

UDC  
81'367.332.7'373.612.2  
811.111:811.134.2  
Original scientific paper  
Received on 24.01. 2004.  
Accepted for publication  
23.06. 2004.

**Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez &  
Olga Isabel Díez Velasco**

Universidad de La Rioja, Logroño  
Departamento de Filologías Modernas  
Edificio de Filología

## **High-level action metonymies in English and Spanish**

In this paper we postulate the existence of two high-level metonymies, ACTION FOR PROCESS and ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT, that we believe correlate respectively with cases of the causative/inchoative alternation and the middle construction. In our view, for a full analysis of the semantics of these two kinds of construction, it is necessary to take into account the existence of an underlying action frame with an implicit agent; however, the action is linguistically presented as a non-controlled event. We observe that these two high-level metonymies are also exploited productively in Spanish, although with different realization patterns. The closest Spanish parallel to the English inchoative and middle constructions is the so-called reflex passive, whose grammatical status remains controversial. We agree with Alarcos (1994) and Maldonado (1999) in their claim that the reflex passive does not display the inherent passive features, so that cases of this construction may be equated to other reflexive constructions. In them *se* is not a clitic but a reflexive pronoun, the subject being coreferential with it. This insight is further substantiated by the fact that the addition of an agentive complement with *por* ('by') often yields fairly infelicitous examples. While in English both kinds of metonymy are instantiated by the reduction of an argument position of the predicate, in Spanish—where the reduction of an argument position is impossible—the goal is expressed separately through the reflexive pronoun *se*, the true agent is omitted, and the grammatical subject takes over this role.

**Key words:** predicational metonymy, causative/inchoative construction, middle construction, reflex pasive construction

## 1. Introduction

Since the publication of *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980 and the subsequent emergence of the experientialist approach, metonymy has been regarded primarily as a conceptual phenomenon whose pervasiveness is manifest in language (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1999; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff & Turner 1989); that is to say, metonymy is said to be ruled by cognitive principles. Within this view, metonymy is defined as a mapping within a conceptual domain.

Most of the research on metonymy has been devoted to defining metonymy as a conceptual phenomenon (Croft 1993; Langacker 1993; Ruiz de Mendoza 2000), studying its interactional patterns with metaphor (Goossens 1990; Turner & Fauconnier 2000; Ruiz de Mendoza 1999; Ruiz de Mendoza & Díez 2002) and providing classifications of metonymy (Dirven 1993; Kövecses & Radden 1998; Radden & Kövecses 1999). In their attempt to offer a consistent classification of metonymy, Kövecses and Radden (1998) posit the existence of some high-level principles that account for every metonymic mapping and offer a description of the kind of relationships existing within an idealized cognitive model (ICM) that may play a productive role in developing metonymic mappings.<sup>1</sup>

So far the role that metonymy plays in grammatical processes has been neglected. Two notable exceptions are the works of Panther and Thornburg (1999, 2000) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2001) in which they contend that high-level metonymic processes frequently place constraints on grammar. The former have studied in great detail the POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY and the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymies and have shown how the exploitation of these metonymies vary across languages (more specifically, English and Hungarian); they have also noted the scarcity of cross-linguistic evidence in this respect.

In this paper we present an exhaustive analysis of two high-level metonymies, namely, ACTION FOR PROCESS and ACTION FOR ASSESSED RESULT. We first demonstrate their realization patterns in English and, in a second step, contrast them with the way they operate in Spanish.

## 2. Some notes on the nature of the domains of metonymy

Although there is wide agreement in accepting the domain internal nature of metonymic mappings, there are some controversies with respect to the nature

---

<sup>1</sup> An idealized cognitive model can be defined as a package of knowledge that results from the activity of a structuring principle.

of this phenomenon (cf. Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1993; Dirven 1993; Croft 1993; Kövecses & Radden 1998; Radden & Kövecses 1999). In what follows, we apply Ruiz de Mendoza's (1999; 2000) proposal. This author has explored in some detail the relationship that exists between the source and target domains of metonymy. He argues in favor of the existence of only two basic kinds of metonymy (i.e. *source-in-target* and *target-in-source*), rejecting the existence of traditional part-for-part metonymy and demonstrating that this type is inconsequential in terms of processing. In the former kind, source-in-target, the source is a subdomain of the target as in *All hands on deck*, where *hand* is a subdomain of 'person'. This metonymic type allows us to expand and develop a domain of which the source highlights a relevant aspect (for example, *hand* profiles the domain of physical activity or hard work). In the latter case, target-in-source, the target is a subdomain of the source as in *He finds Proust a bit tough*, where *Proust* refers to 'Proust's literary work', which is part of our knowledge about this writer. Target-in-source metonymies are frequently employed in those cases in which it is difficult to pin down adequately the nature of the target. For example, in *The White House isn't doing anything*, it is not clear, among many possibilities, whether it is the president, a committee, or some government official that the source expression refers to. This difference in the communicative import of the expression helps to substantiate Ruiz de Mendoza's proposal for only two main types of metonymy.

