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**REGULATIONS ON USE****Stephen C. Levinson and Asifa Majid**

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## Body

Nick Enfield with members of the Space Project (Miriam van Staden, Steve Levinson, Sergio Meira, Jenny Pyers, Sotaro Kita, Gunter Senft, Jürgen Bohnemeyer, Melissa Bowerman, Asifa Majid, and others)

**Relevant Projects:** Space, Event Representation, Gesture

**Priority** - Mid. These are exploratory tasks, and it is not clear yet what will come out of this.

**Motivation** - The body is a unique object in human experience, posing a special problem in cognition and perception: it is at once part of our selves and one of the things in the world we encounter. Unlike anything else in our world we have a dual access to the body - as something which can on the one hand be seen and touched like any other object, or on the other hand be accessed by proprioception, the body-specific modality. These two modes of sensory access to the body overlap most of the time, and their distinctness goes largely unnoticed. The body provides an as yet largely un-mined field of investigation in the universality/relativity debate. There are hundreds of phenomena which the body presents in common to the moment-by-moment experience of every individual on earth - any of these is a potential point of cross-linguistic comparison. Of obvious relevance to the space project is the question of how languages conventionally 'carve up' the body into parts. It is well known that terms for body parts like 'head', 'belly', and 'back' are used in conventional spatial description, but the common assumption that such terms have the same 'literal' meanings across languages is false. Careful comparative work on the basic meanings of these terms remains to be done.

Emerging from the body-part vocabulary, there is often a 'mapping' of the part-whole relationships onto inanimate entities. The application of body part terms to parts of things which do not literally have bodies seems to be a universal, but it is yet to be established whether any of the specific applications are universal. Certainly, it has been claimed (for example in literature on grammaticalization) that there are at least universal 'tendencies' for specific body parts such as 'back' to be used in the expression of spatial location and topological relationships.

Of relevance to the Event Representation project are the *processes* the body presents us to experience and talk about. These are of special interest in cross-linguistic research on language and cognition because they (a) are uncontroversially universal in the experience of human groups, and (b) present defined *processes* and *chains of events* rather than mere 'things' for categorization. Two points of focus for investigation are as follows. First, how do people linguistically package situations in which the body may or may not be viewed like a 'thing'? For example, is there a dedicated formal distinction between a description of 'lifting one's arm' by intrinsic action as opposed to by lifting it up (like one lifts a thing) with the other hand, or is this sort of distinction left to pragmatic inference? Some relevant data has appeared in literature on reflexive and middle marking (Kemmer 1993: Chapters 3 and 4), and on the semantic classification of verbs (Dixon 1991: 118-120, Levin 1993:§40). Second, how does the language encode the events and processes which take place with the body (and/or some emission from it) as sole locus (e.g. 'sneeze', 'fart', 'hiccup', 'vomit', etc.).

**Questionnaire task** -Three sections (1a, 1b, 2). Internal priority: Although the two main sections can be done separately, they should both be attempted if possible. This is mainly so as to maintain comparability between results. Number of subjects: ideally more than three, but just one will still be of some use.

**Equipment** - there is no need to record these sessions, and the only stimulus is the set of pictures of the body, provided in this manual. The pictures are man and woman, front and back, nude. There are two front view pictures with a leaf placed over the genitalia, in case you or your consultants are shy. This will be more likely if you are working with more than one consultant. You will need to gauge the situation.

**Estimated time to run the task** - 2 hours per consultant (?), depending on the detail of discussion.

## 1. Body parts.

### 1a. The inventory of parts

It is useful to have basic data on the ‘carving up’ of the body made in the language you are working on. In this manual there are four illustrations of the body, showing front and back views of men and women (and two extra ‘modest’ front views with pubic areas covered). (Make working copies of these so that the originals are not marked.)

Present these pictures to the consultant and ask them to tell you the words for all the parts of the body that can be discerned. Note the names of the various parts, and, as clearly as possible, determine the precise extensions of the terms - e. g. where does ‘foot’ finish and ‘leg’ begin? You could give a pen to the consultant and ask them to draw lines in the appropriate places. Note that just marking a point on the body to specify a body part will not enable us to delineate the extension of the relevant term. We want to be able to compare the relevant boundaries across languages.

*Note 1 - Be mindful of the possibility that a term may be polysemous (e.g. a single term covering two parts which are in a paronymic relationship, such as ‘arm’ and ‘hand’).*

*Note 2 - Be mindful of the possibility that the same body part may have a number of different labels, which differ in terms of usage (especially concerning register, politeness). For example, in Lao, references to the ‘foot’ are considered impolite. There are two terms for ‘heel’ - son2 nòng1 and son2 tiin3 - regarded as not impolite, and very impolite, respectively. (Cf. the very large English vocabulary for genitalia, ranging in politeness, and connotation.) There are usage effects, too - Lao speakers may avoid explicit reference to the foot. For example, one may say sêt1 khaa3 ‘wipe (your) legs’ to mean ‘wipe (your) feet’. (Without this piece of cultural background, the use of khaa3 ‘legs’ to refer to ‘feet’ could be misinterpreted - i.e. one might imagine that khaa3 could have a second meaning ‘feet’.)*

