

Metonymy as a research tool

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This workshop will explore the use of metonymic thinking processes to 'focus in' or 'open out' a research project. The definition of metonymy as a 'stands for' relation within one domain or related domains works well with simple language examples, such as 'hot under the collar', but is less useful for other forms of analysis, such as visual arts, music, and multimodal forms of expression, where a complex mix of information is being navigated. In these circumstances the definition of *serial* or *chained* metonymy would, I suggest, be more apt. Drawing on Brigitte Nerlich (Nerlich 2001: 245-272), Armin Burkhardt (Burkhardt 1996: 178) and Klaus-Uwe Panther (Panther 2006: 147-185), as well as my own experience in practice-based research, I propose a new definition of serial metonymy, namely that of 'a cognitive process of meaning expansion within a domain or domain matrix'.

Taking this as a starting point, participants will attempt to a) identify circumstances in their own research project where they have used (or might use) metonymic thinking processes, b) identify what form this metonymic thinking has, or might take (e.g. discussion, mind-maps, material reviews, etc) and c) explore whether there are benefits to raising awareness of metonymic thinking processes in research and if so, what these benefits might be.

The workshop will take a practice-based approach, focussing on metonymic 'material thinking', which places an emphasis on the materials, methods, tools and ideas of research practice. These materials might be field notebooks, a video camera and a sound recorder. The aim will be to draw researchers' attention to the contribution particular materials and tools make to our research outcomes. For example, does the choice of process in some way direct the possible outcomes? And if so, what is the significance of this? This will be illustrated through simple methods, such as setting out a range of materials: pencils, pen & ink, charcoal, wood-saws, chisels, engraving tools, scissors, digital sound recorder, digital video camera, mobile phone, various types and shapes of paper, wood, lino, etc. – all materials which the participants are asked to use to explore, for example, the emotion of 'anger'.

[For more on Susan Ryland, see her work at <http://www.susanryland.co.uk/>]

References

Burkhardt, A. (1996) Zwischen Poesie und Ökonomie. Die metonymie als semantisches prinzip. *Zeitschrift für Germanische Linguistik* 24(2), pp.175-194.

Nerlich, B. and Clarke, D. D. (2001) Serial metonymy: A study of reference-based polysemisation. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 2(2), pp 245-272.

Panther, K-U. (2006) Metonymy as a Usage Event. In: Gitte Kristiansen, Michel Achard, René Dirven and Francisco J. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, eds. *Cognitive Linguistics: Current Applications and Future Perspectives* (Applications in Cognitive Linguistics 1), pp 147–185. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.