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อิทธิพลของชนิดในการใช้คำอุปลักษณ์ บริบท และวัฒนธรรมที่ส่งผลต่อการตีความของผู้เรียน

ปัญจพล บุญมา
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บทคัดย่อ

แม้ว่าคำอุปลักษณ์ จะไม่ได้ปรากฏอย่างชัดเจนในโครงสร้างทางภาษา แต่ก็ใช้เพื่อสื่อข้อความของผู้พูด นอกจากนี้ เห็นได้ชัดว่าการตีความคำอุปลักษณ์ขึ้นอยู่กับความรู้ความเข้าใจ และภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรมที่คำอุปลักษณ์ได้รับการพัฒนามา ดังนั้น งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพลของประเภทของคำอุปลักษณ์ บริบท และวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อการตีความเชิงเปรียบเทียบของผู้เรียนที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ โดยใช้วิธีการเก็บข้อมูลผ่านแบบทดสอบการแปลและเทคนิคการคิดแบบออกเสียง โดยคัดเลือกผู้เรียนแบบเจาะจง จำนวน 20 คน ให้แปลสำนวนเปรียบเทียบ 9 รายการ และรวบรวมข้อมูลชนิดของคำอุปลักษณ์ บริบทและอิทธิพลทางวัฒนธรรมที่มีผลต่อการตีความผ่านการสัมภาษณ์ขณะแปลงาน ความถูกต้องของการตีความและปัจจัยอื่นที่เกี่ยวข้องถูกนำมาวิเคราะห์จากค่าเฉลี่ยและส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐานโดยใช้ ANOVA ผลการวิจัย แสดงให้เห็นว่า ความรู้ บริบท และภูมิหลังทางวัฒนธรรม รวมถึงประเภทของคำอุปลักษณ์ส่งผลต่อการตีความของผู้เรียน ผู้เรียนชาวไทยมักจะตีความคำอุปลักษณ์เชิงสัมพันธ์ (relational metaphor) ได้ถูกต้องมากกว่าคำอุปลักษณ์เชิงกายภาพ (attributional metaphor) และคำอุปลักษณ์เชิงซ้อน (double metaphor) นอกจากนี้ พวกเขายังมีแนวโน้มที่จะตีความคำอุปลักษณ์ซึ่งวางไว้ที่ส่วนต้นและส่วนกลางของข้อความได้ดีกว่าคำอุปลักษณ์ซึ่งวางไว้ที่ส่วนท้ายของข้อความ โดยสรุปแล้วจากการศึกษาพบว่าการตีความคำอุปลักษณ์มีความสำคัญต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษ นอกจากนี้บทเรียนดังกล่าวสามารถปรับปรุงบรรยากาศในห้องเรียนและยังเสริมสร้างแรงบันดาลใจ

ต่อการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษอีกด้วย การเพิกเฉยต่อบทเรียนเกี่ยวกับคำอุปลักษณ์ยังสามารถส่งผลต่อผลคะแนนในการทดสอบหรือการสอบวัดความรู้ทางภาษาได้

คำสำคัญ ; คำอุปลักษณ์, การตีความ, ชนิดของคำอุปลักษณ์, การวางตำแหน่งคำอุปลักษณ์, อิทธิพลทางวัฒนธรรม

Influences of Metaphor Types, Context and Culture on Learners' Interpretations

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Abstract

Though metaphors do not appear clearly in discourse structure, they are used to convey a speaker's message. Additionally, interpreting a metaphor may depend on having an understanding of the culture in which the metaphor developed. Thus, this research aimed to investigate the metaphor types, context, and culture which influenced the metaphorical interpretations of Thai people learning English as a foreign language (Thai EFL learners). Translation tasks and think-aloud protocol were used to collect the data. Twenty Thai EFL learners individually took a translation task comprised of 9 metaphorical expressions. Furthermore, the investigation of types of metaphors, context, and cultural interferences was conducted through interviews while doing the translation tasks. The accuracy of metaphor interpretation and analyzed factors influencing the interpretation were analyzed using ANOVA. The results revealed the impacts of a culture where the metaphor developed, context, and types of metaphor on learners' interpretation. Thai learners tended to interpret relational metaphors more correctly than attribution and double metaphors. In addition, they were more likely to interpret metaphors which were placed at the beginning and at the middle of the text than metaphors that were put at the end of texts. In conclusion, this study demonstrated that metaphor interpretation is crucial to learning English as it can help teachers change their class environments and motivate their students. Ignoring metaphors could result in poor performance on language tests.

