Metonymy in human interaction

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Human communication is based on mutual interaction between participants. Much of this communication is linguistic in nature. Language is structured by grammar and grammar is inherently metonymic (Langacker 2009). Thus, language and interaction must be metonymic. In this article, I explore the metonymic basis of human interaction in both its linguistic and non-linguistic aspects. First, I make a distinction between linguistic and cultural metonymy. Both have a conceptual basis. The former, extensively studied from the view of cognitive linguistics, has a linguistic source. The latter, found in fields as diverse as art, theater, and film, does not necessarily have a linguistic source. The broader concept of cultural metonymy seems to structure human interaction. Second, I delineate distinguishing factors between the two types of metonymies. Those are the nature of the source and the (mis)match in the intentionality of producer and perceiver. Third, I make an overview and provide real examples of what aspects of human interaction are metonymic. Its elements, including the content of the message, the identity, proxemics, and kinesics of the participants, and the context of the interaction, can be metonymic. Its processes, namely those of language production and reception, are as well inherently metonymic. Overall, I show that metonymy, understood as relatedness or association, pervades human interaction and plays an important role in its success.

Keywords: metonymy, interaction, communication, culture, cinema, art, literature

1. Introduction

Communication is a basic behavior that is common and necessary for all human beings. Together with hunting, harvesting, and sexual intercourse, it is a fundamental activity for survival that requires social cooperation. Tomasello (2008) argues that social cooperation predates communication. As humans needed to work

hand-in-hand with each other to cultivate food, organize tribes, and maintain their lineage, they developed forms of communication. At first, these were gesture-based, consisting mostly of imitating and pointing. Later on, this communication was enhanced by vocal performances, presumably the beginnings of human language. The purpose was, above all, to share intentions and evaluations in the projects undertaken by communities. Human communication is thus a product of adaptive biological evolution as well as a response to the 'shared intentionality structure' that communal living brought about.[1]

There are broadly two types of communicative behavior in human interaction, the verbal and nonverbal ones. The former is composed of all linguistic material used to convey information. The so-called 'conduit' metaphor provides a good illustration of linguistic communication (Reddy 1979). When speaking to each other, we exchange words conceptualized as objects. These objects, conceived as containers, are loaded with meaning. When our interlocutor receives the message, she 'unwraps' the thoughts inside and processes them. The latter, nonverbal communication, is defined as everything that is not linguistic communication (Knapp 1972). It is estimated that between 65% and 90% of communication is nonverbal in nature (Matsumoto, Frank, & Hwang 2013). This type of interaction comprises the participants, including their physical appearance and the props they wear, and their facial expression, their voice features, and the rest of the communicative context. All these elements are conceptually associated and can stand for each other. This is where my claim for a metonymic basis in communication lies.

My article is structured as follows. First, I survey the concept of metonymy from its inception in Ancient Greece to its most recent conceptualization in cognitive linguistics. Second, I establish a distinction between 'linguistic metonymy' and 'cultural metonymy'. Third, I explain how elements of human interaction can have a metonymic basis, understood in a broad sense. What ensues from my discussion is that metonymy can be used to motivate whole systems, including art, cinema, literature, and communication. We can refer to this encompassing field as 'metonymics'.

2.   Metonymy

Earlier accounts of metonymy considered it a figure of speech together with metaphor, simile, hyperbole, and personification (Matzner 2016). Its function was to act as a rhetorical and embellishing device. It was believed to awaken the reader's

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[1]. This evolutionary view of human communication is also shared by Hauser (1996). He cites, for example, that arboreal non-human primates evolved vocal communication as a means of competing for female partners in courtship and mating practices.

emotions and convince the undecided. In the words of Du Marsais, 'dans les occasions où le figures ne seraient point déplacées, le même fons de pensée será exprimé d'une manière ou plus vive ou plus noble, ou plus agréable par le secours des figures, que si on l'exprimoit sans figure' (1757: 10–11).[2] Aristotle was the first to worry about something other than literal language. In Part XXI of his *Poetics* (1987), he mentions four types of (what he dubs) 'metaphor'.

> Metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion.   (Aristotle [Janko] 1987: 28)

Only the two last options, based on a token-to-token or analogical comparison, are true metaphors. The other two, based on genus and species relations, are metonymy and synecdoche. Authors in Ancient Greece and Rome, including Democritus, Trypho of Alexandria, and Cicero, agreed that there was a close, associative relationship between the source and the target different from that of metaphor. Toward the latter half of the twentieth century, there was a rebellion against this traditional view. Jakobson (1956) began to question the possible functions of metonymy and metaphor in patients suffering from aphasia. Other authors have since then started using metonymy as a tool to understand the conceptualizations of people with mental disorders (Rhodes & Jakes 2004; van Herwegen et al. 2013). Their evidence suggests that, as metonymy establishes conceptually 'closer' links between concepts than metaphor, it may be more useful in making these patients sync with reality. This has been followed by a view of figurative language as central in the study of communication and metaphor and metonymy as fundamental processes in thinking (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

