Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts
10

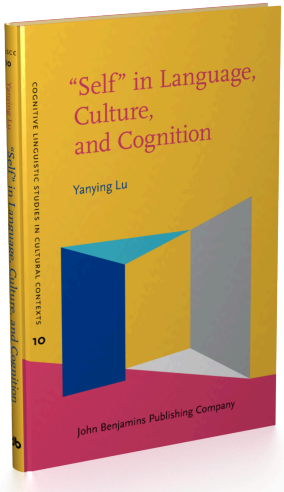
CHAPTER 6

# The self within

## On the Chinese embodied self

https://doi.org/10.1075/clscc.10.c6






Pages 111–130 of
**"Self" in Language, Culture, and Cognition**
Yanying Lu
[Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts, 10]
2019. xv, 178 pp.

CHAPTER 6

# The self within

## On the Chinese embodied self

This chapter discusses the Chinese embodied view of selfhood by examining body parts that constitute an important source of self-related conceptual schemes and cognitive categories in Chinese. Body parts are found to be prominent as the seat of the self or one's essential being in the Chinese conceptual system. The ways in which they are used by contemporary Chinese immigrants in the articulation of selfhood not only reflect the indigenous conceptions of the embodied selfhood in the Chinese conceptual system, but also reveal some age-old cultural premises which are historically-transmitted and ideologically formed.

**Keywords**: the embodied self, body parts, mental processes, emotional being, cultural ethos

### 6.1 The embodied view of self

Expressions for the self and person in contemporary Chinese vocabulary often contain *shen* 'body', such as, *zishen*, literally 'self body' and *benshen*, literally 'root person'. The Chinese idiom *shenbuyouji*, which literally translates as 'body beyond control of self', stands for going against one's will. Another term that also takes on a somatised image is *buyouzizhu* which literally means 'beyond one's own mastery', signifying a spontaneous overflow of emotive sentiment. In the comments the participants make in relation to their private thoughts, the word *ganjue* 'feeling' can refer to premature yet authentic ideas or firmly-kept impressions. This has shown some indication for the convergence of feeling and thinking in Chinese. The legacy of the unity of mind/body is evident in a range of references to an embodied conception of the self that appears in the participants' conversations.

The aforementioned Chinese expressions reveal a unified concept of body and mind. The unity implies a body/self that is thinking and sensing, and interacting with the surrounding world. For example, the Confucian school of thought emphasises the process in which a person seeks conscious self-development. As discussed in Chapter 3, such process is called self-cultivation, or *xiushen*. *Shen*, literally meaning 'body', denotes the whole person/body and mind. Self-development is the refinement of the whole person.

In Chinese, the mind does not constitute a separate entity from the sensing body. Modern Chinese expressions about being unable to restrain one's own emotions are short of a self-aware subject, such as *qingbuzijin* 'being overwhelmed by emotion'. This expression draws upon a conceptual metaphor in which bodily feelings are the object of control. Losing control of them is called *zhenqingliulu* 'overflow of authentic emotions', which constitutes an authentic representation of embodied affective experience. Equivalent terms in English include "I couldn't help myself" or "I was overtaken by a powerful emotion". In Chinese, the difference is that the mind/body is at the locus of self-control, rather than a conscious subject.

This language phenomenon is inherited from the premodern Chinese habit of thinking of a person as an embodied being. It can be said to derive from a holistic straightforward connection between personhood and nature in premodern Chinese philosophical texts and traditional Chinese medicine. Based on this, Ning Yu's extensive research into the philosophical and medical discourse of Chinese culture and civilisation has shown connections between embodied metaphors that express thinking and sensing in Chinese (Yu, 2007b, 2009).

Other researchers also found evidence of the embodied nature of emotions in Chinese. For instance, one distinctive feature of the Chinese metaphor for anger is that it is concerned with *qi* 'vital energy'. *Qi* 'vital energy' is a notion that is deeply embedded in Chinese philosophy and medicine. It is the substance of the body (Kirkland, 2004). It is, therefore, a vital part of self-cultivation that revolves around improving a person's *qi* 'vital energy' to allow that person to function well in both the natural and the human world.

Particularly in Daoism, the human body is one of the organic manifestations of the *dao* 'cosmos' or 'the way' (Hansen, 2000; Morris, 1994). This way to understand the self goes beyond the notion of ego, which involves the vital participation of human beings. To fulfil such a process, one is to live in an effort to harmonise the microcosm of a person with the fundamental laws of nature. The integrity of individuals lies in the discovery of the vital rhythms of organic life (Morris, 1994, p. 110).

In Daoist cosmology, disciplining the spiritual aspects of the self to prevent the blocking of *qi* while enhancing the health qualities of the body, is to make it work towards the Daoist ideal of self-cultivation "within a cosmos comprised of subtly linked forces" (Kirkland, 2004, p. 192). In practice, instructions are listed in the Daoist text *Zhuangzi* for achieving integration of the whole person with *dao*, including the balancing of diet and moderation in physical activity, achieving calmness or equilibrium in both the body and mind.

