The conceptualisation of fear in Italian and Russian: different degrees of lexicalization of metonymies

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1. Introduction

In Cognitive Linguistics, metonymy is usually defined as "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain […]" (Kövecses 2010, 173).

The role that metonymy plays in understanding and categorizing the surrounding world has been underestimated for a long time. However, in the last decades, many scholars (among others Panther and Radden 1999, Dirven and Pörings 2003, Littlemore 2015) have drawn much attention to the importance of metonymy in everyday thinking and its pervasiveness in language. Moreover, metonymy has been identified as a relevant process in semantic change (Ullmann 1957, Brown 1979) and, in particular, in lexicalization (Traugott and Dasher 2002, Brinton and Traugott 2005, Győri 2014).

Cognitive Linguistics tools, such as metonymy and metaphor, prove to be very useful in the analysis of emotions. Human beings have direct experience of emotions through their own body but, at the same time, emotions are abstract and not easily definable concepts. For this reason, emotions are very likely to be conceptualized and expressed through metonymies and metaphors.

In this paper I analyze metonymies with different degrees of lexicalization that are used to conceptualize fear in Italian and Russian. In section 2, I discuss the notions of metonymy and metonymy-based

metaphor which will be used in the analysis, paying particular attention to the conceptualization of fear. In section 3, I discuss the role of metonymy in lexicalization and I present the analysis. In particular, I analyze the metonymies and the metonymy-based metaphors that can be retrieved at different stages of lexicalization, such as in metonymic expressions (section 3.1), in the lexis (3.2), and in etymology (3.3). Moreover, I analyze the metonymies of fear underlying Italian and Russian phraseology. In section 4, I offer some concluding remarks.

All the examples presented in this paper are taken from the RuTenTen Web Corpus for Russian and the ItTenTen Web Corpus for Italian[1].

2. Metonymies and metonymy-based metaphors of fear

We know from our physical experience that emotions cause intense, unexpected and very often uncontrollable reactions on our body. Body responses are linked by a cause-effect relation to the emotion of which they are a tangible manifestation. Because of the contiguity between emotions and bodily reactions, metonymy is very likely to be used to understand and express emotions. A general metonymy is PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION, through which the emotion is expressed by referring to its effects on the human body. In particular, more specific metonymies can be retrieved for the conceptualization of fear: the metonymies DROP IN BODY TEMPERATURE STANDS FOR FEAR, IRREGULAR HEARTBEAT STANDS FOR FEAR, and (INVOLUNTARY) RELEASE OF BOWELS OR BLADDER STANDS FOR FEAR (Kövecses 1990, 2000, and 2005, Kirillova 2007) will be discussed in the present paper.

Shaver et al. (2001, 35) define fear as a complex emotion that includes nervousness, anxiety, apprehension, dread, and also horror, shock, and terror. In this paper I refer to fear in these terms. Moreover, Kövecses (1990, 79) claims that in our general perception there are three different kinds of prototypical fear: the stereotypic fear, terror, and dispositional fear. Kövecses, however, claims that it also might be that people consider terror as the prototypical fear because of its salience.

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[1] The corpora are available at www.sketchengine.co.uk.

As has been highlighted by several scholars (among others Radden 2000, Barcelona 2000a, Goossens 1995, Ruiz de Mendoza 2000, Panther and Radden 1999), metonymy can interact with metaphor giving rise to complex structures. Unlike metonymy, metaphor is a cognitive process that involves two distinct conceptual domains which are compared because they show some kind of similarity. One of the possible interactions between metaphor and metonymy, which is relevant for the present discussion, is the metonymy-based metaphor, which is defined by Radden (2000, 93) as "a mapping involving two conceptual domains which are grounded in, or can be traced back to, one conceptual domain". One of the most relevant metonymy-based metaphors in the conceptualization of fear is the FEAR IS COLD metaphor (Apresjan 1997, 181, Kövecses 2005, 289, and Grigorian 2005), by which the two distinct concepts, fear and cold, are compared. The comparison between cold and fear, however, is motivated by the metonymical contiguity EFFECT FOR CAUSE: the bodily reactions to fear, such as pallor, tremble and drop in body temperature, are very similar to the ones caused by cold. The similar reactions to fear and cold motivate the close connection between these two concepts. A more complex metonymy-based metaphor discussed in this paper is the HEART IS THE SITE OF EMOTIONS metaphor. The conceptualization of the heart as the site of emotions has a cultural basis, but it is also grounded in some physiological reasons: the change in heart-beating is one of the first physiological reactions to emotional states and this provides the HEART metaphors with a metonymic base (Barcelona 2000b, Ruiz de Mendoza 2000, Kövecses 2005, Dirven & Pörings 2003). Metonymy-based metaphors play an essential role in the conceptualization of emotions because they structure the concept, taking as a starting point the physiological reactions that emotions trigger in our body.

