

Anela J. Mulahmetović Ibrišimović<sup>1</sup>  
University of Tuzla  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of English Language and Literature

# METONYMICAL EXPRESSIONS ABOUT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN AMERICAN AND BOSNIAN-HERZEGOVINIAN MEDIA

*Abstract: When engaging with media content, its consumers need to be mindful of potential negative media bias and stereotypical representation of minority groups, such as the disabled community. Critical consumption is essential in the context of the ableist perception of the world, often conveyed through metaphor and metonymy. Both frequently appear in the media, reinforcing prevalent societal attitudes and opinions.*

*This paper examines the presence of conceptual metonymies in the American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian media coverage of individuals with disabilities. While a limited number of studies delved into the interplay between metaphor and disability, no studies were conducted on the relationship between media, disability, and conceptual metonymy. We believe that this study will contribute to an informative, cross-cultural understanding of disability media coverage practices since conceptual metonymy offers insights into the patterns of disability representation and perception.*

*Keywords: conceptual metonymy, disability, media, American, Bosnian-Herzegovinian.*

## 1. Introduction

The choice of topics and the portrayal of people with disabilities in the media are said to have a remarkable influence on public opinion about this social group. According to Haller (1999:p.260), a news-reporting frame 'can sway public opinion about disability issues and toward the cultural representations of people with

<sup>1</sup>anela.mulahmetovicibrisimovic@untz.ba

disabilities in general'. This concern with media framing is closely related to the way language shapes perceptions of disability. In Canada, Australia, and the USA, referring to a person through their illness or impairment has been replaced by neutral, person-first expressions bolstering positive identification of the disabled community. The people-first language implies that a person should be put before the disability, which is reflected in the use of the "head N + PP", "head N + relative clause", or "head N + participial" syntactic patterns. Other recommendations include not referring to a person's impairment unless relevant, avoiding the use of premodification ("disabled person" vs "a person with a disability") or adjectives as nouns ("the retarded", "the deaf", "the blind"), and avoiding statements that emphasize person's achievements in the context of their disability (Halmari, 2011).

Despite institutional and academic support, the person-first language faced resistance in the USA. Albrecht, Seelman, and Bury (2001:p.3) state that many disabled individuals dismissed the person-first idea as offensive 'claiming that it was promoted by powerful non-disabled people, particularly advocates for persons with developmental disabilities'. Bickford's (2004) study on disability language preference among individuals with visual impairments found that most participants rejected the person-first language, as it implied that blindness was something they should be ashamed of. Euphemisms like "physically challenged", "abled", disabled", "handicapable", "special people/children", "differently-abled", and "people with differing abilities" have been perceived as condescending and violating disability etiquette (Galvin 2003:p.162). Hughes (2010:p.196) notes how the term "differently abled", coined to replace the word "disabled", was mocked by the *Los Angeles Times* because the verb "to able" does not exist in the English language. Also, the term "challenged" as in "physically challenged" was inadequate since it semantically suggested an irreversible condition.

Bajić (2013)'s study of Bosnian-Herzegovinian print media revealed that the choice of language to describe people with disabilities remained inconsistent and problematic. Kotur Erkić (2017) reports how people with disabilities in Bosnian-Herzegovinian media are still described as *hendikepiran* 'handicapped', *vezan za kolica* 'wheel-chair bound', and *mentalno zaostali* 'mentally retarded', suggesting that 'they are viewed as objects and not subjects with rights'. The author supports her claims by offering examples of three media articles reporting on disability. In the first article, the author of a photography exhibition is referred to as *vezan za kolica* 'wheel-chair bound'. In the second article, children with disabilities are referred to as *djeca sa posebnim potrebama* 'children with special needs', while the

third article describes a girl as *hendikepirana* 'handicapped' and *mentalno zaostala* 'mentally retarded'.

Both metaphor and metonymy frequently occur in media language since their use helps reinforce prevalent societal attitudes and opinions. Their ideological and rhetorical role has been the focus of numerous studies across various types of discourse, including political discourse (Ahrens, 2009; Charteris-Black, 2011; Mussolf, 2004), media discourse (Mussolf, 2006), business discourse (Koller, 2005), and education (Semino, 2008), among others. Unfortunately, no papers were found dealing with the relationship between disability and conceptual metonymy.

In light of the limited research on this topic, this paper explores the complex relationship between media, disability, and conceptual metonymy. The corpus study aims to reveal which linguistic expressions are metonymical and which conceptual metonymies dominate the media disability discourse. Specifically, the contrastive analysis aims to establish similarities and differences between the use of metonymy in the American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian media. Special attention will be dedicated to the ramifications of this interplay on the media content presented to the public.

## 2. On Conceptual Metonymy

The onset of the 1950s marked a revival of interest in the way humans think and speak, resulting in a number of linguistic, semantic, and cognitive theories on metonymy and metaphor. Metonymy, as a conceptual phenomenon, first drew the attention of cognitive linguists with the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By*. Along with metaphor, metonymy and its concepts help us organize our thoughts and actions. Metonymy is defined as using one entity to refer to or stand for another based on contiguity or association. Thus, in the example "the ham sandwich is waiting for his check", the noun phrase "the ham sandwich" is metonymically used to refer to a person that placed the order (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:p.35).