The same assumption is also reflected in the participants' repeated references to balance and sincerity. In the minds of these contemporary Chinese immigrants, if a person is imbalanced internally, they can be considered irrational and prone to misjudgement. Finding balance represents one's reasoning process of finding

equilibrium. Sincerity, on the other hand, tests the compatibility or incompatibility of one's inner being and appearance. They claim it is of primary importance to have a *zhenxin* 'true heart' or 'sincere intention' that is valued more than etiquette and good manners which are deemed to only exhibit a person's superficial/external character. The inconsistency between the external presentation and the essence sets a contrast between one's behaviours and true thoughts, which renders one's behaviours insincere, deceptive and irreputable.

From a linguistic perspective, it is also important to note that the modern Chinese language is abundant in references to the heart and other bodily organs for expressing a person's ideas and thoughts or for describing one's mental activities, such as *xinzhushenming* 'heart is the mastery of mind'. Not only are these embodied metaphors a clear indication that the Chinese language is rich in expressions that treat body parts as thinking and feeling organs, they also reveal the emotive nature of Chinese reasoning (e.g., Sun, 1991; Yu, 2009). From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the embodied metaphors found in the Chinese language, along with the organic formation of personhood opens up a window to examine the structure of self-related mental processes in the Chinese conceptual system.

## 6.2 The EMBODIED SELF metaphor

Human beings tend to conceive of delineated, vague, or abstract experiences in more concrete terms with the help of metaphors. Approaching the metaphorical language in Chinese from a cognitive linguistic perspective, Conceptual Metaphor Theory establishes the basis for interpreting the meanings of metaphors in the form of cross-domain mapping.

In light of cognitive linguistics, the way human beings understand and conceptualise the world departs from encyclopaedic knowledge and arrives at an organisation of concepts in the form of "Idealised Cognitive Models" or ICMs (Lakoff, 1987, 1988). ICMs are the result of an idealisation process of reality or experience. As a result of this idealisation process, metaphors structure human thought and set up the correspondence between the constituent elements of the metaphorical source and the target.

As for the different functions that metaphors play in the thinking process, there are three ways in which conceptual metaphors function. They inform the three categories of conceptual metaphors, namely structural, ontological and orientational (Kövecses, 2005, p. 30). The current chapter reports the embodied metaphors found in the participants' speech which states their state of mind, inner being and internal causation metaphorically as objects, substances or containers (Kövecses, 2005, p. 38). They belong to the category of ontological metaphors.

Ontological metaphors provide a basis for us to comprehend events, actions, activities by giving a new ontological status to general categories of an abstract target concept. That is to say, speakers can refer, quantify or identify aspects of the delineated experiences through ontological metaphors. For instance, the analytical results show that body parts are frequently drawn upon in metaphorical expressions of one's inner being and internal causation, namely *xin* 'heart', *du* 'belly', *nao* 'brain', *gu* 'bone' and *yan* 'eye'. According to the analytical results, speakers use references to body parts to represent the self to others. The numerous co-occurrences of body parts and mental verbs show that internal organs in Chinese play an important role in representing self-evaluation and other mental processes for gaining self-knowledge through metaphors.

With regard to previous studies on embodied metaphors in Chinese, these metaphors form a comprehensive body-based linguistic system to structure mental processes in the Chinese conceptual system (Pritzker, 2007; Slingerland, 2004; Yu, 1998, 2003, 2007a). This section will focus on metaphorical expressions that describe the individualised self with respect to different body parts.

### 6.2.1 The metonymy of the INNER HEART

Numerous expressions containing the heart show that the INNER HEART corresponds to the private sense of self. Participants across the different age groups all expressed their ideal friendship in terms of *jiaoxin de pengyou* 'friends with whom one can open the heart' and *taoxin de pengyou* 'friends with whom one can reach out to the bottom of the heart'. Based on the CONTAINER FOR CONTAINED and the HEART FOR PERSON metonymies, *jiaoxin* 'open heart' and *taoxin* 'reach out to the bottom of heart' defines this ideal status of interpersonal communication and relationship (Yu, 2009, p. 183). Common to these metonymic expressions is that the HEART is construed as the locus of their private self. This is consistent with previous studies on the Chinese HEART as the centre of thought in Chinese culture (Yu, 2009, p. 208).

In the social dimension, the HEART seems to be a popular seat for a person's inner being, as opposed to a public one. When the public SELF is found to be in sharp contrast with the private SELF, the person can appear to be pretentious, insincere, distanced, and defensive:

(1) a. *danshi ni kan buchulai tamen* ***neixin***
but you tell unable to they **in private (lit. inner heart)**
*xiang shenme*
think what
'but you cannot tell what their think **in private**'

(2) a. *suoyi tamen hui* ***neixin*** *bijiao fangbei*
so they will **in private (lit. inner heart)** quite defensive
'so they would be quite defensive **in private**'

Communication is most effective if the words said and heard come from the HEART. That is to say, both parties have the mutual knowledge that these thoughts and ideas could not have been said and heard in public. Understanding of each other's heartfelt sentiments provides the basis on which an intimate interpersonal relationship is built.

