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A CONTRASTIVE STUDY  
OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMS  
EXPRESSING DISTANCE IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. RATIONALE

*Idiom is an expression the meaning of which cannot be inferred from the meaning of its parts* [4]. Whether we are a professional writer, a teacher or a student we often come across idioms because that is a natural manner of speaking to a native speaker of a language. It is said that when learning a language, a person needs to learn the words in that language, and how and when to use them. However, it is not the same for learning idioms because as mentioned in the above definition the meaning of idioms cannot be deduced from that of their components and their use is closely related to the culture where it is originated. Let us take into consideration some idioms expressing *distance* in English and in Vietnamese; for example, when hearing and reading the idiom “*live in the middle of nowhere*” [40] in English, Vietnamese learners of English cannot understand its true meaning : *to live extremely far away from a place* from the meaning of separate words. Another illustrating example in Vietnamese could be found in “*Bản án chế độ thực dân Pháp*” by Nguyễn Ái Quốc [36]. He wrote: “*Người ta cấp cho người Âu những đồn điền cò bay thẳng cánh nhiều khi quá 20.000 héc-ta mà những người Âu này thì ngoài cái bụng phệ và cái màu da trắng ra, không có mấy may kiến thức gì về nông nghiệp và kỹ thuật*”. “*Cò*” is a popular kind of bird normally flying over Vietnamese farmers’ crop fields. When using the idiom “*cò bay thẳng cánh*”, Vietnamese people want to refer to *a very large piece of cultivating land*. English native learners of Vietnamese lacking this knowledge of Vietnamese

agricultural culture may find it very difficult to grasp its true meaning.

Nevertheless, *a contrastive study of linguistic features of idioms expressing distance in English versus Vietnamese* has so far not been dealt with. As a result, this thesis titled “*A Contrastive Study of Linguistic Features of Idioms Expressing Distance in English versus Vietnamese*” could be carried out in order to find out the linguistic features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese.

#### 1.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

##### 1.3.1. Aims

- Providing learners with a better insight into the semantic, syntactic and cultural features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese.
- Helping Vietnamese learners of English be aware of the similarities and differences in the linguistic features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese.
- Making it possible for learners of English and Vietnamese to use these idioms more effectively and naturally.

##### 1.3.2. Objectives

- Describe the semantic and syntactic features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese.
- Compare these linguistic features of these idioms in English versus Vietnamese.
- Put forward some implications for better teaching and learning idioms in general and idioms expressing *distance* in English and Vietnamese in particular.

#### 1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the semantic and syntactic features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese?
2. What are the similarities and differences between these idioms in terms of syntactic and semantic features?
3. What are the cultural underlying reasons for these similarities and differences in idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese?

#### 1.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

**Chapter 1** - *Introduction*

**Chapter 2** - *Literature Review*

**Chapter 3** - *Method and Procedures*

**Chapter 4** - *Findings and Discussions*

**Chapter 5** - *Conclusions and Implications*

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

In “Essential Idioms in English” [5], idioms are listed and have their meaning explained with illustrating examples. Palmer [20] clearly states some restrictions in syntactic as well as semantic features in idioms. In “An Introduction to Functional Grammar” [11] by Halliday, there has been the explanation of structural grammar, the relationship between grammar and semantic, and especially in the light of Halliday’s view, idioms are regarded as a class of group. Seidl and McMordie [26] write “English Idioms and How to Use

Them”. Besides, in “Oxford Idioms Dictionary for Learners of English” [47], there is a wide range of idioms, from expressions used in business and newspapers to very up-to-date informal English and slang expressions.

Concerning Vietnamese idioms, there have been a lot of studies by various linguists such as “Từ điển thành ngữ tục ngữ Việt – Anh tường giải” by Bùi Phụng [49], “Từ điển giải thích thành ngữ tiếng Việt” by Nguyễn Như Ý [55], “Từ điển thành ngữ tục ngữ ca dao Việt Nam” by Việt Chương [27], “Từ điển thành ngữ Việt- Anh” by Trần Phong Giao [29].