Lakoff and Johnson's definition of metonymy has been broadened by Radden and Kövecses (1999:p.21), who suggest that metonymy is 'a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain, or idealized cognitive model (ICM)'. ICMs are structures that represent the speaker's conceptual knowledge of a thing or entity, which is meant to include not only people's encyclopedic knowledge of a particular domain but also the cultural models they are part of. In other

words, they also include a person's subjective views of a particular concept, shaped by their experiences of it. The composition of a conceptual domain can be viewed as bidirectional: a whole that is constituted by parts, namely conceptual entities or elements, and the parts that constitute the ICM as a whole. Hence, metonymies may emerge in two ways: 1) either A WHOLE STANDS FOR A PART, or A PART STANDS FOR A WHOLE, 2) A PART STANDS FOR ANOTHER PART (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.30).

Ruiz de Mendoza and Diez (2002:p.512) observe an important aspect of metonymy called double metonymy. If metonymy involves one conceptual shift from the source to the target referent, double metonymy implies two or more conceptual shifts. Double metonymy can be isolated in the expression "Van Gogh is on the top shelf", where at first glance, metonymy motivating the expression is expressed as AUTHOR FOR HIS WORK. Yet, closer inspection reveals a double metonymic shift from the author to his work and then to a copy of his work. Hence, the metonymy can be postulated as AUTHOR FOR HIS WORK FOR A SAMPLE OF HIS WORK.

Littlemore (2015:p.7) also observes the notion of metonymic chaining in "Now dry your eyes, and we'll put the kettle on", where the act of putting the kettle on stands for making a cup of tea leads to drinking tea together while sharing one's problems. Furthermore, a linguistic expression can involve a combination of two or more metonymies. In the example 'I'll have a glass to celebrate', the MATERIAL FOR OBJECT metonymy is combined with the CONTAINER FOR CONTAINED metonymy (Littlemore, 2015:p.26).

Metonymy can lead to depersonalization and de-rolling. A de-personalizing metonymy can have a negative effect because of the de-rolling issue, where the metonymy source "de-emphasizes" the important metonymy-target role. Barnden (2018:p.106) suggests that the syntagm "Crooked Nose" in the example 'Coach had instructed him to let the Crooked Nose win the semi-final' illustrates a case of de-personalized metonymy with the de-rolling effect of emphasizing a possibly negative physical trait.

Noun-noun compounds can also have a metonymic motivation. The popular phrase "couch potato" is thought to be motivated by many metonymies within a single domain matrix (Benczsés, 2011:p.202). The word "couch" activates the LOCATION FOR ACTION metonymy since the couch as a place where the activity takes place stands for the activity of watching TV. Furthermore, the word "potato" activates the background knowledge of eating snacks such as chips in front of the TV, resulting in the MATERIAL FOR OBJECT metonymy that

leads to MEMBER OF A CATEGORY FOR THE CATEGORY metonymy (chips for any kind of snack). Since a person eats the (potato) chips, the OBJECT INVOLVED IN THE ACTION FOR THE ACTION metonymy seems to be at play, along with the CAUSE FOR EFFECT, as eating unhealthy food causes a person to gain weight.

The intersection of media, disability, and conceptual metonymy remains largely unexplored. By analyzing how metonymy is utilized in media portrayals, this study aims to provide a cross-cultural perspective on disability representation, offering insights into the underlying patterns that influence public perception. In that aspect, cross-linguistic comparisons play a crucial role in determining the extent to which conceptual metonymies are shared across language communities, namely the American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian. Since metonymy as a cognitive process is generally regarded as universal, its variations can be attributed to cultural and social factors that shape its linguistic manifestations.

### 3. On Corpus and Methodology

The American corpus consists of 230 texts obtained from the most widely circulated print newspapers of 2023, spanning publications from September 2022 to September 2023<sup>2</sup> (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, *USA Today*, *Star Tribune*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Seattle Times*, and *Boston Globe*). *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsday*, *LA Times*, and *Tampa Bay Times* were excluded from the analysis as they did not offer a significant number of disability-related articles. The corpus also contains texts and video transcripts from leading American television channels' online platforms, *NBC* and *CBS*, along with discussions on various disability-related topics found on American disability forums. The search was restricted to the online platforms of only two television channels, since most channels popular with the US audiences either do not possess an online platform or have access limitations outside their respective countries.

The collection of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian corpus posed additional challenges due to inconsistent disability terminology and the absence of dedicated disability sections on media websites. Our examination encompassed a total of 250 texts taken from various news portals (*Klix.ba*, *TIP.ba*, *Glas Regije*, *Tuzlarije*, *Slobodna Bosna*, *diskriminacija.ba*, *zurnal.info*, *dnevnik.ba*), online newspapers (*Avaz*, *Oslobođenje*, *Nezavisne novine*, *Gracija*, *Azra*) and television channels' online platforms (*BHRT*, *FTV*, *Hayat*, *TV NI*, *RTVTK*, *RTV Slon*). We also included the texts posted on

<sup>2</sup><https://www.statista.com/statistics/272790/circulation-of-the-biggest-daily-newspapers-in-the-us/>

the website of *IC Lotos*, an association based in Tuzla that supports individuals with disabilities and promotes their rights.

Metonymy is harder to identify than other figurative language (Littlemore and Tag, 2018), since it lacks a universal identification procedure. In that respect, we followed Radden and Kövecses (1999), Kövecses (2002; 2006), Hilpert (2007a), Littlemore (2015), and Littlemore and Tag (2018). After the lexical metonymy identification, all metonyms were classified according to the taxonomy proposed by Radden and Kövecses (1999), Kövecses (2002; 2006), Littlemore (2015), and Littlemore and Tag (2018).

4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Conceptual Metonymies in the American Media Discourse

This section offers an overview of conceptual metonymies employed by the American media to discuss disability-related issues. Our investigation revealed the presence of 13 conceptual metonymies, presented in Table 1. The following discussion analyzes metonymies identified in the corpus.

