

B. Abdomen-centering conceptualizations

Gut feelings: Locating intellect, emotion and lifeforce in the Thaayorre body

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Abstract

The present paper is concerned with the conceptualization of mental processes, emotions, and life force in Kuuk Thaayorre, a Paman language of Cape York Peninsula. Body part terms are ubiquitous in Thaayorre descriptions of emotional, mental and spiritual activity. I argue that this both reflects and constructs the conceptualization of these experiences as embodied. The purposes of this paper are threefold. The first is to present these various metaphorical and metonymic associations. The second is to propose some overarching conceptual metaphors that account for the regularity with which a particular body part is linked to a particular experience. The third goal of this paper is to outline the cultural models (the ethnomedical system, cosmovision and broader linguistic context) that underlie such associations. Having done this, I argue that the ngeengk 'belly' is conceptualized as the primary site of emotion, spirit and life force (although other internal organs, such as the thip 'liver', man 'throat' and man-ngeengk 'heart', are also associated with these), whilst the intellect is metaphorically situated in the kaal 'ear' (though also secondarily in the meer 'eye' and paant-thuur 'brain'). I conclude that both cultural traditions and physiological responses to internal experiences inspire these conceptual metaphors.

Keywords: Kuuk Thaayorre, emotion, conceptualization, metaphor, Australian, body, Pama-Nyungan, metonymy.

1. Introduction

1.1. Locating intellect, emotion and life force in the human body

Around the world, the body is repeatedly invoked in the conceptualization and description of mental processes, emotions, and life force (hereafter, all subsumed under the term *internal experiences*). Why should this be so? These internal experiences frequently give rise to physiological symptoms; as abundantly illustrated in Ekman and Davidson (1994), we may infer that a person is happy if we see them smile, or that they are thinking if their brow is furrowed. Similarly, there are a range of physiological characteristics by which we judge whether someone is alive or dead (e.g. heart beat, breathing, response to stimuli). Since we cannot access other people's internal states directly, these physical indexes play an important role in our understanding of internal experiences. It has also been well documented that the human body and associated experiences help shape conceptualization more generally (Johnson 1987, Lakoff and Johnson 1999). Similarly, the tendency for languages to express more abstract, intangible concepts in terms of the more concrete (cf. Sweetser 1990) gives rise to the body's frequent use as a metaphorical source domain across the languages of the world, the body being arguably the most concrete and familiar object in our personal universes (see, e.g., Kövecses 2002).

But although the human physical form remains basically constant across all human communities, it is less clear that the same associations between physiological symptoms and internal states are made in culture after culture. So whilst some researchers (e.g. Kövecses 1995) stress the "universal" patterns in how internal experiences are conceptualized in terms of the body, others (e.g. Van Geert 1995, Enfield and Wierzbicka 2002, Kövecses 2002, and Yu 2002) emphasize the cultural and cognitive forces that mediate the interpretation of physiological and internal experiences. For instance, even within a single speech community, one emotional state may be associated with a number of different physical organs and physiological symptoms. So if a person is in love, they might experience a palpitating heart, sweaty palms, flushed cheeks, light-headedness or a fluttering stomach, to name just a few symptoms to which English-speakers attend. But the converse is also true: a single physiological experience may be symptomatic of a number of different emotions. A palpitating heart might signify that a person is in love, but it could also be a symptom of nervousness, anger, enthusiastic excitement, competitiveness, or may simply follow from

the fact that they climbed the stairs too fast. A speech community, then, can pick out any one of these emotion-and-symptom pairings to create an idiom.

