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THE METONYMIC FOLK MODEL OF LANGUAGE

1. Introduction

There do not appear to be many languages that have a word exclusively reserved to denote language. As a rule the word for language is synchronically related to, or historically derived from, a more basic sense. These earlier or basic senses tend to belong to one of the following domains: (i) articulation and speech organs, (ii) linguistic action, and (iii) basic linguistic units. Expressions denoting articulation such as *voice* or speech organs such as *tongue* are often used to describe modes of speaking and language. Expressions denoting linguistic action such as *speak* are also commonly used in reference to language. In many languages the word for language derives from a word meaning ‘speak, say, tell.’ For example, Latin *ōrātiō* derives from *ōrāre* ‘speak formally,’ Irish *urlabhra* from *labhrar* ‘speak,’ Old Norse *māl* from *mæla* ‘speak’; similarly Dutch *taal*, German *Sprache*, etc.¹ Expressions denoting basic linguistic units such as *word* are less frequently used in the sense of ‘language.’ Examples include Japanese *kotaba* ‘word, language’ and Basque *hizkuntza*, which is composed of *hitz* ‘word’ and the noun-forming suffix *-kuntza* and may thus be glossed as something like ‘word-activity.’

The semantic shifts characterizing all these examples are metonymic: they operate within the same conceptual frame, which might be described as “language frame.” These metonymic shifts allow us to access the notion of ‘language’ as a fairly abstract target via a more tangible reference point (for metonymy as a reference-point phenomenon, see Langacker 1993). This applies especially to the use of ‘speech organs’ for ‘language,’ which is the subject of this paper. As will be shown below, the metonymies for speaking and language rely on a small set of speech organs only. These metonymies tend to be elaborated by metaphor, for which Goossens (1995) has coined the term *metaphtonymy*. For example, in the expression *to be tongue-tied*, *tongue* metonymically stands for ‘speaking’ and *tied* metaphorically stands for ‘inability,’ hence ‘inability to speak.’ This paper assumes that these metonymies and metaphtonymies elaborating the metonymies reflect a naive view of language, which might be described as a folk model of language.

In order to gain the widest possible picture of the use of metonymies and metaphors for ‘language’ and, ultimately, as evidence for a folk model of language, examples were collected from various, randomly chosen languages. All the examples listed below were provided or verified by native speakers or non-native informants who are fully competent in the particular language.² These examples will

¹ See Buck (1949: 1259-1261) for the origins of words for ‘language’ in the Indo-European languages. Expressions meaning ‘speak’ for ‘language’ seem to be more widespread in non-Indo-European languages.

² Many informants kindly provided me with a wealth of linguistic data from their native tongues, only part of which, however, could be made use of within the limitations of this paper. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (South American languages), Rita Brdar-Szabó (Hungarian), Marika Butskhrikidze (Georgian), Mike Cahill (Konni), Catherine Chauvin (French), Ross Clark (Maori), Ron Cospere (Chadic languages), Claudio Di Meola (Italian), René Dirven (Dutch), Ivan A. Derzhanski (Bulgarian, Japanese), Yehuda N. Falk (Israeli Hebrew), Elżbieta Górska (Polish), Eitan Grossman (Israeli Hebrew), Zeki Hamawand (Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish), Peter Jacobs (Squamish), Karol Janicki (Polish), Katalin Jobbágy (Hungarian), Wojtek Klemm (Polish), Mark A. Mandel (Bulgarian), Joe McIntyre (Hausa), Naida Mehmedbegovic (Bosnian), Bill Morris (Israeli Hebrew), Gary Palmer (Tagalog), Aila Radden (Finnish), Donald F. Reindl (Chechen), Mari-Ann Richter (Swedish), Kazuko Shinohara (Japanese), Jess Tauber (Salish), Dominique Thun (French), Larry Trask (Basque), Andrew Wilcox (Greek), and Ning Yu (Chinese).

certainly bring to mind more examples in these or other languages, confirming or modifying the view of the folk model presented in this paper.

Given the limited goal of this study, the paper addresses the following issues: Section 2 looks at the metonymic chain leading from ‘speech organs’ to ‘language.’ For reasons of simplicity, ‘voice’ will be treated jointly with ‘speech organs.’ The linguistic analysis in the ensuing sections will proceed in the order in which the metonymic expressions refer to articulators in the vocal tract, starting from the lower places of articulation. Accordingly, Section 3 considers metonymies and metaphors based on voice, Section 4 investigates metonymies and metaphors related to the tongue, Section 5 explores metonymies and metaphors connected to the teeth, Section 6 looks at metonymies and metaphors dealing with the mouth, Section 7 considers the lips as a metonymic and metaphorical source, and Section 8 summarizes the findings and draws conclusions about the folk model of language.

2. The metonymic chain from ‘speech organ’ to ‘language’

Like the expert model of language, the folk model comprises different levels. The following four levels may be distinguished, which display increasing degrees of complexity or abstractness: (i) articulation, focusing on voice and speech organs such as the tongue, (ii) speaking, including various aspects related to speaking such as gossiping, (iii) speech, i.e. *parole*, focusing on spoken language, and (iv) language as a system, i.e. *langue*. These levels of the folk model interact in such a way that one can metonymically shift from a lower level to a higher level, i.e. from the set of speech organs and articulation to speaking, from speaking to speech, and from speech to language, or by skipping one of the intermediate levels, for example by shifting immediately from the level of articulation to that of language.

2.1. SPEECH ORGAN FOR SPEAKING

Speech organs play a prominent role in the folk model of language: they are instrumental to speaking and may metonymically stand for speaking. An example of the metonymy SPEECH ORGAN FOR SPEAKING is *Mary mouthed a prayer*. Here, the speech organ *mouth* metonymically stands to the action of saying a prayer. In our folk model of language speech organs are also seen as conveying meaning. For example, the expression *articulate* in *Mary is very articulate* does not, or not only, refer to Mary’s careful enunciation but also, and more importantly, to her skillful and eloquent ability of expressing herself.

