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**\*\*Author's draft\*\***

## **The affordances of ‘face’ in Dalabon, Gunwinyguan, non-Paman-Nyungan, Australia**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter presents the semantic extensions of the word for ‘face’ in Dalabon, a language of the Gunwinyguan family from northern Australia (non-Pama-Nyungan group). As is common in this region, the Dalabon word for ‘face’, *dje-*, also means ‘nose’ and ‘nostril’. The word has relatively limited semantic extensions as a bare noun but features in a significant number of lexicalized compounds pertaining to the semantic domains of facial appearance and expressions, emotional dispositions, behaviors and states, as well as social interactions. In most of these compounds the semantic contribution of *dje-* is tied to its ‘face’ rather than its ‘nose’ or ‘nostrils’ meanings, although the latter senses are more prevalent for the bare noun. In a number of respects, the semantic extensions *dje-* in Dalabon are reasonably representative of the semantic profiles of words for ‘face’ in this part of Australia, and perhaps in the rest of the continent.

### **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

This chapter explores the semantic extensions of the term for ‘face’ in Dalabon, a Gunwinyguan language (non-Pama-Nyungan group) spoken in the central north of Australia. The word in question is the noun *dje-no*, which primarily means ‘nose’ or ‘nostril’, but can also be used to refer to the whole face. Interestingly, although ‘face’ is only a secondary denotation of *dje-no*, a significant proportion of the semantic extensions of the form derive conceptually from this sense, rather than from ‘nose’ or ‘nostril’. All these semantic extensions occur via lexicalized expressions that include the form *dje-*.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what we see in many languages of the world, in Dalabon

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<sup>2</sup> The suffix *-no* is not included in lexicalized expressions. See **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** for further discussion.

the noun for ‘face’, *dje-no*, does not grammaticalize into an adposition. Instead, the semantic derivations result from the lexicalization of noun-incorporation constructions.

After introducing the language, its grammar and the data used for this study in Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**, in Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** I present the denotations of the bare noun *dje-no*, as well as derivations in the domain of body parts. In the rest of the chapter I systematically explore the lexicalized expressions formed with *dje-*, semantic domain by semantic domain. Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** discusses expressions related to physical appearance, including facial expressions. These remain fairly predictable semantically, in spite of a degree of lexicalization and some figurative elements. Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** analyzes extensions to emotional behaviors, dispositions and states, which are metonymic extensions based on facial expressions. Finally, Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** explores the domain of social interactions, where some extensions are metonymic while several others remain opaque.

## 2. The language, its speakers and the data

### 2.1. Language ecology and data

Dalabon is an Australian language of the Gunwinyguan family, among the non-Pama-Nyungan group. Prior to colonization, it was spoken by a few hundred people in the western part of the Arnhem Land region in the Northern Territory of Australia. Nowadays, Dalabon is severely endangered and fluently spoken only by a small handful of speakers living mostly in remote Aboriginal communities to the east of the town of Katherine. The Dalabon community has now adopted Kriol, an English-lexified creole spoken by 20 to 30,000 speakers in the centre north of the Australian continent (Sandefur 1979; Schultze-Berndt, Meakins, and Angelo 2013; Ponsonnet 2020).

The data and analyses presented in this article are based on a 60-hour first-hand corpus collected between 2007 and 2014, mostly with five Dalabon speakers, all of them above sixty years old at the time, and all but one of them female.<sup>3</sup> Part of the data collection focused specifically on

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<sup>3</sup> The data is available at: <https://elar.soas.ac.uk/Collection/MPI548508>

This data collection was funded by the Endangered Language Project of the Hans Rausing Foundation (IGS0125). I am immensely grateful to the Dalabon community, and particularly to the speakers who have shared their knowledge with me over the years.

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descriptions of the body, including paronomies and figurative compounds involving body-part nouns.

Because Australian traditions have been mostly oral until colonization, there is no written historical data on Dalabon – the earliest written records we have date back to the early 1960s (Capell 1962). Like with other Australian languages, it is possible to infer some of the history of Dalabon based on comparison with other Gunwinyguan languages (Harvey 2003). However, given that linguistic research in this direction has remained relatively preliminary so far for this family, most of the suggestions we can articulate in this realm remain quite speculative. Given the modest scope of this chapter, I will limit myself to the discussion of the synchronic data available for Dalabon, and mostly refrain from discussing cross-linguistic or historical matters.

Like other languages of the Gunwinyguan family, Dalabon is highly polysynthetic, largely head-marking with respect to verbal arguments, with some suffixal case-marking nominal morphology mainly targeting adjuncts. There exists no full grammar of Dalabon at this stage, but there is a dictionary (Evans, Merlan & Tukumba 2004). A number of articles and theses describe various aspects of the language, including the verbal template, tense/aspect/mood categories, person prefixes (Evans, Brown & Corbett 2001; Evans & Merlan 2003; Evans 2006), demonstratives (Cutfield 2011) or prosody (Evans, Fletcher & Ross 2008; Ross 2011). Ponsonnet (2014) offers a detailed account of the linguistic encoding of emotions. This is particularly relevant here because body parts play a prevalent role in Dalabon figurative descriptions of emotions. Ponsonnet's (2015) discussion of Dalabon possession classes presents a detailed analysis of the grammatical status of body-part nouns. In the following section, I summarize the most important of these grammatical properties, as a useful background to the analysis of the semantic extensions of the Dalabon noun for 'face'.

