



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Metaphorical Expressions of the Red Color in Thai and Chinese Languages

Cuiyun Shen^{1*}, Rattana Chanthao²

¹Corresponding author, PhD Candidate in Thai language, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

²Associate Professor in Thai Language, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 24, 2024 Accepted: Dec 8, 2024	Metaphor is not only a rhetorical device but also a basic cognitive framework. This study investigated and compared metaphors associated with red in Thai and Chinese using data from the Thai National Corpus (TNC) and the BLCU Corpus Center (BCC) of China. Applying metaphor theory from cognitive linguistics, the analysis identified 161 metaphors for red in Thai, categorized into seven domains and 13 meanings, with "shyness" emerging as the most common meaning. In contrast, the analysis of Chinese identified 199 metaphors, categorized into eight domains and 17 meanings, with "shyness" also identified as the most common meaning. Overall, red metaphors are more frequent and diverse in Chinese than Thai. However, red metaphors in both languages show both similarities and differences. The two languages show a relatively high similarity in the emotional domain. In contrast, in other domains, Chinese metaphors tend to convey positive meanings, while Thai metaphors are more neutral. The similarities in Thai-Chinese red metaphors stem from shared human physiology, international consensus, and cultural exchange. In contrast, the differences stem from different perceptions of color, the emotional meanings attributed to color, and Thailand and China's unique social, historical, cultural, and political contexts.
Keywords	
Color Term	
Metaphor	
Red	
Thai Language	
Chinese Language	
*Corresponding Author: cuiyun.s@kkumail.com	

INTRODUCTION

Color is one of the most fundamental categories in human cognition (Lin, 2019), serving not only as a means of describing the visual world but also as a cultural and psychological construct that varies across societies. Wierzbicka (1996) notes that while colors are universal in human experience, language and culture deeply influence their meanings and associations. This universal yet culturally nuanced characteristic makes color an invaluable subject for understanding how people conceptualize and categorize the world around them.

Metaphors, another key component of human cognition, are critical in making abstract and complex concepts more understandable by mapping them onto more familiar terms. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors are not merely stylistic devices but central mechanisms of thought that reflect how people structure and interpret abstract domains through more tangible experiences. Since the development of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980), cognitive linguistics has emphasized the importance of metaphor in shaping human thought and language, illustrating how metaphors map abstract or intangible concepts onto concrete experiences. This cognitive approach has contributed to a deeper understanding of how metaphors express and influence cultural perceptions, values, and social norms (Kövecses, 2005).

The study of color metaphor is particularly significant because it combines these two areas of cognitive inquiry: color as a basic perceptual category and metaphor as a cognitive process. Research has shown that color metaphors vary widely across languages and cultures, reflecting different cultural values and social contexts. For example, color terms such as "red," "black," and "white" carry different metaphorical meanings in different linguistic and cultural communities (Gage, 1999). Understanding these metaphors provides insight into how people from different cultural backgrounds associate colors with emotions, moral judgments, and social roles. By studying color metaphors, researchers can better understand universal and culture-specific patterns in human cognition and emotion (Kövecses, 2000; Yu, 2003).

Red is one of the most preferred colors in Chinese culture and is often considered the symbolic color of China (Gong, 2015). In Chinese culture, red has positive meanings and symbolizes auspiciousness, festivity, and success. Similarly, in Thai culture, red is associated with warmth, prosperity, and self-improvement. It symbolizes the courage of the Thai people in defending their homeland and the sun god (Tan, 2015), who is believed to bring light and vitality. As a result, red has significant cultural value in both Chinese and Thai societies. Studies on basic color terms in Chinese and Thai confirm that red is a common basic color term in both languages (Yao, 1988; Liu, 1990; Ye, 2001; Li, 2004; Engchuan, 2000; Thipkongkha, 2010; Phornthippayaphanit and Charunrochana, 2014; Unthanon and Chanthao, 2020). Furthermore, Kanjina (2016) notes that red is the most frequently used color term to express emotions in Thai.

This study aims to explore metaphorical expressions of the color red in Thai and Chinese by analyzing data from the Thai National Corpus (TNC) and the BLCU Corpus Center (BCC). This data-driven approach provides an empirical basis for examining how color metaphors vary and intersect in these two languages. By assessing both the metaphorical meanings and frequencies associated with red, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of the cognitive and cultural dimensions embedded in color metaphors, offering insights relevant to cross-linguistic studies in cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics. Furthermore, a cross-cultural comparison of color metaphors can help non-native language learners understand the cognitive experiences and cultural contexts that underlie these metaphors. Such awareness may enable learners to avoid errors influenced by negative transfer effects from their native language (Lin, 2019; Farooq et al., 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Metaphor Theory

In traditional linguistics, metaphor is viewed as a figure of speech that strategically employs comparative language, often found in poetic contexts (Ma and Liu, 2008: 267). Conventionally, metaphors involve drawing comparisons between two entities, typically using the copulative verbs "is" or "are" to establish a relationship. In Thai, for example, phrases such as */phaw mae khue rom phothi rom sai khong luk /* ("parents are the Bodhi tree of children"), */thahan pen rua khong prathet /* ("soldiers are the fence of the country"), and */kru khue ruea chang /* ("teachers are the ferry boat") serve as clear illustrations of this traditional metaphorical structure (Chanthao, 2018; Vamalathithan et al., 2024).

