**A Study on the experiential cognition of the metaphorical concept of "Tiger" in Chinese and Thai Languages**

Liu Jiaping 1 Li Yinsheng 2

1Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Samut Prakan Province, Thailand

2 School of Literature, Guangxi University, Nanning, Guangxi Province, China

Corresponding author.E-mail：[liujp0534@gmail.com](mailto:liujp0534@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

Tigers have a very close relationship with human life. Based on the development model of human metaphorical thinking of "reality-cognition-language," tigers play an important role in the process of human cognition of the world and the formation of abstract concepts. This paper analyzes the conceptual metaphor of tigers in Chinese and Thai languages from the perspective of experiential cognition. The research found that the semantic extension type of the tiger concept metaphor is closely related to people's experience and perception of tigers. When Chinese and Thai people pay the same attention to tigers, the semantic extension of the concept of tigers in Chinese and Thai languages will overlap; otherwise, there will be semantic dislocation and semantic vacancy. Second, the scope of the metaphorical mapping of the tiger concept involves the conceptual domains related to "people" and "things." Third, there are both commonalities and differences in the conceptual metaphor mapping of Chinese and Thai languages, embodying the complexity in the process of human abstract concept formation.

**Key Words:** tiger experiential cognition comparison between Chinese and Thai

**1.Introduction**

Experiential cognition refers to the process in which individuals acquire knowledge and understand the world through personal and direct experiences. This viewpoint has a long history. In the "Analects of Confucius, Book of Government, (LunYu·WeiZhengPian)" it is emphasized that when facing difficulties or failures in practice, one needs to reflect and learn. This is because practice and experience are important paths for learning and self-cultivation. Laozi, on the other hand, emphasizes the attainment of truth through silent and contemplative experiences. He believes that through reflection on natural and inner experiences, individuals can achieve harmony and unity with the universe, as seen in the phrase "The great sound is unheard, the great form is shapeless" (In a state of quietude, individuals can surpass appearances and gain deeper understanding and insight). Gong Sun Longzi, in his "Discussions on Names and Realities (MingShiLun)," emphasizes the verification and confirmation of knowledge through practical experiences and practices. For example, "Examine the names and realities, be cautious in their usage" (Thoroughly examine the relationship between names and realities and use them carefully and accurately). Scholars like Wang Yangming, Lu Jiuyuan, Gu Yanwu in the Ming Dynasty, and Wang Fuzhi in the Qing Dynasty, all believe that individuals should understand and recognize the essence of things through direct experiences and perceptions of the real world.

German linguist and philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt (1836) pointed out in his work "The Spirit of the Language Structure" that language is a product of the human mental activity, serving as the expression and creation of the human mind, and functioning as the vehicle for human thought and meaning.  
 American scholars George Lakoff and Mark Johnson opened the prelude to the study of experiential philosophy with their book "Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought" published in 1999, making experiential philosophy a focal point of extensive attention from experts and scholars in both Eastern and Western traditions. Wang Yin (2005) proposed the perspective of experiential cognition based on the fundamental principles of experiential philosophy and cognitive linguistics advocated by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.

The core argument of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) is that human categories, concepts, reasoning, and the mind are formed based on bodily experiences, with their most basic forms primarily relying on the perception of body parts, spatial relations, force dynamics, and so on. Ultimately, cognition and meaning are grounded in bodily experiences, and language symbols follow the progression of "reality-cognition-language." In general, experiential cognition plays a crucial role in the formation of abstract concepts in human beings. All concepts in human society are formed through the process of experiential cognition resulting from the interaction between humans themselves and the natural and social environments.

**2.Research Objectives**

As a product of human sociocultural experiential cognition, language analysis of the commonalities and differences in the expression of the same concept at the linguistic level among different ethnic groups and languages can help second language learners reduce barriers to cross-cultural communication, improve learning efficiency, and deepen mutual understanding between nations. Therefore, this paper selects the concept of "tiger," which is familiar to both Chinese and Thai people, and examines the role of the "tiger" concept in the construction of abstract concepts and the patterns followed in its semantic extension from a Chinese-Thai comparative perspective. The aim is to explore the similarities and differences in experiential cognition of the same object between the Chinese and Thai ethnic groups.

**3. Research Methodology**

1) In order to systematically compare tiger-related words in Chinese and Thai, first collect animal vocabulary related to tigers from dictionaries and corpora. Then, based on the target domains of metaphor, divide them into tiger-mapping human domain and tiger-mapping object domain, and further distinguish them. Then, compare and analyze the metaphors of animals in Chinese and Thai within each category.

2)This article adopts the method of theoretical research. After selecting the research topic, relevant literature such as academic journals, books, and dissertations is collected. Through investigation and reading of these literature, the current research status of tiger-related words in Chinese and Thai is understood. Based on the systematic analysis of the collected literature, the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods and theories, as well as the existing problems, are identified. From the perspective of metaphor mapping, starting from the target domain, further research is conducted on the characteristics of tiger-word metaphors, metaphorical patterns, and so on in Chinese and Thai.

**4.Theoretical concepts and related research**

The Chinese term 'Hu(tiger) 'corresponds to the Thai term 'Suea (tiger) '. In their primary sense, both terms refer to "a mammal with a large, round head, yellow fur, and black stripes. They have acute hearing and a sense of smell, are fierce and powerful, are good at swimming but not at climbing trees, and hunt for prey such as birds and other animals at night. They are collectively known as tigers (Modern Chinese Dictionary, 7th edition)." In daily communication, besides conveying the conceptual meaning, the term "Hu(tiger) " in Chinese and "'Suea (tiger) '" in Thai can also carry pragmatic meanings such as cultural meanings, symbolic meanings, metaphorical meanings, and so on. Examples in Chinese include expressions like "Hu Jia Hu Wei" (a fox assuming the majesty of a tiger), "Hu Tou Hu Nao" (tiger-headed and tiger-brained), "Hu Jiang" (tiger general), and "Hu Tou She Wei" (tiger head, snake tail). In Thai, examples include "Seua Dam" (black tiger), which metaphorically refers to a brave black person, and "Seua Phu Ying" (female tiger), which metaphorically refers to a womanizer or someone who habitually exploits women. Often, people may not be aware of the metaphorical expressions when using these words in communication. As mentioned by Shu Dingfang (2000) in her work, "From a cognitive perspective, once a fresh metaphor is accepted, its metaphorical nature begins to weaken. With the increasing frequency of use, its metaphorical meaning becomes integrated into the word's actual meaning." Therefore, conducting an in-depth study of the pragmatic meanings of "Hu(tiger) " and "'Suea (tiger) '" can help Chinese and Thai language learners better understand the cultures of both countries and reveal the interaction between language and cognition. The collected research findings are as follows:

