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A Comparative Study of Words Indicating ‘Artificial Containers of Water’ in Vietnamese and English

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Artificial containers of water were created by the Vietnamese during ancient times. For their specific usage demands, the Vietnamese created artificial containers of water with different shapes and different kinds of materials. Thus, the Vietnamese gave them many different names. This research analyses the words which indicate ‘artificial containers of water’ in the Vietnamese language and contrasts it with the English language to determine the similarities and differences in the scale of their denotative meanings.

Keywords: *Artificial containers, Water moving, Subfield, Semantics field.*

Introduction

According to the oriental philosophy, “water” is one of the elements that creates the universe. Water sustains life. Water is used to wash, irrigate or to produce foods. Because of the importance of water, communities³ in the world are located according to the water sources. When talking about communities, language and culture are related to one another. W²idhaugh (2002), as cited in Herman, Murni, Sibarani and Saragih (2019: 34), presented the different² views of scholars engaged in researching the subject. The major sets of ideas included that language determines thought and culture; language influences thought and culture; culture influences people’s language; language and culture influence each other; and language and culture are not related to each other. In short, language and culture are interconnected. From that basis, the languages and culture of different ethnic groups are attached to water related elements.



In linguistics, water creates a semantic field that includes many subfields, such as the form of water: “giọt, dòng, làn...”; water flowing: “chảy, trôi, đổ, dâng, trào...”; status of water: “đục, trong, mát, sạch...”; natural space of water: “ao, hồ, biển, sông...”; human activities with water: “nước”: “khởi, ngăn, chặn, tưới, tắm...”; and artificial containers of water: “cốc, chén, chum, vại...”.

Artificial containers of water were created by the Vietnamese during ancient times. For their specific usage demands, the Vietnamese created artificial containers of water with different shapes and different kind of materials. Thus, the Vietnamese gave them many different names.

In order to understand more about the separation in naming things, the article compares words indicating ‘artificial containers of water’ in Vietnamese and contrasts it with English. This is done in an effort to realise how the culture and thinking of different ethnics shapes the way of naming things in the languages.

The corpus is collected from sources such as novels, short stories, idioms, proverbs, and poetry. (see list in the corpus sources).

Theoretical Review

The semantic field theory is used, and based on this theory, we can collect words indicating ‘water artificial containers’ in Vietnamese and English for comparison to find the similarities and differences between them. This will enable identifying the naming scale among the words of the English and Vietnamese languages.

For this research, the comparing theory was also applied. According to the comparing theory, words in two languages can be separated with each other on a scale of naming. In other words, we can say, word meanings between two languages have similar and different meaning segments.

Research Method

This article applies the linguistics description method to describe the similarities and differences of the two languages naming scale. Besides, the comparing method is also used to find the similarities and differences of the two languages naming scale. From here, we can point out the separation of the components in naming things within each language. Besides a lesser equivalent, the balance is different. This difference clearly shows the culture and thinking of each ethnicity, directing the way of naming in languages.



The statistics method is used to examine the words' frequency. By assessing the frequency of words, we can identify the Vietnamese life history and culture in using words.

Finding and Discussion

Words Indicating Artificial Containers of Water in Vietnamese

The following is the list and statistics of artificial containers of water in Vietnamese, as follows:

Table 1: List of words

No	Words	Appearance	Percentage	Examples
1	Chén/tách	132	11.43	<p>1. “Thí một chén nước, phước chất bằng non” [2]. 97</p> <p>2. “Thương thay cái chậu nước trong, để cho bèo tằm, bèo ong giạt vào” [2].</p> <p>3. “Cửa buồng tắm không phải là đang mở mà bị giạt tung khỏi bản lề, nằm vật úp dưới đất. Bên trong ở góc có hai xô nhựa còn lung nước, cái gáo dứa để trong thau nhôm” [6].</p>
2	Chậu/thau	116	10.04	
3	gáo	116	10.04	
4	Bát/đọi/tô	92	7.97	
5	âm/chuyên	79	6.84	
6	Gàu/gầu	53	4.59	
7	Phích	51	4.42	
8	Chai	51	4.42	
9	Xô	48	4.16	
10	Bình	46	3.98	
11	Cốc	45	3.9	
12	Thùng	39	3.38	
13	Vại	37	3.2	
14	Bể	34	2.94	
15	Lọ	33	2.86	
16	Máng	30	2.6	
17	Vò	27	2.34	
18	Ca	27	2.34	
19	Chum	23	1.99	
20	Hũ	22	1.9	
21	Khạp	18	1.56	
22	Téc	18	1.56	
23	Thung	9	0.78	
24	Tích	9	0.78	
Total	24	1155	100	

