PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF METONYMY IN LITERARY DISCOURSE: EVIDENCE FROM THE WORKS OF A. S. PUSHKIN

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Abstract

This paper examines the pragmatic functions of metonymy as one of the key tropes in language and discourse. The study discusses the theoretical foundations of metonymy within cognitive linguistics and pragmatics, focusing on its role in ensuring economy of expression, creating evaluative meanings, modeling sense, and influencing the addressee. Particular attention is paid to the functioning of metonymy in literary discourse. Based on examples from the works of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin, the paper demonstrates the realization of the pragmatic potential of metonymy and its contribution to artistic expression and communicative impact.

Keywords: metonymy, pragmatics, pragmatic function, trope, semantic compression, literary discourse, A. S. Pushkin.

Introduction

Metonymy (from the Greek *metonýmia* — "renaming") is a type of trope based on the transfer of meaning according to the principle of contiguity, that is, a real or conceptual relationship between objects. Unlike metaphor, which relies on similarity, metonymy is based on contiguity within the same conceptual domain or scenario. From a communicative perspective, metonymy extends beyond a purely semantic phenomenon and becomes a means of discourse influence. It

enables speakers and writers to convey information economically, shift the focus of attention, imply evaluation, and shape the recipient's perception without direct assertion. Pragmatic approaches consider metonymy a mechanism of inferencing in which context and shared background knowledge help reconstruct the intended meaning.

The Pragmatic Functions of Metonymy: Theoretical Background

Modern linguistics identifies several major pragmatic functions of metonymy.

1. Semantic Compression and Economy of Expression

Metonymy compresses linguistic constructions by replacing more complex expressions with shorter forms. For example, expressions such as *the crown* for *monarchy* or *The White House* for *the U.S. administration* illustrate economical reference and reduce processing effort for the addressee.

2. Evaluative Function and Communicative Influence

Through the shift of attention, metonymy allows indirect expression of positive or negative evaluation while avoiding explicit judgments. In media discourse, metonymic use of proper names and symbols may shape the intended worldview and attribute characteristics to the referent indirectly.

3. Connecting and Modeling Functions

Metonymy links discourse elements and models semantic relations such as part–whole, concrete–abstract, and dominant–secondary relations. It contributes to pragmatic inference and correlates with the principles of Relevance Theory and Speech Act Theory.

4. Referential and Euphemistic Functions

Metonymy facilitates successful reference in an economical manner and may also perform a mitigating role through euphemistic expression and indirect nomination.

Research by Panther and Thornburg emphasizes the importance of metonymy in pragmatic inferencing: metonymic constructions activate associated scenarios and facilitate the interpretation of implicatures. In literary texts, these functions acquire stylistic significance, contributing to imagery, emotional impact, and characterization.

Pragmatic Functions of Metonymy in the Works of A. S. Pushkin

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin extensively employed metonymy to achieve poetic brevity, emotional effect, implicit evaluation, and characterization.

1. "All flags will come to visit us..." (*The Bronze Horseman*, 1833)

In this example, *flags* (part) metonymically replace *foreign ships* or *representatives of different nations* (whole).

The pragmatic functions include:

Semantic compression — economical representation of the large-scale image of St. Petersburg's international recognition.

Evaluative and communicative effect — the expression creates an image of openness, grandeur, and imperial power. The reader implicitly derives the idea of the success of Peter the Great's reforms without direct explanation.

Modeling function — attention shifts to the symbol (*flag* as a sign of the state), reinforcing patriotic and optimistic meanings.

2. "Amber on the pipes of Tsargrad, / Porcelain and bronze upon the table, / And perfumes in cut crystal..." (*Eugene Onegin*, Chapter I, Stanza XXIV)

This example demonstrates material-for-object metonymy (*amber*, *porcelain*, *bronze*, *crystal*).

Its pragmatic functions are the following:

Economy and referential precision — instead of naming individual objects, Pushkin evokes an entire image of luxury through concise lexical choices.

Emotional and evaluative effect — the passage implicitly emphasizes refinement, sophistication, and exotic elegance of aristocratic life.

Characterizing function — metonymy contributes to the portrayal of the protagonist by indirectly revealing his social status and worldview through associations.

3. "Merchants' Assembly"

In this case, the place (assembly building) metonymically replaces the people (merchants).

Its functions include:

Compression and connecting role — immediate identification of a social group within the narrative context.

Communicative effect — creation of generalization and typification, enabling indirect evaluation of social groups without explicit nomination.

In Pushkin's literary discourse, metonymy frequently performs an instrumental role by encouraging readers to infer the author's perspective through shared cultural knowledge. This corresponds to the principles of cognitive pragmatics, according to which metonymic shifts of attention intensify imagery and emotional involvement.

Conclusion

The pragmatic function of metonymy is multifaceted. It ensures economy of linguistic expression, generates implicatures, forms evaluation, and influences the addressee. In literary discourse, especially in the works of Pushkin, metonymy functions not only as a stylistic device but also as an effective means of creating poetic imagery, characterization, and ideological emphasis.

The analysis demonstrates that metonymy is closely connected with cognitive mechanisms of human thinking and communicative strategies. Further research may focus on comparative studies of metonymy across various genres and discourse types.

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