

Two peculiar Spanish bahuvrihis (*manirroto* and *cuatro ojos*): Metaphor and metonymy alone or (also) blending?

My recent conceptual analysis (Author, to appear a) of a sample of forty Spanish and English bahuvrihi compounds (henceforth BC) confirmed the traditional view (Jespersen 1909-1949: VI, 149) that these compounds are due to a *pars pro toto* metonymy (called in my analysis CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY) whereby a category (typically of people, but also of animals, plants, etc.) is conceptualized *from* its characteristic property.

To my knowledge, no previous large scale analysis of BC (Benczes 2006 only describes a few BC) had investigated the conceptualization of the characteristic property (henceforth RPP, for “reference point property”; see Langacker 1999). In my analysis I found that the RPP is conceptualized according to one of these three *main* patterns: (1) literally (*humpback* ‘a person with a humpback’); (2) metonymically (*wetback* ‘illegal immigrant who crosses a watercourse to get into the target foreign country’); (3) metaphoric-metonymically (*featherweight* ‘a very lightweight boxer’), *fathead* ‘stupid person’, *cabeza cuadrada* ‘stubborn person’). See Author (2000) for the various types of metaphor-metonymy interaction.

In most cases, a description in terms of metonymy and / or metaphor was apparently sufficient to characterize the compounds conceptually. However, there is one important argument for an alternative blending analysis that would integrate the above findings: These compounds constitute an excellent means for achieving conceptual and referential *compression* (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). The characteristic property (e.g. STUPIDITY in *fathead*) is conceptualized figuratively as a physical “thing” (Langacker 1987), typically a body part (head, blood [cf. *malasangre* in Spanish], etc.), which via the metonymy CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY is blended with the target category (so that a stupid person is conceptualised as a partial blend between a “fat head” and a stupid person). For lack of space, I was not able to carry out a blending analysis in that study.

In this paper, a detailed blending analysis of two “peculiar” Spanish bahuvrihis is presented. One of them is (*un/una*) *manirroto/a* ‘an excessively generous person’. Its conceptual analysis could simply consist in the description of the role of the metaphors GIVING FREELY IS OPENING ONE’S HAND (arising from the generalization of the metonymy OPENING ONE’S HANDS [PRECONDITION] FOR GIVING PHYSICAL OBJECTS [ACTION]) and HANDS ARE INERT CONTAINERS in the conceptualization of the RPP (in turn mapped by CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY onto the target personal category). But, apart from the reasons given above, a blending analysis is especially suitable due to the peculiar fact (shared with a handful of other BC –*boquirroto*, *manilargo* etc.) that the blend between the personal target category of the metonymy and the “thing” acting as source of the metaphorical conceptualization of the RPP is reflected even morphosyntactically (*manirroto* = (literally) “a broken (“roto”) person *as to* the hand”; i.e. the property BROKEN is grammatically assigned to the target).

The other compound is (*un / una*) *cuatro ojos* (‘four-eyes’; a way of designating a person who wears eyeglasses), where a blending analysis is virtually inevitable. Here, apart from the blend of the RPP with the target category, the RPP (HAVING FOUR ‘EYES’) seems itself to be conceptualized by means of blending. The reason is that the quantifier *four* and the lexical item *eyes* (in plural) are used to cover both the bodily eyes and the metaphorical eyes (due to the metaphor THE LENSES IN A PAIR OF SPECTACLES ARE EYES). This grammatical fact is motivated by the blend (‘EYE’) of the metaphor’s source with its target. The complex interaction between the above metaphorical blend, the overall metonymy, world knowledge, and several other metonymies accounting for the contemptuous import of the compound, are shown to be integrated in a blending network.

The above analysis of both BC was preceded by a careful analysis of the concordances in the CREA corpus, which revealed semantic aspects not registered by dictionaries.

References

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