

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG

NGUYỄN QUỐC TOÀN

**A CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF  
CONNOTATION OF THE VIETNAMESE  
ZODIAC ANIMALS IN ENGLISH AND  
VIETNAMESE IDIOMS AND PROVERBS**

**Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**  
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Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Phan Văn Hòa

Examiner 1: Trần Quang Hải, Ph.D.

Examiner 2: Trương Bạch Lê, Ph. D.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RATIONALE

Many researchers have conducted studies on animal words in English Vietnamese idioms or proverbs. They tried to analyse, compare and contrast all animal words between the two languages through idioms or proverbs. However, to some extent, they fail to achieve their aims comprehensively. This is due to the discrepancy and disparity of animal words in the two languages and that there is not a clear-cut bound between idioms and proverbs, especially those in Vietnamese.

The study “*A Contrastive Study of Connotation of the Vietnamese Zodiac Animals in English and Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs*” is carried out with an aim to avoid this discrepancy and disparity by narrowing the numbers of animals to VZAs (*Rat, buffalo, tiger, cat, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog and pig*) and include both idioms and proverbs. According to previous studies, these animal words take a high rate of the percentage in animal word distribution in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs. Besides, idioms and proverbs are not only used and understood by an individual but also by the communities. To some extent, it can be said that the connotation of animals in idioms and proverbs can represent their connotation in a language.

### 1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.2.1 Aims of the Study

This paper is aimed to study the English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs containing Vietnamese Zodiac animal words to

find out the connotations of VZAs and their similarities and differences in the two languages.

#### 1.2.2 Objectives of the Study

This paper is designed to aim at the following objectives: - To describe the connotation of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs; - To compare and contrast the connotation of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs to clarify the similarities and differences between the two languages; - To suggest some implications for successfully translating, teaching and learning English and Vietnamese

### 1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

As the title of the study shows, it focuses mainly on the connotation of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs. All idioms and proverbs in English and Vietnamese containing VZA words are taken into consideration. The data source comes from English and Vietnamese dictionaries of idioms and proverbs.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, the research questions below will be addressed:

1. What are the connotation of VZA words in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs?
2. What are the similarities and differences of the connotation of VZA words in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs?
3. What are the implications for successfully translating, teaching and learning English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs

in particular and for translating, teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam in general?

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study is hoped to contribute to the process of translating, learning and teaching English, especially to understanding English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs, which contain VZA words. Besides, it may be helpful for cross-cultural communicators in dealing with people from other cultures (English or Vietnamese) to avoid cultural shocks.

### **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The general outline of this research consists of five chapters carried out in a typical order as follows: *Chapter 1 – Introduction*, *Chapter 2 - Literature Review and Theoretical Background*, *Chapter 3 - Methodology and Procedures*, *Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion*, *Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Implications*

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Dictionaries of idioms and/or proverbs are very important and helpful to learners in mastering the language. There are a lot of English and Vietnamese dictionaries of idioms and proverbs. Besides, typical books on idioms and proverbs include: *Idioms and Idiomaticity* [10], which provides a comprehensive treatment of idioms and idiomaticity from a functional perspective; and *Thành Ngữ Học Tiếng Việt* [82] which categorizes idioms into 2 types: comparative

idioms and metaphorical idioms (which consists of 2 sub-types: symmetrical and non-symmetrical) and analyzing these types of idioms from cultural, social and psychological perspectives.

However, not many studies have been conducted on animal idioms and proverbs, especially on the connotation of animal words. Here are some studies directly relating to the field of the study: “*An investigation into the metaphoric devices in English and Vietnamese animal proverbs*” [48], “*A study on English and Vietnamese idioms of comparison*” [70], “*Nghiên cứu đặc điểm cấu trúc-ngữ nghĩa và những giá trị biểu trưng của thành ngữ tiếng Việt (trên cứ liệu thành ngữ có cấu tạo là tên gọi động vật)*” [86], “*A Study of Some Characteristics of Structure, Meaning and Culture of English Idioms about Animals*” [49], and “*Ngữ nghĩa của thành ngữ, tục ngữ có thành tố chỉ động vật trong tiếng Anh (trong sự so sánh và đối chiếu với tiếng Việt)*” [93].