Thai scholars Pichapa Palanumas, Amonrut Kumduang, and Chatuwit Keawsuwan (2021) conducted a comparative study on the semantic aspects of Chinese and Thai idiomatic expressions containing the word "Hu" (tiger) in their publication titled "A Comparative Study of Chinese Idiomatic Expressions Containing the word 'Hu' (tiger) with Thai Idiomatic Expressions Containing the Word 'Suea' (tiger)." They found that there is consistency in the six aspects of "will, sensation, adventure, education and nurturing, submission and surrender, and human actions and behaviors" in idiomatic expressions containing "Hu" (tiger) in both Chinese and Thai languages.

Other researchers such as Atcharaphon Pavaputanon (2019), Wu Wenfei (2018), Nichapat Chuthakawinmongkhon, Pichayapa Amnuaychoktawee (2017), Kritanan Ming-kwan (2017), Liao Zhenzhu (2015), Chutima Khemcharoen (2015), Li Zhiwen (2014), Lin Xianlian (2014), and Cheng Tianci (2012) have provided detailed discussions on the pragmatic meanings (cultural meanings, symbolic meanings, and other pragmatic meanings) of "Hu" (tiger) in the Chinese and Thai languages.

In summary, based on the collected materials, it can be seen that scholars from China and Thailand have conducted extensive and in-depth research on idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, and proverbs containing the word "Hu" (tiger) in Chinese and "Suea (tiger) " in Thai. The research primarily focuses on the structure, grammatical functions, and semantics of tiger in the Chinese and Thai languages. There has been relatively less attention given to the metaphorical meanings of tiger in these languages. This paper, from the perspective of experiential cognition and based on specific language data, categorize the semantic types of metaphorical mappings related to the concept of tiger in Chinese and Thai, explores their similarities and differences, and reveals the cognitive variations between the Chinese and Thai peoples as well as the cultural constraints of the metaphorical expressions involving the tiger concept.

**5.Results**

**5.1The Cultural Connotations of tiger in Chinese and Thai Languages**

In traditional Chinese culture, "Hu" (tiger) is considered the "king of beasts," and its most prominent symbol is the character "Wang" (king) on its forehead. This perception stems from the tiger's fierce nature, its position at the top of the food chain, and its rarity of encountering a worthy opponent. Due to its ferocity, the tiger poses a threat not only to birds and animals in the natural world but also to humans and livestock. As a result, the tiger has two distinct images in the minds of the Chinese people: one is the mighty and courageous "Hu Jiang" (tiger general), and the other is the oppressor of the weak, the "Hu Lang Zhi Bei" (vicious tiger or wolf). It is this contradictory yet unified understanding of the tiger that evokes both loves and hate in people's hearts.

First, totems, ward off misfortune and suppress evil beasts.

As the king of beasts, the tiger used to be widely distributed within China. It is recorded in numerous ancient texts, such as the saying "The clouds follow the dragon, and the wind follows the tiger" in the Book of Changes (Yi Jing), and the presence of tigers in various mountains, such as the Nülin Mountain, Qishan, and the Fengyu Mountain, as described in the Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shan Hai Jing). During the primitive society period, with low levels of productivity, people faced fierce tigers that they couldn't conquer. The fear of tigers was so great that it elevated the tiger to a natural deity in people's minds. Many primitive tribes regarded the tiger as their ancestor and established it as their totem, worshipping it. According to the records in "Shang Jun Shu Hua Ce" and "Lie Zi - Huang Di Pian": "The Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor fought on the field of Banquan, leading bears, leopards, wolves, panthers, tigers, and other beasts as vanguards, with eagles, pheasants, falcons, and kites as their banners. Only after three battles did they achieve their goals." (The Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor confronted each other on the field of Banquan. The Yellow Emperor commanded bears, leopards, wolves, panthers, tigers, and other animals to lead the vanguard, with eagles, pheasants, falcons, and kites as their banners. After several confrontations, they finally defeated the Flame Emperor's tribe.) The mentioned animals, such as bears, leopards, wolves, panthers, tigers, eagles, pheasants, falcons, and kites, are not actual ferocious beasts or birds of prey but rather the names of different tribal totems. The use of "tiger" as a totem can also be seen among ethnic minorities in China, such as the Yi people living in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces, who have the "Black Tiger" as their totem. Furthermore, in the minds of the Manchu people, the status of "tiger" is equally sacred and inviolable. It is considered the "Mountain Lord" or "Tiger God" in the hearts of the Manchu people. In their language, there are vivid descriptions, such as "Go to sleep quickly, or the Tiger Mother will come and carry you away." Here, the "Tiger Mother" refers to the "Tiger God."

