AN INVESTIGATION INTO SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH "GO" IDIOMS WITH REFERENCE TO THE VIETNAMESE EQUIVALENTS

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ABSTRACT

Among the most popular English words being used currently worldwide, the verb "GO" has been, without a doubt, of great concern by linguists so far. Therefore, an initial investigation into syntactic and semantic features of "GO" idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents would provide valuable experience to further studies of linguistics in general and help Vietnamese students as learners of foreign language in translation. Numerous examples have been analyzed cautiously by applying qualitative approach and some other ones so as to achieve the objectives of the research.

Keywords: Idioms with 'go', syntax, semantics, Vietnamese equivalents.

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that language is an indispensable part in the life of humanity. Language is an effective and irreplaceable tool of expressing mind, thought, saying, etc. English is a very rich language and when people want to be proficient in English, all the linguistic phenomena have to be covered.

In fact, we are daily dealing with different kinds of figurative language, like idiomatic expressions, metonymies and metaphors. Some of them are conventional while some of them may be created as we speak (Caillies & Declercq, 2011:207). Accordingly, the comprehension of the former, usually idiomatic expressions, depends on retrieval of a figurative meaning stored in memory, whereas the comprehension of the latter, usually metaphors, depends on an online sense creation process (Caillies & Declercq, 2011: 219). Those who learn English desires to master English as the native speakers. However, we usually face the difficulties that prevent us from gaining natural conversations. One of the reasons for these problems lies in the way we perceive and use idioms. The structural and semantic problems posed by idioms puzzle us because most idioms do not mean what they appear to mean.

It can be said that studying idioms is not new, but it has never been old. Through the history of the development of English there has been a list of around 1,000 most commonly used words of all parts of speech (that can be used on a daily basis for learners of English to comprehend. And GO is one of the most common verbs in English, which is able to capture special attention of all-time linguists.

This research is conducted to achieve the targets of finding out syntactic and semantic features of "GO" idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents as well as suggesting some possible implications for Vietnamese students who study English as a foreign language. To achieve the above-mentioned aims, the following objectives can be put forwards:

(1). Pointing out syntactic features of "GO" idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents.
(2). Figuring out semantic features of "GO "idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents.
(3). Suggesting possible implications for Vietnamese students in learning, teaching and translating "GO" idioms.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Regarding idioms, Seidl and McMordie (1978) are the linguists chosen to shed the light of the theory during the analysis of the theme. On the other words, the syntactic and semantic features of "GO" idioms are going investigated and discussed based on the Seidl and McMordie's theory.

Seidl and McMordie (1978) claim that native speakers use idioms in daily speeches and they do not realize that these idioms are grammatically incorrect. There is a difference among the perception of idioms by native speakers and second language learners. Second language learners realize that idioms are grammatically incorrect and that is why it is quite difficult for them to learn them but the hard study of them can help very much. Seidl and McMordie (1978) also add that application of idioms can sometimes cause a big problem for the users. The English learners usually do not know in which situation they should use idioms because idioms can be used both in formal and informal situations. The words ought to be chosen according to the situation in which a certain person is. When speaking to a friend, it is preferred to use informal or slang expressions. In a formal situation, words must be chosen much more carefully. Formal expressions can be found in the written form of language rather than in the spoken one. Informal expressions are thus used in day-to-day speeches, e.g. among friends.
The connection between the origin and the current use can be another problem while using idioms. "*It has often been necessary, in dealing with an idiom of which the current meaning is clear and that is generally used correctly, to state that the connection between the origin and the meaning in unknown.*" (Collins, 1958).
 "GO" is a lexical (or main) verb. It can be viewed as a dynamic and an intransitive verb sharing the typical syntactic functions of a verb.

