This paper explores the role of typological features in the formation of the Turkish and Hungarian lexicon by examining the way lexemes which are related primarily to the concept of ‘touch’ participate in lexicalization of concepts from other domains of experience. The concept of ‘touch’ is one of five basic sensory concepts which, according to the embodiment hypothesis within the Cognitive Linguistic theoretical framework, serve as source domains in conceptualizing various abstract domains (Viberg 1984, Sweetser 1990, Ibarretxe–Antuñano 2005). The main goals of the paper are 1) to see to what extent the formation of the touch vocabulary differs or overlaps with respect to lexicalization patterns in two typologically similar but genetically unrelated languages, and 2) to investigate differences and similarities in conceptual mappings based on the concept of ‘touch’.

In this paper we have taken the results of Ibarretxe–Antuñano (2005) as a starting point for the analysis of conceptual mappings since the data of Turkish and Hungarian tactile verbs show similar trends in meaning extensions. Our analysis was also motivated by the results of Raffaelli & Kerovec (2017) who have done a contrastive analysis of two typologically and genetically different languages, Croatian and Turkish. Their analysis showed that the main differences in conceptual mappings between the two languages are triggered by morphological features such as prefixes and verb aspect which exist in Croatian but not in Turkish. In contrast to the analysis of Raffaelli & Kerovec, our paper aims to reveal lexicalization patterns used in the formation of the touch vocabulary in two typologically similar but genetically and culturally unrelated languages.

Typological similarities between Turkish and Hungarian can be seen on all levels of linguistic analysis: phonological (e.g. vowel harmony, euphonic word-structure), morphological (e.g. agglutination, no grammatical gender, no morphological aspect, morphological overlapping among different word classes, etc.), and syntactic (SOV order, postpositions, subordinated precedes subordinator, etc.). Nevertheless, in spite of salient typological similarities, the two languages differ in the fact that, unlike Turkish, Hungarian uses prefixes which, when combined with tactile verbs, change the meaning of the lexical unit. For instance, when the verb érint ‘to touch’ is prefixed by the prefix meg, it encodes an activity that happened very rapidly and suddenly. With the prefix ki- the verb tapint ‘to touch’ lexicalizes (very often) a chain of tactile movements that we perform in order to find something, while with the prefix rá- the same verb lexicalizes the activity of touching which results in finding something. It is important to note that the primary meanings of the prefixes ki- and ra- are related to the concept of direction in the spatial domain. On the other hand, Turkish verbs of touch such as dokunmak “to touch” and değmek “to (slightly) touch” cannot be morphologically modified to convey the same meanings as Hungarian verbs. In spite of this difference between the two languages, their similarity can be seen in the fact that the same morphological forms of the tactile verbs can relate to the concrete as well as to different abstract domains of experience, which was not the case with Croatian verbs as shown by Raffaelli & Kerovec (e.g. Hung. érint ‘to touch’ can mean ‘to mention’, ‘to concern’, Tur. dokunmak ‘to touch’ can mean “to harm”, “to disturb”, “to interfere”, “to concern”, “to affect (negatively)”). It means that although Hungarian uses prefixes with tactile verbs, they are not related to conceptual mappings from concrete to abstract domains, as is the case with prefixes in Croatian, i.e. a typologically different language. The interesting fact is that Hungarian prefixes originate from spatial adverbs, and similar ‘adverb+verb’ constructions exist in Turkish too, but in Turkish these adverbs do not merge with verbs and are not combined with tactile verbs.

1 What we mean by the term touch vocabulary is a structure of lexemes which can have very different meanings but whose roots are related primarily to the concept of touch. In this paper we limit ourselves only to verbs.
A comparative analysis of two typologically similar but genetically unrelated languages points to specificities, as well as to regularities in lexicalization processes operative in the formation of vocabularies related to the concept of ‘touch’.

Literature: