

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND DATA CATEGORIZATION

Hearts are one of the most important human organs. Not surprisingly, an abundance of linguistic expressions can be found relating to it, and these expressions are so widespread in our daily conversations. In spite of its significance, it was never eye-catching for linguists until research on metonymy received a great deal of attention. Niemeier (2003) has tried to explore the metaphorical and metonymic bases for the heart idioms in English. Her study, however, reveals some drawbacks. For instance, a major problem of her study is that personality and emotion are not clearly distinguished, leading to an inappropriate categorization of her data. Her study will be reviewed in section 2.1. Section 2.2 aims to clarify the concepts of emotion and personality by identifying their definitions from previous studies, helping to place personality into a distinct group from emotion. Furthermore, section 2.3 will discuss the criteria in previous studies on the classification of emotional and non-emotional terms, laying the foundation for the categorization of the 77 heart idioms collected for this study in section 2.4.

2.1 Niemeier's (2003) Study

In her article, Niemeier (2003) tries to explore the metaphorical and metonymic bases for the heart idioms in English. According to a different degree of connection between the metaphors and the metonymies involved, she sorts the heart idioms into four major categories: (1) HEART AS A METONYMY FOR THE PERSON (e.g., *a lonely hearts club*), (2) THE HEART AS A LIVING ORGANISM (e.g., *make one's heart bleed*), (3) THE HEART AS AN OBJECT OF VALUE (e.g., *to win one's heart*), and (4) THE HEART AS A CONTAINER (e.g., *to open one's heart*). Under these four major categories, there are also subcategories (or submodels). She claims that the metaphors of the heart idioms in the first category have the most obvious metonymic basis, which degrades its obviousness from the first category to the fourth category.

Although Niemeier's analysis has made a contribution to the discovery of the close relationship between metaphor and metonymy, some drawbacks can still be detected. First of all, pointing out that the metonymic basis of metaphor is particularly clear in heart idioms referring to human emotions, she focuses her analysis on the folk model of hearts as the site of human emotions. However, the definition of emotion is absent in her article. There is no doubt that love and anger are prototypical examples of human emotions. But idioms like *to lose heart* and *his heart sank into his boots* have to do with courage, belonging more to the domain of human traits than human

emotions. Moreover, some other idioms shown in her article involve feelings of pity, compassion, and altruism (e.g., *great heart*, *soft heart*, *tender heart*, etc). Therefore, without an explicit definition of emotion, there is no way to determine whether or not human traits should be included in the concept of human emotions.

Second, her categorization of the heart idioms seems to be problematic. For instance, the idiom *fullness of the heart* is put under the sub-folk model of HEART AS CHANGEABLE IN SIZE with other examples like *great heart*, *have a large heart*, *have a big heart*, etc. However, this idiom could more appropriately be classified into the sub-folk model of HEART AS A FULL OR WHOLE ENTITY with other idioms like *half-hearted*, *heartlessness*, *have no heart*, etc. Other examples of inappropriate categorization come from cases such as *make one's heart bleed*, *pierce the heart*, *broken heart*, and *heart-broken*. The word *heart* in these four idioms displays a somehow similar function. To one's surprise, the former two idioms are placed under the sub-folk model of HEART AS A WOUND, while the latter two idioms are under the sub-folk model of HEART AS A MANIPULABLE OBJECT. What's more, there should have been a category termed HEART AS PERSONALITY for an abundance of heart idioms such as *heart of stone* and *heart of gold* that have to do with personality. Nevertheless, such a category do not exist in her article.

Inappropriate headings are another reason for Niemeier's inappropriate

categorization of heart idioms. For instance, the submodel of HEART AS A WOUND (e.g., *make one's heart bleed*, *pierce the heart*, and *something is heartrending*) and the submodel of HEART AS ILLNESS (*an aching heart*, *to be sick at heart*, and *to be heart-sick*) could be merged and given a heading like the submodel of HEART AS A VULNERABLE OBJECT. A combination of two submodels could also work for HEART AS A PRIZE (*to win someone's heart*, *to conquer someone's heart*, and *to offer one's heart*) and HEART AS BOOTY (*to lose one's heart to somebody* and *to steal every heart*).

