

been defined in this section does not extend to cover meaning changes that occur in the process of one language borrowing a lexeme from another language. While meaning changes in borrowing can parallel semantic shifts that occur in the history of a particular language, it is also possible for there to be radical departures. Key to the current model of semantic change is the notion that the speech community exercises a conservative influence over the nature and type of semantic change a lexeme can undergo, because members of the community must be able to reconcile (cognitively) the association of both the older meaning and the innovated meaning with the same form. With semantic shifts during borrowing there is no intermediate stage of polysemy, and there need be no conservative influence over the nature, degree, and type of shift a lexeme undergoes.

#### 4 NATURAL TENDENCIES OF SEMANTIC CHANGE IN THE SEMANTIC FIELD 'PARTS OF A PERSON'

Wilkins (1981) presents a crosslinguistic investigation of the semantic origins of terms for 'parts of a person', and the present section discusses some of the findings of that study. The notion 'parts of a person', or 'parts of a human being', is preferred over the more common 'body parts' because investigation revealed that 'body' is in fact a diachronically unstable term which is often found to be labelled by the same term as the term for 'skin', 'trunk', or 'person', or is not labelled at all. In Kâte (Papuan; Flierl and Strauss 1977), for instance, the word *sahac* has a primary meaning 'skin' and a secondary usage for 'body'. Lewis (1974: 52) notes for Gnaou (Papuan) that 'there is no single word corresponding to the English 'body' for the whole'. Instead a lexeme *matil* meaning 'human', which must be distinguished for sex in its singular form, is used where the material aspect of a human being is to be indicated. Lewis makes it clear that there is no polysemy involved here, it is 'human being', not 'body', which is referred to when *matil* is used.<sup>3</sup> 'Person' ('human being'), as it turns out, is a better candidate for the unique beginner in this domain since it, unlike 'body', appears to be a universally named notion, and terms used to label this notion are less likely to polysemously cover other notions within the same domain. With 'person' as the unique beginner, notions like 'spirit', 'soul', and 'mind' enter into this partonomy along with the physical aspects of a person.<sup>4</sup> This distinction is made explicitly in Ponapean where *pali-war*, the word for 'body', literally means 'vessel side' and is opposed to *pali-ngen* meaning 'spirit side'.

The original study searched for the various semantic sources that can be shown to give rise to the following forty-one notions:

person, soul, corpse, body, belly, chest, breast, head, face, eye, ear, nose, mouth, lip, tooth, jaw, cheek, chin, leg, foot, toe, toenail, thigh, knee, arm, hand, finger, fingernail, elbow, penis, testicle, skin, bone, skull, brain, intestines, heart, liver, kidney, lungs, blood

Four language families for which there are good sources of etymological and/or comparative historical data were chosen for initial investigation. These were Dravid-

TABLE 10-1

