Metonymy between theory and empiricism:

A cognitive-linguistic study of German migration discourse.

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis explores two main objectives: first, to deepen the understanding of how conceptual metonymy functions in the German language, and second, to examine its role in shaping narratives within German migration discourse. Specifically, it investigates how metonymy contributes to the formation of stereotypes and discriminatory notions about migrants. By bridging theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis, this work addresses a gap in research, as most existing studies on conceptual metonymy focus on English.

The study builds on foundational theories in cognitive linguistics, particularly the works of Lakoff and Johnson, Radden and Kövecses, and others, to analyze the linguistic and cognitive structures of metonymy. It also critically examines the interaction between metonymy and word formation in German, challenging existing models and proposing new theoretical frameworks.

In the discourse analysis, the research contrasts metonymic and metaphorical conceptualizations in two German media sources, *Bild.de* and *Spiegel Online*, focusing on how these shape public perceptions of migrants. The findings reveal that *Bild.de* tends to employ more negative and discriminatory language compared to *Spiegel Online*. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of metonymic phenomena in constructing ideological discourse and calls for further research to deepen the understanding of metonymy in German and its role in shaping social narratives.

The thesis concludes that metonymy plays a critical role in both language structure and discourse, particularly in the context of migration

SUMMARY:

The aim of this thesis is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to contribute to a better understanding of the ways in which conceptual metonymy is realized in the German language system. Secondly, it has as its object the role of conceptual metonymy in shaping the narratives of German migration discourse. In particular, the focus will be on the ways in which metonymy contributes to the formation of stereotypical or discrimination-orientated notions of migrants. This work therefore represents an intersection between theoretical, applied and discourse-analytical linguistics.

Metonymy has always been overshadowed by metaphor, the latter is generally seen as the prototypical manifestation of figurative language. In recent decades, however, interest in conceptual metonymy has increased in cognitive linguistics. In their pioneering work, Lakoff and Johnson (1980)

devote little space to metonymy. In the context of this work, conceptual metonymy is merely described as "the use of one conceptual entity to refer to another that is related to it" (ibid., 36).

Lakoff (1987) took greater account of the complexity and significance of metonymic phenomena for the processing of linguistic expressions and for mental categorization processes by attributing a fundamental cognitive structuring principle to metonymic mappings. More precisely, metonymy is recognized here for the first time as a basic principle for the formation of speakers' cognitive models.

Lakoff's contribution gave Panther/Thornburg (1997) the cue to draw on conceptual metonymy to explain the nature of conversational inference patterns. According to the authors, metonymy motivated certain speech acts, which are to be understood as individual parts of a conceptual whole (or scenario).

The first attempt to formulate a theory of conceptual metonymy – which also represents the most comprehensive and authoritative contribution to this subject area to date – goes back to Radden/Kövecses (1998 and 1999). The two authors understand metonymy as a cognitive process in which a conceptual entity, the *vehicle*, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the *target*, within the same idealized cognitive model (Radden/Kövecses 1999, 21); the authors also develop an exhaustive taxonomy of possible metonymic relationships, which can potentially include entities from three "ontological domains" (world of concepts, world of forms, world of things and events).

Since the publication of the theoretical proposal by Radden/Kövecses, contributions on the topic of "conceptual metonymy" have multiplied. The last twenty years have been characterized by attempts to deepen the linguistic-conceptual understanding of metonymic phenomena in order to obtain a uniform understanding of the concept of metonymy (see e.g. Benczes /Barcelona /Ruiz de Mendoza Ibanez 2011). In most of the recently published contributions, an interpretative-introspective method of analysis is used. These studies draw on examples already discussed in the literature or on new – often self-formulated – examples in order to make analytical or theoretical additions or to propose counterarguments to existing analyses (see e.g. Barcelona 2002, Ruiz de Mendoza/Otal Campo 2002, Paradis 2004; Brdar 2007, Bacelona 2011, Ruiz de Mendoza 2014, Littlemore, 2015, Denroche 2017, Wachowski 2019, Littlemore 2022). In contrast, other works have focused closely on the relationship between metonymic operations and word formation (see e.g. Brdar 2003, Brdar, Brdar-Szabó 2013, Bauer 2016, 2017, Brdar 2017). The central debate in this neglected field of research concerns the question of whether or not certain word formation processes (such as conversion) block metonymy.

