METAPHOR TRANSLATION AND CROSS-CULTURAL TRANSMISSION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE THAI NOVEL SIPAENDIN AND ITS CHINESE TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the use of metaphors in the Thai historical novel Sipaendin and its Chinese translation. To date, there is still a lack of extensive comparative research on metaphorical structures between Chinese and Thai. The literary corpus of both languages was perused, and the target domain in conceptual metaphor mapping and categorized metaphorical constructs unique to Chinese and Thai were identified. Then, a comparative analysis of these conceptual metaphors was made by highlighting both commonalities and distinctions between the two linguistic contexts. The investigation further examined the cognitive processes that underlie the translation of these metaphors between Chinese and Thai, leveraging conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003). This study contributes to the wider academic discussion on how metaphors are understood and processed in language. It gives a comprehensive guide for tackling the challenges of metaphor translation, not only between Thai and Chinese but potentially also for other language pairs based on categorizing approaches into metaphor use in the target language, omission, free translation, and figurativeness. Translators can adapt these strategies to different degrees of metaphorical complexity and varying cultural and cognitive overlap levels between languages.

1. INTRODUCTION

From a cognitive science perspective, metaphors serve as a mechanism through which individuals understand and interpret the world (Johnson, 1987; Camp, 2006; Kiseleva & Trofimova, 2017; Shao, 2024). The study of metaphor in cognitive linguistics has evolved from the foundational principles of conceptual metaphor theory toward more dynamic models of meaning construction, particularly conceptual blending theory. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) seminal Metaphors We Live By established that metaphors are not decorative linguistic devices but central cognitive mechanisms that structure thought by mapping knowledge from concrete source domains onto abstract target domains. This insight, later expanded by Shu (2000) into rhetorical, poetic, linguistic, cognitive, and word-play functions, highlights the multiple roles metaphors play not only in literary expression but also in shaping cognition and cultural understanding. This aligns with the foundational tenets of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory, which argues that metaphors are not mere stylistic elements in language but are integral to cognitive processes. In essence, cognitive metaphors involve intricate conceptual mappings in which the source domain serves as a framework for understanding another, often more abstract, target domain.

Yet, while conceptual metaphor theory emphasizes relatively stable mappings between two domains, it does not fully account for the emergent structures that arise when multiple mental spaces interact. Here, Fauconnier and Turner's (2003) conceptual blending theory provides an essential complement. It explains how elements from different input spaces are selectively projected into a blended space, generating new meanings not predictable from the original domains alone.

In this sense, conceptual metaphor theory can be understood as the foundation of cross-domain conceptual correspondences, while conceptual blending theory represents the mechanism by which these correspondences are dynamically recombined and reinterpreted in discourse and translation. The two models therefore operate not as competing frameworks but as mutually reinforcing perspectives on metaphorical cognition.

This integrative approach is especially pertinent to metaphor translation across languages and cultures. For instance, when analysing the historical novel สี่แผ่นดิน-/sī phǣndin/-{four reigns}, henceforth referred to as Sipaendin, – one of the most influential Thai novels, praised as one of a hundred Thai good books – in both the original Thai and its Chinese translation, conceptual metaphor theory enables the systematic identification of source-target mappings that reveal shared or divergent cultural frameworks. At the same time, conceptual blending theory allows us to trace how translators construct blended spaces that reconcile cultural dissonances and produce new interpretive possibilities. In this process, metaphors are not merely transferred but reconfigured through blending, highlighting how translation itself becomes a site of emergent meaning construction.

The significance of the study lies in three primary dimensions. Firstly, with an attempt to identify the metaphors found in both the original Thai and translated Chinese versions of Sipaendin systematically, the study fills a gap in the existing body of research by providing a comparative study on linguistic cognition of metaphors between Chinese and Thai. Secondly, the research brings a unique contribution from the vantage point of a second-language scholar by offering an analysis of Chinese and Thai literary metaphors. It delves into cognitive patterns prevalent in these two languages and identifies universally employed concepts while examining each linguistic context's distinctive attributes. Lastly, although scholarly evaluations of Sipaendin in different aspects exist (see Sodalee, 2023 for entertainment and media; Limjitsomboon & Songthawornthawee, 2020 for discourse analysis; Fawan, 2018 for politics; Wendan & Shengyang, 2016 for Chinese studies), there is a notable absence of research that focuses on the translation of literary metaphors between these languages (Samransap & Petcherdchoo, 2022). Especially at an international level, since 2020, there have been less than 100 published articles in international journals dealing with Thai-Chinese translation, particularly in the area of metaphor, unlike the study of English-Chinese translation (Cui, 2024; Diao, 2022; Liu & Cui, 2024).

The study addresses this void by employing Fauconnier and Turner's (2003) conceptual blending theory to explore cognitive thought processes that inform translation strategies between Chinese and Thai. Examining how different cognitive frameworks influence the translation process provides valuable insights into metaphorical translation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Conceptual Metaphor and Related Theories

Since the onset of the 20th century, the study of metaphor theory has garnered significant attention from linguists. Despite an extensive body of research topics and publications, the inherently complex

nature of metaphor theory demands continued scrutiny and investigation. This is particularly true when the research entails a comparative analysis between two languages, which allows for the exploration of the disparate cultural landscapes and cognitive frameworks of the respective countries.

Historically, metaphor studies were largely circumscribed to rhetorical analyses. However, in more recent years, a growing number of experts and scholars have shifted their focus towards the cognitive dimensions of metaphor. A seminal moment in this paradigm shift occurred with the 1980 publication of Metaphors We Live By (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), positing that our everyday conceptual systems, which underpin our thought processes and behaviours, are fundamentally metaphorical in nature.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are invaluable cognitive instruments that aid human perception and concept formation. They enable individuals to understand their world by utilizing experience from one domain to elucidate and comprehend experiences in another. In essence, metaphors operate as vital cognitive tools, allowing us to grasp abstract or unfamiliar concepts through the lens of more concrete and familiar ones.

Metaphors in everyday language are anchored in deeper, conceptual metaphors within our cognitive systems. Accepting the foundational hypotheses of conceptual metaphor theory leads us to two salient issues: 1) conceptual metaphor serves both as the outcome and the foundation of metaphorical thinking, manifesting in all expressions derived from it and exhibiting multimodal characteristics; 2) conceptual metaphor operates on multiple levels. In recent years, numerous scholars have substantiated the explanatory potency of "conceptual metaphor theory" by dissecting various types of discourse, political discourse being a prominent example.

