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Bakalářská práce

An investigation into English and Vietnamese idioms

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podpis

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Anotace

Ve své bakalářské práci se zabývám srovnáním anglických a vietnamských idiomů. Práce je rozdělená na teoretickou a praktickou část. V teoretické části se věnuji definici idiomu, jeho charakteristickým znakům, klasifikaci a rozdílům mezi anglickými a vietnamskými idiomy. V praktické části jsou porovnány anglické a vietnamské idiomy, které jsou rozdělené podle stupně ekvivalence.

Abstract

This bachelor's thesis deals with the comparison of English and Vietnamese idioms. The thesis is divided into the theoretical and practical section. The theoretical section deals with the definition of idiom, its characteristic features, its classification and the differences between English and Vietnamese idioms. In the practical section, the English and Vietnamese idioms are compared, divided according to their degree of equivalence.

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1 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to focus on comparison of idioms in English and Vietnamese language. The next goal is to identify to what extent the languages belonging to distinct language groups, different historical backgrounds and different geographical conditions are comparable. English language has its place in the Indo-European family of languages whereas Vietnamese language belongs to Austroasiatic language family. Therefore, large number of English idioms are presumed to have no Vietnamese counterparts because of their different origin, tradition, social conditions and history.

My thesis text is divided into two sections. In the first part I will concentrate on idioms as such, give various definitions, explanations and grammatical divisions. In addition, I will shortly present the two languages – English and Vietnamese language. Afterwards, I focused on various settings of set phrases and especially idioms. Idioms will be further discussed in various classifications, namely Makkai, Cermak, semantic, syntactic and structural.

In the practical part of the thesis I will compare English and Vietnamese idioms. The idioms will be divided into different sections, according to the degree of equivalency.

My goal is to compare these two languages and find the differences between them.

2 Definition of idiom

2.1 English idiom

Idioms have always attracted attention of linguists. The new trends in English lexical studies have thrown a completely different light on these multi-word structures with more or less unpredictable meanings. Even the linguists cannot state the complete definition for this term. According to the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, idioms were defined as: “an expression which function as a single unit and whose meaning cannot be worked out from its separate parts.”. Additionally, the writer of the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines the idiom differently: “a phrase or sentence whose meaning is not clear from the meaning of its individual words and which must be learnt as a whole unit.”

John Wright (2002: 7) points out that “an idiom is an expression with the following features. Firstly, it is fixed and recognized by native speakers. We cannot make up our own. Secondly, it uses language in a non-literal – metaphorical way.”

Watcyn-Jones (2003: V) explains it in a very simple and accessible way: “*An idiom is a group of words that has a completely different meaning from the meaning of each word on its own*”. Watcyn-Jones (2003) continues: “*/.../ although you might know the words storm and teacup it would be almost impossible to guess the meaning of the idiom a storm in a teacup, which is a situation where people get very upset and angry over something that is unimportant. /.../. Idioms really have to be learnt as complete phrases, each with its own unique (often unexpected) meaning.*”

Furthermore, *Merriam-Webster* defines an idiom as *“an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a separate meaning of its own”* (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 2016), which means that an idiom is a unit of meaning.

As shown above, definitions of idioms are rather different between the linguists but overall, they do not differ much from each other and share the same basic idea of definition of an idiom: *“they are words, phrases or expressions that cannot be taken literally; when used in everyday language, they have a meaning other than the basic one you would find in the dictionary.”* (Sinclair)

Idioms play important role in our daily lives. We can see them all around us. We use them in our speech and writing.

“When you are having a conversation, a discussion, or an argument, or when you write an article, an essay, or a report, you want to express your own ideas. But there are many fixed expressions and idioms that you can use to link these ideas, for example, to show the listener or reader that you are making a new point, or disagreeing, or closing the argument. Using these phrases gives you time to think about what you are going to say next and helps your listeners or readers to know what they can expect and so understand your argument better.”

(Warren, 1994: A4)

Idioms are everywhere around us, nevertheless some people "*do not feel comfortable using idioms. They find it difficult to believe that the unusual combinations of words can be used with the special meaning of the idiom.*" (McLay, 1987:3).

In general, it is not necessary to know the idioms alone when using them. However, for using the idioms correctly, it is important to understand the proper meaning and the right situation in which particular idiom can be used.