Conceptual metonymy	Number of occurrences
DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY /TRAIT FOR PERSON	37
PART OF THE SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO	34
GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC	29
WHOLE FOR PART	27
SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC	13
INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE	13
EFFECT FOR CAUSE	12
THE SUBEVENT FOR THE COMPLEX EVENT	12
OBJECT USED FOR USER	6
POSSESSOR FOR POSSESSED	3
CONTROLLED FOR CONTROLLER	3
OBJECT FOR ACTION	1
TOTAL:	190

Table 1. The distribution of conceptual metonymies in the American corpus

The most prevalent metonymies in our corpus were the TRAIT FOR PERSON (Littlemore, 2015) and the DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY metonymies (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.35). These metonymies involve using a specific characteristic or trait of a person's disability to represent that individual. In relation to disability, the TRAIT FOR PERSON conceptual metonymy can significantly impact how individuals with disabilities are perceived and treated in society. Littlemore (2017:p.416) points out that this metonymy can serve as an indicator of social attitudes towards a particular group. Specifically, by providing an example of a Paralympian athlete referred to as *the wheelchair*, Littlemore (ibid) concludes that the TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymy can be used to convey underlying prejudice toward a disabled individual. When discussing disability, the TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymy often interacts with the DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY metonymy since *disability* is commonly used in the media as a metonymic shortcut for disabled people. There has been growing awareness of how offensive this metonymy can be since it addresses individuals by referring to their illnesses and diseases, such as “dyslexics“, “schizophrenics“, and “epileptics“, artificially creating a category of people who happen to share a feature (Littlemore, 2015:p.24).

Our corpus analysis revealed the presence of the two metonymies when the term *disability* was used to stand for people with disabilities. They were also identified in the examples utilizing *disability* and *disabled* as pre-modifiers or as the first element in a compound. Importantly, these metonymies did not connote offensiveness but had a pragmatic purpose of delivering the information in a concise manner.

- 1) In many instances, if you were to turn the camera around, he said, “you would see that *disability* was only represented in one direction.”
- 2) Children often aren't exposed to *disability* much because disabled people are only shown in the media 3.1% of the time.
- 3) Our sources included dozens of *disability advocates* who spoke candidly about their experiences, and many of the articles were written by well-known writers in the disability community.
- 4) When McKenzie, who played for the Green Bay Packers and New Orleans Saints, applied for *disability benefits* in 2018, he was evaluated by an orthopedist hired by the plan who denied every one of the 17 players he saw, according to the lawsuit.

Another large group of examples identified in our research exemplifies the WHOLE FOR PART conceptual metonymy (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.31). This type of metonymy involves situations where the whole of something stands for

one of its parts. In our corpus, the highest frequency of the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy involved the term *accessible*. Imamović (2020) notes that *accessible* has narrowed semantically from “accessible to all” to specifically mean “accessible to persons with a disability”. This change was driven by the push for inclusive language and the avoidance of terms that might be offensive or sensitive.

- 5) In a statement, Malik Robinson, the executive director of Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, apologized, saying that “this incident was an important and visceral reminder that *accessibility*, in many forms, is critical for all members of our community.”
- 6) Incensed by a lack of *accessibility* in the city for theater people with disabilities, she wrote her own plays, starring herself and other disabled actors.
- 7) Other considerations include tactile signage and maps, which have raised elements for exploration by touch; *accessible parking*; and excessive or unexpected noises, which can lead to sensory overload for people with sensory-processing disorders.

Semantic narrowing has also been noticed in collocation *adaptive climbing*. Due to different impairments, persons with disabilities cannot participate in traditional climbing. Adaptive climbing accommodates people with disabilities by using specialized equipment and techniques and allowing them to enjoy this sport. It offers a wide range of benefits for the disabled community, from strengthening community ties and boosting confidence to improving muscle strength (Richman, 2020).

The linguistic analysis of *adaptive climbing* reveals a shift in the adjective's meaning. The basic meaning of the adjective *adaptive* is “able to adjust” (Cambridge). However, in relation to climbing, the general meaning of the adjective has been reduced from “able to adjust to everyone” to “able to adjust to people with disabilities”, implying a metonymic connection.

- 8) The hope, according to Seelenfreund, is to make *adaptive climbing* as accessible as nonadaptive climbing.
- 9) After all, she reflects, *adaptive climbing* is only about a decade old.
- 10) It's cool to see the broader community embrace *adaptive climbing*.

The opposite metonymy, PART FOR WHOLE (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.31) also appeared in the corpus. Even though the term *accessible* was found to illustrate the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy, in certain instances, it represented the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy. This was observed when *accessible* was used as a premodifier of nouns or noun phrases denoting buildings, hotels, schools, gyms, ranches, playgrounds, and stations. The meaning of the building “a structure with a roof and walls” was expanded to “a structure with a roof, walls, and furniture”,



while the meaning of the adjective “can be reached and entered” was broadened to “can be reached, entered, and used” (Imamović, 2020:p.291). Consequently, both noun and adjective were interpreted metonymically, giving rise to the PART OF THE SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO metonymy.

- 11) Sene’s placard read: “When *buildings* aren’t *accessible*, we can’t access our rights.”
- 12) New regulations announced by the Transportation Department will mandate that more new planes have *accessible lavatories* (...).
- 13) The Transportation Department announced on Wednesday that it had finalized new regulations to require more commercial aircraft to have *accessible bathrooms* (...).

