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TRẦN THỊ THIÊN LÝ

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC
FEATURES OF IDIOMS DENOTING CLOTHING IN
ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

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(A Summary)**

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Supervisor: Assoc.Prof. Dr TRƯỜNG VIÊN

Examiner 1: Assoc.Prof. Dr PHAN VĂN HÒA

Examiner 2: Assoc.Prof. Dr TRẦN VĂN PHƯỚC

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Chapter 4 describes and contrasts the syntactic, semantic and cultural characteristic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.

Chapter 5 designs conclusions on syntactic, semantic and national similarities and differences of English CLIs.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING, LEARNING AND TRANSLATING

Idioms, as defined in the previous chapter, are semantically opaque, therefore, the learners can be confused at understanding their meanings.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

Within the scope of a master thesis we cannot cover all the features of idioms denoting clothing in both English and Vietnamese, the study just limits itself to the syntactic and semantic features of CLIs in English and Vietnamese, therefore there are still areas for further studies such as

- Pragmatic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.
- English and Vietnamese Proverbs denoting clothing.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

Language is obviously a vital tool for communication in our daily life. Not only is it a means of thoughts and ideas, but it forges friendship, cultural ties, and economic relationships. Benjamin Whorf has noted that language shapes thoughts and emotions, determining one's perception of reality. John Stuart Mill said that language is the light of the mind.

Language, of course, is knowledge, and in our world today knowledge is one of the key factors in competitiveness. In an advanced industrial society in an increasingly interdependent world, the knowledge of other languages becomes indispensable. Just think of how the advent of the Internet has changed our lives. For the last few years, millions of people across the world, who share common interests, are able to communicate with each other and exchange ideas. Not only are they able to do this due to the various technological advances, but also because they share a common language.

There is, of course, no denying the fact that the knowledge of the English language is one of the most important tools available in our life. It is one of the international

languages, a tool of communication between countries, cultural groups, various companies and organizations, communities and friends. Learning English is a difficult task, and mastering idioms in English is not an easy job. Therefore, it is really challenging for learners of English and Vietnamese as a foreign language to learn how to use and understand idioms.

Let us consider the following examples

(1) - There's a lot of unemployment in this area. People are having to *tighten their belt* just to survive till better times return. [66, p.51]

(2) - Tôi chắc thằng Xuân chưa có thì giờ nghĩ đến ta, nếu có nghĩ đến ta thì thế nào nó cũng tìm ta trước để huênh hoang ra về *áo gấm về làng* loè anh chị. [15, p.25]

Obviously, from the above examples, the figurative meanings of English and Vietnamese idioms cannot be predicted through an analysis of their individual word meanings. Idioms do not mean what they literally mean.

With the effort to help learners of English understand more clearly about the syntactic and semantic features of idioms denoting clothing, we concentrate our effort on the research "*An investigation into syntactic and semantic features of idioms denoting clothing in English and Vietnamese*".

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION - IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

A contrastive analysis plays a vital role in this study. It is carried out to find out the similarities and differences in syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing. Moreover, this thesis also investigate the cultural characteristics of CLIs.

Chapter 1 presents the introduction with the rationale of the study and states what the study is aimed at. Besides, the method, research scope, the research questions and hypotheses are included in this chapter.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the related previous studies, fundamental and essential theoretical preliminaries concerning the subject under consideration which serves as the basic foundation of data analysis and findings discussion in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 develops the methods (descriptive, analytical, contrastive) and procedures in order to fulfill the research.

Positive effect	+	+
Material / Colour / Quality	+	+
Lawful / Unlawful profit		
Negative effect	+	+
Positive effect	+	-
Relation		
Bad relation	+	+
Good relation	+	+
Profession	+	-
Emotion	+	-

4.2.3. Cultural Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Clothing

Idioms carry national cultural characteristics and cultural information. And it is inseparable with culture. Cultural features expressed in idioms in general and in idiom denoting clothing in particular are also found in English and Vietnamese.