In contrast to traditional views, modern linguists adopt a broader understanding of metaphor, encompassing all forms of figurative language, irrespective of whether comparative terms are present. Prominent scholars in this cognitive linguistic perspective include Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Ungerer and Schmid (1996), Kövecses (2002), and Cruse (2004). They argue that metaphorical language is fundamentally connected to concepts, experiences, and everyday activities. As a result, metaphors are not merely personal expressions; they represent collective understandings shared by members of a society.

Kövecses (2002) expands on this notion by explaining the metaphorical understanding process as a mapping between two related conceptual domains. This process begins with the transfer of meaning

from the source domain, which provides the original context, to the target domain, which conveys the new meaning intended by the speaker. For instance, in the metaphor "love is a journey," "a journey" acts as the source domain, while "love" represents the target domain. This mapping illustrates how the characteristics of "a journey" enrich our understanding of the complexities of love, demonstrating how metaphorical language enables the expression of abstract ideas through more concrete experiences. Consequently, metaphors enhance conceptual understanding by drawing parallels with relatable experiences, thereby fostering deeper emotional connections in communication. The mapping process or metaphor is illustrated in the figure below.

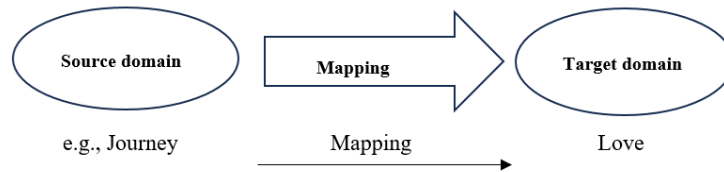


Figure 1 The Mapping Process of Metaphor

From this cognitive linguistic standpoint, color metaphors can be defined as comparisons between colors and other concepts, which facilitate the transfer of meaning from the original context of the color to a more complex or abstract final meaning. This transfer often utilizes experiences associated with the perception of that color to clarify or elaborate on the new meaning. For example, this study will analyze the metaphor of "red," where "red" serves as the source domain, and the target domain encompasses various conceptual areas to which "red" is mapped (such as emotions, behaviors, and objects). This mapping process ultimately shapes the metaphorical usage or meaning that arises during the transfer.

Research on Color Terms in Thai and Chinese

Research on color metaphors in Chinese has been explored by several scholars. Huang (2011) focused on the metaphorical meanings of "red" within the cultural context of China. He (2011) conducted a comparative study of basic color metaphors in Chinese and English, covering the metaphors of black, white, red, yellow, and blue. Li (2020) provided a more comprehensive analysis of color metaphors in both Chinese and English, examining the metaphors associated with the colors black, white, red, yellow, green, and blue. Although these studies offer a wealth of examples of color metaphors, they mainly rely on qualitative examples and do not explicitly specify data sources or research methods, and they lack systematic quantitative analysis. While these studies contribute to understanding the cultural and linguistic features of color metaphors, they fall short in terms of systematic data collection and analysis, particularly regarding the frequency, proportion, and cultural context of metaphorical occurrences.

In the field of comparative color term studies between Chinese and Thai, Jiang (2011), Yang (2013), Gong (2015), Miao (2016), Duan (2017), and Zhou (2018) have conducted research on color terms in both languages. However, these studies mainly focus on defining the scope of basic color terms, the formation of color terms, the relationship between color and social culture, color and social events, the cultural symbolism of color terms, and their implications for foreign language teaching. There is a relative lack of systematic analysis of color metaphors and cross-cultural comparisons of metaphors.

In contrast to the above studies, this study focuses on the metaphorical expressions of the red color in both Thai and Chinese, using a systematic empirical analysis based on the Thai National Corpus and the Chinese BCC Corpus. Through frequency and proportion analysis, this study quantifies the occurrence of red metaphors in both languages and further explores their primary and secondary meanings. It also reveals the different cultural tendencies of red metaphors in Chinese and Thai—whether they carry more positive symbolic meanings or contain negative cultural connotations.

Moreover, this study attempted to explain the origins of these metaphors in the results and discussion sections and explored the similarities and differences in red metaphors between Chinese and Thai from historical and sociocultural perspectives. This work provided new insights into the expression and deeper cultural significance of color metaphors across different cultures and filled the gap in the previous research on color metaphors in Chinese and Thai.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative component utilizes a cognitive linguistics framework to explore the primary domains and meanings of red metaphors in Thai and Chinese. Meanwhile, the quantitative aspect examines the frequency and occurrence rates of these metaphors, providing insights into their significance in each language.

The data for this study were sourced from two distinct corpora. The Thai data were drawn from the Thai National Corpus (TNC), developed by Chulalongkorn University (2013). The search term /daeng/ (red) was used within the "fiction" category to collect metaphorical expressions involving the red color in Thai. For the Chinese data, the corpus used was the Chinese Corpus Center (BCC), developed by Xun et al. (2016) at Beijing Language and Culture University. The search term /hóng/ (red) was employed within the "literature" category to collect metaphorical expressions related to the red color in Chinese. These corpora provided the primary data for the comparative analysis of red metaphors in Thai and Chinese.

Due to a limitation of 1,000 entries per search in the TNC, 1,000 entries containing the term 'red' were randomly selected from both the Thai and Chinese corpora, resulting in a total of 2,000 entries. These entries were reviewed and evaluated by native speakers to identify those containing the red metaphor. The selected entries were then analyzed and categorized based on their metaphorical meanings.

