L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA XXXII (2024) 111–130
ISSN: 1122-1917

Omas, *Opas* und *Tattergreise*: Resemblance and Metonymic Mappings in Two German Expressions of Ageism

Ciro Porcaro
Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza
ciro.porcaro@uniroma1.it

Received February 2024; Accepted October 2024; Published online December 2024

The present paper aims at analyzing resemblance and metonymic mappings motivating sarcastic and/or derogatory uses of the expressions *Oma* / *Opa* and *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin*. For this purpose, a corpus analysis of the type key-word in context was conducted in order to identify and analyze all the instances of the resemblance mappings underlying the uses of the expressions. This allowed to show the most salient stereotypical patterns underlying the identified conceptualizations and shed light onto their metonymic base. The paper concludes with an analysis of the metonymic patterns underlying the elements of the compound *Tattergreis*. In particular, two possible analyses of the compound will be presented and discussed against the backdrop of two general approaches to the study of metonymy.

Keywords: Metonymy, Metaphor, Resemblance, Ageism, Stereotypes

1. *Introduction*

As widely shown by several studies, elderly people are commonly object of stubborn prejudices in western societies (see for example Chopik, Giasson 2017; Chasteen et al. 2022; Gutterman 2022; Rasset et al. 2024). Discriminatory attitudes and bias against older adults are based – like any form of discrimination – on a complex system of (mostly) negative stereotypical conceptions. Rüegger (2018) points out that stereotypical conceptions of ageism are widely conveyed by linguistic expressions that often further contribute to the stigmatization of the category of elderly people. Sarcastic and/or derogatory uses of language are among the most common expressions ascribable to the abovementioned category.

Many contributions in the field of cognitive linguistics and CCDA (cognitive oriented critical discourse analysis) have highlighted the key role played by metaphors, metonymies and similes in shaping the cognitive base of stereotypical conceptualizations (see for example Lakoff 1987; 2002; Santa Ana 1999; Takada et al. 2000; Musolff 2004; Hart 2010; Littlemore 2015; Catalano, Musolff 2019). However, very few are the studies dealing with metaphors and/or similes of ageism[1]. Moreover, to the author's knowledge there are no

[1] One of the few exceptions is represented by the contribution of Wohlmann (2024) with particular focus on metaphors of dementia.

DOI: 10.69117/ALL.2024.3.06

contributions having as object the role of metonymic mappings in the conceptualization of elderly people.

At first glance the semantic field populated by expressions referring to people of advanced age in German appears rather assorted. While some diminutive expressions tend to be positive, others designations tend to neutrality and not to betray a strong connotative value, still others immediately evoke ironic and/or derogatory undertones. These three typologies can be ideally placed along a continuum. Diminutives generally aimed at conveying endearment are for example *Omi* [*Granny*] or *Opi* [*Gramps*]. For these expressions, the potential for semantic extension leading to discriminatory uses is particularly low.

Expressions that tend to occur in a rather neutral context are for example *älterer Mensch*, *ältere Person* (both can be rendered as *older person* in English), *Senior* [*senior*], *Großmutter* [*grandmother*] or *Großvater* [*grandfather*], with the last two underlying a salient relational value. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that also similar expressions located near the denotative pole can be used in ironical or offensive fashion – although more rarely than expressions showing a greater negative connotative charge.

On the other hand, there are also expressions that, although leaning towards the pole of neutrality, are more readily used in a negative sense. In this regard, *Oma* / *Opa* [*grandma* / *grandpa*] or *Greis* / *Greisin* [*old man* / *old woman*][2] could be mentioned. In certain contexts, similar expressions lend themselves to prioritizing more negative aspects of their semantic dimension thus often leading to forms of denigration of the referent. The semantic negative polarization emerging in these cases can favor a more or less substantial semantic extension of the expressions. This can lead to predominantly figurative uses of the same.

Lastly, consider those expressions that appear to be exclusively derogatory like for example *Mummelgreis* / *Mummelgreisin* [*mumbly old man* / *woman*], *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin* or *Zittergreis* / *Zittergreisin* [*old dodderer*, *doddering old man* / *woman*], in which the prominence of the negative semantic traits – the stereotypical 'symptoms' of the advanced age – promote the eminently figurative use of the expressions. In radical cases of semantic extension, the latter expressions can even be used to refer to a younger referent conceptualized on the background of a stereotypical representation of an elder individual (see table 1).

Table 1 - *(Synchronic) semantic extensions scale of expressions of advanced age in German*

positive	**neutral**	**ironic/derogatory**	**ironic/derogatory**
elderly referents	**elderly referents**	**elderly referents**	**younger referents**
Großpapa/-mutti			
Opi/Omi[3]			
	Großvater/-mutter		
	Senior/-in		

[2] Even if *old man* can be considered the closest translation of *Greis*, the English expression does not render its potential negative connotation.