Apart from this distinction, additional evidence in favor of this two-fold classification is found in the choice of the anaphoric referent when a metonymy is involved. Compare (1) and (2):

- (1) The piano has the flu so *he* won't come to the rehearsal.
- (2) When Nixon bombed Hanoi, *he* didn't know what *he* was doing.

Example (1) contains a source-in-target metonymy where 'piano' is a subdomain of 'the musician who plays the piano'; (2) instantiates a target-in-source metonymy in which *Nixon* metonymically refers to 'the air force that carried out Nixon's orders', which is part of our knowledge about this president. In (1) the anaphoric pronoun makes reference to 'musician', which is the target domain. On the contrary, in (2) the anaphor is bound to 'Nixon', which is the source domain. This apparent discrepancy in the domain chosen for reference, which has often led to the distinction between conceptual and grammatical reference, can be resolved. On closer inspection, we observe that both examples coincide in choosing for anaphoric reference the main domain or *matrix domain*.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that anaphoric reference based on metonymy depends

---

<sup>2</sup> Ruiz de Mendoza (1997, 1999) coins the term 'matrix domain' to refer to the most encompassing of the two domains involved in a metonymic mapping.

on the conceptual properties of the matrix domain, irrespective of its status as the source or the target of the metonymy. This analysis accords perfectly with a characterization of metonymy in terms of a domain-subdomain relationship, and constitutes further evidence against the existence of so-called part-for-part metonymies.

### 3. Action for process metonymies

#### 3.1. *Realization patterns in English*

The ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy, first analyzed by Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez (2001), underlies a fundamental phenomenon of English grammar: the transitive/intransitive alternation of verbs. Before proceeding we note that our analysis conforms to Dik's (1989) typology of states of affairs.<sup>3</sup> Thus, in our terminology, events are states of affairs that are dynamic; actions are states of affairs that are dynamic and controlled; and processes are states of affairs that are dynamic and uncontrolled. Consider now the following examples:

- (3) a. The door closed with a bang.  
b. The glass broke.
- (4) a. John died yesterday.  
b. The child fell down.

Apparently, the sentences in (3) and (4) coincide in representing processes, that is to say, dynamic states of affairs over which no entity has control.<sup>4</sup> However, a deeper analysis reveals that there exists a basic difference between them: whereas the events in (4) are found to be completely uncontrolled, in (3) we feel that although the controller is not present in the sentence, they are somehow controlled, that is to say, it is possible to find an

---

<sup>3</sup> Although alternative typologies of states of affairs have been offered (cf. Van Valin & LaPolla 1997), we have chosen Dik's (1989) because Van Valin and LaPolla's taxonomy fails to note the importance of the [ $\pm$ control] parameter and excludes it from the set of basic features that defines a state of affairs. We consider this property necessary for, at least, the three following reasons: (a) control has proven useful in dealing with certain grammatical structures such as orders or promises (Dik 1989: 86-97); (b) Ruiz de Mendoza (1998: 204-205) has shown the existence of an idealized cognitive model (ICM) of control and explained its role in the understanding of numerous semantic phenomena, among them the internal logic of many image-schemas underlying metaphorical thinking; (c) finally, [ $\pm$ control] serves to differentiate positions from states and processes from actions. These distinctions will be central to the following discussion.

<sup>4</sup> We also refer below to sentences like (3) and (4) as 'inchoative' constructions.

agent for the situations represented in (3) as the following sentences exemplify:

- (5) a. John closed the door with a bang.
- b. Mary broke the glass.

The examples in (5) are prototypical instantiations of actions. Furthermore, (5) and (3) could be said to represent the same situation since for a full analysis of the semantics of (3) it is necessary to take into account that someone or something has carried out the controlled actions of closing or breaking.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between sentences (3) and (5) can be elucidated by means of an idealized cognitive model (ICM) of action. This cognitive model consists of a set of participants that have different roles in relation to the action. Thus, any action has an agent, an affected entity, a beneficiary and an instrument, among other possible roles. From all the possible roles connected to this ICM, only one of them has a crucial function: the agent. Its importance is so great that an action cannot be defined unless there is an agent. A problem, however, arises whenever the agent remains unexpressed. This situation is graphically represented in figure 1:

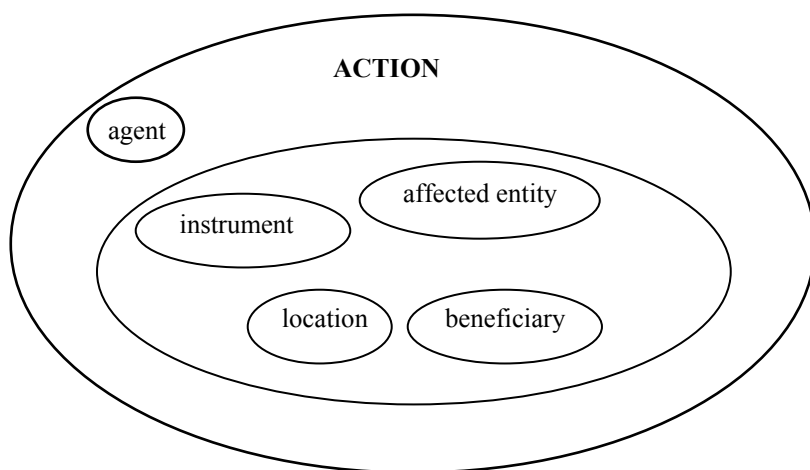


Figure 1. The ACTION frame.

As a result of the omission of the agent, the state of affairs is presented as uncontrolled. As a consequence, the state of affairs is not an action (i.e. a con-

---

<sup>5</sup>. Note that (3a) and (3b) could be followed by a question referring to the agent (cf. *But, who broke it?*).

trolled, dynamic state of affairs) but an uncontrolled process. On the basis of figure 1, sentences (3a) and (5a) below can be represented in figure 2:

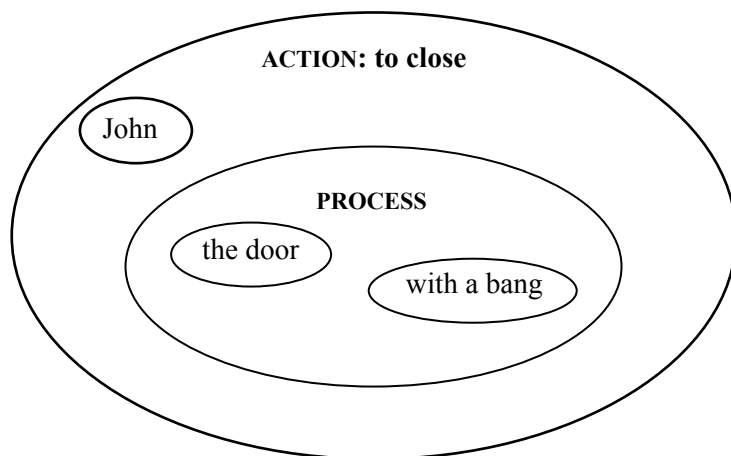


Figure 2. *John closed the door with a bang / The door closed with a bang.*

In light of the previous discussion we observe that the exact nature of the states of affairs underlying the two examples in (3) is problematic. We have argued that (3a, b) are neither processes nor actions as the comparison with prototypical members of these two categories has shown. We postulate that these sentences occupy an intermediate position between actions and processes. According to Dik (1989), the only distinguishing feature between actions and processes is 'control'. On the one hand, the examples in (3) cannot be defined as controlled; on the other hand, they are not completely uncontrolled, although the controller is not explicitly mentioned. In our view, then, the examples in (3) employ an action verb to metonymically refer to a process. As a result of this mapping, the controlling entity loses its prominence and the affected entity achieves a much more prominent role since the whole event is focused on it.

As was suggested in the introduction, the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy has important effects on grammar. First, as a consequence of this metonymy, the agent is not linguistically realized. But because English requires linguistically realized subjects, this position must be occupied by another participant, which leads to the promotion of the affected entity to the subject position and to the intransitivization of a transitive predicate.

Consider now the following examples:

- (6) The enemy's ship sank.  
(7) The captain sank the enemy's ship.

Sentence (6) is another instantiation of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy. A comparison of (6) with its non-metonymic counterpart in (7) reveals two additional important consequences of the metonymy. The absence of an agent in (6) decreases the degree of control over the situation described in the sentence. Whereas (7) expresses a volitional act, (6) does not make explicit whether the sinking of the ship results from a volitional act or not. In (6), as a consequence of the metonymy, the affected entity appears in the first argument position in the clause. According to many authors, this position is regarded as the most privileged. For example, Langacker (1987) equates the grammatical relations subject and direct object with the perceptual roles 'figure' and 'ground' respectively. The figure is the most prominent part of the sentence, contrasting with other grammatical roles (including direct object) that function as ground. In a similar vein, Dik (1989) claims that the first position represents the viewpoint from which the whole situation is perspectivized. We suggest that the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy is also a mechanism for changing the perspective from which a state of affairs is viewed in assigning the affected entity with a higher degree of prominence.