4.2.3.1. Cultural Symbols

4.2.3.2. Religious Symbols

4.2.3.3. Symbolic Animals

4.2.3.4. Human Body Parts

4.2.4. Similarities and Differences In Semantic Features of Idioms Denoting Clothing

4.2.4.1. Similarities

4.2.4.2. Differences

Hopefully, this research can contribute to understanding how people build up idioms in this field, then help language learners to gain the correct comprehension and usage as well as to avoid negative interference in translating idioms.

1.2. RESEARCH SCOPE

All the data are collected from English and Vietnamese dictionaries. We also collect idioms denoting clothing from the short stories and in literature to have better understanding idioms in contexts. Idioms denoting clothing also include those that express the state of “*no clothes on*”. (See examples on pages 11-12)

1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1. Aims of the Study

The study is expected to:

- Investigate linguistic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.

- Raise the awareness among learners of English and Vietnamese of the existence of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing in each language and of some typical linguistic and cultural characteristics between the two languages.

1.3.2. Objectives of the Study

The study is designed to:

- Describe, analyse and compare syntactic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.
- Describe, analyse and compare semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing .
- Find out the similarities and differences of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.
- Make some suggestions for successfully teaching, learning and translating English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

1.4.1. Research Questions

The study attempts to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the syntactic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing?
2. What are the semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing?
3. What are the similarities and differences in English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing?

1.4.2. Hypotheses

Table 4.6. A Summary of Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese CLIs

Semantic fields	English CLIs	Vietnamese CLIs
Appearance		
Bad appearance	+	+
Good appearance	+	+
Personality		
Bad personality	+	+
Good personality	+	+
Situations / conditions		
Unfavourble contrary/situations	+	+
Favourble preferable/situations	+	+
Attitude / Manner /Temper		
Bad attitude / Manner / temper	+	+
Good attitude / Manner / temper	+	+
Knowledge/Experience/Intelligence		
Bad knowledge/Experience/Intelligence	+	+
Good knowledge/ Experience/ Intelligence	+	+
Social status		
Low social status	+	+
High social status	+	+
Actions / activities		
Negative effect	+	+

4.2.1.1. Metaphor

4.2.1.2. Metonymy

4.2.1.3. Simile

4.2.1.4. Hyperbole

4.2.1.5. Symmetry

4.2.2. Semantics Fields of English and Vietnamese Idioms

Denoting Clothing

4.2.2.1. Appearance

4.2.2.2. Personality

4.2.2.3. Situations / Conditions

4.2.2.4. Attitude / Manner / Temper

4.2.2.5. Knowledge / Experience / Intelligence

4.2.2.6. Social Status / Circumstance

4.2.2.7. Actions / Activities

4.2.2.8. Material / Colour / Quality

4.2.2.9. Lawful / Unlawful profit

4.2.2.10. Relation

4.2.2.11. Profession

4.2.2.12. Emotion

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Idioms are both easy and difficult elements in every language. They are easy since each idiom mostly has a single meaning and is used in a sort of circumstance. Once learned, we will find it easy to understand when meeting it again. They are difficult since we cannot normally guess their meaning.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Idioms are an object of study by many linguists and writers. There have been a lot of writers making investigation into idioms in English and Vietnamese languages. Each researcher has his or her own approach and viewpoints. Some pay attention to definition, position, status of idioms. Others focus on the development or explanation the meaning of idioms by giving examples.

Cowie et al [37] analyzed the way their grammar and meanings complemented each other to create idiomaticity. The

author also suggested “*techniques*” to distinguish idiomatic units from other multiword expressions.

Nguyễn Hoà [57] in his book entitled “*An Introduction to Semantics*”, pointed out that the meaning of a word reflects reality by being associated with a certain sound-form. He also presented the transference of meaning includes metaphor, metonymy, litotes and so on in his book on pages 35-38.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Definition of Idioms

According to Wright J. [66] an idiom is “*an expression that is fixed and recognized by native speakers*” and “*it uses language in non-literal – metaphorical – way*”.

There are many Vietnamese linguists who have given out some definitions of idioms.

As for Nguyễn Như Ý et al [34] idiom is a phrase or a fixed syntactic group that has a monolithic semantics, he also states that idioms have no literal senses and they can be used as particular words in sentences. Nguyễn Lâm [19] defined idioms as fixed phrases to express a concept.

To clarify what we mentioned above, let us take a look at the following examples to make the matter clearer.

comparison with Vietnamese. It is 121 gaining 60.5% in English, but there are only 54 gain 27% in Vietnamese. The result of NP and VP are a complete contrary. Next, the percentage of Adjective phrases in English CLIs is lower than in Vietnamese CLIs is 14.5% compared with 4%. Finally, there is a significant difference in the percentage of Prepositional phrases in English and Vietnamese idioms that is 9% in compared with 0%.

4.2. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS DENOTING CLOTHING

4.2.1. Transference of Meaning of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Clothing

Obviously that the meaning of idioms can not be determined by looking at transference of meaning or understand the meaning of the isolated components, we should perceive the relationship between the connotative and denotative meaning of the components to guess the idiomatic meanings in order to know that idiom contains idiomatic expression or not.

Besides, English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing also have some major principles of meaning transference as follows.

Table 4.5. A Summary of Syntactic Features of English and Vietnamese Denoting Clothing

English and Vietnamese CLIs		English		Vietnamese		
		Number	percentage	Number	Percentage	
Syntactical Analysis	Phrase Structures	<i>Noun Phrase</i>	53	26.5%	117	58.5%
		<i>Verb Phrase</i>	121	60.5%	54	27%
		<i>Adjective Phrase</i>	8	4%	29	14.5%
		<i>Prepositional Phrase</i>	18	9%	0	0%
Total		200	100%	200	100%	

The above table shows the numbers and percentages of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing in the syntactic features. Firstly, we take a look at Noun phrases, it is easy to realize that Vietnamese idioms occupy more than double in comparison with English. Particularly, Vietnamese NP is 117 accounting for 58.5%. Meanwhile, English idioms with NP is only 54 occupying 27%. Secondly, Verb phrases have the result contrary to Noun phrases, we can see that the number of Verb phrases in English are more than double in

(3) - What a change there's been in the world! A few years ago that country was a superpower, but now it has to *go cap in hand* to United States and other countries asking for financial help. [18, p.58]

(4) - Chưa lấy Mô nó có là bà vương bà tướng gì đâu? cũng com thầy com cô, cũng chỉ là một con sen. Thế mà động ra khỏi cửa là *quần chùng áo dài* nuôn nuốt. [68, p.17]

2.2.2. Idioms Denoting Clothing

In “*Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*”, Hornby A S [50, p.269] states clothing as particular clothes that we wear, such as *dress, shirt, trousers, or jackets*, etc.

2.2.3. Main Features of Idioms

2.2.3.1. Structural Features

2.2.3.2. Semantic Features

2.2.3.3. Semantic Opacity

2.2.3.4. Semantic Expressiveness

2.2.4. Overview of Phrase Structures

2.2.4.1. Noun Phrases

2.2.4.2. Verb Phrases

2.2.4.3. Adjective Phrases

2.2.4.4. Prepositional Phrases

2.2.5. Idioms and Other Language Units

2.2.5.1. Idioms and Phrases

2.2.5.2. Idioms and Collocations

2.2.5.3. Idioms and Proverbs

2.2.6. Concepts of Semantic Fields

2.2.7. Language and Culture Relationship

2.2.7.1. Language Expresses Cultural Reality

2.2.7.2. Language Embodies Cultural Reality

2.2.7.3. Language Symbolizes Cultural Reality

2.2.8. Summary

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

3.1. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study is designed in the descriptive, qualitative, quantitative, and contrastive methods to describe, generalize, analyze, compare and contrast the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing (CLIs).

