

# Conceptual analysis of Tedim Chin “Heart” idioms

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## 1. Introduction

This paper discusses the process and interaction of metaphor and metonymy in Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms (figurative speech) based on the 37 idioms which I have collected.

Tedim Chin (Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Northeast India, Kuki/Naga/ Chin, Northern Chin). Tedim Chin people live in western Myanmar and North East India. According to Grimes (1996), there are 189,000 in Myanmar and 155,000 in India.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have claimed that “human thought processes are largely metaphorical”. ‘The heart’ plays a very deep and important role in all aspects of the Tedim Chin people’s daily life. The lexeme for ‘heart’ in Tedim Chin is “*lung*”. The folk understanding of ‘heart’ is as the center of a person’s thought and emotion, especially of love. For example, “Thank you” is *lung dam* which literally means “heart fine”. (see example B.13)

## 2. Metonymy in Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms

Metonymy is a mapping within a single conceptual domain (Lakoff 1987:288). One category within a domain stands for another category within the same domain. E.g. in the statement “We need more heads in the laboratory” a person’s head stands for the whole person.

Tedim Chin Heart idioms can be metonymically categorized into at least three different categories: personality, emotion and oneness.

### 2.1 *The heart stands for one’s personality*

In Tedim Chin ‘meek’ is ‘lungnem’ which literally means ‘heart soft’. Here ‘heart’ stands for one’s general personality. Other personal traits which

can be found in ‘heart’ idioms are short tempered, smart, strong hearted, clever, patient, stubborn, etc. (See examples A.1-A.12 in the Appendix).

**Example A.9** ‘*lungkhauh*’ heart hard = stubborn  
*lung khauh te tawh kikhawl kei in.*  
 heart hard PM with friendship NEG particle  
 ‘Don’t make friendship with stubborn people.’

**Example A.10** ‘*lungnem*’ heart soft = meek  
*Lung nem te in leitung a luah*  
 Heart soft PM SM earth 3P inherit

*ding uh hi.*  
 will VP particle  
 ‘The meek will inherit the earth’.

## 2.2 The heart stands for one’s emotion

In Tedim Chin ‘desperate’ is ‘*lungkia*’ which literally means ‘heart falls’. So ‘heart’ can stand for one’s temporary emotions, such as happy, joy, worry, bored, lonely, yearning, doubtful, etc. (See examples B.13-B.32 in the Appendix).

**Example B.13** ‘*Lungdam*’ heart fine = happy  
*Ulian te sangin naupang te a lung*  
 Adult PM than child PM 3S heart

*dam . baih zaw hi.*  
 fine easy Com. particle.  
 ‘Children are more easily happy than adults.’

**Example B.23** ‘*Lungkia*’ heart fall = desperate  
*Amah laikia a a lung kia mahmah hi.*  
 3S fail CONJ 3S heart falling very particle  
 ‘He failed in the examination and felt very desperate.’

## 2.3 The heart stands for oneness

Tedim Chin expresses agreement in ‘*lungkim*’ which literally means ‘heart all present’. Therefore, ‘heart’ stands for oneness agreeing. Other onenesses are together, one spirit, single-minded, etc. (See examples C.33-C.37 in the Appendix).

**Example C.33** ‘*Lungkim*’ heart all present = agreeing  
*Ih lung kim ciat leh zingciang.*  
 1P heart all present each if tomorrow

*Doisaket pai ni*  
 Doisaket go particle  
 ‘If each of us agree, let us go to Doisaket tomorrow.’

**Example C.37 ‘Lung kituak’ heart REFL meet = single-minded**

*Khua khat lung ki tuak khua kua*  
 village one heart REFL meet village nine

*in zo zo lo hi.*  
 SM conquer can NEG particle  
 ‘One **single-minded** village cannot be conquered by nine villages.’  
 (a Tedim Chin proverb)

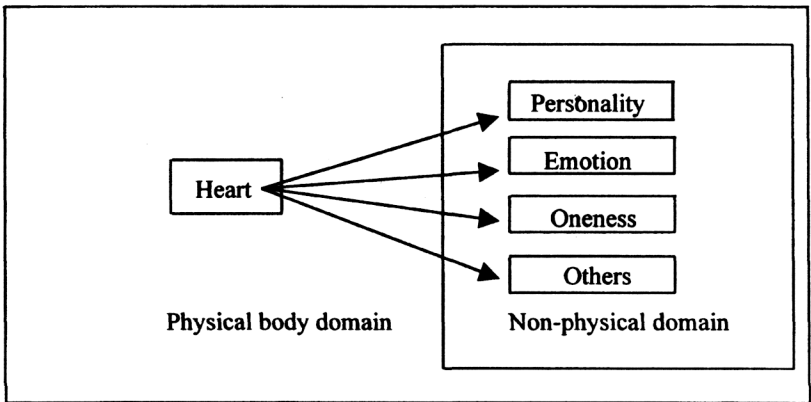


Figure 1. The Tedim Chin Metonymic view of ‘heart’.

