

Political metaphor in world Englishes

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Abstract

One of the key-metaphor complexes in conceptualizing national identity is that of the nation as a body or a person, especially in English-speaking cultures, as evidenced in the lexicalization of phrases such as *body politic*, *head of state*). It has a long conceptual history and still figures prominently in present-day political discourse, both in Inner Circle English-speaking countries and internationally. It thus seems to show considerable semantic stability; however, it is still an open question whether the use of BODY-or PERSON-based metaphors in international English means that recipients in different cultures *understand* these metaphors uniformly. This paper discusses empirical evidence from an international interpretation survey that shows substantial variation in conceptualization of the nation as a body, with five main conceptual scenarios (NATION AS BODY, NATION'S TERRITORY AS BODY, NATION AS BODY PART, NATION AS PART OF EGO and NATION AS PERSON).

1 | INTRODUCTION

- (1) The head of the [British nation's] body represents the Queen of England, as she is in charge of the whole country and she is royalty. The features of the head (eyes, nose, mouth and ears) represent the different official people, such as politicians, the Prime Minister, the Government.
- (2) New Zealand is a young body, small and kind of rugged. She is wild, her hair messy, dirt under her fingernails, Her appearance is somewhat messy, relaxed. She doesn't wear shoes.

These two excerpts are part of a corpus of responses to a questionnaire on the meaning of NATION AS BODY metaphor that has been conducted in more than 20 countries with informants from over 40 different linguistic backgrounds (Musolff, 2016a,b, 2017). The prompting question was: 'The concept of 'nation' can be described by way of a metaphor or simile that presents it in terms of a human body. Please apply this metaphor to your home nation in 5–6 sentences'.

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The motivation for the questionnaire was the experience of contrasting responses to an improvised class test in an MA seminar to check on the recently introduced term 'body politic'. As the majority of students in the seminar did not have English as their first language, I tried to ascertain that the new terminology had been understood by asking them to apply the body politic metaphor to their home country. To my surprise, 50 per cent of responses, which were all given by Chinese students, looked like this:

- (3) Beijing: Heart and Brain, Shanghai: Face (economic center); Hong Kong and Taiwan: Feet; Tianjin: Hands (= army close to Beijing); Shenzhen: Eyes (= the first place open to the world).

Responses of this latter type, which appear to be grounded in a TERRITORY-based understanding of the NATION-AS-BODY metaphor, clearly contrasted with responses of types (1) and (2), which conceptualized the respective home nation as a BODY (more precisely, HEAD see example 1) or as a PERSON (that is, with personality/character traits, see example 2). Of course, the concept of a PERSON is not identical with that of a BODY, but across most cohorts at least 10 per cent (in some cases up to 40%) respondents chose to interpret the BODY metaphor in this way.¹

Having found evidence of three-way conceptual variation in the interpretation of the body politic metaphor among one seminar class, the initial group of students and I developed a simple standardized questionnaire that asked one question, that is, to apply the BODY-metaphor to one's home nation, plus social background information about informants' first language, nationality, age and sex. With the generous help of colleagues and their students, the questionnaire has been administered to various cohorts of language/communication students at the University of East Anglia, two other British universities and higher education institutions of over 20 more countries, with informants from over 40 different linguistic backgrounds (Musolff, 2020 forthcoming). Here, we focus on the cohort of Inner Circle English speakers ($n = 183$), which comprises samples from the UK, the USA, New Zealand and Australia. Their analysis in section 4 of this paper will be mainly qualitative, to show the *range of variation* but will also include comments on the indicative quantitative findings. In sections 2 and 3 we outline the theoretical and methodological horizon of the analysis.

2 | 'UNIVERSALIST' VS. 'RELATIVIST' POSITIONS IN CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

The 'classic' conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) approach, developed since the 1980s by Lakoff, Johnson and others, has been oriented towards a universalist stance on metaphorical concepts towards by locating their origins in 'embodied', ultimately neurophysiologically-based cross-domain mappings (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Kövecses, 2002, 2015; Lakoff, 1993, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999). Nonetheless, the issue of intra- and cross-cultural variation of metaphor has been a topic for continuous discussion both in CMT and applied metaphor studies, thanks to its salience in real-life data of metaphor use (Idström & Piirainen, 2012; Low, Todd, Deignan, & Cameron, 2010; Musolff, MacArthur, & Pagani, 2014; Sharifian, 2010). The largest overview of culture-specific metaphor variation from a CMT perspective is Kövecses' (2005) volume on *Metaphor in culture: Universality and variation*, in which the author makes two 'modifications' to CMT to accommodate variation phenomena: (1) he stresses that it 'is complex metaphors – not primary metaphors – with which people actually engage in their thought in real cultural contexts', and (2) he introduces the notion of a 'main meaning focus' that metaphors gain in a specific community of speakers (2005, pp. 11–12). Such a 'meaning focus' includes culture-specific source-conceptual material. For instance, the apparently universal conceptualization of the emotion ANGER (target concept) as a PRESSURISED SUBSTANCE IN A CONTAINER (source concept), which has been researched across cultures by Kövecses (1986, 1990, 1995) and others (Matsuki, 1995; Taylor & Mbense, 1998; Yu, 1998), has several distinct semantic manifestations. In English it is expressed by way of analogy to a fluid but in Chinese by analogy to a gas, and its main locations can be the head (in English), the belly (in Japanese) or the heart (in Zulu) (Kövecses, 2005, pp. 68–69). The investigation of cultural differences in conceptualization of emotionally and cognitively central body parts (that is, as the seat of emotional/cognitive agency)