Entries containing two or more colors were excluded, as this could complicate the identification of the primary metaphorical meaning. For example, in Chinese expressions such as *"/dà hóng dà lǜ/"* (literally: "bright red and bright green," referring to something gaudy) and *"/dēng hóng jiǔ lǜ/"* (literally: "red lights and green wine," indicating a luxurious and corrupt atmosphere), both red and green together form the metaphor, with both colors being essential.

RESULTS

The results of this study are divided into three main sections: first, the results in Thai; second, the results in Chinese; and finally, a comparison between Thai and Chinese.

Results in Thai

A total of 161 metaphorical expressions of the color red were identified in Thai, which can be categorized into seven domains and 13 meanings. Table 1 shows the specific frequencies and proportions of each domain and meaning.

Table 1 Metaphorical Expressions of Red in Thai

Domains	Meanings	Frequency	Ratio	Ratio total
1) emotions	1.1) shyness	86	53.42%	72.67%
	1.2) anger	19	11.80%	
	1.3) sadness	7	4.35%	
	1.4) happiness	5	3.11%	
2) people	2.1) race	11	6.83%	12.42%
	2.2) newborns	8	4.97%	
	2.3) prisoners	1	0.62%	
3) politics	3.1) communism	7	4.35%	4.97%

	3.2) National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD)	1	0.62%	
4) economics	money	7	4.35%	4.35%
5) characteristics or properties	clarity	4	2.48%	2.48%
6) culture	destiny	4	2.48%	2.48%
7) place	psychiatric hospitals	1	0.62%	0.62%
total	13	161	100%	100%

The following section provides detailed examples of each meaning taken from the TNC.

1) Emotions

In Thai, red is commonly used as a metaphor for emotions. This study identified four primary emotions: shyness, anger, pain, and happiness. When red is used to convey emotions, it is often associated with terms related to head-related body parts, such as the face, cheeks, ears, and eyes. Additionally, the same expression can convey different emotions depending on the context.

1.1) Shyness: When red is used as a metaphor for shyness, it can refer to the shyness arising from flirtation between men and women, as well as the embarrassment or shame that occurs when one makes a mistake or says something inappropriate. This metaphor is commonly associated with terms like "face," "cheeks," and "ears." For example: */na daeng/* (literally: "red face"); */na daeng ruea/* (literally: "blood-red face"); */kaem daeng plang/* (literally: "bright red cheeks"); and */kaem daeng san/* (literally: "cheeks turning red"). All of these expressions indicate feelings of shyness.

1.2) Anger: When red is used as a metaphor for anger or dissatisfaction, it is often paired with terms such as "face," "skin," "cheeks," "eyes," "eyeballs," "complexion," and "ears." For example: */kroht na daeng/* (literally: "angry red face"); */na daeng duay khwam mai phochai/* (literally: "face red with dissatisfaction"); and */duang ta daeng kam/* (literally: "eyes turning red"). These expressions all convey that the individual is experiencing anger.

1.3) Sadness: When red is used as a metaphor for sadness, it is often combined with terms like "face" or "eyes." For example: */bai na daeng kam/* (literally: "face flushed red") and */duang ta daeng daeng/* (literally: "eyes reddened"). Both expressions indicate that the person is experiencing sadness.

1.4) Happiness: When red is used as a metaphor for happiness, it is typically associated with the "face." For example: */na daeng duay khwam sod chuen/* (literally: "face red and glowing with freshness") and */hua ro choen na daeng/* (literally: "laughing until the face is red"). Both expressions suggest that the individual is in a happy or blissful mood.

2) People

In Thai, red also carries human-related metaphors. This study identifies three primary meanings: race, newborns, and prisoners.

2.1) Race: When red is used as a metaphor for race, it appears in the term */phuak phom daeng/* (literally: "red-haired people"), which denotes people of Caucasoid or Europid descent (Department of Fine Arts, n.d.), commonly referred to as "Farang" (Westerners) by the Thai population. For example: */tham mai mai mi wan yut baep phuak khon thai rue phuak phom daeng khao bang/* (literally: "Why are there no holidays like those of the Thai people or the red-haired people?"). In this context, "red-haired people" specifically refers to Westerners.

2.2) Newborns: Red can also be used metaphorically to refer to newborns, as the skin of newborn infants typically has a faint reddish hue. For example: */luk tua daeng daeng/* (literally: "red red child"); */luk dek lek daeng/* (literally: "red little child"). Both expressions refer to newborns.

2.3) Prisoners: Red is also used metaphorically to refer to prisoners, as seen in the term */gin khao daeng/* (literally: "eating red rice"), where red rice refers to unrefined rice with a red husk still intact. Historically, red rice was used to feed soldiers on active duty and prisoners in Thai jails (Office of the Royal Society, 2011). Therefore, a person who "eats red rice" refers to someone in prison in Thai.

3) Politics

In Thai, red is used in political metaphors, specifically associated with communism and the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD).

3.1) Communism: Red, as the color of blood, typically symbolizes courage, sacrifice, and war. Originally used as the color of the flag for resistance movements, it gradually became a symbol of communism (Liu, 2023). In Thai, red is also used in metaphors related to communism, such as: */Jin daeng/* (literally: "red China"), referring to the region of mainland China governed by the Communist Party, excluding Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan; */Lao daeng/* (literally: "red Laos"), referring to the Communist-friendly rural areas of Laos; And */Khmer daeng/* (literally: "red Khmer"), referring to the "National Army of Democratic Kampuchea," a communist force in Cambodia that ruled the Kingdom of Cambodia (renamed Democratic Kampuchea) from 1975 to 1979.

