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FIGURATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN THE SLOVENIAN LINGUISTIC ATLAS

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Abstract

Expressions compiled in the *Slovenian Linguistic Atlas*, significantly differ on several levels: phonologically, morphologically, motivationally as well as in the word formation process. The most interesting expressions from the semantic and motivational point of view are the ones formed by the semantic change. This paper presents three types of expressions created by the semantic change, which are most frequently recorded in the *Slovenian Linguistic Atlas.* These are metonymic, metaphorical and hyperbolic expressions. The last part of the paper emphasises the questions of rare presumably metonymic expressions where it is unclear whether they are a result of a semantic change, or an error.

Keywords

Slovenian Linguistic Atlas, figurative expressions, metonymy, metaphor, hyperbole

EXPRESIONES FIGURATIVAS EN EL ATLAS LINGÜÍSTICO ESLOVENO

Resumen

Las expresiones recogidas en el *Atlas Lingüístico de Eslovenia*, difieren significativamente en diversos niveles: fonológico, morfológico, motivacional, así como en el proceso de formación de palabras. Las expresiones más interesantes desde el punto de vista semántico y de motivación son las formadas por el cambio semántico. Este artículo presenta tres tipos de expresiones creadas por el cambio semántico que se registran con mayor frecuencia en el *Atlas Lingüístico de Eslovenia*. Se trata de expresiones metonímicas, metafóricas e hiperbólicas. La última parte del artículo hace hincapié en las expresiones presumiblemente

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metonímicas que son extrañas, en las cuales no queda claro si son el resultado de un cambio semántico o de un error.

Palabras clave

Atlas Lingüístico de Eslovenia, expresiones figuradas, metonimias, metáforas, hipérboles

1. Introduction

Less than two million people speak Slovenian language. However, due to geographical and historical reasons, its dialect differentiation is among the highest in the Slavic world. The Slovenian language consists of 37 basic dialects that form seven dialect groups: (1) Carinthian, (2) Littoral, (3) Rovte, (4) Upper Carniolan, (5) Lower Carniolan, (6) Styrian and (7) Pannonian.

The first historical factor of the dialectal differentiation is settling of the Slovenian territory from two separate directions: after 550 AD (from the territory of modern Moravia) and approx. 585 to 590 AD, but certainly after 568 AD (or after the departure of the Lombards from the Pannonian Plain), when a larger group of Slavic tribes arrived upstream the Sava and Drava rivers. The Slavs that arrived earlier settled northern and western parts of the Slovenian territory and came from the area of the western Slavic language group. The second group of the Slavs arrived from the area of the southern Slavic language group and inhabited what is today known as the south-eastern part of the Slovenian territory. Additional historical factors that formed the dialectal image are: political and ecclesiastical administrative partition of the Slovenian land,[1] the impact of pre-Slavic population, German colonisations of the Rovte area after the 10th century AD, neighbouring languages, i. e. German, Friulian, Italian, Hungarian and, in the South, Croatian languages and Turkish invasions.[2] Geographical factors such as high mountains, rivers, the Ljubljana Moor, which separated central Slovenian dialect groups – Upper and

[1] E. g. the border between the Pannonian Prekmurje and Prlekija dialects was established by the political Austrian-Hungarian state border on the Mura river until the end of the WW1 and the Prekmurje annexation to former Yugoslavia (Podobnikar, Škofic & Horvat 2009: 225).

[2] Turkish invasions forced the Slovenian population to move from the southern Slovenian territory to the northern parts of Bela krajina, while refugees from Lika, Dalmatia and Bosnia settled their former land.