Table 1: Syntactic structures of "GO" combinations

Structures	Examples
(1) V (Go) + adverb	Go right/ go wrong
(2) V (Go) + PP	Go out
(3) Go + infinitive / gerund	Go shopping
(4) Go + preposition	Go in there
(5) Go + adjective	Go fast/ Go home

Table 2: The semantic senses encoded by the verb "GO"

Meanings	Examples
(1) Movement (move / travel from one location to another)	He's gone to school; I'm going in the car
(2) Belong / fit (person or entity belongs in a specific location, fits in a specific location)	Does that piece go there? The book goes on the shelf.
(3) Disappearance (person or entity is no longer present/ missing without implication of prior movement)	Where's that book gone? (when looking for it)
(4) Future intent (infinitival)	I'm going to dance; She goes to get him from school.
(5) Encourage	Go on, you can do it.
(6) Sound (sound, noise or speech)	It went bang; Dogs go woof.
(7) Happening	What's going on? What went on here?
(8) Give up possession	Let go.

(9) Specified motion (at specific location)	Go like this with your foot; The tape's going round and round.
(10) State / outcome	It's gone wrong; It's going cold.
(11) Order of occurrence	You go first.
(12) Aim for	He's going for the red one; I went for the black.
(13) Searching / reading etc.	Let's go through this book; I went through that pile.
(14) Increase/ decrease (size, value)	The price went up; That balloon's going down
(15) Resume	Go back to the jigsaw; You're going back to the toys.
(16) Catch illness	You'll go down with a cold; He went down with flu.
(17) Dislike	Have you gone off chips? I went off jigsaws
(18) Prepare	Get the dinner going.

There have been a number of writers making investigations into idioms with different points of view and objectives. In English, some famous ones were collected and written by researchers such as *"The American Heritage Dictionary of Idioms"* by Ammer, C. In *"NTC's American Idioms Dictionary"*, Spears, R. and Kirkpatrick, B. focus on the meaning, usage and appropriate contexts for each idiomatic phrase. Nguyễn Lực, Lương Văn Đang are two authors who made a significant contribution in the field of Vietnamese idioms. They wrote *"Thành ngữ Tiếng Việt"* which is a collection of Vietnamese idioms arranged in alphabetical order with clear explanations and examples extracted from Vietnamese novels, newspapers and magazines. Moreover, Nguyễn Trần Trụ who wrote *"Thành ngữ tục ngữ lược giải"* explains meanings of the most common idioms and proverbs in such simple, clear ways that learners can use this book for consulting and reference purposes.

In addition, *"Từ điển thành ngữ tục ngữ Việt Nam"* by Đặng Hồng Chương, *"1575 Thành ngữ - Tục ngữ cần bàn thêm"* by Lê Gia and a number of contrastive studies on the various aspects of idioms have been carried out in Danang University by Vietnamese researchers.

Some studies of Vietnamese researchers that the author has found so far tend to make comparisons between ways of using some popular structures with the verbs they chose. They also listed grammatical structures and provided a wide range of examples and Vietnamese translated versions in order to help other linguists to obtain the examples' meanings more broadly. Thanks to this, when these authors presented their conclusions, their findings can be viewed on a more comprehensive scale.

Relating to the verb "GO", Hà Thị Hồng (2010) conducted "*A Contrastive Sudy of the verb Go in English and Đi in Vietnamese: A Perspective of Embodiment in Cognitive Linguistics.*" The study provided a critical analysis of theoretical approaches of cognition of explaining language phenomena. Through the analysis of the verb "GO" in English and the verb ĐI in Vietnamese, the researcher attempted to present another viewpoint of linguistic exploration, i.e. to interpret the use of language from the understanding of our cognition.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by combining the two research approaches of both quantitative and qualitative. In the first place, data was collected from a wide range of sources from printed publications and e-books on the Internet (certified by Google Books). After the collecting stage was finished, examples then were qualitatively described, analyzed and illustrated in terms of syntactic and semantic features. At the same time, they were also compared with their Vietnamese equivalents under a process of statistical analysis to fully answer to the two first research question individually. For the third question, pedagogical implications were

withdrawn after the two questions about syntactic and semantic features were brought out entirely.

