

A list of color, emotion, and human body part concepts

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Color, emotion, and human body parts are often considered universal semantic domains. However, cross-linguistic comparison of the connections within each of the domains reveals interesting differences across languages (e.g., Jackson et al. [2019](#)). Researchers in lexical typology systematically collect the names for colors, emotions, and human body parts across various languages and analyze the principles of how naming patterns evolve. Using the same word for multiple concepts or colexification, for example, Vietnamese *xanh* denoting the colors green and blue, is often discussed in those studies. To study the colexifications across the three semantic domains color, emotion, and human body part, we need a set of comparable concepts. This blog post introduces a list of 192 concepts across all three domains based on the available concept sets in [Concepticon](#) (List et al. [2016](#), [2021](#)).

Background

Studies in lexical typology investigate the variation of word meanings across the languages of the world (Koptjevskaja-Tamm [2008](#)). In those studies, researchers often focus on a particular domain that is comparable across a variety of languages. For example, the domain of color has received a lot of attention throughout the last half-century. There is a long-standing debate over the principles of how languages categorize the color spectrum. The study on color has come a long way from the early research of Berlin and Kay (1969) who proposed that there are basic color terms and a color hierarchy, to more recent studies that test those assumptions on a large scale and with computational modeling (Haynie & Bower [2016](#)).

Another domain that is of interest for lexical typology is emotion semantics which is also studied across languages with the aim of distinguishing between universal and culture-specific principles of categorization. A study on 24 emotion concepts across 2,500 languages by Jackson et al. ([2019](#)) found that geographic proximity, hedonic

valence, and physiological arousal predict the degree of similarity in linguistic networks. The study paved the way for a new analysis of colexifications, that is, concepts denoted by the same word. By constructing emotion colexification networks from the data in the Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications (CLICS, Rzymiski et al. [2020](#)), the authors were able to show variation across language families. For comparison, they used 13 color concepts and found that there is less variation in color semantics than in emotion semantics across language families.

To date, no comparable study of body terminology has been conducted although the human body has received continuous interest as a possible universal semantic system. Especially, the categorization principles of human body nomenclature were investigated by anthropologists and linguists. At the beginning of this research, universal patterns and historical developments including stages of polysemy were proposed (Andersen 1978; Brown & Witkowski [1983](#)), similar to the study on color systems. However, recent studies challenge these claims, as there are major differences in the way languages divide the body into parts through language (Majid et al. [2006](#)). A study on colexifications in body terminology could thus shed light on categorization principles to determine whether they are universal or culture-specific. The concept list that I present in the next section is the foundation for our upcoming study.

The concept list

The concept list consists of 192 concepts. Included in the list are 22 color concepts, 34 emotion concepts, and 136 human body part concepts. The list was published on Zenodo and is available here: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5572303> (see also Supplementary Material).

The concepts of the human body part category were taken from Tjuka ([2020](#)) although animal body part concepts such as [PAW](#) or [CLAW](#) were excluded. The present list includes outer and inner body parts such as [LEG](#) and [LIVER](#). For the color and emotion concepts, I went through the concept sets in [Concepticon](#) (Version 2.5.0, List et al. [2021](#)) in the semantic fields "Sense perception" and "Emotions and values", respectively. The color concepts included in the present concept list are basic color concepts such as [BLACK](#), [RED](#), but also secondary colors like [PURPLE](#) and [BEIGE](#). For the emotion concepts, positive and negative human emotions were included, for example, [HAPPINESS](#), [ANXIETY](#), and [CONTEMPT](#). The [Concepticon](#) (List et al. [2016](#), [2021](#)) offers concepts for glosses that cannot be categorized as either one or another concept, for example, [GREEN OR UNRIPE](#). To make our future analysis unambiguous, I

excluded those "OR" concepts. In comparison to the study by Jackson et al. (2019), the new list offers 12 additional color concepts and 9 additional emotion concepts.

Summary

Concepts of color, emotion and human body parts are important for studies in lexical typology. The concept list presented in this blog post consists of a selection of concepts across all three semantic domains. The list was based on the available concept sets in the [Concepticon](#) (Version 2.5.0, List et al. 2021). In an upcoming study on colexifications across the languages of the world, the analysis of Jackson et al. (2019) will be extended and a new analysis will be performed on human body part colexifications. The concept list is a cornerstone for this investigation.

Supplementary Material

Tjuka, Annika. 2021. A list of color, emotion, and human body part concepts. Zenodo: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5549847>.

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