[3] *Opi* / *Omi* are diminutives with endearing connotation derived from the base-words *Opa* and *Oma*. Also serving as endearments are *Großpapa* / *Großmutti* [*grandpa* / *granny*].

positive elderly referents	neutral elderly referents	ironic/derogatory elderly referents	ironic/derogatory younger referents
	Opa / Oma	*Opa / Oma*	*Opa / Oma*
	Greis / -in	*Greis /-in*	*Greis / -in*
		Mummelgreis / -in	*Mummelgreis / -in*
		Tattergreis / -in	*Tattergreis / -in*
		Zittergreis / -in	*Zittergreis /-in*

In this regard, the present paper aims at filling the abovementioned literature-gap by analyzing the resemblance and metonymic mappings motivating the emergence of sarcastic and/or derogatory uses of the expressions *X VERB* (*wie*) *eine Oma* / *X VERB* (*wie*) *ein Opa* [*X VERB like a grandma* / *X VERB like a grandpa*] and *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin*. The choice of the two expressions was determined by the fact that – as already noted above – sarcastic and/or derogatory uses are particularly well suited to deepen the knowledge of the stereotypical structures motivating the attitudes of a linguistic community. Moreover, resemblance operations are generally considered to be among the most effective linguistic-conceptual devices used for ironic and/or discriminatory purposes (see for example Veale, Hao 2007; Veale 2013; Lakoff 2002; Santa Ana 1999; Hart 2010). Another reason for the choice of these two expressions pertains to the substantial difference of their semanto-pragmatic and morphological dimensions: while *Opa* and *Oma* dispose of a 'literal' (prototypical) neutral meaning and are thus not necessarily used in an ironic and/or derogatory way, *Tattergreis* and *Tattergreisin* seem to belong – and this is confirmed also by their consideration *in abstracto* – to the realm of figurative uses of language and are typically used ironically or in order to exercise criticism of a discriminatory nature concerning the referent. The semanto-pragmatic crystallization of *Tattergreis* / *Tattegreisin* as eminently figurative expressions may promote the elicitation of specific linguistic-conceptual contextual contents evoked alongside these expressions thus revealing well-established stereotypical patterns closely related to their use. Moreover, the expressions show a different morphological structure, with *Opa* / *Oma* being simplexes, while *Tattergreis* / *Tattegreisin* are compound words.

Occurrences of both expressions will be extracted from a corpus and analyzed in qualitative and quantitative terms. The analysis will shed light on the salient semantic properties involved in the underlying resemblance mappings and on the stereotypical configurations at their base. Finally, the compound *Tattergreis* will also be analyzed and discussed in the light of two different approaches to the study of metonymy, with particular reference to the role metonymic mappings in the conceptualization of determinative compounds.

The present paper is thus structured as follows: in chapter 2 the notions of resemblance operations and conceptual metonymy will be shortly introduced. Subsequently, the selected corpus and the adopted methodological procedures will be outlined.

Chapter 3 contains the results of the analysis of an identified cluster of resemblance operations having OMA and OPA as source domains. In particular, one of the most frequent contexts of occurrence of this resemblance will be considered.

Chapter 4 displays the results of the corpus analysis of the identified resemblance operations having TATTERGREIS / TATTERGREISIN as source domains. Subsequently, the metonymic patterns underlying the elements of German endocentric compounds are briefly outlined. Finally, two alternative metonymic interpretations of the compound *Tattergreis* will be discussed.

2. *Theoretical framework and methodology*

The present study adopts the framework of cognitive linguistics originally outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) for the analysis of metaphorical mappings and in subsequent phases developed and extended to other conceptual-linguistic phenomena such as resemblance operations and metonymic operations.

2.1 Resemblance operations

In the framework of cognitive linguistics two types of conceptual operations can be distinguished (Grady 1999): correlation operations and resemblance operations, the latter being generally neglected by cognitive linguists (as pointed out by Ruiz de Mendoza 2022).

On the one hand, correlation metaphors involve a (partial) correspondence between two distinct conceptual domains, i.e. between two separated dimensions of experience (Grady 1999, 86), and can be seen as a general category comprising the Lakoffian notions of orientational, ontological and structural metaphor. An example of correlation metaphor is the metaphor IMPORTANT IS BIG. This metaphor arises from the perceived correlation between size and importance or relevance of objects when interacting with them (Grady 1999, 94):

> *We have a big problem.*
> *You missed a great opportunity.*
> *You have given us great help.*
> *By working together, we can overcome these small obstacles.*

By mapping the aspect of size from the source domain to the target domain, 'relevant problems', 'important opportunities' or 'important help' etc. can be conceptualized as *big problems*, *great opportunities* or *great help*. Coherently, on the basis of this mapping, something small is consequently understood as something irrelevant (cf. *small obstacles*).

On the other hand, we have resemblance metaphors. They differ from correlation metaphors in that they are not the result of a complex mapping but of an association between common aspects of two domains (Grady 1999, 90). One of the most known examples in literature is the expression *Achilles is a lion*, where the association concerns the aspect of courage that is common to both domains ACHILLES and LION (see also Radden 2003). It is the perceived similarity between the two domains that is responsible for the mapping, i.e. the two concepts are not connected by means of the co-occurrence of the two domains in a given experience. Grady (1999, 94) shows that in resemblance metaphors the mapping takes place between two instances of a higher-level conceptual domain. More specifically,

ACHILLES and LION are instances of the generic schema of 'courage'. Thus, the mapping allows exclusively the transfer of the single aspect of courage from the lion to Achilles: all other features of the lion's behavior or nature are not emphasized by the metaphor (Grady 1999, 89). As showed by Ruiz de Mendoza (2022) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Barreras Gómez (2022) also similes at a high conceptual level can be interpreted as the result of a resemblance mapping connecting a cluster of related properties[4]. Clearly, this does not exclude differences between similes and resemblance metaphors from a linguistic-conceptual point of view since similes take the form of an explicit comparison. They do also tend to be used more frequently when speakers feel the need to make the resemblance relation fully explicit, i.e. when the connection between domains involved in the mapping may be perceived as non-familiar for the interlocutor, who is called upon to "explore possible similarities" (Ruiz de Mendoza, Barreras Gómez 2022, 19). This is also the reason why long elaborations/explications of the mapping are more frequent in the case of similes: *Freunde sind wie Sterne – du kannst sie nicht immer sehen, aber sie sind immer da*[5].

