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# FIGURATIVE CREATIVITY IN AVIATION SLANG: THE CASE STUDY OF COMPOUNDS DENOTING 'AIRLINE PASSENGERS'

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on the study of "creative compounds" that denote 'airline passengers' in English-language aviation slang. The aim of the analysis is to cast some light on the intricacies of figurative conceptualization, showing that both universal and nonuniversal cognitive metaphors and metonymies can be posited in the explication of the semantic structure of profession-specific compounds. The analysis is carried out in the framework of cognitive linguistics.

**Keywords:** aviation slang, conceptual blending, cognitive linguistics, compounding, language for specific/special purposes, linguistic creativity, figurative language, metaphor, metonymy.

## 1. Introduction

The process of compounding has been drawing the attention of linguists for decades, and the issue still arouses interest among academicians worldwide. As regards the English language, where compounding is a highly productive word-formation process, there are numerous studies devoted to the description and classification of compounds,

as well as to their distinction from other multi-unit expressions (see, for example, Bauer 2017; Bloomfield 1933; The Oxford handbook of compounding 2009). There is also a vast number of studies devoted to the analysis of particular subtypes, certain aspects, or chosen groups of compounds (see, for example, Bagasheva et al. 2013; Benches 2006; Cetnarowska 2019; Downing 1977).

This analysis is focused on a group of compound nouns used as slang names for 'airline passengers'. The majority of these compounds, which in terms of numbers means 12 out of 15, could, on the basis of the traditional, well-known approach by Bloomfield (1933) be classified as exocentric formations, i.e., compounds whose semantic head remains unexpressed, and hence the explication of their semantics relies on some kind of meaning shift. Also, nearly half of the compounds in this study could be classified as "figurative compounds" in the sense used by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005). The authors apply this term to lexical items whose semantics relies on metaphorical or metonymic meaning change and which fulfil the criterion of additional naming. As regards this criterion, Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen explain that "a unit of figurative language is not the only way to say what is meant" (ibid., 18). In fact, a group of compounds in this analysis meet the criterion of additional naming, as they are slang terms for the general language term 'airline passenger(s)'. On the other hand, some of the compounds under analysis denote passengers of a certain type, such as, for instance, those who are misbehaving on board a plane, and there are no other English-language terms denoting the same concept.

The best cover term for the set of lexical items in this study appears to be the term proposed by Benches (2006), i.e., "creative compounds". As explained by this author, this term refers to compounds whose meaning explication relies on some kind of metaphorical or metonymic meaning shift, understood as cognitive mechanisms of meaning development. Benches (ibid.) indicates that the adjective "creative" is used to stress that such compounds are "more imaginative, associative and on the whole, more

creative" (ibid., 6) than compounds whose meaning is, at least to some extent, predictable from the literal meaning of the compound's elements.

Notably, the analysis is targeted at a set of lexical items belonging to aviation slang. Aviation slang is understood here as the language used in daily, unofficial, spoken communication among members of airline crews, mainly flight attendants and, to a lesser extent, pilots. The participants of such communication can be considered a discourse community in the sense of Swales (1990), who enumerates six defining characteristics of a discourse community. Two of them are of particular relevance for this study. Namely, (...) "A discourse community utilizes and therefore possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims", and it "(...) has acquired some specific lexis" (ibid., 24-27). Aviation slang needs to be understood as one of the genres used by airline crews, with a specific lexis, and like any other slang, it is meant to be understood only by members of a given group, for example those linked by virtue of the shared occupation. What is more, according to Matiello (2008: 36-37), any slang lacks prestige and pretentiousness, as well as it is fairly spontaneous and familiar. Additionally, in linguistics, aviation slang has to be considered a sublanguage of the language of aviation, which is defined by Borowska as:

*"(...) a special language for aviation purposes that is realized in the different forms of sublanguages or tools constituting its subsets based on particular aviation domains. Those subsets may share common lexical and grammar structures, but are treated as separate sublanguages (...) with their own characteristic features" (2020: 64).*

The linguistic study of the language of aviation is termed "avialinguistics" by Borowska (ibid.). Furthermore, the language of aviation is one of numerous languages for specific/special purposes, frequently abbreviated to LSP, or specialized languages, which are distinguished as being in opposition to language for general purposes (cf. Grucza 2013; Jakubiak 2015; Manerko 2016: 132-139). It can be also considered one of the varieties of English for occupational purposes (cf. Dudley-Evans & St. John 1998). Significantly, the terms under this analysis are sometimes referred to as the

"secret language/code" of flight attendants/cabin crews (cf. Andrew 2019; Kopecka 2020; Strutner 2015; Trim 2018).

The primary aim of this paper is to show the complexity of mental processes leading to the creation of a semantically related group of compounds, with special attention being given to "figurative creativity", which is a term used, for instance, by Kövecses (2005: 259). The paper is a small-scale attempt to support or verify the observation made by Kövecses (ibid.), who claims that a unique experience of a group "(...) may alter deeply entrenched conventional metaphors (...) and result in novel ones" (ibid., 263). Moreover, being focused on vocabulary items present in oral communication among members of a profession-related group, the analysis will shed some light on the within-culture variation of metaphor, and more specifically its social dimension (cf. ibid.).

The discussion below starts with the description of the procedure of data collection and of methodological issues. The following analytical section is divided into 5 parts distinguished on the basis of metaphors and metonymies which account for the major conceptualization patterns within the set of the analysed lexemes. The findings relevant for all parts are presented in the final *Discussion and conclusion* section.

## **2. Materials and methods**

In order to collect the material for the study, firstly internet blogs and other texts relating to air travel were identified by means of a Google search starting from such entries as: *flight attendants' slang*, *flight attendants (secret) language*, as well as *pilots' slang / language*. Subsequently, the content of relevant websites was studied in an attempt to select slang names relating to airline passengers. The online sources used in the creation of the research corpus are as follows: Allan (2016), Andrew (2019), Braun (2019), Eilers (2017), Garcia (2017), Romano (2019), Strutner (2015), Trim (2018), *Revealed: The secret ...* (2018). In addition to online sources, a paper dictionary of aviation slang by Chorążykiewicz (2012) was searched. As a result a set of the

following 15 lexical items was created: *baby Jesus*, *biscuit shooter*, *carry-on luggage*, *crumb cruncher*, *dead head*, *gate hoarder(s)*, *gate lice*, *jet bridge Jesus*, *landing lips*, *payload*, *self-loading freight*, *self-loading cargo*, *self-loading baggage*, *talking ballast*, *unaccompanied monster*.

It can be assumed that most of the identified lexemes are regularly used in the context of informal, aviation-related, professional communication, since each compound appeared in a few sources, with no two of them containing an identical set of vocabulary. In this sense, all compounds examined can be considered lexicalized, at least to some extent, and their meaning seems to be established within a group of English-speaking people, linked with one another on the grounds of their shared profession. Importantly, all the lexemes analysed belong to the slang register and most of them are emotionally loaded. Furthermore, some of them are close synonyms of the general language term *airline passenger*, whereas others are used with reference to airline passengers, but their semantics includes one or more additional meaning components, like, for instance <age>, <sex>, or <behaviour>.

