บทความวิจัย

THE USE OF METAPHORICAL APPROACH IN LEARNING CHINESE VOCABULARY OF GRADE 11 THAI STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to compare grade 11 Thai students' achievement in learning Chinese vocabulary before and after using Metaphorical Approach and to investigate grade 11 Thai students' attitude towards using Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary. A group of 20 Thai students was chosen by applying simple random method. The study adopted Mixed methods. Four lesson plans which lasted 100 minutes were developed and taught for 8 sessions within the time period of two months. The quantitative data was collected through achievement tests (Pre-test and Post-test) and questionnaire. The qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interview.

The findings revealed that Metaphorical Approach was an effective method to enhance grade 11 Thai students' learning achievement in learning Chinese vocabulary with the Post-test mean score of 22.05 which was 11.95 higher than the mean score of the Pre-test of 10.10. The data gathered from the questionnaires showed that all items were ranked at the high level. It evidently proved that the students generally held positive attitude towards Metaphorical Approach. The semi-structured interview results indicated that students enjoyed the given lessons, and were satisfied with the class activities.

Keywords: Metaphorical Approach, Chinese Vocabulary Learning, Grade 11

Introduction

China is rising in the 21st century, with the internationalization of RMB (Renminbi, Chinese Currency); China has become one of the largest economies in the world. Chinese government takes the lead to promote "The Belt and Road" and global integration. Thailand lays at the center of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); one of the important strategic partners of China, exchanges various forms of cooperation with China, especially culture.

The history of learning Chinese in Thailand can be traced back to the 18th century. With the support of the Thai government, a complete Chinese education system has been formed from elementary education to higher education (Hou, 2012). Chen (2019) has highlighted the total number of overseas students in China is 490,000, of which Thailand accounts for 28,000, ranking second in the world. Thailand also contains the world second largest number of participants of HSK (Han Yu Shui Ping Kao Shi) Test. Learning Chinese is becoming normalized in Thailand.

Vocabulary is defined as all the words which exist in a particular language (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2013). It is the key of learning a language. Lessard-Clouston (2013) claims that words are the core of language teaching, without them, learners are not able to comprehend and express their own ideas.

In this article Metaphorical Approach will be adopted as a method for enhancing Grade 11 Thai students' vocabulary size. It is a method by using metaphor which is a common figurative device in language teaching. Metaphor plays an important role in teaching Chinese as foreign language (TCFL). The advantages of implementing Metaphorical Approach can be shown in many ways, extending vocabulary size and reinforcing the internal connection of the words, rising cultural awareness, enhancing learners' interests towards learning Chinese vocabulary, and so on.

Research Objective

Metaphorical Approach has been widely adopted in teaching Chinese sentences, reading, and writing, which are generally considered as the advanced level of learning language. However, this research aimed to explore a possibility of using Metaphorical Approach in teaching Chinese vocabulary, and investigate students' learning attitude. The research objective as listed below:

1. To compare grade 11 Thai students' achievement in learning

Chinese vocabulary before and after using Metaphorical Approach.

2. To investigate grade 11 Thai students' attitude towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary.

Literature Review

1. Chinese Vocabulary

Chinese vocabulary is the derivative of Chinese Characters. Yang (2010) has claimed a Chinese Character is a singular morpheme; words are composed by such morphemes based on certain prescribed procedure. The following example shows the word formation of Chinese language.

a. 人 (rén) (people)
人口 (rén kǒu) (population)
人民 (rén mín) (citizen)
人才 (rén cái)
(human resource)

As shown above, 人(rén) is a morphem; it combines with different morphemes to form a new word. According to the Common Characters in Modern Chinese that was published by State Language Commission (1988), there are 2500 common Chinese Characters and 1000 sub common Characters. Yang (2010) has noted that 3500 common Characters can make up 70,000 words; each Character can make up 20 compound words on average.

- **The Importance of Learning Chinese Vocabulary**

To learn a foreign language, vocabulary is the cornerstone. Barcroft, Sunderman & Schmitt (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 2013) have declared that vocabulary includes entire words, phrases and lexical chunks in a language. Vocabulary knowledge is an important factor to affect learners' performances in acquiring a second language.

