

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

**LÊ THỊ THANH TÙNG**

**A STUDY OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS  
DESCRIBING PEOPLE'S OUTWARD APPEARANCE**

**Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**Code : 60.22.15.**

**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
(A SUMMARY)**

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. RATIONALE

Idioms are considered to be an interesting, popular, indispensable and distinctive phenomenon of almost every language which reflects cultural as well as historical characteristics of the people speaking that language. However, it is sometimes impossible for Vietnamese learners of English to thoroughly and exactly comprehend what is meant by English idioms as well as what structures the idioms belong to.

Moreover, idioms describing people's outward appearance (IPOA) are abundant and varied in the ways of expressing their meanings. However, to the best of our knowledge, idioms describing people's outward appearance have not been studied yet.

Take "*look a sight*" as an example. A listener who knows only the meaning of '*look*' and '*sight*' would be unable to know the actual meaning that if a person looks a sight, their appearance is awful, unsuitable or very untidy.

For example:

"She *looks a sight* in that dress!"

Hopefully, studying English and Vietnamese idioms in general and IPOA in particular helps us to improve our understanding and to achieve our ultimate goal in better teaching and learning English.

For the above reasons, the topic "**A Study of English and Vietnamese Idioms Describing People's Outward Appearance**" has been chosen for my MA thesis with the hope that it will contribute something valuable to the field of teaching and learning English.

## 1.2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 1.2.1. Aim

The aim of the thesis is to investigate into English and Vietnamese IPOA in terms of their syntactic and semantic features in order to help learners use and practise idioms in general and idioms describing people's outward appearance in particular not only in receptive skills like listening and reading but also in productive skills like speaking and writing.

### 1.2.2. Objectives

This study is planned to:

- investigate the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese IPOA .
- compare and contrast English and Vietnamese IPOA to find out the similarities and differences between the two languages.
- suggest some implications for teaching and learning English.

## 1.3. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Idioms are proved to be colourful and various in the ways they are used and understood. Most of learners avoid using them because they aren't sure about the meanings of idioms.

A study of English and Vietnamese IPOA will be probably make some contribution to understanding and using idioms in general and IPOA in particular. Besides, the findings of a contrastive analysis of English and Vietnamese IPOA will improve the syntactic and semantic knowledge of the field for learners of the two languages.

## 1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

With the research entitled "**A Study of English and Vietnamese Idioms Describing People's Outward Appearance**",

we would like to make a contrastive analysis in terms of syntactic and semantic aspects. This study does not investigate into cultural and pragmatic features of IPOA.

### 1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the syntactic characteristics of English and Vietnamese IPOA?
2. What are the semantic characteristics of English and Vietnamese IPOA?
3. What are the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese IPOA in terms of their syntactic and semantic aspects ?
4. What are some possible suggestions for the teaching and learning of English and Vietnamese IPOA?

### 1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter 3 - Methods and Procedures

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion .

Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Implications

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

In English, up to now, this subject has been an interesting field for many linguists and researchers such as V. Fromkin, D.A. Cruse, Jennifer Seidl & W. Mc. Mordie, Milada Broukai,.... D.A. Cruse in “*Lexical semantics*” (1987) mentioned that an idiom may be briefly characterised as a lexical complex which is semantically complex. In “*An Introduction to Language*” (1988), Fromkin et al. makes a comparison between idioms and phrases through examples. A variety of English idioms can be found in dictionaries such as, “*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*” (2008), “*Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of English Idioms*” by Warren (1994), “*Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms*” by Cowie, A.P., Mackin, R.M., and MacCaig, I.R. (1993).

In Vietnamese, a number of researchers have paid attention to idioms. Nguyễn Lực, Lương Văn Đăng made significant contributions to this field in “*Thành Ngữ Tiếng Việt*” (1978). Recently, Nguyễn Lực has just published “*Thành Ngữ Tiếng Việt*” (2009). A lot of works have been done to make collections of Vietnamese idioms in comparison with other languages. Typical works are “*Từ Điển Thành Ngữ, Tục Ngữ Anh – Việt Trường Giải*” by Bùi Phụng (1997). Vũ Dung, Vũ Thúy Anh, Vũ Quang Hào wrote “*Từ Điển Thành Ngữ - Tục Ngữ Việt Nam*” (2000). In “*Từ Điển Từ và Ngữ*” (2000) by Võ Lân, many Vietnamese idioms illustrated with examples can be found in alphabetical order. Besides, the structural

and semantic features of idioms are deeply analyzed by Hoàng Văn Hành in “*Thành Ngữ trong Tiếng Việt*” (1992).

