

**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI
UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
FACULTY OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES**

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**ENGLISH IDIOMS CONTAINING THE WORD “HEART”
AND ITS SYNONYMS IN VIETNAMESE IDIOMS: A
CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS FROM CULTURAL
PERSPECTIVES**

*(NHỮNG THÀNH NGỮ TIẾNG ANH CÓ CHỨA TỪ “HEART” VÀ TỪ
ĐỒNG NGHĨA VỚI “HEART” TRONG THÀNH NGỮ TIẾNG VIỆT: ĐỐI
CHIẾU NHÌN TỪ GÓC ĐỘ VĂN HÓA)*

M.A. MINOR PROGRAM THESIS

FIELD: ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

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DECLARATION

This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education. I certify that this thesis is the result of my own research, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree.

Ninh Binh, September 2012

Student's signature

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the process of internationalization and globalization is taking place at a high speed. English has become the most popular language all over the world.

However, it is not easy to master English in general and English idioms in particular. Vietnamese learners have a great deal of difficulties in learning English. It results from the differences between two cultures.

With a view to exploring English and Vietnamese idioms in the light of culture, this thesis has focused on idioms containing the word “heart” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese ones.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale for the study

It is undeniable to say that English has become an important international language; therefore, mastering this foreign language is of great importance. However, it is not easy to master all English aspects especially idioms. As a matter of fact, English idioms are figurative expressions with different meanings. Metaphor in idioms creates the richness, beauty, sophisticated and vivid way of communication and liveliness of English language in general. In Vietnamese, idiom is a significant linguistic unit, which contributes to the diversification of not only language but also Vietnamese culture. Specifically, many words referring to parts of human body are used in both English and Vietnamese idioms. One very important part in human body is the *heart*. Having taken human- body- based idioms into consideration, the researcher found that there are many English idioms containing the word “*heart*” and their meanings are extremely interesting.

While the English use the word “*heart*” to reveal the world of deep emotions, feelings and attitudes; the psychological and spiritual world is generally expressed figuratively and metaphorically by many parts in the body such as “*stomach*”, “*bowels*” or “*liver*” “*mind*” (*bụng, ruột, gan, tâm*) in Vietnamese. In fact, there are both similar and different points of idioms containing the word “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese in the light of culture. Regarding similarities, in both cultures, heart is considered as the centre of all things in material and mental life. Consequently, idioms containing “*heart*” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese express the most important

part in people's body, very deep feelings in mental life such as love, happiness, sadness, determination and courage. In terms of differences, the dissimilarities between Vietnamese and English cultures have big influence on the way of using idioms in general and *heart-based* idioms in particular. Specifically, the reason for using more words to indicate this most important part of the body in Vietnamese culture results from the richness in the treasure of folk literature. In other words, the differences between English and Vietnamese language specifically – it is idiom - lead to these differences in culture.

From all these reasons above, the researcher has decided to choose the topic named “*English idioms containing the word “heart” and its synonyms in Vietnamese idioms: A contrastive analysis from cultural perspectives* ” to take detailed exploration.

2. Objectives of the study and research questions

The study firstly aims to study idiomatic expressions containing the word “*heart*” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese and then explore the similarities and differences in the light of culture basing on these idioms. As a matter of fact, both English and Vietnamese cultures have used the word “*heart*” and its synonyms to indicate the most important part in human body both physically and mentally. Some differences in terms of culture between these two cultures could also be drawn from these idioms. They are the differences regarding people's characteristics, history origin and people's way of thinking. At the end of the study, some implications for teaching, learning and translating will be explored as useful resources. In order to cover all these matters, there are some research questions and issue covered through the study as follows:

1. What are the similarities and differences between idioms containing the word “heart” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese in the light of culture?

2. What are the implications of the study for teaching, learning and translating?

3. Scope of the study

In a scope of a minor study, it is impossible for the researcher to cover all English and Vietnamese idioms in general and human- body- based idioms in particular. Consequently, in this study, I would like to focus on a narrower aspect of human- body- based idioms as heart- based ones to take into consideration. 51 English idioms with the word “heart” and 148 Vietnamese idioms containing the synonyms of “heart” are collected from many reliable dictionaries and taken to the study as a source for contrasting.

Therefore, the study would investigate some following points as follows:

- General view of idioms in English and Vietnamese
- A contrastive analysis of heart- based idioms in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese in the light of culture
- Some pedagogical implications for teaching, learning and translating

4. Methods of the study

The main method applied in this thesis is contrastive analysis of idioms containing the word “heart” in English and its synonyms in Vietnam from cultural perspectives. The steps to conduct the study include collecting, analyzing and contrasting. At first, English idioms with “heart” and Vietnamese idioms with “gan”, “tâm”, “đạ”, “lòng”, “bụng”, “ruột” are collected from some reliable dictionaries carefully and sorted out. Then collected data is described, classified, generalized and analyzed systematically to find out the similarities and differences in the light of culture. Supporting techniques

including knowledge accumulated through lectures, books, materials and reference, valuable instructions from my lecturers especially my supervisor make great contribution to the completion of the thesis.

5. Significance of the study

As a matter of fact, there are not a few research concerning English idioms and Vietnamese ones in general and idioms containing some words in these two languages in particular such as “*eye*”, “*hand*” and so on. In these studies, collecting idioms in English and Vietnamese seems to be not a very difficult task because of the equivalence in meaning for example “*eye*”, “*hand*” in English and “*mắt*”, “*tay*” in Vietnamese. However, the word “*heart*” is not similar to these words above. Having many synonyms of the word “*heart*” in Vietnamese such as “*gan*”, “*tâm*”, “*đá*”, “*lòng*”, “*bụng*”, “*ruột*” has created one significant point for the study. Furthermore, that these idioms in two languages are contrasted to find out the similarities and differences in the light of culture is another significance of the research. In other words, the study is not simply a contrastive analysis from linguistic perspectives. Idioms in two languages are considered as the contrastive tool in order that similarities and differences in cultural perspectives can be drawn out.