In examples (14–16), the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC conceptual metonymy is expressed through the application of general or collective subjects to discuss specific individuals or situations within the disability community. This metonymic device operates by using a general category (*people with disabilities*, *disabled people*, *students with disabilities*) to refer to the domain of disability. In (14), the generic term *people with disabilities* refers to individuals or groups who initiated legal action but whose outcome might affect the entire disabled population. By mentioning *disabled people* and *students with disabilities* in (15) and (16), the examples use a broad category to address the issue of a selected number of disabled people who were given access to bank accounts and a certain number of disabled students left out of bilingual education. In each case, the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy is a linguistic shortcut to speak of specific experiences while drawing attention to broader systemic issues in the area of disability.

- 14) *People with disabilities* filed a federal lawsuit in response to the state court’s decision, arguing that federal law allows them to get assistance in returning their ballot.
- 15) “*Disabled people* and their families can educate themselves and their supporters about the accounts and how they are used”, Foley said.
- 16) “*Students with disabilities* left out of bilingual classes: Advocates see discrimination in BPS numbers.”

Additionally, a metonymic expression can be motivated by two or more conceptual metonymies. In the following examples, the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymies (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:pp.34–38) underlie the term *wheelchair users*. The term is employed as a euphemism aimed at substituting outdated language considered offensive or stigmatizing, such as “wheelchair-bound”, “confined to a wheelchair”, “restricted to a wheelchair”, or

“trapped in a wheelchair”. Euphemisms, as terms or phrases that are overly direct, awkward, or unsuitable, are often metaphor- or metonymy-based. Harkova and Shigapova (2014) found metonymy to be in central in English euphemisms designed to circumvent explicit references to discreditable and obscene objects. Similarly, Moritz (2018) identified the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy as the dominant mechanism in euphemisms found in presidential war-related speeches.

In our corpus study, the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy was exemplified by the term *wheelchair users*. The identification of metonymy is supported by the common knowledge of an event taking place (an injury or illness) and affecting a person (the inability to walk independently and necessitating the use of a wheelchair for assistance). Moreover, the presence of plural generic reference involves the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy. The following examples illustrate the interaction between these two metonymies:

- 17) Trails with steeper, more rugged sections may be an option for experienced outdoor-*wheelchair users* or those using all-terrain chairs.
- 18) A slope over 12 percent may be difficult for people with mobility or cardiopulmonary concerns, and inaccessible for most *wheelchair users*.

Further instances of the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy involving the expression *use a wheelchair* are offered below. The expression is also a euphemism used to indicate a person's method of mobility in a socially acceptable manner. In the following examples, this expression does not have a generic reference and is only interpreted via the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy.

- 19) The case originated when Deborah Laufer, who has multiple sclerosis and *uses a wheelchair*, filed a lawsuit in 2020 claiming that the Coast Village Inn and Cottages in Maine violated her rights under the Americans With Disabilities Act.
- 20) Ms. Hill, 31, is the founder of the Rollettes, a dance team for women who *use wheelchairs* that formed in 2012.

Generalizations can be expressed through indefinite singulars known as representative generics. Our research identified the terms *disabled person*, *blind person*, *person with disability*, and *child with disabilities* as indicators of a generalization enabled by the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy, where a particular member or element of a group is employed to represent the entire group or category (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.34). In this type of reference, the speaker has no specific entity in mind, and its usage is understood to represent the generic type (Radden, 2009:p.283). This generalization also involves the INSTANCE FOR TYPE metonymy.

- 21) There are two main concerns people seem to have about dating *a disabled person*.
- 22) *A blind person*, always on high alert for all the many things that can go wrong, can really react if grabbed.
- 23) It's illegal for school districts to cite a lack of money or staff as a reason for not educating *a child with disabilities*.
- 24) "Data show that hiring *a person with a disability* for a full-time job improves their quality of life and reduces their reliance on social services."

Regardless of the discourse or format in which it appears, metonymy can be used either to amplify an entity's responsibility or downplay its role. Portero Muñoz's (2011) discussed language used during the global financial crisis, illustrating how noun-noun euphemisms utilize contextual cues and engage conceptual metaphors and metonymies to soften perceptions of economic hardship. Barletta Manjarrés, Cortez Román, and Medzerian (2012) investigated the role of metaphors and metonymies in the instruction and acquisition of writing skills within a composition program at a public university in the United States. In terms of metonymies, they discovered the presence of the INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE, PLACE FOR EVENTS, PLACE-FOR-STANDARDS, CONTAINED-AS-PART, and ENTITY-FOR-STANDARD-PRACTICES metonymies whose roles were to shift the focus from the metonymic target by emphasizing the metonymic vehicle. The INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy was particularly productive in political and media discourse (Schultz, 2012; Zieliński, 2012). Its use has also been ascribed to the pragmatic intent of glorifying or vilifying an institution and diverting attention from the people in charge. The metonymy was frequent in our corpus study as well:

- 25) Across the U.S., advocates say, *schools* are removing students with disabilities from the classroom, often in response to challenging behavior, by sending them home or cutting back on the days they're allowed to attend.
- 26) *School districts* have complained to the state for years about problems there, including classrooms being led by unqualified aides instead of certified special education teachers.
- 27) The *district* initially refused, Clark said. She forced another meeting, and the *district* finally capitulated, according to a settlement agreement the *district* reached with the family.

In examples (25–27), the INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy is activated by the expressions *school* and *district*. The mentioning of *schools* in (25) places the responsibility for decisions regarding students with

disabilities on educational institutions rather than specific individuals overseeing those institutions. In (26–27), the metonymy emphasizes the role of the districts in decision-making, hiding the role of the individuals responsible for their governance. In all of these instances, the INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy emphasizes institutions' collective responsibility for policies and decisions.