*Note 3 - It is worth going into some detail to figure out the precise meaning and extension of especially the most basic and assumed-to-be-universal body parts - in particular ‘eye’, ‘mouth’, ‘back’, ‘face’, and ‘foot’. These have often been claimed to be universal, but this is not based on careful cross-linguistic semantic analysis. Looking at collocations can help here. For example, in Lao ‘cracked mouth’ refers to what we would describe in English as ‘cracked lips’.*

*Note 4 - Once you have elicited terms for the parts of the face, you might be interested in asking how the language describes the range of facial expressions such as ‘smile’, ‘frown’, etc. (this is related to Section 2b of this questionnaire, below). See Enfield 2001 on the Lao means for describing facial expression.*

### 1b. ‘Extensions’ of body part terms

A. ‘Mapping’ onto things other than bodies: Body part terms are often used for reference to things and parts of things other than the human body. If there are extensions in the language you are working on, what is the apparent logic? For example, in Lao *paak5* ‘mouth’ is used to refer to the place where a transport route ends, leading into a larger one - thus, *paak5 thaang2* ‘mouth (of) road’ and *paak5 nam4* ‘mouth (of) river’ refer to the points where the road, and river, respectively, terminate, leading into a larger one. In

Khmer, however, a river also has a 'mouth', but this refers not to the place where a river terminates, but to the main section of river bank in a village where people access the water (i.e. where boats stop, where people mill around, etc.). You will have to use your imagination to come up with answers, but there are some obvious areas to look into. Thus, check whether the following classes of objects have 'body parts' in the language you are working on:

- common artifacts such as bottles, tables, cars, etc.
- body-part based measures (e.g. *cubits*, *feet*, etc.; Lao has *khùup*<sup>4</sup> 'handspan', *sòdk*<sup>5</sup> 'elbow', *waa*<sup>2</sup> 'two-arm span').
- animals (*Clearly these will have body parts - one point of asking is to check when and how these do not match with human body parts. For comparability please be sure to ask about dogs (and chickens?), which are perhaps the most globally widespread domestic beasts.*)
- natural phenomena such as mountains, rivers, trees
- abstract phenomena such as time and space (*This is obviously a huge topic. One area of obvious interest to the space project in is the area of locative and topographical expressions - see Friedrich 1971, Heine 1997: Chapter 3; cf. section of this manual on 'Space in Thinking'.*)

B. 'Mapping' of objects onto body-parts: cf. 'egg' for 'testicle', 'mouse' for 'muscle', 'mother of the hand' for 'thumb', 'pot' for 'head', etc. (cf. Heine 1997:Chapter 7)

C. Metonymic extensions from body-parts to other body-parts; 'brains'/'marrow'; 'foot'/'leg'; 'navel'/'belly' (Matisoff 1978, Wilkins 1996, Heine 1997).

D. Do speakers of the language use terms for body parts (especially the internal organs, such as the heart, liver, or spleen) as a 'seat' of emotional or cognitive activity? Where do 'thinking' and 'feeling' take place? What is the extent and productivity of idioms such as 'it hammers my head' or 'I'm hot in the liver'? (See Enfield to appear.)

## 2. Body events and processes.

Bodily events, actions, and processes - such as 'sneeze', 'vomit', 'blink', 'stretch' and 'laugh' (see below for a long list) - are universal in the biologically determined experience of all humans. But this does not mean that the semantics of their linguistic descriptions will be consistent. Some will be encoded in languages, some not. Here, we are interested not only in the meanings of words in this domain, but also in the grammatical possibilities of these terms.

Dixon identifies a class of 'corporeal' verbs in English, concluding that 'it is hard to draw boundaries within this type' (1991:118). Levin (1993:§40) examines the same, but is more willing to divide them into separate classes. Both authors note grammatical distinctions among these verbs such as the following: some cannot take objects (e.g. *cry*, *faint*, *sweat*, *ache*), some can take objects but not cognate objects (*eat*, *chew*, *suck*), some can take cognate objects (*smile*), some take only one obligatory object argument (*crane* \*(*the neck*), *gnash* \*(*the teeth*)), others are ambitransitive, but only one object argument is possible (*blink* (*the eyes*))/(*\*the nose*)). Since these kinds of grammatical distinctions are both subtle and very much language-specific, is difficult to outline in a questionnaire such as this the

precise set of questions which should be asked. You will need to use your imagination, and check the range of grammatical behaviors (compared with prototypical verbs of various classes) that verbs of this semantic area fall into.

One important area is that of ‘body moves’, i.e. contortions, orientations, actions involving the body (Diffloth 1974, Wierzbicka 1979). How does the language express actions performed with the body that are inherently ‘internally motivated’? These include expressions like *arch the back*, *blow the nose*, *raise the eyebrows*, *crane the neck* (see Levin 1993:221). This domain is of particular interest to the Gesture project, since this class of expressions refers to words for gestures of various kinds, such as *point*, *wave*, *wink*, *nod*, and *bow*. The cross-linguistic study of gestures lacks information about the range of ‘folk analyses’ of bodily moves and signs encoded in the languages of the world.