In referring to artificial containers of water in Vietnamese, the words “chén/tách” are central in use at over 11.43 per cent. They are followed by “chậu/thau” and “gáo” which consist of 10.04



per cent, and “bát, đọi, tô” at 7.97 per cent. In general, the containers which humans use for supplying “water” to food and washing their bodies consists of a higher percentage of containers that contain moving “water”, such as the words: “bình”, “gàu/gầu”, “lọ”, “vại”. This situation demonstrates that artificial containers of water with the functions of food and washing are the most important.

To clearly understand the separation and naming of things by different ethnic groups because of their culture and their cognition, we contrasted these Vietnamese words with English.

Comparison between Vietnamese and English

To clearly understand how cultural characteristics direct the way of naming things in languages, we compare words indicating artificial containers of water between the Vietnamese and English languages¹. See Table 2 below.

Table 2: Statistics of comparing words between two languages

No	English	Vietnamese
1	<i>bailing bucket</i>	gầu/gầu (mức nước)
2	<i>barrel</i>	thùng (hình trống miệng rộng)
3	<i>basin</i>	chậu, bát lớn
4	<i>bidet</i>	chậu (vệ sinh phụ nữ)
5	<i>bowl</i>	bát, đọi, tô, chậu
6	<i>bucket</i>	xô (đựng nước hoặc vật khác)
7	<i>bottle</i>	chai, lọ
8	<i>cask</i>	thùng (nhất là để đựng các loại rượu)
9	<i>cistern</i>	bể, thùng (chứa nước trên mái nhà)
10	<i>can</i>	vật đựng nói chung
11	<i>cup</i>	chén, tách (thường có quai, uống trà, cafe)
12	<i>dipper</i>	cái muôi (môi, vật dụng hình cái cốc có cán dài để múc)
13	<i>dishes</i>	cốc, bát, đĩa nói chung (dùng trong bữa ăn)
14	<i>drum</i>	thùng (đựng hình trống)
15	<i>ewer</i>	bình đựng nước (có miệng rộng, đặc biệt trước đây được sử dụng cùng với chậu trong buồng ngủ, không có vòi nước)
16	<i>earthenware vessel (of water)</i>	vại, bình (chứa nước bằng sành)
17	<i>flask</i>	chai lọ, (thường dùng trong phòng thí nghiệm)
18	<i>flagon</i>	chai, lọ, hũ (hình tròn đựng rượu)

¹ Dictionaries are used for comparison [4], [19].



1		
19	<i>gutter</i>	máng (thoát nước trên mái nhà)
20	<i>glass</i>	ly, cốc (đựng rượu và đồ uống bằng thủy tinh)
21	<i>jar</i>	binh, lọ, vại, thùng, cốc vại
22	<i>jug (pitcher)</i>	binh (sâu đáy có tay cầm và vòi để đựng và rót chất lỏng)
23	<i>keg</i>	thùng (nhỏ, thường chứa chất lỏng dưới 10 galon Anh hay 30 galong Mỹ, keg beer, bom bia có áp lực)
24	<i>kettle</i>	ấm, siêu (có quai, nắp, vòi đựng và nấu nước)
25	<i>mug</i>	ca, cốc vại (có quai, không dùng đĩa ở dưới)
26	<i>pot, teapot, cafepot.</i>	ấm đun nước, ấm trà, cà phê
27	<i>tank</i>	thùng, két, bể
28	<i>tankard</i>	cốc vại, ca to (có tay cầm nhất là uống rượu bia)
29	<i>thermos, thermos bottle, thermos flask</i>	cái phích/binh thủy (đựng nước)
30	<i>tub</i>	chậu
31	<i>tumbler</i>	cốc vại (không quai, không chân)
32	<i>vessel</i>	đồ chứa chất lỏng nói chung
33	<i>vase</i>	lọ (thường đựng hoa, không tay cầm)
34	<i>vacuum flask, vacuum bottle</i>	phích/binh thủy (đựng nước)
35	<i>wash hand stand</i>	chậu đựng rửa tay, mặt
36	<i>water chest</i>	thùng chứa nước
Total	36	

According to the two languages' words which indicate 'artificial containers of water' as above, the following comments can be extracted.