The last conceptual metonymy with a high-frequency index is THE SUBEVENT FOR THE COMPLEX EVENT metonymy. Biljetina (2022) established that drinking-related verbs in English and Serbian can have an extended metonymical meaning. Similarly, the following examples demonstrate how verbs can function metonymically to represent broader processes and events.

- 28) Now more than a million Americans wait in limbo just *to hear* whether they will get assistance.
- 29) Because in fact, despite the fights undertaken, the impression we have is that we're not *listened to*, despite all of our efforts."
- 30) After her school principal said she couldn't *enter* kindergarten because she was using a wheelchair, Judy dedicated the rest of her life to fighting for the inherent dignity of people with disabilities.

In (28), the act of *hearing* is a subevent that stands metonymically for the entire process of applying for, being judged for, and possibly receiving assistance. This complex process involves various steps, including application submission, review, judgment, potential appeals, and finally, a resolution. However, the use of the term *hearing* allows for the mental unpacking of the entire process. Similarly, in example (29), *listened to* metonymically represents acknowledgment and consideration. *Enter* in (30) stands for access and participation in educational opportunities. It does not denote simply physically moving into a building but being accepted and included in the social and educational systems. In sum, each of these verbs acts as a mental reference to complex events or processes.

#### 4.2. Conceptual Metonymies in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian Media Discourse

The analysis of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian media corpus revealed the presence of 11 conceptual metonymies, presented in Table 2. Their number is lower than the number of metonymies identified in the British corpus. GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC is the most prevalent metonymy in this corpus (Radden and Kövecses 1999:p.34).

Conceptual metonymy	Number of occurrences
GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC	34
PART FOR WHOLE	17
WHOLE FOR PART	16
PART OF THE SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO	8
INSTITUTION FOR THE PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE	7
EFFECT FOR CAUSE	7
SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC	6
DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY /TRAIT FOR PERSON	5
THE SUBEVENT FOR THE COMPLEX EVENT	1
OBJECT USED FOR USER	1
TOTAL:	102

Table 2. The distribution of conceptual metonymies in the  
Bosnian-Herzegovinian corpus

In examples (31–34), this type of metonymy is illustrated by using general terms to refer to specific individuals or circumstances within the disability community. Despite the apparent collective reference, all the examples above have a narrow scope. They emphasize various obstacles faced by people with disabilities, ranging from physical barriers and access to information to social stigma and discrimination in their local communities.

- 31) “Od ključne je važnosti da javne institucije na lokalnom nivou, kroz koje se ostvaruje najviše prava, ali i druge institucije otklone arhitektonske barijere, prilagode informisanje i pruže dodatnu pomoć *osobama s invaliditetom*”, naglasili su.
- 32) O tome sa kojim izazovima se susreću *slabovidne i slijepe osobe* govorio je Fikret Zuko, direktor Udruženja slijepih Kantona Sarajevo.
- 33) *Autistične osobe* često su izložene stigmati i diskriminaciji, uključujući nepravedno uskraćivanje zdravstvene njege, obrazovanja i prilika da se angažuju i učestvuju u svojim zajednicama.
- 34) *Djeca s poteškoćama u razvoju* u inkluzivnoj nastavi nerijetko se susreću sa osudama druge djece, a evo šta na to kaže defektologinja.

Another type of metonymic relationship expressing generalization is the SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC metonymy (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.34). In this type of relation, a single indefinite instance takes on a much broader meaning that applies to an entire class, group, or category. The SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC appears less frequently than the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy, occurring only a few times in our corpus.

- 35) *Osoba s invaliditetom* i *osoba sa smanjenom pokretljivošću* može aviokompaniji ili aerodromu podnijeti prigovor ako smatra da su postupili protivno zakonu.
- 36) U evropskim zemljama *osoba sa invaliditetom* može sama funkcionisati. Ne treba ni pratnja.
- 37) "Taj posao ne može raditi svako, nego to zaista mora biti neko ko će u potpunosti biti fokusiran na pomoć *sljepoj osobi*."

A linguistic expression can be motivated by a combination of metonymies or it can involve a metonymic chain. In the following examples, the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC and the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymies (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.34–38) underlie the expressions *osobe u invalidskim kolicima* 'persons in a wheelchair' and *korisnici kolica* 'wheelchair users'. Metonymy is identified by the common knowledge that an event takes place (an injury or illness) and affects a person, resulting in their inability to walk independently and necessitating the use of a wheelchair for assistance.

- 38) On najbolje zna koliko je Mostar daleko od inkluzivnog grada i koliko je teško *osobama u invalidskim kolicima* da funkcionišu u tom gradu (...).
- 39) Kako *korisnici kolica*, i pored svih zalaganja da se urbani prostor prilagodi njima, zbog sveopšte nekulture i dalje ne mogu uvijek nesmetano, samostalno da se kreću (...).

However, only the EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy motivates examples (40–42):

- 40) Zeničanka Samira Džidić je od rođenja *u invalidskim kolicima*.
- 41) Činjenica da *koristim invalidska kolica* u interakciji s diskriminacijom, nedostatkom arhitektonske pristupačnosti i pravovaljanih informacija one-mogućila mi je kontinuiran proces obrazovanja.
- 42) Kao *korisnik invalidskih kolica* najčešće se susrećem s arhitektonskim barijerama, prvo kosinama.

