

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF BODY PART IDIOMS IN IGBO AND CHINESE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Idiomatic expressions are those expressions that a speaker cannot ‘work out’ simply by knowing the grammar and the vocabulary of a language. This study examines the conceptual basis of body part idioms in Igbo and Chinese languages. The study seeks to establish the extent to which certain variations in conceptual values by the speakers of the two languages assist in structuring their creation and use of body parts idioms. Data is collated through secondary sources and researcher’s intuition. The analysis is carried out using the conceptual metaphor theory. The findings show that there are similarities and differences in the conceptual nature of Chinese language and Igbo language which are based on universal embodiment structure and socio-cultural peculiarities. The study recommends that second language learners of the two languages should employ the findings of this work and other comparative studies for easy understanding.

1. Introduction

There are various aspects of communication in terms of language use, which reflects the projection basis upon which speakers understand events. The conceptual basis, in the words of Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 47) are built from the communication constructs across languages, in terms of variability in perceptual. Idioms, in the words of Evans and Green (2006) are one of the major expressions that constitute absolute conceptual basis that has to be described on the basis of the speakers’ perceptual and conceptual value. For proper understanding of the basis of this immediate study, it could be important to streamline simple understanding of idioms, Conceptual metaphor, and the applicability of the theory in the analysis of idioms.

Idiomatic expressions, in the submission of Green and Evans (2006) are those expressions that a speaker cannot ‘work out’ simply by knowing the grammar and the vocabulary of a language. Idiomatic expressions are semantically incoherent in that the meanings of the expressions are not determined by the component units. In other words, speakers deduce the meaning of idioms through the understanding of certain conceptual values that embody the projection of such understanding. This is why idiomatic expressions are described as ‘non-compositional’. Instead, a speaker has to ‘learn them whole’, rather like individual lexical items. Then, what theory is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory? What relevance is it to the study of idioms, and what are the guiding principles that situate the applicability of the theory? Historically, Conceptual Metaphor Theory is supposedly the brain child of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who are two semantic analysts. The theory developed from the view that certain aspect of our daily language is projected from our conceptual basis or the way we understand things. In other words, certain aspects of a particular domain of experience can be used for the understanding of certain things in another domain. In that manner, some aspects of one domain of experience, more physical one, is used in the understanding of other aspects in another domain, more abstract one. The progenitors of this theory, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that in our everyday communication, we usually talk about abstract things using more concrete experience.

Gearerts (2008) discusses an aspect of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth, CMT) that has been applied widely in the analysis of idioms. This concerns establishment of multiple domains which are interconnected by a single projector or conceptual value. In other words, it is possible to understand certain conceptual values in terms of different spaces which are connected by a single conceptual value or understanding.

Some of the conceptual bases that guide the applicability of CMT in the analysis of idioms are:

- i. Inferences are drawn from two domains or more for the projection of conceptual understanding
- ii. There must be the existence of two or more domains or conceptual basis.
- iii. In the conceptual basis, there must be the physical and abstract domains.

In what this particular study aims at, the application of the CMT in analysis of body parts idioms becomes pertinent. The concern of this study is to examine the conceptual basis of body part idioms in Igbo and Chinese languages. The study seeks to establish the extent to which certain variations in conceptual values by the speakers of the two languages assist in structuring their creation and use of body parts idioms. Just for emphasis, body parts idioms are those idioms that contain expressions that encode certain aspects of the human body. So, the research sets to examine the conceptual basis of this category of idioms through the premise of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Following what has been studied already, there seems to be no previous study in the application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory principles in the analysis of the conceptual basis of body parts idioms in Igbo and Chinese. Aniagboso (2015) and Okoye and Mmadike (2016) no doubt are studies of body part idioms in Igbo; however, they are not comparative works. Fan (2017) worked on Chinese and English and other independent studies alike. The position here is that to the best knowledge of the researcher, none has compared body parts idioms in Chinese and Igbo languages. As such, this study is situated on this intellectual gap.

2. Literature Review

Idioms have been studied and defined from different perspective. The dominant is the traditional semantics and literary study approach. In common interpretations, idioms are often rich in imagery, which means that the idiomatic expressions produce concrete images, or pictures, in the minds of people, often in order to convey a more abstract message. This can be seen in the idiom to put the lid on where the concrete image of someone putting a lid on a container is used to convey the more abstract action of preventing something from reaching the public. Since idioms employ so much imagery in their constructions, one might wonder why the idioms have been constructed with these specific imageries.

