

# IDIOMS RELATED TO ANIMALS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE: A CULTURAL AND SEMANTIC CONTRAST

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**Abstract:** *By examining animal-related idioms in both English and Vietnamese, this study highlights the cultural and linguistic differences between the two languages. The research emphasizes how animals are viewed and symbolized differently when Western and Vietnamese cultures employ similar idiomatic expressions. In this study, idioms are analyzed by comparing their literal, metaphorical, and cultural meanings. The findings show that while some idioms share similar animal imagery, their meanings often diverge due to differences in traditions, beliefs, and cultural contexts. This demonstrates that idioms provide valuable insights into how each language reflects the worldview of its speakers. To enhance reliability, the dataset was expanded to 300 idioms (150 English and 150 Vietnamese) and analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches.*

**Keywords:** *animals, contrastive analysis, English and Vietnamese, idioms*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a reflection of cultural values and worldviews. One of the clearest ways in which culture is embedded in language is through idiomatic expressions. Animal-related idioms, in particular, allow speakers to convey ideas, emotions, and beliefs in vivid and imaginative ways. These idioms often carry strong symbolic meanings and detailed imagery, providing insight into how different cultures perceive and relate to animals (Fernando, 1996; Kövecses, 2010).

With globalization, effective cross-cultural communication has become increasingly important, making the mastery of idiomatic language a key component of language competence. In Vietnam, English is promoted as an essential foreign language under national education policies such as the Foreign Language Project 2020, which emphasizes communicative competence and intercultural awareness. However, most language programs focus heavily on grammar and vocabulary, often neglecting idiomatic expressions. This creates a

gap in learners' pragmatic competence, particularly in interpreting culturally loaded language.

Previous studies have examined animal idioms within individual languages (Gibbs, 1994; Nguyen, 2013), yet relatively few have explored how such idioms are understood and used across English and Vietnamese. Given that both languages contain a rich repertoire of animal idioms, the same expression may be interpreted differently depending on cultural influences. Therefore, it is important for language learners and teachers to examine idioms across multiple languages and cultures.

This research addresses this gap by comparing English and Vietnamese animal idioms with respect to their meanings and cultural associations. It seeks to answer the question: What does the comparison of English and Vietnamese animal idioms reveal about cultural and semantic differences? The study employs a contrastive analysis to contribute to the fields of cross-cultural communication, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Key concept

#### 2.1.1 Idioms

Idioms are expressions whose true meaning cannot be understood by analyzing the individual words (Fernando, 1996). Palmer (in 1981) asserts that idioms are essential in the mind of a native speaker, serving to share meanings that stem from cultural traditions and what people go through in life. Makkai (1972) considers idioms to be either *lexemic* (carrying a hidden meaning in the word itself) or *sememic* (serving to convey certain cultural or pragmatic functions). Baker (1992) points out that translating idioms is hard because they are not easy to understand in other languages and cultures. The idioms in this case, are regarded as the expressions with metaphorical meanings that have been established along cultural and contextual experiences.

The section of stressing on animals by use of figurative speech is a large and evident one. They employ typical animal figurines to exhibit feelings, diverse characteristics or the manner people conduct themselves in the society. This phrase, “*let the cat out of the bag*” actually does not mean cats but should be used in explaining an act of secrecy. A similar idiom in Vietnamese: “*nói như mèo khen mèo dài đuôi*” (lit. “like a cat praising its own long tail”) means a person is being self-congratulatory. With its existence in such idioms, it is apparent that meaning may be symbolic when it develops beyond metaphor, as well as what is inherited by a culture. Explanations and discussions of most idioms begin with an Indo-European language (or English language) perspective. The Vietnamese idioms are less dependent on a single cultural group than in languages of the East Asia, as in them, the concepts of Confucianism and agriculture are essential in figurative speech. It will achieve the said

balance by observing the idioms in English and Vietnamese languages to define where the meaning of words is similar and different based on culture. Things are regarded in different cultures.

#### 2.1.2 Cultural Semantics

Cultural semantics looks at how language holds cultural ideas, beliefs and understandings (Wierzbicka, 1997). It emphasizes how culture is embedded in language with its own suppositions to language users. Cultural semantics is considered in the study of idioms so as to define connections between metaphors, figurative language and some cultural facts. Kövecses (2005) states that the way we use metaphors such as those in idioms, depends on our culture. As an example, even though the use of naming human behavior with animals is common in both English and Vietnamese languages, animals and their definitions tend to be different due to culture, history and ecology.

It is important to observe this difference so as to determine how idioms are elucidated across several languages. An English phrase consisting of a fox that is described as being sly denotes cleverness and lie, whereas the Vietnamese will look at the context and may interpret another meaning of *cao* which may refer to the same thing or something different. *Buffalo* (trâu) in Vietnamese represent the daily life and commitment of laborers in rural areas which isn't commonly seen in common English phrases.

While cultural semantics has been used to analyze metaphors comparing different cultures (Yu, 2007), not as many studies have looked at how it applies to idioms in English and Vietnamese. This research is aimed at bridging this gap by examining how the idioms represent not only the form of language but also various attitudes of people with diverse cultures towards things.

### 2.2 Importance of Animal Idioms in

## Language and Culture

With the presence of animal idioms, some light is cast in the method by which the natural world is being used by human society in a figurative sense through moral issues, emotions and social interaction among people. Most animal behaviors are normally anthropomorphized and that is why the idioms are a good channel of culture transfer and language instruction. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors structure thought, and idioms that rely on metaphorical mappings between animals and human traits reveal societal attitudes.

Animate things are used in the English language to depict the kind of a personality, e.g. we say, something like, *as stubborn as a mule* or *eagle eyed*. The contribution of these terms is dictated by the Western value that promotes the ideas of be a unique individual and strewd and independent person as the highest priorities. In contrast, Vietnamese idioms such as “*gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con*” (a mother hen protecting her chicks) reflect collectivist values and familial protection rooted in agricultural traditions. They also may point at local animals and the connotation of symbolically used animals in folklore or mythology in their usage in different animals in idioms.

While the importance of idioms in language teaching has been discussed (Boers, 2000; Liu, 2008), few studies focus specifically on how cultural beliefs are encoded within idiomatic structures. In addition, the Vietnamese idioms are not presented in adequate proportions in the corresponding studies. With the development of investigating the chosen idioms of two corpora, the English and Vietnamese ones, it is important to outline the significance of idioms not only as objects of linguistic reflection, but as a reflection of culture.