In many cases, there is a semantic (and grammatical) distinction between movement of a given body part by internal compulsion (e.g. raising one’s eyebrows), or by external manipulation, as one would an object (e.g. grabbing one’s eyebrows between one’s fingers and pulling them up). The distinction is not made grammatically in English. Thus, *I lifted my arm* is ambiguous between an ‘internal motion’ reading and an ‘external manipulation’ reading, and the very same construction is available for *I lifted his arm* (only an ‘external manipulation’ reading available). In Lao, there is a verb *nik1* which only appears with the object argument *khiw4* ‘eyebrows’ in the expression *nik1 khiw4* ‘to raise the eyebrows (by internal compulsion)’. To say that one raised one’s own eyebrows by external manipulation would require a different verb *nok1* ‘lift’, as in *nok1 khiw4* ‘(I) lifted my eyebrows’. Lifting someone else’s eyebrows would be expressible as *khòj5 nok1 khiw4 phen1* [I lift eyebrows 3sg] ‘I lifted his eyebrows’, and *khòj5 nik1 khiw4 phen1* is only marginally possible, with the meaning ‘I raised (my) eyebrows (at) him’ (not \*‘I raised his eyebrows’). (The distinction would perhaps be marked in English by a pragmatic inference arising out of lexical choice - *I raised my eyebrows* = ‘internal compulsion’ vs. *I lifted my eyebrows* +> ‘external manipulation’.) In the language you are working on, must speakers distinguish between internal compulsion and external manipulation for these kinds of expressions? If not, how can one distinguish if one has to?

Test with the following expressions, which can be done by internal compulsion or external manipulation:

- lifting a body part (head, arm, eyebrows)
- pointing (by hand/finger)
- shaking
- stamping (i.e. foot on ground)

A more expansive set of ‘corporeal verbs’ includes also verbs for ‘bodily processes’. The following list of examples is partly selected from Levin (1993:§40):

*belch, blush, hiccup, pant, sneeze, sniffle, snore, swallow, yawn; bleed, breath, cough, cry, dribble, drool, vomit, spit, sweat; fart, piss, shit, ejaculate; exhale, inhale, perspire; chuckle, frown, gape, gasp, gawk, giggle, glare, grimace, grin, groan, growl, howl, jeer, laugh, moan, scowl, sigh, smile, whistle; blink, clap, nod, point, shrug, squint, wag, wave, wink; arch (back, neck), bare (teeth), bat (eyelashes), blow (nose), stick out tongue, clench fists, click tongue, cross arms, gnash teeth, snap fingers, stretch (legs), turn (head), wiggle (hips, nose), wrinkle (forehead, nose); bob, bow, curtsy, genuflect, kneel, salaam, salute; doze, sleep, snooze; cower, cringe, flinch, recoil, wince; convulse, cower, shake, shiver; choke, suffocate; itch, ache; tingle, (head) spin, throb, be numb, tickle.*

For each of these verbs, we can ask questions of the following kind:

- must the verb take one argument, or two, or either?  
(e.g. *She pointed, She pointed her finger* vs. *\*She craned, She craned her neck*)
- what are the selectional restrictions on the arguments involved?  
(e.g. *She craned her neck, \*She craned his neck, \*She craned her leg*)
- can cognate objects be used?  
(e.g. *She sneezed a big sneeze, \*He chewed a big chew*)
- can the expression take adjuncts, and if so of what kind?  
(e.g. *She pointed (her finger) at him, \*She pointed him*; In some cases, more than one meaning of the adjunct is possible - *John laughed at Mary* is 'directed' while *John laughed at the story* is 'reactive'; cf. Levin 1993:219. Also, can these adjuncts be construed as targets of caused motion?  
(Cf. Goldberg's example of *She sneezed onto the screen*.)
- are causative alternations possible?  
(e.g. *John shook, John shook Mary* vs. *John shivered, \*John shivered Mary*)
- are reflexives possible or normal?  
(cf. French - English examples such as *John pissed himself* have specific meanings; cf. *John shat himself, John fouled himself*, but not *\*John vomited himself*.)
- are passives or similar valency-changing derivations possible?  
(e.g. *My eyes are itching (me), \*I am being itched (by my eyes)*.)

These questions may not all be relevant for your language, and you will have to use your imagination, given what you know of the range of grammatical possibilities for a clause in the language. Importantly, we want to know their range of grammatical possibilities, and the kinds of other verbs in the system that they pattern with grammatically. Some scholars have been interested in the problem of the valency of these types of predications. Are they really intransitive? Goldberg, for example, has claimed that *John sneezed onto the screen* ellipses reference to a theme argument (i.e. that which is emitted when one sneezes), whose motion onto the screen is caused by John's sneezing.

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