

SOME CULTURAL FEATURES MANIFESTED IN ENGLISH - VIETNAMESE PROVERBS

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Abstract

Proverbs are an important part of language. Mastering and using proverbs at the right time and in the right place will make the content of the language richer, clearer, more vivid and convincing. Understanding the proverbial treasure of the country you are studying, and at the same time having a comparative look with the proverbial treasure of Vietnam will be very useful for language teaching and learning. As an English teacher, I am very interested in this topic because in the process of teaching I see that in Vietnamese and English languages, speakers have many different expressions, which is very interesting, so I focus on research on the topic “Some culture features manifested in English - Vietnamese proverbs” with the hope that this article will contribute significantly to supplementing the content of the lectures of teachers who teach Vietnamese and English.

Keywords: *English - Vietnamese proverbs, proverbs.*

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VÀI NÉT VĂN HOÁ QUA MỘT SỐ TỤC NGỮ ANH - VIỆT

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Tóm tắt

Tục ngữ là một phần quan trọng của ngôn ngữ. Nắm vững và sử dụng tục ngữ đúng lúc, đúng chỗ sẽ làm cho nội dung của ngôn ngữ càng trở nên phong phú, trong sáng, sinh động và giàu sức thuyết phục. Tìm hiểu kho tàng tục ngữ của đất nước mình đang học, đồng thời có một cái nhìn so sánh với kho tàng tục ngữ của Việt Nam sẽ rất bổ ích cho việc dạy và học ngôn ngữ. Là giáo viên tiếng Anh, tôi rất tâm đắc chủ đề này vì trong quá trình giảng dạy tôi thấy trong ngôn ngữ tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh, người nói có nhiều cách diễn đạt khác nhau rất thú vị vì vậy tôi tập trung nghiên cứu đề tài “Vài nét văn hoá qua một số tục ngữ Anh -Việt” với hy vọng bài viết này sẽ góp phần không nhỏ vào việc bổ sung nội dung cho bài giảng của giáo viên dạy tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: *Tục ngữ Anh-Việt, tục ngữ.*

1. Introduction

Language is a means of communication between people and is an extremely valuable treasure stored by humans since its formation to today. Campbell (2001, p. 563) said that “Sociolinguistics is concerned with “real-life” language issues in social context. While formal linguistics constructs a simplified language whose behavior can be predicted, sociolinguistics tries to cope with the messiness of language as a social phenomenon. It was Ferdinand de Saussure, the pioneer of structural linguistics as an autonomous science, who called language a social fact”. Language is one of the important factors in the formation of a nation, especially in a multi-ethnic society. It is the most important communication tool for people. Proverbs and idioms are also considered a cultural mark in sociolinguistics. Those are short sayings often used while speaking and writing, which are instructive or satirical about life stories.

1.1. Proverb concept

Up to now, many authors from different fields have been interested in the concept of proverbs such as Hoang (1992, p. 172), etc. but they still disagree on defining what a proverb is. According to author Hoàng Trinh (1992) “Even some leading proverbs have had to admit that no definition can clearly define what a proverb is.”. However, researchers basically agree that proverbs are a linguistic unit with the function of informing, the ability to create independent sentences in the form of speech, relatively stable structural form, knowledge extraction, practice.

1.2. Comparative concept

Comparison is a common form of communication in all languages. The concept of comparison has been interested by many authors in different fields. The linguist concept of comparison is to look at one and see the other to see the similarity, difference or superiority. Sociologists such as Festinger, L., Durkheim, É., Tenbruck, F. H. argue that comparison is thinking, an indirect experimental method, a social and cultural process. (Cited from Tran, 2012).

Lai (2004, p. 385) said that comparison is a method of translating meaning (rhetoric), an artistic method in which the expression in figurative language is made on the basis of comparing and finding similar signs, aiming at highlighting the properties and characteristics of things or phenomena.

Bui (2008, p. 95) affirmed that comparison is a universal thinking manipulation of mankind. Through comparison, people discover many properties and relationships (qualitative and quantitative) between things and phenomena in the world.

On the basis of studying different perspectives on the concept of comparison of researchers, I believe that comparison is a mode of expression when comparing one thing or another phenomenon with other objects or phenomena, they have some commonality that evokes an image or emotion in the perception of the listener or reader.

2. Materials and method

To make this article, I rely on the comparative method based on comparative concept to show the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese proverbs. The contrast method aims to highlight the contrasts in proverbs of native English speakers and Vietnamese native speakers; At the same time, it shows the influence of social, cultural, customs and production factors on the use of proverbs. The function of each proverb is considered in terms of pragmatics. In addition, the article also uses a local method, supplemented with an analytical method. This method aims to analyze the semantic-pragmatic characteristics of proverbs. In my capacity and scope, I only survey the corpus in books, dictionaries and stories about proverbs by Vietnamese and foreign authors.

