CHAPTER III

Methodology

Most cartoons or comic strips are written for one particular reason: Humour. It is the readers' perception of how those comics are humourous; to what extent the readers understand and interpret the meaning of the comic. This study attempted to analyze the discourse interpretation of Calvin and Hobbes comic strips by Mattayom 5 students at Kudbakpattanasuksa School in Sakon Nakhon province.

This chapter contains the explanation of the procedures used in this study. It explains the study's participants, the research instrument, the distribution, collection of data, the analysis of data, and the validity and reliability of the study.

Participants

The current study involved 30 Thai EFL students. They were studying in Mattayom 5 majoring in Science-Mathematics at Kudbakpatthanasuksa School, Aumphur Kudbak, Sakon Nakhon Province. The participants were selected using purposive sampling by examining their scores in English core courses that they received in Mattayom 4, ranging from the first to the thirtieth highest level. The participants had studied English in Thailand for 11 years in average. None had previously read Calvin & Hobbes nor been abroad.

Research Instrument

The selection of this particular comic stemmed from previous research on the translation of interjections and interjectional phrases in Calvin and Hobbes (Wangsuekul, 2007). The main characters of this comic are Calvin, an imaginative six-year-old boy, and Hobbes, an energetic and sardonic—albeit stuffed—tiger.

The instrument used in this study was 20 comic strips of 'Calvin & Hobbes' published between March and April 2008 in the Nation Newspaper, an English newspaper in Thailand. The strips were chosen from the total of 50 strips by an English native speaker. The conversation appeared in the strips was considered as a

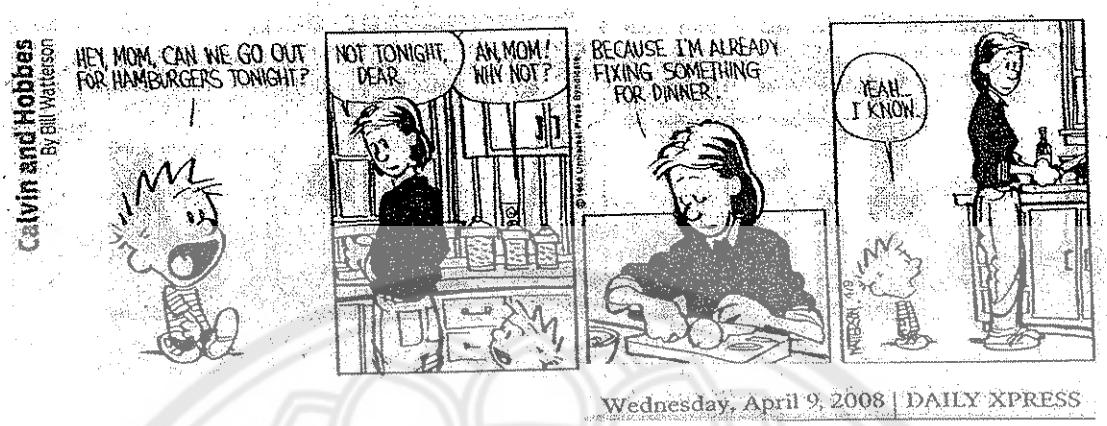
discourse type and the criteria used for selecting the strips are culture aspect, Calvin and Hobbes characteristic aspect, and levels of easiness and difficulty of the vocabulary used. The comic strips were pasted as a first part on the answer sheets. Then the vocabulary was drawn from each strip and shown under the comic's frames as a second part. The meaning of difficult vocabulary was given in Thai in order to ensure that the students could understand the literal meaning of the words.

Then three experts were asked to check out the IOC score to validate the selected 20 strips and a format of the response sheets. The expert comprised two English native speakers were Assoc. Prof. Christopher L. Conley, a lecturer of English at Narasuan University, Mr. Thomson Libscomb II, a native English speaker who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, English major, and a Thai instructor in Thepsatri Rajabhat University who has taught English for thirty-nine years, Asst. Prof. Tamnong Jareonroop.

An English native speaker interpreted the contextual discourse of each strip to be set as a frame to evaluate the students' interpretation. Later, when the interpretation was used, it was translated from the English into the Thai language so that it could be compared with the participants' Thai interpretation. The Thai interpretation was done to two parts, i.e., the first part was an equivalent to the English version meant for measuring the students' pragmatic comprehension. The other part was deemed for the literal level of understanding. Then the 20 comic strips along with the interpreted key were examined by three experts to find out the IOC scores. One of the experts was Thai and the other two were native English speakers. The IOC score which was more than 0.5 from the three experts indicated that the 20 selected Calvin and Hobbes comic strips along with two parts of the interpretation are valid as the research instrument.

