



How to cite this article:

Songsirisak, P., Jitpranee, J., Lisec, A., Boonjanawiroj, P., Wetpichetkosol, B., & Kantamas, K. (2022). Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers at a Thai university. *Malaysian Journal of Learning & Instruction, 19*(1), 213-241. <https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli2022.19.1.8>

CHINESE STUDENTS' METAPHORICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THAI TEACHERS AT A THAI UNIVERSITY

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Received: 14/7/2021 Revised: 28/11/2021 Accepted: 9/12/2021 Published: 31/1/2022

ABSTRACT

Purpose – This paper discusses Chinese students' negative and positive written feedback about Thai teachers using metaphorical descriptions and the links between it and their classroom experiences.

Methodology – An open-response questionnaire was employed to collect the data from 21 Chinese female students. The questionnaire provided both positive and negative “people” or “thing” metaphors of Thai teachers for students' selection. In addition, students were allowed to use their own metaphors to describe their teachers. Data was analyzed by using open and axial coding techniques.

Findings – The results revealed that Chinese students were able to compare Thai teachers with either a “person” or “thing” metaphor and could write a metaphorical description that reflected different aspects of their instructors’ teaching, both positively and negatively. The quality of their descriptions was rich enough to link with their classroom learning experiences. Both positive and negative “people” and “thing” metaphorical descriptions were associated with three different viewpoints: academic, power dynamics, and emotion. The positive “people” metaphorical descriptions were linked to four classroom issues: knowledge and experience, teaching style, motivation, and guardian/protector. In contrast, the positive “thing” and negative “people” and “thing” metaphorical descriptions were linked to three classroom issues: knowledge and experience, teaching style, and emotion.

Significance – These findings help to strengthen Thai-Sino understanding of the relationship between Chinese students and Thai teachers. Findings also suggested that Chinese students’ metaphorical feedback should be used with the non-metaphorical assessment form to evaluate and improve Thai teachers’ instructional practices in the Thai-Chinese student exchange curriculum.

Keywords: Chinese students’ metaphors, metaphors, metaphorical descriptions, metaphorical study.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a number of Chinese students have enrolled in the English language, Thai language and culture, tourism, Chinese for international trade, and Thai traditional medicine programs at a university in the northern part of Thailand. The current statistical number of those Chinese students are 224 bachelor’s degree students, 42 master’s degree students, and 8 doctorate degree students (The Office of Academic Affairs and Registration, 2021). Most of the Chinese students in the bachelor’s degree level are from the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements on student exchange programs between the university under study and universities in Yunnan Province, China. This has led to many adjustments and preparations of the student exchange curriculum to meet the requirements of Chinese students in terms of credit transfer, students’ academic services, welfare, and facilities in the bachelor’s degree level. Theoretically,

these curriculum adjustments are based on the four commonplaces (Schwab, 1973) of curriculum design including teacher, student, subject matter, and environment. The interrelation of these four commonplaces in curriculum design is important in structuring teachers' strategic teaching plans, planning the processes of learning and teaching, assessing students' learning outcomes, and procuring learning facilities for students' learning both inside and outside class. To reflect upon teachers' teaching, Chinese students' metaphorical feedback on their Thai teachers are taken into consideration and used as a purpose to improve their teaching practices, enhance the quality of teaching and learning in class, and build effective teacher-student rapport to meet the students' learning needs and their perceptions of a good language teacher in the Thai context.

Previous studies on metaphor analysis have shown that metaphors play a critical role in education and function in various ways (Botha, 2009; Jitpranee, 2017). Metaphors help teachers to develop their teaching approaches that contribute to the improvement of students' learning skills and outcomes (Bas & Bal-Gezegin, 2015; Ishiki, 2011). Likewise, Bas and Bal-Gezegin (2015) noted that understanding students' perceptions enables teachers to indicate students' attitudes toward learning and learning success. This means that teachers can access the mental images of their students' perceptions and reflections of the effectiveness of teachers' teachings on their learning outcomes (Ishiki, 2011). Accordingly, metaphorical studies of students' conceptualizations of their teachers have been conducted in many contexts including China (Zhang, 2016), Malaysia (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008), the Philippines (Kitikanan, 2010), Thailand (Kitikanan, 2010; Jitpranee, 2017), and Turkey (Bas & Bal-Gezegin, 2015).

However, from the reviewing of the earlier literature, the researchers rarely found any research concerning Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers in the context of Thai universities. In addition, students most frequently evaluate and describe their teachers on scales of effectiveness or in objective descriptions instead of subjective descriptions. As a result, metaphorical descriptions are lacking in their feedback. This makes Thai teachers have less insightful information to gain a better understanding of their students' perceptions of learning needs, qualities of teachers' teaching practices, teachers' strategic teaching plans, and fulfilment of curriculum design.

