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Ontological Metaphors in English Business Economics Terminology and Their Equivalence in Vietnamese

Abstract

This study investigates the use of ontological metaphors in the nomination of business economics terminology in English and their equivalent representations in Vietnamese. The research corpus comprises 357 English metaphorical terms and 365 corresponding Vietnamese terms, which were collected from business economics dictionaries and textbooks. The findings highlight that metaphorisation serves as a highly effective method for term nomination, evidenced by the prolific use of ontological metaphors in the business economics terminologies of both English and Vietnamese. By conceptualizing our experiences in terms of concrete objects, abstract business economics concepts – such as company, brand, market, business activity, industry, economy, price, cost, and capital – are symbolically represented as physical entities. The analysis reveals three primary methods employed when translating English terms into Vietnamese: (i) an English ontological metaphor is translated using the identical metaphor in Vietnamese (with differences mostly limited to word order), (ii) an English ontological metaphor is translated by a different metaphor in Vietnamese, (iii) the Vietnamese term utilizes a loanword or a descriptive translation. The study also discovers that, unlike in English-speaking countries, Vietnamese speakers do not extensively utilise the animal source domain to describe abstract business concepts. These findings are anticipated to provide valuable insight into the metaphorical nomination of business economics terminology in English and Vietnamese for economists, scholars, and language users.

Keywords: ontological metaphor; business economics; translation equivalence; English for specific purposes; Vietnamese for specific purposes

1 Introduction

Metaphor has been an effective instrument utilised by experts to describe and clarify abstract and complex ideas in a way that non-experts can understand (Silaški & Đurović, 2024). Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), significantly broadens the definition of metaphor, positing that the human cognitive system inherently operates metaphorically. Being a cognitive tool, metaphors facilitate our understanding and cognition, and it is through metaphors that we are able to comprehend and verbalise abstract and intangible concepts by transferring representations from a preexisting domain of reality (source domain) to it (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). A concept is regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon linked to cognitive processes and culture (Terniievska, 2023).

Metaphorisation is explored in the studies of numerous scholars who examine the metaphorical nomination in English for Specific Purposes. Silaški (2011) studies metaphorical terms in business and economics formed from the source domain of animals. The author categorizes the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and INSTITUTIONS ARE ANIMALS metaphors into several sub-metaphors. Analyzing the financial vocabulary in Spanish and English used to communicate socioeconomic developments, Sánchez Pérez and Cortés de los Ríos (2015) discover cross-cultural variations in the prevalence and types of metaphors and metonymies utilised in financial press articles. Orčić and Gorčević (2017) investigate metaphorical collocations in English business terms and their Serbian equivalents. Kos's (2019) study states that metonyms and metaphors

play a crucial part in creating new naming units, whether they are morphologically simple or complex, especially in situations where literal description may be inadequate. Khachmafova et al. (2021) look into the characteristics of metaphorical terms in the oil and gas industry through modelling and etymological methodologies. The study has presented multiple conceptual models of metaphorical terms derived from various sources, encompassing humans, animals, space, medicine, colors, and other domains. Meanwhile, Krawiec (2022) identifies several conceptual metaphors used to describe information technology terms from such source domains as people, food, sports competition, physical space, container, parts of a living body, etc. Martin et al. (2024) investigate metaphors utilised in finance and have found that “markets animate”, “markets inanimate”, “war/combat”, and “health” exhibit significant correlations with mainstream and social media. Additionally, Hanh (2024a) reveals that business can be conceptualised as a journey. The author also identifies four mapping schemas by which certain attributes of the business target domain are projected from the journey source domain in forming new terms. Moreover by projecting certain attributes from the military affairs and building source domains onto those in business, Hanh’s (2024b) study provides numerous instances of business terms created from metaphors such as COMPANIES ARE MILITARY FORCES, MARKET IS BATTLEFIELD, COMPANIES ARE BUILDINGS, etc.

