

A Comparative Study of Animals that Describe the Characteristics of Human through Thai and Myanmar Proverbs

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Abstract

The objectives of this research are to compare the types of animals that describe the characteristics of human and the purposes of using that animals as a metaphor in both Myanmar and Thai Languages. People use proverbs to get perfect meaning of what they want in daily conversation. Therefore, the uses of proverbs are more widely spread among people. Proverbs are the standard of a nation. We can estimate the humorous, matureness and thoughts of one nation from their proverbs. (Hla Thamein ,2018) There are many types of proverbs according to their origins. Some of the proverbs are originated from animals, some are from nature, some are from religions and some are from traditional beliefs. Among them, people use animals as a metaphor in proverbs not only to compare the types of animals with human but also to describe human is such kind of animal too. 253 Thai proverbs and 128 Myanmar proverbs that describes the characteristics of human are analysed by using descriptive-comparative method. Myanmar proverbs are collected from Myanmar proverbs by the team of Myanmar Language, The Meaning of Myanmar proverbs and their usages by Hila Thamein (2018, June) Thai proverbs are collected from Thai proverbs 5000: Akarat Udonphon2. The result reveals the same type of animals that are used as a metaphor in describing the characteristics of human and the purposes of using that animals as a human being. Both Myanmar and Thai people have the same religion, similar traditions and cultures. That make using the similar type of animals in proverbs although there the number and the purposes of proverbs have some differences.

Keywords: Animals, characteristics, human, Myanmar, Thai, Proverbs

I. Introduction

Proverb is a meaningful saying and people use proverbs to express their feelings, to compare the things in common and to make their speech more effective and precisely. Proverbs are derived from living and non-living things around us such as animals, nature, religions, traditions and cultures. “Proverbs reflect the ethic and mindset of an ethnic group. Some proverbs describe the physical characteristics of human and manners of speaking. Some show about public relationships. Some indicate the nature of human and earth. Therefore, the more you know about the proverbs and usages, the more you can understand about human behaviours, manners of speaking, the nature of people, and the nature of our environment as well. And these things can help you more effective in your speech, thoughts and behaviours. (Hla Thmein, 2018)

Myanmar and Thailand are neighbouring countries and have friendly relationship. Moreover, both of the countries have the same religion and similar traditions and cultures. Therefore, Myanmar and Thai people mostly use the same animals as metaphor in proverbs although there are some different animals in some proverbs. In this study, the researcher collects the proverbs that have animals as a metaphor in both Thai and Myanmar that describes human characteristics. Myanmar proverbs are collected from Myanmar proverbs by the team of Myanmar Language, The Meaning of Myanmar proverbs and their usages by Hila Thamein (2018, June) Thai proverbs are collected from Thai proverbs 5000: Akarat Udonphon2. Human is a kind of animals and the proverbs include animals as a metaphor to describe the

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characteristics of human, the researcher is interested in what kind of same animals do Myanmar and Thai people use to describe those characteristics and their purposes in describing “human is like such kind of animal too”.

II. Case Study

Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follow.

1. To Study animals that are compared with the characteristics of Human through Thai proverbs
2. To Study animals that are compared with the characteristics of Human through Myanmar proverbs
3. To compare the same animals that are used to describe the characteristics of Human in both Thai and Myanmar proverbs
4. To find out the reason for using the same type of animal describe both the good as well as bad characteristics of human.

Research questions

Myanmar and Thai people mostly use the same animals as metaphor in proverbs although there are some different animals in some proverbs. Therefore, the research questions have been set as followed.

1. Which kind of same animals do Myanmar and Thai people use to compare with characteristics of human?
2. Does the same type of animal describe both the good and the bad characteristics of human and why?

Expected benefits

From this research, we can find out the similar animals that are used as metaphors in both Thai and Myanmar proverbs. Both Myanmar and Thai language learners also get the knowledges of the meaning and the impact for using animals as a metaphor. And this research will have some knowledges concerning the relationship between characteristics of human and animal. This will be useful for both Myanmar and Thai languages learners too.

Method

This research is a quantitative research. Data are collected from Myanmar proverbs by Myanmar Language Commission, The Meaning of Myanmar proverbs and their usages by Hlla Thamein (2018, June) Thai proverbs are collected from Thai proverbs 5000: Akarat Udonphon2. Both Myanmar and Thai proverbs are concerning with the characteristics of human using animals as a metaphor. In this research, the researcher performed the following steps.