"Tigers" prefer to live in caves within dense forests. Their roar is deep, powerful, and highly intimidating. It carries such force that it can cause other animals to scatter in fear, thus the saying "Tiger's roar scatters beasts in the mountains" (referring to the phenomenon of animals fleeing upon hearing the tiger's roar in the forest). The tiger's roar is often accompanied by strong winds. The wind enhances its might, and the sound travels with the wind, causing other animals in the forest to tremble in fear. Therefore, the Book of Changes (Yi Jing) states, "The wind comes from the tiger." Wang Chong, in his work "Discourses Weighed in the Balance," explained the relationship between "tiger's roar" and "wind" from the perspective of the Five Elements: "Someone may ask why the wind comes from the tiger. Wind represents wood, and the tiger represents metal. Wood is subjected to the control of metal, so how can it not follow? Therefore, when the tiger roars, the wind arises—it is the way of nature." In ancient times, the reverence for tigers and the association between the tiger's roar and the wind led to the tiger gradually becoming the divine being that governs "wind and thunder" in people's minds. According to legend, in ancient times, people prayed to the Land God to subdue and tame tigers because they feared the harm they could cause. After the Land God successfully tamed the tigers, they became his mounts and were worshipped as the guardian gods of temples, known as "Tiger Lords" or "Tiger Deities." As the Tiger Lords guarded the land under the jurisdiction of the Land God, no evil spirits dared to approach, making them powerful in warding off diseases and dispelling demons. They were especially effective in protecting children from various frightening ailments, serving as their guardians. Therefore, Chinese people often decorate clothing with the image of tigers. For example, they paint or embroider the image of a tiger on children's clothes, hats, or shoes, creating "tiger cloaks," "tiger hats," and "tiger shoes." Parents hope to use the power of the tiger to protect their children's healthy growth. Additionally, tiger motifs are also commonly found in door gods and door paintings, symbolizing "the divine tiger guarding the home and warding off evil." Examples include tiger charms, tiger rings, tiger carvings, tiger temples, tiger hats, tiger shoes, and tiger pillows.

Secondly, status, power, and outstanding individuals among the people.

In the early stages of human society, the worship of the tiger as a totem and its own majestic and courageous nature made the tiger an important symbol for rulers to proclaim their identity and status. In the "Book of Rites - Department of Earth Officials," there is a record of "residing on the left side of the Tiger Gate" - "Tiger Gate, the gate of the road and sleeping. The king holds court on the road and sleeping, with a painted tiger outside the gate to symbolize bravery." From this record, we can understand that as early as the Zhou Dynasty, China began to establish "Tiger Gates" within the imperial palace to showcase their prestige and emphasize their status. Moreover, ancient emperors would command people to carry "tiger flags" when traveling to intimidate the common people. In the "Book of Rites - Department of Earth Officials - Handling Ceremonies," it is recorded that "mountainous countries use tiger emblems, land countries use human emblems, and marsh countries use dragon emblems." (During the Zhou Dynasty, envoys from mountainous vassal states carried metal emblems in the shape of tigers; envoys from flatland vassal states carried metal emblems in the shape of humans; envoys from marshland vassal states carried metal emblems in the shape of dragons.) From this description, we can see that "tigers, humans, and dragons" could all become symbols of a country. Both "dragons" and "tigers" can represent imperial power, but there is a distinction between them. In the "Book of Songs - Da Ya - Jiang Han," there is a record of "the tiger bows down, the Son of Heaven reigns for ten thousand years." From this, we can see that the "dragon" symbolizes the emperor, while the "tiger" represents the loyal and brave individuals who serve the emperor - the tiger ministers. Additionally, there are many words and phrases such as "tiger generals," "sons of the tiger at the gate," "tiger tokens," and "hidden dragons and crouching tigers" that represent "status, power," and outstanding individuals among the people.

**Thirdly, it signifies danger, terror, and hazardous territory.**

The tiger, due to its ferocity and majesty, has made the place where it resides and lives a synonym for "dangerous and hazardous" territory. For example, the phrase "Hu Xue" (tiger's den) in expressions like "long Tan Hu Xue" (dragon pool and tiger's den), "Bu Ru Hu Xue Yan De Hu Zi" (without entering the tiger's den, how can one obtain the tiger's cub), "Lang Wo Hu Xue" (wolf's lair and tiger's den), and "Hu Lang Zhi di" (land of tigers and wolves) has become a representation of extremely dangerous places in people's eyes. Apart from the tiger's dwelling in caves, phrases such as "Hu Kou" (tiger's mouth), "Hu Wei" (tiger's tail)have become metaphors for "dangerous places."

**Fourthly, it represents brutality, ruthlessness, and evil forces.**

Due to the fierce and ruthless nature of tigers, it is often used in the Chinese language to metaphorically refer to people or situations in life that oppress the weak and display brutality and heartlessness. For example, expressions such as "Zuo Hu Bao" (acting like a tiger or leopard). An example of this usage can be found in the poem by Dong Jieyuan of the Jin Dynasty in the play "The Story of the Western Wing - Various Palace Melodies," where the line goes: "Among the monks, only you act like a tiger or leopard, constantly tormenting me."

In conclusion, the Han ethnic group has a contradictory perception of the tiger, known as the "king of beasts." On one hand, there is great admiration for the tiger's strength, majesty, and abilities. On the other hand, there is also a deep fear of these characteristics associated with the tiger. As a result, the tiger embodies the cultural significance mentioned above in Chinese culture.

Thailand is located in the tropical region and has rich vegetation within its borders. Due to the tiger's predatory nature, which often involves ambush hunting, the forests provide highly favorable conditions for the tiger's hunting and survival. As a result, tigers are widely distributed in the extensive forests of Thailand. The Thai people have similar perceptions and feelings towards tigers as the Chinese people, experiencing both love and hate. They love tigers for their majestic, fierce, powerful, and skilled attributes, but they also harbor resentment due to the potential threats these characteristics pose to their lives.

