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Metonymy and the meaning construction – on the material of *The Promised Land* by Władysław Stanisław Reymont

✦ Кључне речи:
*cognitive linguistics, metonymy,
metonymic structure, cognitive
semantics, idiolect.*

Чланак има за циљ да представи основне поставке когнитивног приступа проблему метонимије на примерима метонимијских структура из романа *Обећана земља* Владислава Станислава Рејмонта. Као што ће показати, проучавање менталне архитектуре лингвистичких конструкција омогућује приступ многим захтевним аспектима когнитивне семантике. У овом чланку разматраће се значење одређених метонимија на темељу истраживања појмовне метонимије којима се баве *Radden i Kövecses* (1999) и *Panther i Thornburg* (2004).

INTRODUCTION – ON METONYMY

In accordance with its traditional conceptions, metonymy is often characterized as a 'stand for' relation, a reflection of which is that metonymies are usually represented by the schema X FOR Y, where X represents the source meaning and Y symbolizes the target meaning of the metonymic operation. (see Panther & Thornburg 2004: 95) In modern generation of cognitive linguistics, even though metaphor and metonymy are

regarded as two basic structuring principles of human conceptual system, we can easily observe such schemas of metonymic configurations. Nevertheless, metonymy is no longer defined as a stylistic, poetic nor rhetoric device that allows us to use one entity to stand for another; it is not merely an operation of substitution. Metonymic concepts are treated as a part of the ordinary, everyday way we think, act and talk. In their book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), introducing a new approach to language and meaning,

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Lakoff and Johnson argue that metonymy serves the function of providing understanding. For illustration they give the following example: in the case of the metonymy *the part for the whole* there are many parts that can stand for the whole; which part we pick up determines which aspect of the whole we are focusing on (36).

Lakoff and Johnson also admit that metonymy cannot be limited to random expressions or arbitrary occurrences, to be treated as isolated instances. Metonymic concepts function in a structured way. They are systematic and allow us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else (39).

During the extensive cognitive research in Europe and the USA, metonymy has been presented as a fundamental conceptual mechanism: Lakoff (1987) discusses metonymy against the fundamental cognitive linguistic concept of ICM (*Idealized Cognitive Model*) or *scenario*, which is linked to the concept of *frame*. A substantial part of his discussion concentrates on different kinds of prototype-based categories (ideals, paragons, social stereotypes, typical examples) which are structured by metonymy. For the first time on such a scale metonymy has been presented as a cognitive process which underlies the formation of human cognitive categories. Lakoff also shows to what extent metonymy is entrenched in social and cultural experience (see: Kosecki 2005: 19).

In his paper *Reference-point Constructions*, published in 1993, Langacker sees metonymy as a kind of reference-point construction. He also draws attention to the active-zone relation, which is very common in language. An active zone in a given entity does not have to be its sub-part in the physical sense. It can only be related to it in a certain context, which points out to the concept of conceptual contiguity. (see: Kosecki 2005: 20).

According to Kosecki (2005: 20–21), an important study of metonymy is Gibbs (1994). Gibbs argues that metonymy is a matter of thought, hence a conceptual phenomenon. He discusses the role of metonymy in eponyms, tautologies, as well as indirect speech acts, and thus shows how deeply metonymy is embedded in language. His analysis relies mainly on Lakoff's framework.

The late 1990s represent a shift in the European study of metonymy. Radden and Kövecses make the first attempt to provide a systematic theory of metonymy within cognitive linguistics. It is based on the concept of ICM and the authors advance a comprehensive classification of metonymic configurations and metonymy types. They define metonymy as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or ICM" (1999: 21).

Radden and Kövecses view of metonymy as consisting of two elements, i.e. vehicle and target, as well as their classification of individual metonymies, have been accepted in the present article.

Apart from the presentation of the development of the concept of metonymy, the book *On the PART-WHOLE Configuration and Multiple Construals of Salience within a Simple Lexeme* offers the following characteristics of this conceptual mechanism (Kosecki 2005: 21):

Metonymy is based on association and contiguity;

Contiguity can be physical or conceptual; in the latter case it results from human construal of the world;

Metonymy is an underlying principle of diverse linguistic phenomena, e.g. semantic change, pragmatic inferencing, the structure of categories, the structure of signs, word-formation processes, etc.;

Metonymy is a highly structured cognitive mechanism; metonymic expressions are created following a number of principles.