6. Organization of the study

The study includes three main parts as follows:

Part 1 – Introduction – has covered some points including the rationale for the study, objectives and research questions, the scope, the methods, the significance and the organization of the study.

Part 2 – Development – In this part, the researcher has elaborated two chapters:

Chapter 1 – Theoretical background and Literature Review – provides the background of the study, including definitions of key concepts consisting of culture, language, idioms, idiomatic expressions containing the word “heart” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese, some characteristics of Vietnamese and English culture. At the end of the chapter, a review of related studies is mentioned.

Chapter 2 – Similarities and differences of idioms containing the word “heart” and its synonyms in Vietnamese in the light of culture – shows a contrastive analysis between English and Vietnamese culture basing on the tool as English idioms containing the word “heart” and its synonyms in Vietnamese.

Part 3 – Conclusion – It concludes the main issues discussed in the paper, the limitations of the research, and implications for teaching, learning and translating idioms in general as well as some suggestions for further studies.

Following this part are the References and Appendices.

PART 2: DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1.1. Culture and the relationship between Language and Culture

1.1.1.1. Definitions of culture

Many definitions of “**culture**” are given from different perspectives.

The term was first used in this way by the pioneer English Anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, *Primitive Culture*, published in 1871. Tylor said that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."

According to Boas (1989:82), “**culture**” embraces all the manifestation of social habits of a community, the reactions of the individual as affected by the habits of the group in which he lives, the products of human activity as determined by these habits. Regarding to Linton (1989:80), “**culture**” is the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior which the member of that society have acquired through instruction or imitation and which they share to a greater or less degree. In general, two definitions above focus on, which is called “habit” to signify culture.

However, Nguyen Quang in many his books has emphasized the feature of “hidden patterns” of culture. As for him, “**culture**” refers to the informal and often hidden patterns of culture share. The hidden nature of culture has been compared to an iceberg, most of which is hidden under water. Like an iceberg,

most of the influence of culture on an individual cannot be seen. The part of culture that is exposed is not always that which creates cross-cultural difficulties, the hidden aspects of culture have significant effects on behaviors and on interactions with others.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization) gives another definition of culture as follows:

Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

In my opinion, **culture** is the products of people, the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything including both spiritual and material features such as language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music, arts, architecture and so on. The influence of culture on human's life is great and cannot be seen totally.

1.1.1.2. The relationship between language and culture

According to Kramsch (2000:3), language is the principle means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.

Language expresses cultural reality

Language embodies cultural reality

Language symbolizes cultural identity

Language and culture always exist together and reinforce each other. The relationship between them was so inextricable that we could not understand or appreciate the one without the knowledge of the other.

The American (cognitive) linguistic anthropologist Michael Agar has described the concept of “languaculture” in his book *Language Shock. Understanding the culture of conservation (1996)*. The book gives us an inspiring introduction to the connection between language and culture on a differential sense, providing many examples and indications as to how layman can investigate culture and language

In his book, he distinguished between two conceptions of culture. On the one hand, there is a widespread conception that culture is something one “has”; on the other hand there is the conception of culture of which he himself is a spokesman that culture is something that happens to the individual in daily life.

Culture is ...what happens to you when you encounter differences become aware of something in yourself, and works to figure out why the differences appeared. Culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and opens paths to other ways id being

Agar introduces the concept of “languaculture” in order to be able to sum up culture and language in one word. “Languaculture” refers to the necessary ties between language and culture. Culture starts when you realize that you’ve got a problem with language and the problem has to do with who you are”

1.1.1.3. The relationship between language and proverbs, idioms

In Richard (1990: 150), language is often described of having three main functions: descriptive, expressive and social functions. In fact, proverbs and idioms are important parts in linguistic resources. They belong to language and have all functions of a language. They have not only descriptive function, but also the expressive function, that is, to supply people’s feeling, preferences and so on. Moreover, proverbs and idioms are considered a minor reflecting social-

cultural tradition in the most reliable way. They are proverbs and idioms, which create the richness and beauty of a language.

1.1.2. Idioms

1.2.1.1. Definitions of idioms

Jackson & Amvela and Palmer (2000:66) supposed that an idiom may be defined as a phrase the meaning of which cannot be predicted from the individual meanings of the morphemes it comprises. Jenifer and W.Mc Mordie in *English idioms and How to use* (Oxford University Press, 1978) also defines “an idiom is a number of words which taken together, meaning something different from the individual words of the idioms when they stand- alone”. In the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (1992), an idiom is seen as “an expression which functions as a single unit and whose meaning can not be worked out from its separate parts”. According to Dean Curry in *Illustrated American Idioms* (1995), “an idiom is the assigning of a new meaning to a group of words which already have their own meaning”. In general, all these researchers supposed that in terms of semantics, idioms’ meaning is not simply the meanings of constituent making up the phrase. In terms of syntax, there are many different opinions about it. Most of the authors only consider phrases as idioms; on the other hand, according to A.S Hornby in *the Oxford Advance Learners* (Oxford University Press, 1995), an idiom is defined as “phrase or sentence whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole unit”. It means that besides phrases, Hornby considered sentence as a syntactic unit to found idioms.

