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Role of Metonymy in Unmarked Change of Word Category

B.A. Essay

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Abstract

Unmarked change of word category, e.g. when the verb *kiss* becomes the noun *kiss*, is one of the most productive ways for coining new words in English. Traditionally the process has been seen as *conversion* or *zero-derivation*, neither of which fully explains the phenomenon. Recently, scholars from the field of cognitive linguistics have made attempts to explain the process with the help of metonymy – with some interesting results. In this essay, a cognitive approach to conversion, *the metonymy theory*, will be examined and its advantages and disadvantages measured up to those of the formalist *zero-derivation theory.* This is done in an attempt to answer the question of whether unmarked change of word category is better explained with metonymy than it is with the traditional zero-derivation, and if so, whether the new word-forms should be considered *metonymic expressions* rather than *zero-derivatives*.

The *zero-derivation theory*'s greatest merit is its simplicity and conformity to traditional morphology and word-formation. The zero-morphemes are however very polysemous which breaks the ground rule of *one form – one meaning* which is so important in traditional morphology. The *metonymy theory* on the other hand embraces the polysemy and accounts for the extended meanings that the converted words acquire, but fails to provide a uniform explanation for all types of conversion.

The dissimilarities of the two theories proved to be problematic when evaluating which theory better described the unmarked change of word category. Eventually the merits of the *zero-derivation theory* were considered greater than those of the *metonymy theory*, largely because of the author's formalist background.

Contents

1 Introduction

Unmarked change of word category is one of the most productive ways for coining new words in English: verbs (*flirt*, *kick*) are used as nouns, adjectives (*clean*, *open*) are used as verbs and so forth. The productivity of this process can largely be attributed to the fact that English has lost most of its inflectional endings and so it has no class-specific inflectional endings – making it easier for words to travel between word categories undisturbed.

This unmarked change of word category which also goes by the name of conversion, zero-derivation or functional shift seems to have been of interest to scholars for over a century but the term *conversion* was coined by Sweet in the late 19th century. It was not, however, until the second half of the 20th century that the subject got real attention from scholars such as Marchand (1960, 1963, 1964, 1966), Kastovsky (1968) and Dokulil (1968a, 1968b, 1968c) (Bauer 2005:7). Although the subject seems to have gone out of fashion for some time, it has been slowly returning in the last couple of decades, now from the fresh perspective of cognitive linguistics.

In May 2002 a symposium on conversion/zero-derivation was held in Szentendre, Hungary. A few years later a collection of papers presented at the symposium and papers sent in by scholars who could not attend, was put together by Laurie Bauer and Salvador Valera. One of these papers: *Zero-derivation – functional change – metonymy* by Schönefeld (2005) took a more cognitive approach to the phenomenon, emphasizing the role of metonymy in the unmarked change of word category, something that only a few others had done before e.g. Štekauer (1996), Radden and Kövecses (1999) and Dirven (1999).

In this essay I will be discussing and comparing two different approaches to this phenomenon: traditional *zero-derivation* versus *unmarked change of word category due to metonymy*. These approaches originate in two very different schools of thought within linguistics: *zero-derivation* originates in *formal linguistics* and *the metonymy theory* in *cognitive linguistics*. I will start with a short definition of a word category and explain what it means when words change category (section 2.1-2.3). The difference between conversion and zero-derivation will then be discussed and subsequently the advantages and disadvantages of zero-derivation will be addressed (section 3.1-3.2.2.2). A brief introduction to the field of cognitive linguistics will follow (section 4.1) to lay the foundation for a detailed assessment of the metonymy theory: its essential properties, its advantages and disadvantages (section 5-5.2.3). In my conclusion (section 6) I will try to answer the question which drove me to writing this essay: *whether unmarked change of word category is better explained with metonymy than it is with the traditional zero-derivation theory*, and if so, *whether those new word-forms should be considered metonymic expressions.*

2 Unmarked changes of word category

2.1 What is a word category

Before discussing unmarked change of word category in detail I find it necessary to both define what is meant by word category and briefly mention the more traditional ways words move from one category to another: derivation.

Word categories, also known as part of speech or lexical categories, are linguistic categories such as verbs, pronouns, nouns and conjunctions. Individual words are defined

and sorted into these categories on the basis of semantic, syntactic or morphological behavior. An example of this would be a word like *sing* e.g. *John sings to the children* where *sing* denotes some kind of action (semantics), it occurs in second place in this declarative sentence (syntax) and it takes a third person singular -*s* (morphology): all of which are characteristic of verbs, therefore *sing* belongs to the word class of verbs. Word categories are traditionally divided into open categories, such as verbs and nouns where new words are frequently added and closed categories, such as pronouns and conjunctions to which new words are rarely or never added. In this essay, the focus will be on the open word categories of nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs.

2.2 Derivation

Marked change of word category falls within the area of derivational morphology. According to O'Grady et al. the definition of derivation is as follows:

> "A process that forms a word with a meaning and/or category distinct from that of its base through the addition of an affix (e.g., the formation of *helper* (N) from *help* (N))."
>
> (O'Grady at al. 1996: 711)

Although derivation can be a process of forming a word with a meaning distinct from that of its base without changing category, e.g. when *kingdom* (N) is formed with the base *king* (N) and the suffix -*dom*, this essay will focus solely on derivation where a word moves from one word category to another through the addition of a suffix.

