

THE PROCESSING OF ANIMAL-RELATED EXPRESSIONS¹

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ABSTRACT: *The aim of this study is to explore how several animal-related expressions are both processed and understood in natural language. In order to do so, we draw on the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor, which was first put forward by Lakoff & Johnson in 1980. More specifically, we aim at analyzing three different types of animal expressions, namely: (i) those that are based either on prototypical actions performed by animals (e.g. to leave with one's tails between one's legs) or on animal parts (e.g. to have hawk's eyes); (ii) those that derive from animal names and which originate actions that can be applied to people's behavior (Bad luck seems to have dogged me throughout my whole life, I called out to him but he hared off in the opposite direction); and (iii), those that stem from sounds which are typically emitted by animals and can be used to refer to speech verbs (bark, bellow, howl, snarl, roar).*

With this purpose in mind, we elaborate on some of the ideas in Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez (2002), where it is argued that conceptual interaction is fully regulated and constrained by a limited set of interactional patterns; and we analyze certain speech verbs that are liable to be analyzed on the basis of conceptual metaphor theory.

KEYWORDS: *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, metaphor, metonymy, interaction, speech verbs, processing.*

1. Introduction

In this paper we attempt to explore how various animal-related expressions can be processed and understood in natural language. In so doing, we base our study on the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor, which was first put forward by Lakoff & Johnson in 1980. More specifically, our purpose is to explain the way people process and understand three different types of animal expressions, namely: (i) those that are based either on prototypical actions performed by animals or on animal parts; (ii) those that derive from animal names and which originate actions that can be applied to people's behavior; and (iii), those that stem from sounds which are typically emitted by animals and can be used to refer to verbs of speech.

We have extracted our corpus of examples from Google searches, and both English textbooks and dictionaries.

2. Some preliminary remarks

In order to carry out this study, we should begin by analyzing the GREAT CHAIN METAPHOR, which allows us to understand nonhuman attributes in terms of human character traits. Under the name of the Great Chain of Being, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) manage to treat ontological metaphors as an exploitation of a folk model in which different kinds of entities are arranged in a hierarchy where human beings represent the higher order and natural physical things are located in the lower position. The items in the hierarchy are organized as follows:

Human beings > animals > plants > complex objects > natural physical things

From this basis, the Great Chain determines the relationships holding between the different orders of the hierarchy. Hence, each level is characterized by having the properties that define the lower ones but also incorporates an additional distinctive trait. In fact, by means of this metaphor, we are able to understand human attributes in terms of corresponding animal attributes, as in *He is a fox* or *Mary is a snake*. All these sentences are in fact realizations of the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS METAPHOR; in them, a culturally attributed behavioral feature of foxes (i.e. guile), snakes (i.e. malice) is used to describe people.

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3. Expressions based on animal actions and parts

Expressions that are based on either prototypical actions performed by animals or on animal parts are usually processed and understood via the “integrated interaction” between conceptual metaphor and metonymy (c.f. Herrero, 2002). In this type of interaction, metonymy is always subsidiary to metaphor although it performs different functions, which leads to different types of interaction, as described in Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez (2002) and in Herrero (2004, forthcoming), namely:

- (1) Metonymic expansion of a metaphoric source.
- (2) Metonymic expansion of a metaphoric target.
- (3) Metonymic reduction of one of the correspondences of the target domain of a metaphor.
- (4) Metonymic expansion of one of the correspondences of the target domain of a metaphor.
- (5) Metonymic expansion of one of the correspondences of the source domain of a metaphor.
- (6) Metonymic reduction of the metaphoric source.
- (7) Metonymic reduction of a metaphoric target.

In order to exemplify this, let us analyze the following expressions based upon the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor and that follow any of these interaction patterns.

The first expression is in Spanish, *tener mucho pico*, and refers to the fact that someone talks a lot; it can be diagrammed as follows:

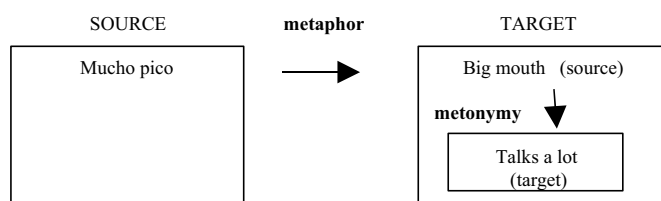


Figure 1. (Spanish) *Tiene mucho pico*.

