

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
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**TRƯỜNG THỊ TIÊU VI**

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO SYNTACTIC  
 AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF  
 IDIOMS DENOTING SPEED  
 IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

**Field : The English Language**

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

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. RATIONALE

Idioms are considered as a special form of language that carry a large amount of cultural information, such as history, geography, religion, custom, thinking pattern and so on. In our daily life, in order to express ourselves more effectively and clearly, we frequently need to call upon idioms that are defined by Palmer (1990) [46] as *expressions whose meanings cannot be inferred from the meaning of its part*.

It can be said that studying idioms is one of the most interesting and the hardest things in the process of studying a language such as English language. They are interesting because they are colourful and lively. However, they are also difficult for learners to know in which situations it is correct to use an idiom. Idiomatic expressions can often be very difficult to understand and even difficult for native English speakers because they have unpredictable meanings or collocations and grammar, and often have special connotations. Therefore, sometimes, the language learners may be able to guess the meaning from context but if not, it is not easy to the meaning.

There is a need to study some syntactic and semantic features of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese in the hope that the result of this study can help Vietnamese Learners of English improve their understanding of idioms and apply idioms in communication. Moreover, the investigation hopes to provide learners with background knowledge about cultural aspects related to the idioms they are approaching. All the reasons above urge me to conduct the thesis entitled “*An Investigation into Syntactic and*

## *Semantic Features of Idioms Denoting Speed in English and Vietnamese”.*

### 1.2. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

Idioms are an important part of both spoken and written language. Even if people are not aware of it, they are used very frequently in everyday speech and very often, when people have conversation, they can be used without noticing them. For this reason idiomatic expressions have been object of several studies among linguists for the last decades.

It is hoped that along with the understanding of the features of idioms in general and the study of idioms denoting speed in particular, the findings of the study of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese can be a contribution to syntactic and semantic competence that benefits learners and translators.

### 1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.3.1. Aims

The aim of this study is to investigate the syntactic and semantic features of English idioms denoting speed in contrastive analysis with Vietnamese idioms denoting speed; to explore and explain the similarities and differences in syntax, semantics and culture hidden in idioms denoting speed for applying in teaching, learning and translation in English and Vietnamese. Also, the understanding of English and Vietnamese idioms in general and idioms denoting speed in particular would help Vietnamese’s learners to be more aware of the values of language.

#### 1.3.2. Objectives

The objectives of the studies are:

- Describing, analyzing, comparing idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese in terms of syntactic features.

- Describing, analyzing, comparing idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese in terms of semantic features.

- Suggesting some ideas for teaching and learning as well as translating idioms denoting speed.

#### **1.4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This thesis is restricted to the syntactic and semantic features of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese with a view to finding out their similarities and differences.

#### **1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the syntactic features of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese ?

2. What are the semantic features of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese?

3. What are the similarities and differences between English idioms denoting speed and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed in terms of their syntactic and semantic features ?

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

The study is organized into five chapters: Chapter 1 is the Introduction; Chapter 2 is the Literature Review and Theoretical Background; Chapter 3 is the Methods and Procedures; Chapter 4 is Findings and Discussions; Chapter 5 is the Conclusions and Implications.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

##### **2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Idioms have become an interest of a great number of researchers in the world in different languages.

In English, we can mention Dixon, R.J (1971) [19] with *“Essential Idioms in English”*; Seidl, J. and McMordie, W. (1988) [54] with *“English Idioms and How to Use Them”*, McCarthy, M. (2002) [40] with *“English Idioms in Use”*, Ammer, C. (1997) with *“The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms”* [3], etc.

*“Thành Ngữ Tiếng Việt”* of Nguyễn Lực and Lương Văn Đăng (1978) [88] is one of the earliest books about idioms in Vietnam. After that, it is the appearance of *“Từ Điển Thành Ngữ và Tục Ngữ Việt Nam”* by Nguyễn Lâm (1994) [85], Hoàng Văn Hành (2008) *“Thành Ngữ Học Tiếng Việt”* [75]...

#### **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

##### **2.2.1. Definitions of Idioms**

In David Crystal’s opinion [18, p.181], *“Idiom is a term in grammar and lexicography to refer to a sequence of words which is semantically and often syntactically restricted, so that they function as a single unit”*.