Kövecses (2010) states that one source domain can be linked to several target domains and vice versa; one target domain can be connected to several source domains and subdivide the source and target domains into various categories, encompassing diverse facets of life, such as emotions, interpersonal relationships, society, and politics. This segmentation underscores the ubiquity and complexity of metaphor, indicating that its attributes are ripe for ongoing exploration and discovery.

Metaphors in language emanate from underlying metaphorical thought processes and reflect the cognitive mechanisms through which humans comprehend the world. Because countries employ different languages replete with unique metaphors,

comparative studies between two languages furnish valuable theoretical frameworks and methodological tools. Such comparative analyses enable a deeper understanding of how different linguistic and cultural landscapes influence cognition and, by extension, our perceptions of the world.

The conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003), a cornerstone in cognitive linguistics, aims to delineate the universal principles governing cognitive processes. This theory advocates a robust explanatory capacity and a broad spectrum of applicability, encompassing key concepts, principles, and mechanisms that elucidate cognitive operations. Earlier, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) postulate that metaphor is not merely a rhetorical flourish but a pervasive cognitive tool and a common modality of human thought.

This paradigm-shifting perspective catalysed scholarly reassessments of preceding metaphor theories, inspiring deeper inquiries into the cognitive substrates of metaphorical reasoning. Building upon this intellectual backdrop, subsequent research gave considerable attention to the theory of conceptual blending, also known as conceptual integration theory, articulated by cognitive linguists such as Fauconnier and Turner (2003). Rooted in the mental space theory, conceptual blending serves as a theoretical lens through which a myriad of linguistic phenomena can be examined, ranging from metaphors, analogies, and fictive utterances to deictic pronouns, syntactic structures, and pragmatic presuppositions.

According to the theory, conceptual integration is a ubiquitous cognitive activity. Humans continually construct mental space during communication and cognitive processing, facilitating mappings between these spaces to synthesize novel, blended cognitive domains. Such an integration network systematically underpins the real-time construction of meaning (Tian, 2006). Conceptual blending theory posits that the act of conceptual integration is a ubiquitous cognitive operation.

In this process, individuals continually create 'mental spaces' during both communication and introspection. These mental spaces are then interconnected, allowing blended conceptual spaces to emerge through various mapping strategies. Within these dynamically created networks of conceptual integration, individuals engage in real-time meaning construction. Therefore, conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003), with its compelling explanatory power and extensive scope of application, remains a critical construct in the evolving landscape of cognitive linguistics.

The intricacies and multidirectional nature of metaphor underscore the inherent vagueness of human cognition. Historically, metaphors were devised as tools to circumvent challenges in expression; we instinctively resort to metaphors when conventional language falls short.

While on the surface, literary metaphors might appear nebulous akin to 'mist, rain, and wind' it is not due to a lack of coherence between linguistic form and the meaning they signify. From a semiotic perspective, metaphor and metonymy are the primary catalysts for semantic expansion. Taylor (1989) emphasized that the ultimate consequence of the archetypal effect is the pervasive use of metaphorical extensions while also pointing out that ambiguity is an intrinsic feature of language. For example, the conveyed meaning of the word 'beauty' is intrinsically elusive, with most considering beauty as a relative construct.

The term embodies varying degrees of appreciation, from 'somewhat beautiful' to 'comparatively beautiful.' However, describing something as 'beautiful as a fairy' elevates the subject to the highest level of beauty, even though no one has actually witnessed a fairy. Literary contexts craft poetic metaphors to seed ambiguity intentionally, yet this very ambiguity provides readers with clarity in interpretation and a vast realm for imagination. Echoing the reverence for metaphors, Aristotle posited that mastering the art of metaphor is a supreme achievement.

He passionately remarked on the importance of being adept at crafting metaphors, asserting, "It is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances" (Aristotle, 1954). One cannot effortlessly acquire this adeptness in metaphorical crafting from others; it is a testament to an innate genius. It embodies an intuitive capability to discern resemblances between disparate entities.

The role of metaphor in literature is paramount. As encapsulated in literary works such as novels and poems, these metaphors breathe life into the text, eliciting a myriad of emotional and intellectual responses from the reader. According to Sun (2017), metaphor translation has predominantly focused on these literary genres, highlighting the ubiquity of metaphors and their intricate presence. The task of translating metaphors, given their intricate and culturally embedded nature, has invoked the scholarly attention of many over the years. A plethora of scholars (Broeck, 1981; Dobrzyńska, 1995; Newmark, 1981; Nida, 2015; Schäffner, 2004; Wu & Wang, 2019) have delved deep into the strategies for metaphor translation. One of the notable methodologies, as posited by Dobrzyńska (1995), emphasizes the necessity of exact equivalence in translating original metaphors.

This entails using another metaphor as a substitute that closely aligns with the original's semantic essence. Such a methodology ensures not only the retention of the content's originality but also the undiluted interest it garners from its readership.

This interdisciplinary approach to cognitive translatology marries the principles of cognitive science, particularly those from cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics, with translation studies. The objective is to demystify the intricacies of translational phenomena. By employing cognitive science's theoretical frameworks and methodologies, researchers endeavour to elucidate the underlying cognitive processes inherent to both oral and written translation. This includes revealing the psychological complexities that translators navigate as they seamlessly transition content from one linguistic medium to another. Ultimately, the overarching aim is to reveal the translation's foundational essence and governing principles.

Cognitive linguistics, as a paradigm within linguistics, emphasizes understanding language as deeply intertwined with human cognition. Rather than viewing language as an autonomous system, cognitive linguistics perceives it as closely tied to our sensory experiences and how we understand and interpret the world around us. It argues for the grounding of linguistic study in the principles of cognitive psychology, particularly those centred on information processing.

The field looks at language through the lens of information processing, drawing inspiration from advancements in artificial intelligence and emphasizing the intricacies of how language is processed cognitively. The minute mechanics of semantic information processing, along with the broader cognitive processes involved in language comprehension and production, are pivotal areas of exploration within this paradigm. Wang (2007) highlighted the relevance of applying core cognitive linguistic principles in juxtaposing two languages. One can ascertain the commonalities and discrepancies between these languages by investigating the underlying cognitive mechanisms. Such comparative analyses, particularly in the realm of metaphorical translations, provide valuable insights into the cognitive landscapes specific to different linguistic communities.

