

What's really going on with the ham sandwich? An investigation into the nature of referential metonymy.

Abstract

Working within the framework of Relevance Theory, I investigate the nature of referential metonymy (specifically, metonymically-used definite descriptions), aiming to elucidate (i) the pragmatic mechanisms involved in referential metonymy comprehension, and (ii) the contribution of a metonymically-used definite description to the explicitly communicated content of an utterance. I propose that, while the interpretation of referential metonymy is properly inferential in nature, it cannot be explained in terms of ‘meaning modulation’ (narrowing and broadening); rather, the literal meaning of a metonymically-used referring expression remains intact, and is used as ‘evidence’ of the speaker’s target referent. In addition, I argue that the referential/attributive distinction proposed by Donnellan (1966) for literally-used definite descriptions also applies to metonymically-used definite descriptions. Thus, the contribution of a metonymically-used definite description to explicit utterance content differs according to whether the definite description is used ‘referentially’ or ‘attributively’.

Keywords: referential metonymy; Relevance Theory; explicature; referential/attributive distinction; interpretive use

1 Introduction

Metonymy is traditionally treated as merely a rhetorical device or figure of speech in which, for the name of a thing, we substitute the name of an attribute of that thing, or of something closely related to it (e.g. *hands* for *workers*, or *skirt* for *woman*). In this paper, I set out to elucidate the nature of referential metonymy, i.e. cases of metonymic use which function to pick out the speaker’s target entity in a given communicative context. Specifically, I

investigate cases involving definite descriptions, as exemplified in (1) and (2), wherein the definite descriptions ‘*the ham sandwich*’ and ‘*the muscle*’ are being used metonymically because they express attributes of/things relating to the actual target referent:

(1) The *ham sandwich* has left without paying.

(2) If they won’t pay, send in the *muscle*.

In (1), Nunberg’s (1979) now famous example, the referent is a restaurant customer but the referring term is the word/phrase for his food order. In (2), the referents are hired tough guys but the referring term is the word for their most notable property, i.e. their sizeable muscles.

I restrict my focus to referential metonymy because it is the prototypical example of metonymy and as such has been studied in most depth.¹ Moreover, I concentrate in particular on metonymically-used definite descriptions because definite descriptions are a very common means of referring (both literally and metonymically), and have been widely discussed as vehicles of metonymy and ‘reference transfer’ (see especially Nunberg, 1978; 1979; 1995). Working within the framework of Relevance Theory (hereafter, RT) I address two crucial issues: (i) how referential metonymy is interpreted, and whether the phenomenon falls in with other kinds of innovative non-literal word use like hyperbole and metaphor in terms of the pragmatic mechanisms involved in its comprehension; (ii) how best to represent the contribution of a metonymically-used referring expression to the explicitly communicated content of an utterance.

I will show that in referential metonymy, the speaker’s intended interpretation is recovered by standard processes of pragmatic inference; therefore, the comprehension of referential metonymy is compatible with the RT view of utterance processing, which sees interpretation as properly inferential (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995, 1998, 2002; Wilson & Sperber 2002).

¹ In addition to referential metonymy, certain theorists, especially those working within the cognitive linguistics framework, identify propositional metonymy, e.g. ‘It won’t happen while I still *breathe* (= live)’, as a distinct subtype of metonymy (see e.g. Thornburg & Panther, 1997; Panther & Thornburg, 1998, 1999; Warren, 1999, 2002, 2004; Croft, 2006; also Nunberg (1995, 2004) on nominal vs. predicate ‘meaning transfers’).

The linguistic properties of the metonymically-used expression provide evidence of the target referent, i.e. referential metonymy is a ‘motivated’ phenomenon².

I will also argue that the interpretation of referential metonymy cannot be explained in terms of the lexical pragmatic phenomenon of ‘meaning modulation’ (resulting in a narrowed and/or broadened denotation), which RT sees as underlying the comprehension of a continuum of types of language use from literal to metaphorical (Wilson & Carston, 2007). My key claim is that, rather than deriving an ‘ad hoc concept’ through pragmatic adjustment of encoded meaning, as in modulation, the literal meaning of a metonymically-used referring expression remains intact, and is used as ‘evidence’ of the speaker’s target referent.

In addition, I draw on Donnellan’s (1966) arguments concerning the referential/attribution distinction for literally-used definite descriptions and propose that metonymically-used definite descriptions can also receive a ‘referential’ or an ‘attributive’ reading.³ Thus, two distinct ways of representing the contribution of a metonymically-used definite description to explicit utterance content are required: ‘referential’ cases supply a singular concept of the intended referent, whereas ‘attributive’ cases involve so-called ‘interpretive use’, or metarepresentation, of the metonymic referring term.

2 Motivations for referring metonymically

Before I examine the pragmatic processes by which referential metonymy is interpreted, I will begin by investigating why speakers refer metonymically in the first place. I take as my

² A ‘motivated’ phenomenon is one in which the linguistic properties of the innovatively-used word/phrase give the interpreter clues to the speaker’s intended meaning. This contrasts with ‘opaque’ phenomena wherein the word/phrase uttered gives no clue to the intended meaning, which must be either explicitly given by the speaker or inferred by the hearer on the basis of contextual information and pragmatic principles alone (cf. Wilson & Falkum (2015) on ‘motivated’ neologisms e.g. *blackbird* vs ‘opaque’ neologisms e.g. *Crocs* = foam clog shoes).

³ Here, the word ‘referential’ is used in Donnellan’s (1966) sense, to talk specifically about those cases in which we have an intended entity in mind and use a description with the aim of picking out that particular entity; this sense, common in the philosophy of language literature, is stricter than the more general use of ‘referential’ that is found in the pragmatics literature (as in ‘referential metonymy’). For further discussion, see §4.3.

starting point existing RT accounts of referential metonymy such as Papafragou (1996), Jiang (2013) and Rebollar (2015), in which the central role of the speaker's intentions in determining the referent of an expression is highlighted. These accounts cite Kaplan's (1989: 559-561) claim that the intention to use an expression to refer to a given entity can dominate over the intention to use the expression in question in accordance with any of its prior meanings or pre-established uses. For example, although the established usage of the expression '*the ham sandwich*' is to pick out the bread-and-meat snack, in (1) above, uttered in a restaurant context, the speaker's intention in using this expression is to refer to a particular customer who ordered a ham sandwich. Consider also (3):

(3) I spent hours making small talk with *the forehead*.

While the conventional meaning of the word '*forehead*' denotes the part of the face above the eyebrows, the person who utters (3) uses the definite description '*the forehead*' to refer to a particular person with an especially prominent brow. This demonstrates how the encoded or conventional meaning of an expression does not strictly determine the entity/entities which a speaker can use the expression to pick out, such that the speaker's intended referent need not be the linguistically-specified referent of the expression. It also raises the question of why there are occasions on which the intended referent is not simply the established referent: what reasons might a speaker have to fix a novel referent for an existing expression?

Speakers may refer metonymically in situations where referring literally would impose unnecessary extra processing costs on the audience. For example, suppose that a waitress in a crowded restaurant full of businessmen on their lunch break intends to refer to a specific diner. Using an expression which literally refers to her target entity (e.g. '*the businessman*') would, in the communicative context, lead to referential ambiguity because it would not identify a unique individual, and would thus require of the audience extra cognitive effort to resolve the ambiguity and work out the intended referent. Furthermore, in a hectic restaurant

environment, the audience, i.e. other waitresses, will have to deal with many other cognitive tasks in addition to utterance interpretation, and therefore may not have the time or processing resources to interpret a literal referring expression such as '*the man who ordered the ham sandwich*' which, although it provides disambiguating information, is long and syntactically complex. Note that here, the effort required from the speaker for articulation is pertinent too: although the speaker's utterance should be clear and unambiguous if she is to successfully communicate her intended message to her audience, she must balance this need for clarity and explicitness with the opposing desire to minimise her own costs in utterance production (see Horn, 1984). This also explains why, in referential metonymy, the speaker 'repurposes' an existing expression to pick out her target entity, because making use of already available lexical items is less cognitively costly than inventing an entirely new expression that will allow for successful recovery of her intended referent.

