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Metonymy – a Figure of Speech or a Figure
of the Mind

1. Introduction

According to numerous popular sources (e.g. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*) metonymy is

“a figure of speech that consists in using the name of one thing for that of something else with which it is associated”.

Such a ‘standard’ definition reflects the traditional view of the phenomenon, according to which

“metonymy operates on names of things, involves the substitution of the name of one thing for that of another thing and assumes that the two things are somehow associated” (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 17).

According to more recent studies, however, metonymy is a highly structured cognitive mechanism rather than a simple linguistic matter. In a metonymic model one concept does not seem to be merely substituted for another one but appears to be conceptualised by means of its relation to the other concept and contiguity relationships, on which metonymy is based, need not be physical but can be conceptual only (can result from human construal of the world). Basing on the above mentioned cognitive properties of metonymy Radden and Kövecses (1999: 21) proposed a cognitive definition of metonymy. According to them 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”.

Due to certain limitations of space, this article focuses only on the evidence for conceptual rather than linguistic bases of metonymy and such issues

as contiguity, contingency or the nature of metonymic shift, although very important for understanding of the phenomenon will not be pursued here.

2. Evidence on metonymy in thought

As was mentioned above, the traditional approach perceives metonymy as a phenomenon limited to language, especially literary language, which merely operates on names of things (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 17). According to the cognitive view, on the other hand, metonymic concepts not only structure our language but, more importantly, also “our thoughts, attitudes and actions” (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 17). The evidence for conceptual rather than linguistic bases of metonymy abounds in cognitive linguistic literature. For the sake of a certain order of the presented arguments, the evidence, or more precisely the metonymic relationships that provide it, have been divided here into the following categories:

- Metonymic models of individuals,
- Prototype effects and metonymic models of categories,
- Metonymic inferencing.

2.1. Metonymic models of individuals¹

In *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson presented many types of metonymic models of individuals² and noted that metonymies cannot be a simple linguistic matter (1980: 37). They illustrated their point in the following way:

“If you ask me to show you a picture of my son and I show you a picture of his face, you will be satisfied. You will consider yourself to have seen a picture of him. But if I show you a picture of his body without his face, you will consider it strange and will not be satisfied. You might even ask, “But what

¹ The term has been adopted from Lakoff (1987: 85).

² A metonymic model of individuals is understood here as a metonymic relationship of a “static” type whose concepts are related by conceptual contiguity and which takes place within one cognitive structure. A metonymic model of individuals is understood as an E-relation (a relation between entities – ‘bounded regions’) (cf. Seto 1999) as opposed to a C-relation (a ‘kind-of’ relation between category members) which will be dealt with in section 2.2. The classification of some examples used in this chapter may seem doubtful since the vehicles used in them are not proper nouns which refer to only one entity (designatum) but common nouns which refer to a category. Thus, these examples seem to fall into both categories (E-relation and C-relation e.g. 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 from Lakoff and Johnson’s list of metonymic models presented below). This issue, however, will not be pursued here (for a more detailed analysis see disclaimer).

does he look like?" Thus the metonymy THE FACE FOR THE PERSON is not merely a matter of language. (...) We function in terms of a metonymy when we perceive the person in terms of his face and act on those perceptions." (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 37)

Metonymic models of individuals, as the one presented in the above quotation (+THE FACE FOR THE PERSON+), provide strong evidence in support of the conceptual basis of metonymy.

First, as Lakoff and Johnson noted, metonymies are reflections of some general cognitive phenomena and thus are not random, arbitrary occurrences and should not be treated as isolated instances. Lakoff and Johnson made a list of metonymic patterns motivated by such general cognitive principles:

+THE PART FOR THE WHOLE+

1. Get your butt over here.
2. We don't hire longhairs.

+PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT+

3. He bought a Ford.
4. He's got a Picasso in his den.

+OBJECT USED FOR USER+

5. The sax has the flu today.
6. The gun he hired wanted fifty grand.

+CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED+

7. Nixon bombed Hanoi.
8. Napoleon lost at Waterloo.

+INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE+

9. Exxon has raised its prices again.
10. You will never get the university to agree to that.

+THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION+

11. The White House isn't saying anything.
12. Paris is introducing longer skirts this season.

+THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT+

13. Let's not let Thailand become another Vietnam.

(1980: 38-39).