Numerous researchers have stressed the role of culture in determining which physiological symptoms are invoked in the description of emotion. As Hupka et al. (1996: 246) state, “although the genetic and physiological bases of emotions may be similar in all human beings, talk about emotions may vary because of cultural scripting”. This cultural scripting of emotion and other internal experiences has been the subject of a number of interesting studies. Ameka (2002), for instance, describes the cultural construction of emotion in reference to the Ewe linguistic community. Sharifian (2003, this volume) describes how *cultural conceptualisations* arise from cultural interactions and become internalised by members of that cultural group. The literal or figurative status of the linguistic expressions codifying these conceptualizations has also been debated. Ameka argues that the body part terms invoked in the description of emotion in Ewe are not figurative, but must instead be taken literally. Enfield (2002), however, argues that many Lao body part terms are polysemous, and that it is their non-physical senses (e.g. “locus of intellect” or “locus of emotion”) that are involved in expressions describing internal states. Accordingly, Enfield (2002) argues, Lao speakers do not necessarily conceptualize their internal experiences in terms of internal organs at all. These debates will be reviewed in section 3 below.

1.2. The language and its speakers

Kuuk Thaayorre is a Southwest Paman language spoken on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. Traditionally hunter-gatherers, many of the Thaayorre people moved to the Anglican mission established at Edward River in 1937. Nearly seventy years later, Kuuk Thaayorre is still spoken by close to 300 people, most of whom are residents in the community of Pormpuraaw, situated on the former mission site. The traditional lands of the Thaayorre include the community of Pormpuraaw and areas extending to the south and east, and most Kuuk

Thaayorre speakers maintain strong links to their traditional lands, spending at least some of the year at outstations thereon.

2. Embodiment of internal experiences

2.1. The ear as main locus of the intellect

In Kuuk Thaayorre, the ear is conceptualized as the locus of the intellect. The dominant metaphor in this domain equates thought with audition. This is evidenced by the polysemous verb *ngeey* (which means both ‘hear’ and ‘think’) and dozens of expressions relating to cogitation that make reference to the *kaal* ‘ear’ (e.g., *kaal-aath-* ‘believe’). These terms – *ngeey* ‘hear, think’ and *kaal* ‘ear, locus of intellect’ – are clearly polysemous, and expressions of cogitation involving these terms (e.g. *kaal-aath-* ‘believe’) should not be taken to refer to the ear (or hearing) literally (cf. Enfield 2002). But speakers nevertheless appear to associate such expressions with ear as an organ, invoking the ear itself in novel descriptions of the thought process, and touching or otherwise indicating their ear when talking about cogitation. The same is also true for many of the body parts – internal experience associations described below. This points to a metaphorically-structured polysemy (Sweetser 1990) founded in the regular and unidirectional semantic shift from the concrete domain of the body to the more abstract realm of the intellect. For clarity, I will consistently gloss these polysemous terms with their body part senses, although in many cases they are used without literal reference to the body part in question. Nevertheless, this polysemy will be shown to be motivated by a number of cultural conceptualizations and pervasive metaphors; diachronically if not synchronically. Further, there is less danger of ethnocentric bias in interpreting body part glosses since in most cases there is close alignment between the denotata of the corresponding Thaayorre and English terms (cf. Gaby 2006).

Wilkins and Evans (2000) have documented a strong association between knowing and hearing in numerous Australian languages. Beyond the simple linkage of ear and mind, an overarching schema that KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT [RECEIVED BY AND STORED IN THE EAR] finds expression in numerous Thaayorre lexemes and idioms. This conceptualization of the ear as a receptacle and container for the knowledge object is based upon several submetaphors. The hierarchical relationship between these can be represented as in Figure 1:

