



## Figure of Speech in the Translation of the Book Sets of Common Knowledge about China

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**Abstract:** The figure of speech is figurative language in the form of a single word or phrase to be effective in thinking, understanding, imagining, and conveying emotions to better understand the author's writing intention. The words of the figure of speech usually organized in different ways instead of straightforward telling. Furthermore, translating the figure of speech has its own characteristics since it should keep the original text's characteristics and let the translation have the same rhetorical effect. This research is documentary research that aims to study figure of speech usage in translating Chinese to Thai in the book sets of Common Knowledge about China, which are bilingual books published by Higher Education Press in 2007. In this research, the writer uses qualitative research with descriptive analysis as the method of the research. The results of the study noted that 7 types of figure of speech are found in the Thai language, which as a translation language of the book sets as following: 1) simile 2) personification 3) paradox 4) allusion 5) reduplication 6) rhetorical question and 7) onomatopoeia. Furthermore, the figure of speech usage can make the language beautiful and profound, help readers imagine images or create images in their hearts, as well as stimulate readers' thoughts to think deeply and feel impressive.

**Keywords:** *Figure of speech, translation, Chinese, Thai*

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### INTRODUCTION

Figure of speech means rhetorical words allowing audience to imagine images and words that are organized in a stylistic way, intended to have an effectiveness on thinking and understanding of audience, and can imagine and convey emotions more deeply than straightforward meaning (Royal Academy, 2008). In addition, Pianchob (1996) commented that figure of speech allows readers to see images and appreciate the words, causing imagination, joyful mood and appreciation in Thai language. It can be used without memorizing, leading to creativity and preservation of Thai literature. Polboon (2007) categorized figure of speech into 13 types, namely simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, antonomasia, paradox, allusion, reduplication, rhetorical question, alliteration, onomatopoeia and symbol, and also stated that "figure of speech is the language used to create images in order to get clear, powerful, strong and interesting meaning which is able to convince listeners or readers" (Liwenlin., 2018; Polboon, 2007). Watiktinkorn (2003) discussed that figure of speech is a stylistic language that uses less words but gives a deep and profound meaning. The construction of sentences using figure of speech may be done in 6 different ways, including comparing similarities, comparing differences, comparing relationships, using exaggerated words as a metaphor, using sarcastic words and using sounds for adding feelings such as using word rhyme and imitating natural sounds. Therefore,

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figure of speech is the language to help readers imagine images and recognize smell, sound or taste. It also makes the language of writing become more graceful with deep content and better understanding of the meaning that the author wants to express. Moreover, figure of speech can be used in a variety of ways based on appropriateness.

Translating figure of speech is a special thing and difficult thing, since it should not only keep the characteristics of the original text, but also let the translation have the same rhetorical effect. This corresponds to the idea of [Pinmanee \(2009\)](#) that a word besides having the first meaning and the secondary meaning, there is another comparable meaning, whereas the secondary meaning and the comparable meaning are not able to convey the meaning of the original text if it is translated by word-for-word translation. In other words, specific translation methods are required in translating figure of speech in order to show the true meaning of the source language. [Chakorn \(2017\)](#) studied literary translation techniques in translating 5 short story from Thai into English, revealed that simile, metaphor and personification were used and the translation of figurative language maintained equivalence in a satisfactory level. On the other hand, [Thanajirawat \(2016\)](#) compared the similarity and difference of figure of speech from Thai, Chinese and English proverbs, summarized that 1) antonomasia, metaphor, metonymy, oxymoron, paradox, simile, hyperbole, personification, synecdoche, irony, antithesis and describing were showed in Thai proverbs; 2) analogy, symbol, antithesis, metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole, synecdoche and describing were showed in Chinese proverbs; 3) simile, metaphor, hyperbole, personification, oxymoron, antithesis, irony, metonymy and describing were showed in English proverbs. Moreover, [Tiyanon \(2013\)](#) compared Chinese novel *Jia* and its Thai translation *Baan*, found that simile, metaphor, personification, symbols, onomatopoeia and hyperbole were used, and those techniques helped convey the meaning as to Chinese language structure while adjusting Thai versions words or structures.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the writer uses qualitative research with descriptive analysis as the method of the research. The sources of information gathering and analyses is the Book Sets of Common Knowledge about China (BSCKC) of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council and the Office of Chinese Language Council International, published by Higher Education Press in 2007. BSCKC are bilingual books that Chinese is the original language and Thai is the translation language. This book sets include 3 books, namely Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture, Common Knowledge about Chinese History and Common Knowledge about Chinese Geography. They are the book sets for teaching and learning in the classroom as well as for self-directed learning and reading for pleasure in the family, which allow overseas Chinese youth to learn about general knowledge of Chinese culture, Chinese history and Chinese geography ([The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, 2007a, 2007c, 2007b](#)). In addition, this book sets won the award of “Outstanding International Chinese Language Teaching Materials” in 2010 by the Office of Chinese Language Council International ([Yang & Wongpinunwatana, 2018](#)).

