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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO ENGLISH
AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS CONTAINING
WORDS DENOTING TIME**

**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 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Idioms are also popular and attractive to English and Vietnamese learners and researchers but using them in communication is not easy because of their structure, meaning and cultural features, therefore an awareness of the meaning and structure of idioms will not only provide learners with a better understanding of their usage but also help them to be better in communication. Among the abundant stock of idioms in English and Vietnamese *idioms containing words denoting time* (IWDT) are employed quite often. Below are some instances:

- Helen knows the score. She was *not born yesterday*.

(Helen hiểu biết sự thực về cuộc sống. Cô ta rất *lỗi đời*.)

[8, p.366]

- Âm no và hạnh phúc của một dân tộc không thể nào đạt được trong *một sớm một chiều*.

[Báo Sài Gòn giải phóng 3.9.1975]

We see that the above IWDT do not denote the meaning of time. So, understanding the meaning of idioms in general and IWDT in particular is the first difficulty of learners and the second one is the way of using idioms in each specific context. Moreover studying IWDT is a part of language learning and it can help learners use language more naturally and effectively.

For the above reasons, the research paper: “*An Investigation into English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time*” is carried out with the aim to find out the syntactic and

semantic features of English and Vietnamese IWDT. We hope that the study would have a minor contribution to help learners to understand more about the nature of IWDT that so far have not been discovered fully, and help us draw implications for teaching and learning IWDT.

1.2 AIMS, OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims

This study is carried out with the aim to investigate into English and Vietnamese IWDT in terms of their syntactic and semantic characteristics in order to help Vietnamese learners of English understand and use this kind of idioms more effectively and confidently..

1.2.2 Objectives

- To identify the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese IWDT.

- To compare and contrast English and Vietnamese IWDT to find out the similarities and differences between the two languages.

- To suggest some implications for language teaching and learning IWDT.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is undeniable that idioms play an important role in language teaching, learning as well as translating. When learning and translating idioms, a difficulty which the users of English have to face is to understand their meanings because idioms are a sequence of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the words themselves. So, with the study entitled “*An Investigation into English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time*” I would

like to make a contrastive analysis in order to find out the similarities and differences between the two languages in terms of structural and semantic aspects. I hope that the study will be a contribution to language teaching and learning.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This research focuses on providing a description of English and Vietnamese IWDT through a contrastive analysis in terms of their syntactic and semantic characteristics. This study does not investigate IWDT in terms of cultural and pragmatic features

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

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

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 LITERATURE REVIEW

Up to now, English idioms have been the objects of many studies by linguists and researchers.

In the book “*Semantics*” (1990) written by Palmer, he defines that semantically, idioms are single unit, but not a single grammatical unit like a word. He also points out some restrictions in syntactic features and notes that the problem of idioms is involved with the much wider issue of word formation, by which what would appear to be new and more complex lexemes can be formed from single ones. Cruse (1987) in “*Lexical semantics*” mentions that an idiom may be briefly characterised as a lexiccal complex which is semantically complex. According to him, most idioms are homophonous with grammatically well-formed transparent expressions. Besides, he makes the conception of idioms in his book more clearly by distinguishing idioms, collections and “dead” metaphor. In “*An Introduction to Language*”, Fromklin et al. (1988) make a comparison between idioms and phrases through examples.

In Vietnamese, idioms have been recognized, collected and explained systematically since the end of 1970s. A lot of works have been done to make collections of Vietnamese idioms in comparison with other languages. In “*Từ điển thành ngữ Anh - Việt*” Lã Thành introduces about 18,000 English idioms to readers for the purpose of helping them recognize, understand and use idioms correctly. Nguyễn Bá Ngọc with “*Thành Ngữ Tiếng Anh với Người Dạy và Học Việt Nam*”, *Tạp Chí Ngôn Ngữ*, No 9, 2001. In his paper,

Nguyễn Bá Ngọc shows the similarities as well as the differences between English and Vietnamese idioms and the difficulties which Vietnamese learners usually encounter when interpreting idioms from English into Vietnamese and vice versa. Phạm Văn Bình has done the research entitled “*Thành Ngữ Tiếng Việt*” (2003). In the research, he collects and explains hundreds of Vietnamese idioms with their uses and their meanings and gives out some explanations for origin of those idioms.

