

# Metonymy is a Cognitive Mechanism of News Discourse

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**Abstract.** The paper considers metonymy as a cognitive mechanism widely used in news discourse. Views of different scholars on the concept of metonymy were analyzed in this paper. The problem of metonymy in linguistics is associated with two functions: 1) as a means of creating artistic speech; 2) as a means of nomination. The second part of the paper deals with different trends of metonymic transfer: psychological, logical and semiotic. In the third part, different classifications on the types of metonymic transfer are given. Finally, the fourth part of the paper considers the cognitive approach to metonymic study. The cognitive mechanism of conceptual metonymy operates within a single conceptual domain, one element replacing another. The replacement element is called a vehicle. It opens up access to another conceptual structure called the concept target within a single conceptual domain at the mental level.

In news discourse, metonymy is used to express a concept economically. A shift in focus in metonymic nomination creates a positive or negative assessment, distortion of information, and depersonalization of individual referents to influence the reader. Thus, metonymy has a referential function, i. e. it allows one entity to replace another. But metonymy is not only a referential device. It also serves to understand.

**Keywords:** discourse; linguistic phenomenon; spatial metonymy; concept-means; concept – target; metonymic projection.

## INTRODUCTION

In conditions of information confrontation, a comprehensive analysis of news texts that construct an image of an event and influence individual perception and public opinion is of particular importance. News performs an important structuring function and is the essential component of mass media discourse around which the rest of the media content is built. One of the main functions of mass communication is informational. That is why a comprehensive study and systematic analysis of the news is of great importance. The critical component of discourse theory is a comprehensive and integrated approach to the analysis of speech activity. Discourse is understood as a complex communicative phenomenon that covers the entire set of extralinguistic factors accompanying the communication process, including the sender message, its recipient, various types of contexts, peculiarities of production, dissemination and perception of information cultural and ideological background, etc.

Within the framework of a structured approach to discourse, the emphasis is made on its structural

components. Discourse is understood as a product of speech activity, taken in the aggregate of all verbal and extralinguistic characteristics associated with its production, distribution and perception.

As one of the main types of semantic changes, metonymy has attracted more and more attention in recent years. Metonymic transfers permeate language and speech, mainly spoken. However, metonymy is more specific and is not as symbolic as a metaphor. For this reason, metonymy was for a long time in the shadow of metaphor, being considered logically explicit and therefore not requiring interpretation. The main goal of this paper is to analyze the role of metonymy in the perception of the texts of news discourse.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Different trends in the study of metonymic transfer

The term “metonymy” is translated from Greek and means “renaming”. The problem of metonymy, like metaphors, is associated with two

functions: 1) as a means of creating artistic speech; 2) as a means of nomination. These concepts were distinguished even in antiquity. Cicero wrote that metonymic and metaphorical expressions are “speech adornments” and “shine like some luminary”. He emphasized that the way of using words in a figurative sense “gave rise to necessity, it arose under the pressure of poverty and scarcity of the dictionary” [3].

It should be noted that the study of metonymic transfer went in several directions. First, the psychological trend, which originates in antiquity, sees the reasons for the metonymic transfer in various psychological processes (associations or contiguous ties).

Cicero understood by metonymic expressions “those in which, instead of the word exactly corresponding to the object, another word is substituted with the same meaning, borrowed from an object that is in close connection with the given one” [3].

Quintilian writes: “Metonymy consists in replacing what is said with the cause of this latter” [3]. Thus, the ancient definitions of metonymic transfer have survived with some changes in modern period studies.

Author [18] introduces the term “contiguity” into the definition of metonymy, metonymy – “transfer of names based on contiguity”.

Author [14] writes: Metonymy is such a transfer of a name, which is done not based on the similarity of external or internal features of a one-time thing or a new one but based on contiguity, that is, contact of things in space or in time.

Researcher [15] opinion should also be noted: “Metonymy is the name of an object or phenomenon transferred to another object or phenomenon by contiguity”. What is hidden under the concept of “contiguity”? These are real connections between objects and phenomena of objective reality. The mental reflection of these connections is implication connections between concepts. The implication is that it is about B due to A's presence's necessary and possible connections. Thus, concepts A and B imply each other. Examples of implication connections are casual (cause-and-effect), temporal (temporal), local (spatial) and other dependencies [10]. Consequently, metonymy is understood as a trope based on an implicated meaningful connection between the original and arbitrary meaning [11].

The ideas of the representatives of the logical direction should also be noted here. They associate semantic changes in names with formal-logical relationships between concepts. There are five of these relations: 1) equivalence 2) exclusion 3) contradictory 4) subordination (inclusion) 5) crossing (intersection). Author [4] notes that the crossover relation is the logical basis of the semantic transfer process, which exists in two varieties: metaphor and metonymy. We see a similar relationship between semantic changes and formal-logical relations between concepts in the work of [17]. He believes that the metaphor is based on the crossover relation, metonymy is based on the exclusion relation, and synecdoche is based on the inclusion relation [17].