Overall, the examination of terminology through the lens of cognitive linguistics, particularly in relation to conceptual metaphors, is garnering significant interest from researchers worldwide and has notable achievements in identifying the use of metaphors in nominating specialised vocabulary. However, little effort has been devoted to research on metaphorical terms in English in relation to their equivalence in Vietnamese, which needs to be fulfilled. Consequently, the present study seeks to clarify ontological metaphors in nominating business economics terminology in English and their equivalence in Vietnamese.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The crucial turning point in the study of metaphor arose with the advent of cognitive linguistics in the 1980s, led by Lakoff and Johnson. Cognitive linguistics investigates metaphor by studying various aspects of human experience and argues that metaphor is a cognitive process rather than just a linguistic phenomenon (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), showing correlations between language and our cognition (Aksenova, 2022). Lakoff and Johnson point out that metaphor is the cognitive process of comprehending and perceiving a concept by connecting it to a different concept, which entails designating an abstract domain (target domain) by projecting similar attributes from a concrete domain (source domain). Meanwhile, Kövecses (2010) claims conceptual metaphor to be a systematic set of correspondences, or mappings, between the source and target domains. The cognitive link between these two conceptual domains facilitates connections of words or phrases (Martin et al., 2024). A widely used convention for indicating conceptual metaphors is a formula expressed in capital letters in the following structure: TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN or TARGET DOMAIN AS SOURCE DOMAIN (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). This demonstrates the semantic practice of capitalizing terms to distinguish their meanings from linguistic elements.

Conceptual metaphors can be categorised based on their cognitive function, their conventionality, their nature, and their complexity (Kövecses, 2010, p. 310). In terms of cognitive function, metaphors are classified into three types: structural metaphors, ontological metaphors and orientational metaphors (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

A *structural metaphor* is a metaphorical representation in which one concept is organised and understood through the lens of another concept. This type of metaphor allows us to comprehend the target domain by projecting the attributes from the source onto those of the target domain (Kövecses, 2010; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Take the metaphor THE MIND IS A MACHINE as an example; it is clear that our knowledge on the concept of a “machine” is mapped onto the concept of “mind”. In this metaphor, the source domain is “machine”, while “mind” is the target domain.

An *ontological metaphor* refers to the use of language or concepts that describe abstract or intangible ideas in terms of concrete or physical entities (Gkalitsiou & Kotsopoulos, 2023; Nordquist, 2023). Our

perception of physical objects and materials shapes ontological metaphors, which can be used to provide meaning to notions that go beyond basic orientation. Ontological metaphors are utilised to promote our understanding of activities, actions, states, or events (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Ontological metaphors are fundamental devices that we use to understand and make sense of our experiences. By conceptualizing experiences about substances, objects, or containers, we are able to isolate certain elements of our experience such as events, actions, emotions, and ideas, and analyse them as distinct entities. Personification may also be considered to be a type of ontological metaphor (Nordquist, 2023). Consequently, events and acts are symbolically represented as objects, activities can be described as substances, and states are embodied as containers. As an illustration, THE MIND IS A MACHINE is an ontological metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Therefore, we can discuss intangible concepts as tangible entities due to our ability to manifest them physically through our conceptual system.

Orientation metaphors are abstract notions that are constructed using spatial orientation as a foundation, which allow speakers to establish coherence across a group of target concepts by utilizing fundamental human spatial orientations (Kövecses, 2010). The notion of orientation, which is one of the earliest concepts developed by humans, can be succinctly described as the understanding of spatial relationships such as in – out, inside – outside, up – down, center – periphery, deep – shallow, and so on. For example, the notions of pleasure, happiness, health, etc. are metaphorically associated with the concept of “up”, whereas the concepts of unhappiness and sickness are metaphorically associated with the concept of “down” in metaphors: HAPPY IS UP, CONTROL IS UP, HEALTHY IS UP, SICKNESS IS DOWN. These spatial orientations arise from the observation of objects and phenomena in the physical environment surrounding us.

2.2 Business Economics Terminology in English and Vietnamese

Business economics constitutes a discipline within applied economics that employs economic theories to analyse business organisations and various variables that influence their diverse organisational structures and linkages with labor, capital, and product markets (Moschandreas, 2000). Business economics deals with analysing issues pertaining to organisational, financial, market dynamics and environmental challenges encountered by organisations. Additionally, the subject matter encompasses cost and production analysis, pricing decisions and strategies, demand analysis and forecast, profit management, etc. (Banton, 2024; WallStreetMojo, 2024).