2.2 Vietnamese idiom

Vietnamese linguistic researchers have proclaimed numerous definitions of idiom. Hoang Van Hanh (1994) states: "*an idiom is a fixed group of words which is firm in terms of structure, complete and figurative in terms of meaning, and is widely used in daily speaking*" (*thành ngữ là những cụm từ cố định, có hình thái cấu trúc bền vững, có tính bóng bẩy về ý nghĩa và ãược sử dụng rộng rãi trong giao tiếp.*) (Hoang, 1994:37)

Hồ Lê states: "*an idiom is a word combination which has a stable structure and a figurative meaning, and it is used to describe an image, a phenomenon, a characteristic or state.*" (*Thành ngữ là một loại cụm từ có cấu tạo ổn định. Nghĩa của thành ngữ có tính hình tượng, biểu trưng và giàu cảm xúc.*)

According to Hung, in Vietnamese, idioms frequently use fixed expressions; grammatically, they are not complete sentences, which means they are only words or phrases. Idioms do not show any comments, experiences, ethnical lesson or critics, so they often have figurative function, not educational function. Idioms use brief

expressions based on stories, folk tales, or classic references, which happened a long time ago, now we encounter similar situation. Hearing those idioms, the listener knows exactly what the speaker means.

Many Vietnamese idioms are borrowed from Chinese idioms; however, Vietnamese cleverly transformed those meanings from Chinese idioms into Vietnamese way of talking.

In Vietnamese, idioms have been recognized, collected and explained systematically since the end of 1970s. A lot of work has been done to make collections of Vietnamese idioms in comparison with other languages. In *"Từ điển thành ngữ Anh - Việt"* Nguyễn Minh Tiến introduces about 18,000 English idioms to readers for helping them recognize, understand and use idioms correctly. Nguyễn Bá Ngọc with *"Thành Ngữ Tiếng Anh với Người Dạy và Học Việt Nam"*(2001), shows the similarities as well as the differences between English and Vietnamese idioms and the difficulties which Vietnamese learners usually encounter when interpreting idioms from English into Vietnamese and vice versa.

Phạm Văn Bình has done the research entitled *"Thành Ngữ Tiếng Việt"* (2003). In the research, he collects and explains hundreds of Vietnamese idioms with their uses and their meanings and gives out some explanations for origin of those idioms.

3 English and Vietnamese idioms

3.1 *Based on principles of cultural types*

The way of living in Vietnam is strongly correlated with agriculture, or to be more exact, with the cultivation of water rice and other plants. Cow and buffalo are the most common animals to farmers because they produce meat and milk and partly providing means of transportation. Take buffalo in the idiom “*đàn gậy tai trâu*” as an example. According to Vietnamese conception, buffalo is one of the twelve zodiacs, and it represents something that is bulky, lumpish, but patient. Buffalo is considered a close “friend” of the farmers, leaving a deep spot in the mind of Vietnamese. *Đàn gậy tai trâu* uses one characteristic of the buffalo -*lumpish*- to express the idea of a person who would not listen to anything or anyone.

On the other hand, England with dry and cold climate, has a larger percentage of plains than any other countries. In the past, England’s economy depended on sheep breeding for getting wool, milk and meat. Therefore, sheep can be considered as the most popular cattle to the English. The image of sheep appears widely in proverb and idiom, however, the attitude toward this kind of animal are various. For English people lamb is not the animal of high respect.

This results into differences in the images that are reflected in each country’s collection of idioms and proverbs. To Vietnamese, some agriculture-work associated animals such as cows or buffaloes are frequently seen in their proverbs or idioms. On the other hand, English proverb and idiom collection seems full of animals such as

sheep or horses. In some cases, the same ideas are expressed differently in a way that they reflect the characteristics of each country's culture.

3.2 View from customs

One of the most significant elements that differentiate the proverbs and idioms in English and Vietnamese are the differences in tradition and custom. Vietnam - an Oriental country - has the agricultural culture, while England – a Western country - has the nomadic culture. They have different concepts about the world, especially the animal world.

In nomadic culture like English culture, dogs help human beings with lot of work. They watch the houses, keep farm animals like sheep, goats and help hunting wild animals. Therefore, dogs are highly valued and are considered human's best friends. There are many proverbs showing the importance of dogs.

In Vietnam, the dog has low status. Most of the Vietnamese idioms concerning with dogs are used in an insulting sense, usually describing wicked person, although the numbers of pet dogs have increased nowadays.

3.3 View from religion

There is a big difference between the religion in Vietnam and in England. The Vietnamese religion can be considered as a complex of Buddhism, Confusion, and some other religions; while most English people believe in Christianity. That is why

the concepts of people about some animals in both countries are different. For instance, the *dragon* possesses different cultural connotations in Vietnamese and English.

In Vietnamese culture, the dragon symbolizes the high reputation. To Vietnamese people, dragon is the most beautiful image which is proved by the number of proverbs and idioms with its appearance. This can be illustrated in symbol of dragon- An imaginary animal which crystallizes strength and beauty of other animals. However, the English, consider dragon a strange and wicked animal partly because their analytical mind seems to be unfamiliar to anything that is not concrete or touchable. In Western mythologies, in this case, in English folk tales, where the dragon is described as a monster, a devil and cruelty. It is a common knowledge that the Bible portrayed dragons in a very negative way, equally with Satan. In English speaking countries when you entitle a woman as a dragon, you imply that she is fierce and dreadful.