Finally, we argue that this metonymy may be motivated by economy factors. Since the metonymic mapping results in valency reduction to one argument, fewer linguistic resources are needed to convey the same content as a two-place predicate.

### 3.2. *Realization patterns in Spanish*

In Spanish, the situation is quite different. The closest parallel to the English inchoative construction is the *reflex passive* or *se* construction. This construction has been the source of ample disagreement among Spanish linguists, which is apparent in the numerous descriptive terms that have been proposed to refer to the *se* construction, e.g. *reflex passive*, *synthetic passive*, *middle*, *antiaccusative*. Moreover, these terms are frequently employed differently by different authors, as is apparent in traditional grammars. Manuel Seco (1972), for example, distinguishes between reflex passive sentences with transitive verbs and non-human patients and 'impersonal' sentences with (in)transitive verbs and human patients. See examples (8) and (9) respectively:

- (8) Se alquila                      piso.  
      *se* rent.PRES.3sg    flat.M.sg  
      'flat for rent'

- (9) Se vive bien aquí.  
*se* live.PRES.3sg well here  
 ‘one can live here well’

Gili y Gaya (1961) narrows the scope of the reflex passive so that it encompasses only those cases in which there is no human agent as in (10). He defines impersonal constructions as cases where a schematic human agent can be retrieved.

- (10) La pared se hundió.  
 the.F.sg. wall.F. *se* sink. PAST.3sg.  
 ‘the wall sank’

Finally, Rafael Seco (1962) considers passive sentences to encompass what other scholars have divided into passive and impersonal sentences. Nevertheless, although traditional grammarians may not concur in what fits under the heading of reflex passive, all of them acknowledge the existence of this structure. This position has been challenged by Alarcos (1980, 1994), who offers a radically different view on this controversial issue. He contends that the reflex passive does not display any inherent feature that licenses its classification as a distinct construction; it is merely an instance of the reflexive construction. Note that the reflexive pronoun for the third person in Spanish is *se*. Consider the following examples:

- (11) Juan<sub>i</sub> se<sub>i</sub> peinó.  
 Juan<sub>i</sub> himself<sub>i</sub> comb. PAST.3sg  
 ‘John combed himself’
- (12) La puerta<sub>i</sub> se<sub>i</sub> abrió.  
 the.F.sg door<sub>i</sub>.F.sg itself<sub>i</sub> open. PAST.3sg  
 ‘the door opened’

Sentence (11) is an instantiation of a typical reflexive sentence in which the identity between the agent and the goal is marked by means of the reflexive pronoun *se*.<sup>6</sup> According to traditional grammar, (12) is a reflex passive where the *se* particle should be regarded as a clitic. In contrast to this view, which argues in favor of the existence of two different uses of *se* (one as a reflexive pronoun and another as a clitic), Alarcos (1994) rejects this distinction and shows that the *se* in (12) is not a clitic but a reflexive pronoun that is coreferential with the subject. Thus there is no grammatical feature that distinguishes the constructions in (11) and (12).

<sup>6</sup> Note that if the subject and the object were not coreferential the pronoun chosen should be *lo/la* (cf. *Juan<sub>i</sub> lo<sub>j</sub> peinó*).



More recently, Maldonado (1999) has shown that *se* constructions do not display any of the characteristics that are attributed to the passive voice and has argued that they represent cases of what may be termed 'end-point prominence constructions'. Thus, the passive voice is described as (a) requiring a high degree of dynamism, (b) involving the existence of an intentional agent and (c) not bringing about the simplification of an action but a shift of prominence, whereas in the end-point prominence constructions, (a) the action is simplified by focusing on its end-point and (b) the agent can only be schematically represented.

In this paper we side with these two authors, who deny the existence of the reflex passive as a distinct type of passive sentence. In this respect, the two analyses can be said to be complementary. On the one hand, Maldonado (1999) has studied the consequences that this construction has for the sentence (i.e. the simplification of the state of affairs by means of the schematic representation of the inductive force). On the other hand, Alarcos' (1980, 1994) research has aimed at showing that all kinds of *se* sentences should be regarded as instantiations of the reflexive construction where the *se* particle is a pronoun coreferential with the grammatical subject.