2.2 Metonymic operations

Generally, in cognitive linguistics metonymic phenomena have received less attention than their metaphorical counterparts. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) interpret metonymy as a mapping involving a 'stand for relationship' operating within a single conceptual domain.

A fundamental step in conceptual metonymy research is marked by Lakoff (1987), who describes socio-cultural stereotypes in terms of PART FOR WHOLE metonymies, where a subcategory stands for the category as a whole. According to Lakoff (1987, 77), metonymy fulfills a basic function in the speaker's mind by contributing to structuring her idealized cognitive models (ICMs). Lakoff (1987, 79) maintains that socio-cultural stereotypes are cases of PART FOR WHOLE metonymies. More specifically, SUBCATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY. Such metonymic inferences occur constantly in speakers' minds and belong to the particularly broad class of those metonymies that often "do not even show up in language" (Radden, Kövecses 1999, 18). An example is when the stereotypical concept "housewife mother" stands for the general category "mother" (Lakoff 1987, 79).

Radden and Kövecses (1999) define metonymy more precisely in terms of a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity (the *vehicle*) provides mental access to another conceptual entity (the *target*), which is part of the same idealized cognitive model. An example of metonymy is the expression *Ich trinke noch ein Glas* [*I'll drink another glass*], where the word *Glas* [*glass*] stands for its content.

Moreover, recently the number of contributions focusing on the role of metonymy within grammar and on its interaction with word formation processes has significantly increased[6]. Most of these contributions aim to shed light on the metonymies underlying

[4] The 'cluster or related properties' corresponds to the oversimplified notion of "aspect" postulated by Grady (1999).

[5] The considerations of Ruiz de Mendoza rely on empirical studies (see among others Glucksberg 2001).

[6] After early studies such as Dirven (1999) and Ruiz de Mendoza and Hernandez (2001), there has been subsequent increase in related studies can be observed: Benczes (2006); Brdar (2007); Ruiz de Mendoza (2007); Benczes (2009); Janda (2010; 2011); Brdar, Brdar-Szabó (2013); Bauer (2017); Brdar (2017).

the relationships between compound constituents and to simplify the interpretation of the grammar by referring to general conceptual patterns (see Bauer 2017).

2.3 Materials and procedure of the present study

The data object of analysis in chapters 3 and 4 were extracted from the WebXL Corpus available on the website DWDS. This corpus was selected since it was necessary to identify a dataset containing instances of language which are as close as possible to the pole of informal speech, which is assumed to be the register in which the analyzed mappings are most likely to manifest themselves linguistically. Instances of this kind were identified in the abovementioned corpus which contains – among others – several texts extracted from blog posts and transcripts of interviews and/or conversations available on the web. The corpus was last updated recently (05.03.2024). Another reason for selecting the mentioned corpus consists in its accessibility. The analysis was conducted by searching for locutions like *X SEIN* (*wie*) *ein Opa* / (*wie*) *eine Oma* in the whole corpus. In total, 659 text strings were carefully read in search for underlying resemblance mappings. Several stereotypical clusters within the OPA / OMA conceptual domain conveyed by the analyzed linguistic expressions were identified. Each cluster core could be identified as the result of the mapping of specific aspects of the OPA / OMA domain. One of the most frequent mappings, namely the one making salient the properties INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT (see chapter 3) was then isolated and analyzed in detail. It must be pointed out that many of the identified text strings would not allow the reader to specify the underlying mapping due to the lack of context. For example, the corpus contained also very short texts from blogs like *Da fühle ich mich wie eine Oma*, which provided no useful context for the identification of the specific mapping. As a consequence, similar examples could not be taken into account.

The same procedure was carried out for *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin*, for which 70 tokens were identified and analyzed in their contexts. This was followed by an analysis of the structural components of the compound and a proposal for the interpretation of the underlying metonymic mappings.

3. *Analysis of* Oma / Opa

Object of the present analysis are resemblance expressions such as (*Wie*) *eine Oma* / *ein Opa VERB* based on stereotypical metonymic models. A cluster of examples allowed to isolate one of the most frequent mappings among those identified. This specific mapping is responsible for a particular sarcastic or derogatory use of the resemblance operation. Involved in the mapping between the OMA or OPA domain and the domain of the referent of the expressions are properties which could be preliminarily codified as INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT. These properties are perceived by the speakers/writers as being 'typical' of the OMA or OPA domains and thus made salient in the predications. In total, 21 clear instances of the abovementioned resemblance mapping were counted. By way of illustration, consider the following examples:

1) Ich bestelle Sushi, schau *Law & Order* und gehe jeden Abend um Neun ins Bett – *ich bin eine Oma*. [I order sushi, watch *Law & Order* and go to bed at nine every night – *I'm a grandma*]

2) Das rechtfertigt auch, warum ich mit 35 schon manchmal *wie eine Oma* sein darf (keine Partys, kein Alkohol und immer früh ins Bett, so mag ich es jetzt). [This also justifies why I can sometimes feel *like a grandma* at 35 (no parties, no alcohol and always early to bed, that's how I like it now)].

3) Ich gehe um 21 Uhr *wie eine Oma* schlafen und dann wache ich erst am nächsten Morgen auf. [I go to bed at 9pm *like a grandma* and then I don't wake up until the next morning].

4) Ich habe schon Tabletten genommen und sitze hier *wie eine Oma* mit einem Heizkissen, Ja, so ist das mit Ü40. [I've already taken pills and am sitting here *like a grandma* with a heating pad, yes, that's how it is when you're over 40.]

5) Er ist *wie eine Oma*, die den ganzen Tag aus dem Fenster guckt. [He's *like a grandma* who looks out of the window all day.]

