

MAPPING METAPHOR: THE ‘HEART’ AND ‘FACE’ OF THAI NIRAT

Tara Emily Doherty

BA Linguistics, 2025

Abstract: Metaphor subverts traditional methods of semantic analysis, existing in a domain both cognitive and linguistic. This paper is concerned with the conceptual metaphors using the nouns ‘heart’ and ‘face’ in the Thai language by sampling Nirat (or traveling poetry). Multiple approaches are evaluated, from Gricean pragmatics to Lakoff’s conceptual metaphor theory, and lastly Matisoff’s psycho-collocations. Then, through two Nirat, a finite list of conceptual metaphors was compiled and analysed with the aforementioned frameworks. These were compound manifestations of metaphors known as psi-collocations. Overwhelmingly, the ‘heart’ morpheme stood out as a source domain, and more than half of the compounds were adjectives. As expected, there were instances of ‘redundant’ metaphors, and N+N conceptual metaphors were also found but unaccounted for in the hypotheses. Ultimately, this paper identifies the flexible nature of Thai conceptual metaphor compounding, suggesting avenues for what type of future research could be done on a larger scale to better facilitate understanding of Thai conceptual metaphors.

Keywords: semantics, pragmatics, conceptual metaphors, Nirat, source domain, target domain, psycho-collocation, psycho-noun, psycho-mate.

Supervisor(s): Dr. Gabriel Martinez-Vera

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my supervisor, Gabriel Martinez-Vera, for guiding me throughout this entire project (and for being very reassuring when I decided to change my topic last minute). I'd also like to thank the SELLL department who have received me with nothing but care and enthusiasm over the course of my three years at Newcastle University. I want to express solidarity with staff rightfully taking strike action—I would not be who I am without their kindness and tireless work.

I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to study linguistics so thoroughly, thereby leading me up to the point of completing this project, and I think every day about the bright young minds of friends and strangers in Palestine who may not pursue their curiosities and fulfill their thirst for knowledge as I have due to the genocide being done unto them. May we all one day be free to live and learn with dignity, liberated from the hands of empire.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Background: The Thai Nirat	3
2.1 Thai Language	3
2.2 The Nirat	3
3. Literature Review.....	4
3.1 What is metaphor?	4
3.2 Thai conceptual metaphors	9
4. Hypotheses.....	11
5. Methodology	12
6. Discussion.....	14
6.1 Findings.....	14
6.2 Limitations	18
7. Conclusion	19
References.....	20

1. Introduction

Metaphor is an integral function of linguistic expression, creating a bridge of understanding through comparison. It subverts the typical conventions of linguistic analysis, and thus this paper is concerned with how linguistic approaches to metaphor extends to the conceptual metaphors found in Thai Nirat; most specifically the ‘heart’ and ‘face’.

I will first outline the parameters of Thai language and the Nirat as a genre. Then, I will introduce the different existing theoretical frameworks of metaphor, touching on the semantics and pragmatics of figurative language. This will be followed by a discussion of conceptual metaphors within the Thai language, leading into an outline of my hypotheses and thus a discussion of the methodology of my approach in sampling Thai conceptual metaphors. In line with this, I will also justify my reasonings for why I chose to look at specific poems rather than carrying out a corpus study. Focusing on the ‘heart’ and ‘face’ conceptual metaphors found in two epic poems from Thailand’s most renowned poet, Sunthorn Phu, I have tokenised the occurrences and organized them into tables for viewing. I have endeavoured to romanise the Thai names of scholars, sources, and poems to the best of my abilities, and any mistake in transcription and translation are entirely my own.

It may be more accurate to describe this present paper as a linguistic dissection of Thai conceptual metaphors through the vehicle of the Nirat, rather than a treatise on the Nirat as a genre itself. I will finish with a discussion of findings and whether they aligned with my hypotheses and assert my suggestions for future research into Thai conceptual metaphors.

2. Background: The Thai Nirat

2.1 Thai Language

I felt it sensible to first briefly outline the morphosyntactic features of Thai to aid in making sense of the language's metaphors.

Thai, or Central Thai (widely referred to as Bangkok Thai and Standard Thai), is the variety most spoken in the country. It has an SVO word order and, as will be seen in later sections, is a discourse pro-drop language (On-Usa 2011). There is no inflectional morphology which makes it an isolating language. Tense, aspect, and mood are expressed through serial verb constructions and auxiliaries that are free morphemes (Bisang 1992, Jenny 2001), and these markers are non-obligatory. Importantly, it is rich in compounding, which is the nature of the conceptual metaphors I will be discussing. These compounds are productive, meaning that they can take more modifiers as needed for semantic information (Kriengkiet et al. 2007). For example, a thermometer (เครื่องวัดอุณหภูมิ) consists of the morphemes 'machine', 'measure' and 'temperature', meaning 'machine that measures temperature', but can be modified with 'water', 'body', ad infinitum to denote specific functions.

2.2 The Nirat

The earliest records of 'Nirat' as a descriptor for Thai traveling poetry dates to the Ayutthaya Kingdom, which lasted from the mid-17th to 18th century. The oldest poem to be identified as a Nirat is Nirat Hariphunchai by an unknown author dating between the late 1400's to the early 1600's, written in the Lanna variety and later transcribed into modern Thai (na Nagara 2003). Scholars generally agree that the Nirat genre describes epic poetry composed during periods of extended travel, lamenting the parting from a loved one which is usually but not limited to a female lover (Rachanuphap 1922, Yhupo 1959, Chitakasem 1972). They are written in both prose and poetic structure. The themes of these poems consist of loss, a longing for loved ones, nature, Buddhism, royalty, and so on. Formal address may be expected, but Sunthorn Phu commonly uses colloquial and commonplace words in his verses. The two Nirat I use in the investigations of this present paper are both written in the Central Thai variety.

To note, the Jindamani (จินดามณี) is a book dating back to the 17th Century, intended to be a treatise on the usage of Thai orthography (covering domains from consonants to diacritics) and language in the composition of poetry. Outlined within this is the conventions of Nirat

which has shaped and guided poets with the parameters of verse, from rhyme scheme to meter (Yhupo 1959) which will become an important fact later when discussing why I have chosen the Nirat as a basis for exploring Thai conceptual metaphors.