Given the Chinese people's belief in the existence of such an ideal status of interpersonal communication and relationship, two people's HEARTS can create a shared space where the contents of the two HEARTS can meet. It would be ideal if people shared the same or similar thoughts, often expressed as people having the same heart:

(3) a. *zhaodao yige gen ni shi* ***yitiaoxin*** *de*
find one with you is **of one mind (lit. has one heart)** AP
*xianghu bangzhu de nazhong ren*
mutually help AP that kind people
'finding the kind of person who is one mind and whom you can mutually help out'

In Example (3), *yitiaoxin* 'of one mind (lit. has one heart)' is an example for the HEART FOR PERSON metonymy. The HEART, or its line of thought, is sometimes conceptualised as a long and narrow (or thin) object so that *tiao* 'classifier of long and thin object' is used when the emphasis is on the function of the HEART as thinking and sensing (Yu, 2009, p. 168). If two people share the same line of thought, they are likely to share the same standards and needs, and likely to think and act for their common welfare which could be the ideal situation.

What can also happen, however, is that one's one-sided expression of sincerity can turn out not to be reciprocated:

(4) a. *huozhe shi wenhua ba women juede zhiyao women* ***xin***
or is culture EP we think know we **sincere**
***dao*** *le jiu OK le*
**(lit. heart reach)** PP just <E OKE> PP
'probably is cultural (difference) we think as long as we are **sincere** it is ok'
b. *danshi tamen* ***tihui*** *bu liao*
but they **feel (lit. body understand)** not able
'but they cannot **feel** it'

(5) a. *zhidao ni* ***youmeiyou*** *na ge* ***xin***
know your **whether or not have** that one **sincerity (lit. heart)**
*de shihou*
AP time
'knowing **whether** you are **sincere** or not'

b. *keneng* ***shuo chulai*** *ji shuyu bijiao zhijie de keneng*
maybe **speak out** just belong rather direct PP maybe
***tihui*** *bu dao*
**feel (lit. body understand)** not able
'maybe **put into words** in a direct way (others) may not be able to **feel** it.'

For the participants, the private self, represented by the HEART, carries more weight. The words transporting politeness can be easily *shuo chulai* 'put into words', while the truth is delivered by the HEART and is hard to *tihui* 'feel'. Communication will not be successful if the HEART, the more valuable information, is not understood properly.

### 6.2.2 THE HEART STORES THOUGHTS

Private thoughts and true beliefs are seated in the HEART. THE HEART STORES THOUGHTS AND INTUITIONS is the predominant conceptual metaphor found after examining the word *xin* 'heart' and its collocation with mental verbs. Participants speak of their thoughts and intuitions as if they were kept INSIDE the HEART:

(6) a. *yao jiaodao zhenzheng neng gen ni shuo* ***xinli***
want make true can with you tell **heartfelt (lit. inside heart)**
*hua de pengyou ting nan de*
words AP friend very hard PP
'to find (friends who) truly can tell you **heartfelt** words is hard'

(7) a. *meigeren* ***xinlimian*** *dou you yige ganjue keyi*
everyone **in mind (lit. inside heart)** all have one intuition can
*jixu wang xia shen jiao xiaqu*
continue to under deep develop down
'everyone has a intuition **in mind** (someone with whom I) can keep developing (a friendship)'

Communicating thoughts or words coming from the HEART means taking actions to build more intimate interpersonal relationships. One needs to reveal the true SELF to be sincere, which shall be highly appreciated interpersonally. True friends are expected to communicate deep thoughts or words coming from the HEART.

People hope, wish, desire, and expect with their HEARTS (Yu, 2009, p. 209). The hopes and wishes that come from the HEART represent a person's most authentic and truthful resolutions. When narrating one's own thinking or deliberation, one feels fully committed to the thoughts coming from the HEART:

(8) a. *wo* ***xinli*** *jiu xiangzhe wo juede wo zhe yang zuo*
I **in mind (lit. inside heart)** just thinking I think I this way do
*kending budui*
definitely wrong
'I was thinking **in my mind** I thought what I did was definitely wrong'

(9) a. *wo* ***xinli*** *jiu juede yihou zuiqima*
I **in mind (lit. inside heart)** just think after at least
*huaishier buneng rang ta zhidao*
embarrassing things can't let her know
'I thought **in my mind** at least embarrassing things cannot be revealed to her in the future'

In defining the HEART as the origin of some thoughts, this bodily organ is portrayed as a container. The heart, hidden inside the body, can be used to conceptualise knowledge not supposed to be shared publicly. The INTERIOR of the HEART prevents these thoughts from public disclosure.

The HEART represents one's true SELF. Having alternative opinion in the metaphorical form of keeping thoughts INSIDE the HEART means the individuals are concealing their true thoughts. A group of participants have discussed a few of their cultural shocks when they first arrived (in Australia). They believed politeness and manners only manifested in the public which stands in contrast to the ESSENCE:

(10) a. *bushi zhende* ***xinlimian*** *haoxiang keqi*
not truly **in private (lit. inside heart)** seemingly polite
'not truly polite **in private**'

INSIDE the HEART, one can feel comfortable evaluating peers in bad terms as these evaluations are only made privately, and are therefore harmless:

(11) a. *wo keyi fang zai* ***xinlimian*** *wo buyiding*
I can keep at **in secret thoughts (lit. inside heart)** I not necessarily
*yao zhe yang*
need this way
'I can keep it **in secret thoughts** I don't need to be like this'

Similarly, one can think to oneself in response to disagreement. In this way, the HEART creates a private space for the TRUE SELF to hold on to thoughts that might not be completely acceptable to other people due the perceived disagreement. At times, these thoughts should only be kept INSIDE the HEART, as expressing them outwardly would be regarded as inappropriate:

(12) a. *ta gen wo shuo ta yiqian qu guo zhongguo wan tebie tebie zang*
he to me say he past go already China travel very very dirty
'he said to me he had travelled to China and (found China) very very dirty'

b. *qishi wo* ***xinxiang*** *ta jiushi zhe yang ye*
in fact I **privately think (lit. heart think)** he even this way still
*buyao gen wo jiang a*
not to me tell EP
'in fact I **privately thought** even if he (thought) this way (he should) not tell me'

c. *biru wo buhui shuo helanren dou hen zhongzuqishi wo*
for example I won't say Dutch people all very racist I
*buhui shuo*
won't say
'for example I would not say Dutch people are all very racist I wouldn't say that'

d. *jiusuan wo* ***xinlin juede*** *buhao wo*
even if I **in my mind (lit. inside heart) think** bad I
*buhui shuo*
won't say
'even if I think **in my mind** something is not right I wouldn't say it'

From these examples, we can see that reserving personal opinions in the Chinese socio-cultural context gives rise to different self-representations, which depends on the speaker's anticipation of the possible response from the hearer.

### 6.2.3 THE HEART ACCOMMODATES FEELINGS

The HEART is also found to be used in conjunction with emotional feelings. The following discussion will turn to the role of the HEART as the locus of a person's emotional life. One participant complains of frustration in terms of *nexinshang de shangkou* 'having a wound on the inner heart'. As much as words can be deeply imprinted on the HEART, emotional marks on it might also stay forever. The WOUNDED HEART metaphor can express feelings of mistreatment.

The participants produced these sentiments of unfair treatment:

(13) a. *nong de* ***xinli*** *hen bushufu*
make PP **feel (lit. inside heart)** very uncomfortable
'making (me) **feel** very uncomfortable i**n my heart**'

(14) a. *dan wo* ***xinli*** *haishi bufuqi*
but I **feel (lit. inside heart)** still not convinced
'but I still do not **feel** convinced **in my heart**'

(15) a. *wo jiu* ***juede xinli*** *hen bukaixin*
I just **feel (lit. feel inside heart)** very unhappy
'I just **feel** very unhappy **in my heart**'

(16) a. *wo* ***xinli juede*** *ting nanshou*
I **feel (lit. inside heart feel)** very disturbed
'I feel rather disturbed **in my heart**'

(17) a. ***xinlimian*** *hui yayi*
**feel (lit. inside heart)** will depressed
'(people) would **feel** depressed **in heart**'

In these utterances, all negative sentiments are metaphorically located in the heart. It is not a coincidence that the HEART is sensitive to these highly personalised negative emotions. Previous studies have explained that there could be an embodied connection between negative emotions and the damage they inflict on the internal organs (Yu, 2009, p. 241). However, since none of these words from the semantic domain of emotion involves metaphorical references to physical force, the expression *xinli* 'inside heart' is primarily metonymic. *Xinli* 'inside heart' is a metaphorical representation of the private self. It goes without saying that no one wants to appear unhappy all the time. Therefore, there is a belief that these negative feelings should be hidden from the public.

The private self here can be regarded as the Chinese indigenous conception of the ego which contains negative instincts that one cannot govern. Avoiding negativity also forms part of the vocabulary with which the participants chose to present a favourable self-image. The "bias" towards the private SELF or *si* 'self or selfishness', will be discussed in the discussion section.

A number of embodied expressions used by the participants seem to depict a situation where one is in conflict with oneself – the HEART takes precedence over other cognitive faculties:

(18) a. *jiu ziji keneng jiushi* ***huaren*** *laoban ranhou ziji you shi*
just self maybe just **ethnic Chinese** boss then self also am
***huaren***
**ethnic Chinese**
'maybe he himself is an **ethnic Chinese** boss (my)self is also **ethnic Chinese**'

b. *dajia dou zhidao nazhong* ***dengji*** *suoyi hen nan shuo nao*
all of us all know that kind **hierarchy** so very hard say fight
'all of us know about that kind of **hierarchy** therefore it is difficult to fight back'

c. *ranhou zuo le yihou* ***xinli*** *you tebie bushufu*
then do PP after **feel (lit. inside heart)** again very uncomfortable
'then (I) **felt** very uncomfortable **in my heart** after doing (what I was told)'

(19) a. *wo qu jiao ge fakuan dou taidu hen hao tamen*
I go pay one fine all attitude very good they
'I went to pay fines their attitude was very good'

b. *ganjue fa le qian wo* ***xinli ganjue*** *hai ting*
feel fine PP money I **feel (lit. inside heart feel)** still very
*shufu de*
comfortable PP
'(I) felt even though I was fined I **felt** comfortable **in my heart**'

c. *zhishao tamen hen reqing*
at least they very friendly
'at least they were friendly'

The speaker in Example (18) is unhappy with their condescending boss. At first the speaker makes a open statement to the audience that hierarchy can be incapacitating at work. Due to the common understanding about the inequality between employeers and employees, the speaker seems to have come to terms with it, especially when hierarchy is known to be a traditional Chinese cultural character.

However, the voice from the HEART gives away the true feeling. The speaker actually feels hurt because of it. The reason might be that the speaker expects the boss who is an ethnic Chinese to show more understanding towards someone who comes from the same cultural background.

