

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
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NGUYỄN THỊ MỸ DUYÊN

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE TRANSLATION  
OF IDIOMS IN SOME ENGLISH VERSIONS OF  
TRUYỆN KIỀU BY NGUYỄN DU**

**Field Study : The English Language**

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**M.A. THESIS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AND HUMANITIES  
(A SUMMARY)**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. RATIONALE

Idioms are considered as the beauty of a language, and displays identities of culture of a nation. Each idiom has unique meaning which is not derived from the meanings of each individual word. Therefore, idioms are used in literary works to make language more metaphoric and deeply imbued with its national identity.

Truyện Kiều by Nguyễn Du is considered one of the great works with a large number of idioms. According to my statistics, Nguyễn Du used about 200 idioms in Truyện Kiều. For example, to describe the misery of Kiều and the boredom in her life when being forced to become a prostitute in “the house of mirth”, he wrote:

- (1) “*Mặt sao dày gió dạn sương*  
*Thân sao bướm chán ong chường bấy thân?*” [36, p. 471]

In this verse, the two idioms are continuously used: “*dày gió dạn sương*” and “*bướm chán ong chường*”.

There are also many other idioms such as “*ăn xổi, ở thì*” in “*Phải điều ăn xổi, ở thì*”; “*cá chấu, chim lồng*” in “*Bõ chi cá chấu, chim lồng mà chơi*”; or “*Trong ấm, ngoài êm*” in “*Sao cho trong ấm thì ngoài mới êm*” and so on.

All these idioms are skillfully utilized in different ways by Nguyễn Du, which contributes to making Truyện Kiều a masterpiece all over the world.

However, when translating these idioms into English, translators might face many problems. The biggest problem is that some translators do not fully understand the intention of the writer. Nor do they find a corresponding expression or translation equivalent in English. Look at the following translation of some lines quoted from *Truyện Kiều*:

(2) Bảy lâu **đáy bể mò kim** [36, P.541]

Yet I, too, **groping for lost jade beneath the tide**

[33, p.165]

According to Đào Duy Anh [36, p.111], “*đáy bể mò kim*” or “*mò kim đáy bể*” means “*it is extremely difficult to grope for a needle at the bottom of the sea, but people try to look for it.*”. Thus, this idiom refers to *an extremely difficult task to accomplish*, and the word “*kim*” in (4) should be literally translated into “*needle*”. However, in English version, the translator used the word “*jade*” to substitute for it. It is clear that there was a mistake in English version. It seems that the translator misunderstood the word “*kim*” – a small instrument of steel used in sewing with the word “*kim*” in the Sino-Vietnamese phrase “*kim-thạch*” which means *gold* – a valuable and precious metal.

In general, in translating idioms, translators meet various difficulties that are not easy to overcome, especially translating the ones in poetry. Therefore, the thesis: “**An Investigation into the Translation of Idioms in Some English Versions of *Truyện Kiều* by Nguyễn Du**” was carried out to find out how they were

transferred into English as well as the most effective and frequently used procedures in the translation. As a result, the study can help the foreign readers better understand the idioms in *Truyện Kiều*. Furthermore, it will help the translators and learners of English know how to use procedures of idiom translation in the best way.

## **1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1. Aims**

- To investigate the translation of idioms in *Truyện Kiều* into English as manifested in their different English versions by Vietnamese and Australian translators in terms of syntax and semantics to identify the similarities and differences between the two versions as well as to generalize the effective ways to render these idioms.

### **1.2.2. Objectives:**

- To examine the translation equivalence of idioms in *Truyện Kiều* in the English versions in terms of syntax and semantics.

- To identify the similarities and differences in the translation of idioms in *Truyện Kiều* between different English versions.

- To discuss the effectiveness of translation of idioms in the English versions of *Truyện Kiều*.

- To give out some recommendations in the rendering of idioms from Vietnamese into English.

## **1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. How are the syntactic features of idioms in Truyện Kiều transferred to English as manifested in its English versions?

