

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO  
LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF CHIASMUS IN  
ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE PROVERBS**

**Field: The English Language**

**Code: 60.22.15**

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

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writers, orators, and thinkers have employed chiasmus in their writings and speeches.

**- To students:**

+ When being familiar with the word “chiasmus”, students can discover themselves not only in some fields that their teachers have suggested, but also in interpersonal dialogues as well as in single quotations.

+ More interestingly, not only find and collect chiasmic quotations, students can create chiasmus by themselves thanks to their working knowledge of chiasmus.

#### **5.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Firstly, there has not been much material on the problem under investigation, especially available books on chiasmus in English and Vietnamese to widen but deepen our source of reference for the study. Secondly, the data chosen to make the study on are deeply limited to only one field of proverbs. Thirdly, some parts of the study have not accomplished a satisfactory depth as they should. Finally, there are many times it is very difficult to determine why a proverb should belong to a certain chiasmic structure or a certain pragmatic feature but not another, therefore, our choice sometimes may not be the best.

#### **5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

- (i) Investigation into semantic features of chiasmus in proverbs;
- (ii) Investigation into linguistic features of chiasmus in poems, in political speeches, in newspapers, in magazines, in the world of sport, on stage and screen, in advertising;
- (iii) Investigation into some other types of chiasmus such as implied chiasmus, chiasmic questions;

## **Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 RATIONALE**

Together with the development of the human being history, the oral culture has developed. One of the products of this development is proverbs. Proverbs are brief, memorable and persuasive. However, what makes proverbs so prominently storable in the mind and so easily retrievable from it? As it can be clearly seen, most proverbs carry the easy-to-remember features of syntax thanks to the stylistic devices used in them. One of such devices is chiasmus. Galperin [4, p.209] defined that "*Chiasmus belongs to the group of stylistic devices based on the repetition of a syntactical pattern, but it has a cross order of words and phrases*" as in "Eat to live, not live to eat"

In Vietnamese, chiasmus is transferred as “Phép đảo đối”. It is clearly characterized by Dinh Trong Lac in “*99 phương tiện và biện pháp tu từ tiếng Việt*” [39] as a variant of parallelism but with the reversal order. We can find chiasmus in one Vietnamese proverb:

(1.1) “Người làm nên của, của không làm nên người.”

Here, there is an arrangement of two pairs of words "*người - của*" and "*của - người*" in (1.1). Sincerely speaking, I find myself passionately attracted by the popularity, beauty as well as special effectiveness of chiasmus, especially the one in proverbs. Therefore, I decide to explore this profound and regaling topic entitled “**An Investigation into Linguistic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs**”. It is hoped that my study result will, to some extent, contribute something useful to the teaching and learning of English proverbs as well as using chiasmus in daily life communication.

## 1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### 1.2.1. Aims of the Study

This study aims at finding some possible differences as well as similarities in terms of lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs.

### 1.2.2. Objectives of the Study

- describing, classifying then analyzing lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs
- comparing and contrasting chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs in terms of the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic aspects to clarify the similarities and differences between them
- putting forward some implications of the findings for teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Vietnam

## 1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs?
2. What are the similarities as well as differences in chiasmus English and Vietnamese proverbs in terms of lexical, syntactic and pragmatic features?

## 1.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

## 1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is done only on the lexical, syntactic as well as pragmatic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs.

## 1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

- Chapter 1: The Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background
- Chapter 3: Research Design And Methodology
- Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

attention and getting cohesion in ordering of ideas while these features are not found out clearly in chiasmus in Vietnamese proverbs.

But no matter how similar or different pragmatically it is, chiasmus itself is a very interesting stylistic device that is worthy for listeners/readers to enjoy in proverbs, both in English and in Vietnamese.

## 5.3. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

### - *To teachers:*

+ Teachers should take full advantage of every chance in class to get students have a closer look at the word “*Chiasmus*” and the phenomenon it describes. Considering what students already knew when they first got to class, then making them actually become quite knowledgeable on this subject. When all students know the etymology of the word, then they will understand why all chiastic quotations can be “*marked with an X.*” The purpose of this work - is to bring *chiasmus* out of the closet of obscurity and move it into the world of popular parlance.

+ Help them distinguish chiasmus with other related terms in order that they can avoid mistakes when recognizing chiasmus. Also, knowing these terms will enhance their understanding and appreciation of chiasmus.

