

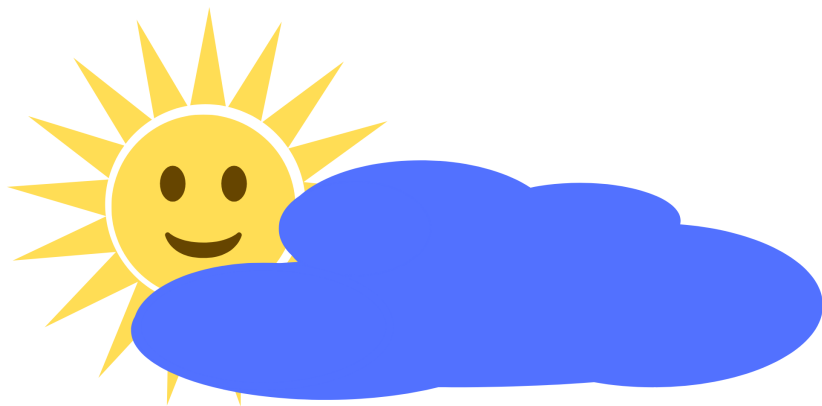
The face of the sky – Body-part extensions from a cross-linguistic perspective

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Meaning extensions of body part terms to objects



An English-centric perspective

“Since metaphor is based on the perception of similarities, [...] when an analogy is obvious, it should give rise to the same metaphor in various languages; hence the wide currency of expressions like the ‘foot of a hill’ or the ‘leg of a table.’” (Ullmann 1963)

An English-centric perspective

“[...] idiosyncratic metaphorical expressions such as *leg of the table* and *foot of the mountain* are not used systematically in our language or thought” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 54)

Frequency of body part extensions to objects

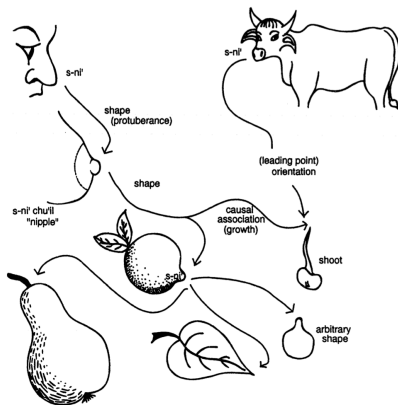


Figure 1: Body part extensions with *s-ni'* 'nose' in Tzeltal (Levinson 1994).

Frequency of body part extensions to objects

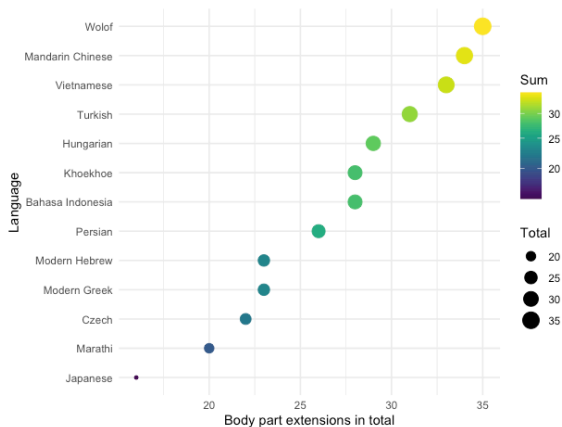
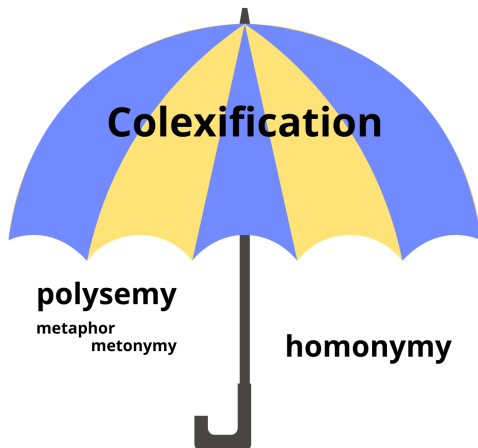


Figure 2: Body part extensions across 13 languages (Tjuka 2019).

Terminology



Cross-linguistic colexification patterns



SKIN~BARK



TESTICLES~EGG



EYE~SUN



EYE~SEED

Cross-linguistic colexification patterns

- Some colexifications between body part and object concepts occur more frequently across languages (Brown & Witkowski 1981, 1983).

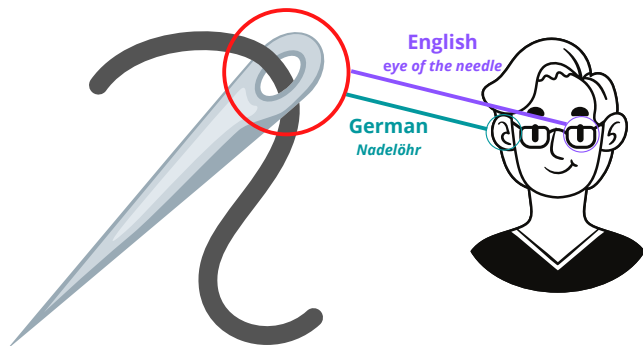
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- Colexifications offer insights into the role of polysemy for semantic change (Koch 2008; Urban 2011).
- There are areal patterns of specific colexifications (e.g., Schapper, San Roque & Hendery 2016; Gast & Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2019).