3. Results and discussion

The article provides specific knowledge about proverbs in English and Vietnamese, shows the similarities and differences of proverbs between English and Vietnamese. It helps enhancing daily communication, cross-cultural communication as well as building more effective language teaching and learning strategies. The research results can be applied in practice, contributing to enriching the "words of mouth" of native speakers, Vietnamese people learning English or British people learning Vietnamese. The research results of the article also contribute to understanding the cultural-ethnic characteristics through the language and communication of British and Vietnamese.

3.1. Resources on proverbs

Proverbs are short, stable, rhythmic folk sayings, images, expressing people's experiences in all

aspects (nature, production, and society), which are used by the people. into everyday life, thoughts and words. Proverbs are formed from practical life, in the production and struggle life of the people, and are composed by the people; good intentions or from foreign borrowing. Between form and content, proverbs have a close connection, a proverb usually has two meanings: literal and figurative. Proverbs have the nature of concluding, generalizing specific remarks into mottos and truths. As Mieder (2004, P. xii) stated “Since proverb collections usually list the texts of proverbs without their social contexts, they do not reveal their actual use and function that varies from one situation to another”.

3.1.1. What is a proverb?

Proverbs are consistently described as self-contained, pithy, traditional expressions with didactic, content and fixed, poetic form. Proverbs are a special linguistic phenomenon, a phenomenon of social consciousness that reflects the way people speak, think and live through the ages. It is a genre of folklore that exists as words rather than narratives and lyrics like other literary genres. Proverbs have the main function of summarizing experience, knowledge, making judgments, morals, justice or criticism in the form of short, complete, rhyming, easy to remember sentences, easy to transmit. Proverbs are a genre born in the earliest category, with the richest number and the most lasting vitality. It is the summation of the wisdom and soul of the working people, sometimes each proverb is not only a judgment, a philosophy but also a valuable text. Proverbs are often interspersed with daily sayings by Vietnamese people to express ideas, making the writing more colorful, accurate and convincing.

Example: “Tốt gỗ hơn tốt nước sơn”.

“Xấu hay làm tốt, dốt hay nói chữ”.

“Một câu nhin chín câu lành”/ “Một sự nhin chín sự lành”.

Even the simplest proverb has its artistic properties. Proverbs show and guide experiences on how to comment, evaluate, behave and practice phenomena. The volume of proverbs accumulated for a long time and increasingly rich has created one of the outstanding features of the Vietnamese language, which is rich in images.

Proverbs always have two meanings: **Literal** (original meaning) and figurative (metaphorical, figurative meaning). **The literal meaning** refers to the direct meaning, the original meaning when the proverb was first formed, while **the figurative meaning** is the meaning that is spread, expanding the concept through the process of transmission in space and time. For example, in the proverb “Đục nước béo cò” stork is a bird that lives in ponds and rice fields. Before planting rice, farmers used to plow their paddy fields, fish and shrimp could not stand the muddy water, so they stuck their heads out of the water to breathe. Right at this time the stork can eat the bowl without much labor. The deep meaning of this proverb blames the bad habits of those who take advantage of opportunities, but if it is within the scope of work, it criticizes the dishonest way of life that only wants to rob other people's labor for profit, for themselves.

The vast majority of proverbs appear on the basis of the **working, productive** and fighting life of the people of each region and each ethnic group. It is also understandable that when reflecting a certain phenomenon of life, many different ethnic groups have similar expressions. For example, to reflect the phenomenon that when there is no one in the house to look after, the animals are spoiled, the proverb has a sentence:

Vietnamese people: “Vắng chủ nhà gà vọc niêu tôm”.

British: “When the cat is away, the mice will play”.

Tay people: “Mèo ra cửa chuột múa kỳ lân”.

Cambodians: “Vắng mèo chuột lên ngôi”.

French: “Le chat parti, les souris dansent”.

Many proverbs of the nations have the same philosophy and generalization, but the way of saying and symbolizing is different. The following proverbs reflect the philosophy that the person who makes the product should not enjoy the product he made:

Vietnamese people: “Ở nhà vườn ăn cau sâu”.

“Bán áo quan chết bó chiếu”.

British/French: “Thợ giày luôn đi đôi giày thủng”.

Russian: “Thợ giày đi chân đất”.

Afghanistan: “Nhà người thợ gốm chẳng có chiếc bình lành”.

Bangladesh: “Nhà người thợ lợp mái bị dột”.