Second, in a metonymic model one concept is not only substituted for another one but, more importantly, seems to be conceptualised by means of its relation to the other. In the example:

14. *The Times* hasn't arrived at the press conference yet. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36)

The Times does not simply refer to “some reporter or other but to suggest the importance of the institution the reporter represents” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36). The above-mentioned sentence means, therefore, something completely different than:

15. *Steve Roberts* (who may be the Times reporter in question) has not yet arrived for the press conference. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 36)

Third, owing to their conventionalisation the use of many examples of metonymy is often automatic and unconscious (this is also true of most of the examples above). As Lakoff noted, it is conventional for one element of a frame (a cognitive model),

“which is either easier to understand, easier to remember, easier to recognize, or more immediately useful for the given purpose in the given context”, to metonymically stand for or to evoke the entire frame or another element of the frame (1987: 84).

In the [MARRIAGE] frame in Polish, for example, one highlighted element: *ślub* (vow) conventionally stands for another element: *marriage* (ceremony) (Koch 1999: 148).

Finally, as Gernsbacher noted,

“people rate as more natural and are faster to understand the [...] pair of sentences with ‘conceptual anaphors’ than they do pairs of sentences with appropriate singular pronouns” (qtd in Gibbs 1999: 68).

What it means is that although antecedents of pronouns must seemingly agree in person, number and case, owing to our ability to think metonymically this is not always so. Let us consider the following examples:

16. Natural: I need to call the garage (where my car was being serviced).
They said *they*'d have it ready by five o'clock. (Gibbs 1999: 68),
17. Unnatural: I need to call the garage (where my car was being serviced).
It said *it* would have it ready by five o'clock.

The second exchange sounds unnatural because “the singular entity mentioned (garage) metonymically stands for some conceptual set (people working at the garage)” (Gibbs 1999: 68). As Gibbs notes,

“[p]lural pronouns are natural and easy to understand precisely because of our ability to think metonymically about people, places, events, and objects” (1999: 68).

2.2. Prototype effects and metonymic models of categories

Metonymic models of categories provide equally strong evidence for conceptual rather than linguistic bases of metonymies. Before we start analysing the evidence, however, the very notions of category and its metonymic model need to be clarified.

Classical rhetoric and cognitive linguistics substantially differ in their views on the concept of categorisation. First, according to the classical view all category members are characterised by a limited set of essential features (Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 26). According to more recent studies, on the other hand (cf. Wittgenstein 1958, Austin 1961, Rosh 1977), category members do not have to share common attributes but instead, seem to be connected by a network of overlapping similarities. Second, the classical theory suggests that categories are homogeneous units (there are no better or worse category members) with clear-cut boundaries. The experimental prototype hypothesis of categorisation shows, however, that

“categories are not homogeneous, but have a prototype, good and bad members, and have fuzzy boundaries” (Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 38).

The above-mentioned prototypes are perceived by human beings as more representative of a particular category than other members and are often used to stand for the category as a whole. As Lakoff noted, in a conventional metonymic model, concept *B* is used to stand metonymically for concept *A* and if concept *A* happens to be a category, “the result is a metonymic model of the category” (1987: 85). Lakoff mentions several kinds of metonymic models of categories.

2.2.1. Typical Examples

We have just seen how a metonymic model of a category arises. In such a model a typical example, that is judged as more representative of the category in a given context, often stands for the category as a whole or for another member of the category. According to Rosh’s goodness-of-example rating tests, for example, >GUN< is judged to be more representative of the category WEAPON than >DAGGER<, >WHIP<, or >FOOT< (qtd. in Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 13)³. Consequently, *a gun* often comes to stand for the whole category WEAPON. Similarly, >ALSATIAN< or >GREYHOUND< which are usually rated

³ The prototypes may shift depending on the context (see e.g. Ungerer and Schmid 1996) and may be completely different from the non-contextualised prototypes elicited in goodness-of-example experiments.

as more prototypical examples of the category DOG than e.g. >PEKINESE< (Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 13) often metonymically stand for the whole category. Such a metonymic substitution may either have an ‘upward (hyponym – hyperonym) orientation’ (+SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC+), as in:

18. *The gun he hired wanted fifty grand* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 38),

where *the gun* (an element of the category WEAPON) may metonymically stand for the whole category⁴, or a ‘downward (hyperonym – hyponym) orientation’ (+GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC+), as in:

19. *He was carrying a concealed weapon.*

20. *The dog bit me.*

where a superordinate term (*a weapon* or *the dog*) takes on the shape of a prototypical element of its category such as *a gun* and *an Alsatian* respectively. As Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk puts it:

“Categorical hierarchies have been shown to be organized not in a regular taxonomic model but rather into distributionally uneven levels. It is the middle levels of a hierarchy that represent the psychologically most salient basic levels e.g. in the hierarchy mammal – dog – dachshund, it is the category dog which is basic. The basic level, being also the name of the whole category (e.g. dog), which includes all lower taxa, stands closest to the prototypical exemplar of that category both in terms of its gestalt, image schematic, as well as typicality properties.” (1994: 6).

Thus, in other words, the category name DOG in the example above “stands closest to the prototypical exemplar of that category” >ALSATIAN<.

Let us now consider the features of typical examples, which appear to provide convincing evidence in support of the cognitive status of metonymic models.

First of all, if metonymy was a phenomenon limited to language only, it would have to be used consciously and deliberately. Typical examples, however, appear to be used unconsciously and automatically. To use Lakoff words:

“An enormous amount of our knowledge about categories of things is organized in terms of typical cases. We constantly draw inferences on the basis of

⁴ *The gun* may also stand for another element of the category (e.g. *a revolver* or *a musket*) or the whole “hit man domain” (as could be seen in part 1.1.1). For a more detailed analysis see disclaimer.

that kind of knowledge. And we do it so regularly and automatically that we are rarely aware that we are doing it." (1987: 86).

Secondly, many prototypical examples do not even show up in language. A *dog*, for example, being a very general term (similarly to the above-mentioned *weapon*), when imagined, takes on the shape of a prototypical element of its category (+GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC+). The prototypical element however, does not necessarily need to have a name. To see this more clearly let us consider Ungerer and Schmid's examples (1996: 43):

21. He opened the door to face a pretty, young woman with a dog in her arms.
22. The hunter took his gun, left the lodge and called his dog.
23. Right from the start of the race the dogs began chasing the rabbit.
24. The policemen lined up with the dogs to face the rioters.

The breed of the dog 'projected' in our minds when reading the above sentences would probably be in each case different. This is so due to the fact that the prototypes of cognitive categories are not fixed but may change when a particular context is introduced. When reading the first example (no. 21), a small Pekinese or a miniature pincher would probably come into our minds. In the second one (no. 22), it might be a dachshund, in the third one (no. 23) – a greyhound and in the fourth one (no. 24) – an Alsatian. The prototypes however may, and often do, remain unnamed. This may be the case in sentence 24. Police dogs, for example, are sometimes a cross between a retriever and an Alsatian and, in a particular context, it might be the picture of them that would appear in our mind and metonymically stand for the whole category DOG.

Finally, as Lakoff noted (1987: 86), we seem to reason by means of typical examples. We make inferences on their basis and generalize knowledge about typical cases to nontypical ones but not conversely. Rips's research showed, for example, that subjects inferred that if the robins, on a certain island, which are more typical examples of birds, got a disease, then the ducks, which are less prototypical examples of the category, would as well, but not the converse (qtd. in Lakoff 1987: 86).

2.2.2. Social stereotypes

As Lakoff noted, in the classical theory, social stereotypes do not play a role in defining category structure, "because they are not part of any necessary or sufficient conditions for category membership" (1987: 81). According to the cognitive view, however, this does not seem to be the case. The housewife-mother stereotype, for example, which itself is defined "relative to the nurtu-

rance model of motherhood”⁵, is used to define a contrasting WORKING MOTHER subcategory⁶. To use Lakoff’s words:

“Consider an unwed mother who gives up her child for adoption and then goes out and gets a job. She is still a mother, by virtue of the birth model, and she is working – but she is not a *working mother*! The reason is that it is the nurturance model, not the birth model that is relevant. Thus, a biological mother who is not responsible for nurturance cannot be a working mother, though an adoptive mother, of course, can be one.” (1987: 80).