The interaction of metonymies was also detected in other parts of our corpus study. In the following set of examples, generic reference has been enriched by the effect of depersonalization conveyed by the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy or its special case FACE FOR PERSON metonymy:

- 43) Naknada *licima sa invaliditetom* je 637 KM: Ispravlja se dugogodišnja nepravda prema ovoj populaciji
- 44) Prema njegovim riječima, *slijepa i slabovidna lica* teško dolaze do posla kod poslodavaca, te se zbog toga češće odlučuju za samozapošljavanje.
- 45) Nekako uvijek to govorimo, ali možda tokom godine zaboravimo, da se ne priča o problemima *lica sa invaliditetom* samo jednom u toku godine (...).

Examples (43–45) address the common theme of challenges people with disabilities encounter in their environments. In these examples, the presence of proportional generic activates the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy. However, the frequently found term *osobe* 'persons, people' has been replaced by the term *lica* 'faces', illustrating the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy or the FACE FOR PERSON metonymy. Metonymical references to persons through body parts (Hilpert, 2007b; Handl, 2011) can have a depersonalizing and dehumanizing effect (Littlemore 2015:p.7), creating a greater social distance between disabled and non-disabled readers. An interesting observation is that the FACE FOR PERSON metonymy was not identified in the American corpus. The finding aligns with Imamović's (2013:p.303) research, which identifies this metonymy as register-specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina, prevalent in legal discourse but absent from the UK and US corpora.

In addition, words coming from the same word family in (46–48) also seem to be underlying the PART FOR WHOLE metonymy (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.31). *Pristupačan, pristupačna, pristupačni* and *pristupačne* 'accessible' are adjectives framed by the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL and CONTAINER schemas, where the goal is conceptualized as a container (Imamović, 2020:p.286). This pattern emerged when the terms were used to modify nouns or noun phrases related to various facilities. These expressions are also to be interpreted metonymically, giving rise to the PART OF A SCENARIO FOR THE WHOLE SCENARIO metonymy (Imamović, 2020:pp.290–291).

- 46) "Osnovne i srednje škole nam nisu *pristupačne*. Fakultet je bio *pristupačan*, ima lift, ali ja sam nažalost imala predavanja u podrumu gdje nemam mogućnost lifta i uvijek sam morala imati podršku drugih", navodi Amela.
- 47) Nijedan objekat u Doboju nije u potpunosti *pristupačan* i prilagođen osobama sa invaliditetom (...).
- 48) Nažalost, u Doboju nismo našli nijedan objekat koji je u potpunosti *pristupačan*.

The opposite metonymy or the WHOLE FOR PART metonymy was observed in the examples involving the word *pristupačnost* 'accessibility' without a reference

to facilities. Imamović (2020) finds that accessible has narrowed semantically from “accessible to all” to specifically mean “accessible to persons with a disability”. The issue of accessibility is crucial for the integration of disabled people into mainstream society, as indicated below:

- 49) Prilagođenost javnih institucija osoba s invaliditetom je pitanje *pristupačnosti*, a *pristupačnost* je ključni uslov ostvarivanja drugih prava s invaliditetom.
- 50) UN je prije nekoliko godina ukazao da Bosna i Hercegovina nema sveobuhvatnu strategiju *pristupačnosti* (...).

Institutions have a pivotal role in supporting disabled people's independence. Depending on their function, institutions provide various forms of support for the disabled community, from education, employment, and healthcare to legal and financial assistance. In the Bosnian-Herzegovinian corpus, we observed that non-governmental associations were more proactive in assisting disabled individuals than governmental organizations. Considering that people in charge of a certain institution are responsible for decision-making processes, the ensuing instances exemplify the INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy:

- 51) *Udruženje osoba sa invaliditetom* današnjim protestima želi izboriti uslove za pristojan život.
- 52) *Udruženje porodica djece i osoba sa poteškoćama u razvoju "Dajte nam šansu"* pokrenulo je veliki projekat za otvaranje prvog Dnevnog centra za djecu i omladinu sa poteškoćama u razvoju u Kantonu Sarajevo.
- 53) *Udruženje RE-SET* pomaže mladim osobama sa invaliditetom

Using a trait or a characteristic to refer to a group of individuals has been the foundation of the TRAIT FOR PERSON conceptual metonymy (Littlemore, 2015) and the DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY metonymy (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:p.35). Since people with disabilities find references to their impairment offensive, these terms have been replaced with less stigmatizing ones. However, the use of expressions such as *gluhi* ‘the deaf’ and *sljepi* ‘the blind’ is still present in some media texts:

- 54) A da je suradnja s *gluhima* dobra, te da je profesionalan pristup poslu najvažniji pri odabiru kandidata dokazuje nam i 19-ogodišnja Esmira.
- 55) Okolina ih smatra nepoželjnim partnerima/icama jer videći ne žele vezu sa *sljepima*, općenito s osobama s invaliditetom.

We would like to close this section with the least frequent conceptual metonymies in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian corpus: the SUBEVENT FOR THE COMPLEX EVENT and the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION metonymies (Radden and Kövecses, 1999:pp.32–37). The former appears in *izaći na ulice* ‘take to the



streets' in (56). To express their dissatisfaction with the government's decision to decrease disability benefits, families of people with disabilities threatened to stage large-scale protests. Gathering on the streets has metonymically been employed to represent a more complex event of protest planning. The phrase metonymically condenses multiple subevents, including obtaining permits, mobilization, transportation, and press coverage.

In addition, the INSTRUMENT FOR ACTION has been identified in (57), where the term *štap* 'a walking cane' stands for the action it facilitates—mobility. Unfortunately, example (57) reveals how using a walking cane reinforces existing prejudices toward the individual with a disability. However, the speaker's intention to counter these misconceptions offers hope for social change.

