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AN INVESTIGATION INTO SEMANTIC, SYNTACTIC AND PRAGMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMON EXPRESSIONS OF DEATH IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

It is undoubtedly true that "death" is one of the most sensitive subjects in all cultures around the world. It usually refers to something bad, unlucky and gives the speakers and the hearers an unpleasant feeling. Therefore, when talking about "death", human beings tend to find another way to avoid mentioning to it directly. The language which human beings use as a useful tool to express "death" effectively is euphemism.

Indeed, euphemisms expressing "death" is widely used in daily life at work place, mass media and in social interactions. According to Galperin, a euphemism is "*a word or phrase used to replace an unpleasant word or expression by a conventionally acceptable one*" [13]. However, perceiving the meaning of those euphemisms is not an easy task for language learners. To understand a euphemism, a language learner must have an abundant source of vocabulary as well as background knowledge about the culture, the religion, the history of the country where that language is used. In a declaration of the death of the Pope John Paul II, for example, Archbishop Leonardo Sandri – Senior Vatican official said:

(1.1)   "*Our Holy Father John Paul* **has returned to the house of**
         Father"   [A51]

If you are not a Christian or do not know anything about the Catholics, you may fail to understand this expression. "*The house of Father*" here is the implication of the heaven which is believed the house of the Lord, and the death is nothing but a long journey return

to that eternal house for all the souls after the death in Catholics' belief.

Learners of Vietnamese also find it so complicated to make a comparison between *"từ trần", "hy sinh", "qua đời", "khuất núi",* etc. in Vietnamese. Generally speaking, both English and Vietnamese usually use the verb *"go"* or *"đi"* to ease the pain. For example, in 1969, appalled with the death of Hồ Chí Minh, Tố Hữu wrote:

(1.2)   *Bác đã **đi rồi** sao bác ơi?*
         Mùa thu đang đẹp nắng xanh trời

                                                        [D3, p.123]

Tố Hữu used the phrase *"đi rồi"* to express his sympathy and regret toward the death of Hồ Chí Minh – the great Father of Vietnamese. The verb *"đi"* in this phrase also shows the high respect for Uncle Hồ.

Similarly, after Michael Jackson - the King of Pop, the idol of so many fans all over the world died, his family issued the following statement to express their loss.

(1.3)   "*In one of the darkest moments of our lives we find it hard to*
         find the words appropriate to this sudden tragedy we all had to
         encounter. Our beloved son, brother and father of three
         *children **has gone** so unexpectedly, in such a tragic way and*
         much too soon."   [A52]

In reality, there is not much such linguistic similarity between those two languages in expressing death. The difference is so apparent because of the difference in culture, religion, belief and history. In any case, the differences in the expressions of death in English and Vietnamese could cause difficulties to learners of English and Vietnamese as a foreign language. However, there have

been hardly any researches into the use of these expressions; thus in this thesis, we attempt to make an "*investigation into semantic, syntactic and pragmatic characteristics of common expressions of death in English and Vietnamese*" in which we focus on the analysis of euphemisms as a softening use to express death. The result of this study will help learners of English and learners of Vietnamese easily recognize the expressions of death and understand their semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features as well as use them properly to achieve a successful communication.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

This study aims at:

- Investigating the similarities and differences in the use of these softening expressions of death in English and Vietnamese in terms of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features.

- Finding out how expressions of death are used in English and Vietnamese in terms of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features.

- Helping the learners of English and Vietnamese acquire a better understanding of the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of expressions of death in the two languages.

1.2.2. Objectives

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the thesis is designed:

- To describe the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of common euphemistic expressions of death in English and Vietnamese.

- To compare these common euphemistic expressions of death in English and Vietnamese in terms of these features.

- To put forward some suggestions for the teaching and learning of English and Vietnamese as a foreign language in Vietnam.

1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the above aims and objectives, the following questions could be put forward:

- What are the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of English and Vietnamese common euphemistic expressions of death?

- What are the similarities and differences of these common euphemistic expressions of death in these two languages?