**3. Metaphor in Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms**

Metaphor maps the structure in the source domain onto a corresponding structure in a different domain (Lakoff 1987: 288, Fauconnier (1997:268). E.g. in the statement “Our marriage was a rollercoaster ride” a personal relationship is compared to part of an amusement park.

The metaphoric process of Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms is structured within the same three metonymic categories, described above.

*3.1 Physical qualities standing for a personality trait*

In example A.9 above ‘To be hard’ in the physical quality source domain is mapped with the ‘heart’ in the anatomical target domain, within the metonymic structure. The result is ‘to be hard is to be stubborn’ in the metaphoric process.

**Example A.9**      **‘Lung khauh’**      **Appendix (A) 9**  
*lung khauh te tawh kikhawl kei in.*  
 heart hard PM with friendship NEG particle  
 ‘Don’t make friends with **stubborn** people.’

3.2 Physical action standing for one emotion

In example B.25 to fly and to yearn are in different domains, physical and emotional. When the two are mapped in this idiom, the meaning is to yearn for someone. This process is also active within metonymy.

**Example B.25**      **‘Lung leng’**      **heart flying = yearning**  
*Khual a zin ciang in Cing a lung*  
 Stranger 3S travel when CONJ Cing 3S heart  
  
*leng mahmah hi.*  
 flying very particle  
 ‘Cing yearns for someone whenever she travels.’

3.3 Physical composition standing for joint emotion

In example C.36 to map ‘to be entwined’ as rope, and unity of spirit are in different domains the ‘heart’ results ‘to be one in spirit’. It happens within the frame of ‘heart stands for oneness.’

**Example C.36**      **‘Lung khual’** heart REFL twisted = one-in-spirit  
*lung ki hual in nasem khawm lengi*  
 heart REFL twisted CONJ work together if 1P  
  
*zo baih ding hi.*  
 finish soon will particle  
 ‘If we work together **in one spirit**, we will finish the work soon.’

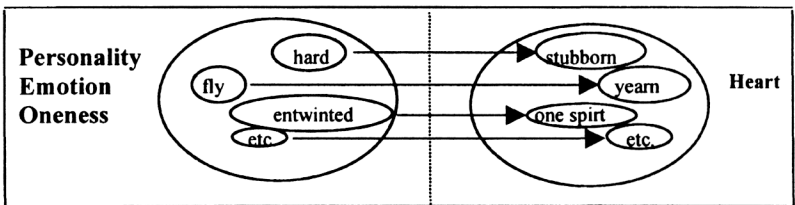


Figure 2. Conceptually metaphoric view of Tedim Chin ‘heart’

**4. Metaphtonymy and its activation in Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms**

Goossens (1990:328), defines metaphtonymy as metaphor and metonymy twisted together in an idiom. This can be subclassified into *integrated vs. cumulative metaphtonymy*. *Integrated metaphtonymy* means combining a metonymy and a metaphor into one and the same expression. This category includes (1) metonymy within metaphor and (2) metaphor within metonymy. *Cumulative metaphtonymy* includes (3) deriving a metaphor from metonymy (where the end product is a metaphor) or deriving metonymy from metaphor (where the result is metonymy).

**METAPHTONOMY MATRIX OF TEDIM CHIN ‘HEART’**

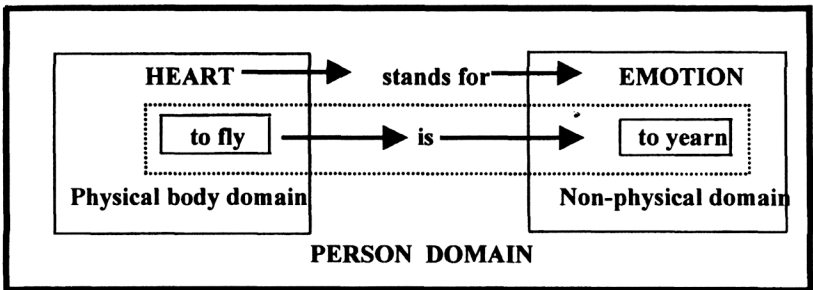


Figure 3. “My heart flies”

**5. Conclusion**

In Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms, the metonymy and the metaphor are joined together. Tedim Chin speakers believe the heart stands for emotion, personality, and oneness, etc. Out of these metonymies, the metaphoric usages are built up. Thus, a ‘hard heart’ is stubborn, a heart flies when it yearns for someone, and a heart joined together is to be one spirit. These processes are activated at a single point of time in the psycho-cognitive mind of the Tedim Chin speakers. As David Tuggy (1994, p.c.) has said “Thus language is conventionalized, each linguistic unit can be easily activated as a whole, though it may be intrinsically complex”.

