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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO COMMON
NOUNS DENOTING ANIMALS AND
THEIR METAPHORICAL MEANINGS
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 RATIONALE

Animals play an extremely important part in human life; especially, some animals such as dogs, horses, etc. have played various roles as friends, companions, protectors, comforters and more. Furthermore, animals have appeared in written literature for thousands of years. Different animals were categorized according to the single trait unique to each of them that might teach a moral or religious lesson. Animal metaphors are pervasive in both literature and everyday life. Thus, metaphors are common in everyday life, not just in language, but also in thought and action [14].

In literature as well as in short stories, words and phrases of animals have diversely been used as metaphors to create vivid images or describe personality of fictitious characteristics. According to Leonhard Lipka (2002), animal metaphors are highly culture-specific, the name of an animal may be a symbol or a concept in a country but quite different in another country [19]. We can see numerous words and expressions of animals appear in both English and Vietnamese short stories and novels, each particular animal represents a certain human trait, traditionally associated with it. For example, in Western stories, a fox is supposed to be cunning or a sly person, a rabbit is supposed to be a coward, a snake is a deceptive or malignant person, a lion symbolizes strength or courage. Similarly, various animal metaphors are applied in Vietnamese short stories as well as in everyday life.

For examples,

It moved at a snail's pace [49, p.15]

Ngày xưa có một bạn chạy thi với ốc sên. [111]

Both examples above from English and Vietnamese short stories express the similar MM of snail, the slowness.

However, there are also contrastive metaphors between English and Vietnamese language due to the differences of culture, custom and others. In Vietnamese culture, owls have been associated with death and misfortune, even nastiness. However, owls have also been associated with wisdom and prosperity in Western concept. A dragon in English and Vietnamese owns different MMs because of different cultural concepts. In Vietnamese, a dragon implies supernatural power, abstract, and fairy; meanwhile, a dragon in English is the MMs of badness or evil.

For examples,

*My MIL (mother-in-law) is a **Dragon** Lady. She is the most selfish, over-dramatic, psychotic, conniving, and spiteful person I have ever met.* [79]

Đầu óc già làm sao hiểu được câu chuyện cá chép hóa rồng. [129]

*Chào hai anh, mấy khi **rồng** đến nhà tôm.* [95]

From my own teaching experience, I have found that learning to apply and interpret the animal metaphors in short stories is not an easy task for Vietnamese learners of English as well as for foreigners who study Vietnamese language and culture. Awareness of the animal metaphors will not only help learners get a better understanding of implied meanings of them, but also provide helpful knowledge of using them in writing as well as in communicating.

My research mainly aims at **investigating into common nouns denoting animals and their metaphorical meanings in English and Vietnamese short stories.**

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims

The study aims at investigating into not only common nouns denoting animals but also their metaphorical meanings in English and Vietnamese. In addition, the results of the study hope to help learners use and analyze metaphorical meanings of nouns denoting animals accurately in translating short stories as well as in everyday communication.

1.2.2 Objectives

- a. To find out metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English.
- b. To find out metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in Vietnamese.
- c. To investigate into the similarities and differences of metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in Vietnamese short stories?
2. What are metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English short stories?
3. What are the similarities and differences of metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese short stories?

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

There are a lot of nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese. The study, however, focuses on metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese short stories.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

As mentioned above, animals are very close to human life. Also, animals have always played an important role in cultures. The thesis is expected to highlight human-animal relations in cultural viewpoint through short stories. Besides, I hope the research will help English learners to get a better insight into metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The thesis consists of five chapters, as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions - Implications and Limitation

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL
BACKGROUND

2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES RELATED TO THE STUDY

Linguistic anthropologists and sociologists of language define communicative style as the ways that language is used and understood within a particular culture.

“*An Investigation into the Metaphoric Devices in English and Vietnamese Animal Proverbs*” by Lê Thị Mỹ Nhật [16] focuses on metaphoric devices in English and the similarities as well as differences between English and Vietnamese proverbs relating to animals. The research introduces the structure of metaphorical utterances, the feature that distinguish them from both literal utterances and other figurative speech, and their truth and meaning, and how metaphors are used in communication insofar as what is intended to be understood is different than what is literally said.

“*Some Characteristics of Structure, Meaning and Culture of English Idioms about Animals*” by Phạm Thị Tô Như [24] provides a system of English idioms from animals together with their examples, and gives an analysis of some characteristics of structure, meaning and culture of English idioms from animals.

