

A Semantic Map of “an Elevated Landmass Made of Rock or Dirt”

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¹ Due to security risks, the names of the author and Language Resource Participants have been abbreviated.

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Languages have different ways of conceptualizing and communicating the things that can be seen in the world. Sometimes conceptualizations are realized in linguistic expressions that are similar to the ways other languages express them, and at other times the conceptualization leads to dissimilar expression. Developing a semantic map is a way to study these cross-linguistic expressions and examine their connectedness. Using an onomasiological approach, I collected data from English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic. I identified the semantic domain, “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt,” and through interviews with LRP’s I examined the different words speakers of these three languages use to communicate their idea of what falls within this semantic domain. By comparing this data, I will create a semantic map of where the lexemes overlap or stand disconnected and discuss how this research applies to the field of Bible translation.

1. Theory of Semantic Mapping

In order to engage with the discussion of semantic mapping, some definitions must be explained. The terms semantic map, nodes, polysemy, and onomasiology as an approach are paramount in the theory of this kind of cross-linguistic word study.

1.1. Definition of Terms

Semantic maps are visual representations of the relationships between words and word meanings in different languages (Georgakopoulos and Polis 2018; Cysouw and Malchukov 2010). Section 3 will include tables and maps that display the connections between the nodes of linguistic expression in English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic words for “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt.” According to François (2008: 17), “the main interest of semantic maps is to organize the polysemous network in a way that makes explicit the various semantic connections between the senses.”

Nodes are represented in a semantic map as the most basic meanings expressed in a word. Nodes are analytical primitives that “cannot be subdivided into two (or more) meanings that are expressed by separate linguistic items in a given language” (Hapelmuth 2003, as quoted in Georgakopoulos and Polis 2018: 4). By identifying nodes of meaning in a language, we can observe the mental conceptualizations speakers hold in their communication of different lexemes within a semantic domain. Some languages may have one word that carries multiple senses, and this is known as polysemy (Kroeger 2022: 87). Polysemous words may have a primary sense and other secondary senses, but both are linguistically represented with a singular word in a language. In the data from this present study there will be examples of polysemous lexemes for “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt.”

To collect information about the nodes of meaning in the three languages, I have used an onomasiological approach, which entails selecting a domain—an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt—and “identifying the core meanings of that domain, and search[ing] for the individual forms that express these meanings in different languages” (Georgakopoulos and Polis 2018: 5). This approach allows the forms that present themselves in language data to be mapped out in order to distinguish core meanings of linguistic categorization, where lexical boundaries exist, and where the meanings are connected (Cysouw and Malchukov 2010; Zwarts 2010). I chose to use English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic as my languages of focus, and the data resulted in surprisingly different lexemes and semantic nodes for the broad semantic domain of elevated landmasses. The semantic variation that is illuminated through the process of building semantic maps is significant to cross-cultural communication because it helps language learners and translators to see the way other languages conceptualize the entities that exist within semantic

domains, and to use the appropriate linguistic expressions for those conceptualizations accordingly in conversation and in translation of texts.

2. Defining the Data

I collected English data through identifying the semantic domain and then writing down all the English words I could think of that represented that semantic domain. After excluding adjectival phrases that strayed too far from the core lexeme, I wrote down descriptions for each word, and example sentences in which I would use the words. I repeated a similar process with Farsi and Egyptian Arabic. I interviewed one native speaker from each language; I provided them with the semantic domain phrase, “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt,” and recorded their identifications of the words that best represented that category. After collecting their descriptions of each word, I showed a slideshow of pictures (see Appendix) and recorded each LRP’s response of what word best represented the landmass pictured. Lastly, I collected sentences in which the words are used.

2.1 English Data

The main English words that represent the semantic domain are *mountain*, *hill*, *mound*, and *volcano*. There are other similar words that are part of the semantic domain—like *cliff*, *ridge*, and *peak*—but these words are parts of a greater whole that would all fall under the word *mountain*, and therefore will only be present in the discussion as descriptive of the main lexemes. The words each have their own unique description.

Mountain	A big, natural landmass that is steep, and can be so tall that it takes hours to climb. It can be so high that there is snow on the top.
Hill	A small landmass, either natural or manmade that may be steep but does not take long to climb. <i>Hills</i> are not tall enough to be covered with snow exclusively at the top, but they may be covered with grass all the way up.

Mound	A very small, frequently manmade landmass that is elevated from the ground but can be climbed in a few seconds or minutes. <i>Mounds</i> are created for different purposes, including waste disposal, burial of items, or religious rites.
Volcano	A huge, natural landmass that is unique because it can spew hot lava. All the same descriptions of <i>mountains</i> are true of <i>volcanos</i> other than the inclusion of lava.