Besides, a large number of Vietnamese and English idioms can be found in many books, dictionaries of other authors and there have been quite a lot of MA and BA theses on various aspects of English and Vietnamese idioms. However, there is no evidence that any research on investigating the topic of my thesis has been done sufficiently and satisfactorily so far.

## 2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.2.1. Definition of idioms and IPOA

#### 2.2.1.1. Definition of Idioms

According to “*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*” [86], the word “idiom” means “an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts”.

D.A. Cruse in “*Lexical Semantics*” (1987) states “idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of its parts”.

In Vietnamese, Hoàng Văn Hành defined idioms in “*Kể Chuyện Thành Ngữ, Tục Ngữ*” (2002), as “thành ngữ là một loại tổ hợp từ cố định, bền vững về hình thái, cấu trúc, hoàn chỉnh, bóng bẩy về ý nghĩa, được sử dụng rộng rãi trong giao tiếp hàng ngày” (*idioms are set expressions which are stable in their morpho – structure, complete and figurative in their meaning, used widely in daily communication, especially in speech*).

With the aim of structural and semantic analysis of idioms in both English and Vietnamese, we base on the definition given by Fromkin, Collins and Blair in the book “*An Introduction to*

*Language*” [52, p.231], idioms are defined as “fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that can not be inferred from the meanings of the individual words”.

#### 2.2.1.2. Definition of IPOA

Appearance is defined as the state, condition, manner, or style in which a person or object appears; outward look or aspect, for example, *a man of noble appearance*. (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/appearance>).

According to “*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*” (2000), appearance means the outward form somebody has; or in Wikipedia, human physical appearance means the way some one looks like (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appearance>).

In “*Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*” (2008), appearance is “the way a person or thing looks to other people”. For example, *a middle-aged man of smart appearance*

From the above mentioned definitions, people’s outward appearance can be defined as the outward look or form that someone has. Idioms describing someone’s outward look or form are considered idioms describing people’s outward appearance.

### 2.2.2. Principal Features of Idioms

#### 2.2.2.1. Syntactic Restriction and Stability

Syntactic stability is one of the first and important features of idioms. Take “*mặt ủ mày chau*” for example, we cannot reorder it into “*mày ủ mặt chau*”. Thus, we can conclude that it is impossible to change or add some words to meet the need of the users because the elements in idioms are usually bound together.

There are also grammatical restrictions in idioms. Although the verb may be placed in any tenses, the number of the noun can rarely

be changed. For instance, with the idiom “*make someone open his eyes*”, we can have “*made him open his eyes*” but not “*make him open his eye*”. There are, at the same time, a number of syntactic restrictions that vary from idiom to idiom.

#### **2.2.2.2. Semantic Opacity**

The meaning of IPOA analyzed in this study is confined to three degrees of semantic opacity namely Complete Opacity > Semi - Opacity > Transparency.

#### **2.2.3. Idioms and Other Language Units**

##### **2.2.3.1. Idioms and Words**

##### **2.2.3.2. Idioms and Phrases**

##### **2.2.3.3. Idioms and Collocations**

##### **2.2.3.4. Idioms and Proverbs**

#### **2.2.4. The Meaning of Idioms and the Meaning of Words**

Idioms have syntactic and semantic inseparability. The meaning of idioms cannot be determined by looking at the meaning of the component words. For example, “*in good shape*” = *healthy* or “*Hàng Nga giáng thế*” = *đẹp*.

#### **2.2.5. Overview of English Phrases and Clauses**

##### **2.2.5.1. Phrase**

In this study, we base mainly on the definition given by Quirk et al. in the book “*A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*” (1985, p.43, 60). He states that a phrase consists of one or more words and there are five formal categories such as noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases.

##### **2.2.5.2. Clause**

In this study, we also analyze IPOA basing on the definition of Quirk et al. (1985, p. 42 - 53). He classifies clauses into seven types SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, SVOC, SVOA.

#### **2.2.6. Overview of Semantic Field**

In this study, the data collected show that there are six main semantic fields of IPOA. They are *General Appearance, the Head, the Face, the Eyes, the Skin and the Legs*.

