

The heel of the bread & the tongue of the sea

Body-part metaphors in object and landscape terms

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Introduction

- On the one hand, body-part metaphors, such as *leg of the table*, are described as isolated instances [3]. On the other hand, comparative studies indicate that they are widespread in various languages [1], [2].
- This type of metaphors seems to be based on an obvious similarity between the body-part and the corresponding object or landscape feature [6]. The similarity can be further specified into three dimensions: shape, spatial alignment, and function [4], [1], [5].
- Studies of Mesoamerican languages reveal that these languages prefer to map body-part terms to object properties in line with the shape dimension [4], [5].

Aims

Questions

1. How productively do languages use body-part terms to express parts of objects and landscapes?
2. Of the three dimensions is one used more productively than the others?
3. How much variation do we find between languages with respect to 1) and 2)?

Hypotheses

- Language variation can be explained by the preference of a language in terms of which dimension it chooses more frequently for the mapping.
- A body-part metaphor is more frequent if it relates to more dimensions.

Method

Elicitation study with 92 body-part metaphors and 53 pictures.



Figure 1: Pictures for elicitation.

Discussion

- (1) **Khoekhoe**
||gau-b am-s
arrow-M mouth-F
'tip of the arrow'
(lit. 'mouth of the arrow')
- (2) **Turkish**
sarımsağ-ın dişi
garlic-GEN tooth
'garlic clove'
(lit. 'tooth of the garlic')

Conclusion

- Only a few body-part metaphors seem to occur in a wide range of languages, most of them are language-specific.
- Some languages use more body-part metaphors than others.
- Languages differ in terms of which dimension they prefer to map body-part terms to object and landscape features.
- The preference for a dimension in a certain language can indicate the choice for a body-part metaphor although additional factors may also play a role.
- Body-part metaphors that are categorized in more than one dimension seem to be more frequent.

References

[1] I. Ibarretxe-Antuñano. 2012. The importance of unveiling conceptual metaphors in a minority language. [2] I. Kraska-Szlenk. 2014. Semantic extensions of Body Part Terms. [3] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. 1980. Metaphors we live by. [4] S. C. Levinson. 1994. Vision, shape, and linguistic description. [5] T. J. Tilbe. 2017. Parts and Wholes in Mesoamerican Language and Cognition. [6] S. Ullmann. 1963. Semantic universals.

Your Feedback

I would like to hear your feedback to further develop my research and learn more about **researchers who work on the same topic** or **body-part metaphors in your native language**. Contact: tjukanni@hu-berlin.de

