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A REVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL METONYMY - METHODS, THEORY AND DESCRIPTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper systematically reviews the main content and academic contributions of Conceptual Metonymy - Methods, Theory and Description. As Volume 60 of the "Human Cognitive Processing" series, this book collects research findings on metonymy from the 12th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference. Through detailed analysis, this paper highlights the book's significant value in several aspects: First, the metonymy corpus and its 14-field description system established by Barcelona's team laid the methodological foundation for metonymy typology research; Second, the book's in-depth discussion of metonymy properties reveals characteristics such as the contingency and indexicality of metonymic reasoning, as well as the dual role of metonymic source in conceptual integration; Third, through multilingual empirical research, it demonstrates the universality of metonymy in constructional development, emotion construction, lexical morphological changes, and sign language construction, while highlighting metonymy's emotional, evaluative and social functions. This book not only advances the theoretical depth of metonymy research but also points out directions for future research, such as metonymy inhibiting factors and cross-linguistic metonymic features that still require further exploration.

KEYWORDS: *conceptual metonymy; metonymy corpus; metonymy properties; metonymic reasoning; pragmatic rhetorical functions; cognitive linguistics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The anthology *Conceptual Metonymy - Methods, Theory and Description* mainly includes papers from conference participants on the topic of metonymy at the 12th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, as well as some commissioned papers. As Volume 60 of the "Human Cognitive Processing" series, the book consists of an introduction and 11 chapters, covering metonymy corpus construction, theoretical discussions, and cross-linguistic empirical research on metonymy's motivational role in constructional development, emotion construction, lexical morphological changes, and sign language construction, primarily from a cognitive linguistics perspective.

The editors point out that metonymy has been proven to be a fundamental and universal cognitive process, constituting the motivation for many conceptual prototypes, conceptual metaphors, grammatical phenomena and constructions, pragmatic reasoning and discourse comprehension, as well as iconic signs. Metonymy provides the potential for linguistic forms and meanings, and language (including sign language), especially grammar, is essentially metonymic. Currently, detailed and systematic typological studies of metonymy, comprehensive standards for describing individual metonymic features, and understanding of how metonymy operates in language and thought (especially from cross-linguistic, cross-modal, and empirical psycholinguistic perspectives) are still needed.

2. INTERPRETATION OF VARIOUS ISSUES IN METONYMY DESCRIPTION - CREATION OF A METONYMY CORPUS

Chapters 1-3 (written by Barcelona, Carrion, and Gomariz respectively) introduce a comprehensive set of standards and parameters developed by Barcelona's team for describing individual metonymic features in detail. This has been used to describe over 300 metonymy entries appearing in professional literature (mostly in English and Spanish, with some in American Sign Language and Spanish Sign Language). This set of standards and parameters has 14 fields:

Field 1: Metonymy category (e.g., EFFECT FOR CAUSE, quoted from original literature)

Field 2: Conceptual metonymy hierarchy (generic, superordinate, basic, subordinate levels)

Field 3: Pure schematic metonymy, typical metonymy, prototypical metonymy

Field 4: Examples of metonymy at various levels from original literature, identifying classification categories of source and target for each

Field 5: a. Pure conceptual conventionality; b. Both conceptual and linguistic conventionality

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Field 6: Language
Field 7: Linguistic category of metonymy 7.1 Grammatical level (morpheme, word, phrase, clause, sentence, etc.) 7.2 Meaning: 1) Constructional meaning (triggering effect, including typical conventional meaning, atypical conventional meaning, implied non-conventional meaning); 2) Discourse meaning (general pragmatic inference) 7.3 Constructional form (a. Typical conventional form b. Atypical conventional form) 7.4 Grammaticalization process (examples of triggered grammaticalization, part of speech conversion, affix derivation, abbreviation...) 7.5 Main function (triggering, reasoning, reference)

Field 8: Metonymy triggering factors (promoting or inhibiting metonymy occurrence) a. Co-textual factors b. Contextual factors: grammatical structure knowledge; ICM framework knowledge; cognitive-cultural context; communicative context (interlocutors, conversation time and place, etc.); speaker/author's communicative goals and rhetorical purposes; register; other contextual/pragmatic factors
Field 9: Operation of metonymy chains, yes/no (quoted from original literature)

