

# DeLiVERing an Introduction to Psycho-collocations with SIAB in White Hmong

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Tus tɰ laug mas siab kub  
CLF older brother TOPIC liver hot

Toi, l'ainé, tu es méchant notoire

Tus tɰ laug mus txua nruas dub  
CLF older brother go make gong black

Tu vas faire un gong noir;

Tus tɰ laug mas siab nkhaus  
CLF older brother TOPIC liver crooked

Toi, l'ainé, qui a le cœur pervers

Tus tɰ laug mus txua nruas hlau  
CLF older brother go make gong iron

Tu vas te faire un gong de fer.

Tus kwv mas siab ncaj  
CLF younger brother TOPIC liver straight

Toi, le cadet, qui a un cœur d'or

Tus kwv mus txua nruas daj<sup>1</sup>  
CLF younger brother go make gong yellow

Tu vas te faire un gong jaune or;

Tus kwv mas siab zoo  
CLF younger brother TOPIC liver good

Toi, le cadet, qui a un cœur droit

Tus kwv mus txua nruas ntoo  
CLF younger brother go make gong wood

Tu vas te faire un gong de bois.

(From Jean Mottin, *Contes et Légendes Hmong Blanc*)<sup>2</sup>

In Western cultures the heart is typically considered to be the primary seat of the emotions; in contrast, in Hmong culture, LUB SIAB 'the liver' is viewed as the locus of choice (LUB being the classifier associated with SIAB

<sup>1</sup> DUB 'black' is a "bad" color in Hmong culture (cf. SIAB DUB 'liver black' = 'wicked, evil'). The status of DAJ 'yellow', however, is uncertain to me at this point. In this poem, it is a "good" color since it is associated with the younger brother. In CUA DAJ CUA DUB 'wind yellow wind black' = 'storm', on the other hand, it is associated with DUB 'black', and has negative connotations. More data are necessary before drawing conclusions on its interpretation. It may be that in the poem, DAJ 'yellow' was used to rhyme with NCAJ 'straight'.

<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Brenda Johns for pointing this poem out to me.

in this case; see below). The speaker in the beautifully-crafted poem above, a female spirit, characterizes two brothers: the older one has a "hot" and "crooked" liver, while the younger one has a "good" and "straight" liver. In other words, the former is hot-tempered and dishonest, and the latter is kind, gentle, and honest. This poem illustrates the usage of metaphorical expressions in Hmong involving the liver as the organ of choice rather than the heart: the younger brother is (literally) "good-livered" rather than "good-hearted".

These constructions involving the liver are by no means limited to poetry and to depicting personality traits, as exemplified in the verses above. They are used in everyday language, and (as we will see in this paper) form a rich collection which shows that the liver is the primary seat of the emotions, intellectual or mental processes, and physical sensations in the Hmong world-view. The central role played by the liver is also reflected in the fact that the language has a syntactic device for differentiating between the liver as physical organ and the liver as seat of the affections: using different classifiers. The classifier NPLOOJ, which is used with nouns referring to leaf-like entities<sup>3</sup>, is associated with SIAB when it refers to the physical organ (this, of course, makes good sense when one thinks of the lobes of the liver), and the classifier LUB, which is used with nouns referring to round and/or bulky things as well as with numerous abstract nouns, is associated with SIAB when it refers to the seat of the affections.