has been developed further into a typology of 'abdomino-', 'cardio-' and 'cerebrocentrist' perspectives (Ibarretxe-Antuñano, 2012; Sharifian, Dirven, Yu, & Niemeier, 2008). Further variation phenomena can be identified in target concept application and pragmatic exploitation of conceptual metaphors. For instance, corpus-based research into the metaphorization of emotions across English, Russian and Spanish has shown that these three languages share some salient conceptualizations (of which the BODY-based ones are only a part) but also exhibit significant differences in the 'appraisal, expression, regulation and the saliency of physiological aspects of anger' (Ogarkova & Soriano, 2014). Yu (2008) has demonstrated that the folk-theoretical SOCIAL FACE-metaphor is differentially composed in Chinese and English, respectively emphasising either the aspects of DIGNITY IS FACE vs. PRESTIGE IS FACE, and MUTUAL vs. EGOCENTRIC FACE (Jia, 1997; Pan, 2000; Pan & Kadar, 2012; Watts, 2005).

Whilst the modified CMT approach thus allows for cross-cultural variation in principle, its status in the theoretical model remains unclear. It is left open whether variation in sub-concepts, for example, of varying foci on body parts as CONTAINERS for emotions (as SUBSTANCES), as in Kövecses' examples, is based on a basic conceptual difference or is merely deemed to be a secondary, surface-level differentiation of a more 'basic' universal (EXPANDING) SUBSTANCE-IN-A-CONTAINER source concept. Second, as has been pointed out repeatedly, the universalist bias of CMT is linked to a concomitant 'synchronic bias', that is, a one-sided focus on the semantic motivation of conceptual metaphors regardless of their diachronic and historical dimension. As Geeraerts and Grondelaers (1995) have highlighted, the metaphor of EMOTIONS-AS-PRESSURISED FLUIDS IN A CONTAINER, which was initially researched mainly on the basis of English language data, bears an uncanny resemblance to the traditions of 'humoral' medicine and philosophy that dominated European thought for more than a thousand years and whose terminological traces can still be found in many modern European languages to this day, such as in the phraseology of 'choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic and melancholic temperaments' (Temkin, 1973). The cultural continuity of these traditions arguably provides at least good a motivation for the EMOTION-AS-PRESSURISED FLUID IN CONTAINER metaphor as its ahistorical 'grounding' in body temperature sensations.

Further studies have adduced empirical evidence of socio-historical influences on conceptual metaphor development. Trim, 2011a,b) has shown that variations in the relative salience of specific versions of the LOVE-AS-FIRE metaphor in particular socio-historical settings/periods can best be explained and modeled in terms of dynamic conceptual networks, rather than as ever-new iterations of the same experiential mappings. Musolff, 2010a,b) and Shogimen (2008) have demonstrated that the historical and cross-cultural variation of the NATION AS BODY metaphor in European and Japanese discourse communities concerns not only a few sub-concepts (as allowed in the modified CMT account) but also the basic source framework, that is, the kind of body that is imagined to be the source for nation conceptualizations. Ancient, medieval, early modern and present-day concepts of the human body clearly differ in relation to the popular physiological and medical knowledge available to respective speech communities; hence their application as sources for political metaphors also varies – medieval thinkers would hardly have talked the British body politics 'DNA', to name just one obvious example.

Even at the synchronic level, evidence of culture-specific 'relativity' of metaphorical concepts has been provided in studies of real-life reception of figurative language in English as Second Language and English as Lingua Franca contexts. Numerous analyses of English as a lingua franca in secondary and higher education contexts have exposed hitherto unnoticed miscommunication due to wrongly understood figurative language for the English-based metaphor UNDERSTANDING-AS-SEEING (Littlemore, 2003; Littlemore, Chen, Koester, & Barnden, 2011; MacArthur, Littlemore, & Krennmayr, 2013; Piquer-Piriz, 2010; Wang & Dowker, 2010), as well as instances of creative adaptation of L2 lexis to L1 mappings (Heredia & Cieślicka, 2015; Nacey, 2014; Philip, 2010). And in the context of practical intercultural communication, Sharifian (2014), has highlighted clashes between speakers of Standard Australian English and Aboriginal English: whilst in the latter discourse variety concepts such as LAND, RAIN, MEDICINE are linked to beliefs in ancestor beings, these links appear in a non-Aboriginal context as merely rhetorical metaphorical mappings that lack any tangible conceptual content, which can lead to social conflict.