The biggest differences between these four landmasses in the English conceptualization is size and natural vs. manmade design. *Mountains* are the biggest structures, and their size and natural creation set them apart from hills. *Hills* are sometimes manmade and are far smaller in size than *mountains*. *Mountains* can have jagged peaks at their tops, but *hills* are rounded and sloping. *Mounds* are very small; they can be as small as just a few feet off the surrounding level ground. In my English conceptualization, *mounds* are most often manmade for some specific purpose. *Volcano* is the most unique of these landmass lexemes. *Volcanos* are a type of *mountain*—as clearly projected in the phrase “volcanic mountain”—but in English it would be more likely to hear someone say, “Look, a *volcano!*” than “Look, a volcanic *mountain!*” For this reason, I have set it apart as its own separate lexeme. The shared qualities of *mountain* and *volcano* will be represented in the tables in section 3.

These words can each be used in a sentence. For example, one would use *mountain* in the sentence, “I reached the top of the *mountain*, and looked out over the massive view below me.” The word *hill* could be used in the sentence, “I reached the top of the *hill*, and ran back down for fun.” *Mound* could be referenced in the phrase “She stood on ground level and looked at the top of the *mound*.” Sentences regarding *volcano* may include, “They walked to the top of the dormant *volcano*,” or “they watched from afar as the *volcano* spewed lava and ash.” Alternatively, one could say “They walked to the top of the *volcano* and died from the heat.”

Each of these words have unique physical representations in nature. English can, additionally, use some of these words metaphorically. It is possible in English to have a “*mountain* of work to do,” and debates can include a speaker’s symbolic “*hill* to die on.” *Mound* and *volcano*, however, are far less likely to be used in a metaphorical sense. It would be unusual to say “I have a *volcano* of work” or “this is my *mound* to die on.” It appears that *mountain* and *hill* are the primary lexemes that come to an English speaker’s mind given the semantic domain “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt.” Within these two words there are many descriptors (cliff, slope, ridge, range, roll, peak, etc.), but the two words do not overlap with one another in lexeme. English speakers conceptualize *hills* and *mountains* as separate entities, although different speakers may categorize some structures as *mountains* while others would categorize them as *hills*. The defining may be in the eye of the beholder, but the two lexemes are distinct in the conceptualization of English speakers.

2.2 Farsi Data

The main Farsi words that represent “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt” are *kuh*, *tæpε*, *sæχrε*, and *ʔatæf fεʃan*. They are similar in description to the English lexemes, with the addition of the unique lexeme *sæχrε*. My LRP described each of the lexemes.

kuh	A <i>kuh</i> is made of rock, and has a peak. People cannot make a <i>kuh</i> . It is above 600 meters tall. ²
tæpε	A <i>tæpε</i> can be big or small, it can roll up and down, and it is made from soil. It can be manmade or natural.
sæχrε	A <i>sæχrε</i> is full of rock, and is by the seaside. It is never manmade.
ʔatæf fεʃan	An <i>ʔatæf fεʃan</i> is a mountain which can erupt with lava.

² All Farsi data is from an interview with LRP Mahsa F.

My LRP used a lot of hand motions to explain to me the difference between the landmasses. When she described *kuh*, she made a pointy peak motion with her hands. When she described *tæpe*, she made a rounded slope gesture. When she talked about *sæχre*, she made a steep drop motion with her hands and talked about the ocean. She did not consider *ʔatæfʃɛʃan* until she was shown a picture of a volcano.

A *kuh* is very tall, and takes a long time to climb. My LRP said of the word, “We can go mountaining on that, skiing, anything. We can go on *kuh* mid-summer or winter. We can see the city when we are standing on top of the *kuh*.” She described that only some animals can live on a *kuh*, such as goats and bears; but other animals, like cows, would not be able to live on a *kuh*.

A *tæpe* is a sloping, rounded landmass that can roll up and down, and it is made of soil. My LRP explained that while a *kuh* is not eroded by water, a *tæpe* is more easily affected by rain, and takes its shape from the elements. A *tæpe* may not be very high off the surrounding level ground relative to a *kuh*. She said that if a person is standing on top of a *tæpe*, you could see a whole town or just a singular building; it depends on the size of the *tæpe*.

My LRP provided examples sentences that came to her mind when thinking about *kuh* and *tæpe*. The range of description was the most necessary for *tæpe*, as seen in (2) and (3), while her explanation and usage of *kuh* was very straightforward, as seen in (1).

(1) *ʔan d̄ʒə ra nɛga kun t̄ʃɛ kuh ha jɛ zibajæst*
 that over DO look what mountain PL CON beautiful
 'Look there, what beautiful **mountains**!'

(2) *ʔin tæpe ha bolænd væ por æz faraz væ næfɪb hæstænd*
 this hill PL high and full of ups and downs are
 'These **hills** are high and full of ups and downs'

(3) *ma bærufe tæpe ha je kæm ertefa kefaværzi mikonim*

We on hill PL CON low in height farm do

'We farm on the low **hills**'

The height and shape of *kuh ha* (*ha* pluralizes nouns in Farsi) and *tæpe ha* seem to be the biggest conceptual differences between the two landmasses. In (1), *kuh ha* are beautiful objects of sight, and this sentence in correlation with my LRP's description makes a person think of a far off, grandiose view. In (2), *tæpe ha* are described as rolling up and down, which may be beautiful but much different than the steep peak gesture made when describing *kuh*. Furthermore, (3) shows that agricultural practices can take place on a *tæpe*, as supported by the comment that animals such as cows could live on a *tæpe*. Contrastively, farming cannot take place on a *kuh*, and only wild animals that are specially adapted to rugged, harsh environments can live on a *kuh*.

