



PRIKAZI KNJIGA – BOOK REVIEWS – BUCHBESPRECHUNGEN



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Bierwiazzonek, Bogusław. 2013. *Metonymy in Language, Thought and Brain*. Sheffield: Equinox, pp. iv + 291. ISBN 9781908049346.*

For a long period of time metonymy has been treated in cognitive linguistics as a metaphor's poor cousin, but there is now a rapidly growing body of literature, in English and other languages, which convincingly shows the importance of metonymic processes. In addition to articles in journals and edited volumes (such as Panther & Radden 1999; Panther & Thornburg 2003; Kosecki 2007; Benczes et al. 2011; Blanco-Carrión et al. 2018), there are now also several monographs. Interestingly, most of these have so far focused on certain aspects of metonymy (I do not mention here monographs that cover both metonymy and metaphor), e.g. on the relationship between metonymy and grammar, such as Waltireit (1998), Ruiz de Mendoza and Otal Campo (2002), Brdar (2007a), or Sweep (2012); on the role of metonymy in discourse (Al-Sharafi 2004; Bonhomme 2006), on diachronic and sociolinguistic variation in the use of metonymy (Zhang 2016), on pragmatic aspects of metonymy (Stoeva-Holm 2010), lexicographic treatment of metonymy (Wojciechowska 2012), or the relationship between metonymy and word-formation (Imamović 2011; Brdar 2017). The volume under review is preceded by only two shorter monographs, Ruiz de Mendoza (1999) and Warren (2006), the former being in Spanish, the latter concentrates on only one type of metonymy. Bierwiazzonek's book is followed in rapid succession by Littlemore (2015), Denroche (2015), Matzner (2016), and Tóth (2018).

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I start this review by discussing the layout of the book, and then point out some topical aspects that are likely to stimulate further discussion. The core of the book is divided into seven chapters, of roughly more or less equal length, except for the first chapter that comprises almost a quarter of the whole text, preceded by a brief introduction. The motivation for the book and its main aim are specified in the one and a half page introduction. The advance in the research on metonymy that is reflected in the works mentioned above resulted in a growing awareness of the open questions concerning its definition, scope and relevance in the context of various more or less traditional linguistic issues. Bierwiazzonek states that his aim is “to survey the studies which demonstrate how metonymy works in various aspects of language” (p. 1). This also explains the organization of the book, as the introductory chapter is followed by four chapters dealing with traditional linguistic areas of study, viz. syntax, morphology, pragmatics and semantics, metonymy in syntax being considered a special type of metonymy that Bierwiazzonek calls formal metonymy, and concepts that will be discussed at length below. Chapter 6 is an attempt to shed light on neural and evolutionary aspects that make metonymy so important and ubiquitous. The monograph is rounded off by a short chapter summing up its results and laying out prospects for further research. All the chapters, except the last one, are followed by endnotes.

In the remaining part of this review I highlight Chapters 1, 2, and 6 because this is where Bierwiazzonek’s exposition is at its most exciting. Chapters 3–5 constitute an interesting reading in their own right, but they are partly overview of Bierwiazzonek’s work on the topics in question (metonymy in morphology, pragmatics and semantics), and partly an overview of relevant contributions by other scholars to the respective area, as a rule furnished with illuminating critical remarks. At the same time, there is a certain amount of repetition here in the sense that the same phenomena that are discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 are taken up again in Chapters 3, 4 or 5.