In addition, there have been so far some master theses in English on idioms carried out by many Vietnamese researchers. Nguyen Van Long has done researches into “Semantic Features of English and Vietnamese Idiomatic Verb Phrases” [17] and “Linguistic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms” [18]. Nguyen Thi Dieu Hao [13] focuses on the study of idioms containing color words in English and Vietnamese. Vo Thanh Quyen [21] makes a contrastive analysis of idioms denoting Human Being in English and Vietnamese. Nguyen Thi Phuong Thu [24] studies “The Syntactic and Semantic Features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Containing Verbs of Motion”. Moreover, Nguyen Thi Thu Mai [19] investigates “The Syntactic and Semantic Features of Idioms Denoting Causes and Results (English Versus Vietnamese)”.

It could be seen that the linguistic features of idioms expressing *distance* in English versus Vietnamese have not been so far investigated.

#### 2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

##### 2.2.1. Definitions of Idioms

## 2.2.2. Distinguishing Idioms from Other Language Units:

### 2.2.2.1. *Idioms and Phrases*

### 2.2.2.2. *Idioms and Collocations*

### 2.2.2.3. *Idioms and Proverbs*

### 2.2.2.4. *Idioms and Cliché*

## 2.2.3. Main Features of Idioms

### 2.2.3.1. *Stability and Restriction in Structure*

### 2.2.3.2. *Semantic Ambiguity*

### 2.2.3.3. *Symbolism*

### 2.2.3.4. *Relationship between Idioms and Culture*

### 2.2.3.5. *Idioms Expressing Distance*

*Spatial distance* could be understood as the extent of space between two objects or places, the condition of being apart in space or remoteness, a point or area that is far away or a stretch of space without designation of limit

*Temporal distance* is the extent of time between two events or an intervening period.

*Psychological distance* is considered to be the most complicated. It is the subjective distance between an actor and another in the actor's psychological space such as the emotional separateness or reserve, the amount of progress, the difference or disagreement. It partly involves the perceived differences and similarities in motivations, such as needs, sentiments, roles, attitudes, interests, means, wants and goals.

*Social distance* is distance between different groups of society in terms of income, education, race, sex, occupation, wealth, power, prestige.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD AND PROCEDURE

#### 3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

With the combination of the descriptive, contrastive method, qualitative and quantitative approach, the similarities and differences in syntax, semantics and cultural features of English and Vietnamese Idioms Expressing Distance could be discovered.

#### 3.2. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The main materials used in the study are collected from the following major sources: the bilingual magazines, novels and short stories and literature books, the grammar books written by English and Vietnamese linguists, the English – Vietnamese and Vietnamese – English dictionaries, English journals, the Internet webpages.

#### 3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The researcher could read and pick out Idioms Expressing Distance from the sources, finding typical examples in which they are used. We start working with them by analyzing and classifying them in order to meet the need of analysis. The collected data could be analyzed in terms of syntactic and semantic features. Finally, the researcher would compare syntactic and semantic features of Idioms Expressing Distance in English versus Vietnamese for similarities and differences based on their cultural underlying features. The statistic data are dealt with by using Microsoft Excel. Last but not least, the researcher would suggest some possible ways of teaching, learning and translating Idioms Expressing Distance in English and Vietnamese.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMS EXPRESSING DISTANCE IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

##### 4.1.1. Symbolic Characteristics of Idioms Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese

###### 4.1.1.1. Metaphor

It is found that metaphor is mainly used in the meaning transfer of idioms. For example, *như sao hôm, sao mai; lên voi xuống chó; con kiến mà kiến củ khoai; chia loan rẽ phượng; chàng ngu ả chực; etc.* in Vietnamese or *until/till kingdom come; many moons ago; till/ until he cows come home; donkey's years; on cloud nine; etc.* in English.