Such factors as economic growth, economic structure, pricing, capital, etc. are closely related to a country's overall economy (Dinh et al., 2024).

Terminology is “the set of technical words or expressions used in a particular subject” (Hornby, 2015, p. 1561). Antia (2000, p. 6) defines terms as “information and knowledge centers”. Kageura (2002) refers to a term as a lexical unit that conveys a certain concept within a particular domain. Therefore, we can assume that business economics terminology is *words or phrases (or multi-word expressions) which have specific meanings in the contexts of the business economics field*, including words or phrases denoting issues related to organisation (company), cost, price, business activity, capital, profit, production, market, industry, economy, to name but a few (Hanh, 2025).

English, which is one of the West Germanic languages, has predominantly forsaken the inflectional case system in reliance on analytic structures. Vietnamese is an Austroasiatic language spoken primarily in Vietnam. Vietnamese is a language characterised by a high level of analyticity and tonality. In English, words undergo morphological changes to convey grammatical relationships. By examining affixes, we can effortlessly ascertain the word's part of speech. In contrast, Vietnamese is characterised by its lack of morphological markers for case, gender, number, and tense. The morphology of a word does not inherently indicate its part of speech or the syntactic function in a sentence. For example, the verb “compete”, noun “competition”, adjective “competitive”, or adverb “competitively” in English can all have their equivalence in Vietnamese as [cạnh tranh], the noun “competitor” is translated into Vietnamese as [đối thủ cạnh tranh].

It is also worth noting that while English noun phrases follow the pattern *pre-modifiers + head noun + postmodifiers* (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1973), Vietnamese has head-initial directionality, with modifiers following the words they modify. For example, “distribution” is [phân phối], and “system” is [hệ thống], the phrase “distribution system” has its Vietnamese equivalence as [hệ thống phân phối] with the reverse

word order in the Vietnamese phrase compared to English. Another good example of different word order is evident in the English term “inventory control procedure”, which corresponds to its Vietnamese equivalent [quy trình kiểm soát hàng tồn kho]. This term has three elements, in which *inventory* is [hàng tồn kho], *control* is [kiểm soát], and *procedure* is [quy trình].

2.3 Translation Techniques and Translation Equivalence

Translation is a process whereby the meaning conveyed in the source language is rendered into the target language (Phuong et al., 2024). According to Nida and Taber (1969), translation involves producing a natural and closely equivalent version of messages from the source language to the receptor language, primarily focusing on style and meaning (Nida & Taber, 1969). Vinay and Darbelnet (1995) introduce two primary types of translation techniques: direct translation and oblique translation. Direct translation can be literal translation, borrowing, and calque. These techniques can be employed when the components of the text being translated exhibit similarities in the source language and target language. Oblique translation techniques are used when a little alteration of the meaning is necessary. These techniques can be transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. The analysis of conceptual mappings in the source language can help translators to employ the most suitable translation technique in accordance with specific context (Aksenova, 2022).

The term “equivalence” is commonly used to describe languages that employ distinct cultural or stylistic methods to depict a shared issue. The concept of “equivalence” has been extensively explored by numerous experts majoring in translation methods. Nida introduces two categories of equivalence, namely dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. While formal equivalence emphasizes the content and structure of the message, dynamic equivalence is founded upon the concept of “the principle of equivalent effort” (Nida, 1964, p. 159). L’Homme (2020) claims that equivalence is a relationship between terms denoting the same concept in different languages. From a knowledge-based perspective, translation equivalence is concerned with identifying language symbols that represent the same idea. From a lexical standpoint, the meaning of terms is what determines the types of translation equivalence possible. Nevertheless, such cases as partial equivalence, non-equivalence, or structural differences between the source and target languages may hinder terminologists from identifying appropriate equivalence in translation. Equivalence can be defined as the attainment of precision and faithfulness in conveying information between the source language and the target language.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Corpus

The data collected in this research are business economics terms which adhere to the purposeful sampling technique. The compiled corpus was collected from different dictionaries in English and Vietnamese, specifically *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (Hornby, 2015), *Cambridge Business English Dictionary* (Combley, 2011), *Từ điển thuật ngữ kinh tế – thương mại Anh-Việt* [A dictionary of business economics terms in English and Vietnamese] (Do, 2009). Moreover, the current study collected additional data from textbooks related to business economics in English and translated versions in Vietnamese (see, e.g., David, 2014, 2015; Kim & Mauborgne, 2005, 2014; Ohmae, 1982, 2020; Porter, 1998, 2016; to name but a few).