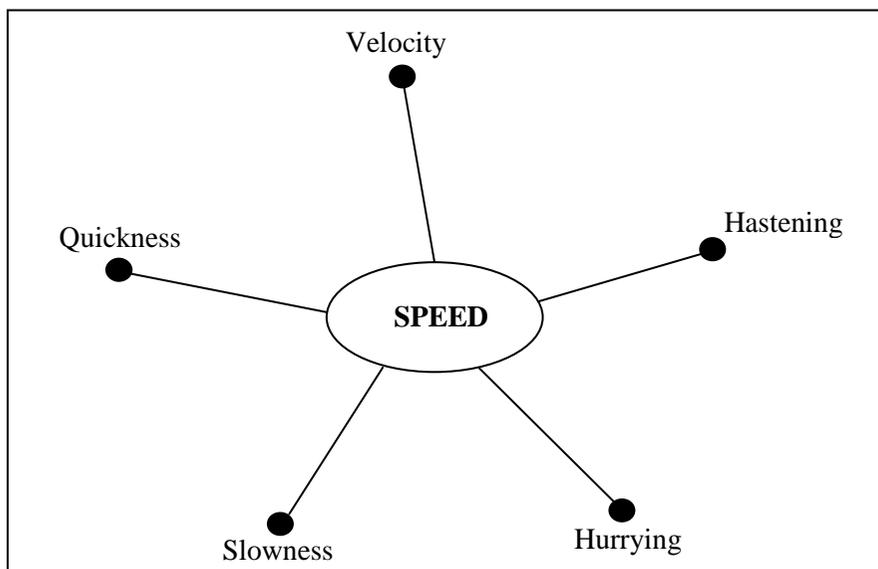
We also find definitions of idioms from a lot of dictionaries. Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms [1, p.701] defines idiom in the following way: *“a group of words in a fixed order having a particular meaning, different from the meanings of each word understood on his own”*. Idioms have attracted the interest of Vietnamese linguistic researchers as well. Mai Ngọc Chừ, Vũ Đức Nghiệu and Hoàng Trọng Phiến in *Cơ Sở Ngôn Ngữ Học Tiếng Việt* [69, p.153-165] affirm that *“idioms are groups of words which are syntactically restricted and have a particular meaning. Their meaning are often imaginative and figurative”*.

In conclusion, although there are many different angles in expression the definition of the word “idiom”, most linguists and researchers have the same view that ***an idiom is a fixed expression***

*whose meaning cannot be taken as a combination of the meaning of its constituents.*

### 2.2.2. Idioms Denoting Speed

Idioms Denoting Speed in this thesis relates to **velocity, quickness, hurrying or hastening and slowness** of someone/ something in English, and **tốc độ, sự nhanh nhẹn, vội vàng, chậm chạp** in Vietnamese.



*Adapted from the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary [137]*

### 2.2.3. Main Features of Idioms

#### 2.2.3.1. Structural Features

#### 2.2.3.2. Semantic Features

#### 2.2.3.3. Transfer of Meaning

#### 2.2.3.4. Cultural Features

### 2.2.4. Idioms and Other Similar Language Units

#### 2.2.4.1. Idioms and Phrases

#### 2.2.4.2. Idioms and Collocations

#### 2.2.4.3. Idioms and Proverbs

### 2.2.5. Overview of Phrase Structures

The thesis is based on the viewpoint of Sydney Greenbaum in The Oxford English Grammar [25] and A University Grammar of English by Randolph Quirk & Sidney Greenbaum [50] on grammar for features of English structure.

#### 2.2.5.1. Verb phrase

#### 2.2.5.2. Noun phrase

#### 2.2.5.3. Adjective phrase

#### 2.2.5.4. Prepositional phrase

### 2.2.6. Semantic Fields

According to Finch, G. [21, p.177], semantic field is an area of meaning containing words with related senses. Meanings of words cluster together to form fields of meaning, which in turn cluster into even larger fields until the entire language is encompassed.

This thesis concentrates on two main semantic fields as Quickness with two sub-fields: Manner and Advantages and Opportunities, and Slowness.