2.2. SPEAKING FOR SPEECH

One’s actions of speaking result in coherent speech. We generally conceive of the results of actions metonymically in terms of the actions bringing them about. The metonymy ACTION FOR RESULT is, for example, found in nominalizations such as *talk* from *to talk*. Its specific application in the domain of language is found in the result nominal *speech* itself.

2.3. SPEECH FOR LANGUAGE

Speech is a specific instantiation of language in general, and the metonymic relationship between the two notions of ‘parole’ and ‘langue’ might be captured as one of ‘specific’ and ‘generic.’ The metonymy SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC is well attested. For example, proverbs usually describe a specific situation but are meant to convey a general understanding. In the domain of language, the metonymy SPEECH FOR LANGUAGE is, for example, found in the origin of the words for ‘language’ in the Germanic languages (Swedish *språk*, German *Sprache*, Dutch *taal*, etc.).

2.4. The metonymic chain

The metonymies discussed form a chain leading from the articulatory function of ‘speech organs’ to articulatory and semantic aspects of ‘speaking’ to the specific result of ‘speech’ and eventually to the generic notion of ‘language.’ This metonymic chain is illustrated in Figure 1.

general metonymies	(i) INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION	(ii) ACTION FOR RESULT	(iii) SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC
specific metonymies	SPEECH ORGAN FOR SPEAKING	SPEAKING FOR SPEECH	SPEECH FOR LANGUAGE
speech organ > speaking > speech > language			

Figure 1: Metonymic chain from ‘speech organ’ to ‘language’

The order in the metonymic chain is motivated by cognitive principles governing the selection of preferred metonymic vehicles (see Radden and Kövecses 1999): the physical (or physiological) nature of speech organs outranks the action of speaking, which in its turn outranks the more specific nature of speech, which again outranks the abstract nature of language. Ideally, we might expect to find metonymies operating step by step along this chain. Many language metonymies, however, skip intermediate stages. Thus, a metonymy widely attested across languages, SPEECH ORGAN FOR LANGUAGE, links the first and the last elements of the chain as in the metonymic expression *tongue* for ‘language.’

2.5. The articulatory basis of the folk model of language

Our folk understanding of speaking and language is thoroughly shaped by its physiological, i.e. articulatory, basis. Of the components involved in the production of speech, it is particularly the middle and the upper articulators that the folk model focuses upon: the tongue, the mouth and the lips. These speech organs are the most salient articulators: the speaker experiences their changes in position and shape in producing words, and the hearer can see, and pay attention to, these speech organs as they change in speaking. Not surprisingly, therefore, words for the tongue, the mouth and the lips are typically found in the metonymic conceptualization of speaking and language. The perceptually “hidden” places of articulation of the vocal tract are less salient. The larynx, the uvula, the velum, the palate, and the alveolar ridge are not seen as essential to articulation, and hence are hardly exploited for metonymic shifts. Voice, however, is recognized as an essential component of articulation in the folk model and is therefore used as a metonymic vehicle.

3. Voice

In the Indo-European languages, words for ‘voice’ mostly derive from words for ‘speak, say,’ and ‘sound’ (Buck 1949: 1248). Since at least one voiced sound is required in the structure of a syllable, voice may be taken as the salient default case and stand for spoken sounds in general. The semantic development of Gr. *phōné* ‘voice’ to ‘sound’ may support this view. ‘Voice’ is also associated with the place where sounds are produced, i.e. the throat and the neck as its larger body part area. In Konni, a Gur language spoken in northern Ghana, the word for ‘voice’ is the same as that for ‘throat,’ and in Tok Pisin, *nek* means both ‘neck’ and ‘voice.’

3.1. VOICE FOR SPEAKING

The conceptual relation between voice and speaking is obvious: producing voice is a precondition for articulating sounds and ultimately for speaking. The quality of voice is, however, highly unspecific. Basically, voice can only be “turned on” or “turned off” and, if it is on, “turned up” or “down.” The metonymic equivalents therefore typically relate to the beginning (1a), the process (1b) and the ending of speaking (1c) or to the volume of speaking (1d):

- (1) a. Polish *zabrać głos*
take voice
‘begin to speak’
b. Finnish *olla äänessä*
be voice.INESSIVE
‘be speaking’

- c. Polish *odebrać komuś głos*
take-away someone.DAT voice
'stop someone from speaking'
- d. Finnish *korottaa äänensä*
raise voice.ACC.POSS.3SG
'speak up'

The metonymic uses of 'voice' for 'speaking' may give rise to various conversational implicatures, as in the following examples:

- (2) a. Polish *prosić o głos*
ask for voice
'ask permission to speak'
- b. Polish *mieć głos*
have voice
'be allowed to speak'
- c. Bosnian *dići glas protiv čega*
raise voice against something
'be opposed to something'
- d. Italian *fare la voce grossa*
make the voice big
'show off'

Sentences (2a) and (2b) illustrate implicated extensions of the 'voice'-metonymy to the domain of turn-taking, and sentences (2c) and (2d) exemplify different implicatures invited by the volume of one's voice in speaking: a person speaking in a loud voice is seen as being opposed to something in Bosnian and as showing off in Italian. Both implicatures are based on the metonymy EFFECT FOR CAUSE, i.e. I raise my voice because I am opposed to something or because I want to show off. In the Lithuanian expression *paleisti gerkle* (let loose throat = 'start arguing'), opening one's throat metonymically stands for producing voice and pouring out many words, which invites the implicature of starting arguing.