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Results

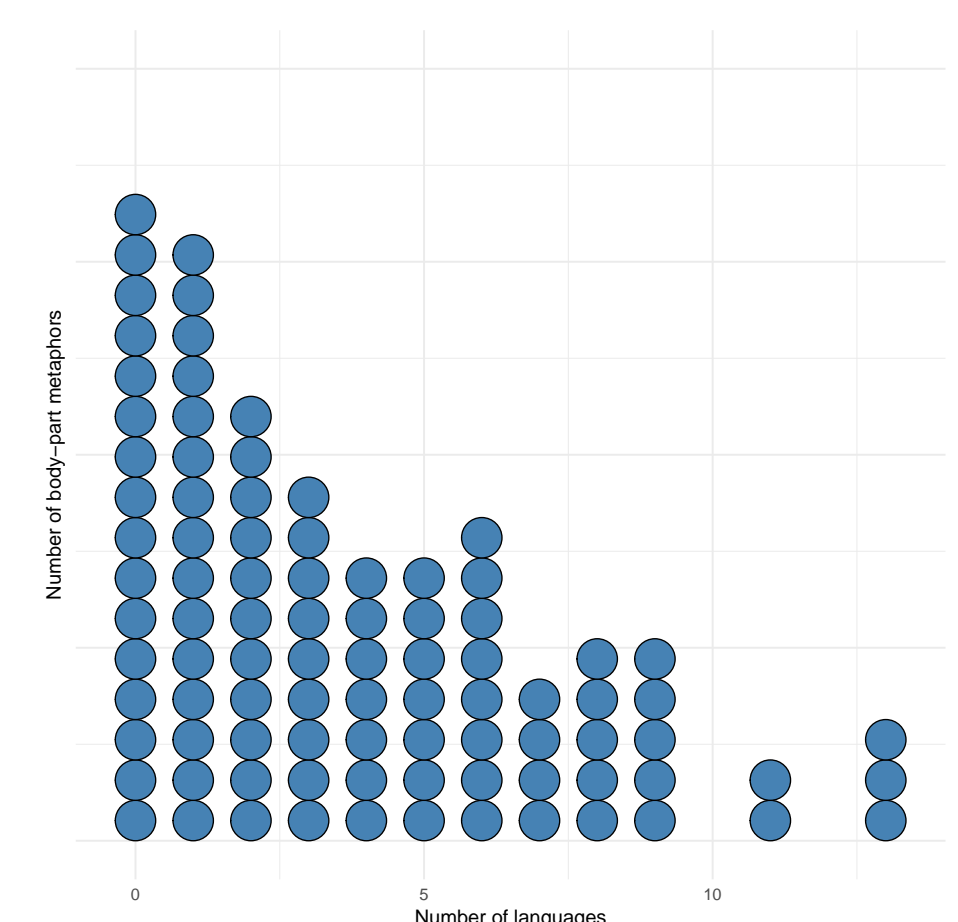


Figure 2: Frequency of body-part metaphors.

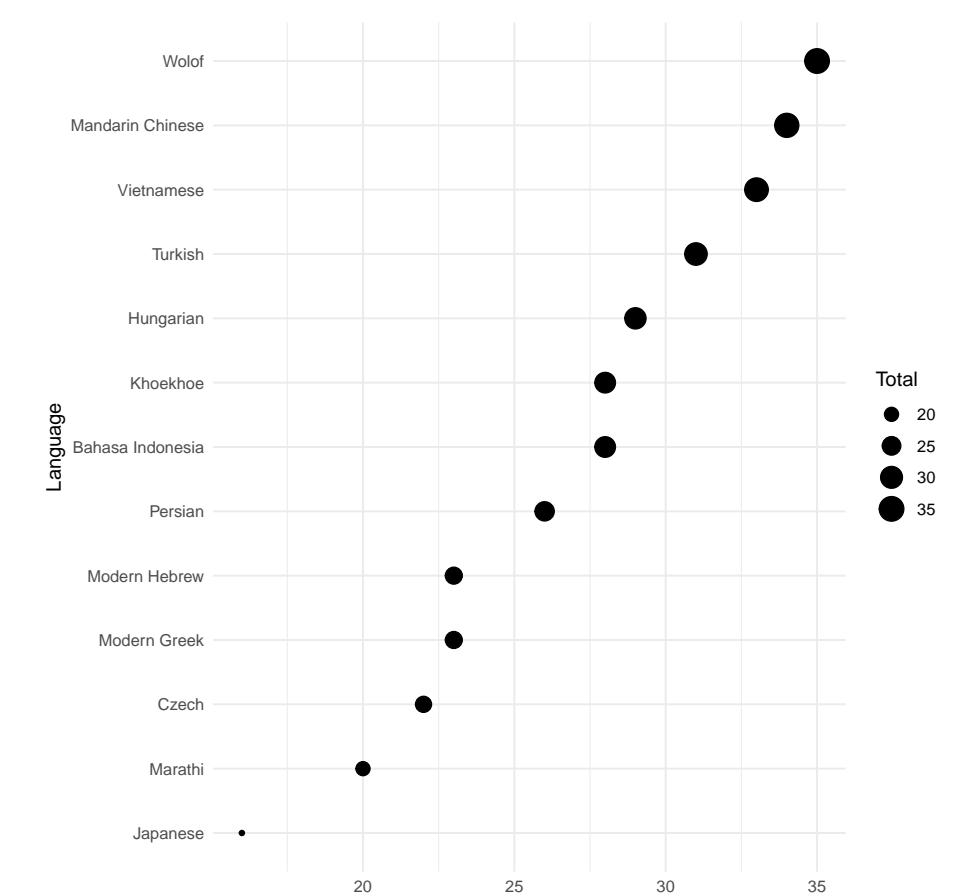


Figure 3: Occurrences of body-part metaphors in each language.