A proverb can be considered as a complete “literary work” because it contains all three basic functions of literature: **Cognitive, aesthetic and educational**. For example, the Vietnamese proverb “Thuận vợ thuận chồng, tát bể Đông cũng cạn” fully expresses a comment about the strength of solidarity, an experience of cooperation at work, a morality in the husband-and-wife relationship. **The cognitive function** in this proverb is to help people understand that the basis of the husband-and-wife relationship is equality, democracy and mutual understanding. **The educational function** is to contribute to the improvement of people's thoughts and feelings in a good direction in the husband-and-wife relationship in particular and in human relations in general. **The aesthetic function** is to express the above thought, and people use a glossy way of speaking with images, so the above thought is concretized and convincing.

Some proverbs are drawn from or extracted from human creations. The beautiful words of famous leaders, thinkers, cultures, and activists of the times have been folkized into proverbs:

Poems from the story of Kieu:

“Cảnh nào cảnh chẳng đeo sầu,
Người buồn cảnh có vui đâu bao giờ”.
“Có tài mà cậy chi tài,
Chữ tài liền với chữ tai một vần”.

Uncle Ho's sayings:

“Không có gì quý hơn độc lập tự do”.
“Vì lợi ích mười năm trồng cây, vì lợi ích trăm năm trồng người”.

3.1.2. Reflective content of proverbs

Proverbs reflect experiences in agricultural labor, animal husbandry, and fishing. The following Vietnamese proverbs closely observe natural phenomena affecting agricultural production: “Gió bắt hiu hiu, sếu kêu thì rét” “Mùa hè đang nắng, cỏ gà trắng thì mưa”. The national identity of Vietnam as an agricultural inhabitant who takes wet rice as staple food is very clearly expressed in many proverbs about production experience: “Gà què ăn quần cối xây”, “Một tiền gà, ba tiền thóc”, “Sai con toán, bán con trâu”. Although the experience of husbandry and fishery is not as rich as that of agriculture, it has provided farmers and fishermen with useful lessons: “Tôm chạng vạng, cá rặng đồng”; “Chăm trăn lọ đuôi không nuôi cũng nậy”.

Vietnamese proverbs visualize **the development stages of social history**. For example, “Ăn lông ở lỗ”; “Chồng chung vợ chạ” The following proverb recalls the heroic spirit of the rebellion against the Mongols in the 13th century: “Cờ bay Sơn Động, ngựa lồng Chương Dương”. “Lê tồn Trinh tại, Lê bại Trinh vong” talks about the history of Vietnam in the early 16th century when the Le dynasty entered the path of decline, the Le emperor became a puppet for the Trinh lord to hide behind and eliminate the opposing factions.

Vietnamese proverbs have strongly broken into the bad habits of the ruling class such as kings, mandarins, landowners, theocracies, which are greed, cruelty, falsehood, manners, etc.: “Muốn nói gian, làm quan mà nói”; “Quan thấy kiện như kiến thấy mỡ”; “Cửa vào quan như than vào lò”; “Bà chúa đứt tay bằng ăn mây đồ ruột”; “Miệng nam mô, bụng bỏ dao găm”.

Proverbs also reflect **the customs and living habits** of the people: “Phép vua thua lệ làng”; “Một miếng giữa làng hơn một sàng xó bếp”; “Mòng bầy hội Khám, mòng tám hội Dầu, mòng chín đầu đầu trở về hội Dóng”. Proverbs make comments and assessments about the characteristics of each locality, each specialty, and the characteristics of the people in those regions. For example: “Bánh dày nếp cái, con gái họ Ngô”; “Chè Vân Thái, gái Tiên Lữ”; “Trai Cầu Vòng Yên thế, gái Nội Duệ Cầu Lim”; “Thứ nhất kinh kỳ, thứ nhì Phố Hiến”.

Humanism and people's behaviors are also the unique content of proverbs. The nature of Vietnamese people is gentle, rich in compassion, respect for trust, desire to live in peace, know how to love and care for each other in times of trouble. This is clearly expressed in literature in general and in proverbs in particular. For example, the following proverbs: “Lựa lời mà nói cho vừa lòng nhau”; “Được làm vua thua làm giặc”; “Một giọt máu đào hơn ao nước lã”; “Lá lành đùm lá rách”; “Một lời nói, một đọi máu”; “Một con ngựa đau cả tàu bỏ cỏ”.

Proverbs contain rudimentary philosophical elements. It is the recognition that the world exists objectively: “Chạy trời không khỏi nắng”, the causal relationship: “Rau nào sau ấy”. The philosophy of small quantity that will not change the quality is expressed in the proverbs of ethnic groups as follows:

Vietnam: “Một con én không làm nên mùa xuân”.
 English: “One swallow does not make a summer”.
 Indonesia: “Một hạt đậu không nấu thành nồi cháo”.
 India: “Một bó đuốc không soi sáng biển cả”.
 “Một ngón tay không che nổi mặt trời”.