Although relegated to a role dependent on metaphor, metonymy made its real debut in Croft (1993), Langacker (1993), and Kövecses & Radden (1998), *inter alia*. Since then, a plethora of volumes have been published (Barcelona 2000; Benczes, Barcelona, & Ruiz de Mendoza 2011; Bierwiaczonek 2013; Blanco-Carrión, Barcelona, & Pannain 2018; Denroche 2015; Littlemore 2015; Matzner 2016; Panther & Thornburg 2003; Zhang 2016), which demonstrate the solid and undeniable role that metonymy has in language and communication. Metonymy is a relation of contiguity or relatedness between a source and a target. These can be parts or wholes of each other. Psychologists have a long-standing tradition of studying both the associations between concepts and between words (Loring 1919). Helle (1994), for example, hints at the concept of association in psychology as foundational in Jakobson's work on figurative language and, more specifically,

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2. 'When figures of speech are present, a thought can be expressed in either a more vivid, a more noble, or a more pleasant way than if we expressed that same thought without them'.

metonymy. As of now, I am taking the concepts of association, contiguity, and relatedness as roughly equal.

Some examples of metonymy follow. Sentence (1), for instance, can be uttered after someone has made a mistake. The property of being fine, in this case, is not applied to the person directly, but to his or her behavior. Metonymies are formulated in small caps, following the SOURCE IS TARGET pattern. In (1), the metonymy is THE PERSON FOR HIS/HER BEHAVIOUR.

Metonymy is not restricted to languages or oral modalities. Signed languages, and signs in general, can also contain metonymic elements that, if interpreted literally, will mislead the interlocutor. Figure 1 shows the sign for "drink" in sign language. This sign is metonymic as a whole representation of a process is not possible in a single gesture. The sign captures the most salient moment, that of pouring the liquid into the mouth. It relegates other sub-processes, like grabbing the container or swallowing the liquid, to the background. Figure 2 is a parking sign which warns drivers not to park there unless they hold a specific permit. The sign says that "violators will be towed". A person is rarely towed; instead his or her car is. This creates the metonymy THE PERSON FOR HIS/HER VEHICLE, a more specific example of CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED.

(1)   You are fine, don't worry.

Figure 1. Sign for "drink" in sign language

Figure 2. Parking sign

3. Linguistic and cultural metonymy

This section establishes a two-way distinction between a more specific and a more general concept of metonymy.[3] The more specific one I label here 'linguistic metonymy'. The more general one, 'cultural metonymy'. Both are conceptual in nature (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) but can be expressed by different means, namely either language or culture. In what follows I briefly sketch what they consist of and provide examples illustrating them.

Example (1), *You are fine, don't worry*, serves as an illustration of linguistic metonymy. Here the source, *you*, is linguistic in nature. The target, namely the behavior of the addressee, is conceptual as it is not referred by any linguistic expression in the utterance.[4] This inference from one to the other is what Langacker (2009) conceives as metonymy, namely, enriching the schematic, fuzzy representations evoked by linguistic forms. This example also illustrates the type of metonymy

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3. This issue has already been tackled by Barcelona (2011) for metonymy and Kövecses (2002) for metaphor. Barcelona proposes a prototype-based definition of metonymy with three levels. They are, ordered by how good of an example of metonymy they are, prototypical, (simply) typical, and (purely) schematic ones (2011: 50). Kövecses distinguishes conventional linguistic metaphors like the ones studies in Lakoff & Johnson (1980), his so-called 'supra-individual level', from the set of metaphors used by an individual, his so-called 'individual level'.

4. There are certain linguistic metonymies, including what Matzner (2016) calls 'amplification metonymy', that do have a target of a linguistic nature.

first described in cognitive linguistics, that is, referential metonymy. In uttering (1) the speaker makes reference to a person and her behavior. In the metonymy in Figure 2, though, the parking sign does not reference any driver or car in particular. Rather, it is addressed to all of those who attempt to park in the area. Therefore, linguistic metonymy can be thought of as referring to:

> A *specific* conceptual operation of the mind by which a source, *of a linguistic nature*, provides access to a target, usually *of a conceptual nature*. Both source and target are located in the same frame. It is usually motivated by *specific* functions including comprehension, perspectivization, humor, and irony.

The bulk of the cognitive tradition in figurative language has focused on addressing linguistic metonymies. It started in the 1970s and 1980s with essays on linguistic metaphors and metonymy (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). It continued with more in-depth studies of metonymy in predicates (Nunberg 1995; Pustejovsky 1995; Ward 2004), in constructions (Brdar 2007), in grammar (Langacker 2009), and in the linguistic system in general (Bierwiaczonek 2013; Littlemore 2015).

Let us now stop briefly to consider what the implications of Langacker's 'metonymic grammar' is. This author cites various phenomena in grammar, including compounds, possessive constructions, noun incorporation, anaphors, and sentence structure as driven by metonymy. Grammar is seen as inherently fuzzy. Not everything that the speaker wants to convey can be matched with specific, unambiguous linguistic forms. This fuzziness leads Langacker to consider language as a tool that highlights parts of conceptualizations. These conceptualizations are construed by a speaker and fit into the linguistic categories of the language. The result are constructions that metonymically fill up what is left unspecified. He speaks of the 'indeterminacy' of language (2009: 67). The role of the listener is to decode them to achieve a conceptualization that approximates that of the speaker. This feature of shared goals between speaker and listener as reflected in the speaker's intentionality crucially distinguishes linguistic from cultural metonymy (see below). If the interactants share a cultural and social frame, then communication aided by those evocative constructions will be successful. In his own words, grammar is:

> Basically metonymic, in the sense that the information explicitly provided by conventional means does not establish itself the precise connections apprehended by the speaker and hearer in using an expression   (Langacker 2009: 46)

In (2), the same NP can be construed differently. The two possible representations, with the simplex and multiplex meaning, are given in Figure 3. This is indicated by the red line surrounding the geese as a unit, and by the single arrow coming out of it. In (2a), *flock* is the head of the phrase and the meaning is of the geese as a unit. In (2b), *geese* is the head of the phrase and the meaning is of the geese as

individuals. This is indicated by the red line surrounding the geese as individuals and the multiple arrows coming out of them. In Langacker's understanding, there is no need for hierarchical relations (in the Chomskyan sense) in language. The relations established between the words in grammar are a reflection of the mental conceptualization of the speaker.

(2) a.   [a flock [of geese]]
     b.   [[a flock of] geese]]
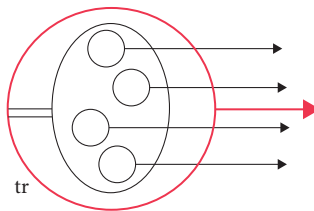
(a)
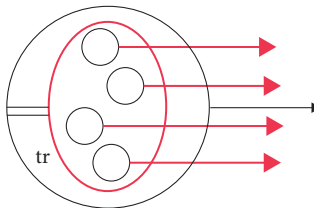
(b)

Figure 3. Simplex and multiplex representations of the NP *a flock of geese*
"Metonymic Grammar" by Langacker, R.W. As published in our book: "Metonymy and Metaphor in Grammar", edited by Panther, K-U. et al John Benjamins Publishing Company (2009).

The other type of metonymy we can more broadly encounter is cultural metonymy. This is a type of contiguity relation established between entities that do not necessarily have a linguistic nature. I use the term 'culture' here to mean the set of meaning-bearing practices and expressions of a specific community that are perpetuated over time. Culture under this definition encompasses subjects like the arts, morality, beliefs and customs, and interaction. An example of cultural metonymy can be found in Picasso's painting *Guernica*.

Figure 4.   Picasso's painting *Guernica*
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The Spanish painter Picasso finished his masterpiece in 1937. He tried to reflect the horrors and suffering of the local population of the Basque town of Guernica when they were bombarded by Spain's allies from Germany (Blunt 1969). The interpretation of this painting is aided by metonymy as viewers establish associations based on the animals, people, and objects depicted therein.[5] The bull in the upper left-hand side evokes the Spanish custom of bullfighting. The soldier lying down in the bottom left-hand side evokes not only the Spanish fascist troops headed by dictator Franco but also the German aviators that massively bombarded the area. There are also different women represented in the painting, each evoking a different type of suffering. Among them we find the death of babies and children and the fire inside people's houses. In fact, the website of the Museo Reina Sofía where the painting is displayed states that it contains 'ninguna alusión a sucesos concretos, sino que, por el contrario, constituyen un alegato genérico contra la barbarie y el terror de la guerra'.[6] Establishing the link between the specifics of the painting and that 'general representation' of the brutality of the Spanish Civil War is assisted by metonymy. Picasso's representation, tied to a specific shape, color,

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5. This is despite Picasso's statement about his own work: '[T]his bull is a bull and this horse is a horse… If you give a meaning to certain things in my paintings it may be very true, but it is not my idea to give this meaning. What ideas and conclusions you have got I obtained too, but instinctively, unconsciously. I make the painting for the painting. I paint the objects for what they are' (Ashton 1972: 155). Despite that, he also claimed that he left viewers to fill in with their own interpretations. This attitude of openness in the interpretation of art is typical of postmodernism.

6. 'It contains no allusion to the specific events. However, it is a general representation against the brutality and horror of the war'.

and structure, prompts in our minds other scenes of suffering when we view it.[7] Therefore, I think of cultural metonymy as referring to:

> A *general* conceptual operation of the mind by which a source provides access to a target, both of which can be *of any kind* and both of which are located in the same frame. It can be found in language, art, cinema, literature, and philosophy, among others. It can be motivated by very *diverse* functions including coherence and cohesion, remembrance, aesthetic pleasure, and persuasiveness.

Monographs on cultural metonymy are still rare (Dévényi 1996; Green 2005; Ryland 2011) as knowledge from different disciplines has to be drawn to compile them. However, we find individual studies drawing from metonymic principles to explain some aspect of culture. Tomaselli & Muller (1987) do so for theater in South Africa. These authors talk about the 'part-whole relationship of art (the performance)' as well as about the metonymic nature of 'stage design' (1987: 49).[8] Onstage props and

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7. Picasso's painting can also be analyzed within the framework of blending and conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner 1998). This theory models the online production of meaning by integrating information from different mental spaces. These mental spaces are structured by one or more frames, their roles and their relations. In the *Guernica* painting, at least three mental spaces and four frames are being integrated. One is the bullfighting frame and space, where the bull is the entity mapped. Another space is that made of the family frame and the civilian frame. Here the same individual is linked to two roles, one within the family and one within society. The mother with the crying child is the entity mapped from this space. She has the roles of both mother and civilian. Another space is that composed of the war frame, where the soldier is the entity mapped. Where are all these entities mapped? They are mapped and integrated into a blended space, of which this painting is a physical representation. In Fauconnier and Turner's taxonomy, this is a case of elaboration. By simulating an event, the bombing of the Basque town, the viewers are making associations that elaborate what is presented to them. In neural terms, these associations are made possible through spreading activation. This implies the firing of neurons that, connected to each other, form the semantic network uniting all elements of the frames at play in the integration. Under this interpretation, metonymy would play a secondary but necessary role within the machinery of conceptual integration. *De facto*, one of the theory's principles is that of 'metonymic tightening', that is, the need to maximally compress the metonymic links when projected into the blended space.