The differences between *kuh* and *tæpe* were further detailed. My LRP said that a person could go bicycling on a *tæpe*, but no one would go bicycling on a *kuh*, unless they were professional. She said "mountains are always bigger or higher than *tæpe*," and used the English word "mountain" for *kuh*. When asked if a person would ever go hiking on a *tæpe*, she said it wouldn't make sense, because *tæpe* can be between one and twenty meters, maybe more; but a *kuh* can contrastively be 1,000 meters tall. It seems that the height difference and shape of the landmass distinguishes a *kuh* from a *tæpe*. One particular image in the slideshow clarified the LRP's conceptualization of a *kuh* compared to a *tæpe*. Image 4 (see Appendix), contains a view of elevated landmasses in Iran, but some landmasses are more visibly rocky and snow-covered, while others are grassy and more sloping. My LRP quickly identified the rocky, snow-covered peaks as *kuh*, and the green, sloping landmasses as *tæpe*.

A *sæxre* is unique to *kuh* and *tæpe* because a person would find *sæxre* exclusively beside water, most likely the ocean. Any picture my LRP was shown that involved an elevated

landmass next to water (except for the volcano in Image 5) resulted in her identifying the landmass as *sæχrɛ* (see Images 3, 6, and 11 in Appendix).

The discussion of *ʔataɸfɛfan* required some extra parsing energy. My slideshow contained two pictures of volcanos: one in which the landmass was visibly erupting (Image 5), and one in which the *volcano* was dormant and showed no signs of volcanic activity (Image 8). In the visibly erupting image, my LRP quickly identified the landmass as *ʔataɸfɛfan*. In the dormant volcano image, she identified the landmass as *kuh*, until I explained that it was actually a volcano. She then quickly changed her answer to *ʔataɸfɛfan*, and said that if the volcanic nature of the landmass is known, the appropriate term is *ʔataɸfɛfan*. However, when asked to talk about a volcano in a sentence, she produced the following phrase in (4).

(4) *ʔan jek kuhɛ atɸfɛfani fæʔæɮ æst*

that one volcanic mountain active is

'It is an active **volcano**'

In this utterance, the landmass is defined as *kuhɛ atɸfɛfani*, which literally means “a mountain of volcano” or a “volcanic mountain.” Therefore, it seems that on the sentence level a Farsi speaker would still classify *ʔataɸfɛfan* as a type of *kuh*. My LRP agreed to this in response to my question about the differences between *kuh* and *ʔataɸfɛfan*. She said, “*kuh* and *kuhɛ atɸfɛfani*...it’s dangerous. When it’s deactive, it’s *kuh*. But when it has [lava] in it, we call it *kuhɛ atɸfɛfani*.”

kuh and *tæpɛ* can be used in metaphorical senses. For example, a Farsi speaker could say the phrase *tæpɛʔi æz aʔgol* ‘hill of garbage.’ Similarly, one could say *kuhi æz lɛbaz* ‘a mountain of clothes.’ It was not explained why a speaker would choose to use *kuh* or *tæpɛ* in either of these metaphors. *sæχrɛ* and *ʔataɸfɛfan* were not provided as metaphorical possibilities.

2.3 Egyptian Arabic Data

The Egyptian words that my LRP produced for the semantic domain were *gæbæl*, *tɛl*, and *borkæn/gæbæl borkæni*. These lexemes produced the most interesting differences from the English and Farsi lexemes for “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt.”

gæbæl	A fairly large mound coming out of the earth. It is typically only natural. ³
tɛl	A <i>tɛl</i> is a smaller <i>gæbæl</i> ; a smaller mound that you can easily climb in a few steps. It could be rocky or sandy; the material is not the most important thing about the <i>tɛl</i> . The size of the landmass is what distinguishes it from a <i>gæbæl</i> .
gæbæl borkæni	A volcanic mountain; it is just called <i>borkæn</i> if erupting.

My Egyptian Arabic LRP described that *gibæl* (plural of *gæbæl*) are typically only natural landmasses, although the meaning could be extended to artificial, manmade *gibæl*, and the context of the utterance would clarify the naturalness of the landmass. One could say *qim:æt ilgæbæl* ‘peak of a mountain.’ A *gæbæl* is much bigger than a *tɛl*. An adjectival phrase for the lexeme would be *silsilet gibæl* ‘range of mountains,’ and she pointed out the American Rocky Mountains as exemplary for this phrase. She used Mt. Sinai as a prototypical *gæbæl*. A *gæbæl* is so big that it can take many hours to summit, as in (5).

- (5) *tɛliʃt gæbæl sænt kætri:n fə sæbaʃ saʃæ:t*
 I went up mountain St. Kathrine in seven hours
 'I climbed **Mount** St. Kathrine in seven hours.'

³ All Egyptian Arabic data is from an interview with LRP Sylvia B.

