ĐÀO THANH TÚ

M.A. MINOR THESIS

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS CONTAINING THE WORD ‘DOG’ IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE
(NHỮNG THÀNH NGỮ CÓ TỪ ‘CHÓ’ TRỌNG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT)

Major: English Linguistics
Code: 60 22 15

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hoàng Văn Văn

Hanoi, 8/2007
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My study has been only completed successfully with the assistance and guidance of my teachers, my friends, and my relatives.

I would, first of all, like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof., Dr. Hoàng Văn Văn for his valuable suggestions, academic guidance, critical comments and practical advice on my study.

I am also grateful to all my teachers at the Post-graduate Studies, College of Foreign Languages, Vietnam National University. They have generously offered me useful lectures, much help, and encouragement. In addition, my thanks also go to my friends with their idea, material, and enthusiasm.

Last but by no mean least, I wish to acknowledge the support and invaluable help of my parents and my sister while the work was in progress.

Definitely, I will not able to do anything without their help.

Hanoi, August 2007
Dao Thanh Tu
A13D
ABSTRACT

In the English language, idioms are one of issues that have never been studied exhaustively. There are many interesting topics in this valuable treasure of the language, and the animal one is not an exception. Among the animals, I am only interested in dog, therefore, I would like to choose the humble thesis ‘Idiomatic Expressions Containing the Word ‘Dog’ in English and Vietnamese’ to study. My study consists of three parts: introduction, development and conclusion. Introduction introduces the rationale, the aims, the scope, the method as well as the design of the study. Development, the main part of the study, contains three chapters in which I represent the theoretical background, the ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese cultures and the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese. The theoretical background consists of the relationship between language and culture, the theories of the literal meanings and the idiomatic meanings, the idioms in relationship with proverbs and a brief view of the previous studies on idioms about animals in general and about the dog in particular. The ‘Dog’ in English and Vietnamese presents the literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese and some features of the people born in the Year of the Dog as well as the findings. The main part of the study is the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese focusing on the meanings of the English idioms containing the word ‘dog’ and a comparative analysis with Vietnamese ones. Conclusion contains the findings coming from the above comparative analysis.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .........................................................................................ii
ABSTRACT ...........................................................................................................iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................iii

INTRODUCTION ...............................................................................................1
1. Rationale .........................................................................................................1
2. Aims of the study ..........................................................................................2
3. Limitation of the study ..................................................................................2
4. Method of the study ......................................................................................2
5. Design of the study ......................................................................................3

DEVELOPMENT ...............................................................................................4
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND ....................................................4
1.1. The relationship between language and culture .......................................4
1.2. Literal meanings and idiomatic meanings ..............................................5
1.2.1. Literal meaning ....................................................................................5
1.2.2. Idiomatic meaning ..............................................................................6
1.2.2.1. Definition of idioms ........................................................................6
1.2.2.2. Classification of idioms ...................................................................7
1.2.2.3. Sources of idioms ..........................................................................8
1.2.2.4. Specific characteristics of idiomatic meanings ...............................8
1.3. Idioms versus proverbs ...........................................................................9
1.4. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ ..................................10
1.4.1. Previous studies on idioms about animals .........................................10
1.4.2. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ ..............................11
1.5. Summary ...................................................................................................11
CHAPTER 2: ‘DOG’ IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE ........................................... 12
  2.1. Literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in English ..................................................... 12
  2.2. Literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in Vietnamese .............................................. 13
  2.3. People born in the Year of the Dog ....................................................................... 15
  2.4. Findings .................................................................................................................... 16
  2.5. Summary .................................................................................................................. 16

CHAPTER 3: IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS CONTAINING THE WORD ‘DOG’ IN
ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE ...................................................................................... 17
  3.1. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ ................................................ 17
    3.1.1. Expressing good points ...................................................................................... 18
      3.1.1.1. The personal characters and status of people ........................................... 18
      3.1.1.2. Convenient conditions and good luck ................................................... 19
    3.1.2. Expressing bad points ...................................................................................... 20
      3.1.2.1. The personal characters and status of people ........................................... 20
      3.1.2.2. Inconvenient condition and bad luck ................................................... 22
    3.1.3. Expressing neutral points .............................................................................. 24
  3.2. A comparison with their Vietnamese ones ........................................................... 28
    3.2.1. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in Vietnamese ................. 29
    3.2.2. A comparative analysis with Vietnamese ones ............................................... 34
  3.3. Analysis .................................................................................................................... 37
  3.4. Summary .................................................................................................................. 39

CONCLUSION .............................................................................................................. 40
REFERENCES ............................................................................................................. 42
INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

Nowadays, English has been widely used in Vietnam. It is also a compulsory subject in many schools, colleges and universities. It is clear that people who want to master English should grasp its idiomatic expressions among other things.

Obviously, to master a language, people cannot help studying idioms, one of the most valuable treasures of the language. In daily communication, we can see the frequent appearance of idioms. Anyone who much concerns idioms owns a very attractive and academic manner of speaking. In written texts, as well, writers use many idioms. Studying English idioms in comparison with Vietnamese ones, we can find the similarities and differences, which, therefore, help learners of English to understand and have a better use of English idioms and Vietnamese ones.

Being interested in idioms for a long time, I choose idioms as my thesis topic. Due to the limited time and knowledge, I just focus on a very small part of the huge idiomatic treasure, ‘Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese’. With the aim of presenting an overview of idioms in general and idiomatic expressions concerning the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese in particular, I hope it will partly help learners and translators avoid difficulties in realizing and translating English idioms into Vietnamese and vice versa.

However, due to different language structures and cultural background, learners of English in Vietnam have to face many difficulties and among which ‘How to use English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ effectively, and find some appropriate Vietnamese ones’ is one of the most complicated.

In reality, learners seem to pay inadequate attention to idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ though they have a very early contact with them. As a result, they frequently fail to use them satisfactorily. I myself have also found that idiomatic expressions
containing the word ‘dog’ are complicated but very interesting and useful in both oral and written communication. Thus, I am eager for choosing the above thesis.

2. Aims of the study

The aims of my study are:
- To study idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English and compare with those in Vietnamese
- To establish the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese idioms containing the word ‘dog’
- To show the specific features of English and Vietnamese cultures about the dog lying behind the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese idioms containing the word ‘dog’.

3. Limitation of the study

Due to the limited time and space, I cannot cover all aspects of idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in this study. Thus, I just concentrate on the overview of English dog idioms and a comparison between English dog idioms and Vietnamese ones.

4. Method of the study

To achieve these aims, I have consulted many dictionaries and books of languages, idioms, metaphor, proverbs; magazines, newspapers, etc. in both English and Vietnamese in which whatever relating to idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ is taken into consideration. Then a comparative analysis is designed to point out the similarities or differences between English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ and Vietnamese ones.
5. **Design of the study**

Apart from Introduction and Conclusion, the study is organized around three chapters. The Introduction raises the issues, English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ and some appropriate Vietnamese ones’, in the thesis. Chapter 1 is concerned with the theoretical background for the study. It consists of the relationship between language and culture, the literal meanings and idiomatic meanings, the idioms versus proverbs and the short introduction of idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’.

Chapter 2 examines the meaning of the word ‘dog’ in English and its equivalent in Vietnamese. Chapter 3 compares idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English with those in Vietnamese. Therefore, we can find out the distinctive features of English and Vietnamese cultures about the ‘dog’ lying behind the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese idioms containing the word ‘dog’.

The Conclusion summaries the issues discussed in the thesis.
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. The relationship between language and culture

What is the relationship between language and culture? What role does culture play with language? In any culture or region, language is much more than semantics, much more than what the written page or the spoken word can contain. This especially becomes clear when studying a foreign language and learning the ways of a particular culture; for example, the use of introductions, salutations, everyday sayings, etc. This area in particular gives more weight to culture then to the words themselves. Anyone studying a foreign language has to be bicultural as well as bilingual to speak the new language in a way that it is not disparaging to the culture and its origin. Language does not end at the meaning or the use of words associated to a culture represents beliefs, history, and the culture of their origin and they must be used accordingly.

In other words, language is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways.

To begin with, the words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge about the world that other people share. Words also reflect their authors’ attitudes and beliefs, their points of view that are also those of others. In both cases, language expresses cultural reality.

Finally, language is a system of signs that is seen as having itself a cultural value. Speakers identify themselves and others through their use of language; they view their language as a symbol of their social identity. Its speakers often perceive the prohibition of its use as a rejection of their social group and their culture. Thus, we can say that language symbolizes cultural reality.