This view is further substantiated by the fact that sentences like (12) are scarcely regarded as passive by Spanish speakers. Hence, the addition of an agentive complement with *por*, which corresponds to the English *by*, often yields infelicitous examples as the comparison of (13) and (14) shows:

(13) ?Se abrió la puerta por Juan.  
 itself<sub>i</sub> open.PAST.3sg the.F.sg door<sub>i</sub>.F.sg by Juan  
 'the door opened by John'

(14) La puerta fue abierta por  
 the.F.sg door.F.sg be.PAS. PAST.3sg open.PAST-PART by  
 Juan.  
 Juan  
 'the door was opened by John'

Sentence (14) exemplifies a periphrastic passive in which the use of the agentive adjunct makes evident the identity of the agent. Sentence (13) is an expanded version of (12) in which an agentive adjunct has been added; however, the result in this case is not completely satisfactory. The impossibility of combining the *se* construction with an agentive adjunct reinforces the view that it should not be regarded as a passive. Furthermore, a reflexive reading of this sentence clearly explains why the agentive complement is felt to be awkward. Reflexive sentences include actions with an agent and an affected entity, both of which happen to coincide in representing the same entity in such a way that the addition of an agentive adjunct is redundant since it would provide a second agent. In fact, our analysis reveals that in most cases where it

seems that an agentive prepositional phrase introduced by *por* is possible, this preposition is often reinterpreted with a non-agentive meaning. This occurs because *por* in Spanish is a highly polysemous preposition that serves to introduce a great variety of complements: time (e.g. *por la mañana* ‘in the morning’), cause (e.g. *por su claridad* ‘because of its clarity’), place (e.g. *por Soria* ‘through/around Soria’). Hence, a sentence like (15), which may seem to have an agentive complement, is preferably read as ‘The door opened because of the force of the wind’ than as ‘The door was opened by the force of the wind’, which shows that it is a causal adjunct instead of an agentive one.

- (15) La           puerta           se   abrió           por   la  
       the.F.sg   door<sub>i</sub>.F.sg   itself<sub>i</sub>   open.PAST.3sg   by   the.F.sg  
       fuerza       del               viento.  
       force.F.sg   of.the.M.sg   wind.M.sg

However, neither Alarcos nor Maldonado has provided any reason why the affected entity of an action may behave like an agent in a reflexive construction such as (12). In our view, (12) denotes an action which metonymically stands for a process since it is obvious that a door cannot be opened by itself and someone or something must carry out this action. If we compare the consequences of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy in English, described in section 3.1., and Maldonado’s (1999) description of the end-point prominence constructions, we observe that the situation in Spanish coincides with the one portrayed in the English counterpart of examples of this kind in the following way:

- According to Maldonado (1999), in end-point prominence constructions there is a *decrease in the level of control*. In the same way, figure 2 shows that as a consequence of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymic mapping there is a lack of control that derives from the exclusion of the agent (i.e. the controller of the action).
- End-point prominence constructions *focus on the change of state*. Similarly, the metonymic mapping also underlies the increase of prominence of the final stage of the action since this is the part where the agent, which has been suppressed, plays the smaller role.
- Finally, in end-point prominence constructions *the inductive force is schematically represented*. This schematic representation is the result of using an action to stand for a process, i.e. there is no doubt that someone/thing must be the initiator of the event, but remains covert.

All this reinforces our view that Maldonado’s (1999) end-point prominence constructions are the linguistic realization in Spanish of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy. We conclude that in both languages this metonymy ex-

ists at the conceptual level but that they differ in its linguistic realization: in English the metonymy is instantiated by the reduction of an argument position of the predicate while in Spanish the reduction of an argument position is impossible; instead the position left vacant by the affected entity as a consequence of the mapping is occupied by the reflexive pronoun *se*.

#### 4. Action for (assessed) result metonymies

##### 4.1. Realization patterns in English

Above we observed that the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy lies at the heart of some processes of valency reduction in English, but this is not the only metonymy that may motivate the change of valency of a predicate, as the following sentences illustrate:

- (16) a. Whole bread cuts easily.  
      b. This knife cuts better.
- (17) a. These clothes wash well.  
      b. This soap powder washes whiter.

We contend that examples (16) and (17) contain two-place predicates that have undergone a process of intransitivization. This operation cannot be explained by means of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy since we do not focus on its processual character, but on the result that the action brings about. Following Ruiz de Mendoza and Pérez's (2001) terminology we shall call this metonymy ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT. The relevance of the result is shown by the introduction of an evaluative adjunct (normally an adverb), which offers some kind of assessment of the way the action develops.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the presence of an evaluative element is compulsory in the activation of this metonymy as the oddity of the following examples shows:

- (18) ?Whole bread cuts.
- (19) ?This soap powder washes.