Field 10: Whether it belongs to other metonymy hierarchical systems simultaneously

Field 11: Interaction patterns with metaphor or other metonymies: 11.1 Whether metonymy triggers metaphor or metaphor triggers metonymy (must be mentioned in original literature) 11.2 Whether it triggers conventional form or meaning of construction (must be mentioned in original literature) 11.3 Whether examples in original literature show interaction with metaphor or other metonymies

Field 12: Corpus case references for parameters 1, 7, 8, 9, 11 (used in corpus analysis phase)
Field 13: Original literature source
Field 14: Entry compiler date; Reviser date
For example, regarding Field 2's conceptual metonymy hierarchy description standards, using the metonymy entry: "*Buckingham Palace* issued a statement this morning" as an example:
Generic: PART FOR PART

Level	Source Domain	Metonymic Relationship	Target Domain
Superordinate level:	Role category	FOR	Another simultaneously occurring role category
Basic level:	Location	FOR	Location attachments
Subordinate levels:	High subordinate: Official residence	FOR	People in official residence
	Mid subordinate: Monarch's residence	FOR	Monarch
	Low subordinate: British Queen's official residence	FOR	British Queen herself

Barcelona points out: The relationships between superordinate and subordinate levels are taxonomic (i.e., kind of) rather than metonymic (i.e., part of); the division of levels is based on whether metonymy can develop into a new sub-level; and defining the metonymy hierarchical system helps reveal subtle differences between highly similar metonymies.

Field 3 categorizes by prototypicality from weak to strong: pure schematic metonymy (close to literal meaning), typical metonymy (target significantly different from source, not necessarily referential), and prototypical metonymy (typical part-for-whole, referential metonymy).

Field 4 introduces all examples of metonymy entries from original literature under that entry with detailed annotations, such as the metonymy entry "The buses are on strike":
②*The sax* has the flu today. +Object: musical equipment: saxophone (source) +Person: musical equipment player: saxophone player (target)

③*The BLT* is a lousy tipper +Object: food: sandwich (BLTs) (source) +Person: restaurant customer: customer eating BLT sandwich (target)

Field 5 includes pure conceptual inference-guiding conventions, as in "If you have ever driven west on Interstate 70 from Denver to the Continental Divide, you have seen Mount Bethel". Based on metonymic thinking: Event for Precondition, readers infer the inherent cognitive premise that "Mount Bethel is near Interstate 70";

Both conceptual and linguistic conventional metonymy, as in "*America* will prevail" (from a U.S. presidential speech). The metonymic thinking is "country for people of that country", while "American people" has already become an explicit dictionary entry for "America".

Field 7.2: Typical conventional meaning of construction, as in "He *sneezed* the tissue off the table". The intransitive verb "sneeze" triggers caused-motion construction, with metonymic thinking being "instrument for action";

Atypical conventional constructional meaning, such as the verb "reduce" meaning to lose weight (one dictionary entry); metonymic thinking is "general category for member": "No sugar, I'm trying to *reduce*".

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Discourse meaning/general pragmatic inference, such as "I think I'm getting cold" → indirect request

Field 7.3 Typical conventional constructional form, such as "interstate highway" simplified to "Interstate" construction (adj→n); atypical conventional constructional form: such as "*ex*-husband/wife" simplified to "ex-" construction.

Barcelona emphasizes that this corpus can provide empirical data for constructing a detailed, rigorous metonymy typology system, rather than just a simple listing of metonymies roughly grouped by general categories (A detailed, sophisticated typology of metonymy would go beyond a mere list of more or less generic metonymies roughly grouped into types). This corpus will provide operational guidelines for researchers to describe and interpret conceptual metonymy in language and can be applied to research in advertising, communication, social psychology, artificial intelligence, and language teaching.