2. How are the semantic features of idioms in Truyện Kiều transferred to English as manifested in its English versions?

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

The research will focus on the investigation into the translation of the syntactic and semantic features of idioms in Truyện Kiều as well as the translation procedures manifested in its English versions: *The Tale of Kiều* - a highly appreciated version by Huỳnh Sanh Thông (1983) – a Vietnamese translator and *The Kim Vân Kiều* by Vladislav Zhukov (2004) – an Australian translator.

#### **1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The research includes five chapters as follows:

**Chapter 1:** “Introduction

**Chapter 2:** “Literature Review and Theoretical Background”

**Chapter 3:** “Research Design and Methodology”

**Chapter 4:** “Findings and Discussion”

**Chapter 5:** “Conclusion and Recommendation”

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1. AN OVERVIEW TO THE PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE RESEARCH**

So far there have been a lot of researches on translation of Truyện Kiều by linguists, language teachers and students. Phạm Thị

Ngọc Mến [20] investigated the syntactic, semantic features and stylistic means of euphemisms in the story of Kiều and their equivalents in English versions. She compared and contrasted Truyện Kiều with the three English versions to find out the best way to translate euphemisms into English. Hoàng Trương Phước Lộc [18] investigated the translation of hyperboles from Vietnamese into English as manifested in the English versions of Truyện Kiều to identify the similarities and differences between the two versions as well as to generalize the effective way to render this stylistic device. Võ Thị Bích Liên [17] investigated expressions describing the villains in Kiều's Story and their English translational equivalents in terms of lexical and semantic aspects. She compared and contrasted Truyện Kiều with the three English versions to find out the effectiveness of translation of expressions describing the villains in Kiều's Story in English.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1. Theories of Translation**

#### ***a. Definition of Translation***

Newmark [22, p.17] pointed out: “*translation is a craft consisting in the attempt to replace a written message and/ or statement in another language*”. Moreover, he presents further view towards transferring meaning in a translation. He said [23, p.5], “*Translation is rendering the meaning of one text into another language in the way that the author meant the text*”.

#### ***b. Translation Equivalence***

Translational equivalence is the similarity between a word (or expression) in one language and its translation in another. This similarity results from overlapping ranges of reference. [72]

### **c) Poetry Translation**

On the various methods employed by English translators, Lefevere catalogues seven different procedures of poetry translation [3, p.81-82]: *Phonemic translation, Literal translation, Metrical translation, Poetry into prose, Rhymed translation, Blank Verse Translation and Interpretation*

### **d) Translation Methods**

According to Vinay and Darbelnet [32, p.84], translators can choose from two methods of translating, namely *direct*, or *literal translation* and *oblique translation*.

However, according to Newmark [22, p.81], there are eight methods of translation: *Word-for-word translation, Literal translation, Faithful translation, Semantic translation, Adaptation, Free translation, Idiomatic translation, Communicative translation*.

### **e) Translation Procedures**

At the syntactic level, Catford [5], suggested two main types of translation shifts, namely level shifts, where the SL item at one linguistic level (e.g. grammar) has a TL equivalent at a different level (e.g. lexis), and category shifts which are divided into four types: *Structural shifts, Class shifts, Unit shifts or rank shifts, Intra-system shifts*.

At the semantic level, Newmark [23] proposed different translation procedures as follows: *Literal translation, Transference, Naturalization, Cultural equivalent, Functional equivalent, Descriptive equivalent, Componential analysis, Synonym, Through-translation, Shifts or transpositions, Modulation, Recognized translation, Compensation, Paraphrase, Reduction and Expansion, Couplets.*

### **2.2.2. Idioms**

#### **a) Definition of Idioms**

According to Hornby [28], idiom was defined as “*a group of words whose meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words.*”

#### **b) Main Features of Idioms**

##### *- Structural Features*

Idioms in both English and Vietnamese are structurally and lexically closely combined phrase. It means that the stability in idioms is very high. An idiom allows no variation in form under normal circumstances.

##### *- Semantic Features*

Semantic opacity or non-literalness can perhaps be considered as the most frequently mentioned feature of idioms. It means that idioms are often nonliteral, which is why their meanings cannot be deduced from the meanings of the *individual* words of the idiom.

#### **c) The Difficulties in Translating Idioms**

Using idioms is very much a matter of style, and translating idioms from one language to another is very difficult because there are a lot of differences in rhetorical effect of using idioms. Therefore, it requires a translator to be not only accurate but highly sensitive to the rhetorical nuances of the language.

