The Reflection of Thai Culture through Figurative Language in Prophecies

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Abstract

The current study examines how figurative language including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and metonymy in prophecies reflects Thai culture. This study employed a non-probable sampling method. The data collection was 68 prophecies from Rai Khing and Thai Samakkhi temples, Thailand. The framework of data analysis follows Closton (2015) and Saralamba (2021). To ensure the reliability and validity of the data analysis, three linguists were instructed to check the accuracy of the data analysis. The results of the study show that the figurative language written in the prophercies reflects Thai culture by comparing people with entities such as boats, chickens, fish, and flowers. However, the figurative language in prophecies is always used when the writers convey a message with a negative connotation. It is expected that the results of this study will be beneficial for learners of English as a Foreign Language so as to gain better understanding about

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language and culture. The study contributes to business English in that the use of language in temples is intertwined with marketing techniques. After reading prophecies, financial donation is given because of the better life in the future.

Keywords: Language and Culture, Figurative Language, Thai Culture, Prophecies

1. Introduction

When Thai people feel uncomfortable because of their work, health and families, they visit temples where they could relieve their stress and anxieties (Dane, 2000). People could practice their meditation to improve their consciousness. Other talk to monks to exchange ways of life and how they could live with other people in societies harmoniously. In addition, some people either go to see fortune teller next to the temple or read prophecies in order to support their positive emotion and their future hope.

Reading prophecies reflects Thai culture in that Thai people has a higher level of anxiety, especially their future (McCargo, 2008). Thai people who visit the psychiatrists due to the symptoms of depression and anxiety would be viewed negatively by those people surrounding them. However, visiting fortune tellers or reading prophecies are considered common practices. Thus, this is a way how Thai people could escape from their mental tortures by relying on good information as convey via prophecies. Nevertheless, language is intertwined with culture. The use of language reflects the culture referring to certain values and beliefs that a group of people share. Language and culture are intertwined (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2021, p.7) and this could be reflected through the belief in the use of figurative language in prophecies that are rooted deeply in Thai culture.

As indicated by Neuliep (2016), the characteristics of Thai culture are indirect, collectivistic and face-saving. Moreover, the level of anxiety among Thai people is rather high. Although

these concepts are understandable, they are rather abstract for one to understand without examples. This study will examine how the meaning of language reflects the cultural perspectives of indirectness, collectivism and saving face. The communication style of Thai people is indirect, so complimenting Thai people directly about their success and wealthiness may make them feel shy. Metaphorical expressions are used as the techniques to avoid someone's shyness. However, some people may not know how to interpret what is said figuratively leading to miscommunication.

Not only does this study seek different techniques of figurative language employed in prophecies, but it also seeks examples of semantic denotations to help us understand Neuliep's (2016) approach toward Thai intercultural communication. Therefore, this study contributes to the field of language and culture in terms of creating awareness of communication regarding the beliefs of Thai people.

Jackson (2014) refers *linguistic styles or speech style* as patterns of speaking which include degree of directness, figurative language such as hyperboles and cultural norms. There is a relationship between speech styles and culture. The speakers adjust the speaking to their listener via the concept of convergence such as content and accent. For example, in order to apply the act of convergence to Thai EFL learners, Thai English teachers speaker English with Thai accent. Doing this encourage solidarity. If the speakers have their own preferred way of communication,

this is known as *speech style of preferences.* Basically, it is the way how information is delivered to listeners with different styles. One teacher prefers to compliment this study answer good, while others may use the expression of that's right. Politeness is effectively applied during communicating. For example, students express their gratitude to their Japanese professor after consultation hours by saying *Professor, we really appreciated that you spend a lot of time with us today. Thank you very much.* Finally, they gave their professor a respectful bow. The communication style relates high and low context. The characteristics of Individualistic culture are independence and privacy. This impact the style of communication to be direct.

On the other hand, the characteristics of Thai culture is community, maintain face and harmony. This impact the styles of communication to be indirect. With this concept, it is believed that cultures shape the way how language is formed.

2. Literature Review

Semantics or meaning is one of the important branches of linguistics that makes a language sound creative and aesthetic. This creativity and aesthetics via semantic expressions allows us to impress how language is transferred into literatures, novels, poems and songs (Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021, p. 83).