This study is intended to investigate English "GO" idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents, therefore, the descriptive and comparative methods have been chosen. First of all, the descriptive method is used in order to give complete and evident descriptions of both syntactic and semantic features of English idioms of the verb "GO". Secondly, the comparative method is applied to identify similarities and differences with the Vietnamese equivalents. Some other methods such as analytical and synthetic methods have also been used as supporting methods. While analyses are vital to analyzing collected data, grouping results into divisions is crucial to give a comprehensive view of what has been concluded. Last but not least, devoted commentaries and guidance from the author's supervisor are very useful to the author. Without these valuable and major contributions, the author could not have done this research successfully and effectively.

To collect data for the research, Google search engine has been placed in use and it has been the most popular and effective tool so far to discover reliable and diverse sources of materials. The vital tip the author used here is putting some key words between two quotation marks and, consequently, examples gathered so far have been the most precise ones from printed books that are also typed by Google Books' hard-working employees to make Internet versions. Therefore, essential information about authors, years of publication and names of publishers are always presented clearly. At the same time, some dictionaries have been searched to find structures and idioms related to the verb "GO" as well as their Vietnamese equivalents. After that, the collected data will be classified thanks to the clustering and classification techniques, which helps greatly in defining and figuring out various syntactic and semantic features in meaning categories or structures and idioms later. Other techniques are also employed such as reading comprehension, note-taking or meaning analyzing to select precisely materials related to English idioms with the verb "GO". In sum, because of these data collection techniques, English idioms with the verb "GO" have been collected successfully up to now together with an array of authentic examples from reliable sources.

The stage of analyzing data is to qualitatively and quantitatively describe syntactic and semantic features of English idioms with the verb "GO" to provide a larger view of English idioms in general as well as English idioms with the verb "GO" in particular. For such reason, the data profiling technique is used in this step to track the frequency, distribution and characteristics of the data collected. Finally, illustrated examples of the above-mentioned features are cited to present the features effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Syntactic features of "GO" idioms
From what have been collected and analyzed, the most typical and outstanding features of the structure of "GO" idioms cane be synthesized in the table as follows.

Table 3. The structure of "GO" iidioms with GO as a single verb

Syntactic feature (Go + components)		Quantity	Rate %
Single verb Go	simple noun phrase (NP)	3	4.84
	complex NP	6	9.68
	preposition + simple NP	11	17.74
	preposition + complex NP	24	38.71
	adjective	9	14.52
	adverb	4	6.45
	preposition	5	8.06
Total		**62**	**100%**

Chart 1: The second component of "GO" idioms with GO as a single verb

- Simple noun phrase (NP) — 4.48%
- Complex NP — 9.68%
- Preposition + simple NP — 17.74%
- Preposition + complex NP — 38.71%
- Adjective — 14.52%
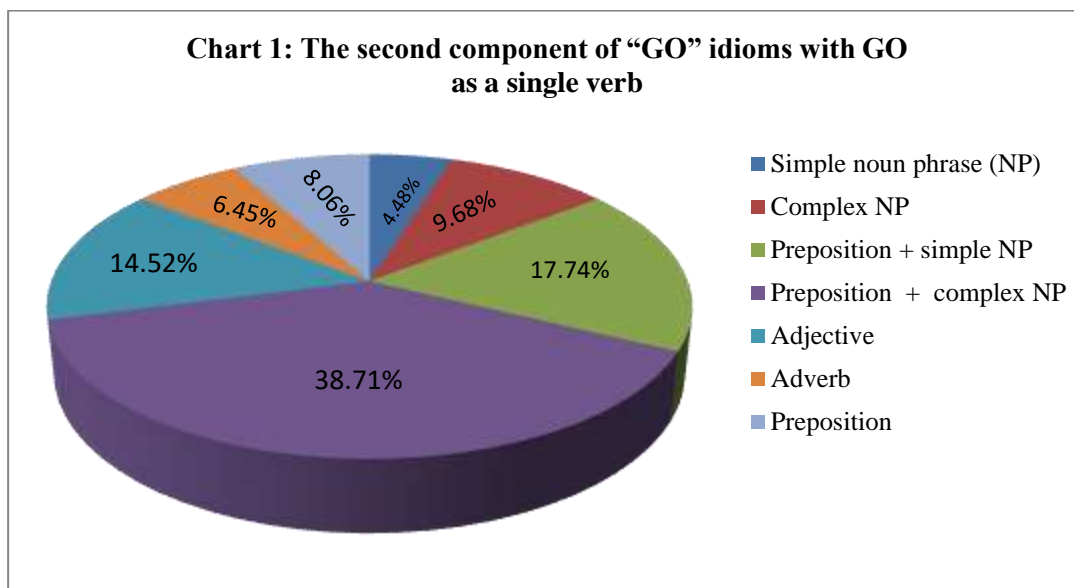- Adverb — 6.45%
- Preposition — 8.06%

