

English and vietnamese language comparison



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A Contrastive Analysis of Metaphors Relating to Some Upper Parts of Human Body between English and Vietnamese

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study on metaphors relating to some upper parts of human body between English and Vietnamese. There are four upper parts of human body consists of eye, nose, ear and mouth are chosen for data analysis. Nguyen Hoa (2004) classification of metaphors are based on their degree of unexpectedness. The results show that living metaphors, faded metaphors and dead metaphors are three main types of metaphors. Also, metaphors are varied from one language to another due to people's life experience, world views or people's cognition of the outside world and the language users' culture.

1. Introduction

One of the most vital functions of language is to name the world or express human thoughts through a system of concepts. In any case, the concepts expressed through language do not exist in seclusion from each other. Or maybe, they exist cooperatively in the language and make up a giant network with numerous interconnections and relationship among the different subparts. A good example of these interconnections includes metaphor, the comprehension of one concept regarding another.

Metaphor is not only used in literary or poetic language but also utilized in everyday conversational language. It can be seen that metaphor is used to express ideas sensibly and vividly as it has great expressive power.

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Furthermore, it also convey more of the human feeling, emotion and attitude towards what is said rather than the non-metaphorical.

One interesting idea in the language is that people got to know their own body and gave names to its parts. And then the human beings began comparing the surrounding things with their own body and finding common features in the process of cognition of the world. So the names of some upper parts of human body are transferred to refer many other things in the real world. They are personified to possess the same names with the some upper parts of human body. For instance, in English the word “ foot” denotes to the lowest part of the human and then on it is metaphorically used to denote to the lowest part of many things, for example, “ the foot of the hill”.

Not only in English but also in Vietnamese also use of metaphors, in such a way, many words referring parts of human body are also used metaphorically. For instance, the word “ chân” in Vietnamese equivalent to the word “ foot” in English is used as a metaphor to denote to the lowest part of the hill: “ Chân Ấ’ á»“ i”.

The way individual words, however, are used is not always the same in both languages. For instance, the word “ eye” in English is metaphorically used to denote to the hole of the needle, while the word “ má^ot” in Vietnamese is not used in such a way. It is metaphorically, however, used to denote to holes of a woven basket in another case.

E. g. Eye of the needle vs Má^ot rá»•.

It can be inferred that the words denoting some upper parts of human body are used metaphorically in English and Vietnamese and the way each word is used is varied in both languages. The way metaphors are used is because of people's life experience, world views and the language users' culture. So metaphors are varied from one language to another.

There are some questions arise: " How are the words denoting upper parts of human body used metaphorically in both English and Vietnamese?", " How much are they similar?" and " How much do they differ from each other?". For this reasons, the study titled " A contrastive analysis of metaphors relating to some upper parts of human body between English and Vietnamese" will be answer the questions mentioned.

2. Literature review

2. 1. *What is metaphor?*

Metaphor that comes from the Greek for " transference". According to Vo Dai Quang (2003, p. 33), metaphor is " word meaning transference based on similarity between two things as regards function, character, size, shape, age, colour, etc." As the following example:

E. g. She is a snake.

That is, the word " snake" has negative connotation because it is thought to be very dangerous and poisonous to people. Basing on this meaning, it is transferred to mention to the character of a person to imply that she is a dangerous person. The similarity in this situation between an animal and a person is about the character. Hence, this definition is clear and parabolic.

However, there is a question to be posed “ why do people have to use such an implicit way to convey the idea?”. According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1995, p. 734), metaphor is defined as “ the imaginative use of a word or a phrase to describe somebody/something as another object in order to show that they have the same qualities and as to make the description more forceful”. This definition is not as cleared as the above - mentioned definition about the association of similarity, however, it takes the use and the effect of metaphor into consideration. If we say “ She is a dangerous person”, it is not as forceful to the hearer as we say “ She is a snake”. Likewise, metaphor can convey the imagination of the language users so it is clearly more powerful and effective in communication.