3.2 Metaphor Identification Procedure

To identify ontological metaphors, the study employs the Metaphor Identification Procedure which was introduced by Pragglejaz Group (2007), with three steps as follows: (1) collecting terms that have the potential for metaphorical use from dictionaries and textbooks; (2) determining metaphorical words and phrases, assessing whether they possess more fundamental contemporary significance across different contexts compared to their usage in the field of business economics; (3) naming *metaphorical terms* – those

that consist of one or more *metaphorical elements*. The contextual meaning employed in the study is the minimal context, which means that the contextual meaning is derived solely from the business economics terms themselves. The study adheres to cognitive linguistics norms by using small capitals for ontological metaphor models, italics for metaphorical terms. Vietnamese terms are placed in square brackets.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory posited by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) in analysing ontological metaphors in business economics terminology. The research utilised descriptive analysis, contrastive analysis, categorisation, and statistics. We adopted the methodology of *lexical approach* described in Kövecses et al. (2024) to the analysis of ontological metaphors in the collected business economics terms. The lexical approach helps to investigate conventional words or expressions associated with the idea under analysis, commonly appearing in dictionaries or word collections that pertain to the field of business economics.

The procedure to analyse the compiled corpus involves the following steps:

- (i) Identify ontological metaphors in business economics in English and Vietnamese
- (ii) Classify metaphorical terms into categories
- (iii) Determine the equivalent and non-equivalent metaphors between the two corpora

4 Results and Discussion

Ontological metaphors are discovered to be extensively utilised in the sampled corpus. Through ontological conceptualisation, abstract or intangible concepts in business economics, including company, brand, market, business activity, industry, economy, price, cost and capital are symbolically represented as physical entities. The number of ontological metaphors in business economics terms in English and Vietnamese can be observed in Figure 1.

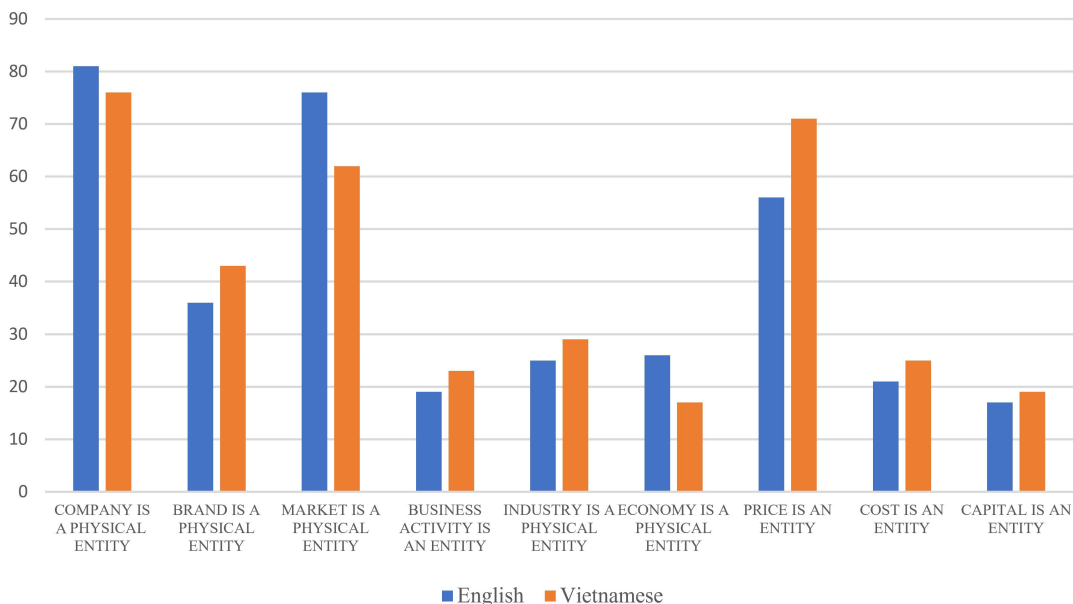


Figure 1. The number of ontological metaphors in business economics terms in English and Vietnamese.