Such diachronic and synchronic variation in metaphor understanding transcends the horizon of classic CMT, which assumed an 'automatic' and largely 'unconscious' understanding of metaphor (Gibbs, 1994, 2007; Lakoff, 1993). This

stance is of course in line with the assumption of universal, neurologically based mappings but is not supported by real-life data. If it were correct, variation in metaphor understanding would not occur at all or be a negligible superficial phenomenon, for the neurological basis must be assumed to be the same in all humans (excepting pathological phenomena). But such universality and automaticity only pertains to the general faculty for understanding metaphors (for humans beyond a certain age), not to specific conceptual structures and cognitive processes. The empirical evidence of mis- or not understood metaphors as well as of synchronic and diachronic conceptual variation clearly shows that the 'automaticity' claim is restricted to narrowly defined, experimentally set-up focus on the 'activation phase' Giora's (2003, p. 3) of metaphor comprehension, that is, to the basic recognition of a linguistic structure as being used in a non-literal sense. However, such initial identification of a structure as a metaphor cannot be deemed to cover the whole interpretation process, including semantic and pragmatic 'integration' (Giora, 2003).

3 | CULTURE-SPECIFIC VARIATION IN METAPHOR INTERPRETATION

If differences in figurative conceptualization impact not only the active production or use of metaphors but also their understanding, we need to develop methods for eliciting metaphor interpretations that reveal these differences at various levels of consciousness. Asking informants directly how and/or why they interpret a given metaphor is obviously not very helpful in itself because it elicits conscious reflection that may not reflect at all the informants' actual ('psychologically real') understanding processes but instead involves meta-interpretive speculation. On the other hand, much of psycholinguistic research on metaphor comprehension (Gibbs, 1994, 2007; Glucksberg, 2008; Katz, 2017; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011) has concentrated on issues such as the speed of processing, the identification of target referents or the role of metaphor in achieving specific pragmatic effects (implicatures such as irony, sarcasm and evaluative preferences), without revealing much about culture-specific factors. Methodologically, research of this latter dimension of metaphor is still in its infancy.

The survey with its open request to applying the body metaphor that was mentioned above can be understood as a first pilot-study towards investigating culture-specific influences on metaphor reception, without laying any claim to conclusiveness – its data will have to be corroborated by further evidence both from more narrowly focused and rigorously controlled interpretation experiments as well as from carefully structured interviews, both of which would provide comparative data to the survey, thus allowing 'triangulation' and modeling of the most likely psychologically plausible reception processes. The survey question itself did not ask explicitly for a metaphor interpretation as such but instead for applying an explicitly suggested metaphor to the 'home nation'. Its main aim was to showcase the range of conceptual variation, and it only yields indirect data on the actual interpretation processes. The responses focused on fulfilling the task of using the metaphor to describe the target concept, which for all national cohorts was a different one. The analysis, on the other hand, concentrated on conceptual-argumentative clusters or 'scenarios' (Musolff, 2006) of source concepts, such as the *BODY*, *PERSON* and *GEOBODY* scenarios indicated in the initial examples, and their distribution within the diverse cultural cohorts of informants. Given the sampling method, the survey data cannot be regarded as representative for whole national 'cultures' (if these can be presumed at all) but are restricted to a subgroup of national discourse communities – undergraduate and postgraduate students of language-related degrees at higher education institutions.

In practical terms, the delivery of the survey questionnaire was guided by a policy of inviting student volunteers to produce within 5–10 minutes a set of answers in class, in order to minimize the possibility of conscious recollection of pre-learnt figurative concept definitions or theories of the nation state as a human body. The participating colleagues were asked to avoid giving 'model answers' and to give advice only to clarify the task. This policy kept the ratio of irrelevant answers to a small minority, around 5 per cent of submissions, with a maximum of around 15 per cent in a few cohorts. The selection of the relevant answers was carried out by the main investigator and two research interns. The identification of irrelevant answers was usually unproblematic, as they either involved no metaphor at all or a clearly different one (such as the *NATION-AS-SHIP* or *NATION-AS-HOUSE*, or *NATION-AS-ANIMAL*).

TABLE 1 Social indicators: Inner Circle English speakers

Gender	Female	105	57% ²
	Male	78	43%
Age group	18–25	160	88%
	26–30	6	3%
	31–40	6	3%
	41+	11	6%

Note: Number of valid scripts overall: 183 (= 100%).

TABLE 2 Scenario distribution: Inner Circle English speakers

Scenarios	BODY	GEOBODY	BODY PART	PART OF EGO	PERSON
Scenario tokens	103	59	23	2	45
Percentages	44%	25%	10%	1%	20%

Number of scenarios overall: 232 (= 100%).

By comparison with the distinction of relevant and irrelevant responses, classifying and coding the conceptual clusters involved more training and discussion for the three analysts. In addition to the BODY, PERSON and GEOBODY scenarios, we identified two further distinct conceptualization clusters: that of the nation as a BODY PART (thus presuming the existence of a larger external BODY), for example, as LEG, HEART or HAIR, or as a PART OF EGO (the informant's own body/personality), as in identifying the nation as their 'own' BLOOD or HEART. Instead of one identical, only superficially variable type of metaphor interpretation as presumed in classic CMT, we thus had five types of BODY conceptualizations for classifying all responses. As the responses varied in length and complexity, they also differed in the number of scenarios they included: some had only one, some two or three scenarios; a few cases covered four or even five.