### **2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.2.1 Denotation and Connotation**

##### **2.2.1.1 Denotation**

Denotation is that part of meaning of a word or phrase that relates it to phenomena in the real world or in a fictional or possible world. [62] For example, the denotation of the English word “elephant” is the largest four-footed animal now living, with curved ivory and a long trunk.

##### **2.2.1.2 Connotation**

Wikipedia [98] defines “connotation” as a “*commonly understood subjective cultural and/or emotional association that some word or phrase carries, in addition to the word's or phrase's*

*explicit or literal meaning, which is its denotation. A connotation is frequently described as either positive or negative, with regards to its pleasing or displeasing emotional connection.*” For example: The denotation of “snake” is an elongate, legless, carnivorous reptile. The connotation is that it is a symbol of evil or danger.

## **2.2.2 Idioms**

### **2.2.2.1 Definition**

“*Idiom is an expression, word, or phrase that has a figurative meaning that is comprehended in regard to a common use of that expression that is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made.*” [41]

### **2.2.2.2 Characteristic Features of Idioms**

According to Kvetko [31] idioms can be characterized as follows: They have a multi-word character; They are institutionalized, - i.e., considered as units by community. (they operate as single semantic units); They are relatively fixed/stable combination of words; and Their meaning is non-literal, but fully or partially figurative or unique.

### **2.2.2.3. Types of Idioms**

In the book “*English Lexicology in Theory and Practice*”, Pavol Kvetko [31] categorizes idioms according to their fixedness/stability, their construction, the degree of opacity of idioms, their type of irregularities and semantically.

Hoang Van Hanh [82] categorizes Vietnamese idioms into 2 types: comparative idioms (*ngư như trâu*) and metaphorical idioms (which consists of 2 sub-types: symmetrical (*đầu voi đuôi chuột*) and non-symmetrical (“*chuột sa chĩnh gạo*”)).

## **2.2.3 Proverbs**

### **2.3.3.1 Definition**

“*A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorizable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.*” [43]

### **2.2.3.2 Characteristics of Proverbs**

In *The Perception of Proverbiality*, Shirley [67] points out the typical stylistic features of proverbs including: Alliteration, Parallelism, Rhyme, Ellipsis. She also proposed some internal features of proverbs: Hyperbole, Paradox, and Personification.

### **2.2.3.3 Classification of Proverbs**

Norrick [50] analyzed a sample of the proverbs from the oxford dictionary of English Proverbs and categorized proverbs according to the type of figuration they use. He distinguished five types of figurative proverbs: *synecdoche*, *metaphoric*, *metonymic*, *hyperbolic*, and *paradoxical*.

## **2.2.4 Idioms versus Proverbs**

In spite of some syntactical, semantic and functional differences, idioms and proverbs also share some characteristics as they both are ready-made speeches, whose existence is naturally accepted by the people; and they both have permanent lexical items and conventional, largely metaphorical meaning.

## **2.2.5 Culture**

### **2.2.5.1 Definition**

Tylor [73] in the first paragraph of his “*Primitive Culture*” had a well-known definition: “*Culture is that complex whole which*

*includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”*

### **2.2.5.2 Characteristics of Culture**

Porter and Samovar [60] proposes basic characteristics of culture: *Culture is learned and transmissible; Culture is dynamic; Culture is selective; Aspects of culture are interrelated; Culture is ethnocentric.*

### **2.2.5.3 Idioms, Proverbs and Culture**

It is generally agreed that language and culture are closely related. It is generally agreed that language and culture are closely related. In fact, idioms and proverbs require some foundational knowledge, information, or experience to use only within a culture, where conversational parties must possess common cultural references. Therefore, idioms and proverbs are not only considered part of the language, but part of the culture.