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This research aims to study the figure of speech in the book sets of Common Knowledge about China by using the conceptual framework of [Polboon \(2007\)](#) which divided figure of speech into 13 types, including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, metonymy, antonomasia, paradox, allusion, reduplication, rhetorical question, alliteration, onomatopoeia and symbol. The abbreviation followed by the page number was used for showing the examples of descriptive explanations as follows: “C” means Common Knowledge about Chinese Culture. “H” means Common Knowledge about Chinese History, and “G” means Common Knowledge about Chinese Geography.

## RESULTS

The results of the study showed that 7 types of figure of speech were used in the Thai translation version of BSCKC as follows.

### *Simile*

Simile is the figure of speech that uses the thing having similar characteristics to compare for describing one of the things that the author wants to present the image clearly. The author often uses words for comparison, such as like, as or as if ([Polboon, 2007](#)). The thing that is compared called metaphor which is what the author wants to explain in the text. The thing that is used to compare with the more obvious thing called simile which is often well known. For example, the sun looks like a large fireball. The word the sun is the metaphor, the word looks like is a word showing

comparison, and the word a large fireball is the simile. From the study, simile was used the most in BSCKC, especially the Common Knowledge about Chinese Geography, as in

“In winter, the lake freezes, and it shines like a mirror in the sun.”

From this sentence, simile is used to compare the lake in the winter with a mirror by connecting them with the word like. The word the lake is the thing that is compared whereas the word a mirror is the thing used for comparison. In this sentence, a mirror is used to compare with the lake to show readers a picture of the lakes surface that is smooth and able to reflect the glistening light like a mirror. Because mirror is used in everyday life and readers are familiar with it, it easy to understand and create the imaginative picture in order to impress Qinghai Lake, which the author wants to recommend.

### ***Personification***

Personification is the figure of speech that compares something that is not a person as a person by putting thoughts, emotions and characteristics of human beings into that thing which can be a living or non-living thing in order to make it like having thoughts and behaviors like human beings (Polboon, 2007).

“Qi Baishi, the painter focusing on the imagination of meanings, drew two chicks fighting for an earthworm. They refused to give the earthworm to each other. The topic was *ท้าวเรือเขียงงู* (One day, they will call for each other). This means that these two chicks are young and fight for only an earthworm, but when they grow up, if their friendship remains close, they will rely on each other. He relied on his understanding of the human world drawing chicks to compare to people.”

From this message, Qi Baishi wanted to convey meaning by using personification to name his painting. The chicks are compared as people that even when they are young, they fight for food, when growing up, they will still have to rely on each other anyway. Naming the painting this way makes readers feel that these two chicks are cute and livelier. So, the drawing is meaningful and more valuable. At the same time, readers would recognize the chicks as the persons so that they think about their childhood life. Or, they can use the concept shown in the drawing to teach their children. Therefore, personification can make the texts livelier as well as make readers visualize and be impressed with the texts.

### ***Paradox***

Paradox is the figure of speech that brings together words with conflicting meanings to compare to each other. When looking at the letter or superficially, it has a contrary meaning to one another. But, when considering deeply or thoroughly analyzed, they have the same meaning (Polboon, 2007). Pianchob (1996) also explained that most of paradox tend to convey the thought or the philosophy with profound meaning content. From the analysis, it was found that paradox can be used to translate proverbs and poems as follows.