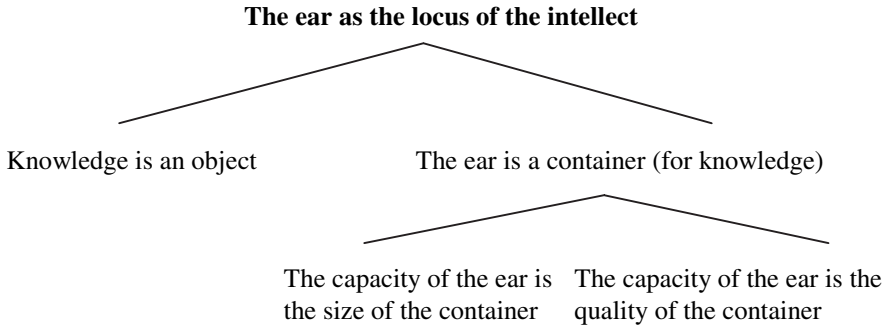


Figure 1. Locating the intellect in the ear

The metaphor KNOWLEDGE IS AN OBJECT is cross-linguistically commonplace. Note that I am using the term *knowledge* very broadly, denoting information, memories, and thoughts. This metaphor is related to the conceptualization of the ear as a vessel (i.e. THE EAR IS A CONTAINER). The conceptualization of the ear as a vessel used to store the received knowledge object, is evidenced by Thaayorre expressions such as *kaalkaalu kal* (ear:RDP²-ERG carry) ‘be mindful, remember’ (literally ‘carry with/in the ear’), or *kaal-purng-m* (‘ear-block-VBR’) ‘forget’. The latter perhaps suggests that the ear vessel must be open if information is to be retrieved. For one’s ear to become blocked, then, is to lose access to previously acquired and stored knowledge (i.e. to forget). Conversely, the ear vessel must be large and strong in order to effectively receive and retrieve information; THE CAPACITY OF THE INTELLECT IS THE SIZE/QUALITY OF THE EAR. Accordingly, young children are often exhorted to *kaal piinth* (ear grow) ‘pay attention’, or *kaal piinth ngeey* (ear strong hear) ‘listen carefully’. Although it may appear that these expressions are more straightforwardly related to audition than cognition, it is clear in context that a request is being made for comprehension, not the simple perception of sound waves. It should also be noted that the verb *piinth* ‘grow’ and the adjective *piinth* ‘strong’ are both homophonous with the noun *piinth* ‘bone’.

Where *kaal piinth* (ear grow) ‘pay attention’ links a large ear vessel to the effective reception of the knowledge object, the size of the ear is also linked to knowledge retrieval, as evidenced by (1):

- (1) *nhul* *kaal* *pii<pi>nth-r*
 3sg(NOM) ear(NOM) grow<RDP>-P.PFV
 ‘he remembered again’ (lit. ‘he grew earwise / in the ear’)

A large ear presumably makes for a better knowledge-vessel, with a larger capacity. The verb *piinth* ‘grow’ may also be associated with development or maturation, however. Thus an ear that grows might be expected to be a more sophisticated, highly developed knowledge archive.

The pervasiveness of the cultural belief that knowledge is received by and stored in the ear can be seen in the following excerpt from a conversation I had with Thaayorre elder Alfred Charlie. In it, Charlie is excusing his forgetfulness:

- (2) a. *ngay pam nhangkn nhamp ngay*
 1sg(NOM) man 2sgPOS(ACC) name(ACC) 1sg(NOM)
pamngoongkom
 be.ignorant³
 ‘I’ve forgotten your man’s name’
- b. *ngay kaal waarr=kaak*
 1sg(NOM) ear bad=PROP
 ‘I have a bad ear’
- c. *ngay kaal<kal>-ukaarp kal<al>-ø,*
 1sg(ERG) ear<RDP>-ERG NEGcarry<RDP>-NPST
ngay pam thuump
 1sg(NOM) man old
 ‘I can’t carry with/in the ear, I’m an old man’

Note that line (2b) contains a further exponent of the idea that the ear must be strong to receive and retrieve information. Where the ear is weak (or ‘bad’), retrieval of the knowledge object is difficult, hence Charlie employs the phrase *ngay kaal waarr=kaak* ‘I have a bad ear’ to describe his failing memory. Giving an English translation of what he had said in Kuuk Thaayorre, Charlie said “I got no good mind, you know, to remember”. Though losing the metonymic motivation, this paraphrase makes explicit the parallelism between the Thaayorre conceptualization of the ear, and the English concept of *mind*. Further to this, the conceptual metaphors identified here for Kuuk Thaayorre are very similar to metaphors identified by Jäkel (1995) for English, with the exception that where English speakers conceptualize the mind as the locus of the intellect, for Thaayorre speakers it is the ear. Compare, for example, Jäkel’s “understanding is taking idea objects into the mind container” (1995: 204) and “the valuables of knowledge are kept in the memory store for further use” (1995: 213) with the conceptual

metaphors outlined here. We might connect the conceptualization of the ear as the metonymical basis for the mind with the dominance of oracy in cultures like the Thaayorre. The fact that knowledge about history, cosmography and other important cultural information is primarily transmitted through the ear (in the form of sound waves) is a clear motivation for privileging this organ.