The analysis is based on notions developed in cognitive linguistics. As regards the applied cognitive apparatus, first, the compounds identified can be assigned to the conceptual domain AIRLINE PASSENGER. This domain, together with such domains as, for instance, AIRPLANE and AIRPORT, is conceptually related to a higher level domain of AIR TRANSPORT. Following Kövecses, the conceptual domain is understood here as "any coherent organization of experience" (2010: 4).

Second, in this analysis, the mechanisms of semantic change are considered cognitive phenomena (cf. Dirven 2002; Lakoff & Johnson 1980). The study of figurative creativity comprises, according to Kövecses (2005: 259), three basic cognitive operations, which are: metaphor, metonymy, and blending. Based on the definition provided by Kövecses "(...) a conceptual metaphor consists of two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another" (2010: 4). The fact

that one domain is understood in terms of another implies that there is a set of correspondences between the source and target domain. The set of correspondences is understood as the mapping of certain elements of the source domain onto selected elements of the target domain (cf. *ibid.*, 7). Furthermore, the definition of conceptual metonymy adopted for this analysis is also taken from Kövecses: "Metonymy is a conceptual process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same domain (...)" (*ibid.*, 173). With the two definitions in mind, the distinguishing feature between the cognitive metaphor and metonymy seems to be the number of domains involved, and as follows, the existence or nonexistence of correspondences. Additionally, a term that is used in this analysis in connection with metonymic meaning shift is domain highlighting, which, according to Croft (1993: 348), is making primary a domain that is secondary in the literal meaning of a given lexical item. The effect of domain highlighting is facilitated by the salience of some elements present within the domain matrix for a given concept, even if they are peripheral to the concept's literal meaning.

When it comes to blending, which is the last one of the basic cognitive operations listed by Kövecses (2005: 259), the definition proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (2003) is relied upon. The authors describe blending as a conceptual integration network, explaining that:

*"(...) In its most basic form, a conceptual integration network consists of four connected mental spaces: two partially matched input spaces, a generic space constituted by structure common to the inputs, and the blended space. The blended space is constructed through selective projection from the inputs (...)" (ibid., 60).*

The process of blending is often visualized graphically as presented in Figure 1:

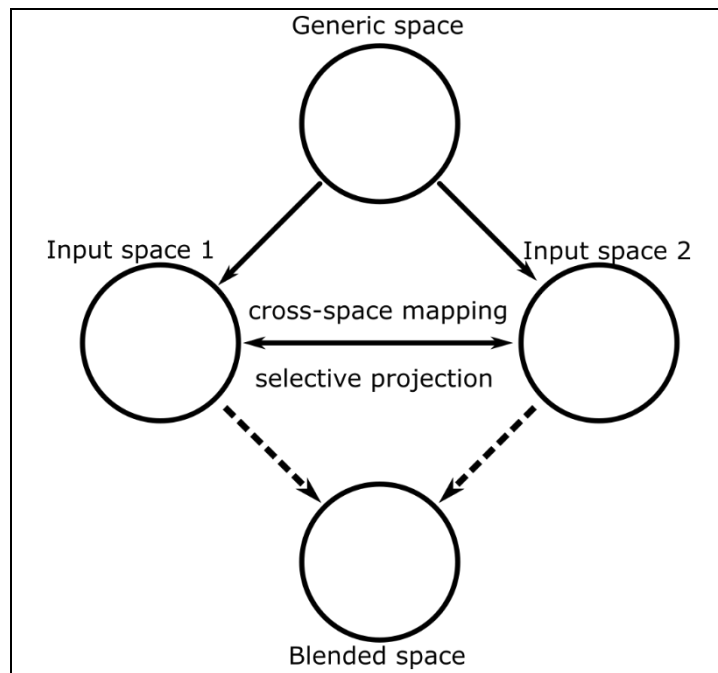


Figure 1. Conceptual blending (Source: Own processing, cf. Fauconnier & Turner 2003: 59)

The diagram above is a graphic illustration of a basic version of the process of blending, as the number of input spaces is, in fact, dependent on an expression under consideration. In other words, mental spaces are expression-specific, and unlike conceptual domains, which are mental constructs characterized by a coherent organization of information, mental spaces are created at the moment of speaking (cf. Kövecses 2010: 267). As described by Fauconnier and Turner (2003: 58), the blended mental space develops its structure dynamically. Finally, for this analysis, it is crucial to add that mental spaces are often structured metaphorically or metonymically, or particular input spaces may be related to each other as the metaphorical source and target domains.

Moreover, in the analysis, reference to the notion known in cognitive linguistics as the Great Chain of Being (hereinafter referred to as GCB; see, e.g., Kövecses 2010; Lakoff & Turner 1989) is made. In short, the GCB is a folk understanding of the hierarchical organization of the world around us, with the bottom level of the hierarchy occupied by inanimate objects and then ascending via plants and animals to people (ibid.). In the extended version of the GCB, as proposed for instance by Krzeszowski (1997), the top

position is occupied by God. Notably, if one level of this hierarchy allows people to enter conceptually a different level, the metaphorical meaning shift is present. The vertical direction of the change has an influence on the emotional load of the target meaning (cf. *ibid.*, 63). To put it more precisely, if the source meaning thread is located on a lower level of the hierarchy, meaning amelioration can be expected; the opposite direction will result in the pejoration of meaning.

### 3. Data analysis

For the purpose of the analysis, a group of 15 aviation slang compounds was selected. These are: *baby Jesus*, *biscuit shooter*, *carry-on luggage*, *crumb cruncher*, *dead head*, *gate hoarder(s)*, *gate lice*, *jet bridge Jesus*, *landing lips*, *payload*, *self-loading freight*, *self-loading cargo*, *self-loading baggage*, *talking ballast*, *unaccompanied monster*. Most of these compounds are lexical units that function only in aviation slang, and their aviation slang sense 'airline passenger' is the primary sense of the compound as a whole. Two compounds, that is, *carry-on luggage* and *payload*, have their primary meaning-threads linked to general aviation English, whereas the aviation slang sense 'airline passenger' has to be perceived as a case of meaning transference. One of the compounds under analysis, i.e., *baby Jesus*, belongs, on the grounds of its primary meaning thread, to general English language, whereas another one, i.e., *crumb cruncher* belongs to general English slang.

The initial analysis has shown that when the semantic structure is taken into consideration, compounds can be grouped into smaller subsets, including three to six lexical items, singled out on the basis of different kinds of metaphorical and metonymic relationships. The main metaphors and metonymies serving as the basis for the distinguished subsets of compounds under analysis are as follows:

- A) AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO
- B) AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS
- C) AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM



#### D) AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE BODY PARTS

It should be observed that in the list above, relationships A and B are metaphorical; whereas C and D are metonymic relationships. The presentation in the following sections takes these relationships as headings for a more detailed discussion of the semantic processes that led to the target meaning 'airline passenger'. However, two remarks should be made here. First, some compounds appear under more than one heading; second, for some compounds no other compound was identified that could be assigned to the same metaphor or metonymy, and, for this reason, the final section of the discussion below is titled *Miscellaneous cases*.

