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Theme session: *Issues in Metonymy*

WHAT KIND OF REASONING MODE IS METONYMY?

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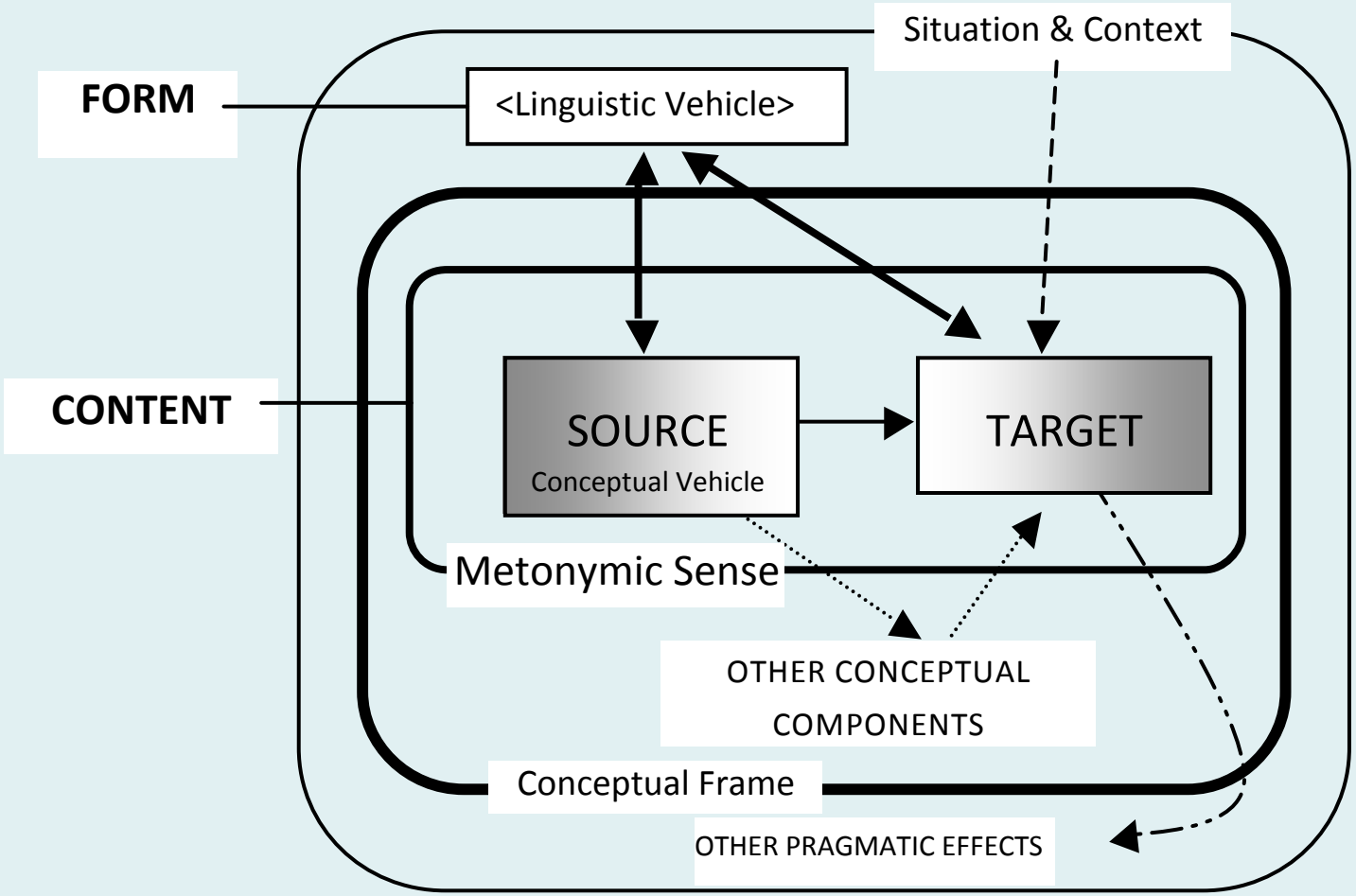
Figure 1. The basic metonymic relation



symbolic relation
indexical relation
other possibly activated indexical links
situational and contextual triggers of target meaning
implicature
SHADING: degree of shading ~ degree of prominence

2. Deduction, induction, abduction

Deduction (syllogism)

[Pople 1973: 147, Levinson 2000: 43]

Table 1. Deductive reasoning

Inference mode	**Structure of argument**		**Defeasibility**
Deductive	$\forall x\ (P(x) \supset Q(x))$ $P(a)$	major premise *or* general law minor premise	no
	$Q(a)$	conclusion	

$\forall$: universal quantifier

P, **Q**: predicate letters

x: individual variable (bound by $\forall$)

a: individual constant

$\supset$: (material) implication

Problem: Deduction is not defeasible; metonymy is in principle defeasible (see e.g. Panther & Thornburg 2007)

Entailment (non-defeasible)

- Entailment: deductive, not defeasible
- Thesis: entailments cannot be the basis of metonymies since metonymies are contingent, i.e. in principle defeasible)

For example:

