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A New Semantic Interpretation of Timotheus of Miletus' *Persae*, 147–8

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In *Persae* 140–61, Timotheus introduces a Phrygian soldier speaking *broken Greek*. In this contribution I will provide a new semantic interpretation of the controversial passage 147–8 Page, since the meaning of [...] διάτορον | σφραγίδα in context with θραύων στόματος is unclear (cf. Wilamowitz 1903, followed by Reinach 1903:79, Mazon 1903:212, Page 1962:410; Gildersleeve 1903:235, followed by Hordern 2002:203; Croiset 1903:346; Campbell 1993:105; Janssen 1984:105, Paduano 1993:534, Sevieri 2011:83, ignoring διάτορον; Nencioni 1950:150, Lambin 2013:138, translating literally, 'breaking the piercing seal of his mouth', without further explanations). In order to understand the cognitive mechanisms underlying these verses I used Fauconnier & Turner's (2002) 'Conceptual Integration' Theory.

Grasping the exact meaning of διάτορον is crucial, since it is an important *Source Input* for the *Cognitive Blend* created by Timotheus to mark the fact that a Phrygian is speaking Greek (*Target Input*). Etymologically, διά-τορον is an o-stem adjective (Chantraine 1979:10–1) derived from the verb τορῆν < PIE *terh₁/3-, 'to pierce' (Beekes 2010:1495). It is applied specifically to sounds, with a semantic change from 'piercing' to 'loud, shrill', comparable to Skt. tará- 'piercing, resonating' and perhaps OIr. tairm 'sound'. Lexicographers (Hsch., *Suda*, Phot., *Etym. Magn.*, Ps. Zonar., s.v.) confirm the relationship with a sound, thus 'piercing' in the sense of 'acute' (cf. A., *Eum.*, 567), even 'audible from a distance'. But how can a 'piercing sound' be related to Phrygian?

The Phrygian slave in Eur., *Or.*, 1384, mentions the μέλος or νόμος (Plut., *de mus.*, 1133b) ἀρμάτειον, a specific melody characterized by a high register (scholia, *Suda*, s.v.) to which his monody has to be sung. The relationship between high register and threnodic songs highlighted by Plut., *de mus.*, 1136c, explains the threnodic use of μέλος ἀρμάτειον in Eur., *Or.*, 1384. Phrygians are defined as θρηνητικοί, 'with an aptitude for threnodic songs', by Eustathius. The νηνιάτον, which Hipponax evokes as a Phrygian composition (fr. 163 West = fr. 173 Degani), is a particular variety of threnodic song. By contrast, the Greek language, called ἰαονα γλωσσᾶν by Timotheus (149), may be associated with ionic harmony, defined as ἀνειμένη by Pratinas (fr. 712 Page), and characterized by a lower register.

The *Cognitive Blend* shows that there must have been a link between the Phrygians, the μέλος ἀρμάτειον, the threnodic songs, and the high pitch of the Phrygian mode to the point that even the Phrygians' way of speaking was identified with a particularly high-pitched tone of voice. So, the Phrygian language pressed this 'seal' (σφραγίς), i.e. shaped the soldier's 'mouth' (στόμα), a metonymy for his native articulatory capabilities, just as Timotheus impressed his own upon his nome (202–36), σφραγίς being a technical term for the most personal part of a poem (Thgn. 19–20). But the Phrygian soldier must break this 'seal', i.e. abandon this high-pitched trait characterizing his 'mouth', in order to speak Greek, a foreign language characterized by a lower register.

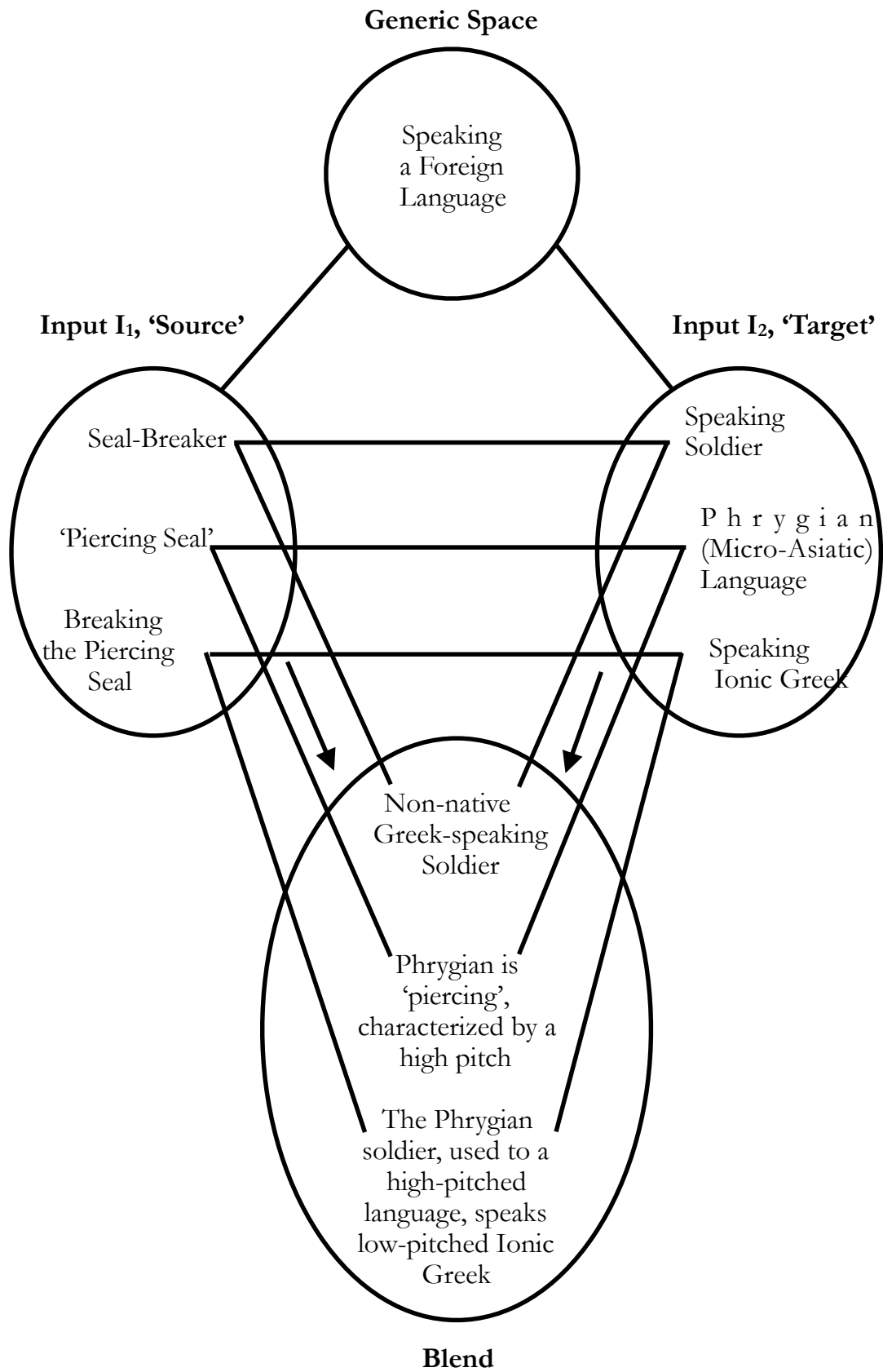


Fig. 1. Cognitive Blend. Single-Scope Integration Network Mapping. After Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 128.

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