#### 3.1 AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO

The first subset of compounds is the most numerous and it comprises the following six items, all of which denote 'airline passengers': *carry-on luggage, payload, self-loading freight, self-loading cargo, self-loading baggage, talking ballast*. These lexical items were assigned to one subset on the basis of the semantics of their right-hand elements. Note that English compounds are predominantly right-headed, and the right-hand constituent is superordinate to the left-hand item, which, in turn, functions as its modifier. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that the compounds under analysis in this subsection are exocentric compounds and their right-hand elements function merely as the syntactic head; they do not take the role of the semantic head. Importantly, the right-hand elements of the compounds above, i.e., *luggage, load, freight, cargo, baggage, ballast*, are semantically linked, and using cognitive terminology, all of them can be assigned to the DOMAIN OF CARGO. The lexeme *cargo* is defined in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary as "the goods or merchandise conveyed in a ship, airplane, or vehicle" (MWOD). The DOMAIN OF CARGO can, in turn, be perceived as the source domain of the target meaning 'airline passenger(s)', achieved through a metaphorical relationship. To be more specific, the change of meaning from the primary meaning thread of the right-hand elements to the meaning of compounds as a whole, i.e., 'airline passengers', could be explained by means of the cognitive

metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO. With metaphor being based on some kind of perceived similarity, the following set of correspondences between the source and target domain can be posited:

Table 1. AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO – metaphorical correspondences  
(Source: Own processing)

<b>Source domain:</b> <b>GOODS TRANSPORTED/ CARGO</b>		<b>Target domain:</b> <b>AIRLINE PASSENGERS</b>
goods are delivered from one place to another / transported by airplanes	→	people are transported from one place to another by airplanes
the staff takes care of loading the cargo / goods onto the plane	→	the staff takes care of passengers boarding a plane
the goods transported are characterized by certain weight	→	passengers are characterized by certain weight
the weight and size of goods allowed onto a plane is limited	→	only a restricted number of people are taken aboard

The cognitive metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO functions as the skeleton for explication of the target meaning 'airline passenger' in the group of compounds with their right-hand items belonging to the DOMAIN OF CARGO. Yet, the role of left-hand elements in meaning creation cannot be ignored.

When it comes to the modifying elements, two of them, i.e., *talking* and *self-loading*, are deverbal, participle adjectives whose role is to prompt the understanding of the compound as denoting a human being, rather than an inanimate object. This function seems to be quite straightforward in the case of the lexical item *talking*, as only humans are able to speak. With the modifying element *self-loading*, occurring in three compounds under analysis, further explanation is necessary. That is, in general English, the adjective *self-loading* is used in the primary sense 'loading (again) by its own action', and it frequently collocates with names of guns, as well as different kinds of

automatic or semi-automatic machines. Still, in order to see the meaning-thread related to human activity, the analysis should start from the verb *load* used in the sense of 'putting goods onto a vehicle (e.g., aircraft)'. By adding the prefix *self-* and the suffix *-ing*, the derived adjective *self-loading* stresses the fact that it is not the airport staff who need to put the goods onto the aircraft, but these 'goods' do it on their own. So, if robots are disregarded, the adjective *self-loading* can only be considered an allusion to human behaviour.

In other words, taking into account the human-related meaning of the left-hand elements of the compounds *self-loading freight*, *self-loading cargo*, *self-loading baggage*, *talking ballast*, it seems more appropriate to describe the meaning construal of whole compounds in terms of a blend, in the understanding of Fauconnier and Turner (2003), rather than a meaning shift restricted to the operation of the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO. The blend can be perceived as created against the generic space AIR TRANSPORT, with the following three input spaces:

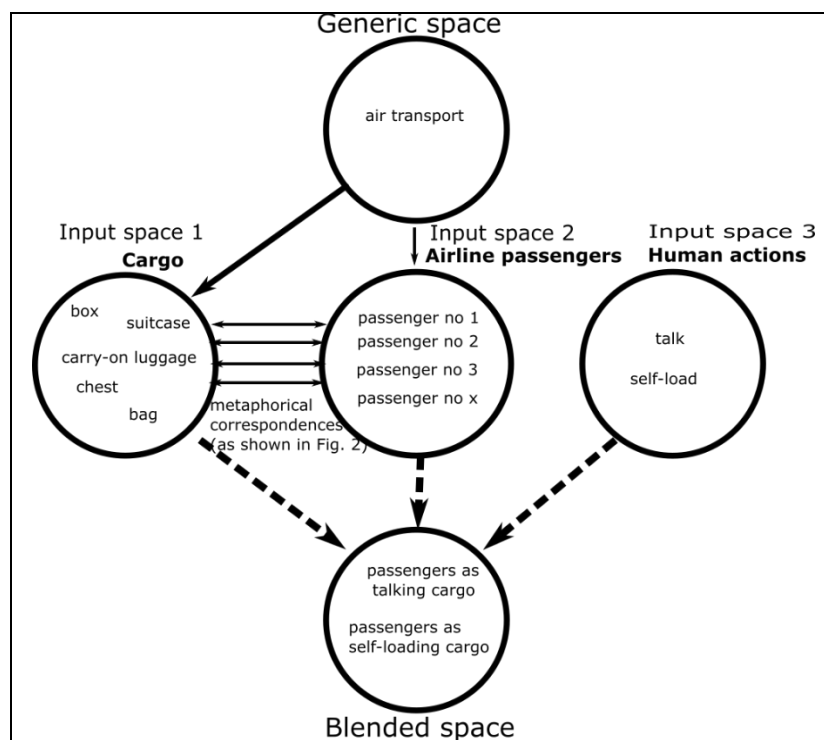


Figure 2. PASSENGERS ARE CARGO metaphor in the blend (Source: Own processing)

More specifically, the Input space 1 – CARGO corresponds to the source domain of the conceptual metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO, whereas Input space 2 – AIRLINE PASSENGERS corresponds to the metaphorical target. The particular metaphorical correspondences, shown in Figure 2 as arrows between the Input space 1 and the Input space 2 are listed in Table 1. What is more, the Input space 3 – HUMAN ACTIONS contains the deverbal participle adjectives *talking* and *self-loading*, denoting human actions. They function as an additional contextual clue helping the listener to blend the inanimate domain CARGO with the animate target domain AIRLINE PASSENGER. The projections of selected elements from the particular input spaces allow the listener to arrive at the sense-thread 'airline passenger' even though the head elements denote inanimate beings. Hence, in the resulting blend, passengers 1, 2, 3, etc. are seen as talking cargo being-loaded / loading by their own action onto the plane. Nevertheless, the most important element of the whole conceptual network is the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO.

Regarding the two remaining lexical items assigned to the first subset, i.e., *carry-on luggage* and *payload*, the process of meaning creation needs to be analysed from a different angle. These two compounds function in general aviation English. The primary, aviation-related sense of the lexical item *carry-on luggage* is: "small bags of limited size and weight that passengers are allowed to take with them into the cabin of an aircraft", while the primary sense of *payload* is "the money earning load carried by the aircraft including the passengers, baggage and freight" (Crocker 2007: 169). Therefore, with the target meaning "airline passenger", they fulfil the criterion of additional naming and qualify as figurative compounds in the sense of Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005). The development of their secondary meaning can be analysed in terms of a metaphorical or metonymic relationship. The development of the sense 'airline passenger' in the case of the lexeme *payload* can be perceived as a metaphorical meaning restriction, whereas the secondary meaning 'airline passenger' in the case of the compound *carry-on luggage* can be attributed to the metonymic relationship POSSESSOR FOR POSSESSED.