2.2.1 Derivational suffixes

A large number of derivational suffixes are found in the English language and most of them are quite particular about what kind of bases they attach to and what kind of words they produce. Let us look at a few of these suffixes: their selected base and their derived forms:

> -*al* attaches to a number of verbs to form nouns such as: arrive → arrival, refer → referral. -*al* can also attach to nouns to form adjectives: culture → cultural, institution → institutional
>
> -*ary* attaches to nouns to form adjectives such as complement → complementary, legend → legendary
>
> -*esque* attaches to nouns to form adjectives such as picture → picturesque
>
> (Plag 2003: 87-95)

These examples support the notion of the morpheme which is "the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning or function" (O'Grady et al.1996: 721). An example of that would be a word like *bridges* which has two morphemes, the noun *bridge* and the inflectional suffix -*s*; *bridge* meaning "causeway over a ravine or river" (Etymology online) and -*s* indicating that there are more than one of them. Another example is the word *assistant* which is also made up of two morphemes: the verb *assist* and the derivational suffix -*ant*. *Assist* means to help or support and the suffix -*ant* denotes a person who does what the verb implies; it is -*ant* that causes the shift from verb to a noun (Plag 2003: 87).

2.2.2 Covert suffixes

The relationship between form and function or meaning is not always clear. A problem arises when words change word categories or gain an extra meaning without taking on a visible suffix. An example of this would be when a word like *sheep* which denotes one woolly animal of a particular kind (singular form) comes also to denote several of these woolly animals (plural form), even though there is no plural marker as we saw for *bridge* earlier: *one sheep → many sheep-Ø*. Another example is when a word like *clean* (ADJ) as in *The blackboard is clean* becomes (V) *clean* as in *I clean the blackboard* or when *kiss* (V) as in *John wanted to kiss her* becomes *kiss* (N) as in *John blew her a kiss*. These examples are similar to the *assistant* example above, except there we had a visible suffix *-ant* that carried the extra meaning and was also responsible for the change of word category but in the case of *clean* and *kiss* there is no visible suffix to carry the added function or meaning.

Since this essay's main concern is with the change of word class our focus will be on processes similar to those of *clean* and *kiss* above. This unmarked change of word category where a word gains an extra meaning or function without a visible suffix has given rise to several questions such as whether the 'new word' is really a new word derived from an older word despite identical appearance or is simply a new use of the same word? This question then inevitably leads to another question that needs to be answered before continuing: what makes a word *a word*?

2.3 *What makes a word* 'a word'

A word is a sound or combination of sounds, spoken or written, that communicates a particular meaning, e.g. the written word *cat* or the phonetic representation ['kat] refers to a concept in the real world: *a cat*. A word can have many word-forms, that is, it takes on grammatical markers to indicate for example, plurality, tense or aspect. A lexeme then is an abstract unit connecting the concept with all the possible word-forms a word can have, e.g. the nouns *cat* and *cats* are possible realizations of the lexeme CAT and the verbs *shoot*, *shot*, *shoots* and *shooting* are possible realizations of the lexeme SHOOT. Since the lexeme is an abstract unit, a root word, called lemma, is used to represent it (Bauer 1983: 12). These terms, *word*, *word-form*, *lexeme* and *lemma* are helpful when determining when a word, or more properly a lexeme, is distinct and when they are the same. If two word-forms have the same lemma, belong to the same word category and refer to the same concept they are representations of the same lexeme, if not, they are generally considered to be representations of two different lexemes (Whelpton 2010).

With that said it should be safe to return to the unmarked change of word category which has traditionally been referred to as conversion or zero-derivation and is the topic of the next section.

3 Conversion and zero-derivation

3.1 Conversion

Conversion in its widest sense implies a shift of a word from one category to another without any apparent change in form. Examples are:

noun	>	verb	*room, hammer, shop*
verb	>	noun	*kiss, kick, laugh*
adjective	>	verb	*clean, empty, cool*

Although this seems like a rather simple process, researchers disagree on the specifics of the process and consequently what counts as an instance of conversion and what does not. Some researchers, e.g. Lieber, have viewed the process in a syntactic context proposing a theory of lexical relisting, i.e. it happens when an item that already exists in the lexicon is re-entered as an item of another lexical category (Lieber 2004: 90). Others, e.g. Jespersen, claim that the words in question are homophonous, that is, they are independent of each other and their identical forms are merely incidental (Quirk et al. 1985: 70-71). Yet another view is presented by Radden and Kövecses, who consider conversion to be a cognitive process, whereby metonymic expansion allows for new uses of a word (Radden 1999). This is only a fraction of the already existing theories which try to explain the process of conversion. Although these, along with a few other approaches to conversion, make some very interesting and valid points, the most popular view has been, and still seems to be, that conversion is a morphological process similar to derivation and compounding, whereby new words are derived from older ones. This means that the converted word is considered a distinct lexeme despite the shared form, since its syntactic features are different from the original word and it refers to a different but related concept.