In Panther and Thornburg (2004), conceptual metonymy has been discussed against the theory of pragmatic linguistics. The authors define conceptual metonymy as a contingent, i.e. non-necessary, relation within one conceptual domain between a source meaning and a target meaning. Such metonymic relations are regarded as multi-purpose conceptual devices not restricted to language but used in other semiotic systems and thinking as well. (see: Panther & Thornburg 2004: 91). The authors admit that the cognitive processes operative in the interpretation of communicative acts are usually entirely spontaneous and automatic:

The rational reconstruction of these processes shows indeed that pragmatic meanings are conceptually complex. It is therefore implausible that the comprehension of speaker meaning should be driven by conscious reasoning, which would intolerably slow down the interpretation process. Human beings must, at some subpersonal level, be geared towards recognizing the inferential pathways (which we believe are largely metonymic) and apply them at “lightning speed” (Barcelona 2003). Such metonymic pathways are part of the cognitive competence of normal speakers and hearers and are readily accessible in particular linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts. (qtd in: Panther & Thornburg 2004: 92)

These above remarks related to the interpretation process of metonymic expressions are crucial for the presented analyses. The next part of the article discusses different metonymic expressions, used by Reymont in his novel “The Promised Land”, that contain the lexems *Łódź*, *fabryka*, *million* as vehicles that provide mental access to other conceptual entities.

METONYMIC EXPRESSIONS IN *THE PROMISED LAND*

In Reymont’s novel *Łódź* is portrayed as ‘the promised land’ because of its rapid industrialization in the 19th century. It was then that the textile industry came into being and *Łódź* became the leading industrial centre. New inhabitants (poor people), merchants and craftsmen were drawn to the city from villages and small towns. Some of them were bent on “doing millions and millions” of zloty while the others just tried to survive.

Description of *Łódź* as a capitalist city is presented in the novel. Reymont painted a kaleidoscopic view of people, places, generations, nationalities. And even though *The Promised Land* is full of individual characters, lively portraits, intimate situations, the main character is the city of *Łódź* itself which encroaches on the forests and villages around it. It should be also underlined, that the Nobel Prize winning author saw industrialization as a huge beast that swallows human resources:

Dla tej “ziemi obiecanej”, dla tego polipa pustoszały wsie, ginęły lasy, wycieńczyła się ziemia ze swoich skarbów, wysychały rzeki, rodzili się ludzie, a on wszystko ssał w siebie i w swoich potężnych szczękach miażdżył i przeżuwał ludzi i rzeczy, niebo i ziemię, i dawał w zamian nielicznej garstce miliony bezużyteczne, a całej rzeszy głód i wysiłek. (Reymont 2004: 443)

[“For that land people were born. And it sucked everything in, crushed it in its powerful jaws, and chewed people and objects, the sky and the earth, in return giving useless millions to a handful of people, and hunger and hardship to the whole throng.”] (qtd in: www.kirjasto.sci.fi/reymont.htm)

Such perception of *Łódź* resulted in a particular way of its presentation in the

novel. The city is painted in the novel with metonymic expressions containing the vehicles of *Łódź*, *factory* and *million*, that inscribe in PART-WHOLE as well as WHOLE-PART configurations. As it will be proved, understanding of Reymont's metonymies not always corresponds to their standard meaning. In numerous cases it is necessary to refer to context, cultural and historical aspects, or to the reader's experience to find an appropriate interpretation.

As most representative, there would be considered metonymies with the vehicle "Łódź". The name of the town is often used by Reymont metonymically, in accordance with the conventional metonymy PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, like in the following example:

Borowiecki wstał i odwrócony twarzą do sali zapełnionej od góry do dołu najlepszą, na jaką tylko było stać Łódź, publicznością, przyglądał się uważnie, co chwila kłaniając się to łóżom, to krzesłom niesłychanie dystygowanym ruchem głowy. (31)

In the novel, however, like in the 19th century Łódź, the structure of the population is a specific mixture of nationalities (mainly Polish, German and Jewish) as well as a mixture of social groups (mainly factory owners, factory workers, tenants and unemployed). Consequently, in numerous cases metonymy ŁÓDŹ FOR INHABITANTS turns out to be complex enough to be analysed in terms of a metonymic chain. Thus interpretation of metonymies with *Łódź*, determined by context, can be reflected in more specific metonymic configurations:

ŁÓDŹ FOR POLISH PEOPLE,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR GERMAN PEOPLE,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR JEWISH PEOPLE,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR FACTORY OWNERS,

ŁÓDŹ FOR FACTORY WORKERS,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR TENANTS,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR RICH PEOPLE,
 ŁÓDŹ FOR POOR PEOPLE
 and even ŁÓDŹ FOR FACTORIES,

as well as the metonymic chains ŁÓDŹ FOR INHABITANTS FOR FACTORY OWNERS and ŁÓDŹ FOR INHABITANTS FOR NON-JEWISH PEOPLE.

