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
‘Lung kia’ 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 ‘Lung kim’ heart all present = agreeing
lh 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.
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.
fly 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 kihual’ 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. Metaphotonymy and its activation in Tedim Chin ‘heart’ idioms

Goossens (1990:328), defines metaphoronym as metaphor and metonymy twisted together in an idiom. This can be subclassified into integrated vs. cumulative metaphoronymy. Integrated metaphoronymy 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 metaphoronymy includes (3) deriving a metaphor from metonymy (where the end product is a metaphor) or deriving metonymy from metaphor (where the result is metonymy).

METAPHOTONYMY MATRIX OF TEDIM CHIN ‘HEART’

![Diagram showing the relationship between heart, emotion, physical body domain, and non-physical domain.]

*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 metathorific 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.
REFERENCES


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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'
   Thunum a lung cim te in pawluai 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 khempeuh 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   ahim 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 girlfriend 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 baih hi.
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’
lh 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