John devoured the steak

entails 'John ate the steak'

There is no metonymy DEVOURING FOR EATING

Induction

[Pople 1973: 147, Levinson 2000: 43]

Table 2. Inductive reasoning

Inference mode	**Structure of argument**		**Defeasibility**
Inductive	P(a) Q(a) […]	observed fact observed fact other observed facts	yes
	∀x (P(x) ⊃ Q(x))	induced generalization	

∀: universal quantifier

P, **Q**: predicate letters

x: individual variable (bound by ∀)

a: individual constant

⊃: (material) implication

Induction: problems

- KLEENEX FOR PAPER TISSUE or ASPIRIN FOR PAIN KILLER could be regarded as instances of inductive reasoning (ELEMENT FOR ANY OTHER ELEMENT OF A SET).
- However, many other standard exx. of metonymy are not based on inductive reasoning: EFFECT FOR CAUSE, POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY, PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT, etc.

Abduction

Coined by C. S. Peirce
(1839–1914)

Charles Sanders Peirce

- Peirce believed that
  "abductive suggestion comes
  to us like a flash. It is an act of insight although
  of extremely fallible insight."
  (Peirce, in Buchler 1955: 151)

Abductive instinct

- The premises and the inference are not consciously formulated (either verbally or mentally); the link between them is "an associative connection rather than reasoning." (Paavola 2005: 147)

Abduction

[Pople 1973: 147, Levinson 2000: 43]

Table 3. Abductive reasoning

Inference mode	**Structure of argument**		**Defeasibility**
Abductive	$\forall x\ (P(x) \supset (Q(x))$ $Q(a)$	known generalization *or* law observed fact	yes
	$P(a)$	hypothesized explanation	

$\forall$: universal quantifier

P, **Q**: predicate letters

x: individual variable (bound by $\forall$)

a: individual constant

$\supset$: (material) implication

Abduction as reasoning from evidence to explanation

- "Inference to the Best Explanation" (Douven 2011) or "thinking from evidence to explanation, a type of reasoning characteristic of many different situations with incomplete information" (Aliseda 2005: 28)
- Abductive inferencing: pervasive in both scientific and common sense reasoning (Thagard 2007: 227)

Metonymy as abductive reasoning

- Hobbs (2006) claims that the interpretation of pragmatic meanings (implicatures, metonymies) is based on abductive reasoning.
- If so, is metonymy reducible to implicature, or vice versa?

Metonymy as abductive reasoning?

Schema

Premise 1

$CONCEPT_T$ is associated with $CONCEPT_S$

Premise 2

$CONCEPT_S$ is coded in utterance

Inferred meaning

$CONCEPT_T$

Metonymy as abductive reasoning?

Premise 1

'Tennis championships taking place in Wimbledon' (EVENT) is associated with 'Wimbledon' (LOCATION)

Premise 2

'Wimbledon' (LOCATION) is coded in utterance [ˈwɪmbəldən] (linguistic vehicle)

Inferred meaning

'Tennis championships taking place in Wimbledon' (EVENT)

3. Contingency, defeasibility, reinforceability

Conversational Implicature 1

[Grice 1989, Levinson 2000]

Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI)

Default inference, i.e. preferred/normal interpretation, e.g.:

We found that **most** countries used ad hoc priority-setting and planning methods, with little to no underlying systematic risk analysis. (COCA 2012)

Default inference: 'We found that not all countries […]'

Conversational Implicature 2

[Grice 1989, Levinson 2000]

Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) vs. Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI)

GCI: default inference, i.e. preferred normal interpretation

PCI: inference arising in particular contexts

Conversational Implicature: GCI vs. PCI

Example 1 (Levinson 2000: 16)

A: What time is it? [CONTEXT]

B: Some guests are already leaving.

GCI: Not all the guests are already leaving.

PCI: It must be late.

Conversational Implicature: GCI vs. PCI

Example 2 (Levinson 2000: 16)

A: Where is John? [CONTEXT]

B: Some guests are already leaving.

GCI: Not all the guests are already leaving.

PCI: Perhaps John has already left.

Properties of Conversational Implicatures 1 (Grice 1989)

1. Cancellable/defeasible: The inference can be defeated by adding premises/additional assumptions.
2. Nondetachable: Same coded content = same implicatures (except those that are based on the Maxim of Manner).
3. Calculable: The structure of the inference is transparent, reconstructable.
4. Not coded: GCIs are not coded (whereas conventional implicatures are).

Properties of Conversational Implicatures 2 (Levinson 2000)

5. Reinforceable: What is implicated can be added to what is said without causing too much redundancy (in contrast to real tautologies).

Defeasible vs. Reinforceable Implicature

Defeasibility

And I think, in fact I know, Governor Wilson yesterday said that California shares some responsibility for the crime committed against the lady in Florida for releasing him in the first place. (COCA 1997, CNN_Talkback)

Reinforceability

I think but I don't know for sure that metonymy is a kind of implicature.

Are metonymies implicatures?