Understanding *tɛl* is more challenging. A *tɛl* cannot be manmade, but can be small enough that a person could reach the top in a few minutes. My LRP explained that *tɛl* is much smaller than the English lexeme *hill*, and is more like a *mound*. As a result, we decided to refer to *tɛl* as “small-hill” in the gloss of the sentences in which she used the word *tɛl*, such as (6).

- (6) *ʔilwɪlæ:d tʕilʕo jilʕabo ʕælæ itɛl*
 the boys went up to play on the small-hill
 'The kids went up to play on **the small-hill**.'

The contrast between the way my Farsi LRP and my Egyptian Arabic LRP responded to Image 4 (see Appendix) is particularly revealing when trying to understand the lexeme of *gæbæl*. While in Farsi the word *kuh* was used for the snow-covered peaks and *tæpɛ* for the green sloping landmasses, the Egyptian word *gæbæl* was used for both. My LRP hypothesized that Egyptian Arabic speakers use the word *gæbæl* very generically to refer to elevated landmasses, while *tɛl* is used if a landmass is particularly small.

When shown an image of a volcano, my LRP said she would be most likely to use the English word *volcano*. However, Egyptian Arabic does have a word for this landmass which can be used; she said she would call it *borkæn* if it were visibly erupting. “But I think if I want to say that this is the type of *gæbæl* that would erupt, I would probably have to say *gæbæl borkæni*,” in which case *borkæni* is an adjective modifying *gæbæl*. Similarly to the Farsi response, the picture of an erupting landmass in Image 5 elicited the response *borkæn*, and the dormant landmass in Image 8 elicited *gæbæl*. When it was pointed out that the dormant landmass was indeed a volcano, the LRP changed her answer to *gæbæl borkæni*.

Only *gæbæl* was used in metaphorical sentences provided by the LRP. For example, the word *gæbæl* would be used when describing a mountain of trash, as in (8).

- (8) *fi:* ***gæbæl*** *zɪbæ:læ* *gæmb* *ɪlbet*
 there is mountain garbage beside the house
 'There is a **mountain** of trash next to the house.'

An Egyptian Arabic speaker wouldn't use *tɛl* for this metaphor; one wouldn't say a 'small-hill of trash,' even if you could climb it in a few steps. Similarly, a person could say they had a "*gæbæl* of assignments," or a "*gæbæl* of a problem." This is another suggestion that the Egyptian Arabic word *gæbæl* is the dominant lexeme that is most generically used when referring to elevated landmasses made of rock or dirt.

3. Semantic Maps

Based on the lexemes collected from English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic in response to the semantic domain "an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt," several tables can be constructed to display the capabilities of the three languages to use lexemes for particular landmasses.

3.1 Analytical Primitives, Partitions, and Lexical Matrix

I condensed the data into a table of analytical primitives, or distinct nodes of meaning. This can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Analytical Primitive Definitions

Analytical Primitives	Definition
TALL NON-VOLCANIC	A tall, rugged landmass that has no lava and takes hours to climb
TALL VOLCANIC	A tall, rugged landmass that can spew lava and takes hours to climb
BIG SLOPE	A rising landmass that has a round top and takes minutes to climb
SMALL SLOPE	A rising landmass that has a round top and takes seconds to climb
ROCKS BY WATER	A rocky landmass that is positioned by oceans, lakes, and rivers

From this set of analytical primitives, the specific conceptualizations of elevated landmasses can begin to be seen. From the discussion of each set of responses to the semantic domain, the descriptions of the LRPs, and the example sentences in which the words can be seen to occur, one can begin to posit where the lexemes of the three different languages overlap when referring to the unique analytical primitives. The partitions between these lexemes can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Partition of nodes within “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt” semantic domain

		Lexical Items		
		English	Farsi	Egyptian Arabic
Analytical Primitives	TALL VOLCANIC	<i>volcano</i>	<i>?atæf feʃan</i>	<i>borkæn</i>
	TALL NON-VOLCANIC	<i>mountain</i>	<i>kuh</i>	<i>gæbæl</i>
	ROCKS BY WATER		<i>sæχre</i>	
	BIG SLOPE	<i>hill</i>	<i>tæpe</i>	
	SMALL SLOPE	<i>mound</i>		<i>tæl</i>

Based on Table 2, it can be explicated that English uses *mountain* to refer to two nodes of meaning, TALL NON-VOLCANIC and ROCKS BY WATER; Farsi uses *tæpe* to refer to the nodes BIG SLOPE and SMALL SLOPE; and Egyptian Arabic uses *gæbæl* to refer to the three nodes TALL NON-VOLCANIC, ROCKS BY WATER, and BIG SLOPE. However, this leaves out some information, because it is possible for English speakers to use *mountain* to refer to volcanoes, even though

English has a word for TALL VOLCANIC. Similarly, Egyptian Arabic speakers would be most likely to use *gabæl* to refer to ROCKS BY WATER, but it would be possible to use *tel*. These features of the data are represented in the matrix in Table 3.