3.2) National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD): Red is also used as a metaphor for the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD) in the term */suea daeng/* (literally: "Red Shirts"). This political group opposes the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD, or "yellow shirts") and supports former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. The UDD is commonly associated with the red color, as its members frequently wear red shirts during protests and gatherings, leading the Thai public to refer to them as "suea daeng" (the Red Shirts).

4) Economics

In Thai, red is metaphorically associated with economics, particularly money. This connection originates from a historical Thai currency, a reddish-brown coin called */satang daeng/* (red satang coin). Consequently, "red" is often used as a metaphor for money in modern Thai. For instance, */mai luea sak daeng/* (literally, "not a single red remains") means "there is no money left," and */mai dai chai sak daeng/* (literally, "not a single red is used") means "no money was used." In both expressions, "red" explicitly refers to money.

5) Characteristics or properties

In Thai, red is associated with metaphors related to characteristics or properties, particularly clarity. It can signify either the exposure of negative events or a clear explanation of matters. For example, */reuang daeng ork ma/* (literally, "the matter comes out red") refers to the revelation of undesirable issues or the clarification of a situation. Similarly, */phut hai chatjaeng daeng jae/* (literally, "speak clearly and red bright") means to articulate something in a clear and detailed manner. The metaphorical use of red to represent clarity may be associated with legal proceedings in Thai courts. In this context, a "red case" refers to a case for which the court has already rendered a judgment or ruling, imparting the meaning of "clarity" to the red color (Don Lawyer, n.d.).

6) Culture

In Thai, red carries a culturally specific metaphor, symbolizing destiny. This metaphor is embodied in the term */dai daeng/* (literally "red thread"), a concept originating from Chinese beliefs, where it is called */hóng xiàn/*. According to legend, a deity named Yue Lao, or the "Old Man of the Moon," ties an invisible red thread around the ankles of destined couples. Regardless of their physical distance, they are fated to meet again, bound by an unbreakable connection (Varchirawatt and Seeruesaeng, 2020).

7) Place

In Thai, red carries a place-related metaphor referring to psychiatric hospitals, embodied in the term */lang kha daeng/* (literally 'red roof') used to describe such institutions. Historically, Thailand's first psychiatric hospitals consisted of windowless buildings with red-painted roofs (Pheearat, 2017). As a result, the phrase 'red roof' has become a metaphor for psychiatric hospitals in Thai.

Results in Chinese

A total of 199 metaphorical expressions of the color red were identified in Chinese. These expressions can be categorized into eight domains and 17 meanings. Table 2 shows the specific frequencies and proportions of each domain and meaning.

Table 2 Metaphorical expressions of red in Chinese

Domains	Meanings	Frequency	Ratio	Ratio total
1) emotions	1.1) shyness	53	26.63%	48.24%
	1.2) anger	22	11.06%	
	1.3) sadness	13	6.53%	
	1.4) happiness	7	3.52%	
	1.5) jealousy	1	0.50%	
2) characteristics or properties	2.1) famous or popular	28	14.07%	25.62%
	2.2) healthy	20	10.05%	
	2.4) vicious	3	1.51%	
3) politics	communism	20	10.05%	10.05%
4) state	success	8	4.02%	4.02%
5) culture	5.1) wedding	5	2.51%	3.52%
	5.2) destiny	2	1.01%	
6) place	6.1) human world	3	1.51%	3.02%
	6.2) sex work establishments	3	1.51%	
7) people	beautiful women	6	3.02%	3.02%
8) economics	profit	5	2.51%	2.51%
total	17	199	100%	100%

The following section provides detailed examples of each meaning taken from the BCC.

1) Emotions

In Chinese, the most common metaphor associated with the color red is related to emotions. This study identifies five key emotions: shyness, anger, sadness, happiness, and jealousy.

1.1) Shyness: As in Thai, shyness is the most frequent metaphor associated with red in Chinese. It is commonly used in expressions referring to parts of the head, such as the face, cheeks, neck, and ears. For example, */liǎn shàng fàn zhe hóng yún/* (literally, "a red cloud on the face"), */hóng le liǎn/* ("the face turns red"), and */ěr duō hé hòu jǐng hóng le/* ("ears and the base of the neck turned red") illustrate this usage. These expressions vividly convey a state of shyness.

1.2) Anger: In Chinese, anger is another common metaphor associated with red, often used in relation to the "face." For example, */liǎn hóng bó zi cū/* ("face red and neck thick"), */zhàng hóng le liǎn/* ("face flushed red"), and */qì hóng le liǎn/* ("face turned red with anger") illustrate this connection. These expressions vividly convey a state of intense anger.

1.3) Sadness: In Chinese, red can also function as a metaphor for sadness, often used in conjunction with terms like "eyes," "eye sockets," or "face." For example, */yǎn kuāng biàn hóng le/* ("eye sockets turned red"), */yǎn jīng hóng hóng de/* ("eyes turned red"), and */yǎn quān hóng hóng de/* ("red eye sockets") illustrate this usage. These expressions convey that the person is experiencing sadness.

1.4) Happiness: When red is used metaphorically to represent happiness in Chinese, it is often associated with the face, cheeks, or complexion. For example, */liǎn hóng pēn pēn de, gāo xìng de hé bù lǒng zuǐ/* ("His face was glowing red, so happy that he could not stop smiling") illustrates this connection. In this context, a red face conveys the emotional state of joy or happiness.