Thus, it seems that social stereotypes do have a cognitive function and play an important role in defining category structure. In a stereotypically structured category, one subcategory, which has a socially recognized status often metonymically, stands for the category as a whole. To see this, let us consider Lakoff’s example where a HOUSEWIFE-MOTHER subcategory stands for the whole MOTHER category:

25. Normal: *She is a mother, but she isn’t a housewife.*
Strange: *She is a mother, but she’s a housewife.* (1987:85).

If it was not for metonymic substitution of the category MOTHER for the stereotypical subcategory HOUSEWIFE-MOTHER, both sentences would seem normal. The latter sentence does not seem normal, however, owing to the fact that mothers are commonly perceived as housewives in our culture and the subcategory HOUSEWIFE-MOTHER stands for the whole category MOTHER. Similarly, in our culture, a stereotypical bachelor is macho, promiscuous, nondomestic, and untidy, and thus a statement:

26. *He is a bachelor, but he is tidy and loves housework.*

⁵ A number of cognitive models often combine a complex cluster that is “psychologically more basic than the models taken individually.” (Lakoff 1987: 74). The models in the MOTHER cluster are:

- The genetic model: The female who contributes the genetic material is the *mother*.
- The nurturance model: The female adult who nurtures and raises a child is the *mother* of that child.
- The marital model: The wife of the father is the *mother*.
- The genealogical model: the closest female ancestor is the *mother*.

(Lakoff 1987: 74)

⁶ There is a stereotypical view of mothers, according to which “mothers who do not stay at home all day with their children cannot properly nurture them” and a stereotypical view of work, according to which “it is done away from the home, and housework and child-rearing don’t count”. The stereotypical views manifest themselves in such expressions as “Every Mother Is a Working Mother” (Lakoff 1987: 80).

seems normal, whereas:

27. *He is a bachelor, but he is untidy and hates housework.*

is odd.

Basing on the above examples it may be concluded that:

- 1) We seem to reason and make judgments about people in terms of social stereotypes. Social stereotypes serve as a norm, which, in our culture, is staying at home and nurturing children for mothers and being promiscuous and nondomestic for bachelors.
- 2) Stereotypical subcategories hardly ever show up in language. The above-mentioned examples of housewife-mother and untidy, macho bachelor, which stand for the whole MOTHER and BACHELOR categories, do not have names of their own.
- 3) Metonymic substitution of the category as a whole for a stereotypical subcategory is an unconscious and automatic process.

2.2.3. Ideals

Another type of a subcategory, which metonymically stands for the entire category, is ideals. Abstract ideal cases are neither typical nor stereotypical, e.g. an ideal husband is “a good provider, faithful, strong, respected and attractive”, whereas a stereotypical husband is “bumbling, dull and pot-bellied” (Lakoff 1987: 87). An interesting example of an ideal case (a negative one though), which stands for the whole category, is *Judas*, e.g.

28. *You are a Judas!* (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 49).

Judas “who is a betrayer par excellence” (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 49) is used here to stand for the whole category. Ideal cases similarly to social stereotypes are used automatically and subconsciously and often remain unnamed. They also organise “a lot of our cultural knowledge” and are used to “make judgements of quality” (Lakoff 1987: 87).

2.2.4. Cognitive reference points

Another type of a metonymic relation seems to arise on the basis of cognitive reference points. The reference points, as Lakoff noted, can have either, as he calls them, biological basis (such as the primary colours or the basic emotions) or cultural basis (e.g. the Seven Deadly Sins). A *hundred*, for example, is perceived as a basic number, and is a culturally stipulated cognitive reference point. Thus, it is often used to stand for other non-basic numbers, e.g.

29. *I've told you a hundred times.*

for:

30. *I've told you several times.* (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 49).

Other examples of reference points via which we seem to comprehend the whole categories are given by Lakoff:

“Subjects will judge statements like 98 is approximately 100 as being true more readily than statements like 100 is approximately 98. This, of course, is context dependent. For example in discussing fevers, where normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit, it would be quite normal to say 99 is approximately 98.6. The reason of course, is that 98.6 is a cognitive reference point where fever is concerned.” (1987: 89).

