

Metaphor and metonymy in the Motivation & Sedimentation Model

The Motivation & Sedimentation Model (MSM) was developed within the field of cognitive semiotics (e.g., Zlatev, Sonesson & Konderak, 2016) in recent years with the goal of providing novel analyses of controversial phenomena such as language norms (Zlatev & Blomberg, 2019) and metaphor (Devydler & Zlatev, 2020; Zlatev, Jacobsson, Paju 2021; Moskaluk, Zlatev & v.d. Weijer, 2022). A definition of metaphor consistent with the model is: *An (a) act of sign use, (b) involving one or more semiotic systems (e.g., language, gesture, depiction), where (c) the intended meaning (d) is understood through another, more directly represented meaning, (e) which it resembles, albeit in a highly schematic manner.* In my presentation I will spell out this definition, including the theoretically loaded terms in (a-e). What has so far been lacking with MSM-research, however, is a systematic analysis of the “little sister” of metaphor: metonymy, as well as the interaction between the two kinds of semiotic acts. I will argue for a definition of metonymy which is identical to that of metaphor from (a) to (d), but substitutes (e) with (e’): *which it does not resemble, but is rather related in a part-whole or contiguity-based relationship.*

I argue that this definition is consistent with well-known proposals in the literature, from Roman Jakobson to Ronald Langacker, but not with those of “conceptual metaphor” and “conceptual metonymy”, since MSM implies that there can be no purely mental metaphor or metonymy, as sign use is primarily a public, communicative activity and requires *expression* in one semiotic system or another. I will show that the theory allows us to systematically distinguish between metaphor and metonymy, in language as well as pictures, as well as between more innovative and more conventional metaphors and metonymies, as I illustrate with examples from advertisements and political cartoons.

Keywords: sign use, part-whole relation, contiguity, motivation, sedimentation, cognitive semiotics

References

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