+ Then, teachers should attract their students’ attention to the world of proverbs to discover and enjoy the beauty of chiasmus, first in English then in Vietnamese to find out how similar and different chiasmus in proverbs is between two languages.

+ Going further, teachers can lead students to a wider world of chiasmus in newspapers, in magazine, in political speeches, in poems, in advertising, and so on to find out how the world's greatest

We have discovered that in English proverbs, there have some types of syntactical chiasmus formed by “a change from the active voice to the passive voice”, “a reverse of the main clause and a prepositional phrase”, of “a subject and a verb”, of “a verb and a verb complement”, of “a verb and an object”, and the last one of “a relative clause and the main clause”.

While chiasmus in English proverbs is richer in form, in Vietnamese proverbs, there are only three kinds of syntactical chiasmus. They are the syntactical chiasmus with “a reverse from the active voice to the passive voice”, “a reverse of a subject and a predicate” and “a change from a phrase to a clause”. In these three kinds, there is one former mentioned kind that is similar to the syntactical chiasmus in English proverbs. However, with reference to the occurrence frequency of this type, chiasmus in English ones seems to be much more prominent in comparison with Vietnamese ones.

(iii) For the pragmatic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs, although the stylistic effect of a chiastic construction has been so far little investigated, we recognized that the realization of a proverb and the choice of which type of chiasmus is employed are all pragmatic.

Through out our analysis in chapter 4, chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs shares some common pragmatic features such as: serving as a memory aid, highlighting a meaningful contrast, denoting prominence, showing strong emphasis and making aesthetic.

However, there are still some slight differences between them although they cannot be clearly and separately distinguished. In English proverbs, chiasmus carries itself the pragmatic features of drawing

- Chapter 5: Conclusions And Implications

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

##### 2.1. OVERVIEW

##### 2.2. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE RESEARCH

Katie [23] gave a clear definition of chiasmus and illustrated it by some examples. Galperin [4] described chiasmus as reversed parallel construction. Grothe [6] discussed what chiasmus is, explained in details chiastic wordplay including the fascinating etymology of the word. In *www.drmardy.com* [49] chiasmus has been discussed in the aspects of the definition and classification of chiasmus. In Vietnamese, Dinh Trong Lac [39], has defined chiasmus as “*Phép đảo đố*” in “*99 phương tiện và biện pháp tu từ Tiếng Việt*”. Trieu Nguyen [41] provided one page listing some proverbs in which chiasmus is used. Le Thi Thuy Duong [12] has studied Repetition in Business Speeches on Linguistic Features. Vu Thuy An [22] has given a definition of what chiasmus is. In terms of proverbs, Nguyen Thi Le Van [17] analyzed English and Vietnamese proverbs of human and animals’ characteristics. Tran Le Nghi Tran [21] studied the Theme and Rheme structures of English and Vietnamese proverbs in comparison to each other to find out their characteristics and semantic, pragmatic and cultural aspects expressed in them. Hoang Kim Anh [8] analyzed and compared some phonetic, lexical and syntactic devices employed in English and Vietnamese proverbs.

##### 2.3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

###### 2.3.1. Chiasmus as a Stylistic Device

### 2.3.1.1. Definitions of Chiasmus

Galperin [4, p.209] stated that “*Chiasmus belongs to the group of stylistic devices based on the repetition of a syntactical pattern, but it has a cross order of words and phrases*”.

Baldick [2, p.257] provided a more extensive description: “*Chiasmus, a figure of speech by which the order of the terms in the first of two parallel clauses is reversed in the second. This may involve a repetition of the same words or just a reversed parallel between two corresponding pairs of ideas.*”

### 2.3.1.2 Ways to Recognize Chiasmus

First, as in [49], one of the most fascinating features of chiasmus is “*to mark with an X.*” The other way of recognizing chiasmus is by using the “ABB’A” method.