Table 3 Lexical matrix for “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt” in three languages

		Meanings				
		TALL NON-VOLCANIC	TALL VOLCANIC	BIG SLOPE	SMALL SLOPE	ROCKS BY WATER
English	<i>mountain</i>	✓	✓	-	-	✓
	<i>hill</i>	-	-	✓	-	✓
	<i>mound</i>	-	-	-	✓	-
	<i>volcano</i>	-	✓	-	-	✓
Farsi	<i>kuh</i>	✓	✓	-	-	-
	<i>tæpε</i>	-	-	✓	✓	-
	<i>sæχɾε</i>	-	-	-	-	✓
	<i>ʔatæfʃɛfan</i>	-	✓	-	-	-
Egyptian Arabic	<i>gabæl</i>	✓	✓	✓	-	✓
	<i>tel</i>	-	-	-	✓	✓
	<i>borkæn</i>	-	✓	-	-	✓

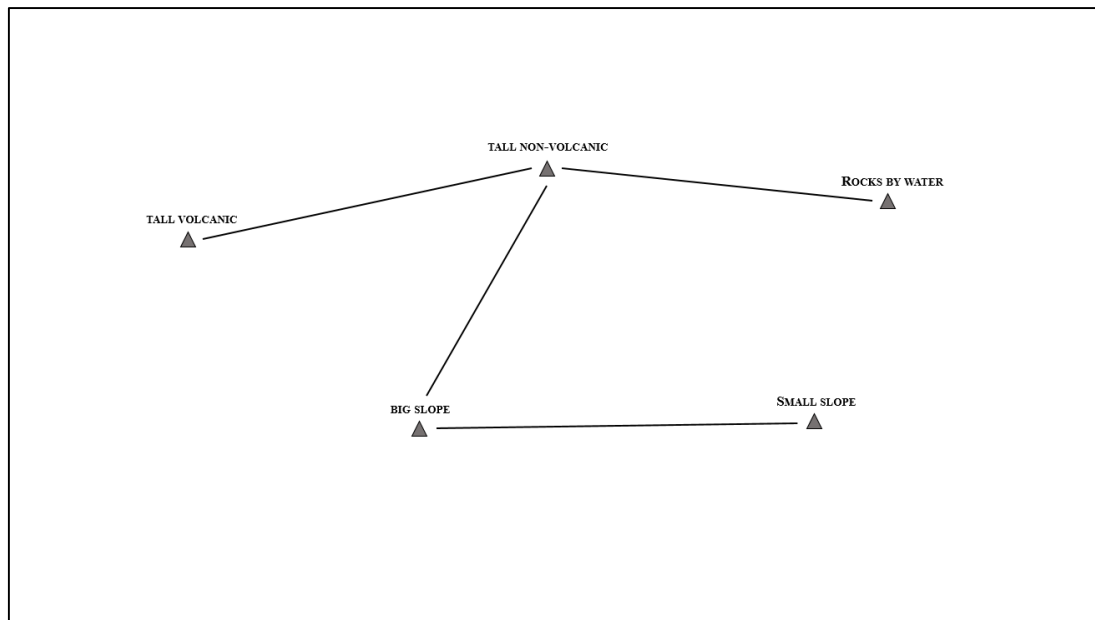
This table makes it more clear that while distinct nodes of meaning exist within the semantic domain, languages may have several different ways to express that analytical primitive. Any time a lexeme is cross-listed with a node of meaning and the lexeme could be used in the language to name the node, it receives a check-mark. Any time where the lexeme would not be used in the language to refer to that node, it receives a minus sign. English and Egyptian Arabic have a pattern in their use of *mountain* and *gabæl*; the words can be used to refer to several variations of landmasses, even when those landmasses—like *volcano* and *borkæn*—have their own word that is used to describe them. Another interesting feature highlighted by the lexical matrix is Farsi’s lexeme *sæχɾε*. It is the only word in the Farsi data that was identified as being suitable for the landmass node ROCKS BY WATER. The other languages, however, can use several

words for that node; it is most likely that the specific lexeme used would depend on the visual and topographical context. For instance, in Image 3 (see Appendix) my Egyptian Arabic LRP identified the landmass as a *tɛl*, and the landmass in Image 6 as a *gabæl*; I, as an English speaker, identify the landmass in Image 3 as a *hill*, and the landmass in Image 6 as a *mountain*. My Farsi LRP identified both slides as *sæχrɛ* because both landmasses, regardless of size or topography, were pictured beside a body of water.

3.2 Maps of Overlapping Lexemes

The landmasses that fall within the semantic domain “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt” are expressed differently in the three languages. The following maps depict the connections between the analytical primitives, and where the lexemes of the three languages overlap.