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Lower Carniolan – and extensive forests are an additional reason for the formation of many dialects and local speeches.[3]

The first book of *Slovenian Linguistic Atlas* (hereafter the *SLA 1*) was published as late as 2011, but the material for it was being collected since 1946. The questionnaire was set in 1935 by a Slovenian dialectologist Fran Ramovš. The *SLA 1* consists of 151 questions from the semantic family Human, i. e. the human body, family and illnesses. There are approx. 2200 dialectal lexemes presented on 142 linguistic maps equipped with dialect indexes and commentaries.[4] The *SLA 1* therefore includes approx. 75,000 dialectal words. Its net points cover 413 locations, the majority of them being in Slovenia, 28 placed in Italy, 34 in Austria, two in Hungary and eight in Croatia.

Phonology, morphology, word-formation and origin of terms collected in the *SLA 1* differ significantly. However, observing from the semantic and motivational point of view, the most interesting terms were formed by semantic change. Below, I will present specific types of figurative expressions and highlight the problem of presumably metonymic expressions that occur only once or a few times. The question that arises is whether these expressions actually present a semantic change or are possibly just a result of inaccuracy of the writer and/or informant.

2. Semantic change

A hypernym figurative expression is used for terms, which develop through the semantic change that occurs due to alteration of the meaning of a word. Scientific papers

[3] High mountains of the Alps were preventing the contact between Upper Carniola and Carinthia, and between the Slovenes living in the Soča Valley and Friuli in the western Slovenian ethnic territory. The flat Sora field that stretches between the towns Kranj and Škofja Loka in central Slovenia still presents a sharp boundary between the Rovte and Upper Carniolan dialect as dense forests were stretching over the field in the past.

[4] SLA 1 in fact consists of two books: *SLA 1.1 Atlas* and *SLA 1.2 Commentaries*. Each commentary consists of five sections: Section 1: **Materials** gives more detail on the significance of the dialect material presented on the map; Section 2: **Morphological analysis** shows the structure of the form/morpheme of the lexemes on the map in their proto-Slavonic expressive form; Section 3 **Mapping features** explains the mapping method used; Section 4: **Use of additional literature** refers to bibliographic units which are not mentioned in the Literature section of the *SLA 1.2 Commentaries*; Section 5 **Compare** is directed to the commentaries and maps in SLA which cover the same lexeme as the question presented. It also points to other linguistic atlases that include the Slovenian language territory either in full or in part (Škofic 2011: 399-400).

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describe many types of the semantic change (see Bloomfield 1967; Blank & Koch 1999) but this paper focuses to only three types, namely those that are most commonly used in the *SLA 1*, i. e. a metaphor, a metonymy and a hyperbole. The semantic change of the first two types is based on different forms of synonymic relations and the relation between the whole and its part (Halliday 1994: 341) while the hyperbolic semantic change is based on the relation between a weaker and a stronger meaning.

2.1 Metaphorical expressions

Metaphorical change is defined by a relationship between the basic and the metaphorical meaning, which share one or more identical characteristics (Warren 2002: 122). This means that the chosen metaphorical term derives from similar or identical characteristics of the compared entities. The basic principle of a metaphor is thus an associative relation between the meaning of an object and something similar to it. Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 139) distinguish between the so-called conventional and imaginative metaphors, wherein the first characterise everyday communication, while the latter go beyond the conventional conceptual world and extend to the imaginative world of art. Recent research focuses on differentiation between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors (Steen 2011: 83). Both types are found in everyday communication and in fiction. Examples of deliberate metaphors from real life can be found in the language of politicians, sport commentators and teachers. Non-deliberate metaphors differ from deliberate ones in that they are not used deliberately as metaphors. The majority of metaphors belong to the latter group (Steen 2011: 83).

Recent research in psycholinguistics does not suggest a clear-cut distinction between metaphorical and non-metaphorical language, but points to differences between metaphorical expressions that have lexicalized and thus have salient metaphorical meaning and novel metaphorical expressions, where the metaphorical meaning is not salient (Semino 2010: 11). Considering the salience of metaphorical meaning and the related prevalence of use, Šmelev (1977: 94) differentiates between systemic and non-systemic metaphors. The systemic metaphor is understood as a

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metaphor, used by a group of people, while the non-systemic metaphor is an individual metaphor used by an individual.