As can be seen from Figure 1, the metaphorical terms denoting company, market and price are the most salient in the collected data. Overall, there is a modest variation in the quantity of metaphorical terms denoting business economics in English and Vietnamese. We will now take a closer look at how ontological metaphors help in nominating business economics terminology in English and their equivalence in Vietnamese, and the correspondences between the target domain of business economics concepts and the source domain of physical entities.

4.1 Ontological Metaphors in Business Economics Terms in English with Equivalent Terms in Vietnamese

4.1.1 The Metaphor COMPANY IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT The term “company” refers to “a business organisation that makes money by producing or selling goods or services” (Hornby, 2015, p. 297). As clearly defined, a company is a business organisation, not a physical object, but it is given qualities of physical objects. Viewing company as an object allows us to regard it as a physical entity with its own structure, design, size, or boundary. In English and Vietnamese equivalence, this mapping can be illustrated through such metaphorical terms as *horizontal organisational structure* [cơ cấu tổ chức nằm ngang], *organisational chart* [sơ đồ tổ chức], *medium-sized firm* [doanh nghiệp vừa và nhỏ], *corporate restructuring* [tái cấu trúc doanh nghiệp], etc. In addition, we can metaphorically describe the features of companies using adjectives such as “closed”, “boundaryless”, “front”, “flat” ... which basically denote physical objects’ characteristics, as in the term *closed corporation* [công ty khép kín]. Some English terms have at least two Vietnamese equivalences, for example *dormant company* [công ty không hoạt động/ công ty hữu danh vô thực], *controlled company* [công ty chịu kiểm soát, công ty con]. It is indispensable to note that certain terms in English have partial equivalences in Vietnamese, which are translated by a different metaphor in Vietnamese, for example *shell company* [công ty vỏ bọc], *shelf company* [công ty trên giấy], *front company* [công ty bình phong], etc.

4.1.2 The Metaphor COMPANY IS A PLANT We can discuss companies as plants because of numerous correspondences between these two domains. Plants’ life cycle goes from the seeding stage, through growth, until death. Similarly, “seeds” commonly represent the initial stage or origin of an organisation, thus all companies need *seed funding* [tài trợ hạt giống] or *seed capital* [vốn hạt giống] which is the money raised to initiate the development of a business idea or a new product. Furthermore, the plant’s physiological growth attribute is triggered and projected onto the source domain of an organisation, enabling people to visualise the organisation’s development as a biological entity, which is indicated by terms like *grow*, *growth*, *growing* [tăng trưởng], *organic growth* [tăng trưởng hữu cơ], *inorganic growth* [tăng trưởng ngoại sinh], etc. *Corporate growth* signifies the increase in the organisation’s size in terms of operational scale, income, and other financial indicators. The organisation’s business scale may expand as a result of either internal or external forces, which is referred to as *organic growth* or *inorganic growth*. *Organic growth* refers to the expansion of a company’s output and sales through internal resources without any profits or *growth* resulting from mergers and acquisitions. In contrast, *inorganic growth*, also known as *external growth*, involves the firm’s *growth* through mergers or acquisitions. Furthermore, a variety of metaphorical terms portray a *growing organisation* with multiple divisions or *branches* [chi nhánh] as a tree that is progressively increasing in size, with the nomination of such terms as *local branch* [chi nhánh địa phương], *branch manager* [giám đốc chi nhánh], ... The term *branch* is polysemous, the first meaning in the dictionary is “a part of a tree ...”, while the second meaning of the term is “a local office or shop belonging to a large company or organisation” (Hornby, 2015, p. 171). As exemplified by these metaphorical terms, different attributes of plants represent many features associated with the organisation, including branches, stages in the plant’s life cycle. Our knowledge of plants helps us to comprehend abstract concepts of companies.