The separation of things in each language (ethnicity) is different, that therein, the words' naming is also different. Such as, the Vietnamese naming of artificial containers used for containing water, beer and wine, normally have the words *ca*, *cốc*, and *chén/tách*. The words, *ca* and *chén/tách*, are named according to their appearances, scales and usage functions (*chén/tách* are equivalent with *cup*. *Ca* is equal to *mug* and *tankard*). The word *cốc* is used for all different kinds of *cốc*. When naming the separation of *cốc*, the Vietnamese often use word phrases such as *cốc vại* (*big cup*), *cốc thủy tinh* (*grass cup*), *cốc nhựa* (*plastic cup*), and with no mention to scale, shape and the usage functions of them. Whereas, the English name according to their shape, material, function and context for using words: *cup*, *glass*, *jar*, *mug*,



tankard, tumbler. Another word, *chậu*, in Vietnamese is used for all different kinds of *chậu*, while English people use the word *tub* to denote *chậu* in general. However, many kinds of *chậu* differ to each other in scale and function, which can be called *bidet* or *basin* (except *wash hand stand*). Vietnamese people name *chậu* according to the usage function by word phrases *chậu giặt* (*wash cloth basin*), *chậu rửa bát* (*wash bowl basin*), and *chậu vệ sinh* (*wash body basin*), or naming based on scale, *chậu to* (*big basin*) or *chậu nhỏ* (*small basin*). In brief, Vietnamese people name things according to the scale, shape and usage function to the naming by word phases.

Oppositely, it also has one English word with a larger thing naming than the equivalent words in Vietnamese, such as the word, *jar*, has equivalent meanings with the words *bình, lọ, vại, thùng, cốc vại* or the word *dishes*, has the scale of thing naming for all the tools that are used in a reflection, including *cốc* (*glass*), *bát* (*bowl*), and *đĩa* (*plate*). The word *can* is used as a general container but it is closed. Whereas, vessel is used for holding or carrying liquids in a container.

There are cases in the Vietnamese language where it has a single word and compound word to denote the bucket that is used for bailing water or pulling water from the well or a deep place: *gàu/gầu* and *gầu sòng*. In contrast, the English have the word phrase: *bailing bucket* (*gàu kéo nước*).

In another instance, the English do not have a name to denote the container that the Vietnamese people use for drawing water: *gáo*. In English, it has only one word with the shape nearly the same as *gáo* in Vietnamese, which is the word *dipper* (thing with the shape of glass, with a long handle used to draw water). The word *gáo* in Vietnamese can denote several different kinds of *gáo* with different shapes, scales and materials, such as *gáo dừa* (*coconut dipper*), *gáo nhựa* (*plastic dipper*), and *gáo nhôm* (*aluminium dipper*) — which especially has a kind of *gáo* that is made by one half of a jar (the jar the United States of America's army used to hold water in during the Vietnam war, made by aluminium) with a vertical cut and a long handle used for drawing water.

The last example notes close equivalents between the two languages, such as *chén/tách* with *cup*, as expressed above. Additionally, or is equivalent when naming with compound words such as *teapot* and *cafepot* in English, and the compound words in Vietnamese of *ấm trà, ấm cà phê*.

From the above comparison, we can identify the different cognition of things between the ethnicities. Thus, that words are also used with different scales of naming things. They may have an equivalency with one another on denotative meanings between the two languages (but may not be equivalent on pragmatic meanings), but normally, they are not equivalent



with each other on denotative meanings. This suggests that the words in languages are usually not closely equivalent in their meanings. Furthermore, this reflects the characteristics of ethnic culture on both material (made different containers used for containing water) and abstract culture in the cognition and denotation in languages (see tables above).

Conclusion

This article has compared the numbers of words indicating ‘artificial containers of water’ and the percentages of the occurrences of the words, then initially explained the difference in the quantity and percentage of the occurrences between them.

The article also compares two languages to determine the scale of words’ naming. Besides a number of words with a similar naming scale, the majority are balanced without a similar naming scale. Furthermore, there are even Vietnamese words that do not exist or have an equivalent in English. This shows the separation in naming things in the languages of each ethnicity. Besides a lesser equivalent, the majority of the balance is different. This difference clearly shows the culture and thinking of how each ethnicity directs the way of naming in languages.



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