Metaphor also be defined as follows “ an extension in the use of the word beyond its primary meaning to describe referents that bear similarities to the word’s primary referent”(Language-its structure and use, 1994). The term “ extension” mentions to the meaning of the word that can be extended beyond its literal meaning. So metaphor here is dealt with as a means of creating and expanding meaning to depict other referents which are similar to the word’s primary referent. Look at the above once more. The primary referent of the word “ snake” is one type of animal and in this metaphor, it mentions to another referent that is a risky person. This should be possible on the basis of the resemblance between the two referents.

The definition given by Barcelone (2000, p. 3) in which metaphor is defined as “ Metaphor is the cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially mapped or projected onto a different experiential domain so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one”. In this

definition, metaphor is understood as a conceptual projection whereby one experiential domain is understood regarding another. The character of a person, in the above example, is understood regarding a character of a snake.

Generally, metaphor mentioned above is viewed from different angles.

Basically, it is the way we call one object by the name of another because we compare these objects and pick up some common features between them.

It is necessary to distinguish “metaphor”, “simile” and “metonymy” because they are closely related. To begin with, “metaphor and simile” are forms of comparison. We compare two unlike things together in two ways. Metaphor, however, is hidden comparison and simile is the open comparison.

Take the following examples:

E. g. Tom is the head of the department.

Tom is like the head of the department.

The word “head” implies one part of human body that comprise the brain and can control the activity of the rest of the body. In this above example, the word “head” means to the people taking the controlling function as the leader in the department. It can be understood implicitly in the first example and in the second one, it can be understood explicitly. Putting it on the scale, metaphor is an equation and simile is an approximation. Obviously, they take different values and effects to the hearer.

Metaphor and metonymy are two types of transference of meaning. One object is named and understood regarding another. Metaphor, however, is

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based on the association of similarity while metonymy is based on the association of contiguity. Look at the two following examples:

E. g. She is the head of the department

Two heads are better than one

In the first example, the word “ head” refers to the leader and it is can be understood regarding the similarity of function; the head of human body and the leader of the department carry the mission to control the rest parts of the whole. In contrast, the word “ heads” in the second example refers to “ people” because they are related to each other- head is one part of human body. It can be done on the basis of part-whole relation in which the name of the part is used to refer to the whole.

Obviously, metaphor is related to simile and metonymy but it is quite distinguished from them. In addition, how metaphors function in language and they are classified will be showed as follow.

2. 2. Functions of metaphors

Metaphors are diverse in terms of values and functions in language, however, in this study only three basic functions given by a Vietnamese language specialist, Dinh Trong Lac(1994, p. 53), are mentioned. According to him, there are three basic functions of metaphors namely naming, cognitive and symbolic functions and basing on this he can group metaphors together.

2. 2. 1. Naming function

Firstly, the function of metaphors talked about is to name things. This is only the technical means to utilize the ready-made vocabulary to offer names to different things basing on the similarity between them. For instance, the lowest part of the mountain is known as the foot of the mountain as the foot on the human body is the lowest part. These metaphors are of almost no or very little rhetoric value but they can reflect the way in which things on the planet are seen together. They are just planned to offer names to things basing on the experience with the existing vocabulary.

2. 2. 2. Cognitive function

Secondly, the function of metaphors is to cognize or conceptualize things. These metaphors do not offer new names to things however conceptualize them as far as another. These metaphors operates between two domains, one domain is conceptualized regarding another. For instance, in the domain of weather, when it is sunny, the sun is sparkling and brings charming climate that can make people cheerful and agreeable. So the word “ sunny” has positive value and it is exchanged to discuss the mood of people as in the following illustration.

E. g. By the time he visited the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, John was in a sunny mood.

That is, John felt exceptionally cheerful and optimistic. Hereby, the human mood is conceptualized and comprehended under the words about weather. These metaphors are likewise conventional and of little rhetoric impact.

2. 2. 3. Symbolic function

Lastly, the function of metaphors is to symbolize things. This function is usually thought to be the conventional function of metaphors. For example, the flower regularly symbolizes for the beauty. So it is frequently compared to the woman's beauty.

E. g. Beauty is a flower which wrinkles will devour.

In the above illustration, the flower is compared to the beauty of woman that will devour like the flower. This kind of metaphors reflect the imaginative and creative way individuals assess and explain things, which can make their language more expressive and persuasive. They are extremely popular in poetic language. All in all, metaphors convey three major functions in language which are naming, cognitive and symbolic functions. Basing on that, metaphors relating to upper parts of human body are in the first group which are used to give names to things in the world.