Zhang & Annual (as cited in Liu, 2016) have conducted research and found that learners' reading comprehension achievement is highly related to their vocabulary knowledge, if a given text contains some words that are beyond learners' vocabulary knowledge but do not affect the understanding of the main idea, learners still would be negatively impacted.

Webb & Nation (2017) have pointed out that if language learners are not able to produce the needed words to express their intended ideas, they will face difficulty in being understood. Similarly, if language learners do not have a broad enough word-base, they may not be able to understand what they have heard or express their own ideas through writing or speaking.

Therefore, vocabulary is the essential component of developing reading

comprehension abilities (Wasik, Hindman, & Snell, 2016), listening abilities (Nation, 2006), writing abilities (Olinghouse & Leaird, 2009), and oral speech abilities (Fernandes et al., 2017).

- **Goals of Learning Chinese Vocabulary**

Vocabulary knowledge involves several parts; teachers should be clear with the content that learners should master. Nation (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 2013) highlighted three basic goals of learning vocabulary as follow:

1) Knowing the forms of the vocabulary, learners should know how to pronounce and write the words. For example, the word 汉语 (hàn yǔ), learner should know its Pinyin, and then master the Stroke and Component of each Character. Liu (2019) claimed that to learn the forms of a word is the basic step.

2) Knowing the meaning of the vocabulary; learners should know what items the concept can refer to, and whether there is a word that can be used to replace it (Lessard-Clouston, 2013). Still using 汉语 (hàn yǔ) as an example, it refers to Chinese language and the words 中文 (zhōng wén) and 华文(huá wén) indicate the same meaning.

3) Knowing the use of the vocabulary; learners shall master when, where, and how to use the words appropriately. As the example above, learners need know that 汉语 (hàn yǔ) is a noun, it usually functions as a subject, object, and so on.

- **Teaching and Learning Chinese Vocabulary in Thailand**

Chinese has been taught in Thailand for decades. Chinese vocabulary teaching is regarded as one of the most essential segments of acquiring Chinese as foreign language (Wang & Wu, 2002). There are also many research and studies about teaching and learning Chinese vocabulary in Thailand. Pichetladarom (2016) carried out a research which explained the common strategies of learning vocabulary and also investigated the frequency of Thai students using these strategies. They are listed from high frequency to low frequency as below:

1) Affective Strategy is a motivation control strategy, is related to language learners' motivation, interest, and attitude (Li, 2005). Language learners set a goal and motivate themselves self to learn Chinese vocabulary and reduce their anxiety.

2) Social Strategy is a strategy conducted with a wide array of communication means. Language learners learn vocabulary by cooperating with others or by consulting native Chinese speakers.

3) Compensation Strategy is a context-clue strategy. Language learners utilize all the collected clues to infer the meaning of a related word.

4) Cognitive Strategy is the strategy of accepting, identifying, organizing, and analyzing the words. For example, language learners look up a word in the dictionary, and use it to make a sentence.

5) Metacognitive Strategy is a strategy consisting of self-assessment and self-management. Learners automatically summarize the learned vocabulary, and try to find out the regular of some words

6) Memory Strategy is learning the vocabulary by repeating, classifying the words into different categories, such as animals or plants, and setting an internal connection of the known-words.

2. Metaphorical Approach

Metaphorical Approach, a method using metaphor in language teaching which it is widely used among Chinese teachers in teaching Chinese. Metaphor refers to "an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way" (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.). Culler (as cited in Qin, 2006) has explained that metaphor is a basic stage of cognition, which is realized by treating one thing as another.

- **The Basic Elements of Metaphor**

Metaphor generally contains three elements which are the tenor, vehicle, metaphor words.Chen (2013) has summarized that tenor is the subject whose retributes are ascribed; vehicle is the object whose attributes are borrowed, and metaphor word is used as a function word to connect the tenor and the vehicle. The following example explains the tenor and vehicle, and metaphor word.

b. 板桥先生像竹子一样 (bǎn qiáo xiān sheng xiàng zhú zǐ yī yàng) Mr. Banqiao is bamboo

This sentence 板桥先生 (bǎn qiáo xiān sheng) is the tenor, 竹子 (zhú zǐ) is the vehicle, and 像…一样 (xiàng...yī yàng) is the metaphor word. 板桥先生 (bǎn qiáo xiān sheng) is a literate and artist of Qing dynasty. He is famous due to his personalities which are fortitude, uprightness and modesty. Likewise, bamboo is an evergreen perennial plant just meted these personality traits. People find the common between the tenor and the vehicle, and give the tenor a new definition.

- **The Use of Metaphorical Approach in Teaching Chinese Vocabulary**

Generally, language teachers use metaphorical approach to teach

sentences, reading, and writing; however, there is also much research supporting Metaphorical Approach as a reliable method in teaching Chinese vocabulary. As mentioned by Chen (2018) in her research,

1) Metaphor is a good way to expand the vocabulary size and consolidate the internal connection between words. As explained previously, people find the common values between things and use one item to explain and describe the other item, therefore these items are internally connected (Zhang, 2014). For example:

松树 (song shù) which means Pinus, students should know it is a kind of 常绿 (cháng lǜ, evergreen) conifer. Chinese commonly regards Pinus as the symbol of 长寿 (cháng shòu, long live). Therefore, when language learners learn a new word, they also absorb at least two more words which are related to its characteristics and symbols.

2) Metaphor is the key to create cross-cultural awareness. Cultural education and language education should be conducted at the same time; cultural education should be integrated into language education (Wang, 2016; Peng, 2016; Wang, 2016). Metaphor is an age-old figurative device and it contains distinct national cultural characteristics. Therefore, Metaphorical Approach is an integration of culture and language.

As mentioned in 1.3.1, plant is a specific existence in Chinese culture. When students learn a number of words about plants, and the further symbols of these words, they may find out that almost every plant can be assigned to a personality or human Characteristic, and also discover the special affection of Chinese culture towards plants.

3) Metaphor can enhance students' accuracy in word selection. People always express ideas through metaphor. By adopting metaphors in vocabulary teaching, students can learn the further meaning of the words, and avoid misusing words (Deignan, Gabrys, & Solska, 1997). If a learner obtains certain knowledge in metaphorical language among Chinese words, they will be more cautious in word selection while they use Chinese as a medium to communicate. The examples are as follow:

昙花一现 (tán huā yī xiàn), 昙花 (tán huā, Epiphyllum) usually blooms for four hours each year. It also symbolizes that good things will be faded soon. Therefore, even it is a very beautiful flower, we don't use it to describe people. Learning vocabulary is an effective way to assist language learners to avoid misuse.

4) Metaphorical approach may be a method to motivate learners to learn Chinese vocabulary. According to Yang & Cai (2009), being interested in Chinese Culture is one of the biggest motivations to learn Chinese language; however, the interests in Chinese Culture are individual interests. When they begin to learn Chinese, they find out the complexity of Chinese, and the lessons are limited in the textbook, their interest will quickly fade. Metaphorical approach integrates culture teaching with language teaching, students can learn cultural information and can also work together to investigate the common values between a specific object and culture.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

In this study, there were two types of variables, independent variables and dependent variables. The independent variable referred to teaching Chinese vocabulary by using Metaphorical Approach, and the dependent variables included students' learning achievement and attitude.