Metonymy ŁÓDŹ FOR FACTORY OWNERS is used in novel in numerous examples. Some of them has been quoted below:

...a niech tam to miasteczko Łódź mór nie minie, niech ją ta ogień spali, niech ich tam Pan Jezus niczego nie żałuje, coby wszystkie wyzdychały, co do jednego. (20)¹

Na ile Łódź zaangażowana? Pytał Borowiecki. (...) Łódź traci ze dwa miliony! (37)

Cała Łódź wie o tym. (68)

Cała Łódź jest u nas. (163)

In the first case the presented curses and abuses, shouted out by a poor woman, are addressed to those who refused to pay compensation for her husband's death in a factory. The context entitles us to interpret "miasteczko Łódź" as all the factory owners with no moral principles or sympathy. The next sentence can be interpreted as an attempt to estimate how much factory owners in Łódź will lose after a bankruptcy of certain Eastern firms. In the third example, a part of a dialogue between Karol Borowiecki and Bucholc reveals that Szaja is the one who is particularly interested in Bucholc's bankruptcy – which fact is well known to all the factory owners. The phrase "cała Łódź" ("the whole Łódź") in the last given instance relates to the factory owners invited to a reception organized by Mrs. Endelman.

1) All the quotations of the source text refer to Reymont 2004.

Contrary to the instances discussed above, interpretation of the metonymy ŁÓDŹ FOR POLISH AND GERMAN PEOPLE used in the dialogue between Szaja and Borowiecki (quoted below) should be based not only on contextual explanation but also on some information about the history of Łódź:

– *Witam pana. Nie ma dzisiaj Hermana, dlaczego? – zapytał [Szaja] ohydłą polszczyzną.*

– *Nie wiem – odparł krótko, bo nie cierpiał Szai, jak go nie cierpiała cała nieżydowska Łódź.* (35)

The metonymic phrase “nieżydowska Łódź” (non-Jewish Łódź) is understood here as “all inhabitants of Łódź apart from Jews” or, more precisely, “Polish and German factory owners living in Łódź”. The latter corresponds to the metonymic chain ŁÓDŹ FOR INHABITANTS FOR POLISH AND GERMAN PEOPLE FOR FACTORY OWNERS. Thus, it is possible to interpret the extended meaning of the phrase in terms of another metonymy and the whole expression in terms of a metonymic chain.

In the picture of industrial Łódź painted by Reymont it has been also used the word “fabryka” with its numerous contextually determined metonymic interpretations. Usually such expressions can be referred to the conventional metonymy PROPERTY FOR PERSON:

Ten cham umyślnie podłożył łeb pod koło, jemu się nie chciało pracować, a jemu się chciało okraść fabrykę! (19)

Kazałem jej iść do adwokata, niechaj wytoczy proces fabryce o odszkodowanie, bo wtedy prawo zmusi ich do zapłacenia. (21)

Pan mnie kompromitujesz takimi radami dawanymi wszystkim mającym jakie bądź pretensje do fabryki. (22)

Nikt nie mógłby być z jego powierzchowności wykwiłtej poznać, że ma przed sobą człowieka, (...) o którego toczyły się wojny między fabrykami bawełnianymi, aby go zdobyć dla siebie; był takim, który w tym dziale fabrykacji robił przewroty. (31)

In all the examples *fabryka* stands for *właściciel fabryki* (The Factory Owner). This is a standard metonymic interpretation of the lexem *fabryka* (factory) providing mental access to the concept of a man possessing a factory.