Variation in colexification patterns



Aim

- A systematic study of body~object colexifications across the languages of the world to identify cross-linguistic patterns of colexifications.

Research questions

- Are visually salient body parts more frequently colexified with objects across languages?

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- Are there differences in the frequencies and distribution patterns of certain body~object colexifications?
- How much do the languages vary in the use of different body parts terms for the same object?

Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications

The CLICS³ database offers colexifications of 2,906 concepts across 2,940 languages (Rzymiski et al. 2019, <https://clics.clld.org/>).

Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications

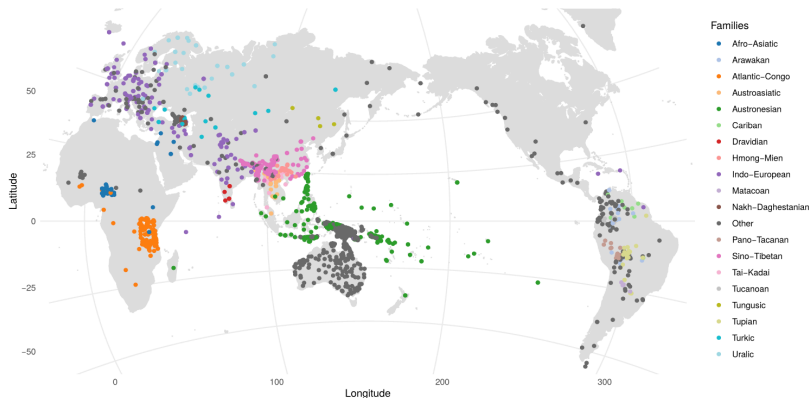


Figure 3: Distribution of languages in CLICS³ (Rzymski et al. 2019).

Results

- 137 human body part concepts
- 1,071 object (part) concepts
 - the object concepts are comprised of items from different categories, e.g., tool, food, landscape, plants, and furniture.
- **1,719 body~object colexifications**

Frequency of body~object colexifications

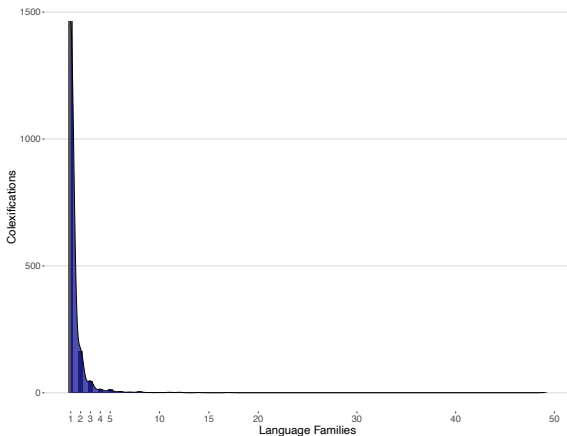


Figure 4: Frequency of body~object colexifications across language families.

Frequency of body~object colexifications



















Body Part	Concept	Object (Part)	Concept	Families	Languages
	SKIN		BARK	49	209
	TESTICLES		EGG	17	36
	NECK		COLLAR	14	49
	HEAD		TOP	12	37
	BUTTOCKS		BOTTOM	12	18
	MOUTH		EDGE	11	19
	EYE		SEED	11	17
	HAIR		LEAF	10	33
	THROAT		COLLAR	9	11

Figure 5: The 10 most frequent body~object colexifications.

Language variation

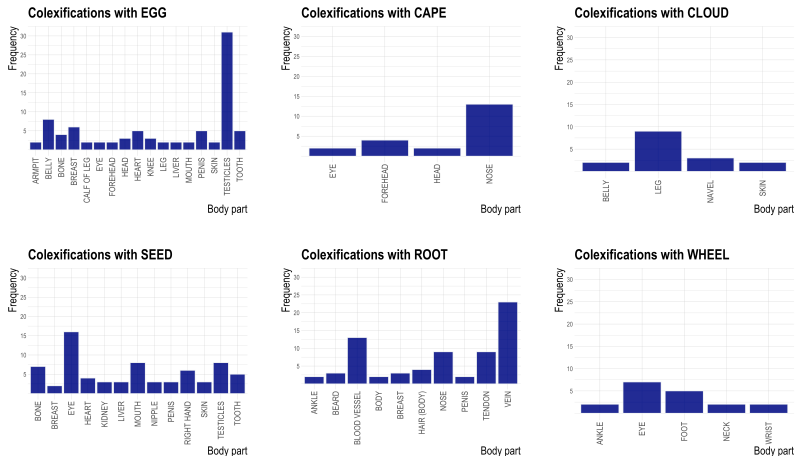


Figure 6: Distribution of body part concepts that collexify with the same object concept.

Conclusion

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2. Most colexifications occur in one language family, whereas only a few colexifications appear in several language families.
3. Colexifications with particular objects can occur with various body part concepts which leads to a variety of language family specific body~object colexifications.

Further considerations

- testing mechanisms behind meaning extensions in experiments
- investigating other types of colexifications
 - Are there differences in cross-linguistic patterns between body~object colexifications versus body~emotion colexifications?

Thank you!

If there are any open questions, you can find me here:

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