

CHAPTER 2

PRECEDENTS IN THE LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

Language and culture are closely interrelated. By culture, we mean “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (Spradley 1979:5). The way we think (our conceptual system) affects the way we perceive the world and how we relate to others. As Langacker states the case, meaning reduces to conceptualization (1991:ix; 2). This chapter discusses the relationship between language and culture with respect to *nâa* ‘face’ in Thai. The first section discusses the research already done on the concept of ‘face’ in the Thai language and shows how ‘face’ is used metaphorically in the Thai culture. The notion of shame, which is closely related to face, is described. The second section discusses the theories and findings from social sciences on metaphor. In particular, the concept of the idiom is discussed and the grounding of metaphor is explained. The conceptual metaphor approach to studying language, which is the approach taken in this research, is also described in detail.

2.1 Theories and Findings from Social Sciences on the Concept of Face

2.1.1 The Metaphorical Use of ‘Face’

Some studies have been done on metaphors based on the ‘heart’ such as the Chinantec heart metaphors described by David Foris (n.d.) and the book *Heart Talk* which is a compilation of Thai heart metaphors by Christopher G. Moore (1992). Closer to this topic, Hollenbach (1995) discusses the uses of the body part term ‘face’ for Trique, a

Mixtecan language. I was able to locate only one article written from the anthropological linguistics approach on Thai ‘face’ idioms (Sanit 1975). Nevertheless, the concept of ‘face’ has been studied by social scientists, particularly in Asian contexts such as Japanese and Chinese.

In short, one needs to ask, “What does *nâa* ‘face’ mean for the Thai?” The Thai-English Dictionary includes the following words in the definition of the word *nâa*: “face, front, facing, expression, countenance, visage, season, icing, frosting, page, width (of a plank)” (Wit 1992:1450). Other dictionaries contain definitions such as topping (of food) and a classifier for any thin and flat object such as cloth or paper. All these terms have the semantic component of something visual, something we see or register, our first impressions of things on the surface. The concern in this study is on the definition of *nâa* as face which is a part of the body. In Thai, *nâa* refers to the area of the face from the forehead down to the chin, including the cheek, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, forehead and jaws.

Most, if not all societies differentiate people by their faces. For the Thai, however, *nâa* is more metaphorically related to ego, self-identity, dignity and pride (Ukosakul, 1994) than dictionary definitions might suggest. Komin (1990) suggests that the Thai see ‘face’ as identical to ‘ego’. As such, the Thai cannot tolerate any violation of the “‘ego’ self” (Komin 1990:161). This ego orientation is the root value underlying other cultural values such as “face-saving” and “criticism-avoidance.” If one ‘gains face’, *dâj nâa*⁹ as they say in Thai, one will feel good. Conversely, losing face and experiencing embarrassment are particularly to be avoided.

⁹ได้หน้า

Sanit (1975)¹⁰ in his article, an anthropological study of *nâa* ‘face’ in Thai, describes the significance of this word in the Thai culture. According to his analysis of the Thai culture, the body is divided into three parts and each part has a different level of importance which is associated with it. The most important and most meaningful part of the human body is the highest part, which is from the neck up to the top of the head.

This highest part can be further divided into three sections, namely the neck, face and head. The head is considered the most important because it is at the highest position vertically. The Thai believe the head is exalted while the feet are base. Consequently, one must not casually touch a person’s head. If one accidentally does so, it is necessary to beg the pardon of the person touched. It is even considered impolite to pass objects over a person’s head (Preecha 1992). If anyone touches a Thai person’s head disrespectfully, it will make that person very angry. The face, even though it does not have as much dignity as the head, is considered the “representation of the person” (Sanit 1975:496).

The second part of the body is from the neck down to the waist. This part has a mid level of importance. The most talked-about areas here are *îj’aj*¹¹ ‘heart’ and *t’w’ij*¹² ‘abdomen or stomach’.

The waist down to the feet of the human body is considered the lowest part. The sole of the foot is the lowest of all and the most inferior and dirty. Even calling attention to the foot requires one to say, “Excuse me” (Preecha 1992). Therefore the Thai consider it a serious insult if the sole of the foot is raised or pointed towards another

¹⁰ This article is in Thai.

¹¹ ใจ

¹² ท้อง

person. Consequently, a person who is angry, for example, a rural woman would insult a man with whom she is very angry by using the idiom *nâa sôn tiin*¹³ ‘sole of feet face’ with him.

From the above, we see that the Thai use body parts metaphorically to express other meanings according to their society and culture. In general, Sanit suggests that the body parts which are high in importance tend to be used to express something that is good or sacred more so than the lowly parts. The word *nâa* in particular is used together with other words to express concepts which are related to emotion, thought and attitude (1975:496).

According to Sanit, the word *nâa* is used more frequently in Thai idioms than all other words that designate other parts of the body such as eye, ear, head, or stomach. This is more evidence for the importance of the word *nâa*. Sanit characterized the use of the word *nâa* in idioms in three ways: in “positive”, “negative” and “neutral” expressions (1975:497).

The first way is the use of the word *nâa* in “positive expressions.” In this category, *nâa* is used to express emotions, thoughts and actions which are “positive.” By the term “positive,” Sanit means actions or attitudes which are beneficial, good, creative or joyful either for the self or for others. Figure 1 lists some examples of positive idiomatic expressions:¹⁴

¹³ หน้าสันตีน

¹⁴ Adapted from Sanit (1975:497).

กู้หน้า	<i>kūu</i> <i>nâa</i> to redeem face	‘to save one’s reputation that was lost’
ใบหน้าอิ้มเอม	<i>baj</i> <i>nâa</i> <i>řim?eem</i> CLS ^F ¹⁵ face full	‘a face showing happiness’
รักษาหน้า	<i>râksăa</i> <i>nâa</i> to preserve face	‘to protect one’s reputation’
รักหน้า	<i>râk</i> <i>nâa</i> to love face	‘to love self or to consider reputation as important’
หน้าบาน	<i>nâa</i> <i>baan</i> face broad	‘delighted, to look happy when praised’
หน้าเป็น	<i>nâa</i> <i>pen</i> face alive	‘grinning; smiling but impudent’
หน้ารับแขก	<i>nâa</i> <i>râp</i> <i>k^hèek</i> face receive guests	‘pleasant, friendly’
หน้าใหญ่ใจโต	<i>nâa</i> <i>jâj</i> <i>třaj</i> <i>too</i> face big, heart large	‘too generous’

Figure 1. Positive Expressions

A second set of metaphorical usages of *nâa* in Thai idioms constitute “negative expressions.” Negative expressions in Sanit’s classification are those which refer to actions, attitudes or emotions which are damaging or lead to negative or undesirable consequences either for the self or others. Figure 2 below lists some negative expressions.¹⁶

¹⁵ CLSF = classifier; generally, objects in Thai are classified according to their shape.