In “*Từ điển thành ngữ, tục ngữ Việt Nam*” by Nguyễn Lân (1993), he supposed that “Thành ngữ là những cụm từ cố định dùng để diễn đạt một khái

niệm”. One time again, in terms of syntax, the phrase is the unit to constitute idioms. In “*Từ điển thành ngữ Việt Nam*” by Nguyễn Lực, Vietnamese idioms have these following features:

- + Về mặt kết cấu hình thái, thành ngữ tiếng Việt phổ biến thuộc lại cụm từ cố định, cũng có thể có những thành ngữ tính cố định cao, kết cấu vững chắc, đạt mức một ngữ cú cố định
- + Một bộ phận thành ngữ tiếng Việt có tính đa nghĩa, trong đó nghĩa bóng có tầm quan trọng hơn cả. Nghĩa của thành ngữ tiếng Việt có tính biểu trưng cao.
- + Quá trình vận động và sử dụng thành ngữ tiếng Việt cũng rất phức tạp.

Regarding semantics, in fact, idioms are man’s creation and originated from human communication, thus the usage of idioms is integral in human interaction.

As a matter of fact, idioms are originated from human in general and human culture in particular. Idioms and culture have a very close relationship in which some cultural features are shown and expressed through idioms. In “*Từ điển thành ngữ Hoa – Việt*”, the authors Nguyễn Văn Khang and Bùi Như Ý showed the relationship between idioms and culture “Thành ngữ của mỗi dân tộc có nguồn gốc sâu xa từ trong phong tục, tập quán, lễ nghi, tôn giáo, tín ngưỡng và triết học. Ngoài yếu tố ngôn ngữ phải có một vốn văn hóa rộng, sâu mới có thể hiểu được thành ngữ”

1.2.1.2. Idioms versus proverbs

Based on Nguyễn Đình Hùng (1999) in *Tuyển tập thành ngữ, tục ngữ ca dao Việt- Anh thông dụng*, a proverb and an idiom are different in terms of syntax. While a **proverb** is a complete sentence with a whole meaning making comments on social relationships, imparting experience of life, giving lessons in

morality or criticizing; **an idiom** is a fixed phrase but not a complete sentence, so it is considered as a word. In Vietnamese, Nguyễn Lâm in “*Từ điển thành ngữ, tục ngữ Việt Nam*” distinguished between idioms and proverbs in terms of semantics as followings: “Thành ngữ là những cụm từ cố định dùng để diễn đạt một khái niệm” and “Tục ngữ là những câu hoàn chỉnh, có ý nghĩa trọn vẹn, nói lên hoặc một nhận xét về tâm lý, hoặc một lời phê phán, khen hay chê, hoặc một câu khuyên nhủ, hoặc một kinh nghiệm về nhận thức tự nhiên hay xã hội”.

In general, idioms and proverbs distinguish from each other in terms of both syntax and semantics. In the author’s opinion, both proverbs and idioms are considered as clear embodiment of culture because they come from human life. Syntactic and semantic features are effective means to distinguish between them

1.2.1.3. Characteristics of idioms

- Semantic characteristics

Semantic features of idioms are concerned about its features of meaning. Curry (1995) proposed that the meaning of an idiom is “the special chemical mixture of meaning of all components which is completely new in quality”. It means that it is very important not to understand idioms literally way but metaphorically. Idioms are embodied with metaphorical expressions and they must be understood metaphorically. In terms of meaning, idioms can range from positive, neutral to negative meaning.

- Syntactic characteristics

Idioms are called “set- expressions”. It means that the components in idioms are stable and cannot be substituted. They cannot be changed or varied in the way literal expressions are normally varied, whether in speech or in writing. Idiom is impossible to be changed from active into passive and vice versa. Idioms may

take many different forms or structures. An idiom can have a regular structure, irregular or even a grammatically incorrect structure such as “*to be at large*”.

In terms of structure, Mac Carthy (2002:6) indicates types of idioms as follows:

Form	Example
Verb+ object/ complement	Kill two birds with one stone
Prepositional phrase	In the blink of an eye
Compound	A bone of contention
Simile	As dry as a bone
Binomia	Rough and ready
Trinomia	Cool, calm and collected
Whole clause or sentence	To cut a long story short

According to *Oxford Dictionary of English idioms* by Cowie, Mackin and Mc Caig, there are two syntactic features of English idioms

+ Clause patterns:

- Verb + Subject Complement such as *turn sour, sound asleep*
- Verb + Adverbial such as *whistle in the dark, prey on sb’s mind*
- Verb + Direct Object such as *ease sb’s mind, bend the truth*
- Verb + Direct Object + Object Complement such as *paint the town red*
- Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object such as *do sb credit*
- Verb + Direct Object + Adverbial such as *play it by ear*
- Subject + Verb such as *sb’s knees are knocking*

+ Phrase patterns :

- Noun Phrase: such as *a crashing bone, somebody’s blue-eyed boy*

- Adjective Phrase such as *free with one's meaning, black and blue*
- Prepositional Phrase such as *in the nick of time, on the blink, in black and white*
- Adverb Phrase such as *as often as nots, out of the blue, as regular as clockwork*
- Verb Phrase such as *scare the pants off sb, get the shivers*

In addition to the common patterns of English idioms, there is occasional appearance of a great number of sentence idioms for example:

They're all yours

You have to laugh

When hell freezes over

To sum up, regarding semantics, the meaning of idioms is not simply the combination of meaning of all words in these idioms. Idioms are understood metaphorically not literally. Concerning the syntactic features of idioms, many different opinions are given. Some researchers only regard phrases as basic unit to constitute idioms; on the other hand, many other opinions are in favor of idioms' structure of both phrases and sentences. In this thesis, the author decided to take idioms as both phrases and sentences into consideration with a view to guaranteeing the sufficiency of collecting idioms both in English and in Vietnamese.