3. Metonymy in lexicalization

Blank (2001, 1603) defines lexicalization as a "process by which new linguistic entities, be it simple or complex words or just new senses, become conventionalized on the level of the lexicon". Brinton and Traugott (2005) describe it as a process by which a construction or word formation acquires

a new meaning and usage that cannot be inferred by the meaning of the constituents of that construction or word formation. This means that the loss of internal constituency and compositionality of the meaning are the results of the lexicalization process. Brinton and Traugott (2005) acknowledge that metonymy, in the same way as metaphor, plays an important role in the process of both lexicalization and grammaticalization, and that the metonymy involved in lexicalization "is more likely to be driven by social custom and encyclopedic knowledge" (Brinton and Traugott 2005, 107).

Analyzing the mechanisms involved in lexicalization processes, Györi (2014) recognizes the "primacy" of metonymy: metonymy is able to trigger lexicalization processes because it satisfies all requirements for an efficient and immediate communication. Györi (2002) points out four factors that should be met in order to enhance successful communication. The first factor is the *cue-validity*, according to which the speaker refers to a salient feature of the entity or phenomenon described. Györi (2002) indicates two other factors that are tightly linked to *cue-validity*, i.e. *cognitive economy* and *perceived world structure*. When the speaker selects the salient feature of a phenomenon, s/he is necessarily influenced by the perceived world structure. In addition, the reference to a salient feature allows to meet the *cognitive economy* factor, since information is passed with little cognitive effort (Rosch 1978, Győri 2014). Győri (2002 and 2014) claims that the fourth factor relevant to semantic change, hence to lexicalization, as suggested by Brown (1979), is *conjunctivity*: that is to say, to name a phenomenon by using a *part of* or *kind of* relationship is a highly salient procedure.

Since metonymy conveys expressive and immediate communication with the minimum cognitive effort, it plays an extremely important role in lexicalization processes (Geerarts 1997, Gyori 2014). If this is true in every interaction, it must be even more relevant when the interlocutors are expressing their feelings and emotions. As discussed in section 2, because emotions are abstract concepts triggering evident reactions on our bodies, they are very likely to be conceptualized through metonymies and metaphors. These cognitive processes can be detected in language.

3.1 Metonymical expressions of fear

As is for other emotions, fear has strong effects on our body and can induce us to react unexpectedly. Different emotions, however, can cause similar bodily reactions and, in certain cases, it is necessary to specify the emotion that triggers those physiological effects. The expressions containing both the reaction and the emotional cause are called "symptom-emotion constructions" (Panther and Radden 2011, 4). These metonymic expressions show a low degree of lexicalization, because the body reaction is immediately followed by the explicit reference to the emotion causing it.

IT
(1)   *Clara **tremava dalla paura** temendo di essere vista, sebbene si fosse nascosta in un angolo buio.*
     "Clara was **trembling from fear**. She was afraid to be seen, although she was hidden in a dark corner"

(2)   *(...) forse non ci pensò neppure **impazzita dalla paura** .*
     "Probably she did not even think about it. She **went crazy from fear**"

RU
(3)   *Olen'ka prosypaetsja i **ne dyšit ot stracha; serdce u nee sil'no b'etsja**.*
     "Olen'ka wakes up and she **cannot breath from fear**. **Her heart is beating hard**."