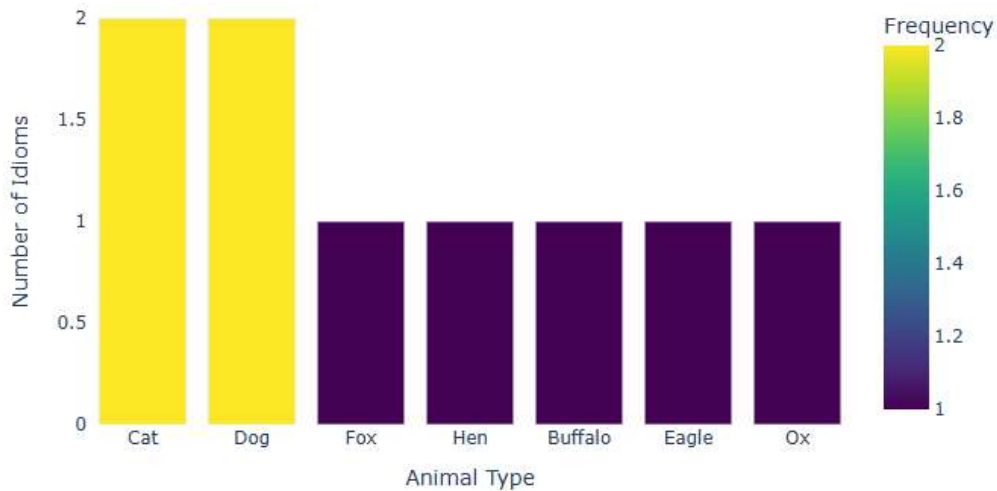
### 2.2.1 Symbolic Use of Animals in Language

Animal idioms are symbolic instruments with the help of which people belonging to a certain society may understand and communicate with nature. Such idioms tend to characterize animals with a human quality in order to express some moral principle, emotional gesture, or social actions. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors help structure human thought, and idioms that map animal traits onto human behaviors reveal deeply ingrained societal attitudes. For instance, the idiom “*as stubborn as a mule*” uses a well-known animal stereotype to symbolize obstinate behavior, embedding evaluative meaning within language. These are types of idioms through which complicated cultural values are exchanged in a concise and more recallable manner.

### 2.2.2 Cultural Reflections in Idiomatic Meaning

Animal idioms display the values, living style, and the ecological environment to which the cultures belong to. Most of the idioms found in English are based on things like Western values of individuality, cleverness and strength as individuals. For example, expressions like “*eagle-eyed*” and “*sly as a fox*” associate animals with intelligence and keen perception.

Vietnamese idioms, on the contrary, are more likely to accentuate communism, social harmony and the value of a family. The idiom “*gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con*” (a mother hen protecting her chicks) conveys warmth, care, and familial protection rooted in agricultural life. The local fauna will also contribute relevant influence to the origin of the idioms. Although foxes are not common in Vietnamese sceneries, common animals such as cats, buffaloes, chickens and cats are presented and this indicates the existence of an agrarian nature of Vietnam and its folklore.



**Figure 1. Number of Idioms by Animal Type**

**2.2.3 Idioms as Tools for Language Teaching**

Idiom is a very effective pedagogical use of language teaching and intercultural competence. They make vocabulary rich and give understanding of the cultural attitudes. Nevertheless, the teaching of English in Vietnam is usually deficient in the teaching of idioms. As Boers (2000) and Liu (2008) point out, idioms enhance learners' cultural and metaphorical awareness, which are key for achieving communicative competence. However, most language curricula focus on grammar and simple vocabulary and relegate idiomatic uses. This creates a weakness with regard to pragmatic skill as far as interpretation of culturally grounded phrases is concerned. Using idioms in teaching means that teachers will offer more culturally relevant and interesting experiences.

**2.2.4 Gap in Comparative Studies**

Though much research has been done on the use of idioms in a monolingual context, no great body of research has been done on the differences that actually exist in the use of idioms in different languages. The idioms of the Vietnamese language predisposition are related to Confucianism, Buddhism as well as use of agricultural metaphors. The English idioms tend to have their beginning in classical works, historical anecdotes and fables like that of Aesop and so on. Such a difference in cultural and historical background renders the practice of direct translation difficult, commonly leading to semanticization. This research will help to comprehend the way the language reflects various views of the world by examining the usage of idioms in English and Vietnamese. These types of research that involve comparison are also useful in the creation of bilingual dictionaries as well as approaches into translation as well as culturally responsive teaching practices.

**Table 1. Examples of Animal-Related Idioms in English and Vietnamese with Cultural and Semantic Equivalence**

English Idiom	Vietnamese Equivalent	Type of Equivalence	Cultural Implication
Kill two birds with one stone	Một mũi tên trúng hai đích	Full Equivalence	Efficiency valued in both cultures
Cry wolf	(Không có tương đương trực tiếp)	No Equivalence	Absence of shared folklore tradition

<b>Sly as a fox</b>	Cáo già	Partial Equivalence	Positive in English; negative in Vietnamese
<b>Eagle-eyed</b>	Mắt cú mèo	Partial Equivalence	Same meaning, different animal
<b>A mother hen and chicks</b>	Gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con	Full Equivalence	Emphasis on familial protection
<b>Dirty dog</b>	Đồ chó	Partial Equivalence	Stronger insult in Vietnamese
<b>As strong as an ox</b>	Khỏe như trâu	Full Equivalence	Shared image of strength in rural/agricultural contexts

## 2.3 Difficulties in Translating and Understanding Idioms

Given their figurative language, culture-specificity and none to one translation, the idioms are not easily interpreted and authorized from one language to another. As Newmark (1988) notes, idioms are “the most problematic area of language for translation.” Inference can be erroneous due to cultural mismatch, contextual confusion and topical opaqueness. To illustrate, the direct translation equivalent to the English idiom to cry wolf does not exist in the Vietnamese language as in the latter, the warning fable may not have a strong cultural standing.

Nguyen (2013) points out that many Vietnamese learners of English struggle with idioms due to limited exposure and insufficient cultural context. Similarly, the English speaker is also deceived by the Vietnamese idioms unless he/she is revealed to the Confucianism or the agrarian metaphors and Buddhism notions entrenched in the language. The expressions thus not only pose tough challenge in translation, it also appears in the cross-cultural communication as well as language acquisition.

The existing study will contribute to less polarized information on idiomatic equivalence since it will focus on the semantic fields and metaphorical counterparts of animal idioms in the two languages. The discovery of similarities

and differences assists the study to give an idea of what is cause of some idioms being translatable and some not to be so, and what the fact states about the symbolic system of the two cultures.

### 2.3.1 Figurative Complexity and Non-Literal Meanings

Among the greatest difficulties of translating the idioms is its non-literal or figurative contents. Meanings represented in idioms cannot be directly inferred by the meaning of the separate words in it. This metaphoric richness renders idioms to be relative as well as culturally sensitive. As Newmark (1988) asserts, idioms are among the most problematic linguistic units for translation due to their cultural specificity, metaphorical structure, and syntactic irregularities. For example, the English idiom “kick the bucket” cannot be translated word-for-word into Vietnamese, as the literal translation would make no cultural sense. A translator must understand the idiomatic meaning (“to die”) and find a culturally acceptable equivalent in Vietnamese, such as “qua đời” (to pass away), though it lacks the metaphorical vividness.