8. The authors say about this that 'audience will (hopefully) perceive more clearly (through metonymy) the contiguous relationships between the enacted performance and the social experience that is being evoked' (1987: 49). In some plays, metonymy is even used to gap the breach between what the play and what the audience represent. Tomaselli and Muller (1987: 50) cite a scene in the play *Pula, A Prayer for Rain*, by the South African playwright and political activist Matsemela Manaka. In it, a market stall with black people stands on stage, while the audience represents the customers which, by the end of the scene, get robbed by actors. The switch between the real identity of the audience and their identity as customers-characters in the play is made possible through contiguity. In this case, conceptual integration theory can also explain the identity link between the audience and their role within the play.

decoration are, due to spatial and budget constraints, symbolic of larger realities. Dévényi (1996) goes even further in her analysis. She considers metonymy as a strategy for fragmenting and unloading the tensions in the drama which, as she shows in four case studies, some playwrights are unable to solve. This author sees metonymic relations in the body of the actors, in the dramatic text, and in the dramaturgy itself.

Similar ideas have been posited for cinema (Coëgnarts & Kravanja 2015; Kirtland-Grech 2014; van Veuren 2012) and art (Petrenko & Korotchenko 2012; Feld 1988). In Blokamp's horror film *District 9*, the body of the white South African privileged protagonist is contaminated with DNA from aliens. The dismemberment of his body allows for rich, variegated interpretations. Metonymic parallels, with a metaphorical base, are established between his rotting body and social, urban, and institutional bodies. It is symbolic of the wrongdoings of apartheid in South Africa. The effect achieved is one of fluidity in the relations and identities between the bodies represented in the film. Literature is also the subject of metonymy-based analyses. Dżereń-Głowacka (2007) looks at different types of metonymies in the writing of the British fantasy writer Terry Pratchett. Her analysis covers metonymies that both conform to those conventionally found in speech and those that break with that conventionality and are re-interpreted literally. These metonymies make reference to one character, Foul Old Ron, by his smell. In a particular scene, the smell, and not the person, is ordered to leave. This breaks the metonymic mapping and forces us to personify the smell through a metaphor. Practical proposals to teach a foreign language through metonymy and literature also exist. In teaching Spanish as a foreign language, López-Ozieblo (2016) suggests that book excerpts from the works of contemporary Spanish writer Almudena Grandes be used to enrich the cultural ideas that students have of Spanish food, clothing, traditions, and society.

3.1 Distinguishing features of metonymy

This section elucidates what features can help establish a dividing line between linguistic and cultural metonymy. Two features are reviewed here, namely the means and intentionality in which metonymies are used. According to the definitions established above, a metonymy expressed in language could fit the descriptions of either linguistic or cultural metonymy. First, there is a difference in what the main medium of expression in the interaction is. Linguistic metonymy is based on the use of language as the primary means of interaction.[9] Such is the case in (1)

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[9] Signed languages do not fit that description but they are a minority within the languages of the world. According to Ethnologue, the number of signed languages is 142 *vis-à-vis* 6,909 as the number of spoken languages.

and Figures 1 and 2. This is not the case in cultural metonymy. Relations of association between concepts can arise in a theater play, for example, as described above. An actor can make reference in his lines to one of the props on stage. This linguistic expression is *not* a linguistic metonymy in that the primary means of the metonymy is the play itself rather than language. Cultural metonymy in theater is more likely to surface in the minds of viewers as associations between the props and the real things they evoke, or between a particular character in the play and specific instances of that character in real life. The term 'primary' deserves further discussion in future research. Primariness here can be approximated to the notion of salience (Giora 2004).

Second, the degree of overlap of intentionality between producers and recipients varies between one and the other type of metonymy. In the linguistic one, if a speaker chooses to utter *you are fine*, as in (1) above, instead of being more explicit, he wants the listener to reconstruct roughly the same meaning he intended. If the speaker is referring to the fact that the listener's behavior is fine and the listener believes that he is referring to his physical aspect, this may lead to disruptive communication. In Gricean terms, the illocutionary force of the speaker's utterance must be matched by the one reconstructed by the listener. If not, strategies of repair will ensue once the mismatch is detected. This is not the case in cultural metonymy. Picasso's intentions when painting the *Guernica* or Blokamp's ones when directing *District 9* do not have to be matched by those of viewers and spectators. Indeed, one of the crucial points of creativity in culture is that individuals can interpret the piece freely and make it personal by tying it to their own experiences. Katz, in describing how Rauschenberg disguises his authorial intent in his assemblages, claims that 'the author's meanings do not have to be the audience's' (2008: 53). This mismatch in interpretations is even more conspicuous when the author himself encourages it. This is the case with the work of the Cuban American minimalist artist González-Torres (Ault 2006). In other words, their interpretations of the work of art may differ. That is not the case with language.