According to RT, all acts of ostensive communication, including utterances, communicate a presumption of their own optimal relevance (i.e. that the ostensive stimulus is both sufficiently relevant to be worth the audience's processing effort, and also the most relevant stimulus the communicator is willing and able to produce in the current circumstances). RT also sees the overall relevance of an utterance as a function of cognitive effects weighted against processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995). Given these two assumptions, the extra effort required for ambiguity resolution or processing a complex expression may result in the utterance failing to meet expectations of relevance, leading the audience to abandon utterance processing without having recovered the speaker's intended referent. It is therefore in the best interests of the speaker to choose a referring expression that makes reference resolution easy, that is, both quick and accurate. Minimising the effort required for interpretation increases the likelihood that the audience will maintain attention and fully

process the speaker's utterance, thus increasing the likelihood that the intended referent will be recovered (Allott, 2013: 81).

Further, as Papafragou (1996: 186) notes, a speaker might refer metonymically to provide access to more contextual implications than would be available if reference were made literally, or to express attitudinal/affective information. By way of illustration, consider an alternative scenario. A guest at an office Christmas party is talking to her friend and, wishing to refer to their colleague Dave, who is wearing a distinctive outfit that night, utters (4):

(4) Look at *the green trousers* dance!

While it would be quicker and easier to refer to Dave by simply using his name, which is known to both speaker and addressee, picking him out by using the expression '*the green trousers*' creates a humorous effect through reducing a human being to his garments. It also encourages the addressee to explore more carefully the implications of the referring expression '*the green trousers*' and thereby derive extra conclusions, e.g. that Dave is, like his outfit, loud and tasteless. Here, the extra effects derived presumably outweigh any extra processing costs that their derivation incurs. Just as minimising the effort required for utterance processing is in the speaker's best interests, so too is maximising the benefits of the enterprise for the audience: providing extra, useful information will also increase the chances that the audience will pay attention, fully process the utterance, and remember the message that the speaker wants to convey (Allott, 2013: 81).

Finally, Jiang (2013: 11-13) and Rebollar (2015: 196-7) claim that speakers use metonymy to fill gaps in the lexicon if there is no existing word to refer to the target entity. For example, if the two friends at the office party do not know the name of the enthusiastically jitterbugging man in emerald flares, they must use an alternative referring expression which allows for economical and efficient referent identification, and possibly also implies additional conclusions.

Summarising these points, we could say that the overarching motivation for referential metonymy is the speaker's realisation that, with respect to the entity she has in mind and intends her audience to pick out, the available means for making literal reference to that entity are not the most convenient or effective (i.e. not the most relevant) in the context at hand. Given the speaker's particular communicative intention, it may be the case that the existing label(s) for her target entity would fail to meet her needs on several grounds simultaneously. That is to say, the above motivations for referring metonymically may combine, such that the metonymic use of an expression is intended to fulfil multiple goals at once: for instance, not only providing a spur-of-the-moment name for an entity, e.g. a man in a nightclub in (4), in the absence of a conventional label, but also encouraging the audience to think about the entity in a specific way (conceptualising the man in terms of his lurid green pair of hose) and thereby to draw a variety of implicit conclusions through exploring assumptions about green trousers and people who wear them. This shows the utility and power of referential metonymy as a device which speakers can employ to ensure the successful communication of complex messages, whose relevance depends not merely on the identification of a certain entity but also on building up a construal of the entity in question.

Yet recent research suggests that some motivations for referential metonymy may emerge later in linguistic development than others, due to the fact that the communicative intentions involved require more sophisticated underlying cognitive capacities. Falkum, Recasens and Clark (2017) discovered that children as young as three years old are able to produce metonymic referring expressions that fulfil what is often taken to be the primary communicative function of referential metonymy: economising on processing effort in making reference to a target entity, in particular by using metonymy as a kind of 'shorthand' for a more complex referring expression, with the aim of ensuring quick and easy referent identification (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Nunberg, 1979; Papafragou, 1996). For these pre-

school age children, metonymy provides a means for picking out an entity (in Falkum, Recasens and Clark's experiment, a novel game e.g. covering a sheet of paper with as many stickers as possible in 20 seconds) without having to resort to using a literal descriptive phrase that might be more demanding syntactically or conceptually: for example, the metonymic referring expression '*the stickers*' is less complex than the literal description '*the game with the stickers*'. However, it is not until slightly later, between ages four and five, that the ability to highlight a specific property of an entity in order to produce a metonymic 'name' for a target referent (e.g. '*The Winter Hat*' for a cat wearing a hat, '*The Fire*' for a horse pictured with its mane on fire) begins to unfold.

The production of metonymic 'shorthand' expressions requires only the ability to represent and exploit salient 'part-for-whole' contiguous associative relations (Falkum, Recasens & Clark, 2017: 112), an ability that has been found even in infants, who are capable of producing iconic gestures that instantiate a part-whole relationship with the meaning represented, e.g. clapping hands for '*baseball game*' and smacking lips for '*food*' (Acredolo & Goodwyn, 1988; Kendon, 2004; Mittelberg, 2006). Yet Falkum, Recasens and Clark (2017: 112) argue that the production of metonymic names involves a higher degree of metalinguistic ability, i.e. the ability to reflect on language and its use (Gombert, 1992; Karmiloff-Smith, 1992; Tunmer, Pratt & Herriman, 1984). This is because in order to come up with a metonymic label (e.g. '*the Moustache*') for an individual (a man with a large moustache), children need to take a familiar term with an established meaning ('*moustache*') and fix the target individual as a novel referent for the term, which may involve replacing a conventional label (e.g. '*the man*'). The use of a familiar term to pick out a new individual requires the capacity to distinguish, and think about the difference between, what is literally 'said' by an utterance of an expression, and what is communicated (the intended message).

Such metalinguistic awareness does not appear to be present until around age four (Doherty & Perner, 1998).

The ability to refer metonymically in order to provide access to additional contextual implications and to create specific effects, e.g. humour, deprecation, etc., is likely to emerge even later. It is plausible that the production of referential metonymy for this purpose requires, in addition to the metalinguistic awareness which allows speakers to replace a conventional term with a novel one and to manipulate the reference of an existing term, a certain degree of world knowledge, including the associations and assumptions which pertain to the literal meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression. Knowledge of this kind can only be acquired through experience, and thus it is unlikely that even children of four and five years old, who do have metalinguistic capacities, also have the sophisticated awareness of the connotations of words that would facilitate more implication-rich uses of referential metonymy. In addition, it is doubtful that the eldest children in Falkum, Recasens and Clark's (2017) group would have fully developed the cognitive capacity to reflect carefully on contextual assumptions potentially shared with their audience, and to consider which referring term would be most likely to lead their audience to particular target conclusions. Although four and five year-olds are capable of producing metonymic names by using a salient property of an entity to create a new label, in a manner similar to that seen in our '*green trousers*' example in (4), children of this age may not realise the effects achieved by their choice of referring expression, therefore their uses of metonymic names may not be motivated by the specific intention to provide access to certain contextual implications. Nevertheless, while the derogatory use of metonymic nicknames such as '*Four Eyes*' and '*Fatty*' has been found to be common among primary school children (Crozier & Dimmock, 1999), to the best of my knowledge, and as Falkum, Recasens and Clark (2017: 90) also acknowledge, little is known about this particular, attitude-signalling use of referential

metonymy in pre-schoolers. This suggests that further research into the deployment of referential metonymy for the specific effects it can have should perhaps be the next step in developmental studies.

3 The interpretation of referential metonymy

RT claims that linguistic meaning, rather than fully determining communicated content, acts as a ‘clue’ or ‘pointer’ to the speaker’s intended meaning. Therefore, in referential metonymy, although the referring expression used by the speaker does not literally identify her target entity, she has chosen this expression because she believes that it is nevertheless the best evidence she is able to provide for her referential intention (and, in some cases, for her intention to achieve certain effects). The task for the audience is thus to use the decoded linguistic content of the speaker’s utterance, together with contextual information, to identify via inferential reasoning the entity that could most plausibly be the speaker’s intended referent. In this section, I will present and evaluate some possible accounts of how the interpretation process works for referential metonymy, and of the pragmatic mechanisms involved in metonymy comprehension, before outlining my own, novel approach to referential metonymy interpretation in §4.