### 2.2.7. The Relationship of Language and Culture

#### 2.2.7.1. Concept of Culture

#### 2.2.7.2. The Relationship of Language and Culture

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

#### 3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

We carry out our investigation based on a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and contrastive methods to describe, generalize, analyze, compare and contrast the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed.

### 3.2. DESCRIPTION OF POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The study is required to guarantee the following criteria:

- the chosen samples are idioms
- they are idioms denoting speed
- the sources from which the chosen samples are picked up

are reliable and contain plenty of idioms.

There are 180 English idioms denoting speed and 180 Vietnamese idioms denoting speed from many different sources.

### 3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

#### 3.3.1. Data Collection

#### 3.3.2. Data Analysis

### 3.4. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

## 4.1. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS DENOTING SPEED

### 4.1.1. Phrase Structures

#### 4.1.1.1. Idioms denoting speed with Noun Phrase Structures

##### •English

[1] (Art) + A + N

[2] (Art) + N + (Art) + N

[3] N + Prep + NP

##### •Vietnamese

[1] N+ V / N + V

[2] N + N / N + N

#### 4.1.1.2. Idioms denoting speed with Verb Phrase Structures

##### •English

[4] V + N/ NP

[5] V + Prep + N/ NP

[6] V + A/V-ing

[7] V + N/ NP + Prep/ PP

[8] V + like/ as + N/ NP

##### •Vietnamese

[3] V + N/ V + N

[4] V + V / V + V

[5] V + A/ V + A

[6] V + N + PP

[7] V + nhur + N/ NP

[9]V + S.one/ S.th + PP

[8] V + nhur + Clause

[9] V + nhur + N + V

[10] V + nhur + V/VP

[11] VP + nhur + VP

[12] V + A + nhur + N

[13] V + Adv

[14] V + VP

[15] V + nhur + N + V +A

#### 4.1.1.3. Idioms denoting speed with Adjective Phrase Structures

##### •English

[10] (as) + A + as + Clause

[11] (as) + A + as + NP

[12] A + N + Adv

[13] A + Prep + NP

[14] A + and + A

##### •Vietnamese

[16] A + nhur + Clause

[17] A + nhur + N/ NP

[18] A + nhur + V

[19] A + N / A + N

[20] A + V/ A + V

#### 4.1.1.4. Idioms denoting speed with Prepositional Phrase Structures

##### •English

[15] Prep + Art/Num + N/ NP

[16] Prep + (Art) + A + N

[17] Prep + NP + PP

[18] like + (Art) + N/ NP

[19] like + NP + PP

##### •Vietnamese

none

none

none

none

none

No Vietnamese idioms in the structures of prepositional phrases can be found in the corpus.

#### 4.1.1.5. Idioms denoting speed with Adverb Phrase Structures

##### •English

none

none

##### •Vietnamese

[21] Adv + Clause

[22] Adv + N + V

In 180 English idioms denoting speed, no adverb phrases can be found.

#### 4.1.2. The Structures of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed

##### 4.1.2.1. The Parallel Structures

##### 4.1.2.2. Comparative Structures

The table 4.7 below demonstrates the syntactic features of English idioms denoting speed and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed in terms of structures and the distribution of these structures in the scope of 180 English idioms and 180 Vietnamese ones.

**Table 4.7. Statistical Summary of Syntactic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed**

English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed		ENGLISH		VIETNAMESE		
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Syntactical	Phrase Structures	Noun Phrases	14	7.8	14	7.8
		Verb Phrases	88	48.9	112	62.2
		Adjective Phrases	20	11.1	48	26.7
		Prepositional Phrases	58	32.2	0	0
		Adverb Phrases	0	0	6	3.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>	

#### 4.1.3. Similarities and Differences in Syntactic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed

##### 4.1.3.1. Similarities

From the investigation, we can see that both English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed have the patterns of in form of

noun phrases, verb phrases and adjective phrases. In detail, both have 4 structures in common: V + N/ NP + Prep/ PP, V + like/ as + N/ NP, as + A + as + NP, as + A + as + Clause. For examples, in group of verb phrases, the patterns V + N/ NP + Prep/ PP appears in both languages. Besides, the pattern of comparison V + like/ as + N/ NP in English can have the similar one V + như + N/ NP in Vietnamese. In group of adjective phrases, the pattern as + A + as + N/NP and as + A + as + Clause in English can share the similar comparison pattern of A + như + N/NP and A + như + Clause in Vietnamese. In addition, the structure of parallelism is used frequently in both languages in form of noun phrases, verb phrases and adjective phrases for the desire of alliteration, rhythm in order to make speeches smoother.