From the traditional view, all there is to idioms is that, similar to words, they have certain syntactic properties and have a meaning that is special, relative to the meanings of the forms that comprise it. The 'core' conception of idioms in what I term the 'traditional view' is an analysis of idiom as an aspect of language which has nothing to do with inference or projections of various connected domains. For instance:

1. It is raining cat and dog
2. Kill two birds with one stone.
3. Let the cat out of the bag
4. It takes two to Tango
5. Costs an arm and a leg

Within the tradition definition of idioms, these expressions are simply matters of language not thought. If they were just a matter of language, then we would need to characterize only their syntactic properties and meanings one by one. Words are characterized in the lexicon one by one according to their syntactic properties and meaning, and the same is assumed to apply to idioms. In other words, the idioms are simply fixed as they are and the meanings have nothing to do with the human experience and encounter. This is what I understood from the idioms.

From the cognitive linguistics approach, idioms have also been defined and studied. The basis of the cognitive linguistics study or interpretation of idioms is on the conceptual basis of the events or knowledge that informs the creation of idioms. In cognitive terms, an idiom is not an expression that forms its meanings out of its constituting parts, It is rather a product of the conceptual mechanism in producing language and not just simply a formal aspect of language. In other terms, Kovecses (2010:233) argues that idiom arises from "our more general knowledge of the world embodied in our conceptual system. In other words, idioms (or, at least, the majority of them) are conceptual, and not linguistic in nature. Lakoff and Johnson (1991) observe that idioms are linguistic expressions whose

overall meaning cannot be predicted from the meanings of the constituent parts. There is a great deal of systematic conceptual motivation for the meaning of most idioms. Since most idioms are based on conceptual metaphors and metonymies, systematic motivation arises from sets of ‘conceptual mappings or correspondences’ that obtain between a source and a target domain in the sense of Lakoff and Kovecses (1987). We distinguish among three aspects of idiomatic meaning: First, the general meaning of idioms appears to be determined by the particular ‘source domains’ that apply to a particular target domain. Second, more specific aspects of idiomatic meaning are provided by the ‘ontological mapping’ that applies to a given idiomatic expression. Third, connotative aspects of idiomatic meaning can be accounted for by ‘epistemic correspondences. According to Kovecses (2003), to explain or interpret the idiom: *The ball is in your court*. There is the need to explore all the conceptual basis that anchor the understanding what the domain of court is based on. Also the domain of what ‘ball’ represents. It is no longer a matter of the expressions, but the conceptual systems the speakers exhibit which help them to mold a meaning of a ball that is in a court.

Given this analysis, an important generalization can be made. Many, or perhaps most, idioms are products of our conceptual system, and not simply a matter of language (i.e. a matter of the lexicon). An idiom is not just an expression that has meaning that is somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituent parts, but it arises from our more general knowledge of the world (embodied in our conceptual system) In other words, idioms (or, at least, the majority of them) are conceptual, and not linguistic, in nature.

2.1 Typology of Idioms: An Overview

Many researchers have categorized idioms in various ways using different approaches. In other words, what is predominant in the literature is that idioms can be categorized in different ways. O’Grady et al (2011) groups idioms into:

- i. Semantic Idioms: these idioms are said to be picturesque in that their literal meanings may invoke a rich and sometimes bizarre message, and are most often based on metaphor. English examples include kick the bucket, a red herring, pull someone’s leg, and fly by the seat of one’s pants.
- ii. Syntactic Idioms: These are expressions whose syntactic structures cannot be generated by general principles. An English example is by and large as well as six and sevens.

They are Idiomatic pairs, transparent, semi-transparent, semi-opaque, opaque, informal and formal idioms. The first group of idioms is identified based on syntactic structure. The second through the fifth groups are differentiated based on the closeness of idiomatic meanings to their literal meanings. The sixth and seventh groups of idioms are identified by their usage, which depend on function, domain, and topic of discussion as well as the role of the participants in a talk exchange. Fernando (1996) also classifies idioms into pure, semi, literal, ideational, interpersonal and relational idioms. Others are idioms of encoding and idioms of decoding. However, these classifications depend on meaning and syntactic structure.