### 2.3.1.3. Classification of Chiasmus

#### a. Lexical Chiasmus

##### a1. Word Reversal

+ *Word Reversal with the Same Pairs of Words and Part-of- speech*

(2.9) “*Charm is a woman's strength, strength is a man's charm.*” [33]

+ *Word Reversal with the Same Pairs of Words but Different Part-of-speech*

(2.11) “*Never let a fool kiss you or a kiss fool you.*” [6]

+ *Word Reversal by Formation of Words*

(2.12) “*Beauty sounds as ugly, and ugliness sounds as beautiful.*” [6]

+ *Word Reversal with Different Pairs of Words but Synonymous*

(2.14) “*Who dotes, yet doubts; suspects, yet strongly loves.*” [13]

##### a2. Number Reversal

Two next prominent characteristics of lexical chiasmus are made by the word reversal with verbs and adjectives, although their rates of occurrence frequency in chiastic structure are not as high as the former mentioned one. The feature of lexical chiasmus formed by a number reversal is another similarly of this stylistic device with many proverbs in both languages.

On the other hand, lexical chiasmus with different pairs of word and different part-of-speech exists only in English proverbs but with the lowest rate of occurrence frequency. The similar case happens with lexical chiasmus with the same word but different part-of speech. These two features are the differences of chiasmus between English and Vietnamese proverbs.

Finally, lexical chiasmus which is formed by the substitution of pronouns in English proverbs, the formation of word and word reversal with the corresponding pairs belonging to the same semantic field in Vietnamese ones are the last different features that we have found out in this aspect.

(ii) For the syntactic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs, we divided them into two different levels: syntactic chiasmus at the phrasal level and the sentential level.

At the phrasal level, although there are not many proverbs using chiasmus in the corpus, this feature exists in proverbs in both English and Vietnamese.

At the sentential level, chiasmus in English proverbs seems more diversified in forms as well as in the quantity of samples compared with the one in Vietnamese proverbs. This diversity in form is proved by many types of syntactical chiastic structure.

Finally, the reason why chiasmus is fully attractive to the readers/listeners when they first read/listen to it is that chiasmus leave in their heart a beauty created by the very artistic wordplay. This urges them to use chiasmus in their daily life.

#### 4.4.4.2. Differences of Pragmatic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

The first difference is the feature of drawing attention in English proverbs.

Secondly, chiasmus in Vietnamese proverbs contains the feature of creating cohesion in ordering ideas of chiasmus while we have not found out the similar one in English proverbs.

Next, while Vietnamese proverbs employ chiasmus to increase the epigrammatic effect, it cannot be found out in English ones.

Finally, the pragmatic feature of breaking the monotony of parallel sentence only exists in Vietnamese proverbs in our corpus.

#### 4.5. SUMMARY

### Chapter 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.1. OVERVIEW

### 5.2. CONCLUSIONS

(i) For the lexical features of chiasmus in proverbs in English and Vietnamese, we dealt with many different types of lexical chiasmus. One of the most prominent characteristics of lexical chiasmus existing in English and Vietnamese proverbs relates to the same pair of words and part-of-speech, in which, the word reversal and repetition with nouns accounts for the highest rate in occurrence frequency in our corpus.

(2.15) "A man is a person who will pay two dollars for a one-dollar item he wants. A woman will pay one dollar for a two-dollar item she doesn't want." [49]

#### b. Syntactical Chiasmus

b1. Reversal of a Comparative Phrase and a Prepositional phrase

(2.17) "As high as we have mounted in delight

In our dejection do we sink as low." [4]

b2. Reversal of the Active Voice and the Passive Voice or vice versa

(2.18) "The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it." [4]

b3. Reversal of an Adverb and a Subject

(2.19) "Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down." [4]

b4. Reversal of a Verb and an Adverb

(2.21) "What is learned unwillingly is gladly forgotten." [7]

b5. Reversal of a Past Participle and a Prepositional Phrase

(2.22) Renown'd for conquest, and in council skilled.. [23]

c. Other Types of Reversal

c1. Reversal of Phrases

(2.23) "Lust is what makes you keep wanting to do it,

even when you have no desire to be with each other.

