

Exploring some metonymy-related figures of thought in the light of cognitive modeling

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If compared to metaphor, metonymy has been largely overlooked within Cognitive Linguistics. However, researchers adhering to the cognitive linguistic paradigm have given metonymy its due place in the last thirty years, as attested by the abundant recent literature on this figure of thought (Barcelona 2011, 2015; Brdar 2009, 2017; Dirven & Pörings 2002; Fauconnier & Turner 1999; Panther & Radden 1999; Panther and Thornburg 2003, 2010, 2014; Panther, Thornburg & Barcelona 2009; Radden & Kövecses 1999; Ruiz de Mendoza 2014). Various topics related to metonymy have been addressed, namely its definition and demarcation problems with respect to metaphor, its classification, and its interaction with other figures of thought, especially metaphor, synecdoche, synesthesia, and to a lesser extent hypallage or merism. This proposal fills this gap by focusing on hypallage and merism. We study them in terms of cognitive modeling. According to Anderson (2010), a cognitive operation is a mental mechanism meant to construct a semantic representation from linguistic input to make it meaningful in context. We draw from Ruiz de Mendoza and Galera's (2014) distinction between formal and content cognitive operations. The former are a prerequisite for the construction of the latter and consist in the structural manipulation of concepts. The latter contribute to the process of making inferences in discourse. Merism, which was traditionally seen as the combination of two contrasting expressions that are salient parts of a broader domain (e.g. *day and night* to mean 'all the time', as in *Electricians have been working day and night to restore electricity supplies to the area*), has been defined in terms of the formal operation of substitution and of the content cognitive operations of contrast and domain expansion (Ruiz de Mendoza 2017). We go beyond this traditional account and offer a more comprehensive notion of merism to include cases which are not based on the cognitive operation of contrast. This new subcategory is further subdivided into prototypical cases (e.g. *bread and butter*, to make reference to 'livelihood', as in *He's got to write short stories, which are his bread and butter, in order to pay the fees for the private sanitariums where Zelda's being cared for*), cases where more than two expressions are involved (e.g. *eat, drink, and be merry* stand for 'make the most of life', as in *Don't worry about that till you are 50. For now, eat, drink, and be merry!*), and finally expressions in which the cognitive operation of strengthening plays a key role (e.g. *always and forever*, to mean 'always', as in *I'm so, so sorry. I love you now and always and forever*. Both adverbs, 'always' and 'forever', grant access to the whole domain "all the time". On closer inspection, however, it is evident that they capture very similar notions and one reinforces – strengthens – the other). As regards hypallage, it has been studied as involving the formal operation of substitution and the content operation of domain expansion (Ruiz de Mendoza 2017). Hypallage, defined as a transferred epithet, is exemplified by expressions like 'happy meal'. In fact, meals cannot be attributed happiness. They can arouse feelings of joy in the people enjoying the meal. The effect (happiness) is mentioned to make reference to the cause, the meal, as stipulated by the high-level metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE. Here we provide a more detailed analysis of hypallage and argue that the content operation of domain expansion does not always apply to all cases, as shown by examples like *disabled access*. This expression does not exploit the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy but is an example of hypallage since the access cannot be characterized in terms of disability. It is people that use that access that can be attributed this feature. In this proposal, we analyze 200 examples of merism and 200 hundred cases of hypallage taken from COCA and some dictionaries (*Cambridge Dictionary, Wordreference, and MacMillan Dictionary*) and categorize them into different groups in terms of the cognitive operations they involve in order to provide a fine-grained study of these two figures of thought related to metonymy.

References

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