The explanation of the development of a secondary meaning of the compound *carry-on luggage* in terms of a metonymic relationship might raise doubts as to the role of the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO. Nevertheless, the notion of a *linguistic template*, introduced by Ryder (1994), seems to offer an answer to this problematic issue. According to this author: "(...) once a pattern begins, the more established forms there are in the pattern, the more likely it is that a new form will be based on one or more of these forms, or on a slightly more abstract template based on them" (ibid., 80).

In this analysis, the "more abstract template" in the quote must be understood as the metaphorical relationship AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO. In other words, any compound with the right-hand element semantically linked to the domain CARGO / GOODS TRANSPORTED seems to be a good candidate for the target meaning 'airline passenger'.

When it comes to the compound 'carry-on luggage', it can be assumed that both the metaphorical relationship and the metonymic relationship contribute to the creation of the target meaning 'airline passenger'. The metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO operates on the syntactic head of the compound, whereas the metonymic relationship POSSESSED FOR POSSESSOR seems to act on the compound as a whole. In metonymy, the two concepts, i.e., the concept of POSSESSED and the concept of POSSESSOR, are linked with the DOMAIN OF POSSESSION (cf. Radden & Kövecses 2007: 16). It has to be stressed that the role of both mechanisms seems to be equally important, as illustrated in Figure 3:

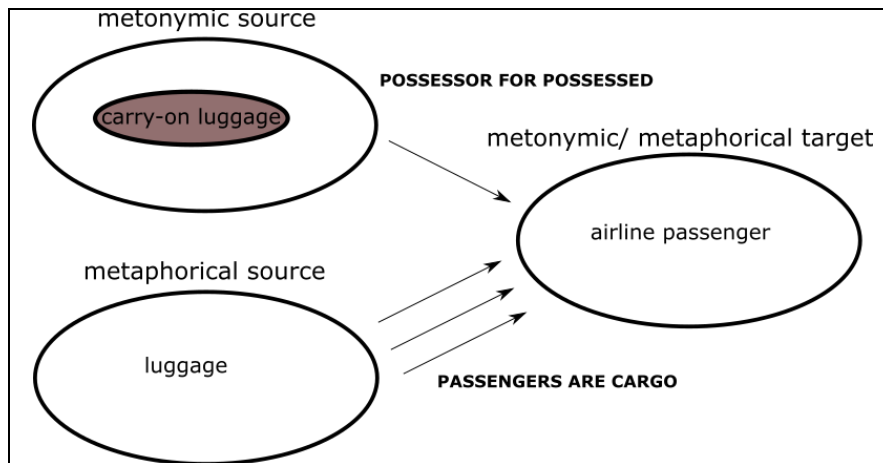


Figure 3. Metaphor and metonymy in the compound *carry-on luggage* (Source: Own processing)

The multiple arrows between the metaphorical source and target represent the metaphorical correspondences as listed in Table 1. In contrast, as the defining feature of cognitive metonymy is the domain highlighting rather than mappings, there is only one arrow between the metonymic source and target, and the lexical item *carry-on luggage* is highlighted symbolizing the mental highlighting of the corresponding concept.

Finally, when it comes to the emotional load of the items discussed in this section, it is, in all cases, mildly humorous, and hence mildly negative. It comes in line with the assumptions taken by the advocates of the GCB theory. In details, the source concept of <goods transported>, i.e., things, occupies a lower position in the GCB hierarchy than the target concept <airline passengers>, i.e., people. Thus, making reference to passengers by means of lexical items denoting inanimate objects results in meaning pejoration.

### 3.2 AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS

In the group of lexemes under this analysis, there are three instances of compounds whose head-elements denote in their primary sense supernatural beings. These are: *unaccompanied monster*, *baby Jesus*, and *jet bridge Jesus*. It should be noted that in their secondary meaning 'airline passenger', they all refer to passengers of a certain type, with the meaning restriction corresponding to the age of the passengers.

Furthermore, only the secondary meaning of the compound *baby Jesus* is an example of an additional naming, and it qualifies as a figurative compound in the sense of Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005).

The slang compound *unaccompanied monster* was formed by analogy to the compound functioning in official aviation language, i.e., *unaccompanied minor*, abbreviated to UM. Depending on the airline policy, children, usually between five and eleven, are allowed to travel alone and it is the responsibility of the flight attendants to supervise them. In aviation slang the lexeme *minor* is replaced by the lexeme *monster*. According to the Wikipedia definition: "A monster is often a type of grotesque creature, whose appearance frightens and whose powers of destruction threaten the human world's social or moral order" (Wikipedia encyclopedia, *s.a.*). As mentioned by Benches (2006: 135), monsters are considered to be uncontrollable, difficult to manage, and unpleasant. All these monster-like features might serve as an explanation why it is the lexeme *monster*, rather than any other lexeme starting with the letter *m* and denoting some kind of supernatural being, such as for instance, *mermaid*, that is used in aviation English to refer, in a mildly derogatory way, to a misbehaving youngster.

The lexeme *monster* is assigned to the domain SUPERNATURAL BEINGS, as monsters are imaginary creatures. Table 2 is an attempt to enumerate the metaphorical correspondences allowing us to claim the existence of the cognitive metaphor (CHILDREN) PASSENGERS ARE MONSTERS/ SUPERNATURAL BEINGS, considered here a lower-level variant of the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS:

Table 2. (CHILDREN) PASSENGERS ARE MONSTERS – metaphorical correspondences  
(Source: Own processing)

Source domain:		Target domain:
MONSTERS / SUPERNATURAL BEINGS		(CHILDREN) AIRLINE PASSENGERS
monsters are frightening	→	children, especially if bored during a long flight, are problematic for flight attendants

monsters may destroy the world	→	disobedient children may cause some damage in the airplane interior
monsters are uncontrollable	→	a child throwing a temper tantrum is uncontrollable
monsters are unpleasant to deal with	→	taking care of a disobedient child is unpleasant for staff members

Unlike the official term *unaccompanied minor*, the slang compound that includes the lexeme *monster* carries a negative emotional load, which is definitely connected with the difficulties that flight attendants face when taking care of some problematic youngsters travelling alone. Due to the fact that the modifier *unaccompanied* is interpreted literally, the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS is considered to operate only on the head element *monster*. The compound's modifier is understood literally.