In addition to the categorization of the heart idioms that poses problems, interpretations of those idioms are not so clearly presented either. Even though a lot of effort has been made in trying to prove that metaphor has a metonymic basis, Niemeier does not pay much attention to revealing the interaction of the two cognitive-semantic mechanisms. Therefore, it is still not clear how heart idioms obtain the interpretations they do, although metaphor and metonymy have been known to be the two cognitive-semantic mechanisms involved. To depict a clearer picture and at the same time to improve the drawbacks of Niemeier's study, this study will focus on how the two cognitive-semantic mechanisms interact to elucidate the interpretations of heart idioms. Another aim of this study is to examine which mechanism, metaphor or metonymy, plays a more significant role in heart idioms.

Additionally, a broader scope is taken in the current study. That is, the repertoire of possible heart idioms is covered in this study.

As mentioned earlier, it is impossible to categorize heart idioms without explicit definitions of what emotion and personality are. As a result, definitions of emotion and personality are firstly discussed in the following section.

2.2 Definitions of Emotion and Personality

In Niemeier's (2003) study, the concept of emotion subsumes the concept of personality. In other words, no personality idioms are presented in her study. Instead, what we intuitively conceive of as an instance of personality is treated as another instance of emotion. To clarify whether there is any significant difference between emotion and personality, we need to check the definitions of each in a dictionary. According to the *Online Cambridge Dictionary of American English*,¹ emotion is defined as "strong feeling, such as of love, anger, fear, etc," while personality is defined as "the special combination of qualities in a person that makes them different from others, as shown by the way they behave, feel, and think." The definitions show that the similarity between the concepts of emotion and personality is that they both involve human feelings. Nonetheless, a major difference that distinguishes personality

¹ The *Online Cambridge Dictionary of American English* can be found at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>

from emotion can be easily detected. That is, the way a person behaves and thinks is valued in the definition of personality. What's more, the definition of personality emphasizes that these qualities make a person different from another person. However, the definition of emotion is completely restricted to strong feelings. In terms of the distinctions, emotion and personality should be treated as two different concepts.

It is now reasonable to separate personality from emotion. In the following section, several works on emotion that will facilitate the data categorization in this study will be introduced.

2.3 Previous Studies on Emotion

The issue of emotion has been a focus of both psychological and linguistic research (Clare et al. 1987, Johnson-Laird & Oatley 1989, 1992, Kövecses 1990, Lakoff 1987, Oatley & Johnson-Laird 1987). There has been an intense debate on the existence of basic emotions in the field of psychology, while much attention has been paid to the discovery of shared semantic mechanisms behind certain emotional idioms (e.g., anger idioms, love idioms, etc) in the field of linguistics. In this section, studies on emotion by Clare et al. (1987) and Johnson-Laird & Oatley (1989), which provide very useful tools for the data categorization in this study, are introduced.

Clare et al. (1987) have discovered a simple linguistic test which their

undergraduate subjects could easily adopt to distinguish between emotional and non-emotional terms. The linguistic test uses the patterns of **feeling X** and **being X**. When a term is put into both X slots and both patterns are considered to be expressions of a certain emotion by their undergraduate subjects, this term is regarded as a genuine emotional term. On the other hand, if a term is put into both X slots and only one or none of the patterns is considered to be an expression of a certain emotion, it is not a genuine emotional term. For instance, **happy** is considered to be a genuine emotional term, because their subjects rate both **feeling happy** and **being happy** as emotions. On the other hand, a term like **ignored** is not a genuine emotional term, because their subjects rate **feeling ignored** as an emotion, but not **being ignored**.

Following Clore et al. (1987), Johnson-Laird & Oatley (1989) present a thorough semantic analysis of English words referring to emotions. They propose five basic emotions—happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust—and sort their 590 emotional words into seven categories: (1) generic emotions, (2) basic emotions, (3) emotional relations, (4) caused emotions, (5) causatives, (6) emotional goals, and (7) complex emotions.² Moreover, they discuss the temporal duration of emotions,

² (1) Generic emotions refer to generic terms like emotions and feelings. (2) Basic emotions refer to those five basic emotions and/or to simple modifications of the five (e.g., happy and light-hearted, sad and depressed, etc.). (3) Emotional relations refer to the relation between someone who experiences an emotion and its object (e.g., John loves Mary). (4) Caused emotions refer to emotions that have a cause known to the person experiencing that emotion (e.g., glad, heart-broken, afraid, etc.). (5) Causatives refer to verbs that express the relation between the cause of an emotion and the person who experiences it (e.g., John frightened Mary, with John being the cause and Mary the person experiencing the fear). (6) Emotional goals refer to emotions that have goals (e.g., need, desire, want, etc.). (7) Complex emotions are emotions that result from high-level self-evaluation (e.g., embarrassment and shame).

