

FIGURATIVE REPRESENTATION IN ENGLISH: THE ROLE OF METAPHOR, METONYMY, AND CORPUS TECHNOLOGIES

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Abstract. *This article examines figurative representation in English through the lens of cognitive linguistics, with a particular emphasis on the role of metaphor and metonymy as key mechanisms for conceptualizing and categorizing reality.*

The relevance of this research stems from the growing interest in studying the semantic processes underlying linguistic thinking, as well as the widespread adoption of corpus-based technologies that enable the empirical analysis of linguistic data. The paper provides a theoretical analysis of metaphor and metonymy, examining their functions in the formation of figurative meaning, as well as their interaction within discourse.

Keywords: *metaphor, metonymy, figurativeness, English language, cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, diachrony*

Introduction

Modern linguistics increasingly explores language as a reflection of human cognitive processes. In this context, the study of figurative representation, which includes various types of figurative meanings, particularly metaphor and metonymy, is particularly important. These phenomena have traditionally been viewed as stylistic devices, but within the cognitive paradigm, they are interpreted as fundamental mechanisms of thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Main part

Metaphor is the process of conceptualizing one domain through another, while metonymy is based on the contiguity and associative connections between elements within a single conceptual field (Kövecses, 2010). Their interaction allows for the creation of complex semantic structures that reflect the ways in which native speakers perceive and interpret reality. The relevance of this study stems from the need for a comprehensive analysis of figurative devices in English, taking into account their diachronic development and functioning in real language data.

Corpus-based technologies, which provide access to large text collections and enable quantitative and qualitative analysis, play a special role in this regard (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). The purpose of this article is to identify the role of metaphor and metonymy in the system of figurative representation of the English language, as well as to analyze the possibilities of corpus technologies in studying these phenomena.

Metaphor and metonymy interact in discourse to create complex semantic structures and provide multilayered meaning (Gibbs, 1992). Figurative language includes various types of figurative devices, such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, and irony (Deignan et al., 2013). Among these, metaphor and metonymy occupy a central place because they reflect basic cognitive processes.

Metonymy forms meanings based on associative links between objects, including part-whole relationships, cause-and-effect, and functional connections. Depending on the degree of entrenchment in language, a distinction is made between

stylistically marked and neutral metonymy, the latter of which loses its figurative quality and becomes part of everyday speech (Galperin, 1977). From a cognitive perspective, metonymy is part of idealized cognitive models in which one element provides access to another (Radden & Kövecses, 1999). This indicates its important role in the conceptualization of experience.

Corpus linguistics plays an important role in the study of figurative representation. The use of corpora allows for the analysis of real language data, identifying the frequency of metaphorical and metonymic patterns, as well as their distribution across different types of discourse (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). Corpus-based methods ensure the objectivity of research, allowing for a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. For example, it's possible to determine which metaphorical models are most productive in a particular historical period or genre. In addition, corpus technologies make it possible to take into account the contextual features of the use of figurative expressions, which is especially important for understanding their semantics (Cameron, 2010).

A comparative analysis of these mechanisms demonstrates that metaphor and metonymy perform different yet complementary functions in language. Metaphor is based on similarity between different conceptual domains and is widely used to explain complex and abstract phenomena. For instance, the expression *time is money* illustrates the transfer of economic characteristics onto the concept of time, reflecting how this concept is perceived in modern society (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 8). In contrast, metonymy relies on associative contiguity and enables the substitution of one element for another within the same conceptual structure, as in the expression *the White House issued a statement*, where the building represents a political institution (Langacker, 1993, p. 30). As noted in the analyzed material, metonymy involves the transfer of naming based on relationships between objects within a single situation, which makes it an important tool of cognitive information processing.

Particular significance lies in the fact that metonymy often functions as a more fundamental mechanism than metaphor, since it provides access to concepts that may later be used in metaphorical mapping. This indicates a close interconnection between these phenomena and their hierarchical interaction within the structure of language.

In actual discourse, metaphor and metonymy rarely function in isolation; rather, they tend to form complex semantic constructions in which one mechanism reinforces the other (Gibbs, 1992, p. 580).

An examination of the typology of metaphorical and metonymic models reveals the systematic nature of these phenomena. Metaphors are commonly categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological types, reflecting different ways of conceptualizing experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 14–32). Metonymy, in turn, is realized through models such as part–whole, cause–effect, and place–institution relations, confirming its universal character and widespread presence in language. For example, expressions such as *all hands on deck* or *Hollywood produces films* illustrate different types of metonymic transfer based on functional and spatial relations.

A practical analysis of English usage shows that metaphor is more frequently employed to create imagery and emotional impact, whereas metonymy serves the function of concise and efficient information transfer. For instance, in the expression *she broke his heart*, emotions are conceptualized as physical destruction, enhancing the expressive force of the utterance. In contrast, in the expression *the crown decided*, linguistic economy

is achieved by using a symbol of authority instead of naming the specific agent. These differences demonstrate the distinct functional orientations of metaphor and metonymy in discourse.

A diachronic analysis reveals changes in metaphorical models across different historical periods. Research indicates that metaphor is more susceptible to change because it is closely linked to cultural and technological transformations in society (Budaev, 2011, p. 142). For example, mechanistic metaphors dominated during the industrial era, whereas in the modern era computer-based metaphors are increasingly prevalent, reflecting the digitalization of society (Kondratieva, 2014, p. 78). By contrast, metonymy demonstrates greater stability, as it is grounded in universal cognitive relationships such as part–whole structures.

Corpus technologies play a crucial role in the study of figurative representation, as they enable the analysis of real language data and the identification of patterns in the use of metaphor and metonymy.

Corpus analysis allows for both quantitative and qualitative investigation, making it possible to determine the frequency of specific models and their distribution across different types of discourse (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 45). For instance, corpus data indicate that metaphors are more common in literary and journalistic texts, while metonymy is widely used in news and formal discourse. This confirms the differing functional loads of these mechanisms.

Furthermore, corpus-based research makes it possible to account for contextual factors in the use of figurative expressions. As Cameron notes, the meaning of a metaphor is shaped within a specific communicative situation, which accounts for its variability (Cameron, 2010, p. 52). In this sense, metaphor and metonymy should be viewed not as static units, but as dynamic processes unfolding within discourse.

The cognitive principles underlying metonymy also play a significant role in shaping figurative representation. These include anthropocentrism, the principle of salience, the principle of interaction, and cultural conditioning, all of which determine the direction of metonymic transfer. These principles explain why certain associative patterns are preferred in language and why some metonymies become conventionalized while others disappear.

Conclusion

Thus, the integration of cognitive and corpus-based approaches provides a more comprehensive understanding of figurative representation. Cognitive theory explains the internal mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy formation, while corpus analysis offers an empirical basis for their investigation (Stefanowitsch & Gries, 2006, p. 7). Such a combined approach contributes to identifying patterns of language development and deepens our understanding of meaning construction.

In conclusion, metaphor and metonymy are key elements of figurative representation in English. Their interaction enables the formation of complex semantic structures that reflect both cognitive and cultural characteristics of society. Diachronic analysis shows that metaphor is more dynamic and subject to change, whereas metonymy is more stable. The use of corpus technologies allows researchers to identify real patterns of their functioning, making them indispensable tools for modern linguistic analysis.

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