Idioms are considered fixed expressions; however, as mentioned in the previous theoretical chapter, they are relatively fixed. In some cases, the change of the word in the same semantic field or the order of the words in the idiom does not break its meaning at all. Both English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed own many variants. For instance, in English, the idioms: *drag one's feet/ drag one's heels* have the same meaning; Vietnamese idioms denoting speed have *chạy vút chân lên cỏ/ chạy bắt chân lên cỏ*, etc.

One more interesting thing is that idioms employed in reality are really more flexible than what is known, especially by authors who want to create their own words on the basis of existing idioms. For example, their elements are changed by replacing new ones as in *at a run (on the run), at full run (at full tilt)* in English; by inserting words as in *rờ như thể xấp rờ (rờ như xấp), nhanh như một tia chớp (nhanh như chớp)* in Vietnamese. Nevertheless, the idiomatic properties of the new terms are lost by no means.

#### 4.1.3.2. Differences

Among the total samples investigated, there are no cases of idioms in the form of adverb phrases in English as well as there are no ones in the form of prepositional phrases in Vietnamese. The number of Vietnamese idioms denoting speed as verb phrases and adjective phrases is more than those in English.

In addition, a large portion of Vietnamese idioms denoting speed is created by the rule of euphonism with sound repetition and rhyming repetition to make a smooth speech, which can not be found in English idiom denoting speed. For example, *bán đố bán tháo, chạy nháo chạy nhào, lật đật như xa vật ông vải, lừ đừ như ông từ vào đền, dững dĩnh như chĩnh trôi sông* etc.

Another structural feature found in Vietnamese idioms denoting speed is that the words in the idiomatic expressions are separated to guarantee the euphonic property and the parallelism in the structure of four-word terms. As in this idiom *chớp nháo đổ nhào*, the word “*nháo nhào*” is split into two parts which are then combine with two verbs to set up a phrase with four words, a common characteristic of Vietnamese idioms. Tendency of parallelism, repetition and word separation which cause specific properties of Vietnamese idioms cannot be discovered in English idioms denoting speed at all.

## 4.2. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE IDIOMS DENOTING SPEED

### 4.2.1. Transfer of meaning

#### 4.2.1.1. Metaphor

(96) As soon as the bell went for the end of the lesson, Jack ran out of the school gates and *hightailed it* for home.

(*Ngay sau khi chuông reo kết thúc giờ học, Jack ra khỏi cổng trường và chạy cong đuôi về nhà.*) [37, p.303]

This idiom does not have the literal meaning as the raised tail of a rabbit or other animal that is fleeing but a metaphor meaning in this idiom denoting Jack runs as fast as possible.

(100) Xe xuống dốc chạy vun vút, anh em hoan hô tài xế. Tài xế đã có thành tích *chạy bán mạng*, gặp tính nóng như lửa của anh em lại càng hợp. [Hoàng Văn Bôn, cited [87, p.117]

*Chạy bán mạng* in this example denotes the quick movement.

#### 4.2.1.2. Hyperbole

(101) With a monopoly on the market he could *coin money*.

[3, p.123]

(*Nắm giữ mặt hàng độc quyền trên thị trường, ông ta hái ra tiền một cách nhanh chóng.*)

In this idiom, it does not mean that he coins money but hyperbole is used to emphasize that he makes a great deal of money easily and quickly.

(103) Tên quân khố xanh là kẻ đầu tiên nhảy xuống suối, một số tên nhảy theo tên chỉ huy, số còn lại *quàng chân lên cổ* chạy thực mạng, không còn tên nào còn đủ thì giờ mang theo súng đạn được nữa. [98, p.554]

In “*quàng chân lên cổ*”, the expression is not understood literally that someone carries legs on the shoulders but it refers to moving extremely fast.