Keywords ; metaphor, interpretation, types of metaphors, metaphor positioning, cultural interferences

Introduction

A metaphor is known to require more effort to interpret than literal language and contain more complicated processes for interpretation. Speech cannot be translated word-for-word since there are often hidden meanings. The interpretation of speech requires creativity and analytical thinking ability, especially in figurative language. Several types of figurative language comprise the communication people encounter in their daily lives. One of them is the metaphor (Dancygier & Sweetser, 2014). Basically, a metaphor is a word, phrase or sentence representing or symbolizing an object or event. The interpretation of a metaphor is not derived through its literal components, but involves processing and analytical skills (Newmark, 2009).

Most previous studies in general have summarized that metaphor type is seen as a factor that may affect its interpretation. Different types require different processing strategies and could affect different interpretations (Shokouhi & Isazadeh, 2009). Gentner (1988) classified metaphors into four categories: attributional, relational, doubled, and complex. Apart from the type of metaphor, context is another major factor that can affect the interpretation. When sufficient context is provided, people can easily understand metaphors (Gibbs & Gerrig, 1989). In addition, the position of where they appear may also affect the interpretation process. Some previous studies claimed that people will take a longer time to comprehend the text when target words occur early in the sentences (e.g. Foss & Lynch, 1969). Apart from that, many studies (e.g. Littlemore, 2003) have revealed that cultural background knowledge may have an influence on metaphor interpretation. They found that different cultural references were one of the reasons that students misinterpreted metaphors. Therefore, it can be assumed that three factors including types, context and position, and culture of metaphor have a significant influence on metaphor interpretation (Trompenaars, 1993).

1. Metaphor and its implication in EFL language learning

A metaphor is a type of figurative language; it is used implicitly for comparing one thing to another. For language learners, it is difficult to comprehend the meaning of a metaphor. While most people may think that a metaphor is just a device of poetic imagination that resides only in literature, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) strongly believe that a metaphor is much more than that. Metaphors are naturally used in everyday life, not only in language, but also in thought and action. They appear in daily communication in every language to increase the diversity of the language.

One metaphor may imply several meanings. Saeed (1997) explained this point by providing the example 'Life is a journey'. This statement can be interpreted as follows: 1) The person leading this life is a traveler; 2) Their purposes are destinations; 3) The means for achieving purposes are routes; 4) Difficulties in life are obstacles to travel; 5) Counselors are guides; 6) Progress is a distance travelled; 7) Things by which you gauge your progress are landmarks; and 8) Material resources and talents are provisions. It could be interpreted in more than these aspects depending on the surrounding contexts, which would help to narrow the meaning. In addition, readers need to consider all elements of the sentence, especially head words like 'Life' and 'Journey', and form connections to those words in their interpretation.

Learning English in an EFL setting is different from learning in a native language setting. For metaphor interpretation, it seems that linguistic differences may affect learners' interpretations.

Kökcü (2017) explained that EFL learners differ from native speakers of English regarding correct metaphor interpretation despite being advanced level learners. Moreover, Kömür and Çimen (2009) also pointed out that metaphors are not only cross-linguistic, but also cross-cultural phenomena. Therefore, learning figurative language like metaphors is vital for language communication. Further,

the benefits might extend to linguistic and communicative skills at large, as noted by Tonini et al. (2022). Additionally, not knowing metaphoric meanings can cause problems in learning English, as noted by Tayjasanant (2012). The easiest metaphors to interpret are those that have an equality of conceptualization and linguistic forms in both the source language and target language.

2. Factors influencing metaphor interpretation

- Types of metaphors

According to Gentner (1988), metaphors can be categorized into four types: attributional metaphor, relational metaphor, double metaphor and complex metaphor.

Attributional metaphors can be interpreted with the property of sharing their object attributes. It means that the metaphor is interpreted to the interpretation with the similarities of their physical appearances, such as "the sun is an orange." This is an attributional metaphor due to both objects sharing a similar physical appearance as both of them have a circular shape and also have an orange color.