Figurative language is one of the communication techniques that is usually found in everyday life via conversation, media and literature. It is used to express the speakers' ideas concerning

entities in the world in linguistic forms. How entities are perceived through our five senses in the real world are acquired from belief, societies and cultures in tangible and non-tangible forms. Figurative language is beyond generic language expressions as it is relevant with psychology, cognition and society (Closton, 2015). Therefore, figurative language overlaps with the branches of psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics and sociolinguistics. The study of figurative language is separated into the beauty of sound devices and semantic denotations. Since it is rather difficult to observe how sounds reflect culture, the figurative language in this study focuses on meaning, which are, simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole and metonymy.

Simile is defined as the comparison between A and B. The comparison is between two entities which can be people, animals, objects, emotion, feeling, ideas, experience or concepts. The way of comparing the two entities is the consideration of their qualities concerning their analogy or likeness. So simile is the overt comparison between source and target entities (Fadaee, 2010, p. 22) via overt linguistic expression devices such as *like* and *as*.

(1)

(a) She shines like a diamond.

(b) Nina eats like a pig.

Examples (1) are examples of the figurative language of simile. Part of the identicalness between the two entities is compared with each other. For example, (1a) is a comparison

between a woman and a diamond regarding beauty. On the other hand, example (1b) shows a comparison between a woman and a pig regarding their behavior. *Metaphor* is defined as the comparison between two entities which are relevant. The entities refer to people, animals, objects, ideas, concepts, emotions, feelings and actions. However, they are not expressed via linguistic expression devices of *like* and *as* (Knowles & Moon, 2004, pp. 13-14). The comparison creates complex and creative ideas, referring to one thing becoming something else.

So, metaphor seeks a common relationship between the two entities. In other words, the analogy and likeness between the two entities are sought and explained in linguistic expressions. Some examples are given as follows:

(2)
(a) Love is a flower.
(b) My mother is an angel.

Examples (2) present metaphor. The emotion love is an abstract concept and the object *flower* is something tangible. The abstract concept is compared with the object in the real world. Example (1b) shows that the person *my mother* is compared with the abstract idea an angel referring to beauty and goodness. In addition, the syntactic structure of metaphor is usually a *subjective complement* or what is what. *Personification or prosopopoeia* is defined as making inanimate subjects instigate creatures' actions as if they are human beings, animals or other living things. The entities are expressed with certain psychological

states, intentions, energies, thoughts and beliefs as if they were a sentient being (Sayakhan, 2018). In other words, physical aspects and mental aspects are expressed as a certain entity. Sometime, the speakers add characteristics, personality, and identity to objects. Some examples are given as follows:

(3)

(a) The sun smiles beautifully.

(b) I will forgive you when the cat barks.

The verb *smile* is an action verb that assigns the thematic role of agent to a human subject. However, the sun is inanimate and cannot perform the action of smiling. However, the speaker expresses the sun as if it is a human. Example (3b) is interpreted to have the semantic denotations of personification in the adverbial clause *when the cat barks*. Even though the cat is an animate subject, it is unnatural for this animal to bark. The implication of (3b) is that it is impossible for me to forgive you. *Hyperbole or hyperbolic expression* is defined as the speakers' exaggeration concerning certain entities in the world. For example, if the speakers would like to make a statement about x, the expression of x will be overstated or bigger than the fact (Claridge, 2010; Closton, 2015). There are several benefits of using hyperbolic expressions. One of them is that hyperbole is used for the sake of humorous feedback. In other words, the listeners' sense of humor will be motivated via hyperbolic expressions. The other is that it is used for creating dramatic effects to give emphasis to the speakers' expressions. Some examples are given as follows:

(4)

(a) I am so hungry; I could eat an elephant.

(b) I have a ton of homework to finish tonight.

Example (4a) is semantically interpreted as a hyperbolic expression. An elephant is not a human's food source. However, the speaker tries to express his degree of hungriness. Example (4b) is also interpreted as a hyperbolic expression. The speaker of (4b) does not actually have a ton of homework. In fact, he tries to address that he has a lot of homework to finish by today. Accordingly, hyperbole is information that is expressed with a high degree of exaggeration. *Metonymy* is defined as the replacement of a word or a phrase by another closely related word. Meronomy describes an entity without using its own name, while other linguistic expressions that have association are used to be expressed. The entities in metonymy could be objects, ideas and events. Expressing via the devices of metonymy allows the meaning of the word to be more meaningful and powerful. Some examples are given as follows.

