

The body of the Speaker: Metonymic Italian expressions for linguistic action

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Cognitive Linguistics' interest in the representation of linguistic action, stimulated by early proposals (Reddy's 1979 "Conduit Metaphor"; Lakoff's "Argument is War" metaphor: Lakoff e Johnson 1980, 4; Lakoff 1993, 244), was further motivated by the manifest involvement of body parts in the representation of a variety of components of the scene of linguistic action, a phenomenon that beautifully fits in with one of the fundamental tenets of CL, that is, "embodiment". Speech organs like the mouth, and its sub-parts (the tongue, the lips, etc.), quite naturally constitute a default source of metonymic (and metaphoric) mapping in the representation of linguistic activity (Radden 2004). Like in English (Goossens 1995), in Italian a productive model of metonymic mapping projects the representation of the speech organs onto that of the speaker. This part for whole metonymy is typically encoded in Italian via three grammatical patterns a) compounding; b) nominal modification by attributive adjectives/prepositional phrases; c) derivation by alterative suffixation.

By focusing on word formation processes, and, particularly, on alteration, a characterizing feature of Italian, the study is able to reveal how whole metonymic expressions result from a complex interplay of metonymic understandings of both the lexical bases and the attached morphological elements. The different conceptual components involved conjure to construe a variety of representations of the speaker centered around his/her intentions, habitual linguistic behavior, and the quantity/quality of his/her linguistic performance. One observation is that the representations at issue tend to involve value judgments, and that in the majority of cases the judgment is a negative one. The data in the study, which include expressions from the national standard as well as from regional varieties, are primarily drawn from two corpora of contemporary written Italian (*La Repubblica Corpus* and the *CODIS/CORDIS Corpus*), with additional items from three dictionaries, two of which also provide diachronic data which are taken into account in the analysis of the word-formation processes yielding the investigated forms (De Mauro 1999-2003, Battaglia 1966-2004, and Pfister 1979-2011).

References

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