2. 3. Kinds of metaphors

Metaphors can be classified basing on their degree of unexpectedness. According to Nguyen Hoa (2004, p. 109), there are three main kinds of metaphors namely living metaphors, faded metaphors and dead metaphors.

2. 3. 1. Living metaphors

When a word is unexpected and quite unpredictable is called living metaphor. It is used in unusual meaning and metaphor is easily recognized by the hearer. It is created and used by individuals.

E. g. She is my sun

It can be seen that the sun lights our earth by day, which can makes people's life brighter and more joyful. Hence, when a people who is thought to make the other's life brighter and more joyful is viewed as " the sun". These metaphors are called *creative or poetic metaphors* as it reflects the creative use of language and they are appended to the symbolic functions as mentioned above are especially utilized in literature and poetry. They are not common in everyday language usage. They are sometimes called *genuine metaphors* because it is the common sense when people discuss metaphors and they have great rhetoric effect on the hearer.

2. 3. 2. Faded metaphors

Metaphor which lost its freshness because of long use and traditional use and became habitual in daily language usage. For example, gold is one sort of very valuable material and when people mention the adjective " golden", it implies that something made of gold. Besides, it is say that " golden youth", it means that the adolescent in a man's life is likewise as valuable as gold. Metaphors are so normal in everyday language that they are sometimes not felt as metaphors. These metaphors can bring about polysemy of so many words in language. Among the functions examined, they are attached to the naming and cognitive functions.

2. 3. 3. Dead metaphors

Dead metaphor- where metaphoric sense is not felt at all because they have lost their indirect meaning and are used only figuratively. For instance, the word " capital" in English used to mean the head which is considered as the most critical part on the human body. So it was metaphorically used to refer

to the most important city or town of a country which is usually the center of government. Hence, it was metaphorically used to refer to the most important city or town of a nation which is generally the center of government. But now the word “capital” is not utilized literally as the head of the human body, however, it just means the capital of the country as in the sentence: “Paris is the capital of France”. These metaphors do not make up many in language. Indeed, these metaphors are difficult or almost impossible to be recognized as metaphors.

In general, there are three principle sorts of metaphors which are living, faded and dead metaphors. In short, metaphors relating to parts of human body are called faded metaphors since they become the means of everyday language to give names to things in the world.

3. Aim and objectives of the study

This study is conducted with the aims of theoretical and practical.

Theoretically is proposed to give a profound and methodical review on the metaphorical uses of words meaning upper parts of human body in both English and Vietnamese and attempt to clarify the reasons why the words are utilized as a part of such ways. Meantime, it is gone for finding the features that English and Vietnamese impart to and vary from each other in the utilization of metaphors relating to upper parts of human body.

Practically is proposed to empower learners of English to have an understanding into metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in English and additionally in their mother tongue so they can improve their vocabulary of the language they are learning and decipher them effectively

in communication or translate them well into their own mother tongue and vice versa.

4. Research methodology

4. 1. Approach intended for the study

Here the two languages to be specific English and Vietnamese are compared and contrasted. In this contrastive analysis, English is dealt with as the instrumental language and Vietnamese is the target language. In this manner, any instances of metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in English will be recorded and analyzed first and after that they will be compared and contrasted with Vietnamese to discover the similarities and differences between the two languages.

4. 2. Methods of the study

This study is conducted with a combination of the comparative and contrastive. Firstly, the theoretical background of metaphors will be given talked about through the basic readings of related materials. Besides, once general theories are given, the data about specific cases of metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in two languages utilized for illustration will be gathered from different sources of data, for example, dictionaries, books, daily papers, magazines furthermore practical observation. Thirdly, it is to choose the typical examples and analyze them. In the meantime, comparative and contrastive techniques will be used to discover the common and the distinguished features in the utilization of metaphors relating to upper parts of human body between English and

Vietnamese. Finally, some conclusions will be made about what has been analyzed and compared.