¹⁶ Adapted from Sanit (1975:498).

เสียหน้า	<i>sǎa nâa</i> to lose face	‘to be embarrassed or humiliated’
หน้ากระดูก	<i>nâa kràdùuk</i> face bony	‘stingy; unwilling to lose one’s advantage’
หน้าแก่	<i>nâa kèe</i> face old	‘to look older than one’s age’
หน้าเขียว	<i>nâa k^hǎaw</i> face green	‘grimace, enduring extreme pain’
หน้างอ	<i>nâa ɲw</i> face bent	‘sullen, showing dissatisfaction’
หน้าซีด	<i>nâa sǐit</i> face pale	‘to turn pale, to be very afraid’
หน้าซื่อใจคด	<i>nâa sǐuu</i> face straight, <i>tǐaj khót</i> heart crooked	‘with murderous intent behind the smile, hypocritical’
หน้าดำน	<i>nâa dâan</i> face hardened	‘insensitive, shameless, brazen’
หน้าเลือด	<i>nâa lúat</i> face blood	‘selfish’

Figure 2. Negative Expressions

The third category of ‘face’ expressions are those which Sanit labelled as “neutral.” By “neutral”, he means idiomatic expressions which refer to feelings, attitudes or thoughts which are neither positive nor negative. Only four examples of this category of idioms were given. Figure 3 lists these examples.¹⁷

¹⁷ Adapted from Sanit (1975:499).

หน้าขรึม	<i>nâa k^hruǔm</i> face solemn	having a quiet and reserved manner
หน้าเฉย	<i>nâa t̃j^hǎj</i> face still	unruffled, perfectly composed
หน้าตาทำทาง	<i>nâa taa t^hâat^haaŋ</i> face eyes manner	one's personality
หน้าตาย	<i>nâa taaj</i> face dead	expressionless

Figure 3. Neutral Expressions

Sanit found that of the total of fifty-three idioms that he listed, the category that contained the highest number of idioms was the one consisting of negative expressions (1975:499). There were thirty-one idioms in this category. The category of neutral expressions were the least numerous while that of positive expressions had eighteen items. This agrees with Hayakawa's statement that "metaphors are bound to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express (1974:105). This examination of Thai 'face' idioms also reveals the same tendency (see Section 3.2).

According to Sanit, the importance of the word *nâa* is reflected in an idiom in the neutral category, namely, *nâa taa t^hâat^haaŋ* which is literally 'face, eyes, manner'. Face '*nâa*', eyes '*taa*' and manner '*t^hâat^haaŋ*' together mean the personality of a person (1975:500). However, of the three, the face '*nâa*' is the most important because it is difficult to identify a person from the eyes and manner without seeing the face. Furthermore, if one sees a person's face, one sees his or her eyes as well since the eyes are part of the face. Even if one cannot see a person's manner, one can still identify that person, or at least, can guess at the feelings of that person by looking at the face, unless he or she deliberately makes a deadpan face (*nâa taaj* 'dead face' in Thai).

It is generally agreed upon by researchers that Thai society places a high importance upon the individual (Kingshill 1965; Phillips 1966; Mole 1973; Ukosakul 1994). When a high value is placed on the self, a great importance is therefore placed on the face since the face is considered the “representation of ego” (Sanit 1975:500). Consequently, people who express behaviors which are considered ‘positive’ for the face tend to be people of whom Thai society approves. For instance, behaviors that conform to the norms of society would be actions that show that one *rák nâa* ‘loves face or reputation’. If one *sǎa nâa* ‘loses face’, one has to *kâu nâa* ‘redeem face’ in order to *râksăa nâa* ‘preserve face’.

Sanit suggested that one reason why there are numerous ‘negative’ idiomatic ‘face’ expressions in Thai could be that the “social sanction” in Thai society is weak (1975:502). The society has few strict laws and regulations that all adhere to. As a result, each individual has to find ways by himself to meet his own needs in order to survive in the social world. Very often, it is up to the individual to decide who is good and who is bad. However, by the time one finds out who is good or who is bad, one has already been cheated. Sanit observed that in the Thai society, the instances of deception and cheating are numerous and varied; hence, the many negative ‘face’ expressions (1975:502).

Negative expressions play a psychological and social role in a person’s life. The ability to express one’s feelings in oral language acts as an outlet for venting one’s frustration. Hayakawa explains it this way:

The stronger verbal taboos have . . . a genuine social value. When we are extremely angry and we feel the need of expressing our anger in violence, uttering these forbidden words provides us with a relatively harmless verbal substitute for going berserk and smashing furniture, that is, the words act as a kind of safety valve in our moments of crisis (1974:67).

What ‘positive’ behaviors does the Thai society endorse the most? These behaviors would reveal what the important “cultural values” of the Thai are. Sanit remarked that in a society where individualism is strong, behaviors regarding the ‘face’ that are considered “right” would be those that *t̂ʃʰət n̂aa t̂ʃʰuu taa*¹⁸ (literally, ‘to lift up the face, to lift up the eyes’), i.e., behaviors or actions that would enhance the good name or prestige of the individual (1975:503). Such behaviors would include actions that *rāk̄sǎa n̂aa* ‘preserve face’ or preserve one’s reputation, or knowing how to *rāk̄ n̂aa* ‘love self or reputation’ and as well as *k̄uu n̂aa* ‘redeem face’ if one is downtrodden by others.

One attitude that follows from *t̂ʃʰət n̂aa t̂ʃʰuu taa* would be *jàak d̄aj n̂aa*¹⁹ ‘wanting to gain face or reputation’, for example, when one volunteers to help someone else who is prominent in society. Another attitude is being *n̂aa j̄aj t̂ʃʰaj too*²⁰ (literally, ‘big face, large heart’), that is, to flaunt one’s generosity in public. Examples of being *n̂aa j̄aj t̂ʃʰaj too* would be to throw an extravagant party for a special occasion, or, to distribute money or things to the poor in a publicised event.²¹

All these actions are always done in the presence of “others.” These “others” could be people who are higher in status than oneself, such as one’s employer, important elders, or politicians; or, they could be lower in status than the individual, such as one’s employees or the disadvantaged in the society. The aim in all cases is to create the need for the “others” to acknowledge oneself and therefore to have to respond

¹⁸ เชิดหน้าชูตา

¹⁹ อยากได้หน้า

²⁰ หน้าใหญ่ใจโต

²¹ Note that Sanit (1975) categorized this idiom as positive. It may not seem positive to Westerners but it is important to remember that Sanit’s definition of ‘positive expressions’ include actions which are beneficial to the self and others.

positively in return. Ukosakul, in a study of the effects of ‘face’ for the Thai, had many subjects who explained that “being recognized as someone important helped one feel good” (1994:167).