###### 4.1.1.2. Metonymy

Here are some images that appear in the idioms expressing distance in Vietnamese by the means of metonymy: *có tai, có mắt; cửa không sân trình; có máu mắt; chân ngoài dài hơn chân trong; chung chẵn chung gối.*

In English, people also use some idioms expressing distance metonymically to convey meaning such as: *have one foot in the grave; in your heart of hearts; neck and neck; absence makes the heart grow fonder; be off the map.*

###### 4.1.1.3. Simile

Here are some idioms expressing distance that we can catch sight of the method of simile: *dài như sông, cao như núi, lên như điều gặp gió, as long as your arm, as common as muck, as old as Adam, etc.*

##### 4.1.1.4. Symmetry

In the idioms expressing distance, **symmetry** is one of the most outstanding characteristics. For example, *day after day; from cover to cover; from door to door, cheek by jowl; deep cave and high mountain; neck and neck; out of sight, out of mind.*

In Vietnamese, it could be found lots of idioms expressing distance which contain this feature such as *đầu ghềnh cuối bãi; gần đất xa trời; kẻ bắc người nam; trên bến dưới thuyền, nghĩ gần nghĩ xa, trên răng dưới dái; cùng trời cuối đất.*

##### 4.1.2. Semantic Fields of Idioms Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese

###### 4.1.2.1. Semantic and Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Spatial Distance in English versus Vietnamese

*Table 4.1: Structure of Idioms Expressing Spatial Distance in English Versus Vietnamese*

ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
[1] (Article) + Adjective + Noun	[1] Noun Phrase + Noun Phrase
[2] Noun + Preposition + Noun	[2] Noun + Adjective + Noun + Adjective
[3] Article + Possessive	[3] Verb + Adj + Verb + Adj
[4] Noun/NounPhrase+Conjunction + Noun / Noun Phrase	[4] Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun
[5] (Article) + Noun Phrase + Preposition + Adverb	[5] Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun
[6] Verb + Preposition + Noun Phrase	[6] Adjective + Noun / Noun Phrase+Verb+Noun/Noun Phrase
[7] Verb + Article + Noun	[7] Adjective + Verb + Adjective + Verb

[8] Verb + Noun + Preposition + Adverb	[8] Adjective + Prepositional Phrase
[9] As + Adjective + As + Noun / Noun Phrase / Clause	[9] Adv + Noun + Adv + Noun
[10] Preposition + Noun/Noun Phrase + (Preposition + Noun/ Noun Phrase)	[10] Adverb Phrase + Adverb Phrase
[11] Preposition+(Article) + Noun / Noun Phrase + (Preposition)	[11] Subject + Predicator + Object
[12] Preposition + Adverb	∅
[13] Adv + Conjunction + Adv	∅
[14] Adverb + Adverb	∅
[15] Adverb + (Adjective) + Preposition+ Noun/Noun Phrase	∅
[16] Subject + Predicator	∅

**4.1.2.2. Semantic and Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Temporal Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**  
**Table 4.2: Structure of Idioms Expressing Temporal Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
[17] Article + (Adjective) + Noun	[12] Noun + Adjective + Noun + Adjective
[18] Noun+conjunction + Noun	[13] Noun+Verb+Noun + Verb
[19] Article + Noun + Preposition+(Article) + Noun	[14] Noun Phrase + Noun Phrase

[20] (Article) + Noun / Noun Phrase + Adverb	[15] Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun
[21] Verb + conjunction + Verb	[16] Verb Phrase + Verb Phrase
[22] Adverb + conjunction + Adverb	[17] Verb Phrase + Noun Phrase + (Verb Phrase + Noun Phrase)
[23] Verb + Noun Phrase + Article + Noun / Noun Phrase	[18] Adjective + Noun + (Adjective + Noun)
[24] Verb + Conjunction + Noun Phrase	[19] Adjective Phrase + Adjective Phrase
[25] As + Adjective + As + (Article) + Noun	[20] Adjective + Verb + Adjective + Verb
[26] Adjective + conjunction + Adjective	[21] Subject + Predicator + Object
[27] Preposition + Article + (Adjective) + Noun	∅
[28] Preposition + (Article) + Noun + Preposition + (Article) + Noun	∅
[29] Preposition + (Article) + Noun + Adjective	∅
[30] (Preposition) + Adverb + Preposition	∅
[31] Preposition + Clause	∅
[32] Adverb + Clause	∅
[33] Subject + predicator	∅

**4.1.2.3. Semantic and Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Psychological Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