## **2.2. The grammar of body-part nouns in Dalabon**

Ponsonnet (2015) has shown how Dalabon nouns are distributed across six distinct possession classes, each of which exhibits its own set of morphosyntactic behaviors and properties with respect to possession. Many languages in the world have two possession classes, and in such cases one of them is usually labelled alienable, and the other inalienable (Nichols 1988; Chappell & McGregor 1996; Lichtenberk 2009). In Dalabon, this (in)alienability contrast makes less sense,

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given that there are six, rather than just two, possession classes. Although some of these classes are clearly less ‘alienable’ than others, Dalabon inalienability is better regarded as a cline.<sup>4</sup> Dalabon body-part nouns – along with detachable parts such as hair, products such as saliva, and abstract attributes of the person such as one’s name, shadow, spirit etc., see Ponsonnet (in press) – form one of these grammatical possession classes. In this section, I present three grammatical properties that define this class. Firstly, body-part nouns are morphologically bound; secondly, their possessors are usually raised to argument functions; and thirdly, they can incorporate into verbs (Ponsonnet 2015: 21–25).

The first and second grammatical properties are important to understand Dalabon body-part nouns, albeit less relevant to our present discussion of the semantic extensions of the noun for ‘face’. Morphological boundedness means that Dalabon body-part nouns cannot occur without some morphological material – either a suffix or a word – appended to their right. The material in question can be anything, for instance another noun forming a compound as in (1), an adjective as in the second occurrence in (2), or some verbal material when a noun is incorporated into a verb complex as in the third occurrence in (2) (see below about noun incorporation). If the context does not provide any material to be appended, then a body-part noun will be followed by a possessive suffix, as with see in the first occurrence in (2). This suffix can default to a third person singular suffix *-no* where the possessor is unknown, as reflected in body-part citation forms (Evans, Merlan & Tukumba 2004). This is why the noun for ‘face’ is cited as *dje-no* rather than *dje*. To the extent that they must receive a possessive suffix when used on their own, Dalabon body-part nouns are said to be ‘obligatorily possessed’.

20100725\_002\_MT 14 [Stim]<sup>5</sup>

[Pointing at body parts on the drawing of a human face.]

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<sup>4</sup> The literature suggests that comparable phenomena may occur in other non-Pama-Nyungan languages, however they have generally been analyzed from a different angle (see for instance Evans 1996; Harvey 1996; McKay 1996; and Ponsonnet (in press) for an overview).

<sup>5</sup> Abbreviations not listed in the Leipzig glossing rules. APPR: apprehensive mood; COMPASS: compassion; DIM: diminutive; EMPH: emphatic; FILL: filler; h: higher in animacy; INCH: inchoative; INTJ: interjection; IRR: irrealis; NEG: negative; PCUST: customary past; PI: past imperfective; PP: past perfective; R: realis; REDUP: reduplication; RR: reflexive/reciprocal; SEQ: sequential; SUB: subordinate. Data types. [ContEl]: contextualized elicitation; [El]: grammatical or lexical elicitation; [Film]: comment on a movie; [Narr]: narrative; [Stim]: comment on visual stimulus.

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(1) *Dje-widj-no...*                      *kenh dalu-widj-no...*                      *dalu-kurlah-*  
*no...*  
nose/face-WIDJ-3sg.POSS      HESIT      mouth-WIDJ-3sg.POSS                      mouth-skin-3sg.POSS

‘The skin around the nose... I mean, the skin around the mouth... the lips...’

20100725\_002\_MT 11 [Stim]

[Pointing at the drawing of a human face colored for the purpose of elicitation.]

(2) *Dje-no,*                      *kanh dje-ngurrimi.*                      *Ka-h-dje-ngurr-mu.*  
nose/face                      DEM      nose/face-red                      3sg-R-nose/face-red-PRS  
‘The face, this one has a red face.                      He’s red-faced.’

Dalabon body-part nouns are often expressed as possessed by means of ‘external possession’ or ‘possessor raising’ (Chappell & McGregor 1996). That is, the possessor (i.e. the whole) gets cross-referenced as an argument on the verb instead of the body part itself, as illustrated in the second line in (3). If *dje-no* ‘nose, nostril, face’ was cross-referenced on the verb, then the person prefix at the beginning of the verb complex would be *ka-*, third person singular acting upon an inanimate third person singular. But the prefix *buka-* cross-references an animate second argument, namely the person whose nose has been cut off.

20110518a\_002\_QB 625 [Narr]

[From a traditional tale.]

(3) *Ka-h-dadjka-ng*                      *keninjbi-dorrung,*                      *kanh lawk,*  
3sg/3-R-cut-PP                      whatsit-COM                      DEM      stone.knife  
*buka-h-dje-dadjka-nj*                      *weh-no.*  
3sg/3sg.h-R-nose/face-cut-PP      INTJ.compass

‘He cut it with the whatsit, the stone knife, he cut his nose poor thing.’

More important to the present argument than morphological boundedness and possessor raising is syntactic noun incorporation (Baker 1988; Evans 2003), a construction whereby a noun gets incorporated to a verbal compound, as illustrated in (2) and (3) above. In Dalabon, noun incorporation is optional, as we can see in (4), where an incorporation construction would have produced *nga-h-bibbi-ngarrk-mu*, literally ‘I breast-ache’. However, in Dalabon incorporation is

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by far the most natural construction with body parts – more so than with other classes of incorporable nouns (Ponsonnet 2015).

250909\_85OK 488 (LB) [ContEI]

(4) *Nunda ke bibbi-ngan nga-h-ngarrk-mu.*  
DEM EMPH breast-1sg.POSS 1sg-R-ache-PRS

‘This is when my breast hurts.’

This tendency of Dalabon to incorporate body-part nouns results in the proliferation of compounds of the form [body-part-noun+predicate] in the language. While these compounds result from productive syntactic construction, they are prone to lexicalization, i.e. many of them become frozen to some extent and/or lose their compositional meaning. In standard Dalabon noun-incorporation constructions, the incorporated noun is interpreted as the first argument (or subject) of intransitive predicates, as in (2); and as the second argument (or object) of transitive predicates, as in (3). However, lexicalized [body-part-noun+predicate] compounds can pattern in different ways, as in (5) where *karlang* ‘shoulder’ expresses a comitative argument (instrument). At other times, the argument structure is not altered, but the sense of the compound is no longer compositional, as in (6). As this example illustrates, such compounds are often figurative.