In short, language and culture always exist together and reinforce each other. The relationship between them is so close that we could not understand or appreciate the one without the knowledge of the other.
Nowadays, people can see the effective progress of cultural interchange from countries to countries, in which language is the most important means. This can be the direct interchange of people from different parts of the world via mass media. Besides, the cultural interchange between nations can be made by translating literature works or other material from one language into other ones and vice versa. Therefore, sometimes, people in this community can take use of some words or phrases of other language communities as much as they consider them as their native ones. However, the distinctions of using language of each community establish its specific characteristics.

1.2. **Literal meanings and idiomatic meanings**

According to Dr. Duong Ky Duc (2003), the meanings of a word are not only the literal meaning, but also the figurative meaning. These meanings of the word do not exist separately but together as a perfect whole. In this whole, the literal meaning is the center and the figurative meaning is the extension, which shows the cultural distinction of using the word between this commodity and others. However, we focus much on idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’, therefore, besides the literal meanings of the word ‘dog’, we mainly study the figurative meanings of these idioms which are, in the study, called the idiomatic meanings.

1.2.1. **Literal meaning**

The literal meaning of a word is the strict dictionary meaning of a word, the ‘dictionary definition’. For example, if you look up the word snake in a dictionary, you will discover that one of its literal meanings is ‘any of numerous scaly, legless, sometimes venous reptiles having a long, tapering, cylindrical body and found in most tropical and temperate regions.’

Obviously, idiom has its idiomatic meaning. Many idioms, however, can also have both the literal and idiomatic meanings. In the study, we do not focus on the literal meanings of all the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ but ones of the word ‘dog’ which are, somehow, related to the idiomatic meanings of the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’.
1.2.2. *Idiomatic meaning*

1.2.2.1. Definition of idioms

English is very rich in idiomatic expressions. It is difficult to speak or write English without using idioms. An important fact must be stressed is that idioms are not only colloquial expressions, as many people believe. They can appear in formal style and in slang. They can appear in poetry or in the language of the journalist, the writer and the Bible. What, then, is an idiom?

According to Seidl and McMordie (1988), ‘an idiom is a number of words which, taken together, meaning something different from the individual words of the idiom when they stand alone. The way in which the words are put together is often odd, illogical or even grammatically incorrect’.

Idioms are composed of more than one word: their constituents show to some extent the sort of internal cohesion that we expect of single words. An idiom typically resists interruption and re-ordering of its constituents. For example, the idiom ‘kick the bucket’ will lose its idiomatic meaning if it is re-ordered into ‘the bucket which is kicked’. The exceptions lie in the idioms such as ‘to lay down the law’ (meaning ‘to say with real or assumed authority what should be done’) and ‘spill the beans’ (meaning ‘reveal secret information deliberately’), which have passives: ‘the law is laid down’ and ‘the beans are spilled’, respectively, though this still raises controversy.

According to Palmer (1990), idioms as consequences of words whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of the words themselves. Semantically, idioms are single units, but they are not single grammatical units like words. He also printed out some restriction in syntactic features and noted that the problem of idioms was involved with the much wider issue of word formation, by which what would appear to be new and more complex lexemes can be formed from single ones.

According to Asher and Simpson (1994), idiom, habitual collocation, is a phrase or other sequence of words which has a meaning beyond or other than the sum of the meaning of the individual words, e.g., *throw over the traces* (= free oneself of restrictions); *fly off the handle* (= be come angry), and which do not participate in the usual possible range of variation, e.g., *He threw over the traces* but *He threw over the trace*. 
In this study, we only prefer Asher and Simpson’s definition of idiom to analyze the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’.

1.2.2.2. Classification of idioms

As far as types of idioms are concerned, according to Fernando (1996: 35), they can be classified into three sub-classes: pure idioms, semi-idioms and literal idioms.

- A pure idiom is ‘a type of conventionalized non-literal multiword expression’ e.g. ‘kick the bucket’ having nothing to do with ‘kick’ and ‘bucket’.

- A semi-idiom (or partial idiom, in Palmer’s term) has one or more literal constituents and at least on with a non-literal sub-sense, usually special to that co-occurrence relation and no other, e.g. ‘rain cats and dogs’ (meaning ‘rain heavily’).

- Literal idioms, such as ‘on foot’, ‘on the contrary’ and others, meet the salient criterion for idioms: invariance and restricted variation, but their meanings can be deducible from the literal meanings of their constituents.

According to Cowie, Mackin and McCaig (1993) in Oxford Dictionary of English idioms, Oxford University Express, English idioms have the enormous structural variety. The majority of entries can be classified under two general headings: phrase idioms and clause idioms. They consist of several dominant sub-categories:

- The most common clause patterns spanned by idioms are:
  
  Verb + complement: ‘go berserk’
  
  Verb + Direct object: ‘ease somebody’s mind’
  
  Verb + Direct object + complement: ‘pain the town red’
  
  Verb + indirect object + direct object: ‘do somebody credit’
  
  Verb + direct object + adjunct: ‘keep the wolf from the door’

- The idioms may be a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, a verb phrase, a prepositional phrase, an adverbial phrase, and an interjection:
  
  Idioms as a noun phrase: ‘Dog’s dinner (over dressed in a showy way)

  Idioms as an adjective phrase: ‘As good as gold’ (generous, helpful, well-behaved)

  Idioms as a verb phrase: ‘Get to the bottom of things’ (find the true explanation or the state of affair)
Idioms as a prepositional phrase: ‘On cloud nine’ (extremely happy)
Idioms as an adverbial phrase: ‘At a nail’s pace’ (very slowly)
Idioms as an interjection: ‘Take your time’

In the study, we are in favor of both kinds of idiom classification to analyze the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in Chapter 3.

1.2.2.3. Sources of idioms

The most important thing about idioms is their meaning; this is why a native speaker does not notice that an idiom is incorrect grammatically. If the source of an idiom is known, it is sometimes easier to imagine its meaning. There are many different sources of idioms. Many idiomatic phrases come from every-day life of the English, from home life, e.g. to be born with a silver spoon in one’s mouth; to make a clean sweep of something; to hit the nail on the head. There are many idioms which have to do with food and cooking, e.g. to eat a humble pie, to be in the soup, out of the frying-pan into the fire. Agricultural life has given rise to to go to seed; to put one’s hand to the plough; to lead someone up the garden path. Nautical life and military life are the source of when one’s ship comes home; to be in the same boat as someone; to be in deep waters. Many idioms include parts of the body, animals, and colors. The Bible gives us to kill the fatted calf; to turn the other cheek; the apple of one’s eye. In this thesis, I just only focus on idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’.

1.2.2.4. Specific characteristics of idiomatic meanings

As we mentioned above, an idiom is a combination of words that has a meaning that is different from the meanings of the individual words themselves. It can have a literal meaning in one situation and a different idiomatic meaning in another situation. It is a phrase which does not always follow the normal rules of meaning and grammar. To sit on the fence can literally mean that one is sitting on a fence. I sat on the fence and watched the game. However, the idiomatic meaning of to sit on the fence is that one is not making a clear choice regarding some issue, for example: The politician sat on the fence and would not give his opinion about the tax issue.
Therefore, we can see that the idiom not only gives or transfers the information but also implies the nuance, attitude and feelings of the speaker.

The literal meaning of the idiom is the meaning that we can see basing on the each unit’s meaning and the idiomatic meaning, is the extension which shows the cultural distinction of using the word between this commodity and others. The idiomatic meaning of the idioms is the meaning beyond or other than the sum of the meaning of the individual words.

1.3. Idioms versus proverbs

It is easy to find that idioms and proverbs have some in common, and until now there have been no clear-cut borders between them. However, basing on some criteria, we can distinguish idioms and proverbs.

Idiom

- It is a fixed phrase or other sequence of words.
  e.g. the total meaning of the idiom ‘chó chui gãm chán’ is equal with the word ‘hèn hà’ (disgraced or despicable).

- It has a meaning beyond or other than the sum of the meaning of the individual words.
  e.g. fly off the handle (= be come angry); ‘chó chêt’ implies ‘terrible’, not ‘the dog died’

- Idioms do not participate in the usual possible range of variation.
  e.g. He threw over the traces but He threw over the trace.

- It contains the nuance, attitude and feelings of the speaker; comparison.
  e.g. ‘nói một tác đến giới’
  ‘năng như côi đá lỡ’
  ‘sick as a dog’

- It is a part of a sentence.
  e.g. Nó là đồ chó chui gãm chán
  (‘chó chui gãm chán’ is intensified to the noun ‘dồ’ in the predicate ‘dồ chó chui gãm chán’).
Proverb

- Proverbs must have the clause or sentence structure (not word) to express justice or an event implying the justice. Sometimes, subject or predicate can be hidden in proverbs such as: ‘Voi một ngà đàn bà một mắt”; ‘uống nước nhớt khuôn’.