1.5) Jealousy: Jealousy is another emotion that can be expressed through red in Chinese, often in association with the eyes. For example, */xiàn mù de hóng le yǎn/* ("eyes turned red with envy") conveys the emotion of jealousy, with the context suggesting a deeper sense of envy or rivalry.

2) Characteristics or properties

In Chinese, the color red is often used metaphorically to represent certain characteristics or qualities of a person or thing. This study identifies three primary meanings: famous or popular, healthy, and vicious.

2.1) Famous or popular: In Chinese, red can be used as a metaphor for fame or popularity, rooted in the cultural perception of red as a symbol of prosperity and success (Gong, 2015). For example: */yī pào ér hóng/* (literally, "became red-hot with a single shot") describes an individual or entity whose reputation quickly skyrockets after a single action or event; */hóng jué ěr/* (literally, "red performer") refers to a renowned performer from the past who was widely admired and celebrated by the public. Moreover, */hóng rén/* (literally, "red person") denotes someone who enjoys favor, prominence, or a successful career, often referring to a famous person.

2.2) Healthy: In Chinese, red can also be used as a metaphor for good physical condition or health. It is commonly found in expressions referring to the face, cheeks, or complexion. For example: */liǎn jiá hóng rùn/* (literally, "red and rosy cheeks"), */hóng guāng mǎn miàn/* (literally, "a face full of red glow"), and */bái lǐ tōu hóng/* (literally, "a face with red shining through white"). These expressions convey a sense of good health, vitality, and a vibrant appearance.

2.3) Vicious: In Chinese, red can metaphorically represent a person's vicious nature, often associated with the eyes. For example, */rén fàn zi hóng le yǎn/* (literally, "the eyes of the human trafficker have turned red") refers to a human trafficker revealing their vicious, cruel nature.

3) Politics

As in Thai, the color red in Chinese can also serve as a metaphor for communism, and this usage is quite common. Examples of such metaphors include the following expressions: */hóng jūn/* (literally: "Red Army"), */hóngsè zhèngquán/* (literally: "Red Regime"), and */hóng qū/* (literally: "Red Area"). Historically, during the Chinese Land Revolution, the People's Army led by the Communist Party of China was referred to as the "Red Army," the regime established by the proletariat under the leadership of the Communist Party was called the "Red Regime," and the revolutionary base areas set up by the Communist Party were known as "Red Areas" (Liu, 2023).

4) State

In Chinese, the color red is often used metaphorically to signify prosperity or business success. This metaphor is evident in the expression */hóng huǒ/* (literally, "red like fire"), as seen in the phrase */shēng yì hóng huǒ/* (literally, "business red like fire"), which denotes a thriving and successful business.

5) Culture

In Chinese, the color red carries metaphors for cultural domains. This study identified two primary meanings: wedding and destiny.

5.1) Wedding: In Chinese, red is metaphorically associated with weddings. This association originates from its prominent use in traditional Chinese wedding customs, where red appears in decorations such as bridal gowns, room adornments, bedding, and other items. In this cultural context, red

symbolizes luck and prosperity. The use of red in weddings reflects the community's wishes for the couple's happiness. Consequently, red functions as a metaphor for weddings in the Chinese language. For instance, */hóng shì/* (literally, "red matter") refers to weddings, while */hóng tiē zǐ/* (literally, "red invitation") denotes wedding invitations.

5.2) **Destiny:** Similar to Thai, in Chinese, */hóng xiàn/* (literally, "red thread") is used metaphorically to represent destiny. In traditional Chinese belief, it is thought that marriages between men and women are often predestined by fate from previous lives, with an invisible red thread connecting them, thus enabling their eventual union.

6) Place

In Chinese, the color red carries place-related metaphors. This study identified two primary meanings: the human world and sex work establishments.

6.1) **Human World:** In Chinese, the red color can be used metaphorically to represent the human world, as seen in the term */hóng chén/* (literally, "red dust"), which signifies the bustle and turmoil of the world, particularly in relation to desires, worldly life, and emotional entanglements. It can also refer directly to the human world. For example, */kàn pò hóng chén/* (literally, "see through the red dust") refers to a profound understanding of worldly distractions and desires, denoting a transcendent state or the relinquishment of material concerns.

6.2) **Sex Work Establishments:** In Chinese, red can metaphorically refer to places of sexual transaction. This metaphor is evident in the term */hóng dēng qū/* (literally, "red light area"), which is derived from the Western term "red-light district". It refers to areas primarily associated with prostitution (Yidu Media, 2023).

7) People

In Chinese, the color red carries metaphors related to people, specifically referring to beautiful women. This metaphor is evident in the term */hóng yán zhī jǐ/* (literally, "red face soulmate"), where "red face" refers to a beautiful woman. Traditional Chinese women often used red in their makeup for their lips and cheeks. As a result, the appearance created by this red makeup became associated with feminine beauty (Zhao, 2015).

8) Economics

In Chinese, the color red carries economic metaphors, specifically related to profits. This is evident in the term */hóng lì/* ("red profit"), which refers to financial gains. The metaphor arises from the cultural association of red with success in Chinese society. The "red profit" concept predates modern stock markets and banking systems, underscoring the longstanding positive connotation of red in Chinese business practices. In contrast, in Thai society, red symbolizes negative economic conditions, such as a bear market, while green signifies profits. Today, China's stock market continues to use red to indicate rising stock prices and green to represent falling ones.