Table 4. The structure of GO idioms with GO as a phrasal verb

Syntactic feature Phrasal verb GO + components				Total	Rate %
Phrasal verb	Noun phrase (NP)	Preposition + NP	Preposition + pronoun		
Go off	6	1	0	7	33.33
Go about	1	0	0	1	4.76
Go out	1	4	0	5	23.81
Go through	5	0	0	5	23.81
Go for	1	0	1	2	9.52
Go down	0	2	0	2	9.52
Go up	0	1	0	1	4.76
Go along	0	1	0	1	4.76
Go on	0	0	1	1	4.76
Go against	1	0	0	1	4.76
Total	**15**	**9**	**2**	**21**	**100**

Chart 2: Phrasal verb "GO" + components
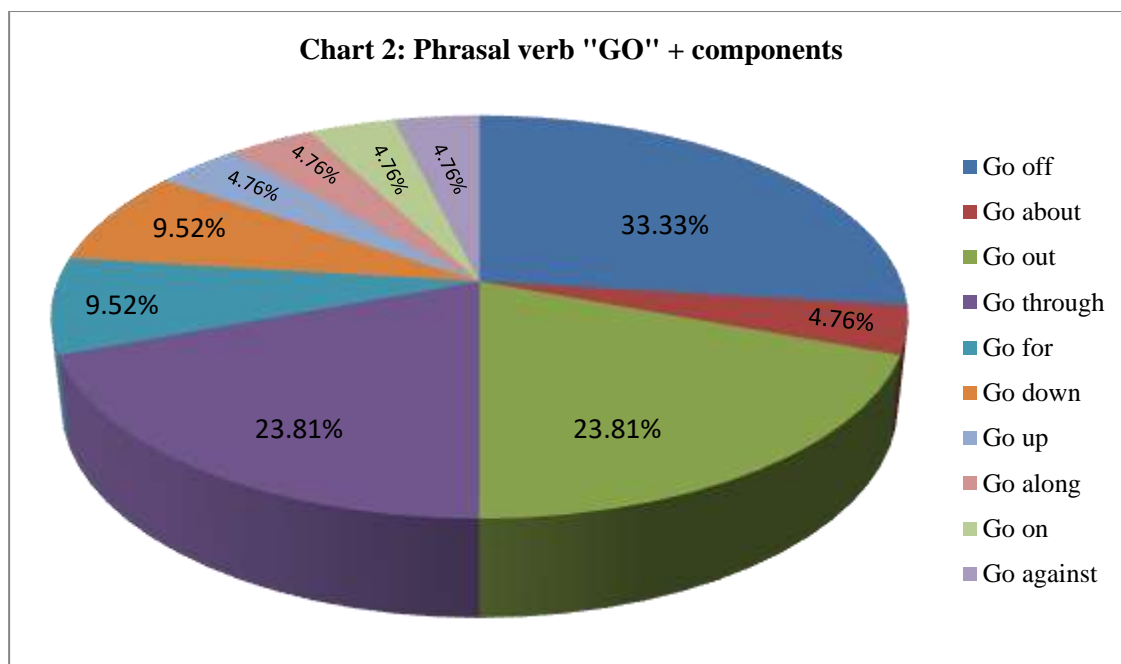
The data shows that the structures "go + preposition + NP" (38.71%) and "Go off + NP", "Go through + NP" are mostly used to form "GO" idioms. The rate of the two phrasal verbs combining with NP is 73 %.

