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CLICS and Cross-Linguistic Meaning Networks

Colexification as an external test for paths of thought in the Atlas of Language

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Michael Reich · Atlas of Language · 10 September 2026

Abstract

The CLICS research track examines which meanings are regularly expressed by the same lexical form across the world's languages and which controlled paths of thought this opens for the Atlas of Language. The full survey compared 936 Atlas profiles with CLICS, producing 2,500 reviewed mapping candidates and 2,362 finding rows. At least one robust comparative finding was obtained for 777 Atlas concepts, or 83.0 per cent of the investigated inventory. A total of 726 paths of thought were released and 129 held back. This report documents the dataset, the logic of colexification, evidence review, language-specific boundaries, and conflict-safe transfer. Colexification is not treated as universal semantic identity but as an observable linguistic coupling whose relevance must be reviewed separately for each Atlas concept.

Metric	Value
Atlas profiles studied	**936**
Mapping candidates	**2.500**
Finding rows	**2.362**
Covered concepts	**777 · 83,0 %**
Released / deferred paths	**726 / 129**

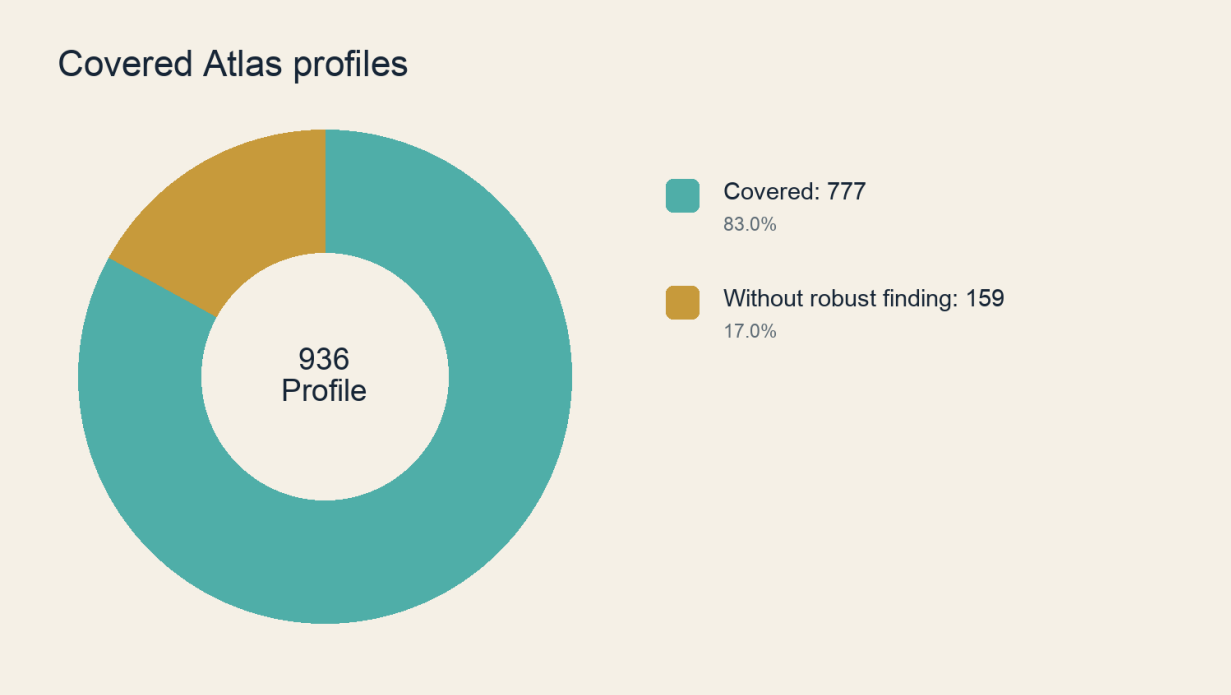

Fig. 1 · Coverage of the reviewed CLICS mapping.