3.1.1 Conversion as a morphological process

If we consider conversion to be a morphological process, the term conversion is a rather unsatisfactory one for two reasons. First, it is not clear from the literature whether the term conversion is used as an umbrella term for other approaches to the phenomenon or if conversion is a specific approach. Some researchers use the term synonymously with other terms such as zero-derivation or functional shift while others make a clear distinction between them. Second, the general definition of conversion given earlier, that it implies a shift of a word from one category to another without any apparent change in form is by no means satisfactory if we want to talk about conversion as a morphological process. In this case the term zero-derivation is more appropriate. For this reason, from now on, the term conversion will only be used to imply a shift of a word from one major category to another[1] from a neutral viewpoint while the term zero-derivation will be used to refer to the process from a morphological viewpoint.

3.2 Zero-derivation

In traditional morphology the connection between form and meaning is usually quite clear as we saw in section 2.2.1, where derivational suffixes like *-al* attach to a number of verbs to form nouns such as: *arrive* → *arrival*, *refer* → *referral*. To make conversion a part of some kind of word-formation process the *zero-morpheme* (also called *null morpheme*) was introduced so that words that change word class without any visible

[1] As discussed in section 2.2 not all derivation causes a change in word category, some only cause a shift in meaning *king* becomes *kingdom.* It can also cause shifts in grammatical features e.g. *man* (count noun) becomes *manhood* (mass noun). Covert derivation also occurs on this level, that is, within the major word categories e.g. when *chicken* goes from being a count noun to being a mass noun *I shot a chicken* vs. *I ate chicken*. Although the question of whether or not this process should also be considered as some sort of conversion is valid it will not be answered here since this essay's focus will solely be on unmarked shifts of words between major word categories.

change in form do in fact take on an affix, just an invisible (i.e. unpronounced/unwritten) one. In this way the phenomenon of conversion can be thought of and treated like traditional derivation with an invisible affix: *zero-derivation*. Examples of zero-derivation and equivalent traditional derivation would be:

Adj. *legal* + *ize*	→	verb *legalize*
Adj. *clean* + *Ø*	→	verb *clean*
Noun *class* + *ify*	→	verb *classify*
Noun *bottle*	→	verb *bottle*

3.2.1 Advantages of the zero-derivation theory

One of the most obvious merits of the zero-derivation theory is its simplicity. With the help of the zero-morpheme, the simple but mysterious process of conversion can be adapted to the well-known and acknowledged process of derivation. The fact that we can classify the phenomenon with the already-established word-formation process: *derivation*, is also much more simple than considering it a separate process which would require us to define syntactic, morphological and phonological limitations of the process (Yongsung Lee 2009: 142). Despite that, some researchers, e.g. Štekauer, claim that "The process of conversion should be regarded as a unique, specific, word-formation process, based upon principles different from those that characterize the process of derivation" ((Štekauer 1996: 43) quoted from Schönefeld 2005: 137). But there are at least three reasons why this process, if considered a word-formation process, should be considered a part of derivation and not a unique word-formation process: blocking, stress and the fact

that the derived word can be paraphrased with reference to its base – just like traditional derivatives.

3.2.1.1 Blocking

Blocking occurs when an existing word-form blocks the creation of a semantically or phonologically identical derived form. An example of this would be the *-er* suffix which is very productive in English and has provided us with nouns like *writer* from *write*, *player* from *play* and many more, but despite the productivity of the *-er* suffix we do not get *stealer* from *steal* simply because the word *thief* exists already; similarly formations like *unbig* and *ungood* are blocked due to the already existing forms of *small* and *bad* (Bauer 1983: 87). But blocking is not only seen in traditional derivation where we have overt affixes. Zero-derivation also shows clear signs of blocking e.g. the noun *cash* can become the verb *cash* as in *to turn something into cash* but the noun *atom* cannot become the verb *atom* as in *to turn something into atoms* because the verb atomize already exists for that and so it blocks the creation of atom (V) with zero-derivation. Another example would be when the verb *cheat* becomes the noun *cheat* as in *John is a cheat* (John does what the verb denotes), the same should go for the verb *write*, but *John is a write* (John does what the verb denotes) does not exist because the overtly derived noun *writer* already exists and blocks the zero-derivative.

3.2.1.2 Stress

Another reason why zero-derivations should be considered a part of derivation and not a unique word-formation process is stress. When words undergo traditional derivation a shift in stress often follows. Examples of this are:

'dialect → dia'lectal

'parent → pa'rental

'origin → o'riginal

'residue → re'sidual

(Bauer 1983: 118)

Out of all the conversion theories, the theory of zero-derivation is the only one that can explain the sound and stress changes in the converted form. The changes in stress are due to the invisible derivational affix that attaches to the stem and affects sounds and or stress in it. Example of these would be:

to in'vite → an 'invite

to re'cord → a 'record

to pro'duce' → a 'produce

(Adams 1973: 39)

Not only does zero-derivation show the same stress patterns as traditional derivation, but the zero-derivatives can also be paraphrased with reference to its base just like traditional derivatives, i.e. one of the words – the derived one – has a semantic extension which then contradicts the conversion theory. (Schönefeld 2005: 138). This is the subject of the next section.