The names of Ch represent the semiotic direction. Authors [21] consider metonymy as one of the types of signs. Researchers developed the main typology of the signs. According to the nature of the relationship between the signifier and the signified by [21], three types of signs were distinguished: iconic (icons), index (indexes) and conventional, or symbolic (symbols). The action of an iconic sign is based on the actual similarity between the signifier and the signified; index sign - on the actual, really existing contiguity of the signifier and the signified; symbol - on learned contiguity of the signifier and the signified [21].

Metaphor belongs to iconic signs, but metonymy to index and symbolic. An attempt to define metonymy as a linguistic phenomenon was made by [21], who believes that metonymy is a combination of semantic contiguity and positional similarity. According to [21], there are two main ways of organizing a linguistic utterance: selection and combination. The choice of linguistic units is based on equivalence, semantic similarity, synonymy and antonymy, semantic contiguity and belongs to the paradigmatic plan of the language. Choice (selection) is opposed to the combination (combination) of linguistic elements into units of a higher degree of complexity. The combination of linguistic elements is based on the principle of positional contiguity and positional similarity.

The combination of linguistic elements is based on the principle of positional contiguity and positional similarity. Consequently, the two types of communication, similarity and contiguity, are considered in two aspects: positional and semantic. Consequently, we distinguish four types of combinations: 1) a combination of semantic and positional similarity; 2) a combination of semantic

similarity and positional contiguity; 3) a combination of semantic contiguity and positional similarity; 4) a combination of semantic and positional contiguity.

### Types of metonymic transfer

Author [13] also distinguishes spatial and temporal metonymy: 1) "The idea of objects or actions confined by cultural, historical or natural conditions to a certain place evokes an idea of this place (association of ideas by contiguity). As a consequence, the names corresponding to these objects or actions can be used as local names". For example, the word pasture, fishing, denotes both a process and a place. This man has his pastures not far from here. 2) "Wherever living conditions or external nature associates objects or actions with a certain time, the names corresponding to these objects or actions are used as temporal names or are transformed into purely temporal words". For example, a month is a designation in one word of the lunar disk and the period regulated by the moon's motion.

The classification proposed by [18] includes local, temporal and attributive types of metonymic transfer. Author [9] includes the following metonymic models in spatial, temporal and casual metonymy: 1) spatial metonymy (containing-content, material-product, locality-product originating from this locality); 2) causal metonymy (action is the result of an action, the name of the inventor is the invention, the source of the action is the person acting); 3) temporary metonymy.

Now let's move on to considering the typology of [2]: spatial (local), temporary (temporal), causal (casual), attributive, material-product, part-whole and whole-part.

It should be noted that the most interesting is the traditional principle of metonymy classification. It includes six main types: 1) partitive (synecdoche) 2) causal 3) temporal 4) local 5) attributive 6) quantitative (quantitative). Author [5] believed that metonymy relies on the relationship between dictionary and contextual meanings based on a certain association connecting concepts expressed in given meanings of words. The relationship between these values is noticeable and pronounced.

Author [16] refers to metonymy to figures of speech, in which the name is transferred by quality, based on contiguity, on the connection between two objects in reality.

Thus, traditional approaches to metonymy consider it a figure of speech that carries stylistic information based on the contiguity of meanings, limiting it to the lexical level.

### A cognitive approach to metonymy

In modern linguistics, metonymy is primarily recognized as "a cognitive mechanism for the representation of knowledge both as a result of their reflection in the system meanings of linguistic units, and in the course of constructing an utterance" [1]. In linguistic works, the term "conceptual metonymy" is widely used. The cognitive mechanism of conceptual metonymy operates within a single conceptual domain, one element replacing another. The replacement element is called a vehicle. The mental level opens access to another conceptual structure, called the target concept, within a single conceptual domain [12]. In the process of action of the cognitive mechanism "conceptual metonymy", the concept-vehicle and the concept-target are compared by contiguity. The concept-vehicle is taken as a part for denoting the whole – the concept-target.

Traditionally, such types of metonymic transfers are distinguished as "part instead of the whole", "whole instead of part", "container instead of its content", "material instead of an object made from it", "used object instead of user", "manufacturer instead of product", "cause instead of effect", "place instead of the institution", "place instead of an event", etc. [20].

Modern research on metonymy allows us to go beyond considering it only as symbolic speech. For example, authors [7] suggested that metonymy and metaphor are powerful cognitive tools with the help of which human cognition of the world is built. They believe that metonymy makes it possible to conceptualize a perceived object through its relationship to another. Moreover, in their opinion, metonymic concepts structure language and thinking, attitudes, and actions.

Author [8] also understands metonymy as a unit of cognitive science and defines it as a cognitive process in which one concept is perceived through another. In linguistic works, we are faced with a contradiction in describing the essence of metonymy. For traditional linguistics, it is a figure of speech, which consists of using one object's name for the name of another associated with it. In cognitive linguistics, metonymy is understood as a cognitive process in which one conceptual unity, viewed as a means or vehicle, provides

mental access to another conceptual unity, a goal, within one idealized cognitive model.