### **2.2.5.4 Characteristics of British Culture**

The British favor individualism rather than group orientation. To other Europeans, the best known quality of the British, especially of the English is "reserve". Apart from "reserve", a typical English man is expected to be modest and humorous. Moreover, politeness is a hallmark of British society though their habits of politeness are on the whole very informal. The queue is typically British, even if they borrow a French word to describe it. Additionally, The UK was once considered a ‘Christian country’. Last but not least, sportsmanship is highly valued in Britain with rules showing generosity to one's opponent and good temper in defeat.

### **2.2.5.4 Characteristics of Vietnamese Culture**

Vietnam is a country of many ethnics and multi-cultures. Each of the 53 ethnic minorities has played their important contribution to enrich Vietnam culture. The culture of Vietnam, therefore, is considered to have *unity in culture diversity*. Besides, oppression and years of war brought great hardship to Vietnamese people. So, they were determined, hard-working and with extremely strong family ties and a strong hold on their historical traditions and customs passed down through religion and the family, building the unique Vietnamese culture as we know it today.

### **2.2.6 VZAs in Idioms and Proverbs**

In this study, I will investigate the connotation of these VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs. In Vietnamese, these animals include: *Chuột, trâu, hổ, mèo, rồng, rắn, ngựa, dê, khỉ, gà, chó, heo* and their variants. In English, these animals include: *Rat, buffalo, tiger, cat, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, chicken, dog, pig* and their variants.

### **2.2.7 Metaphor, Metonymy and Simile**

#### **2.2.7.1 Metaphor**

Lakoff and Johnson [32] stressed on the importance of metaphor in our everyday realities: *“Most of our ordinary conceptual system is metaphorical in nature”* defined the metaphoric processes as *“understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another”*. Besides, they identify three basic types of conceptual metaphors including: Structural metaphors, Orientational metaphors, and Ontological metaphors.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory became widely known with the publication of *Metaphors We Live By*, by Lakoff and Johnson, in 1980. Metaphor is defined as "a cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system". Thus, "metaphorical expression" is used to refer to an individual linguistic expression or "a surface realization of such a cross-domain mapping". The metaphor involves two domains, namely, a source domain and a target domain.

#### 2.2.7.2 Metonymy

In general, metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated (such as "crown" for "royalty", "Washington" for "the United States government" or "sword" for "military power"). Like metaphor, there are numerous definitions of metonymy needed for consideration.

#### 2.2.7.3 Metonymy and Metaphor

According to Lakoff [32], metaphor and metonymy are described as conceptual mappings (i.e. sets of correspondences across domains), which differ only in the nature of the domains involved: in metaphor we find two discrete domains while in metonymy there is a domain-subdomain relationship.

#### 2.2.7.4 Simile

According to Galperin [13], simile is a figure of speech which draws a comparison between two different things in one or two aspects. For example: *As timid as a mouse, Eat like a horse, Úớt như chuột lột.*

#### 2.2.7.5 Simile versus Metaphor

It is said that both simile and metaphor are kinds of comparison which are more alike than different. In fact, a simile is an

explicit comparison between two things using such words as "like" and "as...as" in English or "như" in Vietnamese while a metaphor is an implicit one without these words.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

#### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The main methods are the descriptive and contrastive. English is chosen as the source language and Vietnamese is chosen as the target one.

#### 3.2 SAMPLING

The samples were taken mainly from chosen English and Vietnamese dictionaries of idioms and proverbs. After reading the materials we will pick out all the idioms and proverbs containing the VZAs for the analysis.

#### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The data in English and Vietnamese will be from English and Vietnamese dictionaries of idioms and proverbs which are well-known and reliable, including: **English:** Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs [52], Oxford Dictionary of Idioms [53], Cambridge Idioms Dictionary [07], Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms [06], Longman Idioms dictionary [52] and The Penguin Dictionary of Proverbs [09]. **Vietnamese:** Từ điển Thành ngữ và Tục ngữ Việt Nam [87], Thành ngữ tiếng Việt [88], Thành ngữ và tục ngữ Việt nam chọn lọc [89], Tục ngữ Anh-Việt Việt-Anh [80], Từ điển thành ngữ Việt Nam [97], Từ điển Tục ngữ Việt-Anh and Anh-Việt thông dụng [91].

### 3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs containing VZAs are chosen and collected for analysis. They are then carefully considered and classified according to the names of animals. The followings are procedures for data analysis.

- Describing and analyzing the connotation of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs.
- Comparing and contrasting the connotation of VZAs in idioms and proverbs between the two languages.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1 THE CONNOTATION OF VZAs IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

##### 4.1.1 The Connotation of VZAs in English Idioms and Proverbs

###### 4.1.1.1 Mouse

Mice appear in English idioms and proverbs with negative meaning. For instance, a quiet person is compared with a mouse (*As quiet as a mouse*), “mouse” is considered to be very poor (*As poor as a church mouse*), short-sighted (*Mouse that has but one hole is quickly taken*) and etc.

###### 4.1.1.2 Buffalo

In English, buffalos do not appear in idioms and proverbs. This is due to buffalos are not the British native animals. Instead of them, idioms and proverbs relating to cows or bulls are found with high frequency.

###### 4.1.1.3 Tiger

Tiger does not appear a lot in English idioms and proverbs. It also represents strength and power and sometimes denotes something dangerous (*A paper tiger, He who rides a tiger is afraid to dismount.*)

###### 4.1.1.4 Cat

In English, “cat” carries both positive and negative connotations. “Cat” can connote an ordinary person (*Cat can look at a king*), or someone in authority (*When the cat's away, the mice will play.*). In some idioms and proverbs, “cat” implies people with bad characters. It is considered to be nervous and unable to keep still (*Be like a cat on a hot tin roof*), promiscuous (*Alley cat*), imitative (*Copy cat*) and unfaithful (*Cat in the pan*).

###### 4.1.1.5 Dragon

In English, dragon stands for monster, demon or savage. For such consideration, there are few English idioms and proverbs with the word “dragon”. They all bring negative connotations. For example: It is also used to allude social evil in “*Chase the dragon*” when the idiom means “to take heroin”.

###### 4.1.1.6 Snake

In English, snake tends to symbolize the dreaded parts of life. For example, snake in (*Snake in the grass*) stands for a sneaky and despised person, in “*It's good to get a serpent's head with your enemy's hand*” for an enemy and in *Mad as a (cut) snake* for someone who is crazy or eccentric.

###### 4.1.1.7 Horse

The horse has long been part of life in Britain, a nomadic culture. Many English words and phrases used today derive from the

horse. For example, “horse” in the following idioms is used to compare with human’s activities, habits and strength (*Work like a horse, Eat like a horse, As strong as a horse*)

#### 4.1.1.8 Goat

Goat in English has negative meaning. It denotes a lecherous man. On the other hand, goat stands for an irritable person (*Get someone's goat*), someone who behaves in a silly way, sometimes in order to make people laugh (*act/play the goat*) or a person of low quality (*separate the sheep from the goats*).

#### 4.1.1.9 Monkey

In some English idioms, it can be used to refer to people who are artful (*As artful (or clever) as a wagonload of monkeys*), funny (*Be more fun than a barrel of monkeys*), restless and agitated (*Like a monkey on a stick*) person.

#### 4.1.1.10 Chicken

The British people do not use chickens (cock, hen, rooster and chick) as much as the Vietnamese. In English, they use cock (male chicken) for the defiance (*Cock a snook at someone*), a confident or arrogant man (*Cock of the walk*), and a person who counts on his position (*Every cock will crow upon his dunghill*) or a well-off life (*Live like a fighting cock*).