The structure "phrasal verb + NP" accounts for the highest rate 15/46 (32.61%). Overall sum of both structures having single verb and phrasal verb with "GO" and idioms having "GO" as a single verb make up the higher rate (75.61 %).

The idiomatic meaning and the equivalents in Vietnamese of the "GO" idioms are going to be shown and discussed in the part 4.2 of this research.

Semantic features of "GO" idioms

As what can be seen, from the above presented list of the "GO" idioms, "GO" can combine with a variety of words or phrases denoting different meanings. Although the verb "*to go*" is defined as "*to move or to travel from one place to another place*" (Oxford Advance Learners' Dictionary), its original meaning can be only kept as "*movement*" in some cases. In most of the other cases, the meaning as "*movement*" can be changed completely new. The meaning of "GO" idioms mainly depends on the second component of the combinations.

Among the number of 110 "GO" idioms collected, there are only eight idioms, accounting for 7.3%, in which the verb "GO" keeps the origin meaning as "movement". They are going to be presented in the following table.

**Table 5. Idioms with "GO" denoting "movement"**

Idioms	Meaning	Vietnamese equivalents
Go like the wind	Go / Run quickly	Đi / chạy như ma đuổi
Go hell for leather	Go as fast as possible	Đi nhanh như bay
Go on a journey	Trip, outing	Du ngoạn, chu du, đi đây đi đó
Go on business	Go on a mission	Đi công tác
Go for a spin	Take a drive, go for a ride in a car	Đi ô tô, chạy xe một vòng
Go to bed with the chickens	Go to bed at sundown -at the same time chicken go to bed	Đi ngủ từ lúc gà lên chuồng
Go with the flow	Follow the general tendency and go along with whatever happens.	Đi theo số đông, chạy theo đa số
Go full bat	Go very quickly	Đi ba chân bốn cẳng

The rest number of "GO" idioms contains the verb "GO" not meaning "*move to somewhere*" like "*go to the supermarket*", "*go to the park*", "*go to the zoo*", etc. The different meanings of

the verb "GO" seem to depend on the hidden meaning of the second component in the combination as an idiom. As mentioned in the previous chapters, idioms are normally fixed expressions that they cannot be understood by separating each component, but as the whole.

In order to summarize some outstanding semantic features of the GO idioms which have been categogized based on the function of indicating things of noun phrase, the author implement a stastic as in the table 6.

Table 6. Common categories of noun phrases in GO idioms

Category	Name	Quantity	Total	Rate %
Fruit	banana	1	2	5.41
	nut	1		
Work of art	song	1	1	2.70
Weapon	gun	1	1	2.70
Distance	mile	1	3	8.11
	length	1		
	way	1		
Animals	hog	1	3	8.11
	dog	1		
	chicken	1		
Material	grain (of wood)	1	2	5.41
	leather	1		
Objects	kite	1	7	18.92
	pot	1		
	handcart	1		
	handbasket	1		
	overdrive	1		
	patch	1		
	waste	1		
Parts of house	wall	1	3	8.11
	window	1		
	roof	1		
Sport equipment	bat	1	2	5.41
	mat	1		
Body parts	head	2	3	8.11
	ear	1		
	heart	1		
Natural world	wind	1	10	27.03
	fire	1		
	water	1		
	air	1		
	rock	1		
	flame	1		
	smoke	1		
	limb (of tree)	1		
	seed (of tree)	1		
	flow (water)	1		
Total			**37**	**100**