3.1 Referential metonymy as ‘interpretive use’

The first account of referential metonymy processing to be considered comes from Papafragou (1996). Papafragou (1996) aims to explain referential metonymy in Relevance-theoretic terms; therefore, I will briefly present the RT approach to utterance interpretation in order to clarify the assumptions underlying her approach. RT claims that in comprehension, our goal is to construct a hypothesis about the speaker’s intended meaning that satisfies the expectations of relevance raised by the particular utterance, given the presumption of optimal

relevance that comes with every utterance. This task comprises three sub-tasks: (i) constructing hypotheses about the explicit content of the utterance, (ii) constructing hypotheses about intended contextual assumptions, and (iii) constructing hypotheses about intended contextual implications (implicated conclusions). These hypotheses are developed on-line and in parallel (Sperber & Wilson, 2002: 261). Considerations of relevance may lead us to expect a particular conclusion, or type of conclusion; these conclusions may contribute via backwards inference to the identification of explicit content and contextual assumptions which act as explicit and implicit premises that warrant, via forwards inference, the anticipated conclusions (Carston, 2004; Wilson & Carston 2007). Utterance interpretation is therefore fully inferential: each sub-task in the overall process of constructing a plausible interpretation for the speaker's utterance involves a non-demonstrative inference process (Sperber & Wilson, 2002: 262). The mutual parallel adjustment of explicit content, context and cognitive effects is constrained by the RT comprehension strategy, which states that interpreters should follow a path of least effort and test interpretive hypotheses in order of accessibility, stopping when expectations of relevance are satisfied (or abandoned) (Sperber & Wilson, 2002: 259).

Importantly, the RT approach to utterance interpretation, according to which all aspects of communicated content are recovered inferentially, contrasts with associationist approaches, which claim that at least certain interpretations are the result of 'blind', automatic spreading activation patterns. For example, the cognitive linguistics account of metonymy (see e.g. Lakoff, 1987; Kövecses & Radden, 1998; Radden & Kövecses, 1999; Panther & Thornburg, 2003) proposes that metonymic interpretations are recovered via code-like 'transfer of meaning' rules ('author for work', 'foodstuff for consumer', etc.) which map from the source representation (the literal meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression) to the target representation (the intended referent). Among the problems with such a code-based

account are that it only appears able to describe the input-output relation for certain highly frequent, familiar metonymic usages, and gives an explanatory role to these relations rather than seeking to explain how they arise and how they are comprehended when they are first used. This latter criticism seems especially important, given that cognitive linguists, who believe in ‘embodied’ cognition which is determined by our sensory experience of the world, would strenuously deny the claim that ‘transfer of meaning’ rules are in any way innate. A properly inferential account of metonymy interpretation, as per RT, therefore seems preferable.

Indeed, just such an inferential approach is proposed in Papafragou (1996). Yet, Papafragou (1996) also makes a further key claim regarding the nature of the phenomenon: that referential metonymy is a variety of so-called ‘interpretive use’ (see Sperber & Wilson, 1986/1995; Wilson & Sperber, 1988). Interpretive use occurs when a representation is used to represent another representation, by virtue of a resemblance between the two representations. This contrasts with ‘descriptive use’, in which what the representation is used to represent is a state of affairs in the world, by virtue of its propositional form being true of that state of affairs (Papafragou, 1996: 179-80).

There are no restrictions as to the kinds of representations that can be used interpretively. Interpretive use is not limited to representations, such as utterances, which have a fully propositional form; lexical concepts or phrases expressing concepts can also be used interpretively, and can become embedded in a fully propositional representation Papafragou (1996: 180). It is the interpretive use of lexical and phrasal concepts that is most pertinent to referential metonymy. Such use typically occurs when a new name/label for an entity is first introduced. Imagine that you unexpectedly encounter a novel object, the name of which is known to neither you nor your companions. Inspired, you spontaneously invent a name for the object, and utter (5):

(5) That's a *'blicker'*!

Here, you are using the word *'blicker'* interpretively to mean something like 'an object that can appropriately be called *blicker'*'. In doing so, you are introducing a representation of a representation, i.e. a metarepresentation. The name you have invented is a spur-of-the-moment device for referring to the target object in a way that overcomes the obstacle of having no conventional term available for the object in question. Now compare referential metonymy, as in (6), uttered in a crowded bar to refer to a hirsute man sitting nearby:

(6) *The beard* looks miserable.

Although referential metonymy involves repurposing existing expressions (here, *'the beard'*) rather than inventing entirely new linguistic forms, note the parallels between the scenario in (6) and the scenario in (5). The metonymic use of the definite description *'the beard'* and the outright invention *'blicker'* have a common motivation: the need to make reference in the absence of an established expression for picking out the target entity (the speaker of (6) does not know the name of the morose, bearded individual she wishes to talk about). Further, the metonymic use and the invention serve the same communicative function, i.e. referring to a particular intended entity. This illustrates how referential metonymy can come to be classed as an interpretive use.

Papafragou (1996: 181) sees referential metonymy as a specific kind of interpretive use which (i) introduces a new name/label for an entity (in some cases, replacing an existing label on that particular occasion), and (ii) picks out an entity that does not fall under the linguistically-specified denotation of the metonymically-used referring expression, i.e. fixes a novel referent for an existing expression. Metonymically-used referring terms do not provide truthful descriptions of their intended referents which correspond to actual states of affairs in the world. Rather, a speaker makes reference metonymically as a maximally convenient way of identifying a target referent in a particular context. The referring expression is 'held up', in

Papafragou's terms, in order to help the audience pick out the intended entity, on the basis of the 'clues' provided by the linguistically-specified meaning of the expression. Interpreters realise that a literal, 'descriptive' interpretation of the metonymically-used referring expression would not satisfy their expectations of relevance, and instead assume that they must be dealing with an interpretive use of the expression in question.

For example, on hearing the utterance in (6), we immediately recognise that the speaker does not intend the definite description '*the beard*' to be understood literally, as referring to the type of facial hair, because this would yield an incoherent, nonsensical interpretation that would fail to satisfy our expectations of relevance. A 'descriptive use' interpretation can thus be ruled out and, in most instances, would not even be considered. Instead, guided by the verb phrase 'looks miserable', which makes accessible the interpretive hypothesis that the subject of this predicate, i.e. the referent of the definite description '*the beard*', is human, we take the speaker to be using the phrase '*the beard*' interpretively— as a metarepresentation, to represent a representation of the actual intended referent. Therefore, (6) expresses a message along the lines of (7), which makes an assertion about an individual:

(7) The person that could appropriately be called '*the beard*' is miserable.

Assuming that in the communicative context at hand we may have specific expectations about the cognitive effects that the utterance of (6) will achieve, for example the expectation that the speaker will provide us with useful and/or interesting information about other people in the bar, we must engage in further processing in order to pick out and derive an 'individuating conceptual representation' (Papafragou, 1996: 183) of the target entity. Given the presumption of optimal relevance, we may reasonably take it that the speaker has used the most relevant linguistic stimulus she is willing and able to produce to identify her intended referent. Indeed, in the context of utterance, a literal beard is physically present and directly perceivable, and focusing on this entity, our attention drawn to it by the speaker's use of the

word *'beard'*, is sufficient to enable us to recover a referent for the phrase *'the beard'* that satisfies our expectations of relevance. Crucially, when we attend to the actual beard, we simultaneously attend to an individual who could appropriately be called *'the beard'* by virtue of the fact that the beard is on his face. Moreover, the speaker has presumably chosen the term *'the beard'* as her referring expression because no men present in the bar other than her intended referent have facial hair. Thus, when we attend to the literal beard we can see nearby, we simultaneously attend to the only person who could be plausibly the speaker's intended referent; that is to say, the intended referent is made maximally accessible. Having identified this individual as the target referent of the metonymically-used definite description, we can go on to infer further contextual implications which will contribute to the overall relevance of the utterance of (6), e.g. that if *'the beard'*, i.e. the bearded man nearby, is looking miserable, we should go over and attempt to cheer him up.

As this example shows, the notion of *'interpretive use'* can be successfully integrated into a properly inferential account of utterance processing, in keeping with the principles of RT: the intended interpretation of (6) is arrived at by following a path of least effort in testing and evaluating interpretive hypotheses, using as a starting point the decoded linguistic content of the utterance. In addition, Papafragou (1996: 183) makes the important claim that referential metonymy contributes to the explicitly communicated content of an utterance. However, while I believe that the notion of *'interpretive use'* is valuable for understanding the nature of referential metonymy, and make use of it in my own account (see §4.3)⁴, Papafragou's (1996) account is, I believe, incomplete in several respects.

Firstly, although Papafragou (1996: 181-3) uses definite description cases to illustrate how the interpretation of referential metonymy proceeds, she doesn't discuss the

⁴ See also Falkum (2011) on *'interpretive use'*. However, Jodłowiec and Piskorska (2015) argue against metarepresentation (interpretive use) in referential metonymy, on the basis that this imposes unnecessary processing effort. While an in-depth critique of Jodłowiec and Piskorska (2015) is beyond the scope of this paper, I believe that their objections to *'interpretive use'* accounts do not withstand scrutiny.

referential/attributive distinction for definite descriptions (Donnellan, 1966), which I argue in §4 is vital in elucidating the contribution of a metonymically-used referring expression to the explicitly communicated content of an utterance. In addition, Papafragou's (1996) approach was formulated before the advent of the RT 'lexical pragmatics' programme (see e.g. Carston, 2002; Wilson, 2004; Wilson and Carston, 2007), and therefore does not adequately address the crucial question of whether the RT account of lexical pragmatics, which covers a range of other non-literal uses including hyperbole and metaphor, carries over to referential metonymy interpretation. It is to this question that we turn now.

3.2 Referential metonymy as modulation

According to the RT account of lexical pragmatics, all cases of 'modulation' of encoded meanings (context-dependent pragmatic fine-tuning to recover the speaker's intended meaning) can be given a unified explanation. Both narrowings (e.g. '*drink*' used to convey the more specific meaning ALCOHOLIC DRINK) and broadenings (e.g. '*flat*' used approximately, to mean RELATIVELY FLAT), including metaphorical extensions (e.g. '*shark*' used to mean PREDATORY CREATURE), involve the online construction of an 'ad hoc concept', or occasion-specific sense, from the linguistically-specified meaning of the word in question, as a result of interaction between encoded information, contextual information and relevance-based expectations. An ad hoc concept can be more specific than the encoded concept, as in narrowing; more general than the encoded concept, as in broadening; or can be both narrowed and broadened in comparison to the encoded concept, as in metaphor (Carston, 1997, 2002). Ad hoc concept construction occurs as part of the mutual parallel adjustment of the explicit and implicit content of an utterance in the search for an interpretation that satisfies the expectations of relevance raised by the utterance. It is therefore the outcome of a single, properly inferential interpretive process.

The key strength of RT's approach to lexical pragmatics is thus that it treats lexical narrowing and lexical broadening (or a combination of the two) as involving one and the same interpretive mechanism; that is, inferential ad hoc concept construction. Moreover, the RT approach does away with the traditional divide between literal and figurative language that we find in standard Gricean pragmatics, and instead argues that phenomena of innovative word use, such as hyperbole and metaphor, are not distinct natural kinds which as such require different interpretive mechanisms, but rather are interpreted by the self-same process that is responsible for the interpretation of ordinary, literal utterances (see e.g. Carston (2002), Wilson (2004) and Wilson and Carston (2007) on lexical pragmatics and ad hoc concepts).

However, although the discussion in §3.1 demonstrates that referential metonymy can be explained in the properly inferential terms of RT, such that we need not invoke special interpretive mechanisms like 'transfer of meaning' rules to account for its interpretation, I nevertheless claim that it does not involve ad hoc concept construction (note that no ad hoc concepts figure in the analysis of (6)). Referential metonymy seems to work differently from other examples of figurative language e.g. hyperbole and metaphor, and indeed, a 'modulation' account appears to be wrong for the phenomenon.

Consider first narrowing, which involves using a word to pick out a proper subset of the items that fall under its linguistically-specified denotation, as in (8) and (9):

(8) I've got a *temperature*.

(9) Josie is avoiding *bachelors*.

An utterance of (8) communicates the message that the speaker has a specific kind of temperature, i.e. a higher-than-normal one. An utterance of (9), given a particular set of background assumptions, could be understood as conveying that Josie is steering clear of a certain subtype of unmarried men, for example the kind that still live with their mothers. The

words *temperature* and *bachelors* come to express the ad hoc concepts TEMPERATURE* and BACHELORS*, which have a restricted denotation compared to that of the encoded meaning from which they are derived. In order to construct such narrowed ad hoc concepts, contextually relevant encyclopaedic properties associated with the encoded meaning are promoted to the status of logical/definitional properties of the communicated concept, e.g. for *bachelors*, the property of 'living with their parents'.

In referential metonymy, however, the overall effect is not to highlight a proper subpart of the linguistically-specified denotation of the metonymically-used referring term. It is plainly not the case that the intended referent in the *ham sandwich* example—the customer who ordered the ham sandwich—could be thought of as a subtype of ham sandwiches. Likewise, in (6) in §3.1, there appears to be no way in which the entity that the speaker intends to refer to by her use of the expression *the beard*, i.e. a man sporting a beard, is a specific subtype of the entity which is picked out by the encoded meaning of the word, i.e. the beard itself. The metonymically-used referring term does not come to express, through the addition of encyclopaedic properties, a narrowed ad hoc concept which is a more specific version of the sense it is ordinarily used to convey. The definite description *the beard* continues to apply to the same entity (a unique, contextually salient beard) as on the literal use— as indeed it must, because successful identification of the speaker's intended referent in (6) depends on her addressee attending to the literal beard and thereby coming to pick out the target individual, by virtue of the fact that it is on his face that the beard is to be found. Moreover, while the referring term retains its standard, linguistically-encoded meaning and does not express a new concept with a restricted denotation, the speaker's metonymic use of the definite description nevertheless fulfils a particular function: it serves to identify a novel referent, an entity which lies *outside* of the linguistically-specified denotation of the referring

term. It can thus be concluded that referential metonymy cannot be explained as a variety of narrowing.

We turn next to broadening. Broadening occurs when the denotation of the pragmatically-inferred concept is wider (more inclusive) than the linguistically-specified denotation of the term. The denotation of the ad hoc concept which results from broadening includes all the entities contained in the denotation of the original literal concept, plus more. In (10) for example, '*boiling*' can be used to express the ad hoc concept BOILING*, which includes in its denotation not only things that are boiling in the strict sense (having a temperature of 100 C) but also things that are hot but not boiling, such as very warm bathwater (this would be a hyperbolic use of '*boiling*'):

(10) The water is *boiling*.

Compare the metonymic use of the expression '*the ham sandwich*' in (1) above. While the denotation of the expression remains culinary, the reference (speaker's reference) is to a person, not a person in addition to a bread-and-ham snack. The referring expression comes to pick out an entity that does not fall within its linguistically-specified denotation, which may appear similar to the way in which a broadened expression can apply to entities that lie outside of its linguistically-specified denotation. Importantly, however, the metonymic denotation does not stand in a superset relation with the denotation of the encoded literal concept, unlike the denotation of a broadened concept. It is simply something else altogether, hence the talk in some quarters of 'meaning transfer' or 'reference transfer'.