- What are the underlying reasons for these similarities and differences?

1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Due to the time and resource constraints, the thesis is confined to the common euphemisms of death in obituaries, articles in newspapers and magazines, short stories and common use in English and Vietnamese.

1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study could help cross-cultural communicators use euphemisms expressing death in English and Vietnamese better. Moreover, the study could help learners of English and Vietnamese as a foreign language gain a deeper insight into both English and Vietnamese euphemisms in general and euphemisms expressing death in particular and help them avoid errors when using these euphemisms.

1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis could be organized into 5 chapters: 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. LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of writers have discussed the expressions of death directly or indirectly in both English such as Enright, Noble, Hughes, Wardaugh...All those English linguists, however, considered the expressions of death as a small part of their research. No one went into details about the death.

In Vietnamese, there are also many Vietnamese linguists who dealt with euphemism rather than explored the expressions of death. Le N. T. [21] investigated the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of euphemisms in English and Vietnamese newspapers. In 2007, Nguyễn Văn Trào [46], in Ngôn ngữ và Đời sống focused on the euphemism in expressions of death in English…

From the literature review, it could be seen that no studies of euphemisms of death in English and Vietnamese has been carried out in terms of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features. Therefore, this thesis attempts to discover the common softening expressions or euphemisms of death concerning these features in English versus Vietnamese.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Taboo of "Death"

Death is undoubtedly a timeless taboo in which psychological, religious and social interdictions coexist. However, different cultures,

different religions or beliefs have their own definition about the death. The taboo of death cannot be properly understood without considering the crucial role that religion played in sepulchral matters.

2.2.2. Conception of Euphemism

So far, many linguists have given out a variety of definition on euphemism. American scholar Rawson [28, p. 1] states: *"Euphemisms are embedded so deeply in our language that few of us, even those who pride themselves on being plainspoken, ever get through a day without using them."* Euphemisms are pervasive in our society. In Vietnamese, many famous linguists such as Đinh Trọng Lạc, Nguyễn Thái Hòa [40], Trương Viên [47] consider euphemism as a stylistic device used to express various meanings.

2.2.3. Metaphor and Euphemism

Metaphor and euphemism have something in common. Metaphor is mostly regarded as a poetic device; something could be used to make language "pretty". In addition, it could be seen that metaphors are different from euphemisms in that they on the one hand literally denote one thing but on the other hand suggest another. However, both use another way to talk about something, and this way is always better and more emotional than the word itself. And we could also say that metaphor is one of the good means to express euphemism.

2.2.4. Functional Grammar Theory

2.2.4.1. An Overview of Functional Grammar

With the appearance of systemic functional grammar, a grammar model developed by Halliday, the study of language is seen from a new perspective. According to Halliday, language is "*a*

network of systems or interrelated sets of options for making meaning" [15, p. 15], thus, language is "systemic".

2.2.4.2. Metafunctions and Three Meanings in a Clause

Halliday [15] developed a theory of the fundamental functions of language, in which he analyzed lexicogrammar into three broad metafunctions: experiental, interpersonal and textual.

2.2.4.3. The Transitivity Systems

The transitivity system construes the world of experience into manageable set of process types. Each process type provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind. The transitivity system is the structure in which speakers select a process.

2.2.5. Face Theory and Euphemism

The relation of *face* and *euphemism* is mentioned by Allan K. and Burridge [2]: *"Euphemisms are alternatives to dispreferred expressions and are used in order to avoid possible loss of face. The dispreferred expressions may be taboo, fearsome, distasteful, or for some other reason have too many negative connotations to felicitously execute speaker's communicative intention on a given occasion."*

2.2.6. Indirectness

2.2.6.1. Indirectness as Politeness Strategy

Studies on indirectness which have interested many scholars centered round two main trends: indirectness serving as a saving strategy to show politeness, and indirectness as a communication strategy in interpersonal relationships.

2.2.6.2. Indirectness and Euphemistic Expressions

It can be concluded that in case of talk on a distasteful topic, there are two main motives for employing *euphemism*; to minimize the threat to the hearer's face, and to protect the speaker's own face, which result in rather precautionary face-management strategies.