As we have seen, the metonymies, which arise on the basis of cognitive reference points, are highly conventionalized and so their use, similarly to the use of social stereotypes and ideals, is completely unconscious and automatic. The cognitive reference points also help us make approximations and estimate size, and thus play a special role in reasoning.

2.3. Metonymic inferencing

Gibbs suggests an interesting distinction between

“processing metonymic language (e.g., understanding utterances like *Paris has dropped hemlines this year*) and metonymic processing of language (e.g., understanding the gaps in narrative by inferring some rich source of information, like a script, from the simple mention of some salient part of that language)” (1999: 69).

In parts 2.1. and 2.2. we discussed examples which would probably fall into the ‘processing metonymic language category’, in the section below, however, we will have a closer look at the relationships of a syntagmatic type⁷, which could probably be understood as “metonymic processing of language” or metonymic inferencing⁸.

⁷ The division into syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships is an important Saussurian distinction in the analysis of signs which, owing to certain analogies to metonymic relations, has been adopted here. Syntagmatic relates to *chain* (linear sequence and combination on the horizontal orientation) and paradigmatic relates to *choice* (in the vertical orientation). Here the term paradigmatic is used with reference to the (vertical) connections between domains and subdomains and (also vertical) categorial connections, and the term syntagmatic to events and states in ordered (linear) sequence linked by time proximity and causality, arranged in progression.

⁸ Some examples of metonymic models of a temporal type used in this section are also metonymic models of individuals and metonymic models of categories, e.g. +PRECONDI-

Before we start analysing evidence in support of the conceptual basis of metonymies provided by metonymic inferencing let us define some key terms that have been used in this section with reference to the knowledge structures within which metonymic relations operate. As Taylor observed,

“[t]he terminology in this area is confusing, partly because different terms may be used by different authors (...) to refer to what seems to be the same construct, or the same term may be used to very different constructs” (1995: 87).

The notion of conceptual domain, for example, is defined by Langacker as a context “for the characterization of a semantic unit” (1987: 147). This definition, however, does not seem to be much different from the definition of a frame given by Fillmore. According to him frames are “cognitive structures [...] knowledge of which is presupposed for the concepts encoded by the words” (qtd in Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 209). Other terms used by different authors also seem to refer to what seems to be the same or at least similar construct. Schemas, according to de Beaugrande and Dressler, are

“global patterns of events and states in ordered sequence linked by time proximity and causality, arranged in progression, plans are global patterns of events and states leading up to an intended goal – evaluated in terms of how they advance forward the planner’s goal and scripts are stabilized plans called up frequently to specify the roles of participants and their expected actions and differ from plans by a preestablished routine” (qtd in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1994: 7).

As can be seen, it is difficult, if not impossible, to make clean conceptual distinctions in this area. As Langacker notes,

“the construct of domain (...) overlaps to a large extent with what others have referred to as frames, scripts, schemata, scenes, scenarios, idealized cognitive models and so on” (qtd in Taylor 1995: 87).

The impossibility of differentiating between the different concepts was also noted by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk who claims that

“Frames, including, say, restaurant scenes, cannot be in fact distinguished from Schemas or Scripts, both [...] potentially able to cover the same restaurant scenes” (1994: 7).

To keep matters as simple as possible, Lakoff’s notion of an ICM has been adopted here as a term encompassing all the above mentioned patterns.

TION FOR PROCESS+ *I waved down a taxi*. This issue, however, will not be pursued here. For a more detailed analysis see disclaimer.

Fillmore's frames (1982)⁹, Langacker's domains and Schank and Abelson's scripts and schemas (1977) have also been used as "subtypes" of Lakoff's ICMs, in order to differentiate between more static (frames and domains) and more dynamic (scripts and schemas) cognitive structures¹⁰.

2.3.1. Idealized Cognitive Models (ICMs)

According to Lakoff, Idealised Cognitive Models are complex, structured wholes by means of which we organise our knowledge (1987: 68). They use the following structuring principles:

- Propositional structure, as in Fillmore's frames,
- Image-schematic structure, as in Langacker's cognitive grammar,
- Metaphoric mappings, as described by Lakoff and Johnson,
- Metonymic mappings, as described by Lakoff and Johnson.