In addition to the conceptualization of the mind as the locus of thought, there is a metaphorical association between sight and knowledge in English and most European languages. Although this is rarer in Australian languages than the association between hearing and knowledge, Kuuk Thaayorre does possess one term that expresses a KNOWING IS SEEING metaphor, namely; *wal-meer-em* (brow-eye-VBR) ‘remember’. Several other Thaayorre terms and phrases express a related EYE FOR ATTENTION metonymy. For example, the act of showing (i.e. to draw something to somebody’s attention) is described as *meer-en* (literally, eye-V[^]). Similarly, the eye is invoked in a request for attentiveness in the following:

- (3) *paanth ngathn meer<meer>-e kal-ø!*
 female 1sgPOS(ACC) eye<RDP>-ERG carry-IMP
 ‘look after my girls!’ (lit. ‘carry my girls with/in your eyes’)

Finally, Foote and Hall (1992: 96) document two Thaayorre expressions that locate the intellect in the *paant-thuur* (head-marrow) ‘brain’: (1) *pam paant-thuur waarr* (man brain bad) ‘fool’; and (2) *pam paant-thuur menethurr* (man brain MENETHURR) ‘genius’. Although it seems that THE BRAIN AS THE LOCUS OF INTELLECT competes with THE EAR AS THE LOCUS OF INTELLECT, it should be noted that these two expressions are nowhere attested in my own data, whereas expressions linking the intellect to the ear/audition are extremely frequent.

2.2. The belly as the locus of the spirit and intuition

The *ngeengk* ‘belly’ is conceptualized not only as a part of the physical body, but also as a person’s spirit. Accordingly, a person’s soul or spirit is often termed *ngeengk-rithrr* (belly-fat), the same term also being used for the concept of ‘Holy Spirit’ in the Thaayorre Bible translation. Similarly, the spirit of a *wangath* ‘doctor (a person with spiritual powers)’ is labelled *pam ngeengk* (man belly). It is believed that this spirit can travel large distances to visit the infirm, or be projected into the body of a sick person in

order to detect the cause of their illness (Taylor 1977: 426). When the *wan-gath* puts his spirit inside the patient, it is his *pam ngeengk* (man belly) ‘spirit’ that enters them.

Related to this spiritual sense, the belly is symbolically invoked in expressions of intuition and premonition, such as *ngeengkman rumparr* (belly-ERG break) ‘signify, prophesy’. The *man* ‘throat’ is also conceived of as a locus of intuitive apprehension. For example, a Thaayorre man who was worried about his brother’s safety during a rodeo, said:

- (4) *ngay* *man-u* *wa<a>k-r*
 1sg(ERG) throat-ERG follow-RDP-NPST
yarrman *ith=okun* *wont-nan*
 horse(NOM) dem:dist=DUB fall-GO&:NPST
 ‘I’m worried that the horse might fall’
 (lit. ‘my throat follows [in case] the horse might fall’)

The spirit is also described as located within the belly in a number of other Australian languages (see, e.g., Turpin 2002, Myers 1986, Valiquette 1993).