In response to this gap, the researchers conducted this study to investigate Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers in the context of a Thai university. The purpose of these metaphorical descriptions is to understand Chinese students' current attitudes toward Thai teachers and to reflect upon the effectiveness of Thai teachers' teaching for Chinese students at the university.

The following section provides a review of previous studies on metaphorical descriptions and the reasons why it is important to study metaphors in the aspect of education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, a metaphor is a linguistic expression presented in a group of terminology used in describing a particular thing based on a figurative language in a poem or literature by a speaker (Kitikanan, 2010; Kamberi, 2014). The notion of a metaphor is related to a cognitive process transition toward language use (Danto, 1980; Kitikanan, 2010). According to Cameron and Maslen (2010), metaphors are used to "talk about something in terms of something else", which rely on individuals' evaluations, attitudes, perspectives, or beliefs. In cognitive research, the images described through the metaphors communicate an individual's thinking (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and their subconscious thoughts and reasoning (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The meanings of any metaphor are based on the ability to create a cognitive framework of knowledge and a worldview to reflect what is associated in the minds of individuals without regarding the validity beyond the meaning being conveyed by the metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Metaphor analysis has many advantages in education and non-education contexts, especially concerning the reflection of understanding and perception toward some particular things or events. As remarked by Yilmaz (2018), metaphors enable the speakers to express their feelings and thoughts, make information confidential and reliable, present the holistic knowledge and understanding of a particular thing, exemplify common behaviors, and reflect understanding of social and cultural processes through a figurative language. Cameron and Maslen (2010) noted that metaphors help people in the community understand each individual's attitudes and emotions. Zheng and Song (2010) stated that metaphors facilitate learners to insightfully understand their

learning contents in the academic settings. According to Botha (2009), metaphors reflect the world experience in education so that there are many advantages gained from the metaphorical analysis. These advantages include forming educational policies, training teachers, planning curriculum, guiding teacher reflections, and learning evaluations.

Moreover, metaphors help students gain an overview of the English language, which is beneficial for their creative writing (Effendi, 2016). Students' learning of metaphors can increase their knowledge of the English language and gain better insights into native culture (Dong, 2004). Metaphors enable teachers to grasp students' attitudes and gain a better understanding of students' learning, so they can better design lesson plans and improve their teaching strategies in class. Moreover, studying metaphors increases both students and teachers' understanding of the learning situations occurring in the classroom (Ural et al., 2016), and students' metaphors of their teacher's role ensure students' linguistic development and well-being.

Previous studies of metaphor analysis emphasized various perspectives of metaphors, including teacher metaphors (Carter & Pitcher, 2010; Yesilbursa, 2012; Kamberi, 2014; Şimşek, 2014; Akinoglu & Eren, 2016; Ural et al., 2016; Yilmaz, 2018), learners' metaphors of teachers (Nainby & Fassett, 2008; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Kesen, 2010; Kitikanan, 2010; Ishiki, 2011; Mouraz et al., 2013; Kamberi, 2014; Bas & Bal-Gezegin, 2015; Su, 2015; Effendi, 2016; Ural et al., 2016; Zhang, 2016; Jitpranee, 2017; Yilmaz, 2018), and others (e.g. Zhang & Song, 2010; Lowery, 2013).

Regarding teacher metaphors, earlier studies have focused on English teachers in terms of pedagogical perspectives (Carter & Pitcher, 2010), professional role identities (Yesilbursa, 2012), language teaching and learning (Kamberi, 2014; Şimşek, 2014; Ural et al., 2016), scientific knowledge (Akinoglu & Eren, 2016), and teachers themselves (Yilmaz, 2018). For learners' metaphors of teachers, available literature has emphasized matters of students' perceptions toward English teachers (Bas & Bal-Gezegin, 2015; Zhang, 2016; Jitpranee, 2017), English learning (Ishiki, 2011; Su, 2015), English language course books (Kesen, 2010), English courses (Kitikanan, 2010), non-English language teachers (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008), and teaching and learning processes (Mouraz et al., 2013; Kamberi, 2014; Ural et al., 2016).

However, there is still a lack of research concerning Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers in the Thai universities context. Therefore, the current study aims to determine Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers in order to gain a better understanding of their attitudes toward Thai teachers and their instructional practices. To achieve this aim, three research purposes were formulated for the present study:

1. To determine Chinese students' ability to use metaphors to express both positive and negative attributes of Thai teachers
2. To find out the positive and negative reasons underlying their choices of metaphors in describing Thai teachers
3. To identify the link between those metaphors and Thai teachers' teaching issues both inside and outside the classroom

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 21 Chinese female students from a university in Yunnan Province, China were asked to participate in the present study. They were enrolled in an English major at a university in the northern part of Thailand through an MoU agreement. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21 years old. They had also studied a basic course of Thai with a Thai teacher at their university in China before entering Thailand. Therefore, they could speak a little Thai and understood general Thai cultural values and norms. They studied English with both Thai and native English teachers, but most of their teachers were Thai. They studied literature, including Shakespearean plays that incorporate some aspects of metaphorical language. Furthermore, they studied Thai as a minor course with Thai teachers at the university. They had already studied in the Thai university for a year and had one more year before graduation. To follow up on the Chinese students' attitudes of Thai teachers, an open-response questionnaire was used to gather the metaphorical descriptions of their teachers in order to improve Thai teachers' instructional practice and fulfill curriculum design in the future.