Sanit added that the attitude of *nâa jàj t̂saj too* ‘big face, large heart’ is present at all levels of society, even at the national level (1975:504). For example, during the economic crash of 1997, many people gave of their own freewill, millions of baht, to help out the country. In all ways, the point is to enhance the name of the nation and to avoid ‘selling face’ *k^hǎaj nâa* which will bring shame to oneself or the nation, because if one ‘sells face’, one would ‘not know where to hide the face’ *mâj rúu t̂sà? ʔaw nâa paj wáj t^hi nǎj*²².

Conversely, behaviors that are negative would be those that go against the norms of the Thai society. People who are in the upper echelons in society would be those who have already gained face or reputation, i.e., those who *mii nâa mii taa*²³ (literally, ‘have face, have eyes’). Therefore, they are expected to help the less fortunate in order to *ráksǎa nâa* ‘preserve face’. Consequently, one would avoid people who *mii nâa mii taa* ‘have face, have eyes’ but are *nâa sūuw t̂saj k^hót* ‘hypocritical’ or *nâa lûat* ‘selfish’. People who are insensitive to the feelings of others or are shameless would be labelled as *nâa dâan* ‘thick face’.

Because the face *nâa* is the representation of ego, to make someone *sǎa nâa* ‘lose face’ is a social taboo. The Thai will avoid losing face at all costs (Ukosakul 1994). They will therefore do everything they can to *ráksǎa nâa* ‘preserve face’ even when

²² ไม่รู้จะเอาหน้าไปไว้ที่ไหน

²³ มีหน้ามีตา

the costs are high. The idiom that expresses this idea is *k^hăaj p^hâa ʔaw nâa rɔɔt*²⁴ which is literally ‘to sell one’s clothes in order to save face’. One common example of this attitude is the tendency of the Thai in general to use and buy expensive brand-name goods despite their low salaries (Ukosakul 1994).

Another behavior that the Thai disapprove of is to *k^hâam nâa k^hâam taa*²⁵ (literally, to step over the face, to step over the eyes). This idiom refers to an action where something is done without considering the position or feelings of others, e.g., when a worker makes a decision without consulting his or her superior. This action is considered an act of *hàk nâa*²⁶ ‘breaking the face’ or *mâj wâj nâa*²⁷ ‘not sparing the face’. The ‘face’ is therefore very fragile and sensitive. A ‘face’ that is ‘broken’ would be very difficult to restore (Ukosakul 1994).

2.1.2 The Relationship of ‘Face’ to Shame

Face is closely related then to the notion of shame. Noble (1975), in his book “Naked and Not Ashamed”, discussed the difference between guilt-oriented and shame-oriented societies. He quoted Ruth Benedict as follows:

True shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behavior, not, as true guilt cultures do, on an internalized conviction of sin. Shame is a reaction to other people’s criticism. A man is shamed either by being openly ridiculed and rejected or by fantasizing to himself that he had been made ridiculous. In either case it is a potent sanction. But it requires an audience or at least a man’s fantasy of an audience. Guilt does not. (Benedict 1946:223)

²⁴ ขายผ้าเอาหน้ารอด

²⁵ ข้ามหน้าข้ามตา

²⁶ หักหน้า

²⁷ ไม่วัหน้า

Shame is therefore the reaction of a person to pressure from others; this implies that shame requires an audience. The bigger the audience, the stronger the effect of shame or losing face. Shame develops mainly in relation to other people for the purpose of control (Ukosakul 1994).

Two cultures which are well-known for their orientation toward shame in this sense are the Japanese and the Thai. Research has indicated that the effect of 'face' on Thai people is a product of the child-raising patterns of their parents (Ukosakul 1994). 'Face' is a powerful sanction for the Thai in encouraging or discouraging certain behaviors. Margaret Mead defines sanction as "a mechanism by which conformity is obtained, by which desired behavior is induced and undesired behavior prevented" (Piers and Singer 1953:48).

In many cultures, the effect from the pressure of external sanction from others is often expressed in relation to the word 'face' such as "losing face" and "face-saving" (Ting-Toomy 1985: 75). Face is therefore often associated with the sense of dignity. La Barre noted that while the Japanese concept of face is basically a concern about the status of the self, the Chinese are more concerned about the feelings of others (Stewart 1972). The Thai, however, are concerned with both the self and others (Ukosakul 1994).

Noble (1975) discussed four aspects of the concept of shame: honor, failure, covering, and exposure. First, shame is the loss of **honor**, which is dishonor. One who is shameless has lost all sense of honor.

Second, shame is associated with several types of **failure**, e.g., failure to achieve or failure to measure up to a standard. It may or may not involve moral failure. For instance, when a child brings home a poor report card, he feels ashamed when his

parents see it. When a person lies and gets caught, he experiences shame because his wrongdoing has been revealed openly.

Third, the state of shame is one of **covering**. One who is ashamed tries to hide what he really is from others; in other words, he puts on a mask. Psychologists would say that this is an unhealthy situation because it prevents honest relationships. Yet, the wearing of a mask may be necessary to protect oneself from being exploited by others, and it is used for exploiting others as well.

Fourth, the experience of shame is one of **exposure**. When something happens to remove that mask, a person's real self is exposed. Then one normally responds to shame by **re-covering**. One covers up one's shame by using diversion through different emotional channels such as anger or humor. When one recovers, one remains the same person with the same state of shame. But when one changes what one is to become a better person, that shame is removed.

In conclusion, face is often equated with the ego. To 'lose face' is to cause embarrassment or shame to oneself. In order to protect the 'face', the Thai has mechanisms to help one maintain smooth relationships with others. These mechanisms include the avoidance of confrontation and indirectness (Ukosakul 1994), and they help to ensure that the dignity of the person is protected as much as possible.

2.2 Theories and Findings from Social Sciences on Metaphor

Figures of speech are prevalent in all languages. First of all, what are figures of speech? The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics defines a figure of speech as "a word or phrase which is used for special effect, and which does not have its usual or literal meaning" (Richards, Platt and Weber, 1985:105). Figures of speech

include metaphors, similes (comparisons of one thing to another), hyperboles (exaggerations for effect) and metonymies (using one entity to refer to another associated with it). Dirven (1985:96) defines metaphor as “a process of transference, by means of which a relationship between two entities, qualities, states or processes is established on the basis of an association of given attributes of the one with attributes of the other.” Therefore there is an implied comparison between two concepts in a metaphor.

Figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, and personification are among the most efficient communicative devices of language because they make the inventing of novel words for new things or new feelings unnecessary since they use old meanings to express these new ideas or feelings (Hayakawa 1974:107). Metaphor is probably the most important means by which language develops, changes, grows and adapts itself to our changing needs. Metaphors tend to occur whenever we have strong feelings to express. As such, they can be described as “direct expressions of evaluation” (Hayakawa 1974:106).

Metaphors can be ‘live’ or ‘dead’. ‘Live’ metaphors are those which are constructed on the spot as an illustration or for didactic purposes (Larson 1984:249). ‘Dead’ metaphors, on the other hand, are those which are an established part of the idiomatic constructions of the lexicon of the language. They have become so much a part of the language’s vocabulary that we cease to think of them as metaphors at all. In this sense, an idiom is a ‘dead’ metaphor. When an idiom is used, the listener or reader understands its meaning without having to think of the comparison on which the idiom was based. The ‘face’ expressions researched in this study are mainly idioms.

2.2.1 Defining ‘Idiom’

Fraser (1970) brought the topic of idiomaticity to the attention of the linguistic scene about thirty years ago. The most common definition of an idiom is ‘a figure of speech whose meaning cannot be predicted or determined by the meaning of its parts’. For example, consider the following quotations by well-known linguists:

Idioms . . . do not get their meanings from the meanings of their syntactic parts (Katz 1973:358).

These are idiomatic in the sense that their meaning is non-compositional (Chomsky 1980:149).

Our definition of idioms, or frozen expressions, is rather broad. Ideally, an expression is frozen if the meaning is not predictable from the composition, that is to say, for example, if the verb and fixed complement(s) do not contribute to the meaning of the sentence (e.g., *to kick the bucket, to take the bull by the horns*) (Machonis 1985:306).

The traditional definition of an idiom states that its meaning is not a function of the meanings of its parts and the way these are systematically combined; that is, an idiom is a noncompositional expression (van der Linden 1992:223).

The use of ‘idiom’ in this thesis resembles the research of Nunberg, Sag and Wasow. In their article “Idioms”, they argue that only a limited number of idioms are totally un-analyzable in this manner. They claim that “many parts of phrasal idioms carry parts of their idiomatic meaning” (1994:506). All the definitions of idiom quoted above are therefore misleading or inadequate (cf. also Langacker 1987:24ff, 93-94, *passim* for a similar evaluation). Nunberg, Sag and Wasow went on to describe the difficulty in defining idioms.

In actual linguistics discourse and lexicographical practice, 'idiom' is applied to a fuzzy category defined on the one hand by ostension of prototypical examples like English *kick the bucket*, *take care of NP*, or *keep tabs on NP*, and on the other by implicit opposition to related categories like formulae, fixed phrases, collocations, clichés, sayings, proverbs, and allusions—terms which, like 'idiom' itself, inhabit the ungoverned country between lay metalanguage and the theoretical terminology of linguistics. In virtue of these oppositions, if nothing else, idioms occupy a region in a multidimensional lexical space, characterized by a number of distinct properties: semantic, syntactic, poetical, discursive, and rhetorical (1994:492).

As an alternative, Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994:492-493) suggest several properties of idioms in general. These include:

- **Conventionality:** Idioms are conventionalized. This means that their meanings or usages cannot be predicted, or at least entirely predicted, from the meaning and use of the constituents which make up the idioms. Conventionality, however, is a matter of degree (cf. Langacker 1991:116, 246, 358).
- **Inflexibility:** Idioms typically appear only in a restricted number of syntactic constructions, unlike freely composed expressions. For example, idioms often cannot be passivized (e.g., **the bucket was kicked*).
- **Figuration:** Idioms typically involve metaphors (*take the bull by the horns*), metonymies (*lend a hand*), and even hyperboles (*not worth the paper it's printed on*).
- **Proverbiality:** Idioms are often used to describe a recurrent situation of particular social interest (becoming restless, talking informally, divulging a secret) in virtue of its similarity or relation to a scenario involving familiar, concrete things and relations—climbing walls, chewing fat, spilling beans.

- **Informality:** Idioms are typically associated with relatively informal register and with popular speech and oral culture.
- **Affect:** Idioms are usually used in an evaluative or affective way. A language does not ordinarily use idioms to describe situations that are neutral, such as, buying a book.

According to Lakoff (1987:380, 384, 446-7), the only property that is obligatory to all idioms is conventionality.²⁸ Some idioms do not involve figuration. An example in English is *by dint of* since the word *dint* occurs in no other context and therefore cannot have a figurative interpretation. Other idioms do not have literal meanings that refer to concrete things or relations, e.g., *second thoughts*.

Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) distinguish between two types of idioms- **idiomatically combining expressions** (e.g., *take advantage of, pull strings*), whose meanings are conventional and **are** distributed among their parts, and **idiomatic phrases** (e.g., *kick the bucket, saw logs*), which **do not** distribute their meanings to their components. Gibbs added that idiomatic phrases are “non-decomposable” because people experience difficulty in breaking these phrases into their component parts. The class of idiomatic phrases is much smaller than the class of idiomatically combining expressions. In general, the analyzability of idioms is really a matter of degree, and it depends on the salience of their individual parts (Gibbs 1994: 278).

Calling an expression an idiomatically combining expression does not imply that the idiom is ‘transparent’ in that the speakers are able to fully recover (or predict) the rationale for the figuration it involves. However, it does mean that there is a

²⁸ For Langacker, also, grammar itself is “a structured inventory of conventionalized linguistic units (1987:487). Conventionality, therefore, takes in a much broader range of linguistic patterns than simply idioms (1987:35-36; 57). For a specific study of conventionalization, nonpredictability and motivation of usage cf. Casad (1988).

correspondence between the parts of the idiom and the meaning of the idiomatic phrase. To use Lakoff's idea, the use of a particular word in an idiom is **motivated** (Lakoff 1987:381; 384; 448; 452).

As an illustration, Nunberg, Sag and Wasow gave the example of *spill the beans* which means "divulge the information" (cf. also Lakoff 1987:449-502). One can safely assume that *spill* denotes the act of divulging and *beans* the information that is divulged even though one cannot say why *beans* should have been used here instead of *peas*. The meaning arises through a convention that assigns particular meanings to its parts when they occur together. Therefore, in an idiomatically combining expression, there is a "conventional mapping from literal to idiomatic interpretation (which) is homomorphic with respect to certain properties of the interpretations of the idiom components" (Nunberg, Sag and Wasow 1994:504).