Besides, huge numbers of Vietnamese and English idioms can be found in many books, dictionaries of other authors and there has been quite a lot of MA 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 Some Related Theoretical Notions

2.2.1.1 Idioms

A traditional definition of idiom is: “An idiom is an expression whose meaning cannot be inferred from the meanings of its parts” in the book “*Semantics*” by Palmer (1990, P.94).

Cruse (1996, p.38) defines “An idiom is an expression the meaning of which can not be inferred from the meanings of its parts”.

According to Fromkin et al in the book “*An Introduction to Language*” (1988, p.1985), idioms are defined as “fixed phrases, consisting of more than one word, with meanings that cannot be inferred from the meanings of the individual words. Idioms, grammatically as well as semantically, have very special

characteristics. They must be entered into one’s mental dictionary as single items, with their meaning specified, and one must learn the special restrictions on their use in sentences”.

In addition, a definition of idioms is that idioms are phrases and sentences that do not mean exactly what they say. Even if you know the meaning of every word in the see or hear, you may not understand the idiom because you do not understand the culture behind it [74].

The definition of idioms in Vietnamese is given out in “*Kể Chuyện Thành Ngữ, Tục Ngữ*” by Hoàng Văn Hành (2002, p.25): idioms are some set expressions which are stable in their forms and structures, complete and figurative in their meaning, used widely in daily communication.

2.2.1.2 Time

Time is an observed phenomenon, by means of which human beings sense and record changes in the environment and in the universe. Time has been called an illusion, a dimension, a smooth-flowing continuum, and an expression of separation among events that occur in the same physical location.[29, p.479]

2.2.1.3 Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time

In “*Pocket English Idioms*” (1993). Seild & Mordie classify English idioms into a lot of special groups such as body parts, animals, colours, numbers, time and briefly list them. They define IWDT as a special kind of idioms in which time terms with special meanings are considered key words. In other words, IWDT are one specific group of idioms that demonstrate the way each person use

time terms in set expressions and how they associate these terms with other things in the world.

Phạm Vũ Lửa Hạ in “*Mastering English Idioms*” (1996) mention idioms with key words from special categories such as idioms involving animals, colours, numbers, size, body parts, time,...According to him, IWDT are idioms which contain time words or terms as key words or main components.

The above definitions of IWDT make the background concepts of what I am working with the study.

2.2.2 Principal features of idioms

2.2.2.1 Structural Stability

2.2.2.2 Semantic Opacity

2.2.2.3 Symbolism

2.2.2.4 National Features

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 Overview of Phrase, Clause and Sentence Structures

2.2.4.1 Phrase

There are various definitions concerning in this term. In this study, we base on the definition of Quirk et al. in the book “*A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*” (1985, p.43, 60) 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.

2.2.4.2 Clause

The study is also carried out based on the definition of clause which given by Quirk et al. (1985, p.42 - 53).

The definition is that a clause consists of one or more phrases. He suggests that to describe the constituency of clause, we need to distinguish the elements of clause structure such as Subject (S), Verb (V), Object (O), Complement (C) and Adverbial (A). And he classifies clauses into seven types SV, SVO, SVC, SVA, SVOO, SVOC, SVOA.

2.2.4.3 Sentence

Beside phrase idioms, idioms have sentence form. According to Moons (60, p.84), he points out that sentence idioms have simple and complex patterns.

In this thesis, from the corpus, I find a number of English and Vietnamese IWDT formed in simple sentence. For example: *One swallow does not make a summer.*

2.2.5 Overview of Semantic Opacity and Semantic Field

2.2.5.1 Semantic Opacity

Opacity is the quality of being incomprehensible and it is one of the principal characteristics of idioms.

There are different degrees in the semantic opacity of idioms. In this study, the meaning of IWDT are analyzed based on the “Opacity Hierarchy” which is established by Gereon Miller (2000): XP opaque > XP semi-opaque > XP semi-transparent > XP transparent. However, the analysis is confined to only three degrees of semantic opacity namely Complete Opacity > Semi - opacity > Transparent.

2.2.5.2 *Semantic Field*

In this study, the data collected show that there are nine semantic fields of IWDT. They are *Time, Mood /Ppsychological Sstate, Physical State, Speed, Human characteristics, Progress, Human Actions / Activities and Patience / Diligence, Frequency/ Degree.*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

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

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The descriptive method is used to describe and interpret the meanings of idioms with the help of a powerful source of dictionaries and lexicons in order to obtain their syntactic and semantic features.

The contrastive method is used to find out the similarities and differences of English and Vietnamese IWDT in terms of their syntactic and semantic features

Besides, statistical and observational methods are also applied to draw out necessary findings.