Summarily, I'd like to assert that Nirat are poems defined by two aspects, which may exist independently of each other, but typically presuppose one another:

- 1) A long journey allowing the speaker inner reflection;
- 2) The missing of or lamenting the loss of a loved one.

3. Literature Review

3.1 What is metaphor?

To discuss metaphor is to discuss meaning, and meaning is difficult to discuss. Meaning, in the tradition of semantics, is the surface or literal meaning of an utterance. For the purposes of this present paper, I will refrain from dissecting the arguments of what constitutes semantic meaning in detail (see Birner 2013 for a more thorough discussion). As an overview, however, let us say that semantic meaning is defined by 'truth conditions', or the conditions that an utterance must fulfill for it to be true regardless of what the true world is. Similarly, 'truth values' is the logical notation of these conditions (Birner 2013:19). An utterance is therefore analysed in semantics under the assumption that all utterances can be judged with classical logic. However, the excluded middle that arises with this form of logic would preclude any implicit or intended meaning from consideration, and this is where pragmatics can fill in this gap left behind after a truth-value calculation. Thus, what I am interested in is the pragmatics of metaphor, which is to say, meaning in context.

The earliest account of pragmatics is attributed to Grice's Cooperative Principle. This defines the parameters for interlocutors to be able to engage in productive discourse, also referred to as conversational implicatures (Grice 1975). Metaphor, according to Grice, is riddled with falsity. He cites resemblance as the motivation behind metaphorical utterances (Grice 1975:58), which flouts the Maxim of Quality; the maxim concerned with truth and reliability. Consider the utterance 'my day was a nightmare' (Birner 2013:12). The truth-conditional meaning of this utterance, if interpreted with convention, would be that the speaker slept for the entirety of their day, and had a nightmare throughout it. However, it is safe to assume that most, if not all, participants in discourse would be able to understand that the meaning of 'my day was a nightmare' intends to express that the speaker's day was

unpleasant *like* a nightmare is unpleasant. This utterance cannot be interpreted with traditional semantics alone. Pragmatic analysis thus relies on felicity conditions rather than truth-conditions to evaluate the implicit (or implied) meaning of an utterance, following the guidelines of Grice's maxims.

In a similar vein, a metaphor can only be one when the discourse participants stand on some common ground that allows the bridging between the source and target domain. Common ground, or CG, coined by psycholinguist Herbert Clark (1996), has been referred to as 'common knowledge' (Lewis 1969), 'shared knowledge' and 'mutual knowledge' (Clark & Marshall 1981), and 'mutual belief' (Birner 2013). I will henceforth refer to the concept as CG for ease of reference. CG is the shared intuition by participants of discourse that allow inferences to be made about the meaning of utterances, which is not dissimilar to Grice's Cooperative Principle. Clark identifies community as the basis in which a common ground is derived. These are communal categories based on sociocultural identity, ranging from nationality and gender to education and employment, which contribute to an individual's schema, extending to how they interact linguistically; also referred to as 'co-presence' (Clark & Marshall 1981, Clark 1996). It is important to note that CG does not require the community to know each other personally, but rather refers more to the understanding that naturally arises when one is part of a community. For example, 'There's a bug!' is a felicitous utterance both in the context of a child telling their guardian that they've spotted an insect in the house, and in the context of a computer engineer telling their colleague that they've identified an error in their software. These two instances would require different communal categories for the participants in discourse to infer meaning. 'There's a bug!' could easily mean the same thing in either of these contexts, but its interpretation is informed differently by the CG of the interlocutors (for example, the guardian is more likely to interpret the 'bug' in the child's utterance as an insect rather than an error in software, whilst a computer engineer's colleague would assume that 'bug' is referring to the latter). Metaphors are constrained by this same parameter.

Additionally, we can recognize the metaphorical property of an utterance divorced from its surface meaning because metaphor subverts the conventional usage of language. Therefore producing utterances that can only be understood in discourse when it is interpreted by context rather than convention (Croft & Cruse 2004:193), which is how the problem of 'my day was a nightmare' above is overcome. This interpretation is implicit (Croft & Cruse 2004, Birner 2013) in that the interlocuter overcomes the semantic-pragmatic gap by making assumptions

when interpreting. This is described in the cognitive linguistics tradition (associated with functionalism; Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1991), as conceptual metaphors. Metaphor requires the mental process that links a source domain to a target domain (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), thus metaphorical utterances require both linguistic and psychological computation to be interpreted (and they exist on a larger scale in the conceptual plane). In short, this is the TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN formula (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Croft & Cruse 2004), which concerns itself not with finite sets of metaphorical constructions but rather the overarching cognitive domain that allows the pragmatic interpretation of a metaphor. Lakoff & Johnson's formula allows us to quantify metaphors beyond constructing a list of linguistic items classed as metaphors but creates a system of analysis that can be applied broadly.

It is important to note, however, that though these ideas are similar, they belong to distinct disciplines of linguistics. Lakoff & Johnson are not concerned with objective truth in their conceptual metaphor theory and are most interested in conceptual metaphors as exists in the cognitive domain. They believe that conceptual metaphors extend beyond linguistics and permeate into human behaviour in a Whorfian way (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), which I will avoid at risk of falling into the trap of linguistic determinism. On the other hand, pragmaticists like Birner and Clark make no mention of conceptual metaphors in their work and retain an objective approach to metaphorical analysis, citing a quantifiable analysis of metaphorical interpretation. I will endeavour to consider each approach in later sections when discussing the Thai conceptual metaphors I have found, but ultimately, there is an undeniably human aspect to metaphor that benefits from a holistic understanding that combines both linguistic and conceptual theory, which is why I have presented them above. To argue for an analysis of metaphor that excludes cognition is to argue for an incomplete map of metaphor, and vice versa.