#### 4.1.1.11 Dog

The British people consider dog as their dearest pet (*Love me, love my dog*), or their loyal friend (*A dog is a man's best friend*). So, it usually stands for people or things with commendatory senses in some idioms and proverbs.

#### 4.1.1.12 Pig

In English, pigs are commonly associated with greed of various forms, including: gluttony (*eat like a pig*), greed (*as greedy as a pig*) and monopolisation of time or resources (*a road hog*).

#### 4.1.1.13 Summary

### 4.1.2 The Connotation of VZAs in Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs

#### 4.1.2.1 Mouse

The Vietnamese people compare human’s actions with those of “chuột”. In the following examples, “chuột” denotes cowardly people. (*Chạy như chuột, Len lét như chuột ngày*)

#### 4.1.2.2 Buffalo

Buffaloes are very sturdy animals so they denote hard-working people or those with strong physical ability (*Trâu khỏe chẳng lo cày trúa, Trâu ho bằng bò rổng, Khỏe như trâu*)

#### 4.1.2.3 Tiger

In the Vietnamese culture, it represents strength and power (*Cáo mượn oai hùm, Khỏe như hùm*). Because of its strength and beauty, “hổ” usually refers to people with good characters (*Hổ phụ sinh hổ tử*) and nice appearance (*Râu hùm hàm én*).

#### 4.1.2.4 Cat

Cat’s meanings in most of Vietnamese idioms and proverbs are negative and derogatory when it alludes a person. “Mèo” is used to refer a dull person (*Chó gio, mèo mù*), someone who hides evil things secretly (*Giấu như mèo giấu cứt*), a scamp (*Mèo mả gà đồng*), an unfriendly, quarrelsome person (*Như chó với mèo*), and etc.

#### 4.1.2.5 Dragon

In Vietnamese culture, the dragon symbolizes the high reputation. In the feudal society, an ordinary person who passed the national exam and became a mandarin (*Cá chép hóa rồng*) or someone in favorable condition (*Rồng gặp mây*) is compared with “rồng”.

#### 4.1.2.6 Snake

In Vietnamese, “Rắn” is associated with human’s evil appearance (145) and behaviors (146) in the following idioms: *Mắt như mắt rắn ráo*, *Len lét như rắn mừng năm*.

#### 4.1.2.7 Horse

In Vietnamese culture, Horse is used for travelling and transportation for the rich (*Lên xe xuống ngựa*), and especially in welfare (*Chiêu binh bãi mã*). Besides, “ngựa” is used for an evil (*Đầu trâu mặt ngựa*), an young aggressive person (*Ngựa non háu đá*), and etc.

#### 4.1.2.8 Goat

For Vietnamese farmers, goat is not a helpful animal (*Bán bò tậu ruộng mua dê về cày*) or is a topic in gossips (*Cà kê dê ngỗng*). However, goat sometimes has positive meaning. For example, in the idiom “*Treo đầu dê bán thịt chó*”, it alludes high-quality goods.

#### 4.1.2.9 Monkey

When denoting to human, monkey also represents bad qualities. It is used for a grimacer (*Nhăn như khỉ*), a person with bad behaviors (*khỉ lại là khỉ, mèo vẫn hoàn mèo*), a cunning person (*Khinh khỉ mắc độc già*), an incompetent person who have high position (*Khỉ ngồi bàn độc*)

#### 4.1.2.10 Chicken

The Vietnamese deal with chickens a lot in their daily life. There are numerous idioms and proverb relating to “Gà” and it is used in many comparisons. The connotative meanings are related to human’s characters, appearance, state and emotions (*Đông như đám gà chọi*, *Nhác nháo như gà phải cáo*, *Rối như gà mắt đẽ*).