However, it is not all the cases that the attitude of English and Vietnamese are always different. When living and working with the animals, human beings have the same feelings towards some certain animals. "Fox" would be a good example for this. Fox is supposed to be tricky by both Western and Eastern conception. "*Deal with a fox, think of his tricks*" such as the English saying goes, "*The fox changes his skin but not his habit*". Also, Vietnamese idiom has "*cáo mượn oai hùm.*" (*A fox wants to be a tiger.*)

4 Classification of idioms

4.1 Classification of idioms by Makkai

Makkai's classification of idioms is one of the most used but also the most complexed. Makkai classified idioms into two groups. They are known as lexemic and sememic idioms. He defends this argument saying that the idiom is basically a linguistic phenomenon that cannot be fully understood without a wider view of the language. Not united in meaning, unpredictable in the syntactic structure of the whole and thus misleading in speech, the idiom belongs to both the lexical system (if it is identifiable with the formal class) and the sememic, alternatively hypersemic system, if the magnitude corresponds to an independent sentence or a pronominal expression. (Makkai,1972:121)

4.1.1 Lexemic classification

Makkai explained a lexemic idiom quite complexly: *“Any polylexonic lexeme which is made up of more than one minimal free form or word (as defined by morphotactic criteria) each lexon of which can occur in other environments as the realization of a monolexonic lexeme is a Lexemic idiom”*. Lexemic idiom differs from other lexems in that they are *“subject to a possible lack of understanding despite familiarity with the meaning of the components, or to erroneous decoding: They can potentially mislead the uninformed listener or they can disinform him.”* (Makkai,1972: 122)

Simply said, lexemic idioms are idioms, which meaning cannot be deduced from the mere translation of the individual parts, and therefore, to their correct interpretation, we need a wider knowledge of the language.

Makkai (1972: 135-169) divides lexemic idioms into these categories:

- ◆ “Phrasal Verbs – “the structure of this type of idioms is always verb + adverb” (Makkai, 1972:135)
- ◆ Tournure Idioms – consist at least of three lexemes, having a compulsory *it* in a fixed position between the verb and the adverb (Makkai, 1972: 148)
- ◆ Irreversible Binomial Idioms - defined as “a formula consisting of parts A and B the order of which cannot be reversed” (Makkai, 1975: 155)
- ◆ Phrasal Compound Idioms - compounds which refer to a specific, generally known object, using common nouns (e.g. *darkroom*)
- ◆ Incorporating Verb Idioms - the first element is either a noun or an adjective which is attached to a verb (e.g. *to manhandle*) (Makkai, 168)
- ◆ Pseudo-Idioms - all lexemic idioms one of whose constituents is a fixed term that does not make any sense on its own, such as *spic and span*. (Makkai, 123)

4.1.2 *Sememic classification*

A polylexemic construction whose aggregate literal meaning derived from its constituent lexemes functions additionally as the realization of an unpredictable sememic network is a sememic idiom. This complex, unpredictable sememic network can be expressed on the level of denotation, leaving connotation, suggestiveness and the like side, by the shortest standardized auto glottic paraphrase of the construction in the question. (Makkai, 1972: 128)

Makkai classifies sememic idioms into these categories (Makkai, 1972: 172)

- ◆ Proverbs (Don't count your chicken before they hatched.)
- ◆ Famous quotes (Brevity is the soul of wit. – W. Shakespeare)
- ◆ 'First Base' Idioms (May I....? I want to...)
- ◆ Idioms of Institutionalized Detachment or Indirectness (e.g. She seems to be late again.)
- ◆ Idioms of proposals of encoded as questions (e.g. Would you like to...?)
- ◆ Idioms of Institutionalized greeting (e.g. How do you do?)
- ◆ Idiomacity in institutionalized understatement (e.g. I wasn't too crazy about him.)
- ◆ Idiomacity in institutionalized Hyperbole (e.g. He won't even lift a finger.)

4.2 Classification of idioms by Čermák

A Czech linguist František Čermák defines idiomatic expression as “a set and at least two word combination of any word class with another one (or a combination of the same classes), which is characteristic of the fact that (at least) one of its members is within the given meaning and context only able to be collocated with other words in the text extremely limitedly or not at all, thus it is restricted within this meaning or function on the given combination only.” (*ustálená a minimálně dvouslovná kombinace libovolného slovního druhu s jiným (případně kombinace stejných slovních druhů), která je příznačná tím, že (aspoň) jeden její člen je schopen se v daném významu a funkci spojovat s jinými slovy v textu jen krajně omezeně, popř. vůbec ne; je tedy v tomto významu či funkci omezený pouze na tuto kombinaci.*) (Čermák, 1983:14)

In his work Čermák divides idiomatic expression in two types. The first is called *frazém*. It is characterized by its anomalous collocability from the formal point of view. The other one, *idiom*, is characterized by its anomalous collocability from the semantic and functional point of view.