It should be emphasized that most of the theoretical contributions on conceptual metonymy are limited to examining metonymic realizations within the English language system. Relevant

studies in this field focusing on the subject language German are extremely rare (see e.g. Drößiger 2004, Spieß 2015 and Hagemann 2017). Analyses of metonymic expressions in German have also found a place in a few comparative language studies (see e.g. Panther / Thornburg 2015, Brdar 2020, Brdar-Szabó 2021).

In addition to the proposals of purely cognitive theoretical interest, contributions on the role of metonymy in the representation of discursive communities have taken up more space in the literature in recent years. These works belong to the linguistic research field of discourse analysis, which increasingly draws on cognitivist constructs or methods of analysis (cf. Ziem 2013). It should be noted that these studies are generally dedicated to the investigation of metaphors and that metonymies play a completely subordinate role in them (see e.g. Santa Ana 1999, 2002, Charteris-Black 2004, Musolff 2004, Hart 2010, Hart 2011, Polajnar 2022 etc.). Such studies are usually dominated by qualitative or quantitative corpus linguistic approaches.

The two areas of research mentioned – the purely cognitive-theoretical and the discourse-analytical field – should not be regarded as separate. A decisive proof of this is provided by Littlemore (2015), who combines the two areas of research. She devotes herself both to the consideration or critical discussion of general theoretical models of metonymy and to the analysis of real linguistic data and is thus able to shed light on the role of metonymy in the representation of social identifications or realities.

The discursive field most frequently chosen as the subject of the analyses mentioned is that of migration discourse. As an integral part of political discourse, migration discourse has always been the subject of numerous studies in the field of critical discourse analysis (CDA) (cf. van Dijk 2017). CDA is essentially concerned with social problems and therefore involves a form of political engagement that consists in uncovering the discursive strategies that lead to the creation and maintenance of social inequalities or abuses of power (see Fairclough 1996, Wodak 1996, Rirchardson 2007 and Van Dijk 2015). Currently, CDA is a broad, interdisciplinary field whose theoretical constructs and methodological tools come from different areas (such as "(socio)linguistics", "literature", "semiotics", "cognitive psychology", "law", "history", etc.).

In recent decades, the research paradigm of cognitive linguistics has increasingly contributed to the enrichment of the methodological apparatus of CDA (cf. e.g. Hart/Lukes 2007, Hart 2010, Ziem 2013). So far, however, the application of cognitive linguistics in critical discourse analysis has mainly been limited to the theory of conceptual metaphor (cf. e.g. Santa Ana 2002, Charteris-Black 2006, Musolff 2004, 2018, 2023). Examples of cognitively orientated discourse analysis can also be found in recent German-language literature. Here, too, the same tendency can be observed: the focus is generally on the metaphorical mappings identified in the migration discourse fragments (see, for

example, Schwarz-Friesel 2015, Spieß 2017, Kalasznik 2018, Plötner 2018, Spieß 2018, Csatár/Majoros/Máté 2019, Spieß 2019, Polajnar 2022, etc.). Metonymic phenomena are also pushed into the background or completely ignored in similar studies.

In light of this research gap, the role of metonymic phenomena in the conceptualizations evoked in the German migration discourse is examined as a priority in this study. In particular, the focus will be on how metonymic phenomena contribute significantly to structuring stereotypical or anti-migrant attitudes in migration discourse.

The present work is organised as follows. The first part (chapters 1 and 2) focuses on the theoretical models of conceptual metonymy, with particular reference to the German language system. The second part (chapters 3 and 4) is devoted to the most relevant ideological and linguistic-pragmatic implications of the phenomena of a metonymic nature in German migration discourse, which have often been neglected in the literature to date.