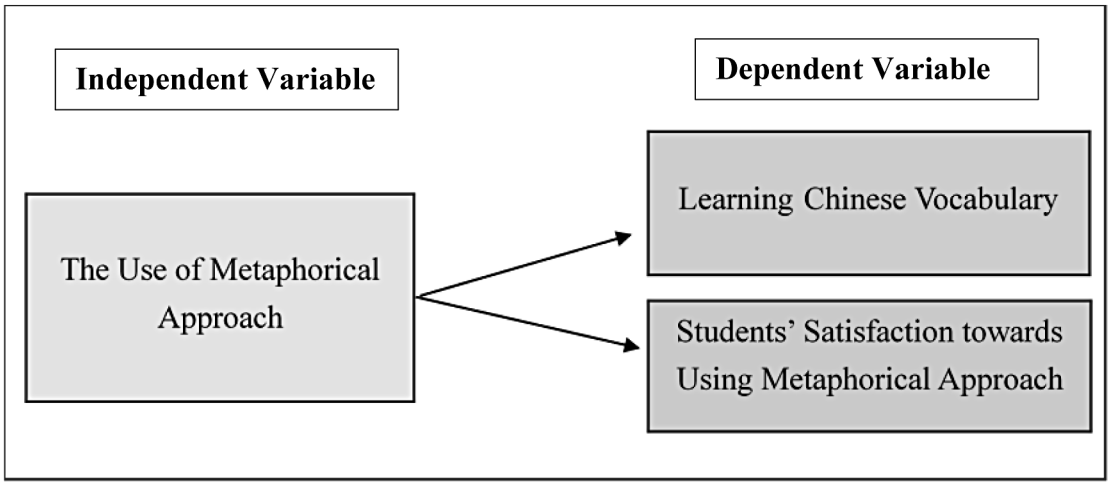


Figure 1 Independent Variable and Dependent Variables

Research Methodology

1. Research Instruments

The researcher applied mixed methods which included quantitative and qualitative methods in this study. Lesson plans, achievements tests (Pre-test and Post-test), questionnaire, and semi-structured interview were adopted as the instruments to collect the data.

1.1 Lesson Plans

In this study, the researcher designed four lesson plans that were taught for 8 classes; each lesson plan was designed for 2 sessions per week. Each session lasted for 50 minutes. All four lesson plans were developed by the researcher to implement Metaphorical Approach. The themes of the lessons were "Plants and Culture". The researcher aimed to enhance secondary Thai students' Chinese vocabulary size. The vocabulary was chosen from Experiencing Chinese second edition, published in 2010.

1.2 Achievement Tests

In this study, there were two tests, Pre-test and Post-test, respectively conducted before and after the lessons. The Pre-test aimed to investigate students' proficiency in Chinese vocabulary, to find out the general errors that participants tended to make. The results of the pre-test were provided to the researcher to adjust the lesson plans to match students' actual level. The post-test was the same as pre-test, however, the order of questions and answers were rearranged. Both two tests shared the similar difficulty. The aim of the post-test was to investigate whether participants improved their vocabulary or not after taking the lesson with Metaphorical Approach.

The test was developed based on the text book of grade 11 Thai students, and highly related to "Plants and Culture". The test items were comprised of 3 parts. Part 1 contained 11 Multiple Choices, which aimed to test students' understanding in pronunciation and identifying Chinese Characters. Part 2 was Matching; participants were asked to match the questions with the given options to test their understanding in cross-culture awareness. Part 3 was composed of 8 True or False test items; this part was designed to investigate participants' understanding of Chinese vocabulary.

1.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to investigate grade 11 Thai students' attitude towards using Metaphorical Approach in Learning Chinese vocabulary. Therefore, the questionnaire was handed out to each participant at the end of the study.

The attitude mainly included students' interests, motivation, and satisfaction towards using Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: personal information and 12 statements with five scales for each statement. Simply put, students' attitude towards learning Chinese was divided into five levels, and ranged from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'.

1.4 Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of the research to investigate participants' attitude towards using Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary. Semi-structured interview refers to the researcher creating a question frame rather than detailed questions (Pathak & Intratat, 2012). In this research, researcher interviewed all the participants in the classroom, over the course of two days. The researcher invited a Thai teacher to assist during the interview procedure, and participants were able to use their mother tongue to respond the questions. All of the responses were recorded, transcribed and translated into English for the subsequent analysis.

1.5 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 20 grade 11 students studying Chinese in a private school in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants' age range was 16-17 years old with mixed genders. All the participants were selected by applying simple random method. And based on the ethics consideration, the author would hide the name of school. To compare with non-Chinese major students, Chinese major students needed more assistance in learning Chinese vocabulary because they were expected to have a certain level of knowledge in Chinese, and were required to take HSK (Han Yu Shui Ping Kao Shi) level Test. The participants of this study have received Chinese education for 3 years.