- It has a meaning beyond or other than the sum of the meaning of the individual words e.g. ‘cái nét đánh chết cái đẹp’.

- Proverbs’ logic contents/meanings are exposed in two ways.
  + It expresses one idea of justice directly (without through actions and events).
    e.g. ‘Lệnh ông không bằng còng bà’
  + It expresses one idea of comment, experience, morality, justice or criticism basing on an action or an event.
    e.g. ‘Giận cá chém thờ’

- It can stand independently with a complete meaning.
  e.g. ‘Ông ăn chà, bà ăn nem’

1.4. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’

1.4.1. Previous studies on idioms about animals

There has been a various collection of studies on idioms in general, more than 30 of all kinds, from an article, a scientific research to a graduation paper or a book, in which, there are about two studies on idioms about animals that the author choose to introduce:

- A study on some characteristics of structure, meaning and culture of English idioms about animals (by Pham Thi To Nhu, 1998)

The author provides some theoretical background about idioms and made some comparison with other concepts such as collocations, proverbs. In the main part, the author used the view of ‘new’ traditional grammar to classified English idioms from animals according to their structural forms. Therefore, she found the semantic mechanisms, cultural characteristics of these English idioms about animals and contrasted them with those of Vietnamese idioms.
A contrastive analysis on animal-based comparison idioms in English and Vietnamese (by Nguyen Thi Nga, 2003)

In the study, the author dealt with the features of English idioms and made a contrastive analysis on animal-based comparison idioms in English and Vietnamese counterparts. The author found that, though the animal-based comparison idioms in both cultures use different animal images to express ideas, semantically they both reflect the personal characteristics and status of people in the society during the course of historic development of the two nations. According to her, many animals, while positive in English, may be negative or neutral in Vietnamese and vice versa, which creates a lot of interests for learners in accessing and analyzing them.

1.4.2. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’

English idioms from animals are idioms, which have factors denoting animals. The interesting thing is that the number of English idioms from animals is quite large. In this study, however, I only focus on idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in daily communication and written texts. It is in the main part of my study designed in Chapter 3.

1.5. Summary

This chapter has been concerned with the theoretical framework for the analysis of the relationship between language and culture, the literal meanings and the idiomatic meanings, idioms in relationship with proverbs and a brief view of previous studies on idioms about animals in general and the dog in particular.

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

In the part idiomatic meanings, an overview of the definition, the classification, the sources of idioms and the specific characteristics of idiomatic meanings firstly mentioned. The next is some criteria to distinguish idioms and proverbs.

The last of this chapter, we have presented the general view of the previous studies on idioms about animals in general and the dog in particular.
CHAPTER 2: ‘DOG’ IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

To master the meanings of words, it is necessary to study many linguistic aspects, in which two typical ones are literal and idiomatic meanings. Chapter 2 is designed to present the literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese. This is the basis to explain the way English and Vietnamese people cognize the image of dogs similarly and differently through their own the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ designed in Chapter 3.

2.1. Literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in English

According to The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics (1994), ‘dog is a common domestic animal, a friend of a man, of which there are many breeds’.

Dog is a member of the genus Canis (probably descended from the common wolf) that has been domesticated by man since prehistoric times. There are many kinds of dog: domestic and wild dogs; wolves; jackals, doggie, doggy, pooch, barker, bow-wow, black dog, yellow dog; wild dog, spotted dog, piebald dog, mongrel dog, pedigree dog. In terms of the birth places of dogs, there are Chow-Chow, Collie, Leonberger, Cokerspaniel, Husy, Bernhardiner, Basset Hound, West Highland White Terrier, Mops, Boxer, Mastiff, Dalmatiner, Afghhane, Deutsch Kurhaar, Airedaleterrier, Japanese dog, Welsh corgi, Mexican hairless, basenji, see dog or seal, Beijing dog, Spanish dog, etc. In terms of the special features of the dogs, there are hairy dog, shock dog, little dog, poodle, pug-dog. In terms of functions, there are watchdog, sled dog, army dog, scout dog, hunting dog, police dog, guide dog, shepherd-dog, sheepdog, etc.

In English, to mention this animal, people often use two words ‘dog’, ‘cur’. The first, ‘dog’ is used for the male, the second, ‘cur’ is a bad quality kind of dog and also used with connotative meanings to talk about the ‘rotter’, ‘uneducated’ or ‘humble’. The male is usually just called, ‘dog’, the female dog is called, ‘bitch’ and the young are called ‘puppies’ or ‘pups’. A group of dogs may be referred to as a pack.

Maybe, the special eating way of the dog may be a reason why the English use the word ‘dog’ to point the tongs or hooks for technical terms. ‘Dog’ is a hinged catch that fits into a notch of a ratchet to move a wheel forward or prevent it from moving backward.
direction. Moreover, in American English slang, the word ‘dog’ can be used in ‘dogface’, means ‘infantryman’. The word ‘dog’ can be referred to a dull unattractive unpleasant girl or woman; ‘she got a reputation as a frump’; ‘she's a real dog’ frump disagreeable woman, unpleasant woman - a woman who is an unpleasant person. The word ‘dog’ can be used as an informal term for a man, like chap, fellow, cuss for a boy or man; ‘you lucky dog’; ‘that chap is your host’; ‘there's a fellow at the door’; ‘he's a likable cuss’. People use ‘dog’ to say someone who is morally reprehensible; ‘you dirty dog’ blackguard, bounder, cad, hound, bounder scoundrel, villain - a wicked or evil person; someone who does evil deliberately. The ‘dog’ is used in hot dog, hotdog sausage - a smooth-textured sausage of minced beef or pork usually smoked; often served on a bread roll.

The word ‘dog’ can also be used in some phrases and combined words such as: ‘dog-fennel’ (a kind of chrysanthemum), ‘dog-tooth’ (pyramid architecture), ‘dog-trot’ (amble/pace), ‘dog’s-tooth’ (lily), ‘dog’s-tongue’ (dog’s-tongue tree), ‘dog’s-tail’ (goose grass), ‘dog’s-grass’ Bermuda grass), ‘dog-salmon’, etc. To sum up, the English quite like using the features of parts of the dog’s body to name other objects. Like this way, the Vietnamese also says ‘cây cút chó’ (a kind of plant), ‘rau húng chó’ (common basil), ‘chòm sao Thiên lang’.

**Dog Days of summer:** In the six weeks after the solstice, the Dog Star, Sirius, appears in the night sky of the Northern Hemisphere. It was once thought that this bright star contributed to the heat characteristic of the beginning of August.

### 2.2. Literal meanings of the word ‘dog’ in Vietnamese

In Vietnamese, the animal with four legs, long face, sensitive nose, keen ears, long tail, reared to watch house is called ‘dog’ (chó), with a very popular sentence ‘Nhà bà có con chó den, Người lạ nó cân người quen nó mừng’. One of the most typical characters of the dog is his/her voice ‘bow-wow’ (gâu gâu), therefore, she/he is often named ‘con gâu’ (bow-wow animal). Besides, the ways people call their dogs can also become their funny names: ‘tun tun’, ‘lu lu’, ‘lêu lêu’, ‘ceu ceu’. Many others call the dog ‘mích’ or ‘tuma’.

The word ‘dog’ can also be used in some phrases and combined words such as: ‘dog-fennel’ (a kind of chrysanthemum), ‘dog-tooth’ (pyramid architecture), ‘dog-trot’
(amble/pace), ‘dog’s-tooth’ (lily), ‘dog’s-tongue’ (dog’s-tongue tree), ‘dog’s-tail’ (goose grass), ‘dog’s-grass’ (Bermuda grass), ‘dog-salmon’, etc. To sum up, the English quite like using the features of parts of the dog’s body to name other objects. Like this way, the Vietnamese also say ‘cây cứt chó’ (a kind of plant), ‘rau húng chó’ (common basil), ‘chôm sao Thiên lang’.

In ancient Vietnamese, there are also other nouns referring to the word ‘dog’ such as ‘câu’ (‘hải câu’ (seadog, seal), ‘linh câu’ (hyena)) and ‘khuyên’ (‘khuyên dương’, ‘khuyên mả’ (dog and hose or loyal servant), ‘khuyênCENT’). In a certain circumstance, reminding the image of the dog, ‘tuất’ is used instead (‘tuổi tuất’ (born in the year of the Dog), ‘năm tuất’ (the year of the dog). Cun con (Puppy) is a word used for a cute baby or a lover, and sometimes a dog may be treated as a member of the family. ‘Dog paddle’ is a swimming style that amateurs use, and a ‘dog circus’ is a performance of the dogs’ intelligence and cuteness which attracts many audiences.