**Table 4.3: Structure of Idioms Expressing Psychological Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
[34] Article + Adjective + Noun + (Preposition)	[22] Noun / Noun Phrase + Verb / Verb Phrase + Noun / Noun Phrase + Verb / Verb Phrase
[35] Verb + Article + Adjective + Noun	[23] Noun Phrase + Noun Phrase
[36] Verb + Noun + Preposition	[24] Noun Phrase + Adjective + Noun Phrase
[37] Verb + Adverb	[25] Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun
[38] Verb + Adjective	[26] Verb + Adj + Verb + Adj
[39] Adjective Phrase + Preposition + Noun	[27] Verb + Prepositional Phrase
[40] Preposition + (Article) + Noun / Noun Phrase	[28] Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun
[41] Adverb + Noun Phrase	[29] Adv + Verb + Adv + Verb
[42] Subject + Predicator + Complement	[30] Subject + Predicator + Object

**4.1.2.4. Semantic and Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Social Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

**Table 4.4: Structure of Idioms Expressing Social Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

ENGLISH	VIETNAMESE
[43] Noun + Conjunction + Noun	[31] Noun+Adjective+Noun+Adjective
[44] Adjective + Noun	[32] Noun + Verb + Noun + Verb
[45] Article + Adjective + Noun	[33] Noun Phrase + Noun Phrase
[46] Noun Phrase + Preposition + Noun Phrase	[34] Noun + Prepositional Phrase
[47] Verb + Prepositional + Article + Noun	[35] Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun
[48] Verb + Noun Phrase	[36] Verb + Adverb + Verb + Adverb
[49] Verb + Adverb	[37] Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun
[50] Adjective + Conjunction + Adjective	[38] Subject + Predicator + Object
[51] As + Adjective + As + Noun	Ø
[52] Preposition + Noun / Noun Phrase + Preposition + Noun / Noun Phrase	Ø

**Table 4.6: A Statistic Summary of Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**

Idioms Expressing Distance in English versus Vietnamese			English		Vietnamese	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Syntactical Analysis	Phrase Structures	Noun Phrases	47	23.5%	72	36%
		Verb Phrases	50	25%	63	31.5%
		Adjective Phrases	10	5%	45	22.5%
		Prepositional Phrases	73	36.5%	0	0%
		Adverbial Phrases	13	6.5%	9	4.5%
		Clause Structures	Simple Patterns	7	3.5%	11
	Total			200	100%	200

The percentage shows that Vietnamese people tend to use more idioms in noun phrases than English ones: 36% versus 23.5%. Also, Vietnamese people use more verb phrases: 31.5% versus 25%. There is total of 45 idioms in form of adjective phrases in Vietnamese, accounting for 22.5%. Meanwhile, English idioms contributing to this field are only 10 idioms, accounting for 5%. Of all the structures investigated, there is the special inequality in the proportion of prepositional phrases between Vietnamese and English idioms: 0% versus 36.5%. Adverb phrases in Vietnamese versus English respectively account for 4.5% and 6.5%, and sentences are 5.5% and 3.5%.

**Table 4.7: Frequency of Semantic Fields of Idioms Expressing Distance in English versus Vietnamese**

Idioms Expressing Distance in English versus Vietnamese			English		Vietnamese	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Semantic Fields	1	Spatial Distance	57	28.5%	70	35%
	2	Temporal Distance	72	36%	38	19%
	3	Psychological Distance	45	22.5%	60	30%
	4	Social Distance	26	13%	32	16%
	Total Number			200	100%	200

Table 4.7 represents the predominant use of idioms expressing spatial distance in Vietnamese: 35%. Meanwhile, English idioms contributing to this field account for 28.5%. However, English idioms expressing temporal distance rank the first with 36% versus 19% in Vietnamese ones. Vietnamese idioms expressing psychological distance are employed more frequency than in English ones with the proportion of 30% in Vietnamese in comparison with 22.5% in English. The analysis of the data in English and Vietnamese idioms expressing social distance gains the fewest instances of idioms, accounting for respectively 13% and 16%.