The present study aligns with this perspective, positing that a deep dive into the cognitive mechanisms underpinning the comparison of two

languages, especially in metaphorical translation, can greatly enrich our understanding of the cognitive congruences and divergences between Thai and Chinese linguistic frameworks.

2.2. *Sipaendin as the Corpus*

Sipaendin, penned in 1953 by a renowned Thai ex-Prime Minister and writer Kukrit Pramoj (1911-1995), famously known as Kukrit, serves as an influential work in Thai literature. The narrative offers an expansive royalist view of Thai society spanning several decades. In the reigns of King Rama V (1853-1910) to King Rama VIII (1925-1946) of the Chakri Dynasty (1782-the present), the story revolves around the life of its aristocratic protagonist, Ploy, who lived through the reigns of the four kings, which became the title of the story. The novel delves into major historical milestones, courtly customs, and the sociocultural shifts that Thailand underwent due to Western influence. Kukrit infused the text with his life experience as a descendant of King Rama II (1767-1824) and part of the Chakri royal family, crafting a sweeping tableau of Thai history. The novel was, at first, serialized in a Thai newspaper from 1951 to 1952.

In the context of Chinese scholarly research, Wu (2010) postulated that the patron-client system constitutes the bedrock of Thailand's traditional political culture, and Sipaendin serves as a source of the Siamese culture of absolute monarchy. Through the character of Ploy, the novel illustrates the intricate duties and obligations incumbent upon the patron-client relation. Ploy's life trajectory and spiritual evolution serve as a lens through which the reader can understand the Thai social and cultural milieu in the first half of the 20th century, particularly the customs that revolve around the royal family. Consequently, the novel serves not merely as a literary artifact but also as a complex reflection of

Thai society, history, and cultural shifts in the eyes of the noble writer. Additionally, Quan (2017) noted that the novel's Chinese translation received the second prize in the Second National Excellent Foreign Literature Book Award in the 1990s. The prominence of the Chinese translation of Sipaendin hinges on three factors, the original text's acclaim, the renown of the translator, and its distinction as the first Chinese translation of the work (Sanpaweerapong, 2000). As for the author, Kukrit remains a luminous figure in modern and contemporary Thai literature and one of the most frequently translated Thai authors in China. To date, the novel has been reprinted fourteen times in Thailand since its original publication and has been

translated into multiple languages, including Chinese, Japanese, and English.

In contrast to a long history of research into English translation, the field of Thai-Chinese translation research remains relatively underdeveloped (Li, 2017). A survey of documents found that literary works in the Thai language from 1782 to 1910 were mainly historical romances. The very first translation from Chinese is The Romance of the Three Kingdoms. In the second period, from 1910 to 1946, translations from Chinese were those of historical stories and novels by publishing houses or newspaper editors. When Thailand got involved in the Second World War, the newspapers were closed down, and that was also the end of the translations from Chinese novels published in these newspapers (Manomaivibool, 1987). Almost 40 years ago, there was not much research on Thai-Chinese translation. Therefore, the gap of this study holds relevance for second-language learners and educators, as understanding the culture and cognitive systems of the target language can significantly facilitate language acquisition and translation. The research culminates in analysing translation methodologies and mechanisms, comparing Chinese and Thai metaphor types and translation strategies. Highlighting the cognitive systems in both languages, this study not only enriches our understanding of Chinese and Thai metaphorical cognition but also aims to contribute to developing a robust Thai-Chinese translation theory.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, using both the original Thai text and its Chinese translation by Qian Guang (1984) as the main corpus. The method involves exploring the collected data to identify and compare the subsequent aspects.

The first component is the types of metaphors by examining the conceptual metaphor systems of the Thai and Chinese languages using the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and analysing these metaphor systems based on Kövecses' (2010) categories. The second part explores the topic of Thai-Chinese translation cognition, with the aid of Fauconnier and Turner's (2003) conceptual blending theory. The third section elaborates on metaphor translation with a comparison of Thai and Chinese and Thai metaphors and translation approaches.

An analysis of the translation mechanism of the metaphors is also elucidated. Figure 1 illustrates the overall research design, outlining the sequential

steps of data collection and analysis. The diagram also highlights how the selected theoretical frameworks underpin and inform each stage of the

analytical process, ensuring methodological coherence and theoretical grounding.
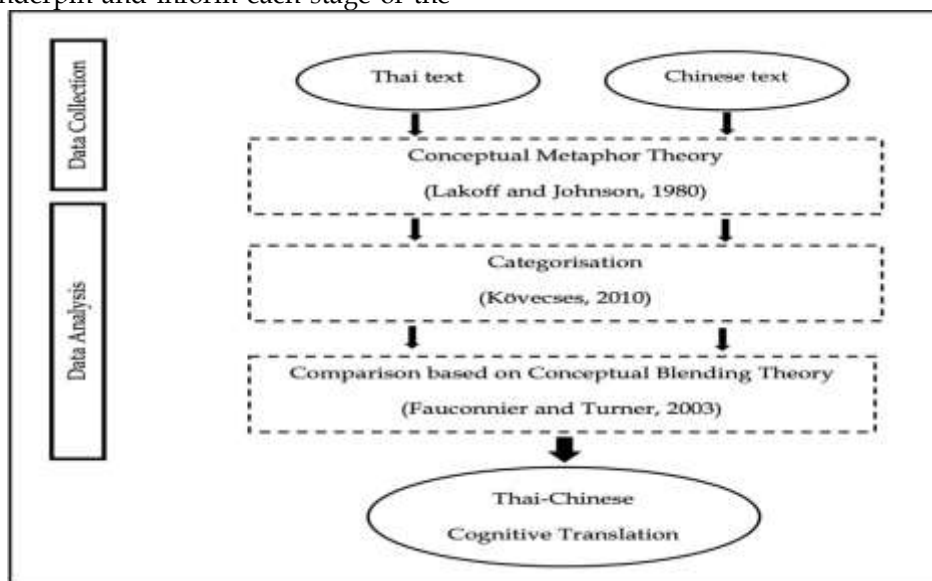
Figure 1: Conceptual Diagram Of The Research Design, Showing The Relationship Between Data Collection, Analysis Procedures, And The Guiding Theoretical Frameworks That Structure And Inform The Analytical Process (Source: Authors' Own Elaboration).