2006 was the year of the dog, an animal closely associated with human life and appearing frequently in Vietnamese culture. Of the twelve Asian horoscope animals, the dog appears most frequently in Vietnamese culture, such as poem, literature, and especially proverbs and idioms, due to its positive characteristics of intelligence, and usefulness.

A Vietnamese saying, ‘Dogs protect homes, roosters show time’ highlights the usefulness of the animal. However, the crowing cock usefulness is negated in another proverb, ‘When the householder is not at home, chickens put the kitchen in disorder’.

Only the dog never causes any complaints. Owners can trust their dogs to take care of the home protecting it from thieves when they are away, and as active hunters, dogs also help their masters and protect them when they are in danger. ‘Dogs are in the home, chickens are in the coop’ is a saying about the true loyalty of family. Although a master may not come home for several years, the dog will still recognizes its boss and welcome him warmly. In addition, with a sharp-nose, dogs help people in matters of security and rescue. Dogs are useful in a multitude of ways.
2.3. People born in the Year of the Dog

Dogs are the most likable sign of all the animals in the lunar zodiac cycle. A person born in the Year of Dog is considered honest, intelligent and straightforward with a deep sense of loyalty and a passion for justice and fair-play.

Dogs are also unpretentious, know how to get along with others and are never too demanding. They like to meet others halfway and are willing to listen to reason. If you have a dog as a friend, you will not worry when you are in trouble because dogs never ignore a cry for help. Dogs protect the interests of others more avidly than themselves and never give up.

Dogs are also open-eyed and open-minded observers, with the objective of preserving social goals and guarding the interest of the public at large. However, although dogs can be quite defensive, they are not materialistic or fond of ceremony and prefer plain talk. Dogs will see through people’s motives as natural lawyers and listen to your case objectively.

As the symbol of justice, dogs are very serious about their responsibilities, practical, fearless and the owners of very sharp tongues, dogs are very realistic and outspoken.

Dogs make for good impartial judges as they spare nobody, not even themselves, in the final analysis. People born in the Year of the Dog will probably be a good but somewhat reluctant leader with an astute intelligence and noble character. China’s Late Premier Zhou En Lai was an example of a person born in the Year of Dog, who was loved for his warm charisma and superb insight into human nature.

Females born in the Year of the Dog are considered a thoughtful and capable person who will be a simple dresser in all situations, preferring casual and serviceable clothing. She is unaffected and attentive to the needs of others, cooperative, unprejudiced and very good at sport. Dogs are warm and often beautiful. For an example of some famous females born in the Year of the Dog, we have Ava Gardner, Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot and Naomi Campbell.

The Year of the Dog is also one year in which parents choose to give birth to their babies because they believe that children born in the Year of the Dog are friendly, happy and well-balanced and get schoolwork done without too much trouble. Cheerful and
harmonious, children born in the Year of the Dog will be reasonable when asked to help around the house and will be protective toward younger family members. They will also expect little from others and accept parents and friends as they are.

Young dogs also may put up a fight with the neighborhood tyrant or bully and win the respect of their peers. Open, confident and loyal, young dogs perceive other people’s viewpoints with amazing clarity while still maintaining their own convictions and dignity.

Generally, people born in the Year of the Dog are never without resources and wield influence on important or decision-making people through sound advice and remarkable insight.

The dog is most compatible with the horse, the cat and the tiger. He will have no conflict with the rat, snake, monkey, pig or even another dog. But the one he will never really get himself to believe in is the overconfident dragon.

2.4. Findings

In both English and Vietnamese, there are many kinds of dogs as well as nouns referring to the word ‘dog’. It can be jackals, doggie, doggy, pooch, barker, bow-wow, black dog, yellow dog; wild dog, spotted dog, Japanese dog, Welsh corgi, seal, scout dog, hunting dog, etc.

In both cultures, they all study people born in the year of the dog. They seem to have the common ideas: a person born in the Year of Dog is considered honest, intelligent and straightforward with a deep sense of loyalty and a passion for justice and fair-play.

2.5. Summary

In this chapter, we have concerned with the literal meanings of the dog in both English and Vietnamese as well as the information about the people born in the year of dog. Therefore, we can have a general view about the concepts of the dog in English and Vietnamese.
CHAPTER 3: IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS CONTAINING THE WORD ‘DOG’ IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

Each object has its own many attributes and each community will see and select different attributes to the referential levels of the meaning. The ways of cognizing objects affected by the history, specific psychology of the language and culture community has led to the change of the meanings of similar words in different languages. Thus, we can find out the similarities and differences based on the idiomatic meanings of the word ‘dog’ in English and Vietnamese.

3.1. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’

To study the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’, we should have a brief view about the image of dog in English cultures.

Dogs and Death

Dogs often bark at night, which is the symbol of night, darkness and afterworld - the world of the dead. In many mythologies, dogs or dog-like beings guard the underworld from unwelcome guests such as the still-living, and they also keep the dead where they belong. Examples are Cerberus, multi-headed guardian of the Greeks, his two-headed brother, Orthrus, and the Norse dog Garm, at Hel's door. There are many others.

In Welsh mythology, white hounds with red ears are denizens of Annwn, the Otherworld that is ruled by Arawn, lord of death. In the tale of the hostel of Da Derga, there are nine hounds, and also many dog skeletons have been found buried in Celtic graves either having been sacrificed to accompany their masters or as offerings.
**In Aboriginal America**

At the time of the Walking of Creation, Gitchi-manitou sent Wolf to keep Original Man company, but after that, he ordered Original Man and Wolf to go their separate ways. (The wolf and the Anishnabe (Ojibway or ‘Western Cree’) are considered similar since both mate for life, have a clan and tribal system, have had their land taken, been hunted for their hair, been pushed almost to destruction and are now experiencing a time of recovery [at least in Canada]) The dog was given as a substitute, but since it is a relative of the wolf, it should be kept separate from contemporary people and away from sacred objects or rituals. To do otherwise would endanger people’s lives.

We will see that dogs are associated with death, often in the role of the guardian of the Underworld or Land of the Dead, e.g. **Cerberus**, the many-headed hound of classical mythology. This association is an actual one. As scavengers, packs of them performed an essential function on fields of battle. Yet, perhaps by a kind of hermeneutic transformation, they are equally associated with life, fertility and longevity.

The image of the dog in the spiritual and cultural life of the English above is, somehow, related to the English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’. Therefore, we can find all the positive meanings, the negative meanings and neutral meanings in these ones. In term of positive meanings, there are some idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’.

**3.1.1. Expressing good points**

3.1.1.1. The personal characters and status of people

- The English often use the noun phrase ‘**top dog**’ to talk about the most important or powerful person in an organization or country:
  - **top dog**
  - Idiomatic meaning: the most important or powerful person/ country
  - E.g. Yes, I am worried. Mr. Brown has been our **top dog** for 25 years, but he is retiring. Three of our senior executives are fighting for his job, and nobody knows who will end up as new **top dog**.
- Also, to appreciate the importance of a person or an important position in a company, people often use the noun phrase ‘big dog’ in the sentence.
  
  - **big dog**
  
  - Idiomatic meaning: important person
  
  - E.g. *He is a big dog in his company.*

  In the two above examples, the English use the word dog but not other animals in this situation because they see dog as the family member as mentioned in the part of literal meaning.

  - The dog often gives a wag of its tail to express its happy state when it gets food or love from its owner. To show someone’s happy, delighted or proud mood (especially because she/he now owns or has achieved something), people also use this image of the dog:

  - **like a dog with two tails**
  
  - Idiomatic meaning: delighted, very happy or proud
  
  - E.g. *She was like a dog with two tails when she had been chosen for the award.*

  - If you want to mention the action of helping others who is in difficulty or trouble, there is an English phrase verb containing the word dog:

  - **help a lame dog over a stile**
  
  - Idiomatic meaning: give help to someone who is in difficulty
  
  - E.g. *The charitable precept always to help a lame dog over a stile is shared by the world’s major religions.*

### 3.1.1.2. Convenient conditions and good luck

Most dogs in the United States seem to have an easy life. They sleep a lot and get fed often. People take their dogs for a walk two times a day and also let them play outside. Dogs get medical care when they are sick or injured. What a great life! Right? Well, we say people with a similar, carefree existence enjoy a **dog’s life** (for example, ‘It’s a dog’s
life here on vacation - all this sunshine and good food). They have no troubles or responsibilities. They can come and go as they please, sleep all day, and never have to work.

- To express the good luck, people often say a phrase *a dog’s chance*. Besides, *a dog’s chance* is also used with the meaning of a slight chance of achieving something (often in the negative sentence).