What distinguishes a conceptual metaphor from other figurative language or literary metaphors is best demonstrated by example:

1. เธอคือดวงใจของฉัน

she is heart of me

‘she is my heart’

2. อุบัติเหตุทำให้เธอสะเทือนใจ

accident make her shake-heart

‘the accident shocked her’

The first phrase is a comparative nominal construction commonly found in literary works, whilst the latter is a metaphor that may not stand out as one in regular discourse due to its commonplace usage. Perhaps it is best understood with the ‘conventional’ versus ‘novel’ dichotomy (Croft & Cruse 2004:195), wherein there is a distinction between metaphors that are commonly used and metaphors that are not conventionalized in the lexicon due to their being new constructions. 1. and 2. illustrate this distinction quite clearly, where 1. Is a direct comparison whilst 2. demonstrates the Thai metaphor compounding construction I will discuss later, using the ‘heart’ in place of the psyche. Lakoff & Johnson define conceptual metaphors by this conventionality, marking a construction’s assimilation into the lexicon as the point where a metaphor is no longer novel. Others argue that conventionality results in a dead metaphor instead, thus no longer possessing any figurative properties. When exactly a metaphor becomes ‘conventional’ (or ‘dies’) and whether its conventionality in and of itself removes its figurative property entirely (Croft & Cruse 2004, Birner 2013) is unclear. Birner argues that a metaphor ‘dies’ when its metaphorical origins are no longer apparent to the participants in discourse, or when it takes on a new meaning entirely. Though, a metaphor never really ‘dies’ per se. Lakoff & Johnson give the example of a student who interpreted ‘solution’ in ‘the solution to my problems’ as a chemical solution (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), as opposed to the conventional interpretation. This demonstrates quite literally the effects of communal categories mentioned in the prior section: the student who was a non-native English speaker, by virtue of not being part of a specific sociolinguistic group, was unable to interpret the conceptual metaphor with convention because they did not share a CG with other interlocutors. We as native English speakers might not recognize the metaphorical property of ‘solution’ when used in the context above because of its regular usage, but its metaphorical property still exists peripherally. Essentially, conceptual metaphors cover the range of

figurative language that is understood through the mapping of source domains into target domains, thus existing in the cognition of interlocutors even implicitly.

Another example Birner raises for the dead metaphor argument is once again the ‘my day was a nightmare’ instance, or specifically the use of ‘nightmare’ to denote an unpleasant experience. Birner thinks that the assimilation of ‘nightmare’ into the English lexicon deprives it of its figurative property because it no longer requires inference on the part of interlocutors. A similar issue was raised by Vervaeke & Kennedy who stipulated that many conceptual metaphors such as Lakoff & Johnson’s ARGUMENT IS WAR constructions were no longer metaphorical ones due to how commonplace they are (Vervaeke & Kennedy 2004). Conversely there exists the argument that because this ‘nightmare’ usage is still a figure of speech, it will always require the CG of the interlocutors covertly, thus making the interpretation implicit (and therefore pragmatic) even if this process is subconscious on the part of the participants in discourse (Birner 2013:12) like discussed above with the ‘solution’ anecdote. In summary, for some, a metaphor is no longer one at all once it has assimilated into quotidian usage such that its figurative nature is no longer recognizable due to a semantic shift over time, whilst some would argue that the domains of comparison still exist regardless of how commonplace the expression has become. I would assert that classifying an ‘assimilated’ or conventional metaphor into the category of semantics and thus dismissing it as a metaphor is counterintuitive to the present analysis. To go back to the nightmare example, though there has been a semantic shift that makes ‘nightmare’ a commonplace noun that denotes a negative experience, that shift is still not large enough to obscure the metaphorical origin of the construction. Perhaps the question is more a temporal one, but that is not what I am interested in answering in this present paper.

Conceptual metaphor theory is not without criticism. Vervaeke & Kennedy dismiss Lakoff & Johnson’s classification of some conceptual metaphors on the grounds of falsifiability (Vervaeke & Kennedy 2004), or more accurately that some of the conceptual metaphors identified by Lakoff & Johnson like ARGUMENT IS WAR is unfalsifiable by nature of their theory classifying anything that isn’t ARGUMENT IS WAR as belonging to some other source domain, thereby eliminating any evidence for falsification (Ibidem). Moreover, the ARGUMENT IS WAR conceptual metaphor could equally be called by any other source domain, like CHESS, in the same way that many source domains overlap in what their target domain is, and vice versa (Ritchie 2009). Though I would counter that ARGUMENT IS WAR only differs from ARGUMENT IS CHESS in an arbitrary way in that

it is a system of classification, simply a name for a subset of a nomenclature. Whether the name for ARGUMENT IS- in the conceptual metaphor theory is WAR or CHESS does not affect the overarching idea that a conceptual processing presupposes an interlocuter's interpretation of a metaphor.

Summarily, I have illustrated the map of metaphor in the field of linguistics, and how interlocuters must not only have the individual understanding of the source and target domains, but also have the belief that the other participants in discourse share a common ground which will accommodate the interpretation of a metaphorical utterance. This was built upon by discussion of conceptual metaphor theory and its criticisms.

3.2 Thai conceptual metaphors

Concerning the application of conceptual metaphor theory in Thai, we must first discuss the nature of Thai metaphor. Linguist James Matisoff posits that Southeast Asian varieties are especially rich in 'overt classes' of expressive terms which he calls 'psycho-collocations' (henceforth psi-collocation; Matisoff 1986) to denote the sets of conceptual metaphors that use a multimorphemic construction to create terms uniquely reserved for expressing abstract ideas. The term 'collocation' itself is sometimes used to describe conceptual metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lawler 1983), but here Matisoff is referring to the specific compounding of Thai conceptual metaphors that form a pair consisting of a 'psycho-noun' and its 'psycho-mate' (Matisoff 1986). The Thai 'heart' (or 'jai') is a psycho-noun that constitutes a large number of polymorphic constructions that usually denote emotions. There are also arguments made that 'jai' represents the equivalent English 'mind' interchangeably (Saralamba 2008), but this does not affect the present paper's analysis. The Thai 'heart' can appear both at the beginning and at the end of a compound, combining with adjective or verb psycho-mates. Matisoff calls constructions using 'heart' 'psychosomatic metaphors' which describes the ambiguity that arises when the source domain is used in place of the body (i.e. the heart representing the person experiencing the emotion). Lakoff & Johnson (1980) call them 'ontological metaphors' where the target domain is associated with a specific entity.