1. Collect the Myanmar proverbs that use animals as a metaphor describing the characteristics of human
2. Collect the Thai proverbs that use animals as a metaphor describing the characteristics of human
3. Find out the same animals that are used in both Myanmar and Thai Languages.

4. Compare the purposes of using animals as a metaphor in both languages.
5. Analyse the finding result and summarize by using descriptive analysis method.

Literature reviews

In Myanmar Dictionary (Serial No. 1) defines proverb as a meaningful saying that people use as an example to compare. According to the Royal Institute Dictionary (2011), the meaning of proverb is explained as the words or messages that have been passed down for a long time that teach people to have morality and how to behave in society.

Hla Thamein, (2000) described the important of proverbs. A proverb is used effectively and befittingly can substitute a whole lengthy paragraph. In some cases, the use of correct proverb can help a great deal to explain more precisely, whereas the ordinary presentation may tend to circumlocution.

Hla Thamein, (2018) also described that the uses of metaphors in proverbs reflect the culture of a developing ethnic group. As the metaphors of proverbs include the ideas, creativity, analysis and self-awareness of an ethnic group, we can survey about the maturity, comedy, knowledges, the observation about the environment traditions and cultures.

Kövences, Zoltán (2002) stated that many of human behaviour are understood through the embodiment of animal behaviour. Thus, the animal element contained in the proverb can be used as a symbol to describe aspects of human life. The use of animal elements is also used in English proverbs because of a close relationship with British society.

There are many types of Thai proverbs as Jia Satavin (1972) discussed the origin of the proverb are mostly caused by ordinary people in various occupations such as villagers, farmers, gardeners, boaters, etc. They are naturally related to the animals like the farmer use the cow in their works, villagers are near dogs or cats. They ideas from those animals. Therefore, 1. Some proverbs are caused by animals, proverbs such as men, like elephant, female feet. 2. Some are caused by parts of the human body for example, a proverb like two heads, is better than a single head alone. 3. Some are caused by professional tools. 4. Some proverbs are caused by nature.

Several researchers have done different research on proverbs. A Chinese scholar, Li Mengdie (2019) did a research on “A Contrastive Study of Chinese and Thai Colour Idioms. According to her research, the intention of use of the Chinese and Thai idioms related to colours were the same. But both countries are located in different places and environments, so their cultures have both similarities and differences.

Therefore, proverb is a meaningful saying that everyone uses in daily conversation. A proverb is used effectively and befittingly can substitute a whole lengthy paragraph. Proverbs contain metaphors

Proverbs reflect the beliefs, life style, traditions and cultures of an ethnic group. Because proverbs include the living-things and non-living things around us as metaphors. People also use various metaphors in proverbs based on ideas, creativity, analysis, experiences and self-awareness. And there are many causes that can create proverbs. Therefore, those who are learning languages should study more about the meaning of proverbs and their usages as studying proverbs can help us to know about the nature of our friends' countries.

II. Data Analysis

It is found out that there are 123 Myanmar proverbs and 256 Thai proverbs that use animal as a metaphor in describing the characteristics of human. Among them, only 117 Myanmar proverbs and 231 Thai proverbs use the same animals as metaphors. There are altogether 24 types of same animals are used as metaphors in both languages. The 24 types of the same animal in both Myanmar and Thai languages are 1) Ant 2) Birds 3) Buffalo 4) Cat 5) Chicken 6) Cow 7) Crocodile 8) Dog 9) Dragon 10) Elephant 11) Firefly 12) Fish 13) Frog 14) Goat 15) Horse 16) Lion 17) Monkey 18) Pig 19) Rabbit 20) Shrimp 21) Snake 22) Tiger 23) Water monitor and 24) Worm(maggot).

1) Ant

There are (1) Myanmar proverb and (7) Thai proverbs that use ant as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (1).

<Table-1>Proverbs that use ant as a metaphor

Thai	1. ปากมด (Ant's mouth) The one who talks a lot.
Myanmar	၁. ဆင်လည်းဆင်အထွာနှင့်ပုရွက်ဆိတ်လည်း ပုရွက်ဆိတ်အထွာနှင့် (The elephant span for an elephant, the ant span for an ant.) Everyone has its own measure.

2) Birds

There are (14) Myanmar proverb and (44) Thai proverbs that use bird as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (2).

<Table-2>Proverbs that use bird as a metaphor

Thai	1. ကာ (The crow) The one who is not harmonious with society.
Myanmar	1. တစ်တိတစ်တိနှင့် ငါးပိကျိုးချို (Paring off bits after bits the crow takes the fish sauce.) The one who stoles the manifold small quantities also makes a great amount.

