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THE ROLE OF BODY IN EMOTION METAPHORS

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EACH CULTURE HAS ITS OWN UNIQUE WAY of modeling the body, which often serves as the base for the figurative language about many other topics. Emotion is one such topic that many languages conceptualize via a large number of metaphors and metonymies involving body parts, bodily events and processes, body heat, internal pressure, etc. (Lakoff 1987), and a large part of our emotional understanding seems to be based on these metaphors and metonymies. The emotion concepts and metaphors have received serious attention from researchers in linguistics and cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1991, Kövecses 1990, 2000), who have discussed and explored the way people understand their emotions and added to our understanding of the general structure of our conceptual system. In his study of metaphor and emotion, Kövecses (1990) critically assesses prior and current semantic theories on the conceptualization of emotion metaphors in English and some other languages and proposes that the emotion categories should be defined by prototypes instead of collections of features or minimal definitions of core meaning. The prototypes can be represented in terms of cognitive models which arise mainly from conceptual metaphors and metonymies that reflect our folk understanding of emotional categories. He regards cognitive models as propositional and image-schematic knowledge, and argues that a 'major advantage of conceiving of emotion concepts as prototypical cognitive models is that the prototypical models capture a large number and perhaps the (culturally) most important of our emotional experience' (1990:214).

Like English and many other languages, Chinese is exceptionally rich in its metaphorical and metonymical expressions for emotion which originate in the domain of body parts, especially the heart (and other internal organs) due to an association between the folk theory of the human body and its physiological functions. The present article explores and discusses conceptual metaphors and metonymies for emotion in the Chinese language with regard to the role of body, since the figurative language not only pervades daily expressions people use for emotion, it is also essential to the understanding of most aspects of the conceptualization of our emotion and emotional experience. The view of emotion concepts and metaphors the present study subscribes to is that of cognitive models outlined in Kövecses (1990, 2000).

1. CULTURAL FACTORS UNDERLYING THE ENCODING OF EMOTION. Emotion is commonly described as *qi qing* 'seven feelings' in Chinese. This is the number of basic human emotional feelings: *xi* 'joy', *nu* 'anger', *bei* 'sorrow', *ju* 'fear', *ai* 'love', *hen* 'hate' and *yu* 'desire'. The popular folk theory holds that all seven emotional feelings have

effects, usually bad, ill or negative, on one's internal organs, especially the heart, and hence all emotional feelings should be put under control. The folk theory is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, which considers emotion in general as disease or psychological instability and hence the source of the ailment of the body and the internal organs. Since traditional Chinese medicine has been practiced for thousands of years and often worked wonders, its views and knowledge have permeated the Chinese culture. With the traditional medicine as a guide, Chinese people seem to have a folk understanding of the relationship between bodily functions and emotion. For example, worry may hurt one's stomach and spleen, fear may harm one's gallbladder, anger may damage one's liver, and sorrow may destroy one's heart, etc. The traditional medical view has laid the foundation for the folk understanding of the correspondence between emotion and physiology, and the folk theory, in turn, has led to abundant conceptual metaphors and metonymies furthering this understanding. The following hyperbolic expressions, for example, give us a glimpse of the crucial link between internal organs and the conceptualization of emotion.

- (1) *qi zha-le fei*
anger explode lungs
so angry that one's lungs explode
- (2) *xia po-le dan*
scare break gallbladder
so scared that one's gallbladder ruptures
- (3) *shang tou-le xin*
hurt thorough heart
so sorrowful that one's heart breaks

Indeed, the majority of emotion metaphors and metonymies originate from the domain of internal organs and they often indicate that emotional forces are typically dangerous and destructive. Other body parts such as the face, the facial organs, the limbs, etc. are also used in the metaphorical language of emotion in Chinese, specifically in the display of emotion, as shown in the following metonymies:

- (4) *shou wu zu dao*
hand dance feet dance
one's hands and feet dance (indicating joy)
- (5) *mei-mu chuan qing*
eyebrow-eye pass love
to express love with one's eyes and eyebrows (i.e., expressing love implicitly)