While it is true that "Western" languages abound with metaphorical expressions involving the heart (cf. English 'take heart', 'lose heart', 'a change of heart', 'to one's heart's content', 'big-hearted', 'cold-hearted', and French 'sans cœur', 'avoir un cœur d'or', 'ne pas porter quelqu'un dans son cœur', 'écœuré', etc.), they also typically treat the expression of mental activities, qualities of personality, or emotions as a *covert* class. There is nothing in the words 'understand, decide, patient, brave, satisfied, scared etc.' which explicitly points to the *locus* where the implied psychological phenomena unfold, i.e. there is no word which explicitly means 'heart, liver, stomach, mind, spirit, etc.' In sharp contrast, Hmong — along with many other East and Southeast Asian languages — tends to treat the expression of emotional and mental states or processes much more like an *overt* class via what Matisoff (1986) has termed "psycho-collocations." In his words, a psycho-collocation is "a polymorphemic expression referring as a whole to a mental process, quality, or state, one of whose constituents is a 'psycho-noun,' i.e. a noun with explicit psychological reference (translatable by English words like *heart, mind, spirit, soul, temper, disposition, mood*). The rest of the psycho-collocation contains morphemes (usually action verbs:

<sup>3</sup> NPLOOJ is also used with NTSWS 'lung', for instance.

or adjectives) that complete the meaning. This element we call the 'psycho-mate'. (...) Thus:

Psycho-noun + Psycho-mate = Psycho-collocation." (Mattisoff 1986:4)

In this paper I wish to demonstrate that SIAB 'liver' is the psycho-noun of choice in Hmong via an analysis of the numerous psycho-collocations in which it occurs. The data have been arranged according to the metaphorical meanings conveyed by the psycho-collocations: meanings dealing with moral characteristics/personality traits, mental processes/states, and emotions ranging from anger to satisfaction, fear, confusion, and a few others. Along the way, I will also try to show that while the overt expression of these meanings differs in Hmong, there are similarities between Hmong and English on a conceptual level.

In light of our familiarity with the metaphorical role of the heart, however, I will begin the discussion by attempting to answer the following questions: does the heart play a metaphorical role in Hmong culture at all, and if so what is it? From the data gathered, the following conclusions can be drawn: by itself, PLAWV 'heart' can be used metaphorically as literal center, but not as seat of the emotions. However, in conjunction with SIAB 'liver', it can function as a locus for emotions, and in conjunction with PLAB 'stomach', it can serve as a locus for intellect. These three metaphorical extensions of PLAWV 'heart' are expanded on below.

(A) *PLAWV 'heart' as literal center.* Let us consider the following data:

1. PLAWV ZOOV  
heart jungle = 'the heart of the jungle'
2. PLAWV ZOS  
heart village = 'the middle of the village'
3. PLAWV KEV  
heart road = 'the middle of the road'
4. PLAWV TEB  
heart field = 'the middle of the field'
5. PLAWV NTUJ  
heart sky = 'the middle of the sky'
6. PLAWV NTOO  
heart tree = 'the heart of a tree'

7. PLAWV TSAWB  
heart banana tree = 'the heart of a banana tree'
8. NTOO KHOOB PLAWV  
tree empty heart = 'a hollow tree' (literally 'a tree with  
an empty heart')

These phrases show that PLAWV 'heart' is used metaphorically to refer to the literal center/core of words connoting spaces (#1-5) as well as trees (#6-8). The source domain of these metaphors is the heart, and the target domain is space. As pointed out by Matisoff (1986:15), "the metaphorical connection between the heart and the central/innermost part is found in both Eastern and Western languages" (cf. English 'the heart of a rose', the 'heart of Chinatown', etc., or French 'le cœur de la salade', 'au cœur de l'été', 'au cœur de la ville', etc.) However, as far as I can tell, the metaphor only extends to the *physical* realm in Hmong, whereas it includes the abstract realm in familiar Western languages (cf. English 'the heart of the matter', or French 'le cœur du problème', etc.)

(B) PLAWV 'heart' as locus for emotions in elaborate expressions with SIAB 'liver'.

As said above, so far I have not found any psycho-collocations in which the heart by itself is used as the seat of the emotions. I have, however, come across a few elaborate expressions<sup>4</sup> in which PLAWV is used as a locus for emotions, and this in conjunction with SIAB 'liver'. Elaborate (i.e. multi-morphemic) expressions may be viewed as a device that primarily monosyllabic languages such as Hmong use to give "weight" to otherwise "light" and short syllables, and are hence very common. PLAWV 'heart' is found in some elaborate expressions involving SIAB 'liver', as seen below:

1. IB LUB SIAB IB LUB PLAWV  
one CLF liver one CLF heart = 'united in the heart, of one  
and the same feeling'
2. LWJ SIAB LWJ PLAWV  
rotten (in) liver rotten (in) heart = 'to be all upset, in turmoil,  
disheartened'

<sup>4</sup> The phrase "elaborate expression" was originally coined by M. R. Haas, and has been used extensively by linguists working on Southeast Asian languages (see Matisoff 1986 for more details.)

3. MOB SIAB MOB PLAWV  
 hurt (in) liver hurt (in) heart = 'to feel heartbroken, hurt,  
 distressed, upset, wounded'
4. TU SIAB TSEEM TSHUAV PLAWV  
 break (in) liver still remain heart  
 = (literally) 'my liver is broken, but I've got some heart left'  
 = 'I am not distressed for so little' (said in joking) or 'I am not  
 letting this get to me'

In these elaborate expressions, my speculation is that PLAWV 'heart' is used as a "backup", as though SIAB 'liver' were not enough of a locus to express the idea of unity or emotional turmoil (#1-3). This is particularly clear in sentence #4 where the "resources" of the liver have been exhausted, and the heart has to be resorted to for contrastive purposes.

It is also interesting to note that whereas the liver as a physical organ is distinguished from the liver as seat of the affections via the use of different classifiers (see above), this is not the case with PLAWV 'heart'. Only one classifier, namely LUB, seems to be associated with it, which may be considered as an additional clue that the heart plays a very limited metaphorical role in Hmong culture.

(C) *PLAWV 'heart' as a locus for intellect in elaborate expressions with PLAB 'stomach'.*

In addition to its literal meaning — the stomach as physical organ — PLAB has also been described as the "abdominal region regarded as a seat of the intelligence" (Helmbach 1979:247). This is seen in PLAB LOJ (literally 'stomach big'), which means 'wise, intelligent'. Here again, as in the case of SIAB, PLAWV 'heart' is found in conjunction with another organ, and seems to serve as a "backup". This is illustrated in the following elaborate expressions:

1. PLAB PLAW<sup>5</sup> LOJ  
 stomach heart big = 'wise, intelligent'
2. NEEG PLAB PLAW NTHUAV  
 person stomach heart open up, unfold = 'wise and intelligent  
 person'

<sup>5</sup> PLAWV 'heart' has undergone tone sandhi both here and in the following elaborate expression, which seems to indicate that it forms a compound with PLAB 'stomach' (in tight syntactic constructions, the high tone of the first element can trigger a tone change in the following element; here, the mid rising tone of PLAWV has become a mid tone). So we may be dealing with a noun compound here rather than an elaborate expression.

Hence, we may tentatively conclude that PLAWV 'heart' is the source domain for some spatial metaphors [cf. data under (A)], and that it seems to function as a "backup" in conjunction with SIAB 'liver' or PLAB 'stomach' [cf. data under (B) and (C), respectively]. Let us now turn our attention to the psycho-collocations with SIAB and discuss them along the parameters defined earlier.

## I. MORAL CHARACTERISTICS/PERSONALITY TRAITS:

The psycho-collocations listed in this section are used to depict qualities of character and personality traits. Typically, the psycho-mates here are antonymic adjective<sup>6</sup> pairs (#1-21) referring to size/shape, color, weight, temperature, constriction, and solidity/strength.

### 1. SIAB NTEV

liver long = 'patient, even-tempered'

### 2. SIAB LUV

liver short = 'impatient, short-tempered'

In English, the notion of "impatience" can also be conveyed by a psycho-collocation which makes use of the psycho-mate "short", namely "short-tempered". The same conceptual metaphor is found in "to be on a short fuse" as well. But, interestingly enough, we have neither the antonymic psycho-collocation "long-tempered" nor the metaphor "to be on a long fuse".

### 3. SIAB NCAJ

liver straight = 'morally honest and upright'

### 4. SIAB NKHAUS

liver crooked = 'dishonest, not straightforward'

English also uses "straight" and "crooked", the psycho-mates found in #3 and #4 respectively, to convey the same metaphorical meanings as Hmong. We speak of "going straight", "a straight answer", "walking on a straight path", and, of course, of "crooks". English has carried the metaphor found in #3 so far as to use "straight" for sexual conduct sanctioned by the moral majority (which, as many of us know, is neither).

<sup>6</sup> In Hmong, "adjectives" should of course be viewed as stative verbs since there is no copula.

5. SIAB LOJ  
liver big, large = 1. 'generous' (LPV7) (cf. "big-hearted")  
2. 'brave' (M + B)
  6. SIAB ME  
liver small = 1. 'not generous, stingy' (LPV) 2. 'discouraged' (M)
  7. SIAB DAV  
liver wide, broad = 'generous, kind, gracious'
  8. (a) SIAB NQAIM (b) SIAB TI  
liver narrow liver narrow, dense, close together  
= 'miserly, stingy, selfish'
  9. SIAB DAWB  
liver white = 'pure, faultless'
  10. SIAB DUB  
liver black = 'wicked, evil, a "black" heart, unmerciful'
- #9 and #10 point to traditional color metaphors also found in English: WHITE IS GOOD, and BLACK IS BAD.
11. SIAB HUV  
liver clean = 'upright and faultless'
  12. SIAB TSIS HUV  
liver NEG clean = 'person who steals'
  13. SIAB NTSHIAB  
liver clear, fresh (of water)  
= 1. 'a clean, clear heart; a transparent person; open-hearted' (H)  
2. '(Christian) holy, saint' (B)
  14. SIAB TAWV  
liver hard, tough, stiff = 1. 'hard-hearted, firm in purpose' (H)  
2. 'brave, strong' (B + LPV)

<sup>7</sup> The following abbreviations have been used to refer to data sources where a given psycho-collocation varies in translation or nuance: LPV = Lopao Vang, Hmong language consultant; M = Mottin (1978); B = Bertrais (1979); H = Helmbach (1979).

15. SIAB MUAG  
liver soft, pliable, weak = 1. 'teachable, humble' (H)  
2. 'weak personality, weakling' (B)
16. SIAB SIB  
liver light (as in weight) = 'docile'
17. SIAB HNYAV  
liver heavy = 1. 'slow in obeying, in deciding' (M + B)  
2. 'heavy-hearted, sorrowful, distressed' (H)
18. KUB SIAB  
hot liver = 'zealous, earnest'

Some of the psycho-collocations listed above are roughly synonymous in terms of their metaphorical extensions, and can be found juxtaposed, yielding the following elaborate expressions:

19. SIAB LOJ SIAB TAWV  
liver big liver hard = 'brave, strong, courageous' (#5 + #14)
20. SIAB DAWB SIAB HUV  
liver white liver clean = 'pure, faultless, perfect' (#9 + #11)
21. SIAB HUV SIAB NTSHIAB  
liver clean liver clear = 'pure, holy, faultless' (#9 + #13)

While antonymic adjective pairs represent the typical psycho-mates in psycho-collocations used to depict moral characteristics/personality traits, I have also found a few such collocations where the psycho-mate is a verb, or verb phrase. This is seen in #22-24:

22. SIAB HLOB  
liver grow = 'covetous, gluttonous, wants it all' (B: 'qui a des désirs démesurés' [emphasis mine])
23. SIAB TXIA NTSHAV  
liver ooze blood = 'wicked, evil, cruel'

#10 and #23 can be juxtaposed, yielding an elaborate expression I would not want to be used to describe anyone:



24. SIAB DUB SIAB TXIA NTSHAV  
liver black liver ooze blood = 'wicked, evil, cruel'

Finally, let us mention a psycho-collocation which has puzzled me for a long time:

25. SIAB POB TAUB  
liver a) POB TAUB = ball-like + gourd, pumpkin(-like)  
b) POB TAUB = short (B)  
= 'impatient'

Until very recently I thought that the mate of SIAB in #25 was a compound noun (see glosses for each element), but I just discovered an entry in Bertrals' dictionary which lists POB TAUB as meaning 'short'. I do not know how POB TAUB differs from the more common word for 'short', namely LUV, but it seems as though we are dealing with a psycho-collocation which is equivalent to #2, i.e. SIAB LUV liver short = 'impatient'.

## II. MENTAL PROCESSES/STATES:

The psycho-collocations listed in this section differ from those above in the following way: structurally, the mates of SIAB are "true" motion or action verbs rather than antonymic adjective pairs, and metaphorically, the collocations refer to mental processes/states rather than moral characteristics/personality traits. Hence, these psycho-collocations show that the liver is also viewed as the organ where the intellect operates.

1. NKAG SIAB  
crawl liver = 'to understand' (literally 'to crawl into the liver')
2. TO SIAB  
be pierced with a hole liver = 'to understand'  
(metaphorically 'penetrating to the understanding')
3. SIAB NTHUAV  
liver unfold, unroll, open out as a book = 'to have reached the age  
of wisdom, of mature reflection'
4. SIAB QHWV QUAV  
liver wrapped feces = 'mentally "constipated", i.e. unable to think'

#1-4 show that the liver is treated as a receptacle for intellectual processes. As seen in #1-2, knowledge comes in from the outside (cf.

English "it came to me", "to be receptive") so that when the liver is opened up as in #3, one has attained a state of wisdom. On the other hand, when the liver is "wrapped in feces" as in #4, nothing can get in, and all intellectual activity is blocked.

5. TXIAV SIAB

cut liver = 'to decide, make a decision'

Matisoff (1986) has shown that the psycho-collocation in #5 is based on a metaphor which seems to reflect a fairly universal human thought process: languages as varied as Thai, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Latin, French, Jingpho, Burmese, and Lahu rely on a "cut/sever" metaphor to express the notion of deciding.

6. NPAJ SIAB

prepare liver = 1. 'to prepare the heart (as for instruction, etc.)' (H)  
2. 'to get mentally ready to do something' (LPV)

7. HLOOV

SIAB

change (clothes, name, etc.) liver = 'to have a change of mind/heart'

8. RAU

SIAB

put, place liver = 'to apply oneself to do sth.'  
(cf. "put all your heart into it", or "put your mind to it")

By adding the psycho-noun SIAB in #6-8 the literal meanings of the verbs acquire a mental dimension, which once again shows that the liver is the organ where mental activity is perceived to take place. This is also seen in #9 where the psycho-noun SIAB occurs with the quantifier "many" as its mate, yielding a psycho-collocation with a mental metaphorical extension. The language also takes advantage of the fact that it has two quantifiers meaning "many", one which typically only occurs with animate nouns (COOB), and one which occurs with either animate or inanimate nouns (NTAU) to express the notion of indecisiveness via the elaborate expression found in #9b. The fact that COOB "many", which is usually reserved for animate nouns, occurs with SIAB "liver" seems to reinforce the central role of the liver since it is promoted to animacy here.

9. (a) SIAB NTAU

liver many = 'of many minds, indecisive'

- (b) SIAB COOB      SIAB NTAU  
      liver many      liver many  
                  [+animate]      [+/- animate]  
      = 'of many minds, fickle, undecided, going in every direction'

So far, we have seen that the psycho-collocations with SIAB can be used to depict personality traits and mental processes. In addition, there are psycho-collocations which describe emotional states such as anger, satisfaction, fear, confusion, and various others. These will be discussed now in that order.

### III. ANGER:

Let us consider the following psycho-collocations:

1. SIAB KUB  
    liver hot = 'quick/hot-tempered, prone to anger'
2. SIAB NPAU (or NPAU SIAB)  
    liver boil, bubble up = 'to be angry'
3. LAJ SIAB  
    cool (in) liver = 'to cool off, to abate anger'

The psycho-collocations in #1-2 point to a metaphor also found in English: phrases such as "I had reached the *boiling* point", "Let him *stew*", and "You make my blood *boil*" indicate that anger is associated with heat like in Hmong. Conversely, when anger dissipates, heat is reduced: one "cools off" or "simmer down", which is also the case in Hmong, as seen in #3. Anger is also associated with speed in both languages as seen in #4 below.

4. SIAB CEEV  
    liver fast = 'quick-tempered, prone to fits of anger'

Anger is often manifested by physical agitation, so it is not too surprising to find a metaphor in Hmong which is based on this, as seen in #5:

5. SIAB NPHAU  
    liver up/turn over = 'very angry' (literally 'liver turned over')

Finally, the two central metaphors associated with anger, namely heat and speed, can be combined to yield the elaborate expression in #6:

6. SIAB CEEV SIAB KUB

liver fast liver hot = 'quick/hot-tempered, prone to anger,  
easily carried away'

#### IV. SATISFACTION:

The feeling of satisfaction can be expressed via psycho-collocations in which the psycho-mate has positive connotations in English as well: "bright" as in #1, "full/filled" as in #2, "sweet" as in #3, and "good/well" as in #4. We may also note that while we are dealing with metaphorical extensions in #1-3, in #4 SIAB is merely used metonymically in the sense that it stands for the place where well-being is felt.

1. SIAB KAJ (or KAJ SIAB)

liver bright = 'satisfied with things, pleased, (heart) refreshed'

2. PUV SIAB

full, filled (in) liver = 'satisfied' (cf. English "fulfilled")

3. QAB SIAB

sweet (in taste) liver = 'happy, at ease, satisfied' (cf. English "sweet life")

vs. TSIS QAB SIAB

NEG sweet liver = 'unhappy, ill at ease'

4. ZOO SIAB

good/well (in) liver = 'happy, pleased'

The feeling of satisfaction can also be conveyed via psycho-collocation in which the psycho-mates are verbs whose literal meanings are "hit the mark" as in #5, and "fit (together)" as in #6-7. The metaphorical extension of satisfaction is not surprising: hitting a target and things fitting together result in feeling satisfied.

5. RAUG SIAB

hit the mark liver = 'pleased, satisfied'

vs. XU SIAB

miss the mark liver = 'displeased, dissatisfied'

6. HAUM/HUM SIAB<sup>8</sup>

fit liver = 'satisfied, satisfactory'

## 7. DHOS SIAB

fit together liver = 'according to my wish, agrees with my heart's desire'

(#5, 6, and 7 are roughly equivalent according to my informants)

#8 below might be antonymically related to the #2 and #4 ANGER psycho-collocations discussed above. Anger is associated with the liver being agitated, as seen earlier (cf. English "flood of anger" also), so that when it abates as in #8, one feels content.

## 8. SIAB NQIG/NQEG

liver to go out, abate (of tide)/to wane (of moon) = 'to feel  
appeased, satisfied'

## 9. TUAG SIAB

die/dead (in) liver = 'to be totally satisfied with'

vs. SIAB TSIS TUAG

liver NEG die/dead = 'not to be totally satisfied with'

From a Western standpoint, #9 may seem odd at first since death is not typically associated with a feeling of satisfaction, but this is less the case when we think about expressions like "I'd die for a vacation in Tahiti" or "I'm dying to meet them" where dying for/to is equated with something positive. The Hmong psycho-collocation may be interpreted in the following way: when the liver is in a state of inertia (i.e. not boiling, turning over, falling, etc.), there are no needs to be filled, and one can feel satisfied. Reference to death as a state of ecstasy/fulfillment is also found in French where "la petite mort" (the little death) is used to refer to an orgasm.<sup>9</sup>

## V. FEAR:

## 1. POOB SIAB

fall (in) liver = 'frightened, scared'

vs. SIAB POOB

liver fall = 'discouraged, distressed'

<sup>8</sup> The two entries given here and in 8 reflect dialectal vowel variation.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also Lahu *nī-qhā ǝ̌ ve* 'be settled; satisfied' ('heart-path dies'). [Ed.]