Instrument

An open-response questionnaire was used to elicit the students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers who taught them Thai and English languages in the student exchange program. The questionnaire consisted of two main parts. The first part included questions about personal details such as gender, the number of teachers the students had studied with, and the number of years they studied at the university in Thailand. The second part enquired about the students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers. It had two questions concerning the positive and negative metaphors of Thai teachers. Since giving a metaphorical description of a teacher is a high level of communication skill, the research team decided to provide the students with examples of both positive and negative metaphors of a teacher in the questionnaire so that they could have more choices to the metaphor that best conveyed the metaphorical meanings of their teachers. The questionnaire provided a wide selection of both positive and negative metaphors for the students, and allowed them to come up with their own metaphors if they were to explain the Thai teachers well. Those metaphors were adapted based on metaphorical theories and literature (Oxford et al., 1998; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008; Jitpranee, 2017) and some were designed and checked multiple times by the research team in order to build the validity of the questionnaire for data collection. The students were asked to use those metaphors to describe their Thai teachers based on their experiences and attitudes of learning with them. Students' completion of the questionnaire remained anonymous to the Thai teachers. In addition to completing the questionnaire with a metaphor to represent their Thai teachers, they were asked to give the reasons underlying the metaphor, and a brief example of the Thai teachers' teaching issues inside and outside the classroom.

Data Analysis

Open and axial coding techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were adopted for metaphorical data analysis. The open coding technique was used to analyze the data of students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers at the first stage. It was used to dissect the ideas found in the students' metaphorical texts into pieces, identify and group them into themes based on their similarities and differences. Later, axial coding technique was used to analyze and put the data found in the first stage into categories according to their relationship, label them, and report them for results.

RESULTS

This section reports on the results of the present study in three parts. First, students' ability to select and use metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers. Second, students' usage of positive metaphors of Thai teachers. Finally, students' usage of negative metaphors of Thai teachers. The first part corresponded to the first study purpose while the second and third parts were for the second and third purposes of the study.

The positive and negative metaphors used to describe Thai teachers were divided into two groups under the headings of metaphors associated with "people" and "things". The findings for students' positive and negative metaphorical descriptions were largely based on their individual perceptions of Thai teachers as these descriptions were related to their learning experiences with Thai teachers at the university, specifically in the classroom.

Students' metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers were divided into "people" and "thing" metaphors, which were analyzed and associated to five types of viewpoints including academic, power dynamics, emotion, motivation, and guardian/protector. Academic refers to the teacher's knowledge, ways of teaching, directions, and goals. Power dynamics refers to whether a classroom is democratic, inclusive, or participatory. Emotion refers to the teacher's awareness to students' needs. Motivation refers to the teacher's encouragement of their students to accomplish the goals. Guardian/protector refers to the teacher's monitoring and suggestions provided for students.

Students' Ability to Select and Use Metaphorical Descriptions of Thai Teachers

Concerning the criteria used for students' ability, the researchers defined ability as: *the capability to correctly identify appropriate metaphors for either good or bad Thai teachers and to use two or more words that support their metaphorical descriptions*. In terms of inability, it is defined as: *not being able to correctly identify appropriate metaphors for either good or bad Thai teachers and unable to use up to two words to support their metaphorical descriptions*. As illustrated in the last column under the Metaphorical Description Ability (MDA) of Tables 2 and 4, the data showed that 5 out of 21 Chinese students were

unable to meet these criteria, which meant that the majority could adequately select and describe metaphors about their Thai teachers.

Students' Usage of Positive Metaphors of Thai Teachers

Positive "People" Metaphors

The findings illustrated that there were seven positive "people" metaphors used in describing Thai teachers. Data in Table 1 shows that the most frequent positive metaphors used to describe Thai teachers were a friend (14.28%), a provider (9.52%), a conductor (9.52%), a tour guide (4.76%), a parent (4.76%), a wise prophet (4.76%), and a nutritionist (4.76%), respectively. The language used for metaphorical descriptions of these positive "people" metaphors were found to consist of three types of viewpoints including academic, power dynamics, and emotion.

