

The *face* of the moon – Body part extensions in Vietnamese

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Third Cultural Linguistics International Conference (CLIC-2021) –
Cultural Linguistics: The Interface of Language and Cultural Conceptualisations

June 16th, 2021

Polysemy, Ambiguity, Colexification

Ambiguous words challenge our understanding of how the mental lexicon is structured.

Two hypotheses on the activation of a specific meaning:

- all meanings of a word are stored in one lexical entry and the relevant one is retrieved
- only a core meaning is stored and the other senses are generated by lexical rules

(see Pustejovsky 1991)

Colexification between Body Parts and Object (Parts)



(see Tjuka 2019)

Similarity Features

- the metaphorical use of body part terms seems to highlight certain features of the source in the target (Apresjan 1974)
- the similarity in shape and particularly, the features 'round' and 'long' evoke the metaphorical transfer of body part terms to objects (Andersen 1978)
- perceptual salience and function of parts are important features to categorize everyday objects (Tversky and Hemenway 1984)
- perceptually salient body parts seem to develop polysemous meanings and are often used as a source domain (Kraska-Szlenk 2014)

Preferences for Similarity Features

- shape is productively used to map body parts to objects in Tzeltal (Levinson 1994)
- languages differ in the strengths of preferences for particular strategies (Tilbe 2017)
- frequencies of the use of body part extensions as well as preferences for similarity dimension differs across languages (Tjuka 2019)
- Vietnamese seems to prefer mapping body parts on the basis of shape features (Tjuka 2019)

Features of FACE

- round shape
- function as a representative for an entity or part-whole relation
- visibility
- spatial alignment: contour and being opposite

The Concept of FACE in Vietnamese

- the concept 'to save face' is an important part of Vietnamese culture
- Vietnamese speakers employ deference mechanisms (*lễ phép* 'deference') in everyday life to 'save the face' of a person
(Nguyen 2015)
- The communication strategy of saving someones face lead to a continuing significance of the concept *mặt* in social encounters.

Aim

- A qualitative analysis of the meanings of the body part concept FACE across languages and in particular, the extensions of *mặt* 'face' in Vietnamese.

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/>).

- based on a reference catalog for concepts: Concepticon (List et al. 2016)
- structured in a network
- data sets include, for example, IDS (Key & Comrie, 2016), WOLD (Haspelmath & Tadmor, 2009)

Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications

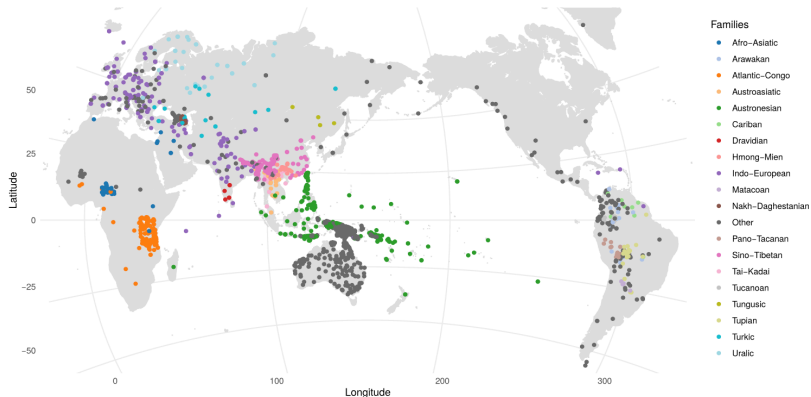


Figure 1: Distribution of languages in CLICS³ (Rzymski et al. 2019).

Cross-Linguistic Colexifications of FACE

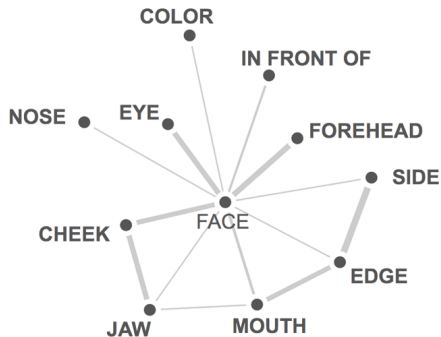


Figure 2: Subgraph of FACE in CLICS³

(https://clics.clld.org/graphs/subgraph_1560).