1.1.3. Idiomatic expressions containing the word "heart" in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese

1.1.3.1. Literal and figurative meanings of "heart" and its synonyms in Vietnamese

In terms of physiology, heart is a very important organ, which is responsible for making sure that blood is supplied to every part of the body. According to *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, “heart” has these following meanings ranking from the most frequently- used meaning to the less one

(1): **heart** is the organ inside the chest, which controls the flow of blood by pushing it round the body

(2): **heart** is used as the centre of a person’s feelings, especially of kind or sincere memory

(3): **heart:** is something in a shape supposed to be like the shape of a heart. A heart is used to represent the love between a man and a woman

(4): **heart:** is used as the central of the most important part

(5): **heart** is used to refer to determination or strength of purpose

In other words, these meanings above rank from the literal to figurative meanings. Heart is placed at the centre of the body; therefore, it refers to very deep feelings in people mind such as love, happiness and so on. In Vietnamese, the psychological and spiritual world are generally expressed figuratively and metaphorically by many parts in the body beside *heart* such as “*stomach*”, “*bowels*” or “*liver*” or “*mind*”(*bụng, ruột, gan, tâm, lòng, dạ*).

1.1.3.2 Idiomatic expressions containing the word “heart” and its synonyms in Vietnamese

In each language, idioms containing words of human body part possess a remarkable figure. According to statistics in *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, there are about 30% of such idioms in English. As stated in the rationale part, the author chose one important part of human body as the

subject of the study. Heart- based idioms in English are ones containing the word “heart”. “*Have a big heart, break your heart, follow heart*” are examples of heart- based idioms in English. In Vietnamese, there are more than one word to denote the most important part in the body including “*bụng, ruột, gan, tâm, dạ, lòng*”. “*Tâm đầu ý hợp*”, “*từ tận đáy lòng*”, “*dạ sắt gan vàng*”, “*ruột tâm bói rôi*”, “*đi guốc trong bụng*” are examples of Vietnamese equivalents

1.1.4. Some characteristics of Vietnamese and English culture

1.1.4.1. Hofstede’s value dimensions

Besides research on English and Vietnamese idioms, the differences between English and Vietnamese culture also attract many researchers’ attention. One significant research was conducted by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede mentioned five cultural dimensions to define the features of one culture as follows:

➤ **Individualism/Collectivism** – Defining a culture as Individualistic generally means that the culture does not rely on others but themselves as individuals. Defining a culture as collectivist generally means that community is very important and everyone in the community works together and thinks of themselves as a whole rather than individuals.

➤ **High Uncertainty Avoidance – Low Uncertainty Avoidance** – The idea of high and low uncertainty avoidance deals with whether or not a culture is very aware of what could happen in the future and how much control they feel is necessary to have over this.

➤ **Power Distance** - Power distance in a culture is measured by the distance of power that there is between the powerful and the less powerful and if the less powerful accept this. High power distance means that all individuals accept the

power distance as a way of life. Low power distance signifies that inequality in a society is not accepted as natural or good.

➤ **Masculinity/Femininity** - Whether a culture is considered to be a more masculine or feminine society is to say whether or not the culture values masculinity or femininity more. A masculine culture is considered to be more patriarchal and value the men's role in the culture more. The opposite, a matriarchal society, means the culture values women's role in the culture more.

➤ **Long-Term/Short-Term** - Long-term and short-term classifications have to do with a culture and if it values short-term or long-term results. If they value long lasting relationships or if they just want quick, gratifying results.

1.1.4.2. Characteristics of English and Vietnamese culture according to Hofstede's Value Dimension

According to Hofstede's Value Dimension, Vietnamese and English cultures have 5 value dimensions shown in this table below:

Dimensions	Vietnamese	English
1.Individualism/Collectivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Vietnam is considered a fairly collectivist culture ◇ Vietnamese culture is strongly orientated around family and community family comes before oneself and to bring pride to family is the ultimate goal 	- English belong to individualism
2.High	- Vietnam is classified as a	- English tends to be high

<p>Uncertainty Avoidance – Low Uncertainty</p>	<p>Low Uncertainty Avoidance culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Vietnamese are welcoming to outsiders and are less tense and more relaxed * Vietnam is confident in their country and comfortable with the uncertainty that tomorrow brings 	<p>uncertainty avoidance</p>
<p>3.Power Distance</p>	<p>-Vietnam is a social republic state and has a high power distance. The power in Vietnam is not distributed equally but this is accepted as part of the culture from all ends of the social classes.</p>	<p>- Low power distance</p>
<p>4.Masculinity/ Femininity</p>	<p>- Masculinity is highly valued in Vietnam. ◊ father is always the head of the household</p>	<p>- Equal power in gender</p>
<p>5.Long-Term/ Short-Term</p>	<p>- Vietnam is high on long-term orientation. They are hard-working and respect their superiors. They value the relationships they build</p>	

1.1.4.3. Other studies on English and Vietnamese culture

Regarding Hunt P.C (2002) in “*An Introduction to Vietnamese culture for rehabilitation service providers in the US. Buffalo, Ny: Center for International rehabilitation research information and exchange*”, Vietnamese culture has some following principal values:

➤ **Harmony:** To achieve harmony, one must observe moderation and avoid extremes in communication, daily life activities, consumption of food and drink and social reaction to ensure physical safety and adhere to the moral imperative of keeping one’s dignity unimpaired.

➤ **Duty and honor:** The duties and roles of each family member are well – defined. They govern the actions of the individual and are the scarifies one makes to one’s family

➤ **Respect:** This is the guiding principle of all relationships. It is conveyed through language and demeanor

➤ **Education:** Education, valued more than material wealth and success, is the pillar of the culture and begins at home.