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

Vietnamese whereas we can find a lots in English as following forms

Preposition + Noun phrase

(28) - Once a medical student has anatomy *under her belt*, she'll have much less to memoriez. [35, p.687]

Prepositional phrase + Prepositional phrase

(29) - She is quite capable of deserting you whenever she feels like it – *at the drop of a hat*. [49, p.173]

Preposition + Prepositional phrase

(30) - When we last saw Phil he was *out at the elbows*. [35, p. 479]

The prepositional phrases in both English and Vietnamese CLIs can be illustrated in the table 4.4

Table 4.4. Prepositional Phrase Structures of English and Vietnamese CLIs

	English	Vietnamese
Prepositional phrases	Preposition + Noun phrase	–
	Prepositional phrase + Prepositional phrase	
	Preposition + Prepositional phrase	

(26) - Hon chục năm nay, Cún đi ăn mày, Cún chẳng lạ gì cuộc sống con người... ăn mày là ai, ăn mày là ta...**Đói cơm rách áo** hoá ra ăn mày... [71, p.35]

Adjective + Noun + Comparative + Adjective + Noun

(27) - Người vẫn nói **tốt danh hơn lành áo** như thế mới sâu, / Đồi thường chê xanh vỏ đồ lòng, cũng đừng nên sắc. [5, p.301]

We have summarized the structures of adjective phrases in both languages in the table 4.3.

Table 4.3. Adjective Phrase Structures of English and Vietnamese CLIs

	English	Vietnamese
Adjective phrases	As + Adjective + As + Noun phrase	Adjective + Comparative + Adjective
		Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun
		Adjective + Noun + Comparative

4.1.2.4. CLIs in a Structure of a Prepositional Phrase

Preposition in Vietnamese is not a main part of speech and prepositional phrase is not typical, states Diệp Quang Ban. Therefore, it is difficult to pick out the prepositional phrase in

The data used in the study is collected from dictionaries, books, websites or examples used in contexts, in short stories, novels, newspapers and magazines in both English and Vietnamese. We try to work with 400 idioms denoting clothing.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

Analyzing and classifying is the next step after completing data collection. The data are analyzed on the basis of semantic and syntactical perspectives. They will be qualitatively and quantitatively processed to investigate some linguistic features of idioms denoting clothing in English and Vietnamese. The data are categorized into main aspects syntax and semantics.

3.4. PROCEDURES

The paper will collect about 200 samples of idioms in English and 200 ones in Vietnamese denoting clothing from dictionaries, books, short stories, novels, newspapers, magazines and on the internet.

- Finding and comparing the similarities and differences in syntactic and semantic features of CLIs.
- Finding and contrasting cultural characteristics of CLIs.
- Suggesting some implications for teaching and learning as well as in translating with reference to idioms denoting clothing.
- Presenting the limitations of the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS DENOTING CLOTHING

4.1.1. Syntactical Glimpse at English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Clothing

In this chapter, we focus on the syntactic and semantic

4.1.2. Phrase Structures

4.1.2.1. CLIs in a Structure of a Noun phrase

Noun phrase in English idioms denoting clothing takes a modest number in our data. Let us take a look at the first structure.

(Article) + Noun + Noun

(5) - I apologized a dozen times - Do you want me to wear *a hair shirt* forever? [35, p.275]

(Article) + Noun + and + Noun

(6) - The angry landlady threw her student-lodger out of her house, *bag and baggage*. [48, p.176]

(Article) + Adjective + Noun

(7) - She must have invited *a big-wig* or she wouldn't have spent so much on the dinner. [48, p.174]

(Article) + Past Participle + Noun

	English	Vietnamese
Verb phrases	Verb + Noun phrase	Verb + Noun phrase
	Verb + Noun phrase + Preposition/Preposition phrase	Verb + Noun + Prepositional phrase
	Verb + Prepositional phrase	Verb + Adjective + Verb + Adjective
	Verb + To + Verb	Verb + Noun+ Verb + Noun
	Verb + Preposition	Verb phrase + Verb phrase

4.1.2.3. CLIs in a Structure of an Adjective Phrase

As + Adjective + As + Noun phrase

(24) - I wouldn't worry about Stephen if I were you. He's *as tough as old boots* and can look after himself.