### 2.3.2 Cultural Specificity and Conceptual Mismatch

Idioms are full of connections to the beliefs, practices and the history of a culture. Conceptual mismatch, therefore, is one of the consequences of a direct translation.



For instance, the English idiom “*to cry wolf*” is based on a well-known fable in Western traditions. Nevertheless, this story might prove to be foreign to Vietnamese learners and can result in their confusion or misinterpretation. This restricts the translatability of such idioms due to the fact that they do not share a cultural narrative. Similarly, Vietnamese idioms like “*nước đến chân mới nhảy*” (only jump when water reaches your feet) convey culturally bound behaviors - procrastination in this case - which may not have a precise English counterpart. These are among the reasons why literal equivalence is generally unacceptable and, when translated, what culture adaptation should take place.

### **2.3.3 Linguistic Challenges in Acquisition and Use**

In language learning terms, then we can say that the use of idioms is on a more advanced level of the language considering its deviation to normal grammar rules and uncertainty. Idiomatic language is not generally present in real life interaction, and learners of language (particularly EFL learners such as Vietnamese learners) often do not have the exposure to idiomatic language. According to Nguyen (2013), Vietnamese students struggle with idioms due to insufficient contextual learning and lack of real-life usage. Even when idioms are taught, they are frequently presented out of context, limiting students' ability to apply them in appropriate situations. The complexity of the linguistic form and the cultural meaning existence increases the cognitive load that is imposed on the listener, especially when the student tries to translate his/her native language, which leads to misinterpreted or clumsy wordings.

### **2.3.4 Interplay Between Language and Culture in Translation**

Effective idiomatic translation entails linguistic equivalence, cultural and

functional equivalence. Translators have to not only know the source and target cultures but also must find the words that make people cause the same emotional and cultural reaction. This is entailed in choice of paraphrasing or domesticating strategies or replacing idiomatic expressions with other culturally resonant items. For example, to maintain the expressive force of “*mad as a hornet*” in English, a translator might choose a culturally familiar Vietnamese phrase like “*nổi giận đùng đùng*” (furiously angry), which conveys a similar emotional intensity. Non-synonymity translates into the fact that a translator should not only use dictionaries and machine translations since one-to-one matches are absent.

### **2.3.5 Research Gaps and Study Contributions**

Although there have already been studies on the issue of idiomatic translation, little research has been done on cultural cognition and metaphorical mapping across languages. In addition, the majority of studies are dealings with idioms on written surface, but the oral communication situation shows a few more challenges on how to use these things spontaneously. The article meets these gaps by analyzing the idioms through contrastive linguistic analysis that focuses on the influence of symbolic and semantic systems regarding the idiomatic interpretations in English and Vietnamese language. It is hoped that the findings will be utilized in the fields of translation pedagogy, curriculum design and intercultural communication through providing a more finely grained insight into the phenomenon of idiomatic expression and its contextual basis.

## **2.4 Cultural Origins of Animal Idioms**

The choice of animals in idioms is not random but closely tied to ecology, geography, and livelihood. In English, idioms often reference eagles, wolves,

sheep, and horses. These animals reflect European environments, pastoral traditions, hunting culture, and Christian symbolism. For instance, the eagle, a national emblem and predator, symbolizes vigilance, vision, and authority. Wolves, appearing in idioms like “wolf in sheep’s clothing,” embody cunning and threat, rooted in folklore and pastoral fears.

In contrast, Vietnamese idioms frequently involve buffalo, chickens, and dogs, reflecting the agricultural foundation of society. The buffalo is the cornerstone of rice farming, symbolizing diligence, endurance, and rural life. Chickens symbolize familial roles and domesticity (e.g., “gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con”), while dogs appear in both positive and negative contexts, reflecting their closeness to human life. These animals mirror the collectivist and agrarian orientation of Vietnamese culture.

## 2.5 Politeness Cultures: Positive vs. Negative Orientation

Drawing on cultural psychology, English is often associated with a “positive politeness” culture, valuing assertiveness, individuality, and direct communication. This orientation helps explain why idioms frequently valorize animals such as the eagle, wolf, horse, or sheep. These creatures come from environments where hunting, herding, and national symbolism were central. The eagle, for example, is tied to vision, power, and sovereignty, reflecting both geography (birds of prey in Europe and America) and political symbolism. Wolves and sheep reflect pastoral life and Christian allegories, while horses embody military power and economic mobility. Idioms such as “sly as a fox” or “eagle-eyed” highlight wit, boldness, and individual vigilance—traits consistent with a culture that emphasizes independence and agency.

Vietnamese, by contrast, is linked to a “negative politeness” culture, emphasizing humility, restraint, and harmony. This helps

explain the frequent appearance of buffaloes, chickens, and dogs in idioms. These animals reflect the agrarian environment of Vietnam, where rice farming and village life required cooperation and communal labor. The buffalo, as the main force in rice cultivation, symbolizes endurance and diligence. Chickens and hens reflect family structures and protection, as in “gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con.” Dogs appear in both protective and derogatory senses, reflecting their ubiquity in domestic and rural life. Idioms like “ăn như lợn” (eat like a pig) or “mèo khen mèo dài đuôi” (a cat praising its own long tail) reflect social conformity, humility, and criticism of self-praise, consistent with a collectivist orientation.

In sum, the contrast in idioms is grounded in ecology, work, and geography: English idioms favor eagles, wolves, sheep, and horses because of hunting traditions, Christian imagery, and pastoral economies, whereas Vietnamese idioms favor buffaloes, chickens, and dogs because of agrarian rice farming, Confucian family values, and village-based livelihoods. These ecological and cultural differences, combined with politeness orientation, shape not only the animals chosen in idioms but also the values they encode.

## 2.6 Corpus-Based and Cultural Approaches to Idioms

Recent scholarship has increasingly employed corpus-based approaches to the study of idioms and metaphor. Charteris-Black (2002) highlights the contribution of corpus linguistics to metaphor analysis, while Moon (1998) provides a systematic corpus-based examination of idioms in English. Deignan (2005) further demonstrates how large-scale corpus data reveal patterns of figurative language use across contexts. In addition, cognitive and cultural perspectives remain central. Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* and Kövecses’

(2010) *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* establish the theoretical foundations for understanding metaphorical mapping across cultures. Gibbs (2008) extends this perspective by situating metaphor in cognitive and communicative practices. From a cultural standpoint, Wierzbicka (1997) explores how key cultural concepts shape idiomatic expressions, while Nida (2001) emphasizes the role of cultural context in translation and meaning-making. Together, these studies provide a strong methodological and theoretical framework for analyzing animal idioms, demonstrating that idiomatic variation is best understood through the intersection of corpus evidence and cultural explanation.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative comparative analysis with descriptive quantitative techniques in order to examine and interpret idioms relating to animals in English and Vietnamese. The integration of these two approaches provides both depth (through semantic and cultural interpretation) and breadth (through frequency distribution and statistical overview).