4 | THE INNER CIRCLE SAMPLE

The sample of responses from informants with English as their first language was collected at seven universities across Britain, USA, New Zealand, and Australia; it also incorporates responses by English-L1 Inner Circle speakers (from these countries as well as from Ireland and Canada) in various European universities. Altogether, it includes 183 valid scripts, of which 59 are by British nationals, 34 by US, 42 by New Zealand, 46 by Australian, 1 by an Irish person and 1 by a Canadian. It would have been desirable to have more balanced national samples but sampling met with varying practical problems and the ensuing discrepancies in sample sizes made a balanced comparison impossible. It is thus not possible to draw a statistically valid comparison between the four main 'national' Inner Circle sub-cohorts (Britain, US, New Zealand, Australia) but only to indicate conceptual and pragmatic patterns that are indicative of nation-specific tendencies in conceptualising one's own nation as a body. Further research may yet enable us to roughly match the cohorts and thus achieve a better basis for comparison.

Like all other samples, the Inner Circle sample is (unsurprisingly) characterized by a strong preponderance of 18–25 year old informants, and by a female majority, which may be due to sampling among language/linguistic-related university students.

According to the 'scenario' categorization outlined in Table 1, the Inner Circle sample generated 232 scenario instantiations, which show in Table 2.

In the following sections we will discuss the different scenarios, starting with the most frequently represented one (BODY), then discussing the conceptually most closely related ones (BODY PART; PART OF EGO) and then moving on to the GEOBODY and PERSON scenario versions. The latter in particular gives rise to affectively charged conceptualizations as

well as to further pragmatic effects, e.g. argumentative exploitation and irony, which will be of special interest in cross-cultural comparison.

4.1 | The nation as a (whole) body

The BODY scenario clearly dominates the Inner Circle sample. Its implications are that of hierarchy (as in example 1 above) and of interdependency between all the parts of the BODY-whole, as in the following example:

- (4) A human *body* only works effectively if all of its individual parts work. For example, a person can only survive if their *heart/lungs/brain organs* are functioning [...]. A nation – like Britain – can only function well if all its *body parts* [...] work together. If one thing gets taken away or isn't able to voice its opinion, then the body will die or not function correctly. (E, UK, 21, F)³

In addition to BODY (WHOLE) and the umbrella category ORGANS/BODY PARTS/LIMBS, a further 60 distinct BODY- sub-concepts and 21 HEALTH/ILLNESS-related sub-concepts can be found across the 380 instances of lexical items from the combined BODY-HEALTH field, ranging as they do from the BODY-WHOLE to the extremities, inner organs, taboo areas (ANUS, ARMPIT) and to medical conditions and their treatment. The most frequent lexical fields are: HEAD-BRAIN (86 instantiations = 23%), HEART (65 instantiations = 17%), BODY(WHOLE)-PARTS/LIMBS/ORGANS (65 instantiations = 17%), BLOOD-VEINS-ARTERIES, ARMS-HANDS and LEG-FEET (each with 20–22 instantiations, that is, between 5–6%).

The most prominent usage pattern is the hierarchical top-down model of the political anatomy from 'head to toe', which is strongly reminiscent of classic body politic definitions since the Renaissance (Dobski & Gish, 2013; Harris, 1998; Harvey, 2007). This model is shared by all Inner Circle groups; the main differences concern the target referents of the TOP BODY PARTS:

- (5) England is an *organism*. Its *head* is the Queen, its *torso* and *limbs* are the state and government. Its *heart* is culture and history, its *brain* is parliament. Its *feet* is the economy. (E, UK, M, 25)
- (6) The United States of America is like a *human body*. In fact, we often refer to it as the *body politic*. The government of the U.S. is the *head*, or the *brain*. It is (supposed to be) in control of the country's functions. The states are the various *parts of the body*, functioning independently, but under the control of the 'brain'. (E, US, F, 48)
- (7) The *head* of the nation is the president and the members of Congress. (E, US, 20, F)
- (8) If New Zealand was a *body*, the Prime Minister would be the *head* in control and at the top. The Queen would be the *hair*, technically higher, but with no real power. The *feet* would be our farms, covered in mud but helps us trudge along, the main source of our momentum. The *hands* would be our vineyards, full of fruit ripe for the picking, useful and helpful. (E, NZ, 19, F)
- (9) Our *head of state* [of Australia] is the English monarch. (E, AUS, F, 18)
- (10) The federal government [of Australia] is the *brain*. (E, AUS, M, 18)

In many cases HEAD and BRAIN are treated as exchangeable as the hierarchically 'highest' parts of the body-whole that control all other parts. However, where there is a distinction between the ceremonial or nominal *head of state* and the politically effective, controlling body part, the latter is accorded the BRAIN function, whereas the former may be the nominal HEAD or, indeed, a more ephemeral part of the HEAD, as in HAIR (see example 8). Critical stances are taken mainly vis-à-vis the BRAIN rather than the HEAD for being dysfunctional or even abnormal:

- (11) [America's] *brain* is bipolar and completely disjointed in the middle (E, US, 25, M)
- (12) [...] like *Frankenstein* [i.e.: Frankenstein's monster], we have an *abnormal brain* commanding the body, which is causing our country to act and react with more negativity and distastefulness (E, US, 48, F)

In the British and New Zealand samples, such massive criticism is rare; instead, the well-established BRAIN-HEART dichotomy, metaphorically juxtaposing reason and emotion) is employed. This comparison introduces implicitly a PERSON scenario, to signal a contrast between types of political decision-taking:

(13) The *brain* and *heart* [of my nation] don't always agree with one another, and this conflict is normal (E, UK, 22, F)

(14) New Zealand listens to its *heart* more than its *brain*. (E, NZ, 19, M)

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that the HEART concept is always or mainly used in the proverbial 'seat of emotions' meaning. The majority of target concepts of HEART in the BODY-scenario are in fact either central political institutions (monarchy, parliament) or the working population who keep the body of the nation alive:

(15) The *heart* of the nation is the American people. (E, US, 21, F)

(16) The *heart* of the Australian nation is found in the working class, their ethics and prejudices, transporting these values and production to every *appendage*. (E, AUS, 24, M)

An alternative source for the 'people' target concept is BLOOD, due to its ubiquity and continuous movement, which signals LIVELINESS/VITALITY. Other target concepts for BLOOD are the economy, public finances, business and public transport (often likened to the VEINS and ARTERIES). The concepts of ARMS, HANDS, LEGS, FEET as well as EYES are associated with various 'executive' parts and functions of state and society (military, police, secret service, middle class, economy, workers). One British informant mentioned *the long arms [...] of the empire* (UK, 21, M) but did not specify whether this was meant as a topical or historical description. Extremities are often listed as LIMBS that are complementary to the central control part (HEAD-BRAIN/HEART), without further specification. The collective category ORGANS fulfills much the same function in our texts:

(17) New Zealand works as a collective *body* in that there are a number of different sectors of society that work like the *different organs of a body* in order to function as a whole. (E, NZ, 20, F)

(18) [...] a person can only survive if their *heart/lungs/brain organs* are functioning, [...] A nation – like Britain – can only function well if all its parts, the government, the monarchy, and its inhabitants – work together. (E, UK, 21, F)

ILLNESS/DISEASE and MEDICAL TREATMENT concepts are rare in this sample, amounting as they do altogether to 4 per cent.⁴ Both summary references (SICK, AILMENT, SCARS, PAIN) and specific notions such as CANCER, INFECTION and TRANSPLANT are represented in single figures. They are used to express criticism of parts of the respective nation state, but mostly in the GEOBODY scenario (see below).

Another vehicle for criticism is that of taboo or ugly BODY PARTS, which also straddles various scenarios. In the organological and physiological hierarchy there are only a few instances:

(19) The queen sits at the *face* of the nation, with the flabby, *saggy* Tory government, as the *aged, wrinkled décolletage*. (E, UK, 19, F)

(20) [...] the *anus* would be the actual workers. While the *brain* thinks it controls the *anus*, the most it can do is ask or demand things to be done (E, NZ, 18, M)

(21) The *head* is the white guys in charge. They also double as the *asshole*. (E, NZ, 18, F)

Such drastic and offensive examples are few in number but they show the potential of BODY PART conceptualizations to support strongly evaluative arguments and even insults. Whilst the target referents are more or less arbitrarily chosen, the sources appear to be derived from a 'stock' of low-prestige concepts that are entrenched in the everyday discourse, idioms and taboo subjects of the respective discourse community.

4.2 | The nation as a body part and part of ego

To view one's own nation as a BODY PART, as in a LIMB or an ORGAN is a perspective taken in one tenth of scenario instances in the Inner Circle sample. It presents the informant's nation as either part of a larger body (continent or world), or as body part that is typical for a particular socio-political function or status. Its applications almost always carry an explicit or an implicit evaluation. The positive ones highlight useful limbs/organs, such as EYES, HANDS, BRAIN and HEART (the latter again with its 'seat of emotions' symbolism):

- (22) [...] GB represents the *eyes* of development [...]. (E, UK, 21, F)
- (23) America is like the *hands* of a human *body*; they are used for work, get dirty often, and when backed in a corner, are used to fight. (E, US, 20, M)
- (24) Australia is like a *brain* – a bit isolated from the rest of the body, similar to how Australia seems isolated from the other countries in the world. Similar to how many people move to Australia for new opportunities, the human brain is full of potential (E, AUS, 18, F)
- (25) Our nation is like a *beating heart*, where pride and passion flow as *blood* (E, NZ, 20, M)

In the critical/negative cases, the BODY PART chosen to represent the nation is usually 'low' in the body hierarchy in terms of (lack of) importance, height or cultural esteem, which achieves a denigrating, sarcastic effect (especially bearing in mind that it is supposed to be the writer's own nation):

- (26) England is like an *appendix*, not very significant anymore but *can still cause trouble* and make you realise its there if it wants to. (E, UK, 18, M)
- (27) Britain [...] is the *belly button*. A part of previous high value [...]. Now an aesthetic part with a lesser importance than the rest of the body (E, UK, 22, M)
- (28) New Zealand can be seen as the *Middle toe* of the world, while one may not acknowledge or care for it *when removed the balance of the body will simply be off* (E, NZ, 19, M)
- (29) Australia is the *butt* of the world, somewhere that seems laughable and sometimes unnoticeable [...]. (E, AUS, 18, F)

The US sub-sample contains no comparable satirical BODY PART conceptualizations. However, one US student highlighted his nation's double-edged role world politics by both describing and drawing it as the LOWER BACK of the world that can be painful but is indispensable at the same time:

- (30) *Lower back*. You really need it and it is a very key part. It also gives a lot of people *pain*. Some people feel different ways about it. You really can't ignore it and most things are connected to it (*like your legs to the belly*) (E, US, 20, M)



(Illustration to Example 30)

Another US respondent's answer constitutes one of the rare cases where a depiction of one's own nation as a BODY PART is followed by a 'conceptually matching' characterization of neighbouring country, with an ironical slant:

- (31) The first thing that came to mind for the United States was the *head*. The US in the sole remaining superpower state (although its influence is declining) making it arguably the most important nation to the rest of the world. [...] on a lighter note, back home we call Canada “America’s hat”, *where does a hat go but on the head?* (E, US, 20, M)

Such a linkage between a BODY PART and matching DRESS ITEM to the relationship between different nation states is unique in the corpus and may be a spur-of-the-moment invention by the writer. It underlines the potential for BODY PART concepts to be exploited for creative and ironical statements.

The scenario variant of the NATION AS PART OF THE WRITER’S (EGO’S) OWN BODY is only minimally represented in the Inner Circle English corpus: there are just two instances, one from the British, one from the Australian cohort, that is as the FEET on which EGO stands (E, UK, 21, F) or as her HEART (E, AUS, 18, F). Due to its low numbers, this scenario seems insignificant for Inner Circle cultures, whereas it is significantly more important in other cultural contexts (see below, section 5).

4.3 | The national territory as a geobody

If the nation is viewed as a territorial or geographical BODY whole, the BODY PART concept lends itself to being applied to particular places or regions, with hierarchical or functional analogies. In the Inner Circle sample, this is not the dominant scenario but still accounts for one quarter of all scenario uses. Mostly, the capital is seen as HEAD, BRAIN, or HEART, due to its status as the seat of government and its control function for the rest of the national body.⁵ London, Washington, DC, Wellington and Canberra are identified in these ‘top’ locations, often with a second city (Birmingham, New York, Auckland, Melbourne) as the complementary central organ, the HEART. Occasionally, rural regions (Yorkshire in the UK, the Midwest in the US) are associated with HANDS and FEET, on account of agricultural activity. Some respondents also feel encouraged to declare their allegiance to, or aversion against, specific places and regions:

- (32) I was born and bred in the north-east of England, so that’s where I picture as the *heart* of my home nation. Of course, the *head* of state is situated in the south east of England, so that it seems *the heart is above the head* – geographically speaking. (E, UK, 27, F)
- (33) [...] perhaps London is the *brain* as it seems to be where people go to work after study. The *real brain* is Cambridge, the best university the country has to offer. Don’t talk about Oxford, that is the *fungus nail infection*, which we haven’t got round to treating yet (E, UK, 24, M)
- (34) The *brain* is Auckland. The *heart* is Wellington. (E, NZ, 20, M)
- (35) Washington DC is the *brain/head/mouth*. *The legs* are the producing states (It keeps the economy going/moving). Nebraska is the *heart*. LA is the *cancer killing the nation / body*. Florida is the *wrinkles & parting lines*. New York is the *adrenaline*. (E, US, 42, F)
- (36) Canberra is *the heart of Australia*. New South Wales is like the *hands that craft fine things*. (E, AUS, 20, M)

As with nation-as-BODY PART conceptualizations, regional-territorial BODY PARTS can carry implicitly evaluative notions regarding their status in the body hierarchy, as well in terms of state of health and body aesthetics, many of which are exploited for humoristic or polemical effects. These include to characterizations of regions as ILLNESSES (NAIL INFECTION, CANCER as in examples 33, 35 above) or as ‘lower’ and taboo BODY PARTS:

- (37) The *backside* of England is Hull (E, UK, 19, F)
- (38) [...] certain parts of [America] (specifically the upper eastern, but not on the coast) [are] referred to as the “*armpit*” of the nation, implying that it is *stinky, and gross* (E, US, 31, F)
- (39) Tasmania is the *nether regions* of Australia. (E, 19, M)
- (40) Canberra is the *ass* of Australia (E, AUS, 20, M)

On the other hand, regions can be emphatically and 'patriotically' endorsed, most often as the HEART, in the symbolic sense of the 'seat' of the SOUL, of the respective nation:

- (41) Britain's [...] *heart* is in Yorkshire (E, UK, 21, F)
- (42) Uluru is the *heart* of Australia, soulfully connecting us to our surrounds (E, AUS, 18, M)
- (43) I grew up in the upper Midwest (Dakotas), and have always known it as "*the heartland*" for two reasons. First is that it is in the middle of the country, just as the *heart is said to be in the center of the body*. I have also heard it in terms of the fact that the people who live in the *Midwest have a lot of heart* (E, US, 31, F)
- (44) The Gaeltacht is the *heart/soul* of Ireland (E, Ir, 19, F)

