Metonymic Representation of the Concept of Beauty

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to address the nature of the concept "beauty" through its figurative component, metonymy, particularly synecdoche. Macro and micro areas of the metonymic representation of the concept will be outlined and the implemented lexical field considered. The analysis will be based on materials from the 21st Century English literature.

Keywords: Concept, Structure, Cognitive Linguistics, Cultural Linguistics, Concept Beauty, Metonymy, Synecdoche.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that language is a very important means of accessing the mind of man. It is through language that a significant part of the conceptual content of consciousness[46] can be explicated. On the other hand, language is a mirror of culture, it reflects not only the real world around people, not only their conditions of life but also their group consciousness, their national character, traditions, customs, values, and worldviews. Language is a treasure, a storage, where the culture is embodied and accumulated. One of the units considered to describe the world picture is the concept. It can be defined as "a basic cultural cell in the mental world of a man" [Stepanov, 2007: 248]. Thus the term can be associated with the two main modern branches of linguistics - cognitive and cultural linguistics. Despite the amount of research done in this field, there are still areas that need further clarification, because concept as a unit of thought is subjected to constant change and development. One such study of special interest is the analysis of the structure of the concept. Traditionally the structure of the concept can be represented as a circle. The basic notion - the kernel of the concept - is in the centre of the structure, and at the periphery stays everything that is added to the culture, traditions, and people's personal experiences. A multidimensional meaningful construct made up of several components (notional, figurative and evaluative), the concept can be viewed as an object of linguistic analysis thanks to its symbolic nature. The sign component of the concept involves a connection with certain verbal means of expression. They set up a corresponding semantic field in which the name of the concept is the center or core [Vorkachev 2003: 68]. The figurative and evaluative components are on the periphery of each concept and help to understand the mentality of people[47]. Therefore, it is through the evaluative and figurative component of the concept that we can get to the collective consciousness of a nation and the conceptual realm[48] of its individuals. Usually, the figurative component is expressed through figurative language or tropes such as simile, irony, understatement (litotes), overstatement (hyperbole), metaphor and metonymy. Despite the interest shown in metonymy during the past decades, no precise definition has been offered yet. A typical definition may be: A stands for B with which A is closely associated. But this stands true for metaphors as well.

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[46] Consciousness is (3): the totality in psychology of sensations, perceptions, ideas, attitudes and feelings of which an individual or a group is aware at any given time or within a particular time span [[definition from Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, Unabridged]

[47] Mentality can be defined as the perception of the world in the categories and forms of the native language that connects the intellectual, and spiritual qualities of national character in its typical manifestations [Bloom, 2000: 79]

[48] Ordered collection of concepts in the mind of a person forms his/her conceptual realm. Language is one of the means of access to the people's mind, their conceptual realm, the content and structure of concepts as units of thinking.

Synecdoche, on the other hand, is viewed by most scholars as a subtype of metonymy. Traditionally, it is defined as a relation in which a part stands for a whole or a whole stands for a part. In this context, **the aim** of this paper is to develop a metonymic model of the concept of beauty through analyzing the figurative component represented by the speech figure of metonymy, respectively synecdoche. Macro and micro areas of the metonymic representation of the concept will be outlined and the implemented lexical field considered. The analysis will be based on materials from the 21st Century English literature.

CREATING A METONYMIC MODEL[49] OF THE CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

There has been increased interest in metaphor and metonymy within linguistics since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) in which it is claimed that metaphors and metonymies are fundamental to the structuring of our thought and language and that we frequently use the concepts and lexis from one semantic area to think and talk about other areas. We think 'metonymically' because it is physically impossible to consciously activate all the knowledge that we have of a particular concept at once, so we tend to focus on a salient aspect of that concept, and use this as a point of access to the whole concept [Littlemore, 2015: 4]. To a large extent, therefore, it can be said that metonymy is prevalent in language simply because it is a property of our everyday thought processes [Langacker, 1993: 23].