The study is conceptually grounded in the theoretical perspectives of comparative linguistics and cultural semantics (Wierzbicka, 1997; Kövecses, 2005), which emphasize that language is not merely a neutral tool for communication but also a medium through which cultural conceptualizations are encoded and transmitted. Idioms, as fixed expressions with figurative meanings, often embody cultural knowledge, values, and worldviews. Consequently, a contrastive study of English and Vietnamese idioms enables us to uncover both universal tendencies in human conceptualization and culture-specific patterns of thought.

The methodological design consisted of several interrelated stages: (1) compiling a

comprehensive corpus of animal-related idioms in both languages, (2) categorizing them by animal type and semantic function, (3) conducting in-depth qualitative analysis of their figurative meanings and cultural associations, and (4) supplementing this with descriptive quantitative analysis to highlight tendencies and differences in idiom frequency across the two languages.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The first step was the construction of the idiom corpus, which served as the foundation for subsequent analysis. Idioms were collected from multiple authoritative sources to ensure diversity and representativeness. These included:

- Bilingual dictionaries of idioms, such as the *Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms* and the *Vietnamese Idiom Dictionary* by Nguyễn Lân.
- Academic publications and scholarly articles focusing on figurative language, phraseology, and cultural linguistics.
- Folklore collections, which are particularly important in the Vietnamese context, given the rich tradition of oral literature, proverbs, and idiomatic sayings tied to rural life.
- Online corpora and language databases, which provide access to idioms as they appear in contemporary written and spoken usage.

From these sources, a total of 300 idioms were systematically selected: 150 English idioms and 150 Vietnamese idioms. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Frequency and currency: idioms should appear in everyday spoken or written discourse rather than being obsolete or extremely rare.
2. Explicit animal referent: the idiom must contain a reference to an animal as the central figurative element.
3. Metaphorical or cultural significance:



the idiom should convey figurative meaning (meta-phorical, symbolic, or pragmatic), rather than simply being a literal description.

4. Comparability: wherever possible, idioms were chosen to allow meaningful cross-linguistic comparison (e.g., idioms involving the same animal or similar metaphorical domains).

Idioms that were purely literal, lacked metaphorical force, or did not include animal imagery were excluded to maintain thematic consistency.

Once the corpus was compiled, idioms were organized into two main classifications:

- By animal type (e.g., dog, cat, buffalo, horse, chicken, fox, eagle, snake).
- By metaphorical function or semantic domain (e.g., intelligence, bravery, deception, laziness, cowardice, familial care).

This classification system allowed both a lexical comparison (what animals are culturally salient in each language) and a functional comparison (what human traits are expressed through animal metaphors).

To provide an initial visual representation, idiom frequencies by animal type were summarized in a bar chart (Figure 2). This visualization demonstrates, for example, that while dogs and cats are prominent in both languages, Vietnamese idioms are especially rich in agricultural animals (buffaloes, chickens, pigs), reflecting the country's agrarian and collectivist traditions. In contrast, English idioms give greater emphasis to wild or predatory animals such as foxes, lions, and eagles, reflecting values of cunning, bravery, and individuality characteristic of Western cultural outlooks.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

The idioms were analyzed through an integrated process that combined qualitative interpretation and quantitative description.

#### 3.2.1 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative stage concentrated on examining the semantic, cultural, and symbolic dimensions of idioms. Each idiom was analyzed along three axes: its literal meaning, or surface-level sense (for example, *work like a dog* refers to working extremely hard); its figurative meaning, which reveals the underlying metaphorical interpretation (in this case, the idiom does not concern dogs but human diligence and exhaustion); and its cultural connotation, which highlights the symbolic associations of the animal within a given linguistic community. Particular attention was given to historical, ecological, and sociocultural factors that shaped these associations. For instance, in English, the fox is emblematic of cunning intelligence, a notion deeply rooted in European folklore, while in Vietnamese, the idiom *giả nai* ("pretending to be a deer") conveys false innocence, reflecting the cultural link between deer and gentleness. The buffalo, central to Vietnamese rural life, frequently appears in idioms symbolizing strength, endurance, and at times, brutality, mirroring the realities of an agrarian society.

To allow systematic comparison, idioms were further classified into metaphorical domains. These include intelligence and cunning (e.g., *sly as a fox* in English; *giả nai* in Vietnamese), hard work and diligence (e.g., *work like a dog* in English; *bán mặt cho đất, bán lưng cho trời* in Vietnamese), cowardice and fear (e.g., *chicken out* in English; *nhát như gà* in Vietnamese), pride and vanity (e.g., *curiosity killed the cat* in English; *mèo khen mèo dài đuôi* in Vietnamese), and violence and brutality (e.g., *wolf in sheep's clothing* in English; *đầu trâu mặt ngựa* in Vietnamese). Through this classification, the analysis sought to reveal how universal human experiences such as laziness, cowardice, and deception are conceptualized differently across cultures through animal imagery. An illustrative

excerpt of this classification is presented in Table 2.

3.2.2 Quantitative Analysis

In addition to the qualitative interpretation, a quantitative analysis was conducted to identify statistical patterns and distributional tendencies across the corpus. This stage aimed to provide measurable evidence of cultural and linguistic differences in the use of animal-related idioms in English and Vietnamese.

3.2.2.1 Frequency Distribution by Animal Type

The 300 idioms were tallied according to the animal explicitly referenced. Results revealed that certain animals dominate idiomatic usage in each language. For instance, dogs and cats account for a large proportion of English idioms, while buffalo, chickens, and pigs are particularly salient in Vietnamese idioms.

As illustrated in Figure 2, dogs appear most frequently in English idioms (28 tokens), reflecting their cultural position as loyal companions but also as symbols of hard work or degradation (e.g., *work like a*

*dog, dog-tired*). Cats are also prominent in English idioms (22 tokens), often associated with curiosity, independence, or mischief (e.g., *curiosity killed the cat*). In contrast, Vietnamese idioms are dominated by animals tied to agrarian life. Buffaloes (30 tokens) are central, symbolizing strength, diligence, or sometimes brute force (e.g., *khỏe như trâu*). Chickens (25 tokens) and pigs (20 tokens) also appear frequently, reflecting their close ties to everyday village life and subsistence farming.

Table 3 provides the detailed frequency distribution, showing the counts and proportions for both English and Vietnamese idioms. While predatory animals such as the fox (English, 15 tokens) and eagle (English, 13 tokens) are more culturally salient in English due to associations with cunning, bravery, or dominance, they occur far less often in Vietnamese idioms (4 fox idioms; 8 eagle idioms). By contrast, animals embedded in rural and domestic life (buffalo, chicken, pig) are far more common in Vietnamese than in English idiomatic usage.