(5)

(a) The americano is waiting at the cashier.

(b) President Joe Biden works in the White House.

Example (5) show examples of metonymy. For example, the americano in (5a) does not mean a cup of coffee, the word is used to replace the customer who ordered of a cup of americano. In addition, *the White House* in (5d) does not refer to a house which is white in color, but it is used as metonymy to mean

the American Administration. This article reviews what figurative language is. Despite having a variety of figurative language, this article introduces a few types, such as simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, and metonym. Basically, simile and metaphor are similar, but simile are used with the linguistic expressions of *like* and *as*. Personification creates human-like attributes. Hyperbole is exaggeration. Metonymy is the substitution of one with another. This article will contribute to English language learners who would like to apply and study the principles of figurative language in daily language usage.

In regard to previous studies, Jitmart and Wongkittiporn (2021) studied figurative language in love songs by an American singer named Lauv. 17 songs provided 59 tokens of figurative language. The results of the study show that hyperbole was found the most. They discuss that hyperbole and love songs are relevant in regard to hierarchy of needs and the hypothetical world. In other words, everyone needs love and different people have different interpretations of love. Namwong et al. (2023) investigated the use of figurative language in love songs. 37 love songs from American singers provided 78 tokens of figurative language. The results show that hyperbole was used the most in love songs. They discussed that there is some relevance between figurative language and hyperbolic expression in terms of placing emphasis on the needs of human beings. However, the data of the two studies above was limited and lacked generalizability. This study contributes to the field by increasing the data collection for the sake

of better understanding. Previous studies usually paid attention to the study of figurative language in songs. The results of figurative language in songs reveals that hyperbole is the most common technique used for the listeners to tune into the songs easily. Nevertheless, this study contributes to the field by selecting different materials such as properties. So the benefit of the study is that it could be used as effective pedagogical materials to teach figurative language to English language learners in an interesting way.

3. Objectives of the Study

To study frequencies of figurative language in prophecies
To study types of figurative language in prophecies.
To reflect figurative language and Thai culture

4. Methodology

While the concepts of figurative language are given in the above section, this part provides a description of how the data in this study was collected and analyzed.

The current study is a qualitative research study where the method of the study was based upon non-probability sampling approach. This means that the data in this study was particularly selected to answer specific questions. Since the study was a qualitative in nature, a large number of data collection in this study was not required. However, to avoid the bias of selecting the data collection, all properties from Thaisamakhee temple and Rai Kning temple were collected to be studies.

The data collection of prophecies in this study came from Thaisamakhee temple and Rai Kning temple. The prophecies from these temples are valid and reliable as the English versions of the prophecies were translated by an assistant professor from a famous university in Thailand. 58 prophecies that were collected to study figurative language were used as prediction as in (6).

(6) You are like a small boat travelling through dangerous winds in a stormy sea.

(Prophecy No. 25, Watthaisamakhee)

The data analysis in this study follows Closton (2015) and Saralamba (2021). While there are various classifications of figurative language, this current study excludes the analysis of sound devices, such as alliteration, assonance and consonance. The only focus in this study is the semantic interpretations of figurative language including simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole and metonymy. The data analysis of figurative language is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Data Analysis of Figurative Language

(7)

Types	Examples
Simile	(a) She grins *like* an ape.
Metaphor	(b) She is *an ape.*
Personification	(c) The ape is *talking* to her.
Hyperbole	(d) The ape can live a *thousand years.*
Metonymy	(e) No one is as agile as *Grodd.*

Simile as in (7a) is the comparison between two entities which are a woman's smile and an ape's smile. The comparisons of simile are noticeable via the linguistic features *like* and *as*. Example (7b) represents metaphor where the two entities are compared via subjective complement of the structure *what is what*. Example (7c) shows the idea of personification where the ape is given the role of agent to talk as if it is a human. Example (7d) illustrates exaggeration to indicate that the life expectancy of ape is 1,000 years, where this statement is impossible.

The data analysis of entities such as animals are given in Table 2.