➤ **Family:** Allegiance to one’s family was absolute and included fulfilling one’s responsibilities and proper conduct

Moreover, in “*Cơ sở văn hoá Việt Nam*” by Trần Quốc Vượng, Vietnamese culture is defined by these following features:

➤ People all have similar thoughts and awareness of nature and society. However, each nation has its own language, different geographical features, natural conditions, social developing level

➤ Vietnamese people mainly live on land. They lead stable lives in fixed

places all their lifetime and depend upon the weather for crop → great number of idioms about nature, weather, agricultural production

➤ Vietnamese people prefer the collective life in which individuals are associated with their families. On the contrary, the English seem to be self-orientation

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In fact, there is much investigation of idioms in English and Vietnamese in general and human- body- based idioms in particular. In the M. A thesis named “*A contrastive analysis of English and Vietnamese idioms of comparison*” Đỗ Quỳnh Anh (2004) contrasted idioms of comparison in Vietnamese and English. As a matter of fact, her thesis only paid attention to idioms of comparison with the structure “*as.....as*” in English and “*nhu nhu*” in Vietnamese. At the end of the thesis, the author came to conclusion that there are the similarities between idioms of comparison in English and Vietnamese equivalents. It is a contrastive analysis from linguistic perspectives, there is no contrast between these idioms in the light of culture. Another research concerning human- body- based idioms by Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Yến in her graduation paper focused on metaphors in these idioms. In this research, she emphasized that metaphor is considered to make the greatest contribution to the richness, beauty and liveliness of English idioms. In other words, it is metaphor, which gives English idioms sophisticated and vivid way of communication. She supposed that all idioms are understood metaphorically not literally. In the main part of her study, she analyzed English human- body- based idioms embodying metaphors in comparison with Vietnamese ones. Firstly, it is an analysis of the metaphorical expressions of

upper parts of human body such as “head” (*đầu*), “face” (*mặt*), “nose” (*mũi*), “eye” (*mắt*) and internal organs including “heart” (*tim*), “stomach” (*bụng*), “bowel” (*ruột*), “liver” (*gan*) and *bones* in English and Vietnamese idioms. Furthermore, in this paper, the author listed some difficulties faced by Vietnamese learners in studying English human- body- based idioms including difficulties in understanding, memorizing and translating. At the end of the graduation paper, some suggested solutions to Vietnamese learners’ difficulties in learning human- body- based idioms were given as an effective source for learners. Among these solutions, the author emphasized one that understanding English and Vietnamese culture as a key to open the door of the treasures of idioms and their meanings. However, that point was just mentioned as a solution in the ending chapter. Nguyễn Thị Kim Huệ (2007) in her graduation paper called “*Vietnamese’s cross- cultural errors in using idioms of comparison in communication with Anglicist*” listed some common errors in the light of culture. She supposed that the difference between an agricultural culture (Vietnamese) and a nomadic culture (English) created errors in using idioms. It resulted from the fact that idioms of one language were a means to express this culture’s features. In another linguistic thesis by Nguyễn Thị Phương named “*Đặc trưng ngôn ngữ- văn hóa của các từ chỉ bộ phận con người trong thành ngữ tiếng Việt (so sánh với tiếng Anh)*”, she described and analyzed words denoting human- body parts in English and Vietnamese idioms to find out similarities and differences. She found that there are 1100 Vietnamese idioms and 867 Vietnamese ones and the appearance of words denoting human- body parts in these two languages is also different. Many similarities and differences in terms of semantics to express appearance, knowledge, feelings, mood, will were drawn

out. Moreover, she emphasized the effect of cultural features in languages to learners, which is the reason for the difficulties in learning a foreign language. At the last part of her study, she supposed that it is necessary for teachers to help students aware of the similarities and differences between two cultures when learning these two languages. To sum up, all these studies above are closely related to thesis. In this thesis, the author focused on one important body- part- that is *heart*, one linguistic unit- that is *idiom*- and two cultures *namely English and Vietnamese* to make a contrastive analysis.

Many researchers all over the world have paid more attention to English idioms. Their opinions are collected and presented in many idioms Dictionary such as Longman Dictionary of Language and Culture, Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms.

1.3. Summary

As stated in the name “*Theoretical background and Literature Review*”, this chapter consists of two main parts. In the first part, by elaborating on the key terms, the researcher has briefly reviewed the theoretical background of the study. Firstly, it has pointed out the definitions of culture from many different perspectives, its relationship with language, English and Vietnamese idioms and proverbs, idioms’ features in terms of semantics and syntax. In the scope of this thesis, the author decided to collect idioms as both phrases and sentences to distinguish and compare in the light of culture between English and Vietnamese. Secondly, the author took an exploration on idiomatic expressions of the word “*heart*” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese. Literal and metaphorical meanings of the word “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese were taken into consideration. Thirdly, it focused on another important point of the thesis, which

are the differences between English and Vietnamese culture. Although there are many research on this matter, the author based on Hofstede's value dimensions as criterion to explore English and Vietnamese culture. These dimensions would be analyzed in contrastive part in next chapter. In the second main part of this chapter, results of many related Vietnamese and worldwide studies were collected and analyzed as a source to develop this thesis. The author of this thesis would like to research more on the differences between Vietnamese and English culture through heart- based idioms.

CHAPTER 2: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF IDIOMS CONTAINING THE WORD “HEART” AND ITS SYNONYMS IN VIETNAMESE IN THE LIGHT OF CULTURE

2.1. Similarities

2.1.1. In terms of semantic

As stated in chapter 1, the “*heart*” is the organ responsible for making sure that blood is supplied to every part of one’s body. If the “*heart*” stopped working properly, one person’s life would be impossible. Because of this, people often refer to something that they consider being the most important and influential part as the “*heart*”. Moreover, the “*heart*” is situated at the chest, almost in the centre of the human body. As a result, “*heart*” is often regarded as the place from which the deepest feelings come. All these things can be seen clearly in idioms. Both in English and Vietnamese, idioms containing the word “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese refer to the most important part in the body physically and mentally.