As to Đinh Quang Trung [7], “*Investigation into Syntactic, Semantic and Cultural Features of English Slangs Containing Words Denoting Animals*” shows some syntactic, semantic and cultural characteristics of English slangs containing words denoting animals. The examples of the research is mainly collected from dictionaries,

prose and in literature because it is easier to understand slangs in contexts

“*Proverbs and idioms related to animals in English and Vietnamese: A contrastive analysis and education implications*” by Lê Thị Thu Hiền [17] focuses on categorizing the similarities and differences of proverbs and idioms related to animals in English and Vietnamese as well as giving out some explanations. Then, the paper also offers some educational implications for English teachers and learners to make their teaching and learning more effective.

According to “*People identify with Animal Metaphor*” by Arthur Shelley [47], animals have been used as a source of inspiration and derision since early civilization. A person can be “*busy as a bee*”, “*quiet as a mouse*”, “*cunning as a fox*”, “*stubborn as a mule*”, “*quick as a hare*”, and “*wise as an owl*”. Both positive and negative animals’ metaphors are in common use as lovers, family, friends and enemies. It seems that no boundaries expressing how they can be applied.

“*Animals in literature*” [42, p.1] also shows that animals in literature act as symbol and mirror. They are named and grouped but are rarely individuals. The image of animals is used as a mirror because human (especially in Western culture) tends to see animals as the “other,” groups them as types, names these grouped and cages them in generalities. The oral history and folklore associated with a particular animal, through culturally specific, represent a more global tendency towards the use of an animal to characterize particular traits. For example, trickers are presented by the fox in Europe, the monkey in India and Africa, the coyote or raven in North America and the spider in West Africa. Actually, the tricker’s characteristic in

literature exploits the rich cultural associations between an animal and its particular characteristics such as humor, quick thinking, storytelling, rule bending and rule breaking.

Although there are some various researches have been investigated related to animals, no research has been found on **metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese, especially in short stories**. That is the reason why I do this research.

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Definitions of Short story

Lê Huy Bắc (2004) stated short stories were born very early and called with many names in historical periods. A short story usually contains from tens of words to twenty thousand words. In the short story, many respects of living are expressed vividly and clearly by a small amount of words.

A short story is also a "*short piece of fiction aiming at unity of characterization, theme and effect*" [38].

In short, a short story is a work of fiction that is usually written in prose, often in narrative format. With a limited amount of words, short stories convey full of information to readers so that the readers can read and understand contents of short stories in a short time.

2.2.2 Metaphor and Metaphorical meanings

2.2.2.1 Definition of Metaphor or Metaphorical meanings

According to Galperin [10, p.187], "*A metaphor is a relation between the dictionary and contextual logical meanings based on the affinity or similarity of certain properties or features of the two corresponding concepts*". He showed that metaphor can be embodied in all the meaningful parts of speech, in nouns, adjectives, adverbs,

verbs and sometimes even in the auxiliary parts of speech, as in prepositions.

Phan Văn Hòa [31, p.9-15] has an article on metaphor, pragmatic metaphor and grammatical metaphor. He tried to reconfirm that metaphor is an entity to not only affect the growth of languages but also make communication especially effective. It also points out the remarkable progresses in metaphor investigations: from view that metaphor is only a rhetoric device to the view that metaphor is a common and important device for the development of languages.

2.2.2.2 Types of metaphors

- A dead metaphor
- An extended metaphor (conceit),
- A mixed metaphor
- An absolute metaphor

2.2.3 Metaphor and simile

The research "*Ân dụ so sánh, ẩn dụ dụng học và ẩn dụ ngữ pháp*" by Phan Văn Hòa [31, p.10] showed that metaphor is a special comparison. He said that there are a lot of similarities between metaphor and simile more than differences between them. In the other words, metaphor uses direct or implied comparisons while simile uses *như, giống như, ví như* in Vietnamese and *like, as* in English.

In the "*Stylistics*", I.R.Galperin [10, p.188] said that in the process of representing the meaning implied in a metaphor, one image excludes the other, that is the metaphor *lamp* in the "The sky lamp of the night" when deciphered, means *the moon*.

In short, even though both simile and metaphor are forms of comparison, simile compares the two ideas indirectly to remain

distinct in spite of their similarities while metaphor compares two things directly.

