



INDIRECT SPEECH ACT METAPHTONYMIES AND DIAGRAMMATIC ICONICITY

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Traditional view has it that tropes are hardly anything more than just poetic figures, the whole classical complex *téchnZ* thus being reduced to just *ornatus*. Conceptual metaphor and metonymy, however, enjoy a central position in Cognitive linguistics as fundamental backbones of cognitive processes, linking human thought, language and action, while rhetoric is seen as a study of how language is put to use in promoting social cohesion between participants in an act of communication. The present paper shows (i) how indirect speech acts whose ultimate function is to maintain or enhance social cohesion can rest on conceptual metaphonymies (combinations of metaphors and metonymies), and (ii) that these constructions, realized here as one type of indirect conditional clauses in English, at the same time exhibit an unusually high degree of diagrammatic iconicity. The metonymic aspect is due to the fact that peripheral parts of a complex Idealized Cognitive Model stand for the central one which normally determines the type of speech act. The metaphorical aspect consists in presenting the distance in conceptual and linguistic space as the distance in sociophysical space.

Key words: metaphonymy, metaphor, metonymy, indirect speech acts, diagrammatic iconicity, conditional clauses

INTRODUCTION

It is traditionally held that tropes such as metonymy, metaphor, etc. are merely poetic figures. This position is quite in keeping with the medieval notion of rhetoric, which seems to be prevalent even today, in which the whole classical complex *téchnZ* is reduced to just *ornatus*. Cognitive linguistics holds diametrically opposed positions on both counts. First of all, conceptual metaphor and metonymy function in most cognitive frameworks as genuine backbones. Rhetoric, on the other hand, is in cognitive linguistics seen in a way reminiscent of the classic rhetoric, viz. as a study of how language is put to use in promoting social cohesion between participants in an act of communication.

In the present paper we first show that a number of more or less indirect speech acts whose ultimate function is to maintain or enhance social cohesion are based on conceptual metaphonymies, combinations of metaphors and metonymies. All the indirect speech acts we are here concerned with are realized as one type of indirect conditional clauses, such as the English examples below:

- (1) a. *If I may return to what we were talking about earlier.*
- b. *If I may pick you up on that point.*
- c. *If I may continue, at the state level, we found that over 70 percent of the people who are in prison for drug-related offenses are in there for trafficking...*

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d. It doesn't sound exactly orthodox, *if I may say so*.

e. I think the whole thing is very unfair and *if I may say so* I think it's very sexist.

f. Now sir, he had continued acidly, gripping Mark by the ear, 'tell me, *if I may be so bold as to ask*, precisely what I have been talking about.'

g. *If I may be quite frank with you*, I don't approve of any concessions to ignorance.

h. There's a – well, *if I may be pompous*, a sort of biochemical relationship between the two.

i. The Detectives, which pulled in bumper viewing figures when it was shown on BBC earlier this year, was a revelation for Jasper whose stand-up routines of recent years *if I can be frank* were dire.

After very briefly reviewing in Section 2 some basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics concerning the role of rhetoric, we present in Section 3 the cognitive linguistic approach to poetic figures, pointing out similarities and differences between metaphors and metonymy. After outlining some ways in which they can interact, we analyse in Section 4 the metaphonymic nature of examples such as (1), which will be shown to involve more than one conceptual domain in multi-tiered metaphonymies. This analysis will exhibit an unusually high degree of diagrammatic iconicity obtaining between metaphoric and/or metonymic mappings.

2. RHETORIC AND COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

The history of rhetoric seems to present us with a picture of a discipline treading a long and meandering path with many crossroads and prongs, one of which meets with some paths of modern philosophy and cognitive linguistics and even comes close to converging with them in taking a turn towards its true origin.

The traditional rhetoric was developed in the Classical period of ancient Greece, about the 5th century B.C. by rhetors, who attempted to teach the art of public speaking to their fellow citizens, and it became usual to assume a close relationship between rhetoric and democracy. Taking a historian's perspective, we see the rise of rhetoric as a consequence of the situation that obtained in Syracuse in the 5th century BC. Exiles who returned to the town entered into litigation for the return of their lands from which they had been dispossessed by the overthrown despotic government. As there were no written records, claims were settled in a newly founded democratic legal system, and to help litigants improve their persuasiveness, certain teachers began to offer something like systematic instruction in rhetoric.