Chart 3: Common categories of noun phrases in "GO" idioms
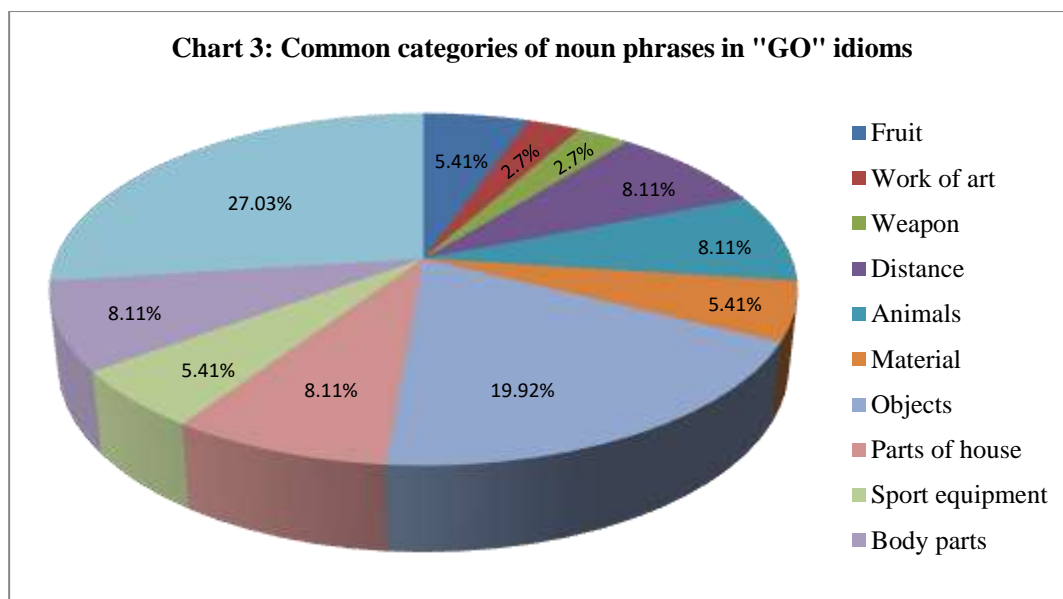
The data shows that the noun phrases indicating objects and natural world accounts for the highest rate, 18.92% for objects and 27.03% for natural world. Parts of a house, parts of body and animals have the same rate (8.11 %), ranked in the second higher position, according to the above table.

Vietnamese idioms also contain the nouns belonging to such categories. For example, the word "*dog*" (chó) appears in the idiom "*fight like cats and dogs" (cãi nhau như chó với mèo*). "*Window"* (cửa sổ) also enters the idiom "*ném tiền qua cửa sổ*" to talk about wasting something. In terms of the nouns indicating parts of body, Vietnamese idioms say "*anh em như thể tay chân"* to talk about the close relationship between brothers and sisters (siblings) or "*tai to mặt lớn*" to describe someone in high position of society. With regard to natural world, Vietnamese have an idiom "*gió (wind) thoảng mây (cloud) trôi*" to refer something not long-lasting. The image of "*sky*" and "*land"* appear in the idiom like "*trời xui đất khiến*" to imply that something happens accidently or coincidently.

Language can reflect every aspect of life, including ways of living and thinking. Through these "GO" idioms in the study, it can be seen that humans generally tend to take anything in life from the world to imply what they mean. The richness of language is reflected clearly in idioms. Through idioms, a national or cultural identity can be felt distinctly. It makes the difference between two nations. For example, the idiom "*go for a song*" can not be " *rẻ như bài hát*", but *"rẻ như bèo".*

However, there are some similarities in the way of choosing the objects or phenomena to make hidden comparison. This feature can be seen clearly in the idioms "*go through water and fire" and "go on the streets"*. Both Vietnamese and English think that "water and fire" is dangerous and challenging; therefore, they use them to imply something difficult and risky, and if someone wants to reach success, they often have to overcome them. In order to avoid insulting and hurting the girls or women who works as a prostitute, both the Vietnamese and the English choose to use metaphorical expressions.