4.3 Semantic classification

Regarding how problematic it is to define an idiom; most linguists prefer to describe them through an idiomatic range from at least to the most idiomatic expressions according to semantic criteria. On one side of this scale are opaque idioms, i.e. idioms whose significance cannot be estimated (e.g. kick the bucket). The scale then closes so-called transparent idioms, the meaning of which can be deduced

(e.g. spill the beans). There are countless others between these two contradictory possibilities, for which the linguists cannot reconcile the transparency of individual idioms.

4.4 Classification by Yorio

Yorio came up with his classification in 1989. This classification belongs to the less complicated.

He divided into these classes:

- ◆ Transparent, which are not idioms (e.g. your face looks familiar)
- ◆ Semi-transparent idioms or phrases (e.g. shake hands, skyscraper)
- ◆ Figurative idioms (e.g. catch fire)
- ◆ Opaque (e.g. pop the question)

4.5 Classification by Fernando and Flawell

Classification of these two linguists was made in 1981 and has similar features with Yorio's classification. Just one class is missing.

- ◆ Transparent (e.g. add fuel to the fire)
- ◆ Semi-transparent (e.g. skate on a thin ice)
- ◆ Opaque (e.g. pull someone's leg)

4.6 *Classification by Howarth*

Another classification I have chosen for my work is Howarth's classification, which was mentioned in his book *Phraseology and Second Language Proficiency*, created in 1998.

- ◆ Free collocations (e.g. under the table)
- ◆ Restricted collocations (e.g. under attack)
- ◆ Pure idioms (e.g. under the weather)

4.7 *Classification by Cowie, Mackin and McCaig*

These linguists have done the most complicated and numerous classifications of idioms in 1983/1993. This classification also includes collocation, which is a steady connection of words that are related not only grammatically but also semantically.

In the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English* written by Cowie, Mackin and McCaig, the authors mentioned in introductory chapter this division of idioms (Cowie, 1985: xii-xiii) :

- ◆ Open collocations (e.g. in the raw)
- ◆ Pure idioms (e.g. in a nutshell)
- ◆ Restricted collocations/Semi-idioms (e.g. a blind alley)
- ◆ Figurative idioms (e.g. hit the jackpot)

4.8 Structural classification

Idioms can also be divided into several groups based of their structure. This classification was constructed by Seidl.

Seidl mentioned in her book *English idioms*:

“Idioms take many different forms or structures. An idiom can have a regular structure, an irregular or even a grammatically incorrect structure. The clarity of meaning is not dependent on “the grammatical correctness.””(Seidl, 1988:13)

Idioms are divided into three categories (Seidl, 1988:13)

- ◆ Irregular form with a clear meaning (e.g. do someone proud)
- ◆ Regular form with an unclear meaning (e.g. to have a bee in one’s bonnet)
- ◆ Irregular form with an unclear meaning (e.g. be at daggers drawn)

4.9 Syntactic classification

This classification classifies idioms according to their sentence structure. This means, that it is difficult to define the individual groups because the description of sentence elements is being implemented.

Cowie (1985: xi) differentiates two types of idioms by their syntactic structure. They are known as phrasal idioms and clause idioms.

Phrase idioms are divided into four different types (Cowie,1985: xi):

- ◆ Noun phrase (e.g. *a crashing bore*)
- ◆ Adjective phrase (e.g. *blind as bat*)
- ◆ Prepositional phrase (e.g. *in the nick of time*)
- ◆ Adverbial phrase (e.g. *as often as not*)

Clause idioms are divided into these following categories (Cowie,1985: xi):

- ◆ Verb + Complement (e.g. *go berserk*)
- ◆ Verb + Direct Object (e.g. *ease sb's mind*)
- ◆ Verb + Direct Object + Complement (e.g. *paint the town red*)
- ◆ Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object (e.g. *do sb credit*)
- ◆ Verb + Direct Object + Adjunct (e.g. *take sth amiss*)

5 The method of analysis

In the practical part I have used the methodology from Mgr. Jana Vokáčová PhDr. I came across this methodology during my research in diploma thesis written by Mgr. Jana Cuchá.

In her dissertation *Comparative Study of English, Czech, French, and German Idioms* Vokáčová evaluates idioms based on correspondence levels and arranges idioms into three primary classifications: *total correspondence*, *partial correspondence* and *non correspondence*. All the correspondence kinds mentioned above are additionally split into sub-categories.

Therefore, Vokáčová's classification of equivalence inspired me and only the main categories are used in this thesis. The fact, that the Vietnamese counterparts could not be classified into the same, specifically restricted sub-categories, was the cause for using only the principal categories. On the basis to the Vietnamese idioms I have categorized English idioms into a category of total correspondence category, partial correspondence or non correspondence.