This is quite easily seen in an idiom like *pull strings*. The literal situation involves a pulling activity. The object itself is a puppet, and its appendages are linked by strings to pieces of wood that are being manipulated by a performer in a public show. The idiomatic situation that this is mapped to involves a different activity, but one that preserves certain properties of pulling, and, similarly, the affected object in the idiomatic situation has certain similarities to the way strings are pulled. Lakoff calls this the Invariance Hypothesis, noting that metaphorical mappings preserve the typology of the image behind the metaphor (Lakoff 1990:54ff.).

On such an account, it is not surprising that there exist families of idioms which are semantically related. Here are some examples that Nunberg, Sag and Wasow listed:

throw someone to the dogs (lions, wolves, etc.)
 go to heaven (the happy hunting ground, a better reward, etc.)
 keep (lose, blow) one's cool
 talk (argue, complain, etc.) until one is blue in the face. (1994:504)

Nunberg, Sag and Wasow (1994) concluded that the dependency among the parts of the idiomatically combining expression is fundamentally semantic in nature. That is to say, most idioms have identifiable parts which contribute to the meaning of the whole. The analysis of the Thai 'face' idioms in Chapter 3 will reveal this more clearly. Croft (1993:336) explains further that the meaning of the part seems to be partly determined by the meaning of the whole as well.

Recent studies on metaphor have shown that metaphorical mappings tend to go from concrete to abstract (e.g., Croft 1993; Lakoff 1987, 1990, 1993; Langacker 1987; Sweetser 1990). These studies reveal that the basic metaphorical concepts that underlie most transfer processes in natural language take familiar and concrete things and situations (e.g., body, spatial relations) and map them to more abstract domains (e.g., social interactions).²⁹

2.2.2 Grounding of metaphors

Scholars have noted the ubiquity of metaphor not only in oral language and literature, but also in such varied areas as religion and physics (McGlone 1996). Everyday language is rife with metaphorical expressions. Lakoff and Johnson, in their book *Metaphors We Live By*, even went further to propose that metaphor plays a fundamental role in human thought. They wrote,

²⁹ Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of metaphor will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

We have found . . . that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature (1980:3).

On what basis do we understand and use metaphors? Filbeck (n.d.) explains that there are four areas of life which all humans share which form the knowledge bases for metaphors. They are the human body, environment, kinship, and social structure. Sweetser (1990:30), for example, states that “bodily experience is a source of vocabulary for our psychological states, but not the other way around.” Kurath (1921), who studied the semantic sources of emotion words in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, and the Germanic languages, noted,

Indo-European words for the emotions are very frequently derived from words referring to physical actions or sensations accompanying the relevant emotions, or to the bodily organs affected by those physical reactions. (For example, the heart’s physical function of blood-pumping is strongly and noticeably affected by love, excitement, fear, and other strong emotions-such as courage or passion. Or, because physical brightness is conducive to cheerfulness, “bright” comes to mean cheerful, while “dull” means the reverse.) (in Sweetser 1990: 28)

Kurath went further to suggest that because physical sensation and emotional reaction are inseparable, this link is the source of the tendency to derive the vocabulary of the mind from the vocabulary of the body. Essentially, language is inseparable from common human experience. Lakoff puts it this way: “The human conceptual system is a product of human experience, and that experience comes through the body” (1987:206). This is what is meant by ‘grounding’: the more abstract concepts are conceptualized in terms of the more concrete. Sweetser (1990) argues that while the link-up between the vocabularies of the mind and body may have some psychosomatic roots, it is essentially metaphorical in nature.

Our concern in this study is with the human body, of which the face is a part. Parts of the body and what we can do with our bodies are sources for many figures of speech.

Examples of figures of speech which include body parts in English are:

He has a black heart.

She is hot-headed.

He is the president's right hand man.

Examples in Thai are:

ใจดี	<i>tʃaj</i> <i>dii</i> heart good	kind
มือเก่า	<i>muu</i> <i>kàw</i> hand old	experienced, skilful
ตากล้อง	<i>taa</i> <i>klôŋ</i> eye camera	photographer, movie maker

How is the understanding of metaphor accomplished? Different models have been proposed to explain how metaphor works. These will be described below.

Ortony (1979) and Wolff and Gentner (1992) have proposed that metaphors in the form of *X is a Y* can be interpreted as comparisons of the form *X is like a Y*. Take the example of the metaphor *Our marriage was a rollercoaster ride*. Once the addressee recognizes the implicit comparison, the addressee would conduct a search for matching properties in the topic (e.g., *our marriage*) and vehicle (e.g., *rollercoaster ride*) concepts. The implication of these 'comparison models' is that metaphors are understood in basically the same ways as literal comparisons, such as *Nectarines are like oranges*. In Chapter 3, we will discuss certain Thai metaphors that illustrate this point clearly.

While the comparison models may seem attractive in its simplicity, such models fail in the situation when the addressee does not realize the relevant properties that the topic (the subject in focus) and vehicle (the comparison) concepts share (McGlone, 1996). For instance, in the metaphor cited above, people who are not familiar with the marriage in question will have no previous representation of the marriage that includes properties such as ‘exciting,’ ‘scary,’ or ‘unstable’. Yet these sort of properties come to mind when an uninformed reader reads the statement.

McGlone therefore argues that comparison models are “ill-equipped to deal with any metaphor that is used to make informative statements about a topic-i.e., to introduce properties that are not part of the addressee’s mental representation of the topic” (1996:544). McGlone further adds that this argument can be used for literal comparisons as well. He explains:

“For example, if a person knows nothing about kumquats, then telling her that *A kumquat is like an orange* will introduce new properties into her mental representation of the concept ‘kumquat,’ rather than produce a match between ‘kumquat’ and ‘orange’ properties” (544).

Therefore, instead of property matching, the vehicle provides properties that can be attributed to the topic. Can this explain how a metaphor is grounded? Consider the metaphor *Our marriage was a rollercoaster ride* once again. The topic and vehicle concepts each belong to several categories. A marriage is a type of relationship. A rollercoaster ride is a type of recreational activity and also a type of journey. These concepts belong to other categories as well, but there does not appear to be a common category that contain them both. If this is the case, what is the implied ground of the metaphor?