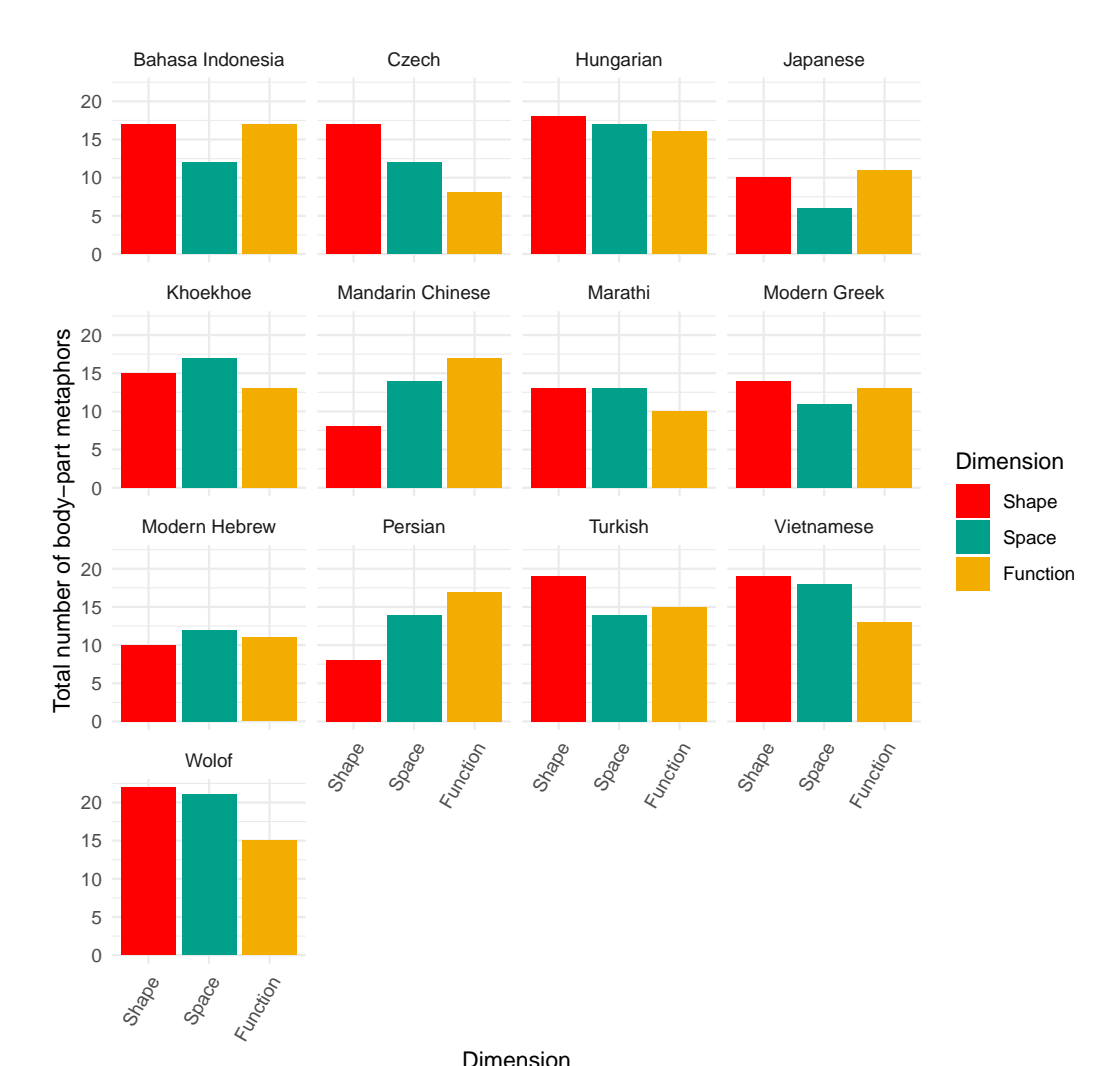


Figure 4: Preferences for each dimension.