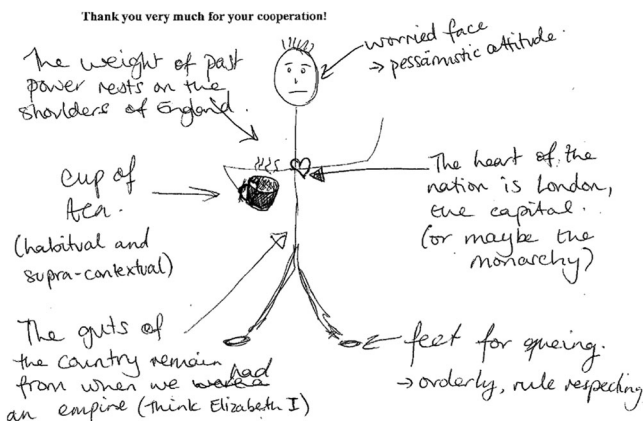
Overall, GEOBODY characterizations serve mainly the function of comparing prominent places/regions and attaching emotion-laden evaluations to them. The HEAD/BRAIN – HEART distinction is very prominent and often linked explicitly with the conventional REASON – EMOTION dichotomy, which favors a positive identification with HEART-status, whereas BRAIN-function is ascribed varying evaluations.

4.4 | The nation as a person

The last scenario to be discussed, that is the personalization of the nation, appears to invite even more evaluative uses than the BODY PART and GEOBODY scenarios. The positive depictions of the nation's CHARACTER TRAITS center on concepts such as EASY GOING, FRIENDLY and POLITE, the negative ones include HEADSTRONG, MOUTHY, MESSY, MEASLY, WEAK, PESSIMISTIC. Occasionally, 'national character' stereotypes are exploited, as in the UK with regard to the national pastimes TEA-DRINKING and QUEUING, which are treated with mild (self-)irony (4 cases, see below, example 46); and in Australia, with regard to alcohol-consumption, allegedly *a gallon each second* (2 cases, both from male informants). In a few instances, such personalized nation-characterization is extended into a mini-narrative that 'explains' the origins of the PERSON-quality in question, for example, AGEING and OBESITY for the UK and USA, respectively, and YOUTH/ADOLESCENCE for the 'younger' nations of New Zealand and Australia:

- (45) England is an *ageing person*, one that has been going for a long time. A *small frame* with big potential. England used to have many other *clothes* (colonies) to dress itself in. However, it has since given away all of its [*sic*] *clothes*. (E, UK, 18, F)

(46)



(E, UK, 22, F)

(Text and illustration)

- (47) My nation is fat. Lying supine, its *head is in the center, as well as its feet* [sic]. Its *limbs* branch like a star. Its fat is a combination of future pregnancy, a bloated [sic] past and an uncontrollable *metabolism*. (E, US, 25, M)
- (48) New Zealand is like a *little brother chasing after the nations of the world and clamouring for attention*. (E, NZ, 18, F)
- (49) Being a relatively new country I would equate Australia to a *body during adolescence*. Ideologies are developing and changing at a rapid pace, though not without internal conflict. *The brain is exposed to new hormones* such as the older generation of Australia is exposed to multiculturalism and expected to adjust to it. The *parasites* are the people who reject these inclusive notions. (E, AUS, 18, F)

5 | DISCUSSION

Our overview over nation conceptualizations produced by informants from Inner Circle societies shows that the BODY scenario is the dominant one. Its implications of hierarchical structure and interdependence (that is, top-down orientation, functional and aesthetic hierarchies of life-essential vs. non-essential, 'superfluous' and 'lowly' organs/limbs) show a high degree of congruity with Western/European traditions of nation-as-body conceptualizations (HEAD-TO-TOE hierarchy, *Fable of the belly*). The BODY-PART scenario fits this pattern, too, and allows authors to comment on aspects of the *body politic* that they want to hold up to praise or ridicule. This pattern also applies to the territorial GEOBODY-scenario, in which the respective capitals are assigned top status (HEAD, BRAIN or HEART) whilst some places or regions are relegated to the lower regions in the nation-BODY. PART OF EGO examples are only minimally in evidence whereas the NATION AS PERSON scenario, which accounts for one fifth of all instances, predictably includes the most detailed characterizations. They depict the respective nation in a personal (age-specific) role, with (supposedly) matching 'typical' behavior and provide an evaluative commentary that expresses ethical and/or emotional identification or distancing (see examples 45–49).

When such normatively slanted, personalized depictions are combined with the more implicitly evaluative BODY/BODY PART conceptualizations for the whole nation or for territorial or political entities in it, the amount of judgmental comment in the Inner Circle responses reveals itself as high: 94 out of 183 questionnaires (51%) contain conceptualizations that depict aspects of the respondents' home nations in a partly or wholly negative (39 instances), or an ironically/sarcastically ridiculing (45 instances) or a sympathetic-humorous light (10 instances). This is by far highest percentage across all cohorts – comparative results for other European and Middle Eastern cohorts are below 10 per cent, for Asian cohorts are below 5 per cent! It is also in this group of critical/ironical/humoristic responses that we can find subtle differences between the distinct national cohorts in the Inner Circle sample, although the imbalance of sample sizes makes it difficult to gauge the statistical reliability. The British sub-sample (n = 59), for instance, is characterized by matching amounts of critical and ironical comments (n = 18 for each type) and a minority of four humorous comments, yielding 40 instances altogether, which is the highest percentage (68%). The ironical remarks are relatively polite, as exemplified in quotations (19), (26), (27), (33), (37), (45) and (46). Generally, taboo-BODY PART characterizations are avoided and the criticism is often tempered by a humorous slant. In the smaller US cohort (n = 34), the number of relevant examples is 17, yielding a percentage of 50 per cent. Here the criticism is more stringent and sarcastic, with references to *bipolar brain function*, *Frankenstein-like* features and deadly cancer threatening the body politic (examples 11, 12, 35). The New Zealand sample (n = 42) has 14 relevant examples (= 33%), the majority of which are creative, humorous references to the nation as inexperienced (young girl/boy), and as being emotional rather than rational and of uncertain status, as in examples (2), (14), (28), (48). The 23 examples in the Australian cohort (n = 46) amount to a matching 50 per cent but are characterized by a predilection for taboo parts and drastic conceptualizations (*butt, nether regions, ass, parasites*, see examples 29, 39, 40, 49). The latter sub-concepts, which also occur in the three other Inner Circle cohorts, albeit to a lesser extent, are highly distinctive in the whole corpus: in several of the quantitatively larger linguistic/cultural cohorts (German and Chinese, both more than 300 scripts) they do not appear at all. Again, it must be stressed that due to the statistical imbalance, the percentages reported have only indicative significance,