1. Scope

CLICS—the Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications—provides cross-linguistic links between Concepticon concepts. The Atlas uses this network as an empirical outside view of its paths of thought. When one language expresses two meanings with the same form, this yields comparative evidence; it does not imply synonymy, nor does it imply that all languages make the same connection.

The study therefore does not ask which CLICS edge can simply be copied into the Atlas. It asks which linguistically attested coupling reveals a previously hidden semantic neighbourhood, and under what conditions that neighbourhood remains explainable within the Atlas.

2. Dataset

The analysis binds CLICS4 v1.0 and Concepticon 3.4.0 to the reviewed Atlas inventory. Glottocodes, Concepticon IDs, CLICS nodes, and Atlas IDs are stored separately. This preserves the distinction between claims derived from the external network, an individual language, Atlas editorial work, or later interpretation.

The research state covers 936 profiles, 2,500 mapping candidates, and 2,362 documented finding rows. Seven hundred and seventy-seven concepts are covered by at least one robust CLICS comparison. This high coverage is not proof of completeness; it records the reach of the reviewed mapping for this Atlas state.

3. Procedure

Atlas concepts are first mapped in a controlled manner to Concepticon concepts. Direct CLICS edges and network neighbourhoods are then reviewed. An edge is formulated as a path of thought only when source

and target meanings, linguistic evidence, and the direction of the perspective shift can be documented intelligibly.

Editorial decisions separate release from deferral. Released paths have robust cross-linguistic evidence and a distinct epistemic movement. Deferred paths remain research findings but are not published as navigable Atlas connections.

INTERPRETIVE RULE

Colexification shows an attested coupling in language data; it is not universal synonymy.

4. Main results

Of 936 investigated profiles, 777 are covered and 159 remain without a robust mapping finding. Seven hundred and twenty-six paths of thought were released and 129 deferred. The path analysis documented 1,692 direct edge references and 451 network-gap observations. CLICS thus reveals not only existing couplings but also the boundaries of its own semantic space.

The most productive findings rarely arise from mere word similarity. They occur where a language-specific form couples two domains of experience: body and feeling, spatial orientation and social order, perception and knowledge, or possession and relationship. Such couplings can give the Atlas new questions without redefining its concepts.