(4)   *Poĕtomu on prosto stojal na meste, bukval'no **okamenel ot stracha**.*
     "And so he was just standing there, he literally **petrified from fear**."

In examples (1)-(4), fear has several consequences on the experiencer's body, such as pallor, tremble, irregularity in heart beating rate and in breathing patterns. The changes in vital functions lead to immobility and to physical and psychological inability (examples 2 and 4). These metonymic expressions are not exclusively used to express fear. Body responses, such as tremble, inability to move and irregular heartbeat rate, can be due to several emotions, not only to fear. For example, in both Italian and Russian, one can tremble from anger, joy, or from a general emotional state. However, in several contexts these metonymies are sufficient to narrow the reference down to fear exclusively. When the linguistic and/or extra-linguistic context is clear enough, the physical reaction is able to refer to fear without any other further specification. This is very common in

everyday oral communication, when the extra-linguistic context does not allow misinterpretation. When the linguistic context is clear enough, it can be used also in written texts, as in examples (5) and (6).

IT
(5)   *Anzi **tremo tutto** perché mi sembra di vederlo in pericolo.*
      "Actually I am whole trembling because it seems to me he is in danger"

RU
(6)   *No ona stala bojat'sja drugogo - boitsja vrača (...). No ničego sdelat' ne možem: **drožit, bledneet** devočka, stoit ej tol'ko uvidet' Olgu Petrovnu.*
      "But she started to fear something else - she is afraid of doctors (…). But we cannot do anything: the girl trembles, turns pale, whenever she sees Olga Petrovna (doctor)."

In the Italian example (5), the verb *tremare* is employed to express fear and the context of danger helps us interpret the verb metonymically. The same happens in the Russian example (6) where body reactions, such as *drožat'* "tremble" and *blednet'* "turn pale", are enough to denote fear. The physiological reactions that are used metonymically to express fear are several, among which pallor, drop in body temperature, and inability to speak or to think (Kövecses 1990, 96-87). In Russian the role played by the metonymy of tremble is particularly important. Although the tremble can stand metonymically for a multiplicity of emotions, it is so important that the verb *drožat'* 'tremble' can be used in specific constructions such as *drožat' pered kem-to/čem-to* 'tremble in front of someone/something' or *drožat' za kogo-to/čto-to* 'tremble for someone/something' which can be considered to be synonymic to the verb *bojat'sja* 'fear' (Apresjan 2004). In Italian equivalent expressions, such as *tremare per qualcuno* and *tremare davanti a qualcuno/qualcosa*, are possible and can be used to express fear. The metonymic use of *drožat'* and *tremare* is of central importance and dictionaries register it as one of the meanings of these verbs[2].

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[2]In Russian other verbs, such as *sodragat'sja* "shudder", and *trepetat'* "quiver", and *trjastis'* "shake", behave similarly to *drožat'* "tremble". They are metonymically used to express fear and can occur in those constructions such as *pered kem/čem*, "in front of someone/something" and *za kogo/čto* "for someone/something").

An interesting verb used to express fear in Italian is *rabbrividire* "shiver", which comes from the noun *brivido* "shiver"; the etymology of this word is not certain but it is usually associated to the Latin *frigus* "cold" or to the Greek *brychein* "teeth-chattering" (Pianigiani 1907). The Italian *rabbrividire* always implies the concept of cold, even when it is used to refer to other events, such as emotions. The verb *rabbrividire* can be used in 'symptom-emotion constructions' (example 7) or without any reference to the emotion causing it (example 8). The analysis of a sample of 50 occurrences of *tremare* and 50 occurrences of *rabbrividire* randomly selected from the ItTenTen corpus shows that the verb *tremare* is used to denote tremble which is due to strong movements, cold, illness, or various emotional states; the range of emotions that *tremare* can express is wide, from general emotion, excitement, surprise, to sadness and fear. On the contrary, *rabbrividire* is more specific: it can denote a sense of cold and, if used metonymically, it can refer to a very narrow range of emotions such as fear, fright, horror, or terror.

(7)   *Questa scoperta lo fece **rabbrividire di paura** e di disgusto.*
       "This news/discovery made him **shiver with fear** and disgust."
(8)   *La sola idea mi **fa rabbrividire**.*
       "Just the idea **makes** me **shiver**."