In Example (19), the speaker is talking about the experience of paying a fine, which should not be a "happy" experience. The overall emotional experience, however, concludes on a positive note because the HEART feels comfortable. The speaker was satisfied after receiving friendly service because the matter was handled with respectfulness. Both the speakers have their feelings conveyed through the HEART which in both utterances turns out to be the dominant voice.

In Examples (20), (21) and (22), each of the speakers expresses their emotional distress, which is related to apprehension or guilt about what they should or should not do. Without exception, these feelings are tagged as heart felt:

(20) a. *xiang wo qunian meige xingqitian shangwu dou hui qu jiaotang*
like I last year every Sunday morning all will go church
'take me as an example I went to church every Sunday morning last year'

b. *danshi wo xianzai zhende shi meibanfa yinwei zuoye tai duo le*
but I now really am no way because homework too many PP
'but I truly cannot (go) now because of too much homework'

c. *wo jiu dasuan yihou dou bu qu le wo* ***xinlimian*** *hui youdian kuijiu*
I then decide after all not go PP I **feel (lit. inside heart)** will a little guity
'I then decided not to go thereafter I **feel** a bit guilty **in my heart**'

This student cannot keep attending church services because of academic pressure. Irregular attendance has caused her emotional distress and become a source of guilt. The HEART is the seat for harbouring this feeling of guilt.

(21) a. *ruguo shi zuowei dongli dehua jiushi xinyang de zhicheng ba*
if is as motivation if just faith AP support EP
'in terms of motivation it is due to the support from having a faith'

b. *bu xue* ***xinli*** *jiu bu'an*
not study **feel (lit. inside heart)** then disturbed
'if (I do) not study (I) would **feel** disturbed **in my heart**'

c. *dudu shengjing shenme hai ting guanyong de*
ready Bible something actually very useful PP
'reading the Bible or something can be quite helpful'

The current participant in Example (21) does not have the motivation to study. From Examples (20) and (21), we can see that motivation and feelings are addressed with different subjects. On the one hand, the speaker expresses a genuine lack of motivation; on the other, the HEART is feeling disturbed or even guilty. The speaker in Example (21) chooses to read the Bible to put her HEART at ease, which is a necessary step towards finding the motivation to continue studying.

We can be at war with ourselves through the projection of ourselves onto other people and only one can win (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). Examples (20) and (21) show that one's reason or will power might not necessarily win the battle. If you

were to convince yourself, you would have to start from examining heart felt feelings. In a similar vein, the speaker in Example (22) talks about the emotional distress she encountered after moving to Australia. She admits she used to watch a lot of TV after work. This young professional expresses the guilt she felt from living an unproductive life.

(22) a. *ruguo shuo ni rang wo ba xialeban de suoyou shijian yong*
if say you ask me prep after work AP all time spend
*lai kan dianshi dehua*
to watch TV if
'if you ask me to spend all the time on TV after work'

b. *wo* ***xinli juede*** *guilty na yang de shenghuo*
I **feel (lit. inside heart feel)** <E guilty E> that way AP life
*wo bu xiangyao*
I not want
'I (would) **feel** guilty **in my heart** that is not the life I want'

c. *wo jiu xiangyao tiao chuqu you shenme banfa ne/*
I just want jump out have what solution IP <rising tone>
*yi shi huan gongzuo*
one is change job
'I just want to jump out how to do so one way is to change the job'

d. *ranhou er jiushi zhao nanpengyou you yige ren*
then second just find boy friend have one person
*fenxiang yixia*
share a little
'then second way is to find a boyfriend to have someone to share'

That sense of guilt comes from her INNER HEART. This emotional feeling could be so strong it could motivate her to change the way she lives (Lines c and d). In fact, guilt and shame are often expressed in terms of a heart felt feeling in Chinese, e.g., *wenxinyoukui* 'heart has a guilty conscience' and *kuixinshi* 'guilty hearted things'. An observable interaction of a person's emotions and feelings seated in the HEART and one's self-representation in social interaction seems to suggest a socially oriented cognition of emotion through this bodily organ. The HEART, as an embodied and culturally enriched source concept, helps to involve and engage the listener or the audience in the speaker's inner world, which thereby increases the effectiveness of communication in discursive transactions.

Cognitive scientists believe that each individual interacts with the world under the guidance of cognitive models. Body parts are an important source domain for various self-related conceptual schemes and cognitive categories, which are not static repertoires located in the mind of each individual thinker. The discursive practice that the individual engages in also shapes the application of cognitive categories. The

exchange of these embodied metaphors in social interactions "incorporates both a conceptual repertoire and a location for persons within the structure of rights for those who use that repertoire" (Davies & Harré, 1991, p. 46). The following subsection compares the heart with the other body parts that the participants use to refer to different subjective impressions with varied discursive purposes.

### 6.2.4 THE HEART BRAIN BONE EYES

When studying expressions of self-related thinking and feeling experiences in Chinese, a number of body parts constitute a set of embodied source domain concepts. They are heart, brain, belly, bone and eyes. Departing from a cognitive-pragmatic-discursive perspective, the selection of different body parts to represent the self is treated as ways in which speakers portray themselves as a thinking and feeling individual. It is found that the speakers' references to the EMBODIED SELF reflect a culture-specific cognitive environment, the evoking of which depends on communication-sensitive contextual information.