As illustrated in Table 1, the academic viewpoint included six people metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a provider, a conductor/driver, a tour guide, a parent, a wise prophet, and a nutritionist) with 12 different views: *gives useful knowledge to people, has knowledge and gives new information to students, provides good advice for people, offers intuitive choices and gives directions, takes passengers on trips, is strict but well-meaning, has many different ways of teaching, predicts things, finds solutions to problems, conducts need analyses, causes growth and development, and explains the important needs*. For the power dynamics viewpoint, there was only one people metaphor (Thai teachers were described as a conductor/maestro) with three different views: *leads others to play good music (negotiates and allows for participation), leads the team (leads and organizes), and plays an important role (takes control)*. In terms of emotional viewpoint, there were four people metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a friend, a provider, a tour guide, and a parent) and six different views: *helps students in trouble, sincerely cares, is friendly and kind, is aware of others who are in need, shows the way when lost and loves, and has devotion for students*.

These metaphorical descriptions were found to link to Thai teachers' teaching issues both inside and outside the classroom under four main themes: 1) knowledge and experience issues; 2) teaching style issues; 3) motivation issues; and 4) guardian/protector issues.

Regarding knowledge and experience issues, the findings showed that students perceived Thai teachers as knowledgeable, experienced, competent, and well-planned teachers who effectively helped them learn and exposed them to new knowledge. For example, findings from the students' metaphorical descriptions indicated that Thai teachers "*give useful knowledge to people and give new information to students*". In addition, Thai teachers provided students with many learning activities and gave them feedback on their mistakes in order to improve their learning performances and increase their ability to achieve satisfactory academic outcomes. Furthermore, the ability to predict Chinese students' learning difficulties helped Thai teachers set successful teaching plans and strategies to facilitate and support their learning both inside and outside class.

Additionally, the findings revealed that Thai teachers had their own teaching style in class. They employed several teaching techniques and ways to help Chinese students learn. For example, they provided the students with learning tips, strategies, and suggestions to support the growth and development of their knowledge, learning potentials, abilities to solve learning problems, and experience. However, Thai teachers mostly relied on textbook approaches and focused their teachings on the contents in the books, which were considered as uninteresting and unmotivating.

In terms of motivation issues, the findings indicated that Thai teachers knew how to motivate Chinese students. They were always supporting and building students' confidence and encouraged them to use critical thinking during classroom discussions.

Finally, concerning guardian/protector issues, Thai teachers were helpful and patient. They monitored and provided advice directly and focused on students' learning. They always showed concerns and gave warnings to students, especially when going off campus.

Table 1

Positive People Metaphors of Thai Teachers

No.	Metaphor	Metaphorical description	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
1.	Friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ helps students in trouble ➤ sincerely cares ➤ is friendly, kind, and appreciative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ is helpful and patient ➤ is close to students like the old Chinese saying "like teachers like friends" 	3	14.28	Able
2.	Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ helps and gives useful knowledge to people ➤ is aware of others who are in need ➤ has knowledge and gives new information to students ➤ provides good advice for people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ helps gain useful knowledge ➤ has a lot of knowledge and experience ➤ makes students feel comfortable in a new learning environment 	2	9.52	Able
3.	Conductor/ Driver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ navigates driving for passengers ➤ drives to many places ➤ gives advice to specific ticket outlets ➤ offers intuitive choices and gives directions ➤ takes shortcuts and avoids detours ➤ tells necessary procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provides advice to students ➤ gives good directions 	1	4.76	Able

(continued)

No.	Metaphor	Metaphorical description	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
	Conductor/maestro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ leads others to play good music ➤ leads the team ➤ plays an important role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provides many learning activities ➤ gives tips, strategies, and suggestions ➤ builds students' confidence ➤ encourages critical thinking 	1	4.76	Able
4.	Tour guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ takes passengers on trips ➤ shows the way when lost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ warns students when going off campus ➤ advises students to spend time on learning instead of "wasting time" 	1	4.76	Able
5.	Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ is strict but well-meaning ➤ has various ways of teaching ➤ loves and has devotion for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ uses several different approaches to learning ➤ solves conflicts and provides criticism for students' mistakes ➤ teaches only the contents from the book 	1	4.76	Able
6.	Wise prophet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ predicts things as "good or bad" ➤ finds solutions to problems ➤ conducts needs analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has competence and is well-prepared ➤ can predicts students' problems and shortcomings ➤ sets good targets for the course 	1	4.76	Able

(continued)

No.	Metaphor	Metaphorical description	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
7.	Nutritionist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ gives fertilizers and nutrients to flowers ➤ causes growth and development ➤ explains the important needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ gives students different types of knowledge in class ➤ uses different teaching techniques and strategies 	1	4.76	Able

Note. N == Percentage, MDA = Metaphorical Description Ability Number, %

Positive “Thing” Metaphors

Regarding students’ selection of positive metaphors of Thai teachers related to things, the findings showed that there were seven “thing” metaphors that were most frequently used by the students to describe their teachers: sunshine (19.04%), a boat (4.76%), a lamp (4.76%), a walking dictionary (4.76%), a candle (4.76%), a bright lamp (4.76%), and a book (4.76%).

In terms of the language used for metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers, it was found to consist of two viewpoints, namely academic and emotion.

Table 2 demonstrates that the academic viewpoint included five thing metaphors (Thai teachers were described as sunshine, a boat, a lamp, a walking dictionary, and a candle) with 12 different views: *has bright knowledge, makes the darkness clear, sees colors and shapes clearly, leads to adventure, takes me to my final destination, shows different routes, has brightness with different purposes, has unlimited knowledge, has expanded insights, flows with information, is very bright, and can see things clearly.* For emotional viewpoint, it was found to have three thing metaphors (Thai teachers were described as sunshine, boat, and lamp) with six different views, which included: *helps appreciate beauty, appears in the morning and is warm, touches my heart and makes me feel comfortable, takes passengers to see scenery, shapes, and colors (stimulates our senses), has invisible power, and has endless rays.*

According to these metaphorical descriptions, they were linked with Thai teachers' teaching issues both inside and outside the classroom under the three teaching issues: 1) knowledge and experience issues; 2) teaching style issues; and 3) emotional issues.

Regarding knowledge and experience issues, the data showed similar findings to Table 1, which indicated that students perceived Thai teachers as being knowledgeable, helpful for students' learning of different aspects of knowledge, and available to solve their academic difficulties. They provided ways to facilitate students' pronunciation learning, supported learning through good personal examples and actions, and provided comparisons for students' better understanding. Additionally, they guided students' learning and understanding of difficult things through readings, sentences analysis, and learning examples.

For teaching style issues, Thai teachers presented knowledge to students in an interesting way. They organized enjoyable learning activities and implemented them in the classroom for students' learning. The findings further showed that they were also more likely to repeat and re-explain difficult sentences for students' understanding before moving to the next steps of teaching.

In terms of emotional issues, Thai teachers were perceived to make students feel comfortable in class. They were gentle, patient, relaxing, and easy going toward the students. Sometimes they encouraged students to feel strong after experiencing disappointment and were helpful in solving their students' personal problems. Moreover, the findings revealed that there were two students who used "thing" metaphors for their Thai teachers, but they could not provide either a metaphorical description or link them with any classroom examples.

Table 2

Positive Thing Metaphors of Thai Teachers

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
1.	Sunshine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has bright knowledge ➤ helps appreciate beauty ➤ makes the darkness clear ➤ appears in the morning and is warm ➤ sees colors and shapes clearly ➤ touches my heart and makes me feel comfortable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ makes students appreciate the importance of different aspects of knowledge ➤ makes students feel comfortable ➤ solves students' personal and academic problems ➤ uses fun and enjoyable activities ➤ is gentle and responsible ➤ encourages students to feel strong when disappointed 	4	19.04	Able
2.	Boat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ leads to adventure ➤ takes me to my final destination ➤ shows different routes ➤ takes passengers to see scenery, shapes, and colors (stimulate our senses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ takes students through reading ➤ helps students to use their senses and emotions ➤ analyzes sentences in a fun and enjoyable way ➤ teaches with patience ➤ repeats and re-explains difficult sentences 	1	4.76	Able

(continued)

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
3.	Lamp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has invisible power ➤ has endless rays ➤ has brightness with different purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has endless knowledge ➤ presents knowledge in lively and interesting ways ➤ has patience, busy but accommodating to teacher's schedule 	1	4.76	Able
4.	Walking dictionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has unlimited knowledge ➤ has expanded insights ➤ flows with information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ uses many ways to make students clear in their pronunciation ➤ uses personal examples, actions, and comparisons with other examples for student's understanding 	1	4.76	Able
5.	Candle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ is very bright ➤ can see things clearly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ explains difficult things clearly by giving examples 	1	4.76	Able
6.	Bright lamp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	1	4.76	Unable
7.	Book	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	1	4.76	Unable

Note. N = Number, % = Percentage, MDA = Metaphorical Description Ability

Students' Usage of Negative Metaphors of Thai Teachers

Negative "People" Metaphors

The findings showed that students selected four different negative metaphors under the heading of "people" metaphors for their Thai teachers, which included a salesman (9.52%), a quake (9.52%), a bad coach (4.76%), and a sleep talker (4.76%). The language used for metaphorical descriptions of these negative "people" metaphors were found to consist of three types of viewpoints including academic, power dynamics, and emotion.