Later, in Athens, the art became more and more institutionalized as a central educational discipline and a complex activity uniting verbal skills with learning and wisdom. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* both records the prevailing contemporary practice and attempts to reform it. Rhetoric itself, as he sees it, is not a productive art of creating but is an art of performing, embodying a power which is employed in certain kinds of speaking. He pleaded for a distinction between rhetoric and its counterpart, dialectics, on the one hand, philosophy and science, on the other. The former, he felt, were concerned with probable matters, where the truth was accessible through several roads. Philosophy and science, on the other hand, are for him concerned with demonstrable matters, where possible roads are fewer but the truth more certain.

These insights, though, proved to be fatal in the long run for rhetoric in its original form and with its original function. If the truth with which rhetoric is concerned is not demonstrable, and if it is, moreover, detachable from the forms of argument, it is only understandable that rhetoric was sooner or later to be relegated to a lower place among the arts, and that the focus of rhetoric was to shift to mere forms. Another important proposal by Aristotle,



one that has had equally long-lasting but more immediately felt repercussions, was to treat figures of speech not as an instrument of thought but as an ornamentation, an adornment that at best serves the functions of clarity and vividness.

A later change of social circumstances was enough to lay bare the rift that was, if not actually brought about Aristotle's teachings, than at least reflected in them. As long as there was a skillful but, at the same time at least responsible, if not a benevolent, speaker concerned with truth, and an audience of equals that was to be persuaded of this truth, everything seemed all right with rhetoric. But the social climate of the Middle Ages was quite a different one. In absence of true democracy, the divorce between the contents, in the sense of search for truth and persuasion, and the form, became more and more obvious. The medieval audience was no longer the same partner in the creative live two-way event that it had been in older days of freer public discussion. It had rather gradually grown to be a one-way process without immediate social repercussions. From the classical period through the Middle Ages rhetoricians began more and more to conceive of their art as a kind of careful, solitary process leading to literary creation. Rhetoric was thought of less in terms of a power and more in terms of certain products of that power – orations, and the technology behind the production of speeches.

Shorter or longer periods of this impoverished conception of rhetoric alternately falling into disrepute and then again becoming slightly more respectable followed each other well into the the first part of the 20th century. The first half of the 20th century saw a converging of several strands of thought which eventually helped carry rhetoric beyond its Aristotelian bounds.

A largely negative bias toward rhetoric prevailed until the 1930s, when the importance of the study of how language is used was brought to the fore by Logical Positivism, the philosophical movement that insists that all sta-

tements be verifiable by observation or experiment. The New Rhetoric movement in the United States constitutes one way of responding to the challenge of Logical Empiricism.

Rhetoric is, for the proponents of this new rhetoric, a theory of argumentation that studies discursive techniques that aim to provoke or to increase the adherence of people's minds to the theses presented for their assent. The new rhetoric is a practical discipline concerned with the forms of discourse not for their ornamental or aesthetic value but primarily as a means of persuasion and, more especially, means of creating "presence" (i.e., bringing to the mind of the audience notions that are not immediately present) through the techniques of presentation. In a sense, then, rhetoric may be seen as a study of how language is put to use in establishing individual and group identity, and ultimately promoting social cohesion between participants in an act of communication.

This new rhetoric brought about a radical change in the philosophical enterprise too. The job of philosophy is now seen as directing and guiding human action in all of the fields in which value judgments occur, and it is therefore no longer considered to be the search for self-evident, necessary, universally and eternally valid principles. Rather, philosophy reflects its own time and the social and cultural environment in which it is developed. Its outlook is structured by common principles, values, and loci, accepted by what the philosopher sees as the universal audience. Finally, from the early 1930s onwards, we also note a growing demand of modern literary criticism for a new rhetoric. This practical approach to criticism proved the instrumentality of rhetoric, freed from its traditional confines, in literary analysis, and this carried over to discourse analysis in general.