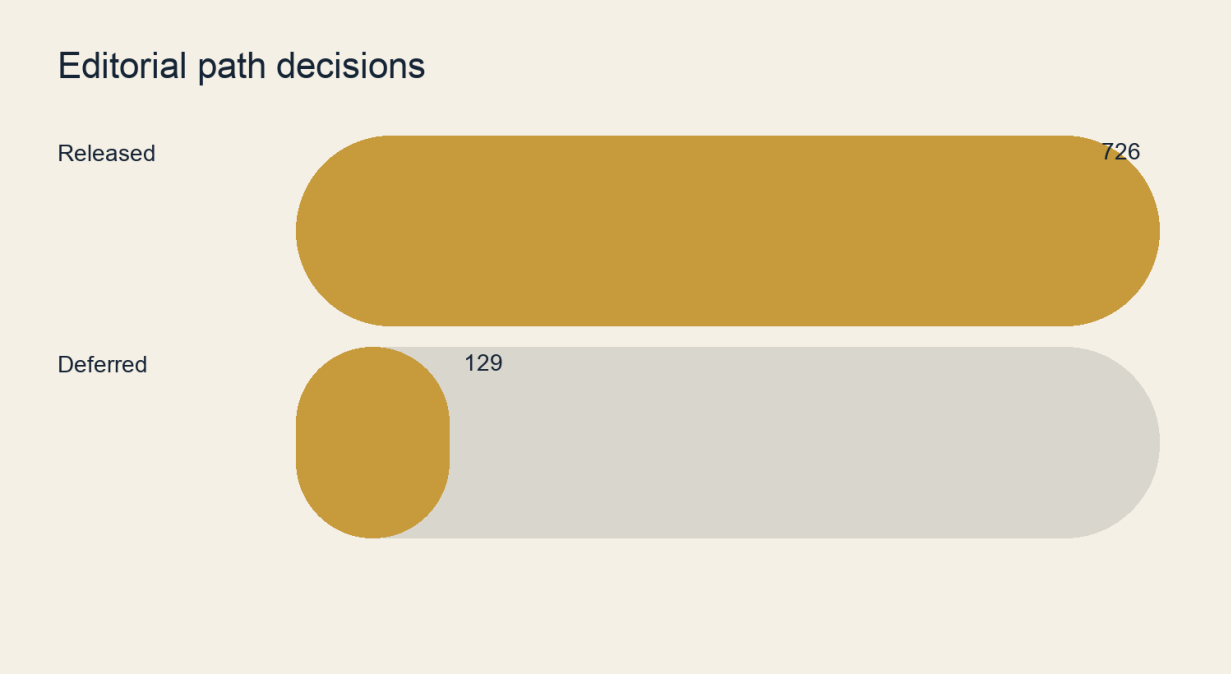

Fig. 2 · Release and deferral of paths of thought.

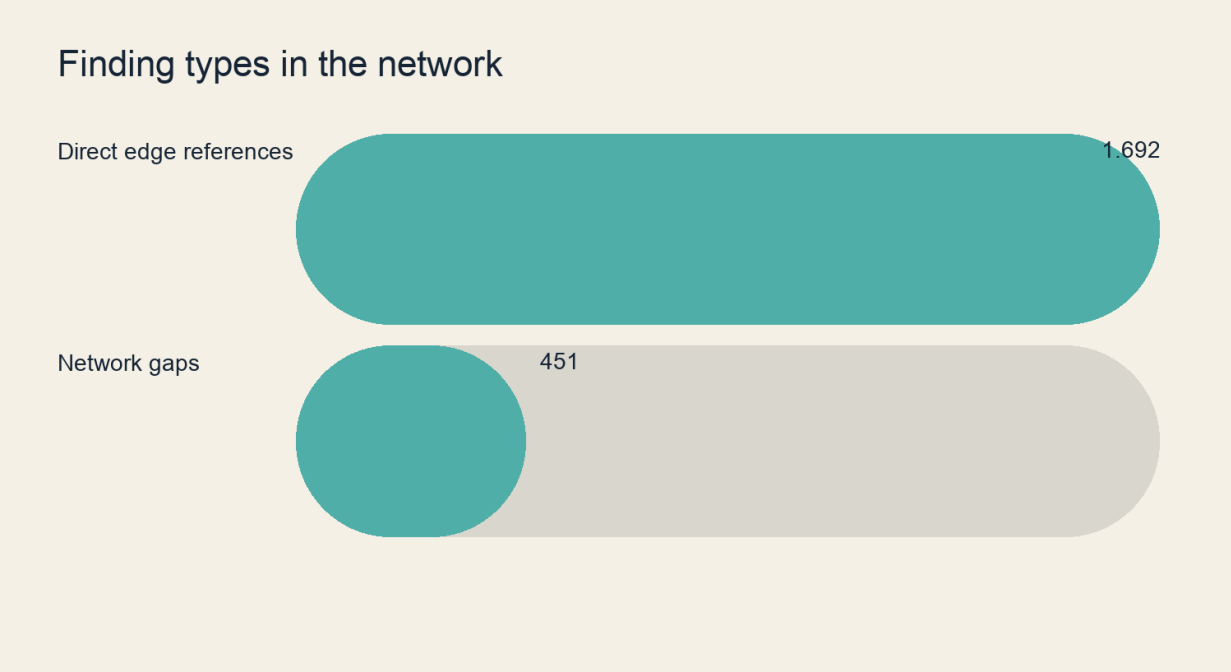

Fig. 3 · Direct edges and diagnostic network gaps.

5. Evidence and limitations

A colexification is a linguistic observation tied to a specific dataset. It may be shaped by homophony, polysemy, segmentation decisions, or historical development. Languages, forms, sources, and mapping decisions are therefore preserved; an isolated edge does not suffice as an ontological claim.

