

Grzegorz A. KLEPARSKI, Beata KOPECKA

**THE TRUMPET PUT ME IN A BAD MOOD: SOME
REMARKS ON THE MECHANISM OF METONYMY IN
CURRENT LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS**

Introduction

The notion of *metonymy*, gaining its name from two Greek particles, i.e. *meta* – ‘after’, ‘later’ and *ὄνυμα/ὄνομα* – ‘name’, ‘word’ first appeared in the antiquity, where it was considered one of the four figures of speech, or rhetorical tropes, together with metaphor, synecdoche and irony. Today metonymy is frequently discussed in connection with metaphor, as two closely connected phenomena, whereas synecdoche, i.e. ‘part for the whole’ – *pars pro toto* relation, is generally subsumed within the notion of metonymy. In accordance with the classical, rhetorical approach metonymy is broadly defined as a device in which the name of one entity stands for another one by association of ideas (cf. Rayevska 1979, Ullmann 1957). The assumptions characteristic for the rhetorical approach are as follows:

- 1) metonymy is a figure of speech, thus a matter of literary, ornamental language;
- 2) metonymy relies on linguistic substitution, i.e. substitution of names;
- 3) metonymy is a ‘stand for’ relationship between two words, based on physical contiguity or proximity of the entities denoted;
- 4) contiguity is understood in a broad sense and comprises spatial contact, temporal proximity, casual relations, part-whole relations, etc.

In present-day linguistic analysis, after years of a relative neglect, one may speak of a certain revival of interest in the study of metonymy. In the last decade of the 20th century metonymy attracted the interest of cognitive semanticists, who have gone far beyond the traditional view in several ways. With this in mind, the aim set to this paper is to reconsider the notion of metonymy in linguistics, with

due attention to a selection of current views and approaches. Nevertheless, before relevant issues are presented, a brief explanation of terminology introduced to account for the novel view seems indispensable. The basic notion in discussing both the mechanisms of metonymy and metaphor in cognitive semantics is the notion of *domain*, frequently referred to as the *Idealized Cognitive Model* (henceforth: ICM). However, despite the central role of these terms in the cognitivist debate, their definition remains fairly ambiguous. In general, domains are to be understood as coherent regions of human conceptual space, being organisational units of the encyclopaedic knowledge about a concept. To be more specific, Croft and Cruse (2004:15) provide a more precise definition, based on the assumptions made by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Langacker (1987), defining domain as *a semantic structure that functions as the base for at least one concept profile, typically many profiles*. A *profile* and a *base* are to be understood as parts of a concept, in such a way that the base presupposes the existence of any profile and is, consequently, prerequisite for its conceptualisation. In cognitivist discussion, the term *domain* is often further qualified by means of such adjectives as *cognitive* or *conceptual* (e.g. Klepanski 1997). In addition, apart from the terms *domain* or *ICM*, the terms *frame* (e.g. Papafragou 1996, Koch 2004) or *schema* (Lakoff and Turner 1989) are currently employed to account for more or less similar mental constructs. Another two terms frequently appearing in the discussion of metonymies from the cognitive viewpoint are a *vehicle* (or *source*) and *target*. The notion of *vehicle* is understood as an entity initiating the metonymic process, whereas the concept of *target* stands for the entity aimed at by means of metonymy.

Metonymy in communication

One may say that metonymy, judging by its widespread occurrence in natural languages, fulfils important functions in everyday communication. The questions that appear in this context are, first of all: *Why and how do speakers encode meaning in a metonymic way?* and secondly, *How do hearers arrive at the relevant interpretation?*

Starting with the first question, most importantly metonymy has a referential function, and there are several pragmatic reasons for the referential use of metonymies. According to Nerlich, Clarke and Todd (1999:362), metonymy is an *abbreviation device* which allows us to [...] *say things quicker; to shorten conceptual distances*. In other words, due to the use of metonymic expressions speakers are capable of limiting the number of referents. In this way, for example, the word form *school* contextually comes to refer to an institution, whose existence is determined by a number of components, like for instance *lessons, staff, schoolyear*; etc. Frequently, explicit reference to these components

is superfluous, or even their usage would necessitate in introduction of many further referents (Dirven 1993:22).