2.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

CHAPTER 3
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Two major methods which have been used in this thesis are: descriptive and comparative. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are supporting methods.

3.2. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

For conducting the study, the following steps are taken:

Firstly, two survey questionnaires in English and Vietnamese are established to investigate the reliability and validity of the survey situations. These survey questionnaires consist of three situations with various typical contexts in daily conversations. Secondly, samples of common softening expressions of death are collected from obituaries, articles in newspapers and magazines, short stories in English and Vietnamese. Finally, the similarities and differences in semantic, syntactic, pragmatic features between English and Vietnamese common softening expressions of death are brought out.

3.3. DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

In order to survey the investigated expressions from the sample population, the study is intended to collect 400 English common softening expressions of death and 400 Vietnamese ones to ensure

the objectivity of frequency and tendency of using those euphemistic expressions of death.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data for this research are collected from different type of newspapers, magazines, and novels, short stories and obituaries in English and Vietnamese and the online magazine. These data are also collected from the two survey questionnaires, which are likely to provide a detailed description of how expressions of death are used in different contexts.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data are described and analyzed to find out the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of common euphemistic expressions of death in English versus Vietnamese.

3.6. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

There is a great deal of expressions of death in English and Vietnamese; however, in this thesis, merely common softening expressions of death in English and Vietnamese are analyzed.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMON EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS OF DEATH IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

4.1.1. Semantic and Syntactic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English

4.1.1.1. Semantic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English

a. Death as a Movement

When someone dies, it is believed that he/ she is ready to come to another place. In other words, dying is not the end at all; it is just the beginning of a journey to somewhere else. Therefore, we can see a lot of euphemistic expressions using the verbs that originally show the movement like *"go", "depart", "pass", "pass away", "depart"* , the dead person is seen as *"the goner",* and the nouns *"the passing", "the departure"* etc. also show the meaning of the movement.

b. Death as a Reunion

Another positive image of the death is the reunion. According to the Bible, those who died will all be revived like Jesus revived after three days of dying. And after that, they will have a reunion with righteous loved ones in the eternal home – Heaven after a separation. With this belief, we can meet some expressions with the words *"reunite"* or *"rejoin".*

c. Death as a Rest

Closely associated with the view of death as a desirable condition, we have found some expressions which follow a conceptualization of death in terms of a peaceful rest after an earthly existence. The most frequent term in this mapping is *"rest"*, observed in phrases such as *"eternal rest", "rest in Him"* and *"rest in peace".*

d. Death as a Loss

This image lies in the fact that life is perceived as a valuable object and death is thus seen as the loss of this possession. Contrary to the three images of death mentioned above, the loss cannot be said to provide any sort of consolation of relief. It shows that death is an event that human beings cannot control, and they feel powerless in the face of the unavoidable event.

e. Death as an End

By virtue of the *"source-path-goal"* schema into which our everyday experience may be organized, life can be understood as a process with a starting, and end point and a time span. From this perspective, death is conceptualized as the final stage of our lifespan by means of the image mapping *"death is the end"*

4.1.1.2. Syntactic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English

a.Verbal Group

a1. Experiential Structure of the Verbal Group

a1.1. One-word Verbal Groups

The one-word Verbal Groups are realized in some of the expressions of death in English. Let us look at the examples below:

(4.1) *Intellectually I know you* **have gone** *but emotionally I can't accept it. As I always do, I have written a poem for you.* [A1]

(4.2) *Michael* **left** *us unexpectedly on December 11.* [A37]

The Verbal Group denoting the state of death is usually used in the past tense, sometimes in the present perfect to talk about the death which has just happened and never in continuous tense.

a1.2. Phrasal Verb

The Phrasal Verbs used to express death are limited in number but they are used rather frequently, especially the verbs *"pass away"*.

a2. Transitivity Structure of the Verbal Group

a2.1. One-participant Process

Processes with only one participant in common euphemistic expressions of death in English have the structure configurative is:

Actor + Process: Material + Circumstance

(4.3) *The star* **passed away** *from congestive heart failure in hospital on Wednesday.* [A55]

As analyzed in the semantic characteristic part, a lot of expressions of death are derived from the verbs of motion especially those express the meaning of *death* as a *movement*. Therefore, to create the meaning of death, those verbs are followed by the Path-role which has the linguistic structure: Preposition + Nominal Group.