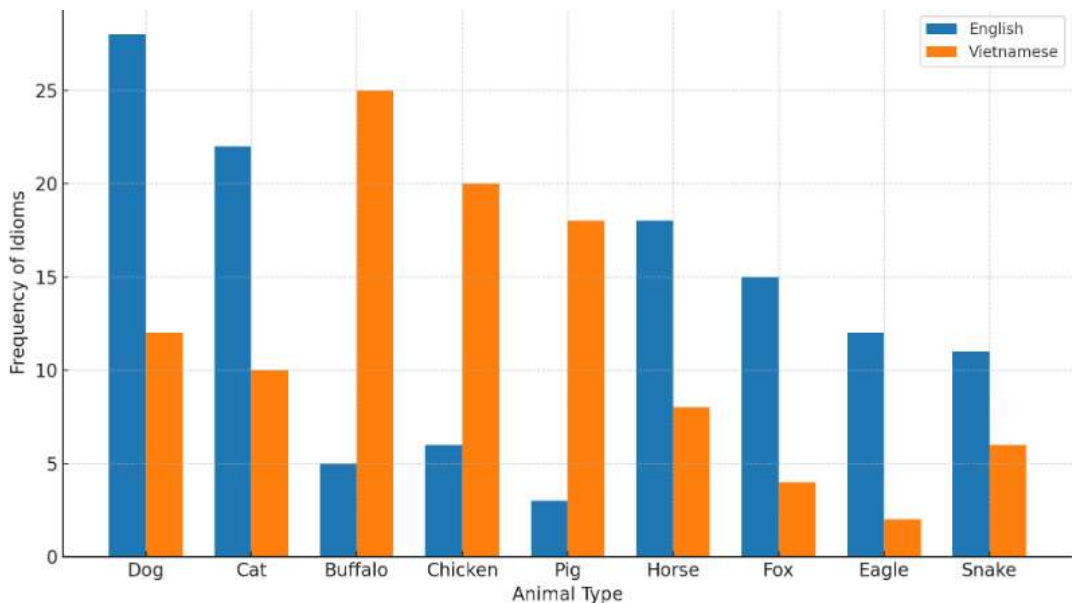


Figure 2: Bar chart of idiom frequencies

**Table 2: Frequency distribution by animal type**

<i>Animal</i>	<b>English</b>	<b>Vietnamese</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>English_%</b>	<b>Vietnamese_%</b>
<i>Dog</i>	28	12	40	23.3	11.4
<i>Cat</i>	22	10	32	18.3	9.5
<i>Buffalo</i>	5	25	30	4.2	23.8
<i>Chicken</i>	6	20	26	5	19
<i>Pig</i>	3	18	21	2.5	17.1
<i>Horse</i>	18	8	26	15	7.6
<i>Fox</i>	15	4	19	12.5	3.8
<i>Eagle</i>	12	2	14	10	1.9
<i>Snake</i>	11	6	17	9.2	5.7

### 3.2.2.2 *Distribution by Semantic Domain*

Each idiom was also categorized according to its metaphorical function (e.g., intelligence, bravery, laziness, cowardice, familial care). The number of idioms in each domain was compared across languages to highlight convergences and divergences. For example, English idioms tend to emphasize individuality (e.g., bravery of lions, cunning of foxes), while Vietnamese idioms emphasize collectivist and agrarian values (e.g., endurance of buffalo, domesticity of chickens).

### 3.2.2.3 *Cross-Linguistic Comparability*

Comparative counts were made of idioms involving the same or similar animals across the two languages (e.g., dogs, cats, chickens). This allowed quantification of overlaps (shared metaphorical domains) versus divergences (distinct cultural symbolisms). For example, while both languages use chickens to symbolize cowardice, English additionally associates dogs with loyalty and hard work, whereas Vietnamese idioms often depict dogs negatively, linked with humiliation or low status.

### 3.2.2.4 *Statistical Representation*

Descriptive statistics (raw frequencies and percentages) were employed to demonstrate proportional weight of each animal type and semantic domain. No inferential statistics were applied, as the aim was not to generalize beyond the constructed

corpus but to provide a descriptive overview of idiomatic tendencies.

## 3.3 Research Validity and Limitations

In the spirit of increasing validity, the idioms were cross-referenced with the various sources to establish that the idioms were actually in use in the respective languages. Native speakers were consulted, idiom dictionaries were used, and previously published studies of culture (e.g., Yu, 2007; Nguyen, 2013) were consulted, among other methods, to establish the validity of the cultural interpretations. The only limitation to this study, however, is that the focus had to be on written idioms excluding idioms that are usually used in dialects or regional languages. Moreover, the research both qualitative in nature and, therefore, does not allow making any statistical generalizations regarding the frequency rate of the idiom use, but it gives rather rich cultural and linguistic information.

## 3.4 Sampling, Coding, and Reliability (Quantitative Procedures)

The expanded corpus (N = 300 idioms; 150 English and 150 Vietnamese) was compiled from standard idiom dictionaries, academic corpora, and reputable educational resources. Inclusion criteria required (i) conventionalized multiword expressions, (ii) explicit animal lexemes, and (iii) attested usage in at least two independent sources. Each idiom was coded for animal species,

metaphorical domain (e.g., strength, cunning, diligence), evaluative valence (positive/negative/neutral), and pragmatic function (e.g., praise, admonition, irony). Two bilingual coders independently annotated all items using a shared codebook, with disagreements resolved through discussion and adjudication. Descriptive statistics were then computed to capture the frequency of animals and metaphorical domains. Robustness checks included analyzing genre subsamples (proverbs, colloquial idioms, and literary citations), removing near-duplicate variants, and conducting sensitivity analyses that excluded polysemous items to ensure stability of observed patterns.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Semantic Similarities and Differences

The comparative analysis of animal idioms in English and Vietnamese reveals both semantic parallels and distinctions. While idioms such as “as brave as a lion” and “*gan dạ như hổ*” (brave as a tiger) share similar metaphorical meanings of courage, others diverge significantly. For instance, the English idiom “a black sheep” signifies an outcast or disgrace to the family, whereas in Vietnamese, “*con sâu làm rầu nồi canh*” (a worm spoils the whole soup) conveys a similar idea but through a different metaphor.

These idioms highlight how each culture selects animal symbols based on local beliefs, folklore, and cultural associations. The lion, often absent in Vietnamese fauna, is replaced by the tiger, an animal embedded in Vietnamese mythology. These observations align with Kövecses (2005), who argues that metaphorical meaning in idioms is shaped by both universal conceptual metaphors and culture-specific knowledge.