The notion of 'voice' is often metonymically extended to 'opinion of a group' as in French *d'une seule voix*, German *einstimmig* or Polish *jednogłośnie*. The expression 'voice of the people' as in English or Italian *la voce del popolo* and many other languages is a loan translation from Latin *vox populi*. However, this in itself does not explain its wide-spread use—it has been adopted as a calque in so many languages because the 'voice'-metonymy is conceptually so well motivated. The voice of a group of people is also conceived of as a unifying and characteristic trait of this group, which accounts for the Slovenian saying *Vsaka vas ima svoj glas* ('Each village has its own voice'), a variant of the Polish saying *Każda wieś ma swą pieśń* ('Each village has its own song'). The notion of 'people's voice' has also led to the sense of 'vote', as in German *Stimme*, Polish *głos* or Kurdish *deng* ('voice').

3.2. VOICE FOR LANGUAGE

The notion of 'voice' hardly lends itself as a metonymic vehicle to the highly diversified concept of 'language.' Yet, there are languages which refer to language by way of 'neck' or 'throat,' which, as mentioned above, metonymically stand for 'voice.' In Austronesian languages, e.g. *reo* in Maori, the words for 'voice, language' are derived from words meaning 'neck,' and in the North-American Indian language Squamish, a coast Salish language, the suffix *-qin* 'hair, throat, head' is used to refer to names of languages: thus 'speaking the Teit language' is rendered as *teyt-qin* 'Teit-throat.'

4. The tongue

The tongue is the speech organ that is most conspicuously involved in the action of speaking. The concept of 'tongue' is therefore conceptually contiguous to that of 'speaking' and forms a well-motivated metonymic reference point for 'speaking,' 'speech' and 'language.' The concept 'tongue' is also typically used as a metonymy for 'language.'

4.1. TONGUE FOR SPEAKING

In our folk model of language, the tongue enables people to speak, and its pure presence ensures a person's ability to speak as in:

- (3) a. Bosnian *imati jezik*
have tongue
'be able to speak, to defend oneself'
- b. Dutch *Waarom vraag je het dan niet, je hebt toch een tong in je mond?*
why ask you it then not you have though a tongue in your mouth
'why don't you ask, you have a tongue, don't you?'

The conceptual link between having a thing and making use of it is commonly exploited metonymically as PRECONDITION FOR ACTION. Not having the thing required for the action consequently means 'not being able to perform the action.' In the case of linguistic action, this situation is typically described by stating the cause for its lack, i.e. by means of the CAUSE FOR EFFECT metonymy, and by expressing the cause metaphorically. The cause may be metaphorized as the loss of one's tongue as in Dutch *heb je je tong verloren?* (have you your tongue lose.PP), as forgetting one's tongue as in Polish *zapominać języka w gębie* (forget tongue.GEN in mouth.LOC), as swallowing one's tongue as in Turkish, as having one's tongue tied as in English, stuck as in Swedish, or glued as in Bosnian.

In the logic of this folk model, making or allowing a person to speak is seen as loosening his or her tongue as in French *déliier la langue* or, more specifically, as loosening his or her frenulum as in Norwegian. From the present-day point of view, untying a person's tongue is, of course, understood metaphorically. Cutting the frenulum of new-born babies was, however, commonly practiced by midwives until recently in order to enable children to learn to speak faster. Tongue surgery is still performed in South Korea to correct a condition known as "tongue-tie," which is believed to prevent children from acquiring English fluently and without a Korean accent. This belief is reflected in the expressions of many languages, in which cutting the tongue-band means 'loosen someone's tongue' and having a cut tongue-band is equivalent to 'being eloquent'.

The tongue needs to be unimpeded so that it can move freely to produce speech. Speaking is therefore tantamount to moving one's tongue (4a), and the kind of motion the tongue typically performs in speaking is turning (4b). The tongue itself needs to be flexible and cannot, for example, be knotted (4c) or stiffened by having bones (4d):

- (4) a. Dutch *de tongen komen in beweging*
the tongue come in motion
'begin to talk'
- b. Hungarian *jól forog a nyelve*
good.ADV turn DEF.ART tongue.POSS
'be able to speak well'
- c. Chinese *zhang-kou jie-she*
open-mouth knotted/stiffened-tongue
'be agape and tongue-tied; be at a loss for words'
- d. Turkish *dilin kemigi yo*
tongue.GEN bone.NOM not.have
'people will talk as they wish,' i.e. 'we can't stop people from talking'

Deliberately refraining from speaking is often metaphorized as in English *holding one's tongue*, as bridling one's tongue as in Finnish, as drawing one's tongue back or as putting one's tongue behind one's teeth as in Bosnian, while silencing a person may be metaphorically described as cutting one's tongue as in Kurdish. When a speaker decides to refrain from speaking s/he usually does so for some reason so that these situations may give rise to implicated meanings. For example, while 'drawing back one's tongue' in Bosnian only means 'to stop speaking,' the Dutch equivalent *zijn tong inslikken* is further extended to mean 'not saying what you want to say' or 'breaking one's promise or word,' and while 'putting the tongue behind the teeth' in Bosnian means 'to become silent,' Dutch *zijn tong achter zijn tanden houden* means 'not showing one's thoughts.' The more urgent the need for a speaker to stop speaking, the more

drastic are the measures to be taken metaphorically in suppressing one's speech. Such a situation typically arises at the moment when the speaker realizes that s/he is at the point of giving away a secret s/he was not supposed to tell. Many languages describe this situation as biting one's tongue, as e.g. in Polish *ugryźć się w język* (bite REFL in tongue), or even as biting off one's tongue as in Hungarian *inkább leharapná a nyelvét* (rather off.bite.3SG.CONJ DEF.ART tongue.POSS.ACC). In all these examples, the act of speaking which the speaker stops at the last moment does of course not refer to the form of the message but metonymically refers to its content or meaning.