In (4.4), the Source-role *"from this life"* denotes the starting place of the leaving. And both the Goal and the Source are included like in (4.5).

(4.4) *Calvin H. Adams,* **passed from this life** *early Sunday morning, Feb. 8, 2009, at his home in Waco.* [A40]

(4.5) *A.R. Naylor* **passed from this life into eternal glory** *on February 10, 2010 after a nine year battle with prostate cancer.* [A44]

a2.2. Two-participant Process

The processes with two or more participants consist of the Actor with either Goal or Range and hence belong to one of the two configurations:

Actor + Process: Material + Goal

Actor + Process: Material + Range

It is the participant treated in traditional grammar as the Direct Object and is usually mapped onto the Complement part in the Mood analysis.

(4.6) *Frederick Albert Our dear Father and Poppa* **left us** *on February 28, 2009 to be with his beloved Norah.* [A43]

b. Nominal Group

b1. Experiential Structure of the Nominal Group

Membership within the Nominal Group is typically expressed by one or more of the functional elements Deitic, Numerative, Epithet and Classifier.

b2. Transitivity Structure of the Nominal Group

b2.1. As a Phenomenon in the Mental Process

Most affectivity process clauses also have another participant – the thing, idea, or fact which is liked, loved, mourned, and so on. This participant is referred to as the *Phenomenon*. It can be summarized as follows:

Sensor + Process: Mental + Phenomenon

(4.7) *When I heard about **the passing** of Harmon Killebrew my mind raced back to 1967.* [A64]

The third main category of process, Relational Process, expresses the notion of being something or somewhere. The participant in a Relational Process is the *Carrier*. The process itself appears to have less meaning than do Material and Mental Processes and serves merely to relate the Carrier to its *Attribute*. The structure of Relational Processes could be presented as below:

Carrier + Process: Relational + Attribute

Let us consider the following examples:

(4.8) *I thought we were both **goners**.* [C1, p. 59]

c. Voice

The construction of the passive voice expressing the death could be analyzed like this:

Laura Ann Neary	was	taken	by the Lord
Recipient	**Process**		**Agent**
Subject	**Finite**	**Predicator**	**Adjunct**

4.1.2. Semantic and Syntactic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Vietnamese

4.1.2.1. Semantic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Vietnamese

a. Death as a Movement

There is a great deal of expressions in Vietnamese in which the death and the movement are coincided. The verbs in these euphemistic expressions are those of motion like: *đi, qua.* The vast majority of Vietnamese assume that a person's soul lives on after death.

b. Death as a Reunion

Those who do not believe in spiritual ones also have an altar of ancestor in their house. They believe that, after the death, their relatives still live in "*another world*" as mentioned above and they can usually go home to visit their children, give advice and bring good fortune.

c. Death a Rest

A positive image of death is *"the rest"*. In the death notices in Vietnamese, we can see a lot of expressions like "*yên/an nghỉ*" and the cemetery is also called *"nơi yên nghỉ", "nơi an nghỉ"*. Obviously, when someone dies, it means they are free from busy life, out of numerous burdens of worries.

d. Death as a Loss

The loss of everything is emphasized as the difference between life and death in any cultures. In Vietnam, the expressions related to *"mất"* (*"lose"*) or *"sự mất mát"*(*"the loss"*) are commonly used. Like those English euphemistic expressions, the Vietnamese

counterparts show the feelings the survivors have, that is the regret and the sadness.

e. Death as an End

Anyone in Vietnam believes in Buddhism theory or not, divides their span of life into four stages: be born – get old – get sick – and eventually die. The death in any cultures is the end of everything.

