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Title: The types of metonymies in Afrikaans first language acquisition

Little is known about how preschool children connect concepts to each other by means of metonymic associations. Metonymy refers to a conceptual mapping that takes place between two experiential domains that share a common experiential domain, is traditionally divided into PART-WHOLE and PART-PART relationships and usually has a referential function. In the few studies on children's metonymic abilities the authors have found that metonymy production and comprehension precede that of metaphor in child language (Brink & Breed 2017; Falkum et al. 2017; Pérez-Hernández & Duvignau 2016; Rundblad & Annaz 2010). Literature rarely focus on children who are just starting to acquire a language, thus from about 0;6 to 3;0, and rather focus on children who already have a more extensive vocabulary. According to Pérez-Hernández and Duvignau (2016:385) children do not necessarily use complex metonyms but rather use "compelled" metonyms, which contrasts with the more creative and figurative use of metonymy by adults. These compelled metonyms correspond with what other researchers call "overextensions", and Nerlich et al. (1999) call them "compelled metonymical overextensions".

It is evident that young children make use of compelled metonymic overextensions. This study revisits the types of metonymic mappings identified by Norrick (1981) and Radden and Kövecses (1999) (in adult language) and Pérez-Hernández and Duvignau (2016) (in child language), to answer the research question of which types of compelled metonymic overextensions Afrikaans-speaking children between the ages of 0;6 and 2;0 produce.

Data were collected of 20 Afrikaans-speaking children between the ages of 0;6 and 2;0 just starting to use lexical items. These data were collected by means of diary entries the children's mothers made over the course of five months. The contexts of use (n=1371) of the lexical items were annotated and a total of 223 contexts could be divided into sixteen types of metonymic overextensions (e.g. SALIENT PROPERTY-CATEGORY, CATEGORY MEMBER/INDIVIDUAL-CATEGORY, OBJECT-ACT, etc.) with two types being added to the list, (ACT-ACT & LOCATION-LOCATION). The type of metonymic overextension that occurred the most was SALIENT PROPERTY-CATEGORY (n=53), e.g. *tiek-tok* ('tick-tock') for a watch. The type of metonymic utterance that occurred second most was CATEGORY MEMBER/INDIVIDUAL-CATEGORY (n=51), e.g. using a dog's name to refer to all large brown dogs. This paper will elaborate on the types of metonymic overextensions as well as the significance of this research in understanding the way in which young children connect and categorise various concepts.

References

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