The title of Chapter 1 is in sharp contrast with its contents in the sense that what it carries is not a short history of the concept of metonymy and research on it, but a lengthy overview starting with classical Greek and Latin authors, and ending with contemporary cognitive linguistic theories of metonymy, together with their main achievements and problems they face. One of the formal problems in the layout of the whole book that manifests itself clearly in the very first chapter is that the internal structure of individual chapters is not given in the table of contents, i.e. we do not find there second- and third-level headings, so the inner logic of the organization within chapters remains less visible on the go, though it occasionally causes a surprise at transition points, when one realizes what strange fellows may be dis-



cussed in a single section or subsection. Chapter 1 is thus organized in ten sections. After classical views on metonymy, we move on to what Bierwiazzonek sees as a formal approach to metonymy, and then in the third section to the conceptual view on metonymy. Somewhat surprisingly, we find an account of Norrick's work on metonymy here. However, what is even more surprising is that the fourth section is labelled "Modern theories of metonymy," which appears to suggest that conceptual approaches are not modern. However, Lakoff and Johnson's work is discussed in both the third and the fourth section. Sections 5 to 10, widely diverging in length, are devoted to a motley of phenomena, from the role of cognitive domains and ICMs (Section 5), the distinction between metonymy and synecdoche (Section 6, on less than a single page, including a figure), to the typology of metonymies (Sections 7 and 8), while Section 9 returns to the issue of what should be considered metonymy and what should not. The final section (1.10 *Why metonymy*) could be seen as a prefiguration of the last chapter, were it not for the fact that they are both very sketchy, so the latter is just a somewhat expanded reformulation of this section. Despite some problematic points, this chapter can on the whole be a very useful reading for both novices and experts as it provides a broad overview past of the developments and the current state of the art.

One of the two most original aspects of the book, along with the discussion of metonymy in the embodied mind in Chapter 6, is Bierwiazzonek's introduction of formal metonymy as type on a par with Panther and Thornburg's (1999: 335–336) two, viz. three types. Bierwiazzonek redraws their typology placing the referential and the predicational one on the same level as the illocutionary metonymy (p. 27). The typology proposed by Bierwiazzonek is as follows:

- A. Formal metonymy
- B. Referential metonymy
- C. Propositional metonymy (with its two subtypes: predicative and sentential)
- D. Illocutionary metonymy

Another point of originality in this typology that we do not get to know more about is that it diverges from Panther and Thornburg's proposal in that they never mention predicative or sentential metonymy, B is for them a subtype of C, along with predicational metonymy.

The central part of the book opens with a chapter on formal metonymy. It is claimed to be an elaboration of an overlooked possibility in Kövecses and Raden's (1998), where metonymies are classified in terms of ontological realms as Sign metonymies (based on linking form and concept), reference metonymies (linking sign, form and/or concept with a real world thing or event), and Concept

metonymies (linking concepts with concepts). The majority of researchers have always concentrated in practice on Concept metonymies, simply disregarding the first two. Bierwiaczonek argues that there is a fourth possibility, Formal metonymy, which he defines as a metonymy linking a “part or some salient aspect of the form of the linguistic unit [...] used to access the whole form of this unit” (p. 61). It is further claimed on p. 64 that

... [a]t least two domains within the ontological realm of linguistic form should be distinguished: the domain of SOUND and the domain of GRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS. Accordingly, two Form ICMs can be proposed: the SPEECH-SOUND ICM, associating concepts with sounds, and the WRITING ICM, in which graphemic symbols represent speech sounds.

The rest of this section (2.2 *Formal metonymy*) is devoted to several types of writing metonymies, such as acronyms and alphabetisms, while SPEECH-SOUND metonymies are dealt with in a separate section (2.3), such as clipping or ellipsis, phonaesthemes, rhyming slang. This is surprisingly followed by a discussion of what Bierwiaczonek calls constructional metonymies (Section 2.4), which include cases of full and partial conversion, ellipsis again, tag questions, reduced comparatives, anaphoric ellipsis, gapping constructions, reduced raising constructions and independent subordinate clauses. The chapter ends with two sections on discourse metonymies (2.5) and pragmatic metonymies (2.6), and a brief section with provisional conclusions.