Authors [6] distinguish three postulates in the understanding of metonymy: 1) metonymy is a conceptual phenomenon; 2) metonymy is a cognitive process; 3) metonymy operates within the framework of idealized cognitive models. Metonymy acts as a name for an object and an indication of the concept underlying the lexical meaning. They believe that metonymy, like a metaphor, is part of our everyday thinking, is based on experience, is subject to general systemic principles and structures our thoughts and actions.

Let's consider metonymic models with the source area "the location of the object in space". Thus, the following basic models of metonymic projection of a static relationship between an object and a spatial reference point to related areas of experience can be distinguished:

1. "Arrangement of an object in space" → "Human activity" / "Impact on an object". Quite common answers to the question about the occupation of a person What are you doing? are statements like I'm at work. I'm in the bathroom. I'm at university, etc.

2. "Arrangement of an object in space" → "Independent movement of an object in space" / "Moving an object in space by someone (something)". Since the location of an object in space is the result of its movement – either independently or caused by some external force, in response to the question about the direction or endpoint of the object's movement, you can report its location: Where did you go? – I was at my uncle's. Where did you put the key? – The key is in my bag. This type of metonymic projection can also have the opposite direction: Where are you now? – I am at the party.

3. "Location of the object in space" → "State of the object". A specific state can also be associated with being in a specific place: He is in hospital (= He is ill). He is in bed (= He is asleep; He is ill). As a consequence, such statements can serve as an answer to the question How is he? Is he well.

So, conceptual metonymy as a fundamental cognitive mechanism that determines the ability of one concept to replace another belonging to the same conceptual area, or the entire area as a whole, is manifested by units of different language levels, including syntactic models of a simple sentence.

Authors [7] offer the following representative examples of metonymy:

#### 1) PART INSTEAD OF WHOLE

We don't hire longhairs.

The Giants need a stronger arm in the right field.

#### 2) PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT

He's got a Picasso in his den.

#### 3) OBJECT USED FOR USER

The sax has the flu today.

The buses are on strike.

#### 4) CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED

Napoleon lost at Waterloo.

A Mercedes rear-ended me.

#### 5) INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE

You'll never get the university to agree to that

#### 6) THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION

The White House isn't saying anything.

Paris is introducing longer skirts this season.

Hollywood isn't what it used to be.

In the case of metonymy, we attribute human properties to something that is not human – theories, disease, inflation. In such contexts, the related property cannot be attributed to any particular human being. When we say, "Inflation stole my savings," we do not relate inflation to anyone.

Let's analyze metonymy examples taken from the websites of leading news agencies such as The New York Times and Reuters:

*The White House forecast a staggering jump in the nation's monthly jobless rate.*

*Taiwan and the United States discussed how to get "closer coordination" between the island and the World Health Organization during the outbreak, drawing a rebuke from China.*

*Mr. Paul, a libertarian, said he had returned to Washington "so that history will record that not everyone gave in to the massive debt Congress is creating" with the multiple rounds of coronavirus relief it had enacted over the past six weeks.*

In these examples, metonymy is represented by the place instead of the institution.

*The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office predicted on Friday that the economy would contract at an annual rate of nearly 40% in the second quarter.*

*Switzerland's government boosted its powers to force firms to make more critical medical supplies.*

*The Senate passed Tuesday's measure by voice vote – a necessity since most senators were not present because the chamber had been in a prolonged recess — though two Republican senators, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Mike Lee of Utah, spoke against it beforehand.*

In these examples, metonymy is represented by the institution instead of the people responsible.

*The president's family business is asking his administration for rent relief.*

*"You're not allowed to have a customer. So, in some places, it's rigorous. New Jersey is strict. New York is strict.*

*In the western state of North Rhein-Westphalia, wearing a mask is mandatory at bus stops, train stations, banks, post offices, and gas stations. At the same time, Berlin has decided not to make mask-wearing in shops obligatory. Here we attribute human properties to something that is not human, to the cities.*

*The Senate appears unlikely to follow suit, though senators are discussing how to manage remote hearings and stay connected while scattered across the country until at least May 4.*

In these examples, we attribute human properties to something not human, to business, cities, and institutions.

Cognitive linguistics allows a deeper understanding of the processes underlying metonymy and

metonymic relationships. Author [6] believes that it is the cognitive principles that underlie the choice of the metonymy model. Cognitive principles correlate with three conceptual system determinants: human experience, perceptual selectivity, and cultural preferences. Metonymy is not limited to language alone but is a cognitive process that operates within the same idealized cognitive model. Metonymic relationships arise not between words as language units but between concepts as units of thinking or cognitive activity.

## CONCLUSIONS

In modern linguistics, metonymy is considered "a cognitive mechanism for the representation of knowledge, both as a result of their reflection in the system meanings of linguistic units, and in the course of constructing a statement". Metonymy acts to represent, transform, and evaluate social and political life phenomena in the media discourse. As a cognitive phenomenon, metonymy is involved in the processing of knowledge and its conceptualization. In news discourse, metonymy is used to express a concept economically. A shift in focus in metonymic nomination creates a positive or negative assessment, distortion of information, and depersonalization of individual referents to influence the reader. An appeal to an encyclopedic knowledge of a socio-historical and national-cultural nature makes it possible to interpret metonyms.

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