Nevertheless, these body parts play a less important or secondary role and are used much less frequently in encoding emotion than the heart (which often extends to refer to all internal organs) in the conceptualization of emotion, because the Chinese culture does not usually encourage one to express or display one's emotional feelings

openly. Ancient Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, advocated keeping up morality, controlling emotion and resisting desires, because unrestrained emotion and desires would gradually drown one's conscience and morality, and overcome the good (Wang 1994). As a result, Chinese culture regards self-control as a virtue and keeping calm or hiding one's emotions as a worthy ability. The advocacy of suppressing emotion and maintaining control can be readily seen from the following sayings:

- (6) *bu-yao zuo gan-qing de nu-li!*
not-want be emotion slave
Do not be a slave to one's emotion.
- (7) *yao xue-hui kong-zhi zi-ji-de gan-qing!*
want learn control self emotion
Learn to control one's feelings.
- (8) *yong lizhi zhan-sheng gan-qing!*
use reason fight-win emotion
Make reason overpower emotion.

The view of the inferior nature of emotion, the passive role of people in emotion, and the disruptive force of emotion is not unique to Chinese culture, since 'in the whole history of Western thought the emotions have been treated as the "lower" parts of the human soul, what we share and inherit from the animals, while it is reason that makes us human, even "a spark of the divine"' (Solomon 1981:35). We suffer from our emotions. For example, people are *struck by jealousy, crushed by shame, paralyzed by fear, overwhelmed by guilt* and *plagued by remorse*. Likewise, the idea of control is expressed in Western cultures: '[some people] connect the emotion and morality domains in such a way that they conceive of their emotions as forces of temptations, thus seeing their emotions as dangerous or even evil forces that they should resist' (Kövecses 2000:198).

While it seems that emotion is more universally regarded as inferior in nature and disruptive in force, Western cultures differ from the Chinese culture in their view and treatment of emotion with regard to the display and discharge of emotional feelings. The former seems to view the display of emotion as a healthy act both psychologically and physiologically, as seen in the Freudian terminology of emotion such as 'catharsis', 'sublimation' and 'vicissitudes' (Solomon 1981); the latter, however, emphasizes the containment of emotion in the heart, and the damaging force of emotion to the heart. The Chinese folk theory of the physiological effects of emotion on the body, especially the heart, with its roots in traditional Chinese medicine, forms the basis of the most general and unique metaphor for emotion: HEART AS CONTAINER FOR EMOTION. In the following sections, I examine and explore the association of the heart with Chinese metaphors and metonymies for emotion, i.e. how abstract domains of emotion are structured by means of projection from a more concrete domain of the heart. The study of linguistic expressions which refer to parts of the body and their

functions may thus contribute to a clearer understanding of how physical experience is projected onto linguistic action.

3. HEART AND EMOTION. A look at the Chinese characters that encode basic human emotions reveals an interesting association between the conceptualization of emotion and the heart domain. In general, most Chinese characters indicating emotions are compound characters, typically consisting of a phonetic component and a semantic radical – *heart*. For example:

怒 (*nu* ‘anger’), a compound character with the semantic radical *xin* ‘heart’, indicating that anger has to do with one’s heart. Another common character standing for anger is 愤, whose semantic radical is also a heart.

悲 (*bei* ‘sorrow’), a compound character with the semantic radical *xin*, indicating the relationship between sorrow and the heart. Another idiomatic expression for sadness and sorrow is 伤心, literally ‘hurt-heart’

惧 (*ju* ‘fear, shock’), a compound character with the semantic radical *xin*, indicating a correspondence between fear and one’s heart. Other common characters standing for fear are 怕 (*pa*), 惊 (*jing*) and 恐 (*kong*), all of which have *xin* as their semantic component.

爱 (*ai* ‘love’), a compound character with *xin* as its semantic radical. It is a simplified version of the original 愛, which also has *xin* as a semantic component. One of the compound words commonly used in Chinese to express *love*, *beloved*, or *treasure* is 心爱, which is literally translated as ‘heart-love’.