#### 4.2.1.3. Simile

(105) Santonio Holmes is *as quick as lightning* and he’s a tremendous player. [131]

(*Santonio Holmes nhanh như chớp ấy mà. Anh ta là một cầu thủ khác thường.*)

(108) Con chó ăng lên một tiếng, rồi **nhanh như chớp**, nó vật được kẻ thù xuống đất, giơ hai chân ra cào mặt và móc mồm...

[108, p.5]

**Table 4.8: Frequency of Transfer of Meaning in English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed**

Transfer of Meaning		English		Vietnamese	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
[1]	Metaphor	147	81.7	67	37.2
[2]	Hyperbole	7	3.9	9	5
[3]	Simile	26	14.4	104	57.8
Total		180	100	180	100

#### 4.2.2. Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese Idioms

##### Denoting Speed

##### 4.2.2.1. Quickness

###### a. Manner

###### • English

Firstly, English idioms denoting speed describe the manner of the verbs such as:

###### • run

(109) - Heaven help us! said Fee. "Go on, Dane, go outside and play, will you?" She clapped her hands. "Buzz!"

- The boy **ran for his life**, and Fee edged toward her books.

[102, p. 504]

(- Ôi, lạy Chúa lòng lành! – Fee nói. – Đi đi, Dane, chạy ra vườn mà chơi, nghe thấy chứ? – Bà vỗ hai tay vào nhau. – Đi!

- Thằng bé **ba chân bốn cẳng chạy đi**, còn Fee sốt ruột nhìn những quyển sổ quyết toán của mình.)

[111, p. 107]

###### • go

(110) I saw Tom **going hell for leather** towards the station, with two policemen running after him. [128]

(Tôi thấy Tom **chạy thực mạng** về phía nhà ga và hai viên cảnh sát đuổi theo anh ta.)

###### • get

(111) As the train came out of the tunnel, it **got up steam**.

[37, p.682]

(Ngay khi ra khỏi đường hầm, con tàu **dần dần tăng tốc**)

###### • and other verbs

(112) The children saw Mrs Frost coming and **made themselves scare**. [3, p.411]

(Vừa thấy bà Frost đi đến bọn trẻ **ù té chạy**)

Secondly, English idioms denoting speed often express the quick manner of an action or something by comparing with the speed of **wind, wink, blaze, lightning, flash, shot, or wildfire** or the swiftness of animals such as **bunny, dog**:

(115) ...When he saw the army lads were a wake up he was **off like a shot**, down the steps and into the street with two soldiers after him.

[102, p.61]

(Vừa thấy rõ rằng quân đội đã được báo trước về mình, cậu ta **bỏ chạy tức thì**, lao từ bậc tam cấp ra phố, hai người lính đuổi theo.)

Thirdly, English idioms denoting quickness describe manner of the other kinds:

(116) A fleeting day, over **in a second**. But on looking at his watch he saw it was still early, and knew the man who had so much power now that His Holiness lay near death would still be wakeful...

[102, p.587]

(Ngày trôi qua **như một khoảnh khắc**. Nhưng nhìn đồng hồ, anh thấy rõ ràng vẫn chưa muộn – cố nhiên, bây giờ khi Đức Thánh Cha sắp tạ thế, người có quyền lực vô cùng lớn lao ở Vaticăng vẫn chưa ngủ...) [111, p.216]

Fourthly, English idioms denoting quickness describe manner in haste:

(118) In a race **against the clock**, they rushed the accident victim to the hospital. [43, p.25]

(Họ đang **chạy đua với thời gian** để có đưa nạn nhân đến bệnh viện)

• **Vietnamese**

Firstly, *Vietnamese* idioms denoting speed describe the manner of the verbs such as:

• **chạy**

(120) A Phũ khỏe, **chạy nhanh như ngựa**, con gái trong làng nhiều người mê, nhiều người nói: “Đứa nào được A Phũ cũng bằng được con trâu tốt trong nhà, chẳng mấy lúc mà giàu”. [107, p.12]

• **đi**

(125) Không bao giờ cô ấy dám nhìn vào mà **đi như ma đuổi**. [87, p.270]