#### **2.2.7. Summary**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Quantitative and qualitative approaches are used in the thesis to investigate into the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese IPOA.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH METHODS**

The descriptive method is used to describe and interpret syntactic and semantic features of IPOA.

The analytical method is used to analyze how each structure of IPOA is formed or to identify different groups of IPOA based on their semantic features.

The contrastive method will be used to show the similarities as well as differences IPOA of the two languages in terms of their syntactic and semantic features.

#### **3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

- collect English and Vietnamese IPOA from books, dictionaries and on the internet to find examples in which they are used.

- analyse English and Vietnamese IPOA in terms of structures and classify them in accordance with their semantic features.

- find out the similarities and the differences in the structural and semantic mechanisms of English and Vietnamese IPOA.

- suggest some implications for teaching and learning.

#### **3.4. DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

In this study, 430 idioms describing people's outward appearance, in which 210 idioms are in English and the rest in Vietnamese, are exploited. We collected them mainly from

dictionaries and on the internet. Examples illustrated for the study are mainly from books, short stories or poems both in English and Vietnamese.

When choosing the samples, we pay attention to criteria as follows:

- The samples have characteristics of idioms as mentioned in 2.2.1.
- They describe people's outward appearance.

#### **3.5. DATA COLLECTION**

In order to meet the aims of the study, we collect the total of 430 English and Vietnamese IPOA based on the criteria in the part 3.4. The idioms are mainly collected from books, dictionaries and the internet.

#### **3.6. DATA ANALYSIS**

The idioms collected are analyzed and classified on the basic syntactic and semantic features in both English and Vietnamese in order to find out the similarities and differences between the two languages.

From the results of the analysis, we also suggest some effective ways for teaching and learning idioms.

#### **3.7. DISCUSSION OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

The data collected for this study come from reliable sources such as dictionaries, books and websites on the internet. Thus, the data and the background for the study are of great reliability.

In term of validity, we try our best to ensure the quality of the study. English and Vietnamese idioms are carefully selected and checked in both bilingual and monolingual dictionaries. Moreover, the collected idioms are always compared with the results from the

theoretical background to make sure that we follow what has been set forward.

### 3.8. SUMMARY

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IPOA

##### 4.1.1. English and Vietnamese IPOA with Phrase Patterns

Phrase structures of English and Vietnamese IPOA are discussed in five groups as follow: noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase and prepositional phrase.

##### 4.1.1.1. Noun Phrase

a) IPOA in the structure of a noun phrase with subordinate relation

##### + Modified by an adjective:

*average Joe; a long face/ đầu xanh tuổi trẻ; mắt đỏ ngầu*

##### + Modified by a prepositional phrase:

*face like thunder, egg on one's face, nose in the air*

##### + Modified by another noun:

*poker face, bedroom eyes or mặt hoa da phấn; mặt cú da dơi*

##### + Modified by a clause:

*face only a mother could love(using english.com) (ugly) or mặt cắt không còn hột máu*

b) IPOA in the structure of a noun phrase with co-ordinate relation

*(all) skin and bones; bright-eyed and bushy-tailed/ bụng ông đít beo; mặt búng da chì*

##### 4.1.1.2. Adjective Phrase

English IPOA in adjective phrase structure usually have the comparative form with 'as' as in: *Bald as a coot; as cold as ice*

**(as) + adjective + as + a noun/ NP**

Vietnamese IPOA with comparative structure with the word 'như' after the adjective: *đỏ như gà chọi, (to) như bồ tuột cạp*

**adjective + như + a noun/ noun phrase**

#### 4.1.1.3. Verb Phrase

The common patterns are: **verb + direct object; verb + direct object+ complement; verb + direct object + adverb**

\* **verb + direct object:**

*Keep up appearance; lose an eye/ chau mày, nghiêng răng*

\* **Verb + complement**

*go/ turn grey; not be a pretty sight/ bước thấp bước cao*

\* **verb + direct object + complement**

*Look like a cat that got the cream*

No Vietnamese IPOA in this pattern can be found in the data for this thesis.

\* **verb + direct object + adverb**

*keep one's hair on; carry it off well/ vênh cái mặt lên*

#### 4.1.1.4. Prepositional Phrase

In English IPOA of this type, a preposition is usually followed by a noun phrase.

