

Metonymy Goes Cognitive-Linguistic

1. From Structuralist Semantics to Cognitive Linguistics

When Roman Jakobson pulled metaphor and metonymy to the center of the stage in linguistics and poetics, structuralists were trying to account for meaning by means of a componential model of clearly defined semantic elements (Jakobson, "Closing Statement"). Inspired by the success of Vladimir Propp's structuralist narratology, which attempted to account for story structure by means of a limited set of plot ingredients, and by structuralist phonology, which was able to characterize the various phonemes of language by means of a limited set of sound primitives and their combinations, structuralist semanticists set out to develop a similar approach for word meaning. This proved to be a difficult task. Here is Jonathan Culler's account of the problems raised by the approach advocated by A. J. Greimas:

Greimas's machinery requires . . . that lexical items which can serve as the vehicle of a metaphor have the metaphorical potential incorporated in their lexical entries, so that, for example, the production of the correct reading for *This man is a lion* depends on the presence of the contextual seme *human* in the lexical entry for *lion*. Not only is this requirement in itself exceedingly cumbersome and counter-intuitive; it has the unfortunate consequence of entailing the suppression of semantic features on which the point of the metaphor may depend. (85-86)

The problems with Greimas led to the conclusion that not every figurative use could be foreseen and encoded in an a priori fashion in a language's lexemes.

As a result, metaphor and metonymy as problems of meaning were taken out of the semantics of language and located in its pragmatics. Culler, discussing metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche as part of the overall program of structuralist poetics, emphasized the role of readers' expectations and their application of reading conventions. David Lodge developed Roman Jakobson's opposition between metaphor and metonymy as two modes of writing and reading (Jakobson, "Two"). And Umberto Eco devoted his analytical powers to discovering various metaphoric and metonymic inferencing paths through the linguistic code (*Role*). These are just some illustrations of the general movement away from the language of the text as the sole basis for the construction of figurative meaning; a more complex model was gradually developing which most importantly included the role of the language user as an essential part.

A similar development, away from an exclusive focus on semantics, took place in linguistics. The problem of metaphorical interpretation was first resolved by means of a proposal of semantic feature transfer, which was linked to the grammatical notion of selection restrictions (Weinreich). This led to a discussion of mechanisms of grammatical feature projection versus cancellation (e.g., Cohen; Levin). Then the whole semantic idea was abandoned and a move to handling figuration by pragmatic interpretation was advocated by philosophers of language Paul Grice and John Searle. A third philosopher of language who had a stake in this debate, Donald Davidson, also took figuration out of semantics and proposed an account of its function in terms of psychological effects rather than meaning, since meaning could only be literal. By the mid 1970s, the pragmatic account of metaphor and metonymy seemed to hold the best cards in poetics, linguistics, and philosophy.

However, with the emphasis on reading conventions, modes of reading, inferencing, and pragmatic interpretation, the demarcation between the role of linguistic meaning and knowledge of the world became increasingly problematic (e.g., Eco, "Metaphor"). Appreciating the point of a metaphor like *This man is a lion* or a metonymy like *She's nothing but a pretty face* largely depends on our knowledge of the world, not on the linguistic meaning of the words out of context or on the pragmatic conventions for interpreting the language of these utterances. When psychologists like David Rumelhart and his student Raymond Gibbs (*Poetics*) began to argue that all meaning construed by language users is dependent on the use of world knowledge, this struck a chord in those poeticsians and linguists who had understood the writings by I. A. Richards, Max Black, and Paul Ricoeur in the same way. It took only one more step for them to be convinced that not just active but all metaphorical and metonymic meaning may be based on the juxtaposition of two knowledge domains, and that even many so-called literal meanings are related to metaphorical ways of thinking about the world (cf. Nelson Goodman). This step was taken, of course, when George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published *Metaphors We Live By*. The tables were turned, and language was incorporated in a more general approach to all of cognition, of which language was seen as one special and specific case. A new research program in linguistics called cognitive linguistics was launched at the beginning of the eighties, and metaphor and metonymy remained among the central phenomena that demanded adequate description and explanation.

One important result of that development was the reclaiming of metaphor and metonymy as problems for semantics, now conceived of as cognitive semantics (Lakoff). The originally Jakobsonian idea that metaphor and metonymy are modes of thought that leave their traces in all kinds of signs and sign systems has been triumphantly evidenced by the many cognitive-linguistic studies on the metaphorical motivation of much polysemy and language change (e.g., Sweetser; Gibbs and Steen; Cuyckens and Zawada). It has taken a little longer for metonymy to receive the same attention, but over the past fifteen years, cognitive linguists

have shown that metonymy is just as essential for the description of many aspects of language and its use (e.g., Goossens et al.; Panther and Radden; Barcelona, ed.; Dirven and Pörings). This has even more recently coincided with a renewed interest in the boundaries between the semantics and the pragmatics of figuration, and in particular of metonymy, again from a cognitive perspective (Panther and Thornburg; Traugott and Dasher). Because the rise of a cognitive approach to figuration in general has already been given attention in this journal (*Style* 36.3 [2002]), the idea of a special issue about metonymy seemed appropriate.