Cognitive linguistics, with its experiential subjectivist position (cf. Lakoff, 1987), is very close both to the classical type and the new rhetoric, in one crucial point. Both linguistics (or grammar) and rhetoric, and here we mean



the whole range of discursive types, including philosophical investigations, discourse analysis, etc., are concerned with how we come to know and cope with the world around us. In other words, they all study the construction of meaning of some sort. An even more important thing they have in common is that this construction of meaning in neither of them rests exclusively on entities specific to the activity (i.e. it is not motivated internally) or on entities that have constant, objective and eternal values, independent of the subject performing the activity and his cultural environment (i.e. it is not motivated by external objectivity alone).

While the construction of linguistic meaning does not rest on any knowledge or module in the mind that is specifically and exclusively concerned with language, the construction of meaning in rhetoric does not rest on any specific rhetoric action (cf. Oakley, 1998). Both work the way they do because they are based on and guided by general principles of cognitive framing and steeped into the cultural environment.

This also explains why traditional figures of speech are seen in cognitive linguistics in a fundamentally different light. The central traditional figures such as metaphor and metonymy are considered to be results of basic conceptual processes. Since they are, on the one hand, processes that reflect the inescapability of human embodiment, with all its shortcomings, and also, to a degree, shaped by the cultural background, while they are, on the other hand, one of the most important means of imposing structure on reality, it becomes critically important that we be aware at all times of the subjective roots of our conceptual tools, and of how they can be manipulated in order to produce certain effects, as, for example, shown by Lakoff (1992), where the role of metaphors is discussed in the discourse of media and politics to justify a war. This paper by Lakoff is at the same time a very good demonstration of how cognitive linguistics and the new rhetoric converge.

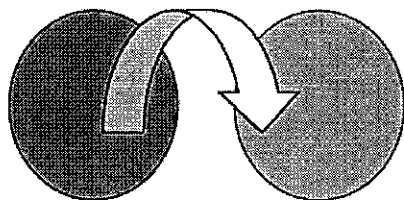
3. METAPHOR AND METONYMY IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS

The received wisdom is that tropes such as metonymy, metaphor, etc. are hardly anything more than just poetic figures. In everyday folk conception of human experience based on objectivism, language and thought are considered to be primarily literal. They must be so, it is claimed, if they are to help us in reaching the ultimate objective, underlying truth. Thinking and speaking in a figurative way is therefore seen as indulging in extras, at best. At worst, it is a way of seeing the world, and speaking about it, in a way that distorts its true nature. It is only understandable that the figurative thought and language are still exiled into the domain of the literary as an outlet in which this risk of distortion could be easily controlled.

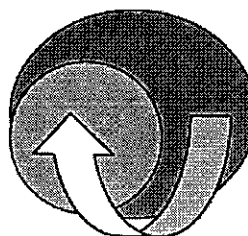
As pointed out at the outset, this position is challenged by cognitive linguists, who see metaphor and metonymy as basic and ubiquitous cognitive processes that closely link all our thinking, speaking and acting. It is quite interesting to note that there is here once again a very close intellectual affinity between this cognitive linguistic view on metaphor and metonymy and ancient classics' position and that later work, continuing for centuries, has basically led into degeneration.

As Turner (1998) points out, metaphoric expressions are for Aristotle conceptual in nature. There is no denying that his *Poetics* contains a potentially misleading passage describing metaphor as the transfer of an *expression* from one thing to another. However, it becomes clear from the context that the linguistic transfer is for him motivated by a conceptual relation. In other words, the linguistic transfer is brought about by the conceptual transfer. Unfortunately, as discussed above, rhetoric came later to concentrate more and more to applied matters, and this observation on the conceptual nature of figures was as good as forgotten, figures becoming reduced to lists of certain linguistic forms.

As for the two cognitive processes whose



metaphorical mapping



metonymic mapping

Figure 1.

role in pragmatic conditionals is to be discussed below, let us just note that they are frequently contrasted with respect to two central points of difference. Metonymy is based on contiguity, whereas metaphor is based on similarity (cf. Ullmann, 1962: 212; Taylor 1989: 122). Contiguity is taken in its broader sense to cover all associative relations except similarity.

The other important point of contrast concerns the number of conceptual domains involved. Metonymic mapping occurs within a single domain, while metaphoric mapping takes place across two discrete domains. It is also possible for metonymic mapping to occur within a single domain matrix which involves a number of subdomains (cf. Croft 1993:348). In other words, metonymic mapping across different domains within a single domain matrix, involving the conceptual effect of domain highlighting, is also possible. The differences between the two types of mappings can be presented schematically as in figure 1.