In English: *In good shape; in the pink; in the club/ in the family way*

Prepositional phrases in Vietnamese of this pattern can not be found in this study.

#### 4.1.1.5. Adverb Phrase

There are only some IPOA adverb phrase in English and Vietnamese in the data collected for this study

*Down in the doldrums, up the duff/ Le te như ghe lộn ngược; te tái như gà mái nhảy ổ*

**Table 4.6. Number and percentage of English and Vietnamese IPOA listed in terms of syntactic features**

	Noun phrase		Adjective phrase		Verb phrase		Prepositional phrase		Adverb phrase		Others	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<b>English IPOA (210)</b>	39	18,6	91	43,3	40	19	15	7,1	4	1,9	21	10
<b>Vietnamese IPOA (220)</b>	105	47,7	96	43,6	10	4,5	0	0	5	2,3	4	1,8

#### 4.1.2. English and Vietnamese IPOA with Clause Patterns

After examining all the total number of IPOA collected for this study in English and Vietnamese, only two clauses in English and the same number in Vietnamese can be found.

In English: *Somebody's face falls; Somebody's face is a picture.*

In Vietnamese: *Chân dẫm đá chân chiêu; mặt vàng đôi lấy mặt xanh*

#### 4.1.3. The Structures of English and Vietnamese IPOA

##### 4.1.3.1. Parallel Structures

*Skin and bones; apples and oranges/ áo lụa quần hồng*

#### 4.1.3.2. *Comparative Structures*

In the total number of IPOA collected, idioms with comparative structures account for a large number both in English and Vietnamese.

*(as) fat as a pig; face like thunder/ bé như dãi khoai*

#### 4.1.3.3. *Elliptical Structures*

In English, there aren't any IPOA found in this structure. However, a lot of Vietnamese ones can be seen. For example: 'má hồng răng đen; da trắng tóc dài; chân yếu tay mềm'.

#### 4.1.4. **The Variation on the Form of Vietnamese IPOA**

*Áo rách nón cời/ nón mê; len lét/ nem nép như rắn mừng năm*

#### 4.1.5. **Similarities and Differences between EIPOA and VIPOA in Syntactic Features**

##### 4.1.5.1. *Similarities*

Most of English and Vietnamese IPOA have stable structures. Both English and Vietnamese own a system of idioms in certain grammatical groups such as noun phrase, verb phrase, and adjective phrase.

Both in English and Vietnamese, complements following a verb can be realized by an adjective, adjective phrase, a noun, a noun phrase; objects can be a noun or noun phrase, etc.

##### 4.1.5.2. *Differences*

Vietnamese IPOA can vary both in lexical and phonetic terms whereas English ones tend to have fixed structures.

There are no cases of prepositional phrases in Vietnamese compared with the phrasal structures in English where all types of phrasal structures are found.

Besides, there is a difference in the position of an adjective in adjective phrases. In Vietnamese IPOA, an adjective comes after the noun whereas in English it precedes. Furthermore, in idiom structures, the elliptical construction is only found in Vietnamese IPOA.

#### 4.2. **SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IPOA**

##### 4.2.1. **The Meaning of English and Vietnamese IPOA**

According to Fernando (1996) [48, p.35], idioms are divided into three sub-classes: pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms. These sub-classes are divided based on the degrees of opacity in idioms: complete opacity, semi-opacity and transparency.

##### 4.2.2. **Symbolic Characteristics of English and Vietnamese IPOA**

Vietnamese and English idioms describing people's outward appearance have a high symbolic characteristic because they, mostly, use the main principles to transfer the meanings. Thus, such stylistic devices as simile, metaphor, metonymy and hyperbole are of great importance.

###### 4.2.2.1. *Simile*

###### 4.2.2.2. *Metaphor*

###### 4.2.2.3. *Metonymy*

###### 4.2.2.4. *Hyperbole*

##### 4.2.3. **Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese IPOA**

In this study we will deal with six main semantic fields of IPOA that are used more often and popularly. They are *General Appearance, the Head, the Face, the Eyes, the Skin and the Legs*.