What is more, referential metonymy often proves to be the only unambiguous expression, in comparison to particular paraphrases, even though apparently it may seem vague and imprecise, e.g.: *Different parts of the country don't necessarily mean the same thing when they use the same word* (Dirven 1993:6). Here, the phrase *different parts of the country*, which is interpreted metonymically in the context of the rest of the utterance, combines the meanings of *particular geographical areas* with *individual inhabitants*. A possible paraphrase like *People living in different parts of the country don't [...]* would put more emphasis on individuals than on the regional variation, which – to some extent – changes the original interpretation inherent in the metonymic phrase. Similarly, a paraphrase *In different parts of the country people don't [...]*, would highlight the regional rather than individual variation.

Thirdly, by means of metonymy, the danger of ambiguity can be avoided as to which part of the referent's meaning is considered the most relevant. For instance, the phrase *the Crown*, as used in *The Crown has not withheld its assent to a Bill since 1707* (Dirven 1993:17), suggests that what is meant is the institution, whereas the person, i.e. monarch is totally irrelevant.

The answer to the question of how speakers encode meaning in the metonymic way must rely on the discussion of entities that are chosen to serve as vehicles to give access to required targets. In an attempt to deal with this question Kövecses and Radden (1998:62–71) specify what the authors refer to as principles of relative salience, i.e. principles determining the natural cases of metonymy. The authors differentiate between principles having a cognitive basis and communicative principles. The cognitive principles are determined by three general determinants of conceptual organisation, namely human experience, perceptual selectivity and cultural preference. The human experiences, derived from the anthropocentric view of world and our interaction with the world, lead to the following principles for choosing the vehicle entities:

HUMAN OVER NON-HUMAN,
CONCRETE OVER ABSTRACT,
INTERACTIONAL OVER NON-INTERACTIONAL,
FUNCTIONAL OVER NON-FUNCTIONAL.

On the other hand, the perceptual selectivity accounts for the following principles:

IMMEDIATE OVER NON-IMMEDIATE,
OCCURENT OVER NON-OCCURENT,
MORE OVER LESS,

DOMINANT OVER LESS DOMINANT,
GOOD GESTALT OVER POOR GESTALT,
BOUNDED OVER UNBOUNDED,
SPECIFIC OVER GENERIC.

Thirdly, cultural preferences result in the following principles:

STEREOTYPICAL OVER NONSTEREOTYPICAL,
IDEAL OVER NON-IDEAL,
TYPICAL OVER NONTYPICAL,
CENTRAL OVER PERIPHERAL,
BASIC OVER NONBASIC,
IMPORTANT OVER LESS IMPORTANT,
COMMON OVER LESS COMMON,
RARE OVER LESS RARE.

Finally, communicative principles relevant for the choice of the preferred vehicle, as distinguished by Kövecses and Radden (1998), are:

CLEAR OVER LESS CLEAR,
RELEVANT OVER IRRELEVANT.

Notice that the former of the two principles is clearly a counterpart of Grice's (1975) maxim of manner, whereas the latter one relies on Sperber and Wilson's (1995) principle of relevance. At first sight, the reconciliation of the two principles might seem unfeasible. Nevertheless, as Langacker (1993:30) puts it:

[...] metonymy allows an efficient reconciliation of two conflicting factors: the need to be accurate, i.e. of being sure that the addressee's attention is directed to the target; and our natural inclination to think and talk explicitly about those entities that have the greatest cognitive salience for us.

Thus, by means of metonymy, two apparently conflicting aims can be achieved, namely accuracy and economy of speech. Furthermore, the communicative principles of clarity and relevance simultaneously provide an answer to the last one of the three questions posed in this subsection. They account not only for the process of encoding, but also of decoding the meaning of an utterance.