It thus appears that referential metonymy is not amenable to an analysis in terms of either type of lexical 'modulation', narrowing or broadening, as also noted by e.g. Recanati (2004: 26), and Wilson and Carston (2007: 254). However, a potential problem arises at this point. So far, we have only considered narrowing and broadening occurring in isolation, yet recall that RT claims that utterance interpretation can involve narrowing and broadening in

combination (Carston, 1997, 2002). This analysis is fruitfully applied to metaphor comprehension, as illustrated by (11):

(11) Caroline is a *princess*.

In (11), the word '*princess*' expresses the ad hoc concept PRINCESS*. PRINCESS* applies to non-royal Caroline in addition to literal princesses, therefore its denotation is in certain respects more inclusive than the denotation of the lexical concept PRINCESS. However, the entities to which the ad hoc concept PRINCESS* applies might be characterised by having the properties 'spoilt', 'snobbish', etc., therefore the denotation of PRINCESS* is also in certain respects more restricted than the denotation of the lexical concept PRINCESS, because any literal princesses who are not pampered and arrogant are excluded from the denotation of PRINCESS*. This shows that the ad hoc concept PRINCESS* is both narrowed and broadened in comparison to the encoded concept from which it is derived.

One may be tempted to propose a similar analysis for referential metonymy comprehension, arguing that the very reason why the target entity picked out by a metonymic use of a referring expression is disjoint from the linguistically-specified denotation of the expression in question is that the interpretation process in fact involves a combination of radical narrowing and radical broadening, to such an extent that there is no overlap whatsoever between the encoded concept and the resulting ad hoc concept communicated.

This possibility is explored by Falkum (2011), who examines the adequacy of a potential account of referential metonymy in which the concept encoded by the referring expression is seen as 'triggering' an ad hoc concept with which it does not share any encyclopaedic properties. Falkum (2011: 242) suggests that in order to construct a metonymic ad hoc concept, an interpreter would have to retrieve an accessible encyclopaedic assumption of the linguistically-encoded concept, or an accessible contextual assumption, which would include the linguistically-specified denotation and the speaker-intended referent and which would

thereby allow for identification of the target referent. Using the ‘*ham sandwich*’ case to illustrate the process, the idea is that recovery of the encoded concept HAM SANDWICH would make contextual assumptions about ham sandwiches and ham sandwich orders highly activated and accessible. From there, to construct the ad hoc concept HAM SANDWICH*, the interpreter would need to retrieve the contextual assumption *Customer A has ordered a ham sandwich*, and to identify the intended referent as Customer A. Optimally relevant implicatures could then be derived, e.g. since ‘*the ham sandwich*’ has left without paying, we should chase after Customer A, i.e. the intended referent, and make him pay.

Jodłowiec and Piskorska (2015: 171), in their discussion of Falkum (2011), review this analysis and conclude that it is inadequate on the grounds of a fundamental ‘weak link’: namely, a failure to account for how exactly the interpreter is supposed to reason from the encoded to the communicated concept. Falkum (2011: 244) herself highlights this as an area of uncertainty, and admits that it does not seem to involve any logical or evidential relation between the encoded and the communicated concept. Jodłowiec and Piskorska (2015: 171), citing Wilson and Carston (2007), stress that ad hoc concept construction, whether arising from narrowing, broadening or a narrowing-broadening combination, is genuinely inferential in nature, because the encoded and the communicated concepts share implications. Yet if the encoded and the communicated concepts do not overlap, as is the case with putative metonymic ad hoc concepts, there can be no implication-sharing, which suggests that the process of deriving the communicated concept from the encoded concept is not genuinely inferential. We are, therefore, left with an account of the interpretation of referential metonymy which is both incomplete and incompatible with one of the core claims of RT, i.e. that utterance interpretation is always properly inferential. On this basis, it appears that a commitment to providing a truly RT-compatible treatment of referential metonymy may alone lead us to reject a radical-modulation approach.

Jodłowiec and Piskorska's (2015) arguments are forceful and convincing, making clear that a modulation account of referential metonymy is simply untenable. I will conclude this section by adding a further point in support of their refutation.

In my view, an ad hoc concept analysis cannot be accepted because it is fundamentally inappropriate given the communicative function of referential metonymy. Referential metonymy is concerned with the picking-out of real-world entities. As we have seen in §2, speakers refer metonymically in order to circumvent the inconveniences that, in the context at hand, are posed by the available means for referring literally. The speaker chooses a metonymic referring expression because it is the most efficient and/or effect-rich way of identifying her target referent in that particular communicative scenario; in some other situation, it may be the case that a literal referring expression or a proper name would be the optimal way of picking out the self-same referent. The primary focus is thus the referent itself, not merely the referent to the extent that it falls under a certain denotation, as Donnellan (1966: 303) argues for referential uses of literal definite descriptions. This is shown by the fact that referential metonymy can succeed in picking out a target entity even when the speaker is mistaken in her choice of referring term: '*the ham sandwich*' may really be a cheese sandwich, '*the beard*' may be a trick of the light, and yet the audience may still be able to home in on the 'right' (i.e. the intended) referent. In referential metonymy, there is a specific entity which the speaker intends should be identified by the audience, and who/what the specific entity is, is a direct function of the speaker's intentions, not a function of the denotation of the concept expressed by the referring expression used.

However, the primary role in communication played by modulation is not to enable interpreters to directly identify things in the world. Rather, modulation serves to yield novel, ad hoc concepts, i.e. descriptive entities or 'senses' whose denotations are different from the denotation of the input, lexically-encoded concept. Narrowing, broadening and narrowing-

broadening combinations are denotational outcomes. Therefore, when a broadened or narrowed-broadened expression can come to apply to entities that do not fall within its linguistically-specified denotation, this is because the expression conveys an ad hoc concept that has an enlarged (at least in certain respects) denotation. While the ad hoc concept communicated by the expression is part of speaker-meant content, and is therefore a function of the speaker's intentions, when it comes to the relationship between the speaker's intentions and entities in the world, we can see that in cases of modulation, we are at one remove: we are at the higher level of concepts. I therefore conclude my rejection of an ad hoc concept account of referential metonymy by returning to Donnellan's (1966: 281-2) statement that referring and denoting are not the same: while a change to the denotation of an expression comes about through modulation of the encoded meaning of the expression, using an existing expression to refer to a novel entity can be achieved without the construction of an ad hoc concept, and this is what we find in referential metonymy.

3.3 Referential metonymy as neologism

Previous accounts of referential metonymy have shared the intuition that the phenomenon is fundamentally concerned with the creative introduction of novel names/labels for entities. For example, Papafragou (1996: 182) claims that metonymically-used referring terms function as 'newly coined names' for the speaker's intended referent, and Rebollar (2015: 196) speaks of 'ad hoc name creation' for identification purposes. This suggests an analogy between referential metonymy and other phenomena of new word coinage, such as so-called 'zero derivations' (denominal verbs, e.g. '*to porch*', and deverbal nouns, e.g. '*a get*') and noun-noun compounds. Indeed, in recent talks, Wilson and Falkum (2015) suggest that metonymy works in a similar way to these classic cases of neologism. This hypothesis arises from their belief that, regarding motivations for production and processes of interpretation, referential

metonymy shows more continuities with neologisms than with ‘tropes’ like metaphor, hyperbole and irony.

The ‘metonymy as neologism’ position finds support in the evidence from language acquisition, which suggests that the ability to refer metonymically emerges at around the same age as the ability to use zero derivation and compounding. Falkum, Recasens and Clark (2017) found that children as young as three years old can both produce and comprehend referential metonymy; zero derivation emerges as a device for creating new names/labels from two years old (Bushnell & Maratsos, 1984; Clark, 1982); and by three years old, children are capable of using novel compounds to refer to entities and individuals (Falkum, Recasens & Clark, 2017; see also Clark, Gelman & Lane (1985) on young English-speaking children’s construction of novel root compounds for subcategories). These early examples of creative language use seem to share a common motivation: the need to compensate for vocabulary gaps in order to refer to a target entity. Moreover, there also appears to be a common conceptual principle underlying young children’s lexical innovations. Zero derivations, in particular, exploit the kind of salient associative relations of (often part-whole) contiguity between entities which also underpin referential metonymy: for instance, we can see that a child’s use of the novel denominal verb ‘*to gun*’ for ‘shoot’ (Falkum, Recasens & Clark, 2017: 90) is ‘metonymic’ in nature because a gun is a highly salient part of the ‘shooting’ action (it is the instrument by which the action is accomplished). Falkum, Recasens and Clark (2017: 90) also argue that some of Clark, Gelman and Lane’s (1985) novel root compounds, such as ‘*clown-boy*’ for ‘the boy who is a clown’ and ‘*daddy-seed*’ for ‘the seed that is a daddy’, may be ‘metonymically’ motivated in that they involve highlighting a salient characteristic of the target referent, and therefore exploit a part-whole relationship between entities and their properties.