20110518b\_003\_LB\_ND 131 (LB) [Narr]

(5) *Mamam-ngan ka-h-karlang-ka-ninji.*  
grandfather-1sg.POSS 3sg/1-R-shoulder-take-PCUST

‘My grandfather (mother’s father) used to carry me on his shoulders.’

20120706b\_005\_MT 095 [ContEI]

(6) *Delegram buka-h-marnu-burlh-miyan,*  
email 3sg/3sg.h-R-BEN-come.out-FUT  
*mulah-no-kun ka-h-lng-kangu-yowyow-miyan.*  
mother’s sister-3sg.POSS-GEN 3sg-R-SEQ-belly-flow:REDUP-FUT

‘She’ll get a phonecall, and she will be pleased about her mother’s sister.’

This lexicalization pathway, via frozen noun-incorporation constructions, is the main avenue of semantic extensions for body-part nouns in Dalabon. All these metaphors are lexicalized, and therefore conventional. Free, poetic metaphors are relatively rare in Dalabon (Ponsonnet 2014: 230), and I have not found any involving the face in my data. Contrary to what is observed in many other languages of the world, body-part nouns do not very naturally grammaticalize into

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adpositions. The current noun for ‘face’ *dje-no* shows no signs of such grammaticalization – contrary to the noun for ‘chest’, *berru-no*, which can attract spatial interpretations. The extensions of *dje-no*, on the other hand, occur mostly via the sort of lexicalized compound predicates discussed above, as well as via nominal compounds. They concern the semantic domains of physical appearance, emotions and social interactions. Before discussing these three domains in Sections **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** to **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** below, in Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** I present the primary denotations of *dje-no*.

### 3. Body parts and denotations of the bare noun

As already mentioned, the word for ‘face’ in Dalabon is *dje-no*. There is no other word to talk about the whole face. *Dje-no* has several meanings, and as evidenced by speakers’ responses to pointing tasks and other tests (Ponsonnet 2012: 368–75), ‘face’ is not its primary denotation. Instead, *dje-no* primarily means ‘nose’, as in (7) (and (3) above); and often means ‘nostrils’ as well. When presented with visual stimuli featuring faces and asked to identify *dje-no*, speakers always point to the nose first, and never point to the whole face spontaneously. The ‘face’ meaning of *dje-no* is nevertheless clearly attested, as in (8) (and (2) above), but it is less frequent, especially outside of compounds. Several languages of the Gunwinyguan family, such as Kunwok (Garde 2011) or Rembarrnga (Saulwick 2003), also colexify ‘face’ and ‘nose’. This occurs elsewhere on the continent too (e.g. Kukatja, Pama-Nyungan, Western Desert, Peile 1997), and more generally in many Australian languages the word for ‘face’ also denotes a part of the face, such as the forehead (e.g. Yolngu, Pama-Nyungan, Arnhem Land, Zorc and Bowern 2012) or the eyes (e.g. Kaytetye, Pama-Nyungan, Arandic, Central Australia, Turpin 2002 and Turpin & Ross 2011).

In addition to human-oriented denotations, *dje-no* can also be used to talk about equivalent parts of animals, such as the beak of a bird or the nostrils and tip of the nose of a crocodile.

- 3’00’’/30015a/2008 (LB) [ContEI]  
 (7) *Dje-no-walung* [...], *ka-h-dja-kulu-bo-n*, *kanh wurdurd-wurd* [...].  
 nose-3sg.POSS-ABL 3sg-R-just-mucus-go-PRS DEM child-DIM  
 ‘[It’s running] from her nose, this child’s nose is running.’

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20100716\_002\_MK\_JG 0588 [ContEl]

[Touching her cheek and side of chin.]

(8) *Wurdi nga-h-dje-werleberrk-mu!*

INTJ.neg 1sg-R-nose-?hang.down?-PRS

‘Oh dear, I’m all wrinkled!’

Dalabon body-part nouns are often part of compounds that denote other body parts. The forms found with *dje-* are listed in Table (1). We see that most of the compounds refer to a part of the nose, reflecting that this is the primary denotation of the *dje-no*.

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-dun-no</i> , n.	nostril	<i>dun-no</i> , n. ‘hole’
<i>dje-karndarn-no</i> , n.	sinuses, nose bridge	cf. <i>karnda-no</i> , n. ‘channel’
<i>dje-ngonjorrngonjorr-no</i> , n.	nostril	<i>ngonjorrngonjorr-no</i> not attested
<i>dje-widj-no</i> , n.	skin around nostrils	cranberry morpheme WIDJ, e.g. <i>daluwidj-no</i> ‘mouth’+WIDJ, ‘skin around the mouth’
<i>ngarlbak-dje-no</i> , n.	some part of the lower half of the beak of a pelican	<i>ngarlbak-no</i> , n. ‘chin, jaw’

Table 1. Nominal compounds with *dje-*.

Applied to objects, *dje-no* can mean ‘hook’, typically the peg of a spear-thrower. This sense is another extension of the ‘nose’ sense, with a metaphor inspired by the shape of spear-throwers.

An important conclusion from the set of denotations of *dje-no* is that the primary sense of this Dalabon word is ‘nose’. ‘Face’ is a secondary meaning, in fact even more backgrounded than ‘nostril’. However, as the following sections will reveal, the semantic extensions of this form mostly rely on the meaning ‘face’ rather than ‘nose’ or ‘nostril’.