2.2.4 Semantic fields

Nguyễn Hòa [21, p.146] also gives some ideas about semantic fields. He states semantic field is a set of interrelated senses based on a conceptual field or spectrum. Words can be grouped either thematically or ideographically.

“Thematic groupings contain words of the same part of speech which cover the same conceptual field”

Semantic field of human body: head, arm, leg, face

[21, p.147]

“Ideographic groupings may contain words of different parts of speech but thematically related”

Semantic field of hand: warm, cold..., clap, grasp...

[21, p.159]

Basically, words are divided into fields depending on their semantic features. This helps find words that are synonymous in the same field.

According to Geoffrey Finch [9, p.77], semantic field is an area if meaning contain words with related senses. Meanings of words are gathered to create fields of meaning. For example, the semantic field of “madness” containing words likes *insane, demented, batty, parramoid...* Some of these words are synonyms of madness, and the others are types of madness.

2.2.5 Context

Nguyễn Thị Hạnh [22, p.18] claimed, “The meaning of an utterance is more than the meaning of a sentence because of the fact

that it is uttered in particular context. Context can determine utterance meanings in three ways:

- It usually can make clear what sentence is uttered.
- It can tell us what proposition has been expressed.
- It shows that kind of illocutionary force has been assigned by the speaker to the proposition.”

Actually, context helps people be able to understand correctly and exactly the meaning of a word although context is not the main part in the word.

2.2.6 Dialect

Dialect is “a regional and social variety of language in pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary, especially a way of speaking that differs from the standard variety of the language” [41]. There are regional and social dialects. Regional dialect is used a lot in literature and in the real life because it is familiar to people. The other type of dialects is social dialects, which are used to describe differences in speech associated with various social groups or classes. It can be used to determine social position- factors such as occupation, place of residence, education, ‘new’ and ‘old’ money, income, racial or ethnic origin, cultural background, caste, religion, and so on

Generally, dialects and types of dialects- social and regional dialects contribute variety of the language and culture.

2.2.7 Language and Culture Relationship

According to Nida, E. [23, p.29], in addition, “Language and culture are two language items symbolic systems. Everything we say in language has meanings, designative or societal, denotative or connotative. Every language form we use has meanings, carries

meanings that are not in the same sense because it is associated with culture and culture is more extensive than language.”

In short, language and culture are close together. Language cannot exist outside the social context, so the relationship between language and culture must be established within the social context too. Therefore, “*Language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that language and people can see a culture through its language*”, said Wenying Jiang [43] in *The relationship between culture and language*.

2.2.8 Metaphor and Culture Relationship

Metaphor is the “*basic for human cognition, thinking, experience, language and even acts*”, obviously it can be used to understand cultural similarities and differences [18].

In conclusion, in this chapter we have reviewed the literature of the matters of metaphorical meanings. Also, semantic fields, contexts, metaphor language and culture relationship, and metaphor and culture relationship have been made to help the research more effective and concrete.

CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND PROCEDURES

3.1 METHODS

In order to deal with the research, methods of both quantitative and qualitative are used, including descriptive, analytic and contrastive approach to find out the similarities and differences in MMCNA in English and Vietnamese.

Descriptive method is considered to be one key method of contrastive analysis. Common nouns denoting animals were retrieved from English and Vietnamese short stories to clarify their metaphorical meanings. Moreover, the analytic method was used to identify different groups of common nouns denoting animals through their semantic features. The contrastive analysis was also used to distinguish the similarities and differences of MMCNA in English and Vietnamese short stories.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is conducted using the Qualitative and Descriptive methods to achieve the aims and objectives specified in chapter 1.

Qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis and description are used as main research methods throughout the study to discover semantic features of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese

Next, the Contrastive method is used to find out the similarities and differences in the semantic features of common nouns denoting animals in both languages. Besides, the quantitative method is used to analyze the data. Finally, the cross-cultural analysis will be used to

identify the influence of English and Vietnamese culture on the use of MMCNA.

3.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLES

Samples were taken from many different sources so as to eliminate the element of subjectivity in the findings of the study that results in a good conclusion and implication. Both English and Vietnamese samples were taken from some magazines, newspapers, books and Internet.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected from 250 examples from English and Vietnamese short stories. All short stories are from books, newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

In order to investigate the MMCNA we will choose all short stories containing animals and pick out all animals appeared in. Then, we again select some common nouns denoting some animals and form them in semantic fields to do our research.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The 250 examples in Vietnamese and 250 in English short stories were analysed as following steps:

First, MMCNA in English and Vietnamese short stories were analysed.

