

LINGUIST 168 Introduction to Linguistic Typology

LECTURE 6: LEXICAL TYPOLOGY

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April 14, 2021

Plan for today

- Questions about previous lectures
- Recap terms and ideas from Monday
- Kinship terms and decomposing lexical meaning
- Mapping lexical meaning

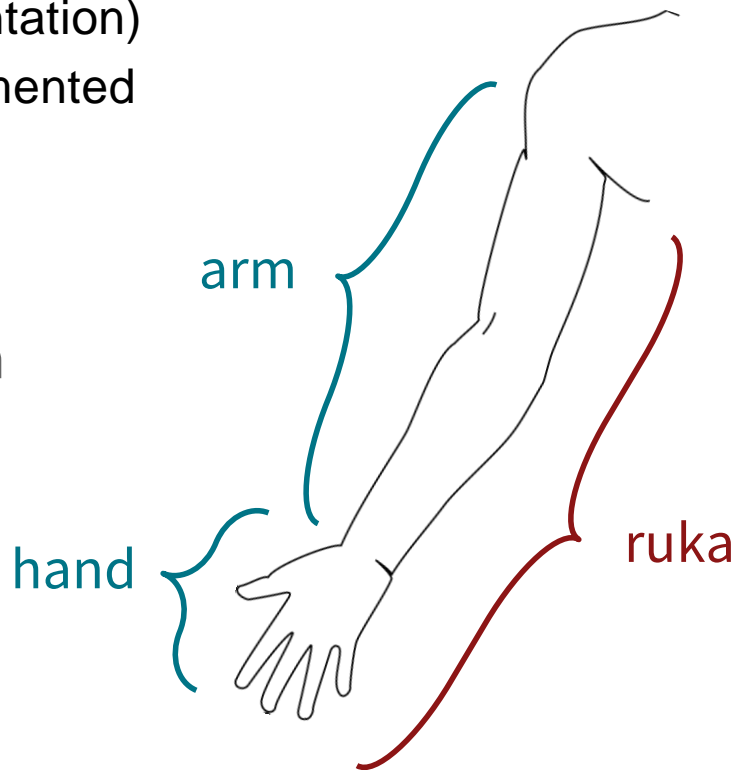
Dimensions of partitioning the world

- **partonomy:** how things are divided into subparts
- **taxonomy:** how things are united into types
- **boundary location:** where boundaries are drawn between categories

