

**Metaphors in science communication** – *Wolf-Andreas Liebert (Linguistics), University of Koblenz-Landau (Germany)*

The mediation of scientific knowledge to a general lay public via metaphors seems to be evident and easy but in fact it is a complicated undertaking. Indeed it is a complicated undertaking. One of the reasons for the complexity is that we do not have - as usual with metaphors - two semantic areas from everyday social environment where the structure is sufficiently evident for the parties concerned. It is rather the case, that the intermediary area is unknown and strange, not only concerning some concepts or circumstances, but in its totality. Therefore metaphors cannot be used naturally any more, but additionally have to be contextualized. In addition, it must be demanded that in particular the meaning of fixed metaphors like 'text', 'transcribe' or 'cut' need to be clearly separated from their everyday meaning. Even if science journalists develop a consistent imagery, it is vital that the base factors to which the metaphors refer are unequivocal and clear.

Hence, notification problems between science and general public appear because in both spheres different languages are spoken in certain way. If a geneticist fancies the DNA as a text, he knows of the as-if-character of this image, and that only certain aspects of this molecule can more or less suitably be shown with this metaphor. Because scientists use expressions which also belong to everyday language, it can easily happen that, with a mindless transfer of technical motivated and contextualized metaphors in public discourses, the knowledge about this 'as if' gets lost and/or false interpretations appear because of an insufficient clarification of the context.