Comparison of Red Metaphors in Thai and Chinese

The comparative results of metaphorical expressions of the color red in Chinese and Thai are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of red metaphors in Thai and Chinese

Domains	Meanings	Thai	Chinese
emotions	shyness	86	53
	anger	19	22
	sadness	7	13
	happiness	5	7
	jealousy	N/A	1

Domains	Meanings	Thai	Chinese
people	race	11	N/A
	newborns	8	N/A
	beauty	N/A	6
	prisoner	1	N/A
characteristics or properties	famous or popular	N/A	28
	healthy	N/A	20
	vicious	N/A	3
	clarity	4	N/A
politics	communism	6	20
	UDD	1	NA
economic	money	7	N/A
	profit	N/A	5
culture	wedding	N/A	5
	destiny	4	2
state	success	N/A	8
place	psychiatric hospital	1	N/A
	human world	N/A	3
	sex work establishment	N/A	3
total		161	197

Overall, the frequency of red metaphors in Chinese is higher than that in Thai. Additionally, the domains and meanings identified in Chinese are more diverse than those in Thai, which does not include any metaphors related to the domain of the state. Red in Chinese and Thai shows relatively high similarity within the domain of emotions. However, outside the emotional domain, red metaphors in Chinese tend to convey predominantly positive meanings, such as “famous or popular,” “healthy,” “profit,” and “success.” In contrast, red in Thai is more neutral, conveying meanings that are neither strictly positive nor negative, such as “race,” “newborns,” “money,” and “destiny.”

In addition, both languages share metaphors such as shyness, anger, sadness, happiness, communism, and destiny. Unique Thai metaphors include race, newborns, prisoners, clarity, finance, the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), and psychiatric hospital. Unique Chinese metaphors include jealousy, beautiful women, famous or popular, healthy, vicious, profit, wedding, success, the human world, and sex work establishment.

DISCUSSION

The higher frequency and greater diversity of red metaphors in Chinese, especially with their predominantly positive meanings, reflect red's unique cultural and symbolic significance within Chinese society. In Chinese culture, red is strongly associated with auspiciousness, prosperity, celebration, and success, commonly seen in festivals, weddings, and other major life events. This positive bias in red-related expressions suggests a cultural tendency to view red as a color of luck, joy, and achievement.

In contrast, the more neutral connotations of red in Thai may reflect a cultural perspective that assigns the color a more balanced role, connected with both natural and social phenomena without the same intense positive or celebratory implications as in Chinese. This distinction between the two cultures highlights the ways in which metaphorical language shapes and reflects broader social values, demonstrating how cultural attitudes toward colors can deeply influence language use and cognitive associations. The following discussion will address each domain individually.

In the domain of emotions, red in Thai can metaphorically represent a variety of emotions, consistent with Kanjina's (2016) conclusion that red serves as an emotional metaphor in Thai. Beyond emotional expressions, this study identifies red metaphors in six additional major domains due to a broader research scope. Furthermore, red metaphors in Thai and Chinese show considerable similarity in the emotional domain, as both languages use red to express shyness, anger, sadness, and happiness. This finding is consistent with studies in other languages that also use red to express shyness and anger, such as Japanese, Mongolian, Korean, and English (Anda, 2013; Ye, 2013). This suggests that there is a universal connection between the color red and intense emotional states across cultures. This connection may be due to common physiological or emotional responses in humans, such as when emotions fluctuate, blood vessels typically dilate, and heart rate increases, leading to more redness in the skin, especially through facial features. This gives red cross-cultural significance as a color associated with strong emotions.

In the domain of people, Thais use "red hair" to metaphorically refer to Westerners, who predominantly have brown hair, while Chinese use "yellow hair" for the same group (Lin, 2019). This difference reflects differences in color perception or thought patterns between Thai and Chinese cultures. In addition, Thai uses the expression "eating red rice" to refer to prisoners, a metaphor that does not exist in Chinese, highlighting Thailand's unique social and historical context.

In the domain of characteristics or properties, there are numerous metaphors related to characteristics or properties (48 instances) in Chinese, most of which carry positive connotations. In contrast, only four such instances appear in Thai, with neither positive nor negative bias. This suggests that red has a more important and positive symbolic meaning in Chinese culture. In contrast, red may be less prominent and emotionally neutral in Thai when expressing characteristics or properties.

In the domain of politics, both languages use red to metaphorically represent communism, indicating that red symbolizes these ideologies as an international consensus. However, Thai also uses red to refer to the UDD political group, while Chinese lacks similar political metaphors. This distinction reflects Thailand's unique political landscape and historical context, suggesting that red has broader political meanings within Thai culture.

In the economic domain, Thai uses red to metaphorically represent money due to the reddish-brown color of the historical Thai currency. Although Chinese currency also includes red (e.g., the hundred-yuan bill), similar metaphors are lacking in Chinese. This suggests that the symbolism of red as money in Thailand is tied to specific historical and cultural contexts not found in Chinese culture.

In the cultural domain, both languages use red to metaphorically represent "destiny," employing the same term, which reflects the cultural interaction between the two countries. However, traditional Chinese ceremonies prominently feature red in the context of weddings. In contrast, Thai weddings emphasize gold, white, and pink, which results in the absence of a wedding metaphor in Thai. This underscores the uniqueness of each country's culture.

In the state domain, the Chinese use red to metaphorically represent success, while the Thai lack similar metaphors. This underscores the strong association of red with achievement and prosperity in Chinese culture, reflecting its deeper symbolic meaning of positive outcomes and good fortune, which may be less pronounced in Thai society.