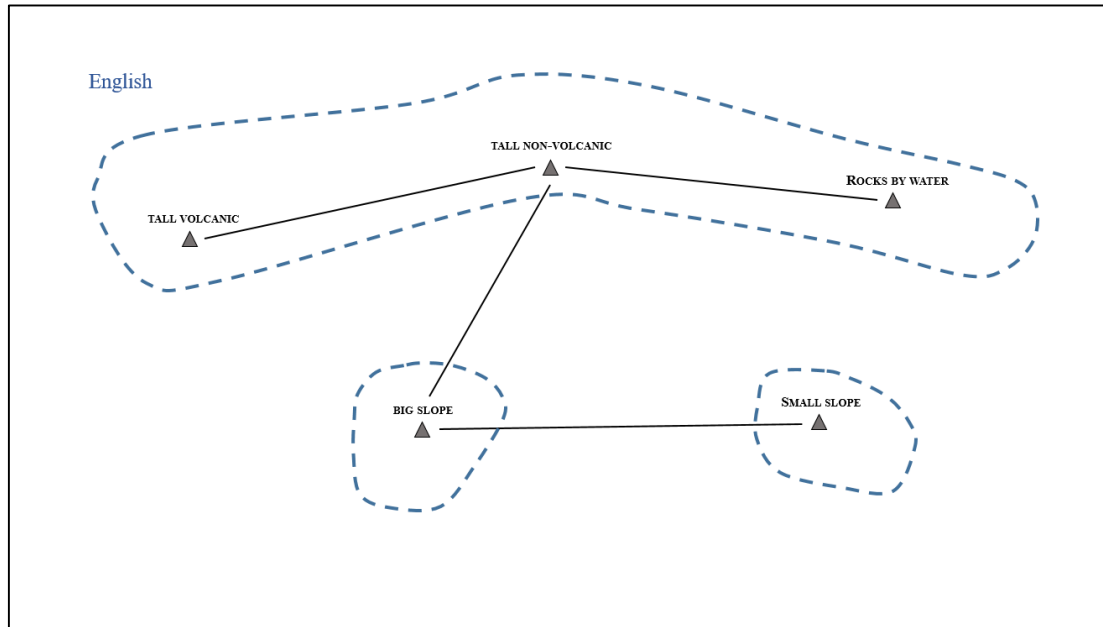
Map 1 Nodes of Semantic Map for “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt”



These five nodes represent the ways the three languages conceptualize elevated landmasses.

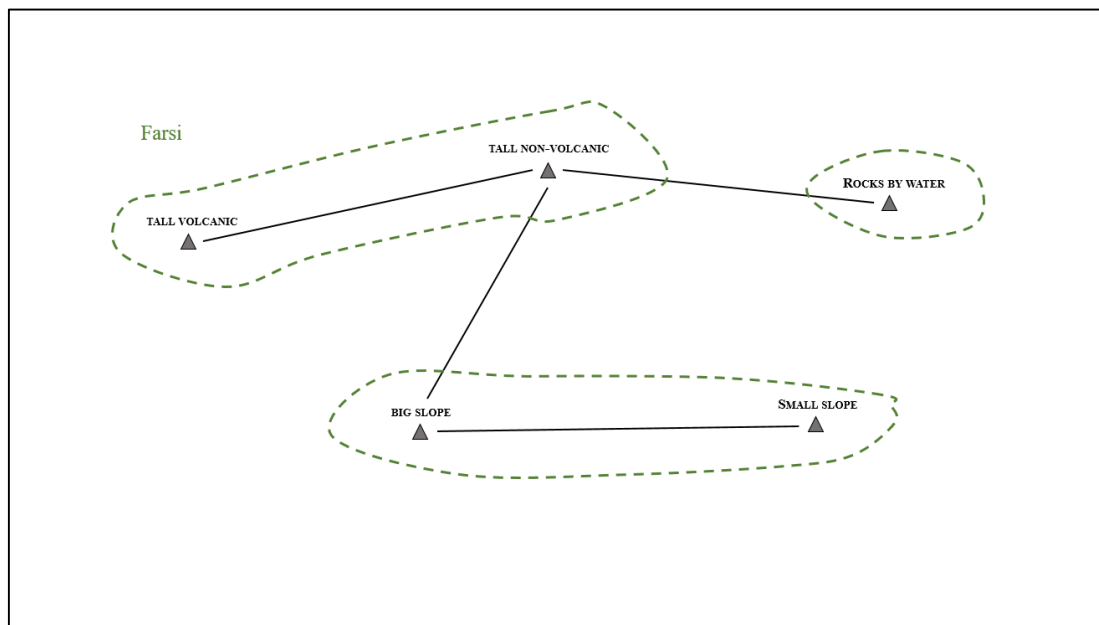
Map 2 displays the ability of English to use lexemes to span several nodes, or in some cases the ability to have a one-to-one correlation of lexemes to nodes.