4.1.3 The Metaphor BRAND IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY A brand is defined as “a type of product, service, etc. made or offered by a particular company under a particular name” (Hornby, 2015, p. 172). The design, logo, packaging, and advertising message of a product are all synchronised to effectively convey the

brand's message to the consumer. A brand is an intangible asset; nevertheless, we use ontological metaphors to comprehend a brand as a concrete entity. Firstly, a brand is metaphorically viewed as a building in the sense that a brand has its unique archetype, architecture, model, building process, in such terms as *brand architecture* [kiến trúc thương hiệu], *brand archetype* [hình mẫu thương hiệu]. Establishing a brand provides numerous benefits to a company. Therefore, when a firm seeks to define its public image, it needs to focus on *brand positioning* [định vị thương hiệu] in the market, which involves a certain *brand building process* [quy trình xây dựng thương hiệu] on a *brand platform* [nền tảng thương hiệu] using a *brand map* [bản đồ thương hiệu].

Secondly, a brand is conceptualised as a physical object in terms like *brand switching* [chuyển đổi thương hiệu], *brand diffusion* [khuếch tán thương hiệu], etc. While *brand extension* and *brand stretching* have the same equivalence in Vietnamese, as [mở rộng thương hiệu], the term *brand alignment* is translated by a different metaphor in Vietnamese, as [liên kết thương hiệu], which indicates a partial equivalence between the two languages. As clearly shown in these metaphorical terms, a brand is similar to a physical object given that we can deliver, extend, align, switch a brand in the same way as a tangible entity. The abstract concept of brand is concretised as a distinct physical entity, resistant to damage, which helps companies bolster their reputations, providing them with a distinct competitive advantage over their competitors.

4.1.4 The Metaphor MARKET IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY The market is defined as “an occasion when people buy and sell goods”, or “business or trade, or the amount of trade in a particular type of goods” (Hornby, 2015, p. 924). As specified in the definition, market is an intangible item which can be perceived as a tangible entity. First and foremost, a virtual market in economics is comprehended as a physical destination in a business journey. If business is a journey, then market is a destination in that journey. All companies look for *untapped market space* [thị trường chưa khai thác], or try to enter, penetrate, or get access to a potential market in order to carry out their business activities and achieve their corporate goals. This mapping is demonstrated by the nomination of terms like *market entry strategy* [chiến lược gia nhập thị trường], *market penetration* [thâm nhập thị trường], *barriers to market entry* [rào cản gia nhập thị trường], etc. In the business journey, one company may need *market driving strategies* [chiến lược dẫn dắt thị trường] to be a *market pioneer* or *market leader* [dẫn đầu thị trường]; otherwise, it will become a *market follower* [người theo sau trên thị trường].

Secondly, we metaphorically view market as a tangible object due to its well-defined structure, boundary, size, signal... such as in the metaphorical terms *market size* [quy mô thị trường], *market boundary* [ranh giới thị trường], *underground market* [thị trường ngầm], etc. Similarly, the market can be likened to an object because authorities or certain organisations can control it (*market control*), or companies share the same market (*market share*). In addition, market is largely understood by means of a liquid. This can be represented by metaphorical terms such as *market saturation* [bão hòa thị trường], *oversaturated market* [thị trường quá bão hòa], *frozen market* [thị trường phong tỏa, thị trường bị đóng băng]. The partially equivalent Vietnamese term of “market skimming” is [chiến lược giá hớt văng], etc.

In addition, when classifying various types of market, we employ numerous adjectives denoting colors (black, grey) or orientations (horizontal, vertical) to depict the attributes of a specific market. For instance, a *horizontal market* [thị trường ngang] refers to a market in which products or services are frequently consumed with a high demand, resulting in less risk for producers in terms of demand for their output. A *black market* [thị trường chợ đen] implies an underground market or a series of transactions that involve illegality or do not adhere to standard rules and regulations. Other metaphorical terms projected in accordance with this attribute are *vertical marketplace* [thị trường dọc], *black market goods* [hàng hóa thị trường chợ đen], *grey market* [thị trường xám, thị trường phi chính thức], etc.

Last but not least, market is conventionally viewed as a living creature. *Market movement* [hoạt động của thị trường] is attributed with animate activities, which are then activated and projected onto the market, resulting in upward, downward, or sideways market trends. Furthermore, market is similar to a living thing in the sense that market is considered to have certain power, strength, attractiveness like an animal in such metaphorical terms as *market power* [sức mạnh thị trường], *market attractiveness* [sức hấp dẫn của thị trường], etc. From these metaphorical terms, it is evident that the market is conceptualised as a tangible entity, allowing enterprises to ascertain their position within the market.