It is found in the data that body parts are used in metaphorical expressions about one's personal opinions. These opinions can be assumptions that are not tested, or views taken from a biased perspective.

(23) a. *shijishang dajia dou*
in reality all of as already
***xinzhiduming***
**know without saying anything openly (lit. heart knows belly is clear)**
'in reality all of us already **know but we saying nothing openly**'

Apart from the heart, the *du* 'belly' in Example (23) is another body part to be the source of inner thoughts. The belly and the heart, both hidden inside the body, are used to conceptualise biased viewpoints that are not supposed to be shared publicly. Due to its rare occurrence in the data, the metaphorical use of the belly will not be discussed in comparison to those of the heart.

The speakers used various different body parts to address different opinions, such as eyes:

(24) a. *dei zhidao bieren dui ni de kanfa shi shenme*
must know others toward me (lit. you) AP opinions are what
'(I) must know what opinions other people have of me (lit. you)'

b. ***cong bieren yanli*** *ye neng kandao ziji kan budao de dongxi*
**from others' inside eyes** also can see self see unable AP things
'also things seen **through other people's eyes** are not perceivable from one's own'

(25) a. *yinwei tamen* ***yanzhong*** *shi women gang chuguo*
because they **know (lit. inside eyes)** were we recently go abroad
*shihou de yangzi*
when AP appearance
'because what they **know** is the way we were when we just left China'

b. *shijian jiu le ni ziji zhangda le kan de dongxi*
time more PP I (lit. yourself) grow up PP see AP things
*buyiyang le*
different PP
'after a long time when I have grown up and have started to see things differently'

First of all, we need to understand KNOWING IS SEEING which is one of the primary conceptual metaphors for thinking (Kövecses, 2005). In this metaphor, the validity of a viewpoint is dependent on the viewing perspective. In Example (24), the participant believes that one should take someone else's perspective to gain true knowledge as, metaphorically speaking, everyone sees things with different eyes. In other words, any opinion a person has is a result of their own way of thinking and reasoning.

To be aware of individual differences and limitations is a crucial social imperative. For the same reason, we should always show understanding and compassion for other people, as our viewpoint can be difficult to alter, as Example (25) indicates. As the participant grows older, her mental maturity also increases, enabling her to take on a fresh viewpoint.

(26) a. *bushi tamen* ***xinli*** ***xiangxiang*** *de nayang danshi*
not they **in mind (lit. inside heart)** **imagine** AP that way but
*henduo ren bu zhidao*
many people not know
'it is not what they had **imagined in their mind** but it is unknown to many people'

(27) a. *dang ni faxian zhe ren gen ni*
when I (lit. you) find this person with me (lit. you)
***xinmuzhong*** *de buyiyang*
**in my mind (lit. in mind's eyes)** AP different
'when I realises that this person is different from what I had **in my mind**'

b. *dang ni faxian tade jiazhiguan gen ni buyiyang*
when I (lit. you) find his value with me (lit. you) different
'when I finds out that his values are not the same (as mine)'

c. *ni jiu hui biande bu renting zhe ren*
you just will become not identity this person
'I (lit. you) would become unable to identify with this person'

A subjective impression can be an imagination in the HEART as in Example (26) or something seen in one's *xinmu* 'mind's eye' (literally heart eye)' as in Example (27). These two examples are a more complex extension of the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor. It may involve conceptual blending (Fauconnier, 1997; Fauconnier & Turner, 1998). Blending the HEART STORES THOUGHTS metaphor with the KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor, to have an impression is to have a VISION in the HEART.

EYES FOR SEEING is a very common conceptual metonymy in the Chinese language.[16] The heart, being the key source domain concept in Chinese, is conceptualised as an entity in relation to mental activities (Yu, 2009, p. 146). The HEART FOR PERSON metonymy blends with the KNOWING IS SEEING and forms the metaphorical representation of the SEEING AND KNOWING HEART.

Since both participants emphasise the contrast between one's impression in the HEART and an externally existing reality, it can be inferred that this mental impression generated by the HEART constitutes one's private evaluation. A reasonable and smart individual should be aware that their subjective evaluation can portray a distorted image, and thus they should always try to seek the reality.

If the previously discussed mental impressions are flexible and can be altered when circumstances change, the impressions one makes within the BRAIN *naohai* 'brain sea' are likely to be permanently biased. In the present data set, the BRAIN *naohai* 'brain sea' appears to be a seat of stereotypes, as shown in Examples (28), (29) and (30).

(28) a. *tamende* ***naohai dangzhong*** *haishi henjiu*
their **fixed impression (lit. brain sea amidst)** still a while ago
*yiqian de zhongguo*
past AP China
'**within** their **fixed impression** it is still the China from a long time ago'

b. *yinwei zhebian buhui zhengmian xuanchuan*
because here won't positively publicise
'because the media here won't give positive publicity about China'

(29) a. *ni ding le yige mubiao* ***naohaili*** *sheding*
you set PP one objective **in mind (lit. within brain sea)** install
*wo xiang liu zai zheer*
I want stay at here
'I (lit. you) set the objective **in my mind** which is "I want to stay here"'

b. *zai* ***naohaili*** *sheding le liangge tiaojian*
at **in mind (lit. within brain sea)** install PP two condition
*ranhou zai wang nage difang zhengqu*
then again towards that place strive
'I (lit. you) set two conditions **in my mind** then (I) strive to reach that goal'