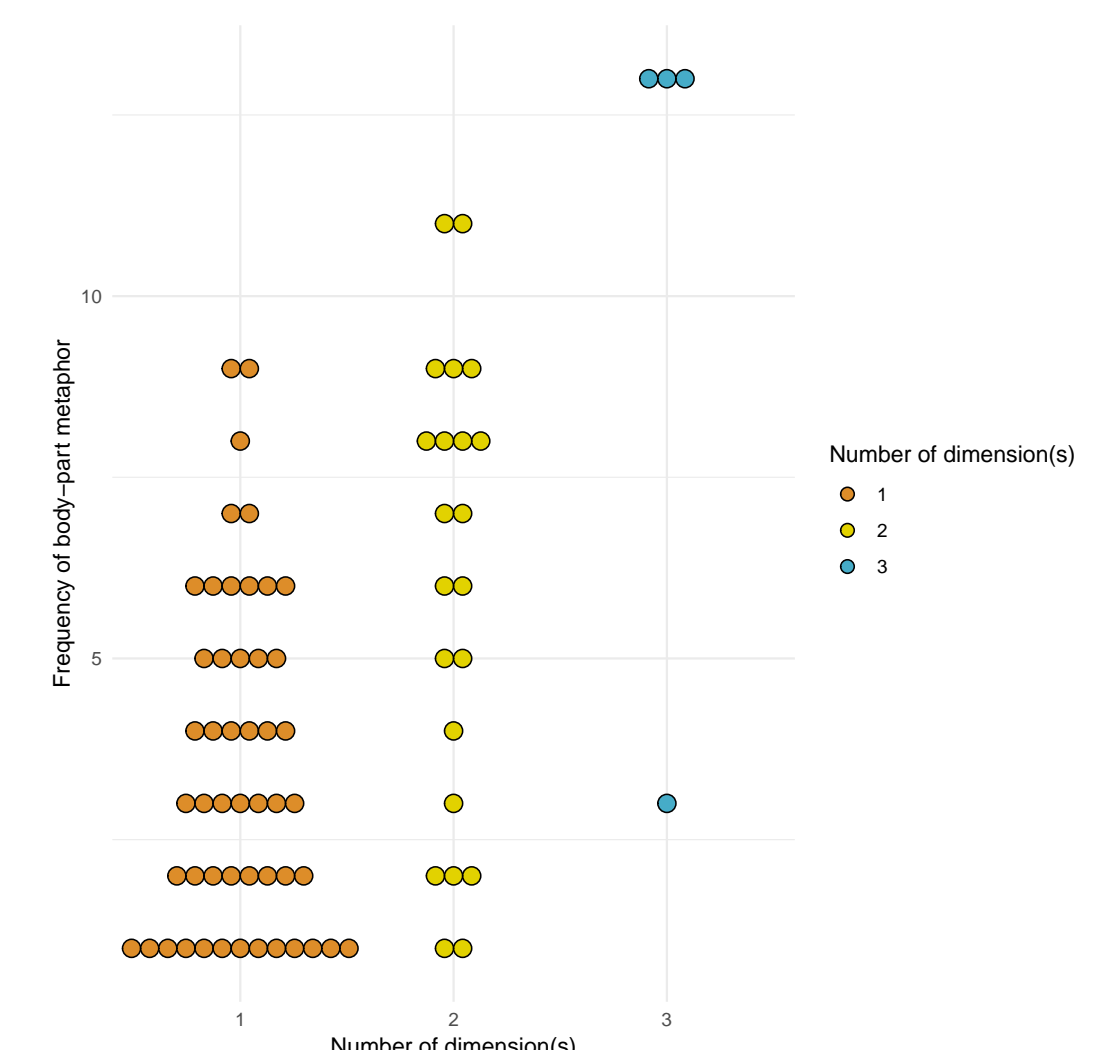


Figure 5: Correlation between frequency and dimension.