

## Heart-based emotion metaphors in Mlabri (Austroasiatic, Thailand)

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In many cultures, heart is considered to be a key center of emotion. Emotion language reflects this relationship, and emotion literature is rich in examples documenting heart-based metaphorical expressions attested in the world's languages. Here, we consider the role of heart-based emotion metaphors in Mlabri, an Austroasiatic language of a recently settled hunter-gatherer group of Northern Thailand, drawing on first-hand data from elicitations with emotionally evocative stimuli as well as the general Mlabri corpus. Similarly to the majority language of Thailand—Thai—Mlabri employs heart-based metaphorical expressions in its emotion vocabulary. Although some of them rely on similar metaphorical mappings, e.g., *klɔl plɔŋ* 'hot heart' (Thai *jai rɔɔn* 'hot-tempered') and *klɔl tɛk* 'cool heart' (Thai *jai yen* 'calm, relaxed'), or contain borrowings, e.g., *ʔɔn klɔl* 'sad' (Thai *òon jai* 'downhearted, depressed'), the emotion lexicon of Mlabri reveals clearly distinct conceptualizations of emotion. A central example discussed here is that of the spatial orientation metaphor, instantiated in the expressions: *klɔl jur* 'heart going down' and *klɔl khɔn* 'heart going up'. Unlike the common HAPPY IS UP / SAD IS DOWN mappings attested in English and many other languages (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 1991; Yu 1995), the Mlabri terms seem to use the vertical orientation (more precisely, vertically-oriented motion) to map the dimension of arousal (energized-quiescent) rather than valence (pleasant-unpleasant). Hence, *klɔl jur* is best translated as 'glad, at ease, delighted' while *klɔl khɔn* as 'uneasy, disturbed, angry'. While not equally well-attested cross-linguistically and at first sight possibly counter-intuitive, the mapping appears to tap into a salient dimension of emotion (Russell 1980) and be rooted in physical experience.

### References

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