Investigating Metonymic Expressions in Communication

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Abstract

This paper was written as a result of an investigation concerning one of phenomena in language use, which is specifically related to metonymic expressions used by lecturers at one of universities in Bogor. The writer investigated deeply the patterns of metonymic expressions in communication and then analyzed which of those patterns of metonymy categorized as the most frequently used by the lecturers. The data presented in this paper was taken from communication activities by lecturers. Based on the data found during the investigation, it can be concluded that the lecturers seem to frequently use the pattern "*institution for people responsible*". One clear reason for using this pattern is to economize the use of language.

Keywords: Metonymic expression, Communication

INTRODUCTION

Putnam as cited in Gärdenfors (2001, p.27) says that "meaning cannot be in the head or mind". He denies cognitive semantics or objects to a notion of meaning which conceives the meaning of an expression as something the understanding of which is a psychological state in the narrow sense and which at the same time determines the expression's extension or reference. Here, a psychological state in the narrow sense is an individualistic state, i.e. a state which presupposes only the existence of the subject having the state, but not the existence of any other individuals or objects. Putnam sees that reasoning consists of two parts. The first part is concerned with the social individuation of meanings and shows that word meanings cannot be determined only by the mental representations of an arbitrary individual speaker: The second part of Putnam's reasoning claims much more: namely that the extension of at least some expressions is not determined by idealized mental states of language users, but only by the world itself. Responding to this, Gärdenfors (1999:28) gives his comment on Putnam's argument by saying that the role of socio-linguistics in the meanings is not impossible. In other words, meanings are determined by individuals together with the structure of linguistic power that exist in the community. According to Gärdenfors, there are two basics types of power structures: oligarchic and democratic. The earlier arises when the social meanings of words are determined by a group of linguistic experts writing dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, etc. When language user is in a doubt about the meaning of a locution that falls under the realm of the oligarchy, he would rely on the judgments of these experts. In the meantime, the latter, meaning is identified with "common usage", and therefore, linguists cannot change the meaning of an expression.

A language is a conglomerate of several sublanguages. For example, semantics of the languages used by lawyers is determined by the criteria that are different from those of the language of entomologists; which in turn are different from those used for slang expressions. In other words, oligarchic power seems more dominant. By

contrast, in daily expression the democratic power is felt more dominant.

In this paper, I will focus on the phenomena concerning language uses in daily communication. More specifically, the expressions which are not connected to the meaning attached to the expressions them selves will be observed and discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

It starts with the theory that has given a base to the concept of metonymy and then will follow the theory of metonymy itself.

Mapping

Evans (167,168) quoted Fauconnier (1997) says one of important themes in cognitive semantics is related to *conceptual mapping*. According to Fauconnier, there are three types of mapping operations. The first type is projection mappings. The second type is pragmatics function mappings. And the last is schema mappings. Of these three, only the second and the third will be discussed since they are related to metonymy.

Pragmatics function mappings

They are established between two entities by a virtue of a shared frame of experience. For example is metonymy, which depends upon an association between two entities so that one entity can stand for the other (see Evans, 2006).

For example: "The ham sandwich has wandering hands". In this context, the salient association between a particular customer and the food he orders establishes a pragmatic function mapping.

Schema mappings

It relates to the projection of a schema (another term for frame) onto particular utterances. For instance, we have an abstract frame for PURCHASING GOODS, which represents an abstraction over specific instances of purchasing goods, such buying a stamp in post office, buying groceries in a supermarket, and so on. Each instance of PURCHASING GOODS involves a purchaser, a vendor, merchandise, money and so on.

For example: "The Ministry of Defense purchases twenty new helicopters from Westland". In this context, we can understand the role assumed by each of the participants in this example: that the Ministry of Defense is the PURCHASER, the contractor Westland is the VENDOR, and helicopters are the MERCHANDISE.

This frame has connection with *mental spaces* as elaborated in the following subtitle.

Mental spaces

Mental spaces are cognitive structures entirely in the minds of interlocutors. In his account, there are two kinds of mental space. The *base space* is used to describe reality (as it is understood by both interlocutors). *Space builders* (or *built space*) are those mental spaces that go beyond reality by addressing possible worlds, along with temporal expressions, fictional constructs, games, and so on. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_ semantics#Mental_spaces).

The connection between mental spaces with metonymy is that they are talking about *triggers,* and *targets*. For example: "*Plato* is on the top shelf". In this context, author is the trigger and is used to identify the target wanted by speaker that is books of Plato.