5.1 Total Correspondence

Total correspondence means that idioms from one language are semantically, structurally, lexically and figuratively identical with the idioms from compared language. (Vokáčová, 2008:59)

Furthermore, the compared idioms should have same stylistic and functional form in both languages. The meaning of compared idioms should also remain identical. As well as every component of the language in both languages is identical on the formal level. (Vokáčová, 2008: 62). For example:

Love is blind.	Tình yêu là mù quáng.	Láska je slepá.
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Additionally, Vokáčová differs 100% correspondence and overall correspondence.

In the practical part I only addressed the semantic level in comparison to Vokáčová. The stylistic level of idioms is not included, as this element does not form part of this thesis.

5.2 *Partial Correspondence*

Idioms in the partial correspondence category must have to some extent a certain correspondence level. The meaning of compared idioms remains, nonetheless *“the lexical means used for their formation differs.”* (Vokáčová 2008: 64).

Work like a horse.	Làm việc như trâu.	Dřít jako kůň.
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For example, in Vietnamese idiom *“làm việc như trâu”* **Trâu** means buffalo, however, meaning still remains the same in all three languages – to work hard.

Besides, Vokáčová (2008:64-67) also includes sections of partial correspondence:

- ◆ Expressiveness versus neutrality
- ◆ Using lexically different words but keeping the semantic meaning
- ◆ Using a different lexical means for one element of the idiom
- ◆ Using hypernyms or hyponyms
- ◆ Idioms possessing different number of lexical expressions
- ◆ Grammatically different idioms
- ◆ The whole idiom is expressed with different lexical means

5.3 Non Correspondence

Category of non correspondence is the very last type of correspondence. Non correspondence is an extensive class in terms of the massive number of idioms related to this type. (Vokáčová, 2008:67)

Vokáčová says that non correspondence idioms have no equal correspondent including idioms “*expressed non-idiomatically.*” (Vokáčová 2008:67)

6 Analysis of idioms

In the practical part of my bachelor thesis I will deal with analysis of English and Vietnamese idioms with equivalent meaning. I tried to match an English idiom to the Vietnamese idiomatic expressions. For every Vietnamese idiom there is literal translation for better understanding. Many Vietnamese idioms have no adequate equivalent or even no translation. In these cases, I tried to find an adequate way of translation for particular idiom variants. Furthermore, the chapters are divided according to the degree of equivalence.

While working on the practical part of my thesis I used these sources

- ◆ *LONG, T. H. Longman Dictionary of English Idioms. Harlow: Longman.1979.*
- ◆ *NGUYEN, Cừ. Giải Nghĩa Tục Ngữ Việt Nam.2012.*
- ◆ *NGUYEN,Lân. Từ điển thành ngữ và tục ngữ Việt Nam. 2010.*
- ◆ *SIEFRING, J. Oxford Dictionary of idioms. Oxford University Press. 2004.*
- ◆ *TRAN, Ngọc Dung. English Idioms- Thành ngữ tiếng Anh.2013.*
- ◆ WALTER, Elizabeth, ed. Cambridge international dictionary of idioms. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- ◆ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-vietnamese/>
- ◆ *Native speakers of Vietnamese*

Longman Dictionary of English Idioms is a dictionary of more than 6000 idioms from spoken and written English.

The book of Nguyễn Cừ is a collection of Vietnamese idioms. All idioms are sorted alphabetically and divided into three different topics- family, nature (or landscape) and society. Every idiom has an explanation.

Từ điển thành ngữ và tục ngữ Việt Nam is a classic dictionary of idioms. All idioms are sorted alphabetically. To each idiom there is one explanation. The idioms are not thematically structured; therefore, you can find in the book phrases from different areas.

Idioms are explained and put into context in the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms*. The book takes a look at the idiomatic phrases and sayings of English.

The dictionary of Trần Ngọc Dụng is another classic dictionary of idioms. All idioms are alphabetically introduced according to the Vietnamese alphabet. Each idiom has a literal translation and an equivalent English idiom. In case there is no exact equivalent, the idiom is accompanied with a free English translation.

In addition, the internet sources were very useful, especially:
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-vietnamese/>

In order to find the Vietnamese idiomatic equivalents, it was necessary to check the form and usage of the particular idioms by consulting them with a Vietnamese native speaker.

The following idioms I chose because I intended to examine various phrases and have a wide- ranging knowledge of different areas of idioms. A total of 140 of English and Vietnamese idioms have been included that have been analyzed and classified into categories that show their correspondence.

6.1 Total correspondence

The compared idioms correspond on all three levels, i.e. on the semantic, lexical and formal (syntactic) level.