喜 (*xi* ‘joy’) a compound character with *xin* as its semantic component. The original pictograph of the character is composed of a drum (the upper part) and a mouth (the lower part), indicating a lively scene of laughter and drumming, hence meaning joy or happiness. Also, 喜 can be written with an added heart at the left or the bottom of the character as its semantic radical (cf. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Characters* 1995), suggesting that the heart plays a role in joy. Another common character for joy/happiness is 悦, again with a semantic radical of *xin*.

In fact, of about 1,100 characters with the heart as the semantic radical in *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Characters* (1995), 60% indicate human feelings and emotions of joy, anger, sorrow, fear, love, hate, desire, shame, surprise, pride, worry, etc. Moreover, the Chinese word for emotion can be a compound character 情 (*qing*) or a compound word, 感情 (*gan-qing*), both having the heart as their semantic component.

The concept of the heart seems to be ubiquitous in the Chinese language of emotion because the ancient Chinese considered the heart the center of one’s body, as shown by the character *zhong* (literally ‘center’), which has been used metonymically for the heart (see (10) below). The heart metaphor and metonymies for emotion are abundant in Chinese, and many of them have become idiomatic expressions. For example:

- (9) *nu cong xin qi*
 anger from heart derive
 Anger rises from the heart
- (10) *bei cong zhong lai*
 sorrow from heart come
 Sorrow comes from the heart

The following section shows how the Chinese language makes a principal use of the heart in the conceptualization of some emotional feelings. While discussing the conceptualization of emotion in Chinese, I illustrate each of the conceptual metaphors with linguistic examples, all of which are taken from native speakers' daily conversations, and contemporary Chinese short stories and novels as well as Chinese dictionaries.

4. THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE HEART CONTAINER METAPHOR. As demonstrated by several major studies (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987, Kövecses 1990, 2000, *inter alia*), emotion has an extremely complex concept structure which brings about a wide variety of non-trivial references. In this section, I focus on the conceptualization of emotion in the Chinese language and its cultural setting, based on the cognitive framework set up by the above-mentioned research, and try to show that underlying the Chinese language of emotion there is a coherent conceptual organization, where the *heart* is at the heart of metaphorical and metonymical expressions.

In explaining how metaphors are used in the understanding of a variety of emotional experiences, Kövecses (1990:47) states,

Conceptual metaphors involve two concepts, one of which is typically abstract and the other typically concrete. The more difficult (i.e. the more abstract) concept is called the 'target domain', and the concept in terms of which we try to understand this concept is called the 'source domain'. Not only the target domain but also the source domain can be characterized by several (prototypical and non-prototypical) cognitive models, or schemas.

Hence we have the CONTAINER metaphor of emotion in English, i.e. the body is a container for emotion, where the container is the source domain and emotion the target domain. The following exemplifies the container metaphor in English.

- (11) She was filled with emotion.
 (12) She felt emotionally drained.
 (13) He bottled up his emotion.
 (14) He overflowed with emotion.
 (15) He gave vent to his emotions.

These examples portray emotion as a fluid/substance in a container (the body), which defines an intensity scale for the emotions. When a person is very emotional, the

container is full (11), when she lacks emotion, the container is empty (12), when he tries to control his emotion, the container is closed (13), when the emotion gets more intense, the container is overflowing (14), and when the emotion gets too intense, it has to be released (15). It seems that the CONTAINER metaphor of emotion can map all the parts of the container domain onto the corresponding parts of emotion domain, and this single conceptual metaphor gives considerable structure to the diffuse and vague notion of emotion.

Much like English, emotion is in general conceived as a force/substance in Chinese that can be either contained or become uncontainable in the body. However, Chinese metaphors and metonymies express more specifically the HEART IS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTION, which characterizes the source of the emotions as coming from the heart as well as the heart as the container. For example:

- (16) *xin-zhong-de nu-qi*
 heart-in anger
 the anger in the heart
- (17) *xin-zhong bei-shang*
 heart-in sad
 sorrow in the heart

This general metaphor of the heart (container for emotion), however, is two-fold. First, it consists of a coherent conceptual organization of emotion that originates from the heart, i.e. emotion is A SUBSTANCE IN THE HEART. Secondly, it is composed of a variety of conventionalized expressions that characterize the negative effect of emotion on the heart, i.e. emotion is A DAMAGING FORCE IN THE HEART. I will start with the concept of emotion as a substance in the heart container.