2.1.1.1. Expressing feelings: love, happiness, unhappiness

In English, many idioms containing the word “*heart*” show very deep feelings such as love, happiness or unhappiness as follows:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| + <i>break my heart</i> | + <i>aching heart.</i> |
| + <i>died of a broken heart</i> | + <i>gives heart to somebody</i> |
| + <i>heart leap</i> | + <i>heavy heart</i> |
| + <i>followed his heart</i> | + <i>from the bottom of her heart</i> |
| + <i>My heart goes out to</i> | + <i>Open her heart to me</i> |

If some one “*break your heart*”, they make you feel very sad and unhappy, usually because they end a love affair or close relationship with you. For example:

- “There is no excuse my friend
For *breaking my heart, breaking my heart* again
This is where our journey ends
You're *breaking my heart* again”

(Lyrics of the song “*Breaking my heart*” by Richter, Jascha)

If “*your heart goes out to somebody*”, you sympathize very deeply with his or her problems. For example:

- “I see the tears you cry
They're tears I cannot dry
Know what you're going through
My heart goes out to you”

(Lyrics of the song “*My heart goes out to you*” by Anders Bagge, Rick Nowels, Allan Rich)

If you “*give heart to somebody*”, it means that you love his/ her very much. For example:

- “I give all my money for a slice of daily bread
I give forty honest hours to a boss I never met
And I gave my soul to Jesus at the age of twenty-two
So there ain't much left to offer
But I *give my heart to you*”

(Lyrics of the song “*Give my heart to you*” by Jr. Aldridge;Bob Di Piero)

If you want to show something “*from the bottom of your heart*”, it means that this feeling comes from your very deep emotion. For example:

- “*From the bottom of my broken heart*
There's just a thing or two I'd like you to know
You were my first love, you were my true love
From the first kisses to the very last rose”

(Lyrics of the song “*From the bottom of my heart*” by Eric Foster White)

Similar to English idioms, we can find many Vietnamese ones containing *heart*'s synonyms (*lòng, bụng, gan, ruột, tâm, dạ*) to express the deepest feelings such as:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| + tận đáy lòng | + bầm gan nát ruột |
| + bầm bụng bầm gan | + tím ruột bầm gan |
| + ghi lòng tạc dạ | + khắc cốt ghi tâm |
| + ruột tằm bói rối | + Ruột xót như bào |

These phrases are used a lot in literature, especially in poetry

“Bấy lâu tím ruột bầm gan
Bây giờ cởi mở muôn ngàn uất căm”
(Xuân Diệu)

And Nguyễn Du in “*Truyện Kiều*” also used some idioms containing the word “*tâm*” to express emotion of characteristics such as:

“Càng trông mặt càng ngẩn ngơ
Ruột tằm đòi đoạn như tơ rối bời”
“Sinh đà rít ruột như bào
Nơi ra chẳng tiện trông vào chẳng đàng”

2.1.1.2. Expressing determination and courage

Besides idioms to show love, happiness or unhappiness, there are also several idioms using “*heart*” to refer courage or determination.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| + <i>Lose heart</i> | + <i>Take heart</i> |
| + <i>with all one`s heart</i> | + <i>finds it in one's heart to</i> |
| + <i>heart sinks</i> | + “ <i>a sinking of your heart</i> ” |

If you “*take heart*”, you become more courageous. For example:

- “So *take heart*
Let His love lead us through the night
Hold on to hope
And take courage again”

(Lyrics of the song “*Take heart*” by Joel Timothy Houston)

On the contrary, if you “*lose heart*”, you feel discouraged and lose determination to continue what you are doing.

If your *heart sinks*, or if you feel “*a sinking of your heart*”, something which you hear or see, makes you feel very discouraged and depressed. Here are some examples:

- “And my heavy *heart sinks* deep down under you”

(Lyrics of the song “*Love Song*” by Sara Bareilles)

In Vietnamese, we can also find some idioms to express strong courage and determination.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| + <i>dạ sắt gan vàng</i> | + <i>dạ ngọc gan vàng</i> |
| + <i>dạ sắt gan đồng</i> | + <i>dạ đá gan vàng</i> |
| + <i>gan cóc tía</i> | |

If someone always has strong will and does not begin to flinch when meeting difficulties, we say he has “*dạ sắt gan vàng*”, “*dạ ngọc gan vàng*”, *dạ sắt gan đồng*, *dạ đá gan vàng*. For example:

- Hà Tĩnh ta ơi! *gan vàng dạ sắt*, dù mưa roi nắng gắt, dù bom đạn quân thù, ta vẫn đi lên đi lên ta hát bài ca mà Đảng bắt nhịp cho ta.

(Lyrics of the song “*Bài ca Hà Tĩnh*” by Đỗ Dũng, Lương Văn Trọng)

2.1.1.3. *Expressing people’s characteristics*

“*Heart*” is also used to describe people’s characteristics. One person whose *heart of gold* is very kind and helpful. For example:

- I want to live, I want to give, I've been a miner for a *heart of gold*

(Lyrics of the song “*Heart of gold*” by Neil Young)

Someone with *heart of stone* is normally cold. Other idioms of this feature are *from the heart* and *heart- to- heart*.

There are many idioms containing such words as “*bụng*” and “*dạ*” describing the nature of a bad person who always speak the good things but in fact is heartless and wicked.

- Miệng bồ tát, *dạ* ót ngâm
- *Bụng* chua miệng ngọt
- *Bụng* gian miệng thẳng
- Miệng bồ tát, *bụng* dao găm
- Miệng nam mô, *bụng* bồ dao găm

In fact, there have been many scholars doing research on the semantic field of words denoting parts of human body or comparing that of the two languages. According to Nguyễn Đức Tồn in the article “*Tiếng gọi bộ phận cơ*

thể trong tiếng Việt với biểu trưng tâm lý, tình cảm” (Văn hóa dân gian, No 3, 1994), theoretically we can say that each country can, with its own conceptions, identify a particular psychological phenomenon of a particular human- body part and vice versa. Furthermore, a particular part of human body can have different functions symbolizing different psychological and emotional phenomenon. As a result, studying idioms containing human- body parts in general and the word “*heart*” in particular can help to discover typical features of a nation and understand more about its culture and national soul.