When it comes to the two remaining compounds, i.e., *baby Jesus* and *jet bridge Jesus*, they both include the name *Jesus*, the core character of Christian religion. In both cases, it occupies the head position. As regards the compound *baby Jesus*, the creation of the secondary meaning thread 'infant passenger' must be analysed with reference to the Biblical nativity story, in which *Baby Jesus* was born. Table 3 shows metaphorical correspondences that allow us to posit the operation of metaphor INFANT PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS in the creation of the target meaning 'airline passengers':

Table 3. INFANT PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – metaphorical correspondences  
(Source: Own processing)

<b>Source domain:</b> SUPERNATURAL BEINGS		<b>Target domain:</b> INFANT AIRLINE PASSENGERS
Baby Jesus was a little child	→	an infant passenger is a little child
Baby Jesus was a special child	→	infant passengers are special kind of passengers



shepherds and the three wise men came to pay tribute to Baby Jesus	→	infant passengers require special treatment from flight attendants
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It could be added here that the compound *baby Jesus* is used primarily with reference to infants whose parents expect extra services for their child from flight attendants. Such an expectation may result in parents' resentful, impolite behaviour. This fact explains why, even though baby Jesus as well as other little babies generally evoke positive feelings, the compound is used with a (mildly?) negative shade of meaning. Finally, it can be observed that due to the fact that the combination *Baby Jesus* functions as a compound in its literal meaning in general English, the metaphor INFANT PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS seems to operate on the compound as a whole.

Regarding the compound *jet bridge Jesus*, one first needs to observe its embedded structure. Using labelled bracketing, the compound's formal structure can be represented as [[[jet] [bridge]] [Jesus]]. This proves that the name *Jesus*, being the syntactic head of the compound, is modified by another compound, i.e. *jet bridge*. The lexical item *jet bridge* is but one of many terms for a structure known also as, for instance, a *passenger boarding bridge*, *jetway*, or *loading bridge*, defined in the Dictionary of Aviation by Crocker (2007: 139) as 'a covered walkway from an airport departure gate that connects to the door of an aircraft, used by passengers and crew getting on and off the aircraft'. It can be added that it has a form of an enclosed, often movable structure connecting the airport and the airplane; the structure allows passengers to board the plane without being exposed to weather conditions. The secondary meaning of the compound *jet bridge Jesus* is 'an elderly airline passenger', and at first sight one can hardly see any logical connection between the compound consisting of the *jet bridge* with the head word *Jesus* and the secondary meaning-thread 'an elderly airline passenger'. To arrive at the explanation, a few more meaning-related facts need to be considered. Namely, as explained in detail in source materials, a *jet bridge Jesus* is an elderly passenger who, when boarding, requires assistance and is taken aboard on a wheelchair, but during the deboarding procedure leaves the airplane

on his or her own feet. Another aviation slang expression denoting an analogical situation is the compound *miracle flight*, clearly stressing the allusion to the miracles described in the Bible to have been performed by Jesus. Namely, according to the Bible, during his earthly mission, Jesus, in order to give evidence of his divine nature, cured, among other people, a nobleman's son (John 4: 46-54), Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:30-31), and a man with leprosy (Mathew 9:1-8)<sup>1</sup>. This shows that it is not the lexeme Jesus that stands metaphorically for 'airline passengers', but rather his miraculous actions provide the direct conceptual link to the target meaning.

With this in mind, using the terminology of cognitive linguistics, it can be assumed that the target meaning 'an elderly airline passenger' is a result of a double meaning shift, relying both on the metonymic relationship PERFORMER FOR ACTION and the metaphorical relationship PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS. The metonymic relationship is a prerequisite for the operation of the metaphor, and it is embedded in the metaphorical source, as shown in Figure 4:

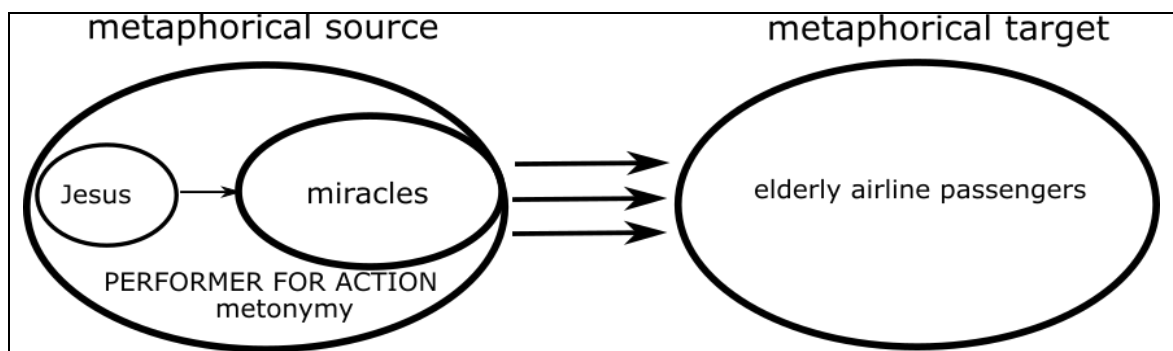


Figure 4. (ELDERLY) PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – metaphonymy  
(Source: Own processing)

To be more specific, the metonymic relationship PERFORMER FOR ACTION allows one to think about the miracles when using the lexical item *Jesus*, i.e., the concept of MIRACLES becomes metonymically highlighted in the spectrum of the lexeme Jesus even though it is secondary in the literal meaning of the lexeme. Such simultaneous working of metaphor and metonymy is termed as "metaphonymy" (cf. Goossens 1990).

When it comes to the Biblical miracles in which people recovered their health, the cure of the paralytic (Mathew 9:1-8) gains the most salience, and this situation underlies the metaphorical correspondences enumerated in Table 4:

Table 4. (ELDERLY) PASSENGERS are SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – metaphorical correspondences  
(Source: Own processing)

<b>Source domain: SUPERNATURAL BEINGS – MIRACLES DONE</b>		<b>Target domain: (ELDERLY) AIRLINE PASSENGERS</b>
Biblical paralytic	→	elderly passenger
paralytic's mat (on which he was brought to Jesus)	→	wheelchair (pushed by a flight attendant)
the paralytic gets up and goes home	→	passengers disembark from the airplane walking
Jesus' curing of the paralytic was considered a miracle by those who saw it	→	passengers able to disembark from the plane on their own feet seem as if they have been miraculously cured during the flight

The jet bridge does not appear in the correspondences. However, pushing the wheelchair along the jet bridge, which is a special treatment, and which probably involves some effort from the flight attendants or other members of the airport staff, is a salient element of the whole situation in the eyes of the staff members. This cognitive salience seems to justify the appearance of the lexeme *jet bridge* in the compound.

When it comes to the emotional load of compounds with the lexeme *Jesus* in the function of the compound head, both are humorous and rather negative. This seems to contradict the assumptions concerning the changes in the emotional load of the metaphorically influenced target expression made by advocates of the GCB approach. In this analysis, the use of a lexeme denoting a higher-level concept, i.e., *Jesus*, with reference to a lower-level concept, i.e., human being, does not result in the amelioration of meaning. Also, the compound *jet bridge Jesus* appears to contradict the fact that the

feature of God as being almighty is admired in English cultures, as proven, for instance, by Uberman (2020) on the basis of her analysis of divinity-related phrases in the English- and Polish-language cultures.

### 3.3 AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM

In this subsection, the following three compounds will be discussed: *gate hoarder(s)*, *crumb cruncher*, *biscuit shooter*. All of them can be interpreted with the help of a metonymic relationship, and in all of them this mechanism of semantic change is intertwined with a word-formation process of affixation. In addition, it should be mentioned that the compounds *gate hoarder(s)*, *crumb cruncher*, *biscuit shooter* must be classified as endocentric compounds, as the gate hoarder is 'a type of hoarder', a crumb cruncher is 'a type of cruncher' and a biscuit shooter is 'a type of shooter'.