3.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

- Collecting English and Vietnamese IWDT from books, dictionaries and on the internet and finding examples in which they are used.

- Analysing English and Vietnamese IWDT in terms of their structures and classify them in the accordance with their semantic features.

- Finding out the similarities and the differences in the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese IWDT.

- Presenting the limitations of the study.

- Putting forward some implications for teaching and learning idioms as well as making some suggestions for further research.

- Closing the study with References and Appendixes – types of exercises, key and the lists of English and Vietnamese IWDT.

3.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

In order to prepare data for the research, I proceeded to collect data as follows.

First, I determined some criteria to select the samples. i.e. the number of samples, the samples have characteristics of idioms and they contains words denoting time such as: *time, year, month, day,...*in English idioms and *thời gian, năm, tháng, đêm, ngày,...*in Vietnamese ones.

Second, with such set criteria I collected English and Vietnamese idioms from many books, dictionaries, stories and the internet. Firstly, we start collecting idioms in the book which got more IWDT than other ones. When we get a list of idioms, I was able to collect a total of 383 English and Vietnamese IWDT for building up our corpus which consists of 200 English idioms and 183 Vietnamese ones.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

In order to meet the goals of the study, we collect the total of

383 English and Vietnamese IWDT based on the criteria in the part 3.4. The idioms are collected from books, dictionaries, internet.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

We analyze and classify the idioms collected 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 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

In the terms of reliability, the data for this study, as mentioned above, is carefully collected from popular dictionaries, books as well as common websites. In addition, any information quoted in this study is exactly the same as the original materials with clear references of its authors, the name of publishers, the time and place of publication as well as the page numbers where the information is extracted. So, both the data and the background for the study are reliable. The results and findings in the study are surely withdrawn from the data analysis without any prejudices or preconceptions.

In the terms of validity, English and Vietnamese idioms which are collected meet all required criteria. The samples of the study are made from English and Vietnamese idioms which are drawn from dictionaries, books, stories and in the internet. Moreover, after collecting English idioms from bilingual dictionaries, the idioms will be carefully checked up in the monolingual dictionaries to make sure their origin and avoid the translated idioms. Finally the data is analyzed based on the theoretical background presented in chapter 2.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS CONTAINING WORDS DENOTING TIME

4.1.1 IWDT with Noun Phrase Structure

There are many patterns in the noun phrase structure, especially in English idioms but we only investigate some popular patterns such as: **(Article) + Noun + PreP, Noun +Adj + Noun +Adj, (Article) + Noun + Noun, (Article) + Adj + Noun, Noun + V-ing**. Different from English idioms, Vietnamese ones appear in the patterns: **Noun +Adj + Noun +Adj, Numeral + Noun / Numeral + Noun, Noun+ Verb / Noun +Verb**.

4.1.1.1 (Article) + Noun + PreP

a blast from the past, the lion of the day, days of grace,...

4.1.1.2 (Article) + Noun + Noun

a week moment(phút yếu lòng), day and night(suốt ngày đêm),...

4.1.1.3 (Article) + Adj + Noun

a blind date (một buổi gặp xem mắt), a split second(chỉ trong nháy mắt), the big time(thành công),...

4.1.1.4 Noun + V-ing

day dreaming (mơ tưởng hão huyền), years running (năm liên tiếp.)

4.1.1.5 Noun +Adj + Noun +Adj

ngày rộng tháng dài, mùa đông tháng giá, etc.

4.1.1.6 Numeral + Noun / Numeral + Noun

Một sớm một chiều,...

4.1.1.7 Noun + Verb / Noun + Verb

nay đợi mai trông, tháng đợi năm chờ, năm hết tết đến, nay gánh mai đợi,...

4.1.2 IWDT with Verb Phrase Structure

The basic patterns in the verb phrase structure: **Verb + Noun/ NP, Verb + Noun/ NP + Noun / NP, Verb + Noun /NP + PreP, Verb + PreP, Verb + NP + NP + PreP, Verb + NP + PreP + PreP** are found in the verb phrase structure of English idioms whereas Vietnamese ones only appear in two patterns: **Verb + Noun / NP, Verb + Noun /NP + Verb + Noun /NP.**

4.1.2.1 Verb + Noun/ NP

In English: *bide your time, brighten up the day, carry/win the day,...* and in Vietnamese: *yên giấc ngàn thu.*

4.1.2.2 Verb + Noun /NP + Noun /NP

Call it a day, catch s.o some other time,...