The folk model of language distinguishes between the form and meaning in language. As is known from Reddy's (1979) conduit metaphor, linguistic expressions are metaphorized as containers filled with meanings as in *It is difficult to put this concept into words*. In the process of speaking, the word containers are placed on the tongue to be filled with meaning and uttered. This process may, however, be blocked so that a word container is seen as lying or revolving on the tongue waiting to be filled with meaning. This metaphor does not, however, describe a situation in which we know a word form but cannot find its meaning but describes the opposite situation: we have a certain concept and cannot find the correct word to express it. In spite of its blatant inappropriateness, this part of the folk model is very widespread cross-linguistically and only differs with respect to the part of the tongue where the word container is placed or whether it is stationary or moves around. Typically, the word is on the tip of one's tongue as in English or on the end of one's tongue (5a), on one's tongue as a whole (5b) or underneath one's tongue (5c), and it may lie on one's tongue (5d) or even revolve on it (5e). All these expressions mean 'not being able to say something although one knows it.'

- (5) a. Polish *mam słowo na końcu języka.*
have.I word on end.LOC tongue.GEN
- b. Polish *mam słowo na języku.*
French *j'ai le mot sur la langue.*
I have the word on the tongue
- c. Turkish *dil altı olmak*
tongue.NOM under.ADV be = be on underside of the tongue
- d. German *Es liegt mir auf der Zunge.*
it lie.3SG me.DAT on the tongue
- e. Finnish *sana pyörii kielelläni*
word turns tongue.ADESSIVE.POSS.1SG

In the logic of this model, forgetting something is metaphorically seen as a thing falling off one's tongue as in Finnish *nyt se tipahti kieleltäni* (now it fall.PAST tongue.ABLATIVE.POSS.1SG = 'I have just forgotten it').

Since the tongue is both responsible for articulation and sense-giving, it may fail with respect to either task. Difficulty in articulation is generally metaphorized as the twisting of the tongue as in English *tongue-twister* or as breaking of the tongue (6a); failure in communicating the intended meaning is often metaphorized as in English *slip of the tongue* (6b) or as stumbling of the tongue as in Turkish:

- (6) a. German *Zungenbrecher*
tongue.PL.break.NOM
'tongue-twister'
- b. Polish *przejęzyczać się*
across.tongue.VERB REFL
'make a slip of the tongue'

In Japanese, a slip of the tongue, *sitaga suberu* (tongue.NOM slip), refers to the manner of speaking and means 'saying something carelessly.' The manner of speaking tends to be associated with the shape and condition of the tongue and its speed of motion, all of which provide a rich source for metaphorization. The length of the tongue correlates with the length of speaking, which in its turn may give rise to various implicated meanings: gossiping in Dutch (*een lange tong hebben*) and Chinese (*changshe*), blabbing and giving away secrets in Polish (*mieć długi język*) and Italian (*avere la lingua lunga*), and being insolent and impertinent in Kurdish and Turkish.

The metaphorical use of a ‘short tongue’ is not attested in the languages studied. However, the tongue may be strong (i.e. confident as in Bosnian) or weak (i.e. ‘poor in speaking’ as in Bosnian), it may be sharp (i.e. ‘critical’ as in English) and sweet (i.e. ‘flattering’ as in English or ‘polite’ and ‘friendly’ as in Kurdish); it may be good or clean (i.e. ‘eloquent’ as in Dutch and Kurdish) and bad (i.e. ‘slandorous as in Bosnian); it may be big (i.e. ‘bragging’ as in Bosnian), fast (i.e. ‘able to speak well’ as in Dutch), etc.

The associative link between a ‘good tongue’ and ‘eloquence’ is particularly revealing for our folk model of language. It is also reflected in the derivation of words for eloquence. Thus, Arabic *lasina* ‘to be eloquent’ and *lasan* ‘eloquence’ derive from *lisān* ‘tongue,’ and Japanese *benzetsu* ‘eloquence’ is composed of *ben* ‘valve, speak’ and *zetsu* ‘tongue.’ Thus, making use of one’s tongue properly means being eloquent. Speaking properly also means speaking sincerely. The tongue should, for example, be held in the right position (7a, b) and not be misplaced (7c, d), be split (7e) or come in the shape of two tongues (7f):

- (7)
- a. Swedish *hålla tungan rätt i munnen*
hold tongue correct in mouth.DEF
‘take care of one’s words; mind one’s P.’s and Q.’s’
 - b. French *avoir la langue bien pendue*
have the tongue well hang.PP
‘have the gift of the gab’
 - c. English *tongue-in-cheek*
‘not being serious’
 - d. Turkish *dili dönmemek*
tongue.ACC upside.down.not
‘unable to pronounce a word’
 - e. Italian *avere la lingua biforcuta*
have the tongue split
‘be double-tongued’
 - f. Arabic *lisānain*
tongue.two
‘double-tongued; insincere; double standards’

As was shown in the examples under (3), the presence of the tongue is needed for speaking. But in order to say something meaningful, the tongue needs to be monitored by the mind. If this is not the case, the tongue will produce nonsensical utterances (8a, b).