shedding light on the categorization of heart idioms. Johnson-Laird & Oatley (1989:

97) state:

Another aspect of a basic emotion mode is its temporal duration. Certain terms refer to a currently experienced emotion, others refer to a prolonged state or mood, and still others refer to an even longer-term state—a disposition of the personality towards feeling that emotion. Thus, an individual can be described as irritable if he or she is currently angry, or in an angry mood, or has a general disposition to be angry.

The passage above shows that people of a certain personality are subject to feeling that emotion. These types of personality are called “emotional types of personality” by Johnson-Laird & Oatley (1989: 97). So far, the relationship between the concepts of emotion and personality can be demonstrated by Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1. Relationship between the concepts of emotion and personality

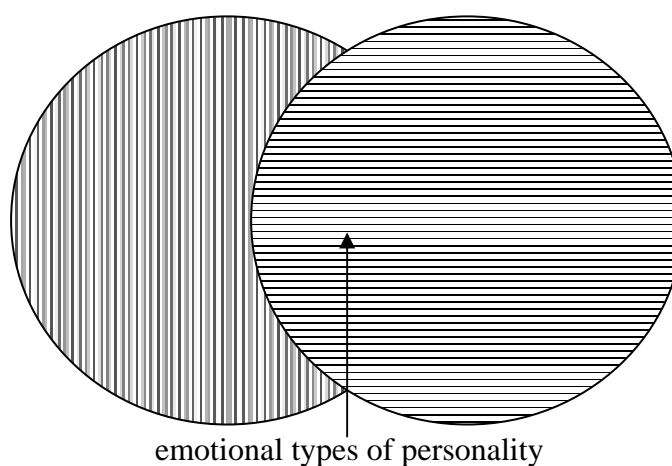


Figure 2.1 shows that the concepts of emotion and personality partially overlap.

The idea of this figure would be used for the data categorization in the following

section. Although the seven categories of emotional terms proposed by Johnson-Laird & Oatley do not appear necessary for the current cognitive-semantic analysis of heart idioms, the data categorization in this study benefits a lot from their discussion.

2.4 Categorization of Heart Idioms

77 heart idioms are collected for this study. Among them, some idioms have variations. However, variations of the same heart idiom are counted as one instance of heart idioms. For instance, *break one's heart* and *broken heart* belong to the same idiom group, because generally they express the same idea. Most of the data in this study come from *A Dictionary of Current English Phrases and Idioms*, and the rest from Niemeier's (2003) study. The 77 heart idioms are sorted into four types – (1) emotion, (2) personality, (3) emotional types of personality, and (4) others. Type 1 refers to those heart idioms that simply express generic emotions (e.g., *a change of heart* 'a change of feelings') or specific emotions (e.g., *broken heart* 'sad'). Type 2 refers to those heart idioms that only describe personality or human traits without expressing any emotion (e.g., *heart of stone* 'a nature lacking in sympathy, kindness, or pity'). Type 3 refers to those heart idioms that are flexible enough to describe both the emotion and the personality of a person (e.g., *sick at heart* 'feeling very unhappy or disappointed'). At last, type 4 refers to those heart idioms that express neither

emotion nor personality (e.g., *by heart* ‘by memory’). Let us begin with type 1.

2.4.1 Type 1: Emotion

Heart idioms in this category can be further divided into two subtypes—(A) generic emotions, and (B) specific emotions. They are listed as follows:

Type 1 (A): generic emotions

- *at the bottom of one's heart; from (the bottom of) one's heart* ‘with one's deepest thoughts or feelings; sincerely; with great feelings’
- *in one's heart (of hearts)* ‘in the deepest part of one's mind or feelings; in one's most secret feelings; in reality’
- *open one's heart* ‘talk about your feelings honestly’
- *take something to heart* ‘to feel the effect of something deeply (and take suitable action)’
- *bare one's heart/soul* ‘to make known one's deepest feelings’
- *pour out one's heart* ‘to tell all one's personal worries, problems, feelings, etc. in an uncontrolled way so that the words rush, esp. after keeping them unexpressed for a long time’
- *a change of heart* ‘a change of feelings’
- *wear/pin one's heart on one's sleeve* ‘to show one's true feelings openly instead of hiding them’
- *with all one's heart* ‘sincere’
- *harden one's heart* ‘to make or become severe, unkind, or lacking in human feelings’
- *this filled my heart with something* ‘I feel something (e.g., happy, sad...)’
- *one's heart is swelling with (e.g., happiness, sadness...)* ‘one is moved with (e.g., happiness, sadness...)’