2. Data Collection Procedures

2.1 Approval and Ethics Concern

To conduct the research in the school, the researcher obtained an approval letter from Ethics Committee of Research Institute of Rangsit University. As the participants of this study are at the age about 17, the researcher also asked the approval from the responsible department of the school.

2.2 Data Analysis

2.2.1 Test Scores Results

The researcher used mixed methods to collect the data; therefore, this research included both quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data which was collected

by achievement tests (pre-test and post-test) scores, and questionnaire results were analyzed by mean value, standard deviation, and T-test. The qualitative data, collected by a semi-structured interview was recorded, translated, and interpreted by using thematic analysis method. These methods were used to compare the grade 11 Thai students' learning achievement in Chinese vocabulary as well as to investigate their attitude towards the use of Metaphorical Approach.

Table 1 Paired Comparation of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Test	Pre-test		Post-test		Mean Diff.	T	P
	Mean	Sta. Deviation	Mean	Sta. Deviation			
Part 1	5.35	2.323	9.50	1.638	4.15	-8.696	0.000
Part 2	1.25	0.851	5.45	1.050	4.20	-16.998	0.000
Part 3	3.50	1.147	7.10	1.119	3.60	-10.987	0.000
Total	**10.10**	**2.972**	**22.05**	**2.605**	**11.95**	**-19.087**	**0.000**