Concerning the phenomena such as abbreviations, clipping or ellipsis, we face a grave problem: it is not only that the form invariance is not kept (a condition that Koch 1999: 157–159; 2001: 233) considers to be crucial for metonymy), but the concept side seems to be totally eliminated from consideration, i.e. we do not have one conceptual entity that would provide mental access to another conceptual entity, but one formal entity providing access to another formal entity, and this then looks like metonymy in the sense of indeterminacy resolution, i.e. metonymic processing of language or supermetonymy.

Bierwiaczonek considers Barcelona’s (2005: 324; 2012: 259) metonymy SALIENT PART OF FORM FOR WHOLE FORM to be an instance of his formal metonymy. In order to eliminate the problem that he sees in Barcelona’s approach, Bierwiaczonek assumes that in the case of all abbreviations, alphabetisms and acronyms alike, as well as in graphemic metonymies, we have multiple metonymies superimposed on each other. Simply stating that abbreviations are made possible by the metonymy SALIENT PART OF FORM FOR WHOLE FORM is not precise enough, due to the formal differences between alphabetisms and acronyms. The former are pronounced as a



series of individual letters, each letter ideally corresponding to the initial letter of the full form. This makes Bierwiazzonek postulate the following series of metonymies:

- i. ALPHABETIC PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF LETTERS FOR FIRST LETTERS OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATION OF WORDS OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION;
- ii. FIRST LETTERS OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATION OF WORDS OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION FOR FIRST SOUNDS OF WORDS OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION;
- iii. FIRST SOUNDS OF WORDS OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION FOR WHOLE PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION;
- iv. WHOLE PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION FOR CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION.

The last metonymy is suspect—it is not immediately clear how and why a phonological form can metonymically activate a conceptual representation, except the conceptual representation of phonological form itself (in the sense that we have a conceptual representation of what and how we uttered something). We might actually be tempted to add another metonymic layer here, revising the last metonymy into WHOLE PHONETIC REPRESENTATION OF COMPLEX EXPRESSION FOR ITS CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION and then top this with a concept-for-concept metonymy: CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF PHONETIC REPRESENTATION FOR CONCEPTUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE REFERENT.

Achieving this, linking the form with the concept, may not actually be an easy task. This is what happens in the case of so-called pseudo-alphabetisms, where individual letters do not stand for initial letters of any underlying unabridged form, such as *ABC(s)*, meaning a number of things ('(the letters of the English) alphabet,' 'the rudiments of reading, writing, and spelling,' 'the most basic or important information about a subject'). In some cases an abbreviation, even a very common one, may come from another language, and its origin may be opaque to many speakers, e.g. *lb* for 'pound,' which comes from Latin *libra*, a unit of weight in ancient Rome equivalent to about 12 ounces.

Another point that does not square with how we normally understand metonymy concerns the relationship between the metonymic source and vehicle on the one hand (let us call the latter L_1) and the metonymic target and the lexical item (let us call it L_2) that is normally (or might be) associated with the metonymic target concept as its expression, on the other hand. Bierwiazzonek (2007) insightfully points out that it can be characterized as an asymmetric type of synonymy. L_1 , the meto-

nymic vehicle, can function as a synonym of L_2 , but not the other way round (cf. Brdar & Szabó 2014; Brdar 2015). But in the case of alphabetisms and acronyms the synonymy is apparently not asymmetric. Radden and Kövecses (1999: 28) state that

[t]he reversal of this metonymic relationship does not occur freely. In the case of abbreviations, this would imply that we understand a full expression such as *United Nations* as standing for its abbreviated form, *UN*.

Note, however, that we can easily resolve and introduce abbreviations in the running text, just by using the abbreviation in brackets immediately after the full form, or the other way round, as in *This complexity has been linked with the discreetness required for information extraction from relation databases by the autonomous use of Structured Query Language (SQL). SQL (Structured Query Language) is the formal querying language for relational databases.* This seems to indicate that the two indeed function as virtual synonyms of each other.