The enactive view of narrative comprehension, for instance, stresses that the readers engage, not only with the meaning of the text as intended by the author, but also with the meaning socially and personally constructed from it (Popova 2015). In short, both the primary means of expression (whether language, art, literature, theater, etc.) and the degree of interaction between the intentionality of producer and recipient (whether matching is required or not) play a role in distinguishing linguistic from cultural metonymy.

4.   Elements of human interaction

The focus of this section is the elements that play a role in human communication. Hymes dubs them "components of speech" (1972: 58–66) and lists message form and content, setting, scene, speaker and addressee, purpose (outcomes and goals), key, channel, form of speech, norms of interaction and interpretation, and rules of speaking as examples of these components. For Hymes, speech is a type of human interaction that involves any type of medium or channel, be it oral or sign language, gesturing, humming, or singing. These can sometimes be attributed to a metonymic basis. In what follows we examine the most important ones.

4.1   Participants

In this section, we look at two prominent features of participants, namely their identities and their names. Identity construction is part of interaction as speaker and listener negotiations are mediated by who does what to whom. Identity is, in part, innately and biologically determined (e.g. our physical attributes) and, in part, socially constructed (e.g. our hairstyle or hobbies). Both the individual and social components of identity are put to action in human interaction. It is through perception, cognition, and categorization that we achieve an "intersubjective world of shared social meanings" (Turner & Oakes 1986: 240), including those meanings of the identity of the self and of others. Metonymy can explain some aspects of this socially-constructed identity of participants. With dress, for example, people have choices as to what to wear, whether it is a Topshop leather mini-skirt, a Scottish kilt, or a pair of comfortable Levi's jeans. Our choice is metonymic in that it picks out, by highlighting it, a piece of clothing within a set of interrelated ones. The same applies to music or film tastes, reading preferences, or personality traits. If we are big fans of the movies produced by David Lynch, metonymic processing is at stake when we are asked what our favorite movie of his is. We may not only compare his individual pieces, but also check against other surrealist film directors like Luis Buñuel or Alejandro Jodorowsky, and their production.

Terms of address for participants in an interaction are also subject to metonymy. Catalan speakers use a different form of the second person pronoun, depending on whether they are referring to a 'social equal', *tu*, or a socially higher person, *vostè*. These are referred by Brown & Gilman (1960) as the T and V pronouns, respectively. The referent is the same, but a metonymically motivated choice, dependent on the social relation between speaker and listener, has to be made. This is especially salient in nicknames, epithets, alias, and terms of endearment, most falling within Jakobson's 'emotive' language function. Alternating between *mommy*, *mom*, *mother*, and *mama* implies a perspectivization of a child toward

her mother. They are all underlyingly related to a single referent but socially constructed through metonymy (see Colman & Anderson 2004: 553 for similar arguments). The following example from the posthumously published novel of Ana Maria Matute illustrates this as well.

> Era *mi abuela* pero todos la llamábamos *Madre*. Desde mi padre – cosa normal – hasta Magdalena, Yago y yo misma, a pesar de ser su nieta, no su hija. Curiosamente para Magdalena era la *Señora Madre* y para Yago *Doña Magdalena*.[10]
>
> (Matute 2014: 21)

In *Demonios Familiares*, the grandmother of the protagonist and narrator is referred by three different names, most of which do not fulfill the truth conditions that link them to their referents. Whereas her grandchild calls her *Mother*, the family servant calls her *Lady Mother*. Yago, another servant and unacknowledged child, calls her *Ms. Magdalena*. This profiling of the character provides the reader with a clue as to what relationship each of the other characters hold toward her. The range of choices, from the more distant *señora* and *doña* of the servants to the more affectionate *madre* of the protagonist, is created by Matute via metonymy.

4.2 Proxemics

Proxemics encompasses the human use of space in interacting with others. It is symbolic for social distance and power relations. The connection between the proxemics and these underlying meanings can be conceived as metonymic. Hall (1966) shows how we are expected to use different proxemics in different cultures. Not doing that may cause intercultural communication issues. Whereas in American and Northern European societies, distance in personal interaction is a sign of deference toward the interlocutor, in Latin American and Southern European societies it is a sign of antagonism. The metaphor AN EMOTIONAL RELATIONSHIP IS A DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO ENTITIES (Kövecses 2003: 92–93) that motivates expressions like *He is very* close *to me* or *She became part of my* circle *of friends* is based on an experiential metonymy. The closer we are to a person in space the more we interact, both verbally and physically with her or him. This same experience-based metonymy seems to underlie the workings of proxemics.

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10. She was *my grandmother* but all of us called her *Mother*. All including my dad – what is normal –, Magdalena, Yago, and even myself, despite the fact that I was her granddaughter and not her daughter. Oddly enough, she was *Lady Mother* for Magdalena and *Ms. Magdalena* for Yago.

4.3 Kinesics

Kinesics, popularly known as body language, is the meaning communicated via facial expressions and body gestures. These too can have a metonymic basis, as they will bring about larger significance in the communicative exchange. The example below is an excerpt from Aramburu's latest novel *Patria*.