- ◆ Easy come, easy go
 - **viet.** Dễ được, dễ mất.
 - **literal translation:** Easily get, easily loose.
- ◆ Weep/ Shed a crocodile's tears
 - **viet.** Cháy nước mắt cá sấu.
 - **literal translation:** Shed a crocodile's tears.
- ◆ United we stand, divided we fall
 - **Viet.** Đoàn kết thì sống, chia rẽ thì chết.
 - **literal translation:** Together we live, separate we die.
- ◆ Love is blind
 - **viet.** Tình yêu là mù quáng.
 - **literal translation:** Love is blind.
- ◆ Fight like cat and dog
 - **viet.** Như chó với mèo.
 - **literal translation:** To be like cat and dog.
- ◆ Like father, like son
 - **viet.** Cha nào, con nấy.
 - **literal translation:** Like father, like son.

- ◆ Out of sight, out mind
 - **viet.** Xa mắt, cách long.
 - **literal translation:** Far from sight, far from mind.

- ◆ Be on cloud nine
 - **viet.** Bay bổng trên chín tầng mây.
 - **literal translation:** Fly high on cloud nine.

- ◆ You get what you pay for
 - **viet.** Tiền nào của nấy.
 - **literal translation:** You get what you pay for.

- ◆ Easier said than done
 - **viet.** Nói thì dễ làm thì khó.
 - **literal translation:** Easier said harder to do.

- ◆ Tit for that
 - **viet.** Ăn miếng trả miếng.
 - **literal translation:** Eat a piece, return a piece.

- ◆ The more the merrier
 - **viet.** Càng đông càng vui.
 - **literal translation:** The more the merrier.

- ◆ See the light at the end of the tunnel
 - **viet.** (Nhìn) Thấy ánh sáng cuối đường hầm.
 - **literal translation:** See the light at the end of the tunnel.

- ◆ Beat around the bush
 - **viet.** Nói gần nói xa chẳng qua nói thật.
 - **literal translation:** Beat around the bush.

- ◆ Don't judge a book by its cover
 - **viet.** Đừng đánh giá con người qua bề ngoài.
 - **literal translation:** Don't judge a book by its cover.
- ◆ Better late than never
 - **viet.** Thà trễ còn hơn không.
 - **literal translation:** Better late than never.
- ◆ Silence is golden
 - **viet.** Im lặng là vàng.
 - **literal translation:** Silence is golden.
- ◆ To be (all) in the same boat
 - **viet.** Cùng thuyền.
 - **literal translation:** To be in the same boat.
- ◆ To be a thorn in someone's eye
 - **viet.** Cái gai trong mắt ai.
 - **literal translation:** To be a thorn in someone's eye.

6.2 *Partial correspondence*

- ◆ Each bird loves to hear himself sing
 - **viet.** Mèo khen mèo dài đuôi.
 - **literal translation:** A cat compliments long-tailed cat.
- ◆ So many men, so many minds
 - **viet.** Chín người mười ý.
 - **literal translation:** Nine people, ten minds.

- ◆ Practice makes perfect
 - **viet.** Có công mài sắt có ngày nên kim.
 - **literal translation:** Having success in sharpening iron, now you have a needle.

- ◆ Tip of the iceberg
 - **viet.** Phần nổi của tảng băng chìm.
 - **literal translation:** Floating part of the iceberg.

- ◆ Be somebody's right hand man
 - **viet.** Cánh tay phải của ai.
 - **literal translation:** Somebody's right hand.

- ◆ First come, first serve
 - **viet.** Trâu chậm uống nước đục.
 - **literal translation:** The last buffalo drinks dirty water.

- ◆ Black sheep of the family
 - **viet.** Con sâu bỏ rầu nồi canh.
 - **literal translation:** The worm in a pot full of soup.

- ◆ It's raining cats and dogs
 - **viet.** Mưa như trút nước.
 - **literal translation:** Raining like pouring water.

- ◆ There's no peace for the wicked
 - **viet.** Có tật giật mình.
 - **literal translation:** Guilty man gets scared easily.

- ◆ Once in the blue moon
 - **viet.** Năm thì mười họa.
 - **literal translation:** Five times luck, ten times unluck.

- ◆ To live from hand to mouth
 - **viet.** Được đồng nào hay đồng đó.
 - **literal translation:** Get that coin or that one.

- ◆ Don't count your chicken before the hatch
 - **viet.** Nói trước bước không qua.
 - **literal translation:** Do not count on something that has not yet happened.

- ◆ To kill two birds with one stone
 - **viet.** Nhất cửa lưỡng tiện.
 - **literal translation:** One door many ways in.

- ◆ Work like a horse
 - **viet.** Làm việc như trâu.
 - **literal translation:** Work like buffalo.

6.3 *Non correspondence*

The English lexicon has numerous idioms which do not have the equal structure as their Vietnamese counterparts.

- ◆ To bury the hatchet
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Làm lành.
 - **literal translation:** Make it unite.

- ◆ To have one foot in the grave
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Sắp sang thế giới bên kia.
 - **literal translation:** Almost be in the other world.

- ◆ if you can't bite, never show your teeth
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Miệng hùm gan sứa.
 - **literal translation:** Teeth of the tiger liver of medusa.