In *The Promised Land* there can be found many other interpretations of metonymic expressions and phrases with the lexem *fabryka*. Two of them can be illustrated with the following examples:

FACTORY FOR ACTIVITY OF WORKING IN IT:

Panu Horn nie służy fabryka. Po salonach trudno mu się przyzwyczaić do kantoru i do roboty. (19)

FACTORY FOR PEOPLE AND MACHINES WORKING IN IT:

Wydawał krótkie rozkazy (...) i leciał dalej wśród spojrzeń setek robotników i szumu fabryki, co niby piekło wrzała chaosem. (14);

Fabryka po chwilowym odpoczynku podwieczorkowym pracowała znowu z jednaką energią. (21);

Ale nam nie jest wszystko jedno, nam – fabryce, w której pan jesteś jednym z miliona kótek! (22);

Nikt nie przychodził na ratunek; fabryka szumiała głucho jak morze wiecznie burzliwe, a jemu brakło sił... (224).

As it has been already mentioned, the capitalist city of Łódź is shown in the novel

as a monstrous, wild, vibrant and passionate metropolis dominated by greed, ruthlessness and cruelty. Anything goes in the fight for money: dishonesty, betrayal, theft, arson, mocked bankruptcy. Moral principles, loyalty and good intentions lose when confronted with such a world. Reymont constructs this anti-utopia of an industrial city using the word 'million' in its numerous metonymic senses:

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Dawniejsza zasada: „szlachectwo obowiązuje”, zmieniła się dzisiaj na: „miliony obowiązują”. (73)

Wyglądał niby bożek pookręcany w łachmany i szmaty, który w głębi swej świątyni złotej leży na milionach i nimi potężny urąga wszystkiemu, drwi ze słabości, szydzi z uczuć i samo człowieczeństwo niepodniesione milionami ma w pogardzie. (74) – [Bucholc]

...na dziesięciu spotkanych na ulicy sześciu jest świeżo przybyłych i zakładających agentury, a dziewięciu chcących zrobić miliony. (77)

Żył w świecie, w którym oszustwa, podstępne bankructwa, plajty, wszelkiego rodzaju szwindle, wyzysk – były chlebem codziennym (...) zazdrośczone głośno sprytnie ułożonych łajdactw, opowiadano sobie po cukierniach, knajpach i kantorach coraz lepsze kawały, admirovano tych publicznych oszustów, wielbiono i czczono miliony, nie bacząc, skąd pochodzą; co to kogo obchodziło, zarobił czy ukradł, byle te miliony miał. (82)

Bucholc nie żyje! Pan wie?... Miał fabryki, miał miliony, był całym hrabią i nie żyje! A ja nie mam nic i jeszcze na jutro mam protestowane weksle, ale ja żyję! (228)

Mieć miliony, czuć je w swoim ręku, otoczyć się nimi, panować nad nimi. (232)

Miał już te upragniony miliony, dotykał się ich codziennie, oddychał nimi, żył z nimi, widział je dokoła siebie. (437)

In the examples 1–7, the lexem 'million' can be structured by at least two metonymies: MILLIONS FOR INDEFINITELY LARGE SUM OF MONEY (examples 2–7) and MILLIONS FOR BEING RICH (example 1). Such interpretation is possible if the noun 'million' means 'a very large number' or an extremely large but indefinite number'

Apart from the conventional metonymy MILLION/MILLIONS FOR A LARGE SUM OF MONEY, there is the metonymy MILLION/MILLIONS FOR A PERSON POSSESSING IT/THEM:

Uwaga, zaczynamy! Milion okrągły! – szepnął, przedstawiając go Müllerównie. – O, my się znamy dobrze! – zawołała Mada z radością, wyciągając rękę. (164)

Co mi pan może zrobić, co mi kto może zrobić? Kto co robi milionom? (30)

Śmiech jakby falą buchał z drugiego piętra i rozpryskiwał się kaskadą dźwięków na parter i na łoża, na te wszystkie głowy i dusze tak nagle zaniepokojone, na te miliony, rozparte na aksamicie, ubrylantowane, pyszne swą władzą i wielkością. (37)

Karol, ile może być dzisiaj milionów w teatrze? – zapytał cicho Moryc. – Będzie ze dwieście – odpowiedział tak samo, z wolna ogarniając znane twarze milionerów. – Tu rzeczywiście pachnie milionami – wtrącił Leon, wciągając w siebie powietrze przesycone zapachem perfum, kwiatów świeżych i błota przyniesionego z ulicy. (32)

This interpretation is possible because the noun 'million' provides metonymic access

to the concept of people who are very rich and have or will inherit from their parents at least a million zloty.