More specific developments in the cognitive-linguistic work on metonymy add further to the relevance of this special issue. The focus on metaphor as the trope of tropes has been gradually shifting over the past fifteen years, initially to the interaction between metaphor and metonymy in many linguistic expressions, including such idioms as *take my breath away* and *look beyond the end of your nose*. More recently, attention has also been devoted to the motivation of many conceptual metaphors by metonymy. Thus, cognitive linguists have postulated the existence of a well-known conceptual metaphor, UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING, which informs many word meanings, including *point of view*, *perspective*, *vision*, and so on. However, this conceptual metaphor itself may in fact be due to an even more basic metonymic mapping, in which seeing is a precondition for understanding. The idea that many conceptual metaphors may be motivated by or even reducible to conceptual metonymies has become a central issue in the cognitive-linguistic debate.

The motivation of metaphor by metonymy also happens to be an idea which was advanced some decades ago in structuralism. Some cognitive linguists have now begun to make these connections (for a good way in to this theme, see Dirven, and Dirven and Pörings, which contains a reprint of Dirven's article). Because of this rapprochement between cognitive linguistics and structuralism, it may be useful to stimulate an interest from the other side as well, and introduce the readers of *Style* to some of the cognitive-linguistic work on metonymy.

2. From Metaphor to Metonymy

The starting point of the cognitive-linguistic study of metonymy inevitably lies in Lakoff and Johnson's chapter on the phenomenon (*Metaphors*). They discuss "The ham sandwich is waiting for his check" as a case in point and emphasize that it can be analyzed along general patterns of conventionalized metonymic mappings, which include THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT, THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION, INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE, CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED, PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT, and so on. Lakoff and Johnson's examples include cases of conventionalized metonymic vocabulary that can be found in the dictionary, as in "The *White House* isn't saying anything," as well as ad hoc or novel cases of metonymic meaning in lexis, as in the example of the ham sandwich. The major point of the chapter is that metonymy is just as systematic and basic to our thinking as metaphor. This position is further explicated in Lakoff's subsequent book on the program of cognitive semantics

(*Women*), where metonymy is defined as a conceptual relation where one concept stands for another concept in the context of an encompassing knowledge frame, called an Idealized Cognitive Model, or ICM.

In Lakoff and Johnson's most recent publication (*Philosophy*), metonymy is used to explain the nature of some of the fundamental conceptual metaphors of our culture, such as TIME IS SPACE. Since our experience of time is grounded in our everyday experience of movement or lack of movement through space, there is a fundamental correlation between time and space that allows for a systematic mapping between these two fundamentally distinct domains, to the effect that, for instance, the location of the observer corresponds with the present, the space in front of the observer corresponds with the future, and the space behind the observer corresponds with the past (140). However, these correspondences can also be seen as metonymic (152). "Corresponds with" is replaced by "stands for." The possibility that many conceptual metaphors may be explained by such correlations in experience has been advanced most persuasively by Joseph Grady ("Theories," "Typology"), and it has raised the question where metaphor stops and metonymy begins (e.g., Barcelona; Radden).

One important issue here is the definition of metonymy and metaphor by means of contiguity versus similarity. In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson write, "In fact, the grounding of metonymic concepts is in general more obvious than is the case with metaphoric concepts, since it usually involves direct physical or causal associations" (39). In later works, this gets referred to as correlations in experience by both Lakoff and Johnson as well as by Grady and others. Readers who are well-versed in structuralism will tend to understand this description of metonymy in terms of Jakobson's criterion of contiguity, which was contrasted with the criterion of similarity for metaphor. Cognitive linguists have for some time resisted this terminology and way of thinking, for reasons that need not detain us here (cf. Kövecses), but in recent years they have finally come round to accepting these criteria for what they are worth (e.g., Taylor; Dirven; Croft; Kövecses and Radden; Panther and Radden; Barcelona, ed.). This is a positive development, as it facilitates explaining the distinction between the role of metaphor and metonymy in such conceptual metaphors as TIME IS SPACE.