In *rabbrividire*, the PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION metonymy interacts with the FEAR IS COLD metaphor; this interaction might explain the specificity of *rabbrividire* in referring exclusively to the emotional state of fear (if not referring literally to cold).

3.2 Metonymies of fear in the lexis

The PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION metonymy, which has been discussed so far, can help us motivate some lexical items used to express fear. In particular, the Italian words *strizza* and *tremarella* are worth discussing.

The noun *strizza*, which comes from the verb *strizzare* "squeeze", refers to the spasms of internal organs and sphincters and they are physiological reactions to fear. Through the metonymy PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FEAR

STAND FOR FEAR and the more specific (INVOLUNTARY) RELEASE OF BOWELS OR BLADDER STANDS FOR FEAR, *strizza* is used as a near-synonym of *paura* 'fear' (example 9) but in a familiar and colloquial register of language.

(9) *Da bambino avevo una vera passione per i tuffi. Ma anche una* **strizza** *inenarrabile.*
"When I was fond of diving, but I also had an unutterable **fear**."

The other Italian lexical item taken into account in the analysis is *tremarella*, which is derived from the verb *tremare* "tremble" (example 10).

(10) *Arrivata l'alta marea a qualcuno è venuta la* **tremarella**.
"When the high tide came someone had the **shakes**!"

In dictionaries (Devoto and Oli 2007, De Mauro 2000) *tremarella* is defined as a colloquial variant of *paura* "fear", or as a tremble due exclusively to fear. However, there are dictionaries (Battaglia 2002) according to which *tremarella* expresses a tremble due not only to fear but also to cold or diseases. This is confirmed by the analysis of a sample of 50 occurrences taken randomly from the ItTenTen Corpus which shows that there is a more recent tendency to use *tremarella* to refer to a general tremble: the completely lexicalized metonymy is now subject to other changes, which, in this case, go back to its literal meaning.

In Russian the metonymy TREMBLE STANDS FOR FEAR does not give rise to lexical item which can be considered the equivalent of the Italian word *tremarella*. The Russian word *drož'* 'shiver' (from the verb *drožat'* 'tremble') describes a general state of trembling, while the more specific *trepet* "quivering", which refers to general tremble (as in *trepet list'ev* "the shake of leaves"), can be used to express fear as in *ispytyvat' trepet pered kem-to* "feel trepidation in front of someone"(Ožegov and Švedova 2007).

3.3 Metonymies and metonymy-based metaphors in etymology

In this section I analyse metonymies and metonymy-based metaphors lying at the basis of the concept "fear" by investigating the etymology of Italian

and Russian fear words. Although, at this stage of lexicalization, the cognitive processes involved are neither transparent nor active, the study of etymology sheds light on the important role played by metonymy in the process of lexicalization.

The metonymy TREMBLE STANDS FOR FEAR can be retrieved in the Italian word *terrore* 'terror' and in the Russian words *trus* 'coward', *trusost'* 'cowardice'. *Terrore* comes from the Latin *terreo* 'terrify' that tracks back to the Proto-Indo-European stem *tres-, *ters-, *teres- which means "to quiver, tremble" (Pianigiani 1907). This PIE stem gives rise also to the Russian verb *trjasti* "shake" from which the Russian words *trus* and *trusost'* are derived (Fasmer 1986).

There are also metonymy-based metaphors that underlie several lexical items denoting fear in both Italian and Russian. The first metaphor is FEAR IS COLD, which is at the basis of the most general Russian noun for fear, i.e. *strach*. According to Fasmer (1986), in early times the meaning of *strach* was "stupor and torpor" and it was linked to the Lithuanian word *stregti* which meant "become torpid, turn into ice". Moreover, the PIE stem of *strach* is *(s)ter-, *(s)terə, *(s)trē-, which meant 'stark, stiff, solid, rigid'.