#### 4. Physical appearance

A number of lexical compounds featuring *dje-* relate to the physical appearance of the face. These compounds can describe lasting properties of someone’s facial appearance – whether properties of their features (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**), or momentary facial expressions (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**). All these senses derive most naturally from the ‘face’ sense of *dje-no*.

##### 4.1. Looks

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We find *dje-* in a number of Dalabon verbs and adjectives used to describe somebody’s looks, as recapitulated in Table (2) and discussed below. In these compounds, *dje-* refers literally to the face.

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<b>LOOKING GOOD</b>		
<i>dje-(men)-burrama, adj.</i>	good looking	<i>burrama</i> , adj. ‘good, healthy’ <i>men-no</i> , n. ‘ideas, mind’
<i>dje-mon/mondih, adj.</i>	good looking (may also occasionally mean ‘good-tempered’)	<i>mon</i> , adj. ‘good, fine’ <i>mondih</i> , adj. ‘good’
<i>dje-(men)-weh, adj.</i>	ugly (may also occasionally mean ‘quarrelsome’)	<i>weh</i> , adj. ‘bad, unhealthy’ <i>men-no</i> , n. ‘ideas, mind’
<i>dje-wehkurla, adj.</i>	ugly	<i>wehkurla</i> , adj. ‘bad’
<b>LOOKING ALIKE</b>		
<i>dje-dadjka, v.t.</i>	look like someone (particularly a family member)	<i>dadjka</i> , v.t. ‘cut’
<i>dje-rokrok, adj.</i>	look alike	<i>rokrok</i> , adj. ‘same’

Table 2. Compounds with *dje-* describing facial features.

Combined with the adjectives *mon*, *mondih* or *burrama*, all meaning ‘good’, or with *weh* or *wehkurla*, meaning ‘bad’, *dje-* can be used to qualify the attractiveness of people’s features, as in (9). The meaning of such expressions is compositional, and *dje-* does implicitly refer to the face here, not the nose. These expressions are lexicalized to the extent that the combinations of components are somewhat frozen: for instance, *dje-* is not a natural combination with *marrkidj* ‘beautiful’.

20120718a\_000\_MT 058 [EI]

(9) *Kanh kirdikird mak ka-dje-burrama, ka-h-dje-weh.*  
DEM woman NEG 3sg-face/nose-good 3sg-R-face-bad

*Bah bulu ka-h-dja-berrmeberrma-ng.*  
but 3pl 3sg/3-R-FOC-joke:REDUP-PP

‘This woman is not pretty, she’s ugly. But she makes jokes with them [with men].’

(Joking with someone is akin to flirting with them and liking them, hence the implication that men like this woman although she is not pretty.)

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In addition there are also some lexicalized expressions where *dje-* combines with *men-*, the latter meaning ‘ideas, mind, consciousness’ (Ponsonnet 2009). That is, one can say *dje-men-burrama* instead of *dje-burrama* for ‘good looking’, or *dje-men-weh* instead of *dje-weh* for ‘ugly’. Elsewhere in my data, *men-* produces compounds related to cognitive functions (intellectual states and processes, plus some emotional states). While there is no clear-cut explanation to the presence of *men-* in facial-appearance compounds, given the ubiquity of body and part-of-the-person nouns in Dalabon in this semantic domain, these occurrences of *men-* ‘ideas, mind, consciousness’ are hardly surprising. The accumulation of two body-part nouns before a predicate is a widespread phenomenon. Like other nouns for holistic aspects of the person (e.g. *njerrh-* ‘body’), *men-* ‘idea, mind’, can have abstract, and somewhat more neutral semantic contributions (Ponsonnet 2014: 357–58). For instance, both *men-yer(mu)* and *yer(mu)* mean ‘be ashamed’, so that the contribution of *men* in this compound is neutral (Ponsonnet 2014: 338–39).

As illustrated in (10), some compounds with *dje-* denote facial resemblances. *Dje-rokrok* is another compositional compound, as *rokrok* means ‘same’ and the compound means ‘look alike’. Note that a synonym is *men-rokrok*, where ‘ideas, mind’+‘same’ means ‘look alike’ (facial resemblance). That is, the semantic contributions of *men-* and *dje-* to the compound are the same, in spite of these elements having quite different meanings in isolation. We also see in the second line of example (10) that ‘look alike’, and more specifically here ‘look like one’s ascendant’ can also be expressed as *men-wan* ‘ideas, mind’+‘follow’.<sup>6</sup>

- 20120717\_007\_MT 062 [ContEI]
- (10)      *Wurdurd*      *kardu*      *bulnu*      *bulah-yaw-dje-dadjka*  
             *weh-no.*  
             children      maybe      3pl              3pl/3-DIM-face/nose-cut:PRS  
             INTJ.compass
- Bulnu*      *bula-h-men-wa-n. [...]*      *Bala-h-dje-rokrok.*  
             3pl      3pl/3-R-ideas-follow-PRS      3pl-R-face/nose-same:REDUP

‘The children look a little like her [their cousin], how cute. They follow her features. They have the same face.’ (The cultural emphasis on family relations leads the speaker to

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<sup>6</sup> Apart from the presence of *men-* in these compounds, there is not much additional evidence to indicate that *men-no* could have meant ‘face’ at an earlier stage of the language.

find the resemblance in question endearing, because it emphasizes social connection. She expresses her endearment using a diminutive and an interjection – see Ponsonnet (2014: 81–109).)

We see in example (10) that another compound, *dje-dadjka* ‘nose/nostril/face’+‘cut’, ‘look alike’, also denotes resemblance. It produces an opaque metaphor, CUTTING SOMEONE’S FACE IS LIKE LOOKING ALIKE, for which I have no compelling conceptual or cultural explanation. This is the only figurative compound with *dje-* in the semantic domain of physical appearance.