The nature of metonymy

Our present-day discussion of metonymy reveals both similarities as well as differences in the treatment of the notion in question. To start with similarities,

first and foremost the linguists' interest has ceased to be restricted to literary language. At present a great deal of research is conducted with regard to everyday discourse, where – in fact – metonymy refers to a wide range of language phenomena. Secondly, metonymy is no longer viewed solely as a figure of speech and thus a characteristic of language in terms of relations among words alone. Instead, the grounding of metonymy in the human conceptual system, i.e. thought processes, is universally stressed. This prominent feature of the mechanism of metonymy was first stated directly by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:39), considered pioneers of the novel approach, who underlined that metonymic concepts structure language, thoughts, attitudes and actions, and are grounded in our experience. What follows; at present metonymy is considered a conceptual operation rather than a mere 'stand for' substitution relationship. As a result, contiguity, a crucial notion in dealing with metonymy, is perceived in mental rather than in physical terms, which is occasionally stressed by the term *conceptual contiguity* (e.g. Dirven 1993).

In accordance with the standard definition within the framework of cognitivism, as advocated by, among others, Lakoff and Turner (1989), metonymy is perceived as [...] *a mapping [conceptual projection] with a primarily referential purpose, in which the source and target entities are conceptual entities in the same domain* (Strazny 2005:681). The unity of domain (ICM, frame) seems to be another similarity in the treatment of metonymy by individual linguists. This feature is supposed to distinguish metonymy from metaphor, where the defining property is concept mapping between two domains. Nevertheless, despite the apparently common consent to the fact that metonymic processes operate within one conceptual construct, some differences, resulting mainly from the ambiguous status of the notion of domain itself, can be observed. Thus, according to Croft (1993:348), metonymic mapping does not necessarily occur within a single domain, but may also take place in a single domain matrix, with the domain matrix understood as a combination of domains presupposed by a single concept. This suggestion is justified by the fact that a concept may simultaneously presuppose several different dimensions, which in turn can be interpreted as different domains forming a domain matrix. Dirven (1993:9) distinguishes three types of metonymies with one of them, the inclusive syntagm, operating within two different domains or two different aspects of a domain. Since the involvement of two domains seems to blur the distinction between metonymy and metaphor, Dirven (1993:14) clarifies that in metonymy the two domains remain intact, whereas in metaphor the source domain is totally suppressed. However, as the author aptly notes, the division of extralinguistic reality is not objective but rather it depends on the language user's cultural background, which in turn determines the existence of one or more domains for a given concept. Thus, the question of a number of domains is basically a matter of

perspectivisation,¹ and in metonymy, given experiential areas are merely perspectivised as one domain or more domains. Consequently, the conceptual contiguity between two elements, forming the base of metonymic relations, must be perceived as constituted by a conceptual act rather than the objective reality. Within the frame semantics, where metonymy is defined as *frame-based figure/ground effect with respect to an invariant meaning* (Koch 2004:8), contiguity is considered to hold on two levels, namely between elements of a frame, as well as between one element and the frame as a whole.

Due to the fact that metonymy does not actually seem to consist of systematic mappings, some linguists refrain from treating it as a mapping process. Instead, a ‘reference point’ approach is suggested, as in the following definition:

Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model (Radden and Kövecses 2005).

Thus, for example, in the sentence *She’s just a pretty face*, the element *pretty face* functions as the vehicle which by means of mental activation allows to access the ‘person’ as the target (Radden and Kövecses, 2005). The definition quoted above relies on the ‘access node’ model of meaning proposed by Langacker (1987), in which a word form serves as a point of access to a network of open-ended relations, i.e. cognitive routines, constituting its meaning.