The *SLA 1* is composed of a relatively large number of metaphorical expressions; it includes systemic expressions that occur repeatedly in (presumably) geographical areas, as well as the non-systemic ones, i. e. metaphorical expressions that occur individually (only once or sporadically and are geographically dispersed). An example of an individual metaphorical expression for 'brown hair' is a phrase *kofetasti lasje* (*coffee-ish hair*), which is recorded only twice (*SLA 1.2*: 54). On the contrary, a phrase *kostanjevi lasje* (*chestnut hair*), which can be labelled as a systemic metaphor, is used for the same meaning in a large areal of western Slovenian dialects (ibid.). Similarly, the expression *vejice* (*twigs*) is a systemic metaphorical expression for 'eyelashes', while *lasje* (*hair*)*, tipalnice* (*antennae*) and *moštace* (← Friul. *mostacjis* 'mustache') are non-sistemic metaphorical expressions in the same meaning (*SLA 1.2*: 74-75).

The *SLA 1* records deliberate as well as non-deliberate metaphors. Deliberate metaphors are:

1. Colourful synonymic expressions used as alternative to neutral denotative expressions mentioned by the informant. Examples from *SLA 1* include expressions such as *jabka* (*apple*) meaning 'cheek' (*SLA 1.2*: 83), *čompa* ('potato' in western Slovenia) meaning 'fist' (*SLA 1.2*: 105), *črv* (*worm*) meaning 'pimple' (*SLA 1.2*: 191) and *šavflja* (*spade*) (← Germ. Schaufel 'spade') meaning 'foot' (*SLA 1.2*: 173).

2. Colourful synonymic expressions used as alternative to denotative expressions not mentioned by the informant because they present taboo slang. This group is denoted by *ta široka* (*the broad one*) meaning 'buttocks' (*SLA 1.2*: 147), *izpuščati* (*to release*) and *stisniti* (*to squeeze*) meaning 'to fart' (*SLA 1.2*: 149), *sramota* (*shame*), *premoženje* (*property*)*, kosmatije* (*the hairy one*) and *lumpi* (*naughty boy*) meaning 'male genitals' and *veseličica* (*party butterfly*) and *ta mala* (*the little one*) meaning 'female genitals'.[5]

[5] Questions of 'male genitals' and 'female genitals' were not included in the *SLA 1*, because we did mostly not get answers to them. Expressions used for these two meanings mostly belong to local slang and speakers understand them as vulgar, so most of them do not want to name them (in public). However, the answers we did get, are available from the Dialectological Section of the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language at the ZRC SAZU in Ljubljana.

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Some metaphorical expressions raise a question whether the speaker (still) perceives them as expressions that underwent a semantic change or whether their meaning is (already) demetaphorised. The lexeme *klobasa* (*sausage*) 'intestines, bowels' (*SLA 1.2*: 145) is no longer recognised as a figurative expression among the speakers of the Porabje dialect (Pannonian dialect group), but as a denotement. This dialect does not use denotative terms such as *intestines* or *bowels*. The expression *klobasa* (*sausage*) 'intestines, bowels' is therefore completely demetaphorised, i. e. semantically neutral.[6]

2.2 Metonymic expressions

In the literature, the distinction between a metaphor and a metonymy focuses on the comparison of similarities, i. e. a metaphor, and imminence, contiguity and connection with, i. e. a metonymy.[7]

Birih (*apud* Snoj 2006: 76) notes that metonymy is based on the existing links between the adjacent denotements. He lists six types of metonymic changes: partitive, causative, temporal, attributive, quantitative and spatial (ibid). Partitive, causative and spatial types of metonymic change can also be found in the *SLA 1*. Given the widespread use, metonymic changes can be, similar to the metaphoric ones, divided into systemic changes, which are frequent (and presumably occur in geographical areas, although this is not essential) and non-systemic, which are individual in nature.