4.1.2.3 Verb + Noun /NP + Verb + Noun/ NP

Ăn bữa hôm lo bữa mai, ăn bữa sáng lo bữa tối, đi đêm về hôm, lầy đêm làm ngày, mong đêm mong ngày,...

4.1.2.4 Verb + Noun /NP + PreP

Do something in your own time, make a day of it,...

4.1.2.5 Verb + PreP

Fall on hard times, play for time,...

4.1.2.6 Verb + Noun /NP + Noun /NP + PreP

Only two English idioms in this pattern are found: *not give somebody the time of day, take things one day at the time.*

4.1.2.7 Verb + Noun /NP + PreP + PreP

Only one English IWDT in this pattern: *Don't make a present of your property to thieves.*

4.1.3 IWDT with Adjective Phrase Structure

Adj + (Article) Noun, Adj + PreP, Adj + AdjP, Adj + AdvP are the common structures of English idioms adjective phrase. Vietnamese ones occupy a large number in this form and they are in the patterns: **Adj + AdvP, Adj + (numeral) Noun/ Adj + (numeral) Noun, Adj + Verb Phrase.**

In English: *Advanced in years, All present and correct, Ill-timed, Past it,...* In Vietnamese: *buồn như hoa bí buổi chiều, giàu chiều hôm, khó sớm mai, len lén như chuột ngày, rõ như ban ngày,...*

4.1.4 IWDT with Prepositional Phrase Structure

English idioms mainly appear in the pattern: **Pre. + N/NP, Prep + PreP.** For example: *all in a day's work, in the cold light of day,...*

4.1.5 IWDT with Adverb Phrase Structure

Some English idioms in the patterns: **Adv + PP, Adv + Adv, Conjunction + NP, Conjunction + Clause.** For example: *abreast of time, ahead of one's time, before one's time, as the day is long,...*

4.1.6 IWDT with Sentence Structure**4.1.6.1 Subject + Verb + Complement (Noun/ Adj)**

In English: *that'll be the day, it's just not my day,...*

4.1.6.2 Subject + Verb + Object

In English: *You'll rue the day, every dog has its day,...* In Vietnamese: *áo bào gặp ngày hội.*

4.1.6.3 Subject + Verb + Adjunct

time is on her side is English idiom. No Vietnamese one can be found.

4.1.6.4 Subject + Verb + Complement + Object

kiến tha lâu ngày đầy tổ is Vietnamese idiom.

4.1.7 The Parallel Structure of IWDT in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese: *dăm bữa nửa tháng, đi đêm về hôm, ngày rộng tháng dài, một sớm một chiều*, etc. No English idioms in this structure can be found

Table 4.2: A Statistical Summary of Syntactic Features of English and Vietnamese IWDT

Structure of English and Vietnamese IWDT		English		Vietnamese	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Phrase Structures	Noun Phrase	55	27,5%	80	43,7%
	Verb Phrase	73	36,5%	50	27,3%
	Adj. Phrase	12	6%	32	17,5%
	Adverb Phrase	10	5%	0	0%
	Pre. Phrase	33	16,5%	0	0%
Sentence Structure		17	8,5%	21	11,5%
Total		200	100%	183	100%

4.1.8 Similarities and Differences of Syntactic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time

4.1.8.1 Similarities

This section has given out a generalisation of the syntactic structures of idioms containing words denoting time in English and in Vietnamese. The syntactic features of idioms are shown in the table 4.1 where all the features have been sorted into common patterns.

From the table, we find that both English and Vietnamese own a system of idioms in certain grammatical groups such as; noun phrase, verb phrase, and adjective phrase.

Different from other kinds of idioms, English and Vietnamese IWDT can also form in sentence structure.

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.

4.1.8.2 Differences

From the analysis of the syntactic features of English and Vietnamese IWDT, we see that not every idiom in English and in Vietnamese has the same syntactic patterns. Among the samples investigated, we see that there is no existence of Vietnamese idioms in the preposition phrase whereas all the phrasal structures appear in English IWDT. In addition, there are a large number of patterns in phrasal structures in English idioms but Vietnamese idioms have much fewer ones.

What's more, in idiom structures, the parallel construction is only found in Vietnamese IWDT (no English ones) and most of Vietnamese idioms consists of four - words. For examples: *ngày lành tháng tốt, một sớm một chiều, ngày rộng tháng dài*, etc.