Regarding excerpt quotations, the original Thai text is presented, followed by its Chinese counterpart. For in-text explanation of a word or short phrase, slanting lines and curly parentheses are utilized to provide the romanization of the texts, and their translations, respectively. The romanization of the Thai text is generated by the automatic software, Plangsarn, which is based on the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and the American Library Association-Library of Congress standards, whereas the Chinese one is from Mandarin IPA Translator based on the Romanised spelling for Chinese transliteration or Pinyin. All the literal and free English translations are by the authors except indicated otherwise.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In conducting the analysis, both the original corpus and its translated counterpart were systematically examined to ensure comprehensive coverage. All instances of metaphor were identified and categorised, the results were synthesised in tabular form (Table 1) to illustrate the overall distribution across categories. It is important to note that while the discussion section includes textual excerpts, these do not represent the full set of data; rather, they serve as selected illustrative examples chosen to exemplify each identified category of metaphor. This sampling strategy ensures that the analysis remains grounded in the complete dataset

while allowing the discussion to highlight representative cases that best capture the patterns and functions observed.

4.1. Types of the Metaphor

From the compilation and examination of the metaphors in the Thai and Chinese versions of Sipaendin, eight categories of metaphor are found: life, emotion, human connections, morality, time, politics, society/nation, and desire. Table 1 presents the quantitative distribution of metaphor categories identified across the original and translated texts.

Table 1: presents the quantitative distribution of metaphor categories identified across the original and translated texts.

Metap or	L ife	Emoti on	Human connections	Moral ity	Tim e	Politi cs	Soci ety/ Nati on	Desir e
Chine se	1 16	102	154	21	68	8	17	34
Th ai	9 1	72	121	19	16	9	19	19

According to Table 1, overall, the Chinese corpus contains a larger number of metaphors (520 instances) compared with the Thai corpus (366 instances). It should be noted that additional miscellaneous metaphor categories were identified during the analysis; however, these were excluded from the table as they accounted for a minimal proportion to be classified as certain types and were

not central to the comparative focus of this study. In both languages, metaphors that pertain to human relationship or human connections are the most common, emphasizing the intricate nature of interpersonal interactions. A pervasive metaphorical concept in both languages is that 'relations are chains,' signifying that relationships serve as the ties that bind individuals together. Metaphors concerning life and death follow closely in frequency, often conceptualized as a journey in both Thai and Chinese cultures. From birth to growth, struggle, and eventual demise, the human experience is seen as a series of milestones and challenges, culminating in death the ultimate destination. Additionally, life is frequently likened to valuable objects, reinforcing the notion that it should be cherished. Further metaphorical representations of life in both languages include 'life as an object' and 'life as a dance,' among others, indicating a rich conceptual landscape that transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries.
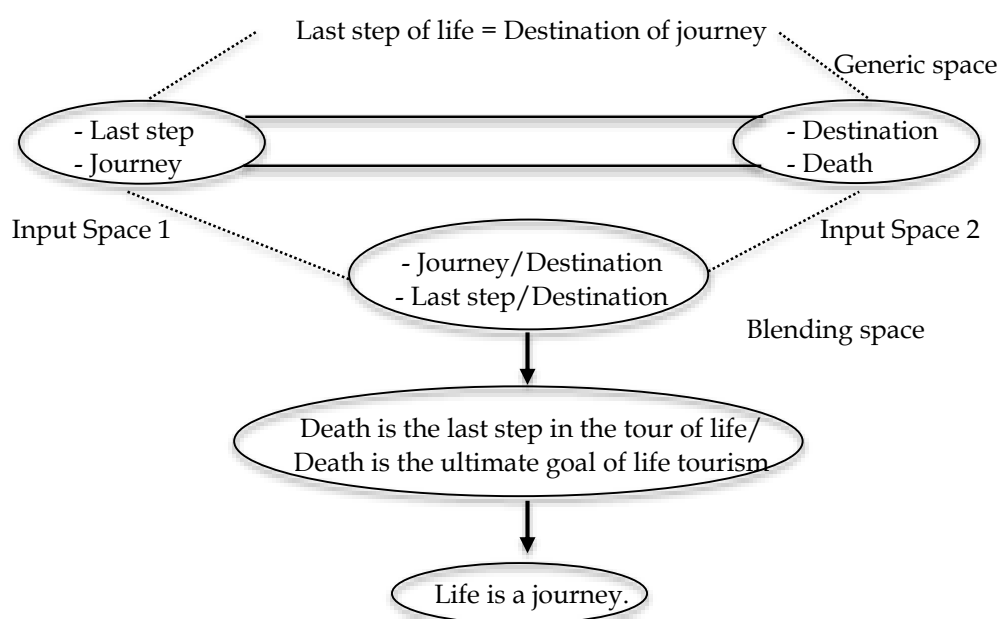
Upon examining the emotional metaphors in the original and translated versions of Sipaendin several categories emerge: pain, resentment, anger, happiness, and love. An analysis of the frequency revealed a notable prevalence of pain metaphors in the Chinese version, suggesting that pain, often metaphorically represented by the sensation of bitterness, is a predominant emotion expressed in this rendition. This frequent association of pain with bitterness highlights its poignant impact within the narrative. In contrast, while the Thai version also prominently features pain metaphors, it equally emphasizes happiness metaphors. This near

equivalence in the frequency of metaphors for pain and happiness suggests a balanced portrayal of these contrasting emotions in the Thai version. The variations in metaphorical emphasis between the two versions might be attributed to the nuanced interplay between translation choices and linguistic-cultural contexts, underscoring the intricate relationship between language, culture, and literary interpretation. Empirical research on the translation of Sipaendin from Thai to Chinese reveals a significant overlap in cognitive concepts between the two languages.

4.2. Conceptual Framework of Thai and Chinese

In the translation of the life metaphor, if the sentence is the same, the concept mapping is equivalent. If the source language and the target language use the same cognitive tool to represent the same thing metaphorically, then the metaphorical blending space of the Chinese and Thai languages is consistent. For such metaphorical translation, conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003) can be adopted for translation, such as 'life is a journey' as shown below:

(1) พลอยรู้อยู่แต่คนเดียว   แต่ก็ดูจะไม่มีปัญหาอะไรนัก เพราะก้าวสุดท้ายของชีวิตคนทุก ๆ คน ก็ย่อมจะอย่างไปทางเดียวกันทั้งนั้น ไม่มีใครจะหลีกเลี่ยงได้ (Pramoj, 2001, p. 925)
今后将向何处跨步，要达到什么目标，她自己已很清楚。看来这是不成问题的，因为每个人的生命的最后一步都将迈向同一个方向，任何人都无例外。
(Pramoj, 1984, p. 317, Qian Guang's translation)

Last step of life = Destination of journey

Generic space

- Last step
- Journey

- Destination
- Death

Input Space 1

Input Space 2

- Journey/Destination
- Last step/Destination

Blending space

Death is the last step in the tour of life/
Death is the ultimate goal of life tourism

Life is a journey.