Relational metaphors can be interpreted with the property of sharing a common relational structure. It means that the metaphor (source domain) is interpreted to the interpretation (target domain) with the similarities of their two relational structures, such as "Timmy is a fish." It would be difficult to interpret in terms of physical similarities between 'Timmy' and 'a fish', but both elements might share a common trait, such as the skill that both of them are good at swimming.

Double metaphors can be interpreted with both attributional and relational properties. It means that the metaphor (source domain) is interpreted to the interpretation (target domain) with the similarities of both their physical appearances and relational structures, such as "The plant stem is a drinking straw." A double metaphor means both objects share a similar physical appearance and are also related to their function of absorbing water.

Complex metaphors may have more than two interpretations. It means that the metaphor (source domain) is interpreted to the interpretation (s) (target domain) with the similarities of either their physical appearances or relational structures or both, such as "Let me throw some light on this subject of philosophy." This is an example of a complex metaphor where "throw some light" is used as a metaphor to clear a point and the word 'light' refers to understanding things. However, a complex metaphor may be quite different from the other three categories and require more than one mapping analysis. This kind of metaphor seems to require more processes such as metonymy and phonological matching in addition to alignment and mapping, as suggested by Gentner, Bowdle, Wolff, and Boronat (2001). The study applied three types of metaphors regarding the suggestion by Gentner (1988) to investigate the accuracy of metaphorical interpretation among them. Complex metaphors were excluded from the study due to the complexity of the mapping process and their difference from other types of metaphors.

- Context/positioning

Apart from the mapping of metaphors and conceptual metaphors, context was another major factor that could affect learners' interpretation of metaphors in various ways. Gibbs and Gerrig (1989) pointed out that students could understand metaphors without difficulty when sufficient context was provided. This was because context could clarify the meanings of metaphors and helped readers comprehend them more easily, which was supported by Tayjasanant (2012) who suggested that "the students rarely knew the meaning of the metaphors without the contexts given." Following Inhoff, Lima and Carroll (1984), with enough contexts, metaphors were interpreted at the same speed as texts carrying only literal meanings, meaning that metaphors could be interpreted as easy as simple words if there was surrounding context to assist while reading. Context had a crucial influence on metaphor interpretation including the position of the target words when they appeared in the

context. In addition, Foss and Lynch (1969) claimed that learners took a longer time to comprehend text when the target words occurred early in the sentences. Further, it could take much longer if there was insufficient context provided for assistance. It was also added that learners found the difficulty in sentence comprehension with various variables such as frequency of lexical items in the language, sentence length, surface structure and so forth. The study of Jayaram (1984) supported the investigation of the clause position influence on stuttering in complex sentences and claimed that a clause placed at the beginning of a sentence was stuttered more often than the same clause placed at the end of the sentence and more than the same clause as an isolated sentence.

- Culture

Many studies (e.g. Littlemore, 2003; Trompenaars, 1993; Shen, 2020) have revealed that cultural background knowledge has an influence on metaphor interpretation. Littlemore (2003) claimed that different cultural references were one reason why students misinterpreted metaphors. In addition, it seems that metaphors tend to be culturally-loaded expressions that have to be inferred through the reference of shared cultural knowledge. Trompenaars (1993) also pointed out that confusion arose particularly when a speaker and listener had different connotations to the source domains. Therefore, the cultural background knowledge of learners should be counted as one of the major factors that may interfere with learners' interpretation of metaphors. "Metaphors are rooted in culture and part of a culture, reflecting the content of that culture" said Shen (2020). In order to investigate these factors, this study implemented critical think-aloud protocols to find out how the mentioned factors influenced learners' metaphor interpretation. Different perspectives or background knowledge of different cultures may lead learners to different interpretations. Learners may become confused when they encounter foreign metaphors, despite the use of simple vocabulary.

This study reviews related literature to organize the theoretical framework for the study. There were descriptions for each type of metaphor, as suggested by Gentner (1988), to investigate the influence of types of metaphors in metaphor interpretation. Next, related studies about context and metaphor interpretation were examined, which led to the importance of metaphor positions within the context. Previous studies pointed out that learners with different cultural background knowledge can interpret the same metaphor differently. Further, cultural interferences play an important role during the interpretation process. Moreover, the think-aloud protocol is used as a data collection instrument to collect information from the participants during their thinking process via asking about their thoughts.