3.2.1.3 Paraphrasing

The third reason why zero-derivation should be considered a part of traditional derivation and not a unique word-formation process is that just as the traditionally derived word *legalize* can be paraphrased with reference to its base *to make something legal*, so the zero-derivatives *clean* (V) can be paraphrased with reference to its base *to make something clean*. Schönefeld gives further examples of:

> *cheat* (N) = *someone who cheats* (V)
>
> *stop* (N) = *a place where one stops* (V)
>
> *cash* (V) = *to convert into cash* (N)
>
> (Schönefeld 2005: 138)

This fact, that zero-derivatives can be paraphrased with reference to their base, along with the fact that they show the same stress pattern as overtly derived words and follow the same pattern of blocking, should be evidence enough for zero-derivation to be considered a part of traditional derivation and not a unique word-formation process. However, this approach faces a number of problems, not least among them, the paraphrase relation itself.

3.2.2 Disadvantages of zero-derivation

3.2.2.1 Polysemy

Although the zero-derivation theory with its zero-morpheme is undoubtedly simple and convenient, it has its flaws. In word-formation theory, the connection between form and

meaning is emphasized. It is precisely this emphasis which requires that a new meaning or change of category must be the result of the addition of a unit of form – even if there is no overt evidence of such a form. This in itself is problematic. However, it leads directly to one of the main objections to this approach: the polysemy of the zero-morpheme. In traditional derivation we have several affixes where each carries a specific meaning. Examples of these would be the suffix *-ee* which combines with verbs to produce nouns that are the objects of the verb:

> "-EE 'one who is object of the verb', as in appoin'tee, pa'yee"
>
> (Quirk et al 1985: 1550)

or the suffix *-able* which combines with transitive verbs to produce gradable adjectives:

> "'of the kind that is subject to being V-ed' as in debatable, washable, drinkable, manageable."
>
> (Quirk et al 1985: 1555)

This indicates that each visible affix seems to carry a limited set of meanings. This is not the case with the zero-morpheme. Here are a few examples:

> *answer* (V) → *answer* (N) the noun is the object of the verb
>
> *butter* (N) → *butter* (V) to provide with N
>
> *nurse* (N) → *nurse* (V) to act/be as N with respect to...

cheat (V) → *cheat* (N) a subject of the verb

dry (ADJ) → *dry* (V) to make adj.

(Quirk et al 1985: 1560-1561).

According to this the zero-morpheme can carry several meanings, which tells us that in zero-derivation the connection between form (or lack thereof) and meaning is not clear. In traditional morphology and word-formation, great emphasis is placed on the *one form – one meaning* relationship. The zero-derivation theory does not offer a clear cut relationship between form and meaning; in fact it offers many different meanings, presented by what seems to be a variety of covert forms. This is undeniably a major drawback for the theory.

3.2.2.2 The invisible zero-morpheme

Another drawback has to do with one of the basic features of a good scientific theory. For a scientific theory to be considered valid, it has to be both provable and refutable. Since the zero-morpheme is invisible it is very hard to prove or refute it and for that reason it is hard to acknowledge zero-derivation as a real theory. These drawbacks give us a reason to doubt whether conversion is really best explained by derivation.

As we saw in section 3.1 researchers disagree on the specifics of the conversion process. One theory, very different from the zero-derivation theory, is the metonymy theory which does not consider conversion to be a derivational process but a cognitive process, whereby metonymic expansion allows for new uses of a word (Radden 1999). Before diving into the details of the metonymy theory I find it necessary to give a little background on cognitive linguistics, the linguistic field this theory sprang from.

4 Cognitive linguistics and metonymy

4.1 Cognitive linguistics

Cognitive linguistics is an approach to linguistics that emerged in the 1970s as a response to Chomsky's generative theory. Cognitive linguists maintain that language is simply an extension of general cognition, whereas generative linguists view syntax as an autonomous cognitive system, independent of general cognition. Generative linguists view syntax as the core of the linguistic system with semantics as a peripheral interpretive component; cognitive linguists have argued to the contrary that the main focus in linguistic studies should in fact be on meaning and the relation of language and mind. One of their arguments is that "Linguistic structures serve the function of expressing meanings and hence the mappings between meaning and form are a prime subject of linguistic analysis" (Kemmer). Despite being the subject of much criticism in the beginning, the field started to gain recognition in the 1980s when the works of leading cognitive theorists like Langacker, Lakoff and Talmy began to gain ground (Kemmer). This new approach to linguistics not only introduced new terminology to the field but it also redefined some already existing terms such as *metonymy*.

4.2 Metonymy

Metonymy, similar to metaphor, is traditionally considered 'a classical figure of speech' used for rhetoric purposes. The main difference between the two is that while metaphor makes use of similarity between things, metonymy makes use of association. Metaphor uses resemblance or analogy: an example of that would be to say *John is such a pig* and thereby to emphasize certain features that John has in common with the pig. Metonymy

on the other hand is based on association or a 'stand-for' relationship where one word that stands for one object/idea is used to stand for something else e.g. *I met a lot of friendly faces* where faces stand for people or *He drank the whole bottle* where the container stands for the contained substance (Fiedler 2007: 191). In this case, it is clear that the bottle is not a part of its contents, in the way that faces are a part of people, but the stable conventional relationship between the bottle and its content is enough to allow metonymy. The metonym is therefore not chosen randomly: it has to play a major part in the whole or be a co-part in a conventional whole – so it can be easily recognized. This does not mean that *face* is the only right metonym when referring to people – it is also possible to say something like *Many hands were laid off at the factory* where hands are used to refer to people or *They need some good heads to solve this problem* where heads are used to refer to people. The main point is that the metonym has to have a clear and conventional association with the referent so that the listener is in no doubt what is meant by the expression. This traditional metonymy is often referred to as reference metonymy since it is based on indirect reference between two things connected by association (Schönefeld 2005: 145).