The reason why (18) and (19) sound awkward derives from the absence of the evaluative expressions *easily* and *whiter* respectively, which are necessary for the metonymic sense. Without these elements, we tend to interpret the in-

---

<sup>7</sup> Whereas Dik (1989) has not investigated the different types of construction that result from valency reduction, Levin (1993) has offered a more detailed analysis and distinguishes between the causative/inchoative alternation and the middle construction. The former coincides with the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy while the latter correlates with the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy.

transitive uses of the transitive predicates in (18) and (19) as instantiations of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy, which leads to an incoherent reading. However, whenever the predicate allows the activation of both the ACTION FOR PROCESS and the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy, the evaluative element determines which of the two metonymies is operative:

- (20) a. The front door opened (=ACTION FOR PROCESS)  
b. The front door opened easily (=ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT)

Consider again the examples in (16). At first sight, they seem to represent identical cases of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy. Closer inspection, however, reveals that there is an important difference between them, which can be observed by analyzing their non-metonymic counterparts below:

- (21) a. One cuts whole bread easily.  
b. One cuts better with this knife.

While (21a) assesses the affected entity of the action, in (21b) the assessment is concerned with the instrument of the action. This difference suggests that the metonymic mapping has two different realization patterns in English depending on whether the first argument position left vacant by the agent is occupied by the affected entity or by the instrument. In the former, which is instantiated in (16a), we evaluate the properties of the affected entity that allow the changes brought about by the action (i.e. the properties of the bread for being cut). In the latter, in (16b), what we evaluate is the ability of the instrument to help the agent to perform the action (i.e. the quality of the knife for being used to cut). Normally, the assignment of value of the element promoted to the first argument position is determined by the intrinsic nature of this entity and our knowledge of the world (i.e. knives are usually used for cutting). Nevertheless, there are situations where both interpretations are available:

- (22) This glass cuts better.

Unless some additional context is provided, it is not possible to decide whether in (22) *glass* is being cut or is being used for cutting something else.

#### 4.2. Realization patterns in Spanish

In (16) and (17) we presented some instantiations of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy in English; in (23) and (24) below we provide their closest parallels in Spanish:

- (23) a. El pan integral se corta fácilmente.  
the.M.sg bread.M.sg se cut.PRES.3sg easily.
- b. Este cuchillo corta mejor.  
this.Msg knife.Msg cut.PRES.3sg better
- (24) a. Estas ropas se lavan bien.  
these.Fsg clothes.Fsg se wash.PRES.3sg well.
- b. Este detergente lava más blanco.  
this.Msg soap powder.Msg wash.PRES.3sg more white.Msg

The first thing to note in (23) and (24) is that Spanish has two different realization patterns. The former, illustrated in (23a) and (24a), makes use of the *se* particle whereas the latter, (23b) and (24b), does not. Sentences (23a) and (24a) have traditionally been regarded as cases of the reflex passive, i.e., they are not considered different from the construction found in example (12) above (*La puerta<sub>i</sub> se<sub>i</sub> abrió*). Consequently, no attention has been paid to the emphasis (23a) and (24a) place on the result of the action. Not even Alarcos (1980) distinguishes between (12) and (23a) and he offers for the latter the same explanation of the *se* particle as a reflex pronoun we described in section 3.2. Nevertheless, we agree with Alarcos in his rejection of *se* as a clitic, and agree that it is more adequate to understand it as a reflexive pronoun coindexed with the subject (cf. section 3.2). This reflexive pronoun occupies the second argument position which has been left vacant, in order to avoid the ungrammatical reduction of an argument position.

A more accurate analysis has been carried out by Maldonado (1999), who claims that examples (23a) and (24a) are to be considered as ‘internal attribute constructions’. These constructions display some common features that can be summarized as follows:

- There is an implicit agent that performs the action.
- The result of the action depends on the intrinsic characteristics of the affected entity rather than those of the agent.
- The action is followed by a modal adverb that expresses the degree of difficulty of the action to be carried out.

As with the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy, a detailed analysis of this construction reveals that these three features are the result of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy. Regarding the first feature, the implicit agent is a consequence of having an action as the source domain of the metonymic mapping. Second, the importance of the nature of the affected entity for the adequate development of the state of affairs has already been mentioned in 4.1 as a characteristic of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy in English and is due to the schematization of the agent and the high increase of

prominence of the affected entity that brings about the metonymic mapping. Finally, the appearance of an evaluative (or, in Maldonado's terms, modal) adverb has already been mentioned as the key feature of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy. Recall that in English it is the presence or absence of an evaluative element that determines whether an ACTION FOR PROCESS or an ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT reading is appropriate. In short, the internal attribute construction is one of the realization patterns of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy in Spanish.

