

A Study of Grammatical Metonymy Based on the Analysis of Chinese Constructions

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Conceptual metonymy operates at all levels of language, but research on metonymy in grammar has visibly been underrepresented. This paper regards grammatical metonymy (GM) as a sub-branch of conceptual metonymy and explores it with reference both to theoretical construction and empirical analysis. The major findings are summarized as follows.

Firstly, a comparatively systematic study has been conducted on GM, ranging from its working definition, motivations, characteristics, functions and the realization patterns of its source. The paper holds that GM is conceptual in nature and is bound to have consequences on grammatical structures.

Secondly, the operational model of GM has been built, which is diagrammed in the following figure. It is argued that bi-directional interaction exists between grammatical structures and conceptual metonymy.

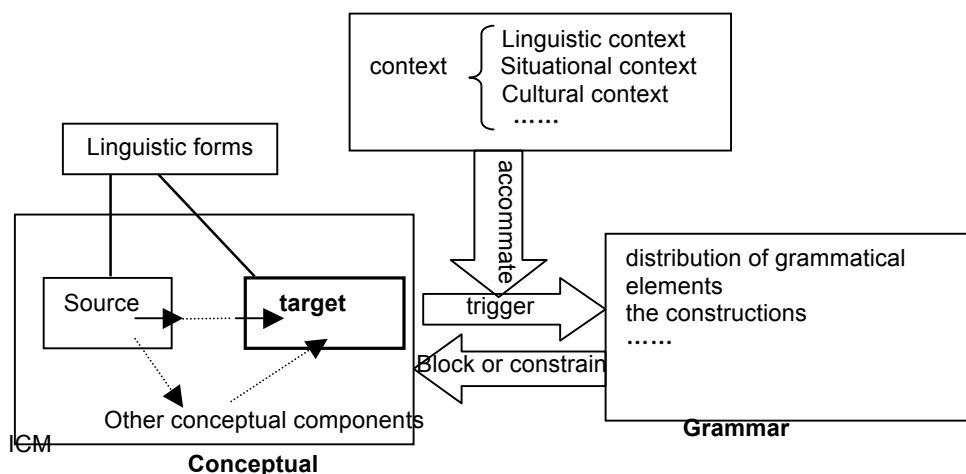


Figure 1: The Operational Model of Grammatical Metonymy

Thirdly, the research illustrates how GM operates in Chinese grammatical structures. Three constructions are taken as case studies to testify and complement the theory of GM. The study of Chinese *Resultative Construction* (RC) from the perspective of GM aims to disclose the impact of GM on the rearrangement of grammatical elements. The investigation of Chinese *Imperative Construction with "Adj+*dian*"* acting as predicate aims to testify the impact of GM on the shaping of the whole construction. The analysis shows that it is the grammatical metonymy *RESULT FOR ACTION* that licenses the stative adjectives to enter action construction. The analysis of Chinese *Verb-object Construction* has revealed that object change is motivated by three kinds of grammatical metonymies. First, the object change is caused by the metonymic operation on nouns acting as object. The nouns acting as object are conceptually contiguous and one of them can provide mental access to the other. Second, the object change is caused by the metonymic operation on the semantic roles in the ICM of action. Third, the object change is caused by the metonymic operation on verb. The analysis of the three constructions has evidenced that GM and grammar are interactive and that context plays a crucial role in accommodating the operation of metonymy.

The study is of significance in disclosing the cognitive mechanism underlying constructions and illustrating the relationship between the basic way of thinking and language faculty. Furthermore, this study opens up new avenues of research on conceptual metonymy to some extent and extends conceptual metonymy to its wider applicability.