Table 3 illustrates the eight different academic viewpoints from three negative people metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a quake, a bad coach, and a sleep talker), which indicated that the teacher *is a bad doctor, is bad medicine, has limited knowledge, is old-fashioned and has old knowledge, learns nothing new, has a one-way understanding, causes misunderstanding, and talks like in a dream*. For the power dynamic viewpoint, there were two viewpoints from two negative people metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a salesman and a bad coach): *recommends things you do not need and makes athletes worse*. In terms of emotional viewpoint, it was found that there were six different viewpoints from three negative person metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a salesman, a bad coach, and a sleep talker): *is a boring talker, causes pressure to make quick decisions, is difficult to refuse, has no patience, has no strategies, and mumbles to self*.

The findings revealed that the link of students' metaphorical descriptions to Thai teacher's teaching issues both inside and outside the classroom were associated with three teaching issues including: 1) knowledge and experience issues; 2) teaching style issues; and 3) emotional issues.

Regarding knowledge and experience issues, the data indicated that some Thai teachers lacked knowledge and were unable to supplement new information for students' learning. They were sometimes considered to have meaningless teaching approaches and bad attitudes. They taught what they thought was the right way, but it did not match the needs of the students.

Additionally, Thai teachers' teaching styles were sometimes perceived as unmotivating. They were perceived as teaching fast and did not follow the content in the textbooks. They repeated things that had already been taught and were unnecessary.

In terms of emotional issues, some Thai teachers were perceived to have less patience and sense of responsibility, which caused uncertainty and confusion for the students.

Table 3

Negative People Metaphors of Thai Teachers

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
1.	Salesman	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ recommends things you do not need ➤ is a boring talker ➤ causes pressure to make quick decisions ➤ is difficult to refuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ teaches too quickly and too fast ➤ causes students to hear wrong and accept things ➤ causes uncertainty and confusion 	2	9.52	Able
2.	Quake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ is a bad doctor ➤ is bad medicine ➤ has limited knowledge ➤ is old-fashioned and has old knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ cannot teach new information and has a lack of responsibility and patience 	2	9.52	Able
3.	Bad coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ makes athletes worse ➤ learns nothing new ➤ has no patience ➤ has no strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ lacks patience and a sense of responsibility ➤ has meaningless teaching approaches and bad attitudes 	1	4.76	Able

(continued)

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
4.	Sleep talker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has a one-way understanding ➤ causes misunderstanding ➤ mumbles to self ➤ talks like in a dream 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ teaches what he thinks we need but is not necessary ➤ does not follow textbook and repeats what he has already taught 	1	4.76	Able

Note. N = Number, % = Percentage, MDA = Metaphorical Description Ability

Negative “Thing” Metaphors

Regarding the negative metaphors, the findings showed that the five “thing” metaphors students frequently used to describe Thai teachers were broken traffic lights (33.33%), a broken record (19.04%), a rock (4.76%), a broken lamp (4.76%), and a broken radio (9.52%). In terms of the language used for metaphorical descriptions of Thai teachers, the findings consisted of three viewpoints including academic, power dynamics, and emotion.

Table 4 shows the 13 different viewpoints from two negative “thing” metaphors (Thai teachers were described as broken traffic lights and a broken record): *causes traffic accidents, affects traffic on all the roads, causes confusion and misunderstanding, gives different signals and meanings according to different cultures, misleads walking people (pedestrians) and drivers into wrong directions, gives wrong messages and directions, jams up people, breaks rules, causes traffic jams, cannot hear singer’s voice clearly, does not communicate well, gives an incomplete message, and is unclear and incomprehensible.* For power dynamics viewpoint, the data showed that there were three viewpoints from one negative thing metaphor (Thai teachers were described as a rock), which were *falls from mountains, falls with the force of gravity, and has no stopping impact.* In terms of emotional viewpoint, there were three different viewpoints from two negative thing metaphors (Thai teachers were described as a broken record and a rock): *is confusing, annoying, and boring, has a broken and lifeless sound, and causes deep depression.*

The data revealed that there was a link between students' negative metaphorical descriptions to Thai teacher's teaching issues both inside and outside the classroom under the three teaching issues including: 1) knowledge and experience issues; 2) teaching style issues; and 3) emotional issues.

In regard to knowledge and experience issues, some Thai teachers had unclear and inaccurate pronunciation when compared with native English-speaking teachers. Their inaccuracy in spelling and incomplete and unclear explanations on tasks caused confusion for some students.

For teaching style issues, some Thai teachers taught too fast, which was uninteresting and led students to lose focus. The teachers only followed what was in the textbooks, which was unmotivating. They sometimes ignored listening or providing clear explanations for students. Moreover, they were compared to being like "a broken record", which was disconnected from the sequences of the learning topics and always changed unexpectedly.

In terms of emotional issues, the students perceived that their teachers were unsatisfied with their work. Sometimes they got angry when they felt that their students disrespected them. This impatience discouraged and depressed the students.