  - *a dog’s chance*
  - Idiomatic meaning: a good luck / a slight chance
  - E.g. *He has a dog’s chance of getting that job.*

/ *She has entered her name for the 100 meters, but she has not a dog’s chance of winning. The competition is very strong this year.*

With these positive meanings, the word ‘dog’ is used to refer to many good things as: the best man, the best nation; the most important thing; the good luck; good quality, good care. However, as mentioned above, there are many other idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ conveying the negative meanings such as: humble men, doing many bad things, hunger, misery, declination, guilty, etc.

### 3.1.2. Expressing bad points

#### 3.1.2.1. The personal characters and status of people

- To say someone who has behaved badly, meanly or selfishly, people also use the word ‘dog’ in the noun phrase:

  - *a dirty dog*
  - Idiomatic meaning: badly-behaved and mean person
  - E.g. *His friends called him a dirty dog because he never treated them to a good meal.*

- To mention a dangerously or foolishly violent, irresponsible or eccentric person, people use the noun phrase:

  - *a mad dog*
  - Idiomatic meaning: foolishly violent or eccentric person
• E.g. It has always been accepted that the Emperor Theodore was a mad dog let loose, a sort of black reincarnation of Ivan, the Terrible.

- The noun phrase a gay dog imply a pleasure-loving, perhaps irresponsible or licentious, fellow; someone who is fond of social life.

• a gay dog

• Idiomatic meaning: a pleasure-loving, perhaps irresponsible or licentious, fellow

• E.g. The man who is very fond of the lifestyle of Cống tử Bạc Liêu (Bạc lieu mandarin’s son) is himself a gay dog.

- To talk about meeting with misfortune, sloping down both materials and character, the English often uses the verb phrase.

• (to) go to the dogs

• Idiomatic meaning: to deteriorate, to become bad

• E.g. Her dad has really gone to the dogs since he lost his job at the auto plant. All he does now is hanging around the house, watching TV and drinking beer.

or in the bad situation: Many things in our city have gone to the dogs during the last ten years.

- To say someone who keeps something that they are not able to use or do not really want in order to prevent anyone else from having it, there is an English idiom:

• (to be) a dog in the manger

• Idiomatic meaning: selfish (person)

• E.g. My friend always acts like a dog in the manger and often tries to prevent us from enjoying ourselves.

or: They seem to have a dog in the manger attitude and won’t let us have any input in the project.
3.1.2.2. Inconvenient condition and bad luck

- The word ‘dog’ appears in the kind of idiom having human relationship implication. As talking about the miserable life, there is an English noun phrase:

  - **(lead) a cat-and-dog life**
  
    Idiomatic meaning: a life of frequent or constant quarreling
  
    E.g. *You miss a woman when she has been living with you in the same house for six years, no matter what sort of cat-and-dog life you led together.*

- There is another idiom having human life implication. It is a noun phrase containing only ‘dog’, not ‘cat’. It shows a pattern of life in which there is not much pleasure or freedom, in which one has to take orders from the others.

  - **a dog’s life**
  
    Idiomatic meaning: an unpleasant or miserable life
  
    E.g. *‘The man is leading a dog’s life in that store, fetching and carrying from morning till night.*

- Besides, to mention a mess, a situation, undertaking, piece of work, room, etc., that is mismanaged, untidy, they use the noun phrase:

  - **a dog’s breakfast/dinner**
  
    Idiomatic meaning: a mess, a mismanaged or untidy work
  
    E.g. *You should have seen the ceiling after he had finished painting it. It was completely a dog’s breakfast’.*

Husbands and wives use this **doghouse** term when they are angry at each other. For example, a woman might get angry with her husband for coming home late or forgetting their wedding anniversary. She might tell him that he is in the **doghouse**. She may not treat him nicely until he apologizes. However, the husband may decide that it is best to leave things alone and not create more problems. He might decide to let sleeping **dogs lie**. Therefore, whenever someone accidentally forgets to buy his wife the birthday
present, and as a result, he is in disgraced or disfavour situation or in trouble with his wife, it is like

- **in the doghouse**

  - Idiomatic meaning: in disgraced or disfavour situation or in trouble
  
  - E.g. *The man is in the doghouse with his wife because he came home late last night.*

If we are ‘in the doghouse’, someone is angry with us because we did something to upset them. For example,

A: *I hear your wife is angry with you because you came home late last night.*

B: *She sure is. I will be in the doghouse for the next week.*

We are usually ‘in the doghouse’ with somebody until they are no longer angry with us. For example, a man is talking about an unfortunate situation at work with a friend.

A: *I missed that important meeting yesterday.*

B: *Yeah, the boss was not too happy with you.*

A: *I know. I am in the doghouse at work now.*

B: *How do you know?*

A: *Well, I rode down the elevator with the boss today and he didn't say one word to me.*

B: *Oh, yeah. You are in the doghouse.*

- To describe a world in which people fight for themselves only and will hurt other people; ruthless competition or self-interest.

- **dog-eat-dog**

  - Idiomatic meaning: ruthlessly competitive

  - E.g. ‘I needed a change from the weather, the city and the dog-eat-dog way of life’.

*Dog-eat-dog* means that a person is like a **dog** that will **eat** another **dog**. If something is ‘dog-eat-dog’, it is a situation where people have to take care of themselves
and look after their own interests. If something is ‘dog-eat-dog’, survival is the main thing to worry about. For example,

A: *It is really difficult to start your own business.*

B: *Yeah, it is. Starting a business is a dog-eat-dog experience.*

This idiom is commonly used together with the word ‘world’. Sometimes people say ‘*It's a dog-eat-dog world*’ as an excuse when they have hurt another person. Example: ‘*I can't believe you sold him your motorcycle for so much money!*’ Reply: ‘*Hey, it's a dog-eat-dog world.*’ *It's a dog-eat-dog world* means that you must first watch out for your own interests, because other people will be watching out for theirs. There is no letter s at the end of any of the words in *dog-eat-dog*. Example: ‘*That school is dog-eat-dog. The students cheat and even destroy each other's work to get better grades.*’

However, not everyone has it so easy. In fact, some people say we live in a *dog-eat-dog world*. That means many people are competing for the same things, like good jobs. They say that to be successful, a person has to *work like a dog*. This means they have to work very, very hard. Such hard work can make people *dog-tired*. And, the situation would be even worse if they became *sick as a dog*.

### 3.1.3. Expressing neutral points

If someone forget to buy his wife the birthday present, and as a result, he is in disgraced or disfavour situation or in trouble with his wife, it is like ‘*in the doghouse*’. Obviously, to mention someone who is in trouble and difficult situations, or being harmed by others, she/he wants to find out the possible solution and the best way is to ‘diamond cuts diamond’, the English say: ‘*the hair of the dog (that bit one)*’ (a drink of alcohol that one takes when recovering from a hangover).

- **the hair of the dog (that bit one)**

*Idiomatic meaning: a drink of alcohol (that one takes when recovering from a hangover)/ useful method*

- E.g. *The man woke up and had the hair of the dog that bit him before he ate breakfast.*
- Many dogs in the United States sleep in safe little houses near their owners’ home. A junkyard is not a fun place for a dog. However, it provides shelter. Yet they can be cold and lonely in the winter.

Some people are compared to dogs in bad ways. People who are unkind or uncaring can be described as **mean as a junk-yard dog**. Junkyard dogs live in places where people throw away things they do not want. Mean dogs are often used to guarding this property. They bark or attack people who try to enter the property.

- **Mean as a junk-yard dog**

  - Idiomatic meaning: very mean

  - E.g. *Although Hetty was one of the richest women in the world, she was mean as a junk-yard dog. She counted every cent and she spent as little as possible. She didn’t own a house because she didn’t want to pay property taxes.*

- If you work too hard, you have no time to relax as a result you are in the tired mood, there is an English idiom presenting your situation.

  - **dog-tired**

  - Idiomatic meaning: utterly exhausted

  - E.g. *I stayed up all night to finish a history essay, and this morning my coach made me run five miles in the sweltering heat. Man, I’m so dog-tired I can’t even walk.*

- If someone was in unexpected situations, he could be very sad and did not want to attend any relaxing activities. To express this sadness, people often say:

  - **Sad as a hound dog’s eye**

  - Idiomatic meaning: very sad

  - E.g. *Poor the boy! he was sad as a hound dog’s eye because he failed his mid-term exam.*

- The idiom ‘**sick as a dog**’ has some different meanings. ‘**Sick as a dog**’ is used to talk about someone who drank too much and vomited a great deal. It also implies
someone’s depression about his/her matter. It can be seen as the sickness of someone when she/he has a cold or flu.