Figure 2: Portrays the Process of Conceptual Metaphor Equivalence of Free Translation.
(Source: Authors' Own Elaboration.)

Example (1) portrays the idea of 'life as a journey': ก้าวสุดท้ายของชีวิตคนทุก ๆ คน ก็ย่อมจะไปทางเดียวกันทั้งนั้น -/kaō sutthāī khǒng chīwit khon thuk thuk khon ko̅ yo̅ 'om c̆ha yāng pai thāng dīaokan thangnan/-{the last step of everyone's life inevitably moved in the same direction} and 每个人的生命的最后一步都将迈向同一个方向 -/meɪˇ kɤˇ ʐən´/ /tɤˇ/, /ti´/, /tiˋ/ /ʂɤŋˉmɪŋˋ/ /tɤˇ/, /ti´/, /tiˋ/ /tsweɪˉ/ /xoʊˋ/ /iˉ/ /puˋ/ /tuˉ/, /toʊˉ/ /tɕjaŋˉ/, /tɕjaŋˋ/, /tɕʰjaŋˉ/ /maɪˋ/ /ɕjaŋˋ/ /tʰʊŋ´/, /tʰʊŋˋ/ /i´ kɤˇ/, /i´ kɤˇ/ /faŋˉɕjaŋˋ/-{the last step of everyone's life would be in the same direction}. The idea can be explained through the conceptual metaphor equivalence mapping as shown in the figure.

In Figure 2, the terminal point of Input Space 1 serves as the starting point for Input Space 2, with the ultimate projected space of 'life' culminating in the 'destination of the journey.' Here, 'death' is identified as the destination for human beings and, consequently, the endpoint of life. This endpoint is integrated into the larger metaphorical framework that conceptualizes life as a journey. Importantly, the figure delineates a congruent conceptualization of the 'life as a journey' metaphor in both Chinese and Thai languages, enabling the translator to render the intended meaning of the Thai author accurately.

The aforementioned analysis reveals a uniform conceptualization of life across Chinese and Thai cultural contexts, exemplified through metaphors like 'life is a journey,' 'life is an object,' and 'life is a dance drama.' Given this conceptual overlap, translators have the advantage of directly translating the original author's meaning while maintaining the integrity of the cognitive concepts involved. Such consistent representation simplifies the interpretative task for linguists working in both Chinese and Thai, thereby facilitating a clearer understanding of the metaphor's nuances across both languages.

4.3. Metaphor Translation

Based on the analysis of the original Thai text and its Chinese translation of Sipaendin, evidently, while Chinese and Thai languages share numerous overlapping cognitive concepts, they also feature distinct conceptual metaphors. In cases where the concepts in the source and target texts diverge and where blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003) is insufficient for resolving the translation challenges, the question arises: how can translators effectively render the original Thai text into Chinese when

dealing with divergent conceptual frameworks? This study demonstrates various translation strategies by examining specific examples of unique conceptual metaphors in Thai. Four primary methods are outlined for addressing these complexities: free translation, omission, figurativeness, and adaptation to target-language metaphor.

4.3.1 Free Translation

Free translation prioritizes the retention of the essence and meaning of the source language without rigid adherence to its form or structure. It allows for flexible adaptation to convey the intended message and artistic nuances in a manner that is accessible and resonant for readers of the target language. This strategy becomes particularly useful when navigating between languages with distinct cognitive concepts. In the case of the translation of Sipaendin into Chinese, free translation was employed on several occasions to bridge conceptual gaps. For instance, Example A shows the Thai-specific conceptualization of death as an object. In the Chinese rendition, this unique Thai perspective is tackled through free translation.

(1) ในกระบวนพี่น้องทุกคน
คุณอุ่นดูเหมือนจะรับเอาความตายของคุณเปรมไปใส่ใจมากกว่าคนอื่น
(Pramoj, 2001, p. 622)
在所有的兄弟姊妹中，坤雯心理最难过。
(Pramoj, 1984, p. 33, Qian Guang's translation)

In the original Thai text คุณอุ่นดูเหมือนจะรับเอาความตายของคุณเปรมไปใส่ใจมากกว่าคนอื่น-/khun 'un dūmǔan c̆ha rap 'ao khwāmtāī khǒng khun prēm pai saic̆hai mǎk kwāˉkhon 'ūn/-{Khun Un took Khun Prem's death to her heart more than the others}, death is conceptualized as an object, specifically in the context of Khun Prem's death being something that the living can carry in their hearts. The greater the emotional 'weight' one carries, the deeper the sorrow. In this case, Khun Un bore the most 'weight,' signifying that she was the most sorrowful. While the translated Chinese text captures the same meaning: 坤雯心理最难过 -/kʰuənˉ/ /uən´/ /ɕɪnˉ/ /liˇ/ /tsweɪˋ/ /nan´ kuɔˋ/-{Khun Un is the saddest mentally}, it lacks the nuanced 'flavor' of the original Thai concept.

Another distinct Thai metaphorical concept revolves around the hierarchical nature of relationships among people, as shown in (3). This, too, is addressed through free translation in the Chinese version. As the Chinese text lacks a direct equivalent for this Thai conceptualization, the

translator resorts to a more flexible interpretation to capture the dynamics of these hierarchical relationships, making it comprehensible to a Chinese audience. When the Thai text employs metaphorical language, the Chinese translator often opts for a more literal interpretation, utilizing specific Chinese words to elucidate the meaning behind the Thai metaphor. Although the Chinese rendition may not mirror the metaphorical structure of the original Thai, it nonetheless accurately conveys the intended meaning.