This sort of patterns contain, as shown above, target in source metonymies within the metaphoric target, the metonymies thus having the function of highlighting that part of their source domain (to talk a lot) which is essential for the understanding of the metaphoric correspondence on which they work (“mucho pico” > big mouth). This pattern is very similar to the one which has been labeled by Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez (2002) “metonymic reduction of one of the correspondences of the target domain of a metaphor.”

A different instance can be found in *to tail someone*, where tail metonymically stands for “follow”. This is based upon the fact that the prototypical way to follow someone is by being behind her. Notice how in one of the correspondences the target domain is expanded by the source-in-target metonymy, giving it more prominence than the other correspondences so that it becomes the central one of the metaphor.

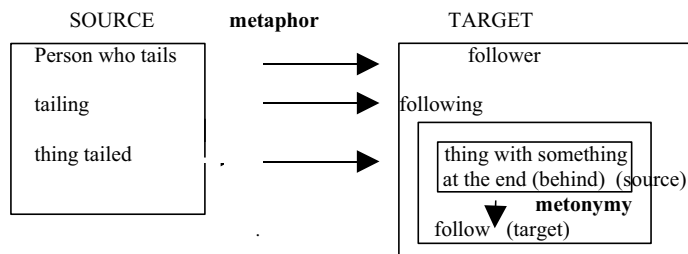


Figure 2. *To tail the suspect*

In the taxonomy established by Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez (2002), this pattern is labeled “metonymic expansion of one of the correspondences of the target domain of a metaphor”, which is characterized by firstly, the fact that the correspondence where the metonymic mapping takes place is given more prominence than the other ones thus becoming the most central in the metaphor and, secondly, the fact that the metonymic expansion originates a focus on a specific subdomain of the reference domain. Hence, these patterns show a double process of highlighting (one referred to the role of the correspondence in the metaphoric mapping and another related to highlighting a relevant feature of the matrix domain of the metonymy).

The following example tries to account for the fact that the metonymy included, which is of the source-in-target type, has the main function of developing the source of the metaphor in order to interpret it correctly. Suffice it to say that the role of this sort of metonymy is the same independently on whether it works on the source or on the target of the metaphoric mapping. In this example, a person performs the action of “scratching” in order to get the most of something. Then, the target of this metaphor maps onto a more general situation in which a person does his best to overcome a difficult situation. So, there is a source-in-target metonymy with the main function of developing the target of the metaphoric mapping to get a full understanding of it.

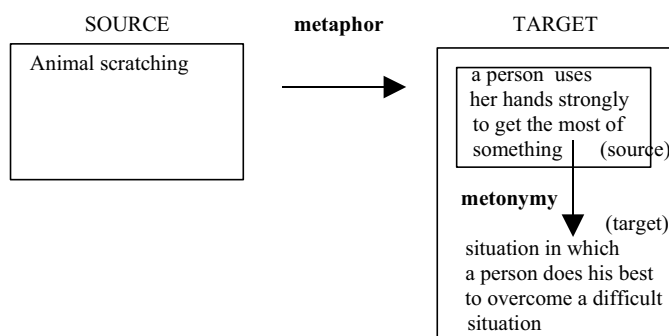


Figure 3. *He was scratching to pay rent.*

In the expression *to leave with his tails between its legs* the source of the metonymy is a subdomain of the target, which provides us with the main elements in order to build the metaphoric mapping (i.e. the output of the metonymic mapping is the input to the metaphor) while focusing on only one of the correspondences, the central explicature of the metaphor (i.e. a person is defeated and humiliated and hence stops his attempts to achieve his goal). This is not possible with metonymies where the source is not a subdomain of the target, as in Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez here noticed (2002). This example can be labeled a “metonymic expansion of a metaphoric source”, always following this pattern:

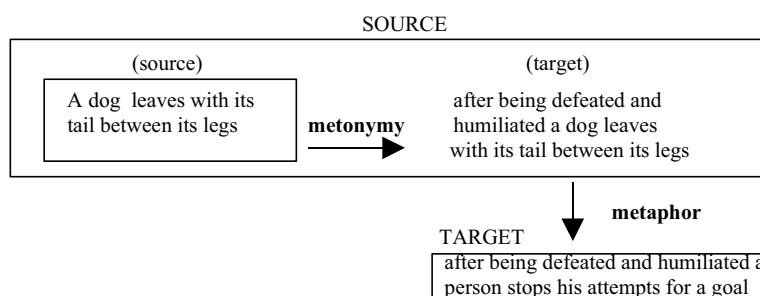


Figure 4. *To leave with his tail between its legs.*

A different although related example is *to stand/get up on one's hind legs*. In this case one of the correspondences within the metaphoric source is developed metonymically (“rear up” for the action of energetically standing up in order to argue in public). The metonymy has the function of highlighting the possibility of “rear up” to become the action of “standing up in order to argue”. So, the source of the metonymy becomes the one with the highest degree of prominence since the metonymy itself puts into focus one of the correspondences in the activation of the metaphoric source. This pattern is labeled “metonymic expansion of one of the correspondences of the source domain of a metaphor”.