Now reconsider examples (23b) and (24b) where the linguistic realization of the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy does not call for the coindexation of the element promoted to the subject position with a reflexive pronoun. In these sentences the realization patterns of English and Spanish coincide. More detailed analyses are needed but at this point we surmise that Spanish only forbids valency reduction when it involves the second argument position. Therefore, as *cuchillo* and *detergente* in (23b) and (24b) respectively are instruments and the instrument of the action does not occupy this position, no reflexive pronoun is needed. Accordingly, we can find two different realization patterns in Spanish for the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy: the former takes place in those cases in which the affected entity of the action is promoted to the subject position (cf. (23a) and (24a)); the latter, whenever the element promoted to the subject is the instrument of the action as in (23b) and (24b). As these two patterns are easily distinguished in Spanish, there are no cases where the interpretation of an ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy is ambiguous between the two possibilities. Thus, a sentence such as (22) (*This glass cuts better*), which is ambiguous regarding the role of the subject, needs resolution of the ambiguity before being rendered into Spanish, as illustrated in (25):

- (25) a. Este cristal (=instrument) corta mejor.  
           this.Msg glass.Msg cut.PRES.3sg better
- b. Este cristal (=affected entity) se corta mejor.  
           this.Msg glass<sub>i</sub>.Msg itself<sub>i</sub> cut.PRES.3sg better

## 5. Summary and conclusion

In this paper we have analyzed the realization patterns of two high-level metonymies in English and Spanish: ACTION FOR PROCESS and ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT. In English the relevant constructions have often been described as cases of valency reduction (cf. Dik 1989), but their metonymic nature has so far been overlooked. The metonymic analysis proposed in this paper accounts for the intransitive use of typically transitive predicates. We have shown that these metonymies are also productively exploited in Spanish, although they have linguistic realizations different from English.

For Spanish we have offered a general account of *se* constructions, many of which traditionally have been regarded as instantiating non-reflexive constructions, such as the reflex passive or the impersonal construction. We have shown that these are cases of reflexive constructions, a claim substantiated, among other things, by the fact that they resist taking agentive adjuncts. Since in Spanish—unlike in English—a valency reduction from two to one argument is impossible; the affected entity promoted to subject status has to bind a reflexive pronoun *se*, while the true agent is omitted and the grammatical subject takes over its role. We have also observed that Maldonado's endpoint constructions correlate with the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy.

Finally, we have demonstrated that the ACTION FOR (ASSESSED) RESULT metonymy occurs in two different realization patterns in Spanish: one in which the affected entity of the action is promoted to the subject position and shares part of the realization features of the ACTION FOR PROCESS metonymy (i.e. the compulsory appearance of the reflexive pronoun *se*); the second, which has the same structure as its English counterpart and occurs whenever the instrument is promoted to the subject position.

By and large, we hope to have shown that conceptual metonymy plays a crucial role in valency reduction and that hitherto unexplained and seemingly disparate phenomena can be accounted for in an elegant and uniform way using the tools of cognitive linguistics.

**Authors' address:**

Francisco José Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez  
Universidad de La Rioja  
Departamento de Filologías Modernas  
Edificio de Filología  
c/San José de Calasanz s/n  
Campus Universitario  
26004, Logroño, La Rioja, Spain  
e-mail: francisco.ruiz@dfm.unirioja.es

Olga Isabel Díez Velasco  
Universidad de La Rioja  
Departamento de Filologías Modernas  
Edificio de Filología  
c/San José de Calasanz s/n  
Campus Universitario  
26004, Logroño, La Rioja, Spain  
e-mail: isabel\_velasco@hotmail.com