The first chapter serves not only as an introduction to the basic assumptions and constructs of the main theoretical proposals on conceptual metonymy. The chapter also proposes real linguistic data from German and analyses them critically in the light of the various theoretical models of conceptual metonymy. In the course of the chapter, theoretical considerations and analyses that have not yet been addressed in the literature are also presented. In this context, for example, the comparative linguistic analysis (German-English) of the realizations of metaphorical mappings in section 1.2.1 or the considerations on the violation of the Domain Availability Principle in German in section 1.2.2 should be mentioned. Section 1.3 also contains the complete transposition and brief analysis of the taxonomy of metonymic relations introduced by Radden/Kövecses (1999) into German.

The second chapter builds on some of the theoretical aspects of the relationship between metonymy and morphology mentioned in the first chapter in order to demonstrate its problematic nature and propose a theoretical solution to it. In particular, this chapter focuses on the relationship between metonymy and word formation in German, with three objectives in mind: a) to illustrate the language-specific interaction between word formation processes and metonymy in German converted verbs; b) to demonstrate the inappropriateness of Brdar's (2017) approach with regard to the word formation types of German conversion cases; c) to propose – using German converted verbs as an example – a possible theoretical solution for the metonymic interpretation of German conversion cases (cf. 2.5). In the second part, an inventory and a structural analysis of the most important interactions between metaphor and metonymy in German compounds are also carried out. The results of these considerations will contribute, among other things, to the development of a methodological basis for the cognitive discourse analysis in Chapter 4.

The third chapter primarily aims to critically examine the ideological and linguistic-pragmatic implications of metonymy in migration discourse. Furthermore, the chapter sets itself the task of introducing those categories of analysis and methodological prerequisites that are relevant for discourse analysis (cf. Chapter 4). This chapter also critically reflects on the current state of research in cognitively oriented discourse analysis and presents a new theoretical formalization that aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of metonymy in shaping stereotypical models, which has not yet been sufficiently considered in the literature. Sections 3.2.4 and 3.2.5, for example, propose for the first time a model of the relationship between source and target domains in CATEGORY-FOR-SUBCATEGORY metonymies.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, a cognitive-oriented discourse analysis of two migration discourse excerpts is carried out. The excerpts mentioned are taken from the online versions of the daily newspaper *Bild* and the news magazine *Der Spiegel*: *Bild.de* and *Spiegel Online*. The analysis focuses mainly on the conceptualizations of migrants and migration referred to in the articles. In particular, the focus is on the often neglected role of metonymies or metonymic models and their relationship to metaphors in determining stereotypical ideas. The following two hypotheses are put forward in this regard:

(a) the metonymies and the metaphors in the narratives of *Bild.de* articles have an overall more negative or more discrimination-orientated connotation than their counterparts in *Spiegel Online*;

b) the total number of metonymic and metaphorical phenomena that have a discriminatory or potentially discriminatory nature is higher in *Bild.de* than in *Spiegel Online*.

Results and conclusions

This study had two main objectives. On the one hand, the thesis aimed to promote a better understanding of the ways in which conceptual metonymy is realized in German. Another aim of this thesis was to examine in detail the role of conceptual metonymy in shaping stereotypical or anti-migrant conceptualizations in German migration discourse.

The analyses carried out against the background of the most influential theoretical models of conceptual metonymy have not only revealed "superficial" structural differences between English and German, but have also shed light on "deeper" linguistic-conceptual phenomena. It was shown, for example, that the Domain Availability Principle can be violated in German.