6) Leider war ich Sylvester kränklich und war im Wohnmobil und habe *wie ein Opa* Fernsehen geschaut. [Unfortunately, I was ill on New Year's Eve and was in the camper van watching TV *like a grandad*.]

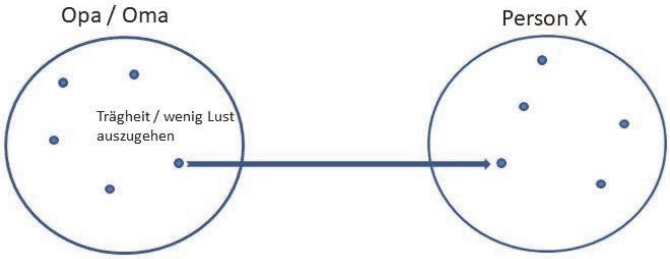
7) In Pantoffeln Du vor mir stehst, langsam *wie ein Opa* gehst. [You stand in front of me in slippers, walking slowly *like a grandpa*.]

As a preliminary remark, it should be pointed out that only 2 of the 21 examples are cases of resemblance metaphor, whereas in the remaining cases the resemblance mappings assume the configuration of a simile. In 15 of the identified instances of the mapping the target domain is represented by OMA; only in the remaining 6 instances the domain OPA is evoked as an element of the resemblance. Common to both types of instances is the fact that the resemblance operation underlying the expressions tends to rule out most of the aspects of the source domains OMA / OPA. Apparently, the salient transferred 'aspect' in these cases is the tendency or habit for older people to spend a lot of time at home – especially at evening; for example, in order to rest. This habit is usually (i.e. stereotypically) associated with members of the two categories OMA and OPA.

In this regard, it may be noted, for example, that although according to the Duden (2015, 1295, 1296) the first meanings of *Oma* and *Opa* correspond respectively to those of *Großmutter* [*grandmother*] and *Großvater* [*grandfather*], implying the existence of a familiar relationship (i.e. 'mother of the father' or 'mother of the mother'; 'father of the father' or 'father of the mother'), this aspect (i.e. the existence of at least one grandchild) is not projected onto the target domains of the identified resemblances operations. In other words, in the abovementioned examples, it's primarily the aspect of the referent resembling

the (stereotypical) behavior of an old woman / man to acquire conceptual prominence. Similar uses depend on the prototype categories OPA and OMA, whose representative members are people of advanced age[7]. The stereotypical behavior in question consists in the abstraction of a constellation of coherent and observable elements. These include, for example, the fact that prototypical grandmas and grandpas usually have less energy available than younger people; that they are often tired; that they need to rest more often; that they have little interest in outdoor activities etc. These elements constitute a relevant part of the stereotypical notions OMA and OPA, although they are not exhaustive of them (cf. in this regard Chonody, Teater 2017). It can be noted that in the isolated cluster of examples, all other (stereotypical) properties of the domains OMA and OPA are not subject to mapping: e.g. the fact that grandpas and grandmas usually have white hair; that they wear glasses; that they are not very familiar with new technologies; that they use a walking stick; spend their free time in parks etc. (see Fig. 1)[8].

Figure 1 - *Mapping: INERTIA / LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT*



The already mentioned cluster of related properties defined as INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT is systematically evoked in the examples by the reference to activities and habits which are commonly perceived as being characteristic of the 'indoor routine' of older people. An example is 'going to bed early': quite frequent is the occurrence of phrases like TIME REFERENCE + *ins Bett gehen / schlafen gehen* [*to go to bed / to go to sleep*] as can be seen from examples (1), (2) and (3). Like in the examples, all the time references identified in the instances refer to an event occurring before the expected time or sooner than usual: [...] *gehe jeden Abend um Neun ins Bett*; [...] *immer früh ins Bett*; [...] *gehe um 21 Uhr wie eine Oma schlafen* etc. Other elements pertaining to the semantic field of indoor routine of older people are also often evoked: these include for example spending (a considerable amount of) time sitting (4), being in slippers (7), watching TV (6) or

[7] It is well known that some people become grandmothers or grandfathers at a young age. However, prototypically, the words *Oma* and *Opa* evoke the idea of an old person.

[8] As mentioned above, the research allowed the identifications of other types of resemblance operations. Each of these tends to exploit specific (more or less stereotypical) aspects of the OMA and/or OPA domain. For instance, a cluster of examples makes exclusively the aspect REFUSAL / DIFFICULTY IN THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES salient: *ich bin zwar jung aber mit Handys bin ich wie ein Opa* [*I may be young but I'm like a grandpa with mobile phones*].

spending (a considerable amount of) time looking out of the window (5). It should be noted that these activities represent 'deviant' behaviors in the conceptualization of the speaker / writer who posits them as elements of contrast to the activities normally expected of a younger person (the referent). This is the reason why in some cases the contrast is explicitly formulated by mentioning activities typically associated with the routine of a prototypical young and/or active person. One of these cases is example (2), where *Partys* and *Alkohol* clearly evoke the typical scenario of a festive night of partying among young people.

The identified expressions also allow to observe the fuzziness of the set of related properties involved in the mapping. In some examples, INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT are emphasized and/or (more or less directly) motivated by reference to health issues or sickness. The ILLNESS scenario can be directly evoked as in (6) with the adjective *kränklich* [*ill*]; or indirectly elicited as in (4) – by referring to taking pills as a habitual routine: *Ich habe schon Tabletten genommen*, where the use of *schon* [*already*] qualifies the event as an instance of a pattern that repeats itself in a given period of time (usually 'daily'). In other words, the conceptual landmark for the use of *schon* is represented by a reference point in the (daily) routine coinciding with the time when the conceptualizer usually performs the action of taking pills.

