

Motivation of Metonymy

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The presentation focuses on issues that have largely been neglected in cognitive research of metonymy. Most of these issues relate to aspects of motivation and are stated here in the form of questions.

Studies of metonymy have mainly focused on the hearer's task of interpreting metonymic utterances. It goes without saying that the speaker's production of metonyms deserves equal attention. What motivates the **speaker** to choose a metonymic construal, how does metonymy relate to the speaker's verbal planning, and how does, in a dialogue, the speaker's production of metonymy align with the interlocutor?

Some conceptual relationships such as containment or causation are widely exploited for metonymy while others, such as those of contact or distance, are not. What makes a conceptual relationship eligible to serve as a **metonymy-producing relationship**?

Metonymy is a poorly defined category. It ranges along a **continuum** between literalness and metaphor. For example, does the relationship between type and token involve metaphor or metonymy? What is the motivational status of "one-shot" metonymies? Can the notions of conceptual and linguistic metonymy be constrained?

Conceptual metonymies have mainly been deduced from linguistic metonymies. Are assumptions about the conceptual nature of a particular metonymy dependent on, or detached from, its language? A case in point is the English *hit the N_{type}* construction in expressions such as *hit the beach* for 'spend time on the beach', which have been analysed by Ch. Ruhl (1989) in terms of conceptually appropriate inferences. G. Radden and J. Littlemore demonstrate that the metonymic inferences are motivated by the construction and affordances associated with its linguistic material.

References:

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- Ruhl, C. 1989. *On monosemy: A study in Linguistic Semantics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.