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A cross-cultural study of conceptualizing internal body organs in SEA languages

AUTHORS:

Prof. Dr. TOAN THANG, LY
Vietnam Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia
Dr. KIEU VAN, LE THI
Ho Chi Minh City University of Education





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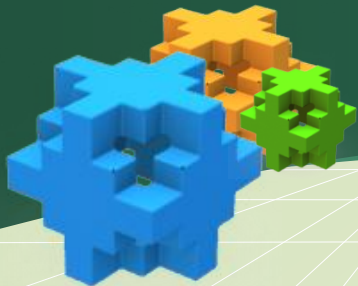
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Conclusion



What are some Vietnam languages that can be representatives of SEA ones?

How can Vietnam languages conceptualize internal body organs?

What are some similarities and differences in conceptualizing internal body organs between them?

INTRODUCTION

Relationship among language, thought and culture

'ethno-syntax', 'ethno-linguistics', 'ethno-psycho-linguistics', 'cultural linguistics'; 'human factor in language', 'linguistic picture of the world', 'linguistic consciousness' etc.,

Apresjan 1995; Enfield 2004; Leontev 1997; Ly Toan Thang 1993, 2006, 2008, 2010; Sharifian 2011; Underhill 2009, 2012

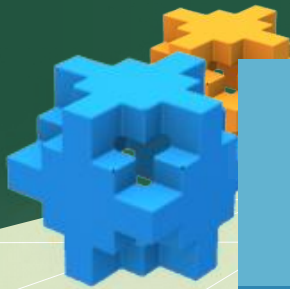
Worldwide development of modern linguistics, 'cognitivism' tendency

'different *views* of the world' or '*worldviews*', and 'the ways in which speakers of different languages *think* differently → they *conceptualize* or *categorize* experience in different ways

Different ways of conceptualizing inner body parts which function as 'container' or 'locus' for human emotional and mental states and activities.

how such *conceptualizations* are grounded in *bodily* cognition and how they have their roots in culture and how they can be different from language to language.

Ly Toan Thang 2011; Maalej, Ning Yu 2011; Ning Yu 2009; Sharifian, Driven, Zlatev, Frank 2007



Conceptualizing inner body parts as a 'container' or a 'locus'

English

SEA Languages

HEART and
MIND →
***anatomical and
functional
dichotomy***

HEART,
BELLY/ABDOMEN,
STOMACH,
LIVER, and
BOWEL or
INTESTINE



SEA Languages and Vietnam Language

SEA Languages

- (i) Austro-Asiatic languages (includes Mon-Khmer with the nuclear consisting Vieto-Katuic and Khmero-Bahnaric languages);
- (ii) Austronesian/Malayo-Polynesian languages (perhaps includes Tai-Kadai);
- (iii) Hmong-Mien/Miao-Yao languages;
- (iv) Sino-Tibetan languages;
- (v) Tai-Kadai languages (part of the Austro-Tai proposal).


Vietnam Language

- (i) Austro-Asiatic languages: ***Vietnamese, Muong and Khmer;***
- (ii) Austronesian: ***Cham, Ede;***
- (iii) Hmong-Mien: ***Hmong;***
- (iv) Sino-Tibetan languages: ***Chinese;***
- (v) Tai-Kadai: ***Tay-Nung or Tay***



Language families, subfamilies or groups to which Vietnam has the representatives

Vietnam language families/groups	Vietnam language representatives
Austro-Asiatic languages	<i>Vietnamese, Muong and Khmer</i>
Austronesian/Malayo-Polynesian languages	<i>Cham, Ede</i>
Hmong-Mien/Miao-Yao languages	<i>Hmong</i>
Sino-Tibetan languages	<i>Chinese</i>
Tai-Kadai languages	<i>Tay (or Tay-Nung)</i>



To find out the diversity and complexity of the eight languages above in Vietnam, English is chosen as the ‘source’ which is mapped itself onto SEA languages as ‘target’ because it should be the language considered as “standard” with ‘universal/ key’ concepts or ‘universal/ key’ words (Wierzbicka 1992, 1997).

LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE

English vs Vietnamese

Mon-Khmer nuclear consisting Vieto-Katuic and Khmero-Bahnaric languages: *Vietnamese, Muong, Khmer*

Austronesian languages: *Cham, Ede*

Tai-Kadai languages: *Tay (or Tay-Nung)*

Sino-Tibetan languages: *Chinese*

Hmong-Mien languages: *Hmong*



English as the 'source' mapped itself onto SEA languages

English		Vietnamese	
heart	An inner body part as 'locus'/'seat'/'container' for human physical life	belly	a body part as 'seat' for confident thoughts and emotions or characters of a person
mind	not a body (invisible body) as 'place'/'locus' for thoughts/human mental life	intestine	a body part as 'seat' for the endurance of human emotions
There is different way of 'world view' in thinking of localizing human thought and feelings at inners body organs → 'Dualistic cultural construct'		liver	a body part as 'seat' for human spirit or strong will to confront with difficulty or danger
		<i>place of abdomen</i>	a place for localizing emotion and mental/psychological aspects, spirit, will, character, moral nature of humans
		<i>place of stomach and place of abdomen</i>	a place for localizing human awareness and memory, but does not denote any body part