Type 1 (B): specific emotions

- *lose heart* ‘become discouraged; lose hope’
- *take heart* ‘be encouraged’
- *absence makes the heart grow fonder* ‘one likes a person better when one has been away for a long time’
- *break one's heart; broken heart* ‘make or become very sad or unhappy; cause

bitter grief or sorrow to someone'

- *lose one's heart (to)* 'to fall in love (with)'
- *steal someone's heart (away); steal every heart* 'cause someone to fall deeply in love with one'
- *win someone's heart* 'to gain someone's love or strong approval'
- *conquer one's heart* 'to gain someone's love or strong approval'
- *eat one's heart out for something* 'to be very unhappy about or have great desire for someone or something without talking about it'
- *someone's heart sinks* 'a person becomes sad, disappointed, or fearful'
- *make one's heart bleed* 'causing deep sorrow or pity; pitiful'
- *pierce one's heart* 'causing deep sorrow or pity; pitiful'
- *have (something) at heart* 'be deeply interested in something'
- *to one's heart's content* 'as much as one wants'
- *warm the cockles of one's/the heart* 'to make one feel happy and satisfied'
- *cry one's eyes/heart out* 'to cry very sadly and usually for a long time'
- *put (new, fresh, etc.) heart into* 'to encourage someone'
- *one's heart throbs for someone* 'to fall in love with someone'
- *a lonely hearts club* 'a club for people who wish to find a friend or lover'
- *something is close/dear to someone's heart* 'someone is deeply concerned about something'
- *an aching heart* 'sad'
- *set one's heart/mind on something* 'to want something very much and to expect to have or do it'
- *have one's heart in one's mouth/boots* 'to feel very afraid or worried'
- *his heart sank into his boots* 'to feel very afraid or worried'
- *one's heart skips/misses a beat* 'one is surprised/shocked, one is in love'
- *heart stand still* 'one is surprised/shocked, one is in love'
- *offer one's heart* 'to give one's love'
- *somebody being one's heart's desire* 'somebody is the object of desire or love'
- *put/set someone's heart/mind at rest* 'free a person from worry'
- *lift (up) one's heart* 'be or cause to be encouraged, hopeful or joyful'
- *a heart overflowing* 'with gratitude'
- *the way to a man's heart is through his stomach* 'feeding a man food that he likes will cause him to love you'
- *find it in one's heart/in oneself to* 'to have the courage to do something'
- *something touches one's heart* 'one is easily moved by something'

The reason why the heart idioms above are categorized as type 1 is that neither one of them seems to be an appropriate answer to a question like **What is John's personality?**. Many of the heart idioms of type 1 (A) express sincerity. However, it needs to be noted that sincerity does not refer to any specific human emotion but denotes the expression of one's true feelings and thoughts. Likewise, the rest of the heart idioms of type 1 (A) do not express any particular emotion but simply denote feelings or emotions. For instance, *at the bottom of one's heart* and *in one's heart (of hearts)* do not express any specific feeling but simply a neutral sense of feelings. And it appears odd to state **I am feeling feelings (or emotions)**, since it does not specify what kind of emotion the speaker is currently experiencing. That is why the heart idioms of type 1 (A) are termed generic emotions. Unlike type 1 (A), heart idioms of type 1 (B) express certain feelings or emotions. For instance, *John lost his heart to Mary* means 'John fell in love with Mary', which shows an emotion of love. Let us now turn to type 2.

