Majid, A., Bowerman, M., Van Staden, M., & Boster, J. S. (2007). The semantic categories of cutting and breaking events: A crosslinguistic perspective. Cognitive Linguistics, 18 (2), 133-152. doi:10.1515/COG.2007.005.

This special issue of Cognitive Linguistics explores the linguistic encoding of events of cutting and breaking. In this article we first introduce the project on which it is based by motivating the selection of this conceptual domain, presenting the methods of data collection used by all the investigators, and characterizing the language sample. We then present a new approach to examining crosslinguistic similarities and differences in semantic categorization. Applying statistical modeling to the descriptions of cutting and breaking events elicited from speakers of all the languages, we show that although there is crosslinguistic variation in the number of distinctions made and in the placement of category boundaries, these differences take place within a strongly constrained semantic space: across languages, there is a surprising degree of consensus on the partitioning of events in this domain. In closing, we compare our statistical approach with more conventional semantic analyses, and show how...

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