The most common type of metonymy or synecdoche connected with the concept BEAUTY is the relation of *the part to the whole*. This model is implemented as part of the subject or phenomenon obtains characteristics that allow it to be relative to the category[50] of **beautiful**. Each category is characterized, on the one hand, with objects, and on the other hand, with certain signs by which an object is assigned to this category. In the context of our research, we can say that category BEAUTY includes most diverse entities that may become a subject of evaluation by the speaker - a person (or part of their face, body), animals, artifacts, natural phenomena or artwork. The analysis of the material allows us to differentiate the following **macro areas of the metonymic model of the concept of Beauty: Physical beauty, Spiritual beauty, Natural beauty, Artificial beauty.** Each of these macro areas is characterized by a set of structural elements that are most often subject to aesthetic evaluation by the speaker. The information content of the evaluation for each subject presents the micro areas of the concept of Beauty.

The metonymic representation of the concept Beauty in the area of **Physical beauty** includes such micro areas as:

- appearance
  *'**You look beautiful**,' he breathed into her hair.*   [Sanders, 2008: 158]
- face
  *Caroline, or Carrie as she is familiarly known, is American. She must have been **stunningly beautiful** in her youth, and still has a **lovely face***
                                                                    [Lodge, 2001: 24]
- hair
  *Your **hair looks nice**, love. Really…..smooth.*   [Sanders, 2008: 16]
- mouth

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[49] According to Lakoff [1987:84-85], metonymy is not a linguistic object, but a conceptual or cognitive organisation expressed by a linguistic object. This cognitive organisation corresponds to a 'metonymic model' and has certain characteristics.

[50] E. Rosch (1985) thinks that humans categorise not by means of the necessary and sufficient conditions assumed by the classical theory, but with reference to a prototype: a relatively abstract mental representation that assembles the key attributes or features that best represent instances of a given category. The prototype was therefore conceived as a schematic representation of the most salient or central characteristics associated with members of the category in question.

*He owed it to himself to earn another chance at that **beautiful, luscious mouth** before he exploded ...* [Parks, 2012: 134]

- skin

*… her **skin is remarkably fine** for a woman well past the bloom of youth.* [Lodge, 2001: 59]

- cheeks, lips, teeth

*... her **cheeks glowed rosily**, and her **sickle lips** opened on **perfect teeth** smiling broadly on recognition* [Lodge, 2001: 65]

- body

*I must have **looked pretty good** to Marta wading stark naked in the stream, in fact, she told me so later, "**Like a statue in a museum,** like one of them **Greek gods made out of white marble…"** I saw the frank admiration in her smile* [Lodge, 2001: 78]

The metonymic representation of the concept Beauty in the area of **Spiritual beauty** includes such micro areas as:

- character, behaviour

*But regardless of **his beauty**, Holly really craved company and he seemed like a **nice, decent** man to talk to.* [Ahern, 2008: 184]

- spirit, soul

*'You do very well, Becky,' he says. '**You have a beautiful spirit.**'*
I feel a sparkle of delight all over. I, Rebecca, have a beautiful spirit. I knew it.
*'**You have an unworldly soul**,' he adds in his soft voice, and I stare back totally mesmerized.* [Kinsella, 2004:15]

- intelligence, manners

*Marc Osbourne was everything she'd convinced herself she would never find in a man - **tender, sexy, intelligent, attentive**.* [Bockoven, 2011: 5]

- intellect, behaviour

*She had thought him **handsome** when they first met but it was his **intellect** and **passion** and **caring** she had fallen in love with.* [Bockoven, 2011: 36]

- talent

*"You have such a **wonderful talen**t; I can't believe you tried to hide it from me." Holly's smile stayed glued onto her face.* [Ahern, 2008: 402]

The metonymic representation of the concept Beauty in the area of **Natural beauty** includes such micro areas as:

- natural phenomena

*The sun was still a half- hour from setting, the sky an explosion of pink and orange, the lights on the Bay Bridge and in the city dim promises of the **spectacular** land-bound milky way they would become in an hour. It seems I never stop to just look at anything anymore' Rachel said, **transfixed by the beauty** of something she saw every day but failed to notice.* [Bockoven, 2011: 212]

- day time

*Now May had gone and June had arrived, bringing bright long evenings and the **beautiful mornings** that came with them.* [Ahern, 2008:135]

- flowers

*Holly was walking through an entire field of **pretty** tiger lilies; the wind was blowing **gently**, causing the **silky** petals to tickle the tips of her fingers as she pushed through the long strands of bright green grass.* [Ahern, 2008: 15]

The metonymic representation of the concept Beauty in the area of **Artificial beauty** includes such micro areas as:

- clothes

  *'Isn't this **gorgeous**?' I pull out a pink T-shirt with a little butterfly motif. 'And this one with the daisy would really suit you!'.... 'These skirts are **fabulous**! I say, going over to another rack filled with evening wear. 'This black one with the netting would look **amazing** on you!'* [Kinsella, 2004:149]

- *accessories (shoes, hat, bag, jewellery etc.)*

  'Oh, my God! Is that an Angel bag? Is it real?''
  *'Yes.' **I glow blissfully**. 'Like it?'*
  *''Wow.' **It's absolutely amazing**.* [Kinsella, 2004:148]
  *Nestled in darker blue velvet was a **delicate** gold bracelet interspersed with tiny pearls. 'Oh, that's a **pretty** bracelet* [Sanders, 2008: 27]

- furniture

  "Do you notice anything unusual about the staircase?" Ralph asks.
  *"Well, it's **extremely elegant**," says Helen.* [Lodge, 2001: 45]
  *"He leads her to the common room u the basement, furnished with **modern sofas** and armchairs…, and a **gleaming Swiss automatic drinks machine**"* [Lodge, 2001: 45]

- cars

  *"Just look at that." He let out a whistle. "**Bee-oo-te-ful**." "Who's beautiful? Where is she? I can't see her." Will pointed ahead of them in the queue of traffic waiting at the lights. "A 1972, soft-top DB6 **Aston Martin**. **Magnificent**."* [Potter, 2002: 143]

- buildings

  Pittville is a ***delightful* garden-city estate** of fine houses and ***elegant*** terraces, set in landscaped parkland surmounted by a vast neoclassical spa. The Messenger's **house** is a ***magnificent*** double-fronted detached villa in Greek revival style, **... the *proportions are so perfect*.** … The house is ***beautifully decorated*** and finished in ***appropriate style***. [Lodge, 2001: 6]

CONCLUSION

The conducted research has helped to reveal the complex nature of the concept of Beauty. By creating the metonymic model of the concept Beauty important characteristics of the collective consciousness of the English-speaking people have been outlined. The differentiation of the macro and micro areas of the concept has shown the variety of objects and properties that can be a subject of aesthetic evaluation by English speakers. In the area of **Physical Beauty**, beauty stands for *body, face, hair, lips, etc.*; in the area of **Spiritual Beauty** it refers to *character, behaviour, manners, talent, etc.*; the area of **Natural beauty** includes micro areas such as *natural phenomena, flowers;* and in the area of **Artificial beauty,** beauty is most often associated with *clothes, accessories, furniture, cars, buildings, etc.* In these metonymic representations the most often used lexical constructions are phrases with the verbs **to be** and **look** accompanied by adjectives, expressing the idea of Beauty such as: *beautiful, pretty, perfect, handsome, nice-looking, lovely, attractive, amazing, gorgeous, magnificent, ravishing, eye-catching, stunning, dashing, great, excellent, wonderful, brilliant, superb, elegant, fantastic, fabulous, marvelous, divine, terrific, delightful, enjoyable, etc.* and the modifiers *so, such, very.* It would be fruitful to pursue further research about the metaphoric model of the concept of beauty in order to complete the study about its figurative component and the complexity of its structure.

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