Table 2 Connotations of Animal (Saralamba, 2021)

Types	Connotations
Bear	A very hungry person
Vulture	A person who exploits an incident
Peacock	An arrogant person
Cat	A wealthy and greedy person
Chicken	A cowardly person
Dog	A faithful person
Fish	An unintelligent or incompetent person
Fox	A cunning person
Horse	A strong person
Pig	A greedy and dirty person
Snake	A harmful person

5. The Results of the Study

This section presents the results of the study where frequencies and percentages are given. According to the first research question, what were the frequencies of figurative language in prophecies? The answer of this research question was given in Table 4.

Table 4 Frequencies and Percentage

Types	Frequencies	Percentage
Simile	14	77.78
Metaphor	4	22.22
Personification	0	0
Hyperbole	0	0
Metonymy	0	0
Total	18	100

According to the second research question, what were the types of figurative language in prophecies? The answer of this questions was in the following section.

4.1 Metaphor

Some examples of metaphor are given as follows:

(9)

(a) You become a **bright moon** coming out of the clouds.

(Prophecy No. 2, Watthaisamakhee)

(b) Starting as a *fish*, you can now turn into a dragon.

(Prophecy No. 9, Watthaisamakhee)

(c) You are like *the moon* coming out from behind the clouds to shine brightly again.

(Prophecy No. 11, Watthaisamakhee)

Example (9a) makes comparison between the person who got this prophecy with a bright moon. Example (9b) made a comparison of a person as a fish and a dragon.

4.2 Simile

Some examples of simile are given as follows.

(10)

(a) Like *a naughty young chicken* carelessly departing from its group unaware, you'll be far away from your loved ones.

(Prophecy No. 4, Watthaisamakhee)

(b) Play safe and prepare ways to escape, like *the moon* seeking a place to hide behind the clouds.

(Prophecy No. 4, Watthaisamakhee)

(c) Then, it would be *like trading a horse for a buffalo*, an old saying word of concern.

(Prophecy No. 6, Watthaisamakhee)

(d) Making merit is *like growing fruits* nearby.

(Prophecy No. 7, Watthaisamakhee)

(e) You are *like a young tree* bearing no fruit or flowers yet.

(Prophecy No. 7, Watthaisamakhee)

(f) You are *like a flower* that is not withered amidst a strong wind and hit by bright sun.

(Prophecy No. 21, Watthaisamakhee)

(g) You are *like a small boat* travelling through dangerous winds in a stormy sea.

(Prophecy No. 25, Watthaisamakhee)

(h) You are *like a blooming flower* that modestly struggles to resolve your suffering.

(Prophecy No. 26, Watthaisamakhee)

(i) Moving forward is a good action in fulfilling your hope, but always take good care when confronting obstacles whether it be *high mountains, deep seas* or the like.

(Prophecy No. 28, Watthaisamakhee)

Example (10a) makes comparison between the person who got this prophecy with a naughty young chicken. Example (10b) makes comparison between the person receiving this prophecy with the moon. Example (10d) is the comparison between making merit and growing trees. Example (10i) makes a comparison between obstacles and mountains.

To sum up this section, Thai people are compared via simile and metaphorical devices as (1) the moon, (2) a boat, (3) fish, (4) chicken, (5) trees and (6) flowers. These six entities are relevant to the lifestyle of Thai people.

Regarding the third research question, what was the reflection of prophecies and Thai culture. When a negative situation or incidents are the prediction in prophecies. Direct

statements are avoided to be used. Thai people are likely to be uncomfortable and become more sorrowful concerning what was predicted. The softer conversations were provided by the use of certain animals, such as *a boat* and *a chicken*. This indirectness makes the tone of conversation become lighter and save the face threatening among the readers.

In addition to the indirectness among Thai culture, the prophecies are the intrinsic motivation among Thai people. Intrinsic motivation is internal positive reinforcement (Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). Although Thai people seek success and compliments from others, it is not the culture that Thai people's success will be articulated. Some Thai people avoid accepting the compliment due to their shyness. Therefore, the success is methaphorically given via the expression of flower to avoid their own embarrassment and jealousness from other people in societies once posted the message into social media.

You are ***like a blooming flower*** that modestly struggles to resolve your suffering.