### **2.2.3. Nguyễn Du**

Nguyễn Du (1766-1820) (pennames Tô Như and Thanh Hiên) was born in Tiên Điền village, Nghi Xuân district, Hà Tĩnh province, Vietnam. He was descended from a noble mandarin family. He was a great poet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In addition to *Truyện Kiều*, his masterpiece, he left to Vietnamese literature numerous poetic works in both Chữ Nôm and Chinese such as “*Văn Tế Thập Loại Chúng Sinh*”, “*Văn Tế Sóng Trường Lưu Nhị Nữ*”, “*Thác Lờ Trai Phưông Nón*”, “*Bắc Hành Tạ Lục*”, “*Nam Trung Tạ Ngâm*”, “*Thanh Hiên Thi Tập*”. Nguyễn Du was awarded the title “Cultural World Person” by the UNESCO in 1965.

### **2.2.4. Truyện Kiều and Its English Versions**

*Truyện Kiều*, which was based on an earlier Chinese work known as *Kim Vân Kiều* and was originally titled *Đoạn Trường Tân Thanh*, is an epic poem in Vietnamese written by Nguyễn Du at about the end of the 18th century. It is widely regarded as the most significant work of Vietnamese literature. In 3,254 verses, the poem was written in: “lục bát” meter – a strict form consisting of alternating lines of six words followed by eight ones.

So far, there have been 7 English versions of *Truyện Kiều* including *Kim Van Kieu* by Lê Xuân Thủy (1968), *The Tale of Kiều* by Huỳnh Sanh Thông (1983), *Kiều* by Michael Councell (1995), *The Story of Kiều* by Lê Cao Phan (1996), *Kiều* by Hoài Văn Từ (1996), *The Kim Van Kieu* by Vladislav Zhukov (2004), and the latest version: *Kieu* (an English version adapted from Nguyen Khac Vien's French Translation) by Arno Abbey (2008).

### **2.3. SUMMARY**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. RESEARCH METHODS:**

The study is carried out with the combination of both descriptive method and contrastive method. In addition, the study will be carried out by the combination of some other methods such as statistic method, synthetic method and so on.

#### **3.2. SAMPLING**

- Idioms in *Truyện Kiều* and their translation equivalents in the English versions by Huỳnh Sanh Thông (1983) and Zhukov (2004).

- 200 samples in *Truyện Kiều*, 200 samples in *The Tale of Kiều* by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and 200 samples in *The Kim Van Kieu* by Vladislav Zhukov.

#### **3.3. DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.4. DATA ANALYSIS**

### 3.5. RESEARCH PROCEDURES:

### 3.6. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

### 3.7. SUMMARY

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. THE TRANSLATION OF THE SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF IDIOMS IN TRUYỆN KIỀU FROM VIETNAMESE INTO ENGLISH

##### 4.1.1. The Translation of the Syntactic Features of Idioms in Truyện Kiều in the English Version by Huỳnh Sanh Thông

###### a) *Structure- shifts*

(1) Làn **thâu gió mát trăng thanh** [35, p. 505]

**Cool breeze, clear moon** - her nights were going round. [30, p.113]

Structure shifts N+Adj →Adj + N:	<u>gió</u> <u>mát</u> <u>trăng</u> <u>thanh</u> N Adj N Adj <u>Cool</u> <u>breeze</u> , <u>clear</u> <u>moon</u> Adj N Adj N
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###### b) *Class shifts*

(2) Buồng không **lặng ngắt như tờ** [35, p.427]

**A death-still silence** filled the void, her room. [30, p. 5]

Class shifts AdjP → NP	<u>lặng</u> <u>ngắt</u> <u>như</u> <u>tờ</u> Adj như N <u>A</u> <u>death-still</u> <u>silence</u> Det Adj N
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*c) Unit-shifts*

(3) Ở đây **tai vách mạch dùng** [35, p.490]

Beware – around here **walls have ears and eyes.** [30, p.91]

Unit- shifts	<u>tai vách mạch dùng</u>		
NP → Clause	NP	NP	
	<u>walls have ears and eyes</u>		
	S	V	O