(2) เมื่อฉันได้กับเขา ใคร ๆ ก็พากันว่า ว่า<u>ฉันได้เมียต่ำกว่าตัว</u> (Pramoj, 2001, p. 457)

我娶她的时候，<u>别人都说她出身卑微配不上我</u>。(Pramoj, 1984, p. 422, Qian Guang's translation)

From (3), we can see ฉันได้เมียต่ำกว่าตัว-/chan dai mīa tamkwā tūā/-{I got a wife lower than me} or {my wife was inferior to me}, and 她出身卑微配不上我 -/tʰaˉ/ /ʈʂʰuˉ ʂənˉ/ /peiˉ weiˉ/, /peiˉ weiˊ/ /pʰeiˋ/ /puˋ/, /foʊˇ/, /foʊˉ/ /ʂaŋˋ/ /uɔˇ/-{she was too humble for me}. The word 'humble' in Chinese also means status, but it's not a metaphor, so it is not the same as the original Thai, which uses the idea of 'สูง-ต่ำ'-/sūng-tam/-{up-down} or {above-below} as a hierarchical metaphor. The Chinese translator used free translation, keeping the original meaning. This shows that Chinese people also understand the concept of hierarchy, only in *Sipaendin* did they not use the concept of hierarchical metaphor. The possible reason is that during the time the novel was translated, there was no longer the concept of inner or outer palaces in China. Therefore, no such metaphors existed. However, the Chinese can still observe it in a scene of Chinese court operas, so they can understand the hierarchical relation even though the concept of hierarchical metaphor is no longer commonly used. In addition to the above examples, the next example of Thai สิ้นบุญพ่อแม่แล้ว -/sinbun phoɔˉ mæˉ lǣo/-{to an end of the merit of the parents} was translated by using the free translation method. Thailand is a Buddhist country, and the concept of บุญ-/bun/-{merit or good deeds} from Buddhism is prevalent, while death is as consummation of merit.

(3) ฉันคนหนึ่งละที่จะไม่ทิ้งพี่ทิ้งน้อง และถ้าเดาใจแม่พลอยไม่ผิด แม่พลอยก็คงจะคิดอย่างเดียวกัน นึกอย่างนี้แล้ว ฉันก็สบายใจขึ้นเป็นกอง เพราะถ้าคิดถึงเวลาข้างหน้า <u>สิ้นบุญพ่อแม่แล้ว</u> ฉันจะไม่สบายใจเลย แต่ถ้าคิดว่ายังมีพี่พี่น้องอยู่ ก็พอค่อยยังชั่ว (Pramoj, 2001, p. 306)

反正我不会忘记自己的兄弟姐妹，要是我没猜错的话，嫚珀怡肯定也是这么想的。我有时一想到<u>老人百年以后的日子</u>，心里就没底儿，但一

想到还有兄弟姐妹，我心里就踏实多了。
(Pramoj, 1984, p. 288, Qian Guang's translation)

The phrase สิ้นบุญพ่อแม่แล้ว-/sinbun phoɔˉ mæˉ lǣo/-{to an end of the merit of the parents} was translated as "老人百年以后的日子"-/laʊˇ/ /ʐənˊ/ /paiˇ/, /pɔˊ/, /mɔˉ/ /njɛnˊ/ /iˇ xoʊˋ/ /tɤˊ/, /tiˊ/, /tiˇ/ /ʐɤˋ tsɯˉ/-{our parents are gone}, indicating that the readers of Chinese and Thai have different perceptual backgrounds. For Buddhist Thais, dying can be perceived as the end of the merit made throughout life. To let Chinese readers understand the meaning of the novel, the translator chooses free translation for this sentence. From the novel's perspective, the meaning of the source text and the translation are close, but the translation lacks the cultural background of the original text.

4.3.2. Omission

As a translation strategy, omission involves eliminating certain elements from the original text when there's a significant disparity between the source and target texts. This method essentially means excluding certain portions of the original text during translation. Because of different metaphorical concepts, the translator used omission to translate different concepts, as shown in the following example:

(4) ในบางกรณี ตาอันก็ยอมเป็น<u>เบี้ยล่าง</u>ให้จนพลอยรู้สึกสงสาร (Pramoj, 2001, p. 411)

有时甚至一让再让，珀怡更觉得达奥恩可怜。(Pramoj, 1984, p. 380, Qian Guang's translation).

The Chinese version does not provide the Thai metaphor but captures the original text's essence. In the novel, Da On is Ploy's adopted son, who is usually described as feeling inferior in terms of status compared to Ploy's own children. The Thai word เบี้ยล่าง-/bīalāng/-{a low cowrie}, meaning a low status, was not translated into Chinese. In other parts of the story, omission is also found when the notion of the superior as the center of the inferior is mentioned, such as:

(5) มีเสด็จเป็นศูนย์กลางแห่งชีวิตในวัง พอนึกถึงเสด็จขึ้นมา ทุกอย่างที่พังทลายลงเมื่อกี้ดูเหมือนจะกลับมีระเบียบและเข้าสู่ดุลขึ้นบ้าง (Pramoj, 2001, p. 222)

一想到娘娘，刚才崩溃了的一切，似乎又在聚拢。(Pramoj, 1984, p. 210, Qian Guang's translation).

In the original Thai text, the phrase มีเสด็จเป็นศูนย์กลางแห่งชีวิตในวัง-/mī sadet pen sūnklāng hǣng chīwit nai wang/-{the Princess was the centre of Ploy's life in the palace} signifies that the Princess was not just important but integral to Ploy's

existence, serving as her emotional and psychological anchor. However, in the Chinese translation, this essential detail is omitted. Instead, the translation proceeds to the latter part of the sentence, simply indicating Ploy's thoughts of the Princess, thus suggesting her significance in Ploy's life. While this captures the essence of Ploy's relationship with the Princess, it lacks the depth and full scope of emotional investment conveyed in the original Thai phrase. As a result, the translated text only partially represents Ploy's profound attachment to the Princess, failing to capture the centrality of this relationship in her life.

4.3.3. Figurativeness

From the study, it was also found that each has its own metaphorical characteristics. The closest method when translating unique Thai metaphors into Chinese is figurativeness, such as:

(6) พลอยอาบน้ำตาอันด้วยความรักความเมตตาทั้งหมดที่มีอยู่ น้ำแต่ละขันที่ค่อย ๆ รดลงไปนั้น   เป็นประดุจน้ำใจของมารดาที่มีอยู่ต่อบุตร <u>น้ำใจที่สะอาดเต็มไปด้วยความรักบริสุทธิ์</u>   ปราศจากความหวงแหน ความเห็นแก่ตัว หรือการเรียกร้องใด ๆ ตอบแทน น้ำใจของแม่ที่ปราศจากราคี ประดุจน้ำที่ใสสะอาด มีแต่จะทำให้ผู้ที่ได้รับชุ่มเย็นอยู่เป็นนิตย์ (Pramoj, 2001, pp. 954-955)

珀怡怀着全部慈爱洗浴着达奥恩。每一飘水都触合着纯真的，无私无求的母爱，<u>慈母的心意和这净水一样圣洁</u>，使受浴的童行浃沦肌髓，永不忘怀。(Pramoj, 1984, p. 347, Qian Guang's translation)