3. DISCUSSION OF METONYMY PROPERTIES

Chapter Four: John Barnden summarizes five types of contrasts in metonymy. The first is between metonymic source and target, common in antonymic metonymy, such as "Our friends cockroaches" (friends → adversaries "cockroaches"), and some depersonifying metonymy, like "I parked out there" (person → car). The second is between the attitude conveyed by the metonymic source and the attitude the speaker should present, common in derogatory uses of depersonifying metonymy, such as "Steam irons never have any trouble finding roommates" (referring to roommates as "irons", showing unfriendliness). The third occurs when the metonymic source is a peripheral feature of the target, contrasting with the target's professional identity, combining depersonification and de-role metonymy. For example, calling a teacher "Ms Crooked nose" or FBI agents "Suits" creates dysphemism or ironic effects. The fourth is between the metonymic target scene and conventional target scenes. For instance, in "She was wearing *Primark*", the metonymic target is a budget brand, creating irony by contrasting with the conventional thinking of "wear+brand" construction implying luxury brands. The fifth is between the metonymic source focus and target focus. For example, in "What are the French army doing in Mali?" the metonymic source questions the action content while the target questions the reason. Finally, hypallage is formed by contrast between rhetorical expression and the modified object, usually involving metonymic reasoning, such as "Cozy Exit Ahead" where "Cozy Exit" is metonymic for Hampton chain hotels near the highway exit ("Cozy" being the hotel's advertising slogan).

Chapter Five: Panther & Thornburg first point out that metonymy in daily conversation is a swift, automatic indexical reasoning, reaffirming the contingency criterion of metonymic reasoning. Some scholars' alleged counterexamples of "necessary inclusion" metonymy (such as breathing stops → death, aspirin → painkiller, kettle boiling → water in kettle boiling) are still cancellable inferences (brain death is the death standard, aspirin → common blood thinner; stainless steel's boiling point is 3000°C). Since metonymy is experience-based, the authors argue that primary metaphors mentioned by Lakoff & Johnson (1999) (such as happy is up, intimacy is closeness) should be interpreted as primary metonymies of effect for cause. Metonymic reasoning is a semantic enrichment process that integrates the metonymic source into the metonymic target, with the reasoning result highlighting the metonymic target. Combined with context and communicative situations, metonymic expressions can trigger pragmatic effects such as implicit emotional stances, social parameters, and aesthetic effects. From the speaker's intention perspective, all metonymies are semantic extensions of part for whole.

Subsequently, the authors point out that most metonymic reasoning belongs to abductive reasoning, serving as a resolution strategy when a linguistic unit encounters semantic-pragmatic conflict with its context. However, not all metonymies are triggered by such semantic-pragmatic incongruence (incongruence-based metonymy). For instance, default metonymies like mother → housewife; secretary → young lady; road → highway. The default metonymic target can be explicitly cancelled, creating an unexpected pragmatic effect (e.g., "My boss hired a new *secretary*-an older man, actually"). However, metonymies based on semantic-pragmatic conflict are constrained by the sentence's predicate structure, and their metonymic targets cannot be cancelled (e.g., "*Hollywood* made millions with The Titanic"). The contingency of metonymy does not necessarily imply cancellability.

Chapter Six: Radden emphasizes the dual role of metonymic source: 1) as a medium triggering metonymic reasoning; 2) narrowing the target reference scope and participating in constructing complex metonymic targets. Phenomena where language accepts metonymic transformation while simultaneously highlighting the source domain are not uncommon. For example: "*The kettle* is boiling". "Don't worry, *it*'s an automatic kettle, so it will turn itself off". This is because the complex target includes both the inferred target and metonymic source, either of which can become the subject of subsequent discourse. The author suggests that the emergence of additional meanings through conceptual integration of metonymic source and target is the most prominent feature of metonymic reasoning. For instance, in "Molly married money", the predicate verb "married" activates the generic space: marriage ICM, input space 1 (source): money and input space 2 (reasoning target): man integrate into the blended space: man with money, a lot of money, *marriage of convenience*. The blended space emerges with the speaker's contempt and disdain.