2.2 Creation of Meanings of Idioms

The ability to decipher the meaning of what is said or written is an important aspect of communication whether one uses literal or figurative language. Mateu and Espinal (2010) draw a distinction between syntactically encoded meaning and conceptually encoded meaning. Referring to the earlier as compositional and the latter as non-compositional, they are of the view that any fruitful study of the semantics of idiomatic constructions is to be based on a clear distinction between syntactically transparent compositional meaning and non-syntactically transparent conceptual ones. Keysar and Bly (1999) maintain that the meaning of idioms is not arbitrary and may offer a window into speakers’ conceptual structure. This can be interpreted to mean that while syntactically encoded meaning offers the literal meaning of idioms, the conceptually encoded meaning provides for figurative meaning. One way of encoding meaning conceptually is through the use of metaphor. Metaphor is defined as the understanding of one concept in terms of another and the representation of abstract concepts in terms of more basic physical and cultural experiences, (O’Grady 2011). It is therefore the duty of the hearer to match these two points with each other. The critical factor here seems to be time. This lends credence to the evolution of slang into idioms. More so, Aitchison (2012) expresses that when humans

consciously use metaphor, they subconsciously follow certain guidelines and tend to compare items from different semantic fields which share minor but obvious characteristics.

2.3 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Various theories have been applied in the study of idioms and other figurative expressions. In this study, the conceptual metaphor theory was applied. This section explains the foundations of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the systems of applicability and the manner in which interpretations are derived. Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which is the adopted theoretical framework in this present research, is a contemporary approach, as noted by (Gibbs, 2008), which extensively builds on the experimental-based documentation of Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Hence, the two researchers are widely recognized as the progenitors of the approach, even when they attribute the development of the theory to the work of Reddy (see Lakoff 1993, 2004, 2006). This section reviews the basic concepts that underpin that premise of the CMT approach in the analysis.

The concern of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), as the primary progenitors of the theory, in the development of the CMT, is to unveil why most of our everyday ordinary concepts are structured in one way rather than the other. The Conceptual Metaphor Theory, CMT, according to Geeraerts (2006) is probably the best known aspect of cognitive linguistics. The theory in the exact words of Geeraerts (2006: 11) “rests on the recognition that a given metaphor need not be restricted to a single lexical item, but may generalize over different expressions.” In a related opinion, Gibbs (2008: 3) notes that the Contemporary approach to metaphor known as Conceptual Metaphor Theory unveils the fact that “metaphor is not simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their own activities.”. The theory, according to Knowles and Moon (2006) establishes the position that certain abstract concepts such as time, love, life, emotion, thought itself, society, politics and policies, government and governance, etc. are clearly comprehended through the prism of other relevant concrete ones, which provide the basic tools for the cross domain mapping projection.

The whole idea of conceptual metaphor is summarized in the words of Lakoff (2006: 304) when he objectively posits that “we talk of conceptual metaphors when one gets away from concrete physical experience and starts to talk about abstracts or emotion”, and through this approach, the CMT now deepens the general understanding of the pervasiveness of metaphor in our cognitive structure and in our common daily language. What is now referred to as ‘metaphor’ entails “a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system” (Lakoff, 1993: 4).

The application of the system of CMT in this study is set to unveil the manner in which various conceptual structures can account for the interpretations of body-parts idioms in Igbo and Chinese.

2.4 Empirical Studies

Many studies have been carried out in the examination of the nature of idioms across language, including the Nigerian languages. What this section sets to do is to examine and review some previous studies in this regard.