#### 4.1.2.11 Dog

Dogs in Vietnamese culture are watchdogs, not pets. They do not bear positive connotation. In the following idioms, dog’s image is used to compare with human’s intellect, emotions, actions and etc. (e.g. *Bẩn như chó*, *Như chó với mèo*, *Làm như chó cái trốn con*)

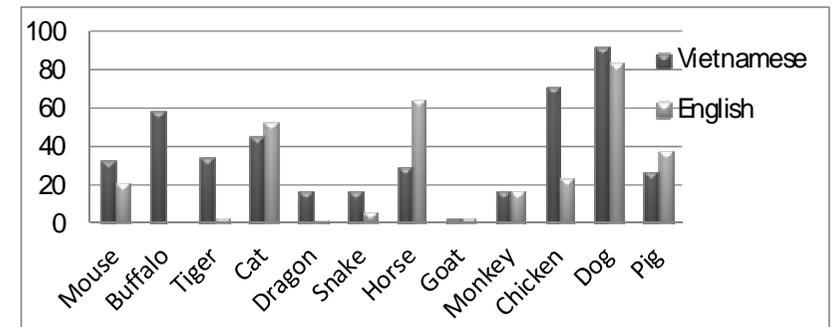
#### 4.1.2.12 Pig

The Vietnamese people compare their bad characteristics with the pig and usually these comparisons are insults. These characteristics include dirtiness (*Ở dơ như heo*), fatness (*Mập như heo*) and stupidity (*Ngu như heo*).

#### 4.1.2.13 Summary

### 4.2 DISCUSSION

#### 4.2.1 Frequency of Occurrence of VZAs



#### 4.2.2 Pairs of VZAs

Vietnamese Examples: *Như chó với mèo, Chuột gặm chân mèo*

English examples: *Cat in gloves catches no mice, Rain cats and dogs*

#### 4.2.3 Simile in VZA Idioms and Proverbs

Examples:

*Like a drowned rat, Poor as a church mouse, Quiet as a mouse*

*Chạy như chuột, Ác như hùm, Ăn như hùm đồ đồ*

#### 4.2.4 Metaphor in VZA Idioms and Proverbs

“Rồng” in the proverb “*Rồng đến nhà tôm*” is understood in terms of “*a noble, superior man*”. “Pig” in “*make a pig of oneself*” refers to “*a gluttonous person*”. The idioms apply to the conceptual metaphor of PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS.

#### 4.2.5 Metonymy in VZA Idioms and Proverbs

In the Vietnamese idiom “*Hang hùm miệng rắn*”, “*hang hùm*” and “*miệng rắn*” stand for “*dangerous places*”. So, the idiom applies to the conceptual metonymic mapping of THE SPECIFIC FOR GENERIC.

In English, the proverb “*Love me, love my dog.*” is quite popular. “*My dog*” in that proverb is an example of metonymy. It stands for “*everything and everyone that the person loves*”.

#### 4.2.6 Negative Connotations of VZAs in English and Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs

Saville-Troike [60] mentions the role of metaphor in many cultures as a means of depersonalizing criticism, thus rendering it less offensive. Animal metaphor can be used for this purpose but it is

also, of course, used to maximize personal impact both in endearments and perhaps more frequently, in insults. The data analysis in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs has proved this.

### 4.3 A COMPARISON OF CULTURAL CONNOTATIONS OF VZA WORDS IN VIETNAMESE AND ENGLISH IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

#### 4.3.1 The Similarities in Connotations of VZA Words in English and Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs

No	English	Vietnamese
01	<i>Rats desert a falling house</i>	<i>Cháy nhà ra mặt chuột</i>
02	<i>Change horses in midstream</i>	<i>Thay ngựa giữa dòng</i>

#### 4.3.2 The Differences in Connotations of VZA Words in English and Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs

##### 4.3.2.1 Same VZAs, Different Connotations in Vietnamese and English

Buffalos are familiar with Vietnamese culture, so idioms and proverbs related to them are numerous with both negative and positive connotations. Nevertheless, the British people don't have any idioms and proverbs with buffalos.