3) Buffalo

There are (4) Myanmar proverb and (5) Thai proverbs that use buffalo as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (3).

<Table-3>Proverbs that use buffalo as a metaphor

Thai	1. ความปละ (Buffalo) A stupid person, a person with big body but not intelligent
Myanmar	1. ကျွဲပါးစောင်းတီး (To play a harp near a buffalo.) To guide someone who is not amenable.

4) Cat

There are (7) Myanmar proverb and (4) Thai proverbs that use “cat” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (4).

<Table-4>Proverbs that use cat as a metaphor

Thai	1. แมวเก้าชีวิต (A nine-life cat) The person who has suffered a lot of failure but returns to its original situation.
Myanmar	1. ကြောင်မရှိ ကြွက်စ (When the cat leaves, the mice frolic.) If there is no proper supervision, the stuff becomes unruly.

5) Chicken

There are (6) Myanmar proverb and (25) Thai proverbs that use chicken as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table(5).

<Table-5>Proverbs that use chicken as a metaphor

Thai	1. ไก่ (Chicken) The woman who earns money by prostitution
Myanmar	1. ကြက်မတွန်လို့ မိုးမလင်း (Dawn never comes if the hen crackles.) Woman has limited capabilities.

6) Cow

There are (13) Myanmar proverb and (8) Thai proverbs that use “cow” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (6).

<Table-6>Proverbs that use cow as a metaphor

Thai	1. วัวแก่กินหญ้าอ่อน (The aged bullock loves to eat tender grass.) The old man wants to marry with the young lady.
Myanmar	1. နွားအိုမြက်နုကြိုက် (The aged bullock loves to eat tender grass.) The old man wants to marry with the young lady.

7) Crocodile

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (8) Thai proverbs that use “crocodile” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (7).

<Table-7>Proverbs that use crocodile as a metaphor

Thai	1. จระเข้ขวางคลอง (Crocodile blocks the canal.) Blocking others' benefits or interferes others' success.
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Myanmar	1. မိကျောင်းလို ခေါင်းဖြူလေရဲလေ (The crocodile becomes more savage, as it heads becomes more paler.) The old man wants to marry with the young lady.
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Both Myanmar and Thai Proverbs use “crocodile” to describe the bad characteristics of human. But in some cases, crocodile represent the “courage” of the person.

8) Dog

There are (19) Myanmar proverb and (27) Thai proverbs that use “dog” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (8).

<Table-8>Proverbs that use dog as a metaphor

Thai	1. สมองหมา ปัญญาควาย (The dog's brain, the buffalo's talent.) The foolish person.
Myanmar	1. ခွေးရူးဖက်ကိုက် ခွေးကောင်းနားရွက်ပြတ် (If a good dog quarrels with a mad dog, it will only get its ear torn.) The right person will suffer if he deals with the wrong person.

9) Dragon

There are (2) Myanmar proverb and (1) Thai proverbs that use “dragon” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (9).

<Table-9>Proverbs that use dragon as a metaphor

Thai	1. ชาคติมังกร ไม่อยู่ในสระและห้วยหนอง(The dragon cannot live in the ponds and swamps.)A smart person cannot live in narrow place.
Myanmar	1. နဂါးတို့မျက်စောင်း အကြောင်းသုံးပါးမရွေး (The stare of a dragon does not give a favour to anyone.) The anger of the powerful one does not favour anyone

10) Elephant

There are (20) Myanmar proverb and (17)Thai proverbs that use “elephant” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (10).

<Table-10>Proverbs that use elephant as a metaphor

Thai	1. ช้างเผือก (The white elephant) The one who was born in the jungle but became famous in the city.
Myanmar	1. ဆင်ကန်းတောတိုး (As though a blind elephant wildly dashes out the thickets) A person who act blindly and foolishly without thinking properly.

11) Firefly

There are (1) Myanmar proverb and (4) Thai proverbs that use “firefly” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (11).

<Table-11>Proverbs that use firefly as a metaphor

Thai	1. หิ่งห้อย (Firefly)A humble person
Myanmar	1. ပိုးစုန်းကြူးထွန်း၍ တစ်ကျွန်းလုံးမလင်း (A firefly cannot give light to the whole island.) An important person cannot make a great achievement.

12) Fish

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (10) Thai proverbs that use “fish” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (12).