Table 7. Frequency of GO idioms denoting different meanings

Meaning		Quantity	Rate %	Total
Expressing feelings & emotion	Getting angry	9	11.25	16.25
	Getting embarrassed	1	1.25	
	Getting afraid / scared	1	1.25	
	Getting too proud	1	1.25	
	Getting unhappy/ miserable	1	1.25	
Making effort and devotion to be successful		7	8.75	8.75
Be in damage, ruin and failure		9	11.25	11.25
Being dead		6	7.5	7.5
Doing a job and profession		4	5.00	5.00
Being in difficulties or hardship		4	5.00	5.00
Being lucky and successful		6	7.5	7.5
Going at high speed		3	3.75	3.75
Behave abnormally		6	7.5	7.5
Getting bankrupt		4	5.00	5.00
Being in bad or unfavorable condition		8	10	10
Misbehaving		2	2.5	2.5
Doing enthusiastically		2	2.5	2.5
Idioms having monetary factors		6	7.5	7.5
Total		**80**	**100**	**100**

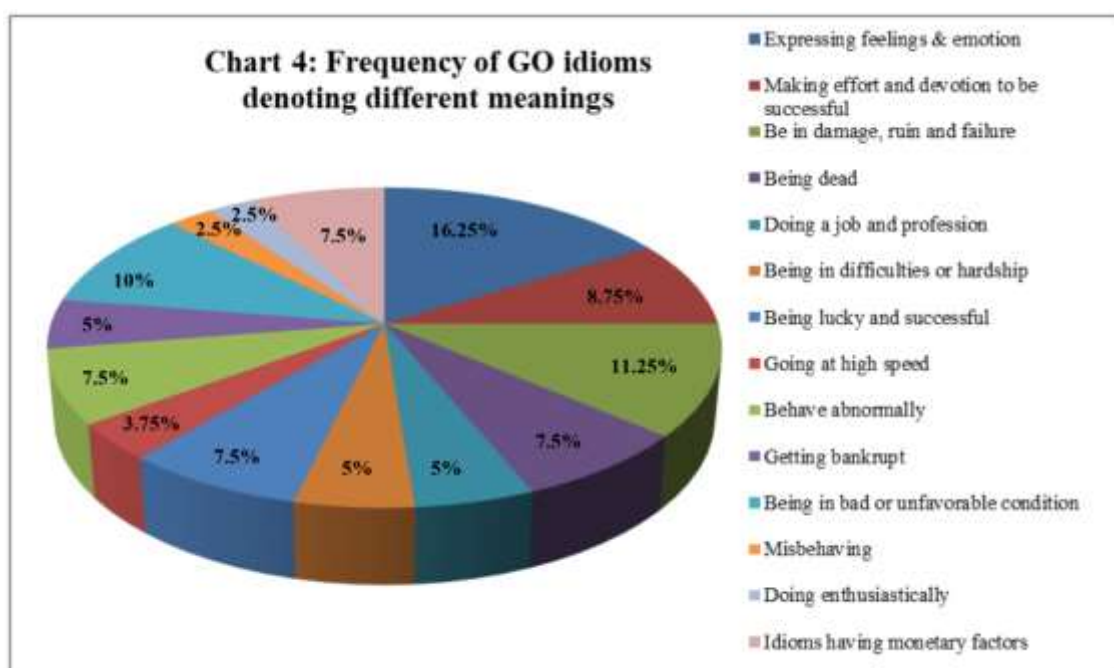Chart 4: Frequency of GO idioms denoting different meanings

Table 7 helps to draw out some remarks as follows. First, most of the "GO" idioms express feelings and states of emotion (16.25%), in which the idioms expressing anger account for 11.25%, the highest of all kinds of feelings mentioned in this study. Second, the idioms denoting damage and failure make up 11.25 % and rank the second. Regarding the idioms expressing anger, for instance, Vietnamese also have a variety of idioms from the lower level to higher one of emotional level. For example, "*đá thúng đụng nia*", "*giận cá chém thớt*", "*giận tím mặt*", "*nóng mặt nóng gáy*", "*tức sôi máu*", "*đằng đằng sát khí*", "*nổi cơn tam bành*", "*nổi trận lôi đình*", etc.

