

# **Delimiting and Classifying Metonymy: Theoretical and Empirical Challenges in Cognitive Metonymy Research**

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In holistic cognitive linguistics, metonymy is generally considered as a ubiquitous cognitive mechanism that plays a central and even more primary role in every field of conceptual and linguistic organization than metaphor. However, if we accept the ubiquity view of conceptual metonymy in its broadest form, the notion of metonymy may run the risk of becoming unlimited and vacuous. Two basic strategies to come to grips with the unlimitedness of a notion are (i) to define it more narrowly so that we are able to distinguish the phenomena covered by the notion from other related and similar phenomena; and (ii) to classify the phenomena covered by the notion into relatively homogeneous sub-classes, which enables us to make generalizations about them. Accordingly, my dissertation addresses the following two interrelated problems:

(P<sub>DEL</sub>): On the basis of what criteria can metonymy be delimited against related phenomena?

(P<sub>CLASS</sub>): How can metonymy be classified into relatively homogeneous classes?

My approach to (P<sub>DEL</sub>) can be outlined as follows: In a first step, I argue for a clearer distinction between linguistic and conceptual metonymy, then revisit the general rejection of the referential view of metonymy, and finally propose two properties of linguistic metonymy that distinguish it from some related phenomena (from linguistic metaphor and active zone phenomena). In my definition, linguistic metonymy is (i) an expression motivated by conceptual metonymic processes (ii) in that it co-activates a complex of mental contents (the source, the target, and the relation holding between them) in a way reminiscent of reference point constructions, (iii) with the linguistic property that the target content and the relationship between source and target are not expressed explicitly or are only expressed marginally or schematically on the linguistic level.

The category of linguistic metonymy, even if defined narrowly as above, still encompasses a very broad range of various phenomena. Thus, as an answer to (P<sub>CLASS</sub>), I argue that metonymies can be classified according to their target content and sub-classified according to the source content providing access to the target. Based on different types of activated mental

content, I propose a distinction between five major classes of metonymy: THING-, PROPERTY-, EVENT-, PROPOSITION- and illocutionary metonymies.

My theoretical findings are supplemented by two small-scale, quasi-empirical pilot studies. In Case study 1, I conduct a target-driven cross-linguistic analysis to examine how a range of languages conceptualizes and verbalizes a complex EVENT (PLAYING MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS). My analyses indicate that complex EVENTS seem to be conceptualized by metonymic and/or metaphoric strategies in each language under scrutiny. In Case study 2, I employ corpus linguistic procedures to argue that a substantial portion of color-smell synesthetic expressions are not metaphors but eventually PROPERTY-metonymies.

The unresolved theoretical issues surrounding the cognitive linguistic notion of metonymy also pose a challenge to the empirical study of the phenomenon, as a result some empirical deficits can be observed in metonymy research. These are not only due to a lack of generally accepted and practiced methods and procedures, but also to the problem that an all-encompassing set of the most diverse phenomena is very difficult to examine systematically with empirical methods. Thus, the solution of (P<sub>DEL</sub>) and (P<sub>CLASS</sub>) does not only contribute to eliminating the risk that the category of metonymy will become unlimited but also takes us a step closer to enhancing the empirical study of metonymic phenomena.