Only a few Thai EFL language teaching and learning studies have focused on how types of metaphors, positions of context, and the cultural background of learners affect Thai learners' interpretation of metaphors. This study aimed to investigate how types of metaphors affected EFL learners' interpretation, the influences of different positions of metaphors in contexts by EFL learners, and how the cultural background of EFL learners plays a role in metaphor interpretation. The findings could support further studies on other aspects of metaphor interpretation and provide some guidelines for the improvement of teaching metaphors in an EFL setting. It would provide a better understanding of metaphor interpretation and show how different types of metaphors affect Thai learners' comprehension. In addition, it would help clarify whether or not the position of metaphors in the context affects Thai learners' comprehensibility. Additionally, it could shed light on how the cultural background of learners affects metaphor interpretation. EFL teachers will gain more understanding of the nature of metaphors as they are used in real-life situations, which could then be applied as an authentic sample when they teach their students. Thus, this study aims to investigate how types of metaphors, positions of metaphors in the context and cultural background knowledge affect EFL learners' interpretation, including how EFL learners interpret metaphors.

Research Methodology

The researcher conducted mixed-methods investigation in order to obtain both quantitative and qualitative results. The research methods consisted of three sections: participants, data collection, and data analysis. Also, two main tasks including a translation assignment and think-aloud protocol were explained.

1. Participants

The participants of this study were selected using the purposive sampling method. The criteria were set for only second-year students who had already completed two English foundation courses (EL171 and EL172) and possessed an intermediate level of English proficiency. Moreover, the target participants were studying in course EL200: English Skill Development for Careers 1, which mainly focuses on the development of the forms and uses of the English language in order to become functioning members of an international workforce and encourages students to cultivate their use of all aspects of English. Therefore, this group of participants was capable of using English to a certain degree as their average English proficiencies were at an intermediate level, meaning they would be able to interpret the given tasks. The study required participants to have an intermediate level of English proficiency for metaphor interpretation as suggested by Manawong (2011), who claimed that students with an intermediate level of English would have sufficient lexical knowledge of the target language to interpret all the words provided. Twenty Thai EFL learners out of 38 students in the class were selected to participate in this study.

2. Data Collection

The study was conducted during the first semester of academic year 2018. All participants were asked to participate in the study in their free time. The researcher scheduled appointments and then asked each participant to participate in the study individually.

Three tasks were administered to each participant based on three metaphor types including attributional, relational, and double metaphors (Gentner, 1988). Each task comprised 9 metaphorical expressions. The translation task was formally examined and validated using an Item Objective Congruence Index (IOC) method by three English native speakers to verify its appropriateness for the purposes of the study. The comments from this method were used to implement the translation task. Each expression consisted of 3 sentences in which the positions of the metaphor for each expression were placed in to following positions: At the beginning (3 expressions); in the middle (3 expressions); and at the end of the text (3 expressions). In the task, metaphors were also categorized into three different types based on the cultural background of the context: Metaphor in the Thai cultural background context (3 expressions); Metaphor in the Western cultural background context (3 expressions); Metaphor in both the Thai and Western cultural background context (3 expressions).

The task was presented as a reading text; students were asked to carefully read the text and interpret the meaning. During the task, students were able to concentrate on each lexical item and could reread the words on the paper at any time. Each participant was asked to complete the task within 40 minutes. They were not allowed to use dictionaries or other electronic devices while doing the task. During the translation task, the researcher would gather information using the think-aloud protocol with a check list.

The researcher would ask questions regarding how a participant interpreted the metaphor, and how types, positions or cultural interferences of a metaphor affected the participant's interpretation. During the task, the entire conversation was recorded using a voice recorder. Regarding types of metaphors, the participants did not know how to identify type of metaphor. However, the researcher asked what they thought about different kinds of metaphors, and there were some comments for this question.

An example of the task is as follows:

"Hey! Do you know Samorn? Rumor has it that he has 10 dishes a meal. That guy is truly an elephant." The metaphor 'an elephant' as an attributional metaphor referring to the large size of a person. The position of the metaphor is at the end of the passage context. This metaphor resides in Thai cultural background since it is commonly known in Thai and does not exist or is uncommon in western countries.