Although tiger in the two languages has connotations of “*dangerousness*” and “*powerfulness*”, it does not have any positive connotations in English idioms and proverbs. Whereas, tiger in Vietnamese is more powerful and beautiful; even it is considered as the king of beasts in the jungle.

#### 4.3.2.2 Different VZAs with Same Connotations in English and Vietnamese

No	English	Vietnamese
01	<i>When the cat's away, the mice will play</i>	<i>Chủ vắng nhà gà mọc niêu tôm</i>
02	<i>Birds of a feather flock together</i>	<i>Ngưu tầm ngưu, mã tầm mã</i>

#### 4.3.2.3 Others

#### 4.3.3 Conclusion

Through the comparison of VZA's connotations in idioms and proverbs between English and Vietnamese, it is inevitable that both similarities and differences exist. With the hope to help readers have clearer understanding on this issue, the author of this study would like to recommend some reasons for these similarities and differences on the basis of personal knowledge, with reference to opinions of other authors and evidence from the data analysis.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Generally, this study has carried out on the basis of the contemporary theories about the related concepts including: idioms and proverbs, culture, connotations, simile and metaphor. It analyses the cultural connotations between the English and Vietnamese VZA words, and compares the VZA images and their connotations. A contrastive analysis has been done with both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

To set up a theoretical base for the study, a review of some key terms has been presented in the second part of the study. The key terms includes denotation, connotation, idioms, proverbs, VZAs, cultures and rhetoric devices (such as metaphor, metonymy and simile). They are well defined with classification and examples. Besides, some comparisons have been made to clarify some misunderstood terms such as: idioms vs. proverb, metaphor vs. metonymy and Vietnamese culture vs. British culture.

With the findings and analysis, the study has found the clearest answers to the research questions. The author has dealt with connotations of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs by showing examples and analyzing them. Moreover, in order to meet the aims and objectives mentioned in the Chapter 1 and for the analysis to be convincible, statistics are shown in forms of tables and charts. As a result, connotations of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs have been described clearly, carefully and systematically. Then, the author has discussed the findings of the analysis. The discussion has been done on the frequencies of occurrence and connotations of VZAs in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs and has come to some conclusions:

1. The Vietnamese people tend to use more animals, especially VZAs, their idioms and proverbs than the British people do, resulting from the VZA's frequency of occurrence. Moreover, the frequencies of occurrence of VZAs are different among animals and between the two languages. *Horse* and *pig* are more popular in English but other VZAs including *chicken*, *tiger*, *dragon* and *mouse* appear less than in Vietnamese. In spite of this, the British and the

Vietnamese peoples both use *dog* and *cat* a lot in their idioms and proverbs with little difference in occurrence. Especially, the British don't use *buffalo* in their idioms and proverbs.

2. The Vietnamese and British peoples both use VZAs in their idioms and proverbs mostly with negative connotative meanings although some VZAs have the majority of neutral or unclear connotation or even *dragon* convey mostly positive connotative meaning in Vietnamese. VZAs are used to maximize personal impact both in endearments and insults. However, it seems that the latter is perhaps more frequent.

3. In Vietnamese idioms and proverbs, pairs of VZAs are quite common while they are few in English ones. Popular pairs in English include “cat-dog” and “cat-mouse”. In Vietnamese, the two pairs are also the most popular but there are also many other pairs including: “dog-chicken”, “horse-buffalo”, “dragon-snake” and etc.

4. VZAs appear in both English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs as rhetoric devices such as metaphor, metonymy and simile. In most idioms and proverbs of the two languages, VZAs are used in metaphorical and metonymical ways. According to CMT, people have often resorted to animals as a way of explaining human behavior, human feelings and even human relations [26]. Popular conceptual mappings include: HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR and PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. Moreover, many similes are used to compare with human's appearance, character, emotions, state, action and etc.

