

On the Interrelation of Metaphor and Metonymy

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Abstract: According to cognitive linguistics, metaphor and metonymy are both important cognitive mechanics. Through the analysis of the similarity and difference and interrelation between metaphor and metonymy, we can draw a conclusion that metaphor and metonymy are closely related to each other and these two are a continuum.

Keywords: metaphor; metonymy; interrelation.

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor has been one of the everlasting research subjects of the poets and writers for many years in history. Aristotle thought it amazing to become a master of metaphor. While in his eyes metonymy is only an assistant device of language. In recent decades, metaphor has gained more and more attention of the academic world. And the late 1970s witnessed the prosperity of the study in metaphor by European and American scholars, which was once called *the Era of Metaphor*.

Metonymy is also considered as a psychological mechanism by cognitive linguists. But it is only alluded while metaphor is discussed. The study in metonymy has sprung up only in recent years. By illustrating the characteristics and interrelations of metaphor and metonymy, this article argues that metaphor and metonymy, which have shared the important role in human's cognition and thinking, are related to each other so closely that they are actually in a continuum.

DEFINITION OF METAPHOR AND METONYMY

It is universally acknowledged that metaphor and metonymy are two different cognitive mechanisms. Metaphor is a cognitive activity in which people understand an unfamiliar or unknown object in one domain by means of the familiar and known object in another domain. Metaphor is a structural mapping between two cognitive domains. However, metonymy is made up of the mappings of the same domain or conceptual structure. Presently it's widely recognized that metonymy happens when a conceptual subject provides another with a psychological channel in the process of cognitive thinking [1]. Generally, a part can refer to the whole and the prototype can refer to the whole category. For example,

1) You *are* *wasting* my time!

2) *The piano* will not show up tomorrow.

Example 1) contains the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY because people are understanding the abstract TIME with the help of the experience and feeling of using the concrete MONEY. While in Example 2), "piano" refers to the pianist. This is an INSTRUMENT FOR PLAYER metonymy.

RELEVANCE BETWEEN METAPHOR AND METONYMY

Categorization is a process of categorizing after the subject and object have interacted on the things. With the relatively stable category formed, people have obtained the cognitive basis of giving concept. Lakoff has put forward the "idealized cognitive model (ICM)" to further illustrate his cognitive point of view. i.e. Each kind of ICM can construct a mental space. We use the ideal cognitive model to organize our knowledge, and the category and prototype are the by-products in the process of organization. There are four sources of ICM: Fillmore's frame semantics, Lakoff and Johnson's theory on metaphor and metonymy [2], Langacker's cognitive grammar and Fauconnier's the Mental Space Theory. ICM can be divided into four types: image schema, proposition model, metaphor model and metonymy model. Metaphor model refers to the mapping from a particular image schema in one cognitive domain to another. Metonymy model shows the relevance between one component of the domain and another, based on one or more patterns of schema, for example, in the schema of PART-WHOLE, a part can refer to the whole [3].

INTERRELATION OF METONYMY AND METAPHOR

Differences between metonymy and metaphor

(1) According to cognitive linguistics, cognition is the required meaning when people organize the perceptual

information by the principles of the gestalt psychology. Metaphor is based on the principles of similarity and coherence while metonymy is based on the principles of adjacency and prominence. For example,

3) The *foxy* boy escaped quickly from the enemy.

4) *The big nose* gave me a big smile.

In Example 3), the boy and the fox become similar because of their cunning character. That is to say, similarity in character is the reason why people can relate the boy to the fox. With the help of the metaphor HUMAN IS FOX, the boy's cunning character can be easily understood. In Example 4), the most prominent feature of the person is the big nose. So people can easily figure out what it refers to when "the big nose" is mentioned. It is what we call metonymy, which works under the principle of prominence. The prominent part of a thing or a person can refer to the whole thing or the person.

(2) Metonymy refers to the extension of a concept in the same domain while metaphor is the mapping of the concept between different domains. For example,

5) She is nothing but a pretty *face*.

6) The government is *fighting* against inflation.

Example 5) is a typical metonymy. FACE refers to the PERSON and they obviously belong to the same domain. Thus, metonymy happens in the same domain with the concept of FACE extended. In Example 6), we may first relate FIGHT to the experience in a battle, then metaphorically understand "fight against the inflation" with the help of the experience of "fight against the enemy in the battle". This metaphorical understanding is actually mapping the experience from one domain to another. In this way we can understand the world better and more accurately, especially the abstract concept in the world.

(3) The basic function of metaphor is to comprehend, and metonymy functions as reference. For example,

7) He is at the *crossroad* of his life.

8) Shanghailander don't speak "*Ala*" in public.

Most of us have experienced the hesitation and bewilderment at the crossroad. In Example 7), there is a metaphor LIFE IS JOURNEY, the metaphorical expressions "at the crossroad of his life" can help us better understand the sentence "He is at a very important point of his life", where he has to make an important decision. In Example 8), "Ala" is the typical expression in Shanghai dialect. So it's more acceptable

to use "Ala" to refer to Shanghai dialect. This is PART FOR WHOLE metonymy.

(4) Compared to metaphor, metonymy pays more attention to the prominent feature or detail of the thing referred. For example,

9) *Shakespeare* sells well.

In Example 9), there is a WRITER FOR WORKS metonymy. we can easily figure out that Shakespeare refers to the works by Shakespeare. In other words, the prominent feature of the books is their writer, Shakespeare, who is very famous all over the world. So we can use the name of a famous writer or composer to refer to his or her works or compositions.