Four parameters to check

- Metonymic sense
- Contingency
- Defeasibility
- Reinforceability

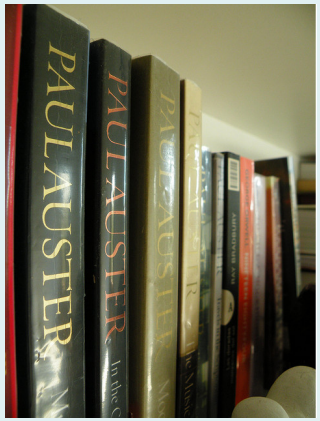
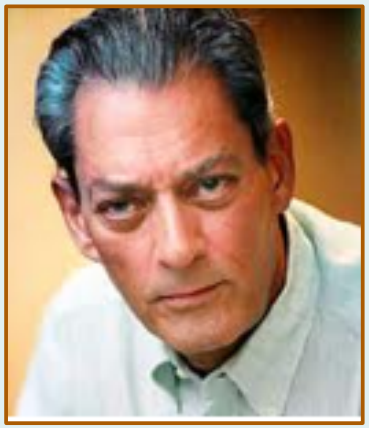
Contingency vs. defeasibility

(see e.g. Panther 2006, Panther & Thornburg 2007)

Contingency: metonymies **are based on world knowledge, not on conceptual necessity**; therefore, they are, *in principle*, defeasible.

However: linguistic context/situation may coerce a non-defeasible metonymic reading.

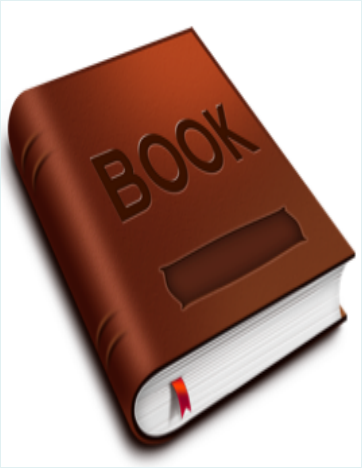
Paul Auster is on the second floor

Metonymic sense	Contingency	Defeasibility	Reinforceability
+	+	+	+
Paul Auster's novels 	Empirical (not conceptually necessary) fact: Paul Auster writes novels	Auster 	Paul Auster is on the second floor – in fact / I mean, all of his novels are there.

She is the mother of two daughters

Metonymic sense/ I-implicature	Contingency	Defeasibility	Reinforceability
+	+	+	+
Metonymic model (Lakoff 1987) vs. I-Heuristic (Levinson 2000): 'housewife mother' 	Empirical (not conceptually necessary) fact: In some societies / cultures /social classes, mothers are typically housewives.	She is not a housewife mother 	She is the mother of two daughters – i.e. a typical housewife mother.

Paul Auster began a new book

Metonymic sense	Contingence	Defeasibility	Reinforceability
+	+	–	+
ACTIVITY: writing a new book 	Empirical (not conceptually necessary) fact: Paul Auster writes novels	THING: a new book 	Paul Auster began a new book– I mean, he started writing one.

Paul Auster began a new book

Note

- The metonymic sense ‘write a new book’ is defeasible; because Auster might ‘read a new book’, ‘bind a new book’, ‘catalogue a new book’ – although ‘put the new book on a shelf’ is probably not a possible metonymic sense.
- The schematic metonymic sense is ‘do something that is typically done with a new book’
- This schematic sense allows for some indeterminacy: prototypical, peripheral, unlikely events involving a new book

Hollywood made millions with *The Titanic*

Metonymic sense	Contingency	Defeasibility	Reinforceability
+	+	–	+
the American movie industry located in Hollywood 	Empirical (not conceptually necessary) fact: The American movie industry is located in Hollywood	Hollywood 	Hollywood made millions with *The Titanic* – I mean, the American movie industry did.

The kettle is boiling

Metonymic sense	Contingency	Defeasibility	Reinforcability
+	+	+	+
'the liquid in the kettle' CONTAINER → CONTENT 	Empirical (not conceptually necessary) fact: A kettle does not necessarily contain liquid	'kettle' CONTAINER 	The kettle is boiling – of course, I mean the water in the kettle.

The kettle is boiling

Note

Stainless steel:

- melting point: 1510^0 C
- boiling point: 3000^0 C

The interpretation that the kettle itself is boiling is unlikely but it is not impossible!

4. Conclusions

What (some) metonymies have in common with implicatures

- Defeasibility: This is not surprising given that the relation between source and target is contingent.
- Reinforceability: the possibility to make the target meaning explicit

When (some) metonymies do not behave like implicatures

Metonymic coercion

Occurs typically when semantic selection restrictions are violated; e.g. incompatibility between verb and NP meaning or between construction and lexical meaning.

Such cases instantiate non-defeasibility but they nevertheless exhibit the relation of contingency between source and target.

Metonymically coerced target meanings

- Genuine metonymic coercion typically occurs when semantic selection restrictions are violated:
- Ontological clash: *enjoy the wine* 'enjoy drinking the wine'; direct object must be EVENT
- Aspectual clash between construction meaning (ACTION) and lexical meaning (STATE): How to Own a Piece of Ontario Cottage Country for $199,000

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