Despite the popularity of the reference-point approach (e.g. Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1993, Panther and Radden 1999, or Dirven and Pörings 2002), the above model draws criticism as well. According to Panther and Thornburg (2005:43), who rely on both the cognitivist and relevance theories in their model of metonymy, the reference-point approach seems too unrestrained, classifying data as metonymic that cannot be treated as prototypical cases of metonymy. The authors illustrate their claim with the following pair of sentences:

- a) *The trumpet* put me in a bad mood.
- b) *The loss of my wallet* put me in a bad mood.

Thus, although in b) *the loss of my wallet* seems to provide access to the concept of NON-POSSESSION (*of the wallet*), it is a conceptually necessary and thus a non-metonymic relationship. By contrast, *the trumpet* does not necessarily entail THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPET, which makes it a metonymic relationship. Consequently, Panther and Thornburg (2005:50) distinguish two essential and – in their view – defining properties of metonymy, namely

¹ For a slightly different understanding of the notion of *perspectivisation* see Klepanski (1997).

contingence and the degree of conceptual prominence of the target meaning. Contingence is defined as *a conceptually non-necessary relation between concepts, i.e. relation that is in principle defeasible* (see Panther and Thornburg 2005:46). The latter property, that is conceptual prominence, leads to a conclusion that the traditional ‘stand for’ metonymic relation, where the target meaning is maximally prominent, is a borderline case of metonymy rather than a prototype. The basic metonymic relation, as viewed by Panther and Thornburg (2005), differs slightly from the definition coined by Radden and Kövecses (2005), and can be presented in form of the following *Figure 1*:

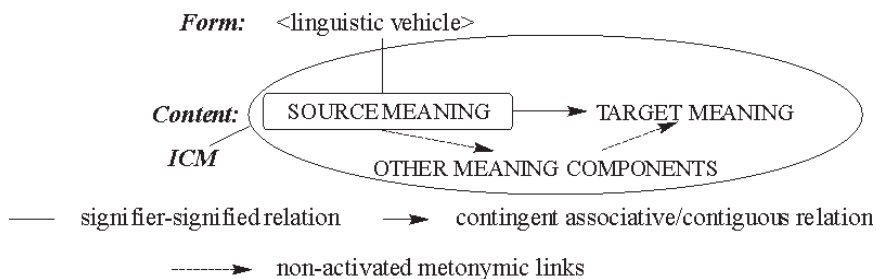


Figure 1. The basic metonymic relation (Panther and Thornburg 2005:42)

Unlike Radden and Kövecses (2005), Panther and Thornburg (2005) draw a line of distinction between the vehicle, as a linguistic form, and source meaning as the part of meaning inherent in the vehicle triggering the particular metonymic process. What is more, the diagram shows that in the concept formation the source meaning is not wiped out by the target meaning. Thus, although the target meaning is more prominent, the source meaning must be salient enough to enable its activation. In a similar way, Dirven (1993:21) observes that *in metonymy two elements keep their existence and form a contiguous system*.

In modern literature metonymy is also defined as a variety of echoic use (Papafragou 1996, and website). Within the framework of the relevance theory, the echoic use is understood as a kind of self-referring, interpretative linguistic expression falling outside its normal descriptive denotation. In Papafragou’s (1996) view, *ad hoc* metonymic concepts are formed within the complex system of relations found in a frame. Thus, they rely on the set of attributes and values characterising a particular expression, and capture the multitude of assumptions humans possess (cf. Klepanski 1997). The echoic expression produces the novel concept through some particularly accessible value. According to Papafragou (1996:176), metonymy must be considered a novel conceptualisation of an external entity rather than a mapping between two concepts. Consequently, in

metonymy the descriptive content of the expression is not necessarily attributed or attributable to a previous source.

To explain the gist of the metonymic process from the cognitivistic perspective, Croft (1993:348) speaks of an effect called domain highlighting, i.e. making primary a domain that is secondary in the literal meaning.² This occurrence of this process is facilitated due to the salience of some elements present within the domain matrix for a given concept, even if they are peripheral to the concept's literal meaning. For example, the works of Proust are definitely external to the concept PROUST in comparison to the fact that he was a person. Nevertheless, since Proust as a person gained fame due to his works, the domain matrix must include the **CREATIVE ACTIVITY** domain, where the WORKS BY PROUST are salient enough to initiate a metonymic shift. As Croft (1993:349) remarks, domain highlighting seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for metonymy.