4.2.1 Cognitive view of metonymy

Cognitive linguists do not see metonymy as merely a 'classical figure of speech' or just a play on words. According to Lakoff "Metonymy is one of the basic characteristics of cognition. It is extremely common for people to take one well-understood or easy-to-perceive aspect of something and use it to stand either for the thing as a whole or for some other aspects or part of it" (Lakoff 1987: 77). This means that metonymy can be an effective cognitive tool for accessing abstract things or things that are for some reason not

mentally accessible in an easy way. Due to this central role that metonymy plays in cognition, the term was redefined to better fit the cognitive view. The new cognitive definition was that "Metonymy is a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides a mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain" (Kövecses 1998: 39).

In metonymy the vehicle is the more salient term which is used to refer to the less salient term – the target. An example of this would be when a waitress says '*The hamburger left without paying*' using the more salient term *the hamburger* to refer to the less salient term, *the person (whose identity is unknown) who ordered and ate the hamburger* (Dirven 1999: 275). For the waitress, a customer and what a customer orders can be seen as a conventional whole, it is something she deals with every day, and so when the identity of the customer is unknown and therefore mentally ill-accessible it causes the waitress to use the hamburger (a part of the conventional whole that she is very familiar with) to refer to the customer (another part of the conventional whole that she is less familiar with). So according to the cognitive view, metonymy is not merely a play on words but an important cognitive tool that can be used when accessing or referring to abstract entities. The reason for this ability, that is, to access and refer to abstract entities with the help of metonymy, is our common knowledge of the world. Kövecses and Radden claim that metonymy occurs wherever we have 'idealized cognitive models' or ICMs. (Kövecses 1998: 41). An ICM and several other terms such as cognitive model, domain or frame refer to the fact that we understand the meaning of a linguistic expression only against the background of their cognitive contexts (Schönefeld

2005: 141). In her paper Petruck, explains in a very clear and effective way how these frames/models work:

> "The notion can be exemplified with the Commercial Transaction Frame, whose elements include a buyer, a seller, goods, and money. […] Among the large set of semantically related verbs linked to this frame are *buy*, *sell*, *pay*, *spend*, *cost*, and *charge*, each of which indexes or evokes different aspects of the frame. The verb *buy* focuses on the buyer and the goods, backgrounding the seller and the money; *sell* focuses on the seller and the goods, backgrounding the buyer and the money; *pay* focuses on the buyer, the money, and the seller, backgrounding the goods; and so on. The idea is that knowing the meaning of any one of these verbs requires knowing what takes place in a commercial transaction and knowing the meaning of any one verb means, in some sense, knowing the meaning of all of them."
>
> (Petruck 1996: 1)

So cognitive models can be seen as prototypical descriptions of an event and its typical participants and other entities possibly involved in the event. According to Kövecses and Radden "we have ICMs of everything that is conceptualized, which includes the conceptualization of things and events, words and their meaning, and categories of things and events" (Kövecses 1998: 41) and it is because of these ICMs that we can use metonymy to access or refer to abstract entities. Kövecses and Radden assume that our common knowledge about the world is structured by these ICMs, which

we comprehend as wholes with parts and suggest that metonymies arise from two conceptual configurations: between a *whole ICM and its parts* or between *the different parts of an ICM* (Kövecses 1998: 49).

All of the metonymic expressions discussed above have been of the more traditional *reference metonymy* type where things stand for other things, e.g. a *hamburger* stands for a *person*, *bottle* stands for *liquid* and so forth. But cognitive linguistics also offers a slightly different type of metonymy where things are not necessarily used to refer to other things (nouns) but can be used to refer to actions (verb) e.g. *shampoo my hair*, or a property word (adjective) can be used to refer to action (verb) *to clean the table* and an action word (verb) can be used to refer to results (noun) *he gave the ball a kick* to name but a few (Schönefeld 2005: 158-159). This type of metonymy usually arises within the same ICM, i.e. when an object that is involved in an event is used to refer to the event itself: *cover the bed with the blanket* becomes *blanket the bed* and *I wash my hair with shampoo* becomes *I shampoo my hair.* This type of metonymy, when what seems to be the most salient entity in the event becomes the main designation for the event itself is called by Dirven *event-schema metonymy* (Dirven 1999: 279). Before we continue the discussion of this special type of metonymy in greater detail I feel that it is necessary to briefly discuss the concepts of thematic roles, an important tool when it comes to analyzing semantic roles within the event-schema.

4.2.1.1 Thematic roles

Thematic roles are a predetermined set of labels that identify the arguments of the verb in accordance to the semantic relation they have with it, in other words: a grammatically

relevant facet of a verb's meaning is represented in the label assigned to the argument (Levin 2005: 35). The following example of thematic roles is presented in O'Grady et al.:

> Agent – the entity that performs an action
>
> Theme – the entity undergoing an action or a movement
>
> Source – the starting point for a movement
>
> Goal – the end point for a movement
>
> Location – the place where an action occurs
>
> (O'Grady et al. 1996: 286)

An example of other roles could be *time*, *target, manner*, *beneficiary*, *instrument* and *experiencer* to name but a few. These thematic roles play an important part when analyzing events since they enable us to isolate and semantically analyze each entity in the event, its relation to other entities and its relation to the verb. Examples of an analysis like this would be (thematic roles in SMALL CAPS): *John took the book from the shelf and gave it to Mary in a hurry*. Here John is the AGENT, the book is the THEME, shelf is the LOCATION, Mary is the RECIPIENT and in a hurry is the MANNER. In the following sections thematic roles will be used for clearer demonstration of how metonymy affects semantic relations within an event-schema.