4.1. EMOTION IS A SUBSTANCE IN THE HEART. Of all emotional feelings, anger seems to be the most studied topic of emotion from a cognitive-semantic perspective. There are a number of metaphorical sources (Lakoff 1987) that characterize anger in English metaphors, the major domain of which is ‘anger is a hot fluid in a container’. The major corresponding source domain in Chinese metaphors for anger is, however, bound up with *qi*, which is literally gas. More often than not, the word for anger in daily uses is *nu-qi*, or simply *qi*. *Qi* is also regarded as energy that flows through the body (Yu 2002). For example, when *qi* rises from the heart, anger follows (18), and when it calms down, anger subsides and the harmony is restored in the body (19).

- (18) *nu-qi yong shang xin-tou*
 anger-gas rise up heart
 Anger rises from the heart
- (19) *xin-ping-qi-he*
 heart-level-gas-harmonious
 (indicating one’s calmness when faced with confrontation)

When anger becomes more intense, the gas rises; anger sets a fire in the heart. Very often, more intense anger is characterized as fire simmering, smoldering (20), and burning (21) in the heart rather than released. Similarly the smoldering anger/rage is sometimes compared to a volcano, but a dormant one (22). In the examples (20) to (22), the intensity of anger is depicted as high and on the rise, yet it is still kept closed in the container—the heart.

- (20) *xin-li bie-zhe huo*
heart-in hold fire
anger smoldering in one's heart
- (21) *nu-huo man qiang*
anger-fire full chest
burning with rage in the chest
- (22) *ta xin-tou yu-ji-de fen-nu xiang chen-mo-de huo-shan*
he heart gather anger like silent volcano
The rage in his heart was like a dormant volcano.

Not only is anger *qi*, it is also regarded as a fluid in the heart. While the fluid can be hot or seething, it can be cold and icy in the Chinese conceptualization. For example:

- (23) *fen-nu-de chao-shui zai ta xin-zhong fan-gun*
anger tidal-wave at his heart-in seeth
The tide of anger was seething in his heart.
- (24) *yi-ci you yi-ci, ta qi-de han-le xin*
once again once he anger cold heart
Again and again, the anger finally froze his heart.

In (23) anger is rising as a seething tidal wave, whereas in (24), it falls (in temperature) and chills/freezes the heart. Of interest here is the conceptualization of anger in terms of a cold fluid or even ice in a container (the heart), which seems to be absent in the English metaphor of anger, i.e. ANGER IS HEAT. The cold concept of anger may have to do with the idea of control (i.e. ability to keep anger inside), or lack of control (i.e. release/display of anger). Anger, as a fluid, can rise, become hot, swell, overflow, or explode; it can also drop, become cold, and freeze. When the fluid is heated past a certain limit (intense anger), pressure increases in the container (the heart). One can either release the pressure by losing control, i.e. the container explodes, or one can control the release of the heated fluid for either destructive or constructive purposes with the effect of lowering the heat and pressure level. When taken to the lower extreme (i.e. the end point zero), the fluid freezes in the heart, and the self becomes numb, completely passive and unable to show or display anger. In other words, the self passively puts anger under control. As shown by the above examples, whether one controls anger or is overpowered by anger, the emotion is mostly kept contained in the heart.

While anger as a fluid can rise, fall and freeze, sorrow, including melancholy, seems always to be associated with the concept of a cold fluid in Chinese metaphors. Of all basic human emotions, sorrow seems to have the most negative effect on the heart and almost all sorrow metaphors make use of a cold, icy or broken heart. The following examples and idioms illustrate the concept of 'sorrow is cold/ice':

- (25) *ta-de xin bian-cheng-le yi-kuai bing*
 her heart become a-block ice
 Her heart became a block of ice.
- (26) *ta rang ta han-le xin*
 he make her cold heart
 He made her heart frigid.
- (27) *ta-de xin bei bei-shang bing-feng le*
 her heart PASS. sorrow freeze
 Her heart was frozen in sorrow.