Another attempt to specify the process of meaning shift by means of metonymic extension was, for example, made by Taylor (1990) and Kleparski (1997), who treat metonymic meaning changes as special cases of perspectivisation within conceptual domains (henceforth: CDs). As viewed by the latter author, the notion of CD entails the existence of attributive paths against which attributive values, forming an open set, are specified (cf. Seto's notion of exploiting connections, 1999). The lexical categories are characterised relative to different locations within the attributive paths of CDs. Perspectivisation is understood as a process by means of which some attributive values, whether overtly present or not, are foregrounded whereas others become backgrounded or even disappear completely.

Types of metonymic relations

The problem of classification of metonymic relations has attracted the interest of a number of students of language. For the purpose of brevity, only the general principles underlying selected classifications, rather than their details, can be included here.

In accordance with the cognitivist approach to the mechanism of metonymy, the crucial issue in the presentation of classificatory schemes is first of all the identification and description of conceptual structures that can result in conventional metonymic relations. A typology of metonymy-producing relationships was, among others, worked out by Radden and Kövesces (1998, 2005), who primarily base their presentation on the distinction between whole

² The notion of *highlighting* understood in a similar way by other authors, such as, for example, Kleparski (1997), Kiełtyka (2005) and Kiełtyka (in preparation).

and parts. The approach results from the assumption that human knowledge about the world is organised by structured ICMs, which are perceived by people as wholes with parts. Thus, the two basic conceptual configurations distinguished are: 1) Whole ICM and its part(s); 2) Parts of an ICM. Within the first configuration the following ICMs are listed as being capable of giving rise to metonymy producing relationships:

Thing-and-Part ICM,
Scale ICM,
Constitution ICM,
Event ICM,
Category-and-Member ICM,
Category-and-Property ICM,
Reduction ICM.

Metonymies relying on these ICMs apply typically to things. In the second configuration, in case of which the resulting metonymies normally apply to entities within an event, metonymy-producing relationships occur in the following ICMs:

Action ICM,
Perception ICM,
Causation ICM,
Production ICM,
Control ICM,
Possession ICM,
Containment ICM,
Location ICMs,
Sign and Reference ICMs,
Modification ICM.

It has to be noted at this point that Radden and Kövesces (1998, 2005) attempt at specification of general conceptual categories, referred to by the authors as metonymy-producing relationships, within which they identified an impressive number of actual metonymic relations. Thus, for example the *Thing-and-Part ICM* is supposed to lead to two metonymic variants, namely **WHOLE THING FOR A PART OF THE THING**, and **PART OF A THING FOR THE WHOLE THING**. As far as the metonymies applying to events are concerned, the *Action ICM* includes, among others, **AGENT FOR ACTION** or **INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION** metonymic relations.

Dirven (1993) lists three types of metonymies, with a distinction based on the dichotomy between syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations. Thus, linear metonymies, which occur in linear linguistic context, i.e. phrases or sentences,

rely on the syntagmatic relationship of the metonymic element to the rest of the sentence, against which it is interpreted. As Dirven (1993:6) points out, this type of metonymy does not necessarily result in a shift of meaning. Linear metonymies belong to the so-called low-level metonymies, of which typical examples are: **LOCALITY FOR INSTITUTION, INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE, CONTAINER FOR FOOD, PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT**, etc. The second type of metonymy is the conjunctive syntagm, which depends on non-linguistic syntagmatic relations, e.g. cultural context. Notice that this type of metonymy entails an obligatory change in meaning. Nevertheless, as Dirven (1993:8) claims, conjunctive syntagm operates on a cluster of contiguous domains, and thus the relationship does not exhibit figurative interpretation. In case of the conjunctive syntagm the shift in meaning is systematic, which is demonstrated evidently in dictionary entries. The inclusive syntagm, which is the third type of metonymy as listed by the author, relies on a chain of inclusion and, like the previous type, it has non-linguistic syntagmatic nature. One of the main features of this type of metonymy is that this metonymy is characterised by different degrees in figurativity. In fact, the varying degree in figurativity is, according to Dirven (1993:15–16), a differentiating feature between metonymy and metaphor. Thus, linear metonymy, which is non-figurative, can be placed on the one end of a scale, whereas the other end of the scale is occupied by metaphor, characterised by complex figurativity.

