A Survey of Body Part Construction Metaphors in the Neo-Assyrian Letter Corpus

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We present findings from a semi-automated linguistic analysis of the letter sub-corpus of the online State Archives of Assyria project (SAA), focusing on a specific grammatical configuration we dub a **Body Part Construction** (BPC). This is a verb phrase with a compound prepositional phrase involving a simple human body part. For instance, *alāku ina muhhi* literally means 'to go to the skull', or more colloquially, 'to go towards'. The BCP is a major template for conventional metaphors that greatly expands the expressive capacity of Akkadian. While specific instances of this construction have been documented in the literature, no large scale survey of them has been conducted until now.

Our presentation centers on how we constructed and analyzed our data set, which involved annotating the entire SAA letter corpus and converting those annotations to a format conducive to searching for BPC's. This process first involved training a custom spaCy language model on a set of gold-standard annotations and then applying the model's predictions to the rest of the corpus. The resulting annotations were converted to a linked open data format that easily faciliated searches for BPC's via sparql queries. These automated search results were then combined with pre-existing corpus metadata, allowing us to easily discern a number linguistic and rhetorical features of BPC's in the SAAo letter sub-corpus. The most interesting of these to date is the fact that there is a dialectal split between Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian letters in terms of whether BPC's use the base prepositions *ina* versus *ana*.

Beyond the specific linguistic findings we present, the value of our presentation also lies in how our methods can easily be used by other scholars of low-resource ancient languages who wish to efficiently annotate and analyze corpora on their own.

References: • Ong, M. & S. Gordin (to appear). A Survey of Body Part Construction Metaphors in the Neo-Assyrian Letter Corpus. *Journal of Open Humanities Data*.