- ◆ There's a will, there's a way
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Có chí, thì nên.
 - **literal translation:** Motivation is the key.

- ◆ Makes hay while the sun shines
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Việc hôm nay chớ để ngày mai.
 - **literal translation:** Don't delay what can you do today for tomorrow.

- ◆ The ends justify the means
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Mạnh vì gạo, bạo vì tiền.
 - **literal translation:** Stronger by rice, daring by money.

- ◆ Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Yêu nên tốt, ghét nên xấu.
 - **literal translation:** Love should be good, hate should be ugly.

- ◆ Every dog has its/ his day
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Ai giàu ba họ, ai khó ba đời.
 - **literal translation:** Who is rich now will have difficulties for three lifetimes.

- ◆ A storm in a teacup/ in a glass of water
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Việc bé xíu ra to.
 - **literal translation:** Small thing can become bigger.

- ◆ to go through fire and water
 - **possible Vietnamese equivalent:** Chịu đựng chia lửa.
 - **literal translation:** To endure the fire.

6.4 Vietnamese idioms with no English equivalent – Animal World

Not all idioms in Vietnamese can be expected to have their equivalents in English. Due to differences in two cultures, some ideas in one culture never exist in the other.

- ◆ Chó chê Mèo lắm lông
 - **meaning:** To be naïve.
 - **literal translation:** Dog criticises cat for lot of hair.
- ◆ Mèo già hóa Cáo
 - **meaning:** Somebody gets wise by time.
 - **literal translation:** The old cat turns into the fox.
- ◆ Mèo đàng chó điếm
 - **meaning:** Two people (often enemies) are left behind together, wandering and taking care of each other.
 - **literal translation:** Street cat, street dog.
- ◆ Chó treo, Mèo đậy
 - **meaning:** Hide something safely.
 - **literal translation:** Hang it in front of the dog, cover it in front of the cat.
- ◆ Có ăn nhạt mới thương tới mèo
 - **meaning:** To learn the truth/ to open your eyes.

- **literal translation:** Only when you start eating without salt, you start to feel sorry for cats.
- ◆ Mèo nhỏ bắt chuột nóc
 - **meaning:** Not to have excessive claims/Not to overestimate your abilities.
 - **literal translation:** Small cat catches small mice.
- ◆ Chó ăn đá, gà ăn sỏi
 - **meaning:** Poor village/ poor area.
 - **literal translation:** dog eats stone, poultry eats gravel.
- ◆ Chim sa Cá lặn
 - **meaning:** To admire a girl.
 - **literal translation:** Bird flies high up, the fish is sinking.
- ◆ Một con ngựa đau, cả tàu bỏ cỏ
 - **meaning:** Share feelings with someone, be a tight group.
 - **literal translation:** When one horse is hurt, the whole train (herd) of horses says no to grass.
- ◆ Ông nói Gà bà nói Vịt
 - **meaning:** Everyone talks about something else.
 - **literal translation:** Man says chicken, woman says duck.
- ◆ Con gà tốt mã vì lông
 - **meaning:** Clothes make the man.
 - **literal translation:** You can recognize a good chicken for its beautiful feather.

- ◆ Thay ngựa đổi chủ
 - **meaning:** Not loyal, betray friends.
 - **literal translation:** Change a horse, change the owner.

- ◆ Như ong vỡ tổ
 - **meaning:** Unorganized crowd, where everyone runs back and forth.
 - **literal translation:** Like a scattered swarm of bees.

- ◆ Ăn nhỏ nhẻ như mèo
 - **meaning:** Not eating much.
 - **literal translation:** To eat slow and less like a cat.

- ◆ Lên Voi xuống Chó
 - **meaning:** Sometimes in life you are up, sometimes down.
 - **literal translation:** Up on the elephant, down on the dog.

- ◆ Chó dại có mùa, người dại quanh năm
 - **meaning:** Someone remains insane for life.
 - **literal translation:** The dog is after the season insanae, the person is insane the whole year.

- ◆ Cống Rắn cắn Gà nhà
 - **meaning:** Act against your own interest.
 - **literal translation:** A snake bites a chicken.