4.2.2 Event-schema metonymy

Unlike the traditional metonymy where the reference is between two entities within the same word class (usually nouns), event-schema metonymy makes reference across word classes and in those cases it is the most salient participant or entity in the ICM that

becomes the main designation for the event itself (Dirven 1999: 279). Let us take a look at a few examples of how this works. In a sentence like *John hit the nail with the hammer* the INSTRUMENT (*the hammer*) is the most salient element in the event and therefore comes to stand for the event itself resulting in the expression *John hammered the nail*. Similarly a sentence like *I will put the canoe up on the beach* becomes *I will beach the canoe* since the TARGET (*the beach*) is the most salient element in the event-schema and therefore comes to stand for the event as a whole. In his paper, *Conversion as a conceptual metonymy of event schemata*, Dirven explains very clearly how exactly this transition takes place:

> "*to clean* is a transitive verb implying a case frame containing an agent, a patient, and possibly an instrument, a manner and a result. This linguistic configuration can in fact be seen as an iconic reflection of a conceptual configuration, in which an agent as the energy source transmits energy to an object which is affected by the energy. This is obviously the case in *X makes the table clean*, where the adjective *clean* denotes the resultant state of the energy transmitted by the agent. Since the resultant state is the most salient element in the whole action schema, it comes to stand for the whole event in *X cleaned the table*."
>
> (Dirven 1999: 277)

For whatever reason, event-schema metonymy is very productive in English. In fact countless examples can be found – and many people are unaware of this metonymic

shift when they produce such utterances since the metonymic use has been lexicalized (Schönefeld 2005: 148). An example of this would be the verb *to clean* which is now an established entry in the English lexicon and the metonymic connection to the adjective is therefore not as obvious as it is for less conventionalized (and therefore not lexicalized) metonymic utterances such as the verb *to fork* from the noun *fork*. Let us take a look at a few more examples of this metonymic shift and consider to which degree they are conventionalized: *I am sure the coach will put me on the bench* where the TARGET is the most salient element in the schema becomes *I'm sure the coach will bench me*. *I eat the soup out of the bowl with a tablespoon* where the INSTRUMENT is the most salient element becomes *I tablespoon the soup out of the bowl* and *Traditionally they spend the summer in Reykjavík* becomes *Traditionally they summer in Reykjavík* because the THEME (*the summer*) is the most salient part of the event-schema. These metonymic expressions seem to be conventionalized to a different degree, i.e. most English speakers would agree that their use of the verbs *clean* and *hammer* comes more naturally to them (they are lexicalized) than the use of *beach* and *tablespoon* (which have to be formed more consciously).

On closer investigation of these metonymic shifts we can see that they all exhibit what had already been discussed and explained by conversion – *a shift of a word from one category to another without any apparent change in form* or zero-derivation where *words change word class taking on an invisible zero-morpheme which results in homonyms*. This leads directly to the next topic – whether words that change word class without any change in form, are to be considered metonymic expressions rather than the results of conversion or zero-derivation.

5 The metonymy theory

Unmarked change of word category is one of the most productive ways for coining new words in English. Cognitive linguists have argued that this type of word-formation is motivated by conceptual metonymy and that its products should therefore be considered metonymic expressions rather than zero-derivations (Schönefeld 2005: 147). Dirven's *clean* example earlier supports this view, that is, when the adj. *clean* becomes the bearer of saliency in an event resulting in the verb *clean* it strongly implies that the process is not just happening on the morphological level but on the semantic level.

According to Kövecses and Radden the reason why English language users can so easily both understand and make use of an unmarked change of word category is that the process is driven by deeply entrenched conceptual systems (Kövecses 1998: 61). An example of these routs of conceptualizations would be:

INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	*to ski, to shampoo (one's hair)*
AGENT FOR ACTION	*to butcher (a cow), to author (a book)*
ACTION FOR AGENT	*snitch (slang: " to inform" and "informer")*
OBJECT INVOLVED IN AN ACTION FOR THE ACTION	*to blanket (the bed)*
ACTION FOR OBJECT INVOLVED IN THE ACTION	*(give me one) bite*

(Kövecses 1998: 54-55)

According to Kövecses and Radden these conceptual systems are a part of the mutual knowledge of all English language users which makes it possible for them to

move from the vehicle to the target with much ease and sometimes even unconsciously (Kövecses 1998: 61). Schönefeld gives a good example of this effortless transition when she explains how the word *witness* goes from being a noun to being a verb:

> "when a word of particular word category is used as a word of another, e.g. when a noun is used as a verb (*witness* N→V), we make use of the original category (inclusive of its meaning) as a means to refer to another category associated with it. (In this example, the link is: EXPERIENCER OF AN EVENT FOR THE EVENT). This transfer or rather mapping is located in one and the same domain, the domain which organizes the knowledge we have about the event of *watching* (i.e. passively experiencing) an event, action or deed. […] The mapping, which does not show in the expression itself (*witness*), is cued by its (syntactic) use and potential contextual information"
>
> (Schönefeld 2005: 147).