*d) Intra-system shifts*

(4) **Con ong cái kiến** kêu gì được oan? [35, p.490]

When wronged, can **flies and ants** demand redress? [30, p.91]

*Table 4.1: Vietnamese singular nouns were changed into English plural nouns in Huỳnh Sanh Thông's Version*

Vietnamese Singular Nouns	English Plural Nouns
<i>con ong</i>	<i>flies</i>
<i>cái kiến</i>	<i>ants</i>

*e) Frequency of Syntactic Translation Procedures*

*Table 4.2: Occurrence Frequency of syntactic translation procedures by Huỳnh Sanh Thông*

PROCEDURES	OCCURENCES	%
Structure- shifts	85	42.5
Class-shifts	42	21
Unit-shifts	65	32.5
Intra-system-shifts	8	4
Total	200	100

#### 4.1.2. The Translation of the Syntactic Features of Idioms in Truyện Kiều in the English Version by Zhukov

##### a) Structure- shifts

(5) Bấy lâu **đáy bể mò kim** [35, p.541]

Yes I, too, **groping for lost jade beneath the tide.** [33, p.165]

Structure shifts	<u>đáy</u> <u>bể</u> <u>mò</u> <u>kim</u>
A+V+O	A V O
→ V+O+A	<u>groping for</u> <u>lost jade</u> <u>beneath the tide</u>
	V O A

##### b) Class shifts

This procedure appears 44 times accounting for 22% of the total procedures.

(6) Dặm ngàn, **nước thăm, non xa** [35, p.472]

But oh! a thousand li **beyond these strangers' hills.** [33, p.66]

Class shifts	<u>nước</u> <u>thăm</u> , <u>non</u> <u>xa</u>
NP → Prep P	N Adj N Adj
	<u>beyond</u> <u>these</u> <u>strangers'</u> <u>hills</u>
	Prep Det Gen N

##### c) Unit-shifts

(7) Sinh rằng: **Gió mát trăng trong** [35, p.442]

Yet Kim still sighs: **The breeze blows fresh, the moon glows sheer.**

Unit- shifts	<u>Gió</u> <u>mát</u> <u>trăng</u> <u>trong</u>
NP → Clause	N Adj N Adj
	<u>The breeze</u> <u>blows</u> <u>fresh</u> , <u>the moon</u> <u>glows</u> <u>sheer</u>
	S V A S V A

**d) Intra-system shifts**

(8) **Miếng hùm nọc rắn** ở đâu chôn này! [35, p.500]

Now glitter **tiger-fangs, the crypts of serpent-lairs** grape  
everywhere. [33, p.107]

*Table 4.3: Vietnamese singular nouns were changed into  
English plural nouns in Zhukov's Version*

Vietnamese Singular Nouns	English Plural Nouns
<i>miếng hùm</i>	<i>tiger-fangs</i>
<i>nọc rắn</i>	<i>the crypts of serpent-lairs</i>

**e) Frequency of Syntactic Translation Procedures**

*Table 4.4: Occurrence Frequency of Syntactic Translation  
Procedures by Zhukov*

PROCEDURES	OCCURENCES	%
Structure- shifts	98	49
Class-shifts	44	22
Unit-shifts	50	25
Intra-system-shifts	8	4
Total	200	100

**4.1.3. Summary**

**4.2. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF  
SYNTAX BETWEEN THE TWO TRANSLATIONS**

*Table 4.5: The Frequency of Syntactic Translation Procedures Used  
by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and by Zhukov*

PROCEDURES	HUỶNH SANH THÔNG	ZHUKOV
Structure- shifts	42.5%	49%
Unit-shifts	32.5%	25%
Class-shifts	21%	22%
Intra-system-shifts	4%	4%

#### 4.2.1. Similarities

#### 4.2.2. Differences

### 4.3. The Translation Of The Semantic Features Of Idioms In Truyện Kiều From Vietnamese Into English

#### 4.3.1. The Translation of the Semantic Features of Idioms in Truyện Kiều in the English Version by Huỳnh Sanh Thông

##### a) *Literal Translation*

(9) **Mạt cưa mướp đắng** đôi bên một phường [35, p.455]

**Sawdust and bitter melon** met and merged. [30, p.43]

In (9), the idiom “*Mạt cưa mướp đắng*” was used to refer to the pair: Mã Giám Sinh and Tú Bà who were considered as well-matched swindlers. This idiom was literally translated into English.