2.4.2 Type 2: Personality

Contrary to heart idioms of type 1, heart idioms of type 2 can be used to talk about a person's personality. They are listed below:

Type 2: personality

- *have the heart (to)* ‘have courage (to do something)’
- *have a big heart; have a large heart; great heart* ‘kind and generous’
- *heart of stone* ‘a nature lacking in sympathy, kindness, or pity’
- *heart of iron* ‘courageous and strong’
- *pure in heart* ‘never having evil or harmful thoughts or intentions’
- *heart of gold* ‘a kind, generous, or giving nature’
- *have a heart* ‘be kind, reasonable, or sympathetic’
- *soft heart* ‘having tender feelings; easily moved to pity; quick to forgive’
- *tender heart* ‘having tender feelings; easily moved to pity; quick to forgive’
- *take (somebody/something) to one’s heart* ‘accept or treat someone or something with much love; cherish fondly; marry’
- *have one’s heart in the right place* ‘to be a kind or generous person, perhaps in spite of one’s outward manner’
- *have a place in every heart* ‘a person who seems attractive and desirable to many others’
- *open heart* ‘frankness; freedom; kindness; generosity’

According to the definition of type 2, these heart idioms only describe a person’s personality or human traits without expressing any emotion. The data obviously show that there is only a small set of heart idioms that denote personality or human traits without showing any emotion. The idioms above can be used to answer a question like **What is his personality?**. For instance, it is appropriate to answer *He has the heart to do anything he wants* ‘he has courage to do anything he wants’ and *he has a heart of stone* ‘he is courageous and strong’. What needs to be specified is that courage is not an emotion. On the contrary, “it is a lack of an emotion rather than the positive presence of one” (Johnson-Laird & Oatley 1989: 99). Similarly, cruelty is not an emotion but a judgment on human behaviors. The following section presents heart

idioms of type 3.

2.4.3 Type 3: Emotional Types of Personality

What distinguishes heart idioms of type 3 from those of type 2 is that they are capable of describing both the emotion and the personality of a person. In other words, they can be used to express short-term emotions as well as long-term emotions (i.e., personality). Take an example. *Sick at heart* can be used to answer both of the questions—**How did he feel at the moment?** and **What is his personality?**. It is appropriate to answer *He felt sick at heart at the moment* ‘he felt sad at the moment’ and *He is sick at heart whenever he confronts something* ‘he is sad whenever he confronts something’. Heart idioms of type 3 are listed below:

Type 3: emotional types of personality

- *one’s heart bleeds for somebody* ‘one feels sad or pity for somebody’
- *light heart* ‘happiness’
- *sick at heart* ‘feeling very unhappy or disappointed’
- *heavy heart* ‘sad; depressed’
- *someone’s heart goes out to* ‘someone feels sympathy or pity for someone’
- *set all hearts on fire* ‘inspire love in people’
- *young at heart* ‘one feels or thinks that he is young’
- *have one’s heart in something* ‘have determination or strength of purpose in something’

The last type of heart idioms is presented in the following section.

2.4.4 Type 4: Others

Heart idioms of type 4 express neither emotion nor personality. They are shown below:

Type 4: others

- *at heart* ‘in reality; in spite of appearances; at bottom’
- *search one’s heart* ‘study your reasons and acts; try to discover if you have been fair and honest’
- *the heart/root of the matter* ‘the essential nature, or the most important aspect of something’
- *get to the heart of* ‘find the most important facts about or the central meaning of; understand the most important thing about’
- *put one’s heart and soul into* ‘put one’s attention and strength into something completely’
- *after one’s own heart* ‘similar to oneself or of the type one likes’
- *by heart* ‘by memory’
- *cross one’s heart (and hope to die)* ‘promise’
- *believe/know something in one’s heart* ‘to be secretly sure of something without admitting it’
- *two hearts that beat as one* ‘two people in unity (e.g., being/working together)’

Followed by the definitions of the concepts of emotion and personality, Niemeier’s (2003) study on heart idioms is reviewed in the beginning of this chapter. Later on, previous studies on the issue of emotion are also included to help elucidate the distinction between emotion and personality. Finally, the heart idioms collected for the current study are sorted into four types, improving the drawbacks of Niemeier’s (2003) categorization. These four types of heart idioms will be analyzed through the investigation into the cognitive-semantic mechanisms behind them in

Chapter 4.³ In the subsequent chapter, however, theoretical frameworks for the analysis will be presented first.

³ For ease of reference, all the 77 heart idioms of the four types are again presented with their figurative meanings in the Appendix.