I must note that my biggest reserve with Matisoff's philosophy is that there is a conflation of a language's orthography with its grammar (though this may be understandable when considering that he cites Benjamin Lee Whorf in his work). For example, he grounds his observations of Chinese varieties' psi-collocations in the language's logography where the

character for ‘heart’ is used as a radical in writing (Matisoff 1986). The implication that grammar and orthography are not independent of each other can become problematic. Regardless, Matisoff’s identification of the psycho-noun and psycho-mate as categories for analysis aids in understanding conceptual metaphors in Thai better because it accounts for the manifestation of conceptual metaphors as expressive compound constructions that do not exist in English, therefore filling in the cross-linguistic gap in Lakoff & Johnson’s work.

Matisoff also identifies ‘redundant’ classes of psi-collocations, where the psycho-mate on its own already carries the same meaning as the metaphor it combines with the psycho-noun to create (see 1. below). Why such a redundancy exists can be explained by conceptual metaphor theory, where the ‘heart’ is used as the source domain, and thus is naturally extrapolated onto psychological phenomena and used overarchingly in linguistic utterances.

Importantly, Matisoff attaches a value system to the metaphorical property of the psi-collocations.

1. ใจกล้า

heart cowardly

‘cowardly’

2. ใจกว้าง

heart broad

‘generous’

Matisoff would place 2. as more valuable in terms of information due to its ‘higher’ metaphorical property because the psi-collocation derives its meaning only from the specific combination of the two morphemes (Matisoff 1986). I would like to dismiss this argument on the grounds of it being a prescriptive analysis and propose instead that conceptual metaphor theory is better accommodated to explain the differences in construction. And indeed, where Lakoff & Johnson’s theory differ from Matisoff’s is that every psi-collocation would equally be a conceptual metaphor. The Thai ‘heart’ as a conceptual metaphor is described as HEART AS PERSON, HEART AS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS, or HEART AS THE CONTAINER (Berendt & Tanita 2011). Therefore, 1. could be explained with HEART AS PERSON and 2. with HEART AS THE CONTAINER, with no disparity in metaphorical property. The ‘heart’ is the vehicle in understanding psychological phenomenon, so I propose HEART IS THE PSYCHE for a more widely applicable conceptual metaphor formula.

‘Face’ psi-collocations are less common, but by no means rare. The psycho-noun ‘face’ expresses physical and physiological phenomena, integral to metaphorical expressions of ego and pride by way of representing honour, realized as THE FACE IS THE CONTAINER FOR HONOUR (Ukosakul 2000).

4. Hypotheses

The literature laid out above paints a relatively clear picture of what to expect when doing a comprehensive analysis of Thai conceptual metaphors, and so the hypotheses for this present investigation are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The conventional versus novel metaphor dichotomy (Croft & Cruse 2004) will be observable in the two chosen Nirat;

Hypothesis 2: The most prominent metaphors observed will have the ‘heart’ as the psycho-noun over the ‘face’, with HEART IS THE PSYCHE and THE FACE IS THE CONTAINER FOR HONOUR conceptual realisations respectively;

Hypothesis 3: The compounds will consist of N+V, V+N, Adj+N, N+Adj constructions;

Hypothesis 4: Instances of redundant psi-collocations will be present in both the ‘heart’ and ‘face’ constructions.

Hypothesis 1 is motivated by the prior discussion of what constitutes a conceptual metaphor. Because I am examining Nirat, it is reasonable to assume that some metaphorical occurrences will be novel, created for poetic reasons. However, I am confident that the conventional half of the dichotomy will also be present in the two poems by virtue of the ‘heart’ being such a common conceptual metaphor (Berendt & Tanita 2011, Bovonwiwat 2023).

Hypotheses 2 and 3 are based on the literature reviewed above, therefore not requiring much explanation. However, there is yet to be enough quantitative evidence of ‘face’ psycho-noun occurrences compared to the ‘heart’ to suggest that we might see it significantly less, so this gap should also be considered.

Why I posit Hypothesis 4 for both ‘heart’ and ‘face’ is because there is not any evidence of redundant psi-collocations with the psycho-noun ‘face’ in existing literature, so I do not want to rule it out yet.

5. Methodology

This present study makes use of Nirat Phu Khao Thong (henceforth NPKT) and Nirat Mueng Klaeng (NMK) by Sunthorn Phu from the Vajirayana Library's online archive. Poems are measured in eight syllable intervals that make up one 'wak', of which one 'bhot' would have 4 (i.e. 32 syllables or morphemes). According to the Thai Department of Fine Arts, Nirat Phu Khao Thong has 88 bhot which would equal to around 2,816 morphemes, whilst Nirat Mueng Klaeng has 248 which equates to about 7,936 morphemes.

I chose the Nirat for two reasons. The first being that in order to quantify the usage of the conceptual metaphors I will discuss later, I did not find the available corpora of Thai language to be a valuable source of data. This is because the nature of Thai conceptual metaphors (in their being compounds as discussed above) renders searches tedious due to the computer's word segmentation. For example, when searching for collocations for the word 'heart' (ใจ) in the Thai National Corpus (TNC), some of the tokens that appear are not actually collocations, but happen to be considered such by virtue of the corpus' coding (for example 'ตุ้ม' which is an onomatopoeia denoting the 'thump' of a heart, 'ถี่' which is a prosodial feature, or 'ก็ดี' which means 'is also good', combining 'also' with the morpheme 'good' which is a collocation but is excluded as a token on its own entirely). Similarly, the HSE Corpus showed tokens which were not part of the lexemes being searched for. I therefore made the judgement that for the purposes of the present study, there would be more benefit in taking a case-study approach, looking at two Nirat to quantify the usage of conceptual metaphors.