- **sick as a dog**
  - Idiomatic meaning: vomiting a great deal; deeply depressed; very sick
  - E.g. *My friend was as sick as a dog when he left the restaurant last night.*
  
or: *I saw an ad in the paper for just the car I am looking for. I was sick as a dog when they told me it had just been sold.*

We often use this one if the person has a stomach sickness and vomits. We can also use it if someone has a bad cold or flu. For example, a man is talking to his coworker about why he did not go to a meeting at work.

A: *Hey, Bob. I didn't see you at the meeting yesterday. What happened to you?*
B: *I couldn't make it because I came down with the flu.*
A: *Oh, really? That's too bad. Was it serious?*
B: *Well, it was only a 24-hour flu, but for those 24 hours I was as sick as a dog.*
A: *Ouch! I'm sorry to hear that, but I'm glad you're feeling better.*
B: *Thanks.*

- ‘**dog and pony show**’ is used when you disapprove of an event because you think it has only been organized in order to impress other people (like a dog and pony show in a circus).

- **Dog-and-pony show**
  - Idiomatic meaning: impression
  - E.g. *The rock concert Valence is planning to raise money for earthquake victims promises to be a real dog-and-pony show.*

- Dog expressions are also used to describe the bad weather. **The dog days** of summer are the hottest days of the year. A rainstorm may cool the weather. Nevertheless, we do not want it to rain too hard. We do not want it to **rain cats and dogs**.

- **rain cats and dogs**
  - Idiomatic meaning: rain heavily
- E.g. Bob and Susan were just about to exchange marriage vows when there was a crack of thunder, and it started to rain cats and dogs. Everyone at the wedding was soaked and the cake was ruined.

- To express a long period of time, people often say:
  - a dog’s age
  - Idiomatic meaning: a long time
  - E.g. It has been a dog’s age since I saw him.

- Observing the special feature of the dog’s ears, people also use the image of dog’s ears to point out the turn-down corners on the pages of the book, or in bundles of papers (usually the result of much, or careless, handling but sometimes done deliberately to mark a place).
  - dog ears/-eared
  - Idiomatic meaning: turn-down corners
  - E.g. - ‘Don’t do that’, she snapped. ‘I hate a book full of dog ears’
  - He asked me to read his novel, a dog-eared manuscript that told its own story of having gone the rounds of probably a score of publishers.

- Basing on the dog’s specific character which is looking after its owner’s house carefully, people form the idiom
  - to dog someone’s (foot) steps
  - Idiomatic meaning: follow continually
  - E.g. Bad luck still seems to be dogging the European Movement’s footsteps.

To sum up, in English, the idiomatic expressions concerning the word ‘dog’ point out more the negative meanings rather than the positive ones. Now the question is ‘Are there any similarities or differences between English and Vietnamese idioms containing the word ‘dog’?’
3.2. A comparison with their Vietnamese ones

The above part is designed to present the English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’, the positive meanings is less than negative meanings. To support the Vietnamese learners of English a better understanding of these idioms, the examining section of this chapter mainly focuses on the Vietnamese idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ and the comparison between them. Therefore, they can see whether these idioms have their Vietnamese equivalents as well as the similarities and differences between the two communities in using idioms containing the word ‘dog’. First, we should have a brief observation about the image of dog in Vietnamese culture.

In ancient Vietnamese culture, chim hạc (crane) and con nghê (lion’s whelp) are the two typical sacred objects. The crane has been the relic since King Hung’s dynasty. About the lion’s whelp, it is not clearly specified when the lion’s whelp appeared (It may have been born under the Ly’s dynasty right after the period of domination by northern invaders). Though, the lion's whelp is one of the pure Vietnamese relics, it is not known popularly.

In daily life of Vietnamese people, two animals considered two of their close and important ones are buffalo and dog. Buffalo helps to produce food, dog helps to protect homes. In spiritual life, dog is also used to protect against evils, therefore, stone dogs are built much in northern Vietnam, mainly standing in front of village gates, communal house doors, tombs, home terraces or gates. The stone dogs’ figures can be various with the height of about 0.5 to 1 meter. The stone dogs, especially their heads and faces, with many august details are made and sculptured carefully. Due to containing supernatural power, the stone dog is called Nghê (lion's whelp).
Overall, the relic Lion's whelp was created to protect the spiritual life of the Vietnamese; we can see its figure through some goods like the lion's whelp statue, thurible and a small bottle of wine.

For more information about Nghê (lion's whelp), readers can read the article in Vietnamese titled Con Nghê linh vật thuận Viêt (lion's whelp- the pure Vietnamese sacred object) of Bui Ngoc Tuan on Vietnam net.com.

**Dog Food**

In Vietnam, dogs are sacrificed to the indigenous gods in rituals intended to induce rain. Dogs are also eaten during certain periods of the lunar year in the belief that this meat contributes to virility and longevity.

**3.2.1. Idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in Vietnamese**

The English people see the dog as one of the members in their families; however, the Vietnamese often only treat them as a kind of animals with humble position. In other words, the Vietnamese disdain the dog and they usually tie the word ‘dog’ in relationship with the negative meanings such as ‘cậu hành’ (bad character; small-minded), ‘cậu tiêu’ (ill laugh, laugh without any purposes), etc.
3.2.1.1. Expressing good point

In English, people use the word ‘dog’ in some idioms to express the good points such as ‘top dog’ and ‘big dog’. The Vietnamese people also use the word ‘dog’ in the idiom expressing the good thing. People suddenly have a good luck or do an excellent thing that make others unbelievable, and in this case the Vietnamese language has an idiom: ‘chó ngáp phải rơi’. For instance, ‘Hắn ta thật là chó ngáp phải rơi, cuối ngay được một cô vợ con nhà tử tê’ (He had a good luck of getting married to a good girl).

3.2.1.2. Expressing bad points

3.2.1.2.1. The personal characters and status of people

There are many expressions in the English language referring to the miserable existence of the canines. People say someone is dog tired; he died like a dog; their relationship is going to the dogs; she was once a beauty, but now she looks like a dog’s breakfast; the business world is dog-eat-dog. Also, in Vietnamese, focusing on idiomatic meanings, we can see clearly that the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ mainly have negative meanings. To talk about someone who is a bad and talentless one but she/he is still of high social standing; she/he is not shameful but complacent, the Vietnamese often says ‘chó nhảy bàn đóc’ (dog is on the altar). In short, its idiomatic meaning is insolent action; unashamed behaviour or absurd situation. For example, ‘Bắt tài như hắn mà cũng nghiêm nghiêm giữ ghê lành đạo công ty ta, thật là chó nhảy bàn đóc’ (He became the leader of the company without any talents or qualifications, that is an unshamed behavior/ absurd situation).

In Vietnamese, the very popular phrases used to talk about the foolish and ignorant are ‘ngu như chó’ or ‘đốt như cây’ (as ignorant as a dog). For instance, ‘Nó đốt như cây szy, cả ba tiếng đồng hồ rồi mà vẫn không viết được chữ ‘ghê’. (he is really an ignorant pupil, he hasn’t been able to write the word ‘chair’ for three hours.)

The Vietnamese often say ‘chó đê’ (son of a bitch), which is the same meaning as an execration, to give someone a talking-to with insults. For example, ‘không thèm tiếp thằng chó đê ấy’. (Do not receive him- Son of a bitch!).
When people talk about someone who has behaved badly, meanly or selfishly, they also use the word ‘dog’ in the noun phrase ‘chó bán’. For example, ‘Bạn bè gọi hận là tháng chó bán với hận chẳng bao giờ thiệt dại bạn bè được một bữa từ té cả’ (His friends called him a dirty dog because he never treated them to a good meal).

If you want to talk about someone who is very bad in Vietnamese, you can use the phrase ‘chó değil’. ‘Chó değil’ implies the idiomatic meaning very caddish. For example, ‘không thèm quan hệ với tháng chó değil ấy’ (Do not have any relationship with this very caddish person – what an arrant cur!).

Another phrase ‘chó má’ has the same meaning as ‘chó değil’. The Vietnamese often use ‘chó má’ with the idiomatic meanings of the rascal, scoundrel or caddish. It is used to scold someone who is very bad. For example, ‘Bọn chúng thật là quân chó má’ (They are really caddish and base or What a cur they are!).

In Vietnamese, to mention the small-minded person who is aggressive, reckless and thoughtless, people usually say ‘chó dài cán cán’ (not a mad dog bites inconsiderately). For instance, ‘Hắn hành động chẳng khác gì một con chó dài cán cán’ (He behaved like a thoughtless person).

In the situation of someone who is hated and disgraced by others, the Vietnamese often use the noun phrase ‘chó ghẻ’ (not a scabby dog). For example, ‘Trong làng anh ta bị coi là con chó ghẻ’ (He is hated and disgraced by the villagers).