Cook (1999) states that pragmatics provides a means of relating the language to the physical, social, and psychological world in which they take place and tends to examine how meaning develops at a given point. Therefore, the researchers analyzed the pragmatic meaning of the conversation of the characters that appeared in each strip. This included the theory of schemata, Grice's co-operative principle and the flouting of the maxims of co-operative principles. Below are the 20 comic strips along with the pragmatic interpretation used as the analysis guideline in the study.

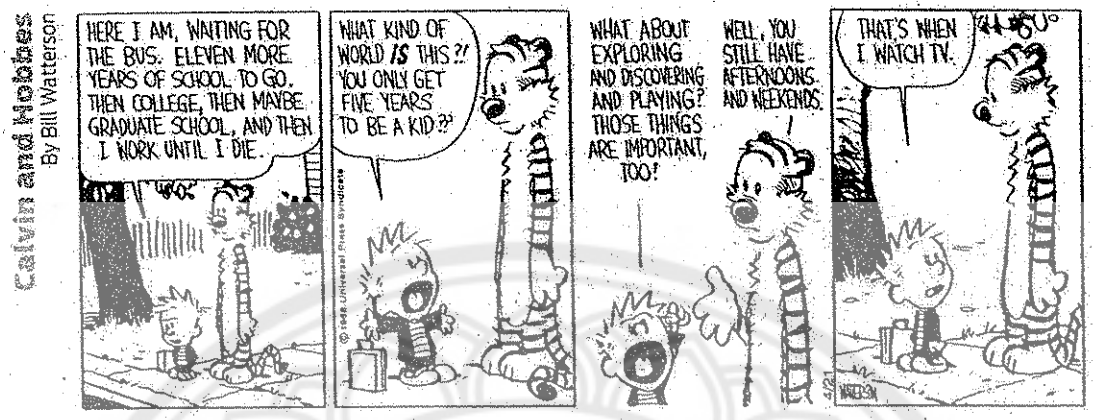
Comic strip no. 1



The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Mom gives a reason why they won't go out for dinner. Calvin has another reason for wanting to eat out: he doesn't like Mom's cooking.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no.1, the participants need to be able guess the taste of the mother's food using their schemata to interpret Calvin's "YEAH…I KNOW." and the knowledge of the indirect speech act of saying "I don't like to eat your food."

Comic strip No. 2



Monday, April 21, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is making up many things he could do instead of going to school. He doesn't really want to do those things; he just wants to get out of going to school.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no.2, the participants need to know the schema about character of Calvin that he does not like to go to school, a feeling that is so common in millions of young boys around the world.

Comic strip No. 3

Monday, March 10, 2008 | DAILYXPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin's dad tricks him into taking a bath. Calvin can empathize with grown children who don't want to see their parents.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no.3, the participants need to know the schema about fathers who like to tricks their children and the knowledge of the maxim of quality that is flouted when Calvin's father lies that bath time is a very special time.

Comic strip No. 4

Thursday, March 6, 2008 | DAILYXPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'A new definition of gym class or "physical education": what Calvin learns from the bully's physical body.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no.4, the participants need to know the schema about the character of Moe, a bully at Calvin's school, who always shoves Calvin against wall, demands his lunch money and calls him "Twinky". Moe represents a bully figure seen in school all over the world, and the knowledge of the maxim of quality that is flouted when Moe exaggerates the effects of a physical education class would help make the comic strip humourous.

Comic strip No. 5

Thursday, March 13, 2008 | DAILYXPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is trying to look like a tiger. Hobbes feels that no matter how much Calvin looks like a tiger; he will never have the style of a tiger. Essentially, Hobbes thinks he is better than Calvin, and Calvin will never be as cool as he is.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no.5, the participants need to know the schema about character of Calvin who sometimes imagines himself as a tiger and character of Hobbes, Calvin's stuffed tiger, who, from Calvin's point of view, is a live tiger, much larger than Calvin and full of independent attitudes and ideas. This corresponds with a little boy's fantasy and aspiration that is commonly seen.

Comic strip No. 6

Tuesday, March 25, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Hobbes is making up information about tigers to trick Calvin into eating a caterpillar. Hobbes is a stuffed tiger, not a real tiger, and it's funny that he claims to know more about tigers than someone who has written a book on the subject.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 6, the participants need to have knowledge that tigers eat meat of large animals, not caterpillars. And it helps if the participants realise that Hobbes is a stuffed tiger, not a real animal.