Furthermore, the syntactic head elements of the three compounds discussed in this section are products of agentive deverbal nominalization. The suffix *-er*, which appears in all of them, is, as observed by Szymanek (2012: 175), the most productive suffix specializing in the creation of agent nouns. Taking into consideration the fact that the head elements of the compounds *gate hoarder(s)*, *crumb cruncher*, *biscuit shooter* are deverbal nouns, one may try to posit the background operation of a metonymic relationship. The metonymic relationship present in the structure of lexemes denoting 'someone who does x' is the ACTION FOR AGENT relationship (cf. Radden & Kövecses 2007)<sup>2</sup>.

As regards the three endocentric compounds denoting 'airline passengers', their verbal roots, that is the lexemes *hoard*, *crunch*, and *shoot*, denote actions, while the derived agent nouns – *hoarder*, *cruncher*, *shooter*, ought to be considered as performers of these actions. This is to say that the verbal roots function as metonymic vehicles and provide mental access to the metonymic targets, which due to the word-formation process of affixation assume the form of agent nouns. Importantly, actions are contiguous with the agents who perform them. Consequently, both actions and

performers are elements of one domain, i.e. DOMAIN OF ACTION, which is a characteristic feature of cognitive metonymy (cf. Kövecses 2010: 173). For the purpose of this analysis, the metonymic relationship may be expressed as AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM, and should be considered a lower-level variant form of the relationship ACTION FOR AGENT.

More specifically, in the case of the compounds *crumb cruncher* and *biscuit shooter*, both compound elements contribute to the description of actions that serve as metonymic vehicles. That is, the actions of crunching crumbs and shooting biscuits are connected with prototypical potential behaviour of children during a flight. In fact, to keep the children engaged, parents or staff often give them something to munch on during the flight, and some children, especially the younger ones, will throw the snacks around. Using the cognitive terminology, one may assume that the actions of shooting biscuits and crunching crumbs are salient elements of the DOMAIN OF ACTION, and the metonymic relationship ACTION FOR AGENT, or its lower-level variant AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM operates on the compound as a whole rather than merely on its right-hand constituent. What is more, to do justice to the language facts, it needs to be mentioned that the compounds *crumb cruncher* and *biscuit shooter* are testified by general language dictionaries of English slang. The lexeme *crumb cruncher*, also spelled with a hyphen, is defined as a slang term for 'a child'; the compound *biscuit shooter* is defined as 'a waiter / waitress on a lunch counter, or a cook on a ranch'<sup>3,4</sup>. In aviation slang, both *crumb cruncher* and *biscuit shooter* signify 'a child passenger', so in connection with the meaning thread present in general English slang, the aviation related meaning can be considered an instance of meaning restriction.

In turn, when it comes to the compound *gate hoarder*, it exists only in aviation slang and refers to 'those who hoard their belongings, in front of the boarding gates'. The compound modifier, i.e., the lexeme *gate*, is linked with the domain AIR TRANSPORT, as the boarding gates are an essential part of boarding procedure.

It should be mentioned here that all three compounds in which the background operation of the metonymic relationship ACTION FOR AGENT is claimed are humorous aviation slang terms for 'child passengers'.

### 3.4 AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE BODY PARTS

In the analysed set of lexemes, two compounds were identified in which the syntactic head elements signify, in their primary meaning-thread, a body element. These are: *landing lips* and *dead head*. These two compounds are exocentric, and taking into account the primary meaning of their right-hand constituent, their aviation slang meaning threads are clearly linked with the metonymic relationship BODY PART FOR PERSON.

Thus, the compound *landing lips* is used to denote 'a female passenger / a female flight attendant'. The choice of the lexeme *lips* as the metonymic vehicle can be justified with reference to stereotypical female behaviour. Not infrequently, before leaving the plane, women, both passengers and flight attendants, put lipstick on their lips to enhance their appearance. Therefore, the lexeme *lips*, which is primarily connected with the domain BODY PARTS and only peripheral in the domain PERSON, becomes salient enough to enable the effect of domain highlighting, and to allow mental access to the target meaning 'a female passenger / flight attendant' (see Croft 1993: 348).

When it comes to the role of the modifier in the semantics of the compounds, it must be observed that the modifier 'landing' is, in its primary meaning thread, directly connected to the domain AIR TRANSPORT. This lexeme receives a literal interpretation, as it is during the landing procedure that female passengers pay special attention to their lips.

Last but not least, the compound *landing lips* occurs only in the metonymically-based meaning thread, and its use is limited to aviation slang. With respect to its emotional load, the compound is a humorous reference to 'women on board'.

In turn, the compound *dead head* denotes 'a pilot who travels as a passenger', or in other words 'a pilot-passenger'. Regarding the right-hand constituent of the compound, one should observe that the lexeme *head* frequently takes the role of the metonymical vehicle allowing mental access to the meaning 'a person' (cf. Więclawska 2012). Additionally, one should take into account the fact that the head incorporates the brain, which is the body part responsible for the thought processes. Hence, the lexeme *head*, as well as its synonyms, often appears in lexical items denoting people with reference to the condition of their mental abilities, both positive and negative (cf. Kopecka 2012). Significantly, as proven, for example, by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (MWOD), the lexical item *head* is used in the sense 'the person (as an employer or supervisor) who tells people and especially workers what to do'. Undoubtedly the pilot on duty, especially the first officer, is in charge of the remaining staff members and of the whole flight. This is to say that the meaning thread 'pilot' seems to result from the combined operation of the high-level metaphor HIGHER IS UP, and the metonymic relationship BODY PART FOR PERSON (cf. Kopecka 2011: 158-160). To arrive at the meaning 'pilot-passenger' some further considerations are necessary, with special attention paid to the modifying element.

The literal primary sense-thread of the lexeme *dead* is, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (MWOD), 'deprived of life, no longer alive'. In the compound *dead head* meaning 'pilot-passenger', the lexeme *dead* needs to be understood metaphorically, with the metaphorical shift based on the similarity between a dead person and a person not performing his/her professional duties (cf. Uberman 2016). The low-level metaphor PILOT-PASSENGER IS A DEAD PERSON, relies on the correspondences shown in Table 5:

Table 5. *Dead head* – metaphorical correspondences (Source: Own processing)

Source domain: DEATH		Target domain: AIRLINE PASSENGERS
the dead person does not show any life functions	→	the pilot-passenger does not perform any professional duties
the dead person is carried in a coffin	→	the pilot-passenger is carried on board a plane (not controlling the airplane from the cockpit)
the brain of a dead person does not work	→	the pilot-passenger does not need to think

However, it is not sufficient to mention only metaphor in the meaning construction of the compound *dead head*, as both metaphor HIGH IS UP and metonymy BODY PART FOR PERSON act on the right-hand element of the compound. Since these two relationships contribute to the source of the metaphor PILOT-PASSENGER IS A DEAD PERSON, the whole mechanism should be considered a case of metaphonymy. Figure 5 is an attempt to show the consecutive steps in the creation of the sense 'pilot-passenger':