Love is what makes you keep wanting to be with each other,

even when you have no desire to do it." [49]

c2. Reversal of Individual Letters of Words

...I have devoted more of my life to shunting and hooting than to hunting and shooting.

c3. Sound Reversal

(2.25) "I'd rather have a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy." [49]

c4. Chiasmus with more than 4 Elements

(2.26) Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed. [49]

#### 2.3.1.4. The Viewpoint of Classification of Chiasmus in This Thesis:

- lexical chiasmus at the lexical level
- syntactical chiasmus at the phrasal level and the sentential level

#### 2.3.1.5. Functions of Chiasmus

- a. Getting Attention
- b. Bringing Richness and Beauty to the Statement
- c. Breaking the Monotony of Parallel Constructions
- d. Bringing Humor to Statements
- e. Showing Strong Emphasis

#### 2.3.1.6. Chiasmus and other Related Stylistic Devices

- a. Chiasmus and Repetition

Table 2.1: Comparison between Chiasmus and Repetition

	Chiasmus	Repetition
<b>Similarities</b>	- repeating words or ideas	
<b>Differences</b>	- must be repeated only one time - repeating but in reverse order	-not limited in the times of repetition - repeating in any order

- b. Chiasmus and Parallelism

Table 2.2: Comparison between Chiasmus and Parallelism

	Chiasmus	Parallelism
<b>Similarities</b>	- identical or similar in construction	
<b>Differences</b>	- repetition in reverse order	- repetition in the same order

Types of Proverbs Pragmatic Features	English		Vietnamese	
	Occurrence	Percentage	Occurrence	Percentage
Drawing Attention	27	13.5 %	0	0 %
Serving as a Memory Aid	30	15 %	92	42 %
Highlighting a Meaningful Contrast	9	4.5 %	8	4 %
Creating Cohesion in Ordering Ideas	27	13.5 %	0	0 %
Denoting Prominence or Showing Strong Emphasis	30	15 %	30	19 %
Making Aesthetic	77	38.5 %	42	21 %
Increasing the Epigrammatic Effect	0	0 %	8	4 %
Breaking the Monotony of the Parallel Constructions	0	0 %	20	10 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.4.4. Similarities and Differences of Pragmatic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

##### 4.4.4.1. Similarities of Pragmatic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

Firstly, chiasmus serves as a tool to help the readers/listeners easy to remember what they read/listen.

Secondly, chiasmus is considered to be a useful stylistic device to make the contrast prominent by repeating but reversing the normal word order in both languages.

Thirdly, whatever the purpose of chiasmus, it will always bring in some new shade of meaning or additional emphasis on some portion of the second part.



- (4.146) *To have a stomach and lack meat;  
to have meat and lack a stomach.* [3]

#### 4.4.2. Pragmatic Features of Chiasmus in Vietnamese Proverbs

##### 4.4.2.1. Serving as a Memory Aid

- (4.147) *Người làm nên của, của không làm nên người.* [45]

##### 4.4.2.2. Highlighting a Meaningful Contrast

- (4.154) *Vô phúc cưới vợ về làm đĩ, có phúc cưới đĩ về làm vợ.* [45]

##### 4.4.2.3. Increasing the Epigrammatic Effect

- (4.158) *Sống không kèn trống, chết không trống kèn.* [45]

##### 4.4.2.4. Breaking the Monotony of the Parallel Constructions

- (4.162) *Tránh anh đánh đau, gặp anh mau đánh.* [45]

##### 4.4.2.5. Making Aesthetic

- (4.164) *Chồng già vợ trẻ nâng niu, vợ già chồng trẻ nhiều điều đáng cay.* [27]

##### 4.4.2.6. Denoting Prominence or Showing Strong Emphasis

- (4.170) *Nước nhờ ma, ma nhờ nước.* [45]

#### 4.4.3. Distribution of Chiasmus in Proverbs in Pragmatic Categories

Table 4.3. Frequency of Pragmatic Categories of Chiasmus  
In English and Vietnamese Proverbs

#### c. Chiasmus and Antithesis

Table 2.3: Comparison between Chiasmus and Antithesis

	Chiasmus	Antithesis
<b>Similarities</b>	- containing the repetition and contrast	
<b>Differences</b>	- must have the reversal of words or ideas	- not necessarily containing the reversal of words or ideas

#### c. Chiasmus and Antimetabole

Table 2.4: Comparison between Chiasmus and Antimetabole

	Chiasmus	Antimetabole
<b>Similarities</b>	- repetition and reversal of words or ideas	
<b>Differences</b>	- not necessarily having the same words reversed - can be syntactical, phonetic, sound, phrase, sentence reversal	- must be identical in the words reversed - only lexical reversal

#### 2.3.2. Proverbs

##### 2.3.2.1. Definitions of Proverbs

Mieder [15, p.127] defined proverbs as “*Proverbs are concise traditional statements of apparent truths with currency among the folk. More elaborately stated, 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.*”