In the domain of place, the Chinese use red to metaphorically represent both the human world and red-light districts, while the Thai associate red with psychiatric hospitals. Although modern Thai also includes red-light districts as areas of concentrated sex work, this study did not identify such expressions due to corpus limitations. Future research could utilize more contemporary data sources, such as social media. Additionally, Thai has its own specific color to denote sex work venues, which is green, as reflected in the term "green lantern." This comes from historical practices in which the Thai government marked brothels with green lanterns (Bunnak, 2019). These observations

suggest that the symbolic meanings of colors associated with places are culturally specific, with red conveying different meanings in Chinese and Thai contexts. Using color as a metaphor can reveal underlying cultural attitudes and historical practices, highlighting the need for more nuanced research on color metaphors across different languages.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the metaphorical meanings of the color red in Thai and Chinese cultures, shedding light on the similarities and differences in various domains. In the emotional domain, red can metaphorically represent emotions such as shyness, anger, and happiness in both languages, suggesting a universal link between red and intense emotional experiences. However, in other domains, the metaphorical implications of red differ. In Chinese, red metaphors tend to have positive connotations, such as success, health, and fame or popularity. In contrast, Thai red metaphors are more neutral, encompassing meanings such as ethnicity, newborns, and money. Moreover, the shared aspects of red metaphors in Thai and Chinese cultures are rooted in common international conventions (e.g., red as a metaphor for communism) and cultural exchanges between the two (e.g., red as a metaphor for destiny). On the other hand, the differences arise from each nation's different social, cultural, political, and historical contexts.

REFERENCE

- An D. (2023). Méng gǔ yǔ Cháo xiǎn yǔ yán sè cí de wén huà nèi hán bǐ jiào yán jiū [A comparative study of the cultural connotations of color terms in Mongolian and Korean]. *Journal of Chifeng University: Social Sciences in Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 44(7), 37-40.
- Chanthao, R. (2018). Upalak phu chai lae phu ying nai suphasit phasa Lao [Metaphors of Man and Women in Bao-Sao Lao proverbs]. *Journal of Language, Religion and Culture*, 7 (1). 154-183. Chulalongkorn University, Department of Linguistics. (2013). *Thai National Corpus (TNC)*. <https://www.arts.chula.ac.th/ling/tnc/>
- Cruse, A. (2004). *Meaning in language: An Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Don Lawyer. (n.d.). Khadi mai lek dam mai lek daeng khue arai [What do the case number black and case number red mean?]. www.lawgeneration.net/คดีหมายเลขดำ-แดง-คือ
- Duan, W. (2017). *A comparative study on cultural significance between Chinese and Thai color terms* [Master's Thesis, Yunnan Normal University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.
- Engchuan, S. (2000). *Khamriak sii lae Manothat Rueang sii khong Khon Thai samai Sukhothai lae samai Patjaban* [Color terms and concepts of color among Thai people in the Sukhothai period and the present day] [Doctoral dissertation, Chulalongkorn University]. Digital Research Information Center.
- Fine Arts Department. (n.d.). *Phap Khong 6 Chatiphan Thi Samkhan Khong Manut* [Images of 6 important ethnic groups of humanity]. <https://www.finearts.go.th/chiangmaimuseum/view/21731>
- Gage, J. (1999). *Color and Meaning: Art, Science, and Symbolism*. University of California Press.
- Gong, X. (2015). *Comparison of basic color words in Chinese and Thai languages and teaching strategies study of Chinese basic color words to Thai students* [Master's thesis, Huazhong Science and Technology University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.
- He, G. (2011). A comparative study of color metaphors in English and Chinese. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(12), 1804–1808. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.12.1804-1808>
- Huang, Q. (2011). A study on the metaphor of "red" in Chinese culture. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 1(3), 34–40.
- Jiang, Q. (2011). *The Comparison Research on Color Terms in Chinese and Thai* [Master's thesis, Jinan University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.