> El alcalde Azkuna los casó cinco años y medio después en el Salón Árabe del Ayuntamiento. Ofició detrás de un espléndido ramo de rosas blancas, visibles en su semblante los primeros estragos de fatal enfermedad.[11]   (2016: 591)

One of the main characters, Gorka, is getting married to his boyfriend. Controversial in a rural society of the post-Franco era, homosexual marriage brings about animosity among family members. On top of that Gorka's boyfriend suffers from cancer from which he dies later in the novel. His face speaks for himself, as it prompts in the reader the association between his expression and his deadly illness. This causes disruption in the wedding ceremony as the mayor and the bridegrooms are engaged in the required linguistic exchange.

4.4 Message

The message in a communicative exchange is the *sine qua non* element. Metonymy in languages takes multiple forms. It can affect the lexicon, the constructions, and the prosody of the language, *inter alia*. All of these sit under the umbrella of linguistic metonymy (see Section 3). An example is found in the locative object alternation with verbs like 'to load', 'to spray' and 'to smear'. In (3), the complementation pattern is subject to the speaker's choice. Whether the direct object is the hay or the truck will depend on the degree of salience that the speaker confers to them. The hay and the truck are in a relation of spatial contiguity as the former is the content and the latter its container. The speaker therefore resorts to their metonymic basis for its linguistic expression.

(3) a. I loaded hay in the truck
     b. I loaded the truck with hay

Of course, the choice of one or the other, though with a metonymic basis, is driven by other factors. For example, if the speaker intends the meaning where the truck is loaded with hay to its completion, then (3b) is more appropriate (Anderson 1971). The example in (3a) entails that the truck was not fully loaded with hay.

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11. The mayor Azkuna married them five and a half years later in the Salón Árabe of the Town Hall. He conducted the ceremony behind a magnificent bouquet of white roses, as he showed the first signs of his deadly illness.

4.5 Setting

By setting we understand the physical circumstances of the speech event (Hymes 1972: 60). These comprise time and space. In the American 90s show *Friends*, the protagonists hang out every day in the same coffee shop. It is called 'Central Perk'. This is partly linguistic, partly cultural metonymy. The name of the coffee shop is evocative of the name of the park in Upper Manhattan. This is what Denroche calls 'formal metonymy' (2015: 95). On the cultural side, the setting of a great number of *Friends* scenes evoke not only Central Park but also New York City and the lifestyle it provided to young people of the 1990s and 2000s. As we see, a very limited spatio-temporal setting in the series frames the story in a larger context. This example, though, illustrates the possible difficulties in elucidating the primary means of a metonymy, if there is one at all (see Section 3).

4.6 Context or scene

Communication is not only based on the rules of the grammar the speaker has but in the constraints utterances can have in context. Speech acts are utterances based on the content, the intention, and the consequences the speaker wants his verbal act to have. Austin (1962) calls this the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary force of the utterance, respectively. Searle (1975) goes further and classifies them into assertives (e.g. statements and acknowledgements like *My dad has already finished cooking the meal*), directives (e.g. orders and commands like *Get out of here, everyone!*), commissives (e.g. promises like *I promise I will be back in 10 minutes*), expressives (e.g. emphatic and emotion-laden expressions like *My dear bunny* or *Hey, guys!*), and declarations (e.g. propositions that modify the status or relationship of participants like when a priest utters *I pronounce you husband and wife*). For instance, the promise above has the illocutionary force of committing the speaker to the content of the proposition (namely returning to where his or her interlocutor is) and the perlocutionary force of creating some expectations in the listener. Hymes (1972: 57) adds that speech acts are subject to intonation, their position in the sentence, and the relations (based on power and social life) between interactants.

Speech acts can sometimes be metonymic in two respects. One, the fact of uttering one of them implies its illocutionary and perlocutionary force. In this respect, implicatures can be thought of as metonymy-based. The proposition expressed and the proposition inferred, that is, implicated, must be conceptually related. Otherwise, the listener will not be able to retrieve the inference if it is too far from the actual proposition uttered. Two, it can contain linguistic metonymy

(see Section 3), that is, its content can be metonymically saying more in less words. Compare the examples in (4a) and (4b).

(4) a. Fire! Get out of here, everyone!
     b. Fire!

In case of an emergency, it suffices to utter (4b) to imply (4a). In a way, what we see here is a prototypical and necessary property of language, which has a metonymic basis, namely underspecification. Prototypical in that all good instances of languages are underspecified, following Gricean maxims. Necessary in that speaking time and the range of constructions available in language are limited so not underspecifying is not possible. Therefore, we need to be brief, to cut information down, and just convey that from which the rest of information can be retrieved. In a word, we have to be metonymic.

5. Processes of human interaction

This section addresses how metonymy aids the processes of language production and reception in human communication. It will be shown that babies and todlers, foreign language learners, parents and caretakers, teachers, and anyone involved in linguistic exchanges must make use of metonymy to express and understand each other's intentions.

5.1 Production

To illustrate how language production is aided by metonymy we touch upon children's and foreign learners' language. Both are simplified forms of language that need to be linked to the intended meaning by the listener. This linkage is achieved by putting in relation concepts like 'door' for 'open the door' or 'to have good morality' for 'honesty'.