In terms of behaviour, to mention someone who is uneducated and insolent, they use the idiom ‘chó lão’ like in this sentence ‘Thắng chó lão ấy nói mười câu không tin được một’ (It is better not believe in the words of that uneducated and insolent man).

The word ‘dog’ is also used to imply people’s bad characters. To point out that someone who acts in a timorous and fearful way; and cannot hide his/her fear and terror, we can say ‘(lắm léu như) chó ăn vừng bột’. For instance, ‘Bọn mất thấm, chó sần bây giờ làm léu như chó ăn vừng bột’ (Spies and reactionary lackeys now act timorously and fearfully).

The idiom ‘chó sần’ has no meaning as the hunting dog or police dog, it implies the sleuth or reactionary lackeys who work for the enemy doing the harmful and unrighteous actions. For instance, ‘Hắn can tầm lầm chó sần’ cho giấc’ (He wanted to be the enemy’s sleuth).
The Vietnamese see that the dog often barks loudly when he is in his owner’s house. However, when he is out of the house, he walks in silence and even run away if someone threatens him. Based on this feature of the dog, to describe the coward manner or fake courage of someone who is only a master in his/her house or uses his/her certain power to cause bad effect or pressure to others, she/he must be ‘chó cây gần nhà’. For example, ‘Chúng nó toàn dọ chó cây gần nhà, ít khi dám đi xa đôn bót’ (They were all cowardly soldiers; they seldom went away from their station).

‘Chó den giữ mức’ is suitable to talk about someone who is too conservative. For example, ‘bào thế nào nó cùng văn chó den giữ mức’ (he didn’t listen to anyone, he was still kept their own ways. He was too conservative).

3.2.1.2.2. Inconvenient conditions and bad things

When a dog died, Vietnamese people can say ‘chó chết ròi’. However, in daily communication, the Vietnamese often use ‘chó chết’ to imply a figurative meaning, which is terrible or rotten as in the example: ‘Chúng hai người bằng một âm mu chó chết.’ (They harmed others with a rotten plot.)

As talking about the poor, difficult and even miserable life conditions, the word ‘dog’ is popularly used in Vietnamese idiomatic expressions. In Vietnam, most people depend on the agriculture; therefore, lands are very important for them. Some lands are very good and fat but others are unfertilized and barren. To talk about the unfertilized and barren lands, there is a Vietnamese idiom ‘chó ăn đa gà ăn sối’. This idiom can have some variants such as ‘chó chạy hờ đuôi’; ‘chó ăn đa gà ăn muối’ or ‘chó nằm lơi lùng’. For example, ‘ở cái vùng chó ăn đa gà ăn sối này đến dâu đẹp cũng không sống nổi’ (Even one lettuce cannot grow in this unfertilised and berran land).

To describe the situation of someone who is quite poor still faces with many continuous difficulties and risks, we can say ‘chó cân áo rạch’. For example, ‘Ông lão đa nghèo lại bị mất cấp thật là chó cân áo rạch’ (Being stolen, the poor old man was in seriously difficult situation).
‘Chó cùng buurt giấu’ is normally used to talk about the action of the people who are in the last way of existence, they can do any things without careful thought or consideration. For example, ‘Sự quy phà của nó chẳng qua chỉ là hành động chó cùng buurt giấu mà thôi’. (His devastating actions are just the thoughtless or devil-may-care ones).

As well, after getting married to a girl, the men has to live in his wife’s house or live on his wife’s parents, people say that he is in ‘chó chui gầm chần’ situation. The Vietnamese also use ‘chó chui gầm chần’ to imply someone who does not do any jobs, just stays at home and live a dependent life. Or if someone is at a low ebb and as a result she/he has to rely on others, but she/he is treated badly. This kind of sorrow and disgraced situation can be expressed as ‘chó chui gầm chần’.

The Vietnamese use ‘chó dài lạc đường’ to describe the lamentable situation of the idiot who acts aggressively and thoughtlessly. For example, ‘Sau vụ liều đào áy, hận như chó dài lạc đường muốn trả thù’ (Being swindled seriously, he became the aggressive revenger).

To describe the stealthy and sudden attack of someone, people say ‘chó cắn trộm’. For example, ‘Nó chờ trộm chó cắn trộm nên không ai kịp phản ứng’ (They attacked suddenly and stealthily so no one could avoid).

In English, people use the idiom ‘dog-eat-dog’ to mention a situation where people have to take care of themselves and look after their own interests. If something is ‘dog-eat-dog’, survival is the main thing to worry about and the people can hurt their accomplices or partners. To talk about this action, in Vietnamese, there is an idiom ‘chó gầm xuống chó’.

If people want to confirm something which is unreal or laughable, they say ‘chó có váy linh’/‘chó dã vây dưới’. Such as in the sentence ‘Nó mà cùng làm được thơ thì chó có váy linh’ (It is unreal for him to write poems). In certain cases, when someone tries to imitate the others unsuitably, ridiculously or ludicrously, she/he can be said as ‘chó có váy linh’. For example, ‘Den như côt nhà cháy cùng quân là áo lựt, thật là chó có váy linh’.

The Vietnamese use the idiom ‘chó tha di mèo tha lại’ to mention something that is worthless. For example, ‘Cái vòng chó tha di mèo tha lại đó chẳng ai thèm lấy’ (This bracelet is worthless for someone to steal).
3.2.1.3. Expressing neutral points

Basing on the above ideas, most of the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ imply the bad points. However, there is one other idiom implying the neutral ones. To describe someone who is walking round perplexingly, people often say ‘loanh quanh như chó đơn chỗ dế’ or ‘loanh quanh như chó năm chó’l. For example, ‘Nó cù loanh quanh như chó đơn chỗ dế mà chẳng biết làm gì’ (He didn’t know what he should do besides walking round perplexingly).

We have presented the image of the dog in English and Vietnamese cultures as well as many interesting English and Vietnamese idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’. In order to find out the similarities and differences in the ways the English and Vietnamese cognize the image of the dog through these idioms, we have designed the following comparative analysis.

3.2.2. A comparative analysis with Vietnamese ones

In the following table, I have selected all the above idioms in which dogs appear. Surprisingly, there are four English idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ has their Vietnamese equivalents (7. a dirty dog vs 8. chó bán; 24. dog-eat-dog vs 27. chó gạm strong chó; 8. a mad dog vs 9. chó diên and 15. a dog’s life vs 17. đờí chó mà ).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In English</th>
<th>In Vietnamese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. top dog</td>
<td>1. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. big dog</td>
<td>2. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. like a dog with two tails</td>
<td>3. [vui như tê]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. help a lame dog over a stile</td>
<td>5. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. dog’s life</td>
<td>6. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. a dog’s chance</td>
<td>7. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. a dirty <strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>a mad <strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>a gay <strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>go to the <strong>dogs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>(to be) a <strong>dog</strong> in the manger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>(lead) a cat -and-<strong>dog</strong> life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>a <strong>dog</strong>’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>a <strong>dog</strong>’s breakfast/dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>in the <strong>doghouse</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td><strong>dog</strong>-tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>[done up/dressed like a <strong>dog</strong>’s dinner]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>the hair of the <strong>dog</strong> (that bit one)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>mean as a junk-yard <strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>sad as a hound <strong>dog</strong>'s eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>sick as a <strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td><strong>dog</strong>-eat-<strong>dog</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td><strong>dog</strong> and pony show</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>rain cats and <strong>dogs</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30. [Mưa như trút nước]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. <strong>the dog days</strong></td>
<td>31. [nóng như thiếu như dột]…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. <strong>a dog’s age</strong></td>
<td>32. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. <strong>dog ears/-eared</strong></td>
<td>33. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. <strong>dog</strong> someone’s (foot) steps</td>
<td>34. …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. …</td>
<td>35. <strong>chó</strong> này bàn đờm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. [What an ass!]</td>
<td>36. <strong>ngu</strong> như <strong>chó</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. [Son of a bitch!]</td>
<td>37. dột như <strong>cây</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. [What an arrant cur!]</td>
<td>38. [ dột như bổ tẩu]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. [What a scoundrel!]</td>
<td>39. <strong>chó</strong> đế</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. …</td>
<td>40. <strong>chó</strong> đếu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. …</td>
<td>41. <strong>chó</strong> mà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. …</td>
<td>42. <strong>chó</strong> đại căn cần</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. …</td>
<td>43. <strong>chó</strong> ghẻ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. …</td>
<td>44. <strong>chó</strong> lao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. …</td>
<td>45. (lấm lệt như) <strong>chó</strong> ăn vừng bột</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. …</td>
<td>46. <strong>chó</strong> sần</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. …</td>
<td>47. <strong>chó</strong> chết</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. [(to be)be driven to extremity]</td>
<td>48. <strong>chó</strong> ăn đa, gần ăn soi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. …</td>
<td>49. <strong>chó</strong> chạy hồ đuôi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. …</td>
<td>50. <strong>chó</strong> ăn đa gần ăn muối</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51. <strong>chó</strong> nầm lồi lưm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52. <strong>chó</strong> căn áo rách</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>53. <strong>chó</strong> cùng rứt giậu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54. <strong>chó</strong> chuối gầm chận</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55. <strong>chó</strong> đại lạc đường</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. Analysis

There may be still more idioms related to dogs that I have not known and have not included in this table. However, one thing that is clear from the table is that, we can see that idioms containing the word ‘dog’ appear more in Vietnamese (32) idioms than in English (27) ones.