Cross-Linguistic Colexifications of FACE

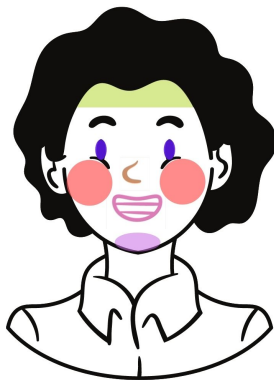


Figure 3: Illustration of cross-linguistic colexifications of FACE.

Colexifications of FACE in Vietnamese

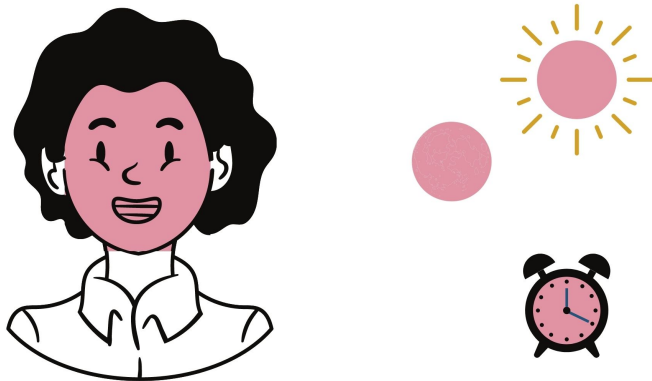


Figure 4: Illustration of colexifications of Vietnamese *mặt* meaning 'face'.

Colexifications of FACE in Vietnamese

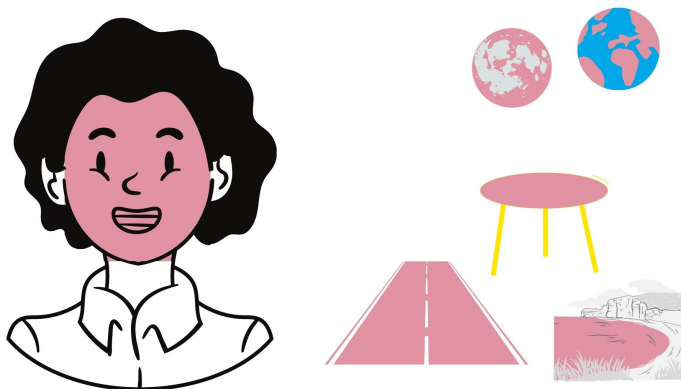


Figure 5: Illustration of colexifications of Vietnamese *mặt* meaning 'surface'.

Colexifications of FACE in Vietnamese

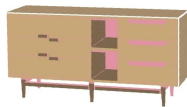
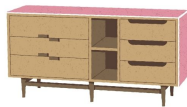
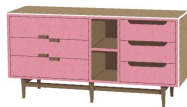
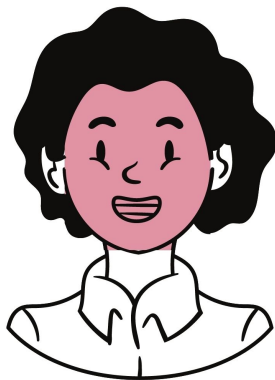


Figure 6: Illustration of colexifications of Vietnamese *mặt* meaning 'side'.

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- The basis for the extension of FACE across languages seems to be a part-whole relation.
- The use of *mặt* is motivated by the concept of 'save face' in the Vietnamese culture. AND
- The features of the face establish meaning extensions of *mặt* on the basis of shape, function, and spatial alignment.

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FACE AS A REPRESENTATIVE FOR AN ENTITY
- extensions of FACE in the social domain indicate that the term is strongly connected with a person's honor
- The process of extending the meaning of FACE to other entities is rather irregular.
- But the use of *mặt* 'surface' is more productive and points to regular polysemy.

Implications for the Structure of the Mental Lexicon

- Studies investigating the representation of polysemous words distinguish between metaphorical meaning and metonymic meaning (e.g., Klepousniotou and Baum 2007; MacGregor et al. 2015).
- The assumption that words are stored according to their tendency of being more metaphorical or metonymous does not consider the possibility of words incorporating both types, as shown by the use of *mặt* in Vietnamese (Tjuka *forthcoming*).
- An alternative explanation for the different processing of ambiguous words is that the representation of a word is stored as a collection of features related to the central meaning of the word (Vicente 2018).

Thank you!

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