The analysis of the interaction between metonymy and the morphological conversion mechanisms of German language, on the other hand, has shown that the criteria developed by Brdar for the assignment of metonymy status are not applicable to the German conversions. The model designed in the present work for analyzing German conversions was realized on the basis of the assumption of a prototypical conception of metonymy. Such a model makes it possible to recognize more or less prototypical metonymies in the category of German converted words. Such a theoretical-analytical solution is to be favored for reasons of psychological accuracy. The criterion of the degree of prototypicality of the metonymies, which was illustrated using the example of converted verbs, can of course also be applied to other types of conversions, such as deverbal or deadjectival conversions. The results of the study on metonymic conversion in German not only shed light on the specific way in which metonymy and the morphology of conversion interact in German. They also demonstrate the inadequacy of a general approach to the study of metonymy that relies radically on the formal features of linguistic expressions and takes the English language model as the main point of reference for drawing universal conclusions about the functioning of metonymy.

Furthermore, an inventory of the most representative interactions between metaphor and metonymy within German composites was formulated, which can serve as a starting point for more in-depth studies.

The cognitive-orientated discourse analysis also made it possible to clearly test the two hypotheses put forward. An overview of the results and the discussion confirms that a) the metonymies and metaphors in the narratives of *Bild.de* articles have an overall more negative or more discrimination-orientated connotation than their counterparts in *Spiegel Online*; and b) the total number of metonymic and metaphorical phenomena that have a discriminatory or potentially discriminatory nature is higher in *Bild.de* than in *Spiegel Online*. The analysis has shown that the metonymic and metaphorical conceptualizations evoked in the *Spiegel Online* discourse are generally characterized by an increased sensibility towards people with migration experience. This can be observed both on the argumentative and on the more conceptual level – i.e. on the level of conceptualizations considered in abstracto. Overall, it was shown that most of the non-prototypical metonymic expressions in the *Bild* discourse tend to occur within narratives – and thus contribute to their realization – that aim to delegitimize or delimit the reasons for the MIGRANTS' migration. These tendencies occur very rarely in the *Spiegel* corpus, especially in their more radical and explicit forms. Overall, a very pronounced categorical opposition between *MigrantInnen* and *Flüchtlingen* can also be recognized much more often in the *Bild* discourse than in the *Spiegel* discourse, against the background of which only the latter have a basic right to asylum. The particularly high frequency of the metonymy *Geflüchtete* in the *Spiegel* corpus is further evidence of a more fluid categorization:

as shown, *Geflüchtete* is used in many articles in the Spiegel discourse alternately with *Flüchtlinge* as a synonym for the form *MigrantInnen*. This phenomenon not only testifies to a less strict form of categorization in the *Spiegel* narratives, but also has an effect on the meaning dimension of the form *MigrantInnen*, in that the latter is less likely to activate a metonymic model of the kind MIGRANTS ARE ILLEGAL MIGRANTS in the Spiegel discourse, as is often the case in the Bild discourse.

The prototypical metonymies found in the two corpora are also generally in line with the trends mentioned above. Significantly greater in the *Spiegel* discourse is also the presence of metonymies such as *Schutzsuchende* (20 compared to the 4 found in the Bild corpus), *Flüchtende* (11 vs. 1) and *Vertriebene* (3 vs. 2), which from the point of view of conceptualizations more or less directly invoke a forced flight scenario – or in any case an implicit agonistic vector (as in the case of *Vertriebene*) responsible for the escape of the people concerned. In other words, the prototypical metonymic forms present in the *Spiegel* corpus emphasize the necessity or, in any case, the urgent nature of the migratory journey. The tenor of the metonymies *Geflohene*, *Ausgebombte*, *Gefolterte*, *Erniedrigte*, *Schwächste* und *Unschuldige* found only in the Spiegel discourse is certainly also pro-migration.

The analysis of the metonymic models of gender categories also revealed that the subcategory MIGRANTINNEN is very rarely evoked directly in both corpora. However, it is much more strongly represented in the Spiegel discourse. In other words, the metonymic model MIGRANTEN for MIGRANTEN UND MIGRANTINNEN is much more common in the *Bild* discourse than in the *Spiegel* discourse, which testifies to an increased awareness of gender differentiation in this last source. The category MIGRANTINNEN, on the other hand, seems to be strongly underrepresented in the *Bild* discourse. These findings suggest that in general *Spiegel* tends to be more sensitive towards gender differentiation than *Bild*.