The acquisition data also reveal points of difference between referential metonymy and classical neologisms. When it comes to creating novel names for referring to objects or individuals, simple noun phrases used as metonymic ‘shorthands’ (e.g. ‘*the straws*’ for a game involving straws, ‘*the moustache*’ for a man with a large moustache) are less morphologically demanding to formulate than novel noun-noun compounds (e.g. ‘*the straw game*’, ‘*the moustache man*’) and thus appear to be favoured by very young children as a productive device for referring to entities that lack a conventional label or proper name (Falkum, Recasens & Clark, 2017). Note, however, that the very fact that pre-schoolers can use metonymy as a less costly alternative to compounding reinforces the claim that the two phenomena fulfil highly similar communicative functions.

It may also be the case that referential metonymy is conceptually easier for children to produce and comprehend than other referring devices— literal descriptions (e.g. ‘*the game with the straws*’, ‘*the man with the big moustache*’) in particular, but perhaps noun-noun compounds too (Falkum, Recasens & Clark, 2017: 116)— on account of the real-world contiguous relations that are exploited in metonymy. Children are known to be sensitive to such relations from early in the preschool years (Rosch, Mervis, Grey, Johnson & Boyes-Braem, 1976), so it follows that any phenomena in which associative contiguous relations are implicated will emerge at a similarly young age, and will be relatively cognitively undemanding.

An additional and significant difference between referential metonymy and neologism becomes apparent when we consider the nature of a true ‘new coinage’. In accordance with the wide-spread view on what constitutes a word, we can define the coining of a new word as the introduction of a new form/meaning pairing. That is to say, for an innovative use to count as a new coinage proper, it must involve the creation of a new linguistic form as well as a new meaning. Noun-noun compounds meet this criterion because they are overtly formally

novel. Even denominal verbs (e.g. ‘party_V’ = to attend lots of parties_N) and deverbal nouns (e.g. ‘scratch_N’ = slight mark/injury caused by scratching_V), although identical to the ‘parent’ noun/verb in bare form (hence the term ‘zero derivation’), nevertheless appear with verbal/nominal inflections (*he partied all night; three scratches*), such that the surface form of the new word shows evidence of the underlying category change. Yet in referential metonymy, the metonymically-used expression does not appear to undergo any morpho-syntactic operations, whether overt (e.g. compounding, affixing) or covert (e.g. category change). Moreover, in §3.2 I argued that, while a metonymically-used referring term comes to pick out a new referent, it does not express a new meaning, because the interpretation process does not involve the creation of an ad hoc concept through lexical modulation. As a result, referential metonymy does not seem to involve the creation of a new linguistic expression.⁵

Wilson and Falkum (2015), however, refer to cases of metonymic use as ‘denominal nouns’, a label which, by analogy with denominal verbs and deverbal nouns, suggests that if any morpho-syntactic operation is involved in referential metonymy, it is most likely to be category change (or more plausibly here, an intra-category change from one type of noun to another). It may thus be possible to seek empirical evidence in support of this hypothesis by looking for inflectional marking on putative new words. Such evidence could potentially be gathered through an experiment to elicit native speaker acceptability judgements in response to instances of inflected metonyms like those in (12):

(12a) I read through a whole pile of *Dickenses*. (= works by Charles Dickens)

⁵ A related observation is that in the case of neologisms, but not in the case of referential metonymy, inferring the intended meaning is constrained by the syntactic context in which the new coinage occurs, or by internal syntactic structure for noun-noun compounds. This suggests that there may be differences in the inferential processes involved in the interpretation of referential metonymy vs the interpretation of neologisms.

(12b) Those *Mary Berries* turned out well. (= cakes made according to a recipe by Mary Berry)

Nevertheless, while I share Wilson & Falkum's belief that referential metonymy has more affinities with neologisms than with figurative language tropes, on my own account of referential metonymy, which I outline in §4 below, there is simply no need to assume that metonymic usages of definite descriptions constitute neologism; nor is there anything to be gained, in my view, by grouping metonymy in with phenomena of word coinage.

4 A new account of the interpretation of referential metonymy

I have spent quite some time attempting to clarify what referential metonymy is *not* (in particular, it is not a case of lexical modulation). Yet this leaves us wanting a positive account of what referential metonymy *is*. My proposal regarding the nature of referential metonymy is simple. Consider again the classic '*ham sandwich*' example, repeated here as (13):

(13) *The ham sandwich* has left without paying.

In cases of referential metonymy such as (13), the speaker (a waitress in a restaurant) makes reference to her target entity (a specific restaurant customer) by using an existing expression ('*ham sandwich*') which literally refers to an entity (a bread-and-meat snack) that stands in a contextually relevant and highly accessible contiguous relationship with the target referent (here, the relevant relationship is between restaurant customers and their food orders). The speaker believes that, once her audience's attention has been drawn to the literal referent of the referring expression, the relationship between this entity and the intended entity will be easily recovered, leading her audience to identify the target referent with minimum cognitive effort, and possibly also to derive additional cognitive effects.

I, therefore, claim that referential metonymy consists in the literal meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression together with (i) the speaker's intention as to the

target referent, and (ii) contextually relevant information about contiguous relations that hold between the linguistically-specified referent of the metonymically-used referring expression and the target referent. It is these contiguous relations that allow for successful recovery of the intended entity. In the comprehension of referential metonymy, the literal meaning is crucial because it is a ‘pointer’ to the speaker’s intended interpretation, therefore the encoded meaning of the metonymically-used expression must remain intact, unmodulated.

4.1 Inferring the intended referent

According to my account, the interpretation of referential metonymy is a properly inferential process involving the mutual parallel adjustment of explicit and implicit content. The audience combines the literal meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression (as an explicit premise) and contextual assumptions about contiguous links between this entity and other relevant entities (as implicit premises) in forward inference to recover the speaker’s intended referent; there may also be backwards inference from anticipated conclusions (contextual implications) which further aids in identifying the target entity. This can be illustrated by the example in (14):

(14) Don’t go out with *the toupee*!

The expression ‘*the toupee*’ is being used to refer to a suitor of the addressee who wears one of these unflattering and unsubtle hairpieces. When the addressee decodes the speaker’s utterance of (14), she will recover the literal concept TOUPEE. This will activate world knowledge associated with the concept, including encyclopaedic assumptions about other entities that are contiguously linked to toupees. Among these assumptions, the fact that the addressee’s persistent admirer wears a toupee is likely to be one of the most accessible, especially if she often encounters this man—his deeply unattractive wig is likely to stand out to her on every meeting, and thus the link between the literal toupee and the suitor will

already be highly activated. Further, in (14), the verb ‘*go out with*’ is likely to raise the expectation that any material coming next will be the verb’s complement; and that this complement will probably be a noun phrase referring to a human being. This will have the effect of increasing the activation of any encyclopaedic assumptions associated with the concept TOUPEE which are to do with human beings. The link between the literal toupee and the tragic suitor will therefore end up becoming yet more highly activated, such that this individual is the most accessible possible referent for the expression ‘*the toupee*’. Moreover, the contiguous link between wigs and their wearers may lead to the activation of further, related assumptions, e.g. that people who wear wigs tend to be eccentric and slightly unsavoury characters. From these assumptions, the addressee may derive additional contextual implications which contribute to the overall relevance of the speaker’s utterance by justifying why she should not become romantically involved with the referent of the expression ‘*the toupee*’. The addressee thereby infers the individual who could most plausibly be the speaker’s intended referent and arrives at an interpretation of the speaker’s utterance that satisfies her expectations of relevance.