2.3. The belly, and especially the liver, as loci of emotion and character

We can say that the *ngeengk* ‘belly’ is also conceptualized as the locus of emotion and character⁴ in Kuuk Thaayorre. Such an association is cross-linguistically common, both within the Australian context (as documented by, e.g., Turpin 2002 for Kaytetye, Goddard 1996 for Yankunytjatjara and Myers 1986 for the Pintupi), and outside (see, i.e., Bauer 1974 for Nigerian English, Matsuki 1995 and Hasada 2002 for Japanese, or Sharifian, this volume, for Persian). There are several more specific conceptual metaphors, however, that subcategorise Thaayorre expressions in this domain. Firstly that THE *NGEENGK* ‘BELLY’ IS A CONTAINER (OF FEELINGS, ETC.), analogous to the HEART AS A CONTAINER metaphor Niemeier (1997: 93) identifies in English. This is evidenced by the following line from a contemporary song composed by Gilbert Jack:

- (5) *raak* *waarr* *ngathnma* *mong* *minc,* *kar*
 thing bad 1sgABL many very like
ngeengk-an *wanyc*
 belly-LOC pain
 ‘I have experienced many bad things, [this is] like a pain in the belly’

Here, the pain caused by life experiences is explicitly located by Jack within his *ngeengk* ‘belly’. Similarly, worries may be ‘held’ in the belly. A feeling of anxiety for an absent loved one can thus be described as follows:

- (6) *ngay* *ngeengk-an* *piit-ø*
 1sg(NOM) belly-DAT hold-NPST
 ‘I hold (worries) in my belly’

When asked under what circumstances he might utter (6), Jack said: “If [my brother] got sick and I’m worried about him [this is] my feeling in my heart, whether he might live”. Revealingly, Jack employs the English HEART AS CONTAINER metaphor in order to translate the Thaayorre BELLY AS CONTAINER metaphor. Finally, the belly-container might rupture under emotional stress. Thus regret is described as *ngeengk thaariic* ‘belly tearing’, revealing the EMOTIONAL PERSON IS A PRESSURISED CONTAINER metaphor analysed by Kövecses (2000).

As well as containing feelings, it could more broadly be said that in Kuuk Thaayorre THE *NGEENGK* ‘BELLY’ IS THE SEAT OF EMOTION/CHARACTER. This association between emotion and character is not unusual, given that sustained emotional states are, in various theories, e.g., the four-humour theory (see Geeraerts & Grondelaers 1995, Yu this volume) reflective and/or formative of one’s character – someone who is habitually happy (emotion) is generally perceived to be a happy (character) person⁵. In Kuuk Thaayorre, then, a compassionate person is described as *pam ngeengk pork* (man belly large) ‘a big-bellied man’. The belly is associated equally with positive and negative emotions and characteristics. This can be seen in expressions ranging from surprise to love to anger. For instance, to say that somebody is ‘with belly’ is to describe them as ‘amazed’ (*ngeengk=kak* [belly=COM] ‘amazed’). This is also semantically close to the idiom *ngeengk miinng* (belly occur) ‘be astonished’. Love is lexicalised by the verb *ngeengkmam* (belly:VBR), whilst someone who is ‘heartbroken’ can be described as *ngeengk watp* (belly dead). If somebody is scared, they *ngeengk ngeerngr=aak* (belly twitch=PROP) ‘have a twitching belly’. If they are ‘deeply troubled’, they are *ngeengk waat* (belly wrongly⁶) (Foote and Hall 1992: 86). Finally, ‘anger’ is termed *ngeengk-kul* (belly-lap⁷). The metaphorical and metonymic abstractions based on the *ngeengk* ‘belly’ in Kuuk Thaayorre, oftentimes correspond with patterns of metaphor in English based on the “heart”. Compare, for instance, *ngeengk watp* (belly dead) with its translation ‘heartbroken’, or *ngeengk pork* (belly big) ‘kind’ with

the English *big-hearted* (see Niemeier 1997: 101). Indeed, many of the English expressions Niemeier groups together under “heart as a metonymy for the person” – such as *big-hearted* generosity and *stout-hearted* bravery – might alternatively be analysed as based on the “heart as a metaphor for emotion/character”. If the heart were metonymically standing for the whole person, we would expect the expression *big-hearted* to literally refer to a big person. However, a large stature does not necessarily imply generosity. Similarly, if somebody is ‘broken-hearted’, or *ngeengk watp* (dead-bellied), it is their love and/or happiness that has been destroyed.