**Firstly, it is the removal of evil, avoidance of calamity, and the Tiger God Shrine.**

In the Xuantian Temple of Bangkok, Thailand, there is an idol depicting a human figure with a tiger's head. According to legend, during the reign of King Taksin the Great (1734-1782), there was a tiger that brought misfortune to the people. One day, a child of a Chinese immigrant mother went up the mountain and unfortunately was bitten by a tiger, resulting in his untimely death. This incident caused great panic among the nearby villagers, and people flocked to the nearby temples to pray for blessings. Led by the monks, the villagers went up the mountain together to confront the tiger. Eventually, the tiger was injured and captured. Just as the people were about to seek justice for the grieving mother by killing the injured tiger, the tiger shed tears upon seeing the mother who had lost her child. Witnessing this, the mother pleaded with the villagers to spare the tiger's life. From that point on, the tiger never harmed the nearby villagers again. Instead, it cared for the mother like a son, either guarding the house or venturing out to find prey to feed her. It also frequently visited the nearby temples to pay respects. After the mother passed away, the tiger disappeared into a fire pit, departing from this world. The local people, grateful for the tiger's kindness towards the mother, sculpted its image and worshipped it, seeking blessings from the "Tiger God" to protect their lives. This is how the Tiger God Shrine came to be, and it is celebrated with the Tiger God Procession .

**Secondly, it is about being mighty, courageous, and outstanding among people.**

"Seua Ru" (Tiger knows) refers to a person being as clever as a tiger. "Seua Son Lep" (Tiger hides its claws) refers to a person with great strength intentionally concealing their abilities, similar to the Chinese phrase "Wo Hu Cang Long" (Hidden Dragon, Crouching Tiger). "Seua Lak Hang" (Tiger pulls its tail) metaphorically describes a person who appears to be slow and deliberate in their actions but unexpectedly accomplishes remarkable feats, similar to the Chinese saying "Yi Ming Jing Ren" (Startle the world with a single brilliant feat). These expressions demonstrate the Thai people's deep admiration for the tiger, and they often use "Seua(Tiger) " to refer to those mighty and courageous individuals in life.

**Thirdly, it is about ferocity, cruelty, and the heart of a tiger.**

In "Khao Pen Seua" (He is a tiger), " Seua /Hu (tiger)" implies that the person is fierce like a tiger. In "Naa Nuea Jai Seua" (A human face with a tiger's heart), " Seua /Hu (tiger)" refers to the person's heart being cruel like a tiger. In agrarian societies, people often feel powerless when facing the threat of tigers. Therefore, when people encounter the dangers posed by tigers to their livelihoods and lives, they are often filled with fear. Thus, in Thai culture, the cultural connotation of Seua /Hu (tiger) is similar to that in Chinese culture, where tigers are used metaphorically to describe people who are fierce, malicious, and as ferocious as tigers.

In conclusion, the terms containing " Seua /Hu (tiger) " in Chinese and Thai languages carry rich cultural connotations. The similarities in the cultural meanings of Seua /Hu (tiger) between the two languages outweigh the differences. For example, in both languages, Seua /Hu (tiger) can be used to metaphorically describe outstanding individuals, as well as dangerous people or things. However, the differences are based on geographical factors, climate variations, traditional culture, religious beliefs, ways of thinking, and social life specific to the Chinese and Thai ethnic groups. To thoroughly and deeply learn the target language, second language learners need to have a considerable understanding of the culture of the target language community. Because regardless of the language we learn, it is only by gaining a deep understanding of a country's culture that we can truly master the language.

**5.2. Comparative Analysis of the Conceptual Metaphor of Tiger**

Various animals in the natural world are closely linked to human activities such as clothing, food, shelter, transportation, agricultural production, and social development. Based on their understanding of the attributes of animals, humans strive to uncover similarities between themselves and animals. They use animals as a mirror to reflect upon human characteristics and, in this process, create numerous language expressions related to animals. Certain features of the source domain, represented by " Seua /Hu (tiger)" are highlighted and mapped onto the target domain of "Ren" (humans), including appearance, mentality, psychological activities, and behaviors. This allows people to better understand themselves by leveraging the metaphorical representation of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" The concept of "animals metaphorically representing humans" is itself a conceptual metaphor because the mutual reflection between human society and the animal world is systematic. Through the comparative analysis of collected metaphorical examples related to " Seua /Hu (tiger)", it is evident that the metaphorical pattern of Seua /Hu (tiger)metaphorically representing humans" in Chinese and Thai languages exhibits both similarities and differences.

**5.2.1Comparative Analysis of Metaphorical Mapping of Seua /Hu** (**tiger**) **with the Target Domain of Humans**

In the process of humans coexisting with animals, people have gained a thorough understanding of the physical features, behavioral traits, and habits of various animals. Based on this knowledge, the animal kingdom has become a mirror through which human society can reflect upon itself. Through this mirror, many characteristics of Seua /Hu (tiger)are metaphorically mapped onto humans, enabling people to gain a better understanding of themselves. The conceptual metaphor that "humans are animals" not only provides diversity in the mapping between animals and the human world but also establishes a systematic relationship between them. Through the analysis and study of collected metaphorical expressions involving " Seua /Hu (tiger)" the following characteristics of the metaphorical pattern of " Seua /Hu (tiger)representing humans" in Chinese and Thai languages can be identified:

**5.2.1.1 Types of Metaphorical Representations of Tiger Referring to Humans in Chinese and Thai Languages**

Lakoff (1999) argues that concepts are formed through bodily and neural experiences of the world. Due to the shared physiological structure and sensory organs of humans, there are certain similarities in their thinking patterns and behavioral activities. As cognitive activities are closely intertwined with personal and everyday experiences, the conceptual metaphors related to " Seua /Hu (tiger)" in Chinese and Thai languages have emerged from humans' daily experiences and cognition of tigers. Based on the shared physiological foundation and life experiences of humans, the conceptual metaphors related to " Seua /Hu (tiger)" in Chinese and Thai languages also exhibit common aspects.

**5.2.1.1.1Tigers metaphorically represent "brave and mighty individuals".**

Translation: In the hunting era, the ancestors of the Han ethnic group formed a psychological consensus regarding the "power" and "ferocity" of tigers during their struggles with the "forest overlord" and "king of the jungle." They regarded tigers as symbols of "bravery," "mightiness," and "courage." Therefore, in the Chinese language, we can see words such as "Hu Wei" (tiger's might), "Hu Shi" (tiger's posture), "Hu Jiang" (tiger general), and "Hu Fu Wu Quan Zi" (a tiger father does not have a dog son). These terms are used metaphorically to refer to individuals who are "fierce, mighty, brave, and tenacious."