A form of communication that is especially metonymic is that of children. In general, children's language is limited by their cognitive abilities and by their lack of experience in the world. Children are generally regarded as endowed with some metonymic ability (Gibbs 1994: 422–427). Nonetheless, a total development in figurative language competence is not reached until a later stage of cognitive maturity. As they grow, they go from uttering single sounds, to one- and two-word utterances, to utterances made of phrases, to finally reach a stage where their speech is coherent and rich in nuances. During the stage of one-word utterances, that lasts until they are about one year old, children communicate with words like "out" if they want to go out, "mama" if they want to see or hug their mothers, or "teddy"

if they want to reach their teddy bear (Greenfield & Smith 1976). The whole intended meaning by the child is captured in a single word. The interlocutor can only interpret what the child means through metonymy with the help of context. If near the front door, the child will probably utter "out" to mean that she wants to go to the park or to the neighbor's house. If near the back door, she will utter "out" to mean that she wants to play with her toys or puppies in the backyard. Metonymy is thus crucial at the one-word, holophrastic stage of language acquisition.

Metonymy also plays a role in the development of children's vocabulary. They usually tend to over- or under-generalize the meanings of words. When encountered with a dog, they will hear the word "dog". Next time, when they encounter a cat, because it's a living animal, they will generalize and call it a "dog". In this case, the label "dog" is providing access to more referents than it does in adults' speech. It's metonymic because, in the child's mind, the dog and the cat are entities related through their status as living beings. Huttenlocher & Smiley (1987) cite the case of children using the word "door" to mean, not only the object, but things related to it like a request to have the door opened. A door and the action it can be subject to are closely related, especially if the child can interact with it that way. That is why it makes sense for the child to refer to both the object and the action with the same word. This and other types of indirect speech acts are explored by Ervin-Tripp (1977) in children *vis-à-vis* adults. The same applies to words that are used too narrowly by the child. Metonymic errors like narrowing or broadening the meaning of words through semantic associations gets corrected over time through parental feedback.

Not only is infants' speech pervasively metonymic, but also that of people who interact with them. Child-directed speech, sometimes called motherese (Newport 1975), is a simplified version of adults' language used to interact with children. It has features that can be interpreted metonymically as the processing of that kind of speech by the child or the simplified language reconstruction by outsiders requires finding the whole concepts or linguistic forms they stand for. Among those, we find word clipping, the omission of grammatical markers, and gesturing. When a word is clipped, as when children say *pa* or *ma* for each of their parents, or *cake* for pancakes or cupcakes, the whole form of the word must be retrieved. This is a case of formal metonymy à la Bierwiaczonek (2013: 61–108).[12] A way of

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12. The difference between the concepts of formal metonymy held by Bierwiaczonek and Denroche is one of scope. Whereas the latter author restricts formal metonymy to relations between word forms that are almost identical (e.g., 'Central Perk' for 'Central Park'), including rhyme, Bierwiaczonek expands his definition to cases where one linguistic form stand for another, more complex form (e.g., 'cake' for 'cupcake' in children's talk, the acronym 'ETA' for 'Euskadi ta Askatasuna', or the surface form of the sentence 'European cars are difficult to drive' for its underlying form 'It is difficult to drive European cars').

making child-directed speech accessible is to delete articles, verbal (e.g. tense) and noun (e.g. number) inflection, and auxiliaries. A father (despite calling this type of speech mother-ese) is likely to address his child by saying *Cookie eat or not?*, pointing at the child with the finger, instead of the more elaborate (but standard) *Have you eaten this cookie or not?* In this last example, the father is using two metonymic strategies to simplify his speech, namely he is leaving out grammatical markers and words, and he is using gestures.

Foreign talk is another form of speech, together with 'baby talk', that stands out as clearly underspecified both at the morphosyntactic and lexical level (Freed 1981). It consists of a form of speech adapted by native (or very fluent L2) speakers to facilitate communication with (other) L2 speakers. The lexicon used is of high frequency, the intonation is usually rising and exaggerated, the syntactic constructions are simple, and crucial morphology is sometimes omitted. Denroche argues that '[t]he relationship between foreigner talk and unaccommodated talk is metonymic' (2015: 140). I would argue, additionally, that that relationship extends as well to the standard, 'idealized' form of the language (referred to as 'native talk' by Freed (1981: 21). In speaking to a British person, a Spanish speaker will, for example, avoid using the auxiliary *haber* 'to have' when referring to the past. He will most likely exaggerate the rising intonation typical of questions when uttering *Tú haces la cama esta mañana?* (instead of *Tú has hecho la cama esta mañana?* 'Did you make your bed this morning?'). There is a three-way interaction between the metonymically reduced 'foreign talk' version, the actual utterance the adult speaker would utter, and the idealized representation of the utterance in the speaker's mind. The crucial aspect in foreign talk is to adjust the speech to the listener taking into account a variety of features like his proficiency level and his native language (Freed 1981). Metonymy comes in handy for this process of attuning speech.