<Table-12>Proverbs that use fish as a metaphor

Thai	1. ปลาจู้ (Pickled fish.) Woman with decadent behaviour
Myanmar	1. ငါးတုခရုပွတ် အိုင်ပျက် (If the snail blew out the bubbles imitating the fish,the pond-water will become turbid.) One cannot imitate the other who is different in several aspects.

13) Frog

There are (2) Myanmar proverb and (8) Thai proverbs that use “frog” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (13).

<Table-13>Proverbs that use frog as a metaphor

Thai	1. กบในกะลาครอบ(A frog in the coconut shell.) A narrow-minded person
Myanmar	1. နွားခြေရာခွက်ထဲက ဖားသုငယ်လို (The frog in the cow's foot.) A narrow-minded person

14) Goat

There are (2) Myanmar proverb and (2) Thai proverbs that use “goat” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (14).

<Table-14>Proverbs that use goat as a metaphor

Thai	1. แพะรับบาป(Scapegoat.) A victim
Myanmar	1. ဆင်ကျီစားရာ ဆိတ်မခံသာ (It is a teasing for the elephant, but the goat has to suffer.) When the powerful one teases the others, the others suffer a lot.

15) Horse

There are (4) Myanmar proverb and (9) Thai proverbs that use “horse” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (15).

<Table-15>Proverbs that use horse as a metaphor

Thai	1. ม้าขาว (The White Horse) The talented one who comes to help.
Myanmar	1. မြင်းကောင်းခွာလိပ် (The best horse may slip sometimes.) A brilliant person may have minor fault.

16) Lion

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (3) Thai proverbs that use “lion” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (16).

<Table-16>Proverbs that use lion as a metaphor

Thai	1. ราชสีห์คบโค (The lion makes friend with cow) A nobleman makes friend with the gangster.
Myanmar	1. ခြင်္သေ့ဆီသိင်္ဂီ ရွှေခွက်မှာတည် (The liquid fat of a lion can be stored in a gold vessel.) The quality of a person is only for those who admire him.

17) Monkey

There are (2) Myanmar proverb and (7) Thai proverbs that use monkey as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (17).

<Table-17>Proverbs that use monkey as a metaphor

Thai	1. ชะนี (Gibbon) Gay
Myanmar	1. မျောက်သစ်ကိုင်းလွတ် (A monkey which falls down while swinging from tree to tree.) A helpless person or a person who miss the good chance.

18) Pig

There are (1) Myanmar proverb and (3) Thai proverbs that use “pig” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (19).

<Table-18>Proverbs that use pig as a metaphor

Thai	1. หมู (Pig) Easy one.
Myanmar	1. ဝက်ဖြစ်မှတော့ မစင်မကြောက် (Being born as a pig, it should not disgust human excrement.) Be prepared for the situation one is in.

19) Rabbit

There are (1) Myanmar proverb and (7) Thai proverbs that use “rabbit” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (20).

<Table-19>Proverbs that use rabbit as a metaphor

Thai	1. กระต่าย (The rabbit) The man from the lower standard
Myanmar	1. ဝင်လယ်ကို ယုန်ငယ်မထောက်နိုင် (The little rabbit can't swim the sea.) A weak person cannot fight with the stronger one.

20) Shrimp

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (3) Thai proverbs that use “shrimp” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (21).

<Table-20>Proverbs that use shrimp as a metaphor

Thai	1. กุ้งแห้ง (The dry shrimp) A skinny person
Myanmar	1. ဝုခွန်ကြိတ်တက် ချိုင်းလည်ပြိတ် (A smart shrimp can cut the neck of heron..) A smart people can fight against the enemy.

21) Snake

There are (6) Myanmar proverb and (4) Thai proverbs that use “snake” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (22).

<Table-21>Proverbs that use snake as a metaphor

Thai	1. ปากเป็นธรรมใจดำเหมือนงูเห่า (Fair mouth but black hearted like a cobra.) A person with a different heart and mind. An unreliable person.
Myanmar	1. ခြေပွေး ဝိုးထိ (A viper is bitten by another viper.) A crook is deceived.

22) Tiger

There are (7) Myanmar proverb and (27) Thai proverbs that use “tiger” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (23).

<Table-22>Proverbs that use tiger as a metaphor

Thai	1. दुहेमींनलेख (cruel like a tiger) A cruel person
Myanmar	1. ကျားရှေ့မှောက်ချက်လဲ (To fell down before a tiger.) Making mistake in front of the person who does not like mistakes and give punishment.