#### 4.2. Facial expressions

Apart from aesthetic properties of the face, compounds with *dje-* can also describe temporary facial expressions such as laughter, tears etc. The facial-expression compounds that occur in my corpus are listed in Table (3). Here again, *dje-* implicitly refers to the face, not the nose; and as with facial-appearance compounds, this reference is literal rather figurative, i.e. the compounds literally denote an aspect of the face. Interestingly, *dje-* exhibits different semantic contributions with different compounds.

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-borlk(mu)</i> , v.i.	put a sad face	<i>borlk(mu)</i> , v.i. ‘fall out’
<i>dje-redjiredjing</i> , v.i.	laugh	<i>redjing</i> , v.i. ‘laugh’, reduplicated
<i>dje-ru-dih</i> , adj.	not crying	<i>ru</i> , v.i. ‘cry’, <i>-dih</i> , privative suffix
<i>dje-yerrk(mu)</i> , v.i.	cry	<i>yerrk(mu)</i> , v.i. ‘slip, flow’
<i>dje-yirru-mun</i> , v.i.	express hostility with the face	<i>yirru-mun</i> , v.i. ‘be(come) angry’

Table 3. Compounds with *dje-* describing facial expressions.

With *dje-redjiredjing* ‘laugh’, *redjiredjing* also means ‘laugh’ in itself, and *dje-* does not really modify its meaning; it simply signals that the face is involved in laughing. The same can be said of crying, however *\*ru-dih* ‘cry-without’ does not occur on its own, so in this case *dje-* is ‘indispensable’, so-to-say. With *dje-yirru-mun*, *dje-* shifts the meaning of the predicate without modifying it entirely, from the emotional sense ‘be(come) angry’ to the facial-expression meaning ‘express anger with the face’. This mechanism whereby a body part combines with an emotional predicate to describe the expression of the emotion with this body part is somewhat productive in

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Dalabon: *yirru-mun* ‘be angry’, for example, was found to combine with *dalu-* ‘mouth’, *langu-* ‘hand’, *marru-* ‘hair’, *mumu-* ‘eyes’, and more (Ponsonnet 2014: 332–36).

20110530\_003\_MT 245 [ContEI]

- (11) *Bulu-no* *kardu* *ka-h-yirru-mu-n,* *bulu*  
*ka-h-du-ng.*  
 father-3sg.POSS maybe 3sg-R-conflict/anger-INCH-PRS 3pl  
 3sg/3-R-scold-PRS  
 ‘The father may be angry, he scolds them.’

20120719b\_002\_MT 42 [Film]

[Commenting on a movie character conveying her disapproval of another character by means of a facial expression.]

- (12) *Buka-h-marnu-dje-yirru-m-inj.*  
 3sg/3sg.h-R-BEN-nose/face-conflict/anger-INCH-PST  
 ‘She’s angry against him [and expresses it] from the face.’

With *dje-yerrk(mu)* ‘face’+‘slip, flow’, ‘cry’ and *dje-borlk(mu)* ‘face’+‘fall out’, ‘put a sad face’, *dje-* modifies the interpretation of the predicates. In each case, the addition of *dje-*, referring to the face, imposes a figurative reading of the compound, as we can see from the semantics of *yerrk-minj* in (13) vs *dje-yerrk-minj* in (14).

20111206b\_001\_MT 025[EI]

- (13) *Wulkun-ngan* *melbe* *ka-h-nahb-inj* *ka-h-lng-yerrk-minj.*  
 brother-1sg.POSS mud 3sg-step-PP 3sg-R-SEQ-slip/flow-PP  
 ‘My brother stepped into the mud and slipped.’

20120705b\_001\_MT 119 [Stim]

[Commenting on a video where a woman leaves a man alone after rejecting the flowers he offered.]

- (14) *Yibung-karn-wali* *ka-h-dje-yerrk-minj*  
 3sg-EMPH-in.turn 3sg-R-nose/face-slip/flow-PP  
*ka-h-ru-yan,* *duway-no-yih.*  
 3sg-R-cry-FUT husband-3sg.POSS-ERG

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‘As for him now, he’s breaking into tears [face-slip/flow], he’s going to cry, the husband.’

## 5. Emotional associations

The compounds discussed in Section **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** evidently relate to emotions, however strictly speaking they denote the *expression* of emotions. Below I discuss compounds that relate to the same moods, but denote either people’s emotional dispositions or behaviors (5.1), or emotional states themselves (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**). Some of the compounds discussed in the section can denote facial expressions as well, but I deal with them here as long as they *also* denote emotional dispositions, behaviors or states. The *dje*-component of these expressions is interpreted literally, mostly as ‘face’, yielding facial-expression denotations like the ones discussed in **Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.** The resulting compound then attract an emotional reading based on the FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR CORRESPONDING EMOTION metonymy (Kövecses 2000: 134).

### 5.1. Emotional behaviors

Derived from the association of the face with laughter are two compounds that describe emotionally charged behaviors, presented in Table (4) below. Although *dje-rekohrekoh* (which is opaque in synchrony since *rekoh* has no meaning of its own) can occasionally mean ‘laugh’, its primary sense is ‘be a jolly/funny chap’ (illustrated in (15)). Hence it describes a personality trait and corresponding behavior – not a facial expression. *Dje-rekohrekoh* can also evoke flirtatious behaviors, although this appears to be a secondary meaning. The semantic extension from being entertaining to being flirtatious reflects a relatively pervasive cultural association between laughing and joking on the one hand and flirting on the other hand: people of opposite gender engaged in lively, smiley chats are normally considered to be flirting.