Dancygier and Sweetser (2014: 110–113), although they talk about acronyms as metonymic abbreviations, list a whole series of more mundane problems. They point out that the shortened forms may “take on a life of their own.” Most people know that *UN* stands for *United Nations*, but the former seems to be more commonly used. While many users of acronyms such as *NAFTA* (*North American Free Trade Agreement*) or *NATO* (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*), *OPEC*, or *AIDS* could actually be ignorant of the words constituting the full forms, there may also be users who are not aware of corresponding shortened words. Some acronyms or alphabetisms can be highly ambiguous, particularly if they are relatively short.

This is even more interesting in the case of abbreviations that have become even more opaque than usual due to the fact that they are used metonymically in such a way that their metonymic targets are conceptually fairly distant from the source concept, i.e. the meaning of the full form. The individual letters in *JPEG* actually stand for *Joint Photographic Experts Group*, but the word is nowadays routinely used as a double metonymy, first to refer to a method of lossy compression for digital images, and then to the type of image file format that was produced using that method of compression. Its meanings seem to be directly accessed in the usual way, just as in other cases of conventional symbolic units, and any putative metonymic route leading via individual letter to the full form would be probably blocked.

Another piece of evidence against the assumption that we always go the metonymic route and successfully trace back the original full form is the frequent phenomenon that goes under the auto-illustrative name of *RAS syndrome*, standing for



Redundant Acronym Syndrome syndrome. This is the jocular label used to refer to cases of tautonymic acronyms or alphabetisms, where speakers who are unaware of the original form and produce a compound-like unit consisting of an abbreviation and a noun functioning as the head and actually explicitly mentioning the last word in the original full form, in this case syndrome. The addition of this pleonastic element is evidence that people are ignorant of the full form, and/or that they could not unlock it. Some popular examples are: *ATM machine* ← *automatic teller machine machine*; *PDF format* ← *printed document format format*; *PIN number* ← *personal identification number number*; *LCD display* ← *liquid crystal display display*.

Further, note the existence of so-called reverse acronyms or backronyms. These are acronyms deliberately chosen or constructed in such a way to fit, or converge on an already existing, normal word. They are sometimes used as mnemonics, e.g. when the eponym *Apgar*, short for *Apgar test* (after Victoria Apgar, an American doctor), which is used to assess the health condition of a newborn baby, is respelled as *APGAR* and reinterpreted as standing for *Appearance, Pulse, Grimace, Activity and Respiration*, which are dimensions on the basis of which the health of the baby is assessed. Consider also the official title of the USA PATRIOT Act, which is a 2001 Act of the U.S. Congress, *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001*, as another example. The symbolic strength of the word(s) onto which such backronyms converge is such that speakers are virtually carried away by the conceptual aspect of the sign and thus prevented from looking for any acronymic origins. In consequence of this if any (metonymic) link could be established between individual letters and the full form, it must be extremely weak. Even if speakers are for a while aware of the background, the whole may soon backfire as the eye-catching model wins over the abbreviation.

By way of summing up our discussion of metonymy in alphabetisms and acronyms, we could say that the evidence that abbreviations are metonymic is at best conjectural. Bierwiazzonek also claims that his formal metonymy also applies to clipping as a subtractive way of producing new words by cutting off part or parts of an already existing lexical item, resulting in a phonologically shorter form. Some common instances are *deli* from *delicatessen* or *phone* from *telephone*. As I have argued elsewhere (Brdar 2017: 85–93), approaching clippings as formal metonymies rests on shaky methodological grounds and has hardly any explanatory power. This is not to say that there is no interaction between clipping and metonymy. They do interact, but the situation is much more complex and varied (cf. Brdar 2015).