23) Water monitor (Iguana)

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (8) Thai proverbs that use “water monitor” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table .

<Table-23>Proverbs that use water monitor as a metaphor

Thai	1. เหี้ย (An iguana) A wicked man
Myanmar	1. ဖွတ်ကျောပြာစု ခရုဆန်ကျွတ် (If the iguana turns to be a crocodile, the river will be tempestuous.) If an incompetent person holds the authority, many people have to suffer.

24) Worm (or) Maggot

There are (3) Myanmar proverb and (8) Thai proverbs that use “worm” as a metaphor to describe the characteristics of human and the examples are shown in the table (25).

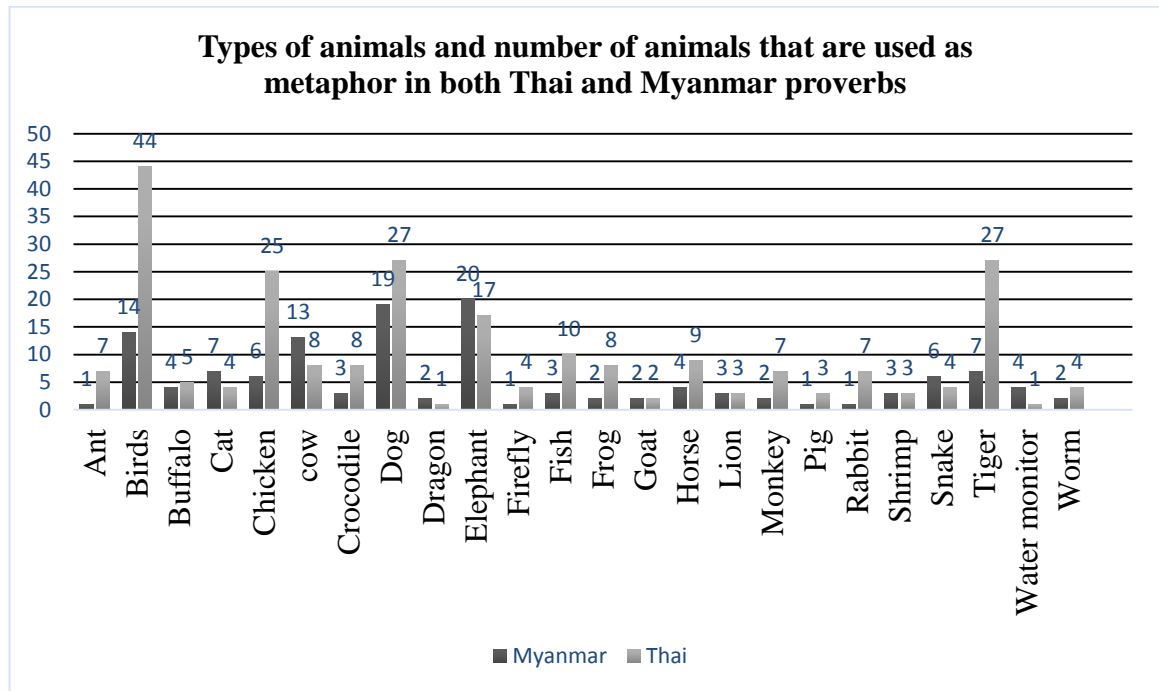
<Table-24>Proverbs that use worm as a metaphor

Thai	1. เกล็ดเป็นหนอน (Like maggots coming out of the flesh.) The betrayer comes out from one's own followers.
Myanmar	1. အသားထဲက လောက်ထွက် (Like maggots coming out of the flesh.) The betrayer comes out from one's own followers.

IV. Findings and discussions

Both Myanmar and Thai Languages use animal as metaphors in proverbs. There are altogether 123 Myanmar proverbs and 256 Thai proverbs. But only 117 Myanmar proverbs and 231 Thai proverbs use the same types of animals to describe the characteristics of human. By analysing the use of the type of animal in proverbs, it is found out as follow.

The 24 types of animals that are used as metaphors in both Myanmar and Thai languages and the numbers of animals that are used in proverbs are shown as follow.