(1) People always say that Dad is a tiger general during warfare, but I can't see it at all. The real tiger general is Mom.

Similar metaphorical expressions exist in Thai as well, such as Seua Kaw (white tiger: metaphorically referring to brave Caucasian people) and Seua Dam (black tiger: metaphorically referring to brave African people).

(2) Khao Pen Seua Khao, Glâa Hăan Mâak (He is a white tiger, very brave.)

In summary, the perception of "Hu/Seua" (tiger) among the Han and Thai people originates from its kingly attributes of "bravery" and "mightiness." Therefore, when people want to express the qualities of someone who is "mighty" and "brave," they often use "Hu/Seua" as the source domain. Based on the shared characteristics of tigers and humans, namely "bravery" and "mightiness," the metaphorical extension of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" to refer to individuals who possess such qualities are formed.

**5.2.1.1.2 "Hu" metaphorically refers to a person of outstanding abilities.**

In addition to metaphorically referring to individuals who are "brave, mighty, courageous, majestic, and extraordinary," " Seua /Hu (tiger)" is also used to metaphorically describe those who are "excellent, outstanding, exceptionally capable, and exceptionally wise." This is because tigers themselves possess remarkable fighting capabilities, placing them at the top of the food chain in the natural world. The ancestors of the Han ethnic group recognized this early on, resulting in the existence of numerous words in the language that uses "Hu/Seua" to metaphorically refer to individuals with outstanding abilities and exceptional wisdom, such as "Ren Zhong Long Hu" (amongst people, there are dragons and tigers), "Cang Long Wo Hu" (hidden dragon, crouching tiger).  
(3) If the elderly person regards Genghis Khan as a dragon and tiger among men and respects him, then Ye Keqiang and Ye Yinghao, father and son, would be regarded as gods and buddhas in his eyes.

Similarly, in the Thai language, there are similar metaphorical expressions. For example, Seua Sangwian (tiger in the arena: a prominent figure in a certain field), เสือสนาม (tiger on the field: a leader in a certain field), Seua O-Akaat (sky tiger: referring to skilled pilots), Yàa Min Seua Phǎwm (do not underestimate the thin tiger: warning not to underestimate someone who may appear weak but possesses great power), and Seua Sǒn Lep (tiger with hidden claws: referring to someone who hides their true feelings and intentions). In the examples of Yàa Min Seua Phǎwm (do not underestimate the thin tiger) and Seua Sǒn Lep (tiger with hidden claws), even though the tiger may be thin or hiding its claws, underestimating them can lead to significant mistakes. Through their interactions with tigers, the Thai people gradually realized this and, after cognitive processing, reflected it in their language as Yàa Min Seua Phǎwm (do not underestimate the thin tiger) and Seua Sǒn Lep (tiger with hidden claws).

(4) Seua Aakat Khue Nákbin Khap Lai Thii Ying Kraengbin Khâa Seuk Tok Hâa Lám Khǔn Pai Síp-èt (Sky tiger refers to a pilot who shoots down 5 or more enemy aircraft in aerial combat).  
In conclusion, through the example sentences mentioned above, we can observe that the term " Seua /Hu (tiger)" in both Han and Thai languages has earned the title of "king of the jungle" due to its immense strength and mighty prowess. Therefore, both Han and Thai people use " Seua /Hu (tiger)" metaphorically to refer to individuals who possess outstanding abilities and exceptional wisdom. Additionally, in the Thai language, the term " Seua /Hu (tiger)" not only emphasizes exceptional abilities but also highlights the characteristic of "having extensive experience." This aspect is easily understandable since having ample "experience" in a particular field will undoubtedly showcase outstanding abilities and exceptional wisdom in that domain.

**5.2.1.1.3 " Seua /Hu (tiger)" metaphorically refers to a person who is "ferocious" and "dangerous."**  
 Due to the tiger's exceptional hunting abilities, it has few rivals in the animal kingdom. In ancient times, tigers also posed a significant threat to human survival. People had limited effective methods to deter tiger attacks. Consequently, ancient ancestors both revered and admired the invincible fighting prowess of tigers, while also harboring a deep fear of their destructive power. This is reflected in language, where numerous expressions metaphorically refer to individuals as "ferocious," "savage," "cruel," or "dangerous" using the imagery of tigers. For example, "Hu Er Guan" (a tiger wearing a crown), "Ban Jun Ru Ban Hu" (accompanying a ruler is like accompanying a tiger), "Yang Hu Yi Huan" (raising a tiger brings disaster), .

Similar expressions can also be found in the Thai language, such as Líang Lûuk Seua Lûuk Jarake (raising a tiger and a crocodile's child: raising a troublemaker or enemy's child will bring calamity), Seua Jam Sin (a hibernating tiger: someone who pretends to be good but is wicked), Seua Lam Baak (a formidable tiger: a fierce enemy), Plɔ̂i Seua Khâo Pàa, Plɔ̂i Plaa Long Náam (release the tiger into the forest, release the fish into the water: letting a bad person return to their original place will bring oneself into trouble), and Nâa Nuea Jai Seua (a face of a cow, a heart of a tiger: someone who appears gentle but has a cruel nature).

(5) In the old society, the working people were true "without a place to seek justice" under the oppression of the cruel ruling class. Didn't Confucius also say, "Tyranny is more fierce than a tiger"? That means that despotic officials are even more dreadful and detestable than tigers.

(6) Líang Lûuk Seua Lûuk Jarake Wái Bàep Níi Wan Nâa Man Rúu Kwaam Jing Man Ja Maa Khâa Rao Ao Dâi Ná (Raising a small crocodile or tiger like this, one day they might kill us: raising a tiger brings disaster)

In summary, during the agricultural society, when faced with the brave, powerful, and mighty tiger, people often felt powerless to resist. The fear instilled by " Seua /Hu (tiger)" was immense. Therefore, when encountering similar situations in life, the people of the Han and Thai ethnicities like to metaphorically refer to those who bring danger to their lives and well-being with the "ferocity" and "cruelty" of a tiger.