There was also more evidence of the metonymic model of the migration journey in the *Bild* corpus (106) than in the *Spiegel* corpus (60). As a rule, instances of this model, in which the ARRIVAL PHASE stands for the entire MIGRATION JOURNEY, provide fertile ground for quite aggressive anti-migration narratives, which often refer to the topoi of illegality, burden, pull factors and proximisation strategies, among others. As mentioned, these instances occur more frequently in the *Bild* discourse (82 references) than in the *Spiegel* discourse (49 references). Looking at the percentage of evidence in relation to the total number of models elicited in each corpus, the total number of these instances is higher in the *Spiegel* corpus (81.66%) than in the *Bild* corpus (77.35%). However, the instances of this type found in the *Spiegel* discourse tend to be rhetorically less aggressive, in that they do not make explicit reference to topoi of illegality or pull factors, nor do they interact with the water metaphor. The total number of instances of the DEPARTURE-PHASE-FOR-JOURNEY model

is 24 (22.64%) in the *Bild* corpus and 11 (18.33%) in the *Spiegel* corpus. Instances of this type tend to be less aggressive from a rhetorical and argumentative point of view. They also often provide space for hints and insights into the causes of migration. However, there is no lack of exceptions: instances of these instances operating in conjunction with proximisation strategies were also found in both corpora. It is also worth noting that none of the instances of the DEPARTURE PHASE FOR JOURNEY model present in the *Spiegel* corpus appear directly with testimonies of people with migration experience, which is the case in some instances in the *Bild* corpus. This last finding stands in contrast to the observations from the other analysis categories.

Analyzing the metaphors – as well as their interactions with metonymic mappings – also helped to confirm the hypotheses. Simply looking at the absolute frequency of the different metaphors in the two corpora is enough to get an idea of how dense the anti-migration and (potentially) discriminatory conceptualizations are in the *Bild* discourse. Almost all potentially anti-immigration mappings are clearly more present in *Bild*. The mapping MIGRANTS ARE (UNWELCOME) GUESTS is the only exception, as its frequency in the two corpora is almost equal (51 in the *Bild* corpus vs. 50 in the *Spiegel* corpus). Overall, the most radical antimigrant or discriminatory metaphorical expressions were identified in the *Bild* discourse. This applies in particular to water, invasion and animal metaphors. It was also found that some articles of the *Spiegel Online* show a pronounced meta-linguistic awareness. One article even contains critical reflections on the widespread use of water metaphors in migration discourse.

In view of the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that it is desirable for cognitive discourse semantics to give more space and value to metonymic phenomena. The ideological effects that arise from the functioning of metonymy are anything but incidental, as the contributions published on this topic in recent decades suggest. As seen in the example of migration discourse, metonymic mappings play a central role in the shaping and dissemination of stereotypes in ideological discourse. The in-depth exploration of their role in the operation of metaphors and their diverse and complex interactions with the metaphorical mappings recognizable in the text can make a significant contribution to the understanding and critical deconstruction of the narratives that characterize migration discourse. In general, it is also necessary for research to focus on other sources in order to produce a comprehensive inventory of the most relevant metonymic and metaphorical mappings operating in German migration discourse.

As the considerations in the first chapter and the study carried out in the second chapter have shown, there is also a need for theoretical work that investigates the language-typical realizations of metonymy within German and compares them contrastively with the different types of metonymies until now (almost exclusively) considered in English. Work of this kind could contribute to 1)

deepening our knowledge of how the German language deals with certain metonymic mappings; in particular, reference is made to the possibility of the German language system to block or enable the linguistic realization of metonymic mappings in certain contexts; 2) deepening our knowledge of word formation in German; 3) to extend the understanding of metonymy in general, i.e. e.g. to confirm or modify some of the previously identified principles of its functioning or the basic theoretical assumptions or even to identify further principles.

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