Second, common nouns denoting animals chosen were classified and arranged in each semantic field.

3.6 PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

First of all, common nouns denoting animals were collected from English and Vietnamese short stories.

Second, common nouns denoting animals were categorized in semantic fields. Then, the quantitative method was applied to investigate the frequency of each animal.

Third, contrastive analysis was applied to find out the similarities and differences of MMs of animals' images in English and Vietnamese short stories. The qualitative method was mainly used to analyze data and results collected.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity are two most important criteria to guarantee the quality of the data collection procedures.

In terms of reliability, the information given in the study and the samples of 250 MMCNA in English and 250 in Vietnamese short stories. Some of the data are extracts from books, newspapers, magazines and Internet.

Besides, the data are elicited from supporting materials such as linguistic and culture documents which serve as theoretical background to study data source. It can be said that the data for analysis come from reliable sources.

In terms of validity, observation and investigation techniques have been utilized as the main instruments. In addition, such supporting instruments as calculation, statistics, tables are used to produce precise results.

In short, the study strictly follows the research design in which the data collection process plays an important part in producing the high quality result of the research. After the above processes had been conducted, the discussion was carried out to explore the similarities and differences of metaphorical meanings of common nouns denoting animals in English and Vietnamese short stories.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. METAPHORICAL MEANINGS OF SOME COMMON NOUNS DENOTING ANIMALS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.1.1 MMCNA in English

4.1.1.1 *MMs of Animals Referring to Persons*4.1.1.2 *MMs of Animals Referring to Badness*4.1.1.3 *MMs of Animals Referring to Faithfulness*4.1.1.4 *MMs of Animals Referring to Misery*4.1.1.5 *MMs of Animals Referring to Conflict*4.1.1.6 *MMs of Animals Referring to Intelligence*4.1.1.7 *MMs of Animals Referring to Filthiness*4.1.1.8 *MMs of Animals Referring to Doubt*4.1.1.9 *MMs of Animals Referring to Competence*4.1.1.10 *MMs of Animals Referring to Superiority*4.1.1.11 *MMs of Animals Referring to Inferiority*4.1.1.12 *MMs of Animals Referring to Strength*4.1.1.13 *MMs of Animals Referring to Innocence*4.1.1.14 *MMs of Animals Referring to Kindness*4.1.1.15 *MMs of Animals Referring to Passion*4.1.1.16 *MMs of Animals Referring to Big Things*4.1.1.17 *MMs of Animals Referring to Spirit*4.1.1.18 *MMs of Animals Referring to Freedom*4.1.1.19 *MMs of Animals Referring to Danger*4.1.1.20 *MMs of Animals Referring to Crowd*4.1.1.21 *MMs of Animals Referring to Fullness*4.1.1.22 *MMs of Animals Referring to Worthiness*4.1.1.23 *MMs of Animals Referring to Shape*

Table 4.1: Summary of MMCNA in English

No	Name of some common animals	MMCNA
1	Cat, dog, pig, horse, sheep, cow and bull, bird, bee, rat	Person
2	Dog, dragon	Badness
3	Dog	Faithfulness
4	Dog	Misery
5	Cat	Conflict
6	Pig, dog	Intelligence
7	Pig, horse	Filthiness
8	Rat	Doubt
9	Rat	Competence
10	Cat	Superiority
11	Mouse	Inferiority
12	Horse	Strength
13	Sheep	Innocence
14	Sheep	Kindness
15	Sheep	Passion
16	Cow, pig	Big Things
17	Bird	Spirit
18	Bird	Freedom
19	Bee	Danger
20	Bee	Crowd
21	Pig	Fullness
22	Horse	Worthiness
23	Dragon	Shape