4.2 SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS CONTAINING WORDS DENOTING TIME

4.2.1 The Meaning of English and Vietnamese IWDT

4.2.1.1 Complete opacity

4.2.1.2 Semi-opacity

4.2.1.3 Transparency

4.2.2 Stylistic Devices of English and Vietnamese IWDT

4.2.2.1 Metaphor

4.2.2.2 Metonymy

4.2.2.3 Hyperbole

4.2.2.4 Simile

4.2.3 Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese IWDT

In this study, we can divide IWDT into eight sub-fields: *Time, Mood /Psychological state, Physical state, Speed, Human characteristics, Progress, Human Actions / Activities and Patience / Diligence.*

4.2.3.1 Time

In English : *the small hours, in olden time, the year dot, at the present time, in the future, week yesterday,...*In Vietnamese: *năm hết tết đến, năm cùng tháng tận (năm tận tháng cùng),...*

4.2.3.2 Mood /Psychological State

In English: *a real Indian summer, the psychological moment...*
In Vietnamese: *buồn như hoa bí buổi chiều, mong ngày mong đêm, ủ rũ như điều hâu tháng chạp, năm đợi tháng chờ,...*

4.2.3.3 Physical State

In English: *have got time on one's hands, have seen better days, be no spring chicken, not have all day, somebody's days are numbered,...*In Vietnamese: *ba ngày béo bảy ngày gầy, năm ngày ba tật, ăn bữa hôm lo bữa mai, etc.*

4.2.3.4 Speed

In English: *at times, the NewYork minute, take one's time,...*There are not any Vietnamese idioms in this semantic field

4.2.3.5 Human Characteristics

In English: *old beyond one's year, there's one born every minute, I wasn't born yesterday,...*In Vietnamese: *tối như bung and tối như hũ nút.*

4.2.3.6 Progress

In English: *mark time, light years ahead,...*No Vietnamese IWDT showing this meaning can be found in my data.

4.2.3.7 Human Actions / Activities

In English: *dance the night away, serve time, save money for the rainy day, not give somebody the time of day,...*In Vietnamese: *đi đêm về hôm, thức khuya dậy sớm, ngủ ngày cày đêm,...*

4.2.3.8 Patience / Diligence

Rome wasn't built in a day is English idiom and *kiến tha lâu ngày đầy tổ* is Vietnamese one.

4.2.3.9 Frequency / Degree

In English: *now and then, day and night (night and day),...*

Table 4.3 Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese IWDT

Semantic Fields	English IWDT		Vietnamese IWDT	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Time	51	25,5%	20	10,9%
Mood / Psychological State	29	14,5%	21	11,5%
Physical State	27	13,5%	47	25,6%
Speed	28	14%	0	0%
Human Characteristics	8	4%	27	14,8%
Progress	7	3,5%	0	0%
Human Actions/Activities	20	10%	25	13,7%
Patience / Diligence	5	2,5%	11	6%
Frequency / Degree	16	8%	13	7,1%
Others	9	4,5%	19	10,4%
Total	200	100%	183	100%

4.2.4 Similarities and Differences of Semantic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time

4.2.4.1 Similarities

Idioms in general and idioms containing words denoting time in particular possess a function of narrating and placing extra feelings. Both Vietnamese and English people use idioms as a treasure to make language colourful. Idioms always make language connotative and allusive.

Both English and Vietnamese idioms containing words denoting time use some certain, characters, things, concrete events to reveal or illustrate abstract idea or phenomena by the means of metaphor, hyperbole and simile.

Idioms in general and idioms containing words denoting time in English and Vietnamese are stable in language forming a unity which cannot be broken down into smaller parts. In most of the semantic fields of English and Vietnamese containing words denoting time, more idioms showing negative than positive characteristics can be found

In addition, Both English and Vietnamese idioms containing words denoting time are employed for the same nine topics *Time, Mood /Psychological state, Physical state, Speed, Human characteristics, Progress, Human Actions / Activities and Patience / Diligence, Frequency / Degree*. However, the classification of all English and Vietnamese IWDT to semantic fields is not an easy task.

4.2.4.2 Differences

Because of the differences of the customs, historical and different geographical environment of the two nations - English and Vietnamese, there are some differences in forming idioms and the way idioms conveying their meanings.