• **ăn**

(126) Chúng tôi không được mời, **ăn như rồng cuốn**. Mẫn rạn mặt như tất cả các bà chủ nhà của ít lòng nhiều luôn tay mức cháo nhắc chú Dế: “ăn nữa đi em” bằng cái giọng rất chị hai. [Phan Tứ, cited [98, p.31]

• **bán**

(128) Không có thiết bị làm lạnh cho nên có cá về ta cứ **bán đổ bán tháo** đi. Mười hai giờ đêm, một giờ sáng còn rải ra các phố để bán. [98, p.54]

• **mưa**

(129) Trời **mưa như trút nước**. Nửa đêm hôm đó, anh Tịch và Út bò vào móc cơ sở, mở cửa rào dẫn một cánh đột vô. Vợ chồng Út lại thu được ba cây súng và rồi lựu đạn hôm qua. [119, p.44]

• **and other verbs**

(131) Bỗng tiếng loa của chúng tôi cất lên, chúng tôi hiện ra, ập tới chặn các nẻo đường, mấy tên hồ hết lúc này hoảng kinh lui **trốn như chuột**. [87, p.769]

Secondly, Vietnamese idioms denoting speed also often express the quick manner of an action or something by comparing with the speed of *wind, lightning, thunder, shuttle, rocket, arrow* or speed of some animals such as *squirrel, rabbit, kestrel, horse, deer* :

(136) Phải chi giặc Mỹ được ngó thấy những chú bé trinh sát **nh nhanh như sóc**, biết cắt rừng một cách chính xác không cần địa bàn. [88, p.239]

Thirdly, Vietnamese idioms denoting speed describe manner of the other kinds

(137) Rào **ba chân tám cẳng** lên, ở nhà tao dóm bết đấy. Hôm nay thứ năm cậu giáo ăn cơm sớm. [Tô Hoài, cited [87, p.43]

Fourthly, Vietnamese idioms denoting quickness also describe manner of moving or acting in haste:

(140) Nhiều người tay không, cứ thế mà chạy **bổ sắp bổ giữa** ra đường.

[Nguyễn Địch Dũng, cited [98, p.87]

*b. Advantages and Opportunities*

• **English**

Advantages and opportunities in this case refer to meaning of idioms denoting making a great deal of money easily or very quickly; or enjoying a large and quick profit; or taking prompt advantage of, respond quickly to an opportunity; or achieving a distinct advantage over someone, especially through early or quick action, get a head start :

(142) He has a reputation for being someone who's only interested in *making a quick buck*.

[16, p.144]

(Ông ta nổi tiếng là người chỉ quan tâm đến việc kiếm tiền một cách dễ dàng và nhanh chóng.)

• **Vietnamese**

In Vietnamese, idioms in this field have the relation between kite and wind

(145) Sẵn tiền, lại sẵn cái tài giao thiệp của bà, đôi vợ chồng mới làm ăn lên *như điều gặp gió*. [103, p.113]

**4.2.2.2. Slowness**

• **English**

(147) Poor old Wally is creeping *at a snail's gallop* because his car has a flat tire.

[43, p.23]

(Ông Wally tội nghiệp đang lê *bước chân chậm chạp* vì lốp xe hơi của ông ta bị xì.)

• **Vietnamese**

(149) Chạy nhanh lên! Cứ *lờ đờ như chuột phải khói* ấy! Chúng nó nỏ cho một quả lựu đạn lại ăn tiết canh nhọc.

[Đỗ Quang Tiên, cited [88, p.194]

**Table 4.9. Frequency of Semantic Fields of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed**

Semantic Fields		English		Vietnamese	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
[1]	Quickness	164	91.1	158	87.8
	<i>a. Manner</i>	149	90.8	153	96.8
	<i>b. Advantages and Opportunities</i>	15	9.2	5	3.2
[2]	Slowness	16	8.9	22	12.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

**4.2.3. Similarities and Differences in Semantic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Denoting Speed**

**4.2.3.1. Similarities**

Idioms denoting speed, by applying some kinds of transfer of meaning such as Metaphor, Simile and Hyperbole, make languages more figurative, interesting and lively and demonstrate ways of thinking and observing the world of English and Vietnamese people.