4. 3. Metaphors relating to some upper parts of human body in English and Vietnamese

4. 3. 1. Metaphors relating to “ eye” in English and “ má^ot” in Vietnamese

We can easily find some common features in the metaphorical use of the words denoting eyes between the two languages. Firstly, our eyes are round and small in shape, in two languages, the two words “ eye” and “ má^ot” imply to the shape of a potato. It has many circled and many small spot on it.

For example: In English: Eye of the potato

In Vietnamese: Má^ot khoai tây

(English-Vietnamese Dictionary, 1993, p. 581)

Moreover, the word “ má^ot” in Vietnamese is refer to many small and rounded-shaped things on the peel of many sorts of fruit and things. In contrast, the word “ eye” in English is not refer to these cases. Look at the table below.

Table 1:

In	In
Englis	Vietnamese
h	
	Má ^o -t tre,
	má ^o -t mía,
None	má ^o -t
in	lÆ ^o á»>i,
Englis	má ^o -t
h	dá»©a,
	má ^o -t xích,
	má ^o -t rá»•,
	etc..

However, the word “ eye” in English denote the eye-shaped spots on the tail of the peacock and piece of metal used together with a hook in order to fasten clothes. For example, “ Eye of the peacock’s tail” (Vocabulary, p. 26), “ Hook and eye of the dress” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1995, p. 410)

In English and Vietnamese, when we see into a person’s eyes and the central position of the eyes when we see around, the words “ eye” and “ má^o-t” refer to the centre of the cyclone and wind blows. For example, in English: “ Eye of the storm”, “ Eye of the wind” while in Vietnamese: “ Má^o-t bão” (English-Vietnamese Dictionary, 1993, p. 581)

Another interesting point is that the world becomes bright and clear when we open our eyes and see and when the sun rises and opens on a day, the world

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is also sheeny. Hence, the British calls the sun “ the eye of the day”.

Similarly, the British also calls “ the private eye” when our eyes has function of observing others secretly to get information. However, Vietnamese has not these interesting features as in English.

4. 3. 2. Metaphors relating to “ nose” in English and “ mũi” in Vietnamese

First of all, the nose which is the front part pointing in shape so it used to refer to the front pointed part of an airplane. For instance, in English: “ He brought the aircraft’s nose up and made a perfect landing”, whereas in Vietnamese “ Anh ta lái mũi máy bay lên và thả cánh hoàn toàn” (English-Vietnamese Dictionary, 1993, p. 1140)

Another interesting is that Vietnamese used the word “ mũi” in order to denote to part of some tools or objects. In contrast, the word “ nose” in English is not used in such a way. To understand clearly about the lexemes “ nose” and “ mũi”, the below table will be illustrate.

Table 2:

In English	In Vietnamese
nose of an airplane	mũi máy bay
	mũi Cà

none in
 English Mau
 none in
 nose of Vietnames
 a car e
 none in
 English mĂ©i kim

Especially, the word “ mĂ©i” in Vietnamese is figuratively used to refer to the forward direction of the attack of the soldiers. But English does not share this interesting feature as in Vietnamese.

4. 3. 3. Metaphors relating to “ ear” in English and “ tai” in Vietnamese

The ears are of organ of hearing, they are the small and curved parts that locate at the sides of the head. The two lexemes “ ear” and “ tai” in both languages are used in metaphors to denote to the parts of things which have the similar features. However, they are used to denote to do not the same in some cases. The table below will be illustrate.

Table 3:

In	In
English	Vietname
	se
none in	tai ná©m
English	tai b��o
none in	

English	tai cá»' i
	xay
none in	
English	none in
	Vietname
ear of a	se
corn	
	none in
ear of a	Vietname
newspap	se
er	
	tai bình
ear of	Ä' á»±ng
the jug	nÆ°á»>c

In the above table, there are some similar in both languages in the way that the words referring the ear are used to denote to the small and curved part on the side of a container such as jug and cup. But the word “ tai” in some cases Vietnamese is used to denote to the two parts on both sides of the mortar in the expression “ tai cá»' i xay”. In contrast, the word “ ear” in English is not used to share this. Similarly, the word “ tai” in Vietnamese is used to denote to the bud of a mushroom while the word “ ear” in English is not used to share it. However, in the same way, it is used to denote to the small part of a corn in the expression “ ear of a corn”. Another interesting is that the word “ ear” is used to denote to the minor and short piece of a newspaper in the expression “ ear of a newspaper” but the equivalent do not exist in Vietnamese. Generally, there are some common and distinguished

features in the metaphorical use of the words denoting the mouth between the English and Vietnamese.