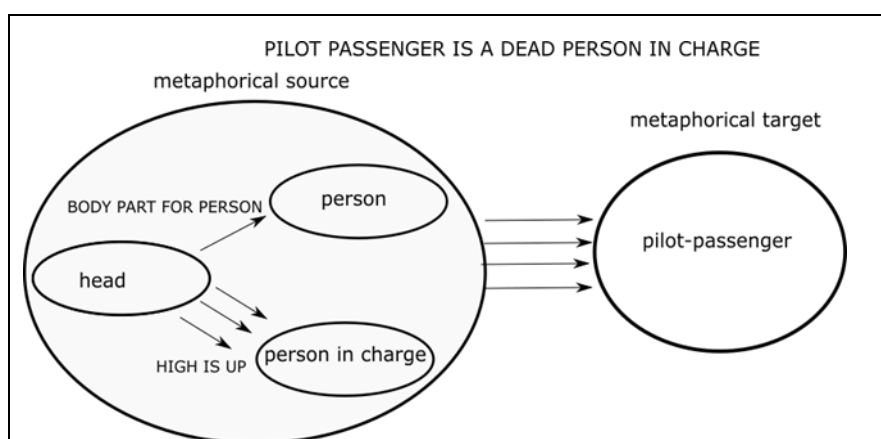


Figure 5. *Dead head* – steps in meaning development (Source: Own processing)

Apart from its occurrence in aviation slang, the compound *dead head* also belongs to general American English slang where, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (MWOD), it is used in the following senses referring to people: 1) 'a stupid person' and 2) 'a person travelling without a ticket'. With this in mind, the aviation slang meaning-thread could also be treated as a sense restriction of the Merriam-Webster sense no 2 of general American English slang.



### 3.5 Miscellaneous

The final section is devoted to the discussion of the lexeme, i.e., *gate lice*, which did not fit in any of the distinguished groups.

The compound *gate lice* can be classified as an exocentric compound, and it is a derogatory aviation slang term used to refer to 'the crowd of people gathering near the boarding gates in order to be the first on the plane'. In the analysis of the semantic structure, the metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS needs to be observed. In this study, a lower-level variant of this metaphor can be formulated as AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ANIMALS<sup>5</sup>. As noted by Kövecses (2010: 17), the domain of ANIMALS is an extremely productive source domain, but one could wonder why the lexeme *lice* was chosen in this particular case as a metaphorical vehicle. To answer this question, the correspondences shown in Table 6 should be considered:

Table 6. *Gate lice* – metaphorical correspondences (Source: Own processing)

Source domain: ANIMALS		Target domain: AIRLINE PASSENGERS
head lice occur in great numbers	→	passengers in front of boarding gates occur in great numbers
head lice cause unpleasant sensations	→	a crowd of passengers is problematic for the staff to deal with

The compound *gate lice* has a relatively heavy negative emotional load, and this derogatory meaning tone can be explained with reference to the notion of the Great Chain of Being, as advocated by Lakoff and Turner (1989). Namely, in this hierarchy animals occupy a lower level than people, so the use of an animal term to denote 'airline passengers' results in meaning pejoration.

## 4. Discussion and conclusion

The primary task of flight attendants is to take care of passengers. Therefore, it is no wonder that passengers are a frequent topic of job-related conversations among crew

members, and some of the information exchanged needs to remain secret. The use of figurative language allows members of flight crews to hide, at least to some extent, information that they consider inappropriate for the ears of passengers. This analysis, intended to shed some light on the semantic structure of 15 creative compounds that denote 'passengers', has led to the following observations.

First, it turns out that all three cognitive operations referred to by Kövecses (2005: 259) as basic, that is, metaphor, metonymy, and blending, are present in the analysis, with blending observed least frequently. Moreover, in two cases the mechanism of metaphonymy was identified. The role of these cognitive operations differs from compound to compound as summarized in Table 7:

Table 7. Cognitive operations – their role in compounds denoting 'airline passengers'  
(Source: Own processing)

<b>Cognitive operations</b>	<b>Compounds</b>
Metaphor acts on the compound as a whole	<i>baby Jesus</i>
Metaphor acts on the compound's head	<i>carry-on luggage, dead head, gate lice, payload, self-loading freight, self-loading cargo, self-loading baggage, talking ballast, unaccompanied monster</i>
Metaphor acts on the compound's modifier	<i>dead head</i>
Metonymy acts on the compound as a whole	<i>carry-on luggage</i>
Metonymy acts on the compound's head	<i>landing lips, dead head, jet bridge Jesus</i>
Metonymy acts on the root in the compound's head	<i>gate hoarder(s), crumb cruncher, biscuit shooter</i>
Metaphonymy in the compound as a whole	<i>jet bridge Jesus, dead head</i>

The table clearly shows that in the case of compounds with the meaning 'airline passenger', metaphor acting upon the head of the compound is the most frequent. Also, it is evident that some compounds can be found in more than one row of the table, e.g. *carry-on luggage, dead head*. This testifies to the complex nature of mental processes leading to the creation of target meaning; sometimes more than one factor may have

influenced the final meaning. For instance, with the lexeme *carry-on luggage* both the mechanism of conceptual metonymy POSSESSED FOR POSSESSOR, as well as the compliance with a pattern based on the conceptual metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO acting upon the head element are equally likely to be the lines of independent meaning development. Likewise, in the case of the lexeme *dead head* the target meaning 'pilot-passenger' may have been a result of the consecutive operation of metaphorical and metonymic relationships, or the development of the meaning pilot-passenger may be considered an example of meaning restriction from the American English slang sense 'a person travelling without a ticket'. Details of these processes are presented in relevant sections of the analytical part.

Second, the analysis supports the claim made by Kövecses (2005) that the experience of a given group of speakers leads to the creation of novel conceptual metaphors, sometimes being modifications of conventional metaphors. Indeed, both conventional and novel, job-specific metaphors and metonymies were identified. When it comes to the conventional metaphors, only one on them, that is, PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, was identified. Regarding conventional metonymies, the following three were relevant for this analysis: ACTION FOR AGENT, POSSESSOR FOR POSSESSED, and BODY PART FOR PERSON. It is worth noticing that the novel, job-specific metaphors were more numerous than the conventional ones, as shown in the form of a list below:

### Novel metaphors

- AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE CARGO
- AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS
- CHILDREN PASSENGERS ARE MONSTERS
- INFANT PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS
- ELDERLY PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS
- AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ANIMALS
- PILOT-PASSENGER IS A DEAD PERSON

## Novel metonymies

- AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM
- AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE BODY PARTS

At first sight the number of novel metaphors and metonymies seems impressive, but it should be noted that some of them are merely lower-level variant forms of higher-level conventional metaphors or metonymies. This is the case with the novel metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ANIMALS, which is a lower-level variant form of the conventional metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. Similarly, both novel metonymies listed above are merely more-specific variants of conventional metonymies, that is, ACTION FOR AGENT and BODY PART FOR PERSON, respectively. This might indicate that human minds are more likely to follow familiar patterns of thinking, introducing only slight, situation-dependent modifications, rather than being fully creative.