- (8)
- a. Italian *parla sole perché ha la lingua*
speaks only because has the tongue
‘he is talking nonsense’
 - b. Turkish *dilin zararını çeker kafa*
tongue.GEN harm.NOM.3SG.POSS head.NOM pull.3SG
= the head attracts the harm of the tongue
‘the head suffers the harm done by the tongue’

The tongue is seen as the speech organ which gives words their meanings. The tongue expresses our sincere thoughts (9a) and vents our true feelings (9b, c), i.e. it makes us say what we mean:

- (9)
- a. Turkish *dil bir ikrar bir*
tongue.NOM one confession.NOM one
‘one’s words match one’s thoughts,’ i.e. ‘be honest, sincere’
 - b. Polish *Co w sercu to na języku*
what in heart.LOC that in tongue.LOC
‘what the heart thinks, the tongue speaks’
 - c. Dutch *Het hart ligt hem op de tong*
the heart lies him on the tongue
‘he is honest’

4.2. TONGUE FOR LANGUAGE

Being the principal articulator in the production of speech, the tongue is also the most appropriate metonymic vehicle among the speech organs to be selected for the notion of ‘language.’ The lexicalized metonymy the TONGUE FOR LANGUAGE is especially prevalent in the Indo-European languages: Greek *glôssa*, Latin *lingua* and Romance languages, Common Germanic **tuggōn* and Germanic languages, Slavonic languages (Church Slavonic *językŭ*, Polish *język*, Bosnian *jesik*, Bulgarian *ezik*, Russian *jazyk*), Baltic languages (Lithuanian *liežuvis*, Latvian *mēle*), Indo-Iranian languages (Urdu and Persian *zabaan*, Kurdish *ziman*), etc. In fact, there does not seem to be any Indo-European language that does not use ‘tongue’ for ‘language.’ Among the non-Indo-European languages, the word for ‘tongue’ is used for ‘language’ in, amongst others, the Uralic languages (Finnish *kieli*, Hungarian *nyelv*), Turkic languages (Turkish *dil*), Semitic languages (Hebrew *lashon*, Biblical Aramaic *lishan*, Arabic *lisān*), Caucasian languages (Georgian *ena*, Chechen *mott*), and Chadic languages (Hausa *harshèe*). The notion of ‘tongue’ may also be found at the root of derivations: thus, in the eastern variety of Basque, word for ‘language,’ *mintzaira*, contains the verb-stem *mintza-* ‘speak,’ which is a derivative of *mihi* ‘tongue,’ whose regular combining form is *min*.

The TONGUE FOR LANGUAGE metonymy is widespread across languages, but is of course not universal. In some languages, this metonymy competes with the metonymic use of other speech organs or, more frequently, with the notions of ‘speaking’ or ‘speech’ for ‘language.’ In this case, the word for tongue may be restricted to specific varieties of language. For example, one’s native language is typically described as ‘mother tongue,’ and a regional variety is often referred to as ‘local tongue.’ Finally, the Biblical use of the term *tongue* in ‘speaking in tongues’ to describe divine, but unintelligible, speech may have contributed to associating the tongue with very specific varieties of language.

5. The teeth

The teeth contribute to articulation, but the folk model of language does not assign any major articulatory function to the teeth. Hence, a person who only has teeth in his mouth, can’t speak and, in metonymic reference to meaning, does not know what to say:

- (9) Dutch *Ik stond met mijn mond vol tanden.*
I stand.PAST with my mouth full tooth.PL
‘I didn’t know what to say’

Most importantly, the teeth need be opened in speaking as indicated by the Chinese expression *qi-chi* (open-teeth = ‘start to talk about something’). In Chinese, the pointed shape of the teeth allows the speaker to hang ideas on them: to talk about something or to mention is metaphorically expressed as *gua-chi* (hang on-teeth). The teeth do not interfere with the meanings of the words generated by the tongue. They are even associated with frankness, as illustrated by the Bosnian adjective *zubat* (tooth.ADJ), which is derived from ‘tooth’ and is used to describe a person who openly says what s/he means. Likewise, speaking with one’s teeth conveys frankness as in Bosnian (10a), and this may be the reason why the teeth should not be “covered” as in Japanese (10b):

- (10) a. Bosnian *govoriti u zube*
speak in tooth.PL
‘be frank, sincere’
b. Japanese *hani kinu kisenu*
tooth.LOC clothes put.NOT
‘speak very frankly’

The teeth may, however, obstruct the free passage of the word on its way from the tongue to the mouth. If the teeth are in front of the tongue (as in Swedish *ha tand för tungan*) or, conversely, the tongue is behind the teeth (as in Polish *trzymaj język za zębami*), they completely block the oral passage and the person is silent. If the teeth are not fully open, the person “speaks through his teeth” and produces low speech (as in Bosnian *reći kroz zube*) or mumbles (as in French *parler entre ses dents*) or, by implicature, is reluctant to answer (as in Italian *rispondere a denti stretti* or Hungarian *a foga között*).

The teeth may also be opposed to the tongue. This is reflected in the Bulgarian saying *da sa zhivi predni zobi* (long live the front teeth). The saying is used when one narrowly avoids saying something secret, tactless or otherwise inappropriate. This expression could be translated as ‘bless my front teeth’ and conveys the idea that the tongue, which generates speech, can be too zealous sometimes, so it is the teeth’s duty to stop it. In all the examples listed the teeth are not seen as producing speech on their own but only as modulating speech or preventing it from being uttered.

6. The mouth

In the folk model of language, the mouth as a whole figures as a speech organ, but it may also metonymically stand for one of its articulatory regions as its active zone, in particular the lips (for the notion of ‘active zone,’ see Langacker 1991, Ch. 7 “Active zones”).

6.1. MOUTH FOR SPEAKING

The mouth is regarded as a speech organ that is principally involved in speaking. This view is reflected in the Japanese word for ‘speak,’ *kutio kiku*, which literally translates as ‘mouth.ACC be.effective,’ or the Bosnian word for ‘say,’ *izustiti*, literally ‘out.mouth.INF.’ An interesting piece of indirect evidence for the MOUTH FOR SPEAKING metonymy is illustrated by the Georgian expression for ‘domestic animal,’ *p’irut’qvi*. This word is composed of *p’ir-* ‘mouth,’ *u-* negative marker, *t’q’v-* a root from infinitival *met’q’veleba* ‘speaking,’ and the nominative case marker *-i*. The word thus defines the domestic animal by its property of lacking a mouth for speaking. Conversely, we may assume that one of man’s outstanding characteristic is having a mouth for speaking.