A further element emerging from the analysis of the identified expressions concerns the higher frequency of evocation of the stereotypical domain OMA instead of OPA in order to convey the idea of a 'deviant', 'non-juvenile' behavior or habits. As anticipated, only 6 (28,57%) of the 21 collected examples contain the word *Opa*, whereas *Oma* is present in the remaining 15 instances of the mapping (71,42%). These findings suggest a clear tendency to prefer the domain OMA in the dataset in order to categorize the cluster of indoor routine-related habits against a stereotypical background. In this regard, example (5) seems to be particularly revealing, as even in presence of a male referent the domain OMA is selected as target conceptual structure aimed at categorizing his behavior: *Er ist wie eine Oma, die den ganzen Tag aus dem Fenster guckt.* This tendency may be due to the 'gender role expectation', i.e. to the stereotypical representation of women spending more time at home, since they are responsible for domestic duties, while men are more focused on other activities outside.

The analysis also suggests another possible formal realization of the resemblance that was not found among the examples but that will be nevertheless taken into account as a possible linguistic outcome of the mapping: the referential use of the resemblance mapping as in a sentence like *Wir waren im Club und der Opa ist wie üblich zu Hause geblieben* [*We went to the club and the grandad stayed at home as usual*][9]. In similar cases, a further cognitive operation takes place in addition to the resemblance mapping: the "formal substitution" (see Ruiz de Mendoza 2017, 10). Formal substitution is characterized by the replacement of one cognitive model (or a part of it) by another model (or a part of it). In contrast to meta-

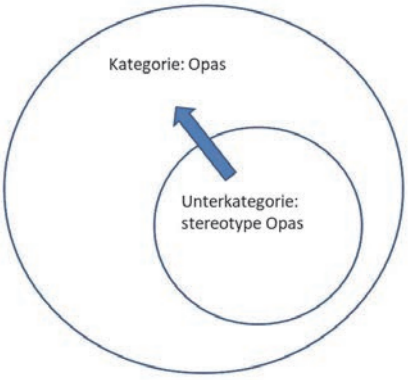
[9] Unlike the others, this example was formulated by the author for explanatory purposes. It must be noted that it was not possible to automatically identify similar instantiations of the mapping by searching for keywords. Manual research would require a careful analysis of the co-text and would reveal to be extremely time-consuming considering the rarity of such examples in the face of the enormous number of literal usages resulting from the research.

phor, substitution occurs exclusively at the formal level[10]. *Opa* replaces here the name of the referent who, according to the speaker, behaves like an old man by staying at home instead of joining his friends for a night at the club[11]. It is intuitive that such referential uses of the mapping are generally based on previous – often explicit – associations between the person and the target domain OMA / OPA which are known to the interlocutors.

To complete the analysis, it is necessary to consider a preliminary step in the conceptualization of all the above considered resemblance operations that is generally neglected. Looking more closely at the examples above, a phenomenon of metonymic nature seems to stand out. It occurs before the emergence of the resemblance mapping and is essential to the whole conceptualization of the expression: it is represented by the metonymic model through which the stereotypical meanings of *Oma* and *Opa* arise.

The categories OMA and OPA do not contain only members who fit the stereotypical characterization illustrated above (see Gutterman 2022): i.e., there are also *Omas* and *Opas* who are not old; who are well versed in new technologies; who do not use a walking stick; who like to go out in the evening or at night, etc. Nevertheless, speakers tend to understand the category through the subcategory, i.e. through the stereotype. This happens because of the underlying metonymic model. It's this model that allows the partial structuring of the target domain as a result of the projection of the source domain in the examples above. In other words, the selection of the aspects transferred to the target domain does always take place on the basis of a socio-cultural stereotype shared by the members of the linguistic community which is based on a SUBCATEGORY FOR THE WHOLE CATEGORY metonymy (see Fig. 2)[12].

Figure 2 - *Metonymic model motivating the stereotype OPA, own representation*



[10] Both metaphors and substitutions belong to the category of 'inferential operations' but only the former are 'content operations', whereas the latter are interpreted as 'formal operations', i.e. the ones responsible for the choice of words.

[11] I thank Francisco Ruiz de Mendoza for his valuable comments regarding this example.

[12] It may be important to point out that, when using resemblance operations of this type, speakers do not just understand the target domain – i.e. the person in question – through certain stereotypical aspects of the source domain: they also potentially (and usually unconsciously) contribute to the spread of the stereotype.

4. *Analysis of* Tattergreis / Tattergreisin

4.1 (*Wie*) ein *Tattergreis* / eine *Tattergreisin*

Unlike *Oma* and *Opa*, *Tattergreis* is an outdated expression used nowadays mainly for ironic and/or derogatory purposes. Thus, its occurrence generally signals a figurative use. From the morphological point of view, *Tattergreis* can be described as an endocentric or hyponymic determinative compound consisting of the two members *Tatter-* [*to dodder / to tremble*] and *-greis* [*old man*], and its meaning is paraphrased in the Duden (2015, 1745) as 'shaky, senile old man'. The corpus search provided the following examples:

8) Er war *wie* ein *Tattergreis* ohne einen Funken Verstand in seinem aufgeblasenen Schädel!
[He was like a doddering old man without an ounce of sense in his bloated skull!]

9) Oder vielleicht eher *wie ein dementer Tattergreis*, der vergisst, dass nur echte Innovation einen voran bringt.
[Or perhaps more like a doddering old man with dementia who forgets that only real innovation will get you ahead.]