One study that is fundamentally related to what this particular work is focusing is Mmadike and Okoye (2016). This particular study, using Igbo idioms pertaining to body-parts, attempts to ascertain the cognitive operations that apply in Igbo idiomatic meaning interpretation. Data for the study were extracted from Igbo textbooks and analysed based on the cognitive linguistics framework. The study shows that the figurative meanings of the selected body-part idioms are generally achieved by conventional knowledge, metaphor and metonymy. It equally reveals that conventional knowledge is a basic tool in idiomatic meaning interpretation as it can solely account for the meaning of an expression. Finally, it can be concluded that a single cognitive mechanism or a combination of two or more of such mechanisms can be employed in the figurative meaning interpretation of Igbo body-parts idioms. Below are some instances of the analysis of idioms by Mmadike and Okoye (2016):

1. *Ọ gbàrà isi akwarà* He is stubborn

This expression is used to describe an adamant person. The meaning of the expression is motivated by our conventional knowledge of taproots and the difficulties associated with trying to uproot them. Akwarà (taproot) in the concrete source domain maps into stubbornness in the abstract target domain. Another motivation in the meaning construction of this idiom is HEAD STANDS FOR A PERSON METONYMY because the attitude of a whole is ascribed to a part (the head). We can therefore, claim that conventional knowledge, metaphor and metonymy are at work as cognitive mechanisms in the meaning interpretation of the expression.

2. isi inū ọkụ

Head on fire

to be brilliant

Isi nà ànụ nwàtā à ọkụ

This child is very brilliant

This idiom is used to describe someone that is very intelligent. The head being the part of the body associated with reasoning stands for the whole person in the expression. The head in the idiom also stands for intelligence. Our conventional knowledge about the head as a vital part of the body together with THE HEAD STANDS FOR INTELLIGENCE and THE HEAD STANDS FOR A PERSON metonymies are employed in the meaning interpretation of this idiom.

3. itị kō isi ọnū

To put heads together to deliberate (on an issue)

Ànyị gà ètikọ isī ọnū banyere mkpesa ahụ

We will deliberate concerning that complaint.

This expression is used when diverse opinions are sought on an issue. Based on our conventional knowledge, we know that when people deliberate on an issue, they come up with different ideas which emanate from the head. These ideas are seen as physical entities stored in the head. Therefore, conventional knowledge, the metonymy THE HEAD STANDS FOR A PERSON and the metaphor THE HEAD IS A CONTAINER are used to achieve the meaning interpretation of the expression.

Then, the emergence of the conceptual metaphor methods in the analysis of everyday language in the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) titled 'Metaphors We Live By' instantly initiates the application of the method by various cognitive linguists and cognitive psychologists in the examination of the daily language. Many scholars have adopted the method in various areas, especially in the analysis of the role of idioms in the human thought system. This section presents a brief review of some of the works. The presentation follows a simple chronological arrangement.

The introduction of the conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson in their work unveils two dimensional approaches to the study of idioms as it relates to the structure of human thought. First is the language based metaphors, and the second is the universal metaphors. Actually, there is no clear cut difference between the two methods above; what is prominent is that some scholars have applied the CMT approach in the analysis of their language, and the review intends to follow the dimension.

The work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) which lays the foundation for contemporary conceptual metaphor analysis was conducted in the English language, although the approach the scholars present the idioms tend to suggest that idioms are universal as they are issues of the thought and not language. However, the linguistic realizations may differ in various languages. For instance, in the analysis of the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY, the authors note that the Western society, not only English speaking Western societies, conceptualize TIME as a kind of LIMITED RESOURCES. In this way, the speakers can afford to SPEND TIME, GIVE TIME, WASTE TIME, etc, as though MONEY is been spent, give or waste, (cf Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993, 2004, 2006). As time goes on, the application of the CMT approach in the examination of certain abstract concepts become prominent. For instance, in 1986, Kovecses, in a work titled "Metaphor of Emotion" applied the CMT methods in the analysis of certain concepts such as 'love, anger, pride, hatred'. The research was conducted in the English language but some of the concepts were translated into other European languages in order to establish the argument of the research. In 1999, O'Gladly conducted a cross-linguistic analysis of size concepts in Zulu, Hawaiian, Turkish, and Malay, which is a vast cognitive examination of the manner

in which the speakers conceptualize size related concepts. This research predicates the examination of how different material cultures exert influence in the formation of the container schema concepts in the Zapoteco language spoken within the Mexico area. A very elaborate application of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory is evident in the works of Gibbs, who has conducted extensive researches in the conceptual structure of idiom. His works in this regard are quite monumental in contemporary examination of everyday language within the purview of the CMT approach. During the research we noticed there is not much research work on the comparative study of body part idioms between the two languages that's why we took up this study