There is also a strong conceptual link between the *thip* ‘liver’ and emotion. Significantly, the *thip* ‘liver’ is conceptualized as both within and part of the *ngeengk* ‘belly’, and accordingly may be referred to equally as *thip* ‘liver’ or *ngeengk-thip* ‘belly-liver’. The *thip* ‘liver’, then, is singled out as a focal point for emotion/character within the *ngeengk* ‘belly’. So, for example, if somebody is brave they might be referred to as *ngeengk-thip thaarrn* (belly-liver strong) ‘strong-livered’. Here the liver acts as a metonym for good character. Although it might be tempting to view the *thip* ‘liver’ as metonymically standing for the whole person, the same idiom may also be used to describe somebody who is not greedy (and therefore a good provider). Clearly there is no necessary correlation between physical strength and altruism. Positive character is also attributed to the liver by the expression *ngeengk-thip thono* (belly-liver one) ‘faithful, dependable’ (lit. ‘one-livered’) (Foote and Hall 1992: 86). Not all emotions associated with the liver are positive, however. For instance, a worried person may be described as *thip waarramnam* (liver bad-ABL) ‘worried’ (Foote and Hall 1992: 77). Finally, drawing on a submetaphor ANGER IS HEAT, the following expression locates hot anger in the liver:

- (7) *ngay* *ngeengk-thip* *paapath*
 1sg(NOM) belly-liver hot
 ‘I’m furious’

Finally, a number of other body parts may also be invoked in the description of emotion. The fixed expression *pancr rirk* ‘body hair rises’, for instance, describes shame. Romantic love is associated with the eyes in expressions such as *meer nhiin* ‘fall in love’ (eye be) (Foote and Hall 1992: 67), or the following example:

- (8) *pul* *paanth* *meer* *wowurr-∅*
 3du(NOM) woman(NOM) eye(NOM) meet-NPST
 ‘the lovers are meeting together’
 (lit. ‘they two, including the woman, meet eyewise/in the eye’)

Anger is referred to by terms invoking the lap, the belly and the throat, such as *ngeengk-kul* (belly-lap) ‘angry’ and *man-kul* (throat-lap) in (9):

- (9) *nhul* *nganh* *man-kul* *thongk<ongk>a-n-r*
 3sg(ERG) 1sgACC throat-lap arrive<RDP>-V[^]-NPST
 ‘he’s making me angry’ (lit. ‘he’s causing my throat-lap to arrive’)

The *kaal* ‘ear’ is associated with worry (e.g. *kaal waarram*, lit. ear bad:VBR) and with awe (*kaal weneth*, lit. ear fear). The compound *meer-kun-waarr* (eye-bottom-bad) is used to describe empathetic sorrow.

2.4. Belly of chest as locus of life force

Many Thaayorre metaphorical expressions, based primarily on the *ngeengk* ‘belly’, have been shown to play a role comparable to that of English metaphors based on the heart. The heart itself, however, plays only a very minor symbolic role in Kuuk Thaayorre. Interestingly, it is labelled by a term compounded from the lexemes *man* ‘chest’⁸ and *ngeengk* ‘belly’ (*man-ngeengk*, lit. ‘belly of the chest’). This can most plausibly be explained by the fact that the belly is viewed as the core of the person overall (analogous to the English *heart*), while the heart is characterised as the core of the chest cavity (due to its central importance if not location). It is perhaps significant that while the physiological manifestation of the pulse is described with reference to the heart (10), the heartbeat as symbolic of life force is described in terms of the belly (11):

- (10) *man-ngeengk* *thanp<anp>a-rr*
 heart(NOM) jump<RDP>-P.PFV
 ‘[his] heart is beating’
- (11) *nhul* *kaar* *ngeengk* *ngeerngor=aak*
 3sg(NOM) NEG belly twitch=PROP
 ‘he is dead / has no pulse’

Similarly, many vital physiological processes are described in Kuuk Thaayorre in terms of the *ngeengk* ‘belly’; e.g. *ngeengk wuunp-* (belly lay) ‘breath’ and *ngeengk thongk* (belly arrive) ‘short of breath’.