##### 2.3.2.2. Proverbs and Other Sets Expression

###### a. Proverbs and Idioms

Table 2.5: Comparison between Idioms and Proverbs

Criteria	Idioms	Proverbs
<b>1. Structure, Rhyme</b>	Fixed word combination (or subject-predicate structure), form relation	Fixed sentence (utterance) (both simple and complex), syntax relation
<b>2. Function of Expressing Denominative Meaning</b>	Denominating things, phenomanon, process	Denominating event, state of fairs

*b. Proverbs and Folk-songs*

In Hornby's opinion [9, p.576], folk-song is "a song in the traditional style of a country or community".

*c. Proverbs and Saying*

Saying is defined as "something that is said, notable in one respect or another, to be *"a pithy expression of wisdom or truth."* [47]

**2.3.3. Summary**

**Chapter 3**

**RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**3.1. OVERVIEW**

**3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

**3.3. INSTRUMENTATION**

**3.4. DATA COLLECTION**

**3.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

**3.6. RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

**3.7. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

**3.8. SUMMARY**

**4.3.4.2. Differences of Syntactic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs**

At the phrasal level, in English proverbs, chiasmus is formed by a reverse from a noun phrase to another noun phrase.

At the sentential level, the syntactic features of chiasmus in English and Vietnamese proverbs show their differences in many points. Chiasmus in English proverbs contains a reserve of "the main clause and a prepositional phrase", "a subject and a verb", "a verb and a verb complement", "a verb and an object", "a relative clause and the main clause", while these features do not exist in chiasmus in Vietnamese proverbs. However, the chiasmus with the reverse of "a subject and a predicate" and a change "from a phrase to a clause" can be found in Vietnamese proverbs not in English proverbs.

**4.4. PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF CHIASMUS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE PROVERBS**

**4.4.1. Pragmatic Features of Chiasmus in English Proverbs**

**4.4.1.1. Drawing Attention**

(4.123) *God gives his wrath by weight, and without weight his mercy.* [3]

**4.4.1.2. Serving as a Memory Aid**

(4.126) *(You) Take your time and time will take you.* [3]

**4.4.1.3. Highlighting a Meaningful Contrast**

(4.127) *It's better to have something you don't need than to need something you don't have.* [3]

**4.4.1.4. Creating Cohesion in Ordering Ideas**

(4.131) *To him that breaks his trust, let trust be broken.* [3]

**4.4.1.5. Denoting Prominence or Showing Strong Emphasis**

(4.141) *All's for the best is the best of all possible worlds.* [3]

**4.4.1.6. Making Aesthetic**

Types of Proverbs Syntactical Features		English		Vietnamese	
		Occurrence	Percentage	Occurrence	Percentage
At the phrasal level		21	27.7 %	6	17.6 %
At the sentential level	Change from the Active Voice to the Passive Voice	25	32.9 %	4	11.8 %
	Reverse of the Main Clause and a Prepositional Phrase	12	15.8 %	0	0 %
	Reverse of a Subject and a Verb	8	10.5 %	0	0 %
	Reverse of a Verb and a Verb Complement	8	10.5 %	0	0 %
	Reverse of a Verb and an Object	1	1.3 %	0	0 %
	Reverse of a Relative Clause and the Main Clause	1	1.3 %	0	0 %
	Reverse of a Subject and a Predicate	0	0 %	4	11.8 %
	Change from a Phrase to a Clause	0	0 %	20	58.8 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.3.4. Similarities and Differences of Syntactic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

##### 4.3.4.1. Similarities of Syntactic Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

Firstly, proverbs in both languages have the chiastic structure at the phrasal level.

Secondly, at the sentential level, there is chiasmus formed by a reverse from the active voice to the passive voice.

## Chapter 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. OVERVIEW

#### 4.2. LEXICAL FEATURES OF CHIASMUS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE PROVERBS

In the total of 200 English proverbs, there are 124 ones containing lexical chiasmus and with the same number in Vietnamese, 166 proverbs of lexical chiasmus are found out. The remains belong to the group of syntactical chiasmus.