10) [...] die tun solche Äußerungen als Blödsinn eines *Tattergreises* ab.
[... they dismiss such statements as the nonsense of a doddering old man]

11) Inzwischen geht Sobottka auf die 70 zu, er wirkt bereit jetzt *wie ein völlig verwirrter Tattergreis*.
[In the meantime, Sobottka is approaching 70 and already looks like a completely confused doddering old man.]

12) Die haben wirklich mit alten *Tattergreisen* nichts zu tun, sind geistig rege und fit und haben sich den Mordermittlungen verschrieben.
[They really have nothing to do with old dodderers, are mentally active and fit and have dedicated themselves to murder investigations.]

13) Ich quälte mich auf einen Stock gestützt *wie ein Tattergreis* in Zeitlupe den Berg hinab.
[Leaning on a stick, I agonized my way down the mountain in slow motion like a doddering old man.]

14) Wie ein *Tattergreis* allerdings wirkt Martin auf mich noch nicht – eigentlich ist der adrette Sportler, der auch gerne mal zum Bier oder zur Zigarre greift, immer noch ein Frauenschwarm.
[However, Martin doesn't look like a doddering old man to me yet – the dapper sportsman, who also likes to have a beer or a cigar, is actually still a heartthrob.]

15) Und muss im Altersheim unbedingt die Karikatur einer total debilen *Tattergreisin* gespielt werden?
[And is it absolutely necessary to play the caricature of a totally feeble-minded doddering old woman in an old people's home?]

Even though the first element of the compound (*Tatter-*) seems to primarily refer to a pathological physical condition of the referent, in many of the identified examples the compound seems to be used to highlight a (more or less) severe form of cognitive decline depending on the referent's age (i.e. *dementia*). Extremely common are in this regard expressions ascribable to the conceptual domain MIND or more precisely to its subdomain COGNITIVE DISFUNCTION: *ohne einen Funken Verstand in seinem aufgeblasenen Schädel* [*without an ounce of sense in his bloated skull*]; *dement* [*demented*]; *vergessen* [*to forget*]*; Blödsinn* [*nonsense]*; *geistig* [*mentally*] etc. In similar contexts, the use of *Tattergreis* usually aims at delegitimizing the actions and the opinions of the referent and has a sort of depersonalizing effect: a *Tattergreis* is an insane person who is not capable of understanding and should thus not be treated as an individual (either in its interlocutory role or in general) worthy of consideration. This is exactly the case in examples such as (8), (9), (10), (11), (12) and (15). In (8) the referent is compared to an old man who lacks sense; in (9) to a demented old man with memory problems (*ein dementer Tattergreis, der vergisst …*); in (10), the words (and thus the opinions) of the referent are considered as being nonsensical [*Blödsinn*]; once again the state of mental disorientation of the referent is highlighted in (11) by means of the adjective *verwirrt* [*confused*]. In (12), on the other hand, referents are conceptualized in opposition to a typical *Tattergreis*, since they are considered to be *geistig rege und fit* [*mentally active and fit*][13] and thus ready to dedicate themselves to an activity requiring considerable effort in terms of reflection and intuition (murder investigations)[14]. Also in the example (15) *Tattergreisin* seems to immediately evoke the conception of a female individual with age-related cognitive deficits since it co-occurs with the adjective *debil* [*feeble-minded*]. The use of the locution *Karikatur* + *spielen* [*to play* + *caricature*] functions here as a sort of linguistic-conceptual marker for the resemblance mapping since it emphasizes the role of the conceptualization of *Tattergreisin* as a term of comparison against an ironic-hyperbolic background by introducing the ACTING scenario.

However, there is no lack of conceptualizations in which it is the (precarious) physical condition and/or the (impaired) motor skills of the referent to be salient in the resemblance. It is the case of example (13), in which the slow and *agonizing* way of proceeding down the mountain of the referent is understood in terms of the typical gait of a (visibly afflicted) elderly person with ambulation problems. Particularly salient in this conceptualization is the notion *Stock* [*stick*] which, given the resemblance mapping, is likely to evoke

[13] It is interesting to note that in expressions of this kind words like *rege* and *fit* are mapped from the conceptual domain BODY to the target domain MIND by means of a correlation metaphor.

[14] Even though the main focus of similar conceptualizations is on the mental activity of the referent, one cannot exclude the implicit reference to the domain of physical health, which is another necessary condition to perform similar activities.

(by means of a conceptual association favored by the phrasal context) also the concept of the walking stick, which is part of the (stereotypical) ELDERLY PERSON domain.

Also interesting is example (14), in which activities normally expected of a younger person like habitually drinking beer or smoking cigarettes are contrasted with the representation evoked by *Tattergreis*. This contraposition reminds some of the conceptualizations evoked by the use of *Oma* and *Opa* analyzed above (see chapter 5). Another element which contrasts the referent with the target domain ELDER PERSON is his characterization as *Frauenschwarm* [*heartthrob*] suggesting that he is (still) physically good-looking and likely to arouses desire and attraction due to his attractiveness.

As for the gender distribution of the noun, it must be pointed out that in this case the feminine is quite less frequent than the masculine. Only 16 text strings with *Tattergreisin* were counted, whereas the remaining 54 occurrences of the noun were masculine.