These three examples are metonymical and metaphorical expressions, indicating that 'she' is deeply sad or sorrowful that 'her heart' changes 'quality' and freezes. Similar to the cold fluid metaphor for anger, the metonymy for sorrow is motivated by the 'drop in body temperature' physiological response, i.e. sorrow is often experienced as something cold and correlates with low skin temperature. When expressed in the figurative language of Chinese, it is the heart that is cold and freezes, and hence the self becomes devoid of the emotion.

It is interesting to see the difference in the conceptualization of anger and sorrow in Chinese. Though anger can occasionally be a cold fluid, it is frequently viewed as a hot gas or fluid, which can rise, be vented or explode. However, sorrow is viewed only as a cold fluid in nature and can only drop to even lower temperature: one can hardly vent one's sorrow, nor can one explode with sorrow. Hence the notion of gaining control or losing control over emotion is conceptually less available for sorrow, since sorrow can only be kept in the heart, freeze the heart and damage the heart.

Moreover, metaphors for fear also frequently employ the concept of the heart as a container and physiological sensations evoked by the emotion such as 'heart quivering', 'heart trembling', 'heart leaping', etc., as illustrated by the following examples:

- (28) *xin-jin-rou-tiao*
 heart-quivering-flesh-shaking
 (indicating extreme fright)
- (29) *ta xia-de xin yao cong zui-li beng chu-lai*
 he fear heart want from mouth jump out
 He was so frightened that his heart was about to leap out of his mouth
- (30) *mei-ci fu-qing zhao-jian ta, ta zong-shi xin-li yi-chen*
 every-time father want-see him he always heart sink
 Every time his father wanted to see him, his heart sank (for fear).

Like metaphors and metonymies for other emotional feelings, the conventionalized expressions for fear again illustrate the ubiquitous link between heart and emotion. However, fear/fright metaphors seem to emphasize more a change of the look, position, or quality of the container (see also Yu 2002) rather than the contained. When one is afraid or frightened, one's heart would quiver and tremble (28), leap out of one's mouth (29) or sink (30). In other words, the heart container is no longer in its normal state or position when affected by fear or terror.

The discussion of fear brings us to the other, perhaps more important aspect of the heart container metaphor that is characterized by the destructive and damaging force of emotion. When emotion gets intense, it would displace, hurt, even destroy the container because, on the one hand, emotion is in general believed to cause disturbance, agitation, destruction in oneself, as cautioned by traditional Chinese medicine, and on the other hand, emotion blurs one's vision and confuses one's heart, as frowned upon by traditional ideology. Hence both literally and figuratively, as well as physiologically and psychologically, emotion is a damaging force to the heart.

4.2. EMOTION IS A DAMAGING FORCE TO THE HEART. The concept of the damaging force of emotion is very productive in Chinese figurative language. Since emotions are closely associated with physical feelings or sensations (i.e. visceral disturbances, frequent flushing, intense irritability, etc.), we suffer from our emotions. In English, we are 'blind with rage', 'consumed by hatred', and 'devoured by conceit', etc. While these metaphors depict the suffering self, the Chinese metaphors emphasize the negative effect of emotion on the heart from anger and fear to sorrow and love, because all emotions originate from the heart. Examples (31)–(33) illustrate the damaging force metaphor.

- (31) *qi-de xin yao bao-zha*
 anger heart want explode
 so angry that one's heart explodes
- (32) *qi-de xin beng-beng luan tiao*
 anger heart (onomatopoeic) disorder jump
 Anger disturbs one's heartbeat.
- (33) *qi-de xin-ru-luan-ma*
 anger heart-as-confusion
 Anger bewilders one's heart.