If in English, the factor of colors is mainly used to tell about the facial expression and imply a state of emotion like *"go red" (getting embarrassed)*, *"go white" (getting scared)*, in Vietnamese, colors are also commonly used to describe such facial expression and feelings, such as *"sợ xanh mét", "nhìn mặt tái xanh tái mét", "mặt đỏ như gấc", "thẹn đỏ cả mặt"*, and so on. However, the factor of fruit which is used to describe anger like *"go bananas"*, *"go nuts"* seemingly cannot be found in Vietnamese idioms.

CONCLUSIONS
Conclusion
The study is to conduct an investigation into the syntactic and semantic features of "GO" idioms with reference to their Vietnamese equivalents. In order to achieve this target efficiently, a number of theoretical backgrounds are presented to support the study. There are also implications for learning, teaching and translating "GO" idioms. By answering all three questions, the author hopes that the findings will be a practical and useful material for the learners of English and Vietnamese as a foreign language understand and use these idioms properly and effectively in reality.

The study has revealed the following results:

Semantically, the meanings of all the collected "GO" idioms in English with reference to their Vietnamese equivalents could be expressed in the form of a noun phrase, an adjective phrase, an adverb phrase. However, such "GO" idioms, when translating into Vietnamese to get their equivalents, do not frequently need the appearance of the word "GO" ("ĐI"). Based on the functional grammar viewpoint, the researcher has investigated each semantic field based on superficial grammatical structures. In the light of this approach, "GO" idioms are analyzed in forms of phrasal structures in relation to their semantic features. The phrasal structures could be categorized into noun phrases, verb phrases, prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases.

The differences in semantic and syntactic features of these "GO" idioms in English could cause some problems to the Vietnamese learners learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, on the basis of the result of the study, we would like to put forward some implications for the possible better language teaching, learning and translating.

Implications
Implication for teaching "GO" idioms
Firstly, the idioms introduced to students should be suitable for the learners. For learners at a lower level, the idioms should be listed in semantic fields, topics or key words. Of course, the explanation in terms of structure and meaning is indispensable in order to avoid misunderstanding the figurative meaning. At advanced level, analyzing semantic mechanisms of the idioms should be done so that learners can discover the figurative meaning of an idiom by themselves.

Secondly, teaching the history of how an idiom came into common usage is also helpful to learners and may provide clues to its present usage. For example, the idiom "*Go Dutch*" originated from the bad reputation of the Dutch is that they are very mean. That is why "Go Dutch" means share the bill equally, and the Vietnamese equivalent should be "*tiền ai người nấy trả*".

Thirdly, to understand the meaning of idioms, learners not only have the basic knowledge of a language but also master the cultural characteristics of idioms. Therefore, in order to teach idioms effectively, it is necessary to teach their cultural characteristics as well. For example, the difference in culture affects the translation of the idiom "*go like a hot cake"*. In Vietnamese, we cannot say "*bán chạy/ bán đắt như chiếc bánh nóng"*. Instead, we say "*bán chạy (đắt) như*

tôm tươi". Furthermore, students should have more opportunities to hear, read and use the expressions through types of exercises.

Implication for translating "GO" idioms

Some translation tactics relating to literal translation and figurative translation could be given to help Vietnamese learners of English as a foreign language deal with "GO" idioms. Translators should make great endeavor to retain the figurative image, rhetorical devices and cultural characteristics of the original idioms. In addition, because "GO" idioms are used widely on news, the translators need to capture the general context and content of an article so that they can find out the most suitable expressions in Vietnamese that are equivalent to. For example, in an article online, there appears this sentence. *Rick Santorum: "The winds are behind' Trump, if he doesn't **go off the rails**." (Trump sẽ có khả năng thành công nếu như ông ta không cư xử lệch lạc và khó chấp nhận).* If readers do not follow the news and information related to Mr. *Donald* Trump, one of America's most famous billionaires but now he's trying to become the next president of the USA and a lot of stories around him, it may hard for them to understand this sentence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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