Metonymy

Metonymy is part of a metaphorical expression. It is related to the use of one item's name to represent another item. In particular the representing item usually has a close

association with the represented item. Lakoff and Johnson defined metonymy as "using one entity to refer to another that is related to it" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 35). Additionally, Lakoff (1989), human have conceptual system that governs what they perceive from the world as well as organizes their relationship with other human. Metonymy is included in such conceptual mapping.

Lakoff and Johnson claim that metonymies are not just a matter of language, but are linguistic representations of how people perceive the world and think about it. The view that metonymic concepts are grounded in human experience is supported by research that they conducted which indicates that there are many patterns of creating such expressions (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.38).

Chandler (2002, p.130) states "metonymy is a function which involves using one signified to stand for another signified which is directly related to it or closely associated with in it some way". Another definition is that metonymy is the evocation of the whole by a connection. It consists in using for the name of a thing or a relationship, an attribute, a suggested sense, or something closely related, such as effect for cause.

Patterns of Metonymy

Lakoff and Johnson put forwards many patterns of creating such metonymic expressions as follow :

PART FOR THE WHOLE known as synecdoche:
- ➢ The *automobile* is clogging our highways (the collection of automobiles).
- ➢ We need a couple of *strong bodies* for our team (strong people).
- ➢ There are a lot of *good heads* in the university (intelligent people).

- ➢ I've got a new *set of wheels* (car, motorcycle, etc).
- ➢ We've got some *new blood* in the organization (new people).
PRODUCER FOR PRODUCT
- ➢ He bought *a Ford*.
- ➢ He's got *a Picasso*.
OBJECT USED FOR USER.
- ➢ The sax has the flu today.
- ➢ The buses are on strike.
CONTROLLER FOR CONTROLLED.
- ➢ *Napoleon* lost at Waterloo.
- ➢ A Mercedes rear-ended *me*.
INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE.
- ➢ *Exxon* has *raised* its prices again.
- ➢ You'll never get the *university* to agree to that.
THE PLACE FOR THE INSTITUTION.
- ➢ The *White House* isn't saying anything.
- ➢ Wall Street is in a panic.
THE PLACE FOR THE EVENT.
- ➢ Remember the *Alamo*.
- ➢ *Watergate* changed our politics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Setting

This research was conducted in Class B of UPI Postgraduate Program. The writer chose this class since he is one of students in the class. Besides, limited time is another reason for choosing this class.

Participants

Participants in this research were lecturers. Communication activities during their stay in campus observed carefully and thoughtfully.

Data Collections

The data presented in this research were collected through

observation and interview. Intensive observations were conducted cautiously. During the observation, the researcher investigated communication activities performed by the participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the classroom observation, the writer found a number of metonymic expressions as presented in the table below. These metonymic expressions are various in patterns.

Table 1.
Metonymic expressions found in observation

Speakers' names	Utterances
A	"Saya heran UIKA kok agak anti dengan demo mahasiswa".
	"Priok gejolak lagi".
B	"Coba konfirmasi *kelas D*, jam berapa masuk besok."
	"Century pasti seneng dengan kasus Gayus."
C	"Mungkin saya pulang pakai *Lion*."
	"Kapan *UIKA* libur pak?"
D	"*UNKHAIR* banyak butuh dosen."
E	"Saya dengar *UNPAD* tidak seketat *UPI* dalam hal nilai"
F	"Selama ini, *sekolah* di tempat saya masih menggunakan kurikulum lama."
G	"Nanti saya konfirmasi lagi ke *Prodi* kapan workshopnya dimulai."
H	"Saya ngga tau kapan tugasnya dikumpulin, pinjam dong Samsung bapak, saya mau kontak teman saya."
I	"Pak Shabir, *Cameron*-nya pesan satu ya, ntar saya ganti, ok?"

All these metonymic expressions will be discussed in the following discussion in order to analyze their patterns and what make them metonymic.

"Saya heran *UIKA* kok agak anti dengan demo mahasiswa".

In this context, the speaker obviously did not intend to say that UIKA (institution of education) itself was opposing demonstration held by students. What is understood here is that the speaker intended to say that the people responsible or staffs of UIKA were opposing demonstration, and therefore, UIKA in this context is a

10

metonymy. The reason is that the word "UIKA" relates to people responsible in it. Therefore, such metonymic expression is categorized as *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"*Priok* berulang lagi".