4.1.5 The Metaphor BUSINESS ACTIVITY IS AN ENTITY Business activities include all economic operations undertaken by a corporation in the course of business primarily aimed at generating profit (Tuovila, 2022). These continuous activities, including operating, investing, and financing activities, are aimed at generating value for the company's shareholders. Business activities, albeit abstract in nature, are made tangible and given symbolic representation through many metaphorical elements such as "model", "position", "structure", "tool", "system", and so on. This can be observed through metaphorical terms like *business model* [mô hình kinh doanh], *business tool* [công cụ kinh doanh], etc.

Moreover, business is personified as an individual, which enables us to understand diverse interactions with it through the lens of the human life cycle and attributes. The metaphorical conceptualisation of several business concepts in terms of human beings is reflected in the following terms: *business life cycle* [vòng đời kinh doanh], *business performance* [hiệu suất kinh doanh], etc.

Business can also be recognised in a natural phenomenon in such metaphorical terms as *business ecology* [hệ sinh thái doanh nghiệp], *business environment* [môi trường kinh doanh], etc. *Business environment* includes internal and external factors that can influence a company's business decisions. The *internal business environment* encompasses elements such as policies, company culture, and business performance, while the *external business environment* includes such factors as economic environment, sociocultural environment, technological environment, political business environment, to name but a few.

As shown by these examples, the metaphor BUSINESS ACTIVITY IS AN ENTITY influences our perspectives on business activities as well as helping us to comprehend abstract concepts in business through the lens of more concrete and physical entities.

4.1.6 The Metaphor INDUSTRY IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY An industry refers to "the people and activities involved in producing a particular thing, or in providing a particular service" (Hornby, 2015, p. 778). Similar businesses are grouped into industries depending on the primary products they produce or sell. In describing features and categorisation of industries, we often metaphorise industry as tangible entities due to our ability to manifest them physically through our conceptual system. Firstly, industry is metaphorically viewed as a person. The attributes of the human life cycle and characteristics are mapped onto those of an industry, which can be realised through various expressions related to industry, such as *industry life cycle* [vòng đời ngành công nghiệp], *infant industry* [ngành non trẻ], *industry attractiveness* [mức hấp dẫn của ngành], and so on. The *industry life cycle* pertains to the evolution of an industry or business via four distinct stages (introduction, growth, maturity, and decline) according to the typical business characteristics exhibited in each phase.

Additionally, industry is conceptualised as an object with its own structure or framework in terms like *industry framework* or *industry structure* [cơ cấu ngành]. We also describe certain characteristics of industries using words like "emerging", "faltering", "fragmented", ... in metaphorical terms such as *emerging industry* [ngành mới nổi], *faltering industry* [ngành đã bão hòa], *fragmented industry* [ngành công nghiệp phân tán]. Additionally, an industry is similar to a location in the following terms: *industry newcomer* [doanh nghiệp mới tham gia vào ngành], *industry boundary* [ranh giới ngành], etc. Certain terms denoting industry, which have partial equivalence in Vietnamese, are translated into Vietnamese using different metaphors, for instance, *industry player* [đối thủ trong ngành], *sunrise industry* [ngành công nghiệp đang lên], etc. The metaphorical terms in the ontological metaphor INDUSTRY IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY prove that, by conceptualizing our experiences in terms of physical entities, abstract concepts related to industries can be described as distinct entities with attributes projected from human beings, physical objects or locations.

4.1.7 The Metaphor ECONOMY IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY The economy is characterised as "the relationship between production, trade and the supply of money in a particular country or region" (Hornby, 2015, p. 475). To put the same thing differently, an economy is a complex system of interconnected activities involving production, trade of goods and services. These activities ultimately decide the allocation of resources among participants. First and foremost, the ontological metaphor ECONOMY IS A PHYSICAL ENTITY enables us to envision the economy as a person. The common features of human entities to be projected onto those of economies are mental state, health condition, growth stages ... such as in the terms

economic recovery [phục hồi kinh tế], *economic depression* [khủng hoảng kinh tế], *economic strength* [thực lực kinh tế], etc.