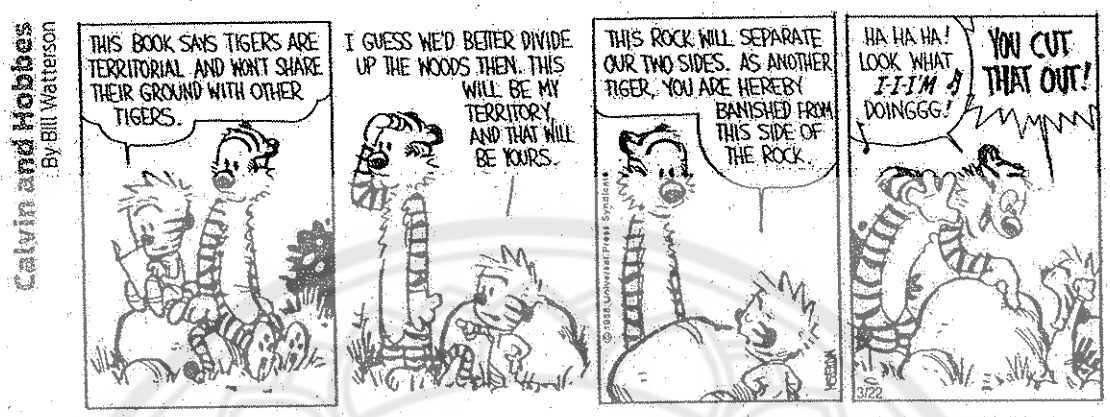
Comic strip No. 7

Monday, March 24, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is making silly comments about how his side of the woods is better, trying to make Hobbes jealous. Hobbes takes an equally silly action to make his own side better than Calvin's.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 7, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes as appeared in strip no.5. It also helps if the participants realise that the act of boasting can be seen as silly and insignificant.

Comic strip No. 8



Saturday, March 22, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic meaning comprehension is 'To try to act like "real" tigers, Calvin separates their territory and forbids Hobbes from coming over to his side. Hobbes teases Calvin by putting his finger on Calvin's side. Hobbes demonstrates how silly Calvin's idea is.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 8, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes as appeared in strip no.5. It helps if the participants realise a little boy's fantasy and how easily that fantasy can be disrupted.

Comic strip No. 9

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'When he calls her, Rosalyn doesn't come running up to Calvin's room, and he gives away his devious intent by stating plainly what he wants her to do. Essentially, Calvin isn't smart enough to make his plan work: he's still just a kid.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 9, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Rosalyn, Calvin's babysitter, who is able to tolerate Calvin's antics and she is also the only person Calvin truly fears and dislikes and the knowledge of the maxim of manner that Calvin tries to flout but does not succeed. Also, the knowledge that Hobbes is just a stuffed tiger helps make Rosalyn's "CALL A VET?" funny and ironic to the point of being sarcastic.

Comic strip No. 10

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is complaining about everything Rosalyn does; he is dissatisfied with her simply because she isn't his mother. She realises that she can't win and bemoans her situation: she could have had a fun date and instead she chose to babysit Calvin.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 10, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Rosalyn as appeared in strip no 9. The knowledge about the relationship between babysitters and the children under their care in general in the United States helps explain the animosity between Calvin and Rosalyn.

Comic strip No. 11

Tuesday, March 18, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Young, gullible Calvin is searching for information about tigers. Hobbes knowingly tricks Calvin again, this time pretending to have secret information.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 11, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes as appeared in strip no.5.

Comic strip No.12

Saturday, March 15, 2008 |DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Hobbes wants to know what it is like to be a tiger, and in this case to find prey. The only "prey", or food, that Hobbes has ever seen is what is in Calvin's house. His answer shows that he knows nothing about the life of a tiger.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 12, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes as appeared in strip no.5. Also, the knowledge that tigers do not usually eat human food helps reveal childhood innocence.

Comic strip No.13

Friday, April 25, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is frustrated with his inability to complete the model accurately. Hobbes makes a silly suggestion. Calvin gets more frustrated and overwhelmed. Hobbes looks for an excuse to help Calvin feel better.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 13, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin who is an impulsive six-year-old boy and Hobbes who wishes Calvin well.

Comic strip No.14

Thursday, April 17, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is speaking in a technical language usually used to describe politicians, as if his dad were an elected official. He is trying to get his dad to allow him to stay home from school. Dad is not fooled.'