Source Text	Literal Translation
<i>mạt cưa</i>	<i>sawdust</i>
<i>mướp đắng</i>	<i>bitter melon</i>

##### b) *Reduction*

(10) Mà trong nham hiểm **giết người không dao** [35, p.492]

The heart will scheme **to kill without a knife.** [30, p. 95]

This idiom was used to refer to the cruelty and malignance of Hoạn Thư to Kiều. It can be easily recognized that the object **người**

was omitted in the English version. Perhaps, the translator thought that the readers could understand his implication through the context without it.

Source Text	giết người không đao
Target Text	to kill without a knife
Reduction	<i>người</i>

*c) Expansion*

(11) Xưa nay **nhân định thắng thiên** cũng nhiều [35, p.440]

**Man's will has often vanquished Heaven's whim.** [30, p.23]

It is obvious that there is a difference between the Vietnamese idiom and its English equivalent. By the expansion procedure, the noun **whim** which means “*a sudden idea*” was added in the English version to make the meaning of the idiom clearer.

Source Text	nhân định thắng thiên
Target Text	Man's will has often vanquished Heaven's whim
<b>Expansion</b>	<i>Whim</i>

*d) Paraphrase*

(12) Mà lòng **trọng nghĩa khinh tài** xiết bao! [35, p.436]

That in your scale **what's right weighs more than gold.** [30, p.17]

In this example, the translator explained the word **nhĩa** in Vietnamese by using the phrase “*what's right*” and the word **tài** by using the word “*gold*”, which implicates “*wealth*”. In addition, the translator used the verbs **weighs** and the comparative structure to express the verbs **trọng, khinh**. Here both denotative meaning and

connotative meaning of the Vietnamese idiom were transferred into English by the procedure *paraphrase*.

**e) Cultural Equivalent**

(13) Buồng không **lặng ngắt như tờ** [35, p.427]

A **death-still silence** filled the void, her room. [30, p. 5]

In Vietnamese, the idiom **lặng ngắt như tờ**, which has the literal translation: *as silent as a temple*, means “very silent”. According to Đào Duy Anh [35, p.349], the word **tờ** is derived from the word “*từ*” which means *a temple*. Obviously, there is a cultural substitution in the example above. The Vietnamese often compare *silence* with *a temple* while the western compare *silence* with *death*. For example, we often see the idiom *silent as the dead* in English which means *completely silent*. Therefore, the translator used *a death-still silence* instead of *as silent as a temple* in his translation to make the western readers easier to understand the original idiom.

**f) Occurrence Frequency of Semantic Translation Procedures**

*Table 4.6: Occurrence Frequency of Semantic Translation Procedures by Huỳnh Sanh Thông*

PROCEDURE	OCCURENCES	%
Literal translation	71	35.5
Reduction	10	5
Expansion	23	11.5
Paraphrase	85	42.5
Cultural equivalent	11	5.5
Total	200	100

### 4.3.2. The Translation of the Semantic Features of Idioms in Truyện Kiều in the English Version by Zhukov

#### a) *Literal Translation*

(14) Trót vì **tay đã nhúng chàm** [35, p.477]

Yet **hands in indigo once dipped** come forth not fair. [33, p. 59]

**Chàm**, a substance from the *indigo* plant, is a fast dye which does not dissolve in water and which is not easy to wash or scrub away. Therefore, **tay đã nhúng chàm** means that one has made a mistake that is difficult or impossible to correct. This idiom was literally translated into English as follows: **hands in indigo once dipped**. Obviously, this English equivalent seems to be difficult to understand for those who do not know the features of *indigo*. Therefore, it would be better if the translator added a footnote in his translation

Source Text	Literal Translation
<i>tay</i>	<i>hands</i>
<i>đã</i>	<i>once</i>
<i>nhúng</i>	<i>dipped</i>
<i>chàm</i>	<i>in indigo</i>

#### b) *Reduction*

(15) Cùng chàng **kết tóc xe tơ** những ngày [35, p.482]