2.2.1 Partitive metonymy

Partitive metonymy is a semantic change, where the meaning of A is used as a meaning of B, with A reflecting the part of a whole and B meaning the whole. This includes the expression *grlo (throat)* meaning 'neck' (*SLA 1.2*: 93), which is recorded four times on the outskirts of the Slovenian language territory. However, partitive metonymy mostly includes individual expressions: e. g. *uhelj* (*pinna/external ear*) meaning 'ear' (*SLA 1.2*: 68), *šoba* (*protruding lip*) meaning 'mouth' (*SLA 1.2*: 87), *flis* (*wound behind the ear*)

[6] For more on demetaphorisation see Halliday (1994: 348).
[7] See Halliday (1994: 340-341), Lakoff & Johnston (1980: 39) and Birih in Snoj (2006: 76).

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and *krasta* (*crust*) meaning 'wound' (*SLA 1.2*: 93, 186), *peta* (*sole*) and *planta* (← Friul. *plante* 'sole') meaning 'foot' (*SLA 1.2*: 173) and *femore* (← It. *femore* 'thighbone') meaning 'thigh' (*SLA 1.2*: 162).

2.2.2 Causative metonymy

Causative metonymy is based on a cause-effect or a symptom-disease relation. Most of these expressions are used for naming illnesses: *sušica* (*dryness*) (< *suh* (*dry*)), *avscerunga* (← Germ. *Auszehrung* 'atrophy, degeneration') and *vneta pljuča* (*inflammation of the lungs*) meaning 'tuberculosis' (*SLA 1.2*: 219-220); *trganje* (*to rip*) as a systemic metonymical expression for 'rheumatism' (*SLA 1.2*: 215-216); *smrkelj* (*snot*) and *katar* (← Germ. *Katarrh* 'severe mucositis') meaning 'to have a cold' (*SLA 1.2*: 207-208); *pička* (*dot*), *osip* (← Croat. *osip* 'rash') and *srab* ('itching') meaning 'measles' (*SLA 1.2*: 203-205); *srbež, srbečica, srbečina* (all 'itching'), *drpljica* (< *drpati* 'to scratch'), *šanta* (← Austr. Bav. Germ. *Schante* 'wound') meaning 'scabs' (*SLA 1.2*: 199-200).

2.2.3 Spatial metonymy

Spatial metonymy is a type of metonymy, which is based on spatial contiguity. It includes expressions such as: *obrvi (eyebrows*), *veke* (*eyelids*) and *podočnjaki* (*dark circles around the eyes*) meaning 'eyelashes' (*SLA 1.2*: 74-76); *zenice* (*pupils*) meaning 'eyelashes' and/or 'eyebrows' (*SLA 1.2:* 72, 74); *stegno* (*thigh*) meaning 'knee' (*SLA 1.2*: 163); *koleno* (*knee*) meaning 'thigh' (*SLA1.2*: 161); *hrbet* (*back*), *pas* (*waist*), *stegno* (*thigh*), *noga* (*leg*), *križ* (*lower back*) meaning 'hip' (*SLA 1.2*: 156-158); *peta* (*heel*) and *golen* (*shin*) meaning 'ankle' (*SLA 1.2*: 171-172); *šija* (*neck*) meaning 'shoulder' (*SLA 1.2*: 100); *stopalo* (*foot*) meaning 'shin-bone' (*SLA 1.2*: 164). Most of these expressions occur once or a few times, apart from metonymic expressions *obrvi* (*eyebrows*), *veke* (*eyelids*) and *zenice* (*pupils*) meaning 'eyelashes', which form smaller or larger geographical areals.