20120717\_000\_MT 28 [EI]

(15) *Yow, ka-h-dje-rekohrekoh, munguyh nol ka-h-re-ngabbu-n.*  
yes 3sg-R-nose/face-REKOH:REDUP all.the.time 2pl 3sg/2-R-  
LAUGHTER-give-PRS

‘Yes, she’s a jolly chap, she always makes you laugh.’

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*Dje-kol(mu)* ‘nose/face’+‘pretend’ has very similar meanings as *dje-rekohrekoh*. It can be used in similar contexts to describe someone who keeps being funny, puts on a show to remain the focus of attention; it can also mean ‘to flirt’ (Ponsonnet 2018: 109–110). Here the semantic contribution of *dje-* is minimal: the verb *kol(mu)* exhibits very comparable meanings when used on its own. The presence of *dje-* in this compound is probably due in part to an analogy with other *dje-* compounds that describe laughter. *Kol(mu)* combines with a number of body parts, all with meanings revolving around seduction, so that this sense is not very specific to the face.

20120714b\_005\_MT 140 [ContE1]

(16) *Yawurrinj biyi, kirdikird-wurd yawk-no,*  
 young.man man woman-DIM young.woman-FILL

*bale-bobo-n bala-h-wawa-rru-n.*  
 3pl:SUB-go:REDUP-PRS 3pl-R-follow:REDUP-RR-PRS

*Nunh kanh bala-h-dje-kol-mu.*  
 DEM DEM 3pl-R-nose/face-pretend-PRS

*Bala-h-marnu-dje-kol-murru-n. Kardu mararradj*  
*wubulu-yidjnja-n.*  
 3pl-R-BEN-nose/face-pretend-RR-PRS maybe lover  
 APPR:3pl/3-have-PRS

‘Young men, men, young women, teenage girls, when they go around and follow each other. That’s when they’re flirting. They try and seduce each other. They might end up with a lover.’

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-kol(mu)</i> , v.i. <i>dje-kolmiyi</i> , adj.	act silly to make people laugh, flirt	<i>kol(mu)</i> v.i. ‘pretend, act funny’ <i>kolmiyi</i> not well attested outside of compounds
<i>dje-rekohrekoh</i> , adj.	laugh, be a jolly chap, a funny chap; flirt	<i>rekohrekoh</i> not attested

Table 4. Compounds with *dje-* denoting emotional dispositions and behaviors.

## 5.2. Emotional states

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A number of *dje-* compounds can be used to describe emotional states – unsurprisingly, those strongly associated with facial expressions, such as being sulky or sad. These compounds are listed in Table (5) and discussed below.

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-bruH(mu)</i> , v.i.	be sulky, sad (emotion)/put on a dark face (expression)	<i>bruH(mu)</i> , v.i. ‘blow’
<i>dje-dol(mu)</i> , v.i.	sulky	unclear
<i>dje-ngarrk(mu)</i> , v.i.	feel very bad, feel sick and tired	<i>ngarrk(mu)</i> , v.i. ‘be sick’

Table 5. Compounds with *dje-* denoting emotional states.

While *dje-dol(mu)* and *dje-ngarrk(mu)* are only marginally attested, *dje-bruH(mu)* ‘nose/face’+‘blow’, ‘sulky, sad/put on a dark face’ is amongst the most frequent emotion words in Dalabon (Ponsonnet 2014: 180; 184). The emotional sense is the most salient, however the facial-expression sense ‘put on a dark face’ still applies in some contexts. It is more than likely that it is the most ancient meaning, and that the compound has developed purely emotional senses, illustrated in (17) and (18), from the initial facial-expression meaning.

20110605\_003\_LB\_ND 088 (LB) [Stim]

[Describing a picture where a character looks sulky.]

- (17) *Kardu yibung-karn bulu ka-h-djare-ninj nahdah bala-h-bo-ni.*  
 maybe 3sg-EMPH 3pl 3sg-R-like/want-PI there 3pl-R-go-IRR

*Ka-h-Ing-dje-bruH-mu mak nol nga-h-marnu-bo-niyan.*  
 3sg-R-SEQ-nose/face-blow-PRS NEG 2pl 1sg/2-R-BEN-go-FUT

‘Perhaps he wanted them to go there [altogether, instead]. He’s sulking: I won’t go with you.’

20120712a\_000\_MT 025 [E1]

- (18) *Mulah-ngan ka-h-moyh-yo, nga-h-dje-bruH-minj.*  
 mother’s.sister-1sg.POSS 3sg-R-sick-lie:PP 1sg-R-nose/face-blow-PP  
 ‘My mother’s sister was sick, I was sad.’

The trope instantiated by *dje-bruH(mu)* ‘nose/face’+‘blow’, ‘sulky, sad/put on a dark face’ is somewhat obscure: assuming that *dje-* refers to the nose in this particular compound, it would

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translate as BLOWING FROM THE NOSE FOR FEELING SAD. While this could be a metonymic allusion to animals blowing in anger,<sup>7</sup> this association did not seem to evoke anything for speakers, and it does not fit well at all with the rest of the emotional figurative ‘system’ observed in Dalabon (Ponsonnet 2014). Instead, the figurative dimension of *dje-bruH(mu)* is probably better understood with reference to an apparently archaic sense of *bruH(mu)*, probably around the notions of growth or swelling.<sup>8</sup> The trope would then become GROWING/SWOLLEN NOSE/FACE FOR FEELING SAD. This is evocative of a size trope found in a number of Australian languages across the continent, where expressions meaning ‘big nose’ are used to denote negative emotions or mood – i.e. LARGE NOSE FOR NEGATIVE EMOTION/MOOD (Ponsonnet and Laginha 2021, 57; Turpin 2002, 281; Peile 1997, 128). Indeed, a calqued expression occurs in the local Kriol, *shwelopnos*, from English ‘swell up’+‘nose’, meaning ‘be sulky, angry’. The underpinnings of the conceptual association between the size of the nose and negative emotions remain obscure. The meanings of ‘big nose’ expressions across Australia suggest that it could be inspired from behaviors involving movements of the face, and/or the appearance of the nose when these movements occur. Note that comparable tropes are found elsewhere in the world. In French for instance, ‘avoir *quelqu’un dans le nez*’, ‘have someone in the nose’, means to dislike them.