"Our teacher is now a fire dragon. She is not in a good mood. I suggest you don't talk to her at this moment." The metaphor 'a fire dragon' as a relational metaphor refers to the aggressive and dangerous nature of a fire dragon. The metaphor is positioned at the beginning of the passage context. This metaphor is shared in both Thai and western cultural backgrounds since it is commonly known and represents the same ideology in both two cultures.

"Dear customer, please look at this scarf. It is as though you are wearing a ferret. You will not regret buying it." The metaphor 'ferret' as a double metaphor refers to both the softness and how it looks like a scarf. The metaphor is placed in the middle of the passage context. This metaphor resides in Western cultural background since it is commonly known in Western countries and doesn't exist or is uncommon in Thailand.

3. Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, the translation assignments were checked by the researcher. Data from the think-aloud protocol were categorized by using the thematic analysis method. Every word during interviews was transcribed and categorized according to types of metaphors, positions of metaphors in context, and cultural background interferences. The data would later be calculated and analyzed descriptively. Mean and standard deviation were reported in order to find out the average accuracy of the participants' metaphor interpretation. ANOVA was used to analyze the significant differences among three factors. First, it was used to detect any significant

differences in terms of the accuracy in the translations of three types of metaphors (attributional, relational and double metaphor). Second, it was used to find significant differences in the accuracy of the interpretations of metaphors at different positions (in the beginning, middle and end of the context). Third, it was used to find significant differences in the accuracy of the interpretations of metaphors due to different cultural backgrounds (Thai, Western, and Both Thai and Western cultural backgrounds).

Findings and Discussions

The accuracy of the participants' interpretations in all 9 metaphorical expressions contained different types of metaphors, different metaphor positions, and different cultural background knowledge. The think-aloud protocol results showed that the participants were able to recognize metaphors which resided in the metaphorical expressions during the translation task (89.58% of the time). Three factors including the types of metaphors, the different positions of metaphors, and the cultural background of EFL learners were found to play an important role in EFL learners' metaphor interpretation. Descriptions are as follows.

1. Findings

1.1 Influence of types of metaphors on EFL learners' metaphor interpretation

Table 1 Metaphor types

Metaphor Types	ANOVA Test	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
Attributional Metaphor	Between groups	19	.157	1.346	.210
	Within groups	40	.117		
	Total	59			
Relational Metaphor	Between groups	19	.080	2.395	.010
	Within groups	40	.033		
	Total	59			
Double Metaphor	Between groups	19	.189	1.263	.260
	Within groups	40	.150		
	Total	59			

The findings for the influence of metaphor types showed relational metaphors were the easiest to interpret correctly (95%), while attributional metaphors were more difficult with 51 correct interpretations (85%). Double metaphor is the type of metaphor that the participants found to be the most problematic. They were able to interpret 48 items (80%) correctly. As shown in Table 1, the results are significantly different (.010), which reached a significant level ($p < .05$) when comparing between the three types of metaphors.

1.2 Influence of the different positions of metaphors on EFL learners' metaphor interpretation

Table 2 Metaphor positions

Metaphor Positions	ANOVA Test	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
Beginning	Between groups	19	.185	2.776	.003*
	Within groups	40	.067		
	Total	59			
Middle	Between groups	19	.136	2.719	.004*
	Within groups	40	.050		
	Total	59			
Ending	Between groups	19	.189	1.263	.260
	Within groups	40	.150		
	Total	59			

The findings concerning the influence of different positions showed that most participants were able to interpret the metaphors that were positioned at the middle of the text correctly, with 55 correct interpretations (91.7%). The participants were also able to interpret the metaphors that were placed at the beginning and end of the text correctly with 53 (88.3%) and 48 (80%) correct interpretations, respectively. In Table 2, the results also prove that there were significant differences in the metaphors at the beginning of the context (.003) and also the metaphors at the middle of the context (.004) as both of these results reached a significance level of $p < .05$.