For the phrase "น้ำใจที่สะอาดเต็มไปด้วยความรักบริสุทธิ์"-/namčhai thī saʻāt tem pai dūai khwāmrak bǫrisut/-{clean heart water full of pure love}, the Chinese translation has the same meaning as the original Thai. The Thai version directly uses the water metaphor, while the Chinese version uses the metaphor, comparing the mother's true love to pure water. In essence, the concepts from the two versions are almost the same. The metaphor is used in Thai and figurativeness in Chinese. Overall, it is mainly the mother's love. Usually, the concept of romantic love in Chinese implies warmth, but love in this Thai novel is like cool water. The Chinese translator used figurative language, which is "慈母的心意和这净水一样圣洁"-/ tsʰɯ´ mu̯ˇ / /tɤˇ/, /ti´/, /ti̯/ / ɕɪn⁻/ /i`/ /xɤ´/, /xu̯ɔ`/, /xu̯ɔ´/, /xɤ`/ /tʂɤ`/, /tʂei̯`/ /tɕɪŋ`/ /ʂwei̯ˇ/ /i´ jɑŋ`/-{heart is as holy as the pure water}, with an almost equivalent effect on the meaning of the original Thai. The above example demonstrates that conceptually, with different perceptions of the temperature regarding love, meaning can still be conveyed through figurativeness. In other words, using figurativeness

to solve the translation problem. It implies that the Chinese can understand the metaphorical concept of love being water.

4.3.4. Target Language Metaphor

Languages often embody distinct cultural perspectives, and this divergence becomes especially evident in the realm of metaphor. In translating *Sipaendin*, the translator might face the challenge of conveying the nuances of metaphorical language that might be difficult for readers of the target language to grasp fully. To address this, the translator employed an approach that retains the use of metaphor but adapted it to concepts more readily understood in the target language. For instance, while the Thai original may describe death as a 'destination' signifying liberation, the translator might opt for an alternative metaphor that captures the essence of death's finality and transformative nature in a way that resonates more powerfully with readers of the translated text. This method allows the translation to maintain a strong thematic and emotional resonance, even if the specific metaphorical constructs differ from the original.

(7) ถ้าเป็นคนอื่นที่สมานติดผมก็อยากจะสมาน แต่จะให้ไป<u>สมานน้ำกับไฟหรือขมิ้นกับปูน</u>   ผมก็จนปัญญา ว่าที่จริงประไพของเรามันก็ไม่ใช่เล่นเหมือนกัน (Pramoj, 2001, p. 856)

可他们像<u>水火不相容</u>、<u>冰炭不同器</u>似的，我也无能为力了。说实在的，咱们的巴佩也不是个省油的灯。(Pramoj, 1984, p. 251, Qian Guang's translation)

The above example shows two metaphors from the source text, namely "สมานน้ำกับไฟ"-/samān nam kap fai/-{unite water and fire} and "ขมิ้นกับปูน"-/khamin kap pūn/-{turmeric and red limestone}, which suggest the idea of two people being incompatible. The Chinese version translated "สมานน้ำกับไฟ"-/samān nam kap fai/-{unite water and fire} rather directly to "水火不相容"-/ʂwei̯ˇ xu̯ɔˇ pu` ɕjaŋ⁻ ʐʊŋ´/-{fire and water are incompatible}. However, the Thai concept "ขมิ้นกับปูน"-/khamin kap pūn/-{turmeric and red limestone} was omitted. In terms of cultural background, Thai people in the past liked to eat areca nuts, and one way of doing it was to have the nuts mixed with betel leaves and red limestone paste. The red limestone paste is made by mixing limestone powder or shell powder with turmeric. The original turmeric mixed with white powder should be yellow as the color of the turmeric, but the actual reaction is different as the mixture becomes red. Therefore, in Thai, this idiom describes people who have a bad relationship, often quarrel or cannot be mixed. The

Chinese version supplied another metaphor, "冰炭不同器"-/pɪŋˉ/ /tʰanˋ/ /puˋ/ /tʰʊŋˊ/ /tɕʰiˋ/-{ice and charcoal are not in the same context}. Although the Chinese translation is different, it can still preserve the meaning of the original text and maintain the flavor of the novel. In this case, the translator used target metaphors instead of the original text, which means that the translator not only has a very high level of Thai language but also is an expert in native Chinese and understands the cultural background of Chinese and Thai. As a result, Chinese readers can also feel the taste of the novel. In translating *Sipaendin* from Thai to Chinese, the translator employed a multifaceted approach to navigate the complex challenges of metaphorical incongruence between the two languages. Four primary strategies were utilized: free translation, omission, figurativeness, and the use of target language-specific metaphors. Free translation was often employed when the original Thai text featured less conventional or non-canonical metaphors, adapting them into a form more comprehensible to a Chinese audience while preserving the essence of the original meaning. Omission was used when certain metaphorical concepts in the original Thai were too culturally specific and risked incomprehensibility in the Chinese context.

This strategy involved omitting or simplifying the metaphor, which effectively conveyed meaning but sometimes resulted in a loss of the nuanced richness of the original text. Figurativeness was applied when the original metaphor was difficult for a Chinese audience to grasp, often using similes or phrases like 'like' or 'the same as' to make the metaphor more accessible. Lastly, when significant cultural or conceptual gaps—especially in areas like religion or politics—were present between

Thai and Chinese contexts, the translator opted to employ an entirely different but culturally resonant metaphor in the target language. While each of these strategies had its own limitations, with omission being considered the least desirable due to its tendency to sacrifice thematic depth and emotional richness, collectively, they enabled a nuanced translation that accommodated both linguistic and cultural complexities, offering Chinese readers a comprehensible and relatable rendition of the Thai classic.

4.4. The Translation Mechanism of Thai and Chinese Metaphors

Translating metaphors in novels encompasses a range of techniques, including preserving the original metaphorical imagery, altering it, providing annotations and explanations, or eliminating it altogether. Translators have options to remove, rephrase, or keep metaphors, depending on their translation purpose, literary quality assessment, and the target audience's preferences (Khalid, 2023; Evgeniia, 2023). Translators employ various techniques in translating metaphors, including replicating the image, employing standard imagery, employing similes, converting it into literal meaning, or removing the metaphor (Gebbia, 2023). Numtong and Likhidcharoentham (2019) and Xiao (2022) emphasized that maintaining the writer's unique style through the efficient translation of metaphors requires identifying suitable equivalents or utilizing techniques like metaphorization, demetaphorization, and transmetaphorization. These strategies aid in preserving the visual representation and equilibrium of literal, associative, and practical information between the original text and its translation.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work highlighted the fundamental role of metaphors in shaping human perceptions and cognition. They proposed that metaphors provide a framework by which humans understand one experiential domain through the lens of another.