4.2 Metonymic mappings motivating the morphological structure compounds

To conclude the analysis, attention will now turn to the metonymic patterns underlying the morphological structure of the compound. A detailed analysis of this kind requires some preliminary considerations concerning the possible metonymic relations between elements in word formations. It is well known that the ancient Greek word μετωνυμία can be translated as 'change of name'. As Koch (1999, 140) has shown, the principle of substituting one word for another also plays a central role in the first Latin definition of metonymy, where it is interpreted as the result of a substitution of words whose meanings are 'close'. Thus, according to Koch (2001, 204), the mechanism of substitution in metonymic shifts is anything but optional and metonymy should be interpreted in terms of a linguistic effect upon the content of a word, depending on a 'figure/ground effect' taking place within a given frame. Figure-ground effects allow emphasis to be placed on different aspects of a specific concept. Thus, in metonymy words are affected by a shift of reference, i.e. they are not used in their 'literal' meaning (Koch 2001, 219). As a result, in expressions like *Willst du noch ein Glas trinken?* [literally: *Do you want to drink another glass?*] *Glas* [*glass*] refers to a concept (namely 'the liquid contained in the glass') which is not part of its 'literal' denotation. Conversely, according to Koch (2001, 232), despite the conceptual contiguity underlying its meaning components, a compound such as *Briefmarke* [literally: *letter stamp*, meaning: *postage stamp*] cannot be interpreted as metonymic. The reason for this is that the morpheme *Brief-* [*letter-*] should give access to an implicit target meaning, which, however, in this case is made formally explicit by the presence of the second constituent *-marke* [*stamp*]. Therefore, *Brief-* has here the sole role of *determinans*. Such an example shows that the invariance of form in Koch's theory is a prerequisite for the definition of metonymy.

Similarly, according to Barcelona (2011, 31) metonymy "consists in the selection of a linguistic structure that will activate a linguistically unexpressed conceptual structure, that is, the implicit target". In few words, the target meaning must remain implicit in order for a metonymy to take place and this is not the case of *Briefmarke*. Following this theoretical approach, the compound could be understood in terms of a non-metonymic

reference point phenomenon[15]. Brdar (2017, 165) adopts the same criterion: he assumes that the target should not be linguistically manifest in metonymies. Warren (1999) claims that compound nouns and cases of metonymy share many similarities, since both presuppose an implicit connection between (at least) two referents. Only in metonymies, however, the referent is implicit. These approaches are countered by the analyses of those linguists who interpret the notion of metonymy in a broader sense[16]. For example, Janda (2011) sees a metonymic motivation at the basis of all compound nouns. Littlemore (2015, 54), following Langacker's model (2009), also considers endocentric compounds such as *Schmetterlingsnetz* [*butterfly net*] as metonymic, since a particular aspect of the concept (i.e. the fact that net is used to catch butterflies) is profiled and provides access to a bundle of characteristic aspects of the target.

4.3 *Tattergreis*: two possible interpretations

As already pointed out, *Tattergreis* is an endocentric or hyponymic determinative compound consisting of the two members *Tatter-* [*to dodder / to tremble*] and *-greis* [*old man*]. In this compound, *Tatter-* acts as a determiner for the base word *-greis*, a hyperonym of the concept denoted by the compound. Its base word *Greis* is a deajectival noun and goes back to the Middle High German adjective *grīs*, meaning 'grey' or 'old'[17]. A metonymic shift can already be discerned in the meaning extension from 'grey' to 'old', where the color of the hair of an old man becomes a salient aspect and stands for the man himself[18].

A first possible interpretation of *Tattergreis* could consist in seeing the compound as a non-metonymic reference-point phenomenon. According to this perspective, a metonymic interpretation should be ruled out since the target domain conceptually invoked by the meaning of the compound is anything but implicit (see the approaches of Koch 2001; Barcelona 2011; Brdar 2017). Following this interpretation, only a "mental contact" between the two concepts evoked by the two constituents takes place in this case (see Fig. 3).

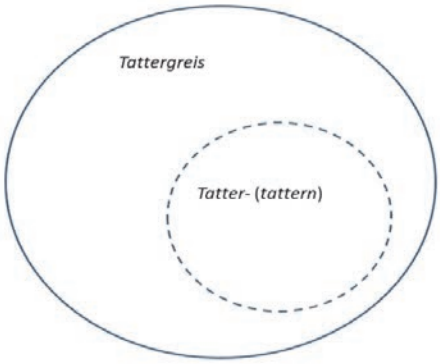
[15] Reference-point phenomena make it possible to establish a mental contact of a generic kind between two concepts. Contrary to metonymy, in non-metonymic reference-point phenomena the target is generally explicit (see Langacker 1993).

[16] See Janda (2011), Denroche (2014), Littlemore (2015), Bauer (2017) and Wachowski (2019).

[17] See https://www.dwds.de/wb/etymwb/Greis (last accessed November 9, 2024).

[18] The HAIR COLOUR FOR PERSON metonymic extension of *grīs* from 'grey' to 'old' will not be the subject of analysis here, since it is a 'dead metonymy', i.e. a metonymy that has crystallized in lexical usage no longer operating in the mind of the average speaker.

Figure 3 - *Reference-point relationship between* Tatter- *and* Tattergreis*, own representation*[19]



The reference-point relationship can be paraphrased here as *Greis, der zittert* [*old man who dodders*]. However, such an approach does not exclude the possibility of a metonymic interpretation of the first constituent *Tatter-*, which can be interpreted as a SYMPTOM FÜR URSACHE [SYMPTOM FOR CAUSE] metonymy. In addition to denoting a characteristic feature of the *designatum* of the base *-greis*, *Tatter-* refers to the physiological cause of the tremor. Of all the possible analyses of the compound, this is probably the least controversial.