In addition, both English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed share the same two main topics Quickness (with two more sub-fields: Manner and Advantages and Opportunities) and Slowness.

These lead to the similarities in the ways of expressing ideas and concepts through idioms. In fact, some English idioms denoting speed have similar equivalents in Vietnamese in terms of both meaning and vocabulary as in: *(run) like the wind: (chạy) nhanh như gió; quick as lightning: nhanh như chớp; quick as a bunny: nhanh như thỏ*.

What is more, idioms denoting speed of both languages reflect the link between the quickness of actions and the speed of wind, lightning, flash and rain. For example, *like the wind, quick as*

*lightning, raining cats and dogs, nhanh như gió, nhanh như chớp, mưa như trút nước, ăn như gió cuốn.*

#### 4.2.3.2. Differences

Firstly, in spite of the fact that both English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed have some similar equivalents about the way of thinking, it does not the same at all. For instance, English has the idiom *spread like wildfire* while Vietnamese use “*vết dầu*” in *nhanh như vết dầu loang*, alluding to something such as news, rumours or gossip spreads like “*wildfire*” or “*oil stain*”, it becomes widely known very fast. It is clear that the images selected to refer to the same matters are different in different languages.

Secondly, it can be realized that English idioms denoting speed come from many different origins. For example, some are from nautical origin as in *before the wind*. Some originate from military such as *beat a retreat, beat a hasty retreat*. Others come from the use of gun such as *get the drop on* etc; while in 180 Vietnamese idioms denoting speed, no idioms which originate from the above origins can be found. On the contrary, there are some Vietnamese idioms of which originates from traditional handicrafts such as *weaving fabric (lẹ như con thoi, chạy như con thoi, lật đật như quai sa vật vải)* in which shuttle and spinning wheel are used in weaving silk or cotton in the old days; or *silkworm breeding (ăn như tằm ăn rỗi)*. Additionally, the existence of words used in Vietnamese idioms is attached with the things close to their daily life such as *lên như điều gặp gió, ăn như chèo thuyền, lạnh chanh như hành không muối, ngón như bò ngón rom* etc.

Thirdly, the Vietnamese idioms in the investigation also combine with domestic animal words close to agriculture life to transfer various meaning such as *bò* (cows), *chạch* (loach), *chuột*

(mice), *gà* (chicken), *tôm, tép* (shrimp), *cò* (stork) ... These words can be picked up in *ngón như bò ngón rom, lẩn như chạch, chạy như chuột, lờ đờ như gà ban hôm, lờ đờ như cò bắt tép, lạch bạch như vịt bầu* etc. Other animals such as tortoise, squirrel, deer or some other kind birds and insects can be seen in *nhanh như sóc, nhanh như hươu vượt đồng nội, lờ đờ như đom đóm đực, lạnh như quạ*, etc. There are only few idioms in English with some images of bunny (*quick as a bunny*), dog (*quick as a dog can lick a dish*), snail (*at a snail's pace*), lamb (*in two shakes of a lamb's tail*).

One more difference is that religious belief, which carries out deeply influence on the way Vietnamese people think, the style they live, is shown in the language they use. Moreover, the influence of China's culture is still engraved in the Vietnamese language. We can see some idioms such as *chạy như ma đuổi, giục như giục tà, lật đật như ma vật ông vải, lờ đờ như ông từ vào đền*. Among the English idioms denoting speed, religious belief has no contribution to the corpus.

In summary, the words in idioms and their meanings can expose not only the way the peoples speak that language recognize the world around them but also many other features related to their life, their geographic location, living habits, culture, customs, religious belief and so on.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

## 5.1. CONCLUSIONS

Firstly, in terms of syntax, under the viewpoint of traditional grammar of Quirk and Greenbaum (1987), idioms denoting speed in the two languages can be expressed in different kinds of phrasal structures with total of 19 patterns in English and 22 ones in Vietnamese: *noun phrases*: 3 in English idioms denoting speed, 2 in Vietnamese; *verb phrases*: 6 in English, 13 in Vietnamese; *adjective phrases*: 5 in English, 5 in Vietnamese; *prepositional phrases*: 5 in English, no one in Vietnamese; *adverb phrases*: 2 in Vietnamese, no one in English. In the limit of the collected corpus, the number of verb phrases is the most popular in use in the total of the two languages. In addition, both English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed apply comparison construction, however, there are more idioms with comparative structures in Vietnamese than those in English. What is more, tendency of sound or rhyming repetition and word separation which cause specific properties of Vietnamese idioms cannot be discovered in English idioms denoting speed at all.