Map 2 English overlapping lexemes



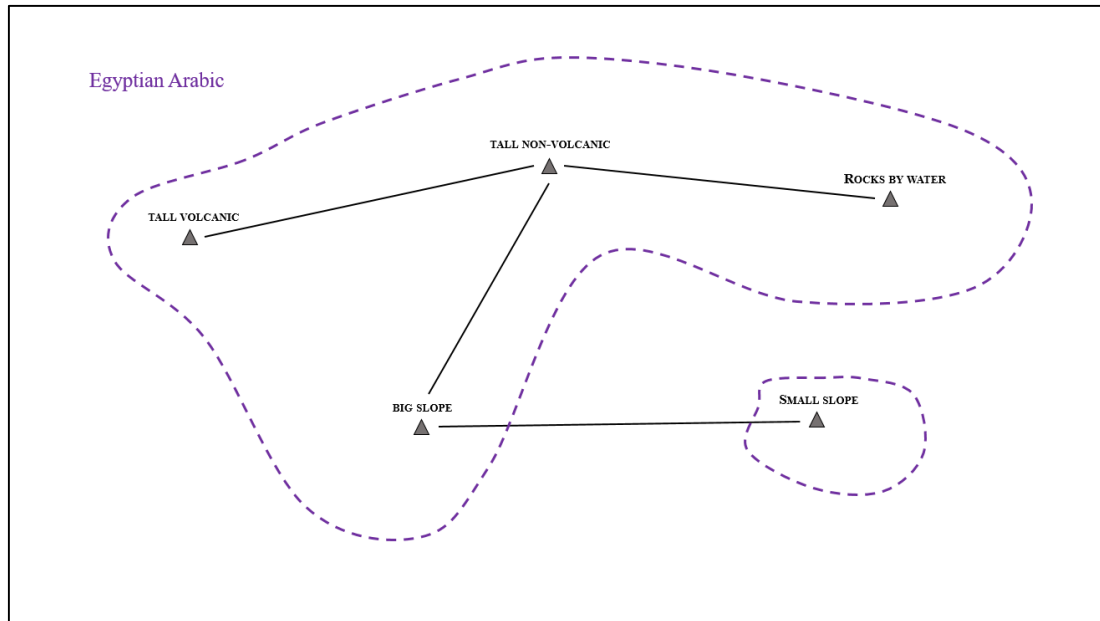
English has one word that can span three nodes: *mountain*. BIG SLOPE and SMALL SLOPE each receive their own word: *hill* and *mound*. Farsi, in contrast, has two words that each can span two nodes, as seen in Map 3.

Map 3 Farsi overlapping lexemes



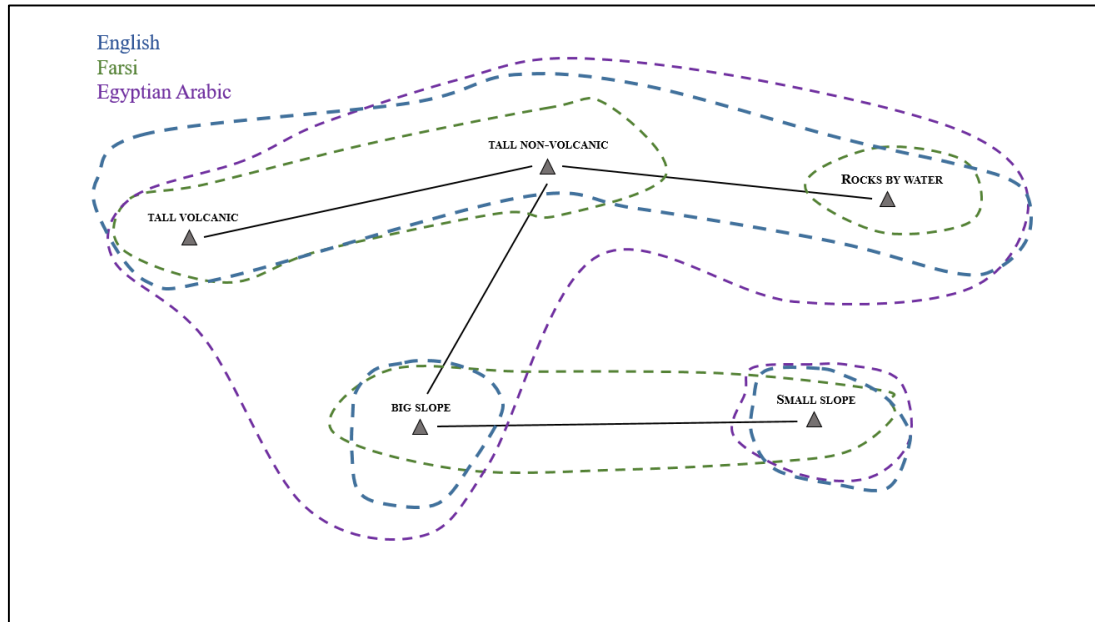
The word *kuh* can refer to both TALL VOLCANIC and TALL NON-VOLCANIC. The word *tæpe* can refer to both BIG SLOPE and SMALL SLOPE. ROCKS BY WATER is the only node that has a one-to-one lexeme correlation with the word *sæχrε*. Egyptian Arabic has the biggest range of nodes for one lexeme, as seen in Map 4.

Map 4 Egyptian Arabic overlapping lexemes



The word *gabæl* can be used for all but one node for “elevated landmasses made of rock or dirt.” The only node that has a one-to-one correlation with a lexeme is SMALL SLOPE, which takes the lexeme *tεl*. The representations of the overlap between the three languages and their linguistic conceptualizations of elevated landmasses is depicted in Map 5.

Map 5 Overlapping lexemes for English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic



It is significant to recognize that while there are some similar trends in the ways the three languages conceptualize elevated landmasses and communicate those conceptualizations, they are not uniform, and the differences can result in both fresh ways of seeing the world and possibilities for miscommunication across languages.