“Saying know when you know, and saying do not know when you do not know.” (One should have an honest attitude in learning.)

The above sentence is the proverb of Confucius teaching students that in studying students must be determined and diligent to search for the truth until they understand it, but not pretend to know what one did not know. Especially, when studying with teachers, if students understand what they are learning, they should tell the teachers that they understand. But if they do not fully understand, they should tell the teachers that they did not understand. The meanings of the words “know” and “do not know” are contradiction, since “not” is a negative word indicating the opposite meaning. Although “know” and “do not know” have conflicting meanings, when they are included in the sample sentence, they provide the same meaning. That is, students must have an honest attitude in learning. Therefore, paradox can be used in a proverbial sentence to teach readers with a deep meaning and encourage readers to follow it.

### ***Allusion***

Allusion is the figure of speech that the writings refer to a person, event, or text at any one time in a story or literature (Polboon, 2007). In this research, allusion included people or books that are well known among Thai people. In addition, there are proverbs, poems, poetries, folk songs, historical events and one of the messages in the story or literature. Allusion makes the content interesting and reliable.

In the past, droughts and floods frequently occurred here. “Heavy rain caused massive floods. Slight rain caused small floods, and no rain, no drought.”

These sentences are the descriptions of the climate of the northern Chinese plains which are the areas of both

drought and flooding until people have made the statements to describe this: “Heavy rain caused massive floods. Slight rain caused small floods, and no rain, no drought.” The speech of the people used in the translation was allusion, which aimed to make the language beautiful and reliable. This research found that allusion was a popular method of describing places. It was used to explain to the readers about Kunming's temperature, which is very different during the day and at night. The translator still referred to the general public's statement that “Kunming has no winter and summer, but when it rains, the winter comes immediately.” For the allusion, in addition to referring to the general public's statements, the sayings of the historical persons were also alluded as well. For example, in order to show the personality of Cao the translator used his statement as an allusion, that is, “In this difficult period, although it is not me, there are many other people who want to seize power.”

### ***Reduplication***

Reduplication is the figure of speech that brings the same sounding words and may have the same or different meanings together to emphasize clearer meaning (Polboon, 2007). We noted that in BSCKC (Thai version), the repetition character (๑) in the Thai written language was used for reduplication to mark that the word must be pronounced twice. But, if the word that has to be repeated does not put together, it must be written twice.

“There are many types of Chinese folk music instruments, which can be divided into 4 major (ใหญ่๑) categories, namely woodwind instruments, brass instruments, string instruments, percussion instruments.”

The word “ใหญ่๑” (major) which appears in this example is a reduplication of words by using the repetition character (๑) in the Thai written language instead of the second word, in other words, ใหญ่๑ should be read as “Yai Yai”. According to the Royal Academy (2008) that repetition character (ใหญ่๑) should use after a word, phrase or sentence in order to read that word, phrase or sentence once more. However, the repetition character (๑) should not be used in 4 cases: 1) when it is not the same meaning; 2) when a single syllable is a two-syllable word that has repeated sounds such as the words นานา 3) when it is a word with different types and 4) when it is in a poem. In addition, Changjai (2018) explained that the repetition character (๑) was first used in the Sukhothai period, in the 44th Ram Khamhaeng Inscription, at Wat Song Khop in 1433. Further, the repetition character (๑) is used in writing in order to clarify the meaning of another word to be clearer. It indicates if the meaning of the word is lighter or stronger. For the word ใหญ่๑ in this example, it is the reduplication of words to clarify the categorization of the music instruments in a broader. In this study, apart from the word ใหญ่๑, there were other words such as ต่าง ๑ and น้อย ๑. Moreover, this research also found repeated words written twice without the repetition character (๑), such as คู่ข้าคู่นี้. The word คู่ was written twice since it is not written together. This type of reduplication can make the language beautiful and the readers are fonder of the translation.

