

This corpus study explores the lexical polysemy in Turkish spatiality through an in-depth semantic analysis of the two spatial nouns ‘üst, üzer’, which roughly translates into English ‘on, over’, within the Principled Polysemy Network (Tyler & Evans, 2001, 2003). Turkish is a morphologically rich language and suggests a Verb-framed pattern (Talmy, 1991) where path of motion is preferably encoded in the main verb unlike English (Özçalışkan & Slobin, 1999). With its complex suffixation system and V-framed pattern, Turkish has a postpositional structure where spatiality is expressed through spatial verbs and a combination of spatial nouns and nominal case markings. The current study investigates the two main questions: Is the polysemy model developed for spatial prepositions in English is applicable to other cross-linguistic domains such as Turkish, which has different linguistic and cognitive systems to express spatiality? If it’s applicable, how rich is the semantic polysemy of spatial nouns ‘üst, üzer’ in Turkish in comparison with the spatial preposition ‘over’ in English?

A great number of studies on spatial markers of English have indicated the polysemous nature of function mappings onto lexical structures. The most prominent research on this came from Tyler and Evans (2001a) where they specified fourteen extended meanings of the spatial marker ‘over’ which was indicated to be originating from a prototypical spatial sense termed the ‘Protoscene’. The preliminary analysis of Turkish ‘üst, üzer’ indicated both spatial nouns encode contact and noncontact situations between a Trajector (TR) and a Landmark (LM) depending on its locative case suffix, context of use as a grammatical construction, and the main/subordinate verb in a given sentence. Despite the fact that Turkish and English are typologically distinct languages and express spatial relations using very different linguistic elements, the analysis showed a surprising amount of overlap with the extended meanings. Accordingly, beyond their Protoscene, ‘üst, üzer’ were found to overlap nine distinct senses ‘up-and-beyond, above-and-beyond-excess, transfer, covering, focus-of-attention, over and above-excess, control, comparison, succession’ in the polysemy network of English preposition ‘over’ developed by Tyler and Evans (2001a). However, the analysis also found a number of extensions not found in English.

In this corpus study, I explore further semantic extensions of ‘üst, üzer’ with a methodology followed from the Principled Polysemy Network. The data come from the Turkish corpus which includes 10 million words of the tagged and parsed written Turkish. An in-depth semantic analysis is conducted to identify the prototypical senses of ‘üst, üzer’, their extended meanings and conceptual domains, the functional elements of control, proximity and support. I hope the findings of the present study will provide a detailed polysemous account of concept-form mappings in Turkish spatial nouns, which has not been studied so far. I will also indicate the degree of semantic polysemy displayed in Turkish spatial nouns ‘üst, üzer’ in comparison with English spatial preposition ‘over’ from a cross-linguistic perspective. Overall, the results will shed light on the non/applicability of the polysemy model developed for English spatial prepositions to the spatial markers of historically unrelated languages.