Paronymy

(= granularity / segmentation)
how something is segmented
into smaller units

English

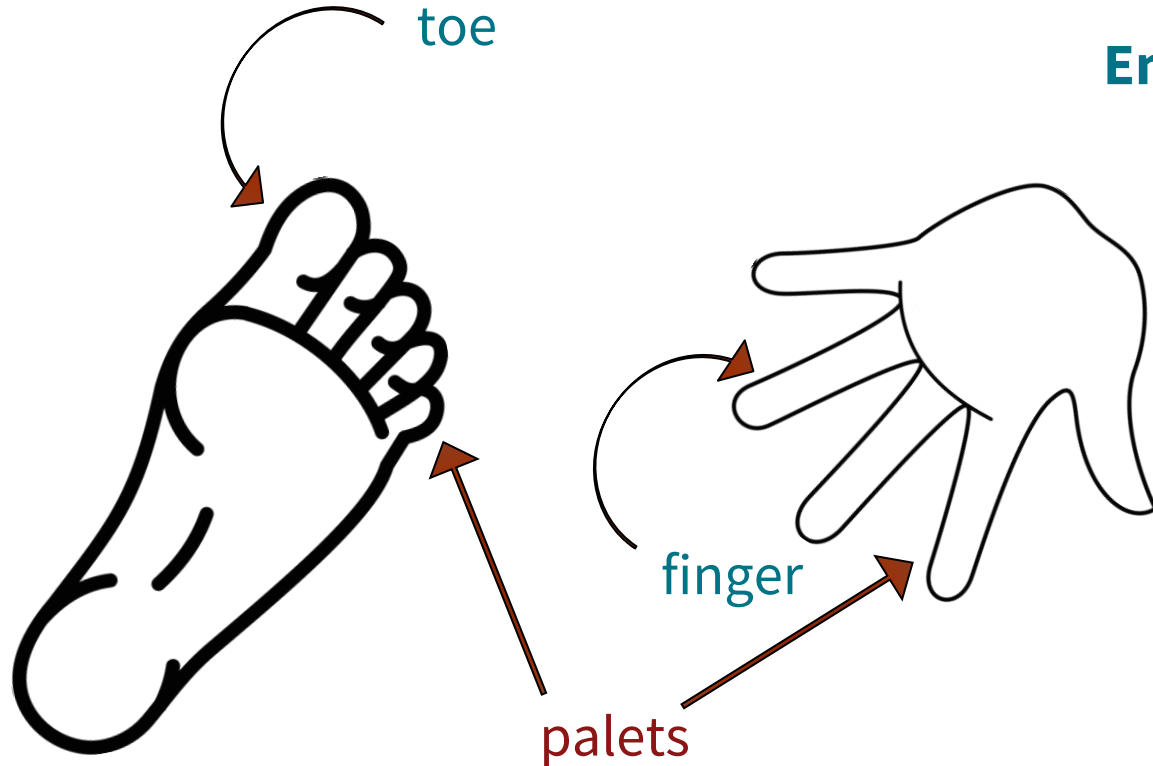


Russian

Taxonomy

(grouping / dissection)

how things are grouped into types



English

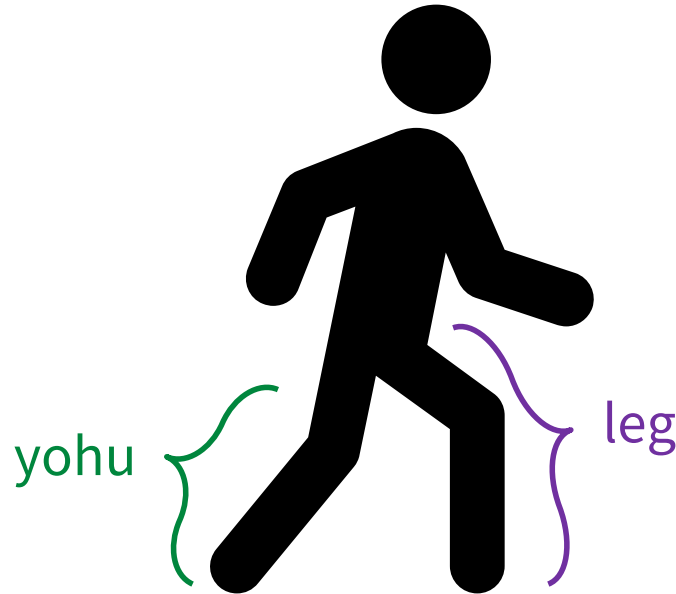
Russian

Boundary location

Where to draw the boundaries between categories?

Tidore

= foot + leg,
cut off three-
quarters up
the thigh



English

Miriam van Staden, 2006, The body and its parts in Tidore, a Papuan language of Eastern Indonesia, Language Sciences 28 (2-3), 323-343, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2005.11.013>

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Activity

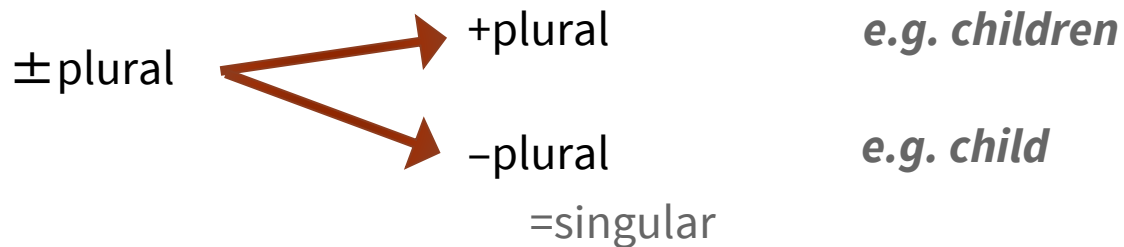
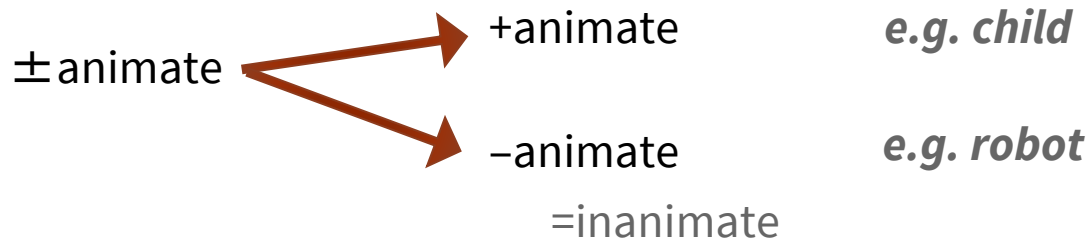
Based on your personal experience and exposure to languages, come with 2-4 examples of differences in partonomy, taxonomy, or boundary location in the domain of **body part terms**.

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Componential analysis

- Meaning is decomposed into **binary features**.