Next, one needs to observe the hierarchical relations between the novel metaphors listed above. Namely, the novel metaphors CHILDREN PASSENGERS ARE MONSTERS, INFANT PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS, ELDERLY PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS need to be considered as lower-level variants of the metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE SUPERNATURAL BEINGS. Likewise, the metonymic relationships AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ACTIONS THEY PERFORM and AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE BODY PARTS are lower-level forms of the relationships ACTION FOR AGENT and BODY PART FOR PERSON respectively.

In addition, the analysis allows us to make some remarks concerning the emotional load of the creative compounds under study, most of which are exocentric compounds. In this respect, Bauer and Huddleston (2002) note that exocentric compounds are often coined as deliberately humorous or ironic combinations. In fact, all of the compounds analysed are ironical or humorous, mostly mildly. The only lexical item that seems to be characterized by a heavy negative emotional load is the compound *gate lice*.

What is more, in the attempt to justify the axiological character of particular groups of compounds, the notion of the GCB was employed. It was assumed that this hierarchical structure meant to reflect the organization of entities in the world would be a useful tool in the explanation of the pejoration of meaning between the literal sense of the compound as a whole or the head element, and the target meaning 'airline passenger'. This assumption was confirmed with lexical items belonging in terms of their literal meaning-thread to the DOMAIN OF GOODS TRANSPORTED, that is, for instance, *luggage*, *baggage* or *cargo*. In the GCB hierarchy, the concept <AIRLINE PASSENGER> occupies a higher position than inanimate beings, and consequently negatively loaded secondary meaning-thread relating to people was developed. Analogically, the meaning pejoration can be explained with reference to the GCB in the case of lexical items denoting animals in their primary meaning-thread. However, the analysis shows that the GCB is not a construct that could explain all of the changes in the emotional load. For instance, the lexeme *Jesus* is in the transferred sense used with a humorously negative tone, although, due to the fact that the concept <GOD> occupies the highest position in the extended variant of GCB, one would rather expect meaning amelioration. This casts some doubts on the reliability of the GCB hierarchy for the justification of the changes in the emotional load between the literal sense thread and the secondary, metaphorically or metonymically influenced meaning. This observation, concerning the somewhat limited usefulness of the notion of the GCB for the study of the emotional load in the analysed group of creative compounds, comes in line with the following remark:

*"(...) the Great Chain metaphor is only of limited use here [i.e., in the study of monomodal and multimodal metaphors], since it depends on typological hierarchies that may be subverted, or simply irrelevant, in creative metaphors, many of which function in contexts creating highly specific, ad hoc metaphorical resemblances (...)" (Forceville 2006: 28).*

Finally, a few remarks about the sources of lexemes building the compounds to name the 'airline passenger(s)' can be made. Only two compound lexemes, that is *carry-on luggage* and *payload*, belong, on the grounds of their primary meaning-thread, to official, plain aviation English<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, when particular elements of compounds

are taken into consideration, there are a few more items that can be considered plain aviation English, and, using cognitive terminology, assigned to the DOMAIN OF AIR TRANSPORT. These are: *cargo*, *freight*, *gate*, *jet bridge*, *landing*. Three compounds, *dead head*, *crumb cruncher*, *biscuit shooter*, also appear in general English slang, but their general English slang sense is different from the meaning in aviation English slang. What is more, nearly all of the head elements belong to English for everyday purposes, or every-day English. These are: *baggage*, *lice*, *lips*, *luggage*, *Jesus*, *monster*. None of them is interpreted literally, though. In sum, judging by the set of compounds under analysis, one may conclude that aviation slang draws from general English, plain aviation English and, to a lesser extent, general English slang.

All in all, the analysis shows that a particular working environment stimulates the creation of profession-specific, novel metaphors and metonymies, being a convincing testimony to the linguistic creativity of human minds. It is also indicated that completely new metaphors were created, whereas novel metonymies identified in this study are merely lower-level variants of conventional metonymies. Last but not least, most frequently, it is the compound's head element that is interpreted figuratively, and in particular with the help of a metaphor.

## Notes

1. John 4: 46-54; Mark 1: 30-31; Mark 1: 40-45 – These quotes from the New Testament are available, for example, at: [www.biblestudytools.com](http://www.biblestudytools.com)
2. Radden and Kövecses (2007: 13), in their cognitively oriented classification of metonymic relationships, include examples of metonymies with clear involvement of word-formation rules. For instance, according to these authors, the metonymic relationship ACTION FOR AGENT can be observed in the semantics of the lexemes *writer* or *driver*.
3. See, for example, [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com)
4. It is interesting to observe that the aviation-related meaning of the compound *biscuit shooter* can be interpreted with the help of the metonymic relationship ACTION FOR

AGENT, whereas the general English language slang sense-thread 'waiter / cook' appears to have been influenced by the metonymic relationship INSTRUMENT FOR AGENT as *biscuit shooter* is a slang name of a device for making biscuits.

5. The metaphor AIRLINE PASSENGERS ARE ANIMALS can also be observed in aviation slang compounds *cattle class* and *dog food*, meaning 'economy class' and 'food served on board planes', respectively. However, since these compounds as a whole do not denote 'airline passengers', they do not qualify for the main analysis (cf. Kopecka 2020).

6. The term *plain aviation English* is used in contrast with the so-called ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organization) phraseology, which is a collection of highly standardized phrases used in particular situations during a flight (cf. Kopecka 2017: 77; Petrashchuk 2010).

### List of abbreviations

GCB – Great Chain of Being

LSP – Language for specific/special purposes

MWOD – Merriam-Webster online dictionary

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## Résumé

The paper focuses on the study of linguistic creativity as evidenced by a set of lexemes belonging to English-language aviation slang. The lexemes under analysis are "creative compounds", that is, compounds whose semantic structure can be analysed in terms of mechanisms of meaning shift. The mechanisms of meaning shift, i.e. metaphor and metonymy are, in this analysis more than rhetorical devices; they are considered cognitive phenomena. The lexemes chosen for the study denote 'airline passengers', and they are used in informal, spoken communication among members of the on-board staff during and around flights, as well as, to a lesser extent, by members of the airport staff dealing with passenger traffic. The participants of this communication are considered a discourse community. Moreover, the analysis belongs to the linguistic study of the language of aviation, i.e., *avialinguistics*, and, in a wider perspective, the

study of *language for specific purposes*. The analysis demonstrates the complexity of semantic processes involved in the construction of meaning of 15 lexemes with the target meaning 'airline passenger(s)'. It shows that although a particular metaphorical or metonymic relationship is of primary importance for the interpretation of meaning in a given compound, the exact role of metaphor, metonymy or blending, and their interactions are, in fact, compound specific. In two compounds the operation of metaphonymy is claimed. In addition, the study shows the role of universal, cognitively motivated patterns in the creation of the compounds under analysis, as well as it identifies novel, profession-related conceptual metaphors and metonymies. Most importantly, the analysis confirms that unique group experience leads to the creation of novel conceptual metaphors even though some of them are merely lower-level variant forms of higher-level conventional metaphors or metonymies.

**Keywords:** aviation slang, conceptual blending, cognitive linguistics, compounding, language for specific purposes, linguistic creativity, figurative language, metaphor, metonymy.