Yet this discussion raises the question of what we actually end up with when we interpret an utterance such as (14): in addition to a range of relevant implicit conclusions, what is the explicit content of the utterance that we take the speaker to have expressed through her utterance?

4.2 Metonymy and the referential/attributive distinction

In what follows, I make the straightforward assumption that referential metonymy contributes to the explicit content—or, in RT terms, the ‘*explicature*’ (a communicated proposition recovered by a combination of decoding and inference)—of an utterance. Indeed, even Stanley (2005: 227), who insists on the linguistically mandated nature of any pragmatic

contributions to truth-conditional content, accepts that referential metonymy contributes to the ‘intuitive’ truth conditions of an utterance, i.e. the proposition that we intuitively take the speaker to have expressed⁶.

Recall that in this paper I have restricted my focus to metonymically-used definite descriptions of the form ‘*the F*’ (‘*the ham sandwich*’, ‘*the green trousers*’, ‘*the beard*’, etc.). It is therefore instructive to turn at this juncture to Donnellan’s (1966) seminal work on reference and definite descriptions, in order to address the question of explicature representation. Although Donnellan uses only literal examples, it seems to me to be entirely unproblematic to apply his arguments to figurative uses of definite descriptions as in referential metonymy, as the non-literal cases have the exact same syntactic form.

Donnellan’s (1966: 285) key claim is that a definite description has two possible uses: (i) to enable an audience to pick out a specific entity, i.e. the ‘referential case’; and (ii) to state something about whoever or whatever meets the description, i.e. the ‘attributive’ case. For example, when we use the (literal) definite description ‘*the crazed murderer*’ to pick out a certain individual, Jones, a notoriously unhinged killer, we are using the definite description referentially. When we use the definite description ‘*the crazed murderer*’ to refer to whomever it was (the case remains unsolved) that brutally killed a family of five, thereby demonstrating his/her insanity, we are using the definite description attributively. Given that we are examining definite descriptions used in *referential* metonymy, applying Donnellan’s terminology to our target phenomenon could become confusing. Thus, to ensure clarity, I adopt the labels ‘referential-referential metonymy’, for ‘referential’ cases of metonymically-

⁶ The so-called ‘embedding test’ (see Carston, 1988: 172-3; 2002: 191-7) confirms that referential metonymy contributes to explicature: a metonymic referring expression e.g. ‘*the beard*’ falls in the scope of logical operators such as conditionals and negation, as in ‘if *the beard* looks miserable, you should buy him a drink’, and ‘it’s not the case that *the beard* looks miserable’.

used definite descriptions, and ‘attributive-referential metonymy’, for ‘attributive’ cases of metonymically-used definite descriptions.

The distinction between the referential and the attributive use is pragmatic in nature: the role played by a definite description is a function of the speaker’s intentions (Donnellan, 1966: 297; Powell, 2010), of whether the speaker’s goal is to get her audience to identify a specific entity or to make a more general assertion about some entity which is ‘the F’. A referential use of a (literal or non-literal) definite description typically occurs in a situation in which the speaker expects and intends her audience to realise which unique entity she has in mind when she utters ‘the F’, and to realise that it is this particular entity about which she is going to say something⁷ (Donnellan, 1966: 285). This is just the kind of situation in which (15) is uttered, by a guest at Ascot to her companion:

(15) *The top hat* must be drunk.

The speaker of (15) is making an assertion about a specific individual (that he is surely inebriated), and such an assertion would not achieve relevance in the context at hand *unless* it was taken to be about a specific individual. Further, because this person is physically present and directly perceivable, the speaker may help her audience to realise that he is the target referent of her utterance by extra-linguistic cues such as pointing or gaze direction.

Crucially, the primary goal of the speaker of (15) is to draw her audience’s attention to a certain person. The metonymically-used definite description ‘*the top hat*’ is therefore merely one means available to her for doing the job of referring, which in the context of a crowded bar happens to be the most convenient (‘*the man*’ would be ambiguous, the name of the

⁷ Of course, there may be situations in which a definite description, although uttered by the speaker as part of an attributive assertion about whichever entity happens to be ‘the F’, nevertheless serves the referential function of picking out a specific entity because the audience assume the speaker to have had this entity in mind, and the interpretation of the speaker’s utterance that they derive on this basis satisfies their expectations of relevance. Likewise, the opposite may obtain: a definite description intended by the speaker to fulfil the referential function may be interpreted by the audience as a case of attributive use, if the audience do not need to know precisely who/what is ‘the F’ for their expectations of relevance to be met.

individual in question is not known to the speaker, ‘*the man wearing the top hat*’ would be unnecessarily complex and effort-demanding, etc.). A range of other devices for doing the same job of picking out the entity could be used instead: what is of importance to the speaker is the end result, the identification of her target entity, and the means are less central. This suggests that what the referring expression ‘*the top hat*’ contributes to the explicature of the speaker’s utterance will be its referent alone, as a singular concept of the intended individual. The linguistically-encoded concept TOP HAT will not play any part in an addressee’s mental representation of the explicitly communicated utterance content, although properties of and assumptions pertaining to this concept may remain activated as contextual assumptions which addressees may make use of in deriving the contextual implications of the utterance.

While in literal uses of definite descriptions, e.g. ‘*the man in the yellow shoes*’, it is most usually the case that the entity denoted by the definite description (i.e. the entity that fits the description uniquely in the context) is the speaker’s intended referent, even in such literal uses, it is recovery of the speaker’s intended referent that matters, and not any essential ‘fitting’ of the referent to the encoded descriptive content. This is made clear by ‘error’ cases like Donnellan’s (1966: 287) example involving the literally-used definite description ‘*the man drinking a martini*’. Here, the speaker’s intended referent is in fact merely sipping water from a martini glass; yet despite the erroneous choice of referring expression, addressees are still able to successfully identify the target individual. In non-literal, metonymic uses of definite descriptions, where the intended referent falls outside the literal denotation of the referring expression, the distinction between denoting and referring, notions which Donnellan (1966: 293) argues should not be confused, is all the more pertinent.

These considerations lead me to propose that the explicature of (15) should be represented as in (16), where **a** is an individual concept (or logical name):

(16) **a** must be drunk.

The same formula can be extended to any case of referential-referential metonymy: for example, on this account, the explicature of the ‘*ham sandwich*’ utterance is represented as in (17):

(17) **h** has left without paying.

One advantage of this notation is that it captures the way in which the intended explicit content can still be recovered by the audience even in cases where the speaker has used the ‘wrong’ referring expression. For example, suppose that the tipsy racegoer in (15) is not in fact wearing a top hat and is actually sporting a daringly tall quiffed hairstyle that resembles a hat. The speaker’s use of the referring expression ‘*the top hat*’ to pick out this man is due to her mistaken belief that the man is indeed wearing a top hat, and therefore that her chosen referring expression will successfully draw her audience’s attention to her intended referent. Yet if her audience are indeed able to identify the man in question regardless of the error, then she has managed to communicate the same explicit content as would be recovered if she had uttered some other more apt metonymic use (e.g. ‘*the quiff*’) or a literal referring expression that applies correctly to the man. This shows why it is important that the representation of the explicature in a case of referential-referential metonymy contains a singular concept of the target referent itself.

Yet what of attributive-referential metonymy? For example, let us return to the sentence in (14), repeated here as (18):

(18) Don’t go out with *the toupee*!