16. For more examples, see Yu (2004)

(30) a. *wo juede chuguo de ren dui ziwo baohu nengli dou bijiao*
I think go abroad AP people to self protect ability all comparably
*yijing dingxing le*
already fixed PP
'I think people who go abroad have an already-fixed sense of self-protection'

b. *yijing zai* ***naozi limian*** *haoxiang wo dei*
already at **within the impression (lit. inside brain)** like I must
*he bieren jiaowang de shihou xiaoxin*
with others associate AP time careful
'(I've) already **had the impression in my mind** I have to be careful when associating with others'

Although this result cannot be generalised to support the binary hypothesis where the BRAIN thinks and the HEART feels, it is worthwhile discussing the choice of brain over heart by these participants. It seems that having a biased opinion might not be one's own choice.

In Example (28), the participant seems to hold the belief that, if provided the wrong information, one can establish a prejudgement which is nothing personal, and therefore forgivable. However, if this prejudgement comes from the HEART, it is more likely to be corrupted by personal resentment.

When an idea is fixed or *sheding* 'installed' in one's mind, such as in Examples (29) and (30), the BRAIN can act as a CPU that runs the program as a separate part of one's internal mental activity. The Chinese word for computer is *diannao* literally means electric brain.

In Examples (29) and (30), the BRAIN is somewhat programmed with either a goal or a principle. The mental activities it houses seem to exist parallel to what the person is experiencing, either trying to achieve the goal or to make friends.

The other source domain concept found in the present data is the *gu* 'bone' which is also a body organ. Studies on conceptual metaphors that involve the bone are rare. However, the notions of bone and bone marrow are not unfamiliar to a non-medical person in Chinese culture. *Shenru gusui* 'bone marrow deep' and *kegu* 'imprinted on the bone' are very idiomatic ways of describing a unchangeable and unforgettable belief or memory.

The participants use the BONE to describe one's personal opinion. It can express a firmly held belief, such as a sense of hierarchy in (31) or intragroup discrimination in (32):

(31) a. *ju ge lizi laoban keyi jieshou yige guilao guimei*
take one example boss can accept one Western man Western girl
*zheme gen ta shuohua*
this to him talk
'for example the boss can accept a Western man or a Western woman talking to him like this'

b. *ta jieshou buliao yige huaren gen ta shuohua ta*
he accept unable one ethnic Chinese to him talk he
***guzili juede** you jiejicengci*
**firmly (lit. inside bone) think** have hierarch
'he can't accept an ethnic Chinese talking to him (disrespectfully) he **believes** the hierarch'

c. *jiu xiang wo **guzili juede** o shi*
just like I **firmly (lit. inside bone) think** EP (he) is
*huaren hen zao yiqian lai de huaren*
ethnic Chinese very early past come EP Chinese
'like I **believe** (he) is ethnic Chinese an ethnic Chinese who came a long time ago'

d. *wo **guzili juede** laoban shi wo shangji yijing*
I **firmly (lit. inside bone) think** boss is my superior already
*qianyimohua yi zhong xinlishang xiguan*
imperceptibly one kind psychological habit
'I **believe** the boss is my superior is has already been imperceptibly held as a psychological habit'

(32) a. *xianggang ren shi **guzi limian juede***
Hong Kong people are **firmly (lit. inside bone) think**
*daluren de sushi tebiedi cha*
Mainland people AP public manner very bad
'Hong Kong people **believe** that Mainland people have very poor public manners'

The BONE metaphors in Examples (31) and (32) imply stereotypical opinions. The speaker in Example (31) is of the opinion that the sense of hierarchy is more than just a simple observation, but a psychological habit that can never be changed between the speaker and his boss. With regard to intragroup discrimination, as the speaker in Example (32) claims, it seems to be impossible for people from opposing groups to alter group prejudices.

The "Book of *Han Feizi*", very well-known ancient Chinese text attributed to a political philosopher, records an anecdote about a famous physician named Bian Que who lived in the 5th century B. C.. Bian Que was invited to see the ill Duke Huan and make a diagnosis. The physician said to the Duke, *"si mingzhisuoshu, wunaihe ye"* 'your sickness is in your bones which is the deified judge of life, I cannot do anything' (Watson, 1964). If a sickness lies as deep as the bones, it means it has developed into the final stage and made the illness fatal or incurable – which makes literal sense.

The conceptualisation of bones in these comments made by the participants and Chinese expressions and proverb is that the qualities carried by the BONE are

almost impossible to change. The physical location of the BONE at the inner-most part of the body is mapped onto the vital part of the issue. It could be argued that the speaker must possess schematic representations of the self and the subjective impression one has. Some idiosyncratic schematic representations, such as BONE-DEEP FOR FIRMLY ENGRAINED, can be the result of personal meaning-construction strategies of self-representation.

## 6.3 Discussion and conclusion

The analytical results show that different body parts can be used to refer to different subjective impressions with varied discursive purposes. The cognitive view of metaphor recognises that each pairing of source and target domains is not a random linguistic activity, but motivated by a cognitive reality. In addition, as researchers working in Cultural Linguistics have shown in their studies across different languages, these cognitive realities also converge on cultural beliefs across generations and are shared by people within the same cultural group (Sharifian, 2017; Sharifian et al., 2008).