It is found out that Myanmar people use “Elephant” the most as a metaphor in proverbs. This is because elephants have had a relationship with Myanmar society for long time in terms of religion, culture and the economy. “Myanmar is home to the second largest total population of Asian elephants remaining worldwide (after India).” (Myanmar Timber Elephant project, Department of Biology, University of Turku.) The role of “elephant” has been very important in Myanmar since Myanmar’s King era. Therefore, Myanmar people use “elephant” the most to describe the characteristics of human in proverbs. Meanwhile, Thai people use “Birds” the most as a metaphor in proverbs to describe the characteristic of human. One of the reasons is that there are many different species of birds that are used to compare with the characteristics of human, From the recent research about proverbs concerning with animals, it was also found out that, Thai people use the birds the most as metaphor in proverbs.(Htet Htet Win, Phyu Yati Thin, Su Su Khin. 2020. A Comparative Study of Thai and Myanmar Proverbs that are related to Animals, The 1st International Conference on Languages and Humanities January 6-7: 193.)

The characteristics of the human depend upon the type of animal that used as metaphor. If the animal is strong, clever, hardworking and has its own aptitude, that animal is used as metaphor to describe the good characteristics of human. For example, Thai proverb “Bookworm” (หนอนหนังสือ) that means a good characteristic of a person who enjoys reading. If the animal is stupid, harmful, cruel and also betrays, that kind of animal is used as metaphor to describe the bad characteristics of human. For example, “Like maggots coming out of the flesh” (အသားထဲက လောကီထွက်).

The same type of animal describes the good as well as the bad characteristics of human. The characteristics of human depends upon the behaviour of animal that used as a metaphor. In some cases, the same type of animal is used to describe the good as well as the bad characteristics of human. A heifer does not cling to its calf. (နွားမတမ်း သားမခင်) A young wife is rarely tied to its children. This proverb represents the bad characteristic of human. The younger ones are half clever comparatively with the experienced elder ones. (နွားပျိုသန်လှ နွားအိုပေါင်ကျိုး) This proverb represents the good characteristic of human .Although the same animal “ cow” is

used but these two proverbs have different meanings to describe the characteristics of human. Chicken (ไก่) This proverb means The woman who earns money by prostitution. In another proverb A game-cock does not need head hair. (ชาติไก่ชน ขนหัวไม่ต้องการ) It means “Good people do not care about praise”. Both of these Thai proverbs use “chicken” as metaphors but the first one refers to bad characteristics and the second chicken refers to good characteristics

Therefore, the same type of animal can describe the good as well as the bad characteristics of human. This is because the good and the bad characteristic of animals do not depend on the type of animal but depend upon the inner mind and the environment as in the Jataka story about “The fate of two parrot.” The two parrots were carried from their nest in a storm and one dropped in a hermitage and the other in a den of thieves. The characteristics of the one who fell among the hermit became quite gentle. The one who fell among thieves grew like the thieves. Its characteristics were cruel, rough and wicked. (Kurunegoda Piyatissa. 2008. Buddhist Tales for Young & Old: Vol-2, [www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/ buddhism](http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhism) (Accessed April 18,2020))

As proverb is a meaningful saying that everyone uses in daily conversation and it reflects the beliefs, life style, traditions and cultures of an ethnic group. And there are many sources that proverbs originated. People also use various metaphors in proverbs based on ideas, creativity, analysis, experiences and self-awareness. Thus, those who are learning languages should study the meaning of proverbs and their usages. And should do more research on proverbs as language is the most useful weapon in communicating with other countries.

V. Conclusion (*heading iv*)

This research shows the types of animals that are used as metaphors in proverbs to describe the characteristics of human. And how people use animals as metaphor to describe the good or bad characteristics of human. By comparing the types of animals, it is found out that there are 123 Myanmar proverbs and 256 Thai proverbs. But only 117 Myanmar proverbs and 231 Thai proverbs use the same types of animals to describe the characteristics of human. “Elephant” is used the most by Myanmar people because elephant plays an important role through time in history of Myanmar. and “Birds” is used the most by Thai people. And the same animal can describe both the good and bad characteristics of human depends upon the inner mind and the surrounding environment of that animal lives. For further more study, we can do research by emphasising on one type of animal that are used in both languages.

Acknowledgment

The researcher would like to express my gratitude to Dr.Kyi Shwin, Rector , Yangon University of Foreign Languages, and Pro-rector Dr.Mi Mi Aung.This research has been accomplished with great kindness from our Tr.Daw Su Su Khin ,Associate Professor, Department of Thai, who provided valuable advices and reviews, correcting mistakes and giving me a chance to write this research paper. The researcher also thanks to the Research Management & Ethic Committee, Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Associate Professors from Department of Thai for supporting to accomplish this research.

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