Further, the 'damaging force done to the heart' metaphor is more explicitly embodied in the following metonymical expressions for sorrow:

- (34) *xin ru dao ge/jiao*
 heart like knife cut/twist
 (one feels) as if the heart is being cut/twisted by a knife

- (35) *hao-si wan jian chuan xin*
 like thousands arrows pierce heart
 (one feels) as if the heart is being pierced by thousands of arrows
- (36) *xin xiang bei si-lie-le yi-ban*
 heart same by torn as
 (one feels) as if one's heart is torn into pieces

Similarly, fear and shock are physical/psychological forces that may damage the viscera, especially the heart and the gall bladder. The concept of gall bladder is specifically associated with fear and shock, which may be based on the folk understanding of the human anatomy and the bodily functions, i.e. courage comes from the gall bladder as well as the heart. For example, *dan-xiao gui* 'a coward' literally means a person with a small gall bladder, and *dan-zi da*, a metonymy for 'fearless', is literally 'a big gall bladder.' Hence quite a number of metaphorical and metonymical idioms expressing the concept of fear emphasize the correspondence between intense fear/shock and the gall bladder and the heart, as shown in the following examples:

- (37) *xin jin dan chan*
 heart fear gallbladder shake
 the heart trembling and the gallbladder shaking (indicating intense fear)
- (38) *xia po-le dan*
 scare break gallbladder
 fear breaks one's gallbladder (indicating terror)
- (39) *xin dan ju lie*
 heart gallbladder all break
 one's heart and gallbladder are both broken (indicating intense terror)

The various kinds of physiological effects clearly indicate different intensity levels of fear from a leaping heart to the breaking of both the heart and the gallbladder. The damaging force of emotion does not spare love, especially romantic love, which can also be destructive to the heart and other internal organs. For example,

- (40) *chang xiang-xi, cui chang gan*
 long love-sickness destroy intestines liver
 Ever-lasting lovesickness destroys one's intestines and liver.
- (41) *li-bie shi ta xin-sui*
 separation make her heart-break
 The separation broke her heart.
- (42) *ta ai ta ai-de wu-zang ju sui*
 she love him result viscera all break
 She loved him so much that her viscera split.

The above metaphorical expressions reveal a great deal about our experience of romantic love and what love can do to us psychologically and physiologically when the emotion is too intense. Not only are emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, sorrow, and love depicted as damaging forces to the heart in the Chinese figurative language, joy, a positive emotional feeling, cannot be indulged without constraint, since extreme joy may also cause tragedy. The following expressions imply the negative aspect of intense joy or happiness, rendering a derogatory sense of the emotion.

- (43) *le ji sheng bei*
 joy extreme bring sorrow
 Intense joy begets sorrow
- (44) *ta le feng-le*
 he joy mad
 He is crazy with joy

The above discussion demonstrates that the heart metaphor conceptualizes almost all human emotional feelings. Chinese abounds in emotion idioms and expressions that employ the concept of heart. This has its roots in traditional Chinese medicine and ideology and the folk theory of the physiological effects of emotion.

7. CONCLUSION. The present paper investigates the role of the heart in the conceptualization of emotion in Chinese figurative language and shows that there is a coherent conceptual organization underlying the metaphorical and metonymical expressions for emotion. It argues, in general, that there are two central ideas in the conceptualization of emotion in Chinese, both characterizing the HEART AS A CONTAINER: one is A SUBSTANCE IN THE HEART and the other A DAMAGING FORCE TO THE HEART, as revealed by a variety of metaphorical entailments of and lexical elaborations on such source domains as gas/fluid, knife, fire, ice, natural force, physical/ psychological agitation, etc. These general metaphors for emotion and their structural organization are largely based on the Chinese folk understanding of the physiological effects of emotion on the body and bodily functions, and influenced by the ancient Chinese philosophy of human nature and feelings. It seems that the cultural models of emotion are indeed the joint products of metaphor and metonymy, physiology, and the cultural context (Kövecses 2000). The study of emotion metaphors and metonymies enables us to see how people of a given culture or different cultures conceptualize and verbalize their emotion, given that the nature of the human body and its physiology are presumably universal.

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