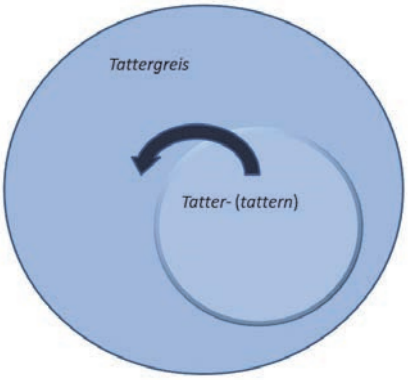
The analysis can be deepened still further in order to highlight another metonymic inference and consequently a metonymic chain[20]. The metonymic chain could consist of the following inferences: *Tatter-* stands for its physiological causes, which in turn stand for the old age of the *designatum* of the compound. It is known that trembling occurs very often in older people. Thus, it is not unlikely that such an inference takes place and that the physiological causes of trembling are attributed to the old age of the *designatum*.

A second possible interpretation could be to consider the whole compound as metonymic, even though the target concept, i.e. the meaning of the whole compound, is linguistically explicit. Following this approach, metonymy would manifest itself in the prominence of the vehicle *Tatter-*. The salient aspect represented by the vehicle (the 'tremor') stands here for a bundle of characteristic properties of the referent (see Fig. 4). This would result in a metonymic perspectivization that influences the conceptualization of the concept GREIS.

[19] The use of the dashed line and the absence of the arrow indicate that the relationship between the two concepts is made explicit at the language level: the concepts are directly invoked by the two constituents of the compound.

[20] A 'metonymic chain' consists of a series of conceptual metonymies based on a series of pragmatic inferences (see Barcelona 2005; 2007; Brdar-Szabó, Brdar 2011).

Figure 4 - *Metonymic prominence of the vehicle* Tatter- *in* Tattergreis*, own representation*



It is obvious that such a conclusion can only be drawn against the background of a broader conception of metonymy (see Radden 2005; Janda 2010; Littlemore 2015)[21]. To summarize: only if metonymy is understood in terms of a conceptual prominence, *Tattergreis* can be described as metonymic, since the aspect of 'doddering' acts as an access point to the *designatum*.

5. *Conclusion*

The corpus research focused on resemblance operations having *Oma* and *Opa* as their object allowed to isolate and analyze instances based on a mapping of a cluster of related properties which – for the sake of simplicity – was labelled as INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT. This mapping was systematically evoked in the analyzed examples by the reference to activities and habits which are commonly perceived as being (stereo)typical of the 'indoor routine' of older people. Similar activities represent 'deviant' behaviors in the conceptualization of the speaker/writer and are thus often contrasted to activities normally expected of a younger person. It was also shown that in some cases, INERTIA and/or LITTLE DESIRE TO GO OUT are emphasized and/or motivated by direct reference to health issues or sickness, thus allowing the ILLNESS scenario to permeate the mapping. From the analysis emerged also a clear tendency to prefer the domain OMA in order to evoke the cluster of the stereotypical indoor routine-related habits of elderly people. It should be emphasized that the domain OMA was even used to refer to male subjects thus leading to a generic feminine motivated by a stereotypical basis. As suggested, this tendency may be due to a more general gender role expectation. Finally, the focus was

[21] Although this conception may seem particularly broad, it should not be assumed that such an analysis is shared by few isolated scholars. Also Radden (2005, 19) maintains that "compounds [...] typically involve a SALIENT PROPERTY FOR A BUNDLE OF PROPERTIES metonymy". Even Barcelona (2003, 17), who as we have seen advocates a narrower conception of metonymy, interprets compounds like *bellbird* as metonymic, since the ringing tone produced by these birds represents here a salient vehicle.

shifted to the metonymic model favoring the emergence of the resemblance mapping and through which the stereotypical uses of *Oma* and *Opa* arise.

The analysis of the resemblance mappings underlying the use of *Tattergreis* and *Tattergreisin* showed that many of the identified conceptualizations seem to highlight a severe form of cognitive decline depending on the referent's age. As a consequence, the use of this expression usually aims at delegitimizing the actions and the words of the referent often resulting in a sort of depersonalizing effect. Similar cases are followed by those conceptualizations making the (precarious) physical condition and/or the (impaired) motor skills of the referent salient. Some of the identified examples bear resemblances to the patterns found in the *Oma* / *Opa* resemblance mappings: i.e. the tendency to contrast the actions or the condition of the referent with activities normally expected of a younger person. However, it should be pointed out that this is the case with few examples, since *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin* seem more specialized in evoking the idea of a dysfunctional (psychological and/or physical) condition of the referent. Conversely, the semantic element of the 'dysfunctionality' doesn't seem to show such a prominence in the conceptualizations motivating the use of *Oma* / *Opa*. The difference in terms of prominence of the (negative) semantic element of dysfunctionality between the conceptualizations evoked respectively by *Oma* / *Opa* and *Tattergreis* / *Tattergreisin* seems thus to return a reliable image of the stage of semantic extension they currently occupy, with *Tattergreis* virtually coinciding with the pole of negative connotation; whereas *Oma* / *Opa* may, depending on the context of occurrence, gravitate towards it.

Subsequently, two different interpretations of the compound *Tattergreis* were presented, in light of two different approaches to the understanding of metonymy.

Overall, the present study contributed to shedding light onto the relevant role of resemblance operations and metonymic models – underlying the considered semantic extensions – in defining stereotypical conceptions of ageism. With reference to the fields of cognitive linguistics and cognitive critical discourse analysis, the study represents a further confirmation of the crucial role of the abovementioned phenomena in defining discursive practices and sociocultural realities. Among the desiderata is the need to conduct a more representative corpus analysis of the considered expressions as well as extend it to other expressions of ageism in order to provide a wider representation of the possible stereotypical clusters underlying the use of similar expressions.

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