#### **4.2. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMS EXPRESSING DISTANCE IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE**

##### **4.2.1. Similarities and Differences in Syntactic Features of Idioms Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese**



#### 4.2.1.1. Similarities

We could find out that both English and Vietnamese idioms expressing distance are formed in certain groups of structures namely noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and sentences. Among these structures, verb phrases and noun phrases are predominant with 48.5% in English and 67.5% in Vietnamese. It is easily understandable because noun and verb are two basic parts of speech in English and Vietnamese word system. They account for a large number in word system and are used with high frequency in daily life because they go with daily activities, status or feeling of human beings, things surrounding people. And idiom which has a long history of formation and development is one of the most important parts in word power of a language. Therefore, these numbers are indispensable.

Apart from that, English and Vietnamese also have idioms in form of clauses. The constituents of the clauses could be subject, predicator, object or complement.

#### 4.2.1.2. Differences

Prepositional phrases in English rank the first position with 73 idioms, accounting for 36.5% whereas among Vietnamese idioms investigated, there are no cases of idioms in form of this aspect. The large number of prepositions found in English in comparison with Vietnamese can explain this phenomenon. Besides, English prepositions themselves can also express the distance for example **off, from, to, in, on, up to, away, apart, until, etc.**

In addition, there are a variety of patterns in English idioms expressing distance in comparison with Vietnamese ones. From the

table 4.5, we can find 52 patterns in all semantic fields whereas there are only 39 patterns in Vietnamese.

In term of parallel constructions, we can see that Vietnamese idioms expressing distance are more numerous. They could be *Noun + Adjective + Noun + Adjective, Verb + Adj + Verb + Adj, Verb + Noun + Verb + Noun, Adjective + Noun + Adjective + Noun, Adv + Noun + Adv + Noun, etc.* We can take the philosophy of dualisme in Vietnamese people's thinking to explain this phenomenon. Vietnamese people believe that there are always two opposite principles in everything for example good and evil, Yin and Yang, father and mother, sky and earth.

#### 4.2.2. Similarities and Differences in Semantic Features of Idioms Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese

##### 4.2.2.1. Similarities

Four common rhetorical devices used in both English and Vietnamese Idioms Expressing Distance are metaphor, metonymy, simile and symmetry. Let us take some typical examples to clarify this point. By using the idiom **lên voi xuống chó**, Vietnamese people do not want to mention to any actions of getting on or getting off an elephant or a dog. However, with the images of elephant which is symbol of richness and power and dog which stands for poverty and misery, Vietnamese people want to talk about the unexpectedly changes of social status of a person. The same case could be found in the idiom **go to the dogs** in English idiom. In the two above examples, we can see that the method of metaphor is used effectively to express social distance in both idioms.

To demonstrate for the method of metonymy, we could take the idioms **neck and neck, bằng vai ngang vế** as some examples. By

using the parts of body such as neck, shoulders and thigh, Vietnamese and English people share the same view point of equal position in society.

Let look at the examples **cao như núi** and **as old as the hills** to see the common comparative image used in both languages in the method of simile.

In both languages, we can catch sight of the symmetry that appears a lot especially in Vietnamese idiom for example **from ear to ear, cùng trời cuối đất**.

One more clear similarity we could find in English and Vietnamese Idioms Expressing Distance is that both languages share the same semantic fields relating to spatial distance, temporal distance, psychological distance and social distance. Among them, spatial distance accounts for the highest frequency (28.5% in English and 35% in Vietnamese) and social distance ranks the last position with the lowest frequency (13% in English and 16% in Vietnamese) in both languages.

Last but not least, we could find that some Vietnamese and English Idioms Expressing Distance can convey more than one semantic field. For example, the idiom **đồng sàng dị mộng** could belong to spatial distance or psychological distance, **from rags to riches** could belong to psychological distance or social distance.

#### 4.2.2.2. Differences

Firstly, Vietnamese culture belongs to the wet-rice culture, so their life is deeply embedded to the agriculture, the nature, the paddy field or the cattle. In 200 Vietnamese data that have been found to express the distance, we can easily catch sight of these images **cò bay thẳng cánh, cút trâu để lâu hóa bùn, dài như sông, chia đàn sẽ**

**nghe, etc.** British people, in contrast, they focus on the industry and they belong to the nomadic culture, so this point has been shown in the idioms such as **the top of the ladder, big guns, from pillar to post, etc.**