In addition, Table 4 shows that there were three students who used negative "thing" metaphors for their Thai teachers, but they could not provide either a metaphorical description or link them with any classroom examples.

Table 4

Negative Thing Metaphors of Thai Teachers

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
1.	Broken traffic lights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ causes traffic accidents ➤ affects traffic on all the roads ➤ causes confusion and misunderstanding ➤ gives different signals and meanings according to different cultures ➤ misleads walking people (pedestrians) and drivers in wrong directions ➤ gives wrong messages and directions ➤ jams up people ➤ breaks rules ➤ causes traffic jams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ has unclear and non-standard pronunciation ➤ provides unclear directions on homework and causes confusion ➤ gives unclear guidance on tasks ➤ spells English words incorrectly on the blackboard ➤ teaches fast and misleads students away from their focus ➤ provides unclear instruction that leads students to incorrect information 	7	33.33	Able

(continued)

No.	Metaphors	Metaphorical descriptions	Thai teacher's teaching issues inside and outside the classroom	N	%	MDA
2.	Broken record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ cannot hear singer's voice clearly ➤ does not communicate well ➤ is confusing, annoying, and boring ➤ has a broken and lifeless sound ➤ gives an incomplete message ➤ is unclear and incomprehensible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ provides serious, boring, and uninteresting teaching ➤ follows and repeats only what is in the book ➤ does not listen and explain to students ➤ provides incomplete explanations and pauses ➤ often changes the connection of topics and is hard to follow 	4	19.04	Able
3.	Rock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ falls from mountains ➤ causes deep depression ➤ falls with the force of gravity ➤ has no stopping impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ feels unsatisfied with students work ➤ feels students disrespecting them and becomes angry ➤ is impatient and causes students to be depressed 	1	4.76	Able
4.	Broken lamp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	1	4.76	Unable
5.	Broken radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ unable to explain 	2	9.52	Unable

Note. N = Number, % = Percentage, MDA = Metaphorical Description Ability

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that Chinese students had the ability to select proper metaphors and use them correctly to describe both positive and negative aspects of their Thai teachers. The results gave a strong indication that most of the students could subjectively describe their feelings about their Thai teachers in writing. Perhaps, it can be noted that this particular batch of Chinese students was able to metaphorically describe their feelings of Thai teachers well because they had studied the introduction to literature and the play *“Romeo and Juliet”* by Shakespeare in their drama class. Using “people” and “thing” metaphors to describe teachers enabled them to indirectly express information that would be difficult to say directly. This metaphorical feedback from the students provides teachers with useful indirect information of students’ reflections on their teaching and effectively maintains positive teacher-student rapport better than acquiring the students’ feedback through direct non-metaphorical ways.

In addition, the findings showed that the Chinese students’ positive and negative “people” and “thing” metaphors consisted of three viewpoints, which included academic, power dynamics, and emotion, except the positive “thing” metaphor, which did not have the viewpoint of “emotion”. These metaphors were linked to events inside and outside the classroom concerning the issues of Thai teachers’ knowledge and experience, teaching styles, and emotions. However, the issues of motivation and guardian/protector were found only in the positive “people” metaphors; while the issue of emotion was excluded. These results revealed that most of the Chinese students’ metaphors of Thai teachers were different from the previous studies (Yilmaz, 2018; Jitpranee, 2017; Zhang, 2016, Şimşek, 2014; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008) as indicated by their different point of views of their teachers based on their individual perceptions, learning experiences, and cultures. One of the interesting metaphors related to Chinese culture was that the teachers were like a “friend”. This metaphor appeared in the old Chinese saying mentioned by a Chinese student: *“like teachers like friends”*. It reflects Chinese students’ culturally-unique way of thinking that exhibits their belief of teachers by describing them like a friend who always has patience, helps, and takes care of them when they are in trouble.

Concerning Thai teachers’ instructional practices, Chinese students positively reflected that the Thai teachers were knowledgeable, competent, well-planned, helpful, patient, and motivated teachers.

They could also predict students' learning difficulties and needs and provided effective solutions, strategies, and feedback on their learning. These findings are considered to be the effective characteristics of Thai teachers in language teaching for Chinese students in the student exchange program. Furthermore, these findings are consistent to the study of metaphorical conceptualizations of English teachers in the Thai context as noted that students conceptualized their English teachers as knowledgeable, smart, qualified, resourceful, helpful, and patient in students' learning (Jitpranee 2017). Likewise, studies of metaphorical analysis of Malaysian students' perceptions of their language teachers remarked that students perceived the teacher's role as to ensure their linguistic development and well-being (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008) and to increase both the teachers and students' awareness of teaching and learning concepts and what is going on in the language classroom (Ural et al., 2016).