Kinship terms analyzed with componential features

- focusing on a subset of kinship terms: **siblings**
- three relevant parameters (= features)

1. sex of ego

male or female

2. sex of relative

3. relative age

elder or younger



8 basic sibling types

Nerlove, Sara, and A. Kimball Romney. "Sibling Terminology and Cross-Sex Behavior." *American Anthropologist* 69, no. 2 (1967): 179-87.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/669433>

8 basic sibling types

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

How does this map to language?

brother

sister



2 terms in English

Types of sibling classifications

- There are 8 basic sibling types.
- Languages vary as to which of these types are differentiated / united under a single linguistic term.
- E.g. in English, there are 2 sibling terms:
 - › brother
 - › sister
- Hypothetically, how many possible language types are there, based on sibling classification?

→ poll

Types of sibling classifications

- There are 4,140 logically possible language types!
- BUT only 12 are attested in more than one language (from sample of 245 languages)



typology narrows down possibilities

Why so many hypothetical language types??

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Most common types

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Out of 245
languages:

78 have 4 terms

efo

Ewe

etse

eda

efoe

Does anyone
speak a
language with
this system?

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria, Ekaterina Rakhilina and Martine Vanhove. 2015. "The semantics of lexical typology", in The Routledge Handbook of Semantics.

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315685533.ch25>

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Most common types

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Out of 245
languages:

38 have 3 terms

aga

Turkish

aba

kardaş

Does anyone
speak a
language with
this system?

Most common types

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Out of 245
languages:

21 have 2 terms

brat

Russian

sestra

Typologically
quite rare!
<10%

Most common types

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Out of 245
languages:

21 have 2 terms

Indonesian

kakak

adik

Does anyone
speak a
language with
this system?

Cross-sibling versus parallel-sibling

	sex of ego	sex of sibling	relative age
1	male	male	elder
2	female	male	elder
3	male	male	younger
4	female	male	younger
5	male	female	elder
6	female	female	elder
7	male	female	younger
8	female	female	younger

Out of 245
languages:
39 differentiate
same-sex vs
different-sex
siblings

uso = same-sex

taugane = male sibling
of female

taufafine = female
sibling of male

Samoan

Does anyone speak a language with this system?


Do you speak or know of a language with a system of sibling classification that we didn't discuss?

Why only 12 sibling systems?

- Cognitive restriction on disjunctive categories

= grouping categories with **no overlapping parameter**

brother = elder or younger male sibling

fake term "brootier" = male sibling or sibling of a male  no overlapping parameter

sex of sibling **sex of ego**

Nerlove, Sara, and A. Kimball Romney. "Sibling Terminology and Cross-Sex Behavior." *American Anthropologist* 69, no. 2 (1967): 179-87.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/669433>

Why only 12 sibling systems?

- Avoidance of categories where sex of ego is primary distinction
= no system with terms for “sibling of male” versus “sibling of female”

It's the comparison of sex that matters!

Nerlove, Sara, and A. Kimball Romney. "Sibling Terminology and Cross-Sex Behavior." *American Anthropologist* 69, no. 2 (1967): 179-87.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/669433>

Questions?

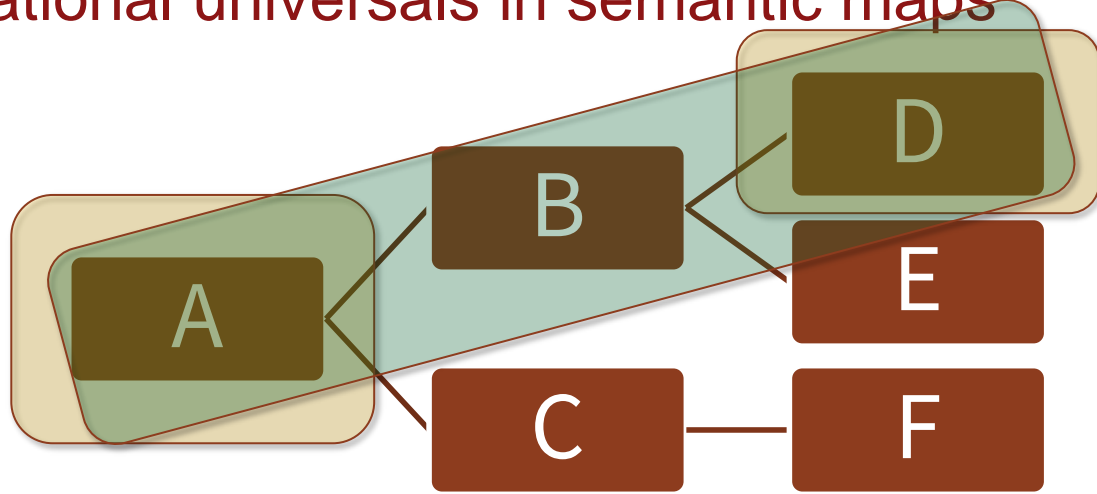
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Semantic maps