The second reason is because the Nirat is one of the most recognizable and integral genres in Thai literature that has retained poetic conventions even with shifts in the language system itself. Despite the Nirat being a genre dating back to the Ayutthaya period, poets in recent time still emulate the nature of this genre and follow the parameters stipulated by scholars (Naknuan 2004). For example, poet Angkhan Kalayanapong, who was active in the late 1900s to early 2000s and wrote in the Nirat tradition, exclusively cites the genre and its conventions as his inspiration and guideline for writing his own Nirat (Ibidem). Kalayanapong's poems were considered for data collection but ruled out upon realizing that there are no digitalized copies available. Choosing these two epic poems allowed me to pick

out series of compounds from a contained pool for a close analysis of the conceptual metaphors used.

Thus, using the Find function (Ctrl+F), I inputted the nouns for ‘heart’ and ‘face’ respectively and parsed through the highlighted items, ruling out non-figurative usage and sorting them into an Excel spreadsheet. I then broke down the compounds first into morphemes and then into literal (surface) and metaphorical (implicit) meaning, adding also a breakdown of the morphology and subsequent lexical categories. This was done by consulting the Royal Society of Thailand’s 2010 Dictionary definitions, alongside my own judgement. I lastly noted the frequency of occurrences for each item.

There exists a method of compound categorization through insertion tests (Nuchamon 2020). This sorts Thai compounds into three distinct types, originally those using the noun ‘head’ (hua), but is used in a similar way to ‘heart’. This was done by inserting ‘that’, ‘of’, and ‘no’ between each compound’s morphemes (see below).

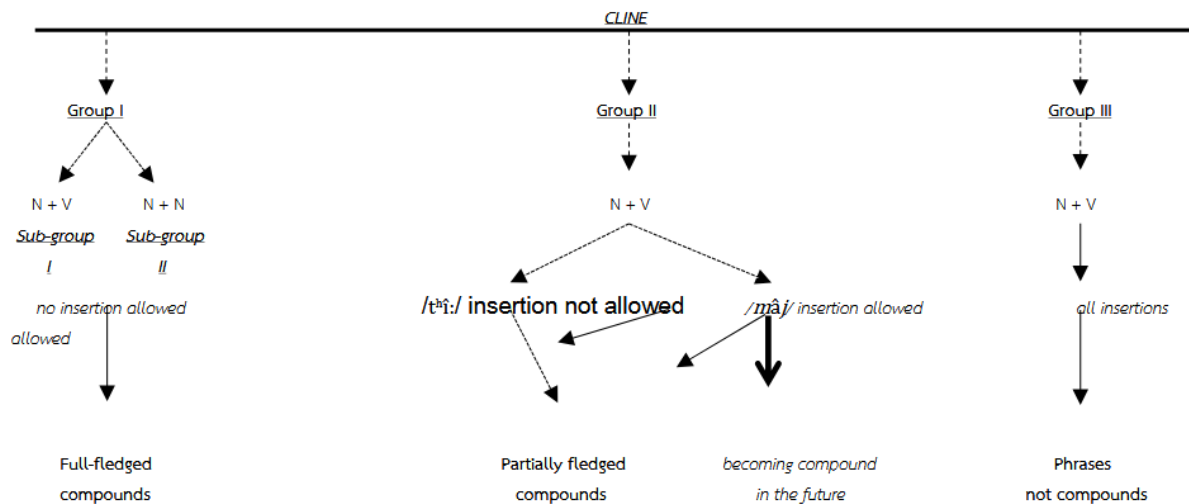


Fig. 1, Nuchamon’s cline of compounds and phrases

This test is helpful in identifying compounds but was not used in this present paper because I was not interested in the morphosyntactic categorization of individual compounds.

Of course, as aforementioned, Thai has no inflectional morphology and thus many of the compounds were coded upon my discretion, for example, the choice of whether the compound was used as an adjective or verb was decided after consulting the text.

6. Discussion

6.1 Findings

There were 21 occurrences (17 unrepeated) found in NPKT and 61 occurrences (43 unrepeated) in NMK.

No.	Compound	M1	M2	Literal meaning	Metaphorical meaning	Morpho.	Cat.	Freq.
1	ใจ(จะ)ขาด	heart	tear	Heart (will) tear	Unbearable pain	N+V	Adj	2
2	(ได้ดัง)ใจปอง	heart	expect	Get what the heart expected	Get what the heart desires	N+V	V	2
3	ใจจืด	heart	bland	Have a bland heart	To be inconsiderate; to be unfeeling	N+Adj	Adj	1
4	ยากใจ	difficult	heart	To be difficult on the heart	to experience difficulty	Adj+N	Adj	1
5	หลายใจ	many	heart	To have many hearts	To be disloyal	Adj+N	Adj	1
6	โศกใจ	sad	heart	To have a sad heart	To feel sorrow	V+N	Adj	1
7	ใจตรม	heart	mourn	To have a mourning heart	To feel sorrow; to be mournful	N+V	Adj	1
8	ขามใจ	fear	heart	To have a fearful heart	To feel scared	V+N	Adj	1
9	อนาถใจ	pitiful	heart	To have a pitiful heart	To feel pity	Adj+N	Adj	1
10	เศร้าใจ	sad	heart	To be sad of heart	To feel sorrow	Adj+N	Adj	2
11	เข็ญใจ	difficult	heart	To have difficulty on the heart	To be miserable	Adj+N	Adj	1
12	ชนะใจ	win	heart	To win the heart	To win favour	V+N	V	1
13	ตกใจ	fall	heart	To have a heart that fell	To be shocked	V+N	Adj	1
14	น้ำใจ	water	heart	The water of the heart	Kindness, grace	N+N	N	1
15	คลายใจ	release	heart	To release the heart	To relax, be relieved	V+N	V	1
16	อร่อยใจ	delicious	heart	For the heart to eat something delicious	To be satisfied	Adj+N	Adj	1
17	ม้วนหน้า	roll	face	for the face to roll; twist	to be retreat out of shame	V+N	Adv	2

