CONCEPT FORMATION THROUGH ICONICITY:
BASIC SHAPES
AND THEIR RELATED METAPHORICAL EXTENSIONS
IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

AT

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Abstract

One of the ways for a speaker to make sense of an object or event in the real world is to make use of iconicity between two things. Through iconic metaphorical extensions, the speaker connects the object or event to something else. In this study, I consider how speakers form concepts through iconic metaphorical extensions, examining how they metaphorically extend one concept to another. I suggest that all speakers use the same ways of forming metaphorical extensions and control metaphorical extensions according to their intentions and contexts.

Using basic and simple shapes (e.g. ○) and their related metaphorical expressions (e.g. ‘a circular argument’), I discuss the role of iconicity in metaphorical understanding, the relationship between concept and language, and metaphorical extensions as tools of concept formation. I conduct descriptive investigations using dictionaries and compare related senses for particular basic shapes between English and Japanese, looking at their polysemous networks and historical changes. Using questionnaires, interviews and tasks with native speakers of English and Japanese, I conduct experimental investigations to examine the speakers’ associations in relation to basic shapes and the degree of iconicity in metaphorical extensions.

This study suggests that concepts, although probably stored in the mental space, are recreated every time they occur. Concept formation through iconic metaphorical extensions must be dynamic because it is based on “extensions” of existing concepts, and must be universal to all speakers because metaphorical extensions are among the most basic mental activities of human beings. I propose dynamic and universal models which represent the way in which a speaker forms concepts, connecting a linguistic form and a mental picture and controlling iconic metaphorical extensions. These models contribute to understanding both similarities and differences in use of metaphorical extensions between English and Japanese.
Acknowledgement

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<td>Single inverted commas</td>
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<td>Italics in single inverted commas</td>
<td>e.g. ‘maru’, ‘Kanozyo wa sono ken o maruku osameta’</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Double inverted commas</td>
<td>e.g. “usage based model” “small conceptual packets”</td>
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### List of frequent abbreviations

- **CED**  Collins COBUILD English Dictionary
- **OED**  Oxford English Dictionary
- **SJD**  SHIN-JIRIN (Dictionary)

**Romanisation**: In this study, the *kunreisiki* (cabinet ordinance system), which was promulgated by the Japanese Government in 1937, is mainly used. The Hepburn system, which is based on the system of English spelling pronunciation, is used for names of authors and titles of books and journal articles.