- Differences in **taxonomy** or **boundary location** can be visually modeled as a type of graph or map.
- Semantic maps are useful for **implicational universals**

Implicational universals in semantic maps



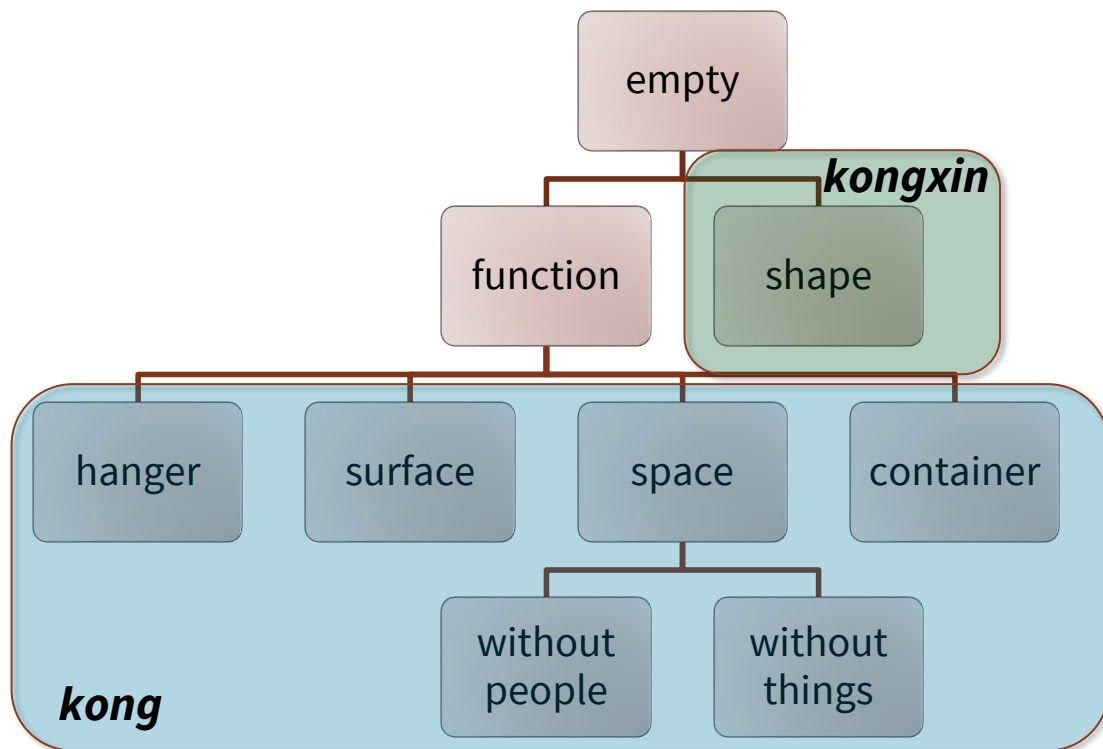
not possible

possible

If an expression is associated with non-adjacent nodes A and D, it will also be associated with the connecting node B.

= In all/most languages, if a single expression is used for A and D, it is also used for B.