Fig.2 Nirat Phu Khao Thong

No.	Token	M1	M2	Literal meaning	Metaphorical meaning	Morpho.	Cat.	Freq.
1	จำใจ	resist	heart	To resist the heart	Be unwilling (to do something)	V+N	Adj	2
2	ปลุกใจ	wake	heart	To wake the heart	To instill with bravery	V+N	V	1
3	เสียใจ	lose	heart	To lose the heart	To feel upset	V+N	Adj	1
4	สว่างใจ	relieve	heart	Relieve the heart	to feel relieved	V+N	Adj	1
5	เศร้าใจ	sad	heart	To have a sad heart	To be sad	Adj+N	Adj	1
6	แจ้งใจ	report	heart	To report to the heart	To report	V+N	V	1
7	สรวายใจ	happy	heart	To have a happy heart	To be happy	Adj+N	Adj	3
8	ชื่นใจ	delight	heart	For the heart to feel delight	To be delighted	V+N	Adj	5
9	ใจหาย	heart	disappear	For the heart to disappear	To be shocked	N+Adj	Adj	6
10	ใจหาญ	heart	courageous	To have a courageous heart	To be courageous	N+Adj	Adj	1
11	ระกำใจ	suffer	heart	To be of struggling heart	To feel burdened	Adj+N	Adj	2
12	ครมใจ	suffer	heart	For the heart to suffer	To grieve	V+N	Adj	1
13	สั่นใจ	cold	heart	To make the heart cold	To be frightened	V+N	V	1
14	วิเวกใจ	solitude	heart	Quiet/desolate of heart	To feel lonely	Adj+N	Adj	1
15	ดีใจ	good	heart	Good heart	To feel happy	Adj+N	Adj	1
16	เหนื่อยใจ	tire	heart	For the heart to feel tired	To feel exhausted	Adj+N	Adj	1
17	วังเวงใจ	weary	heart	To make the heart weary	To feel disturbed	Adj+N	Adj	3
18	เปลี่ยวใจ	empty	heart	For the heart to feel empty	To feel longing, empty	Adj+N	Adj	1
19	สลดใจ	drained	heart	For the heart to be drained	To feel dejected	V+N	Adj	2
20	คลายใจ	release	heart	To release the heart	To relax, be relieved	V+N	V	2
21	ร่ำจวนใจ	yearn	heart	For the heart to yearn	To yearn	V+N	Adj	1
22	ขาดใจ	devoid	heart	For the heart to be devoid (of something)	To feel immeasurable pain	V+N	Adj	1
23	แข็งใจ	hard	heart	To harden the heart	To brace oneself, be brave	V+N	Adj	1
24	ตั้งใจ	set	heart	To set up, prop up the heart	To intend, to be diligent	V+N	Adj	1
25	เบาใจ	lighten	heart	To lighten up the heart	To feel relieved	Adj+N	Adj	1
26	สาใจ	satisfy	heart	To satisfy the heart	To feel satisfied	V+N	Adj	1
27	น้ำใจ	water	heart	The water of the heart	Kindness, grace	N+N	N	1

28	ใจจำ	heart	remember	The heart remembers	To remember (something negative)	N+V	Adj	2
29	หมองใจ	dull	heart	To dull the heart	To feel gloomy	V+N	Adj	1
30	เหลือใจ	surplus	heart	To leave (parts of) the heart remaining	Extremely	Adj+N	Adv	1
31	ท้อใจ	despair	heart	For the heart to despair	To feel defeated	V+N	Adj	1
32	อาลัยใจ	mourn	heart	To mourn the heart	To feel mournful	V+N	Adj	1
33	ซ้ำใจ	bruise	heart	To bruise the heart	To feel hurt	V+N	Adj	1
34	ฉีกใจ	rip	heart	To rip up the heart	To hurt someone emotionally	V+N	V	1
35	สอื้นใจ	weep	heart	To feel the heart weeping	To feel sorrowful	V+N	Adj	1
36	เห็นใจ	see	heart	To see the heart	To understand	V+N	V	1
37	ประสาใจ	manner	heart	The manner of the heart	The way of (as in manner of doing)	N+N	N	1
38	กระดากใจ	embarrass	heart	To embarrass the heart	To feel ashamed	Adj+N	Adj	1
39	น้อยหน้า	little	face	To have little face	To shrink out of shame	Adj+N	Adj	1
40	หน้าชื่น	face	delight	To have a delighted face	To look delighted	N+Adj	Adj	1
41	หน้าหงาย	frown	face	For the face to frown	To frown	V+N	V	1
42	เบี้ยวหน้า	uneven	face	To make the face uneven	To frown	V+N	V	1
43	ตั้งหน้า	set	face	To set up, prop up the face	To be determined	V+N	Adj	1

Fig 3, Nirat Mueng Klaeng

As expected, the dichotomy in Hypothesis 1 was found. For example, ‘เมาใจ’ in NPKT at first glance is another psi-collocation meaning ‘to be drunk’ but upon closer inspection belongs to a full sentence playing on the speaker’s alcoholism, (‘ถึงเมาเหล้าเข้าสาयก็หายไป แต่เมาใจนี้ประจำทุกคำคืนฯ’). Technically, this could still be considered a conceptual metaphor since it still follows Lakoff’s formula where the heart represents the person, but with my judgement, it is quite a novel construction that requires the context of the poem to be understood. However, there were also occurrences of the HEART AS PERSON metaphor that did not manifest as compounds. For example, ‘ใจยังวนหวัง...’ in NPKT meaning ‘the heart is still worrying’. Conceptual metaphor theory would stipulate that this is a clear example of a conceptual domain being generalised and expressed linguistically.