56) "Ovo će jako uticati na živote porodica sa djecom sa smetnjama, a ako se nastavi insistirati da se i kantonalni zakon uskladi sa federalnim, mi ćemo *izaći na ulice*", kazala nam je ova majka.

57) "*Štap* je dodatno pojačao predrasude, no odlučila sam to mijenjati".

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examined the manifestation of conceptual metonymies in the American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian media discourse on disability. The aim of the study was to determine the dominant conceptual metonymies in media representations of disability and to explore the similarities and differences across the two corpora. A comparative analysis revealed several significant patterns in the use of conceptual metonymy.

The largest group of examples identified in our research instantiates the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC conceptual metonymy. The metonymy was prominent in both corpora, as generalization is a powerful strategy used to highlight critical issues disabled individuals grapple with. Although the context narrowed the frame of reference of metonymic expressions, the GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC metonymy was used to evoke a matter of urgency in ensuring an inclusive society.

Additionally, the WHOLE FOR PART and PART FOR WHOLE metonymies, illustrated by the terms *accessible*, *adaptive climbing*, and *pristupačnost* were also widely represented. The terms underwent the process of semantic expansion and reduction in an effort to replace offensive and inappropriate terms with more respectful alternatives. A similar attempt was identified in the use of the EFFECT

FOR CAUSE metonymy, where derogatory expressions such as *wheelchair-bound*, *wheelchair-confined*, and *prikovan za kolica* were replaced by inclusive metonymic euphemisms.

Nevertheless, the corpus analysis has also uncovered some differences in the use of conceptual metonymy in disability media narratives. The American media discourse employed the terms *disability* and *disabled* to refer to the disability community in a concise manner, thereby evoking the DEFINING PROPERTY OF A CATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY and the TRAIT FOR PERSON metonymies. In contrast, these metonymies were less common in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian media discourse and instantiated by expressions describing specific types of impairment, such as *gluhi* 'the deaf' or *sljepi* 'the blind.' Similarly, the INSTITUTION FOR PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE metonymy carried a negative connotation in the American corpus, highlighting the collective responsibility of institutions for actions, decisions, or policies regarding people with disabilities. In the Bosnian-Herzegovinian corpus, however, this metonymy emphasized the proactive role of disability associations in advocating for the rights of disabled individuals.

In sum, the conducted analysis shows significant overlap in metonymic disability framing across American and Bosnian-Herzegovinian media. Metonymy variations stem from cultural, historical, and geopolitical factors, affecting how disability is presented and addressed.

### Dictionaries:

1. *Cambridge Dictionary* | *English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus* [online]. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

### References:

1. Ahrens, K. (ed.) (2009) *Politics, Gender and Conceptual Metaphors*. London, Palgrave Macmillan UK.
2. Albrecht, G., Seelman, K. and Bury, M. 2001. Introduction: The Formation of Disability Studies. In: G. Albrecht, K. Seelman and M. Bury (eds.) *Handbook of Disability Studies*. London and New Delhi, Sage Publications, Inc., 1–10.
3. Bajić, Z. (2013) *Monitoring medija: Analiza izvještavanja štampanih medija o osobama s invaliditetom u Bosni i Hercegovini u periodu april/travanj - septembar/rujan 2013. god.* Sarajevo, Švedska krovna organizacija unutar pokreta osoba s invaliditetom.
4. Barletta Manjarrés, N., Cortez Román, N. A. and Medzerian, S. (2012) From official educational policy to the composition classroom: Reproduction through metaphor and metonymy. *Journal of Writing Research*. 4(1), 31–51.

5. Barnden, J. (2018) Some contrast effects in metonymy. In: O. Blanco-Carrión, A. Barcelona and R. Pannain (eds.) *Conceptual Metonymy: Methodological, theoretical, and descriptive issues*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 97–120.
6. Biljetina, J. L. (2022) Verbs of Drinking in English and in Serbian as Sources of Conceptual Metaphors and Metonymies. *Philologist – journal of language, literary and cultural studies*. 13(26), 170–192.
7. Benczsés, R. (2011) Putting the notion of “domain” back into metonymy: Evidence from compounds. In: R. Benczsés, A. Barcelona and R. de Mendoza (eds.) *Defining Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 147–166.
8. Bickford, J. (2004) Preferences of Individuals With Visual Impairments for the Use of Person-First Language. *RE:view: Rehabilitation and Education for Blindness and Visual Impairment*. 36(3), 120–126.
9. Charteris-Black, J. (2011) *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. Palgrave Macmillan.
10. Galvin, R. (2003) The Making of the Disabled Identity: A Linguistic Analysis of Marginalisation. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 23(2), 149–178.
11. Handl, S. and Schmid, H.-J., eds. (2011) *Windows to the Mind*. Berlin, New York, De Gruyter Mouton.
12. Haller, B. (1999) News Coverage of Disability Issues: Final Report for The Center for an Accessible Society. [online] *The Center for an Accessible Society*. <http://www.accessiblesociety.org/topics/coverage/0799haller.htm>.
13. Halmari, H. (2010) Political correctness, euphemism, and language change: The case of ‘people first’. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 43(3), 828–840.
14. Harkova, E. and Shigapova, F. (2014) Functional features of metaphoric and metonymic euphemisms in media discourse. *European Journal of Science and Theology*. 10(6), 105–113.
15. Hilpert, M. (2007a) Chained Metonymies in Lexicon and Grammar. *Aspects of Meaning Construction*, 77–98.
16. Hilpert, M. (2007b) Keeping an eye on the data: Metonymies and their patterns. In: A. Anatol Stefanowitsch and S. Th. Gries (eds.) *Corpus-Based Approaches to Metaphor and Metonymy*. Berlin, New York, Mouton de Gruyter, 123–151.
17. Hughes, G. (2010) *Political Correctness: A History of Semantics and Culture*. 1st ed. Chichester, John Wiley & Sons.
18. Imamović, A. (2013) Metaphor and metonymy in legal texts. *Jezikoslovlje*. 14(2-3), 295–306.
19. Imamović, A. (2020) Accessible World: A Cognitive-Linguistic Analysis. In: *Essays in Honour of Boris Berić's Sixty-Fifth Birthday: "What's Past Is Prologue"*. Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 277–302.