4.1.2.2. Syntactic Characteristics of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Vietnamese

a. Verbal Group (VG)

a1. Experiential Structure of the Verbal Group

a1.1. Single Verb

In the Vietnamese Grammar Handbook, Trần Ngọc Dụng [49] defined: "Single verbs denote one single action, state, emotion or perception. Most single verbs denote specific action or state".

VG = Head Verb

a1.2. Compound Verb

Compound Verbs usually consist of two words. The Compound Verbs expressing death are commonly used in Sino-Vietnamese. There is a wide variety of Compound Verbs like *"từ trần", "hi sinh", "tạ thế"* used to express death in this form of Vietnamese which show the respect for the deceased.

Head (Motion Verb) + Place

Adjunct + Head

Affix (Direction) + Head (Motion Verb)

a2. Transitivity Structure of the Verbal Group

a2.1 One-participant Process

Cao Xuân Hạo [38] says that Material Processes could be expressed by the clauses of action and intention. The agent of the action is the Actor. The Actor is the first participant and may be sometimes the only participant. In this way, in Vietnamese, there exist clauses with the single participant Actor realized in the form of *intransitive clauses* and two participants in the form of transitive clauses.

Actor + Process: Material + Circumstance

(4.9) *Nhưng cũng có người nói, người đã **về bên kia thế giới,** mà vẫn còn rất thiêng, nghĩa là linh hồn chưa được siêu thoát...*

[D2, p.41]

(4.10) *"Làm sao mà thoát già được, tôi chỉ muốn làm điều lành để khi **sang bên kia thế giới** lòng thanh thản.* [B12]

VG = Motion Verb + Directional Affix + Nominal Group (Place)

a2.2 Two-participant Process

Discussing the two participants in the transitive clauses, Diệp Quang Ban [34] assumed the participant which suffers from the effect of the action is called Goal semantically, and functions as object (Direct object) syntactically. The participant which causes the action is called the Actor and usually functions as the Subject of the clause.

b. Nominal Group

b1. Experiential Structure of the Nominal Group

In the formal situations, Vietnamese writers and speakers always try to avoid the terms directly relating to *"death"* or *"die"*. Vietnamese writers use the words *"người quá cố", "người thiên cổ"* and *"người chín suối"* to refer to *the deceased people*.

b2. Transitivity Structure of the Nominal Group

The nominal group can function as Attribute in the Relational Processes.

c. Voice

The passive voice is rarely employed when expressing death in Vietnamese. Like the passive voice in English, the passive voice in Vietnamese usually refers to optimistic meaning.

4.2. PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF COMMON EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS OF DEATH IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

4.2.1. Pragmatic Features of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English

4.2.1.1. Showing Politeness

Politeness is a kind of social phenomenon, an approach used in order to maintain the harmonious interpersonal relationship, and a kind of conventional social behavioral norm. It is a standardized behavior that everyone has to follow no matter what his culture is. When writing or talking about the death, people tend to use many euphemistic expressions instead of using the word *"die"* nearly as a taboo item in any circumstances to avoid hurting others' feelings.

4.2.1.2. Showing Respect

When communicating with others, it is very necessary for every person to show respect for others by behaving in good manners among which using the proper euphemistic expressions of death could play a vital role in order to maintain and improve the interpersonal communications.

4.2.1.3. Avoiding Hurting Others' Feelings

Losing someone is an extremely harsh thing of anyone. It is the most sensitive situation when every word people speak or write must be careful, or else, they will make the situation worse.

4.2.1.4. Showing Emotions

The expressions that someone chooses to talk/ write about someone's death somehow show his/ her sentiments, passions and feelings towards the survivors and the dead. If the speakers/ writers are the survivors' close friends, relatives… they tend to use various euphemistic expressions of death with *optimistic* meaning to express commendatory meaning, such as *"enter into the Kingdom of Heaven"*, *"go to heaven"*, *"to pass"*, *"to decease"* in order to console those related people of the dead.