Here Schönefeld, just like Kövecses and Radden, concludes that the ease of the transition is made possible with the common conceptual systems which are a part of the mutual knowledge of all English language users. This transition from N→V would be impossible if the speaker/listener had no prior knowledge of what it means to be a witness. With this considered it seems clear that what earlier was referred to as conversion or zero-derivation seems to be metonymically driven. But the question of whether or not the words that are the results of this metonymically driven process should

be referred to as metonymic expressions rather than zero-derivatives is still unanswered. To answer that question we must first take a better look at the advantages and disadvantages of the metonymy theory and find out whether or not its merits exceed those of the zero-derivation theory.

5.1 Advantages of the metonymy theory

5.1.1 Semantic extension

The principal problem for the theory of zero-derivation is *polysemy*, which in turn serves as the foundation for the metonymy theory. The traditional definition of metonymy is that it is a 'stand-for' relationship where a word that stands for one object/idea is used to stand for something else, e.g. *I met a lot of friendly faces* where faces stand for people (Fiedler 2007: 191). This stand-for relationship means that the word-form which is used to refer to a related concept takes on an additional sense. This semantic extension can be seen in sentences like:

Traditionally they spend the summer in Reykjavík

Traditionally they summer in Reykjavík

In the first sentence *summer* only carries the meaning of *the season* but in the second sentence the word *summer* has clearly taken on an extra meaning and now stands for the action *of spending the summer in Reykjavík*. The fact that this semantic extension breaks one of the fundamental rules of traditional morphology: the *one form – one meaning* relationship does make the metonymy theory attractive, more so than the zero-

derivation theory. But the verb *to summer* seems to evoke a richer cognitive context than just spending a summer somewhere. This is where ICMs play a role.

5.1.2 Role of ICMs in extension of cognitive context

From what we have read so far, what makes this event-schema metonymy possible is our common knowledge of the world. The verb *summer* in fact has a more restricted use than the compound of *spend + summer* implies: if for example we knew John to be a struggling father of five who could barely make ends meet, the idea of him summering in some exotic place would surely be strange. This is due to the fact that the ICM we have of people spending summers in exotic places does not seem to include people who are not well off. In fact the verb *summer* does evoke a richer cognitive context than *spend + summer* alone: it does not just imply that one happens to be in Reykjavík or some other place during the summer months but that one resides there for the season; which in our culture leads to the presupposition that the person is independently rich, probably has more than two houses and a job that can be done from home – or wherever in the world one is located at the moment. The metonymy theory will naturally capture this extension since our experience of the world tells us that it is independent, rich people who spend summers in exotic places and not the poor. This is a great advantage of the metonymy theory since the formalist zero-derivation cannot account for the extended cognitive context that is clearly present in this case. But although the advantage of the metonymy theory is great when it comes to the extended meaning of the converted words, it is barely enough evidence on its own to approve of the new word being metonymic expressions, especially when considering the many disadvantages the metonymy theory has.

5.2 Disadvantages of the metonymy theory

5.2.1 Metonymically-driven overtly-derived words

A word's unmarked change of word category certainly seems to be metonymically driven as we have seen in several examples above. But on closer inspection, the same can be said about overtly marked derivatives as well. Let's take a second look at a few overtly derived words that correspond to zero-derivatives (from chapter 3.2):

Adj. *legal* + *ize*	→	verb *legalize*
Adj. *clean* + *Ø*	→	verb *clean*
Noun *class* + *ify*	→	verb *classify*
Noun *bottle*	→	verb *bottle*

Dirven's example of a metonymy driven transition of the adj. *clean* to the verb *clean* seems to apply just as well to the overtly derived verb *legalize*. *To legalize* is a transitive verb like *clean* and just as the verb *clean* can be seen as the results of a conceptual configuration in the event schema, that is, *I make the table clean* becomes *I clean the table* the same goes for the verb legalize *I make the contract legal* becomes *I legalize the contract* except in the latter example we have an overt morphological marking. The same applies to the verb *classify*, it can be seen as the result of a conceptual configuration within the event schema going from *I divide the plants into classes* to *I classify the plants* where we have the derivational morpheme -*ify* indicating the word's shift from being a noun to becoming a verb.

Does this mean that overtly derived words should be considered metonymic expressions as well? In fact, that would go against the basis of metonymy, where a word that stands for one idea is used to stand for something else creating polysemy. In the case of *legal – legalize* and *class – classify* we have different forms standing for different concepts and so there is no polysemy. This means that even if the formation of both overtly and zero-derived words seems to be metonymy driven in the same manner, only zero-derivatives can be considered metonymic expressions but overtly derived words cannot. And since the main reason for the converted forms to be considered metonymic expressions was their metonymically driven formation (Schönefeld 2005: 147), this argument trips over itself when the overtly marked derivatives which are formed in exactly the same manner cannot be considered metonymic expressions. Therefore, although the metonymic relation is important to the understanding of derivation in general, it does not help explain the issue of form and consequently gives no reason for covertly derived words to be considered metonymic expressions. But the theory faces another problem. Even if the examples we have just looked at can be seen as metonymically driven, whether they are overtly or covertly derived, there are examples of conversions such as *kiss* and *kick* which do not seem to be metonymically driven in the same manner.