The analysis of Reymont's metonymic expressions has revealed that metonymy plays a significant role in the process of understanding literary texts. If considered in terms of a rational reconstruction of interpretative operations, metonymy may become a source for a play between an author and the reader. The initial passage of *The Promised Land* can be analyzed here as an example of such a play:

Łódź się budziła.

Pierwszy wrzaskliwy świst fabryczny rozdarł ciszę wczesnego poranku, a za nim we wszystkich stronach miasta zaczęły się zrywać coraz zgiełkliwiej inne i dały się chrapliwymi, niesfornymi głosami niby chór potwornych kogutów, piejących metalowymi gardzielami hasło do pracy. Olbrzymie fabryki, których długie, czarne cielska i wysmukłe szyje-kominy majaczyły w nocy, w mgłę i w deszczu – budziły się z wolna, buchały płomieniami ognisk, oddychały kłębam dymów, zaczynały żyć i poruszać się w ciemnościach, jakie jeszcze zalegały ziemię. (7)

[*Łódź was waking.*

The first shrill factory whistle rendered the silence of early morning. In its wake, others, from all parts of town, ever more clamorous, began screaming hoarsely with unruly voices like a chorus of monstrous roosters crowing through their metal throats, the call to work. The gigantic factories, whose long black sprawling bodies and slim neck-like chimneys loomed in the night, fog and rain – woke slowly, gushed flames from their stoked fires, exhaled billowing smoke, and began to come alive and

move in the darkness which still enveloped the land. (translated by Peter K. Gessner, in: <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/classroom/reymont/style.htm>)]

The expression entering the passage (*Łódź się budziła*) can be recognised as a conventional metonymy PLACE FOR INHABITANTS, commonly used in everyday language. The verb 'budzić się' (*to wake*) means 'to stop sleeping' or 'to make somebody stop sleeping', and in both cases refers to human beings and animals. We are therefore entitled to interpret the given expression as "inhabitants of Łódź were waking". But closer look at the context reveals that such understanding does not correspond to the next part of the text where Reymont describes gigantic and monstrous factories, chimneys and sound of factory whistles. Thus, the first, entirely spontaneous and automatic interpretation, resulted from recognising the metonymy as conventional, turns out to be inappropriate. Then the expression should be reinterpreted and understood in terms of the personification metaphor FACTORY IS PERSON, which is implied by the verb "budzić się".

The reader, misled by the deceptive usage of the conventional metonymy, has to come back to the beginning of the passage and explain its meaning in accordance with the context. This process of reinterpretation leaves the reader with the feeling of success: he managed to understand the author's intended meaning.

CONCLUSION

Metonymic concepts structure not just our language but our thoughts, attitudes and actions. As it has been observed, they are grounded in our experience and it usually involves direct physical or causal associa-

tions. Moreover, we function in terms of a metonymy when we perceive the inhabitants of a town in terms of the town itself or a factory owner in terms of his property.

In the article it has been proved that in a literary text metonymy usually serves the function of providing understanding. Analogically to the example analysed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), in the case of the metonymy THE WHOLE FOR THE PART, discussed in the paper as ŁÓDŹ FOR FAC-

TORY OWNERS OR FACTORY FOR A FACTORY OWNER, there are many 'wholes' that can stand for a certain part; which one we pick up determines which aspect we are focusing on. Consequently, using the name of the city as a vehicle of metonymy makes it possible to highlight the fact that Łódź was exceptional and different from other Polish cities. Its specific history, industrial and technological development entitled its inhabitants to perceive it as 'the promised land'.

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summary

Σ Metonymy and the meaning construction – on the material of *The Promised Land* by Władysław Stanisław Reymont

In the present article, metonymy has been discussed in terms of cognitive linguistic theory, as a reflection of metonymic processes in conceptual system. According to Radden and Kovecses (1999: 21), metonymy can be described as a "cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain or ICM [*Idealized Cognitive Model*]". Metonymic expressions make it possible to combine communicative precision with accenting those aspects that are most important in a particular moment or event.

Such metonymic expressions were used by Vladyslav Reymont in his novel "The Promised Land" to construct image of a naturalistic industrial town. As it has been shown in the article, "Łódź", "factory" and "millions", chosen by the author as vehicles, not only provide mental access to other conceptual entities, but also attract the reader's attention to the elements and aspects that are most significant in the events described in the novel.

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