3.4 Metonymies of fear in phraseology

In both Italian and Russian, there are several phraseologisms used to express fear that show both metonymic and metaphorical bases. Phraseology is particularly interesting because of its fixed structure and its non-compositional meaning, which can be internally analyzed. In both Italian and Russian there are phraseologisms based on similes, such as *tremare come una foglia/drožat' kak osinovyj list* "shiver like a leaf".

In both languages, the phraseologism contains the verb for *tremble* (*drožat'* and *tremare*) which is very often used to express fear metonymically (section 3.1) and seems to reinforce the underlying simile. Although this phraseologism appears in both languages, there are some differences between Italian and Russian: while the Italian phraseology can denote a state of fear, general anxiety and also cold, the Russian expression, according to dictionaries, can only express fear. Michel'son (2005) explains that the *osina* "aspen" is considered to be a cursed tree because, according

to a legend, Judas Iscariot hung himself on an aspen tree and from that moment the leaves of that tree tremble from fear. However, the analysis of 50 occurrences randomly taken from the RuTenTen shows that this phraseology is now used to refer to a more general tremble and, for example, it is also used to denote a tremble due to cold (12%). This means that the meaning of *drožat' kak osinovyj list* is becoming more compositional and less idiomatic.

Other phraseologisms underlying the metonymy PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FEAR STAND FOR FEAR are used in both languages as in (11).

	(11a)	(11b)	(11c)
It	*diventare bianco come un lenzuolo*	*avere/far venire la pelle d'oca*	*far rizzare i capelli*
Ru	*(po)blednet' kak polotno*	*muraški po telu/po kože begajut*	*volosy stanovjatsja dybom*
En	'to turn white as a sheet'	'to give goose pimples'	'hair stands on end'

Depending on the linguistic or extra-linguistic context, the metonymic phraseologisms in (11) show more or less specificity in referring to fear. Both the Italian *avere/far venire la pelle d'oca* and the Russian *muraški po telu/po kože begajut* in (11b) denote, in most occurrences, the physiological reaction to fear or other emotional states, and only occasionally as a reaction to cold. *Diventare bianco come un lenzuolo* (11a) is used in Italian to denote the pallor which can be due to illness or emotions; among the emotions to which this expression can refer, fear and similar emotions are very frequent. The Russian equivalent *(po)blednet' kak polotno*, contrary to the Italian version, is used almost exclusively to denote a pallor caused by an emotional state, such as fear or similar emotions. In comparison to the other expressions, the phraseologisms in (11c) can denote only a very intense fear or similar emotions such as horror, or terror.

(12)   *E allora tira un urlo che avrebbe **fatto rizzare i capelli in testa** a chiunque.*
        "and so she gave a shout that could make anyone's **hair stand on end**."

(13)   *Ja mnogo drugogo slyšal vo dvorce, otčego **volosy stanovjatsja dybom***
         daže u smelogo čeloveka.
         "I heard a lot of things in the palace from which even to a courageous man
         hair stands on end."

Another relevant metonymy is (INVOLUNTARY) RELEASE OF BOWELS OR
BLADDER STANDS FOR FEAR. The Italian *farsela sotto/addosso* or *cagarsi
sotto/addosso* "shit oneself" and the Russian *naložit' v štany* "shit one's
trousers" belong to a very impolite and vulgar register of language.
However, it is interesting to mention these expressions because they are
used to refer exclusively to fear: unless they are interpreted literally, they
can only refer metonymically to a very intense fear. This does not mean that
the same metonymy, (INVOLUNTARY) RELEASE OF BOWELS OR BLADDER
STANDS FOR FEAR, cannot be used to refer to other emotional states, but it is
particularly important and prototypical to fear.

3.5 Metonymy-based metaphors in phraseology

The analysis of phraseology shows also the interaction between metaphor
and metonymy. In particular, the HEART metaphor, which has a metonymic
basis, is widely used in western culture to conceptualize and express
emotionality. The change in heart beating rate is a physiological reaction to
many emotions and this can be one of the reasons why in western cultures
the heart is considered to be the main location of emotions (among others
Lakoff 1987; Gibbs 1994; Gutiérrez Pérez 2008, 31). There are several
phraseologisms underlying the HEART metonymy-based metaphor which
refer to different and diverse kinds of emotions. In both Italian and Russian
the HEART metaphor is found in phraseologisms used to express fear[3], such
as *avere/far venire/saltare il cuore in gola* ,which means literally "heart
jump into my throat", and the Russian *serdce upalo* "heart fell" or *serdce
oborvalos'* "heart tears away" (Fedorov 2008).