3. Methodology

Data for this study is collated through secondary sources. The Chinese idioms are drawn from a software learning application 'trainchinese version 9.63.8' design for researching and learning of Chinese languages. The Igbo idioms are gotten from Okoye and Mmadike (2016). The existence of these Chinese idioms are confirmed by the students in upper level in Chinese department. While the Igbo idioms are confirmed by the intuition of the speaker. Data collated from the studies mentioned above will be analyzed descriptively, attention will be to exemplify the existence of body parts idioms in these two languages. There will be comparison and extraction of differences. The onions for analysis will be the conceptual metaphor analysis approach. Focus will be on the conceptual basis and cultural projections that embody the conceptualization.

4. Body part Idioms in Igbo

Given the limited period of data collection and analysis, the idioms with the head and hand are discussed.

'THE HEAD'

1. O gbara isi akwara
He/she developed head tendons
He is disobedient and unyielding
2. Ibu n' isi
To carry in head
To know something off heart
3. Iti ko isi onu
To put together head mouth
To deliberate on an issue
4. Isi inu oku
Head to get hot fire
To be brilliant
5. Ida n' isi
To fall in head
To be solely responsible (Okoye and Mmadike 2016)

From the presented data above, 5 idiomatic expression related to the head were submitted. The five examples exhibit similar conceptual structure. In other words, the manner of the understanding of the idiomatic expression of head in general emanates from the projected activities and understandings that surrounds the system of the conceptual element.

From the above examples, Igbo language sees 'head' as when it is tough and over bearing, it shows that the person is unyielding as seen in example 1 'Akwara' has to deal with a matured tree, so when a head is grown or over mature, it signifies unyielding.

However, In Igbo language head is also seen as the central point of cognition and intelligent as seen in examples 2, 3, 4 and 5. From example 4, 'head' is seen as a vital instrument. When the head is heated it brings a brilliant idea, then from example 3, if you put heads together it gives

perfect wisdom. The head likewise can be used to store a lot of information as seen in example 2. Only an instrument so viable, efficient and highly technical can perform these functions. This shows that the Igbo people conceptualized the head as the highest point of cognition and intelligent to accord it such responsibility or function. No wonder when one behaves in such a way that is not expected, he or she may be asked

‘Isi odikwa gi mma
Head is it you good
Are you okay?

‘THE HAND’

6. Imu okwa n’aka
To carry guinea fowl in hand
To be very early
7. Ime aka abuo
To do hand two
To steal
8. Ichi n’aka
To carry in hand
To know in details
9. Inye aka azu
To give hand back
To give bribe
10. Isere aka n’ okwu
To remove hand in conversation
To totally withdrawn support
11. I tinye aka
To put hand
To help

(Okoye and Mmadike 2016)

Unlike the head which wielded a common or conventional elevation as the central cognitive control system. The status or image of the hand varies, the common ground in that it is perceived or conceptualized as an initiator of an activity. Given the part that controls intellectualism and values (that is the head) the hand is just a mere tool. It is with this understanding, that one can accept the negativity and positioning portrayed in No 6-11. However while example 6 is positive about punctuality, example 7 has a negative understanding likewise example 8 portrays the grip of the speaker on the subject matter. A negative action of bribery is initiated by the part of the body as seen in example 9. This different manifestation reveals that the hand is a tool for initiating actions.

4.2 Idioms of the part of body in Chinese language

Given the limited period of data collection and analysis, the idioms with the head and hand are discussed.

‘THE HEAD’

12. 头重脚轻
tóu zhòng jiǎo qīng
Head Heavy Foot Light(adj)
To have an unstable foundation
13. 好戏在后头
hǎo xì zài hòu tou
Good game in(preposition) Behind head(n)
The really good part of the game is yet to come
14. 独占鳌头
dú zhàn áo tóu
Control Huge sea Head Turtle(n)

It means to be the champion

15. 出人头地

chū rén tóu dì

Go out people Head (PAR)

To become outstanding

(Trainchinese)

The culture and world view as seen in the examples exposes the importance also attached to the head as the think tank of the whole body. Example 12, attributes the adjective ‘heavy’ to the head in a manner that suggests a construction consisting of many departments, sections and sub units. This construction of course is laden with so much responsibility that any lapse in its preparatory/learning stage maybe problematic. Example 13, builds on the afore mentioned points. The head in its full functional capacity as expected will only give rise to better things. The Idiom in consonance to this, positions every good thing and better ones rightly behind the head. In other words, the best place to look for good, genuine, valuable things, ideas, innovations, is right after a good reflection and thought, given the right information.