This cognitive tool, while invaluable for understanding, becomes intricately complex when one endeavours to translate it across languages, as evident in the process of translating the metaphor-rich Thai novel Four Reigns into Chinese. A thorough translation requires an intimate grasp of the narrative's intricacies, character dynamics, discourse style, and the author's intended messages. The translator, Qian Guang, demonstrated exceptional linguistic prowess and cultural competence in both Thai and Chinese, successfully navigating the challenges posed by metaphor translation.

This translation study has revealed some key insights. For one, the degree of metaphorical intensity is crucial. The translator should avoid using omission as a strategy when translating highly metaphorical constructs, which require meticulous translation.

The underlying cognitive concepts, cultural nuances, and societal structures of both the source and target languages heavily influence the translation process. Three main factors stand out: the cognitive concepts shared between languages, the differences and similarities in cultural and societal structures, and the depth of the metaphorical content. This study suggests four main tactics (Figure 3) for translating metaphors effectively. These strategies are based on characteristics that are

arranged in descending order of metaphorical degree:
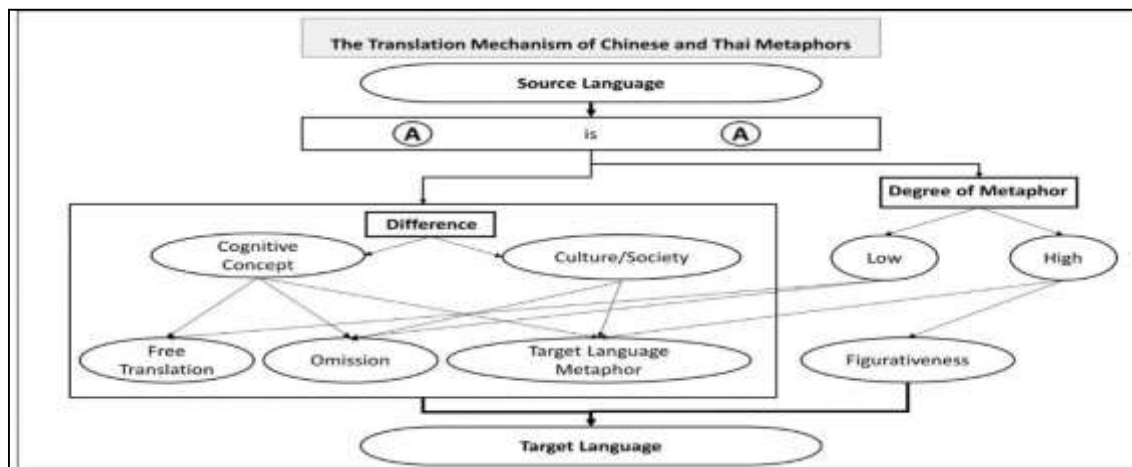
Figure 3: Demonstrates Translation Strategies of Metaphor.
(Source: Authors' Own Elaboration).

First, figurativeness is appropriate for highly metaphorical constructs in which the source and target languages share similar cognitive, cultural, and societal concepts. For target language metaphors in which the source and target languages exhibit differing cognitive, cultural, and societal concepts, especially for profound metaphors, it's beneficial to use an entirely new metaphor resonant with the target language's cultural context. Next, free translation is best suited for metaphors with simpler constructs where the source and target languages possess different cognitive understandings. Finally, omission works for simpler metaphors where the source and target languages have disparate cultural and societal structures. This approach, while efficient, runs the risk of sacrificing some nuances of the source text. Translating metaphors, especially in literary works, demands a nuanced approach that considers the intricacies of both languages and the depth of metaphorical content. The strategies outlined in this paper provide a comprehensive guide for tackling the challenges of metaphor translation not only between Thai and Chinese but potentially for other language pairs as well. By categorizing approaches into metaphor use in the target language, omission, free translation, and figurativeness, the study provides a multi-faceted toolkit for translators. Translators can adapt these strategies to different degrees of metaphorical complexity and varying levels of cultural and cognitive overlap between languages. The figurative method's concept can be particularly useful when the metaphor in question is deeply entrenched in both the source and target cultures. On the other hand, the free translation method becomes valuable when the

source and target languages do not share the same cognitive framework, but the metaphor is not complex enough to warrant a completely new construct in the target language. The omission method, though it may result in some loss of nuance, can be effective for simpler metaphors that may not translate well due to differing cultural or societal norms. Finally, the target language metaphor method can serve as an innovative solution when the metaphor in the source language does not have a direct equivalent in the target language but still needs to convey a complex idea.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the conceptual blending theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003), the study posits that when both the source and target languages share congruent cognitive frameworks for metaphorical constructs, a direct translation becomes not only possible but also cognitively consistent for readers from both linguistic backgrounds. Such linguistic correspondence often implies an overlapping cultural, historical, or religious context that can facilitate the translation process. The study found that in the case of Chinese and Thai languages, concrete domains like plant, water, and fire could primarily be directly translated, given their universal relevance to human experience. Similarly, abstract domains such as life, death, pain, and hope, or societal constructs like politics and interpersonal relationships, also often feature common metaphorical mappings, perhaps reflective of the shared Asiatic experience of both Chinese and Thai cultures. The current paper synthesizes a range of theories relevant to this research study, including,

but not limited to, metaphor theory, conceptual metaphor theory, cognitive theory, literary metaphor theory, metaphor translation theory, and cognitive translation theory. However, despite these linguistic and cultural commonalities, it is important to acknowledge, the innate discrepancies between Chinese and Thai cultural frameworks that present challenges in the translation of certain metaphors. In these instances, the conceptual blending theory exhibits its limitations, specifically in scenarios where the default mapping may not necessarily result in a congruent blending space between the two languages. Consequently, the study identifies four adaptive strategies that Chinese translators commonly employ to address such challenges: free translation, omission, figurativeness, and the utilization of alternative metaphors in the target language. These strategies serve as a multidimensional toolkit, enabling translators to navigate the complexities that arise when metaphorical constructs in the source and target languages do not readily map onto each other.

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