The notion of idealised cognitive models is clearly illustrated by Lakoff:

"Take the English word *Tuesday*. *Tuesday* can be defined only relative to an idealised model that includes the natural cycle defined by the movement of the sun, the standard means of characterising the end of one day and the beginning of the next, and a larger seven-day calendric cycle – the week. In the idealized model, the week is a whole with seven parts organized in a linear sequence; each part is called a *day*, and the third is *Tuesday*. (1987: 68)¹¹

As Lakoff noted, it is conventional to use one element of an ICM to stand for or to evoke the entire model. It may not be very clear if we consider the example of the *Week* ICM quoted above, but it certainly becomes apparent if we analyse an idealised cognitive model (or a structured scenario) of travelling from one place to another. Such a model involves the following series of events:

- a) *Preconditions* – You have access to the vehicle.
- b) *Embarkation* – You get into the vehicle and start it up.

⁹ The term *frame* used here is not to be confused with Panther and Radden's understanding of the notion of *conceptual frame*. Panther and Radden perceive *conceptual frame* as "a cover term for what is variously called 'domain', 'idealized cognitive model' (ICM), 'schema', 'scenario', 'script' etc. (1999: 9).

¹⁰ Cf. Taylor (1995: 87): "In essence, frames are static configurations of knowledge. Scripts, on the other hand, are more dynamic in nature".

¹¹ As Lakoff notes, Idealized cognitive models are created by human beings and do not exist objectively in nature. They are also entirely 'culture-dependent' (1987: 69). As Blank points out frames and their content "not only differ from one linguistic community to another but they can also vary within the same community. An English breakfast, for example, typically includes bacon and eggs, buttered toast etc., whereas in Scotland porridge made of oats is an important part of breakfast." (1999: 174).

c) *Centre* – You drive (row, fly etc.).

d) *Finish* – You park and get out.

e) *End point* – You are at your destination.

(Lakoff 1987: 78).

If speaker *B* wants to communicate to listener *A* that he got somewhere and completed the above-mentioned series of activities he may and usually does mention only one element which metonymically evokes all the other parts. For instance, the answer of *B* in the following example:

31. A: *How did you get to the airport?*

B: *I waved down a taxi.*

would normally be understood as:

“I hailed a taxi, had it stop and pick me up, and then I had it take me to the airport” (Gibbs 1999: 67).

In this brief exchange, the precondition stands for the whole model, but other responses, which would refer to other parts of the model, might also be used. *B* might answer, for instance:

32. *I drove my car.* (Lakoff 1987: 79),

in which case the centre would stand for the whole model, or:

33. *I hopped on a bus.* (Lakoff 1987: 79),

where the embarkation metonymically evokes the rest of the model.

Radden and Kövecses give other conventionalised examples of metonymic highlighting of one phase of an ICM (1999: 33):

34. *They went to the altar.*

where an initial element which happens to be “easier to remember ... etc”, stands for the whole Wedding ICM and:

35. *Our teacher had 100 essays to grade.*

where the final element which again happens to be “easier to remember ... etc”, stands for an ICM involving reading, correcting and marking the papers.

2.3.2. Scripts

Scripts are considered to be knowledge structures “that are particularly designed for frequently recurring event sequences” (Ungerer and Schmid 1996: 213-214). The [FLYING ON THE PLANE] script, for example, consists of three stages (pre-flight stage, the flight and post-flight stage), all of which

consist of a number of activities. The pre-flight stage, for instance, is made up of such activities as: going to the airport, looking for the check-in counter, checking in, going through customs, looking for the gate, waiting for the flight to be called etc. It is conventional for the most salient part of a script to stand for the other parts, which are not explicitly stated. To use Gibbs's words: we "metonymically infer entire sequences of actions having only read some salient subpart in a story" (1999: 68). Let us consider the following example:

36. *John was hungry and went into a restaurant.
He ordered a lobster from the waiter.
It took a long time to prepare.
Because of this he only put down a small tip when he left.* (Gibbs 1999: 68).