(Prophecy No. 26, Watthaisamakhee)

6. Discussion

The document of prophecies shows that the majority of figurative language used are simile, referring to the comparison of one entity with another via the lexical item like. The majority of the target people who read the properties are Thais. The figurative language in prophecies allows us to see the target audiences are compared with animals such as *chicken* and *fish* and natural entities, such as the *moon, trees* and *flowers.* An object in the real world is a boat. Excepting the moon, 90.91 percent employ certain entities to give negative connotations of one's life.

5.1 Negative Connotations of One's Life

5.1.1 The Moon

This study found that life is compared with ***the moon*** as in (11).

(11) Your life is compared with the moon behind the clouds. It will take some time to be bright again.

(Prophecy No. 11 Wat Rai Khing)

A person is compared with the brightness of the moon. The moon could connote several positive things, such as wisdom, brightness of the future and the disappearance of agony (Makavarakorn, 2012, pp. 80-81). However, example (11) shows that one's life will take some time to be good.

5.1.2 Chicken

Chicken is an animal that is relevant and has a positive relationship with Thais. For example, cockfighting is a very popular activity among Thai people. There is a national organization to take care of this traditional activity at Pitsanulok province, Thailand. (Tangtrakarpong, 2015). The sense extension of the word chicken that has been pejorative may be because of the characteristics of cockfighting that are ferocious and aggressive. So the word *chicken* has been related with the concept of naughtiness, trickiness and craftiness. An example *concerning* chicken which is found in this study is given below.

(12) Like **a naughty young chicken** carelessly departing from its group unaware, you'll be far away from your loved ones.

(Prophecy No. 4, Watthaisamakhee)

Chicken is viewed as a couple staying together. This prophecy shows that a person will miss their partner. In Thai, there are idioms comparing a person with a *chicken*. Moreover, other Thai idioms that contain negative denotation are chicken see snake's feet, while the snake see the chicken's breasts. Not only does the Thai language present the meaning of chicken in a negative way, the word chicken in English as in *he is a chicken* connotes a cowardly person.

5.1.3 Fish

Fish is another well-known animal in Thai culture. The common Thai idiom *There is fish in the water and rice in the fields* presents the abundance of food and agriculture. However, the word fish in Thai could connote something miniature as found in the prophecy.

(13) Starting as *a fish*, you can now turn into a dragon.

(Prophecy No. 9, Watthaisamakhee)

In (13), starting as a fish refers to a small person who lacks power. Moreover, the word fish in Thai idioms are found frequently, but usually have negative denotation as in *catch two fish with each hand*.

To sum up this point, animals such as *chicken* and *fish* that are written in prophecies represent negative connotations. In order to avoid the negative emotion after reading the prophecies, a person who is interpreted negatively will be indirectly prescribed as an animal and in Thai culture should be avoided. As stated by Phongphio (2021), indirectness is a communication strategy in Thai culture.

5.1.5 Boats

Thai people are compared with boats via simile such as (14).

(14) You are *like a small boat* travelling through dangerous winds in a stormy sea.

(Prophecy No. 25, Watthaisamakhee)

Thai people and rivers have a very strong relationship with each other. Traditionally, Thai people usually travel by boats. Commuting by boat is also common in Thailand at present. It is not surprising that Thai life is viewed as if a boat. Life is compared with a boat on the sea as sometimes it is serene, but sometimes it is a struggle as if being hit by a strong Tsunami.

5.1.5 Trees

Another simile makes comparison between a Thai person and a tree in (15).

(15) You are *like a young tree* bearing no fruit or flowers yet.

(Prophecy No. 7, Watthaisamakhee)

Trees can grow from small ones to become bigger ones. Some trees can give fruit, while others could have flowers. Example (15) shows that it is not your time to be prosperous as if you were a young tree.

5.1.6 Flowers

Thai people are compared with flowers as in examples (16).

(16)

(a) You are *like a flower* that is not withered amidst a strong wind and hit by bright sun.

(Prophecy No. 21, Watthaisamakhee)

(b) You are *like a blooming flower* that modestly struggles to resolve your suffering.

(Prophecy No. 26, Watthaisamakhee)

The use of the object flower to refer to a person is viewed as a positive object. Flowers connote something blossoming, prosperous, and happy. However, the adjacent linguistic expressions make the whole expression sound negative.