What makes Bierwiazzonek's book really stand out from the majority of contributions to the field is his attempt to lay foundations for a metonymic counterpart to Lakoff's Neural Theory of Metaphor in Chapter 6. Bierwiazzonek reports here a body of evidence from other fields of research to support this theory, the starting point being that metonymy is embodied in the sense of having a neurophysiological basis. The central assumption of this theory is a sort of blending process involving what Damasio (1999: 219) calls image spaces (corresponding to metonymic targets) and disposition spaces (corresponding to metonymic sources),¹ and most likely taking place in the middle layers of the prefrontal cortex. Bierwiazzonek qualifies this claim at the very beginning of the book as "extremely tentative suggestion," but it certainly offers a platform for discussion and further research.

As it happens, this is not the first time it has ever been suggested that metonymy might be considered to be an instance of conceptual integration or compression, just like metaphor is sometimes considered, as suggested by Alač and Coulson (2004) or Radden (2014). Alač and Coulson (2002: 21) thus suggest that "metonymy involves conceptual blending between the concept evoked by the trigger term (...), and that evoked by the intended target."

It is difficult to see how this claim could be defended. It is apparent that when we use *White House* or *Kremlin* as metonymies, we do not normally access any exotic blended spaces combining them with *Trump* or *Putin*, respectively, except perhaps in cartoons. Conceptual integration, as we have seen in many analyses, e.g. of cases like *This surgeon in a butcher* (Grady et al. 1999), or the *trashcan basketball* (Coulson & Fauconnier 1999), etc. do not seem to involve crossing ontological levels, the surgeon and the butcher, scalpel and knife, a wad of paper and the basketball, the basket and the trashcan, etc. are all pairings whose members belong to the same level. It is not the case that one forms a part of the other. If all metonymies lend themselves to an analysis as blends, there must also be some cases involving blends of parts and wholes, i.e. cases of crossing ontological levels. It will be further seen that it is not easy to accept that a part of a whole can be integrated with that same whole (anew), or the other way round.

¹ Damasio defines image space as "the space in which images of all sensory types explicitly occur and which includes the manifest mental contents," while dispositional space is "a space in which dispositional memories contain records of implicit knowledge on the basis of which images can be constructed in recall, movements can be generated, and the processing of images can be facilitated."



Although Bierwiazzonek (p. 248) explicitly refers to WHOLE FOR PART and PART FOR WHOLE metonymies as having “all the makings of conceptual integration,” involving two input mental spaces—the image space and the disposition space—what he describes as being metonymy-as-blend is actually a blend of two perspectives, or stages, in the whole process of encoding and decoding. He describes, but without actually admitting so, first what goes on in the head of the speaker, and then what goes on in the head of the listener. Otherwise, this is reminiscent of, and can be explained in terms of, the sort of telescoping described in Brdar (2007a; 2007b) and Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2011), where a round of source expansion is followed by another round of the secondary source (which is at the same time the target of the first round) reduction, provided we would like to model the whole process. This is probably why Bierwiazzonek (p. 245) thinks that “paradoxically, PART-FOR-WHOLE/PART metonymies result from the activation of the whole, while WHOLE-FOR-PART metonymies result from the activation of a part.” Since most metonymy research only accounts for the decoding part, the activation starts from the concept associated with the vehicle, i.e. from the whole in the case of a WHOLE FOR PART metonymy, which is then gradually backgrounded. Translated into Bierwiazzonek’s terms, the metonymic source is a dispositional mental space, while the metonymic target is a blended space. It is difficult to see how the metonymic target, or the blended space, differs from the input, his image space, when the whole thing is described as follows in the caption of one of the figures demonstrating the putative blending:

The integration of the representation of BOOKS BY PATRICK WHITE in the image space with the dispositional space of PATRICK WHITE, producing the metonymic expression *Patrick White* standing for a book written by Patrick White. (p. 250)

Overall, there is no doubt that the volume under review constitutes a major addition to the growing body of monographs on metonymy. It will, no doubt, be of great interest and value not only for cognitive linguists but also for a wider audience of functional and typological linguists. It is well worth reading, and re-reading, because it offers a unique insight into the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of metonymy. Despite the critical remarks above it nevertheless makes a very coherent and rewarding reading.

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