Semantic map for EMPTINESS

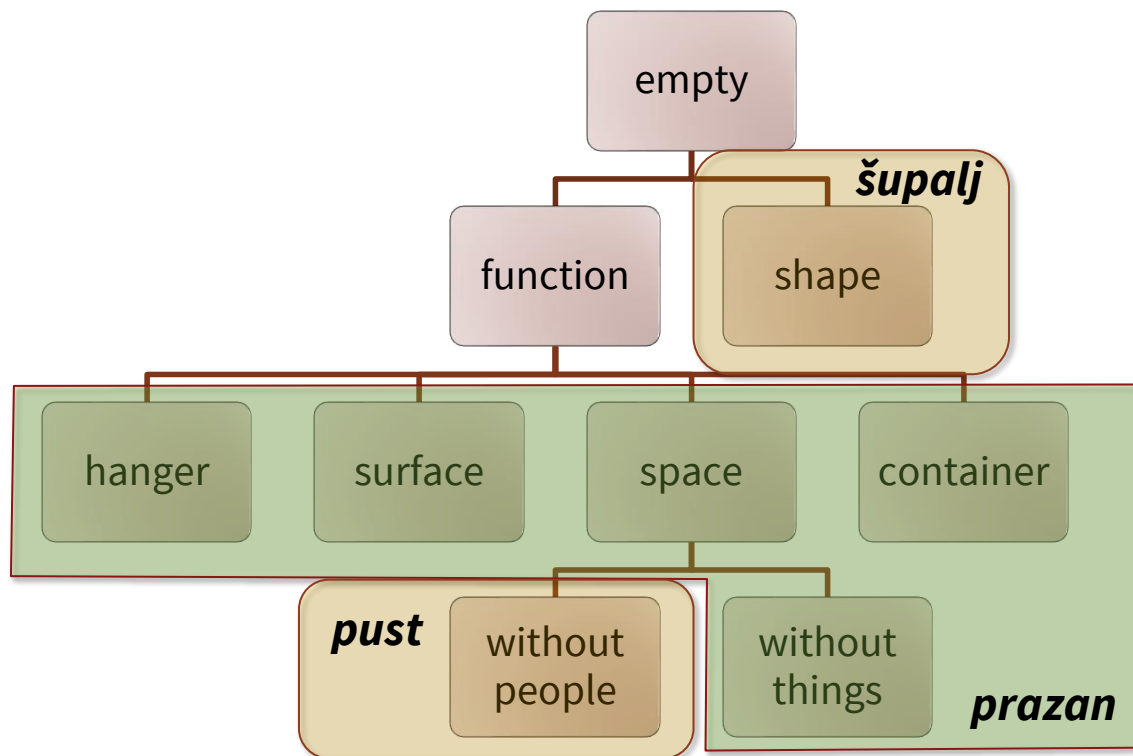


Mandarin

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria, Ekaterina Rakhilina and Martine Vanhove, “The semantics of lexical typology”, in The Routledge Handbook of Semantics. <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315685533.ch25>

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Semantic map for EMPTINESS



Serbian

Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria, Ekaterina Rakhilina and Martine Vanhove, “The semantics of lexical typology”, in The Routledge Handbook of Semantics. <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315685533.ch25>

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Semantic map for COLD

Domains of temperature evaluation:

- tactile

The stones are cold.

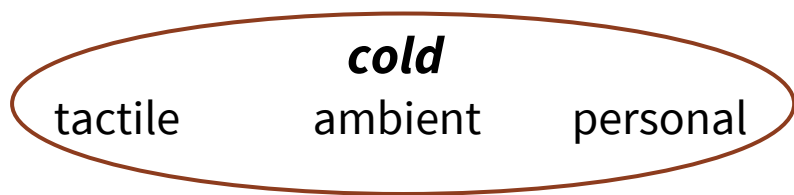
- ambient

It is cold here.

- personal feeling

He feels cold.

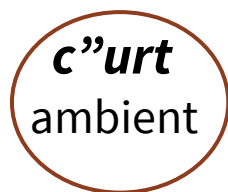
Semantic map for COLD



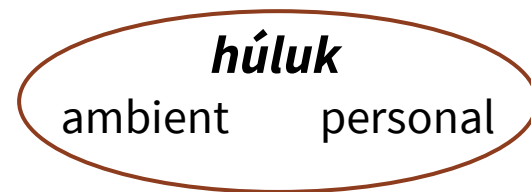
English



Kamang

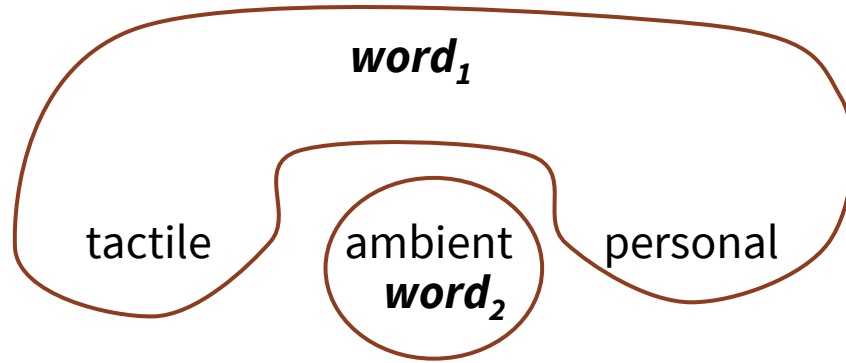


Armenian



Palula

Semantic map for COLD



Impossible system

Lexical typology: summary

- identifies universals and tendencies in **lexical meaning**
- main ways of partitioning meaning:
 - › **partonomy**: how things are divided into parts
 - › **taxonomy**: how things are grouped into types
 - › **boundary location**: where boundaries are drawn between things
- examples of approaches to lexical typology:
 - › componential analysis
 - › semantic maps