(5) Experience is the basis of the understanding of metaphor and metonymy. However, metonymy has a more direct and clear basis of experience than metaphor, because it includes the direct body or causal association between the two things. For example,

10) I like *longhairs*.

11) He sold his *Ford*.

In Example 10), longhairs refers to those people with longhair. This PART FOR WHOLE metonymic expression comes from our life experience. In Example 11), Ford refers to cars of Brand Ford, this metonymy PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT comes from causal relationship between producers and products.

Similarities of Metonymy and Metaphor

(1) metonymy and metaphor are universal in our life. we will consciously or unconsciously use metonymy or metaphor in everyday life. This is because they have become our ways of thinking. For example, we often say "I like listening to Lady Gaga", which is a typical metonymy while we ourselves haven't been aware of it at all. Because we have used it so frequently that it is fixed in our expression. That is to say, we often use one prominent part of the thing to refer to the whole thing.

(2) Both metonymy and metaphor are based on the daily experience of people. They can understand the things around by means of metaphor or metonymy because they have similar or related experience in their life. Actually metaphor and metonymy are rooted in human's body experience and the interaction with the external world [4]. Thus people can understand the metaphor and metonymy because they have been interacting with the physical and cultural environment around them. Human being's cognition for the concept is mainly based on their previous body experience and knowledge. Thought comes from people's body experience, and the creativity of the thought can help

people understand the things around better and more accurately. In a word, concept has formed on the basis of the body, brain and the world experience.

(3) Both metonymy and metaphor are not arbitrary, but systemic. When I mention Leonardo Da Vinci, I am not only thinking of this man, but also his masterpiece, his achievements, his viewpoint and so on. Also, I may compare him with other artists of his time. This is because the metonymy "PAINTER FOR WORKS" or "PART FOR WHOLE" is influencing our thinking and action.

(4) Both metonymy and metaphor are influenced and constrained by culture. Culture has a great impact on people's ways of thinking. Different peoples have different cultures, which will define the way we think. As cognitive models, metonymy and metaphor will inevitably be restricted by culture. For instance, we Chinese will relate DOG with flunkies because in China DOG is expressed in many derogatory ways. But in the west, DOG stands for the loyal people. In this way different culture have shaped different ways of thinking in their people.

Interaction Between Metonymy and Metaphor

In fact, a great many studies have shown that there exists interaction between metaphor and metonymy. The interrelation sometimes is quite complicated. According to Goosens, there are four types of interaction between metaphor and metonymy. A. metaphor from metonymy B. metaphor containing metonymy, C. metonymy containing metaphor, D. non-metonymy in the context of metaphor [5]. For example, 12) Each time he was caught stealing, he would *beat his breast*.

13) She *caught her son's ear*.

14) So many of us simply *pay lip service to* the phrase "family is my number one priority" yet very few of us actually live it.

15) He *got up on his hind legs* to argue.

Example 12) is a metaphor from metonymy. The phrase *beat one's breast* is a metaphor, meaning "be sorry or guilty of what one has done", but it comes from a metonymy, i.e. when a person confessed his guilt on a religious occasion, he had to beat his breast.

Example 13) is a metaphor containing metonymy. The phrase "*caught her son's ear*" is a metaphor and means "caught one's attention". The *ear* in the source domain refers to an organ which has a function of listening, while in the target domain it refers to the listener's attention, which belongs ORGAN FOR FUNCTION metonymy.

Example 14) is a metonymy containing metaphor although it looks similar to Example 13) (metaphor containing metonymy). In fact, the word "pay" in the phrase "pay lip service to" can arouse the financial event, but at this time "pay" and "lip service" have not been blended into the metaphorical meaning. We must first interpret the phrase "lip service" in a new way, that is, "an expression of agreement that is not supported by real conviction". This is ORGAN FOR FUNCTION metonymy and WHOLE FOR PART metonymy. Because the lip is used to speak, and part of what the lips speak is these non-hearted expressions. Then we can get the metaphorical meaning of the phrase "to support orally without any real action".

Example 15) is a non-metonymy in the context of metaphor. As we all know, it takes animals more effort to stand up than to lie on the ground. So this sentence suggests that the man is struggling to argue.

As is shown in the examples, metonymy and metaphor are closely related, and sometimes we can't distinguish metonymy from metaphor. Take "I am in low spirits" as example, this sentence is generally regarded as a metaphor, but it can also be considered as a metonymy. Because this sentence shows the significant impact of emotion. The emotional effect is a part of the category of emotion. So, it belongs to "PART FOR WHOLE" metonymy. What's more, we sometimes may use both metonymy and metaphor in the same case, with people thinking from different aspect. Just imagine the following scene: The teacher pulled out the watch in class and said, "I'll take the time out." From the perspective of metaphor, we consider the time as an object so that it can be taken out, so it is an Ontological Metaphor. From the perspective of metonymy, the function of a watch is to indicate time, FUNCTION FOR OBJECT, which belongs to the usage of metonymy.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis above, we can conclude that metonymy and metaphor are not independent. Instead, there are close relations between them. Metaphor and metonymy are a unified continuum. As Jakobson once said: "the similarities are added to the adjacency, so metonymy is always a bit of metaphor, metaphor is also showing signs of metonymy" [6]. In fact, both metaphor and metonymy are important cognitive mechanisms in our life, and they both have an important impact on our thinking and action [7]. but at some times, we prefer thinking in a metaphorical way while at other times, we will think with metonymy. And there are still some cases where the two cognitive mechanisms play the same important role in the way we think. So we should get rid of prejudice and pay the same attention to metaphor and metonymy so as to better understand the

relationship between them and to better know the world around us.

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