The above mentioned story is seemingly incoherent and seemingly there is no connection between its parts. Nevertheless, activating our knowledge of the activities we normally perform in a restaurant we are able to fill in the gaps in the story and make sense of it. Metonymic inference enables us then "to make meaningful sense of seemingly anomalous and disconnected statements in texts." (Gibbs 1999: 68)

2.3.3. Colloquial tautologies and neologisms

Metonymic reasoning is also visible in seemingly nonsensical tautological statements. Let us consider the following brief exchange between a mother and a father:

37. Mother: *Did the children ever clean up their rooms?*
Father: *Well, boys will be boys.* (Gibbs 1999: 73).

Although the phrase *boys will be boys* "superficially contributes no new information to the conversation" it is easily understandable and does convey a particular meaning. To comprehend it, as in the case of scripts, we resort to our knowledge (in the case of boys to their stereotypical image¹²) and on such a basis we create a possible interpretation of the phrase, i.e. "boys will be unruly and it is often difficult to get them to do what you want". *Boys will be boys* is metonymic since "the speaker refers to a general category (boys) to refer to specific salient parts or attributes of that category (unruly behaviour)" (Gibbs and McCarrell qtd. in Gibbs 1999: 73).

Similarly, resorting to our experience and knowledge of the world we are also able to comprehend neologisms, such as

¹² See also part 2.2.2. (Social Stereotypes).

38. *He is going to OJ his way out of his marriage.* (Gibbs 1999: 65)¹³

O. J. Simpson was a famous American footballer and actor accused of murdering his wife. Drawing a metonymic inference based on the above mentioned salient act from O. J.'s life (alleged murder), one can easily interpret *He is going to OJ his way out of his marriage* as *He is going to murder his wife in order to get out of his marriage.*

2.3.4. Conversational implicature

As Gibbs notes, metonymic reasoning also helps us understand many cases of conversational implicature. Let us consider the following exchange:

39. A: *Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days.*

B: *He has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately.* (1999: 67).

Listener A can successfully interpret what speaker B meant only by drawing the right inference. Thus, A would probably understand that Smith may have a girlfriend in New York rather than he has been simply paying visits to New York.

"B implicates the proposition just mentioned by virtue of what is said along with various background knowledge and beliefs shared with A, including maxims of conversation that participants in talk-exchange are mutually expected to observe" (Gibbs 1999: 68).

In other words, we understand the above-mentioned utterance only because we are able "to see how a speaker's utterance metonymically refers to a whole organized sequence of activities" (Gibbs 1999: 68).

3. Conclusions

As could be seen in the section above, there is abundant evidence that metonymy is not a mere linguistic phenomenon but a highly structured cognitive mechanism, a mechanism that not only structures our language but also "our thoughts, attitudes and actions" (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 17). Let us now recapitulate the main arguments for the conceptual basis of metonymies.

- 1) Metonymies are reflections of some general cognitive phenomena rather than random, arbitrary occurrences.
- 2) Most cases of metonymy are highly conventionalised, and thus used unconsciously and automatically. In the [MARRIAGE] frame in Polish, for example,

¹³ See also part 2.2.3. (Ideals).

one highlighted element: *slub* (vow) conventionally stands for another element: *marriage* (ceremony) (Koch 1999: 148).

3) Many examples of metonymy do not show up in language. As we have seen, the stereotypical HOUSEWIFE MOTHER or the PROMISCUOUS BACHELOR sub-categories, which metonymically stand for the entire MOTHER and BACHELOR categories, do not have names of their own.

4) Metonymy is used in reasoning and serves the function of providing understanding.

a) We seem to conceptualise one concept by means of its relation to the other. When we say, for example: *He's got a Picasso in his den* (Lakoff and Johnson's 1980: 37) – we think of the painting in terms of its relation to the painter.

b) We make judgments about people by means of social stereotypes – ideals help us make judgements of quality – and cognitive reference points help us make approximations and estimate size.

c) We are able to draw inferences about what is meant on the basis of a subpart of a scenario or frame, which metonymically evokes the entire scenario or frame.