### ***Rhetorical question***

Rhetorical question is the figure of speech that uses the questions to require answers, but ask to call attention or encourage the audience to think instead of the answers (Polboon, 2007). That is, it is the use of interrogative sentences in the conversation to call attention or encourage the audience to think, but the answers are not required. This research found that rhetorical question was a figure of speech that was more touching than using normal language to encourage readers to think by themselves, like the example below:

Bao Zheng (999 - 1062) was a native of Hefei District, Anhui Province. When he was a county magistrate, his relative broke violated the law. Bao Zheng did not take it as a personal issue, but sent runners to take him to the local official and sentenced him to death by following the law. Other relatives asked Bao to help, but he said that “It is not that I am ruthless, but who asked him to break the law?” (The Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, 2007c)

The sentence “who asked him to break the law” is a question sentence that needs answers, but in this case, it is used to ask the relatives to think. Generally speaking, the answer of the question “who asked him to break the law” is the relative himself, when other relatives think of the answer they would know the relative broke the law and he should be punished by the law which Bao had to do. Rhetorical question can reduce the intensity of language use and make the readers better understand the author, because rhetorical question is the use of interrogative sentences to encourage the readers or the listeners to find out the answers by themselves. When they can find out the answers to the questions, they will understand the author. Therefore, it can be said that proper rhetorical question can make communication more effective and convey meaning clearly and accurately.

### **Onomatopoeia**

Onomatopoeia is the figure of speech that uses the words simulating natural sounds to create the image like audience are in the real atmosphere (Polboon, 2007). It is the use of natural sounding words to make readers feel like they actually hear the sound so that they feel like they are in the condition that the author has described. According to the study, BSCKC imitated the flow of water to describe the content, as shown in the following example:

“The Tianshan Mountain offer beautiful scenery. Seen from afar, they are covered by a vast expanse of snow and by winding glaciers on the top. The hillside covers with dense forests and green fields. Streams are sougning ໘໘໘ in the foothills. There is also an oasis. This is very beautiful.”

This text is the description of the scenery of Tianshan Mountain Range, which consists of snow, glaciers, forests, grasslands, flowing water and oasis. The translator used onomatopoeia to describe the characteristics of the streams flow by using the word “sougning ໘໘໘” to imitate the sound of water flow in order to encourage readers to imagine until they have the image in their thought based on their experiences. Then the readers will slowly imagine forests, grasslands and other related things. Finally, they can imagine what the translator has described as if they actually see the scenery with their eyes. This points out that onomatopoeia can clearly present the content, resulting in helping the readers to imagine it until they feel like being in the atmosphere. This makes the readers more impressed with the content.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Based on the concept of Warunee Polboon, this research revealed that 7 types of figure of speech were used in the Thai translation version of BSCKC, namely, 1) simile 2) personification 3) paradox 4) allusion 5) reduplication 6) rhetorical question and 7) onomatopoeia.

When it is compared to the concept of constructing sentences using figure of speech of Watiktinkorn (2003), it was found that similarities were compared, including simile and personification. The relationships were also compared. Moreover, allusion was used by comparing differences. Paradox was employed using the texts with sarcastic meaning. Rhetorical question, reduplication and onomatopoeia were also used. Therefore, constructing sentences with 7 types of figure of speech mentioned earlier makes the language of the translation version concise and simple. It is also easy for the readers to understand the translated version and receive the same thing as the readers reading the original version have received, which is the most important objective of the translation.

Proper use of figure of speech in translation can make translation effective as the following reasons.

1. It makes the language reliable, such as simile and personification.
2. It makes the language beautiful and touching such as reduplication and onomatopoeia.
3. It helps readers to create imagination or images in their minds, such as simile and personification.
4. It stimulates readers to think deeply and feel impressive, such as paradox and rhetorical question.

Effective translation can help readers to interpret and understand the original text more easily because “translation” is not only the transfer of language, but it is to completely render the meaning of the original text and convey that meaning to the target language precisely and meaningfully. It must also convey complete direct and indirect meanings consistent with the original purpose of the original text

The limitation of this research was that this research only compared figure of speech in BSCKC between Chinese and Thai versions. On the other hand it could continue to compare figure of speech in other versions which translated Chinese into other languages in the future. Also, studying figure of speech in other kinds of text is a good direction as well.

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