CLICS does not cover all languages, domains, and meanings evenly. Frequent or well-documented language families may become more visible than others. The Atlas therefore marks comparison, evidence, and interpretation as separate layers and avoids claims of universality when the data show only distribution or individual cases.

6. Value for the Atlas

Colexification analysis extends the Atlas in three directions: it provides empirically attested cross-paths, challenges Eurocentric assumptions, and reveals where other languages partition concepts differently. The Atlas does not obtain a world map of finished meanings; it gains an instrument for comparative attention.

The result is especially productive for the idea of a movement of thought. A path does not claim that two concepts are identical. It shows that a language can bring them together in one form—and invites readers to perceive their own conceptual separation anew.

7. Bridge and publication rule

Research data enter the canonical Atlas only through schema-validated, hash-bound inbox packages. The productive inventory remains the single source of truth. External IDs, evidence, editorial status, and internal relations are not conflated. A build is complete only after tests, readback, and a new canonical export.

8. Conclusion

CLICS supports the Atlas's basic idea: meaning is not merely a point but a field of possible relations. At the same time, the resource enforces methodological restraint. A visible connection is an invitation to investigate, not a shortcut to identity.

The controlled conjunction of cross-linguistic evidence and editorial movements of thought creates a space of resonance: external data answer the Atlas, and the Atlas responds with more precise boundaries and new navigable questions.

Appendix A · Review typology and case protocol

The matrix shows the levels of claim kept separate in the CLICS track. It prevents an external graph finding from silently becoming an internal Atlas relation or a claim of universality.

Class	Example / finding	Editorial consequence
Direct colexification	CLICS edge between Concepticon nodes	Review linguistic coupling
Network neighbourhood	Indirect proximity in the graph	Do not claim a direct edge
Single-language evidence	Form + language + source	Limit scope
Mapping gap	Atlas concept without robust Concepticon ID	Document as a gap
Released path	Evidence + explainable perspective shift	Eligible for publication
Deferred path	Unclear direction, scope, or evidence	Retain in research, do not publish

Appendix B · Quality assurance and traceability

1. Base binding: Atlas, Sites, and data-model versions plus manifest SHA-256.
2. Record binding: exact SHA-256 of the relevant concepts.jsonl line.
3. Semantic binding: external ID, version, sense or node, and mapping scope.
4. Editorial binding: package-level status, reviewer, timestamp, and rationale.
5. Technical binding: schema, duplicate check, transaction, full tests, and readback.

REPRODUCIBILITY BOUNDARY

The report explains decisions. Machine-readable files prove the state actually imported at any given time.

Data products and citation

This report documents the research state but does not replace the machine-readable artefacts. CURRENT_MANIFEST.json, concepts.jsonl, external_crosswalks_v2.jsonl, accepted inbox packages, and their import logs remain authoritative for canonical transfers.

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Reich, Michael (2026): CLICS and Cross-Linguistic Meaning Networks. Colexification as an external test for paths of thought in the Atlas of Language. Research Report 01, version 1.0. Atlas of Language / Atelier der Resonanzen.

References and sources

- Rzymski, Christoph et al. (2020): The Database of Cross-Linguistic Colexifications, reproducible analysis of cross-linguistic polysemies. Scientific Data 7.

- List, Johann-Mattis et al.: CLICS4 v1.0. Cross-Linguistic Colexifications. https://clics.clld.org/
- List, Johann-Mattis et al.: Concepticon 3.4.0. https://concepticon.clld.org/
- Atlas der Sprache: CLICS mapping tables, finding rows, language reviews, editorial path decisions and canonical Inbox artefacts.

Transparency note

The visual design is part of the Atlas's private research perspective. It distinguishes established external findings, editorial structural comparisons, and interpretive hypotheses of its own. Here, resonance is not a measured result but a methodological invitation to perceive relations without flattening differences.

Closing image · The external body of knowledge responds; the Atlas retains its own voice.