Hindu: “Một bông hoa không làm nên vòng nguyệt quế”.

3.1.3. Artistic features of proverbs

Proverbs use **specific images to express an abstract concept**, use **the particular to express the common**: “Kiến tha lâu cũng đầy tổ”, “Có công mài sắt có ngày nên kim”; using **similes**: “Con có cha như nhà có nóc”, “Miệng bà đồng, lòng chim khiêu”, using the method of **personification**: “Đũa mốc chòi mâm son”, “Nén bạc đâm toạc tờ giấy”.

Proverbs in terms of form

In terms of form, Vietnamese proverbs have **rhymes**. Rhyming is very rich, for example the following sentences:

Rhyming together: “Bút **sa**, gà **chết**”.

“Có **tật**, **giật** mình”.

Rhymes separated by one word: “May **tay** hơn **hay** thuốc”.

“Lấy vợ xem **tông**, lấy **chồng** xem **giống**”.

Rhymes separated by two words: “Một miếng khi **đói** bằng một **gối** khi no”.

“Không có **cá**, lấy rau **má** làm ngon”.

Rhymes separated by three or four words: “Nhất tự vi **sur**, bán tự vi **sur**”.

“Việc người thì **sáng**, việc mình thì **quáng**”.

There are rare sentences that do not rhyme, but also have a rhythm that makes listeners feel comfortable:

“Gà què ăn quẩn cối xay”.

“No nên Bụt, đói ra ma”.

3.2. Distinguish proverb from idiom

From a theoretical point of view, it is difficult to have a precise and accurate definition based on which to clearly distinguish the boundary between idioms and proverbs. This speaks to the deep, intertwined, overlapping relationship between idioms and proverbs as well as the "flexibility" and "flexibility" in how to use them in practice. In Vietnamese, there are idioms that just need to be added a few words to become proverbs or highly proverbial sentences. Compare:

“Rồng đến nhà tôm” (only one phenomenon).

“Mấy đời rồng đến nhà tôm” (Overview of a rule).

“Xấu như ma” (only one characteristic).

“Xấu như ma vinh hoa cũng đẹp” (generalization of a rule).

However, there are criteria that help us distinguish the difference between proverbs and idioms, which are:

- **In terms of form**, idioms are expressed by fixed phrases (equivalent to words), while proverbs are expressed in sentences.

- **In terms of content**, idioms express concepts and proverbs express judgments.

- **In terms of function**, idioms have the function of identifying and proverbs have the function of announcement.

Idioms do not make a comment or criticism like proverbs, so they often carry an aesthetic function, not a cognitive and educational function, without these two functions, it cannot become literature, so idioms belong to language. The Vietnamese idiom “Mặt hoa da phấn” only shows the graceful beauty of a woman, but does not make any comments or criticisms, so it does not say any lessons about people and society. The English idiom "To have one foot in the grave", (literally, one foot has entered the grave) only speaks to the situation of being near the earth, far from heaven, near the mouth of someone's hole.

3.3. A comprehensive view of culture in Vietnamese and English proverbs

3.3.1. Animal images in Vietnamese and English proverbs

Vietnam is a country with an agricultural economy that depends on nature, the main food is wet rice. The image of animals in Vietnamese proverbs is always associated with fields, rice plants, and rivers, in which **buffalo** are the typical animal because the buffalo is the means of production for farmers. Vietnamese farmers consider buffaloes and rice plants as their inherent assets:

“Con trâu là đầu cơ nghiệp”.

“Trâu ra, mạ vào”.

The buffalo is also a symbol of strength:

“Trâu he cũng bằng bò khô”.

“Trâu gày cũng tày bò giống”.

“Trâu ho cũng bằng bò rống”.

The buffalo also symbolizes the collective, the community, the faction:

- “Trâu ta ăn cỏ đồng ta,
- Tuy rằng cỏ cụt nhưng mà cỏ thơm”.
- “Trâu đồng nào ăn cỏ đồng ấy”.
- “Trâu buộc ghét trâu ăn”.

The buffalo is a symbol of privileges, or the expression of low status of workers:

- “Trâu chậm uống nước đục”.
- “Trâu chậm uống nước đục,
- Trâu ngơ ăn cỏ héo”.

Plowing and harrowing has helped farmers have useful lessons in choosing buffaloes and herding buffaloes:

- “Trâu trắng đi đâu, mất mùa đấy”.
- “Trâu thịt thì gầy, trâu cày thì béo”.
- “Trăm trâu cũng một công chăn”.
- “Trâu hay ác thì trâu vạt sừng”.