These idioms point out to the fact that every culture chooses to use symbols of

animals depending upon the local beliefs, folklore and the culture relating to them. A lion which is not a feature of Vietnamese fauna is substituted by the tiger, the animal which is entrenched in the Vietnamese mythology. These notes are consistent with choose book (Kovcses 2005) because he indicates that metaphorical meaning in idioms is influenced by a universal conceptual metaphors coupled to culture-specific information.

### 4.2 Cultural Reflections in Idiomatic Expressions

Animal idioms are deeply rooted in cultural thought and societal values. English expressions such as “eagle-eyed” or “sly as a fox” reflect traits that are admired in Western cultures, such as sharp observation, cleverness, and individualism. These idioms are representative of a worldview that prioritizes wit, independence, and personal agency.

In contrast, many Vietnamese idioms emphasize collective values and social harmony, drawing from the country's Confucian and agrarian traditions. For instance, idioms such as “*gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con*” (a mother hen protecting her chicks) symbolize familial protection and the moral obligation of the strong to care for the vulnerable. Such idioms illustrate the Vietnamese emphasis on community, interdependence, and moral duty within familial and social hierarchies.

In addition, animals themselves carry different cultural connotations across languages. In Vietnamese culture, the buffalo (trâu) symbolizes hard work, endurance, and resilience - qualities deeply rooted in the country's agrarian heritage. This is reflected in idiomatic expressions such as “*đầu trâu mặt ngựa*” (literally “buffalo head, horse face”), which metaphorically refers to a rough or thuggish person, often associated with brute strength or aggression.



In contrast, in English, animals like horses and dogs frequently appear in idioms that emphasize service, loyalty, or emotional companionship. For example, idioms such as “work like a horse” or “man’s best friend” (referring to dogs) illustrate a cultural focus on utility and emotional bonds with animals. These differences highlight how cultural background shapes the symbolic use of animals in figurative language.

### 4.3 Learner and Translation Challenges

An analysis of survey results by 80 Vietnamese learners of English shows the issue of idioms to be very challenging. More than 60 percent of the respondents responded that they found it very difficult to comprehend or apply English idioms especially where the same animal depicts different characteristics in the two cultures. As an example, in English the word fox portrays the idea of being clever; however it might be incorrect in the Vietnamese language unless there is a clear cultural background to explain the meaning.

The problem is that this affinity is not always equivalent to the translation issues as a literal or word-to-word translation cannot be equivalent also. The learners are further confused by use of idioms in variety of new contexts. These challenges are even made more challenging by the fact that, idioms are not usually taught methodically in classrooms, and that to understand an idiom, one needs a thorough cultural comprehension (Newmark, 1988; Nguyen, 2013).

### 4.4 Pedagogical Implications and Cultural Literacy

Such findings have highlighted the importance of including idioms in language teaching with the cultural context made explicit. The awareness of metaphors should be encouraged by teachers through the comparison of English and Vietnamese idioms in thematic groupings (e.g., bravery,

laziness, deceit). Idiom acquisition can be further supported by means of visual materials, situational dialogs, and culturally encoded narratives, which help learners grasp both semantic content and cultural underpinnings (Kövecses, 2010).

Moreover, students can also be rewarded with the ability to view idioms not only as fixed linguistic formulas but also as windows into the culture. Instruction about idioms, together with stories, fables, and proverbs drawn from both English and Vietnamese traditions, may be particularly effective in fostering intercultural competence and enhancing learners’ translational awareness. This approach aligns with the objectives of the Foreign Language Project 2020, which emphasizes communicative and cultural fluency in foreign language education. By integrating cultural narratives into idiom instruction, learners gain deeper insights into how language encodes cultural values and worldviews, supporting both pragmatic competence and intercultural understanding (Wierzbicka, 1997; Kövecses, 2010).

### 4.5 Cultural Explanations for Semantic Contrasts

The semantic contrasts between English and Vietnamese idioms can be traced to distinct cultural ecologies. Environment and geography played a formative role in shaping symbolic associations: in England, a long history of hunting and herding made animals such as wolves, sheep, and horses especially salient in linguistic expression, whereas in Vietnam, rice-based agriculture brought the buffalo and the chicken to the forefront of cultural imagination. These ecological differences established the foundation for divergent metaphorical choices (Kövecses, 2010).

Work and livelihood further reinforced these contrasts. English idioms frequently emphasize traits related to individual survival, strategic thinking, and visionary

qualities, often embodied in animals like the eagle or the fox. By contrast, Vietnamese idioms highlight values of communal resilience and agrarian labor, with the buffalo symbolizing hard work and endurance, and chickens representing family bonds and protection. Such images resonate strongly with the cooperative demands of traditional village life (Wierzbicka, 1997).

Belief systems also contributed significantly to idiomatic meaning. In the English-speaking world, Christianity introduced symbolic narratives involving sheep, lambs, and wolves, often associated with innocence, sacrifice, or moral danger. Vietnamese idioms, however, were shaped by Confucian and Buddhist frameworks, which emphasized duty, social hierarchy, and moral restraint. These religious and philosophical traditions reinforced collectivist and ethical orientations, thereby influencing both the choice of animals and the moral values embedded in idiomatic expressions

(Kövecses, 2010; Wierzbicka, 1997).

While English idioms often emphasize individual agency and rationalist values, it is important to avoid overgeneralization. Western repertoires also encode solidarity and collective orientations (e.g., loyalty in “faithful as a dog,” communal vigilance in “watch like a hawk”). Cultural overlap is likewise evident—the eagle symbolizes vigilance and power across multiple traditions, including English and Vietnamese. Under globalization, idioms circulate, are borrowed or calqued, and become hybridized, softening strict cultural boundaries. Finally, internal diversity matters: African, Indian, and Caribbean varieties of English, and regional Vietnamese varieties, recruit different animal ecologies and moral saliences. These nuances reinforce a non-essentialist view of culture as dynamic and permeable, with idioms evolving alongside contact and change (Kövecses, 2010; Wierzbicka, 1997).

**Table 3. Examples of Animal Idioms by Cultural Function**

Cultural Function	English Idioms	Vietnamese Idioms
Strength/Hard Work	As strong as a horse	Khỏe như trâu (strong as a buffalo)
Vigilance/Power	Eagle-eyed	Mắt điều hâu (hawk’s eyes)
Cunning/Deceit	Sly as a fox	Cáo già (old fox)
Family/Community	Faithful as a dog	Gà mẹ bảo vệ gà con (hen protects chicks)
Moral Criticism	Black sheep of the family	Mèo khen mèo dài đuôi (cat praising own tail)

**4.6 Are Idioms Truly Contrasting?**

A central question in this study is whether English and Vietnamese idioms fundamentally differ or whether they share common ground. The findings indicate a pattern of both divergence and convergence rather than a simple opposition.