McGlone suggests two possibilities. The first possibility is that the metaphor implies a common category although it may not be a conventional one. For instance, a

marriage and a rollercoaster ride both belong to the category of exciting or scary situations. The second possibility is that there is no implied common category, but a “general correspondence between two separate categories” (1996:545). In the *Our marriage was a rollercoaster ride* example, the relationship between a marriage and a rollercoaster ride can be understood as metaphorical correspondences between love and a journey. In this case, the lovers correspond to travellers, the relationship corresponds to a moving vehicle, and the lovers’ excitement would correspond to the speed of the vehicle, etc.

These two possible explanations for the grounding of metaphors have been a matter of debate. Glucksberg (1991) has argued for the first possibility. He proposes that metaphors, like many literal comparisons, can be understood by casting the topic and vehicle concepts in a common category. Glucksberg’s view is called the Attributive Categorization View. According to this view, metaphors are understood as “category-inclusion assertions in which the topic is assigned to a category exemplified by the vehicle concept” (McGlone 1996:561).

Take, for example, the expression *Their lawyer is a shark*. Since the topic *their lawyer* cannot plausibly belong to the category of marine fish (shark), this category is definitely not considered as the basis for interpreting the expression. Instead, the metaphor can be interpreted as an attributive assertion that *their lawyer* belongs to a category of things that the vehicle *shark* exemplifies. Since sharks are stereotypically vicious, the term *shark* can belong to a category of vicious beings. When such a category is used to characterize a metaphor topic, it functions as an attributive category in that it provides properties (viciousness, cunning) that may be attributed to the topic. With extensive use, the attributive category exemplified by a vehicle concept may become conventionalized and become an idiom. For example, many

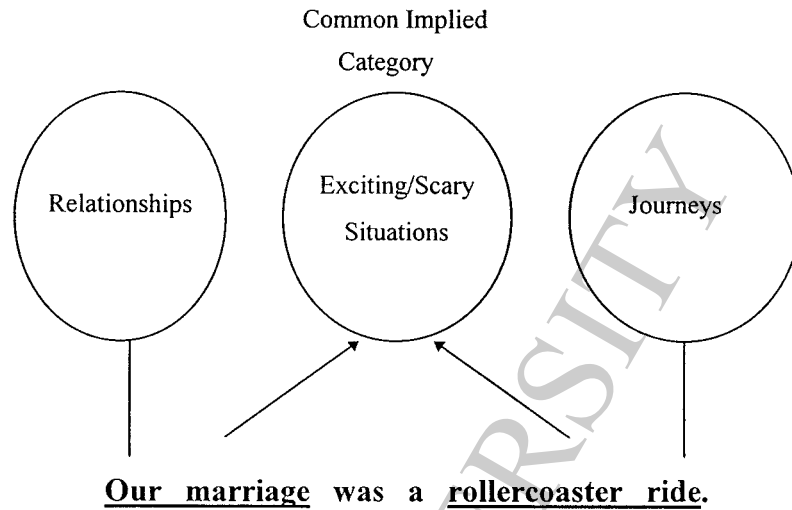
dictionaries include the attributive category exemplified by *shark* as a secondary meaning of the term.

In the Attributive Categorization view, in order to make sense of a metaphor, two kinds of knowledge are needed. First, one must have sufficient knowledge of the topic concept to appreciate the attributive category to which it can plausibly and meaningfully belong. Second, one must be sufficiently familiar with the vehicle concept to know the categories it can exemplify.

Lakoff (1993), however, has argued for the second possibility, that there is no common implied category. According to his proposal, metaphors and other figurative expressions are interpreted through reference to metaphoric correspondences that structure the interpreter's understanding of many kinds of abstract concepts (cf. Lakoff 1990:49, 54, 61, *passim*). Therefore, such figurative expressions are exemplifications of deep conceptual metaphors. This view is labelled the Conceptual Metaphor view. Figure 4 illustrates the two different views for the grounding of metaphor³⁰. Since the latter theory of metaphor will be the main one applied in this thesis, a more detailed explanation of this theory will be described in the next section.

³⁰ Adapted from McGlone 1996:548.

ATTRIBUTIVE CATEGORIZATION VIEW (GLUCKSBERG, 1991)



CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR VIEW (LAKOFF, 1993)

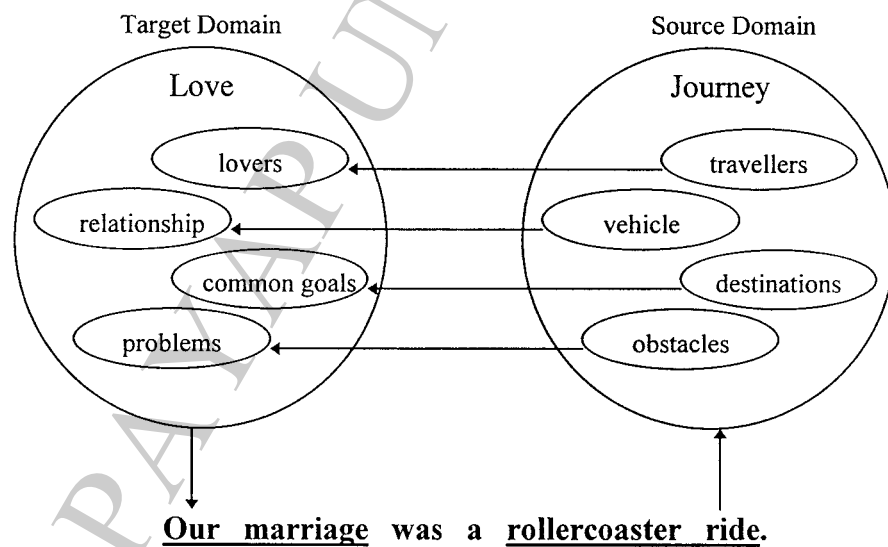


Figure 4. Two Views of Metaphor Interpretation.

2.2.3 Conceptual Metaphor view

In talking about metaphor, it is useful to keep in mind the distinction between 1) metaphor as a linguistic phenomenon, or metaphorical language, and 2) metaphor as a means of understanding, or metaphorical thought processes (Albritton 1995).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is not just a matter of language, it “pervades our human conceptual system” (1980:115). That is to say, the way we think and act are, to a great extent, metaphorical. Because metaphors exist in one’s conceptual system, this makes possible the existence of metaphorical linguistic expressions. In other words, metaphorical linguistic expressions are exemplifications of metaphorical thought processes. Therefore, it is not the use of the metaphorical linguistic expression such as “love is a journey” that is ultimately responsible for structuring one’s thinking of love in terms of travel, but rather it is the metaphorical way of thinking about love that results in the use of the verbal metaphor. Metaphor, on this account, is therefore basically a matter of thought (Albritton 1995). The essence of metaphor is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:5).