Vietnam's rural terrain is a river environment, so “fish” is a rich and popular food source for farmers. Fishing experience has helped farmers have useful lessons:

- “Cá cả ở vực sâu”.
- “Tôm chạng vạng, cá rạng đông”.
- “Cá không ăn muối cá ương”.

Because the river environment is very close to the people, the image of fish appears a lot in Vietnamese proverbs:

- “Cá chuối đấm đuối vì con”.
- “Cá dưới sông, vợ chồng thuyền chài đánh nhau”.
- “Cá kẻ đầu, rau kẻ mớ”.
- “Cá lớn nuốt cá bé”.
- “Cá mè đè cá chép”.
- “Cá mè một lứa”.
- “Cá no mồi khó nhử”.
- “Cá thia quen chậu, chồn đền quen hang”.

Wet rice plants, fields and images of storks are often very closely linked. Vietnamese farmers consider **storks** to be close animals, so it is not surprising that the image of storks appears a lot in proverbs. The stork signifies hard work; however, it often steals the work of other animals:

- “Cốc mò, cò xoi”.

- “Đục nước, béo cò”.
- “Cò gõ mỏ cò thật”.
- “Cò vạc kiếm ăn từng thung”.
- “Cò kiếm cò nóc, cóc kiếm cóc ăn”.

Vietnamese proverbs use the image of a **bird** to educate people to think maturely, to have good manners and lifestyle:

- “Chim khôn tìm chỗ đậu”.
- “Chim có tổ, người có tông”.
- “Chim khôn kêu tiếng rảnh rang,
- Người khôn nói tiếng dịu dàng dễ nghe”.
- “Chim tham ăn sa vào vòng lưới,
- Cá tham mồi mắc phải lưới câu”.
- “Chim khôn tiếc lông, người khôn tiếc lời”.

Contrary to Vietnam, the UK is a country with an industrial economy. Moreover, the industry in England developed very early, so the economy was less attached and dependent on nature. The farm economy in England is very developed, so the image of a **sheep** and a **horse** appears a lot in English proverbs:

“One scabbed **sheep** will mar a whole flock” (Con sâu bỏ rầu nồi canh).

“Every family has a black **sheep**” (Bàn tay ai cũng có ngón dài ngón ngắn).

“To set the wolf to keep the **sheep**” (Nuôi ong tay áo).

“Let every **sheep** hang by its own shank” (Đòi cua cua máy, đòi cáy cáy đào).

“It is a small flock that has not a black **sheep**” (Mía sâu có đốt, nhà dột có nơi).

“It is a good **horse** that never stumbles” (Ăn cơm còn có khi đổ).

“Money makes the **mare** go” (Có tiền mua tiên cũng được), (Tiền của khiến ngựa cất bước), (Đồng bạc đâm toạc tờ giấy).

“Never look a gift **horse** in the mouth” (Của cho chó so đo ít nhiều).

“A long road tests a **horse**, long draw-out affairs test a friend” (Đường dài thử ngựa, công việc kéo dài thử bạn).

“Never change/swap **horses** in mid stream” (Không nên thay ngựa giữa dòng, đổi ý giữa cuộc).

“Do not spur the willing **horse**” (Người khôn đâu phải dài lời).

“All lay loads on the willing **horses**” (Người khôn nhọc lo, đũa đại ăn no lại nằm).

“To lock the stable door after the **horse** is stolen” (Mất bò mới lo làm chuồng).

Animals close to the British in everyday life such as **dogs, cats**. Other animals such as the **mouse/ rat**, the **lion** also appear a lot in English proverbs:

“Every **dog** has its day” (Không ai giàu ba họ, không ai khó ba đời).

“Love me, love my **dog**” (Yêu ai yêu cả đường đi, ghét ai ghét cả tông ty họ hàng), (Yêu cây mới nhớ đến hoa).

“An old **dog** will learn no new tricks” (Mãng không uốn tre già nõ đốt).

“The **dog** will not yelp if you beat him with a bone” (Há miệng mắc quai).

“When the **cat** is away, the **mice** will play” (Chủ vắng nhà gà vọc nêu tôm).

“He that lives down with **dogs** must rise up with fleas” (Gần mực thì đen, gần đèn thì rạng), (Đi với bụi mặc áo cà sa, đi với ma mặc áo giấy).

“Many **dogs** may easily worry one hare” (Hợp quần gây sức mạnh).

“Every **dog** is a **lion** at home” (Anh hùng nào, giang san nấy).

“Don’t rouse the sleeping **lion**” (Chớ đại vuốt râu hùm).

“Better be the head of a **dog** than the tail of a **lion**” (Đầu gà hơn đuôi trâu), đầu voi hơn đít voi).

“For a good **cat**, a good **rat**” (Mèo hay còn có chuột giỏi).