## 6. Social associations

Last but not least the Dalabon word *dje-* occurs in a number of compounds that describe social interactions (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**), as well as, also in the social domain, kin terms (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**) and an idiomatic way to say ‘thank you’ (**Erreur ! Source du renvoi introuvable.**). The compounds related to social interactions are clearly metonymic extensions based on the ‘face’ sense of *dje-no*, with a FACE FOR PERSON metonymy. The motivations of the other two extensions remain opaque.

### 6.1. FACE FOR PERSON AND SOCIAL INDIVIDUAL

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<sup>7</sup> Horses, buffaloes and donkeys, originally imported by farmers, have grown significant wild populations in this part of Australia.

<sup>8</sup> In synchrony, *bruH(mu)* can be used in specific contexts to describe the growth of a pregnant woman. The neighboring Jawoyn language, from the same Gunwinyguan family, has a cognate form *bur’-ma-* [bu.ʔma]) which means ‘swell up’ (Merlan & Jacq 2005).

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In a couple of compounds, listed in Table (6), *dje-* could be interpreted as a reference to the person as a social individual. This FACE FOR PERSON metonymy is based on a more general PART FOR WHOLE metonymy (Kövecses 2002: 151–152). Here again, the ‘face’ meaning of *dje-no* is a more plausible conceptual source of the associations than the ‘nose’ meaning. In contrast with the extensions discussed in previous sections, which are all intransitive, here the verbal compounds with *dje-* are transitive. This is in line with the fact that they describe social interactions, involving two participants.

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-bengkan, v.t.</i>	recognize/remember someone, know someone	<i>bengkan, v.t.</i> ‘know, think about’
<i>dje-djawan, v.t.</i>	ask permission to someone who has authority	<i>djawan, v.t.</i> ‘ask’
<i>dje-(rok-)nan, v.t.</i>	see someone’s face see someone socially	<i>nan, v.t.</i> ‘see’ <i>rok-no, ‘appearance’</i>

Table 6. Compounds with *dje-* with social meanings.

Strictly compositional interpretations of *dje-bengkan* ‘nose/face’+‘know’ and *dje-nan* ‘nose/face’+‘see’, as in ‘see someone’s face’ (for instance on a picture) or ‘know someone’s face’ are not attested and seem to be avoided by speakers. Nevertheless, the purely compositional reading usually remains available as well, in combination with a lexicalized social reading – basically because seeing someone physically normally involves seeing themselves physically. In 0, *dje-bengkan* ‘nose/face’+‘know’ means ‘recognize someone’, including their whole body rather than just their face. In 0, it means ‘know someone’ – which implies knowing their face, but refers to social acquaintance in the broader sense. In (21), *dje-nan* ‘nose/face’+‘see’ means ‘see someone’ in the sense of being able to interact with this person; and in (22), *dje-rok-nan* ‘nose/face’+‘appearance’+‘see’ means ‘see someone socially’, ‘catch up’.

30087/2007 – 1’ (MT) [EI]

(19) [...] *nga-h-dja-marnu-kodj-muk-minj*

1sg/3-R-FOC-BEN-head-cover-PP

*mak nga-dje-bengka-n dorrung-no-dorrung.*

NEG 1sg/3-face/nose-know-PRS body-3gs.POSS-?body/COM?

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‘I have forgotten him, I can’t remember his face, what he looks like [his appearance].’

20110530\_001\_MT 17 [Narr]

[About people asking for money in the street in town.]

- (20) *Bula-h-ye-djawahdjawa-ninj, yawurrinj-ngong,*  
3pl/1-R-COM-ask:REDUP-PI young.men-PL  
*bah mak bulnu nga-dje-bengka-n.*  
but NEG 3pl 1sg/3-nose/face-know-PRS

‘They kept asking me [for money], the young men, but I don’t know them.’

(It is normal to request money from an acquaintance, but not from someone you don’t know.)

20120705b\_002\_MT 019 [Film]

[Reported speech from a nasty character.]

- (21) *Mak da-h-yawoh-dje-n-iyen, nga-h-Ing-k-iyen*  
*wulungmunguyh.*  
NEG 2sg/3-again-nose/face-see-FUT 1sg/3-R-SEQ-take-FUT forever  
‘You won’t see him/her again, I will take him/her [your child] forever.’

20120717\_000\_MT 21 [ContEI]

- (22) *Sarah-yih kanihdja yarra-h-na-rr-inj, yarra-h-dje-rok-na-rr-inj.*  
first.name-ERG DEM 2du-R-see-RR-PP 2du-R-nose/face-BODY?-see-RR-PP  
‘With Sarah, you two saw each other there, you two caught up/saw each other’s face.’

*Dje-djawan* ‘nose/face’+‘ask’ is only marginally attested, but *kodj-djawan* ‘(crown of head’+‘ask’, with the same sense of ‘ask permission to someone with authority’, has more attestations (Ponsonnet 2009: 23). The alternation between *dje-* ‘nose/face’ and *kodj-* ‘(crown of head’ is not at all surprising given how flexible Dalabon is with the use of body-part nouns in social, cognitive and emotional compounds.