The mouth and the tongue may be seen as jointly contributing to speaking. The mouth is, however, only of secondary importance to the tongue as suggested by the Arabic and Turkish ‘have mouth, not have tongue,’ which refers to a person who is helpless or too shy to speak. The mouth is less mobile and flexible than the tongue; moreover, the mouth as a whole contains several articulators whose specific function it may take over. For example, by opening and closing one’s mouth, the speaker may begin and stop speaking in the same way that he may turn his voice on or off. Thus, opening one’s mouth only means ‘to start to speak’ in (11a), but may also give rise to implicatures as in (11b), and closing or holding one’s mouth is almost exclusively used as a rude request to stop another person from talking (11c), while deliberately closing one’s mouth refers to the speaker’s intention of keeping his or her thoughts to him- or herself (11d):

- (11) a. Chinese *kai-kou*
 open-mouth
 ‘start to talk’
- b. Hungarian *kinyitja a száját*
 open his mouth
 ‘begin scolding someone’ or ‘say one’s opinion frankly’
- c. Polish *zamknij gębę!*
 close mouth.ACC
 ‘shut up!’
- d. Japanese *kuchi-o kataku tozasu*
 mouth.ACC tightly close
 ‘refuse to say something’

Shutting one’s mouth may be metaphorically achieved in different ways. Not saying a word is metaphorized in Bosnian as having the mouth tied up and in Italian and French as having the mouth sewn up. Silencing a person may be metaphorically achieved by plugging it as in Italian, locking it as in Swedish or as sealing someone’s lips as in English.

A number of linguistic functions are uniquely associated with the mouth as a container. The interior of the mouth may be filled with the form of a single word that is difficult to pronounce (12a) or a language as a whole (12b). Having one’s mouth filled with language can invite the implicature of articulating an opinion or as being boastful as in Hausa.

- (12) a. Dutch *dat is een hele mond vol*
that is a whole mouth full
'a long word' or 'a word difficult to pronounce'
- b. Swedish *han har mål i munnen*
he has language in mouth.DEF
'he is very talkative'

Typically, the words to be spoken are in the speaker's mouth, and many things may happen to them before they can be uttered. One may, in particular, put words into another person's mouth and thereby tell the person what to say (13a), take words out of a person's mouth and thereby say the same thing that the speaker was going to say (13b), or turn words around in the speaker's mouth and thereby distort the meaning of what he or she said (13c):

- (13) a. English *put words into another's mouth*
'tell a person what to say'
- b. Swedish *ta ordet ur munnen på någon*
take word.DEF out mouth.DEF on someone
'say the same thing another person was going to say'
- c. German *einem das Wort im Munde umdrehen*
someone.DAT the word in.DAT mouth.DAT around-turn
'distort the meaning of what someone said'

The meanings these metaphors convey are consistent with the folk model of language: Since the speaker decides on the meaning to be given each word, speaking another person's words as in (13a) runs counter to his or her own intentions. By A's taking a word from B's mouth as in (13b), B no longer has the word so that A, but not B, can now utter B's word. By turning a word around in a person's mouth as in (13c), its proper position is affected and, concomitantly, its meaning. The metaphor is, however, inconsistent in that the word is no longer in the mouth but has already been uttered.

Like the tongue, the mouth may be associated with certain properties which metaphorically describe aspects of speaking. While the set of properties which are attributed to the mouth is different from that of the tongue, the meanings metaphorically conveyed are often similar to the ones typically expressed by the tongue. Thus, in Japanese a good, beautiful and healthy mouth stands for eloquence, while a sick mouth stands for offensive words in Hausa, in Japanese a light mouth characterizes someone who reveals secrets easily and a heavy or hard mouth someone person who is reluctant to speak or who does not reveal secrets easily. A person who feels self-important has a big mouth in Bosnian, while someone who is talkative or quarrelsome has a wide mouth in Polish (*mieć gębę od ucha do ucha* have mouth.ACC from ear to ear). People may also have loose, pleasant or golden mouths, which are associated with fairly obvious personal traits.

Like the tongue, the mouth should have the proper shape and occupy the proper position when speaking. A person who leaves his mouth open (14a), speaks with two mouths (14b), speaks with half a mouth (14c) speaks without his or her mouth (14d, e), or plays with his or her mouth (14f) does not communicate properly:

- (14) a. French *bouche bée*
mouth open
'be left speechless'
- b. Dutch *met twee monden spreken*
with two mouth.PL speak
'say false, treacherous things'
- c. Turkish *yarım ağızla söylemek*
half mouth.with say
'say but not mean'
- d. Dutch *zijn mond voorbij.praten*
POSS.3SG mouth past.speak
'say more than one should'

- e. Swedish *prata bredvid munnen*
speak beside mouth.DEF
'prattle'
- f. Finnish *soittaa suuta*
play mouth.PART
'twaddle'

It follows from the above discussion that, as in Hausa, people who speak “with one mouth” agree and people who speak with different mouths disagree. Like the tongue, the mouth may speak independently of the heart as revealed by the French old-fashioned saying *Il dit cela avec la bouche, mais le cœur n’y touche* (‘he is speaking with his mouth, but his heart doesn’t know of it’ = ‘be insincere’).