“A **mouse** may help the **lion**” (Con ruồi đỡ nặng đồng cân).

3.3.2. Proverbs about production and labor

Proverbs about production experience, weather, and nature make up a significant part of the treasure of Vietnamese proverbs, showing very clearly the characteristics of an agricultural resident who takes wet rice as the main food.

Characteristics of rice types: “Lúa chiêm là lúa bát ngigh,

Cây trước, trở trước chẳng thì đợi ai”.

Plating experience: “Mùa bót ra, chiêm tra vào”.

“Trâu ra, mạ vào”.

“Tốt giống tốt má, tốt mạ tốt lúa”.

Plowing and harrowing experience:

“Nhai kỹ no lâu, cày sâu tốt lúa”.

“Nhất cày ải, nhì vĩ phân”.

Rice transplanting experience: “Gieo rẫy mong mưa tới,

Cấy ruộng mong trời hửng”.

“Chiêm to tẻ mùa nhỏ con”.

Feeding experience: “Một lượt tát, một bát com”.

“Rẫy một tháng phải dọn cỏ,

Ruộng một tháng phải sục bùn”.

“Một lượt cỏ, thêm giò thóc”.

Experience in weather, nature:

“Cầu móng cụt, không lụt thì bão”.

“Chuồn chuồn bay thấp thì mưa,

Bay cao thì nắng, bay vừa thì râm”.

Meanwhile, English proverbs mostly focus on reflecting **social relationships and truths** about life, with little mention of relationships with nature and production experiences. This partly shows the prosperity of a nation with a strong economy and a very early industrial development, so it is less dependent on nature. It is rare to encounter proverbs such as: “*After a storm, comes a calm sea*” (sau khi bão tan là thời gian biển lặng), “*After rain comes sunshine/fair weather*” (sau cơn mưa trời lại sáng). These two sentences imply that people's lives, no matter how miserable, are sometimes happy; no one suffers forever; no one is rich three families, no one is difficult three generations; heat bouts of extreme misery to the future.

3.3.3. People's food and clothing are shown in Vietnamese and English proverbs

Humans live in close relationship with nature, so how to behave with the natural environment is an important element for each cultural system. Obviously, to maintain life, eating is always the most important thing. However, people's perception of this is not the same for everyone. There are ethnic groups who consider eating to be a trivial matter, not worth mentioning, but especially for Vietnamese farmers with a practical lifestyle, **eating is important**:

“Ăn bữa sáng lo bữa tối”.

“Ăn được ngủ được là tiên,

Không ăn không ngủ mất tiền thêm lo”.

Talking about food, the meal structure of

Vietnamese people clearly shows the imprint of the traditional wet rice farming culture. It is a **plant-based diet** in which rice is the main staple food ranked first, followed by **vegetables**, spices and lastly meat and fish.

“Người sống về gạo, cá bạo về nước”.

“Ăn bát cơm dẻo, nhớ nẻo đường đi”.

“Ăn cháo đời ôi, ăn rau xanh ruột”.

“Ăn cơm lừ thóc, ăn cóc bỏ gan”.

“Com không rau như đau không thuốc”.

Vietnamese meals are communal and of a very high standard. When eating, family members often sit around and eat together (eating in the same bowl), so they are closely related and dependent on each other, so it is necessary to be **careful when sitting and measuring when** eating. That speaks to the table manners.

“Ăn trông nồi, ngồi trông hướng”.

“Ăn trông xuống, uống trông lên”.

“Ăn có mời, làm có khiến”.

“Ăn một miếng, tiếng một đời”.

“Ăn cho đều, chia cho đủ”.

The second most important thing after food is **clothing**, it helps people cope with extreme weather: heat, cold, wind, and rain. Therefore, the Vietnamese people's concept of wearing is a practical concept:

“Ăn lấy chắc, mặc lấy bền”.

“Ăn được bụng no còn lo ấm cật”.

“Ăn lấy đặc, mặc lấy dày”.

“Com ba bát, áo ba manh, đói không xanh, rét không chết”.

Unlike the Vietnamese, the British do not pay much attention to food. The British meal is not as communal as the Vietnamese. During the meal, each member has their own cover, no one picks up food for anyone else, everyone is completely independent of each other. As a country where agriculture is mainly wheat and livestock, the main ingredients in the British diet are **bread, meat, butter, eggs**, the next is vegetables and spices.

“Eaten **bread** is soon forgotten” (Ăn cháo đá bát), (Ăn sung trả gái).

“Each day brings its own **bread**” (Trời sinh voi, trời sinh cỏ).

“They that have got a good store of **butter** may

lay it thick on their **bread**” (Có nhiều bơ thì tha hồ phết bánh).

“Hope is the poor men’s **bread**” (Đói ăn bánh vè).