5.1.7 Reflection of Figurative Language in Prophecies toward Thai Culture

According to Neuliep (2016), Thai culture is collectivistic or people stay together as a whole. Collectivism refers to sensitivity to rejection and indirect communication style. Due to these aspects, one should be careful when saying something negative to Thai people; otherwise, their positive relationship could be broken. To apply this concept to the communicative written texts in prophecies, we can see that the writer uses other entities such animals to represent a person when the person's luck will be predicted negatively. However, when it comes to positive connotation, a person will be directly stated without comparison, as in (17)

(17)

(a) You will win a lawsuit.

(Prophecy No. 3, Watthaisamakhee)

(b) You will gain more profit from whatever you do.

(Prophecy No. 11, Watthaisamakhee)

When the predictions are positive, the subject you is usually used. This study could support by Jackson (2014) who expressed about linguistic styles and culture. As we know

that the *speech style* of Thai people is rather interpreted as indirectness as our cultural norms we share. So that certain linguistic features such as *simile.* This use of linguistic features encourages the concept of convergence or togetherness in that Thai people may not want to listen to their negative information concerning their future. So they use the figurative language, especially metaphor to exchange the positive relationship among us.

The *written style of preferences* concerning written prophecies is comparative techniques. So Thai listeners will not be depressed if negative information was given. Communicating in this way encourage people to make more merit and contribute more on financial donation as they fear of some unexpected situation might happen to them in the future. In addition, *politeness* is effectively applied during this way of communicating as the reader's safe are saved. The communication style of prophecies strongly relates to low context, especially Thai culture where people live together in a community. The proffers to maintain harmony and each other face. This is one of the supporting ideas why prophecies remain popular in Thai culture for a long time. Moreover, the characteristics of Thai people are indirect. According to Hong (2020), the communicational style of Asian people is not direct as an arrow headed down. However, the style of communication among Thai people is viewed as if it is a spiral. Saying something direct may affect the other people's feeling. This is the reason what metaphor pay an crucial role in Thai culture

to save other's people face. According to Neuliep (2016), Thai societies have the word "Kreng Jai". Prophecies are something to recommend someone's life in the future. The expression is rather soft and indirect when unexpected situation or situational avoidance are given.

The current study describes why figurative language, especially simile and metaphor are preferred to be used in prophecies. The answer is that the use of metaphor and simile in prophecies avoids directness of negative connotation, which might give psychological effects, such as depression and anxiety.

(18)

(a) You are like a young tree bearing no fruit or flowers yet.

(b) You are too young to get accomplishment in your life.

When comparing (18a) and (18b), the use of simile makes the expression become gentler. Finally, when people go to the temple, they sometimes feel agony because of some reasons in their life. Although not every prophecy card a person gets could reduce his or her anxiety, applying figurative language could make the semantic interpretations become soften.

This study is beneficial to learners of English as a Foreign language (EFL). English language teachers could ask their students to complete an exercise concerning figurative language as exemplified below.

Instructions: Match the figurative language in A-E with the following examples?

A. HyperboleB. Metaphor C. Metonymy D. Personification E. Simile

.... 1. James' eyes look scary like a devil.

.... 2. He is a chicken.

.... 3. The moon is running in the sky.

.... 4. James has a thousand books to read tonight.

.... 5. Thai is my mother tongue.

Instructions: Discuss the following questions

1. Discuss similarities and differences between simile and metaphor.

2. Analyze the types of figurative language in following sentences with supporting reasons.

(a) I will forgive you when the cat barks.

(b) I will forgive you when the cat talks.

3. What are the differences between the two sentences below?

(a) Everyone can have **a white house.**

(b) Barak Obama has worked in the **White house** for eight years.

After English language learners gain the understanding of the principles of figurative language, the teachers then bring a song into the class for the students to practice interpreting. If this activity takes place in classrooms at university levels,

it could be included in the subjects of semantics and pragmatics. Regarding the new knowledge contributed to the study, the article is valuable to the readers in terms of language and cultural knowledge. The author provided the use of figurative language and metaphors whereby the given information reflected Thai people's belief, culture and way of life. Moreover, the article reveals the usage of language and marketing techniques in temples how to persuade people to make merit and donate money. This marketing language used in predictions on prophecies have psychological effects on those who read the predictions

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