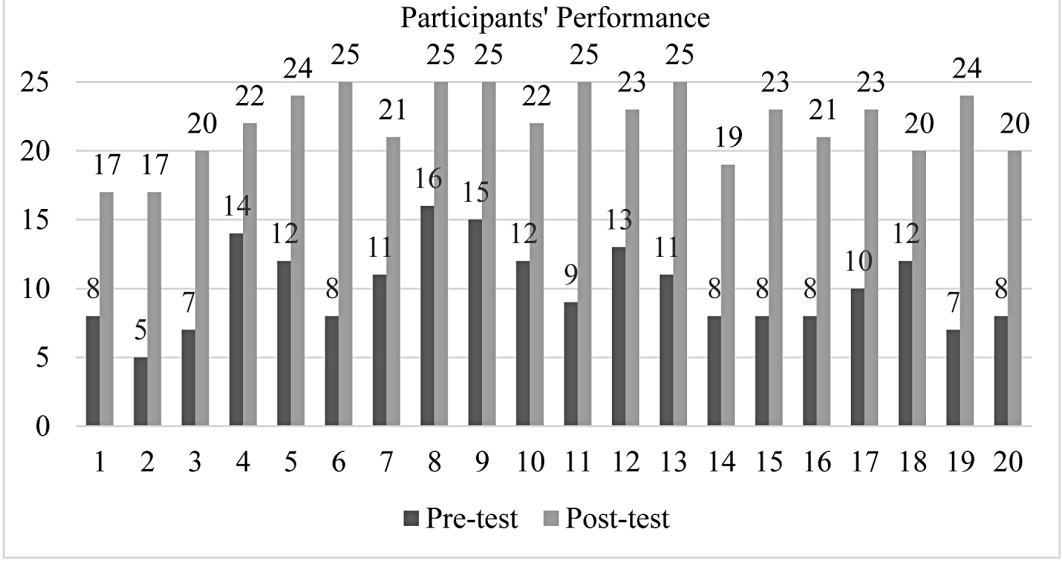


Figure 2 Individual Participant's Test Results between Pre-Test and Post-Test

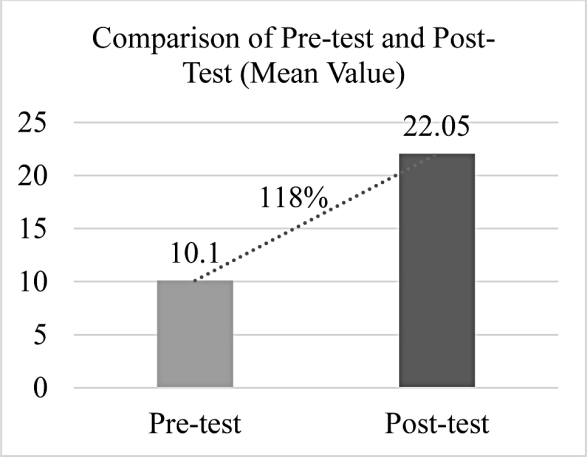


Figure 3 Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

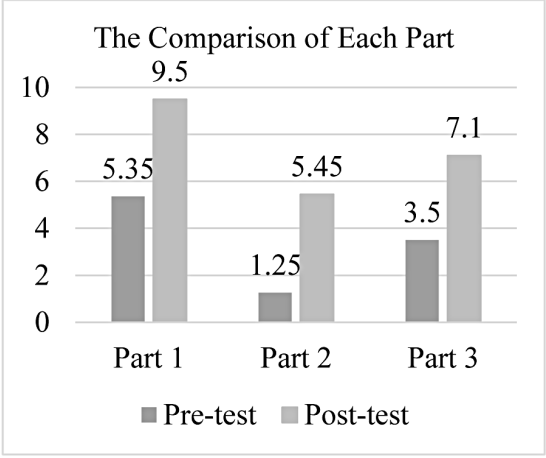


Figure 4 Comparison of Each Part (Mean Value)

2.2.2 Analysis of Test Score Results

The results of the Achievement tests which included both pre-test and post-test were used to respond to the first research question. The test paper was specially designed to investigate participants' abilities in pronouncing and identifying Chinese characters (Part 1), understanding in cross-culture awareness (Part 2) and understanding of the actual meaning of the words (Part 3). The results were analyzed by comparison of mean score and standard deviation, T-test, and P value.

The findings of the Pre-test revealed that this group of participants' achievement in Chinese vocabulary about plants were initially at a quite low level with the mean score of 10.10 out of 25.05 To analyze each part, and sort the mean scores from the lowest to the highest, the results came up to Part 2, Part 3, and Part 1 respectively.

Post-test results in Chinese vocabulary achievement were evidently higher than those of the pre-test with the mean score of 22.05 out of 25. It could find that participants' performances were all at a high level. The mean scores of each part from lowest to highest that were Part 1, Part 3, and Part 2 respectively.

According to the T-test results, the differences of each part between

pre-test and post-test were obvious. The p value of every part was .01. It could be determined that participants made the most progress in Part 2, followed by Part 3, and then Part 1.

Over all, the comparison of two tests in p value was.01; in other words, there was significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and of the post-test. It proved that the participants acquired improved achievement in learning Chinese vocabulary with the use of Metaphorical Approach.

2.2.3 Questionnaire Results

The second objective of this research was to investigate grade 11 Thai students' attitude towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese Vocabulary. One of the methods to collect the data was to use questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided in to section A, B, and C, based on different themes.