“A crust is better than no **bread**”, “Half a loaf is better than none/ than no **bread**.” (Có ít còn hơn không).

“Don’t quarrel with your **bread and butter**” (Ăn cây nào, rào cây ấy).

“You cannot make an omelet without breaking **eggs**” (Muốn ăn cá, phải thả câu), (Muốn ăn, phải lăn vô bếp), (Muốn thắng lợi, phải cố gắng).

“A black hen lays a white **egg**” (Xanh vỏ đỏ lòng).

England is a land of fog, the air is cold and wet, so a **coat, a heavy jacket, a suit** to keep warm is a necessity. These costumes appear quite a lot in English proverbs:

“To shape a **coat** for the moon” (Lấy vải thưa che mắt thánh).

“Wearing brocade **suits** in a dark night” (Áo gấm đi đêm).

In English proverbs, the **actions of eating, the symbols of food and clothing** are used to express the philosophy of life:

“Good clothes open all doors” (Gần sợ dạ, lạ sợ áo quần).

“Live not to eat but eat to live” (Ăn để sống chứ không phải sống để ăn / Có thực mới vực được đạo).

“When wine is in, truth is out” (Rượu vào, lời ra).

“Fish and company stink in three days” (Rượu lạt uống lắm cũng say, người khôn nói lắm dẫu hay hóa nhảm).

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet” (Rượu ngon uống chén cũng ngon).

“He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of hens” (Hay ăn thì lăn vào bếp).

“What soberness conceals, drunkenness reveals” (Ăn lúc đói, nói lúc say).

“Eat at pleasure, drink with measure” (Uống theo khả năng, ăn tùy ý thích).

“Many dishes make many diseases” (Ăn lắm thì lại bệnh nhiều).

“Sit in the shade and eat good food” (Ngồi mát ăn bát vàng).

“He who has drunk will drink again” (Ăn cắp quen tay, ngủ ngày quen mắt).

“Eating and scratching want but a beginning” (Ăn cỏ đi trước, lội nước đi sau).

“Feast today and fast tomorrow” (Tiệc tùng hôm nay, ăn chay ngày mai / No dôn, đói góp).

“Fine feathers make fine birds” (Người đẹp vì lụa, tốt lúa vì phân).

“Fine clothes do not make the gentleman” (Quần áo đẹp cũng không làm nên con người phong nhã / Tốt gỗ hơn tốt nước sơn).

“Over shoes over boots” (Đã đi giày, đi luôn cả ủng / Đã trót phải trét, đã lỡ phải lấm).

3.3.4. *The irony, humor in Vietnamese proverbs compared with English proverbs*

If English proverbs are characterized by seriousness and modesty, on the contrary, Vietnamese proverbs are rich in irony and humor, clearly showing the intelligence and wit of the Vietnamese people. For example, the following Vietnamese and English proverbs prove it:

Table 1. English proverbs are characterized by seriousness and modesty, on the contrary, Vietnamese proverbs are rich in irony and humor, clearly showing the "intelligence and wit" of the Vietnamese people

Vietnamese Proverbs	English Proverbs (With literal translation showing seriousness in word usage)
Thứ nhất quận công, thứ nhì không khó	Poverty is no shame/ sin/ crime/ vice (Nghèo không phải hổ thẹn)
Lắm mối, tối nằm không	The man who chases two rabbits catches neither one (Người đàn ông đuổi theo hai con thỏ thì sẽ không bắt được con nào)
Đề lâu cứt trâu hóa bùn	Things will be forgotten after a long time (Mọi việc sẽ bị lãng quên sau một thời gian dài)
Đem đàn gậy tai trâu	To cast pearls before swine (Đưa những viên ngọc trai trước con lợn)

3.3.5. *Vietnamese proverbs are rich in evocative images, with a very good contrast in terms of ideas and words, including words and sounds, compared with English proverbs*

Antonyms used in Vietnamese proverbs evoke opposite images, the structure between the two sides is balanced, and are nested in the form of symmetry (bằng-trắc), making the sentences both suggestive and evocative high image, which has a melody and a stable form that is easy to propagate. For example, “Ba chìm, bảy nổi”, with the English equivalent: “Continuous troubles of difficulties”. The expression in English is not as impressive as in Vietnamese because the adjective continuous (liên tục) is not as specific as the count “ba, bảy”, the two words “chìm, nổi” opposite each other in terms of meaning and tone, the two sides of symmetry are connected by “comma-paragraph break”. It is this structural form that makes Vietnamese proverbs more concise, more condensed and more evocative.

Compare the following proverbs in Vietnamese and English and you will see that:

“Bóc ngắn, cắn dài” (Live beyond one’s means).

“Ăn xổi, ở thì” (Eat with haste, live temporarily).