5.2.2 Lack of metonymic drive

If we take a second look at the relevant examples of metonymy driven 'zero-derivates' that we have seen so far (*blanket*, *shampoo*, *hammer*, *beach*, *clean*, *bench*, *tablespoon* and *witness*), these are all examples of nouns that are used as verbs, except *clean* which is an adjective used as a verb, that is, participants in an event come to stand for the event

itself, which is the kind of transformation Schönefeld and Dirven supported with their example of *clean* and *witness* above. In fact, in the relevant literature, all the convincing evidence for the metonymy theory is based on this kind of transition. Meanwhile there is no thorough explanation of why other kinds of conversion occur, e.g. verb *kiss* becomes noun *kiss*, verb *kick* becomes noun *kick*, verb *rattle* becomes noun *rattle*, verb *bite* becomes noun *bite*. Even though Kövecses and Radden claim that one of the many deeply entrenched conceptual routes of English language speakers is ACTION FOR OBJECT INVOLVED IN THE ACTION as in *(give me one) bite*, or ACTION FOR RESULT as in *(give the ball) a kick* (Kövecses 1998: 55), it is very hard to present this transaction within the event-schema in the same convincing way as Dirven and Schönefeld did with *clean* and *witness*. In the cases we have seen so far such as *hammer*, *bench*, *clean* and *tablespoon* the participants or objects involved in an event come to stand for the event itself as they are the most salient part of the event-schema. But *kick* and *bite* are not objects in an event. In fact *kick* and *bite* are the very events that involve AGENT, PATIENT, THEME, GOAL, etc. and so when *kick* goes from being a verb to being a noun as in *I gave the ball a kick* the noun comes to describe the event, making it less dynamic and more self-contained. While this transition is probably driven by some cognitive models or processes as well – it is not the same as drives participants or objects of events to stand for the events themselves. The fact that the metonymy theory cannot be applied to common cases of conversion such as *bite* (V) → *bite* (N), *kick* (V) → *kick* (N) and *kiss* (V) → *kiss* (N) makes it rather unattractive in my opinion.

5.2.3 Entrenched conceptual systems of English speakers exclusively

The third reason I have for doubting the metonymy theory is that if, like Kövecses and Radden claim, the reason why English language users can so easily both understand and make use of an unmarked change of word category, is that the process is driven by deeply entrenched conceptual systems (Kövecses 1998: 61), then why does it happen in English and not so much in other languages? It should be safe to assume that people with native tongues other than English also have these entrenched conceptual systems, but still no other Indo-European language to, my knowledge, exhibits nearly as many converted forms/metonymic expressions as English. This productivity can most likely be traced to the fact that English has lost most of its inflectional endings which makes it possible for words to change word categories undisturbed. This suggests that these formations have more to do with the structure of the language, more specifically the morphological structure of the words, than the entrenched conceptual systems of the speakers.

6 Conclusion

Evaluating whether unmarked change of word category is better explained by metonymy or the traditional zero-morpheme is like comparing apples and oranges. The two approaches are so different that it is hard to find common grounds to compare them on – rather one has to look at each approach separately and weigh its advantages against its disadvantages and draw a conclusion from that.

The zero-derivation's greatest merit is its simplicity and how well the idea fits to traditional morphology and word-formation. It shows many of the same characteristics as

traditional derivation. The zero-morphemes are however very polysemous, carrying many different, and sometimes extended meanings, e.g. *to summer* and thereby breaking the ground rule of *one form – one meaning* which is so important in traditional word-formation. The zero-morpheme's covertness is also problematic since it causes the approach to be neither provable nor disprovable.

The metonymy theory embraces the polysemy – in fact polysemy is one of the theory's biggest merits; it also accounts for the extended meanings with the help of ICMs or event-schemas. But even though the metonymy theory accounts for the converted verbs, it fails to provide a uniform explanation for conversions such as *kick*, *kiss* and *bite*. We also saw that overtly derived words such as *legalize* are just as much metonymically driven as covertly derived words such as *clean* and therefore, since overtly derived words can't be considered metonymic expressions – covertly derived ones shouldn't either.

As my prior knowledge of linguistics is mostly based on the formalist approach to language, where the form and the structure of the language plays a key role, the transition to a cognitive way of thinking, where things are much more abstract and less tangible, was not effortless. Although I agree with cognitivists on many accounts, such as that linguistic studies should focus on meaning rather than syntax or other formal aspects of language, I am very reluctant to give up the well structured world of linguistics the formalists have provided me with.

Even though the formation of some covertly derived word-form has been shown to be metonymically driven – the same applies for many overtly derived forms as well. And while the metonymy theory does well with explaining the formation of denominal verbs such as *blanket* or *shampoo*, it fails to explain other formations such as *kick* and

kiss. These facts, along with my reluctance to abandon the formalist foundation my knowledge is based on, lead me to turning a blind eye towards possible polysemy and extended meaning (after all, meaning is secondary to the formalist). My conclusion therefore is that the unmarked change of word category is, for now at least, better explained with the zero-morpheme than it is with metonymy and that converted forms should therefore not be considered metonymic expressions but zero-derivatives.

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