**5.2.2. Unique Metaphorical Expression Patterns in Chinese**

As the king of beasts, the tiger, with its fierce nature and extraordinary abilities, commanded great respect in ancient times characterized by extremely low productivity. Many ethnic groups revered the tiger as their totem. In the long history of China's agrarian society, the ancient Chinese people were influenced by natural conditions, ways of life, religious beliefs, and more, leading to the tiger embodying unique symbolism in traditional Chinese thought and culture.

Firstly, due to the tiger's large size, short and robust legs, powerful hind legs, long and strong tail, and muscular and energetic physique, the common people in agrarian societies desired to procreate children as robust as tigers. This is reflected in the language with many words using "tiger" to metaphorically refer to individuals with a robust and powerful physique, such as "strong as a tiger," "tiger-like stature," "tiger's back and bear's waist," "mighty as a tiger," "swift as a tiger," and "walk like a dragon, stride like a tiger." However, after analyzing Thai language materials, it is found that the Thai language does not have this usage.

Secondly, in addition to using "tiger" to metaphorically refer to adults with a robust and powerful physique, the ancient Chinese people also used "tiger-headed and tiger-brained" to refer to children who were "strong and honest."

Thirdly, in the Chinese language, besides using "tiger" to metaphorically refer to a robust physique and robust and honest children, the Han people also use "tigress" to refer to "fierce and sharp-tongued women." This comes from the mutual fights between male and female tigers during the mating season. Before mating, the male tiger would corner the tigress to a cliff or a dead end, leaving her with no escape. After mating, the male tiger must quickly leave, or else the tigress may bite or even kill him in retaliation. Therefore, people metaphorically refer to "fierce and unreasonable women" as "tigress."

Furthermore, some individuals may appear intimidating on the surface but are kind-hearted and gentle in nature, referred to as "paper tigers." Due to their fierce appearance, resembling a "tiger," they are given the label of a "tiger," but because of their inner "gentleness" and "kindness," they are called "paper tigers."

(7) A group of vigorous young people rode on spirited horses, galloping across the grassland.

(8) Zhou Pu looked at the robust and honest "Little Cannon" with a bandage wrapped around his head and smiled, asking, "Little Cannon, how are you? Is your injury severe?"

(9) Xu Zhigong was willing to go and protect Runye from the oncoming vehicle but was unwilling to go to the hospital to see that "tigress."

In conclusion, based on their understanding of the tiger's strength, bravery, power, and magnificence, the Han people hope to possess similar physical characteristics themselves. Therefore, when describing soldiers, generals, or individuals with strong and imposing physiques, they often use the tiger as a source domain to metaphorically represent the physical features and appearance of people.

**5.2.3. Unique Metaphorical Expressions in the Thai Language**

Due to the differences in thinking between Thai and Chinese people, Thai individuals have their unique characteristics when using the metaphorical mirror of "tiger" to understand human beings. As the king of the jungle, the tiger possesses exceptional strength and few rivals. Therefore, Thai people use "Seua Non Gin" to metaphorically refer to those "silent partners" who benefit from behind the scenes without actively participating in the operation. On the other hand, "Seua Baa" can be used to metaphorically refer to "wild tiger soldiers" or "lecherous individuals." Unlike the Chinese term "Mu Lao Hu" mainly referring to "fierce women," the Thai term "Seua Phu Ying" is used to metaphorically refer to "lustful scoundrels who are accustomed to deceiving women," similar to the Chinese term "Se Lang" for a lecherous man.

（10）Phuak sù̂a muan chon phayayam tham laai chụ̄̀ng siang khàwng pratthānāthibodi dōi klāo hăa wâa thān pen sǐa phụ̂ hǹg reuu mii kwaam sạmphạnạt gap phuak māfīa（The media attempts to tarnish the reputation of the President by accusing him of being a "Seua Phu Ying" or having connections with the mafia.

In conclusion, based on the status of the " Seua /Hu (tiger)" as the king of the forest in Thailand, and the awe-inspiring power it possesses, Thai people associate certain characteristics with it. For example, the expression Seua Non Gin is used to metaphorically refer to those who can reap rich rewards without putting in any effort, as even a sleeping tiger can have something to eat. Additionally, people have observed the frequent intimate activities between male and female tigers during their breeding period. Hence, Seua Baa is used to metaphorically refer to "wild tigers," while Seua Phu Ying is used to metaphorically refer to "lecherous" individuals, similar to the term "Se Lang" in Chinese, indicating someone with lustful behavior. Such usage is not found in Chinese.

**5.3 Comparative Analysis of the Metaphorical Mapping of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" in Chinese and Thai when the Target Domain is an Object**

The tiger is a unique species in Asia, primarily native to Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. The most primitive tigers originated in China, where the tiger symbolizes the "king of all animals" and the "king of the mountains," representing strength and grandeur.

**5.3.1 Common Metaphorical Characteristics of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" in Chinese and Thai Language**

**5.3.1.1The Tiger as a Metaphor for Deity**

In the eyes of the Han Chinese people, the tiger is a symbol of warding off evil, bringing disaster relief, ensuring peace and prosperity, and guarding wealth. The tradition of worshiping the tiger as a "deity" in Chinese culture has a long history. For example, among the Yi ethnic group, the tiger deity is known as "Luo Ni," which is considered the most effective and noble deity in the hearts of the Yi people. The tiger deity not only helps them ward off disasters and evil spirits but also blesses them with good fortune and safety. As a result, tiger-shaped ancestral spirits are often enshrined in the ancestral shrines of Yi households, and tiger-shaped talismans are hung on their doors for protection against evil. Influenced by this belief, parents prepare tiger-themed clothing such as tiger hats and tiger shoes for their children in hopes of their healthy growth. Additionally, to ward off nightmares during sleep, there are also tiger-shaped pillows and other related items.