Vietnamese four - word idioms with flexible parallel structures can help us memorize memorized easily whereas English idioms donot have this structure. For exampe: *tháng đội năm chò / năm đội tháng chò, ngày rộng tháng dài / tháng rộng ngày dài,...*

Some idioms may have more one field, so it is difficult to define which field they tend to belong to. Therefore, we have to put them in the particular contexts where idioms come up. This helps us decide which semantic field of the idioms belong to. More Vietnamese than English idioms with over one semantic field can be found in my data.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The thesis involves the contrastive study of the syntactic and semantic features of idioms containing words denoting time in English and Vietnamese. By doing this, I find out the various meanings as well as the constructions possessed by IWDT the ways it is used properly in both languages.

Syntactically, all idioms in the corpus are analyzed under the phrasal structures and sentence structures. The phrasal structures are categorized into noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb

phrase and prepositional phrase. Among these groups, the verb phrase idioms are the most popular in English with 36,5% versus 27,3% in Vietnamese. However, the noun phrase idioms dominate in Vietnamese with 43,7%. And the adjective phrase idioms are also popular in Vietnamese accounting for 17,5% whereas there is only 6% idioms of English in this pattern. In English and Vietnamese idioms are under noun phrase, verb phrase and adjective phrase. Prepositional phrase and adverb phrase are only found in English idioms but there is no existence of the idioms of preposition phrase and adverb phrase in Vietnamese. Furthermore, the parallel structure of Vietnamese idioms, which account for a large number of the total idioms are presented

Semantically, the most salient feature of idioms is semantic opacity. In other words, the motivation for the occurrence of words in a large number of idioms can be thought of as a cognitive mechanism which links the knowledge of idiomatic meaning. The most common mechanism that is relevant in many idioms is metaphor. Besides metaphor, simile, metonymy and hyperbole are used. The above mechanisms are considered the principles of meaning transfer. So, to solve the problem of ambiguity, we should refer to the context and have the deep understanding the principles of meaning transfer of idioms. In the semantic fields, the figurative and concrete characteristics of both languages are presented in nine fields such as *time, mood /psychological state, physical state, speed, human characteristics, progress, human actions / activities, patience / diligence, Frequency / Degree.*

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING OF IDIOMS

As mentioned in the part - introduction - idioms are considered an interesting and popular phenomenon of every language. Idioms seem to take place of words or groups of words that cannot convey speakers' intentions as well as opinions because an idiom is a combination of words and we can not infer its meaning from the meanings of its parts. If we want to interpret the meanings of idioms properly, we have to base not only on linguistic aspects but also other features. Without knowledge of idioms, the process of communication and translation of idioms would be difficult. In addition, idioms are widely used in our daily life by the native speakers, which may become an obstacle in carrying out communication if they do not know what the speakers means through idioms.

In order to help learners to overcome the above problems, we would like to give out some suggestions for language teaching and learning.

Firstly, idioms should be introduced to language learners at all levels.

- For elementary and intermediate levels: commonly used idioms should be presented to learners of this level, infrequent and highly colloquial idioms should be avoided. Instead, tasks or exercises comparing literal and figurative meanings of idioms can should be used in order to help learners realize the absurdity of literal meanings. Teachers should teach idioms in communicative contexts, in sentences or in short dialogues by using some methods of

explanations and analysis of syntactic and semantic features so that learners can understand their particular meanings, can easily remember them and can use them effectively.

- For advanced levels: learners can be asked to work in groups to take small assignments on collecting idioms involving special key words and then study their aspects related to syntactic and semantic usages in particular contexts.

Secondly, Many different coursebooks, dictionaries and other resources should be used to check the correctness of idioms before use and subjective arbitrariness must be avoided.

Thirdly, learners should be helped to use idioms in different communicative skills especially in speaking and in writing. Learners should write much, getting their compositions corrected by teachers and attend carefully to the corrections. When learners have opportunity, they should listen to an educated native speaker, and endeavour to catch the exact expressions he uses. Once they have heard the idiom used more than once, and fully understand its meaning, they can try to use it themselves.

Last but not least, we can not teach and learn a foreign language without teaching/learning idioms because idioms are not a separate part of the language which we can not choose, use or omit. To use the idioms properly and effectively, we have to understand their meanings.

5.3 LIMITATIONS

Due to the restriction of time and the shortage of reference materials related to the field under investigation as well as the constraints faced by the researcher, it goes without saying that there

must be some mistakes in this thesis and it has not reached a satisfactory depth as it should. The study has not also been concerned with the cultural aspects.

For the above reasons, it is obvious that there are still several aspects related to idioms that need to be studied further.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

- An Investigation into Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects of English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Words Denoting Time.

- English and Vietnamese Proverbs Containing Words Denoting Time.