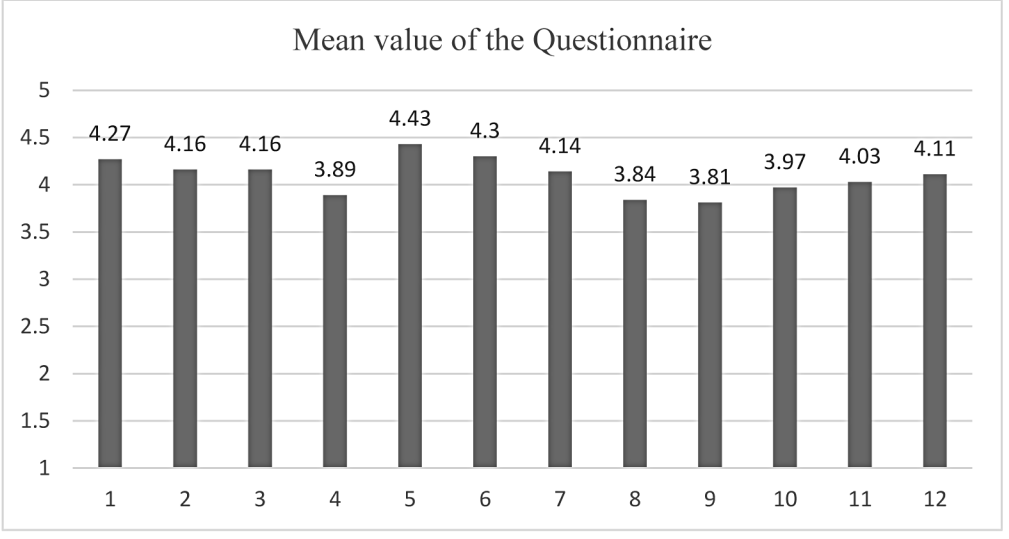


Figure 5 Mean value of the Questionnaire

2.2.4 Analysis of Questionnaire Results

The Questionnaire was developed to investigate participants' attitudes towards the use of Metaphorical Approach. Therefore, it was one of the main methods to answer the second research question. The questionnaire was composed of 12 statements. These statements were further distributed into three specific categories: participant's interest, motivation, and attitude towards learning. The participants were made to rate each statement on Likert scale of 1 to 5 that read from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The overall mean score of the questionnaire was 4.10. It indicated that participants generally held positive attitudes towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary.

2.2.5 Analysis of Semi-Structure Results

A Semi-structured interview was another main research method which aimed to investigate participants' attitudes towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary. It was conducted at the end of this research, and all of the 20 participants participated the interview. Thematic analysis was adopted to interpret the interview data.

It was found that all participants showed remarkable agreement with the given lessons. They all enjoyed in the lessons and activities. Many participants also reflected that they liked the presentation the most. They could accompany their friend and also compete with other groups. The participants also claimed that Metaphorical Approach was good motivation for them to learn Chinese vocabulary. They liked Chinese culture and metaphor was regarded as the epitome of the culture. Finally, the participants also expressed their attitude towards the lesson. Most of them claimed that the lessons were well-designed, organized, and they were able to follow the lessons easily.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research results revealed that 1) Metaphorical Approach was effective in improving participants' learning achievement in Chinese vocabulary, and 2) the participants had a positive attitude towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary.

1. Learning Achievement

Nation (as cited in Lessard-Clouston, 2013) explained three basic goals of learning vocabulary which were form, meaning, and usage. The analysis of

the pre-test revealed that Thai students were generally at a low level in Chinese vocabulary achievement with the mean scores of each part being 5.35 out of 11, 1.25 out of 6, and 3.5 out of 8. The result of the pre-test was similar to the research of Sun (2015), it also indicated that Thai students were at a low level of learning Chinese vocabulary.

In comparing both pre-test and post-test score, it was found that cultural understanding was the sector which earned the most progress during the experiment, with the score having increased 336%. Wu (2013) points out that being interested in Chinese culture is one of the biggest motivations to learn Chinese language. Participants' interest in culture is consistent with the Affective Strategy proposed by Li (2007) and Pichetladarom (2016). Being interested in Chinese culture led to participants' better performance and achievement.

The sector focusing on identifying Chinese characters showed the least progress with 78% increase in score. Chinese language is complex in its form. There are little correspondence between a Chinese character and its pronunciation (Chen, 2013; Xue, 2017; Yang, 2020), therefore, students had to put higher effort into Memory Strategy. Moreover, this strategy was less adopted by Thai language learner (Pichetladarom, 2016). Whether Students remembered the vocabulary or not would directly affect the results of the learning achievement (Liu, 2010).

2. Attitude

The assessment of attitude in this research was limited to three categories: interest, motivation, and satisfaction in learning. Both questionnaire and semi-structured interview were adopted to investigate participants' attitudes towards the use of Metaphorical Approach in learning Chinese vocabulary. Participants generally held positive attitudes.

Among three categories, motivation sector owned the highest mean score of 4.18. When combined with insight from the semi-structured interview, it was found that most participants' original motivation in learning Chinese was Chinese culture; using Metaphorical Approach recalled their original interests in learning Chinese. The research of Deignan, Gabry and Solska (1997) showed that it was easy to learn a language when learners were self-motivated.

Satisfaction sector showed the least mean score of 3.97. Although the participants were quite satisfied with the

lesson design and organization; however, a few participants also expressed their concerns about the possible difficulties of using this approach independently. The Metaphor Language is highly dependent on culture background. Shutova and Teufel (2010) mentioned metaphorical expression showed different ideas under diverse situation, and non-native language learners were struggled to identify this diversity.

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