

「目を見開く」が合図できること

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What “widen one’s eyes” can refer to

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This paper deals with the linguistic phenomenon in which the Japanese idiomatic expression *me wo mihiraku* ‘widen one’s eyes’ refers to emotional responses of surprise, anger or fear, or an act of awareness, and argues that this phenomenon should be best analyzed as a case of metonymy, in which one entity is used to refer to another that is related to it. The relevant metonymic models are FACIAL MOTOR RESPONSE FOR EMOTION and FACIAL MOTOR RESPONSE FOR RECOGNITION. It should be noted here that metonymy is not merely a referential device, but also serves the function of providing understanding. For example, in the case of the metonymic use of *me wo mihiraku* ‘widen one’s eyes’ as a vehicle to stand for surprise as a target, this very motor response picked out as a vehicle determines which aspect of the relevant facial expression being focused on. This suggests that there is empirical and cognitive motivation for the choice of a particular linguistic form as a vehicle (or reference point) in metonymic operation.

Another topic of this paper is the degree of conventionalization of the four types of metonymy: the three emotional types (surprise, anger and fear) and the epistemic type of realization. It is demonstrated that they are not equally conventionalized in the metonymic use of *me wo mihiraku*. In fact, only its metonymic use for surprise is highly conventionalized. This means that the motor action of widening eyes is prominently related to (the domain of) surprise experience, which is empirically and cognitively well-motivated.