Briefly, many aspects of our experience may be associated with each other on the basis physical or causal connections. These are forms of contiguity and may hence give rise to metonymy. This is why Lakoff and Johnson can write:

Where two things are correlated in such a schema, one can stand metonymically for the other. For example, time duration can stand metonymically for distance, as in "San Francisco is half an hour from Berkeley." Here, *half an hour*, the time it takes to travel the distance, stands for the distance. (*Philosophy* 152)

The fact that aspects of our experience may be more or less associated with each other on the basis of contiguity, however, does not preclude the possibility that they are relatively distinct but similar to each other at the same time. Similarity and contiguity are two independent scales that may in principle be applied to the same

expressions or concepts. Thus, when time is said to be space, it may be seen as a stand-for relationship, but it may also be seen as a relationship where something abstract is taken as corresponding in crucial respects to something more concrete; in some admittedly skeletal way, time may be said to be comparable to space, along the lines of the various mappings between distinct domains detailed in cognitive linguistics.

To turn to another metaphor, this is also why seeing may be argued to stand for understanding (metonymy) while it may simultaneously be argued to correspond with or "resemble" understanding (metaphor). The preference for one option or the other partly depends on the choice of perspective by the analyst (cf. Bartsch), who may be looking for metonymy or for metaphor for a specific reason. Concomitantly, in language use, the experience of a linguistic expression as (predominantly) metonymic or metaphorical may depend on the perspective of language users, depending on their communicative interest in either contiguity or similarity relations. Lodge's development of Jakobson's thesis into two modes of reading that are typical of poetry (metaphor) and prose (metonymy) springs to mind as a relevant publication here. These theoretical possibilities for investigating metaphor and metonymy have all been present in structuralist writing from the sixties, and they are now being increasingly discussed in cognitive linguistics.

3. Cognitive Linguistics and Metonymy

I have so far emphasized that the new cognitive-linguistic approach to metonymy displays a number of features that may be fruitfully connected with structuralism. Readers of this journal may actually begin to have their doubts about the title of this introduction, which in their opinion might also have proclaimed that cognitive linguistics goes structuralist. However, such a title would have been misleading, since the cognitive-linguistic approach includes a number of important assets that go beyond the structuralist account of metonymy.

The first important feature of the new approach is its attempt to describe the content of many conventionalized conceptual metaphors and metonyms and their interaction. The collection by Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden contains a separate metaphor and metonymy index totalling over three hundred mappings between conceptual domains. A striking feature of this agenda is the description of interactions between metaphor and metonymy and their reflection in linguistic expressions called "metaphonymies" such as the above-mentioned idioms *take my breath away* and *look beyond the end of your nose* (Goossens, "Metaphonymy"). Moreover, some of the metaphonymies lie at the basis of general phenomena in grammar (Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez), while others motivate general conventions of pragmatic inferencing (Panther and Thornburg,). To provide one illustration, indirect speech acts such as *Can you see him?* for "Do you see him?" are explained by postulating a POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY metonymy (Panther and Thornburg, "Potentiality"). What is also important is the cross-linguistic interest of some of this cognitive-linguistic research into conceptual metonymy, which broadens the

general validity of the postulated mappings. The focus on conceptual metonymy is one exciting area of cognitive-linguistic research that takes metonymy beyond structuralism.

A second cognitive-linguistic aspect that adds to the structuralist approach is its ambition to be part of a more general theory of cognition and cognitive processing. Work by Ronald Langacker on cognitive grammar has paid attention to metonymy as a case of a reference-point construction, which is a general mechanism of cognition whereby we use one mental concept "as a cognitive reference point for purposes of establishing mental contact with another" (1). William Croft has explicated the theory of the two conceptual domains involved in metonymy and metaphor, and the nature of the relationship between the domains. More recently, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner have developed a conceptual integration theory, also known as blending theory, which aims to account for metonymy as a specific form of mapping between mental spaces, yielding conceptual integration in a new space called a "blend"; this theory is illustrated in this special issue by the contribution by Kurt Feyaerts and Geert Brône. This part of the cognitive-linguistic program attempts to fulfil the need for a general theory of concepts and conceptual structures and their relation to words and linguistic structures; it is much in the spirit of the old structuralist agenda but has the advantage that contemporary cognitive science is more advanced today than it was in the sixties.

Connected to this generally cognitive orientation of the cognitive-linguistic approach to metonymy is the interest in predictions about behavior. Psycholinguists have examined various aspects of speaking and thinking with metonymy (Gibbs, "Speaking"), and this offers support for many of the views of cognitive linguistics. Gibbs has even proposed a distinction between metonymic processing of language and processing metaphorical language, echoing my own proposal for a similar distinction for metaphorical processing and metaphor processing (Steen). Metonymic processing takes place, for instance, when readers fill in the gaps in a story by utilizing a conventional conceptual script for the events in the story: none of the utterances in the story itself need exhibit any metonymy, but the story as a whole is processed metonymically (cf. Lodge). If these claims were made on theoretical grounds in the structuralist writings of the sixties and seventies, there is now a lot of experimental evidence from reading behavior which can be marshalled in their support and which informs the further development of cognitive-linguistic theorizing.