In English, metaphors based on the "falling/going down" motion typically have negative connotations (cf. "fall into a depression", "his spirits/heart sank"), so that the Hmong metaphor in #1 does not come as a surprise.

2. SIAB NYIAS  
liver thin = 'fearful, timid'  
vs. SIAB TUAB  
liver thick = 'brave, courageous'
3. SIAB NKA NCUV  
liver skinny intensifier = 'in despair'
4. SIAB XOB (PES VOG)  
liver Xob (see below) (p. v. l.)  
= 'scared, afraid of punishment'

#4 may be a culture/language specific psycho-collocation: "Xob" is a mythical figure responsible for such frightening events as thunder and lightning. In the collocation given above, it can be followed by what Heimbach (1979) has called a "post-verbal intensifier" (abbreviated above as 'p.v.l.'), which makes me think that XOB functions as a verb in #4, so that when the liver is "xob'ed", i.e., struck by this mythical figure, one is scared.

## VI. CONFUSION:

1. SIAB FAB  
liver bushy, weedy, overgrown = 'heart upset, confused, mind not clear, heart in turmoil'
2. SIAB NTXHOV  
liver weedy and overgrown = 'unsettled in mind, restless in heart, heart in turmoil'

#1 and #2 are roughly equivalent and seem to indicate that when the liver is not "well-kept", confusion sets in. In English, we can speak of a "cluttered" mind, as well as of being "wooly-headed".<sup>10</sup>

3. NPHAU SIAB  
tip/turn over liver = 'to lose one's mental or physical balance'

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Professor Matisoff for pointing this metaphor out to me.



extensions listed and discussed. There are also, however, psycho-collocations where the literal meaning of the mate does not acquire a metaphorical dimension when combined with the psycho-noun SIAB. In these cases, SIAB seems to play only a metonymic role in that it stands for the place where the particular emotion conveyed is perceived to take place. This is illustrated in #1-8:

1. CHIM SIAB  
angry (in) liver = 'to be angry'
2. DHUAV SIAB  
fed up (in) liver = 'to be fed up, tired of'
3. SIAB PHEM  
liver bad, wicked, evil = 'bad, wicked, evil'
4. SIAB ZOO  
liver good = 'good, kind, gentle'
5. KHO SIAB  
lonely liver = 'lonely, homesick, sad (out of loneliness)'
6. SIAB NTSE  
liver sharp (literally)  
sharp, clever (metaphorically)<sup>11</sup>  
= 'sharp, clever, intelligent'
7. SIAB VAM (or VAM SIAB)  
liver hope = 'to hope'
8. DEEV SIAB  
comfort liver = 'to comfort, encourage the heart'

From a Western standpoint, the psycho-noun in #8 seems redundant at first since it does not add any metaphorical dimension to the collocation. Hmong, however, seems to not only have a need to express the locus of an emotion overtly (maybe to make the monosyllables "meatier"?), but also to have a fairly productive system of doing this with other body parts, as seen below in #9-16. Noteworthy is the fact that the combination of the same psycho-mate with different psycho-nouns results in an entirely different

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that "sharp" can have the metaphorical meaning "clever, intelligent" in both languages.



metaphorical meaning depending on the body part involved (cf. #11 vs. #12, #14, and #15).