As per Hypothesis 3, the observable constructions I found are as follows:

1. N+V
2. V+N
3. Adj.+N
4. N+Adj.
5. N+N

Hypothesis 3 was confirmed quite verily upon early data collection, but interestingly, the N+N construction (that produces a noun) was not accounted for by any of the literature reviewed, but found in both poems. One appears in both (น้ำใจ, meaning kindness) and is a common expression used in Thai, and the other found in NMK (ประสาทใจ, meaning manner) is a compound noun where the psycho-mate is commonly used in other constructions. Upon investigation, Thai linguists identify this overarchingly as the BODY PART FOR PERSON metaphor (Weerayuth 2022). This is likely the result of my neglect in my preliminary research. Notably, there were no instances of novel ‘face’ constructions.

Unsurprisingly, as predicted by hypothesis 2, the majority of constructions used the heart’ psycho-noun. This was 94% of items in NPKT and 88.4% in NMK. Although this is a staggering difference, I would not yet use this as a generalisation for Thai language since the Nirat genre, as mentioned, is concerned with lamenting loss, and therefore the ‘heart’ constructions may therefore be a product of poetic need rather than being a representative of the usage overall.

By oversight, none of my hypotheses accounted for the distribution of the category of compounds produced. The compounds found across both poems turned out to be overwhelmingly adjectives, with 70% of tokens being adjectives in NPKT and 74% in NMK. Most of the remaining are also verbs, with 23% in NPKT and 18% in NMK. The minority were nouns (the two mentioned above) with one occurrence of an adverb (item 30 of NMK).

Another unaccounted-for finding is that of the few ‘face’ usages found, all are V+N constructions. This would need further investigation because intuitively, other types of constructions exist for the ‘face’, notably those with adjective psycho-mates (Ukosakul 2000).

As predicted by Hypothesis 4, I found redundant compounds in both poems (item 10 in NPKT and items 16 and 31 in NMK). For example, in item 9 of Nirat Mueng Klaeng (Fig.3), ชื่นใจ (to be delighted) follows the typical compounding structure, but the first morpheme is a verbal affix used in similar words like ชื่นชม (to admire) or ชื่นบาน (to bloom), making it a bound

morpheme and therefore distinctly unable to stand on its own outside of its use in a compound. Matisoff calls this ‘morphanic mates’ to denote the semantic subtype of psi-collocation where the modifying morpheme cannot stand alone. Another few instances can be seen in item 11 ใจหาย, and item 26 ใจใจ of NMK, amongst others.

Conclusively, what this shows is a highly flexible blueprint of conceptual metaphor construction in Thai that would greatly benefit from further investigation.

6.2 Limitations

The most obvious limitation of this present paper is that I am only one person, and therefore the judgements made on the metaphorical, and further conceptual, property of the lexical items is coded based on my analysis alone. This was offset slightly with the help of the dictionary definitions, but in future would benefit from native speaker input or another researcher’s coding to ensure consistency.

Yet another obvious limitation is that the Nirat genre, regardless of its notoriety, is still only a small thread in the tapestry of the Thai language. Since it is poetry, and perhaps even *because* it is poetry, these findings cannot be extrapolated and generalised to the language as a whole. For example, out of the 17 items in Nirat Phu Khao Thong, 13 items express negative emotions. I could assert based on this then that conceptual metaphors using the source domain ‘heart’ are typically negative, but this would be inaccurate just by consulting my own intuition.

Further research would benefit from judgement tasks administered on native speakers of Thai to gauge the interpretation of conceptual metaphors. For example, measuring the accuracy rate of interpretation for tokens like ‘ใจหาย’ (shocked) which has 6 occurrences versus ‘อ่อยใจ’ (satisfied) which uses the HEART IS THE PERSON conceptual metaphor but only appears once (and is intuitively less frequently encountered). Similarly, an investigation into the saliency of ‘face’ in the conceptual domain could aid in elaborating on why there were no novel constructions. A corpus-based study would also yield useful results if the search options were better accommodated to the idiosyncrasies of the Thai language’s syntax.

7. Conclusion

This paper began with an explanation of the Thai language and the Nirat genre. I then presented a semantic, pragmatic, and cognitive account of metaphor, with the second and third being what is pertinent in analysing figurative language. As is the case for many other theoretical frameworks, there is disagreement on what constitutes a metaphor, and indeed if conceptual metaphors themselves are even theoretically sound. Matisoff (1986) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980)'s approaches were considered in detail when evaluating Thai conceptual metaphors.

My findings yielded both expected results and those unaccounted for, namely the N+N construction and the majority lexical category being adjectives. As predicted, the 'heart' psi-collocations were the most common, and there was evidence of both conventional and novel usage. However, as discussed, my results are only a microcosm of Thai conceptual metaphors since I have only sampled a very small instance of metaphor usage.

What I found most profound in carrying out this research is that conceptual metaphors permeate time and language, recognizable despite diachronic development. It is apparent that the present paper is insufficient in explaining the full picture of conceptual metaphors in the Thai language as there is much more research to be done, though I have laid out the research gaps and therefore what further investigations could entail in the domain of Thai metaphor.

References

- Berendt, E. A., & Tanita, K. (2011). The 'Heart 'of Things: A Conceptual Metaphoric Analysis of Heart and Related Body Parts in Thai, Japanese and English. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 20(1).
- Birner, B. J. (2013). Introduction to pragmatics. Wiley-Blackwell.
<http://www.books24x7.com/marc.asp?bookid=49637>
- Bisang, W. 1991. Verb serialisation, grammaticalisation, and attractor positions in Chinese, Hmong, Vietnamese, Thai and Khmer. In Seiler, Hansjakob and Premper, Waldfried (eds.), Partizipation: das sprachliche Erfassen von Sachverhalten, 509-562. Tübingen: Narr.
- Bovonwiwat, W. (2023). A Review of Studies in Heart or Jai Metaphor in Thai Language. *Manusat Paritat: Journal of Humanities*, 45(2), 68–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/manutparitat.v45i2.266644>
- Croft, W., & Cruse, D. A. (2004). *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803864>
- Clark, H.H. & Marshall, C. R., (1981). Definite Knowledge and Mutual Knowledge. In Elements of Discourse Understanding. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. pp. 10–63.
- Clark, H. H., (1996). Common ground. In *Using Language* (pp. 92–122). chapter, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511620539.005>
- Department of Fine Arts. ระบบคลังข้อมูลดิจิทัล กรมศิลปากร
กระทรวงวัฒนธรรม. นิราศเมืองแกลงและประวัติสุนทรภู่. [ออนไลน์]. <https://digitalcenter.finearts.go.th/ebook/6450f0e9112ef>
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole, & J. L. Morgan. (Eds.), Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3, Speech Acts (pp. 41-58). New York: Academic Press.
<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lis/studypacks/Grice-Logic.pdf>
- Jenny, Mathias. (2001). The aspect system of Thai. Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich. <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-110203>