The most noticeable cultural belief held by the present day Chinese immigrants is the bias towards the private self. The private self here can be regarded as the Chinese indigenous conception of the ego which contains negative instincts that one cannot govern. The word *si* 'self', once a self-deprecatory self-reference, now means selfishness in modern Mandarin which is a negative trait of the self. Avoiding negativity also forms part of the vocabulary with which the participants chose to present a favourable self-image.

A heavy discussion about the negative connotations of the private self can be traced back to the early phase of the 1900s when the debate on individuality rose to prominence. The debate was often centring upon the tention between collective identity and individual identity over the the advocacy of a self that is capable of operating entirely as a self-driven ego or a self that has the potential of evolving into a higher form of consciousness so as to benefit the nation.

Self-interested tendencies of an individual were often set as a target for criticism. Liang Qichao criticised that the human's selfish aims made them innately immoral (Cua, 2013, p. 388). Lu Xun, another leading writer and literary critic in Republican China, furthered this criticism by regarding the self-benefiting nature as "aggressive instincts and faults" which have the "destructive power" to devour the efforts made by the revolutionary pioneers (Sun, 1986, p. 476).

The idea that being egocentric is bad and being selfless is virtuous permeats the Chinese communist propaganda where selflessness has been promoted as a socialist value to this day. Political slogans containing the notion of *wusi* 'selfless(ness)',

such as *wusifengxian* 'selfless contribution', have always been an integral part of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) political indoctrination.

It was also particularly popular during Mao's rule (1949–1976). Mao condemned the so-called petty bourgeois selfishness from the early days of his leadership of the CCP and praised the working class as *dagongwusi* 'completely selfless'.[17] To be *wusi* 'selfless' was to aspire to altruism rather than to pursue their individual needs. Participants also regard *sixin* 'self-benefiting intent' as a negative trait and in this regard reflect both a modern Chinese and Maoist outlook.

In fact, the discussions of the moral meanings of the self and the selfless self can be traced to premodern Confucian teachings which have been reinterpreted in the twentieth century. Evaluating the moral qualities of the self has been a reoccurring topic in premodern Chinese thinking. Two well-known Confucian thinkers, Xunzi (314–217 BC) and Mengzi, also known as Mencius (372–289 BC), have opposite ideas about human nature.

Xunzi's statement regarding *renzhixing'e* 'human nature is evil' can be considered as the opposite of Mencius' belief in *xingshan* 'human nature is good' (Chong, 2008, p. 94). For Mencius, every human being is born with goodness, and therefore the state of nature embodies moral resources. For Xunzi, however, it is natural for people to indulge in their natural instincts which are therefore immoral and needing regulation by social norms.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the nation-building discourse of *guomin* 'national citizen' and *guominxing* 'national character' in modern China reflects a re-interpretation of some premodern ideas about the ideal relationship between self and society. To be self-aware in that historical context includes guarding against one's immoral instinctive impulses. The view originates from the Social Darwinistic perspective.

The doctrine of Social Darwinism enables the conceptual interaction between modern nationhood and selfhood. It can be attributed to the organic analogy. The aforementioned immoral instincts as well as other personal experience, conduct, habits and traits can then be portaited as a transmissible totality of modern selfhood. The formulation of a "transmissible" character implies that descendants can be influenced by ancestors through *yichuan* 'heredity'.

The present-day participants have spoken about some negative traits or impressions about Chinese people. These innate negative Chiense traits or impressions are more likely to cause them emotional discomfort, such as *dengji guannian* 'a sense of hierarchy' in Examples (18), (31) and (32). These remarks reflects an embodied view of the self as body organs are chosen to represent either the source of true

---

**17.** For Mao's comment, see his 1949 article "On the People's Democratic Dictatorship" (*Lun renmin minzhu zhuanzheng*)

feelings or the originator of firmly-held thoughts. Knowing the existance of hierarchy and not being able to do anything about it can "hurt one's heart". Having a hierarchical view of other people is a fault that is buried deep *guzili* 'inside the bone'.

The imagination of personal flaws in the minds of the contemporary Chinese immigrant can be influenced by the nationalistic (and Social Darwinistic) perspective that sees culture as a matter of transmissible positive and negative traits, implied in the idea of *yichuanxing* 'heredity' and *guominxing* 'national character'. The negative representations of a group of people's "character" might have been internalised in their minds along with the transmission of the nation-building ideology.

Drawing on some premodern Chinese ideas of personhood in relation to the comments made by the project's participants, while the participants produce their own cultural and social perceptions in their discussions, the cultural ways of expressing the self reflect the re-imagination of the premodern embodied view of the self.

From the perspective of embodied cognition, the HEART, the governor of all mental or psychological activities, is the best candidate to govern these negative emotions. The expression *xinli* 'inside heart', as a metonymic representation of the morality-bound person, represents an individual as a reasonable member of society who is able to keep bad feelings under control. The embodied metaphors of self in Chinese enhance a cognitive-cultural perspective, showing embodied conceptualisations of personhood achieved with the transmission of cultural ethos across discourses. The influence of the nationalistic perspectives that first became popular in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China can be contributing to forming the cultural context for re-conceptualising the embodied view of the Chinese self.