but they seem to indicate register differences that may be characteristic of conceptualizing national identity among 18–25 year old academically trained young adults in the four different countries. These characterizations are clearly evaluative and partly humorous/ironical in that they highlight problematic aspects of the nation's history and politics (for example, loss of international importance, difficult relationships with other nations, internal social conflicts through immigration) by depicting them as personal shortcomings.

6 | CONCLUSION

The observed preferences in conceptualizing one's home nation from Inner Circle Englishes only represent a small section of the metaphor interpretation corpus. It comprises comparable samples of L1-users from 13 other European L1 backgrounds and another five from non-European L1 backgrounds (Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Turkish, Hebrew), which altogether include more than 1,200 responses. The comparative value of the English Inner Circle sample is of course only visible in contrast with other cohorts, whose presentation would go beyond the remit of this article. Preliminary results for the other cohorts (Musolff, 2020 forthcoming), indicate that, for instance, the German-L1 sample has an even more pronounced preference for the BODY scenario (55%), the Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)-L1 sample is characterized by a preponderance of PERSON conceptualizations (34%) and a relatively high percentage for GEOBODY scenario instances (28%). The Arabic-L1 sample, on the other hand, combines the already in themselves strongly represented PART OF EGO and PERSON-scenarios (36% and 37%, respectively) to express an emphatic identification of Self and nation. In terms of polarity this tendency is predominantly positively (patriotically) slanted but also includes a strand of stringent nation-as-self critique. The motivating factors for these different tendencies are still to be explored but can be sought in conceptual traditions, including religious and philosophical backgrounds, idioms, proverbs and other culturally important discursive traditions (such as the religious discourse which seems to play almost no role in the Inner Circle sample) as well as in historically or topically salient political/ideological issues.

At the methodological and theoretical level, the findings demonstrate (a) that there is substantial variation in the comprehension and interpretation of the NATION-AS-BODY metaphor and (b) that such variation can be elicited by a task that allows informants to articulate their comprehension in response to an open-ended question rather than a narrowly circumscribed, experimental setting that reduces the complex process of understanding to immediate stimulus reactions measurable in micro-seconds (identification of metaphoricity, or a target referent or a continuation preference), as it has been dominant in psycholinguistic research geared towards confirming cognitive assumptions about universality and automaticity of metaphor comprehension (see Section 2). Such experimental set-ups certainly are legitimate for measuring initial phases of understanding but cannot do justice to the full, socio-culturally informed interpretation potential of respondents. The preliminary findings presented here show that even among Inner Circle English speakers, metaphor interpretation is not a matter of automatically and subconsciously applying one conceptual model but that they are fundamentally characterized by variation, whose patterns can be related to cultural traditions, such as popular discourses informed by the body politic metaphor in the English-speaking world. Its study in world Englishes contexts, which have also other, Outer and Expanding Circle, cultural traditions as inputs, can elucidate the origins of such variation patterns and contribute to intercultural learning, for example, to avoid cross-cultural miscommunication and enable mutual cognitive enrichment.

NOTES

¹ This result shows the close connection of the two metaphor sources (as also reflected in the body politic concept, which has often been endowed with 'personal' features, such as ethical, gendered and 'typical' life-style attributes (see for instance the well nation-personalizations of *John Bull* for Britain, *Uncle Sam* for the USA).

² Percentages here and in all other tables are rounded figures.

³ Italicisation of the relevant metaphorical terms in this and further examples was added by the author. Square brackets signal omissions or explanatory additions by the author. No other changes were made, so spelling and grammatical errors remain

as in the originals. The abbreviations at the end of each quotation signify the sociolinguistic indicators supplied by the informants (first language, nationality, gender, age).

- ⁴ Highlighting healthiness is very rare, with just three instances altogether, one of which accounts for the Canadian contribution: 'Canada is like a *healthy body*. [...] the numerous areas become strong and allows [sic] the country to work well as a whole, i.e. political, sporting and international representation' (E, Can, 19, M).
- ⁵ The 'control' function is not necessarily seen as fully functional; so one US student characterizes Washington D.C. as the 'undecisive [sic] *brain* who argues against itself all the time' (E, US, 20, F). See also example (33), for differentiation between the nominal brain and the 'real' one.

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