Koch's (2004) classification of metonymies follows as a corollary of a pragmatic and relevance-theoretic analysis of a number of metonymies, with the figure/ground effect, as well as dichotomies implicature versus explicature, and literalness vs. non-literalness serving as the base. In the diachronic perspective, Koch (2004:14) distinguishes three stages of metonymic semantic change resulting in the following set of metonymies: a) *ad hoc* metonymies relying on (universal) speech rules, b) conventional metonymies depending on (historical) discourse rules, and c) metonymic polysemies resulting from (historical) language use. In turn, within the *ad hoc* stage, which is claimed to be crucial for further stages, a distinction is drawn between speaker-induced and hearer-induced metonymies, with two types of speaker-induced metonymies, i.e. referent-oriented, and concept-oriented metonymies. Additionally, the concept-oriented metonymies occur in both soft and intense versions. The hearer-induced metonymies are necessarily concept-oriented.

Panther and Thornburg (2005:37), who are clearly proponents of the pragmatic approach to meaning, claim that conceptual metonymies are natural inference schemas that serve as a basis for pragmatic reasoning on the levels of reference, predication and illocution. Consequently, they propose a classification of metonymies into three pragmatic types, i.e. referential, predicational and illocutionary metonymies. In fact, a significant number of metonymic expressions, and thus metonymies, are motivated by speakers' referential needs

(cf. Dirven 1993). In addition to pragmatic types of metonymy, Panther and Thornburg (2005:47–49) distinguish two kinds of coerced metonymies, namely constructionally and lexically coerced metonymies.

Moreover, metonymies can be characterised on the basis of semantic relations. According to Bierwiazzonek (2005:14), the metonymic semantic relations rely on conceptual contiguity and probably strong neural links, which in turn lead to their activation. Furthermore, their co-activation is not necessary by definition (cf. Panther, Thornburg 2005). Thus, the taxonomy proposed by Bierwiazzonek (2005) includes: meronymy-based metonymy, antonymy-based metonymy, complementarity-based metonymy, reversives-based metonymy, and synaesthesia-based metonymy. Within the group of meronymy-based metonymy, depending on the holonym and its parts, the author lists four subtypes, namely functional part-based metonymy, segmented part-based metonymy, script-based metonymy, and frame-based metonymy. What is more, Bierwiazzonek (2005:30) adds, even if hesitantly, metaphor-based metonymy to his taxonomy. The author claims that, providing the contiguity is defined in terms of strengths of synaptic connections between the neural circuits underlying concepts, even conceptual metaphor may be given a metonymic interpretation.

Conclusion

Summing up, the scissors-and-paste overview given in the foregoing pages merely touches upon the basic, background issues relevant for an up-to-date discussion of metonymy, without going into details of particular proposals. The common ground for present studies, clearly distinguishing it from previous treatments, seems to be the cognitive orientation. Nevertheless, due to the mental character and thus mainly intuitive nature of studies, which are frequently based on a limited number of languages, the assumptions made by particular researchers are far from unanimous. Moreover, the above outline is devoted mainly to the theoretical discussion of mental strategies of conceptualisation, whereas the cognitive approach to metonymy provides a useful framework for the study of changes in lexicon, surveying processes resulting from metonymic shift both in the diachronic and synchronic perspective. Last but not least, motivation of many grammatical structures may also be explained by means of metonymy.

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