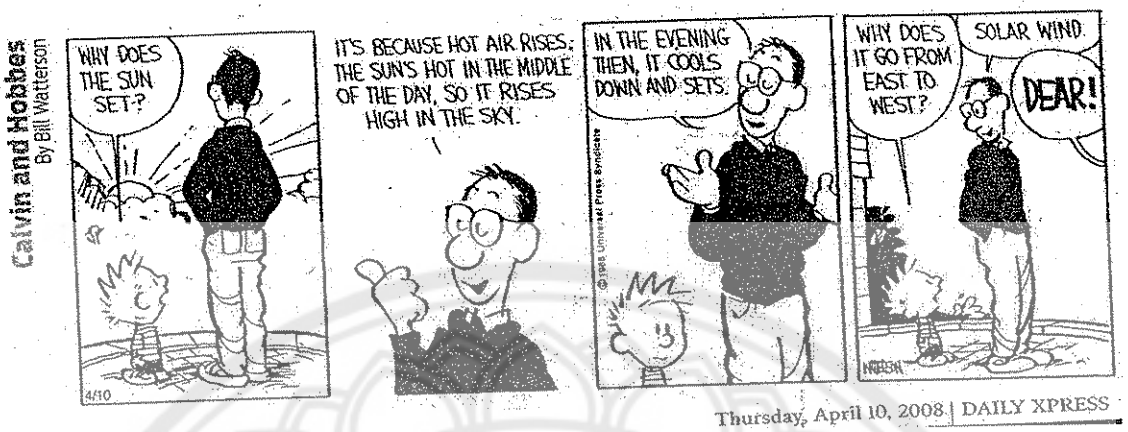
To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 14, the participants need to be able to differentiate between formal and informal discourse typology as well as the usual vocabulary range of adults and children. Moreover, the knowledge of the maxim of quantity and of flouting this maxim will help render Calvin's winding speech more understandable.

Comic strip No.15

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Typical of young children, Calvin has introduced a game that Hobbes has very little chance of winning. After two tries, Hobbes wisely quits. Calvin is not happy – he was having fun winning the one-sided game.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 15, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin who is an impulsive and selfish six-year-old boy and Hobbes who likes to make a wry observation.

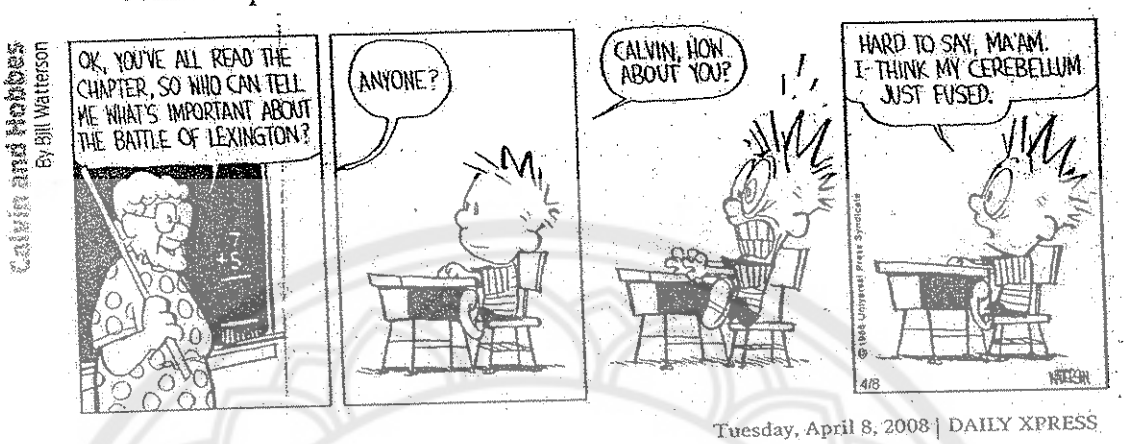
Comic strip No.16



The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is asking curious, childish questions. His dad takes a scientific fact (i.e. heat rises) and applies it inaccurately. Calvin doesn't realize he is being tricked. His mother, however, does realise this and doesn't like his father teasing young Calvin.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 16, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of a curious Calvin and his father who often tells him outrageous lies (flouting the maxim of quality), and the scientific fact of sunrise and sunset. The knowledge of flouting the maxim of relevance appeared in the last strip between his parents.

Comic strip No.17



Tuesday, April 8, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin has probably not read the chapter and has no idea how to respond. He is so shocked by being called on by his teacher that he compares what just happened in his brain to what might happen in a computer that receives an electric surge. As is often the case, Calvin speaks with a voice of experience far beyond his years.'