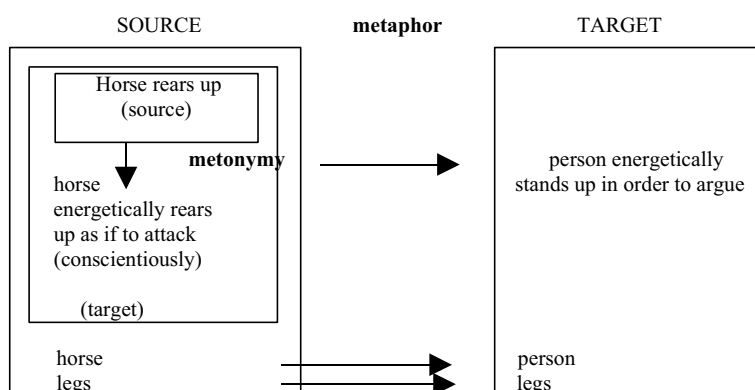


Figure 5. *To stand/get up on one's hind legs*.

A different pattern can be found in instances such as *to have hawk's eyes*, in which the metonymy is of the target-in-source type (i.e. “hawk's eyes” standing for “excellent eyesight”, since hawks are characterized for having extraordinary eyesight, which maps onto the subdomain of a person's eyesight). This leads to patterns labeled “Metonymic reduction of one of the correspondences of the metaphoric source”.

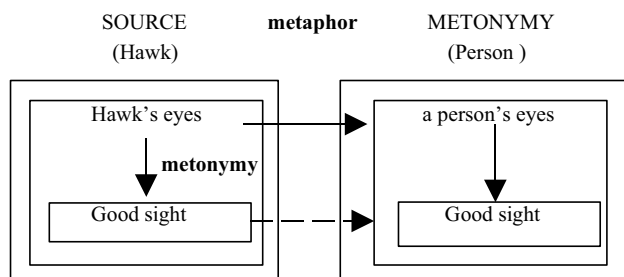


Figure 6. *To have hawk's eyes*.

In order to finish this section, the last interactional pattern can be exemplified by the expression *To paw someone*, in which one of the correspondences within the metaphoric source is developed metonymically (“paw” for the action of using the paws). The metonymy has the function of highlighting the possibility of “paw” to become the action of “handling someone with familiarity”. So, the source of the metonymy becomes the one with the highest degree of prominence since the metonymy itself puts into focus one of the correspondences in the activation of the metaphoric source. This pattern is labeled “metonymic expansion of one of the correspondences of the source domain of a metaphor”.

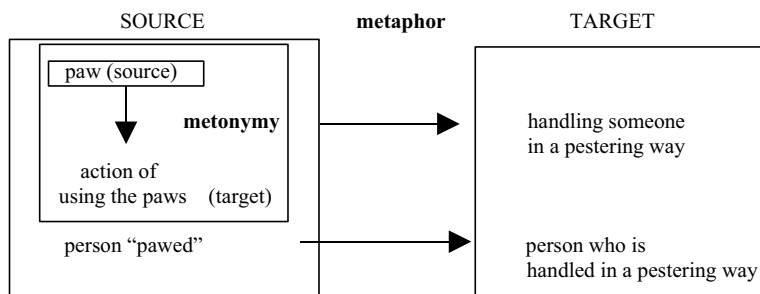


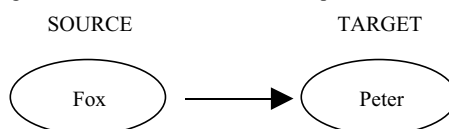
Figure 7. *To paw someone.*

4. Expressions that derive from animal names and refer to human behavior

The previous patterns of interaction belong to the interaction phenomenon labeled by Herrero (2002) as “integrated interaction metaphor-metonymy” and, in them all, metonymy is subsidiary to metaphor although it performs different functions, as we have already shown.