1.3 Influence of the cultural backgrounds of EFL learners on their metaphor interpretation

Table 3 Cultural interferences

Cultural Interferences	ANOVA Test	Df	Mean	F	Sig.
Thai Cultural Background	Between groups	19	.017	1.000	.481
	Within groups	40	.017		
	Total	59			
Western Cultural Background	Between groups	19	.214	1.284	.247
	Within groups	40	.167		
	Total	59			
Thai & Western Cultural Background	Between groups	19	.192	1.921	.041*
	Within groups	40	.100		
	Total	59			

The findings concerning the influence of the cultural backgrounds of EFL learners showed that metaphor expressions that required Thai cultural background knowledge caused the least difficulty for participants – 98.3% successfully gave the correct interpretations. The interference of Thai-western cultural background knowledge was not strong, with 85% of the participants interpreting the metaphors correctly, while 76.7% found that interpreting metaphors that required western cultural background knowledge was the most difficult. In Table 3, the results prove that there were significant differences in the interference of Thai-western cultural background knowledge (.041) as the result reached a significance level of $p < .05$. However, the results indicate that Thai cultural background knowledge caused the least difficulties for the participants, while western cultural background knowledge proved to be the most difficult.

2. Discussions

High accuracy (89.58%) seemed to show that Thai learners of English might not have much trouble in recognizing metaphors in metaphorical expressions or

metaphorical context. However, the accuracy of metaphorical interpretations varies due to several factors. This study revealed some influence on metaphor interpretations of three factors: types of metaphor, metaphor positions and cultural interferences. The results showed that Thai learners of English tended to interpret relational metaphors better than attributional and double metaphors. This is in agreement with Gentner (1988), who claimed that different types of metaphors require different processes of interpretation. The results showed that Thai learners of English tend to be able to interpret best when metaphors are embedded in the middle and at the beginning of the text, and have less ability to interpret metaphors that are positioned at the end of the text. The results in the study are partially in accordance with Foss and Lynch (1969), who suggested that learners will take a longer time to comprehend the text when target words occur early in the sentences. The results showed the accuracy of the participants' interpretations with a focus on cultural interferences. Thai learners of English tended to interpret metaphorical expressions that required the best proficiency of Thai cultural background knowledge. They had less efficiency when interpreting metaphors based on both Thai and western cultural backgrounds, and it seemed that Western metaphorical expressions were a bit difficult for the Thai learners of English. This is in agreement with Littlemore (2003), who pointed out that different cultural references may one reason learners misinterpret metaphors.

In addition, the interview responses supported all the findings as shown in the following excerpts of participants' perspectives.

2.1 Type of Metaphor Perspectives

"...metaphors that can be interpreted with things relating to the interpretation (relational metaphor) are easier to interpret than other types of metaphor."

"For example, the metaphor "a dog's mouth" is very easy to interpret when mapping with the aggressive barking of a dog."

These responses suggested that Thai learners tended to interpret relational metaphors more correctly than attribution and double metaphors.

2.2 Metaphor Position Perspectives

"I usually focused on words put at the beginning of the context. Therefore, if the metaphors were put at the beginning of the context, I had a better chance of interpreting them correctly.

"I could easily interpret metaphors if they were put at the middle of the texts and were surrounded by sufficient information."

"... context is very helpful when interpreting metaphors. If there are not enough supporting details, it can easily lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding."

The interviews pointed that Thai learners were more likely to interpret metaphors that were placed at the beginning and at the middle of text than metaphors that were put at the end of texts.

2.3 Cultural Interference Perspectives

"I am more familiar with metaphors that are based on Thai culture."

"I am able to interpret some of these metaphors immediately without the cultural context."

"..., metaphors that contained some western cultural background seemed to be more difficult due to the unfamiliarity of the words or the nature of Western culture."

These examples proved that more familiarity with cultural background enabled learners to interpret metaphor more accurately.

To conclude, this study suggests that relational metaphors are easier to interpret for Thai learners of English than attributional metaphors and double metaphors. The metaphors that are put at the beginning and in the middle of

the text facilitate interpretation, while those placed at the end of the text may delay it. Metaphorical expressions with Thai cultural background knowledge cause the least difficulty to the interpretations. Also, metaphors that require both Thai and Western cultural background knowledge are less difficult to interpret than metaphorical expressions with only western cultural background knowledge.

Conclusions

This study suggests that relational metaphors are easier to interpret for Thai learners of English than attributional metaphors and double metaphors. As Gentner (1988) claimed, different types of metaphors require different processes of interpretation. The metaphors that are put at the beginning and in the middle of the text facilitate interpretation, while those placed at the end of the text delay it. Foss and Lynch (1969) suggested that learners will take a longer time to comprehend the text when target words occur early in the sentences. Metaphorical expressions with Thai cultural background knowledge cause the least difficulty to the interpretations. Also, metaphors that require both Thai and Western cultural background knowledge are less difficult to interpret than metaphorical expressions with only western cultural background knowledge. Littlemore (2003) pointed out that different cultural references are one of reasons that cause learners to misinterpret metaphors.