4. METAPHOR, METONYMY AND DIAGRAMMATIC ICONICITY AT WORK IN INDIRECT CONDITIONALS

We now return to our initial set of examples of indirect conditionals in (1). It is almost self-evident that all the conditionals in the examples in (1) have a special pragmatic function and that the truth of what is expressed in the apodosis (i.e. the main clause) is in no way directly dependent on the truth value of the protasis (i.e. the conditional clause).

What is more, they are logically unrelated. For that reason, all the main clauses in (1) c.-i. could also stand alone. However, it is also clear that the utterances expanded by conditionals, i.e. longer, more ornate circumlocutions, are more deferential, face-saving and therefore more polite than they would have been without the conditionals.

It appears then that there is some sort of correlation or even causal link between the length of these utterances and the degree of their politeness. It does not require much reflection to realize that the mere length or bulkiness of an utterance does not automatically bring about politeness. Simply stating this correlation will not do even as an approximation to explication, no more so than saying that turning on a tap results in water flowing. In both cases the situation is much more complex than what meets the eye at the end point. Turning a tap off will prevent water from flowing, but just turning it on is not enough for water to always flow. There are other necessary preconditions: there must be a source of water supply, the tap must be connected to it, and the water in the supply system must be either under pressure or physically above the tap so that gravity can do its job. Similarly, an increase in the length of an utterance does not ensure politeness and concomitantly social cohesion. It must be the right choice and form of additional elements in order to achieve that goal.

This means that in the present paper our task will be to uncover, layer by layer, the factors that make this politeness effect possible. It is our claim that it is brought about by an intri-



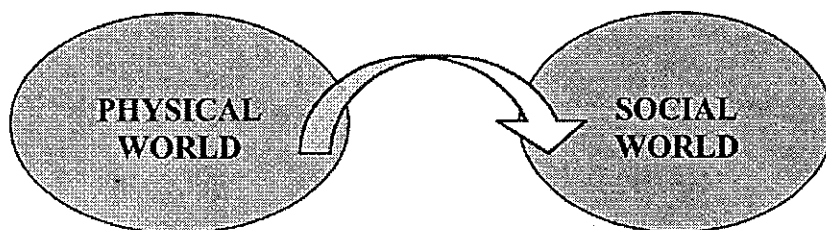


Figure 2.

cate interplay of metonymy and metaphor in conceptual domains at several hierarchical levels and that they are brought into correspondence by the phenomenon of diagrammatic iconicity. Although the assembly of symbolic structures, i.e. pairing of semantic and phonological information, and their combination proceeds, according to cognitive linguistics, in a bottom-up fashion, we shall assume the opposite direction in what follows and analyse indirect conditionals top-down, peeling away conceptual levels one by one starting from the discursive effect of what we hear and see.

As stated at the very beginning, indirect conditionals bring about a politeness effect. They may be seen as a special instance of hedging constructions, enabling the speaker to distance herself/himself from the speech act of directly asserting what is expressed in the apodosis, and at the same time buys the speaker time, delaying the actual moment of uttering the potentially offensive proposition, and thus enables him/her to monitor the interlocutor's reactions and thus actually negotiate on-line the magnitude of face-threat, computing its costs in terms of the expected effects, and eventually even to drop the apodosis altogether, as happens in (1) a. and b. In any case, what happens here is that distance is achieved in the domain of interpersonal relationships, which may in general terms be called social world.

This social world is a relatively abstract cognitive domain and is very often structured by means of some more concrete domains via conceptual metaphors. Very frequently the domain of the social world is structured by the domain of the physical world, i.e. certain properties of the physical world get metaphorically

mapped onto the domain of the social world: (figure 2).

The general metaphor in question, SOCIAL-IS-PHYSICAL, is discussed, among others, in Sweetser (1990).

We claim that such a metaphorical mapping takes place in the case of our indirect conditionals, too. The distance between speakers in the social world, i.e. indirectness and politeness, is presented as some sort of distance in the physical world. This distance may be literally the distance between the speaker and the listener as they engage in the conversation, i.e. the sort of phenomenon studied by proxemics.