Where he had **braided locks** with Hoan: whom folk thought amiable, they said. [33, p.73]

In(15), the phrase **kết tóc** comes from Sino-Vietnamese “*kết phát*” or “*kết phát vì phu phụ*”. It means that boys and girls are old enough to get married [35, p.180]. And the phrase **xe tơ** comes from

a classical reference in China. This classical reference talked about the Old Man of the Moon or the Marriage God (*ông tơ* in Vietnamese) who used the red threads to unite those who had been destined for marrying each other. Hence, both the phrases **kết tóc** and **xe tơ** mean “to get married”. As a result, the translator omitted the phrase **xe tơ** in his translation.

Source Text	kết tóc xe tơ
Target Text	braided locks
Reduction	<b>xe tơ</b>

*c) Expansion*

(16) Bỏ chi **cá chậu, chim lồng** mà chơi! [35, p.506]

Trail here, and must thy compass know but **cage-birds, poor tame fish in tanks?**

In contrast to **cá nước chim trời**, the idiom **cá chậu, chim lồng** refers to the cramp or the confinement. In English version, the phrase **cage-birds, poor tame fish in tanks** is the English equivalent of the Vietnamese idiom. We can see that the phrase **poor tame** which shows the regrettable attitude of the author was added in English version by the procedure **expansion**.

Source Text	cá chậu, chim lồng
Target Text	cage-birds, poor tame fish in tanks
Expansion	<i>poor tame</i>

*d) Paraphrase*

(17) Hoạn Thù **hồn lạc phách xiêu** [35, p.512]

Hoan - **wilted, dwindled, wan, her last conceits laid low.** [33, p.17]

The translator explained the Vietnamese idiom **hồn lạc phách xiêu** which refers to the fright of Hoạn Thư by using a series of past participles and adjective describing her frightened appearance such as *wilted*, *dwindled*, *wan*. In addition, he used the clause “*her last conceits laid low*” to strengthen the meaning of the Vietnamese idiom. Here the denotative meaning of the Vietnamese idiom and its English equivalent is different but their connotative meaning is nearly the same.

*e) Cultural equivalent*

(18) Chúc đầu **rẽ thúy chia yên** [35, p.495]

More prone to **part kingfishers, mandarin-mate lives?** [33, p.99]

According to Nguyễn Thạch Giang [48, p.154], **thúy** or **phi thúy** is a halcyon, and **uên** or **chim uên ương** (in which **uên** is the male, and **ương** is the female) is the mandarin duck. The halcyon and the mandarin duck are the species whose males and females always live in pairs, never separated from each other. They are regarded as a symbol of conjugal affection and fidelity. In English version, **thúy** was replaced by **kingfishers**, which has the back translation: *chim bói cá*. It is clear that there was a change in lexicon in English version. In other word, there was a cultural substitution in translation. In the western culture, **kingfishers** are monogamous and pair for life [75]. Therefore, they are also considered as a symbol of conjugal affection and fidelity. Furthermore, Zhukov was born and grew up in Australia where many kingfishers are found. As a result,

he used the cultural equivalent in his translation to make western readers easier to understand the implication of the Vietnamese idiom.

***f) Frequency of Semantic Translation Procedures***

*Table 4.7: Occurrence Frequency of Semantic Translation Procedures by Zhukov*

PROCEDURE	OCCURENCES	%
Literal translation	62	31
Reduction	12	6
Expansion	17	8.5
Paraphrase	97	48.5
Cultural equivalent	12	6
Total	200	100

**4.3.3. Summary**

**4.4. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN TERMS OF SEMANTICS BETWEEN THE TWO TRANSLATIONS**

*Table 4.8 The Occurrence Frequency of Semantic Translation Procedures used by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and by Zhukov*

HUỖNH SANH THÔNG		ZHUKOV	
Procedure	%	Procedure	%
<i>Paraphrase</i>	42.5	<i>Paraphrase</i>	48.5
<i>Literal Translation</i>	35.5	<i>Literal Translation</i>	31
<i>Expansion</i>	11.5	<i>Expansion</i>	8.5
<i>Cultural Equivalent</i>	5.5	<i>Cultural Equivalent</i>	6
<i>Reduction</i>	5	<i>Reduction</i>	6