4. Application to Bible Translation

These semantic maps illustrate how English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic use different lexemes for distinct landmasses, or use a single lexeme to refer to several landmasses. The uniqueness of expression is far more than linguistically fascinating; it has implications for cross-cultural communication, language learning, and clear representations of ideas and stories in translated texts. For the field of Bible translation, the difference between lexemes must be taken into consideration when transmitting stories from the Bible into local languages.

An example of this discussion is the translation of Psalm 121:1, “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?” Interestingly, the *English Standard Version* uses the

word “hills,” and the *New International Version* uses the word “mountains.” The Hebrew appears to be polysemous from the English standpoint; הַרְרִים in Psalm 121:1 is from הַר, which means “mountain, hill, hill country” (Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon, Biblearc.com). My Egyptian Arabic LRP explained that the word *gabæl* has been used to refer to the Hebrew word in the translation of Psalm 121:1; similarly, the Farsi word used in Psalm 121:1 is *kuh*. Based on the discussion above of what each of these lexemes can refer to, the mental picture held by the audience of Psalm 121:1 may be different depending on the range of nodes that are represented by the lexemes *gabæl* and *kuh*. The Farsi speaker, for example, will definitely not picture a rocky landmass next to an ocean when reading this verse. The Egyptian Arabic speaker will picture landmasses that are much, much bigger than a SMALL SLOPE. Bible translators have to be aware of these lexemes, as well as the lexemes used in the Greek and Hebrew of the Biblical text, in order to accurately communicate stories, lessons, and ideas into local languages in ways that are understood by the target audience and most accurately represent the meaning of the text.

Conclusion

The capacity of languages to convey the diversity of human conceptualization, experience, and expression is breathtaking. The differences that exist in the language-specific expressions of lexemes for the semantic domain “an elevated landmass made of rock or dirt” are relevant for linguistic research on the connections and disconnections between semantic nodes of meaning. Furthermore, the research has powerful implications for cross-cultural communication and successful transmission of texts, whether they are Scriptural or otherwise. Considering how English, Farsi, and Egyptian Arabic express different words for elevated landmasses brings up further questions; it would be interesting to pursue more metaphorical uses of these words in all three languages—for example, if any uses exist of *borkæn* and *tæl* in Egyptian Arabic metaphor,

or *sæχre* and *ʔatæfʃeʃan* in Farsi. Regardless, the ability of the human mind to use language to describe the world around them is enhanced with an awareness of the variety of lexemes that are used to communicate speaker meaning.

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Abbreviations and Appendix

Abbreviation	Definition
CON	Connective
DO	Direct object marker
LRP	Language Resource Participant
PL	Plural
SG	Singular

I used the following pictures in my interviews with LRPs to collect their impression of which word in their language best represented the landmasses shown in the pictures.



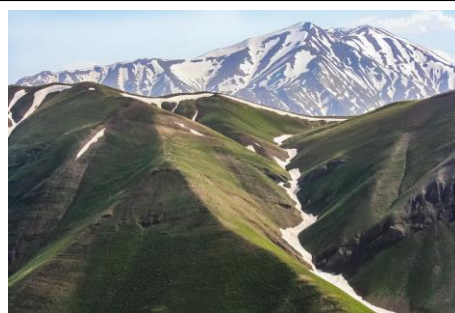
Slide 1



Slide 2



Slide 3



Slide 4



Slide 5



Slide 6



Slide 7



Slide 8



Slide 9



Slide 10



Slide 11

Slides 2-5 and 7-9 come from Google's Creative Commons images. Slides 1, 6, and 10-11 are my own photography.

Responses to Elicitation Slides

Slide #	English	Farsi	Egyptian Arabic
Slide 1	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>kuh</i>	<i>gæbæl</i>
Slide 2	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>tæpe</i>	<i>gæbæl, maybe had'abah</i>
Slide 3	<i>Hill</i>	<i>sæχre</i>	<i>təl</i>

Slide 4	<i>Mountain</i>	white is <i>kuh</i> , green is <i>tæpe</i>	<i>gæbæl</i>
Slide 5	<i>Volcano</i>	<i>ʔataʔfɛʃan</i>	<i>gɛbæl borkæni</i> (<i>borkæn</i> alone)
Slide 6	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>tæpe</i>	<i>gæbæl</i>
Slide 7	<i>Hill</i>	<i>tæpe</i>	<i>tɛl</i>
Slide 8	<i>Volcano</i>	<i>ʔataʔfɛʃan</i> if volcanic nature is known; otherwise <i>kuh</i>	<i>gɛbæl borkæni</i> if volcanic nature is known; otherwise <i>gæbæl</i>
Slide 9	<i>Mound</i>	<i>tæpe</i>	<i>tɛl</i>
Slide 10	<i>Hill in foreground, mountain in background</i>	<i>tæpe</i> in both foreground and background	<i>gæbæl</i> or <i>hadʹabah</i> , the big one is definitely a <i>gæbæl</i> (in comparison, the front one could be a <i>tɛl</i>)
Slide 11	<i>Mountain</i>	<i>sæχre</i> in foreground; snow-covered peaks are <i>kuh</i> , and non-snow-covered landmsses are <i>tæpe</i>	<i>gibæl</i>