The domain of the physical world, however, is a huge one and includes a great number of subdomains. The subdomain of the physical world that is relevant for us here is the domain of the physical realization of language, parole, or more precisely, the actual speech with a linear sequence of sounds organized into words and other such units. This means that the social distance is presented in terms of linear distance in speech. We have now replaced the notion of length of utterance by the linear distance in speech and thus have a clearer idea of why the politeness effect obtains. However, we have to make it clear what the distance relates to, i.e. we have to specify what is distant in speech relative to each other in a relevant way. In order to do so, we now turn to some formal characteristics of the type of indirect conditionals we are concerned with.

In all the examples there is a modal verb, most of the time *may*. In some examples it is followed by an explicit verb of linguistic action, in some others it is followed by a more general verb that can also be used to implicitly re-



fer to a linguistic action (e.g. *continue*, *return*, *pick up*). In some other cases the modal verb is followed by a predicative construction consisting of a copula verb and an adjective. We shall return to the constructions with these predicative adjectives presently, but let us meanwhile note that the subject of the indirect conditional, the 1st person subject referring to the speaker, is separated from what is actually asserted, i.e. the contents of the linguistic action, by intervening material of variable length. In other words, the linear distance between the expression denoting the speaker responsible for the statement in the apodosis and the apodosis itself is thus increased, in terms of speech time and in terms of the number of sounds and words between them.

Note that distance is inherently a relation between at least two elements. The relationship between the speaker and the hearer in the social world corresponds to the relationship between expressions in speech. The images associated with the two relationships as well as the arrangement of the elements relative to each other match each other: distance in social world is mirrored by the distance in the physical world of speech. More simply put, there obtains diagrammatic iconicity between

the two types of distance. Signals are said to be iconic if their physical form bears close resemblance to the entities they refer to. Diagrammatic iconicity is a special term introduced by Bybee (1985a and b) to refer to a phenomenon whereby the relation between certain features of two or more linguistic entities resemble (or is a diagram of) the relation between certain other features of these entities, or of certain features of some other entities (figure 3).

Returning to the constructions with predicative adjectives, we realize that these adjectives are very similar in terms of their function to explicit verbs of linguistic action. It is claimed in Brdar and Brdar-Szabó (2000) and Brdar-Szabó and Brdar (2001) that they stand metonymically for verbs of linguistic action due to a specific instance of the *MANNER-FOR-ACTION* metonymy. In addition to *frank* and *pompous*, exemplified in (1), there are dozens of other adjectives referring to the manner of an implicit linguistic action, such as: *clear*, *open*, *short*.

Now that metonymy has been introduced into play, we have gained two things. Firstly, all the examples are now shown to involve linguistic action in the protasis, more precisely, they involve assertion or question. Secondly, we see how metonymy and metaphor interact: the former makes possible the latter because the predicative constructions with adjectives are much longer and thus create distance between the speaker and the contents of the assertion. A subdomain of the physical world, viz. the subdomain of linear speech becomes a fertile ground for metaphor only after metonymy has done its job and foregrounded diagrammatic iconicity. Since metaphor and metonymy seem to be working here almost in tandem, we can say that this is an instance of metaphonymy in the sense of Goossens (1990).

Recognising a metonymic level in examples like (1) g-i., we are able to align all the protases: they all refer to a linguistic action. The apodoses can now be interpreted as implying a hidden speech act:

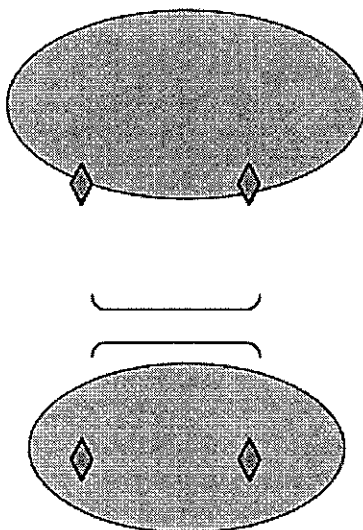


Figure 3.



(2) If I may be frank with you, i.e. speak frankly with you, [then I say]...