4.2.1.5. Showing Regret

Regretting is a natural human reaction to death. That is because someone people know will no longer be a part of their life, and they will never see him/ her again in this world.

4.2.2. Pragmatic Features of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Vietnamese

4.2.2.1. Showing Politeness

In Vietnam, politeness is one of the key factors in the personal moral value system and, thereby, an indispensable part of effective writing and speaking. Politeness is expressed through the attitudes depending on who the hearer/ reader is, and how close the relationship between the speaker/ writer and the hearer/ reader is. In other words, a polite conversation is the one that takes into account of such factors as age, distance of communicators, social positions and social distance of the communicators.

4.2.2.2. Showing Respect

In Vietnamese personal moral value system, respect is regards as a key factor because Vietnamese belongs to the *hierarchical and collectivism culture*. [44].

4.2.2.3. Avoiding Hurting Others' Feelings

In the present Vietnamese, euphemistic expressions of death are mostly based on some ethical standards of social behavior deeply embedded in Vietnamese people's minds, in order not to hurt other people's feelings, to soften painful news.

4.2.2.4. Showing Emotions

"Nghĩa tử là nghĩa tận", says a Vietnamese proverb, implying that no matter how the dead behaves when he/ she is alive, he/ she should be treated well when leaving this life

4.2.2.5. Showing Regret

Like those in English, the euphemistic expressions of death in Vietnamese aim at showing the regret of the speaker/ writer to the dead. There is no need to use such a long expression like "We really sorry to hear that…", but the word *"mất"* which can show the speakers' or writers' deep regret. In fact, this depends on the situational context.

4.3. FREQUENCY OF COMMON EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSIONS OF DEATH IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

4.3.1. Distribution of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Terms of Semantic Categories in English Versus Vietnamese

Semantically, the percentage of common euphemistic expressions of death used in English and Vietnamese in most cases is

different. Indeed, the percentage of euphemistic expressions of *death as a movement* in Vietnamese is slightly higher than that in English: 54.75% versus 50%.

Table 4.1*: Relative Frequency of Semantic Categories of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English Versus Vietnamese*

Language Frequency Categories of Meaning	English		Vietnamese	
	Occur.	Percent.	Occur.	Percent.
Death as a Movement	200	50%	219	54.75%
Death as a Reunion	107	26.75%	76	19%
Death as a Rest	54	13.5%	19	4.75%
Death as a Loss	13	3.25%	56	14%
Death as an End	26	6.5%	30	7.5%

The same is true for the use of the euphemistic expressions of *death as an end*. More noticeably, there are some striking differences. We could see that the percentage of euphemistic expressions of *death as a loss* used in Vietnamese (14%) is four times as much as those in English (3.25%). However, the percentage of euphemistic expressions of *death as a reunion* in English (26.75%) is approximately twice as much as those used in Vietnamese (19%). In addition, the proportion of euphemistic expressions of *death as a rest* used in English (13.5%) is much higher than those used in Vietnamese (4.75%).

4.3.2. Distribution of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Terms of Syntactic Categories in English Versus Vietnamese

Table 4.2*: Relative Frequency of Syntactic Categories of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English Versus Vietnamese*

	Verbal Group	Nominal Group	Others

	Occur.	Percent.	Occurr.	Percent.	Occurr.	Percent.
English	335	83.75%	52	13%	13	3.25%
Vietnamese	326	81.5%	72	18%	2	0.5%

The table above shows that, in general, English and Vietnamese speakers and writers employ the syntactic euphemistic expressions of death somewhat similar to each other. The use of Verbal Group accounts for the majority in both languages. Especially, the syntactic structure: *Verb plus the Post-modifiers of place* is popularly used to denote death as *a movement*.