Kriengkhet, K., Kosawat, K., & Anchaleenukul, S. (2007). A computational linguistics study of compound nouns in Thai. In *Proceedings of the Seventh International Symposium on Natural Language Processing (SNLP 2007)* (pp. 31-36). [A Computational Linguistics Study of Compound Nouns in Thai](#)

Chitakasem, M. (1972). The emergence and development of the Nirat genre in Thai poetry. *Journal of the Siam Society*. 60, 2: 135-168. https://thesiamsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/1972/03/JSS_060_2g_ManasChitkasem_EmergenceAndDevelopmentOfNiratGenre.pdf

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Johnson Metaphors We Live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [\[George_Lakoff,_Mark_Johnson\]_Metaphors_We_Live_By\(BookFi\).pdf - Google Drive](#)

Lakoff, G. (1987). Cognitive models and prototype theory. In U. Neisser (Ed.), *Concepts and conceptual development: Ecological and intellectual factors in categorization* (pp. 63–100). Cambridge University Press.

Langacker, R. W. (1987). *Foundations of cognitive grammar*. Stanford University Press.

Lawler, J. M. (1983). Review of *Metaphors We Live by*, by G. Lakoff & M. Johnson. *Language*, 59(1), 201–207. <https://doi.org/10.2307/414069>

Lewis, D. K., (1969). *Convention: A Philosophical Study*. Cambridge, MA, USA: Wiley-Blackwell. Accessed via: https://eclass.upatras.gr/modules/document/file.php/CEID1184/0%20%CE%93%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC/David%20Lewis%20-%20Convention_%20A%20Philosophical%20Study%20%282002%2C%20Wiley-Blackwell%29.pdf

Matisoff, J. A. (1986). Hearts and minds in South-East Asian languages and English: An essay in the comparative lexical semantics of psycho-collocations. *Cahiers de Linguistique Asie Orientale*, 15(1), 5-57. <https://doi.org/10.3406/clao.1986.1191>

Naknuan, N. (2004). Modern Nirat in the poetry of Angkhan Kalayanaphong and Phaiwarin Khao-Ngam. *Department of Thai, Faculty of Arts*, Chulalongkorn University. ISBN 974-17-6516-9. <https://cuir.car.chula.ac.th/handle/123456789/2695>

na Nagara, P., (2003). Khlong Nirat Hariphunchai. *Vajirayana Library*, Kasetsart University. Accessed via: [Vajirayana Library](#).

Nirat Phu Khao Thong. ประชุมกลอนนิราศต่าง ๆ ภาคที่ ๑ นิราศสุนทรภู่ ๔ เรื่อง. *Vajirayana Library*.

Accessed via: [Vajirayana Online Library](#).

Nirat Mueng Klaeng. ประชุมกลอนนิราศต่าง ๆ ภาคที่ ๑ นิราศสุนทรภู่ ๔ เรื่อง. *Vajirayana Library*.

Accessed via: [Vajirayana Online Library](#).

Nuchamon, J., (2020). A syntactic study of the word HEAD compounding in the Thai language. *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics*, 2020, Vol 17, Issue 5, p160. ISSN: 1336-782X. http://www.skase.sk/Volumes/JTL47/pdf_doc/10.pdf

On-Usa, P., (2011). The syntax of pro-drop in Thai. School of Literature, Language and Linguistics, Newcastle University. Accessed via: <http://hdl.handle.net/10443/1281>

Rachanuphap, D. (1922). In Preface to ประชุมกลอนนิราศต่าง ๆ ภาคที่ ๑ นิราศสุนทรภู่ ๔ เรื่อง. *Vajirayana Library*. Accessed via: [Vajirayana Online Library](#).

Royal Society of Thailand (2010). Royal Society of Thailand Official Dictionary, พจนานุกรมราชบัณฑิตยสถาน ๒๕๕๔. <https://dictionary.orst.go.th/>

Ukosakul, M. (2002). Conceptual metaphors motivating the use of Thai ‘face’. In *PYU Working Papers in Linguistics, Series B: Monographs 2*. Payap University Linguistics Department, Chiang Mai, Thailand. [10.1515_9783110197150.7.275.pdf](https://doi.org/10.1515_9783110197150.7.275.pdf)

Vervaeke, J. & Kennedy, J. M., (2004). Conceptual metaphor and abstract thought. *Metaphor & Symbol*, 19(3), 213–231 DOI: [10.1207/s15327868ms1903_3](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms1903_3)

Weerayuth, W., (2022). CONCEPTUAL BLENDING IN THE MEANING CONSTRUCTION OF NOUN-NOUN COMPOUNDS IN THAI. Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University. <http://ir-ithesis.swu.ac.th/dspace/handle/123456789/2473>

Yupho, K., (1959). จินดามณี (*Jindamani*) เล่ม 1-2 และบันทึกเรื่องหนังสือจินดามณี. โรงเรียนการช่างจุฬาลักษณ์ศึกษา.

พระโหราธิบดี, พระเจ้าบรมวงศ์เธอ กรมหลวง วงษาธิราชสนิท, และ ธนิต อยู่โพธิ์.

<https://vajirayana.org/%E0%B8%88%E0%B8%B4%E0%B8%99%E0%B8%94%E0%B8%B2%E0%B8%A1%E0%B8%93%E0%B8%B5-%E0%B9%80%E0%B8%A5%E0%B9%88%E0%B8%A1-%E0%B9%91-%E0%B9%92>