These speech acts, however, may never surface. They largely remain hidden. If we conceive of speech acts as involving a scenario or Idealized Cognitive Model with several parts (as e.g. Panther and Thornburg (1998) do), we realize that the central part of these speech acts, the one which normally determines the type of speech act and after which they are named, is in fact not present explicitly. There is instead always a more peripheral part of the scenario. It is regularly the part of scenario that functions as some sort of precondition. Before performing a speech act the speaker may check whether he has the go-ahead for it, i.e. he may inquire whether he is permitted to ask a question, etc. (figure 4).

This is in fact where a second metonymic level kicks in: one part of the complex scenario stands metonymically for the central part. In all our examples above, the precondition stands for the central part of the speech act, which is the illocutionary type of metonymic mappings (cf. Panther and Thornburg, 1999).

The conceptual distance between the central part of the speech act scenario and the part that is explicitly used in the indirect conditional can, of course, vary. The more peripheral the part that is used metonymically, the more hypothetical and tentative the whole. We are justified in postulating another metaphor at work here: the conceptual distance is presented in terms of the distance in the linearized speech, i.e. in a subdomain

of the physical world. In fact, this is a second metaphonymy, because it is the illocutionary metonymy that creates the image of conceptual distance that is subsequently the target domain of a metaphoric mapping from the domain of *parole*.

Again, we note that the distance in conceptual space is a mirror image of the distance in the linguistic form, and indirectly of the distance in the social world. Diagrammatic iconicity thus links a whole network of metaphors and metonymies and may be one of the reasons for tightening and merger of domains. Social and physical domain often merge into a single domain of sociophysical world, and the two domains involving *parole* and the conceptual structures as part of *langue*, respectively, are normally seen as a domain of language. The end result of the interplay of metaphonymies and mergers due to iconicity is a derived metaphor DISTANCE-IN-LINGUISTIC-SPACE-IS-DISTANCE-IN-SOCIOPHYSICAL-SPACE. As pointed out at the outset of this analysis, in the course of actual assembly of these complex symbolic structures we tread this path in the opposite direction.

We believe that a comparison of the English indirect conditionals above with their German, Croatian, Russian, and Hungarian counterparts would indicate that cross-linguistic variation is minimal in terms of the degree of iconicity and the role of metaphonymies, although, of course, different formal devices may be involved that are specific to the respective linguistic system.

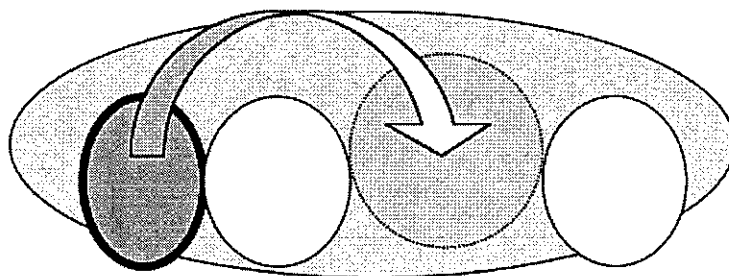


Figure 4.



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METAFTONIMIJE U INDIREKTNIM GOVORNIM ČINOVIMA I DIJAGRAMATIČKA IKONIČNOST

Sažetak

Tradicionalni pristup metonimiji i metafori drži da su one puke poetske figure, a taj se stav može povezati sa srednjovjekovnim pojmom retorike, prema kojemu se klasična složena *téchne* svodi samo na *ornatus*. Pojmovnoj se metafori i metonimiji u kognitivnoj lingvistici pridaje ključna uloga kao okosnicama spoznajnih procesa, a retorika je tu disciplina koja proučava kako se jezik rabi u promicanju društvene kohezije među sudionicima komunikacijskog čina. U ovom se radu pokazuje (i) da se neizravni govorni činovi, čija je zapravo funkcija održavati ili povećati društvenu koheziju, mogu temeljiti na konceptualnim metaftonimijama, tj. na kombinacijama metafora i metonimija, te (ii) da te činove odlikuje neuobičajeno visok stupanj dijagramatičke ikoničnosti. Metonimijski je aspekt posljedica činjenice da se periferni dijelovi idealiziranog kognitivnog modela rabe umjesto središnjih (koji zapravo određuju tip govornog čina). Metaforički se element sastoji u prikazu konceptualne i jezične udaljenosti kao udaljenosti u društveno-fizičkom prostoru.

Ključne riječi: metaftonimija, metafora, metonimija, indirektni govorni činovi, dijagramatična ikoničnost, kondicional