[48, p168]

Adjective + Comparative + Noun Phrase

(25) - Ngoài hành lang một ông già đang ngồi cời trăn bắt rận ở cái áo cánh nâu *rách như tổ đĩa*. [11, p.402]

Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun

(20) - Nay, anh đừng có *vén tay áo sô, đốt nhà táng giấy*, tiền của không phải tự nhiên mà có đâu. [15, p.376]

Verb + Noun + Preposition Phrase

(21) - Thôi tôi can hai bác, anh em với nhau lại cứ khích bác nhau, chỉ tổ *vạch áo cho người xem lưng* chứ được gì. [20, p.796]

Verb + Adjective + Verb + Adjective

(22) - Hằng ngày, Tấm phải làm lưng vất vả, hết chăn trâu gánh nước đến thái khoai, vớt bèo; đêm lại còn xay lúa, giã gạo mà không hết việc. Trong khi đó thì Cám được mẹ nuông chiều, được *ăn trắng mặc trơn*, suốt ngày quanh quẩn ở nhà, không phải làm việc nặng. [15, p.38]

Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun

(23) - Cả miền Nam *sẻ cơm nhường áo*, đùm bọc lẫn nhau trong cơn hoạn nạn, cuối cùng nhân dân Hoà Vang đã thắng. [5, p.220]

In short, the structures of verb phrase of idioms denoting clothing are not many in both English and Vietnamese. In order to make it clearer, we show the following summary of this structure in the table 4.2

Table 4.2. Verb Phrase Structures of English and Vietnamese CLIs

(8) - Pete, now you're behaving like *a stuffed shirt*. Mr Littleton may not be rich or influential, but that's no reason not to accept his invitation. [27, p.110]

(Article) + Noun + Preposition phrase

(9) - This child just can't sit still, she must have *ants in her pants*. [35, p.17]

Similar to English CLIs of noun phrase. Vietnamese also owns many idioms denoting clothing. Let us try to examine the structures of Vietnamese idioms by the following phrases of nouns.

Noun / NP + Noun / NP

(10) - Xênh xang *áo ầu quần liên*

Trường danh lợi mặc ai chen chúc

Noun + Adjective + Noun + Adjective

(12) - Một số đồng các cô, những cô *quần trùng áo dài* rồi xô nhau chạy ra hành lang, nhìn xuống sân [70, p.19]

Noun + Nào + Noun + Nấy

Let us have a look at the example below

(13) - *Mùa nào áo nấy* vẫn là khuynh hướng chính trong phong cách thời trang của giới trẻ xứ sở mặt trời mọc.

[79]

In short, by the way of listing and analyzing the syntactic features of English and Vietnamese noun phrases, we can see that lots of CLIs are used in English comparing with Vietnamese ones. The noun phrase in both languages can be listed in the table below.

Table 4.1 Noun Phrase Structures of English and Vietnamese CLIs

	English	Vietnamese
Noun phrases subordinate relation	(Article) + Noun + Noun	Noun / NP + Noun / NP
	(Article) + Adjective + Noun	Noun + Adj. + Noun + Adj.
	(Article) + Noun + and + Noun	Noun + Nào + Noun + Nấy
	(Article) + Past Participle + Noun	
	(Article) + Noun + Preposition phrase	

4.1.2.2. CLIs in a Structure of a Verb Phrase

There are a lot of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting clothing in this structure. Let us consider a very common structure of English idioms about verb phrase first.

Verb + Noun phrase

(14) - I'm afraid we'll have to ***tighten our belts*** now there's another mouth to feed. [36, p. 56]

Verb + Noun phrase + Preposition / Pre. Phrase

(15) - Of course, your brother has behaved very badly to you, but you will only make matters worse by ***washing your dirty linen in public***. [48, p.177]

Verb + Prepositional phrase

(16) - That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard! You're ***talking through your hat*** if you think that man will be living on the moon in 50 years' time. [18, p.65]

Verb + To + Verb

(17) - I'm not going to the office party this year. Last year everyone was ***dressed to kill***, but I can't afford to spend any money to get something new. [35, p.62]

Verb + Preposition

(18) - Come on, fellows, it's time to ***suit up*** for the hockey game. [35, p.625]

Verb + Noun Phrase

(19) - Trông vẻ mặt cô ấy, trông cách ăn mặc, và cái dáng dấp mau mắn ấy, người ta cũng có thể đã biết đây là người đàn bà biết ***xắn váy quai công*** lên để làm lụng.[11, p. 535]

Verb phrase + Verb phrase