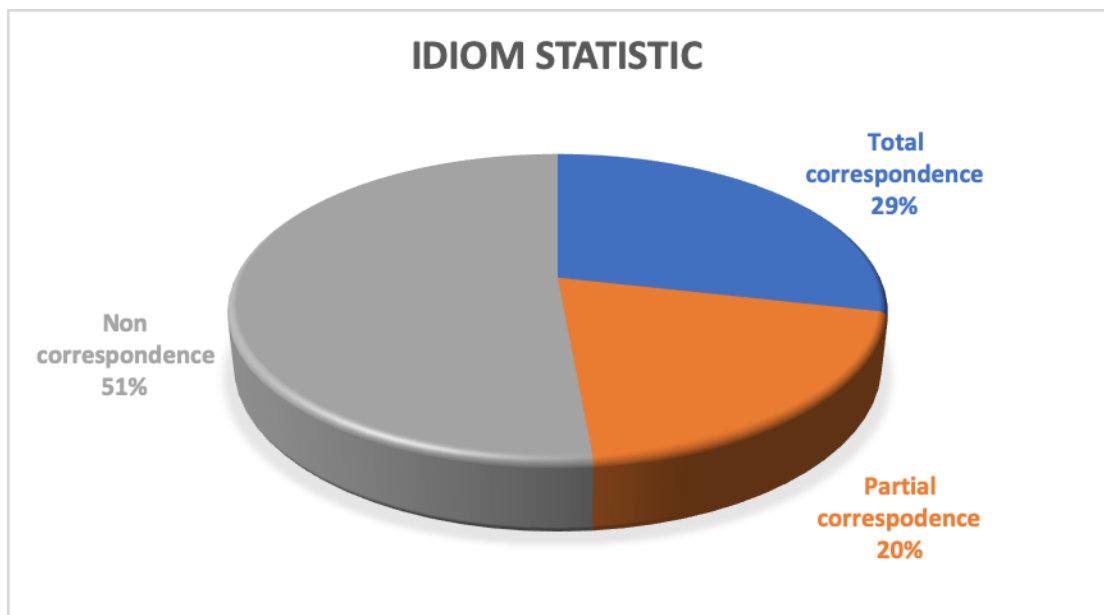
- ◆ Cá chậu Chim lồng
 - **meaning:** To be locked up at home.
 - **literal translation:** The fish in the bowl, the bird in the cage.

◆ Chườn chườn được mấყ hôt thit

- **meaning:** Someone that is weak and tries to fight someone stronger.
- **literal translation:** Dragonfly gets pieces of meat to eat.

6.5 *Statistic of idioms*

Data are evaluated and organized into pie chart to show the correspondence level. In this pie chart we can see the percentages of correspondence between Vietnamese and English idioms. The pie chart below shows that, the largest group is non correspondence. This is due to fact that England and Vietnam have different history, different customs and different religions. On the other hand, the least numerous group is partial correspondence.



Pie chart 1 - idiom statistic

7 Conclusion

In my thesis I dealt with comparative studies of idioms in English and Vietnamese language. The thesis consists of two parts – theoretical and practical. In theoretical part.

I focused on idioms from providing several definitions, explanations to grammatical divisions. I also briefly introduced the two languages - English and Vietnamese language. Idioms were further divided in various classifications, namely Makkai, Cermak, semantic, syntactic and structural.

In the practical part of my bachelor thesis I coped with analysis of English and Vietnamese idioms with equivalent meaning. I tried to match an English idiom to the Vietnamese idiomatic expressions. For every idiom there is literal translation for better understanding. As a result, many Vietnamese idioms have no adequate equivalent or even no translation.

Idioms not only belong to language but reflect the culture. In other words, they are considered the mirror reflecting the socio-cultural traditions in the most reliable way. They are very traditional and specific. Understanding them helps us know more about a nation and its people. Analyzing and comparing English and Vietnamese idioms basing on the cultural identities systems bring us a deeper comprehension of the two nations and their languages. We found not only the similarities but the interesting differences in the way idiom reflects socio-cultural life of the communities.

Both English and Vietnamese languages are rich in images and have a lot of proverbs and idioms. And among them, idioms and proverbs using the images of animals take a large portion. Both cultures share the same capabilities of thought, the same laws of cognition and a common, universal morality. Moreover, some animals have the same important role in people's lives in the two cultures and have the same attributes and features. Therefore, we have many similar proverbs and idioms related to animals, both in the form and in the message.

However, England and Vietnam have different history, different customs and different religions. They have different connotations of some animals in life. Those proverbs and idioms born from the historical fact, local custom or specific religion convey different messages though they use the same images of animals.

The difference between nomadic and agricultural cultures is the main reason for the differences in syntactic and semantic features between English idioms and Vietnamese ones. English idioms are analytical and based on specific observation whereas Vietnamese ones are expressive, have symmetrical structures and sometimes use exaggerated images. Cows, sheep, mules are familiar images in English idioms while buffaloes, birds and horses are easily found in Vietnamese ones.

These differences in the structure make Vietnamese idioms more poetic, more musical and easier to use in everyday life.

Proverbs and idioms are always outcomes of social, cultural, historical and political values. Despite the universal features, there still be distinct features that differentiate

one culture from another. Therefore, we can say that there are two types of proverbs and idioms: those with a common, universal morality, similar in most cultures, if not in the form, at least in the message; and those born from a historical fact, a local custom or a specific event in certain culture. They have their own identity signs which characterize the place or time of origin and are the distinct features of that culture.

ABBREVIATION

viet. - vietnamese

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