From the cultural origin of Normadic Shepherd, we can see that English idioms also show the analytical thinking in British people's perception and behavior. This point is conveyed in the idioms **from A to Z, man and boy, here today and gone tomorrow, come and go, etc.** Meanwhile, with the characteristics of agricultural culture, Vietnamese life depends too much on the nature, so Vietnamese people highly appreciate life experience, Yin and Yang philosophy and sentiment of people in life. Here are some idioms expressing this trait of culture: **con cháu khôn hơn ông vải, cùng trời cuối đất, chấp cánh liền cành, không lo xa ất buồn gần, đêm ngắn tình dài, etc.**

Thirdly, each country also differs in the value they place on individualism or collectivism. Belonging to the collectivism culture, Vietnamese idioms put an emphasis on the close connection or distance of people in a neighborhood or in a village, the solidarity of people in a nation such as **đầu làng cuối xóm, kẻ vai sát cánh, trong nhà chưa tỏ ngoài ngõ đã tường, etc.** Among the English Idioms Expressing Distance, we find out that there seem no cases containing the same above characteristics. However, we can see the idioms showing the individualism culture such as **neck and neck, rise from the ashes, a running battle, etc.**

Last but not least, the history of one thousand years under the domination of China also reflected in Vietnamese Idioms Expressing Distance. The evidence is that there are a lot of Chinese –

Vietnamese idioms appearing in the four semantic fields of Idioms Expressing Distance such as **thâm căn cố đế, kính nhi viễn chi, đồng sàng dị mộng, cố quốc tha hương, etc.** Besides, religion also has a great impact on the way people think, the way they live, which is reflected in the language they use. In Western country, most are Christians, so we can find some idioms which have origin of the Bible. Let us take the idiom **as old as Adam** as an example. In contrast, Buddhism has a greatest influence on Vietnamese people. Here is a culturally loaded idiom expressing distance in Vietnamese **gần chùa gọi bụt bằng anh.**

#### 4.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

### CHAPTER 5

#### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

##### 5.1. CONCLUSIONS

So far, this thesis has already investigated the syntactic and semantic features of idioms expressing distance. 400 idioms of this kind are collected, classified and analyzed on the base of a contrastive analysis to find out the similarities and differences in syntactic and semantic features of the idioms expressing distance in English versus Vietnamese. Let us summarize all the points presented in the thesis until now.

Chapter 1 states the rationale of the study and presents what the study is aimed at. The research questions, scope of the study and organization of the study are also mentioned in this chapter. Chapter 2 comes up with a review of the related previous studies, the fundamental and essential theoretical background to serve as the basis foundation of data analysis and finding discussion in the

following chapter. Chapter 3 is the description of the methods and procedures of the paper. In chapter 4, the findings and discussion of the research are presented to point out the syntactic and semantic features of idioms expressing distance in English versus Vietnamese.

Here are the results withdrawn from the thesis after a long time working with this study.

Syntactically, idioms analyzed are under the phrasal structures and sentence structures. The phrasal structures are categorized into noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, prepositional phrases, adverb phrases and sentence structures in English. Similarly, Vietnamese idioms are in the structures of noun phrases, verb phrases, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and sentence structures

Semantically, all the collected idioms express their meaning through the rhetorical devices such as metaphor, metonymy and symmetry. Besides, idioms expressing distance in two languages are all presented in the four semantic fields such as spatial distance, temporal distance, psychological distance and social distance. The semantic fields have been then investigated in the combination with the superficial grammatical structure examples. Finally, the similarities and differences in syntactic and semantic features of the idioms expressing distance have been pointed out.

Chapter 5 gives some suggestions about how to teach, learn and use idioms expressing distance better for the Vietnamese teachers as well as learners.

##### 5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING, LEARNING AND TRANSLATING

### **5.2.1. Implications for Teaching and Learning Idioms Expressing Distance**

For teachers, firstly, they should introduce idioms to learners in context, point out the literal meaning and figurative meanings of the idioms. To decode the idioms, these steps are indispensable because there are some idioms we can get their meaning when looking at their separate words; however, most of idioms are opaque in meaning. This can lead to the result that learners could misuse the idioms carrying figurative meaning.