At this point, several terms become useful in understanding metaphorical structure. The notion of a domain is central to the understanding of metaphor (Langacker 1991:4; 20; 35, *passim*). However, to understand a domain, we need to understand what concepts are. A **concept** is a semantic structure which may be symbolized by a word or morpheme. For example, [CIRCLE] and [ARC] are both concepts. However, the arc is defined only relative to a circle, since an arc exists only by virtue of its status as a segment of a circle (Langacker 1988:94). Here what we think of as the arc is the **profile** while the notion of the circle which it presupposes is the **base**. The base for [CIRCLE], however, is the basic domain of two-dimensional space. The

definition of a **domain** is “a semantic structure that functions as the base for at least one concept profile (Croft 1993:338). The base *circle* is base not only for [ARC], but also for other concepts such as [DIAMETER], [RADIUS], etc.

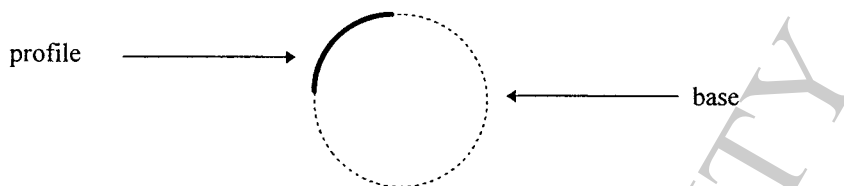


Figure 5. The concept of an arc presupposes the notion of a circle (Langacker 1991:46)

Domains can be **basic** or **abstract** (cf. Langacker 1991:46; 63-64; 125). Basic domains are concepts which “do not appear to be definable relative to other more basic concepts” (Croft 1993:339). Abstract domains are nonbasic in that they presuppose other domains. The concept of [CIRCLE] above is an abstract domain as it involved two other domains: GEOMETRICAL FIGURES and SPACE. The combination of domains simultaneously presupposed by a concept is called the **domain matrix** of the domain. For example, the matrix for the concept of [HUMAN BEING] would include the domains of the physical body, mind, volition, and emotions, to name a few.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) use the term *conceptual metaphor* to describe the mapping of knowledge about one conceptual domain (the source domain) onto a different domain (the target domain). The two domains, the source and the target domains, do not form a domain matrix. Such conceptual metaphors systematically structure the way that many domains are understood. This is reflected, then, in the ways that speakers talk about the world around them.

As an illustration, consider the concept of [LOVE]. According to the Conceptual Metaphor view, love is understood in terms of conceptual metaphors that assimilate

the abstract “target” concept into concrete “source” concepts, such as “journey” or “container.” Therefore the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY involves correspondences between lovers and travellers, the love relationship and a travelling vehicle, difficulties in the relationships and obstacles in the path of travel, and so forth. These correspondences are deduced from metaphorical expressions such as *We are at a crossroad in our relationship, I don't think this relationship is going anywhere, We've gotten off the track*, etc. Therefore, the basis for the Conceptual Metaphor view is a large set of correspondences between abstract and concrete domains, such as the love-journey correspondences that have just been described.

The correspondences between the source domain and the target domain can be of two types: ontological and epistemic (Lakoff 1987). Ontological correspondences are those made between the entities in the source domain and the corresponding entities in the target domain. For example, for the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, the journey would be the source domain while the love relationship is the target domain. Epistemic correspondences are correspondences between knowledge about the source domain and corresponding knowledge about the target domain, i.e., the implications drawn from knowledge of the source domain concept is mirrored by the implications drawn from knowledge about the target domain (cf. Lakoff 1990:67, 73). Thus, for the metaphor above, an example of an epistemic correspondence would be:

Source: A journey has a beginning at some point.

Target: A love relationship has a beginning as well.

Such correspondences are not ad-hoc; rather, they are systematic. Furthermore, metaphorical concepts structure (at least partly) a person's thoughts and actions. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) illustrated this with the example of the concept of ARGUMENT and the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. Examples of metaphorical expressions in English are:

He *attacked* every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were right on *target*.

I've never *won* an argument with him.

He *shot down* all of my arguments.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that we conceive of ARGUMENT in terms of WAR; as such, we act and talk about ARGUMENT in terms of WAR. As a result of the concept being metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and consequently, the language used is metaphorically structured. This leads to a systematic way of talking about argument.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) differentiate between several kinds of metaphorical concepts. The first kind are **structural** metaphors where one concept is structured in terms of another. The LOVE IS A JOURNEY and ARGUMENT IS WAR conceptual metaphors described above are examples of structural metaphors.

Another kind of metaphorical concept is the **orientational** metaphor. Such metaphors do not structure one concept in terms of another, but rather they organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another in terms of postures, paths and scales. Most of the orientational metaphors have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow and central-peripheral, to name just a few.

These spatialization metaphors are not randomly assigned. They are grounded in our experience with the physical and social world, i.e., they are motivated. What we typically do with our bodies and our experience of physical objects and substances are bases for the grounding of orientational metaphors. However, which ones are chosen and which ones are major will vary from culture to culture. For example, for some

cultures, the future is in front of us, for other cultures, the future is at the back (cf. Casad 1993: 632).

According to Lakoff and Johnson, “the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most basic concepts in that culture” (1980:22.) We can further deduce that the deeper a particular value is embedded in a culture, the more likely there will be metaphorical expressions pertaining to that concept. For instance, the concept of ‘face’ which is related to honor and shame is an important value in the Thai culture. Hence, one would expect to find many metaphorical expressions relating to this concept. Chapters 3 and 4 will reveal the extent of the idioms pertaining to this concept.

Oriental metaphors are found among the terms used to describe emotions. A well-known one is HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN. Instances of orientational metaphorical expressions in the terms for emotions in English are:

I’m feeling *up*.

That *boosted* my spirits.

Thinking about her always gives me a *lift*.

I’m feeling *down*.

I’m *depressed*.

I’m feeling *low* these days.

My spirits *sank*.

The physical basis for this metaphor is that erect posture is usually associated with a positive emotional state while a drooping posture typically correlates with sadness and depression.

A third class of metaphorical concepts includes the **ontological** metaphors. Ontological metaphors are based on our experiences with physical objects, especially our

own bodies. They serve to help us comprehend events, activities, emotions, ideas and states as entities and substances. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that they are necessary for dealing rationally with our experiences. For example, we view our visual field as containers. Therefore we can say:

I have him in sight.

The ship is coming into view.

That's in the center of my field of vision.

Very often, ontological metaphors are so natural and so pervasive in our thought that we do not perceive them as metaphors. Hence we take statements like *He cracked under pressure* as being directly true or false. In this case, the underlying ontological metaphor for this expression is THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT.