## 6.2. Kinship terms

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As is typical of Australian languages (Dousset 2012), Dalabon has a relatively extensive kinship terminology, including distinctions between different types of grandchildren: the language has distinct terms for female’s daughter’s children, male’s son’s children, etc., and often more than one word for each category. The form *dje-* occurs in two kinship terms, both denoting types of grandchildren, as presented in Table (7).

Compound	Meaning	Other component
<i>dje-kanhwoh(-kadjji)</i> , kin n.	woman’s son’s child	<i>kanjwoh</i> , kin n. ‘woman’s son’s child’
<i>dje-mawah</i> , kin n.	man’s son’s child	<i>mawah</i> , kin n. ‘man’s son child’

Table 7. Kin compounds with *dje-*.

No other body part is attested in combination with any other kinship term in Dalabon, and generally speaking the presence of body-part nouns in kin nouns is not frequently attested in Australian Indigenous languages<sup>9</sup>. This is somewhat surprising, given the salient role of body parts in sign language across the continent, as reported by Kendon (1988). But even there, the face and its parts do not feature prominently (1988: 336–338). Given such comparative insights, it is not entirely clear whether *dje-* ‘stands’ for ‘face/nose’ in the compounds listed in Table (7), or whether this may be an archaic remnant of a form that used to mean something else. Further investigation of neighboring and other Australian languages could help shed light upon this question.

### 6.3. Expression of gratefulness

Combined with the past form of the verb *ngun* ‘eat’, *dje-* ‘nose/face’ can be used in social interactions to express gratefulness, i.e. to say ‘thank you’, as illustrated in 0. Speakers report comparable expressions in neighboring languages. They usually translate this expression literally (in Kriol or English) as ‘eat your nose’ rather than ‘eat your face’, but this does not constitute evidence that the expression derives from the ‘nose’ sense of *dje-no*. Instead, it may simply reflect that early Kriol speakers used *nos* for ‘face’ as well as for ‘nose’, matching Dalabon/Australian lexical categories (Ponsonnet 2012: 374, note 34; 2018; 2020). Alternative parts of the face can feature in comparable contexts, like *milh-* ‘forehead’ in 0.

<sup>9</sup> See the Austkin database: <http://www.austkin.net/index.php?loc=project>

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- (23) 20111208\_002\_MT 13 [E1]  
 [Referring to elicitation sessions.]  
*Dja-h-milh-ngu-nj.*  
 1sg/2sg-R-forehead-eat-PP  
*Ka-h-mon dja-h-dje-ngu-nj ya-h-yenjyendju-ng yang.*  
 3sg-R-mon 1sg/2sg-R-nose/face-eat-PP 1du.incl-R-talk:REDUP-PRS  
 language  
 ‘I thank you. It’s good I thank you that you and me talk in language.’

‘Nose/face’ can also be replaced by another body part depending on the event one is grateful for. For instance, one would ‘eat someone’s hand’ if they shared food (with their hand), ‘eat someone’s feet’ if they brought something over (walking, using their feet), etc. However, *dje-* ‘nose/face’ is the default, used when the event is unspecified, which could reflect the salient status of the face as a social representation of the person.

## 7. Conclusions

Like many Australian languages of the same region and across the continent, in Dalabon the word for ‘face’, *dje-no*, also denotes other parts of the face, namely the nose and nostrils. Despite the fact that the ‘nose’ sense is primary, *dje-no* yields a range of semantic extensions that are relatively typical of ‘face’ words in the world’s language. They include physical appearance of the face – features and facial expressions –, emotional dispositions, behaviors and states, and social interactions. *Dje-no* has not developed semantic extensions in the domain of space, as words for ‘face’ often do in other languages. In part, this reflects that the grammar of Dalabon does not strongly encourage the grammaticalization of nouns into adpositions, which is the main avenue of semantic extensions of ‘face’ terms to the domain of space. Instead, in Dalabon, the semantic extensions of *dje-no* ‘nose, nostril, face’ occur via lexical composition resulting from noun incorporation or nominal compounding.

The occurrence of the Dalabon word for ‘face’ *dje-* in compounds denoting physical appearance is by no means surprising, and in these compounds *dje-* attracts a plainly literal interpretation. Compounds denoting emotional dispositions, behaviors and states are also expected, as they can derive from FACIAL EXPRESSION FOR EMOTION metonymies well attested

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across the world's languages (Kövecses 2000: 134). Indeed, many Australian languages include the word for 'face' in emotional collocations (Ponsonnet and Laginha, 2021, 58). It is more puzzling that the most frequent *dje-* compound in this semantic domain, *dje-bruH(mu)* 'nose/face'+ 'blow', 'sulky, sad/put on a dark face', seems to rely upon a trope involving the nose, namely GROWING/SWOLLEN NOSE FOR FEELING SAD. Although attested in a number of other Australian languages, the metonymy LARGE NOSE FOR NEGATIVE EMOTION/MOOD remains unexplained.

The occurrence of the Dalabon word for 'face' in compounds denoting social interactions is no more surprising than its occurrence in emotional compounds. It relies upon the widespread FACE FOR PERSON metonymy. In addition, in Dalabon the word for 'face' also features in kinship terms, which is not particularly well-attested elsewhere in Australia. In addition, *dje-* occurs in compounds used to thank people, which is attested in other languages of the Gunwinyguan family neighboring Dalabon, but not elsewhere in Australia as far as I am aware.

It is interesting that the vast majority of the extensions of the Dalabon noun *dje-no* 'nose, nostril, face' are better understood conceptually on the basis of the 'face' sense of the word, although the primary meaning of the base noun is very clearly 'nose'. This could be because there is not much conceptual ground for semantic extensions based on the 'nose' sense (or the 'nostril' sense), apart from the metaphoric extensions based on visual similarity of the body part and certain pointy/sharp objects. This may lead speakers to exploit the secondary sense 'face' for semantic derivation.

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