##### 4.2.1. Lexical Features of Chiasmus in English Proverbs

###### 4.2.1.1. Lexical Chiasmus with the Same Pair of Words and Part-of-Speech

The most popular case of the reversal of words having the same part of speech is 70/124, accounting for 57.84 % in the data, in which, nouns cover 35.9% with 44 proverbs.

###### a. Word Reversal with Nouns

(4.1) *When the oak is before the ash, then you will only get a splash, when the ash is before the oak, then you may expect a soak.* [3]

###### b. Word Reversal with Verbs

The next type of elements having the same part of speech in chiastic structures is verbs. It has 16/124 proverbs, covering covers 13.04% in the occurrence frequency in chiasmus.

(4.13) *Follow love and it will flee thee; flee love and it will follow thee.* [3]

###### c. Word Reversal with Adjectives

They cover 8.9% with only 10/124 proverbs.

(4.21) *It is nice to be important but it is more important to be nice.* [3]

###### 4.2.1.2. Lexical Chiasmus with Different Pairs of Word and Different Part-of-Speech

Chiasmus does not have to be with two different pairs of word, it can be with only one pair of word but with the different parts of speech in ABB'A' order.

(4.25) *Love rounds square things; hatred squares round things.* [3]

#### 4.2.1.3. Lexical Chiasmus with the Same Word but Different Part-of-Speech

(4.26) *Never trouble trouble 'til trouble troubles you.* [3]

#### 4.2.1.4. Lexical Chiasmus with Substitution of Pronouns

Another case of lexical chiasmus can be found in the following proverb where a second singular personal pronoun as subject “you” in the first part is replaced by a second singular possessive pronoun “yours” when being reversed in the second part of a sentence; and a first singular possessive adjective “my” is replaced by a first singular personal pronoun “I”:

(4.27) *You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.* [3]

#### 4.2.1.5. Lexical Chiasmus with Number Reversal

In the total of 124 proverbs, we have found out eight proverbs containing numerical chiasmus, covering 6.5%.

(4.34) *One father is enough to govern one hundred sons,  
but not a hundred sons one father.* [3]

#### 4.2.1.6. Lexical Chiasmus with Formation of Word

The last case where lexical chiasmus can be achieved by the formation of words can be found in 8/124 proverbs (covering 6.5%) as follows:

(4.36) *Winners never quit and quitters never win.* [3]

### 4.2.2. Lexical Features of Chiasmus in Vietnamese Proverbs

### 4.3.2. Syntactic Features of Chiasmus in Vietnamese Proverbs

#### 4.3.2.1. At the Phrasal Level

(4.111) *Chê mẹ chồng trước đánh đau, phải mẹ chồng sau mau đánh.* [45]

A	B	B'	A'
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#### 4.3.2.2. At the Sentential Level

a. Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse from the Active Voice to the Passive Voice

(4.114) *Có đứt ruột mới thương người ruột đứt.* [45]

b. Syntactical Chiasmus with the Reverse of a Subject and a Predicate

(4.116) *Con cái khôn ngoan, về vàng cha mẹ.* [45]

A	B	B'	A'
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c. Syntactical Chiasmus with a Change from a Phrase to a Clause

(4.118) *Ai oi chớ vội cười nhau,*  
*cười người hôm trước hôm sau người cười.* [45]

A	B	B'	A'
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### 4.3.3. Distribution of Chiasmus in Proverbs in Syntactic Categories

*Note:* The distribution is based on a number of 76/200 English and 34/200 Vietnamese proverbs containing syntactical chiasmus.

*Table 4.2. Frequency of Syntactic Categories of Chiasmus  
in English and Vietnamese Proverbs*

b. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse of the Main Clause and a Prepositional Phrase*

(4.101) *God defend me from my friends; from my enemies I can defend myself.* [3]

A	B	B'	A'
---	---	----	----

c. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse of a Subject and a Verb*

Below is the proverb containing chiasmic patterns involving relationships based on orders of constituents. This proverb has Subject - Verb - Object and Object - Verb - Subject pattern.