The author points out that the contiguity criterion for metonymy is too vague. For example, "I hit him in the nose" cannot be metonymically interpreted as "I hit him in the mouth", despite nose and mouth being adjacent facial organs. It needs to be supplemented with Barcelona's (2011:12) observation: the two

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related concepts must be asymmetric to ensure metonymic interpretation occurs. For instance, in "He has a good nose", the body part "nose" and the sense "smell" are asymmetric, enabling metonymic projection: He has a good sense of smell. The main deficiency of the contiguity criterion is that it assigns metonymy a static view. Most cognitive linguists have shifted to using the more dynamic semiotic concept: indexicality. However, not all metonymy types are based on indexical relationships, nor do all indexical relationships produce metonymy. The key is whether conceptual shift occurs, i.e., whether the metonymic target is highlighted in subsequent discourse. This is constrained by immediate context, cultural norms, interlocutors' encyclopedic knowledge, attitudes, interests, and the discourse presentation itself. Metonymic description does not necessarily produce metonymic shift.

4. THE UNIVERSALITY OF METONYMY IN LANGUAGE

Chapter Seven: Bierwiazonek uses corpus analysis to summarize four implicatures of the "If-only P" construction. Since the salient part of a construction can metonymically represent the whole construction, people use "If-only P" to represent the "If-only P, Q" construction. With increased frequency of use, "If-only P" developed into an independent construction, generating new or stronger implicatures (such as the sub-construction "If-only P" highlighting the implicit Q; expressing unrealizable wishes, disappointment or regret; and due to retaining the minimum sufficient condition value of the source construction "If-only P, Q", having stronger pragmatic force than "I wish"). This phenomenon belongs to conventionalized ellipsis.

Chapter Eight: Perak points out that mirror neuron theory shows people reconstruct and understand others' emotions through mental simulation of sensory-motor properties. Listeners' mental simulation of others' emotions relies on metonymic profiling provided by speakers' embodied cognitive cues. For example, in "*Cold* fear overwhelmed him" and "I'm *shaking* in fear", the sensory and behavioral responses are typical associated features of fear emotion, constituting metonymic profiling. Through corpus retrieval of the Croatian lexeme strah (fear), the author constructs a hierarchical accumulation model of emotional concepts emerging through syntactic-semantic layers:

The first layer is sensory-motor metonymic profiling, describing embodied features of specific emotions; the second layer is ontological construction (also called copular construction), where emotion is metaphorically projected as a conceptual entity through predicative verbs like be or become, such as "Fear *is* a companion of war"; the third layer is spatial construction (through prepositions), further describing spatial (space-time-causal) cognitive relationships between conceptual entities, such as "My hand is paralyzed *from* fear"; finally, the fourth layer is thematic construction and the fifth layer is agentive construction. The emotional state as an entity is presented as a landmark (fourth layer) or trajector (fifth layer) in typical events, generating pragmatic implications. For example, "Marko pours fear (landmark) in the bones of the opponent" / "The fear (trajector) is shaking foreign and local rulers of this land".

Chapter Nine: Pannain conducts corpus retrieval and semantic analysis of four Italian compound words formed with "mouth" and "tongue", comparing them with dictionary definitions. The findings show that mala lingua (bad+tongue): malicious talk(er), metonymic chain derivation: speech organ → speaker → (modifier: bad) specifying particular speaker → specific speech act; linga lunga (tongue+long): talkative (person), metonymic chain derivation: tongue metonymy for speaking + suffix lunga (long) → size (big) → quantity (much); since the referent doesn't actually have a long tongue, this compound contains metaphor - in Italian culture, long tongue implies disgust/ugliness/danger; Linga ccia (tongue+big) and bocca ccia (mouth+big) have similar meanings: speaking without consideration (person). Metonymic derivation: tongue, mouth metonymy for speaking + large size → much quantity, excessive speech triggering pejorative evaluation. The evaluative suffix -ccia (big) itself also implies ugliness/unpleasantness/threat. This research shows that when speech organs (like big mouth, long tongue) metonymically represent speech acts or speakers, they often imply negative evaluation, a phenomenon that exists across languages.