Through the above presentation, we can see that there are many idiomatic expression containing the word ‘dog’ in which their negative meanings are many more than the positive ones.

Dogs in English idioms often symbolizes important or powerful positions in society. For example, they portray the positive meanings, for example ‘top dog’ or ‘big dog’.

In the two idioms ‘top dog’ and ‘big dog’, the English use the word dog but not other animals to refer to important people because they see the dog as the family member that is mentioned in the part literal meaning. In Vietnamese, however, there are no idioms containing the word ‘dog’ implying important people like that.

In Vietnamese, we can hardly see the idiomatic expression containing the word ‘dog’ which mentions the good personal characteristics or high status of people as well as the convenient conditions and good luck. In my thesis, there is only one phrase like it: **chó ngáp phải rơi**.

Meanwhile, dogs in Vietnamese are not considered as something respectful. Dogs carry negative meanings in idioms. For instance, when scolding someone, people often say **chó ngáp phải rơi**.
‘chó dêu’. Dogs are looked down on and scorned. They symbolize the bad, uneducated, insolent, rascal, scoundrel or caddish characteristics. Take these idioms as typical examples: ‘chó lão’, ‘chó má’.

One thing in common between English and Vietnamese idioms is that the dog does not portray its natural characteristics like loyalty or dependability. Rarely can we see this in idioms of both languages.

There are many English idioms with no correspondent in Vietnamese and vice versa, there are many Vietnamese idioms with no correspondent in English.

I carry out an analysis of those original Vietnamese idioms whose English counterparts are based on a different pragmatic scenario, or which do not have a correspondent dog idiom in English, as well as of those original English idioms for which there is not any Vietnamese correspondent ones. First of all, something that make me pay attention to that is in the cases in which there is an original English dog idiom which does not have a Vietnamese dog idiom counterpart, there are always other alternative idioms in Vietnamese based on a different metaphor, though transmitting the same message. This is the case of idioms 3, 16, 18, 22, 26 and 27 (number in English column). There is a change in the animal that act as protagonist in these figurative meanings.

Secondly, it is also interesting to note that the case of existing original Vietnamese idiom related to the dogs for which there is not a correspondent one in English. Idioms 12, 35, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 58, 59 and 60 (in Vietnamese column) do not have the equivalents in English. It is more frequent the complete lack of a Vietnamese idiom than the availability of an idiom related to the other pragmatic scenarios. This is happened in 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 28, 29 and 30 (number in English column). This shows the higher tendency in Vietnamese to use dog idioms to present how speaker deal with certain life experiences.

Going further, if we examine the messages those idioms transmit, we can see that there are certain coincidences with respect to their pragmatic and social meanings. Idioms 48, 49, 50 and 51 are all built around a common idea: unfertilized and barren land. However, these idioms do not have the same correspondent idiom related to the dog in English. Certainly, in English, the word ‘dog’ is also related to the unpleasant and terrible life in the cases of 15 (a dog’s life). Sharing the same meaning, in Vietnamese, it also has two correspondents 17 (dội chó má) and 18 (kiếp trâu chó). Therefore, we can find that
the frequency of using the word in Vietnamese referring to hard and difficult life is more than that in English.

Many English idioms containing the word ‘dog’ (3, 16, 18, 22, 26 and 27 in English column) have their Vietnamese partners, which convey the same meaning scenarios with other different expressions without the word ‘dog’. Also, many Vietnamese idioms related to dogs have their English correspondents which share the same meanings without the word ‘dog’ (36, 37, 41 and 53 in Vietnamese column). This exposes the differences in cultural features of the English language and Vietnamese one. For example, to talk about the foolish and ignorant, Vietnamese people often say ‘ngu như chó’ or ‘đột như cây’ because they consider dogs as the foolish and ignorant. In English, on the contrary, asses are seen as the foolish and ignorant so to mention the above idea, people say ‘What an ass’.

3.4. Summary

In this chapter, we have presented the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ in English and the comparison with Vietnamese ones. In the former part, we have discussed the images of the dog in the English culture and right after that the English idioms containing the word ‘dog’. These idioms imply the positive, negative and neutral meanings about human characters, human relationship, luck and life conditions and so on.

In the later part, we designed the image of the dog in Vietnamese culture before the Vietnamese idioms containing the word ‘dog’. These idioms also convey the positive, negative and neutral meanings about human characters, human relationship, lucks and life conditions. The comparative analysis is the last part to point out the similarities and differences between the English and Vietnamese cultures in the ways of using the word ‘dog’ in those idioms.
CONCLUSION

In both English and Vietnamese cultures, dog seemed to appear a long time ago and has its own different positions in these spiritual lives.

In English cultures, dog is the symbol of night, darkness and afterworld - the world of the dead. In many mythologies, dogs or dog-like beings guard the underworld from unwelcome guests such as the still living. In Vietnamese spiritual life, however, dogs are to protect against evils.

In Vietnamese culture, dog or the lion's whelp is one of the pure Vietnamese relics, which is created to protect houses as well as the spiritual life of the Vietnamese, whereas, in English cultures, dog is considered the guard of the death not the existence.

In daily life, the English see dogs as their family members or friends. The Vietnamese, however, often only treat them as a kind of animals with humble position. In Vietnamese, dogs are reared to protect house and they are also eaten during certain periods of the lunar year in the belief that this meat contributes to virility and longevity.

Studying the literal meaning of the word ‘dog’ and idiomatic meanings of the phrases and sentences containing the word ‘dog’ can help me to find out the similarities and differences in the ways the English and Vietnamese cognized the image of this animal. We see that there are many idioms concerning the word ‘dog’ in which their negative meanings are many more than the positive ones.

In terms of the differences, in English, there are many idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ pointing out the good personal characteristics or high status of people as well as the convenient conditions and good luck, such as: ‘top dog’, ‘big dog’, ‘a dog’s chance’, ‘top dog’). In Vietnamese, however, in comparison with English, we can hardly see the idiomatic expressions containing the word ‘dog’ which mentions the good personal characteristics or high status of people as well as the convenient conditions and good luck. In my thesis, there is only one phrase like it: ‘chó ngáp phải rơi’.

Although the image of the dog links to the negative meanings, the dog is still much loved by English people. It is considered as a family member in many English and American families. Many people often joke that the first important member in the family is children, the second one is the dog and then the third is the female owner and the last is
the male owner. The dog can be in bed with his owner or it has its own room or even inherits the owner’s fortune, etc.

In terms of the similarities, we can see that the English and Vietnamese all consider the image of the dog more concerning the negative meanings than the positive ones. In English, dogs can be linked to the worst, the most terrible and miserable things (‘a dog’s life’, ‘go to the dogs’) or in trouble (in the dogs house). To describe a world in which people fight for themselves only and will hurt other people; ruthless competition or self-interest, people two word ‘dog’ in the idiom ‘dog-eat-dog’, and many others.

In Vietnamese, there are so many idioms containing the word ‘dog’ with the negative meanings. Dogs in Vietnamese are not considered as something respectful. Dogs carry negative meanings in idioms. For instance, when scolding someone, people often say ‘chó dẹu’ or showing someone who is in the disgraced or disfavour situation, they say ‘chó chui gậm chẩn’. Dogs are looked down on and scorned. They symbolize for bad, uneducated, insolent, rascal, scoundrel or caddish characteristics. Take these idioms as typical examples: ‘chó lão’, ‘chó mà’.

Due to the limited time and knowledge, in this assignment, I only focused on the dog in English and Vietnamese. Therefore, I could see the cultural specific characteristics of each language community in using phrases and sentences concerning the word ‘dog’.
REFERENCES

IN ENGLISH

IN VIETNAMESE


INTERNET

38. http://www.blackwellpublishers.co.uk/LINGUIST/ (General Linguistics)