In talking about the speech L2 learners themselves produce, metaphor and metonymy become equally crucial. This ability to 'extend the lexicon', as Denroche (2015: 141–143) calls it, allows for the learner to exploit his limited knowledge of the target language. If a L2 speaker wants to say that someone is 'honest' but cannot find or does not know the word, then he can say that the person has 'good morality', 'good intentions', or a 'good heart'. All three expressions are metonymically related to the word 'honest'. Nuances of meaning are surely lost, just as they are in translation. The important thing is that the learner gets understood in the situation. Denroche talks about a common situation between native and non-native speakers which has occurred to me many times. In interactions, these kinds of participants will sometimes negotiate the meaning of words. When I am talking to one of my best friends in Buffalo, I always gauge which words are appropriate or idiomatic in a context. For instance, in writing this paragraph, I first came up with the unidiomatic expression 'to have good morals' (instead of 'good morality'). To

compensate for that, I opened up a Facebook chat with him to discuss it. Together we considered the options cited above. This was a metalinguistic exercise with a metonymic basis from which the learner benefits. He is acquiring vocabulary as he fixes his speech or writing.

5.2 Reception

Just as metonymy is used in producing 'simplified' speech for babies, toddlers, and language learners, it also becomes useful in understanding this type of speech. Native speakers who find themselves interacting with non-native speakers will have to exploit metonymic connections of certain expression to find out what they mean. If a Spanish speaker says in English that he 'doesn't like to walk in the branches' (from the Spanish idiom *irse por las ramas*), the English-speaking interlocutor will first try to understand this literally. Once unsuccessful, he will try and find related meanings, like for example, the one conveyed by the idiom 'to beat around the bush'. In this case branches and bushes are metonymically connected in the frame of plants.

For the foreign language learner, the benefits that metonymy can bring do not stop there. According to Paivio's theory of 'dual-coding' (1971), students learn words best by associating them with related words and images. The notion of relatedness is invoked again to motivate the fact that having three channels to access a concept (the word, the image, and the concept itself) gives the learner more chances to recognize and properly process a meaning than just one.

The pragmatics of interaction are also determined by relatedness. Politeness is one of the factors that structures people's discourse in interaction. A crucial component is face, whether positive or negative. Face is the public image of an interactant. His or her wish is to protect and maintain it. The term 'face' itself is metonymic, as what is at stake is not only his face but his whole appearance, values, and social status. Metonymy, along with metaphor, can be put to use in saving or attacking the face of interactants. Denroche cites an example of metaphor-based face attack. When criticized by a German member of the European Parliament, Berlusconi suggested that his opponent would fit very well the role of the mafia chief in a movie (2015: 15). Although he retracted, his use of metaphor to insult the German politician and to threaten his face was irreparable. I came across an example of metonymy-based face attack at the appointment ceremony for Spain's president. The spokesperson of the independentist Catalan party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya used several strategies to threaten the negative face of the Partido Socialista, the left-wing party to give support to the right-wing party. I understand a political party here as a frame that includes its members, their ideologies, and their opinions. What the independentist politician used was to quote

negative opinions of members of the Partido Socialista to characterize its politicians as betrayers and flatterers. Opinions of members usually stand for the party's general ideology. However, in this case, those opinions clash with it. As metonymically related, we would expect them to be harmonious. The act of quoting those opinions threatens the negative face of the members of the Partido Socialista, that is, their right not to be unimpeded or threatened in their actions and beliefs. This is possible by virtue of the clash between opinions and ideology, which is consequently strengthened by their metonymic relatedness.

6.   Conclusion

Metonymy plays a crucial role in human interaction. It can explain a range of aspects of communication, from the necessarily underspecified constructions that we use in language to the rich and evocative gestures, distance, and context of interactions. All human beings, including children, parents, and caretakers, language teachers and students, and participants in all kinds of communicative exchanges resort to metonymy to produce tightly-packaged units. These units, rich and evocative in content and ideas, must be easily decodable by listeners. We can therefore speak of 'metonymic interactions'. These interactions are crucially based on the features of underspecificity and relatedness or association of metonymy.

The ideas suggested above must be further explored and checked against a set of diverse interactions in different languages and settings. As Hymes states, the validity and explanatory value of sociocultural approaches arise when the model has been built upon the exploration and documentation of a wide range of interactions (1972: 52, 71). Crosslinguistic evidence together with a more specific taxonomy of mappings and ontologies of entities mapped will give conciseness and validity to my view. A first attempt at systematizing metonymic patterns and instantiations is the metonymy database in the Córdoba project (Blanco-Carrión, Barcelona, & Pannain 2018). Soon to be released, this free-access online database is a resource for metonymy researchers. It contains entries with patterns, examples, grammatical and constructional information of the metonymy, as well as hierarchical relations within the entry and in between entries.

Authors like Denroche propose to advance the field of so-called 'metonymics', which he thinks of as an interdisciplinary, non-modular approach to world phenomena in which metonymy is used as an explanatory fundamental resource (2015: Chapter 9). Denroche's concept is different from that of Runia, a Dutch historian who talks about the interaction of metaphor and metonymy in history as metonymics. His proposal is that metaphor motivates the present image that we create of the past based on the *continuity* afforded by similarity. Metonymy,

however, motivates the present representations of history (e.g. museum exhibitions, monuments, history books, etc.) based on the *discontinuity* (and disruption) of contiguous elements (2006: 28). Metonymy in Runia's own words is the 'presence in absence' (2006: 20). Metonymics in Denroche's sense then would comprise both linguistic and cultural metonymy. Both are, though, conceptual in nature. In short, metonymy is not to be understood as a particular phenomenon that can selectively explain the shifts in reference and meaning of particular constructions. It is, instead, a tool that, in combination with other theoretical machinery, can explain broader linguistic and cultural issues than have been considered so far.

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