Chapter Ten: Munoz collected over 300 bahuvrihi compounds (possessive compounds) with body parts as heads from English online dictionaries and found that using body parts as direct or indirect metonymic sources to refer to certain diseases/pains (such as smartphone face, phone neck) or certain types of people (such as the -head construction indicating enthusiasts, like google head, green head) is common in 21st-century internet neologisms. The author points out that this relates both to the contrast effect between metonymic source and target, and reflects metonymy's function in creating/maintaining discourse communities.

Chapter Eleven: Redondo focuses on three sign language symbols in a Spanish cooking show video, proposing that both encoding and meaning decoding of Spanish sign language symbols inherently contain metonymic reasoning. Sign language users have heightened proprioception and body awareness compared to typical people. Primary metonymy triggered by perception: sign language users' interdependent bodily entities refer to independent physical entities (such as fingers → bull horns), forming the cognitive basis for sign language conceptualization. The iconic construction of sign language symbols can only project typical perceptual features of the imagined image. The viewer's first step in decoding: hand shape, movement, position, and orientation respectively metonymically denote local features of the imagined image, achieving preliminary form-meaning conversion; second step: aided by background knowledge and co-text formed by sign language symbol combinations, activating metonymic chain reasoning under specific ICMs at different levels, extending iconic construction to more abstract concepts. For example, a sign language symbol's metonymic chain

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derivation: right index and little fingers extended forward and upward, other fingers closed, placed above right forehead → a pair of horns → cow or bull (feature for category, similar to common Spanish gesture) → beef (material metonymy + Spanish recipe + co-triggering by previous sign language symbol "meat") → calf (triggered by signer's semi-vocalization "calf") → veal (cooking context).

5. CONCLUSION

Metonymy involves both cognitive abilities as a natural property of being human and cross-linguistic, cross-cultural community attribute differences. This book can inspire people to think about the nature of this complex phenomenon from different aspects. Here is a brief review of some key points:

Advancement in metonymy typology research. "Good tools are prerequisite to the successful execution of a job". The metonymy description standards and parameter system established by Barcelona's team determined multiple descriptive dimensions, collecting over 300 metonymy entries scattered across professional literature and describing each using this set of standards to form an expanding metonymy corpus, the first of its kind in the field.

Under the cognitive linguistics framework, the pragmatic rhetorical research perspective of metonymy is highlighted. In the introduction, the editors point out that the trend in metonymy research is to focus on metonymy's affective, evaluative, attitudinal and social functions, a trend that is addressed in various chapters of the book (such as the pejorative effects triggered by de-personifying metonymy, de-role metonymy, and scalar metonymy excess; the community-building function of possessive compound word formation). In this book, Panther & Thornburg propose that linguistic metonymy is a reflection of a figure of thought, and metonymy's pragmatic effects are related to Levinson's Manner Principle: What's said in an abnormal way isn't normal; Radden proposes that after conceptual integration of metonymic source and target, emergent meanings appear, often conveying the speaker's implicit attitudes and evaluations (Xu, 2016).

Discussion of some controversial points and potential research directions in metonymy concepts

For instance, Radden points out that noun-to-verb grammaticalization is viewed as metonymy (as English noun-to-verb phenomenon is more prominent than in morphologically complex Finnish and Russian, English is viewed as a more metonymic language), while the source of disagreement about whether suffix derivation words are viewed as metonymy may be that most linguists study metonymy using a semasiological approach (from form to meaning, holding predicate theory view), while fewer adopt an onomasiological approach (from meaning to form, common in Russian studies, such as Li Qin & Qian Qin, 2005).

Also, Radden points out that the term "mapping" is controversial. As a mathematical term, mapping refers to correspondence between two subsets, while metonymic source and target are interrelated within one domain. Strack's (2015) suggestion should be considered: changing to the neuroscience term "binding", meaning "connecting neural activation patterns across sensory channels to form concepts".

Furthermore, Panther points out that systematic research is still lacking on metonymy inhibiting factors (inhibitors, constraints): what kind of conceptual relations in natural language cannot be metonymized; although Barcelona included factors that block metonymy triggers in his metonymy description standards, they were not actually applied.

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