3. Roots of cultural conceptualizations

3.1. Ethnomedicine and cosmovision

In order to explain the regularity with which particular internal organs (e.g. the *ngeengk* ‘belly’, the *thip* ‘liver’) are associated with mental, emotional, and spiritual experiences, we might seek to find some broader cultural beliefs and practices that encourage such cultural conceptualizations. Perhaps most promising are the ethnomedical beliefs and practices that attempt to rationalize bodily symptoms and occurrences. Unlike many ethnomedical systems from both Western and Eastern cultures, which account for disease and discomfort in terms of forces internal to the body (e.g. the European “four humours” [see Geeraerts and Grondelaers 1995] or Chinese *qi* [see Yu this volume, Kövecses 1995]), for the Thaayorre “death and disease were explained largely in terms of supernatural agents” (Taylor 1977: 425). In particular, most illnesses were seen to result either from *puripuri* ‘magic’ or *yuk may* (stick/thing vegetable) ‘sorcery’ being practiced against the invalid by some enemy, or from the invalid’s having broken some sacred taboo. Most of these taboos involved the proscription of particular foods to people in various conditions. Young men, for example, would abstain from many key foods in the Thaayorre diet prior to their initiation. Pregnant women and young parents, too, were expected to avoid particular foods considered dangerous to the foetus/infant.

The relationship between food taboos and the present discussion is two-fold. Firstly, we saw in §2.2., §2.3. and §2.4. that the *ngeengk* ‘belly’ is conceptualized as central to the spirit, emotions and life force of Thaayorre people. It is perhaps significant, then, that when asked to define the *ngeengk* ‘belly’, Thaayorre speakers often respond:

- (12) *ngeengk* *may-i*
 belly food-DAT
 ‘the belly is for food’

The *ngeengk* ‘belly’ is where food is digested – the point at which foods become a part of the body. Where foods play such a significant role in determining both spiritual and physical health, then, it is not surprising that the *ngeengk* ‘belly’ is also viewed as connected to spiritual and emotional health.

Secondly, food taboos are largely anthropomorphic. The proscription of many foods is explained by drawing analogies between the particular food and the human body part that might be harmed by its consumption. For example,

A pregnant woman could not eat carpet snake. It was thought that when she came to labour, the birth would be impeded as the snake wrapped itself around her abdomen. Similarly, pregnant women could not dig open the nesting mounds of the scrub turkey for this was likened to ripping open a woman’s belly and the foetus might be harmed thereby. Parents had to avoid eating scrub turkey eggs while their first-born was still a baby lest the child develop large egg shaped lumps. (Taylor 1977: 424)

This anthropomorphism fits within a much broader connection between the landscape, its inhabitants and the supernatural world. In the Thaayorre cosmology, these three are inextricably linked, and the Thaayorre language is filled with metaphors that describe the natural world in terms of the human body. The *pungk* ‘knee’ is thus invoked in the description of other angular projections, such as *ngok pungk* (water knee) ‘waves’, or may have spiritual significance, as in *raak pungk* (place knee) ‘tribal lands’. The branches of a tree are described as *punth* ‘arms’, with twigs being *wuurr* ‘digits’ (see Gaby 2004, 2006 for further examples). The description of mental, emotional and spiritual experiences in terms of body parts fits within this broader understanding of the external world in corporeal terms.

3.2. Physiological basis for conceptualization

An alternative source of explanation may lie within the human body itself. Although what we conceive of as *thought*, *emotion*, and *life force* are non-corporeal, each of these does usually have some physiological manifestations. As Enfield and Wierzbicka (2002: 5) assert, “biological events associated with emotion are more or less the same everywhere ... but it is well established that the interpretation and linguistic description of such responses, and the cognitive and cultural routines associated with these, are