Vietnamese inner body organs	Examples
belly	<p>1. Nó rất tốt bụng he - very - good belly 'He is very kind-hearted'</p> <p>2. Nó nghĩ thầm trong bụng he - think - confidently - in - his belly 'He thought himself'</p>
intestine	<p>3. Nỗi đau xé ruột pain - break - intestine 'Heart-rending pain'</p>
liver	<p>4. Nó bé người mà to gan he - small body - but - big - liver) 'Though he is young, but he is courageous enough'</p>
place of abdomen	<p>5. Trong lòng nó đầy ắp những yêu thương. in - place of abdomen - be full of - love 'Her heart is full of love'.</p> <p>6. Nó yêu thương anh ấy từ đáy lòng. she - love - him - from the bottom - place of abdomen 'She loves him from the bottom of one's heart'</p>
place of stomach and place of abdomen	<p>7. Nó rất sáng dạ, học cái gì cũng nhanh. he - very bright - place of stomach - learn - everything - quickly 'He is so intelligent that he could learns everything quickly'</p> <p>8. Nó đã thay lòng đổi dạ he - did - substituted - abdomen - changed - stomach 'He has changed his heart/feeling'</p>

- ❖ There are two ways of 'world view' in our thinking of localizing human thought and feelings at inner body organs: 'Dualistic cultural construct' in English versus 'Monistic cultural construct' in Vietnamese (as they are observed in Thai and Japanese - Berendit, Tanita 2011).
- ❖ In Vietnamese, the 'monistic culture tradition' is cognitively expressed in language by two ways including the localization of feelings and thoughts which can be at an inner body organ (like 'heart' or 'head' in English) or at a non-physical, non-anatomical part or place (like 'mind' in English)
 - (i) The first case takes the *inner body organs*: bụng/ belly; ruột/ intestine; gan/ liver
 - (ii) The second case looks into the *non-anatomical parts, non-physical places*: lòng/ belly and place of abdomen; dạ/ place of abdomen and place of stomach

Mon-Khmer nuclear consisting Vieto-Katuic and Khmero-Bahnaric languages: *Vietnamese, Muong*

Muong		Vietnamese	
<i>tlồng/trông</i> 'belly'	• Ngợi thầm tlong tlồng think - silent - in - belly 'He thought himself'	<i>bụng</i> 'belly'	• Nó nghĩ thầm trong bụng he - think - confidently - in - his belly 'He thought himself'
<i>rột/ roạch</i> 'intestine'	• Nã thối cây rột he - good - a - intestine 'He is very kind-hearted'	<i>ruột</i> 'intestine'	• Tiếc đứt ruột regret - break - intestine 'Feel deeply pained'
<i>lòng/lòm</i> 'place of abdomen'	• Kha mặt hây i kha trong lòng far - face - also - far - in - belly 'Out of sight is out of mind'	<i>lòng</i> 'place of abdomen'	• Ăn ở hai lòng live - with two - places of abdomen 'To be double-faced in one's behaviour'
<i>dạ</i> 'place of stomach'	• Xay lòng tối rột/đạ substitute - abdomen - change - place of stomach 'changing one's heart/feeling'	<i>dạ</i> 'place of stomach and place of abdomen'	Mặt người, dạ thú face - man - place of stomach - beast) 'Wicked person'

- ❖ Muong language is also reflected and embodied the same 'monistic culture tradition' and the similar way of perceiving and conceiving ***rọit/ roạch*** 'intestine', ***tlỗng/ trộông*** 'belly', ***loòng/lòm*** 'place of abdomen' and ***dạ*** 'place of stomach' in playing the role of 'locus' for human emotional and mental life.
 - ❖ Muong is believed to be most closely related to the ethnic Vietnamese (some ethnologists propose that the Muong remained in the mountains and developed independently while the Vietnamese moved to the low country and became influenced by Chinese culture)
- In the Muong language the 'belly' and 'intestine' are used more frequently than the 'place of abdomen' (and 'place of stomach') than in Vietnamese.