20. Koller, V. (2005) Critical discourse analysis and social cognition: evidence from business media discourse. *Discourse and Society*, 16(2), 199–224.
21. Kotur Erkić, A. (2017) *Hendikepirana ili ne vidi?* [online] MC\_ONLINE. <https://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-novinarstvo/hendikepirana-ili-ne-vidi-0>.
22. Kövecses, Z. (2002) *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
23. Kövecses, Z. (2006) *Language, Mind, and Culture: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
24. Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. 1st ed. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
25. Littlemore, J. (2015) *Metonymy: Hidden Shortcuts in Language, Thought and Communication*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
26. Littlemore, J. (2017) Metonymy. In: B. Dancygier (ed.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press, 407–422.
27. Littlemore, J., and Tagg, C. (2018) Metonymy and text messaging: A framework for understanding creative uses of metonymy. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(4), 481–507.
28. Moritz, I. (2018) Metonymy-based euphemisms in war-related speeches by George W. Bush and Barack Obama. In: *Linguistic Taboo Revisited*. De Gruyter Mouton, 55–78.
29. Musolff, A. (2004) *Metaphor and Political Discourse*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan.
30. Musolff, A. (2006) Metaphor Scenarios in Public Discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol* 21(1), 23–38. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2101\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2101_2).
31. Portero Muñoz, C. (2011) Noun-noun Euphemisms in the Language of the Global Financial Crisis. *Atlantis Journal of the Spanish Association for Anglo-American Studies*. 33(2), 137–157.
32. Radden, G. and Kövecses, Z. (1999) Towards a Theory of Metonymy. In: *Metonymy in Language and Thought*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 17–59.
33. Radden, G. (2009) Generic reference in English: A metonymic and conceptual blending analysis January 2009. In: K.-U. Panther, L. L. Thornburg and A. Barcelona (eds.) *Metonymy and Metaphor in Grammar*. Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, pp. 199–228.
34. Richman, M. (2020) Adaptive rock climbing has physical, psychological benefits for people with disabilities. *Office of Research & Development*. <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0520-Adaptive-rock-climbing-has-physical-and-psychological-benefits-for-people-with-disabilities.cfm>
35. Ruiz de Mendoza, F., and Diez Velasco, O.I. (2002) Patterns of conceptual interaction. In: R. Dirven and R. Pörings (eds.) *Metaphor and Metonymy in Comparison and Contrast*. Berlin, De Gruyter Mouton, pp. 489–532.
36. Semino, E. (2008) *Metaphor in discourse*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

37. Schultz, M. (2012) *Metaphor and metonymy: A study of figurative language in newspapers*. Thesis, Linnéuniversitetet, Institutionen för språk och litteratur, SOL. <https://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:lnu:diva-16864>.
38. Zieliński, P. (2012) *Metaphors and Metonymy in Politics. Selected Aspects*. Thesis, Gdańsk University, Poland. <https://www.phil.muni.cz/linguistica/art/zielinski/zic-ma-thesis.pdf>.

Anela J. Mulahmetović Ibrišimović  
Univerzitet u Tuzli  
Filozofski fakultet  
Odsjek za engleski jezik i književnost

## METONIMIJSKI IZRAZI O OSOBAMA S INVALIDITETOM U AMERIČKIM I BOSANSKOHERCEGOVAČKIM MEDIJIMA

### *Rezime*

Prilikom konzumiranja medijskog sadržaja korisnici treba da budu svjesni potencijalne medijske pristrasnosti i stereotipnog prikazivanja manjinskih grupa, kao što je zajednica osoba sa invaliditetom. Kritički odnos prema medijima ključan je u kontekstu ableističke percepcije svijeta koja često u svojoj osnovi uključuje metaforu i metonimiju. Oba fenomena učestalo se pojavljuju u medijima, učvršćujući dominantne društvene stavove i mišljenja. Ovaj rad nastoji ispitati prisustvo konceptualnih metonimija u američkom i bosanskohercegovačkom medijskom izvještavanju o osobama s invaliditetom. Iako je veoma mali broj studija istraživao međusobnu povezanost metafore i invaliditeta, nijedno istraživanje nije se bavilo vezom između medija, invaliditeta i konceptualne metonimije. Stoga vjerujemo da će ovaj rad doprinijeti boljem interkulturalnom razumijevanju medijske prakse prilikom izvještavanja o osobama sa invaliditetom, budući da konceptualna metonimija nudi uvid u obrasce predstavljanja i načine percepcije ove manjinske skupine.

► *Ključne riječi*: konceptualna metonimija, invaliditet, mediji, američki, bosanskohercegovački.

Preuzeto: 13. 4. 2025.  
Korekcije: 15. 5. 2025.  
Prihvaćeno: 27. 6. 2025.