4. 3. 4. Metaphors relating to “ mouth” in English and “ miá»ng” in Vietnamese

In both in English and Vietnamese, there are numerous common features in the metaphorical use of the words denoting the mouth. It can be seen that when we open the mouth, it can work as the passage for the nourishment or drink to go in. So, the word “ mouth” and “ miá»ng”, in both languages, are used to refer to the open part of something especially containers through which we can place things in. For example, in English: “ A decorative pattern round the mouth of the bag.” (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 1995, p. 760)

That is, the bag is one kind of containers and we place something in it through the open and front part of it called “ the mouth”. Similarly, the word “ miá»ng túi” in Vietnamese is equivalent to this case in English. However, the equivalents of the two words “ mouth” and “ miá»ng do not exist in both English and Vietnamese. For instance, the word “ mouth” in English is used to denote to the open part of a cave or river, whereas the word “ miá»ng” in Vietnamese is used to denote to the open part of an injury. And here are some examples:

Table 4:

In	In
English	Vietnames

e

none in

miá»†ng

English

Äfn

mouth

none in

of the

Vietnames

river

e

none in

miá»†ng

English

váºt

mouth

thÆ°Æing

of the

none in

archite

Vietnames

ct

e

mouth

miá»†ng

of the

há»™ p

box

In short, there are some similarities and differences in the use of the words denoting the mouth between the two languages.

5. Results and discussion

All in all, the discoveries about the similarities and differences in the metaphors relating to upper parts of human body has clearly demonstrated the common and distinguished features in the way in which English and Vietnamese think and view the world surrounding them. In both countries, people all comprehend parts of their body well in shape, position, function, <https://assignbuster.com/english-and-vietnamese-language-comparison/>

etc...and relate these features to features of things in the world to name them by utilizing the names of upper parts of the body. In the specific cases, however, they utilize a certain word about a part of human body to refer things are not always the same as they think and view the world differently. In addition, people in each nation have their own way and habitat of utilizing the language creatively so this prompts to the distinctions in the metaphors in the both languages. For these reason, the existence of similarities and differences in the metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in two languages are reasonable and understandable. Moreover, metaphors relating to upper parts of human body can help to create new meanings that enrich the vocabulary in two languages. Another interesting is that “ metaphor is one kind of personification” (Nguyễn Chiếu, 1992) because everything in the world is not seen in but in the relationship with human beings. It means that things in the world are always found in the associative eye of people.

I hoped that the findings about the basic metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in this study will help students not only to acquire these interesting and popular use of the words but also to motivate them in their further language study.

6. Summary

This study has provided a systematic and clear view on metaphors relating to upper parts of human body in English and Vietnamese. First and foremost, words denoting upper parts of human body are popularly used in metaphor in both languages. Secondly, the metaphors, in most cases, relating to them depend on the similar associations of their semantic features. The referents, <https://assignbuster.com/english-and-vietnamese-language-comparison/>

however, they are used to refer in specific cases are not always similar. Last but not least, the more frequently the words are used in metaphors, the more similar features metaphors relating to them in English and Vietnamese share.

If I have an opportunity in the future, my future research could be conducted to study the metaphorical use of the words denoting lower, medial and internal parts of human body and the different metaphorical use of the words referring human body parts when they function in other parts of speech such as verbs, adjectives, etc. I hope that this scope will become more various and meaningful and the reader will have a broader view about this interesting subject between the two languages.

7. Implications

The results of this study can help to suggest the following implications:

- In teaching English, understanding metaphors relating to some upper parts of human body can help student discover the connection between the metaphorical meaning and the literal meaning of the word to find the new meaning for themselves.
- As discussed above, there are many similarities and differences in the metaphorical use of words denoting some upper parts of human body between English and Vietnamese, hence the translators need to be aware of this in the process translation. That is, translators ought to keep away the word-for-word translation while translating these lexemes as they are differently utilized in each language, by people in each nation.

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