However, Chinese students perceived that the Thai teachers relied on textbook-based and teacher-centered approaches while teaching in the classroom as the findings showed that Thai teachers "*taught only the contents from the book*" and "*followed and repeated only what is in the book*". These approaches were considered as uninteresting, un motivating, and may not meet the students' learning needs or adequately develop their learning potentials. In contrast, they preferred Thai teachers to make the class fun, enjoyable, relaxing, and motivating. They should organize different learning activities, employ various teaching techniques and strategies, and provide more examples for their learning. Moreover, the findings suggested that a learner-centered approach should be implemented in the classroom in order to promote and encourage them to take an active role in their learning, and create opportunities and an atmosphere for teacher-student and student-student learning interchanges.

Regarding Thai teachers' concern of Chinese students, this study showed dissimilar findings to previous studies concerning Thai teachers' teaching issues as it is indicated that Thai teachers were emphatic and sensitive to students' learning needs and feelings. They always provided advice and offered solutions for students' problems and disappointments. Additionally, Thai teachers' characteristics as gentle, patient, relaxed, easy-going, and motivating in learning made Chinese students feel comfortable enough to approach and learn with Thai teachers both inside and outside the classroom. These positive aspects of Thai teachers provided a greater involvement in students' learning and effectively built good teacher-student rapport.

On the other hand, Thai teachers' ineffective characteristics included impatience, irresponsibility, bad attitudes, and dissatisfaction with students' works, which may have caused students to be depressed. These findings described the notions as indicated that metaphors reflect people's world experience of education (Botha, 2009) and help them understand the attitudes and emotions of one another (Cameron & Maslen, 2010).

According to the findings, there were three positive and three negative attributes to consider for teaching improvement, teachers' professional development, and administrative awareness. Firstly, concerning the positive feedback for Thai teachers, Chinese students believed that Thai teachers should give many examples, both personal and in general, and be able to compare these examples with other examples for their learning. The data suggested that Chinese students expected Thai teachers to have plenty of experience; therefore, they were expected to provide many examples to clarify their teaching objectives and serve the purposes of learning. Secondly, Thai teachers should inspire and motivate Chinese students to better appreciate the importance of knowledge and learning. They expected Thai teachers to lead and inspire them. Thirdly, Thai teachers should be patient, easy-going, gentle, fun-oriented, and helpful. They should be able to reduce learning anxiety and establish a relaxed learning atmosphere for positive learning for Chinese students.

Concerning the negative feedback for Thai teachers, firstly, Chinese students felt that bad teachers often caused uncertainty, misinformation, and confusion by teaching and talking too fast. Consequently, most of them disliked this teaching style. Secondly, Chinese students preferred Thai teachers to follow the scope of the lesson and utilize meaningful materials for students' learning. Thirdly, Chinese students felt a dislike for those teachers who were irresponsible in their teaching by having an unprepared lesson or not following the course texts.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated metaphorical descriptions of Chinese students concerning their Thai teachers' positive and negative perspectives. The purposes were to identify the kinds of metaphors and descriptions of those metaphors for better understanding of their perceptions toward Thai teachers. The findings showed that Chinese students were adequately able to reflect on their inner feelings through the lens

of metaphorical language, which allowed for valuable information to surface that might otherwise go untapped. This tapped perspective indicated that the Chinese students' communication in their writings can be used to help Thai teachers to better develop and prepare their lessons in the future and will hopefully lead to greater satisfaction with the Chinese students. Moreover, the students' metaphors of teachers are considered as a powerful way to improve teachers' teaching practices and professional growth. It gives feedback for teachers to reflect upon their educational processes and teaching problems, increase teachers' teaching consciousness (Oxford et al., 1998), and help them to be more aware of students' understanding, emotions, and attitudes toward education (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2008). Furthermore, this information is useful for administrators who can reflect more deeply on the teaching and learning processes taking place with their teaching staff and can put them in a better position for planning and developing appropriate teaching training projects for Thai teachers who are teaching Chinese students.

The study concludes that this way of collecting feedback from Chinese students should be considered as a valuable way for getting deeper insights into students' concerns and should be used along with the more common practice of non-metaphoric means of getting teacher-related feedback from students. Moreover, the study identified the top three positive and negative attributes of Thai teachers. The positive attributes included having patience, being knowledgeable, and being helpful. Meanwhile, the negative attributes included teaching too quickly, being irresponsible, and being confusing. Therefore, this research adds new knowledge for Thai teachers to consider when planning teaching and learning activities for Chinese students at Thai universities.

With this in mind, Thai teachers and administrators should be concerned about and listen empathically to Chinese students' metaphorical descriptions for better understanding, and then use that understanding to develop more appropriate and likeable classroom activities in order to improve the qualities of language learning and teaching in the Thai-Chinese student exchange curriculum.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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