9. TSHAIB PLAB  
hungry (in) stomach = 'to be hungry' (in the stomach)
10. TXAJ MUAG  
ashamed eye = 'to be ashamed' (in the eyes)
11. RHIAB SIAB  
tremble/shudder in anticipation of pain or in places of danger  
(in) liver  
= 'to tremble/shudder in anticipation of pain or in places of danger'
12. RHIAB MUAG  
tremble/shudder in anticipation of pain or in places of danger  
(in) eye  
= 'to be acrophobic, dizzy (in the eyes) when looking down from a great height'
13. RUAM SIAB  
dumb (in) liver = 'dumb, stupid'
14. RUAM NCAUJ TSIS RUAM SIAB  
dumb mouth NEG dumb liver  
= 'S/he is mute, but s/he is not stupid!'
15. THOOJ CEV TSIS THOOJ SIAB  
same body NEG same liver  
= 'they look alike, but they do not think alike'
16. SIAB TSIS HUV TES NKHAUS  
liver NEG clean hand crooked  
= 'person who steals' (literally 'person whose liver is not clean and whose hand is crooked')

#### IX. REVERSIBLE VS. NON-REVERSIBLE PSYCHO-COLLOCATIONS:

Some of the psycho-collocations I have collected seem to be semantically reversible, i.e. the order of appearance of the psycho-noun and its psycho-mate does not influence the meaning of the collocation as a whole. This is illustrated below in #1-4:

1. SIAB NPAU (or NPAU SIAB)  
liver boil, bubble up = 'to be angry'
2. SIAB KAJ (or KAJ SIAB)  
liver bright = 'satisfied with things, pleased, (heart) refreshed'
3. SIAB KHIS (or KHIS SIAB)  
liver break a piece off, chip = 'to feel frustrated, saddened, annoyed, upset'
4. SIAB VAM (or VAM SIAB)  
liver hope = 'to hope'

In other psycho-collocations, however, the relative ordering of the two elements does bring about a change in the metaphorical meaning of the collocation, as seen in #5-9 below. In his areal study of psycho-collocations, Matisoff (1986) points out that in Thai when the psycho-noun occurs first, the collocation usually conveys a more or less permanent quality of the heart, mind, spirit, or disposition. On the other hand, when the psycho-noun occurs second, the collocation typically points to a state of mind or feeling which is usually temporary. I have checked this against the Hmong data and come to the conclusion that this systematic difference is not found there, except for #7.

5. KUB SIAB  
hot liver = 'zealous, earnest'
- vs. SIAB KUB  
liver hot = 'quick, hot-tempered, prone to anger'
6. NPHAU SIAB  
tip, turn over liver = 'to lose one's mental or physical balance'
- vs. SIAB NPHAU  
liver tip, turn over = 'very angry' (literally 'liver turned over')
7. ZOO SIAB  
good, well (in) liver = 'happy, pleased'
- vs. SIAB ZOO  
liver good = 'good, kind, gentle'

## 8. POOB SIAB

*fall* *liver* = 'frightened, scared'

vs. SIAB POOB

*liver fall* = 'discouraged, distressed'

## 9. GAUG

SIAB

*weak and tottering liver* = 'duped, believing in other people's deceptions'

vs. SIAB GAUG

LAIS

*liver weak and tottering ?* = 'to become infatuated with'

To conclude, I hope to have shown that while the metaphorical role of the heart we are so familiar with is very limited in Hmong, it is the liver which is its "substitute". The role of the liver, however, extends far beyond that. If we accept the notion that, to a certain extent, language reflects the psychological make-up of the people who speak it, the plethora of psycho-collocations involving the liver indicates that it is the locus where both emotions and mental activities are perceived to take place in Hmong culture. On the other hand, I have also attempted to point out areas where, *in spite of the fact that the language encodes emotional and mental activity differently, the underlying conceptual metaphors are the same in English.* To what extent East meets West in that sense needs to be researched further. Additional research is also needed in the area of actual usage in text of these psycho-collocations. Not having done that yet, I do not feel confident making judgments about their syntactic life. Textual analysis would undoubtedly shed improved light on the semantics of the psycho-collocations, as well as on their syntactic functioning.

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