Nonetheless, the issue of sequencing does not end here. We believe that in order to understand all its intricacies it is necessary to take into account both the ontological status of the domains involved in the interaction and the level of genericity of the mappings. This takes us to our second proposed question about the definitional relationship between metaphor and metonymy. Consider first the sentence *Peter foxed me*, which can be roughly paraphrased as ‘Peter was able to deceive me by acting in a cunning way’. This paraphrase reveals two stages of interpretation. One, where –through the metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS– attributed animal behavior is mapped onto human behavior: Peter is as clever and deceitful as foxes are thought to be. Another, in which Peter is seen as acting according to the behavioral traits ascribed to him. This second stage is the result of the application of the high-level metonymy AGENT FOR ACTION which has the effect of converting an ontological metaphor into the equivalent of a situational metaphor.

First stage: PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor.



Second stage: High-level metonymy: AGENT FOR ACTION.

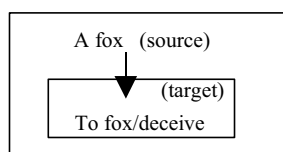


Figure 8. Sequential interaction metaphor > metonymy: *Peter foxed me.*

As can be observed, the interaction process in *Peter foxed me* is carried out along the lines of pattern (2) above, although with one crucial difference. Here the metonymic development of the target has consequences in terms of the ontological status of the resulting metaphor where we have more than one correspondence at issue: we think of Peter acting in such a way that his actions result in the speaker being tricked. This goes beyond saying that Peter is astute, as in Peter is a fox, where there is only one correspondence.

Metonymies are by definition one-correspondence mappings. However, when a metonymic model is further developed into a high-level action scenario, as exemplified in the figure above, the result is very similar to pattern (2) of metaphor-metonymy interaction. We postulate that this is possible because this pattern is initially created on the basis of a one-correspondence metaphor. Indirectly, this shared property of both interaction patterns is evidence in favor of Ruiz de Mendoza's distinction between one-correspondence and many-correspondence metaphors and the existence of a metaphor-metonymy continuum where the former are closer to metonymy than the latter both in terms of their structure and their functionality. In this connection, Ruiz de Mendoza has observed that one-correspondence metaphors may be used referentially, like metonymies (e.g. *There's the nasty rat who betrayed me*). We additionally note that this kind of metaphor enters into the same interactional patterns as metonymy.

In fact, this pattern of interaction, where an ontological metaphor acquires properties typically ascribed to situational metaphors, is very productive, as evidenced by the following examples:

- (8) *Bad luck seems to have dogged me throughout my whole life.*
- (9) *I called out to him but he hared off in the opposite direction, at top speed.*
- (10) *Stop monkeying about, be serious for a minute!!! There's no time for playing the fool*
- (11) *I'd like to have the time and money to swan off to France for a weekend.*
- (12) *He must have been starving. He wolfed a huge plate of stew and then asked for a second helping.*
- (13) *He parroted the exact words I had been saying in the previous meeting.*
- (14) *He is being hounded by the press.*
- (15) *He pigged himself on apple pies. He's now in hospital with indigestion.*

5. Animal sounds and speech verbs

The PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor can also be analyzed in relation to pragmatics and verbs of speech. More specifically, it should be noted that animal sound verbs in English represent a rich source of speech verbs.

In order to provide a better explanation of this phenomenon it is important to take into consideration Grady's (1999) notion of *resemblance metaphors*. Grady has distinguished two types of metaphorical operation according to the nature of the correspondences between source and target domains, i.e. *correlation* and *resemblance*. As opposed to *correlation metaphors*, *resemblance metaphors* are not motivated by experience, they occur when source and target have similar attributes, as in *John is a lion*, which illustrates the metaphor BRAVE PEOPLE ARE LIONS, which in turn represents a subcase of the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor. The use of this metaphor allows us to conceive the behavior of brave people in terms of the behavior of lions. As a result, and taking into consideration that animal sound verbs can be approached from the perspective of the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor, we believe that resemblance metaphorical mappings help us to process the figurative expressions that we use to understand human behavior in terms of animal behavior. In other words, the speech verbs that we will analyze arise from a resemblance operation between a source domain (animal's utterance of a specific sound) and a target domain (figurative comparison of the human being acting in ways comparable to those of an animal).