All these things above show the fact that “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese such as “ *gan*, “ *lòng*” “*ruột*” “ *tâm*” “ *dạ*” “*bụng*” are used to refer to a very important part in our body, very deep part in mental life, courage and determination. These idioms somehow express the characteristics of both English and Vietnamese. Both English and Vietnamese highly appreciate “*heart*” both physically and mentally. Physically, *heart* is the most important part in human body, which guarantees the activities of other parts. Mentally, *heart* is the root of all human feelings such as love, hate, happiness, unhappiness, resentment and so on. The “heart” symbolizes the passion, the affection of the soul itself identified with the physiological principle of vitality and common to humans and animals alike. In Vietnamese culture, “heart” is normally associated with psychological states related to thought, spirit and feelings. It brings about the effects on other parts inside human body such as belly (*bụng*), bowel (*ruột*), liver (*gan*) and stomach (*dạ*).

In fact, according to Nguyễn Đức Tồn, using words of human- body- part to express internal world is one way of “*cải dung*”. It is a significant cultural feature of Vietnamese people. “*Cải dung*”, in other words, is based on the

replacement between the container and the be-container according to Vietnamese's old conception.

2.1.2. In terms of syntax

According to Oxford Dictionary of English idioms by Cowie, Mackin and Caig, English idioms with “heart” and Vietnamese idioms with heart's synonyms have syntactic patterns as shown below:

Syntactic patterns	English	Vietnamese
Noun phrase	Heart of gold, heart of stone, heavy heart	Gan đá dạ sắt, gan vàng dạ ngọc, một lòng một dạ
V+ Od	Break one's heart, cross one's heart, open heart	Mát gan mát ruột, máu chảy ruột mềm, ghi lòng tạc dạ

2.2. Differences

2.2.1. Individualism and collectivism in English and Vietnamese culture

Idioms containing “heart” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese reflect, to some extent, some social features of these two countries. Consider these following examples:

- Nhìn bề ngoài của anh ta không ai nghĩ anh ta lại là loại người “*miệng nam mô, bụng bồ dao găm*”

- His love to her is no word to express. He *gives all his heart to her*.

Consider English example above, possessive adjective “*his*” appears in the idiom. There are many heart- based idioms in which possessive determiners and possessive pronoun tend to be exactly put before the word “heart” such as: do

one's heart good (*khiến ai trở nên vui vẻ*); eat one's heart out (*đau khổ, buồn bã; ghen tị thềm thương*), follow one's heart (*hành động theo tình cảm*), give one's heart to somebody/ something (*yêu thương ai/ cái gì*). This feature somehow reflects **individualism** in English society. It is shown clearly through linguistics. In fact, people living in different regions in England and coming from different class speak different English. There is English for the poor and English for the rich. Individualism result in showing one person's own characteristics in heart-based idioms.

In contrast, using possessive words does not exist in Vietnamese idioms in general and idioms containing heart's synonyms in particular. This feature, to some extent, expresses one characteristic of Vietnamese people- that is **collectivism**. As a matter of fact, Vietnam is known as a nation of long and hard history. One thousand out of four thousand years of its existence, the country had been under the control of Chinese feudalism. In its modern history, Vietnam had been colonized by the French for 80 years and in war against the American for 25 years. However, the courageous people of this land are not assimilated. On the contrary, they succeed in acculturating the new things brought to them by their conquerors in years of being ruled. Vietnamese people always live together in unity and have high community spirit. Vietnamese people always conform to normal social conventions, which are orally and documentarily defined. This very remarkable feature of society is shown in many Vietnamese idioms with symbols and meanings created and determined by society.

2.2.2. *English and Vietnamese language*

✚ Words in Vietnamese idioms can be changeable such as “ *Ghi lòng tạc*”

dạ” or “*Tạc dạ ghi lòng*”; “*dạ sắt gan vàng*” or “*gan vàng dạ sắt*”. This phenomenon does not happen in English idioms containing the word “*heart*”. It results from linguistic feature of English and Vietnamese.

✚ When studying heart- based idioms, it is noticeable that we rarely find an English idiom containing the word “*heart*” and another word denoting different part of human body. On the contrary, this phenomenon is very popular with Vietnamese idioms such as “*đút ruột đút gan*”, “*mát gan mát ruột*”, “*nẫu gan nẫu ruột*” and “*bầm gan lộn ruột*”. In fact, nearly every idiom in Vietnamese seems to be symmetrical. As a matter of fact, symmetry is one of many principles which Vietnamese people usually have in their way of thinking. People from the Orient in general and Vietnamese people in particular traditionally believe that this world is created partly according to the symmetrical principles, in which man is considered to be the centre. This principle has great influence on the Vietnamese literature, especially folk songs, proverbs and idioms.

✚ English people use only the word “*heart*” to denote many concepts whereas Vietnamese people have many words such as “*gan*”, “*lòng*” “*ruột*” “*tâm*”, “*bụng*”, “*dạ*”. In fact, with Vietnamese people, the world of feelings and emotions is expressed through all parts inside the belly. This feature can reflect another feature in Vietnamese culture. National tradition, customs and natural and social conditions have formed qualities of carefulness, sophistication and high evaluation to things and people. As a result, with the same concept of being the most important part of human body, English use one word “*heart*” and Vietnamese use much more than that.

✚ Many Vietnamese idioms with the words “*gan*”, “*lòng*” “*ruột*” “*tâm*”

are originated from old stories in the past. For example, the idiom “gan cóc tía” is originated from a very old legend “Cóc kiện trời”, and so on. As a matter of fact, Vietnamese culture is rich in old legends which reflects plentiful emotional life of Vietnamese people and river- imprinted culture.