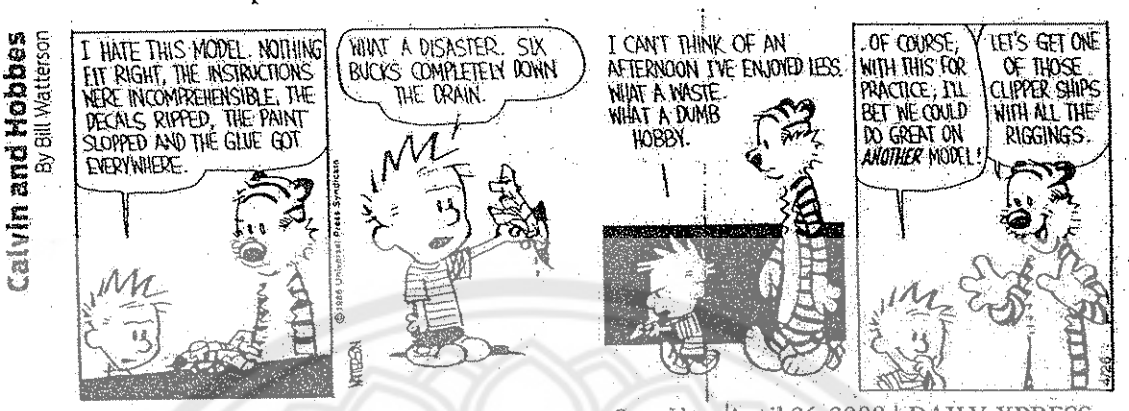
To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 17, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin as appeared in strip no. 14 that he usually speaks with a voice of experience far beyond his age, and about Miss Wormwood who serves as a foil to Calvin's mischief. Personal experience of the feeling of guilt and shock in a similar situation may help facilitate the understanding of this comic strip and make it extra funny.

Comic strip No.18

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Calvin is teasing his friend with a gross story about how his sandwich was made. Instead of being grossed out by the story, his friend observes his antics with condescension.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 18, the participants need to know the characters of Calvin about his often exaggerated expression and his bizarre habit and Susie Derkins, Calvin's classmate, who lives in his neighborhood, and who is polite and diligent in her studies. The knowledge of flouting the maxim of relevance which appeared in last strip is also part of pragmatic understanding.

Comic strip No.19



Saturday, April 26, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'After having a difficult time putting a model plane together, Calvin blames the plane. After a long list of complaints, he admits that it would be fun to do another model. Hobbes makes an outrageous suggestion that they should try a very difficult model ship.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 19, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes and the knowledge of the maxim of relevance.

Comic strip No.20

Wednesday, April 23, 2008 | DAILY XPRESS

The frame of pragmatic comprehension is 'Hobbes is confused by the instructions, which are given in three languages. He thinks that you have to read everything, when we know that it is actually the same instructions in each language. Calvin is struggling with the glue. By the last frame he is so frustrated that he has given up and decided that he will never get the glue cleaned up.'

To understand the pragmatic meaning in strip no. 20, the participants need to know the schema about the characters of Calvin and Hobbes and about the instructions in various languages attached to a lot of products nowadays. The knowledge of the maxim of relevance helps make the reading of this comic strip more enjoyable.

Data Collection Procedure

The 30 participants read the comic strips individually in class. Two strips were assigned for one class (50 minutes). The participants did the reading two classes a week, one during a club study and the other during a homeroom session. This study covered two sessions a week over a five-week period. At the beginning of the study, the researcher explained the purpose and procedure of the study but did not give any background knowledge of Calvin & Hobbes. During the administration, each participant received an answer sheet. The sheet composed of three parts; one comic strip series, a set of vocabulary, and an interpretation section for the participants to write down their reading interpretation. The participants could see the meaning of unfamiliar words below the frames in each comic strip. They could also ask the researcher for the literal meaning of any words that appeared in the strips. After reading, the students interpreted the discourse meaning in Thai by writing down in the interpretation section. This was done individually according to each student's understanding.

Analysis of Data

After the participants completed the answer sheets, the data were qualitatively analysed by the researchers to examine the students' knowledge of discourse interpretation. The students' interpretations were categorised into three groups according to the level of their understanding of the comic strips. The first group was for those unable to understand and those who misunderstood the comic strips. The second group was for those who could understand the literal meaning of the strips. The third group was for those who could reach the pragmatic level of understanding.

The data from the answer sheets were also analysed quantitatively using mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (S.D.) to find out the level of the students' discourse interpretation language.