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2.2.4 Associative metonymy

Expressions based on an associative relation, that is a particular term evoking an association to another similar term, can also be placed among metonymical changes. Examples from *SLA 1* include: *mozolj* (*pimple*) meaning 'boil' (*SLA 1.2*: 188); *tata* (*daddy*) meaning 'stepfather' (*SLA 1.2*: 272-172); *nevesta* (*bride*), *kunjada* (← Friul. *cugnade* 'sister-in-law') and *novica* (*the new one*) meaning 'daughter-in-law' (*SLA 1.2*: 294); *babica* (*grandma*) and *babi* (*granny*) meaning 'mother-in-law' (*SLA 1.2*: 290); *znanec* (*acquaintance*), *dobrotnik* (*benefactor*) and *sosed* (*neighbour*) meaning 'friend' (*SLA 1.2*: 314); *sirota* (*orphan*) meaning 'stepson' (*SLA 1.2*: 276). These expressions are mostly non-systemic metonymy, except for metonymic expressions *sin* (*son*) meaning 'boy' (*SLA 1.2*: 307), *hči* (*daughter*) meaning 'girl' (*SLA 1.2*: 310) and *nevesta* (*bride*) meaning 'daughter-in-law' (*SLA 1.2*: 294) which are widely spread over the western Slovenian territory.

2.3 Hyperbolic expressions

Hyperbolic expression is an expression with a meaning that is stronger than a meaning of the neutral term itself. The *SLA 1* records the meaning 'to die' with several denotative expressions with a root morpheme *-mret-*, i. e. *umreti*, *vmreti and mreti*, as well as with several pejorative verbs, verb or noun phrases, such as *stegniti se* (*to stretch*), *zabincati* (*to kick the bucket*), *črkniti* (*to bleep, to gnash*), *facnoti* (*to kick, to poke*), *gagniti* (*to pop one's clogs*), *krecnoti* (*to drop dead*), *poginiti* (*expression, used for death of an animal*), *zginiti* (*to lose oneself*), *zaregljati* (*to open one's mouth like a frog*), *faliti* (← It. *fallire* 'to fail'), *krepati* (← It. *crepare* 'to drop dead'), *iti v krtovo deželo* (*to go to the mole's land*), *hudič ga je pobral* (*the devil took him*), *vzelo ga je* (*he was taken away*), *vrag ga je vzel* and *hudič ga je vzel* (both meaning *the devil took him*) (*SLA 1.2:* 181-182). The meaning 'healthy' is recorded with a hyperbolic expression *fejst* (← Germ. *feist* 'thick, chubby, fat') (*SLA 1.2*: 184), while the meaning 'fat' with *špehast* (← Bav. M. H. Germ. *spech* 'bacon, fat'), *masten* and *tolst* (both *greasy*) (*SLA 1.2*: 231).

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3. A question of polysemantic expressions

There are many individual (presumably) metonymic and metaphorical expressions recorded among the material collected in 413 Slovenian settlements. This raises a question whether all the recorded expressions are actually the result of a semantic change or are there some inaccuracies made by the author and/or informant. Metonymic expressions are the most doubtful since they, unlike the metaphorical ones which base on similarity and are therefore easier to verify,[8] have a primary reference function (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 36; Dirven 2002: 101) and replace entities, which are adjacent to one another. Some of the discussed metonymic expressions are common, e. g. *obrvi* (*eyebrows*) and *zenice* (*pupils*) meaning 'eyelashes', *nevesta* (*bride*) meaning 'daughter-in-law', *rit* (*arse*) meaning 'male and female genitals'. These examples can therefore be defined as systemic metonymic semantic changes, or in Apresjan's words "regular polysemy", whereby the regularity is a distinctive feature that is crucial for understanding of the metonymic change[9] (Apresjan 1974: 16). The regularity is not necessary for intelligibility of metaphorical changes, as the metaphorical expression shares the same characteristics with the basic meaning and is therefore easier to understand (ibid.).