5) Basing on our ability to think metonymically, we create, are able to understand, and even perceive as more natural some seemingly anomalous utterances.

a) We are able to understand antecedents of pronouns, which do not agree in person, number or case.

b) We make inferences during text processing and make sense of seemingly incoherent stories.

c) We also comprehend seemingly nonsensical, tautological statements.

4. Disclaimer

The division into metonymic models of individuals, metonymic models of categories and metonymic inferencing adopted here may not be very clear and may raise certain doubts.

First, some examples presented in part 2.1. on metonymic models of individuals appear to be inextricably linked with metonymic models of categories and prototype effects. Let us consider Lakoff and Johnson's example:

40. *The gun he hired wanted fifty grand.* (1980: 37),

in which *the gun* metonymically stands for the person using it – presumably *a hit man*. The example, which is, according to Lakoff, a metonymic model of

individuals (1987: 85), actually seems to be also a metonymic model of a category. On the first metonymic level, we choose the most salient element from the HIT MAN model (in the particular context – *the gun*) to stand for the whole model. A hit man, however, usually has at his (or her) disposal a variety of weapons and it is here that the additional metonymic relationship (level) arises and the metonymic model of individuals and the metonymic model of category overlap. In this particular case, on the second metonymic level, we choose the most prototypical (the most salient) element of the WEAPON category (>GUN<) to stand for the whole category.

The difference between metonymic inferencing and metonymic models of individuals does not seem very clear either. In the exchange quoted in part 1.1.3.:

41. A: *How did you get to the airport?*

B: *I waved down a taxi.* (Gibbs 1999: 67)

we infer all the necessary information “from the simple mention of some salient part” (Gibbs 1999: 67) and understand B’s utterance as:

“I hailed a taxi, had it stop and pick me up, and then I had it take me to the airport” (Gibbs 1999: 67).

The sentence therefore, as Gibbs suggests (1999: 69), is an example of metonymic inferencing. However, on the basis of “the simple mention of some salient part” we also infer or activate other elements of the model in metonymic models of individuals or metonymic models of categories. In the example: *The gun he hired wanted fifty grand* we do focus on the most salient part of the model, which in this case is the “instrument” the hit man uses, but we do not merely substitute the whole model for the instrument. What we seem to do instead is use the instrument to activate or access the whole model. As Panther and Radden note, metonymy is not merely a matter of substitution, but rather “a cognitive process that evokes a conceptual frame” (1999: 9). Thus, both: *I waved down a taxi* and: *The gun he hired wanted fifty grand* seem to need metonymic inference to be understood and, using Gibbs’s, could be classified as examples of metonymic processing of language¹⁴.

As we have seen, the categories of the above-suggested typology appear to overlap to a certain extent and it is difficult to draw a clear line between

¹⁴ To make matters even more complicated the example: *The gun he hired wanted fifty grand*, may also be classified as a metonymic model of a category (as could be seen in 2.2.).

them. For the sake of a certain order and clarity of the presented arguments, however (which will hopefully not turn into mess and obscurity), the division had to be made.

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Typographical conventions

Cognitive categories	small capitals e.g. BIRD, VEHICLE
Members of categories	arrows and small capitals e.g. >ALSATIAN<, >GREYHOUND<
Metonymies	+ signs and small capitals e.g. +PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT+
Frames and Scripts	small capitals in brackets e.g. [COMMERCIAL EVENT]

Summary

In the classical theory, metonymy is defined as a figure of speech which mainly operates on names of things. According to more recent studies, however, metonymy is a particular type of mental mapping, a highly structured cognitive mechanism rather than a simple linguistic matter. The fact that metonymy is not merely a figure of speech seems to be now universally acknowledged and the evidence supporting this fact abounds in cognitive linguistic literature (e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Taylor 1995, Panther and Radden 1999). The main aim of this article is to put the evidence together and present it in an orderly fashion. The secondary aim, which appeared sort of by accident, is to shed light on the questionable division of metonymies into models of categories and models of individuals suggested by Lakoff (1987). The article is an introductory attempt at showing that metonymy is a multilevel phenomenon; a phenomenon which escapes the simple classification into models of categories or models of individuals. Due to certain limitations of space however, the secondary issue was not discussed in detail in the article.