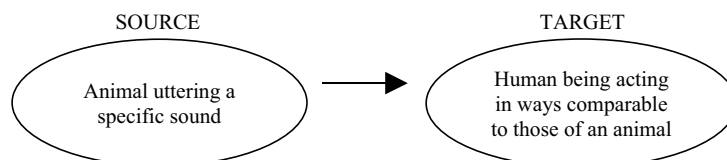


Figure 9. Resemblance metaphorical mapping.

Basically, our goal is to analyze the illocutionary element of the indirect speech acts drawn from the metaphorical mapping between animal sound verbs and human being utterances. In fact, the illocutionary model that we possess in our minds allows us to better process the illocutionary force of the speech act performed.

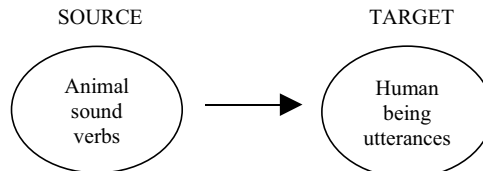


Figure 10. Speech acts based on a resemblance operation.

Let us consider the following examples to illustrate our account:

(16) *The sergeant ordered*

(17) *The sergeant barked*

Example (16) contains the performative verb *to order* that is used in literal direct orders. However, example (17) represents the use of a metaphorical verb to produce a speech act of ordering. As a result, the illocutionary force of the metaphorical instance proves to be more productive and provides the hearer with a greater number of cognitive effects because of the meaningful comparison of a person performing the speech act of ordering, with an angry dog that is barking fiercely. Moreover, the animal scenario instantiates better the power variable than the verb *to order*.

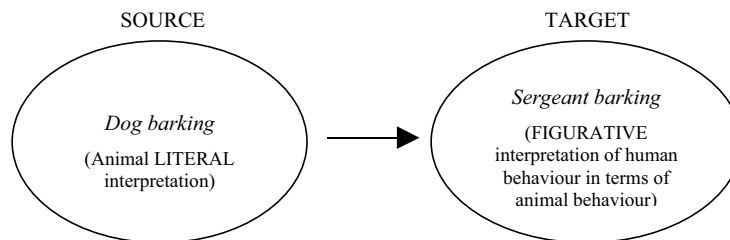


Figure 11. Metaphorical indirect speech act of 'ordering'.

For instance, a *bark* is the short, sharp, explosive, sudden, loud, rough cry of a dog, fox, or seal (e.g. *Our dog always barks at strangers*). When a human being is said to *bark*, he shouts in a loud, rough voice, or speaks in a curt, loud and usually angry tone (e.g. *He would bark an order and everyone would run to obey*, *The sergeant barked (out) an order*). In the case of the military field, a sergeant is compared by means of a resemblance metaphor to a dog that is emitting a loud rough cry, i.e. the relevant attributes of a dog barking (loud noise emitted) are correlated to those attributes of an angry sergeant who is shouting at his soldiers, who rather produces as much noise uttering the order as a dog does when barking.

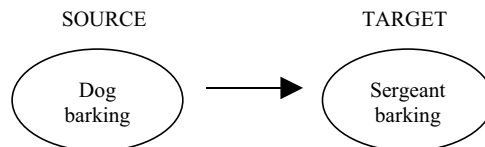


Figure 12. *The sergeant barked (out) an order.*

Following this same pattern we can find the examples below which illustrate the verbs *bellow*, *howl*, *roar*, and *snarl*, in which (a) refers to the literal use of the verb (related to the animal) and (b) refers to the metaphorical use of the verb applied to human beings.

(18)

- a. *The bull bellowed angrily*
- b. *The sergeant bellowed orders at the platoon*

(19)

- a. *The dog howled over his master's body*
- b. *'Be silent!' the judge howled*

(20)

- a. *The animals roared and fought*
- b. *'Forward with the Revolution', the crowd roared back*

(21)

- a. *The dog snarled at the milkman*
- b. *'Get out of here!' he snarled at us*

4. Conclusion

In this paper, besides classifying several animal-related expressions, we have shown how they can be processed and interpreted via either the sequenced or integrated interaction between metaphor and metonymy, or single metaphors. Also, we have not only confirmed that conceptual interaction is fully regulated and constrained by a limited set of interactional patterns, but we have also provided additional evidence in support of this thesis in the domain of metaphor-metonymy interaction. Furthermore, we have been able to examine the question of the sequential arrangement (or *sequencing*) of interaction operations in relationship with the issue that occupies us within this article. Besides, we have explained the processing of certain speech verbs related to human beings through metaphor theory (where the source of the metaphor is grounded in sounds emitted by animals).

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