More than half of the participants agreed that metaphor interpretation should be included in English classes in the Thai curriculum. Some participants presented the idea of starting to learn metaphor interpretation from the primary school level given that the sooner Thai students get used to metaphors, the better they will be able to interpret them. The practice should start with simple metaphors and gradually move on to more complex metaphorical expressions. Some participants also suggested that Thai students should learn how to interpret metaphors in secondary school. They argued that students should at least be able to understand the basic constructions of

English sentences or paragraphs and should be able to read English passages before attempting metaphor interpretation. Therefore, students in secondary school seem to be the most compatible level for metaphor interpretation. Moreover, some participants suggested that metaphor interpretation should be taught in university classes. They claimed that learning metaphor interpretation is quite difficult for non-English major students, and it might be not necessary for those who do not regularly use English in their daily lives. Thus, it should be taught as a compulsory course for English major students and as an alternative course for those who are interested.

From the interviews, it was found that most students did not know what a metaphor was and some had never recognized metaphorical expressions before. The students said most of the English courses they had taken focused more on grammatical functions or basic conversations; figurative language or pragmatic use of English were rarely taught in class. Only a few students who were from international schools said that they had encountered metaphors in class, while one student said she learned metaphors from an English translation class. Some students said the topic closest to metaphor interpretation they had learned in the class was English idioms.

One of the participants suggested that learning metaphor interpretation can bring a lot of fun to a course and improve the class environment. It was posited that students would be more interested in more active classes than in lecture-only classes. Classroom activities, brainstorming, games, presentations or other lesson plans can be implemented using metaphor interpretation, and this could bring variety to the classroom environment.

Many participants agreed that English is an international language and English language learners should learn all aspects of English, not only syntactically, but holistically. If English speakers use figurative language or metaphors in their daily lives, it would be beneficial for students to also learn about metaphor interpretation in order to have a better understanding of the conversations or texts they encounter in order to truly understand English in the same way native English speakers do.

One of the participants mentioned her translation class. The lecturer always gave English sentences or paragraphs and translated them for the students immediately. In this case, the students lose the opportunity to engage their creative and critical minds. Later on, when they encounter something complex, they might not be able to interpret or translate without assistance.

Another participant shared an interesting experience. She said that figurative language or metaphors also showed up in the questions on national exams such as O-NET and GAT. Unfortunately, the teachers in the school had never taught figurative language in their classes and thus the students were unable to answer those questions. Only students who attended extra private lessons at tutoring schools were able to answer the questions.

Metaphor interpretation is vital in English language learning for the various reasons discussed above. Including metaphor interpretation into the curriculum could help teachers change their class environments and motivate their students. Ignoring metaphors fails to prepare students to encounter figurative language and may hinder comprehension of the language, which could result in poor performance on language tests.

2. Recommendations and Limitations

For further studies, populations and groups of learners should be increased and/or varied, such as low and medium proficiency students, so that their in-depth attitudes or perceptions toward metaphor interpretation could be investigated. Other factors such as geographical qualifications including age, gender, personal interests, and educational background should be investigated. Besides, different types of metaphors should be examined including metaphors that are used to describe concepts which have a high degree of abstractness, and metaphors which are understood by including the topic of the metaphor into a metaphorical category defined by one or at most several salient semantic features (Banaruee et al., 2019). Also,

different contexts and different cultural interferences could provide a basis for future research. As for the limitations, the number of participants is limited in this study due to the implementation of the qualitative-quantitative mixed method. A larger study population would increase the generalizability of the study. Moreover, there are still many other types of metaphors which have not been studied. Also, different contexts and different cultural interferences could be provided as a basis for future research. Lastly, language complexity and language difficulty are excluded in the study as the study focused more on types of metaphors, metaphor positions, and cultural interferences. This study created the translation task using relatively basic sentences and included standard metaphors (animal metaphors) in each test item in order to exclude the differences in learners' language proficiency. It is believed that more significant findings are possible provided different language proficiency levels are taken into account in future research.

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