This study is related to the fields of prototype effect, and to the semantic continuum of idioms. These fields of study are helpful in deciding which lexical entities to include in a dictionary. They are also helpful for understanding the peoples’ emic worldview from the sociological, anthropological, and cultural points of view.

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## Appendix

## (A) Heart stands for personality

1. lung pil = 'heart alert' = 'smart'

*Mi lung pil te ka eng mahmah hi.*  
 People heart alert PM 1S envy very particle  
 'I envy very much to people who are smart.'

2. lung cim = 'heart clean' = 'clever'

*Thunuam a lung cim te in pawlhuai uh hi.*  
 kind CONJ heart clean PM SM friendly PM particle  
 'Kind and clever people are friendly.'

3. lung hai = 'heart mad' = 'abnormal'

*Ka ui a lung hai hi.*  
 1S dog 3S heart mad particle  
 'My dog is abnormal.'

4. lung mawl = 'heart blunt' = 'dull'

*Ka lawm pa a lung mawl hi.*  
 1S friend GM 3S heart blunt particle  
 'My friend is dull.'

5. lung lian = 'heart huge' = 'strong hearted'

*Ka pa a lung lian hi.*  
 1S father 3S heart huge particle  
 'My father is a strong hearted man.'

6. lung neu = 'heart small' = 'disappoint'

*Lau na in lung neu sak thei hi.*  
 afraid NR SM heart small cause can particle  
 'Fear can cause disappointment.'

7. lung sau = 'heart long' = 'patient'

*Lung sau tak in a ngak zo te*  
 heart long with Conj 3S wait can PM

*in thupha ngah ding hi.*  
 SM blessing receive will particle  
 'Whoever can wait patiently will receive blessing.'

8. lung tom = 'heart short' = 'short temper'

*Thang a lung tom mahmah hi.*  
 Thang 3S heart short very particle  
 'Thang is very short tempered.'

9. lung khauh = ‘heart hard’ = ‘stubborn’

*lung khauh te tawh kikhawl kei in.*  
 heart hard PM with friendship NEG particle  
 ‘Don’t make friendship with stubborn people.’

10. lung nem = ‘heart soft’ = ‘meek’

*Lung nem te in leitung a luah ding uh hi.*  
 Heart soft PM SM world 3P inherit will VP particle  
 ‘Meek people will inherit the earth.’

11. lung duai = ‘heart sticky’ = ‘patient’

*A heh hak khempueh a lung duai hi lo hi.*  
 3S angry slow all 3S heart sticky is NEG particle  
 ‘All who are slow to anger are not patient.’

12. lung mok = ‘heart waver’ = ‘waver’

*Lung mawk lo in ngim na nei in.*  
 heart waver NEG CONJ goal NR have particle  
 ‘Don’t waver but have goals.’

### (B) Heart stands for Emotion

13. lung dam = ‘heart fine’ = ‘happy’

*Ulian te sangin naupang te a lung*  
 adult PM than child PM 3S heart

*dam baih zaw hi.*  
 fine easy Com. particle.  
 ‘Children are more easily happy than adults.’

14. lung tai = ‘heart well-treated’ = ‘Happy’

*Bang thu za na hia tu ni na lung*  
 What news hear 2S Q Now day 2S heart

*tai tuak hi.*  
 well-treated seem particle  
 ‘What is the news making you look so happy today?’

15. lung nuam = ‘heart comfort’ = joy

*Lung nuam in ci dam na a hi hi.*  
 heart comfort SM flesh well NR 3S be particle  
 ‘To be joyful is good health.’

16. lung kham = ‘heart tire’ = ‘worry’

*Sum hau te a lung kham mahmah uh hi.*  
 Money rich PM 3S heart tire very PL particle  
 ‘Rich people feel much worry.’



17. lung gim = 'heart tire' = 'worry'

lung gim na lian semsem leh hai  
heart tire NR big more and more if mad

suak thei hi  
ever able particle

'If worriedness grows more and more people can go mad.'

18. lung himo = 'heart uneasy' = 'worry'

Kong ciah hak khak leh na lung  
IS come home late in case if 2S heart

himawh kei in.  
uneasy NEG particle

'In case if I come back late, don't worry.'

19. lung am = 'heart dizzy' = 'dizzy'

Nasep ding tam lua ahih manin ka lung  
work to many over because 1S heart

am mahmah hi.  
dizzy very particle

'I feel very dizzy because there are many things to do.'

20. lung tawl = 'heart tired' = 'bored'

Naupang te gamlum sak kei un ka  
Children PM noisy cause NEG particle 1S

lung tawl hi.  
heart tired particle

'Let the children not be noisy. I am bored.'