Thai culture is deeply influenced by Chinese traditional culture. In the streets of Thailand, it is common to see temples dedicated to the "Tiger Deity" and Thai people wearing tiger amulets on their chests. Wearing tiger amulets is influenced by Buddhism, as the Thai people commonly practice the tradition of wearing amulets. Thai people believe that wearing tiger amulets can help them ward off disasters, ensure safety, and bring other benefits.

(11) Handmade floral fabric pouches, small cloth shoes, and tiger-shaped pillows sewn in rural areas are also excellent decorations with a strong visual impact.

(12) Seua Maha Amanaat Pho Pen Bang Phra Jon Khon Pathom Nakhon Pathom (The Tiger of Supreme Power, Phra Pern, Bang Phra Chan, Nakhon Pathom)

In conclusion, based on the infinite admiration for the tiger's "might," "majesty," and "king of the jungle" status, the Chinese and Thai people have gradually developed it into ancient totem worship. Both Chinese and Thai people hope to invoke the power of the tiger to bless their children's healthy growth. Thai people, on the other hand, seek protection and disaster avoidance by wearing tiger-shaped amulets.

**5.3.1.2 The Tiger Symbolizing Dangerous Territory.**

Early Thai and Chinese ancestors recognized that despite the tiger's immense power, its "fierce" nature made it a symbol of danger. In the Thai language, animals such as tigers, lions, elephants , bulls, and rhinoceros are grouped to refer to "extremely clever or highly dangerous individuals." Therefore, there is consistency in both Thai and Chinese languages in using the tiger as a metaphor for "magnificent terrain" and "treacherous places." Examples in Chinese include "tiger's mouth," "escaping the tiger's mouth," "surviving the tiger's mouth," "riding a tiger as if it were a horse," and "tiger's den and dragon's pool." Examples in Thai include Yiip tham seua (entering the tiger's cave), Yiip thin seua (treading on the tiger's territory). From the examples mentioned above, it can be observed that due to the tiger's inherent danger, terms like "tiger's den," "tiger's mouth," and "tiger's whiskers" are all considered synonymous with danger.

(13) Among the participants in the protest march, many of them had escaped from the jaws of Nazi concentration camps, including a woman wearing the striped prison uniform.

In conclusion, due to the tiger's inherent nature of being "ferocious" and "cruel," terms like "Hu Xue" (tiger's den), "Hu Kou" (tiger's mouth), and "Lao Hu Pi Gu" (tiger's rear end) have become synonymous with "danger." The perception of this among the Chinese and Thai people is highly consistent.

**5.3.2 Unique Metaphorical Expressions in Chinese**

Firstly, due to the inherent kingly aura of the tiger and the prominent character "Wang" (king) on its forehead, it truly earns the title of "king of beasts." This easily captures people's attention. However, if someone starts with great fanfare but fails to follow through, abandoning their initial plans, people would describe it as "Hu Tou She Wei" (tiger head, snake tail). Imagine a person wearing a tiger head and dragging a snake tail behind them - it would appear absurd and comical. Therefore, "Hu Tou She Wei" is also used to describe someone whose actions are deceptive and inconsistent with their words.

Secondly, in some rural areas and remote mountain regions of China, people choose names for their children that include the character "Seua /Hu (tiger)"to ward off evil and ensure their children's health and strong growth. Examples of such names are Tang Bohu, Yang Hucheng, Yan Baihu, and so on. This is because people believe that the tiger, as the king of beasts, can bless their children with health, safety, and the potential to become outstanding and talented individuals.

In summary, when the Chinese people use Seua /Hu (tiger)as a metaphor for various things, it carries the connotation of grandeur and magnificence due to their recognition of the tiger's powerful presence. In addition to the mentioned example of "Hu Tou She Wei," similar expressions include "Lang Tun Hu Yan" (wolfing down food like a tiger), used to describe someone eating voraciously and hastily. Furthermore, based on the admiration for the tiger's abilities, strength, and robust physique, many parents choose names for their children that include the character "Hu," symbolizing their high expectations and hopes for their offspring.

**5.3.3Unique Metaphorical Expressions in the Thai Language**

In the Thai language, there is a specific metaphorical expression called "Seua Gin Wua" (tiger eats cow), which refers to a board game. The game consists of a 16-grid board with 4 tigers and 12 cows.

In summary, besides being used to metaphorically refer to people and things, the Thai word "Seua" (tiger) can also be used to describe the game of "Seua Gin Wua" (tiger eats cow). In mainland China, there is a similar game called "Dou Shou Qi" (Animal Chess), which features 8 different animals, including the tiger, elephant, lion, leopard, wolf, dog, cat, and mouse. In Thailand, the game has its variation and cultural context.

**6.Conclusions**

**Table 1:** Mapping Mechanism and Semantic Extensions of the Conceptual Metaphor of "Tiger" in Chinese-Thai Languages

Reality

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Tiger | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | Brave - Mighty | Excellent hunting skills | Fierce predator | Protection intimidation | deadly danger | beautiful appearance | reproduction | | regal demeanor | others | | |
| Cognition | brave and mighty | exceptional individuals | Cruel and brutal person | deity | treacherous terrain | sturdy physique | sharp-tongued woman |  | grandiose presence | personal name | Boy Scouts | a type of game |
|  | Tiger General | outstanding individuals | Tiger and wolf mentality | Tiger God temple | escaping from the jaws of danger | strong and robust physique | tigress | tigress | starting strong but finishing weak | Tang Bohu | Boy Scouts | a type of game |

Language

lecherous individual

From the above diagram, we can see that the conceptual metaphor of "tiger" in Chinese and Thai language is based on the process expansion of "reality-cognition-language". The foundation of the metaphorical mapping of "tiger" is the result of people's cognitive processing of various tiger features. Wang Yin (2011) points out that language is a human creation, which is the result of people's "interactive experience" and "cognitive processing" of reality. For example, " Thîi sùm seua jong bprà-yàt " ("Beware of the tiger's ambush") is the result of people's further conceptualization after their cognitive understanding of the fierce predatory nature of tigers, and it carries a clear experiential quality.