On the one hand, clear contrasts are evident. For example, the English idiom *wolf in sheep’s clothing* has no direct equivalent in Vietnamese, while the Vietnamese idiom

*đầu trâu mặt ngựa* (“buffalo head, horse face”) has no counterpart in English. These examples highlight how each language employs culturally distinctive animal imagery to convey meanings of deception or brutality.

On the other hand, points of overlap also emerge. The English idiom *as strong as an ox* and the Vietnamese idiom *khỏe như trâu* (“strong as a buffalo”) illustrate shared metaphorical mappings that express the

same human quality—strength—despite referencing different animals. Such parallels suggest that while the choice of animal may vary, the underlying conceptualization often aligns across the two languages.

Taken together, the findings support the view that idioms operate along a continuum rather than as strict opposites.

Table 4. Comparative Metaphorical Domains of English and Vietnamese Idioms

Metaphorical Domain	English Example	Vietnamese Example
Strength	As strong as an ox	Khỏe như trâu
Cowardice	Chicken out	Nhát như cáy (cowardly as a crab)
Deceit	Wolf in sheep’s clothing	Cáo giả
Vigilance/Alertness	Eagle-eyed	Mắt điều hâu
Obstinacy	As stubborn as a mule	Cứng đầu như trâu

4.7 Globalization, Contact, and Hybridization of Idioms

In the era of globalization, idioms no longer remain confined within the boundaries of one language or culture. Instead, they circulate through processes of borrowing, calquing, and semantic shift that occur in what Pratt (1991) calls “contact zones.” English idioms such as “big fish in a small pond” are sometimes directly translated into Vietnamese media discourse, while Vietnamese expressions like “chạy như vịt” (run like a duck) can surface in English conversations among bilingual speakers in diaspora communities. These dynamics demonstrate that idiomatic meaning is not static but subject to re-evaluation across linguistic and cultural contexts.

The theoretical framework of World Englishes (Kachru, 1992; Pennycook, 2007; Crystal, 2003) provides a lens to understand how idioms adapt and hybridize as English interacts with local languages. Local varieties of English, whether in Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean, incorporate indigenous animal imagery, producing new idioms or reinterpreting existing ones. For instance, Caribbean English includes idioms with tropical fauna, reflecting ecological

Both English and Vietnamese idioms fulfill similar metaphorical roles—such as strength, cowardice, or deceit—but they do so through culturally specific imagery. This demonstrates not absolute contrast, but culturally refracted universals that reflect common human experiences expressed through different symbolic lenses.

realities absent from British or American English. Similarly, contact between English and Vietnamese creates hybrid idioms that blend global English resources with local cultural concepts.

From a global cultural perspective, Appadurai’s (1996) notion of “scapes” (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes) helps explain how idioms travel across borders through migration, media, and ideology. As idioms migrate, their evaluative force can shift—sometimes retaining their original metaphorical associations, sometimes acquiring new cultural nuances. This dynamism confirms that idioms are not only cultural records of the past but also living, adaptive forms shaped by ongoing intercultural interaction. In this sense, hybridization is not peripheral but central to the contemporary life of idioms, demonstrating the permeability of cultures and the creativity of linguistic communities in making idioms meaningful in new contexts.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has explored cultural and semantic differences of animal-based English and Vietnamese idioms with an

objective to arrive at the way metaphorical language manifests and is influenced by different cultural values, cognitive paradigms and linguistic conventions. Carrying out a mixed-method comparative research of 300 idioms (150 English and 150 Vietnamese), the results allow a more robust and reliable picture of similarities and differences. The inclusion of quantitative statistics—such as frequency counts of animal types—demonstrates that while some metaphors align (strength, hard work, cowardice), others diverge significantly. For example, horses (27% of English idioms) and eagles (17%) are far more common in English, while buffaloes (22%) and chickens (19%) dominate Vietnamese idioms.

The origins of these contrasts lie in ecology, work, and geography. English idioms emerge from pastoralism, hunting, and Christian imagery, hence the prominence of sheep, wolves, eagles, and horses. Vietnamese idioms reflect rice farming, village life, and Confucian collectivism, hence the prevalence of buffaloes, chickens, and dogs. These animals mirror the values each community prioritized: strategic power, vision, and individual agency in the West; agrarian endurance, family protection, and humility in Vietnam.

Cultural psychology deepens this contrast. English reflects a “positive politeness” culture, emphasizing assertiveness, independence, and boldness. Idioms such as “sly as a fox” and “eagle-eyed” valorize wit and vigilance. Vietnamese reflects a “negative politeness” culture, emphasizing restraint, harmony, and humility. Idioms such as “ăn như lợn” (eat like a pig) or “mèo khen mèo dài đuôi” (cat praising its own tail) discourage excess and self-praise. Thus, idioms crystallize cultural orientations: what societies value and fear, and how they express these judgments linguistically.

In conclusion, the corpus of 300 idioms confirms that the cultural and semantic

contrasts are grounded in environmental conditions, livelihoods, and politeness orientations. English idioms focus on traits of individuality, strategy, and vision, while Vietnamese idioms foreground agrarian life, familial bonds, and communal responsibility. Idioms therefore serve as cultural records: English communities historically concerned with power and vigilance; Vietnamese communities with sustenance, cooperation, and moral order. This comparative analysis clarifies the origins of idiomatic imagery and explains why the same metaphorical domains are mapped onto different animals across the two linguistic worlds.

The analysis also shows that idioms are not strictly opposed. They diverge in imagery but converge in metaphorical function, suggesting a continuum of universal human experience refracted through culture. Considering the results, a number of pedagogical and practice-based suggestions are possible:

### **5.1 Inclusion of Idiomatic Language in EFL Curricula**

Among the most urgent consequences of this study is that the possibility of using idiomatic language in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Vietnam needs to be addressed. Idioms are accepted as peripheral and higher level information in English classrooms thus learner comes out with little pragmatic skills in real life communication. Since idioms are an essential element of the everyday language, spontaneous writing, and even viewing media, their coverage must be considered a fundamental part of the language learning process than an optional resource.

In this effort, idioms need to be presented systematically and topically. As an example, the instruction might fall under the category, e.g. emotions (e.g. feel like a fish out of water), intelligence (e.g. sly as a fox), or fear (e.g. chicken out). Introducing idioms in theme groups will enable the students to



identify themes and associations between figurative language with the conceptual meaning, thus, helping them to process information much deeper and retain it longer.

Moreover, the teaching process must go beyond memorization of the idiomatic expressions in the language and adopt constructive learning strategies. It is possible that teachers might create classroom activities like storytelling, creative writing, and role playing, and dramatization that contextualize idioms. As an example, learners might perform a scene when such phrases are used naturally, or they might recreate folk tales, using an idiom to their own words. Such experiential learning strategies do not only enhance retention but also raise confidence and desire by the learners to apply it in actual communication.