Monic-Khmer nuclear consisting Vieto-Katuic and Khmero-Bahnaric languages: *Khmer*

Khmer

chât
'place of
abdomen'

1. *lôp so-rò-lanh co-nông chât*
secret - love - in - **place of abdomen** 'loving secretly'
2. *chư chât*
pain - **place of abdomen** 'being broken-hearted'
3. *cât co-nông ch'....'ât*
think - in - **place of abdomen** 'thinking to oneself'
4. *nức co-nông chât*
remember - in - **place of abdomen**
'remembering somebody secretly'
5. *chât lợ-o*
place of abdomen - good 'kind-hearted'



Khmer language in the South of Viet Nam has similar 'monistic culture tradition' as in Vietnamese generally. Particularly, the crucial feature of this similarity is that the 'place of abdomen' is seen as the central 'locus' for human emotions and rationalities.

Austronesian languages: Cham, Ede

Cham (*hatai*)

1. *Kau pandik hatai/ tian*
I – pain – **heart/ liver/ belly**
'It breaks my heart'
2. *Di dalam hatian kau*
from - in – **heart/ liver** – I
'From the bottom of my heart'
3. *Mboh tung mboh tian*
see - **place of abdomen** - see – **belly**
'Falling in love'
4. *Atah palei karei tian*
far - village - different - **belly**
'Far insight far mind'
5. *Tung/tian/hatai siam*
place of abdomen/belly/ heart/ liver
– good
'good-hearted; kind-hearted'

Ede (*ai tiê*)

1. *Kâo ênguôt ai tiê êdi*
I - pain sad - **heart/ liver** - very
'It breaks my heart very much'
2. *Hlăm ai tiê kâo*
in – **heart/ liver** - I 'From the bottom
of the heart'
3. *~u min hla\m ai tiê*
I - think - in – **heart/liver**
'He thought to himself'
4. *~u jak ai tiê edi*
he - good – **heart/ liver** - much – very
'He is kind-hearted'

In Cham and Ede languages, the concepts of 'heart' and 'liver' are denoted by a polysemy: Cham *hatai* and Ede (*a*) *tiê*. The specific feature of Cham is that both the 'heart' (or/and the 'liver'), and both 'belly' and 'place of abdomen' can play the role of 'container' for human feelings and thoughts; while in Ede it is prior only to the 'heart; liver'.

Tai-Kadai languages: Tay (Tay-Nung)

mốc 'belly'

1. *mốc* *slǝm*
belly – fraught with
'Ineffably and unspeakably
melancholy'
2. *mốc* *bá*
belly – spill 'panic-stricken'
3. *mốc* *pè*
belly – full of
'full of pent-up anger/full of
pent-up resentment,
dissatisfied'
4. *mốc* *quảng*
belly – large/big 'generous'
5. *mốc* *rủng*
belly – bright 'having a swift
wit'

shim 'place of abdomen'

1. *Te* *nằm* *trang* *mốc/shim*
he – thought – in – **belly/**
place of abdomen
'He thought to himself'
2. *Tứ* *shim/ móc/ rẫy* *khỏi,*
khỏi *chắc* *ơn* *trài*
from – **heart/ belly/**
intestine – I, I –
thankfulness – you
'Let me thank you from the
bottom of my heart'
3. *Quây* *nả* *căn* *lẻ* *quây* *shim*
far – face – far – **place of**
abdomen
'Out of sight out of mind'

slầy 'intestine'

1. *slầy* *khát*
intestine – breaks 'heart-
broken'
2. *slầy* *kho*
intestine – bends 'prissy/
being fastidious'
3. *slầy* *cặp*
intestine – narrow 'narrow-
minded/ mean'
4. *slầy* *khôn*
intestine – being hairy
'wicked'

There is a similarity in 'monistic culture tradition', and many similar personality traits of the Vietnamese language in the way of conceptualizing human inner body parts in connection to the relationship between language, cognition and culture and the human with Tay language. Emotional and mental life is seen to be mainly located at the *mốc* 'belly', *shim* 'place of abdomen', and *rẫy* 'intestine' in which both *mốc* 'belly' and *slầy* 'intestine' are seen as the 'containers' for states or processes of human emotions or mentation.



It should be demonstrated that although the Tay language is of the Tai-Kadai, there are some differences in both language and culture between Tay and Thai ethnic groups in the Northwest of Vietnam (as well as of the Thai people in Thailand and Lao). The interesting idea is that there are saliently specific features of the Tay in comparison with Thai languages in conceptualizing the body part '**heart**' can be observed in both Tay and Thai in the compound word of *hua chau* 'heart' included *hua* 'head' and *chau* 'breath'. If Tay language is rarely used *chau* 'breath' in the role of 'locus' of the emotion and character, Thai is used *chau* as 'heart', and 'central place'.