21. lung kitam = 'heart broken' = 'broken heart'

A lawmngaihnu si a amah lung kitam  
3S girlfriend die CONJ 3S heart broken

in a kap hi  
CONJ 3S weep particle

'He feels heart broken and weeps because his girl friend died.'

22. lung galdo = 'heart fight' = 'weary'

lung gal do na in natna nangawn  
heart enemy fight NR SM sickness even

*piang sak thei hi.*  
 create cause can particle  
 ‘Weariness can even cause sickness.’

23. *lung kia* = ‘heart falling’ = ‘Desperate’

*Amah laikia a a lung kia mahmah hi.*  
 3S fail CONJ 3S heart falling very particle  
 ‘He failed in the examination and felt very desperate.’

24. *lung zuang* = ‘heart flying’\_ ‘Yearning for someone’

*Thang a lung zuang ciang in a kap hi.*  
 Thang 3S heart flying when CONJ 3S cry particle  
 ‘Thang cries when he yearns for someone.’

25. *lung leng* = ‘heart flying’ = ‘Yearning for someone’

*Khual a zin ciang in Cing a lung leng mahmah hi.*  
 Stranger 3S travel when CONJ Cing 3S heart flying very particle  
 ‘Cing yearns for someone whenever she travels.’

26. *lung ka* = ‘heart double ended’ = ‘indecisive’

*Ka sep ding thei lo in ka lung ka hi*  
 1S do to know NEG CONJ 1S heart double ended particle  
 ‘I am in a dilemma and do not know what to do.’

27. *lung hiang nei* = ‘heart branch have’ = ‘hesitate’

*Na hih ding khat peuhpeuh lung hiang nei*  
 2s do to one any heart branch have

*lo in sem in.*  
 NEG CONJ do particle

‘Anything you have to do, do it without hesitation.’

28. *lung ngai* = ‘heart listen’ = ‘think’

*Na khensat theih nai kei leh tu zan*  
 2S decide able yet NEG if now night

*sung lung ngai in.*  
 in heart listen particle

‘Think it over tonight if you cannot decide yet.’

29. *lung deih* = ‘heart want’ = ‘desire’

*Hih Leitung ah i lung deih kim*  
 This world to 1P heart want all-present

*thei ngei lo hi.*  
 can ever NEG particle  
 'Desire can never be fulfilled in this world.'

30. *lung patau* = 'heart fear' = 'fear'  
*Na khialh kei leh Lung patau nang om lo hi.*  
 2S mistake NEG if heart fear to be present NEG particle  
 'There is nothing to fear if you do not make mistakes.'

31. *lung lau* = 'heart fear' = 'anxiety'  
*Numei te lung lau baihi.*  
 female PM heart fear easy particle  
 'Women easily have anxiety.'

32. *lung muang* = 'heart trust' = 'confidence'  
*Pasian tung ah ka lung muang hi.*  
 God to PP 1S heart trust particle  
 'I have confidence in God.'

### (C) Heart stands for oneness

33. *lung kim* = 'heart all present' = 'agree or satisfy'  
*Ih lung kim ciat leh zingciang Doisaket pai ni.*  
 1P heart all present each if tomorrow Doisaket go particle.  
 'If each of us agree let us go to Doisaket tomorrow.'

34.  
*Na sepna khempeuh lung kim huai mahmah hi.*  
 2S work all heart all present deserve very particle  
 'It is satisfactory in all you do.'

35. *lung kum* = 'heart share' = 'consider together (discuss)'  
*Lung kum khawm leng ka ut hi.*  
 heart share together if 1S wish particle  
 'I wish we had considered this together.'

36. *lung kihual* = 'heart entwined' = 'one spirit'  
*lung ki hual in nasem khawm leng i*  
 heart REFL entwined CONJ work together if 1P

*zo baih ding hi.*  
 finish soon will particle

‘If we work together in one spirit, we will finish the work soon.’

37. *lung kituak* = ‘heart meet’ = ‘single-minded’

*Khua khat lung ki tuak khua kua in zo*  
 village one heart REFL meet village nine SM conquer

*zo lo hi.*  
 can NEG particle

‘One single-minded village can not be conquered by nine villages.’ (*Proverb*)

### Abbreviations

1P	=	First person plural
1S	=	First person singular
2P	=	Second person plural
2S	=	Second person singular
3P	=	Third person plural
3S	=	Third person singular
CONJ	=	Phrase conjunction particle
GM	=	Gender marker
NEG	=	Negation
NR	=	Nominalizer
VP	=	Verbal plural marker
PM	=	Nominal plural marker
PP	=	Postposition
Q	=	Question word
REFL	=	Reflexive Particle
SM	=	Subject marker