6.2. MOUTH FOR LANGUAGE

The word for the mouth as a whole is occasionally used as a metonymic vehicle to refer to ‘language.’ It is typically used for oral, as opposed to written, varieties and regional varieties. Thus, the German and Swedish words for ‘dialect,’ *Mundart* and *munart*, literally mean ‘mouth-manner,’ i.e. ‘manner of speaking.’ The Gaelic word for ‘English,’ *Bearla*, derives from *beal* ‘mouth.’ The Quechua word for its language is *runa simi* (man mouth, i.e. ‘human language’). In the Chadic languages the word used for ‘language’ means ‘mouth,’ e.g. Polci *bii*, Sayanci *vii*, Boghom *pyok*, all of which are cognate with Hausa *bàakii* ‘mouth.’ In the North-American Indian Salish languages, the lexical suffix of shape, /*-tsan/, is used to refer to mouth, lip, eat, leading edge, business—and language. In Tariana, a South American language of the Arawak family in Northwest Amazonia, the word for mouth, *-numa*, has become grammaticalized as a classifier for ‘word.’

7. The lips

The lips are the visible part of the mouth and form the upper end of the vocal tract. In some languages, the word for lip and mouth are related or the same. For example, Bosnian *usna* ‘lip’ derives from *usta* ‘mouth’ via *ustna* ‘mouth.of,’ and in Hausa the lips are referred to as ‘skin of mouth’. Hence, many of the articulatory functions attributed to the mouth also apply to the lips. The lips play an important role in our folk model of language as can be seen from the widely overestimated belief in lip-reading, i.e. expert’s and deaf person’s ability of understanding a speaker’s words and their meanings from watching the movements of his lips. The lips are, however, only the final articulators to shape the quality of the sound produced. Their contribution to articulation is, therefore, smaller and more restricted than that of the tongue.

7.1. LIPS FOR SPEAKING

The role the folk model of language assigns to the lips in an act of speaking is mainly that of opening or closing the mouth and thereby allowing words which have been produced by the tongue to be uttered or not to be uttered. Thus, ‘utter’ and ‘utterance’ in Kurdish is rendered as ‘lip do.’ The default situation of speaking tends to be seen as having the mouth open rather than the lips—open lips may characterize a person as ‘talkative, prone to giving away secrets’ as in Dutch *loslippig*.

Deliberately keeping one’s lips closed tends to be associated with ‘keeping a secret’ as in Dutch *de lippen op elkaar houden* ‘the lips on one another hold’ or English *my lips are sealed*. We also see the speaker closing his or her lips in expressions which literally refer to words not coming over one’s lips as in Norwegian *Ikke et ord kom over hans lepper* ‘not a word came over his lips’ or in the commonly used metaphor of biting one’s lips as in Polish *przygryźć wargi* ‘bite lips.’ Since the lips are the last speech organs to prevent a word from slipping out, the lip-biting image appropriately captures the emergency situation of suppressing an embarrassing remark at the last moment. The reason for not speaking may, however, also be the speaker’s word-finding problem (15a) or his or her decision to stop speaking (15b):

- (15) a. Dutch *Het lag me op de lippen.*
it lie.PAST me on the lip.PL
'it was on the tip of my tongue'

- b. Italian *La parola gli morì sulle labbra.*
 the word him die on.DEF lip.PL
 ‘the word died on his lips’

Having a word on one’s lips as in (15a) is a metaphorical variant of having a word on one’s tongue as in the examples under (5), and in the same way that the word container may more specifically be placed on the tip of one’s tongue, it may be placed at the edge of one’s lips as in French *Je l’ai sur le bord des lèvres* (I it have on the edge of.PL lip.PL), implying that the speaker is so close to finding the word he or she is thinking of that it is almost uttered. This image as well as that of a word “dying on one’s lips” in (15b) reflects an underlying folk view in which words pass through the vocal tract from the tongue to the lips, where they are ejected in speech or, in the case of becoming silent, stop at the lips.

The lips’ final impact on a word’s articulation seems to be minimal and, by metonymy, the lips do not affect a word’s meaning. By attending to the speaker’s lip movements, a hearer can therefore “read” their meaning or, if he or she wants to listen more attentively to an interesting topic, “cling” to the speaker’s lips (16a) or “hang” on his or her lips (16b). Both of these metaphorical expressions are of course based on the conceptual metaphor SEEING IS TOUCHING.

- (16) a. Dutch *aan iemands lippen hangen*
 on someone.GEN lip.PL hang
 ‘listen attentively to someone’
 b. French *être suspendu aux lèvres de quelqu’un*
 be hang.PP to.DEF lip.PL of someone

Like the tongue, the lips may thus truly express one’s thoughts as in Italian *avere il cuore sulla labbra* and French *avoir le cœur sur les lèvres* (have the heart on the lips = ‘be frank, sincere’) or Hungarian *ajakima* (lip.prayer = ‘prayer expressed by words’). More commonly, however, the lips are seen as changing a word’s original meaning and, thereby, distorting it. In this case, the speaker only pays “lip service,” confesses from the end of his or her lips (17a) or prays by using his or her lips only (17b). When a Hausa speaker makes empty promises, s/he uses his or her lips or metaphorically speaks of the lips of male camels.