“Bán ván, mua thuyền” (Selling wood to buy a boat).

“Đầu voi, đuôi chuột” (The mountain has brought forth a mouse).

“Gần nhà, xa ngõ” (Houses are near, gates are distant).

“Thả mồi, bắt bóng” (A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush).

“Tình ngay, lý gian” (It is sentimentally right but rationally wrong).

3.3.6. *Vietnamese and English proverbs with similarities (homologies)*

Most of the peoples in the world have gone through the development stages of human society, so no matter where they belong, people have the same thinking and awareness about nature and society. But because each ethnic group has its own language, geographical circumstances, natural conditions, and levels of social development are not exactly the same, with the same perception and thinking, each ethnic group has its own unique identity, different expressions. Therefore, putting aside the language shell, the specificity of each ethnic group, we can find the **homogeneity in thinking, perception** as well as **expression method**, even though they have strong characteristics of the nation it represents. The following are similar Vietnamese and English proverbs:

Table 2. Similar Vietnamese and English proverbs

Vietnamese Proverbs	English Proverbs
Có chí thì nên/Có công mài sắt có ngày nên kim	Where there's a will, there's a way
Cười người chớ vội cười lâu Cười người hôm trước hôm sau người cười	He laughs best who laughs last
Cần tắc vô ưu	Better be sure than sorry / Be safe than sorry
Cha nào con nấy/ Chủ nào tớ nấy	Like father, like son. /Like master like servant
Chậm mà chắc	Slow and steady wins the race
Có còn hơn không	Better late than never
Có tiền mua tiên cũng được	A golden key opens all doors/ Money makes the mare go
Đi một ngày đàng học một sàng khôn	Travelling forms a young man
Đói ăn vụng, túng làm liều / No nên Bụt đói nên ma / Bần cùng sinh đạo tặc	Necessity knows no law
Được ăn cả ngã về không	Sink or swim
Mật ngọt chết ruồi	Flies are easier caught with honey than with vinegar
Nhàn cư vi bất thiện	Idleness is the root of all evils
Nước chảy đá mòn	Constant dropping wears away a stone
Phòng bệnh hơn chữa bệnh	Prevention is better than cure
Phúc bất trùng lai họa vô đơn chí	It never rains but it pours
Sông có khúc, người có lúc	It is a long road that has no turning
Tham thì thâm	Grasp all, lose all
Thôi đừng tiếc rẻ con gà quạ tha	It is no use crying over spilt milk
Thùng rỗng kêu to/ Dốt hay nói chữ	Empty vessels make the greatest sound
Tích tiểu thành đại/ Kiến tha lâu đầy tổ	Many a little makes a mickle
Tốt danh hơn lành áo	A good/ fair name is better than riches
Tốt gỗ hơn tốt nước sơn	Handsome is as handsome does/ Beauty is only deep skin
Trăm nghe không bằng mắt thấy	Seeing is believing. To see is to believe
Vỏ quít dày có móng tay nhọn	Diamond cut diamond. / Eye for eye, tooth for tooth
Xa mặt cách lòng	Out of sight, out of mind

4. Discussion

Research on comparative proverbs in English and Vietnamese can confirm their diversity and richness. The similarities and differences in culture of the two countries have influenced English and Vietnamese proverbs. Comparing the types of comparisons in English and Vietnamese proverbs shows that, in expressing both ethnic groups, they use images of comparison and association that are highly symbolic but still have their own cultural appearance of each ethnicity. Behind the original meaning reflecting the daily activities of life, the allegorical and metaphorical meanings of English and Vietnamese proverbs have reflected the ideology of

each community, showing profound education and advice. We should learn to behave flexibly, suitable for each specific situation with different modes of expression, clearly reflecting the truth, goodness, and beauty in the proverbs of each nation.

5. Conclusion

Proverbs are the treasures of a nation, helping us to understand more specific characteristics of thinking, aesthetic views, ways of dealing with people, morality as well as attitudes towards good or evil, the high. Whole or lowly to form a stable personality in life. Vietnamese proverbs with their artistic expressions, the use of glossy words, rich in images, and the excitement for those in contact are

truly a treasure of Vietnamese folklore. Vietnamese and English proverbs, in addition to the similarities in perception, thinking and expression methods, also have their own characteristics with bold ethnic iron. Due to the characteristics of topography, geography, weather, and climate are not the same, psychological characteristics between two different ethnic groups and different languages are different. In communication, a proverb used at the right time and in the right place will create a great effect and have a good impact on the exchange of ideas and feelings between the interlocutors. Studying Vietnamese proverbs and at the same time learning some cultural features in Vietnamese and English proverbs is definitely very useful for foreigners learning Vietnamese or Vietnamese learning English.

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