not universal or species-determined at all”. That is to say, although biological events may in some cases inspire the conceptualization of emotion (and other non-corporeal experiences), this conceptualization is in no way predetermined by the biological events, which may be differently interpreted and described according to the cultural models resulting from the major preoccupations of the people and communities concerned. As Van Geert (1995: 261) puts it⁹ “It is very possible that the number of physiological patterns [of experiencing emotion] is limited and universal, but there is no universality in the corresponding subjective experience”. Accordingly, although many of the Thaayorre conceptual metaphors appear inspired by physiological effects (e.g. the description of one’s *ngeengk ranc* ‘belly jumping’ when one gets a fright), only some conform to cross-linguistically common patterns. Geeraerts and Grondelaers (1995), arguing that the ethnomedical theory of the four humours mediates between bodily experiences of emotion and the English descriptions thereof, contrast the physiological symptom of heat with metaphors based on heat. They point out that, although shame is often manifest in a flushed face and a physical sensation of heat, English ‘heat metaphors’ are restricted to the semantic domains of anger and love. As they point out; “it would make no sense, for instance, to say that one’s blood boils with shame, or that someone is fuming with shame” (1995: 167). Interestingly, in Kuuk Thaayorre the experience of shame is described as *pancr rirk* ‘body hair rises’. The Thaayorre thus focus on quite a different physiological symptom of shame to the one privileged by English speakers, namely the *flushed face*. Indeed, an English speaker is much more likely to associate their body hair standing on end with terror or premonition. Thus a single physiological symptom can be differently interpreted and conceptualized by speakers of different languages, leading to alternative patterns of association.

4. Conclusion

Cultural models associating the intellect, emotions and life force with bodily loci are evidenced by languages spoken in every corner of the globe. But just how similarly do speakers of different languages conceptualize emotion, reason and vitality? This paper has presented an array of embodied metaphors and metonymies across these domains in Kuuk Thaayorre, and has proposed some overarching conceptual metaphors and metonymies to account for them. Notably, the *ngeengk* ‘belly’ was found to be central in

the embodiment of emotion, spirit and life force, and the *kaal* ‘ear’ in the embodiment of intellect. Whilst some of these conceptual metaphors and metonymies have analogues in English and other languages around the world, many do not. The data presented in this paper thus show the associations between internal experiences (associated with emotions, the spirit and intellect) and particular internal organs to vary between linguistic communities.

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Notes

1. The acronyms/abbreviations employed in this chapter are as follows: ABL ablative case; ACC accusative case; GO& associated motion; COM comitative; DAT dative case; dem:dist distal demonstrative; DUB dubitative; ERG ergative case; GEN genitive case; IMP imperative mood; LOC locative case; NEG negative; NOM nominative case; NPST nonpast tense; P.PFV past perfective tense/aspect; PROP proprietive; RDP reduplication; V[^] valence increasing suffix; VBR verbaliser (derivational suffix).
2. *Pamngoongkom* ‘be ignorant’ is a bivalent predicate nominal.
3. In my consideration of human emotions, it should be noted, I will also look at what might more properly be considered human “character”.
4. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out this link between a person’s habitual emotional state and what is perceived as their character.
5. The adverb *waat* ‘wrongly’ is usually coupled with a verb to indicate that the action described by the verb was carried out without the desired, intended, or culturally ‘correct’ effect. For example; *waat ke’err* (wrongly speared) ‘threw a spear (at something) and missed’. It is apparently combined with *ngeengk* ‘belly’ here as part of a fixed expression, of which the meaning is non-compositional.

6. It is unclear exactly how anger relates to the physiology of the *kul* 'lap', which describes the supportive area formed by the legs of a seated (usually cross-legged) person.
7. The principal extension of *man* is to refer to the 'throat', but it is also found in compounds referring to body parts located anywhere in the throat / chest area (n.b. the word for 'chest' is itself *man-ruuw*, *ruuw* also meaning 'front', though this could well be derived from 'chest', rather than the reverse analysis of *man-ruuw* as the 'front of the *man*').
8. Sweetser (1990: 30) similarly points out "the Mind-As-Body metaphor is very probably *motivated* by correlations between our external experience and our internal emotional and cognitive states, but the correlations alone will not explain the observed patterns of polysemy and semantic change".

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