Sino-Tibetan languages: Hoa/Chinese

xin (心) 'heart'

as a locus for not only the affective state and activity but also the cognitive counterparts

1. *xin-fang*

heart-house/room 'heart; interior of heart'

2. *xin-tian*

heart-field 'heart; intention'

3. *xin-di*

heart-land 'heart; mind; character; moral nature'

relevant to the states or the processes of human emotions or mentality such as "thought", "hope", "wish", "desire", "wait", "reminiscence", "study"

1. *xin-si*

heart-think/thought 'thought; idea; thinking; state of mind; mood'

2. *xin-yuan*

heart-hope/wish/desire 'cherished desire; aspiration; wish; dream'

3. *xin-de*


heart-obtain 'what one has learned from work, study'

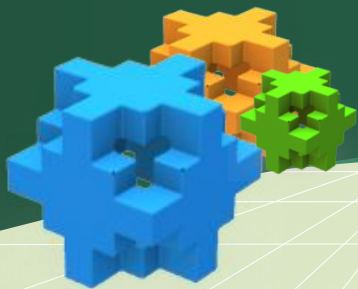
Hmong-Mien languages: Hmong

Hmong

saz
'liver'

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>hmaor nhav haaur</i> saz
love - in - liver | 'to love in the heart ' |
| 2. <i>txix kangz cuz</i> saz
from - bottom - my liver | 'from the bottom of my heart ' |
| 3. saz <i>đuz</i>
liver - black | 'cheating, wicked' |
| 4. saz <i>đu</i>
liver - smooth | 'good-natured, indulgent' |
| 5. saz <i>jông</i>
liver - good | 'content, satisfied' |
| 6. saz <i>njê</i>
liver - sharp | 'acute, smart' |

- 
- ❖ In SEA languages in Vietnam, Hmong (or Mong, or Meo) language is very ethno-specific in linguistic, cognitive and cultural aspects;
 - ❖ In Hmong's mode of thinking the center of human emotions and rationalities is the 'liver'
 - ❖ Some Hmong compound words or idioms with **saz** 'liver' which are embodied the affective states, processes and activities or cognitive counterparts



CONCLUSION

The paper indicates

In the studying ways of localizing human emotional and mental life, feelings and thoughts, affective states, processes and activities or cognitive counterparts, there exists a crucial and typical difference between 'Western' and 'Oriental' languages: if English maintains a cultural tradition of 'dualism' linguistically denoted by the terms *Heart* and *Mind*, SEA languages tend to reveal the cultural 'monism'

Within SEA languages this 'monistic cultural tradition' is expressed by different ways: (i) the languages preferred only one body part or place as the 'locus' for feelings and thoughts such as Chinese and Hmong, while the ones used two or three organs/places as in Vietnamese, Tay and Cham → 'mono-centered thinking mode' >< 'multi-centered thinking mode'; (ii) the function rate of a body part or place in the role of 'locus' for emotions and rationalities is different.

The paper also addresses

It is very interesting in 'cognitive style' that from Chinese to Vietnamese and other SEA languages in Vietnam, the thinking mode of localizing feelings and thoughts seems to *move down* along vertical axes of the body: Chinese people think mainly about the 'heart' which is contained in the upper body part – the chest or the thorax, while in Vietnamese people's way of conceptualization, those are 'belly' and 'place of abdomen' which belong to lower part of body. Theoretically, a new 'typology' of our ways of viewing and thinking about the world can probably be to establish, and in particular, of different conceptualizations for human inner body organs or places. The Vietnam language families may be divided into two 'cultural linguistic' groups:

a group of languages as Chinese which has a 'CHEST/THORAX- cognitively oriented strategy' or 'CHEST/THORAX- cognitively oriented style', ie. it chooses the 'heart' as the central 'locus' for locating human emotional and mental life;

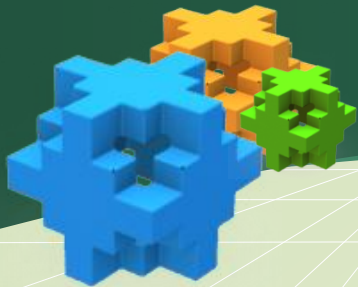
a group of languages as Vietnamese, Muong, Khmer, Tay, Cham, Ede and Hmong which have 'ABDOMEN-oriented strategy' or 'ABDOMEN-cognitively oriented style', ie. another inner body part or place (as BELLY, INTESTINE, LIVER, PLACE OF ABDOMEN) is chosen for central 'locus' function.

Our investigation is that

there is really a certain relationship between the ways of conceptualization and genetic features of languages within a family or a group in question. However, on the other hand, we have found some examples which seem to contrast our assumption: for instance, one African language as Dogon (Plugyan 1991) located very far from Vietnam is very different from Hmong language (above-mentioned) but two languages in question have the similar way of thinking about the central place of human mental and emotional life: not 'heart', not 'abdomen', not 'stomach', but just 'liver' is chosen for this role.



What is priority in the relationship among language, cognition and culture' - linguistic, or cultural, or cognitive 'determination'?



Thank you!