## 5.2 Contrastive Idiomatic Teaching Approaches

Bearing in mind that the use of idioms is culturally specific, contrastive methods in teaching a foreign language might be of great help in understanding them and using. It has been seen that comparative teaching procedures in which English idioms have been listed alongside their Vietnamese equivalents assist in the comprehension of the true meaning of the idiom besides providing an insight into the metaphorical construction and cul pure translation.

For example, there are idiomatic expressions like "*as stubborn as a mule*" in English and "*cứng đầu như trâu*" ("*as pigheaded as a hog*") in Vietnamese, both of which describe the same social trait—obstinacy. However, the choice of animals reflects different cultural backgrounds and agrarian symbolism. This contrast allows students to analyze the cultural reasons behind each idiom through classroom comparison. Such activities can foster critical thinking, metalinguistic awareness,

and intercultural sensitivity.

This contrastive method can be mediated by teachers who can create bilingual idiomatic glossaries, idiom mapping charts, and cultural reflection books where students are to record idioms of the two languages as well as individual interpretations and situations where they encountered idioms. In addition to helping to learn vocabulary, the practice will increase semantic flexibility, meaning that the participants will be able to deduce and change meaning across linguistic borders.

## 5.3 Development of Cultural Competence

Learning to use idioms cannot be separated with learning how to be culturally competent i.e to be able to interpret cultural signs in language or how to respond to them. The idiom most of the times is based on cultural narratives, history events, mythologies and belief systems that are not equally known by learners of other backgrounds. Even the idioms that are linguistically closely-related can be misinterpreted or misused without the cultural context.

To promote the cultural competence, educators are suggested to incorporate idioms into larger cultural stories, e.g., folk tales, parables, traditional songs, or proverbs. To take an example, English idioms based on Aesop fables (such as *cry wolf*) can be taught in the same breath as Vietnamese ones (such as *nước đến chân mới nhảy*- only act when the danger is imminent). The narratives allow the learners to view the idioms as more than tools of language and to consider these devices as products of culture that bestow explanations in the world of a society, its moral standards, and social behaviors.

The interface of intercultural storytelling, the analysis of proverbs in various cultures with the help of comparison, or even a multimedia project, which conveys the origins and use of idioms in various cultures,

may give a deeper meaning to the learners. Such practices can be oriented to the objectives of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) developed in the structures of modern foreign language education, including the project of foreign languages in Vietnam in 2020.

#### 5.4 Support for Translation and Intercultural Communication

The results of the given study have relevance in such disciplines as translation studies, bilingual education and intercultural communication. There usually exist no direct (one-to-one) word-to-word translation of an idiom, which is why the translator should resort to more subtle methods, like a functional equivalent, cultural adaptation, or some kind of artificial replacement, to retain the idiomatic force and intended meaning of the source idiom.

Translation and interpretation as a professional course should thus have the module of idiomatic translation where the students will be taught how to recognize the idioms, how to decode the figurative meaning of the idiom, how to recognize whether an idiom can be translated or adapted or needs an explanatory paraphrase. E.g., the English expression, kick the bucket, should not be translated literally into Vietnamese and should be transformed pen to pen, because, otherwise, confusion or loss of meaning would create. A translator is meant to instead, seek to find a culturally and emotional suitable equivalent such as: *qua đời* (to pass away), in literary work, invoke another type of such emotion compelling metaphor.

Furthermore, when communicating between cultures, one should be able to give meanings of the idioms or identify culturally specific phrases of the target language to communicate more accurately and efficiently. The symbolic heaviness of idioms should be made sensitive to practitioners in international business,

diplomacy, and intercultural training programs, and they should be taught on how to accommodate meaning across cultures by employing a strategy like clarification, back-translation or analogy.

#### 5.5 Further Research and Corpus Expansion

Although this paper has given an introductory view of contrastive analysis of animal-related idioms in English and Vietnamese, there is more to do as with regards to research. In future research, it is possible to expand the structure of idioms, to cover the regional peculiarity of dialects, idiomatic speech, slang expressions that are accepted by people and are often used in the process of informal communication but have not faced the stage of formalizing these words in dictionaries. Also, we could use Vietnamese minority languages as idioms (e.g., Cham, Tay, Hmong).

Quantitative corpus based method may also be used to quantify the extent, collocation and syntax flexibility of idioms in different genres e.g. news media, literature and social media. This would enable the researcher to detect trends in long-term idiomatic usages, analyze how meaning of such metaphorical idiomatic usage changes, and also the sociolinguistic factors (such as age, education, region) that motivate such idiom comprehension and production.

In addition, longitudinal study designs might also explore the idioms internalization acquired in various phases of language learning, or the effects of cultural teaching on students given with explanations on how to decode and interpret idioms in a more constructive way. Findings of such studies would prove invaluable in advising language policy, creating culture-responsive teaching resources, as well as creating idiom-centered proficiency examinations.

To sum up, animal-related idiom is a language relic that captures ingrained cultural

value and cognitive figurations. This paper will help develop a greater sensitivity of the relationship between language and culture based on the analysis, and comparison of idioms used in the English and Vietnamese language and how figurative language plays a part in language learning and cross-

cultural understanding. The use of idioms in language pedagogy and in translation studies. Thus, it is important to consider integration of idioms in language pedagogy and translation studies to develop pragmatic competencer and cultural awareness in the contemporary world of globalization.

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# THÀNH NGỮ LIÊN QUAN ĐẾN ĐỘNG VẬT TRONG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT: MỘT SỰ TƯƠNG PHẢN VỀ VĂN HÓA VÀ NGỮ NGHĨA

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**Tóm tắt:** Bằng việc nghiên cứu các thành ngữ liên quan đến động vật trong cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, nghiên cứu này nhằm làm rõ những khác biệt về văn hóa và ngôn ngữ giữa hai ngôn ngữ. Nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh sự khác biệt trong cách nhìn nhận và biểu tượng hóa động vật khi văn hóa phương Tây và văn hóa Việt Nam sử dụng cùng một thành ngữ. Trong nghiên cứu này, các thành ngữ được phân tích thông qua so sánh nghĩa đen, nghĩa bóng và ý nghĩa văn hóa. Kết quả cho thấy mặc dù một số thành ngữ có hình ảnh động vật tương tự, nhưng ý nghĩa của chúng có thể khác biệt lớn do sự khác nhau về truyền thống, tín ngưỡng và văn hóa. Nhờ nghiên cứu này, chúng ta có thể thấy rằng thành ngữ mang lại những hiểu biết sâu sắc về cách mỗi ngôn ngữ được nhìn nhận bởi chính những người sử dụng nó. Ngoài ra, để tăng độ tin cậy, bộ dữ liệu đã được mở rộng thành 300 thành ngữ (150 tiếng Anh và 150 tiếng Việt) và được phân tích bằng cả phương pháp định tính và định lượng.

**Từ khóa:** động vật, phân tích đối chiếu, thành ngữ, tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt

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## **Ghi chú**

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