**Table 2:**Mapping Distribution of the Conceptual Metaphor of "Tiger" in Chinese and Thai Languages

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mappings Unique to the Chinese Language | The shared mappings are in the Chinese and Thai languages. | The unique mappings in the Thai language |
| 6) refers to a robust physique  7) refers to a sharp-tongued woman  8) refers to being influential or powerful  9) personal name | 1) Tiger symbolizes a brave and mighty person  2) Tiger symbolizes a person with exceptional abilities  3) Tiger symbolizes a fierce person  4) Tiger symbolizes a deity or a divine being  5) Tiger symbolizes a dangerous place | 10) Tiger symbolizes a lascivious person  11) A type of game  12) Boy Scouts |

From the figure above, we can observe that the distribution of conceptual metaphor mappings for the term "Seua /Hu（tiger）" in Chinese and Thai languages exhibits both similarities and differences. The characteristics of brave, majestic, excellent hunting ability, and ferocious predator)are common to both Chinese and Thai people, leading to a shared experiential understanding of the tiger. This shared understanding is reflected in the overlapping semantic expressions in the languages.

In the process of human cognition, individuals are influenced not only by the objective world but also by their subjective psychological factors. Wang Yin (2005) points out that humans have imaginative brains and various cognitive approaches. During the process of categorization and conceptualization, different features of things can be understood from different perspectives. Therefore, although the Chinese and Thai people share the same physiological structure, they exhibit differences in the process of cognitive understanding due to the influences of cultural traditions, customs, and religious beliefs.

Specifically regarding the concept of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" , due to the different focal points of attention for the two ethnic groups, semantic misalignment and semantic gaps occur in the process of metaphorical mapping.

Through further analysis and categorization of the 12 metaphorical mappings of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" mentioned above, it can be observed that within the conceptual domain of tiger metaphor for humans, it can be further divided into experiential domains such as tiger metaphor for heroes, tiger metaphor for talented individuals, tiger metaphor for villains, tiger metaphor for deities), and so on. Within the conceptual domain of tiger metaphor for objects, it can be further divided into domains such as tiger metaphor for dangerous places, tiger metaphor for physique, tiger metaphor for grandeur, and other concepts.

Thus, it can be seen that " Seua /Hu (tiger)" no longer simply serves as a species of the cat family, but rather as a mirror reflecting the cognitive world of human society. It can be used to understand human behavior, describe human psychology, and permeate various aspects of human life. This effectively illustrates the imagery and complexity of human metaphorical thinking in the process of conceptualization.

**7.Recommendations**

The generation of metaphors is based on the similarity between things, and this similarity is often acquired through people's experiences. Therefore, human experiences play a significant role in the formation of metaphors and the process of conceptualizing things. The metaphorical mappings of " Seua /Hu (tiger)" analyzed and summarized in this article are all based on people's cognition and experience of tigers. It is precise because of the significant position of tigers in the animal kingdom that they become an important reference for both Han and Thai people in understanding other things. This has led to the emergence of numerous metaphorical expressions related to " Seua /(tiger)" in language.

**References:**

Atcharaphon Pavaputanon. (2019). Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Animal Idioms and Their Metaphorical Meanings - Taking "Horse, Cow, Tiger" as Examples. Master's thesis. Shanghai:

Huazhong Normal University.

Cai Shuyan. (2017). Study on the Meaning and Connotation of Chinese and Thai Animal Proverbs. Master's thesis. Jinan: Jinan University.

Chen Hui. (2011). Comparative Study of English and Chinese Botanical Terms.Doctoral dissertation.

Shanghai: Shanghai International Studies University.

Cheng Ttianci. (2014). Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Thai Animal Proverbs. Master's thesis. Tianjin: Tianjin Normal University

Chutima Khemcharoen. (2015). Comparative Study of Animal Metaphorical Meanings in Chinese and Thai Idioms. Master's thesis. Dalian: Dalian University of Technology.

Gaodajun Supa. (2006). Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Animal Idioms. Master's thesis. Tianjin: Tianjin Normal University.

He Shanfen. (2002). Contrastive Study of English and Chinese Languages. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 339.

Kritanan Mingkwan. (2017). Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Idioms.

Master's thesis. Harbin: Harbin Normal University.

Li Fuyin. (2008). An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics. Beijing: Peking University Press.

Li Zhiwen. (2014). Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Thai Animal Idioms and Cultural Differences.

Master's thesis. Nanning: Guangxi University.

Liao Zhenzhu. (2015). Comparative Study of Animal Words in Chinese and Thai Languages. Master's thesis. Nanning: Guangxi University.

Lin Xianlian. (2014). Comparative Study of Chinese and Thai Animal Idioms.

Master's thesis. Nanjing: Nanjing Normal University.

Shu Dingfang. (2000). Metaphor Studies. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Sun Yonbin. (2008). Comparative Analysis of Chinese and Thai Animal Idioms. Master's thesis. Xiamen:

Xiamen University.

Wang Wenbin. (2006). On the Similarity in Metaphors. Journal of Sichuan International Studies University, (2), 125-130.

Wang Yin. (2005). Experientiality of Language: A Perspective from Experiential Philosophy and Cognitive Linguistics. Foreign Language Teaching and Research, (1), 37-42.

Wang Yin. (2007). Cognitive Linguistics. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press.

Wang Yin. (2011). Cognitive Semiotics from the Perspective of Experiential Anthropocentrism.

Foreign Language Research, (3), 1-6.

Wu Wenfei. (2018). Comparative Analysis and Teaching Strategies of Chinese and Thai Zodiac Animal Idioms. Master's thesis. Nanning: Guangxi University for Nationalities.

.