The fourth and final aspect that should be mentioned is the fact that cognitive-linguistic research on metonymy can also utilize modern techniques of corpus-linguistic research. Predictions about behavior are thus tested not only by means of psycholinguistic experiments but also by means of large-scale searches in corpora containing attested uses of words and phrases in metonymic ways. For instance, Louis Goossens ("Metonymic," "Patterns") has used historical corpus data to argue that the development of an epistemic sense of English *must* cannot be

explained as being the result of a conventionalized metaphorical mapping from the sociophysical domain to the epistemic domain, where sociophysical obligation is used as a source and inferable necessity functions as a target meaning. Moreover, Goossens claims that an alternative account in terms of metonymy, where the sociophysical domain acts as a reference point for the epistemic domain, cannot be upheld either. The patterns of language use as observed in the corpus indicate more complex transitions than the simple and neat accounts in terms of metonymy or metaphor, and this is the great value of doing corpus-linguistic research. The contribution by Alice Deignan to this special issue is another example of this strength.

I have mentioned four aspects of the cognitive-linguistic approach to metonymy that go beyond structuralism: its detailed and wide-ranging description of conceptual metonymy on the basis of linguistic research across languages; its grounding in a more general and independent theory of cognition; its experimental testing in behavioral research on language use done in psycholinguistics; and its empirical testing in synchronic and diachronic ways in what is the equivalent of fieldwork research on corpora. It can be concluded that the cognitive-linguistic approach to metonymy may owe a lot to structuralism but that it also goes further than structuralism in its theoretical and empirical work. This is the reason why I have given this essay the title it has.

4. Metonymy and Style

There is also some cognitive-linguistic work on metonymy as a feature of style. Apart from a number of analyses in Fauconnier and Turner, attention may be drawn to two book chapters. Friedrich Ungerer has carried out a cognitive-linguistic investigation of the role of metaphor and metonymy in advertising. And Anne Pankhurst has examined the metonymic exploitation of an earring worn by the main character, Pilate, in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. She deliberately seeks a connection with the structuralist tradition of metonymy research in the figures of Jakobson and Michael Riffaterre (*Fictional*, "Trollope"), while also relating to the psycholinguistic views of Gibbs. This type of synthesis between structuralist and cognitive-linguistic traditions is typical of the new approaches of cognitive poetics and cognitive stylistics (Stockwell; Semino and Culpepper; Gavins and Steen). It is represented in this special issue by the article by Dan Strack.

This special issue presents some examples and developments of the cognitive-linguistic approach to metonymy in style in a broad sense. Probably most characteristic of the work described above is the article by Kurt Feyaerts and Geert Brône, who also places their own contribution in the developing field of cognitive stylistics. Their topic is the interaction between metaphor and metonymy at a conceptual plane, in the area of oral expressions of stupidity in the German language and newspaper headlines containing wordplay in English. Feyaerts and Brône examine the rhetorical or communicative function of the metonymic mappings in terms of their innovation effect on language use, their degree of expressivity of an attitude of the speaker, and their capacity for generating humor.

A clear application of the above developments to literature is Strack's article. It analyzes the role of the bridge as a megametaphor in Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Bridge-Builders" and shows how its interpretation is determined by the reader's metonymic view of the characters who are involved in building the bridge. Strack details how the opposition between an English imperialist bridge-builder and an Indian local bridge-builder is cleverly exploited by Kipling to manipulate our views of the bridge as a metaphor for the relationship between England and India.

The third article in this special issue is by Luigi Arata. He has done fundamental research into the Greek and Latin sources on rhetoric, which form the basis of our view of a fundamental contrast between metaphor and metonymy. His article traces the many hesitations and piecemeal developments of the notion of metonymy in great detail. Arata's article may be usefully related to James Mahon's recent essay on the correct interpretation of Aristotle's claims about metaphor.

Finally, Alice Deignan illustrates the corpus-linguistic approach to metonymy in cognitive linguistics. She presents a scale of figuration, ranging from metaphor through different types of interactions between metaphor and metonymy to metonymy itself. Deignan also draws attention to the differences between studying language use by means of dictionaries versus corpora. And she presents three case studies in which she looks at the different types of mapping reflected in the language of argumentation (ARGUMENT IS WAR), and the language of emotions (HAPPINESS IS LIGHT/SADNESS IS DARK and EMOTIONS ARE TEMPERATURES).

As may be appreciated from the previous pages, these four articles form a small selection of the themes that are currently being discussed in cognitive-linguistic research on metonymy. I hope that they will whet the appetite of the reader of this journal for more. I also hope that the rather extensive list of references attached to the present article will be useful in directing the reader to other publications. The possibilities for further work on exploring the connections between cognitive linguistics, structuralism, and metonymy are simply too exciting to let them lie waste.

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