#### 4.2.3.1. General Appearance

**Age:** *as young as morn; long in the teeth/ đầu xanh tuổi trẻ*

**Health:** *healthy as a horse; in the pink; (as) white as a ghost/ vẫn còn phong độ lắm; có da có thịt; xanh búng, xanh beo*

**Psychological state/ mood:** *be red with anger; green with envy/ đỏ mặt tía tai; như gà mắc tóc; mặt tươi như hoa*

**Clothing:** *dressed to kill; dressed up to the nines/ áo lụa quần hồng; te tua như xơ mướp*

**General view:** *ugly as a sin/ xấu ma chê quỷ hờn*

#### 4.2.3.2. The Head

*(as) bald as a coot/ thin on top/ đầu trắng hếu; tóc bạc gia môi*

#### 4.2.3.3. The Face

*put the roses back on your cheeks; have a face like the back end of a bus/ mặt tươi như hoa; mặt vuông chữ điền*

#### 4.2.3.4. The Eyes

*bedroom eyes; to make eyes/ mắt sắc như dao; mắt la mà y lét*

#### 4.2.3.5. The Skin

*as spotless as snowwhite; (as) smooth as silk/ trắng như trứng gà bóc; xanh búng, xanh beo; đen như bồ hóng*

#### 4.2.3.6. The Legs

In English: there aren't any idioms of this field found

In Vietnamese: *chân như ống sậy; chân thấp chân cao*

**Table 4.10. Number and Percentage of English and Vietnamese IPOA Listed in Terms of Semantic Fields**

Semantic fields	English IPOA		Vietnamese IPOA	
	No	%	No	%
1.General Appearance	141	67,1	76	34,5
2.The Head	17	8,1	15	6,8
3.The Face	25	11,9	53	24,1
4.The Eyes	14	6,7	25	11,4
5.The Skin	10	4,7	24	10,9
6. The Legs	0	0	9	4,1
7. Others	3	1,4	18	8,2
<b>Total</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>100</b>

#### 4.2.4 Similarities and Differences between EIPOA and VIPOA in Semantic Features

##### 4.2.4.1 Similarities

Different ways of expressing the meaning are exploited through stylistic devices such as metaphor, metonymy, hyperbole and simile.

Idioms in general and IPOA in particular in English and Vietnamese are stable in language forming a unity which cannot be broken down into smaller parts. In addition, both English and Vietnamese IPOA are employed for the same six topics *General Appearance, the Head, the Face, the Eyes, the Skin and the Legs*.

##### 4.2.4.2 Differences

There are some differences in forming idioms and the way idioms convey their.

In Vietnamese, the terms used in idioms are usually influenced by agricultural culture such as *dãi khoai, trâu dằm, nhái bèn, cây tằm*, ... whereas English people use universal things in their idioms *horse, lion, ox, rose*, and etc.

Vietnamese four - word or six - word idioms with flexible parallel structures can help us memorize easily whereas English idioms do not have this structure. For example: *bụng trâu đầu trắm, áo lượt quần là, mắt la mày lét, bụng thúng cái lưng cánh phân, mặt lá khoai tai lá ráy*.

In short, idioms in both languages have not only some generality but also the demonstration of its own national cultural characteristics. This feature makes English idioms different from Vietnamese ones. And because of the above-mentioned differences, the picture about idioms are more colourful.

#### 4.3. SUMMARY

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. CONCLUSIONS

After investigating into syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese IPOA, we can draw some conclusions as follows.

In terms of syntactic features, under the viewpoint of traditional grammar of Quirk et al (1985), idioms analyzed are mostly under phrasal structures. The phrasal structures are categorized into noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and prepositional phrases. Among these groups, the noun phrase idioms are the most popular in Vietnamese with 47,7% (105 idioms) but less than half of this number are found in English noun phrases accounting for 18,6%. (39 idioms). Next dominating phrase group should be for the adjective phrase. The number are nearly equal in both languages: 43,3 % (91 idioms) in English versus 43,6% (96 idioms) in Vietnamese. Verb phrases range the third with 19% (40 idioms) in English versus 10 (4,5% idioms) in Vietnamese. The number of this type of phrase are not equivalent.

As we can see, most English and Vietnamese idioms are under the structures of noun phrase, verb phrase and adjective phrase. Adverb phrases are of a few in both two languages. There is 7,1 % of prepositional phrase but no idioms of prepositional phrase can be found in Vietnamese.