5. Connotations of some VZAs are same or similar in English and Vietnamese. Similar connotations are related to such animals as

*mouse, horse, dog* and *cat*. Besides, there are a lot of differences in understanding VZAs in idioms and proverbs of the two languages. Typical VZAs with different connotations are *dragon, buffalo, dog* and etc.

6. According to the author's view, the similarities and differences can be traced from cognitive and cultural views of VZAs. The similarities may result from: (1) similar features and characteristics of VZAs, (2) similarities in social activities, feelings, attitudes and ways of interactions towards animals between the two peoples and (3) interactions between languages. The differences can be caused by religion, history, geographical environment, customs, and so on.

## **5.2 FURTHER IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND TRANSLATION OF IDIOMS AND PROVERBS**

### **5.2.1. For Teaching and Learning Idioms and Proverbs**

The result of the study is may be beneficial to learners and teachers of both languages. The contrastive analysis will offer them a clearer insight into the use of idioms and proverbs relating to VZAs. This thesis may help teachers with deeper knowledge of the contrastive analysis between English and Vietnamese in terms of VZA idioms and proverbs. The study provides teachers with the additional reference source that may be helpful in their teaching.

As for students, the thesis may be used as a material or reference book in their study. It may help them to use the idiomatic and proverbial phrases relating to VZAs correctly in everyday situations. As the whole, teachers can encourage their students to

master English through practising idioms and proverbs that represent higher skills in English learning.

### **5.2.2. For Translation of Animal Idioms and Proverbs**

As for translation, with the results from this study and theories of translation, the author suggests the following strategies for translating idioms and proverbs which are described briefly as follows:

#### *a) Using an similar idiom with same animals*

As you know, there are some idioms and proverbs that convey the same meaning in both source and target language, as well as the same lexical items. It means that a same pattern of lexical items is used in both English and Vietnamese to express a single concept of meaning. Thus, we should use one as the translation of the other. Examples for translation of this type can be found in section 4.3.1.

#### *b) Using an idiom of similar meaning with dissimilar animals*

There are some idioms and proverbs in English and Vietnamese that convey similar meaning but the lexical items in their surface structures which contain animal names are different. Therefore, we should find the animal idioms with similar meaning in the target language when translating idioms in a language. The idioms in the target language may contain different animals as influenced by cultural elements.

#### *c) Using an idiom of similar meaning without animals*

However, it is obvious that different cultures express ideas in different ways. As a result, with a particular meaning, people in one culture may use an animal idiom or proverb but those in other culture use idioms without animals.

#### *d) Translation by paraphrase or literal translation*

When there is no equivalent in target language or when idiomatic language seems inappropriate in target text, idioms and proverbs may be translated by paraphrase. As it can be observed, the idioms and proverbs which have been translated by this strategy are those local and traditional ones that are closely related to the unique features of each culture.

### **5.3 LIMITATION OF THE THESIS**

The paper is carried out on the basis of the limited data source due to the limit of time and difficulty in approaching sources and references for the study. Moreover, with limited ability and inexperience in conducting a research, some weaknesses and limitations are inevitable. I would be very grateful to those that take interest in this study with comments, advice, and adjustment. The sincere, useful ideas are very valuable to make this paper more fulfilled, clearer, and more perfect.

### **5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study has been carried out to analyze the similarities and differences of VZA's connotation in English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs, but because of limited time and ability, the author didn't cover all aspects of animal idioms and proverbs but connotations of VZA idioms and proverbs with the limited data sources. There are still some fields in this topic that need to be explored. So, I would like to suggest some further researches on the following aspects:

- Pragmatic analysis of VZAs in English and Vietnamese
- Animal idioms in literary works or newspaper
- VZAs' connotations in English and Vietnamese.