## References

- Alarcos Llorach, Emilio (1980). Valores de /se/. *Estudios de Gramática Funcional del Español*. Madrid: Gredos.
- Alarcos Llorach, Emilio (1994). *Gramática de la Lengua Española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe.
- Barcelona, Antonio, ed. (2000). *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective* [Topics in English Linguistics 30]. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- Croft, William (1993). The role of domains in the interpretation of metaphors and metonymies. *Cognitive Linguistics* 4.4: 335-370.
- Dik, Simon. C. (1989). *The Theory of Functional Grammar, Vol.1: The Structure of the Clause*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dirven, René (1993). Metonymy and metaphor: different mental strategies of conceptualization. *Leuvense Bijdragen* 82: 1-25.
- Gili y Gaya, Samuel (1961). *Curso Superior de Sintaxis Española*. Barcelona: Edit Spes.
- Goossens, Louis (1990). Metaphonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistics action, *Cognitive Linguistics* 1.3: 323-340.
- Kövecses, Zoltán, Günter Radden (1998). Metonymy: Developing a cognitive linguistic view. *Cognitive Linguistics* 9.1: 37-77.
- Lakoff, George (1987). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George, Mark Johnson (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, George, Mark Johnson (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh. The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Lakoff, George, Mark Turner (1989). *More Than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. (1987). *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, Vol. 1. Theoretical Prerequisites*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, Ronald W. (1993). Reference-point constructions. *Cognitive Linguistics* 4.1: 1-38.
- Levin, Beth (1993). *English Verb classes and Alternation: A Preliminary Investigation*. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Maldonado, Ricardo (1999). *A Media Voz: Problemas Conceptuales del Clítico Se*. México D. F.: Universidad Nacional de México.
- Panther, Klaus-Uwe, Günter Radden, eds. (1999). *Metonymy in Language and Thought* [Human Cognitive Processing 4]. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Panther, Klaus-Uwe, Linda Thornburg (1999). The POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY metonymy in English and Hungarian. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. by K.-U. Panther & G. Radden, 333-359. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.



- Panther, Klaus-Uwe, Linda Thornburg (2000). The EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy in English grammar. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*, ed by Antonio Barcelona, 215-232. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- Radden, Günter, Zoltán Kövecses (1999). Towards a theory of metonymy. *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. by Klaus-Uwe Panther & Günter Radden, 17-59. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J. (1997). Cognitive and pragmatic aspects of metonymy. *Cuadernos de Filología*, Universidad de Murcia.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J. (1998). On the nature of blending as a cognitive phenomenon. *Journal of Pragmatics* 30.3: 259-274.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J. (1999). *Introducción a la Teoría Cognitiva de la Metonimia*. Granada: Método Ediciones.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J. (2000). The role of mappings and domains in understanding metonymy. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*, ed by Antonio Barcelona, 109-132. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J., Lorena Pérez Hernández (2001). Metonymy and the grammar: motivation, constraints and interaction. *Language and Communication* 21.4: 321-357.
- Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez, Francisco J., Olga I. Díez Velasco (2002). Patterns of conceptual interaction. *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast* [Cognitive Linguistics Research 20], ed. by René Dirven & Ralph Pörings, 489-532. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- Seco, Rafael (1962). *Manual de Gramática Española*. Madrid: Aguilar.
- Seco, Manuel (1972). *Gramática del Español*. Madrid: Aguilar.
- Turner, Mark, Gilles Fauconnier (2000). Metaphor, metonymy, and binding. *Metaphor and Metonymy at the Crossroads: A Cognitive Perspective*, ed by Antonio Barcelona, 133-145. Berlin & New York: Mouton.
- Van Valin, Robert, Randy LaPolla (1997). *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

#### GENERIČKE AKCIJSKE METONIMIJE U ENGLESKOM I ŠPANJOLSKOM

U članku se postulira postojanje dviju općenitih metonimija, RADNJA UMJESTO PROCESA i RADNJA UMJESTO (OČEKIVANOG) REZULTATA, koje koreliraju sa slučajevima kauzativne/inkoativne alternacije odnosno medijalne konstrukcije. Držimo da je za iscrpnu analizu semantike tih dviju konstrukcija potrebno uzeti u obzir postojanje akcijskog okvira s implicitnim agensom. Radnja se, međutim, verbalizira kao nekontrolirana situacija. Uočava se da se spomenute metonimije produktivno rabe i u španjolskom, iako je njihova realizacija drugačija. Najbliža je španjolska paralela engleskim inkoativnim i medijalnim konstrukcijama takozvani reflektivni pasiv, čiji

je status i dalje kontroverzan. Slažemo se s Alarcosom (1994) i Maldonadom (1999) kada tvrde da refleksivni pasiv nema svojstva inherentna pasivu te se stoga primjeri ove konstrukcije mogu izjednačiti s ostalim refleksivnim konstrukcijama. U njima *se* nije klitika nego refleksivna zamjenica koreferentna sa subjektom. To nadalje potkrepljuje i činjenica da dodavanje agentivnog izraza uvednog pomoću prijedloga *por* te rečenice često dovodi na rub prihvatljivosti. Dok su u engleskom obje metonimije rezultat redukcije argumenata predikata, u španjolskom—u kojem je redukcija argumenata nemoguća—Cilj se izražava pomoću refleksivne zamjenice *se*, pravi se agens ispušta, a gramatički subjekt preuzima tu ulogu.

**Ključne riječi:** predikacijska metonimija, kauzativna/inkoativna konstrukcija, medijska konstrukcija, refleksivna pasivna konstrukcija