The most obvious ontological metaphors are those in which something that is non-human is seen as being human. Such cases are instances of **personification**. Personification allows us to “make sense of the world in human terms-terms that we can understand on the basis of our own motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:34). Examples of personification are:

Life has cheated me.

Inflation is eating up our profits.

The experiment gave birth to a new theory.

Inflation has pinned us to the wall.

Next, there is the case of **metonymy** which allows us to conceptualize one thing by means of its relation to something else. THE PART FOR THE WHOLE is one example of a metonymy. For example:

I've got a new *set of wheels*. (= car, motorcycle, etc.)

We need some *new blood* in the organization. (=new people)

There are a lot of *new faces* out there in the audience. (=new people)

The last example above illustrates the metonymy THE FACE FOR THE PERSON. This metonymy functions very actively in many societies. It is not merely a matter of language, but it is prevalent in a person's thought. For example, if we see the photograph of a person's face, we consider that we have seen the photograph of that person. However, if we are shown the picture of that person's body without his face, we would not conclude that we have seen that person. Therefore, in most cultures, people look at a person's face to get our information about what that person is like.

Speakers have significant leeway in exploiting metonymy; their choices of how to state the metonymic relation vary from domain to domain. For instance, in the metonymy THE PART FOR THE WHOLE, which part is used to represent the whole depends on which aspect of the whole a person wants to focus on. For example, if we say, "We need more *hands* in the kitchen," we are focusing on physical help since the hands do the most work in the kitchen. But, if we say, "We need more *heads* in the laboratory," we are focusing on mental help since the head is associated with brainwork (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:36). Similarly, the category 'face' is appropriate in the context of new people because this is what we usually focus on when we meet strangers.

Furthermore, metonymy has a referential function, that is, it allows a person to "use one entity to *stand for* another" (Lakoff and Johnson 1980:37). One difference between metonymy and metaphor is that metonymy maps within one domain matrix

while metaphor maps across different cognitive domain matrices (Croft 1993).³¹ In metonymy, one category within a domain is taken as standing for another category within the same domain. What metonymy does, as illustrated in the sentences in the previous paragraph, is that it makes primary a domain that is secondary in the literal meaning. Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the difference in mapping between metaphor and metonymy.

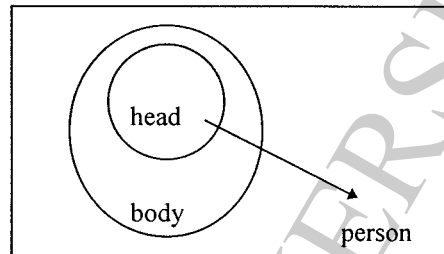


Figure 6. Metonymy: THE HEAD FOR THE PERSON

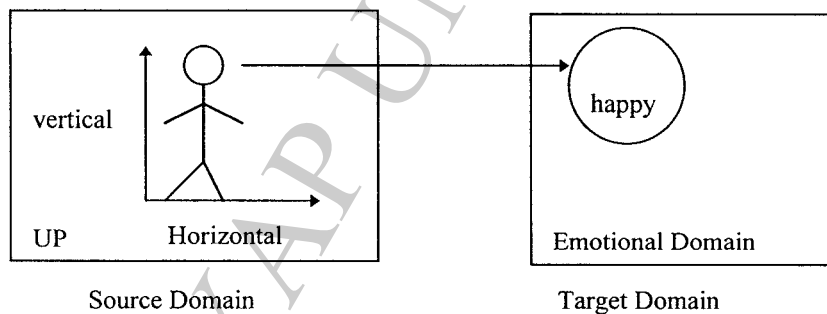


Figure 7. Metaphor: HAPPY IS UP

³¹ Metaphor and metonymy are both conceptual mappings. However, whether they are two discrete notions or points on a continuum is still a matter of debate. Very often, metaphor and metonymy interact to produce the interpretation of a linguistic expression.

Studies have shown that metonymies play an important part in the structures of emotion categories (e.g., Kövecses 1986, 1988; Lakoff 1987). Very often, when one is asked to describe an emotion such as fear or anger, one resorts to describing the physiological experiences that accompany these emotions, e.g., feeling hot, or palpitations of the heart. This led Lakoff (1987) to propose the general metonymy THE PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION. Such metonymies, together with an array of conceptual metaphors are the source for a large number of emotion expressions.

Some negative emotion categories, such as anger and fear can be understood as involving a sequence with a number of phases which describe the development of an emotion starting from the cause of the emotion to its termination (Kövecses 1986). In this way, emotion categories can be understood as scenarios or scripts. Lakoff (1987), for example, summarizing the work of Kövecses, described the prototypical scenario for anger as comprising five stages: the cause, the actual emotion of anger, the attempt at control, loss of control, and, finally, resulting action. In the spirit of this analysis, in Chapter 4, I describe the prototypical scenario of the emotion of shame which shows up very often in the the analysis of Thai 'face' idioms.

In conclusion, metaphorical concepts are grounded in people's knowledge and experience. Those experiences, however, differ from culture to culture. Furthermore, our experiences may be metaphorical in nature, i.e., we perceive experience in one domain in terms of another. We conceptualize the non-physical in terms of the physical, the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated. For example, consider the following:

- (i) Mary is in the living room.
- (ii) Mary is in the Girls' Guides.
- (iii) Mary is in love.

In (i), the concept IN emerges directly from spatial experiences. The instances of 'in' in (ii) and (iii) express metaphorical concepts. Sentence (ii) describes a social experience which makes use of the SOCIAL GROUPS ARE CONTAINERS metaphor. Sentence (iii) describes a domain of emotion and draws on the conceptual metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS.

Therefore, we understand more abstract concepts (such as emotions and ideas) by means of other concepts that we understand on clearer terms (for example, spatial orientation and objects). Lakoff and Johnson concluded that "the kind of conceptual system we have is the product of the kind of beings we are and the way we interact with our physical and cultural environments" (1980:119).

As mentioned earlier, metaphors do not occur randomly or arbitrarily. Rather, they are used systematically in our thought and language. It is motivation, a property of the conceptual system and the language, that accounts for this systematicity (Lakoff 1990:50). Therefore, coherence among metaphors is typical, and metaphors tend to occur in clusters. McGlone (1996) has stated that this observed systematicity of idiomatic expressions in certain semantic domains is the primary evidence for the Conceptual Metaphor view. Albritton suggests that an important function of metaphor is the "creation of schemas for understanding abstract domains of experience" (1995:33). Metaphors also provide a framework for understanding a new domain or for restructuring the understanding of a familiar domain (cf. Black 1979).