Secondly, in the process of teaching a language, it is very important for teachers to combine the introduction of American culture, British culture and Vietnamese culture in order to provide learners with very basic background knowledge to make comparison between two languages. From that, it is easier for them to understand the similarities and differences in the use of the idioms in two languages.

Thirdly, teachers should encourage production of idioms through conversations and discourses. It means that they should apply their teaching methods to force learners to put the idioms studied into practice. For example, to explain idioms in lesson and make the lesson more interesting and easier to understand, teachers should use various activities to attract and arouse the students' interest such as the games (crosswords, find someone who..., who's the millionaire?, hangman, matching,...), songs, vivid pictures with some explanation, group discussion.

For learners, first of all, they should equip themselves with general knowledge of grammatical structures and rhetorical devices

such as metaphor, metonymy, symmetry to be able to recognize these features when dealing with idioms.

Secondly, learning how to make comparison between idioms in target language and idioms in mother tongue is important because this step can help them to remember the idioms longer and use them more effectively.

Thirdly, it is necessary for learners to enrich the cultural knowledge in both target language and mother tongue. Because this is an important key for learners to distinguish and recognize the underlying meaning of the idioms.

Last but not least, it is said that "practice makes perfect", so reading books and newspapers, watching films, visiting some websites about idioms, communicating with native speakers are the ways to perfect the source of idioms.

### **5.2.2. Implications for Translating Idioms Expressing Distance in English and Vietnamese**

#### **5.2.2.1. Literal Translation**

Literal translation or directed translation, is the rendering of text from one language to another "word-for-word" rather than conveying the sense of the original. In translation studies, "literal translation" denotes technical translation of scientific, technical, technological or legal texts. In other word, a literal translation is a translation that follows closely the form of the source language. Many Idioms Expressing Distance could be translated in the literal way, for instance *day after day*, *deep cave and high mountain*, *a running battle*, etc. For this type of translation, the original form and images of idioms are unchangeable and there is no confusion in meaning. For example, the idiom "*deep cave and high mountain*"

could be literally translated into “*hang sâu núi cũ*”. It is a preferred version of translation because it fulfills the function of communicative translation yet retains the original flavour of the source proverb.

#### 5.2.2.2. *Figurative Translation*

Firstly, there is comprehension and interpretation of texts which implies the management of the approach principles to various types of texts, considering the textual, referential, cohesion and naturalness levels. This competence includes reading comprehension and message interpretation (encoding and decoding).

Secondly, re-wording is also important. It means the application of the various strategies for the restitution process of the message (re-coding) by choosing the appropriate method(s), techniques and procedures. Among the most frequently used procedures for the restoration of ideas contained in a translation unit, a translator may resort to transfer cultural or functional equivalent, synonymy, transposition, modulation, compensation, reduction and expansion or amplification. For this purpose, it is also indispensable to make effective use of different types of documentation: Parallel texts, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, encyclopedias, term data base, informants and other sources.

Thirdly, translators should be aware of the fact that incorrect comprehension of a text considerably decreases the quality of the translation. Finding solutions to dilemmas is necessary in the work of the translator. This includes translating problems such as linguistic or cultural “untranslatability”, being able to manage losses and gains, solutions to lexical ambiguity, etc., through various mechanisms such as compensation, loans, explanatory notes, adaptation, equivalence,

paraphrasing, analogies, etc. Translators should also be aware that meaning is not only conveyed by words. Hence adequate decoding and re-coding of idioms is a matter that must be properly considered.

### 5.3. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Firstly, this paper cannot cover all constructions as well as all meanings of idioms expressing distance under discussion due to the limitation of time and reference materials relating to the topic in both English and Vietnamese.

Secondly, the deficiency in the origin of idioms expressing distance and the lack of a very profound knowledge relating to cultural aspect are also some constraints to accomplish the thesis with a satisfactory depth as it should.

It is obvious that several aspects of the matter need to be studied further. And here are some suggestions for those who pay more attention to the English and Vietnamese idioms expressing distance.

- A Contrastive Study of Linguistic Features of Proverbs Expressing Distance in English Versus Vietnamese
- An Investigation into Pragmatic and Cultural Aspects of English and Vietnamese Idioms Expressing Distance