✚ In many Vietnamese idioms containing heart’s synonyms, there are not a few to show strong determination and courage. This fact may result from Vietnamese’s long history struggling against invaders. As a result, in order to get freedom, Vietnamese people had to be courageous, determined and consistent. Therefore, idioms such as “*Gan vàng dạ sắt, gan đồng dạ sắt, lòng gang dạ thép, ghi tâm khắc cốt*” and so on appear much in Vietnamese idioms.

✚ In terms of syntax, English idioms with “*heart*” and Vietnamese ones with heart’s synonyms have some different syntactic patterns as follows:

Syntactic patterns	English	Vietnamese
Prepositional phrase	After one’s own heart, at heart, by heart, from the heart	No idiom
S + V	one’s heart is not in it one’s heart is in one’s mouth one’s heart sinks one’s heart misses a beat	No idiom

2.3. Summary

In this chapter, the author has explored similarities and differences of Vietnamese and English culture through idioms containing the word “*heart*” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese ones. Regarding semantics, two cultures both highly appreciate the importance of “*heart*” in physical and emotional life as well. “*Heart*” in English and “*bụng*”, “*dạ*”, “*tâm*”, “*gan*”, “*ruột*”, “*lòng*” in Vietnamese symbolize people’s inner feelings such as happiness, love, determination or courage, people’s characteristics. Some major differences have been found basing on differences of Vietnamese and English culture such as individualism and collectivism, Vietnamese and English language.

PART 3: CONCLUSION

1. Recapitulation

In general, this research paper acts as a contrastive analysis on English and Vietnamese cultures basing on idioms containing the words “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese ones. The study has focused on both the similarities and differences. It is undeniable to say that idiom is a mirror reflecting the cultural features. In fact, people of one culture express their feeling, attitudes and behaviors through literature material, among which is idiom. Idioms are figurative expressions that help to show attitudes toward something shortly and vividly.

After much exploration and consideration, this thesis has come to some major findings. First of all, in terms of similarities, both English and Vietnamese use the word “*heart*” and its synonyms to indicate the most important part in human body both physically and mentally. Feelings such as love, happiness, sadness, determination or courage and people’s characteristics are expressed through these kinds of idiom by both English and Vietnamese. Some syntactic structures can be seen in idioms in both languages. Furthermore, the study has found some differences in the light of culture between English and Vietnamese. They are individualism and collectivism of English and Vietnamese culture, linguistic differences. These differences result from the dissimilarities in culture such as people’s characteristics, history’s origin and people’s way of thinking.

2. Limitations of the study

Despite being taken into much consideration by the author, this research paper still has some unavoidable limitations as follows. Firstly, the study cannot

deal with all aspects of idioms in general and idioms containing the word “*heart*” in English and its synonyms in Vietnamese in particular. Secondly, the study has only explored some major similarities and differences in the light of culture between English and Vietnamese. In this study, the author based on idioms with “*heart*” and its synonyms in Vietnamese as a tool; therefore, the results could not reflect fully cultural features of English and Vietnamese.

3. Implications for teaching, learning and translating idioms in general

In general, the study acts as a contrastive analysis between two cultures basing on one linguistic unit (idiom). This unit is considered as one of the most complicated and interesting parts of any languages. However, not all learners can use idioms fluently and naturally. They have difficulties in understanding, translating and memorizing due to its strange grammatical structures, poor knowledge of mother tongue and cultural gap between two nations. Because of these difficulties in learning idioms, teachers also encounter many problems when dealing with this linguistic unit. Moreover, translating of idioms is not an easy task. It requires the translators the ability to deal with the two languages, two cultures. Be consistent of Professional Ethicis of the translator’s guide of Great Britain states:

A translator shall work only into the language (in exceptional cases this may include a second language) of which he has native knowledge. Native knowledge is defined as the ability to speak and write a language so frequently that the expression of thought is structurally, grammatically and idiomatically correct (Cited un Meuss, 1981, 27)

In order to solve these above problems, the author would like to give some following suggestions to Vietnamese learners. Firstly, teachers should provide

some recognizable features of idioms for learners because some students find it difficult to recognize idioms. Another important thing is that the meanings of idioms cannot be guessed from its parts. Hence, teachers, when introducing an idiom, should not only use it in given contexts but also explain clearly its figurative meaning. For those who want to master idioms, they must firstly be hard working. They are advised to learn by heart idioms because idioms have various structures and illogical in combinations. Some idioms are grammatically incorrect; therefore, it is not easy to remember. Moreover, when learning idioms, it should be born in mind that the collocation of an idiom should not be disturbed and the form of the words should not be changed. For example, *to make both ends meet* is an idiom, which is incorrectly used as in the sentence “Today, the middle class people find it difficult to *make both their ends meet*” Secondly, learner’s knowledge of mother tongue should be regularly enriched and widened. Thirdly, understanding English culture is also necessary for understanding the similarities and differences in the form of idioms between two nations.

As for translators, some following detailed hints are given. First, the translators should use an idiom of similar meaning and form such as “*as black as ink*” and “*tối đen như mực*” in equivalent. Moreover, using idioms of similar meaning but dissimilar form should be encouraged such as “*as dumb as statue*” and “*câm như hến*” in equivalent. Next, culture and language competence must be enriched. It helps the translators come to the root of the idiomatic expressions instead of attacking his minds to words and literal meaning. Last but not least, the translators should enhance the skill of mobilizing appropriate translation methods. In fact, there are two translation methods including communicative and

semantic methods. In each situation, the translator should take notice to find appropriate method.

4. Suggestions for further studies

Exploiting idioms in general and idioms in the light of culture in particular remains a wide room to discuss and study. Further studies can get focus on other human- body parts in English and Vietnamese idioms. Furthermore, beside English, other studies can explore the differences between Vietnamese idioms and ones of other languages such as Chinese, Russian and French.

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