4.1.2 MMCNA in Vietnamese

4.1.2.1 *MMs of Animals Referring to Persons*

4.1.2.2 *MMs of Animals Referring to Badness*

4.1.2.3 *MMs of Animals Referring to Triviality*

4.1.2.4 *MMs of Animals Referring to Love*

4.1.2.5 *MMs of Animals Referring to Danger*

4.1.2.6 *MMs of Animals Referring to Haughtiness*

4.1.2.7 *MMs of Animals Referring to Superfluosness*

4.1.2.8 *MMs of Animals Referring to Fatness*

4.1.2.9 *MMs of Animals Referring to Misery*

4.1.2.10 *MMs of Animals Referring to Superiority*

4.1.2.11 *MMs of Animals Referring to Economization*

4.1.2.12 *MMs of Animals Referring to Small Things*

4.1.2.13 *MMs of Animals Referring to Inferiority*

4.1.2.14 *MMs of Animals Referring to Fortune*

4.1.2.15 *MMs of Animals Referring to Accidents*

4.1.2.16 *MMs of Animals Referring to Property*

4.1.2.17 *MMs of Animals Referring to Evident Truth*

4.1.2.18 *MMs of Animals Referring to Innocence*

4.1.2.19 *MMs of Animals Referring to Kindness*

4.1.2.20 *MMs of Animals Referring to Crowd*

4.1.2.21 *MMs of Animals Referring to Freedom*

4.1.2.22 *MMs of Animals Referring to Beauty*

4.1.2.23 *MMs of Animals Referring to Dependence*

4.1.2.24 *MMs of Animals Referring to Unsteadiness*

4.1.2.25 *MMs of Animals Referring to Supernaturalness*

4.1.2.26 *MMs of Animals Referring to Divinity*

4.1.2.27 *MMs of Animals Referring to Filthiness*

4.1.2.28 *MMs of Animals Referring to Stupidity*

Table 4.2: Summary of MMCNA in Vietnamese

No	Name of some common animals	MMCNA
1	Cat, horse, bird, dog, bee	Person
2	Dog, cat, pig, mouse, horse, bee	Badness
3	Dog	Triviality
4	Dog	Love
5	Bee, dog	Danger
6	Cat, horse	Haughtiness
7	Pig	Superfluosness
8	Pig	Fatness
9	Horse	Misery
10	Cat, dragon	Superiority
11	Pig	Economization
12	Bird	Small Things
13	Mouse	Inferiority
14	Mouse	Fortune
15	Mouse	Accident
16	Cow	Property
17	Cow	Evident truth
18	Sheep	Innocence
19	Sheep	Kindness
20	Sheep, bee	Crowd
21	Bird	Freedom
22	Bird	Beauty
23	Bird, dog	Dependence
24	Bee	Unsteadiness

interestingly. Moreover, understanding MMCNA helps students remember and use them easily. Teachers should master the MMs in both native language and target one. By only this way, teachers can instruct, explain and illustrate the MMs effectively. Moreover, the teachers must really understand the semantic and pragmatic meanings in both languages as well as cultural and social backgrounds. Without these, it is difficult for teachers to help their students understand and master their language skills. The students should be taught and practise MMs to avoid being embarrassed by complicated MMs.

In translation, understanding and usage MMs of animals take much time to study and apply. Learners should learn the similarities and differences between Vietnamese and English cultures in using words as well as their metaphorical meanings before translating into the other language. For example, “*Books and short stories manuscript submissions have an early bird 5% discount until May 15th*” [80] should be translated into Vietnamese as “*Nộp các bản thảo truyện ngắn và sách trước ngày 15 tháng 5, sẽ được chiết khấu 5%*”

5.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCHES

The thesis focuses on MMCNA in English and Vietnamese short stories. It also tried to find out the similarities and differences in their MMs in English and Vietnamese short stories. However, this is just a minor part in doing research on animals. There are still other concepts that are not mentioned here should be investigated in the future. Actually, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute the literature in general and in teaching, learning as well as translating MMs of words denoting animals in particular.

Besides, there are some suggestions for further researches related on this study. Metaphor phenomena can be present everywhere and are reflected in all languages. Therefore, teachers must introduce and explain this method to help students understand and be able to practice it effectively in their further studies. Moreover, other methods such as idioms, proverbs, similes... should be studied to realize their usages and practice them. For example, Nguyễn Bá Ngọc [35, p.14] gave an idea of distinguish idioms and proverbs.

Actually, it is not easy for not only Vietnamese but also English to read and understand short stories of the other language because there can be literal meanings and figurative meanings in these short stories. Thus, readers should study some simple concepts of figures of speech, idioms, proverbs, puns, etc. and cultures of the countries they are reading about so that the readers can understand deeply ways of using words as well as their MMs, for example metaphorical meanings of animals in English and Vietnamese short stories.