In this context, the speaker intended to remind that a tragedy that happened long time ago in a place named Priok has now happened again. In this context, the speaker wanted to link that Priok with the event that has occurred again. Therefore, Priok in this context is a metonymy. The reason is that the word "Priok" relates to a tragedy that happened long time ago. Therefore, such metonymic expression is categorized here as *place for event* pattern.

"Coba konfirmasi *kelas D*, jam berapa masuk besok".

In this context, the speaker obviously did not intend to ask confirmation to that class itself but to a member or members of the class D. I this context, weather a member or members of that class are the people responsible in that class. So class D in this context is a metonymy. The reason is that the word class D relates to people responsible in that class D. it can be said that such metonymic expression is categorized as *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"*Century* pasti seneng dengan kasus Gayus".

In this context, the speaker obviously did not intend to say that Century (a bank) was happy with Gayus' case. What is understood from the speaker here is the people who were involved in the bank case (corruption, fraud, bribery). So Century in this context is a metonymy. The reason is

that the word "Century" relates to people responsible in it. So in this context, that kind of metonymic expression, again, falls into category of *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"Mungkin saya pulang pakai *Lion*".

In this context, the speaker wanted to say that would go to his hometown by a commercial airplane that belongs to a company named Lion. It is obvious that he used a metonymy in this context. What is understood from the speaker here is that he referred to a name of company (user) to an aircraft (object). So, it can be concluded that metonymic expression used in this context falls into category of *object used for user* pattern.

"Kapan UIKA libur pak?"

In this context, the speaker obviously did not intend to ask that UPI itself but the people or staffs or students responsible in that UPI. Therefore, UPI in this context is a metonymy. The reason is that the word "UPI" relates to people responsible in it. Such metonymic expression here is categorized as *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"*UNKHAIR* banyak butuh dosen".

UNKHAIR is a name of a university. It is clear that the speaker did not mean that the university itself is in need of more lecturers but the people who are responsible in the university. So in this context, that kind of metonymic expression is, again, categorized as *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"Saya dengar *UNPAD* tidak seketat *UPI* dalam hal nilai".

In this context, there are two metonymies which seem similar. The

first is the word "UNPAD" (a university's name) that is not denoted by the speaker to the university itself. Similarly the word "UPI" which the speaker meant is the people responsible in the university. It is clear that both have same pattern of metonymy namely *institution for people responsible*.

"Selama ini, *SD* di tempat saya masih menggunakan kurikulum lama."

In this context, what is denoted by the speaker is not the SD itself. But what he intends to say is that teachers at the primary school she was teaching still used old curriculum. Therefore, such metonymic type falls into *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"Nanti saya konfirmasi lagi ke *Prodi* kapan workshopnya dimulai."

In this context, what is denoted by the speaker was not the Prodi itself. What he intended to say that he would ask confirmation to the staffs of the Prodi. This metonymic type falls into *institution for people responsible* pattern.

"Saya ngga tau kapan tugas kita dikumpulin, pinjam dong *Samsung* bapak, saya mau kontak teman."

In this context, the speaker refers a hand phone cellular to a company named Samsung. It is obvious that he used a metonymy that falls into category of *producer for product* pattern.

"Pak Shabir, *Cameron*-nya pesan satu ya, ntar saya ganti, ok?"

It is clear that this metonymy refers to the producer of a product which is used to stand for the product itself.

From all these utterances, it could be analyzed that metonymic expressions used by postgraduate students of class B mostly fall into *institution for people responsible* pattern which appears here as many as eight times. While other metonymic expressions fall into three categories namely *producer for product*, *object used for user*, and *place for event*. It is strongly assumed that the frequently use of the *institution for people responsible* pattern could not be separated from their real condition as students who deal much with institution or organization or school. For simplification of language, they used such names of the institution or school or organization to refer to the people responsible in them.

CONCLUSION

From the finding of metonymic expressions above, it could be concluded that participants mostly tended to use a metonymic expression of *institution responsible for people* pattern. There is one clear reason why this happened that is the context where the participants communicate that is academic context.

This frequently used metonymy pattern for sure, as it is strongly believed, could not be separated from condition in which they dealt much with such academic terms. They seemed to tend to use such metonymic expressions for simplifying the language they used. In short, their using such metonymies mainly to economize the language they used.

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