- Kanjina, Y. (2016). Upalak lae nam nai kan chai kham riak sii phuea sadaeng kwam ru suek nai phasa Thai [Metaphor and metonymy in the use of color terms to express feelings in Thai]. *Humanities Journal*, 23 (2), 178–210.
- Kovecses, Z. (2000). *Metaphor and Emotion: Language, Culture, and Body in Human Feeling*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kovecses, Z. (2002). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kovecses, Z. (2005). *Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.
- Li, H. (2004). Hàn yǔ sè cǎi fàn chóu de biǎo dá fang shì [The Expression of Color Category in Chinese]. *Language teaching and linguistic studies*, (6).
- Li, T. (2020). The metaphorical expressions of basic color words in English and Chinese. *English Language Teaching*, 13(3), 85. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v13n3p85>
- Lin, Y. (2019). Jī yú yǔ liào kù de Hàn Tàì yán sè cí 'huáng' yǐn yù yǔ zhuǎn yù duì bǐ fēn xī [A comparison analysis on metaphor and metonymy of Chinese and Thai color word “yellow” based on corpus]. *Overseas Chinese Education*, (6), 11.
- Liu, D. (1990). Xiàn dài Hàn yǔ jī běn yán sè cí de shù liàng jí xù liè [The quantity and sequence of basic color terms in modern Chinese]. *Journal of Nanjing Normal University (Social Science Edition)*, (3), 77–80.
- Liu, Y. (2023). Hóng sè wèi shé me xiàng zhēng gé mìng (Why does red symbolize revolution). *Qián xiàn (Frontline)*, 1.
- Ma, L., and Liu, A. (2008). A Universal Approach to Metaphor. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 17(1), 160-168.
- Miao, L. (2016). *A comparison and teaching research on color words in Chinese and Thai* [Master's thesis, Lanzhou University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.
- Phornthipphayaphanit T. Charunrochana J. (2014). *Color terms in Thai during the Thonburi and Rattanakosin period* [Master's thesis, Kasetsart University]. KU Knowledge Repository.
- Siyanalak K. (2014). A study of metaphors and cultural reflections in Chinese idiomatic expressions for colors. *Proceedings of the 8th Humanities and Social Sciences Research Forum 2014: Research Directions for Social Development Toward the ASEAN Community* (pp. 411–422). Chonburi, Thailand: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Burapha University.
- Tan M. (2015). Cóng wén huà shì jiǎo tàn jiū yán sè de xiàng zhēng yì yì—yǐ zhōng tài jī běn yán sè wéi lì [Exploring the symbolic meanings of colors from a cultural perspective: A case study of basic colors in China and Thailand]. *Journal of Chongqing College of Electronic Engineering*, 24(5).
- Thipkongkha, W. (2010). *Color terms in Thai in the Ayutthaya period* [Master's thesis, Kasetsart University]. Digital Research Information Center. https://doi.nrct.go.th/ListDoi/listDetail?Resolve_Doi=10.14457/KU.the.2010.639
- Ungerer, F., and Schmid, H. J. (1996). *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*. London and New York: Longman.
- Unthanon, K., & Chanthao, R. (2020). Thai color terms and their structures. *Journal of Buddhist Anthropology*, 5(6), 152–167. <https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JSBA/article/view/240941>
- Varchirawatt, A., & Seeruesaeng, C. (2020). Sueksa tamnan khwām chuea dai daeng haeng chok chata khong chao jin [Study the legend of the Chinese red thread beliefs]. *Journal of Legal Entity Management and Local Innovation*, 6(4).
- Wierzbicka, A. (1996). *Semantics: Primes and Universals*. Oxford University Press.
- Xun, E., Rao, G., Xiao, X., and Zang, J. (2016). Dà shù jù bèi jǐng xià BCC yǔ liào kù de yán zhì [The construction of the BCC Corpus in the age of Big Data]. *Yǔ liào kù yǔ yán xué (Corpus Linguistics)*, (1).

- Yang, J. (2013). *A comparison of color words in Chinese and Thai followed by an investigation of Thai university students' Chinese color word acquisition* [Master's thesis, Shandong University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.
- Yao, X. (1988). Jī běn yán sè cí lǐ lùn shù píng — Jiān lùn Hàn yǔ jī běn yán sè cí de yǎn biàn shǐ [A review of basic color term theory—And a discussion on the evolution of basic color terms in Chinese]. *Foreign language teaching and research*, 20(1):19–28.
- Ye, J. (2001). *Xiàn dài Hàn yǔ sè cǎi cí yán jiū* [A study of modern Chinese color terms]. Huhehaote: Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House.
- Ye, L. (2013). Research of the Affective Metaphors in Color Words "Red, Blue, and Green" in Chinese, English, and Japanese. *Journal of Huaihai Institute of Technology (Social Science Edition)*, pp. 14, 65–67.
- Yu, N. (2003). Chinese Metaphors of Anger and Happiness: The 'Fire' Model. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 18(4), 313–333.
- Zhao, P. J. (2015). "Hóng yán zhī jǐ" bù shì nán xìng [The "red face soulmate" is not a man]. *Qīng nián jì zhě (Young Reporter)*, 3, 1.
- Zhou, M. (2018). *Study on comparison of the basic color terms of Chinese-Thai and strategies of teaching Chinese as a foreign language* [Master's thesis, Nanchang University]. China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database.
- Vamalathithan, R., Rom, N. A. M., & Said, A. M. A. (2024). Quality Of Life, Knowledge, Skills and Government Support in Enhancing the Wellbeing of Homeless. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences (PJLSS)*, 22(2).
- Farooq, A. J., Akhtar, S., Hijazi, S. T., & Khan, M. B. (2010). Impact of advertisement on children behavior: Evidence from pakistan. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 12(4), 663-670
- Office of the Royal Society. (2011, April 3). *Khlang khwām rū khāo daeng (3 meysan 2554)* [Knowledge repository: Red rice (April 3, 2011)]. <http://legacy.orst.go.th/?knowledges=ข้าวแดง-๓-เมษายน-๒๕๕๔>
- Pheearat, S. (2017, October 30). *Langka daeng Rongphayaban Rokjit Haeng Raek Khong Thai! Raksaduay 'Pa' Lae 'Mai Hai U Wong' Tham Ngern Sue Thidin 'Sritanyaa' Dai!!* ["Red Roof": The first psychiatric hospital in Thailand! Treated with "forest" and "not left empty," earning money to buy land "Sri Thanya"]. <https://mgronline.com/onlinesection/detail/9600000109605>
- Bunnak, R. (2019, August 28). Put tamnan "rong rap chamre burut" lae "khom khiao"! Jon thueng ham kham praveni kap phet diaokan!! [Unveiling the legend of the "male brothel" and the "green lantern"! Up to the point of challenging same-sex prostitution!!]. <https://mgronline.com/onlinesection/detail/9620000082407>
- Yidu Media. (2023, November 30). *wèi shén me shì hóng dēng qū, bù shì huáng dēng qū?* [Why is it the red-light district, not the yellow-light district?]. <https://news.qq.com/rain/a/20231130A09AG300>