Likewise in example 15, these values of cognition, intelligence, think tank attributed to the head is put to test in the sense that, extraordinary achievement is measured in Chinese when the product of your intelligence walks away from what is generally obtainable.

‘THE HAND’

16. 一手一足

yī shǒu yī zú

One Hand One. foot

It means a single effort

17. 十目十手

shí mù shí shǒu

Ten eyes ten hands

You cannot escape the public

18. 手舞足蹈

shǒu wǔ zú dǎo

Hand dance(n) foot To step(v)

To dance for joy

19. 眼疾手快

yǎn jí shǒu kuài

Eyes disease hand Fast(Adj)

To have sharp eyes and agile hands

20. 一个巴掌拍不响

yí gè bā zhāng pāi bù xiǎng

One hand To clap To make a sound(v)

It takes two to make a quarrel

(Trainchinese)

The Chinese language has body part ‘hand’ in them, they were presented in the section above. In this section, one notable thing in the above idioms is that there is usually the need to include another body part together with the body part ‘hand’ in the realization of the idiomatic expression. However, ‘hand’ in these examples means effort, escape, joy, and agility. But this was able to be achieved with the help of the other part of the body.

This goes a long way to suggest that ‘hand’ is considered dependent in Chinese culture and may not be solely responsible for all the products.

5. Analysis and Discussions

This section is an analysis and discussion of the presented data. The presentation of the data was able to unveil the fact that both the Igbo language and Chinese language has cases of body part idioms. This section aims at discussing similarities and differences between body part idioms in Igbo language and body parts in Chinese language. To achieve this, it is divided into two main subsections. The similarities in Igbo language and Chinese language will be treated first in the following section.

5.1 Similarities between Igbo body part Idioms and Chinese body part Idioms

This section given the collected data will bring out the similarities between the Igbo body part idioms and Chinese body part idioms.

The similarity to be discussed are based on:

1. Dependency in function
2. Assigning of roles

5.1.1 Dependency in function

This is interpreted in this research to be the inability of some body part to effectively complete a task, from the Chinese point of view, the idioms containing the body part hand were interpreted to mean effort, escape, joy, agility but these perception were not fully conceptualized without the help of other body part such as ‘foot’ and the ‘eyes’ as seen in example 21.

21. 一手一足

yī shǒu yī zú
One Hand One. foot
It means a single effort

Where ‘shou’ hand and ‘zu’ foot work together to produce effort

In Igbo the dependency in the function takes another turn. The overall interpretation of the idioms containing hand as discussed in the previous section show that hand can carry out functions at polar ends. Activities such as stealing and bribery to others such as punctuality, offering help and expertise. These two extreme in functions shows that the hand is controlled by a higher system, so while the Chinese need another body part to perform a task the Igbo idioms suggest the fact that the Igbo people need another body part (brain) to propel the hand.

5.1.2 Assigning of Roles

The Chinese body part idioms and Igbo body part idioms with the body part ‘head’ are similar in the assigning of roles. They regard the head as:

1. The central point of cognition
2. Body part with the highest responsibility

The head is seen as the central point of cognition and intelligence in both Chinese and Igbo given the fact that it is expected to bring out good ideas, fight challenges, emerge victorious and becoming outstanding. The complexity of the head given the fact that it harbors the ears, the eyes, the nose and the mouth qualifies it for this position. This similarity may not be necessary based on culture because the head takes this responsibility even biologically. So the similarity in Chinese and Igbo may be a mere reflection of the biological makeup of the body.