According to Barcelona (2002: 229) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 37) the use of metonymic expressions, the same as metaphorical, is not rare and arbitrary in languages. Metonymic and metaphorical expressions cannot therefore be regarded as isolated examples. Many of metonymic and metaphorical semantic changes are in fact systemic in different languages/speeches (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 37), otherwise speakers of those languages/linguistic group would find them difficult to understand or would not understand them at all. The question remains with expressions that are recorded only once or a few times, such as *podočnjaki* (*dark circles under the eyes*) meaning 'eyelashes', *hrbet* (*back*) and *križ* (*lower back*) meaning 'hip' and *šija* (*neck*) meaning 'shoulder'. Such expressions cannot be understood as systemic semantic change, as they may be highly

[8] Metaphoric expressions are easier to verify, even though they are sometimes rarely used (e.g. characteristic of one small area) or are even of an individual nature (used by an individual speaker), such as *čompa* ('potato' in western Slovenia) meaning 'fist' and *japka* (*apple*) meaning 'cheek'.
[9] Barcelona (2002: 230) specifies criteria that metonymic changes have to meet in order to be labelled as regular metonymy.

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spatially bounded[10] or even idiolectal. Apresjan (1974: 16) labelled this type of metonymic changes as "immediate polysemy", which is always unstable.[11] Alternatively, some of these expressions cannot be classified as metonymic changes, but faulty and/or inaccurately recorded by the writer and/or informant. The amount of recorded data in the *SLA 1* makes it almost impossible to verify whether the discussed expressions fall within a category of rare semantic changes or errors. Especially given the fact that, as stated in Dirven (2002: 80): "The ability to build a metonymic relationship is part of our cognitive/conceptual ability to link two related sets of entities so that the one can stand for the other". However, this cognitive ability differs from one individual to another, as the individual's ability to identify a metonymical relationship as such differs as well.

4. Conclusions

The present paper proves that the differentiation of Slovenian dialects does not reflect only on the grammatical level, but also in lexical semantics, i. e. in verbalization of meanings concerning the world settled by the speakers of various dialects. The study emphasises expressions created by the semantic change. These expressions are widely recorded in the *SLA 1*. Although ambiguities (polysemy) as a phenomenon and polysemic expressions as its realisation may raise confusion and uncertainty in a certain language, recent research of lexical semantics notes that polysemy is in fact not an anomaly of a language but an important feature of natural languages (Paulin & Béjont 2008: 7). We can further conclude that semantic changes are only features of a living language and speakers who also co-create language which they use in everyday communication. Current lexicography agrees with this recognition (Blank 2003: 267-294) and researches polysemy as a complex multistage phenomenon that extends to cognition, discourse and specific verbalization. The main problem, not only in lexicology but also among the speakers in general, is that the individual speaker only recognises a limited number of words while human imagination is unlimited (and cannot be limited). If the speaker does

[10] They are characteristic of one area or village.
[11] See also Dirven (2002: 85), who divides metonymic changes according to *ad hoc* or permanent change of a meaning.

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not know the lexicalised meaning corresponding to a particular entity one shall: 1. create a new expression, 2. accept the expression used in another language/system, or 3. use a semantic change (Blank 2003: 267). The question of whether the problem of metonymic expressions, such as *podočnjaki* (*dark circles under the eyes*) meaning 'eyelashes', *hrbet* (*back*) and *križ* (*lower back*) meaning 'hip', are in fact semantic changes or errors made by the writer and/or the informant, remains unanswered. However, considering the fact that semantic changes are a complex phenomenon which extends beyond the knowledge of an individual linguist or a group of linguists, the authors of the *SLA 1* considered all expressions, including individual, i. e. non-systemic, (presumably) semantically changed expressions and left their interpretation – as semantic changes or errors – for further assessment of linguists and interested public.

Translated by Dr. Nives Kokeza

Language abbreviations:

Austr. Bav. Germ. = Austrian Bavarian German, Bav. M. H. Germ. = Bavarian Middle High German, Croat = Croatian, Friul. = Friulian, Germ. = German, It. = Italian, < = derives from; ← = accepted from

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