

# The Asymmetry of Conceptual Expansions in Predicational and Modificational Contexts

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Body-part terms are known to exhibit a wealth of extended (metonymical and metaphorical) meanings. Here I take up 16 English body-part terms and collect 250 argument usages and the same number of adjunct usages from the BNC for each nominal expression, and sort out the extended references to demonstrate an asymmetrical distribution: that is, part of the extended references found in argument positions are attested in adjuncts, but not the other way round (cf. Waltereit 1999). This asymmetrical distribution found in the predicational context of argument-adjunct combinations is also reflected in the modificational context of head-modifier combinations. The extended references attested in modifier positions are basically found in head positions of word combinations, but not the other way round (cf. Arcodia 2011).

These two distributions of nominal conceptual expansions are related in a number of ways, and some observations can be made regarding the interrelation. They include:

- (1) Those extended meanings attested both in arguments and adjuncts freely are most likely to be attested also in both head and modifier positions in word combinations.
- (2) Those meanings attested in adjunct positions are more likely to be assisted by premodification, while in argument positions they are less likely to be hosted by modifiers.
- (3) Those meanings assisted by premodifiers both in argument and adjunct positions are unlikely to be employed in the position of modifiers in word combinations.

(1) shows that expanded references attested in different syntactic contexts are more entrenched and are likely to be regarded as part of the lexical meaning of the body-part terms. Instances include *nose* for "tip/front," *head* for "leader," *mouth* for "aperture," *face* for "front/surface" etc. Those meanings are readily adopted in word combinations, and even appear in modifier positions where no assistance of additional linguistic material for insinuating a particular extended meaning is expected.

(2) indicates that nominals in argument positions are not likely to require additional modifiers for decoding the extended meaning, because selectional restrictions dictated by the main predicate of the sentence is enough to identify the intended sense, while in adjuncts, additional clues tend to appear for deciphering. e.g., Her *brow* darkened. (argument use of *brow* for "complexion") vs. He looks forward to the future, with a *stem* *brw* (adjunct use of *brow* for "complexion")

(3) means that those extended meanings requiring modifiers for reaching the appropriate explication are not likely to obtain when the nominals stand alone. Heads are given semantic clues by modifiers for deciphering, but modifiers are simply restrictors in word combinations, so that the extended meanings of modifiers should obtain even when they stand alone. This can be the reason for the distribution in (3). e.g., a covetous *eye* (*eye* for "disposition expressed in the eye," which is not designated when the nominal *eye* stands alone. No example is attested where *eye* is employed as the modifier in a word combination with the meaning of "disposition.")

Some additional distributional facts will be reported through the scrutiny of BNC data, and the reasons for the distribution will be investigated.

## References

- Arcodia, G. (2011). A Construction Morphology account of Derivation in Mandarin Chinese. *Morphology* 21: 89-130.
- Waltereit, R. (1999). Grammatical Constraints on Metonymy. In K. Panther & G. Radden (Eds.) *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (pp. 233-253). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.