4.3.3. Distribution of Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in Terms of Pragmatic Features in English Versus Vietnamese

Table 4.3*: Relative Frequency of Pragmatic Features Expressed Through Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death in English Versus Vietnamese*

Language Frequency Pragmatic Features	English		Vietnamese	
	Occurrence	Percentage	Occurrence	Percentage
Showing Politeness	200	50%	209	52.25%
Showing Respect	87	21.75%	107	26.75%
Avoiding Hurting Others' Feelings	34	8.5%	25	6%
Showing Emotions	39	9.75%	29	7%
Showing Regret	40	10%	30	7.5%

It presents the predominant pragmatic use of euphemistic expressions of death to show *politeness* in English (50%) and Vietnamese (54.75%). There is a sharp difference between these

languages in the use of the euphemistic expressions of death to *show respect*. The percentage of common euphemistic expressions of death used to avoid hurting others' feelings to show emotions and regret is nearly evenly distributed in both of these languages fluctuating within 1% - 5.5%.

4.3.4. Concluding Remarks

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

5.1.1. Similarities

Firstly, some euphemistic expressions of death in English and Vietnamese are formed on the basis of socio-cultural elements. A noticeable thing is that some euphemistic expressions in English and Vietnamese are quite similar in term of the meanings of constituent words. Secondly, most of euphemistic expressions of death in English and Vietnamese are expressed in Verbal Group and Nominal Group. In the level of clause, the two languages employ a large number of clauses with Material Process. Finally, in both English and Vietnamese, people tend to use euphemistic expressions of death with the same purpose to express politeness, respect, avoid hurting others' feelings, showing emotions and showing regret when talking about death.

5.1.2. Differences

Semantically, there are some differences between English and Vietnamese writers and speakers when talking about death. Although people in Vietnamese culture and Western culture believe in the *movement* of spirits after the death, Vietnamese people use somewhat

more euphemistic expressions of death showing the *movement* due to the abundance of *expressions of the place* to which the spirits go. Syntactically, while native people of English make use of other processes like Mental Processes and Passive Voice to express death, native people of Vietnamese rarely use other processes as well as Passive Voice among all of the euphemistic expressions investigated. Pragmatically, the choice to use euphemisms to express death of native speakers and writers of Vietnamese depends much on the social position, the age, the identity of the dead, and the social distance of the speakers and writers to the dead. Meanwhile, among all of the expressions of death in English by native people of English, hardly do we find out that they use euphemisms implying to deaths because of these reasons.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE TEACHING AND LEARNING

5.2.1. Some Predictions of Vietnamese Learners' Errors in Learning English Common Euphemistic Expressions of Death

The above result of the contrastive analysis makes it possible to predict the following types of errors that Vietnamese learners may make when using euphemistic expressions of death in English. Firstly, Vietnamese learners may get confused with the euphemistic expressions of death in English. Secondly, when the native Vietnamese learners of English need to talk about death, the only English word that they know is *"die"*.

5.2.2. Implications for Language Learning and Teaching

Firstly, in order to help learners understand the euphemistic expressions of death, teachers should constantly motivate students to learn about other cultures, which is vital in language teaching.

Secondly, due to the fact that there are not enough instances of expressions of death in textbooks published in Vietnam, teachers of English should give additional materials to the students. Thirdly, students themselves should also consciously use euphemistic expressions of death in class when necessary. Last but not least, not all of the euphemistic expressions of death in English could be translated literally into Vietnamese; as a result, when teaching translation, teachers should ask learners to be careful and do not translate them directly. In conclusion, appropriate teaching principles and methods should be adopted to help the language learners use the euphemistic expressions of death effectively in their target language.

5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the time and data constraints, this thesis is confined to the study of common euphemistic expressions of death ranging within 5 figurative meanings and 5 pragmatic functions as presented in the development of this thesis. Furthermore, the lack of time, reference and material make it impossible for the researcher to provide more intensive focus on euphemistic expressions of death. Thus, mistakes and shortcomings may be inevitable.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

In order to help learners improve their knowledge of euphemistic expressions and appropriately and effectively apply it to speaking and writing, the following points should be taken into consideration for further research.

- Politeness strategies to inform bad news in English versus Vietnamese.
- Politeness strategies to console other people in English versus Vietnamese.
- Slang in the expressions of death in English versus Vietnamese.