(4.105) *As the old cock crows, so crows the young.* [3]

As	A	B	so	B'	A'
----	---	---	----	----	----

d. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse of a Verb and a Verb Complement*

(4.107) *Happy is he that is happy in his children.* [3]

X	A	B	Y	B'	A'
---	---	---	---	----	----

e. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse of a Verb and an Object*

(4.109) *Send a fool to the market, and a fool he will return again.* [3]

A	B	B'	X	Y	A'
---	---	----	---	---	----

f. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Reverse of a Relative Clause and the Main Clause*

(4.110) *He who has good health, is young; and he is rich who wins nothing.* [3]

X	A	B	X	B'	A'
---	---	---	---	----	----

4.2.2.1. *Lexical Chiasmus with the Same Pair of Words and the Same Part-of-Speech*

a. *Word Reversal with Nouns*

In Vietnamese proverbs, chiasmic structures with nouns are mainly found with common nouns. In the total of 166 Vietnamese proverbs containing lexical chiasmus, there are 86 proverbs containing lexical reversal with common nouns, covering 51.7%.

(4.38) *Có con cây của, không có của cây con.* [27]

b. *Word Reversal with Verbs*

While in English the occurrence frequency of verbs covers 13.04% in comparison with other parts of speech, in Vietnamese it is lower with only 3.6%. In the total number of 166 proverbs containing lexical chiasmus, there are only six proverbs in which the elements A, B are verbs.

(4.56) *Nói thì phải làm, không làm thì đừng nói.* [31]

c. *Word Reversal with Adjectives*

In 22 proverbs containing lexical chiasmus with adjectives (covering 13.4%), the adjectives also denote quality and they are the antonym of each other:

(4.59) *Chồng lớn vợ bé thì xinh, chồng bé vợ lớn ra tình chị em.* [27]

4.2.2.2. *Lexical Chiasmus with Number Reversal*

There are 10 proverbs of numerical chiasmus in Vietnamese found out in the total of 166 ones, covering 6%

(4.67) *Nói chín thì phải làm mười; nói mười làm chín kể cười người chê.* [27]

4.2.2.3. *Word Reversal with Corresponding Pair Belonging to the Same Semantic Field*

In this kind of lexical chiasmus, B' has the same semantic field as B and likewise, A' and A:

(4.74) *Gái chưa chồng, hay đi chợ, trai chưa vợ, hay đứng đường*[31]

#### 4.2.3. Distribution of Chiasmus in Proverbs in Lexical Categories

Table 4.1. Frequency of Lexical Categories of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

Types of proverbs Lexical Features		English		Vietnamese	
		Occurrence	Percentage	Occurrence	Percentage
Lexical Chiasmus with the Same Pair of Words and Part-of-speech	<i>Reversal with Nouns</i>	44	35.9 %	86	51.7 %
	<i>Reversal with Verbs</i>	16	13.04 %	6	3.6 %
	<i>Reversal with Adjectives</i>	10	8.9 %	22	13.4 %
Different Pairs of Word and Different Part-of – Speech		1	0.08 %	0	0 %
The Same Pairs of Word but Different Part-of-Speech		1	0.08 %	0	0 %
Substitution of Pronouns		36	29 %	0	0 %
Number Reversal		8	6.5 %	10	6.0 %
Formation of Word		8	6.5 %	0	0 %
Corresponding Pairs Belonging to the Same Semantic Field		0	0 %	42	25.3 %
<b>Total</b>		<b>124</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>100 %</b>

#### 4.2.4. Similarities and Differences of Lexical Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

##### 4.2.4.1. Similarities of Lexical Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

- have the word reversal of different parts of speech.
- have number reversal

##### 4.2.4.2. Differences of Lexical Features of Chiasmus in English and Vietnamese Proverbs

The first difference of lexical chiasmus between English and Vietnamese proverbs can be found in chiasmus with substitution of pronouns. Secondly, in English proverbs there exists the repetition and reversal with only one word but it functions differently in different orders. Thirdly, the English proverbs have lexical chiasmus with different pairs of words and different parts of speech but this phenomenon cannot be found in Vietnamese. Finally, there is the lexical chiasmus with corresponding pairs belonging to the same semantic field in Vietnamese proverbs but we cannot see this type in English ones.

#### 4.3. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF CHIASMUS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE PROVERBS

##### 4.3.1. Syntactic Features of Chiasmus in English Proverbs

###### 4.3.1.1. At the Phrasal Level

(4.84) *A libertine life is not a life of liberty.* [3]

A   B   B'   of   A'   (X)
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###### 4.3.1.2. At the Sentential Level

a. *Syntactical Chiasmus with a Change from the Active Voice to the Passive Voice*

(4.88) *Speak when you are spoken to.* [3]