Consequently, this natural role assigns a deep sense of responsibility to the head. It is the duty of the head to heat up to bring up brilliant ideas as seen in example 22

22. Isi inu oku
Head to get hot fire
To be brilliant

It is also the duty of the head to store information as seen in example 23

23. Ibu n' isi
To carry in head
To know something by heart

However the duty of the head is to outsmart other heads as seen in the Chinese example 2

24. 出人头地
chū rén tóu dì
Go out people Head (PAR)
To become outstanding

Another responsibility of the head is to be an initiator or fore runner of greater things. This is evident in the Chinese idiom in example 25

25. 好戏在后头
hǎo xì zài hòu tóu
Good game in(preposition) Behind head(n)
The really good part of the game is yet to come

Looking at the examples from Igbo and Chinese languages, they show that the head is the highest point of responsibility while the Chinese and Igbo idioms have a lot in common, there are also landmark differences. These will be discussed in the next section.

5.2 Differences in Igbo and Chinese

The differences in Chinese and Igbo idioms to be discussed in this section includes

1. Structural difference
2. Body part differences
3. Polar end meaning differences

5.2.1 Structural difference

The idioms in Chinese are structurally constrained to only 4 words. Consider these examples:

26. 十目十手
shí mù shí shǒu
You cannot escape the public
27. 手舞足蹈
shǒu wǔ zú dǎo
To dance for joy
28. 眼疾手快
yǎn jí shǒu kuài
To have sharp eyes and agile hands
29. 头重脚轻
tóu zhòng jiǎo qīng
To have an unstable foundation

There may be a reason for this, which is not captured within the scope of this work. The study into the origin of Chinese idioms may answer these questions. However, in Igbo although idioms are always short there is no specific number of words to be used. Examples of Igbo idioms can be seen from the data presentation.

5.2.2 Body part content difference

This talks about the number of body part involved in an idiom. The Chinese Idioms for 'hand' collected for this research work all have extra body part accompanying them. Examples are below:

30. 一手一足

yī shǒu yī zú
One Hand One. Foot
It means a single effort

31. 十目十手

shí mù shí shǒu
Ten eyes ten hands
You cannot escape the public

This fact is not established given the limited data. This observation may call for more study. In Igbo however, the idioms containing the body part hand do not come with another body part as seen in these examples

32. Inye aka azu

To give hand back
To give bribe

33. Isere aka n' okwu

To remove hand in conversation
To totally withdrawn support

5.2.3 Polar end meaning difference

In Chinese the meaning from the idioms are always related and tends toward an extreme as seen in Chinese idioms in section 4.

Conversely the Igbo idioms fore hand represent two extremes of values which are the positive value and the negative value.

6. Conclusion

The difference and similarities have number of implications for secondary language learners. Idiom is a tricky aspect of the human communication. Native language users are usually at ease with the use of idioms more than second language learners as a result of the observed variations in structure and conceptualization as such, Chinese learners of the Igbo language may find Igbo idioms difficult to interpret or even use as a result of the variations in structure and in conceptualizations. Also, this may be true of the Igbo learners of Chinese language, however due to certain point of similarities and accepted social projections that cut across language and social classes.

Following what has been presented and analyzed, it is thus important to conclude that:

1. There are different body parts idioms in the Chinese and Igbo languages.
2. The speakers of the two languages usually conceptualize the general body parts idioms through the socio-cultural projections and understandings of what happened with a particular body part and other accompanied narratives.
3. The idioms of hand operate in a different system in the two languages. In the Igbo language, there are usually accompanied by any other body parts. The opposite is seen in the Chinese language in which another body part usually accompanies the body part 'hand' in a single idiom. Also, in the Igbo language, there is usually a verb that precedes the body part element 'hand'. The verbs are usually the prompts to interpretation what happened in or on the hand through which the intended meaning of the idiom is further structured.
4. In the Chinese language, there are no verbs that triggers or stimulates the interpretation of what happens with the hand. Rather, the combination of two body parts usually gives direction in terms of projection and conceptual basis. It is usually through the interpretation of what the combination n of two body parts could yield that embodies the intended meaning of the idioms.
5. The differences and similarities have number of implications for second language learners. Idiom is a tricky aspect of the human communication. Native language users are usually at ease with the use of idioms more than second language learners as a result of the observed difference in structure and conceptualization.
6. The work to an extent has dealt with these conceptual differences.

Given the limited period for this research, certain issues are not yet established. This work recommends that more data be gathered for study into the origin of idioms in China, the combination of hand and the other body part in Igbo.

The study also recommends other comparative study in the languages to encourage second language learners.

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