Secondly, in terms of semantics, idioms denoting speed in the corpus of this study express their meanings via semantic transfer means such as metaphor, hyperbole and simile. Especially, metaphor is superior in number in most of idioms in English such as *make money hand over fist, make a killing, drag one's feet, make a fast buck* etc and also *chạy bán mạng, chân trước chân sau, bán đở bán tháo, chạy chết chạy sống*, etc in Vietnamese. Hyperbole is used in some idioms such as *coin money, mint money, in no time, run for one's life*, or *ba chân bốn cẳng, vút chân lên cổ, quàng chân lên cổ*, etc. Simile appears in some idioms such as (as) quick as lightning,

(as) *quick as a wink, like a shot*, etc in English and is superior in number in most of idioms in Vietnamese as in *nhanh như thỏ, chậm như rùa, nhanh như chớp, phóng như bay*, and so on. Besides, the figurative and concrete characteristics of English and Vietnamese idioms denoting speed are also presented in two fields *Quickness and Slowness* and two sub-fields *Manner and Advantages and Opportunities*. Moreover, we can also find out some similarities as well as differences in terms of semantic features of idioms denoting speed. More interestingly, some English idioms have the Vietnamese equivalents, which prove speakers of English and speakers of Vietnamese, to a certain extent, sometimes recognize the world in the same way. However, the images selected to refer to the same matters are different in two languages. From the discussion, we can recognize that every country has its own way in using idioms and by using them, we also understand more about the life, geography, living habits, culture, customs, religious belief of the peoples who speak English and Vietnamese.

## 5.2. IMPLICATIONS

For learners of English, there may be some following suggestions. Firstly, the context should be offered for students to enhance interpretation of idioms. Secondly, at all levels, learners always encounter idioms and this can be a big problem if they are unfamiliar. Hence, it would be better for learners to do many topic-based exercises as possible. Another thing is that learners not only have the basic knowledge of a language but also should have a good background knowledge of history, culture or customs which is related to idioms in process of dealing with English idioms denoting speed learning.

For teachers of English, the following suggestions should be considered in order to get a good teaching result.

Firstly, it is essential to select English idioms denoting speed that are frequently used in target language and the ones that do not own too many special problems with vocabulary and grammar. Moreover, teachers can provide learners with a list of most useful and frequent idioms with their contexts so that learners can infer the meanings of the idioms rather than memorise definitions.

Secondly, teachers should help learners develop a habit of noticing idioms in everyday situations, including reading and listening. The useful help from teachers can stimulate interest of learners to learn voluntarily and effectively when they discover the beauty of new idioms they are approaching.

Thirdly, idioms introduced to learners should be grouped into semantic fields, topics or key words. By this way, learners can catch the meaning and retain new idioms longer in memory.

To sum up, teaching a language not only helps learners learn how to apply knowledge of the idioms generally and English idioms denoting speed particularly in communication but also provides learners with a good opportunity to acquire information about a language's culture and inspires them to love their own language and culture as well as the language and culture they are learning. To some aspects, the paper will provide a useful reference for those who are interested in teaching and learning idioms denoting speed effectively.

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

#### **5.3.1. Limitations of the Research**

Despite considerable efforts of the researcher, certain limitations could be detected in this study due to limitation of time,

reference materials, the researcher's ability and other unexpected factors. Another limitation is that the number of idioms denoting speed in English and Vietnamese is relatively low. Furthermore, this investigation cannot cover all the structures as well as meanings of idioms denoting speed.

#### **5.3.2. Suggestions for Further Studies**

Since mastering idioms is still a controversial topic, it offers other researchers large room to conduct further studies. Some suggestions for further studies can be drawn as following:

Syntactic and Semantic Features of English and Vietnamese Proverbs Denoting Speed.

A Pragmatic Study of Idioms Denoting Speed in English and Vietnamese .