Imagine a scenario where one friend is telling another about various men in the community whom she believes are single and available for dating. These men all have some odd characteristics: one of them always wears too-short trousers, one has a toupee, one is heavily tattooed, etc. A third friend involved in the conversation utters (18). The speaker does not know the identity of the man who has a toupee, and therefore does not have a specific

individual in mind as her intended referent; she is merely cautioning against whomsoever it happens to be that would make such a pathetic attempt to hide his baldness. Likewise, her addressee does not have an identifying singular concept of the man in question. Here, we plausibly have an instance of attributive use of the metonymic definite description ‘*the toupee*’ (the definite description is used metonymically because it literally refers to a distinctive feature, i.e. the ostentatious hairpiece, of the target entity, i.e. the potentially dateable man); therefore our task is to consider how the explicature should be represented in cases like this.

My proposal for attributive-referential metonymy draws on Papafragou’s (1996) claim that referential metonymy is a case of ‘interpretive use’ (see §3.1). To summarise the interpretive use account, Papafragou’s (1996) hypothesis is that, given a case of referential metonymy occurring in an utterance of a sentence of the general form ‘the F is G’, ‘the F’ is used interpretively, therefore the utterance expresses the proposition in (19), which features a metarepresentation:

(19) [The entity that could appropriately be called ‘the F’] is G.

It is assumed that this proposition can be further enriched or adjusted if a more specific interpretation is required to meet expectations of relevance, yielding an ultimate communicated proposition which includes a conceptual representation of the entity that is named ‘the F’, as in (20):

(20) **a** is G.

This is just the representation that I suggest for cases of referential-referential metonymy involving a definite description, i.e. a representation containing a singular concept of the target entity. In referential-referential metonymy, the speaker has a certain entity in mind and the success of her utterance depends on the identification of this entity. Yet in attributive-referential metonymy, the speaker does not have an identifiable individual in mind, and

makes a more general statement about a unique entity, whoever that may be, that is in an appropriate relation with the literal content of the definite description. I, therefore, maintain that when a metonymic definite description is used attributively, the proposition explicitly communicated by such an utterance is of just the form given in (19); that is to say, the explicature of the utterance should be represented as containing a component of interpretive use, without further specification of the referent (which is not available to speaker or hearer).

My claim is thus that the explicature of (18) is as in (21):

(21) Don't go out with [the individual that could appropriately be called 'the toupee'].

There are several advantages to my analysis. Firstly, it does not posit that an ad hoc concept, e.g. TOUPEE*, appears in the explicature, and thus is compatible with my arguments above in §3.2 against a meaning modulation account of metonymy interpretation. Indeed, cases of modulation do not seem to be interpretive uses. If the interpretation of (18) were to involve ad hoc concept construction, the target entity would fall within the denotation of an ad hoc concept TOUPEE*, hence we would not talk of the entity that could appropriate be called '*the toupee*', but rather of the entity that actually was '*the toupee*', as in (22a). The explicature of (18) would therefore simply be (22b):

(22a) Don't go out with the entity who is the TOUPEE*.

(22b) Don't go out with the TOUPEE*.

In addition, the analysis is attractive because it appears to capture Donnellan's (1966: 285) idea that in attributive uses of definite descriptions, as opposed to referential uses, the description (i.e. F in 'the F') plays an 'essential role' in the proposition expressed. In attributive uses of literally-used definite descriptions, the attribute of being 'the F' is important because if there is nothing that fits the description F, when a speaker utters '*the F is G*', nothing true (or possibly, nothing true *or false*⁸) is said: there is no entity to which the

⁸ See Strawson (1950).

speaker has referred and therefore there is no entity of which the property of being G can be predicated. In metonymic ‘interpretive’ uses of definite descriptions, on the other hand, ‘the F’ is merely being used as a label which the speaker believes to be appropriate. However, if there is nothing that fits the description F (e.g. no toupee in (18)), ‘the F’ (*‘the toupee’*) cannot be used as an appropriate label: in the context of utterance, ‘the F’ does not literally pick out any entity which can stand in a salient contiguous relation with some other entity (i.e. a man whose profile picture clearly shows him wearing a toupee) and thereby enable an interpreter to identify the related entity. Consequently, there is no entity that can appropriately be called ‘the F’ and, as in the literal case, a speaker who utters *‘the F is G’* has, at the least, failed to say anything true.

To my knowledge, nowhere else in the literature is the referential/attributional distinction for metonymically-used definite descriptions—and the consequences of this distinction for the question of a metonymic definite description’s contribution to explicitly communicated utterance content—taken into account. Further, nowhere else is the claim that metonymy involves ‘interpretive use’ (Papafragou, 1996; Falkum, 2011) applied specifically to the issue of explicature representation⁹. My approach is thus novel in the field of metonymy studies.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I set out to address two key issues concerning the nature of referential metonymy: (i) how metonymically-used definite descriptions such as *‘the ham sandwich’*, *‘the green trousers’* and *‘the toupee’* are interpreted, and (ii) how best to represent the

⁹ See Carston (1996, 2002) for questions surrounding the issue of interpretive metarepresentational material in explicatures. However, Papafragou (1996: 184) argues that interpretively-used concepts constitute a suitable input to the inferential mechanism, citing Sperber and Wilson’s (1983: 68) claim that interpretive uses play a central role in a variety of other phenomena including lexical borrowing and vocabulary acquisition.

contribution of a metonymically-used definite description to explicature. I now present the central insights arising from my investigations.

- The interpretation of referential metonymy is properly inferential.
- In interpretation, the metonymically-used referring expression does not express an ad hoc concept. Referential metonymy, therefore, cannot be seen as a variety of lexical modulation.
- While there are interesting similarities between referential metonymy and neologism, in order to understand how referential metonymy works, we do not need to assume that the phenomenon is a case of new word coinage.
- In referential metonymy interpretation, the linguistically-specified meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression provides crucial evidence of the speaker's intended interpretation, and therefore remains intact.
- The metonymically-used referring expression literally refers to an entity that stands in a contextually relevant and highly accessible contiguous relationship with the target entity, thereby enabling the audience to identify the speaker's intended referent.
- Donnellan's (1966) 'referential/attributive' distinction applies to metonymically-used, as well as literally-used, definite descriptions. The contribution of a metonymically-used definite description to explicit utterance content differs according to whether we are dealing with 'referential-referential' metonymy or 'attributive-referential' metonymy.
- In referential-referential metonymy, the metonymically-used definite description contributes a singular concept of the intended referent to explicitly communicated utterance content.

- In attributive-referential metonymy, the metonymic definite description is used ‘interpretively’ and therefore the explicature features a metarepresentation of the referring expression.

Previous RT accounts of referential metonymy (e.g. Papafragou, 1996; Falkum, 2011; Jodłowiec and Piskorska, 2015) have also argued for a fully inferential treatment of the phenomenon, and a consensus is emerging that the interpretation of referential metonymy does not involve modulation (see Recanati, 2004; Wilson & Carston, 2007; Falkum, 2011; Jodłowiec and Piskorska, 2015). The novel contributions made in this paper are: the claim that referential metonymy should be understood as the literal meaning of the metonymically-used referring expression plus (i) the speaker’s intention as to the target referent, and (ii) contextual assumptions about relevant contiguous links between the linguistically-specified referent of the metonymically-used referring expression and the target referent; an in-depth consideration, informed by Donnellan’s (1966) work on definite descriptions and the referential/attributional distinction, of explicature representation for utterances that contain a metonymically-used referring expression; and, finally, the integration of very recent significant empirical data to support my hypotheses.

Although I have restricted my focus here to cases of referential metonymy involving definite descriptions, in the literature, the range of cases labelled as ‘metonymy’ is incredibly wide, encompassing so-called ‘propositional metonymy’ (‘it won’t happen while I still *breathe* (=live)’); ‘semantically polysemous’ cases like ‘lamb’ (animal/meat) and ‘paper’ (material/product, as in ‘he reads a left-wing *paper*) where the metonymic interpretations seem to have become conventional senses; and proper name cases of referential metonymy as in (23):

(23) I spent the summer reading *Dickens*. (= works by Charles Dickens)

This suggests that, going forward, a taxonomy of metonymy is badly needed. It is important that I now ask whether the account I have formulated for metonymically-used definite descriptions generalises to other varieties of metonymy, and if not, what this might mean for ‘metonymy’ as an umbrella term.

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