Moreover, English and Vietnamese IPOA are grouped into three kinds of grammatical features in relation to semantic mechanisms such as parallel structures, comparative structures and elliptical structures. The comparative structures are used mostly in

English and Vietnamese. And in Vietnamese, the parallel structure are of many. From the analysis, it can be concluded that there are more differences than similarities. While the Vietnamese mainly employ lexical means and lineal order, which creates symmetry in their idioms; the English follow strict rules of English grammar.

In terms of semantic features, the most characteristic feature of idioms is semantic opacity. To put it another way, we can not base on literal meaning only but on the figurative meaning of idioms. Nearly all the idioms in this study base on the principles of meaning transfer through stylistic devices such as simile, metaphor, metonymy and hyperbole. The most common mechanism that is relevant in many IPOA idioms is simile. Both English and Vietnamese IPOA appear predominantly by means of simile such as *(as) fresh as a daisy ;(as) gaudy as a butterfly* or *face like thunder* in English and *gầy như con nhái bén* or *mắt đỏ như mắt cá chày* in Vietnamese. This stylistic device accounts for 41% (86) in English and 44% (97) in Vietnamese. To solve the problem of ambiguity, we should refer to the contexts and understand the principles of meaning transfer of idioms. In semantic fields, the figurative and concrete characteristics of both languages are presented in six semantic fields such as *General Appearance, the Head, the Face, the Eyes, the Skin and The Legs*.

## 5.2. IMPLICATIONS

### 5.2.1. Implications for Language Teaching

As teachers of English, our goal is to successfully teach our students English. The ways we teach and what we teach determine how successful we are. Nonetheless, we cannot teach a foreign language without teaching idioms because they are not a separate part

of the language which we can choose either to use or omit. Thus, it is a good idea for teachers of English to prepare themselves with the knowledge of how idioms are formed or what they mean in each different context. Once they have known well about idioms, they can have suitable ways to help their learners learn better and better. For the case of IPOA, if used suitably, they will help teachers to enable their students to use, describe and talk about people's appearance more effectively and naturally.

More importantly, the syntactic and semantic similarities and differences of IPOA analyzed in this study will, to some extent, help the teachers foresee the difficulties that their learners may face or have during their learning process. In addition, we can know what mistakes our students may commit so that we set out suitable methods in dealing with them. It is a good idea for teachers to encourage their students even if they may have mistakes when using idioms. We should not stop and interrupt our students every time they make mistakes to give correction or comments. By doing so, we discourage students in using idioms.

It is a fact that people usually have a tendency to avoid using idioms which seem to be a difficult area to cope with. However, it should not be thought that teaching idioms is a difficult and boring task to do, especially after we are well-prepared with useful knowledge about idioms in general and IPOA in particular.

### 5.2.2. Implications for Language Learning

Learning idioms helps learners get closer and feel easier in understanding and using English – a popular language in the world. However, this process should not be carried out in a foreign language

alone but in both the target language and in our native one. To study effectively, the following suggestions will help.

Firstly, learners should try to get used to using idioms in their learning process.

Secondly, useful sources of references such as dictionaries of idioms, coursebooks and other resources should be used to check for sure if their usages of idioms are correct. However, it is not advisable to stop and check whenever learners meet an idiom. By doing so, they will slow down their learning process.

Thirdly, it would be better for learners if they learn idioms in contexts. In addition, they should try to do as many exercises as possible. Some types of exercises introduced at the appendix will be useful.

Last but not least, the learners should be helped to use idioms in different communicative skills, especially in speaking and writing.

Learners should be encouraged in using English and Vietnamese IPOA at all levels: *elementary levels, intermediate levels as well as advanced levels*. Depending on each level, teachers have to use suitable methods in introducing and teaching IPOA such as setting some exercises in which they can pick out and understand the meaning of each idiom; asking their students to make sentences or short dialogues to describe people around them or helping learners to use IPOA in different communicative skills.

### **5.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Though much effort has been made to carry out this paper, it cannot cover all structures and meanings of IPOA due to the limitation of reference materials, some of which are hard to find.

Moreover, hardly could we arrange the time suitably for doing research while many other tasks of being a lecturer need to be fulfilled.

IPOA covers a wide range of linguistic areas. Nonetheless, we just choose to deal with 6 topics where IPOA are often used.

With the hope that idioms will be investigated and studied more widely into more depth, we would like to have some suggestions for further study as follows:

- An Investigation into Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects of English and Vietnamese Idioms Describing People's Outward Appearance.

- A Study of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting People's Personalities.