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[3]Although not exclusively. These phraseologisms are most frequently used to
express fear and similar emotions, such as dread, anxiety or apprehension, but they
can also denote emotions such as surprise and stupor.

Considering that the HEART is conceptualized as the site of emotions, when a person experiences fear (or other emotions), her/his heart is conceptualized as losing its normal position.

Although Italian and Russian show several similarities in the conceptualization of fear through metonymies, some discrepancies can be detected when metonymy interacts with metaphor at the level of phraseology.

Let us take into consideration the Russian phraseologism *serdce v pjatki ušlo* 'lit. the heart fell to the heel', which is used exclusively to express fear (example 14).

(14)   *Mimo amerikanskie lodki skol'zjat, a u nas serdce **v pjatki uchodit**.*
       "American boats are floating by, and our **hearts sink**" (lit. went to the heel).

In Russian, however, there is a synonymic and widespread variant of this expression, which is *duša v pjatki ušla* 'lit. the soul fell to the heel'.

(15)   *U menja **duša v pjatki ušla**, kogda mertvec s šumom vzdochnul i zachripel.*
           "My **heart sank** (lit. my soul went to the heel) when the deceased noisily sighed and started to wheeze."

The concept of *duša* 'soul' has been deeply analysed by several scholars as it is a very central and specific concept in the Russian language and culture. Wierzbicka (1992 and 1997) claims that *duša,* which can be roughly translated in English as 'soul' (in Italian it can be translated as *anima*, *animo* depending on the context), is a language specific concept referring to "a person's spiritual, moral and emotional core and as an internal theatre where a person's moral and emotional life goes on" (Wierzbicka 1997, 3). The author (1992, 48) also explains that the Russian word *serdce*, as the English *heart*, refers to both the body organ and the organ of emotions; however, Russian has two words to refer to the organ of emotions, *serdce* and *duša*, which have different meanings. Although, in general, it cannot be said that *duša* and *serdce* are equivalent (see Wierzbicka 1992, 47-55), as it appears evident in the phraseologisms analyzed in (14) and (15), fear, in Russian, is an emotion that can be felt both in the *serdce* and in the *duša*.

4. Conclusions

In the present analysis I have retrieved metonymies and metonymy-based metaphors used to express fear in Italian and Russian which show different degrees of lexicalization in language. The general metonymy PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION is retrieved at different degrees of lexicalization: in metonymic expressions, in the lexis, in etymology, and also in phraseology. The TREMBLE STANDS FOR FEAR metonymy is relevant already in symptom-emotion constructions and metonymic expression. Especially in Italian the PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF FEAR STAND FOR FEAR metonymy is completely lexicalized, such as in *tremarella* and *strizza* that are words used as synonyms of fear even if they belong to a lower register of language. Eventually, interesting observations can be made by analyzing the etymology of fear words: at this level of lexicalization, metonymies are no longer transparent but they can be retrieved and analyzed.

Metonymies can also be retrieved in phraseology that shows a more or less specific reference to fear: phraseologisms more specific to fear, horror and terror, such as *volosy stanovjatsja dybom* or *farsela sotto* and less specific ones such as *bianco come un lenzuolo* or *drožat', kak osinovyj list*, can refer to fear, cold, illness, or a general emotional state.

Metonymy can also interact with metaphors. In particular, the Italian verb *rabbrividire* "shiver", which is motivated by the metaphor FEAR IS COLD, is used very often by itself to express fear, terror, or horror. Moreover, the interaction between metaphor and metonymy sheds light on cultural specific elements. In particular, while the HEART IS THE SITE OF EMOTIONS metaphor is active in both languages and used to conceptualize fear, only in Russian fear can be conceptualised as being located in the *duša* 'soul'. *Duša* is a highly cultural specific concept in Russian and there is no exact equivalent in Italian.

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