#### 4.4.1. Similarities:

#### 4.4.2. Differences

### 4.5. SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate the translation of idioms in two English versions of *Truyện Kiều* by Nguyễn Du in terms of syntax and semantics. By doing this, we aim to find out the similarities and differences between the two versions as well as to generalize the effective ways to render these idioms. After examining and analyzing 600 samples including 200 Vietnamese idioms in *Truyện Kiều* and 400 English translation equivalents in two English versions by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and Vladislav Zhukov, we can come to the following conclusions:

Firstly, in terms of syntax, the most frequently used procedures in both translations were **Structure-shifts**, **Class-shifts** and **Unit-shifts** with 96% of the total in both English versions. The least used procedure was **Intra-system-shifts** with only 4% of the total. In other words, both translators tended to use **Structure-shifts**, **Class-shifts** and **Unit-shifts**, and avoid **Intra-system-shifts** in translating the syntactic features of idioms.

Secondly, in terms of semantics, the most frequently used procedures in both translations were **Paraphrase** and **Literal Translation** reaching to 78% of the total procedures applied in the translation by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and 79.5% in the translation by

Zhukov. The least used procedures were **Expansion, Reduction** and **Cultural Equivalent** with only 22% of the total procedures applied in the translation by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and 20.5% in the translation by Zhukov. Thus, both translators tended to use **Paraphrase** and **Literal Translation** and tried to avoid **Expansion, Reduction** and **Cultural Equivalent** in their translations.

Thirdly, it can be concluded from the findings that the best procedures applied in translating idioms in *Truyện Kiều* in particular and in poems in general are **Structure-shifts, Class-shifts** and **Unit-shifts** in translating the syntactic features of idioms and **paraphrase** and **literal translation** in translating the semantic features of idioms.

Fourthly, although many scholars do not recommend translating idioms literally and consider it an unacceptable procedure because it destroys the meaning of the original expressions and results in complete nonsense in the TL, most of the literally translated idioms in Huỳnh Sanh Thông's version in this study were entirely understandable to target readers. This implies that **literal translation** is by no means a failed procedure in translating idioms. With this procedure, the translator can keep not only the aesthetic value but also the cultural value of the original version.

Last but not least, the corpus of idioms collected in *Truyện Kiều* and their English equivalents is a valuable source of material for not only translators, teachers and learners of English, but also for readers and those who are interested in *Truyện Kiều* by Nguyễn Du.

## 5.2. IMPLICATIONS

### 5.2.1. Implications on Translation Work

Firstly, most of idioms are culture-specific, which may cause many problems for the translators. Therefore, in order to transfer a source idiom into the target language, the translator must have a good knowledge of the culture, custom and characteristics of the places where source language is formed and used. Simultaneously, s/he also chooses the most appropriate strategies for her/his translation.

Secondly, translators may use the procedure **literal translation** in translating idioms. However, this procedure should not be applied extensively, but should be used if it secures referential and pragmatic equivalence to the original, or used with a list of notes or footnotes and with careful consideration.

Thirdly, translation of idioms in poetry is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks for every translator. The task of a translator is to make an art from art, keeping the aesthetic value of the work. From this, when transferring idioms in poems, it is important for a translator to have the knowledge of not only idioms but also poetry so that s/he can reproduce the precise contextual meaning of the original as well as maintain the rhythm and metre of the verses.

### 5.2.2. Implications on the Language Teaching and Learning

Firstly, the teachers should provide the students with basic knowledge of the features and function of idioms in the teaching and learning process. Next, the teacher should also try to help students to form the habit of reading and understanding idioms through the context. Besides, learners should be equipped with necessary knowledge and skills in writing and pointed out the main differences between the two languages to help them do their translation tasks much more easily and effectively.

### **5.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Since idioms in Truyện Kiều are rather diversified and utilized in many different ways by the author, some of them are difficult to be recognized and have likely been left unnoticed.

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

There are some aspects to be further studied such as:

- The translation of the pragmatic and stylistic features of idioms in Truyện Kiều.

- The translation of the linguistic features of idioms in Vietnamese poetry and prose into English.