- (17) a. French *aveu du bout des lèvres*
 confession of.SG end of.PL lip.PL
 ‘pay lip service’
 b. Polish *modlić się tylko warg-ami*
 pray REFL only lip.INSTR.PL
 ‘pay lip service’

It is probably for this reason that expressions for speaking involving one’s lips tend to carry negative connotations. For example, the English expression *Watch your lip!* and the German colloquialism *eine Lippe riskieren* (a lip risk = ‘to be cheeky’) have aggressive undertones. The same applies to Chinese, where the conjunction of ‘lip’ and ‘tongue’ leads to the sense of ‘argument’ as in *chun-she* (lip-tongue ‘words, argument’) and *chun-qiang she-jian* (lip-spear/gun tongue-sword ‘cross verbal words, engage in a battle of words’). In Japanese phrases containing the word for ‘lip,’ *kutibiru*, tend to denote negative aspects of speaking: *kutibiruo togarasu* (lip.ACC stick out, or, more commonly, *kutio togarasu* mouth.ACC stick out = ‘complain’) and the archaic expressions (*kutibiruga usui* lip.NOM thin = ‘be talkative’), *kutibiruo hirugaesu* (lip.ACC turn-over = ‘be critical’), *kutibiruo kaesu* (lip.ACC return, turn over = ‘be hateful’). Also in the following Haiku lips are metonymically used for speaking in an unpleasant context:³

³ I am indebted to Yoshihiko Ikegami for the example of the Haiku.

- (18) *Mono ie.ba kuchibiru samushi*
 things say if lip(s) cold
aki no kaze
 autumn 's wind
 'if you say something inadvertently, you may feel uneasy afterward'
 (= 'Be careful about what you say')

7.2. LIP FOR LANGUAGE

Very few languages seem to use the word for lip in the sense of 'language.' Israeli Hebrew has two body-part terms for 'language:.' *safa* 'lip, language' and *lashon* 'tongue,' which are generally assumed to be synonymous. According to the different functions assigned to the tongue and the lips in our folk model of language, we should, however, expect to find differences in meaning between *safa* and *lashon*. This is in fact the case. *Safa* is the more common term: it applies to language in general and is used in the sense of 'plain language' and 'clear speech' as well as 'incomprehensible, verbose, long-winded and flowery language.' *Lashon*, on the other hand, is restricted to traditional, religious language. It is used in expressions for The Holy Tongue (*lashon hakodesh*), Biblical Hebrew (*leshon hamikra*) as well as scientific language, linguistics and linguist (*balshan/ut*). The literary and Biblical connotations associated with *lashon* are reflected in collocations meaning 'fine language', 'exactly as written,' 'be precise in one's speech' and 'understatement.'

8. Conclusions

The object of this study was to investigate our naive view of 'language' as it is reflected in a number of languages. 'Language' as a large conceptual domain comprises many linguistic branches, or subdomains. In our naive view of language, some of these subdomains are systematically related by metonymy. The metonymic relationships this study is concerned with are those between the concrete subdomains of 'articulation' and 'speech organs' on the one hand and the fairly abstract subdomains of 'speaking' and 'language as a system' on the other hand. There is ample cross-linguistic evidence for systematic metonymic mappings between these subdomains, in particular SPEECH ORGAN FOR SPEAKING and SPEECH ORGAN FOR LANGUAGE. Metonymy is thus not just a local shift but, like metaphor, a general and systematic conceptual process. Moreover, like metaphorical mappings, the metonymic mappings discovered here are unidirectional: concrete subdomains of experience serve as the metonymic vehicle, and abstract subdomains of experience serve as the metonymic target. Like conceptual metaphor, conceptual metonymy allows us to understand abstract notions in terms of experientially basic notions.

The metonymies SPEECH ORGAN FOR SPEAKING and SPEECH ORGAN FOR LANGUAGE reflect a coherent "folk model of language." Particularly relevant in this model are a few, highly salient articulators, which are associated with specific linguistic functions. These include voice and the four articulators tongue, teeth, mouth and lips. Although the notion of the vocal tract is not explicitly present as a term in the folk model, it figures prominently in the production of speech. Speech production involves the following stages of articulation, each of which may have its own metonymic impact on the meaning of the word articulated.

First, voice is produced in the throat and may be directly meaningful in expressions such as *to voice an opinion*. Next, language is generated by the tongue. The tongue is the most important articulator. The folk model of language regards the tongue as the speech organ that not only produces the sound shape of words but also fills them with meaning. The meanings given to words reflect the speaker's thoughts. Hence, in using his or her tongue, the speaker cannot but speak truly and sincerely. Its essential function in producing sounds and generating meaning also makes the tongue the most suitable speech organ to stand for the abstract notion of 'language.' As a next step, the words are passed on to the mouth. The mouth is seen as the most important articulator next to the tongue and also contributes to a word's meaning. On their passage through the mouth the words may, however, be obstructed by the teeth. The lips, lastly, are the final articulators to shape the sound and meaning of a word before it is uttered. If the lips allow a word to pass freely, the hearer can read its meaning from them; the lips may, however, also interfere with the articulation of words and distort a word's meaning before it is uttered.

The discussion of the roles of the speech organs has shown that the folk model of language tends to assign different functions to the speech organs and to associate them with different aspects of meaning.

In general, the lower, partly hidden articulators in the vocal tract are associated with a “deeper” quality than the upper, visible articulators. This folk view of language may be related to our metaphorical view of the mind. As shown by Jäkel (1995: 209) in his metaphorical problem-solving scenario, difficult problems lie deep down and are hidden inside the “problem container” as in *There is a deeper issue here*. In the case of lower and upper articulators and the kind of language produced by them, the levels of depth are literally present and the qualities attached to them are invoked by metonymy.

Evidence for this folk model of language has been found in many, also unrelated, languages. However, systematic cross-linguistic studies are needed in order to assess its possibly universal status. Thus, the metonymy SPEECH ORGAN FOR LANGUAGE is widespread and appears to be a natural choice in Western languages but, as observed by Ning Yu (personal communication), does not seem to apply to Chinese. Cross-linguistic differences are of course likely to occur with respect to conventionalized implicatures invited by the metonymies, especially in reference to the manner or mode of speaking. For example, we showed that opening one’s mouth may have the implicated meanings ‘to begin to speak,’ ‘to begin scolding someone’ or ‘to say one’s opinion frankly.’

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