Secondly, the abstract concept of economy is symbolically represented as an object through associated mapping attributes. For example, economy can have a specific model (*economic model* [mô hình kinh tế]), a certain structure (*economic structure* [cơ cấu kinh tế]), a cycle (*economic cycle* [chu kỳ kinh tế]), can be controlled (*controlled economy* [nền kinh tế bị kiểm soát]), or can be fluctuated (*economic fluctuation* [biến động kinh tế, thăng trầm kinh tế]). Additionally, words denoting spheres of concrete objects like “developing”, “emerging”, “downturn”, “mixed” ... are metaphorically employed to describe economic features in such terms as *underground economy* [kinh tế ngầm], *economic moat* [hào kinh tế], *economic bubble* [bong bóng kinh tế]. In particular, the colors of objects like “brown”, “green”, “black” are also utilised in nominating economic terms such as *black economy* [nền kinh tế đen], or *green economy* [nền kinh tế xanh], etc.

As clearly shown in these examples, economy is an abstract system, but described as a physical entity like a person or an object through our conceptual system.

4.1.8 The Metaphor PRICE IS AN ENTITY Price is the amount of money for which a thing is or can be bought or sold (Hornby, 2015). Price determines the product’s future, client acceptance of the product, and profitability from the product. The price of a product or service can be used as a competitive advantage, and as a result, pricing decisions can have a significant influence on an organisation. Price is an abstract concept that is commonly described as an intangible entity, not having a physical form. First and foremost, the term “price” is symbolically represented as a building with its own distinct features. This mapping scheme is derived from the utilisation of words basically denoting the spheres of a building like “corridor”, “floor”, “ceiling”, “boundary”, ... *Price corridor*, also known as *price guardrail* or *pricing boundary*, translated into Vietnamese as [hành lang giá], are predetermined ranges that establish the acceptable prices for products or services. Different from other terms, *price floor* [giá sàn] and *price ceiling* [giá trần] are especially translated into Vietnamese with the same word order as English, where *price* is [giá], *floor* is [sàn], and *ceiling* is [trần].

Additionally, price is metaphorically viewed as construction materials or tools, which can be realised through various expressions related to price such as *fixed price* [giá cố định], *price elasticity* [độ co giãn của giá], ... The materials or tools may be placed in a high or low position. Similarly, the price of products or services can range from a low to a high level, for instance *low-priced goods* [hàng giá rẻ], *high price* [giá cao], etc. The terms *roll back price*, *price drop* are translated into Vietnamese as [hạ giá] or [giảm giá].

Moreover price is also embodied as a sports competition in metaphorical terms such as *competitive price* [giá cạnh tranh], *price competitiveness* [khả năng cạnh tranh về giá], *price pressure* [sức ép về giá, áp lực giá cả], etc. Certain terms formed from this mapping are translated into Vietnamese with different metaphors, for example *knockdown price* is equivalent to [giá giảm xuống thấp nhất], *knockout price* is similar to [giá rẻ mạt], etc.

As evidenced in the above examples, the concept of price and product pricing is fundamentally abstract. Nevertheless, terms denoting prices are metaphorically nominated through the mapping of an entity’s attributes, which can aid in our effortless understanding of various pricing concepts.

4.1.9 The Metaphor COST IS AN ENTITY Cost is the amount of money needed to buy, make or do something. By conceptualizing our experiences in terms of physical objects, we are able to isolate the abstract concept of costs and analyse them as distinct entities. In the ontological metaphor COST IS AN ENTITY, the knowledge originating from the “physical entity” source domain is transferred to the “cost” target domain, resulting in the representation of costs as concrete entities with their own structure or behaviour, such as in the terms *cost structure* [cấu trúc chi phí], or *cost curve* [đường cong chi phí]. In particular, the term *cost behaviour* has three equivalent terms in Vietnamese, which are [cách ứng xử của chi phí], [hành thái chi phí], and [hành vi chi phí].

In addition, cost exhibits characteristics typically associated with a physical entity in the sense that people can drive, control or cut it, such as in the terms *cost control* [kiểm soát chi phí], *cost cutting* [cắt

giảm chi phí], etc. Moreover, when classifying different types of cost, we use words like “sunk”, “mixed”, “fixed” ... in the same way that we talk about physical objects. Thus, we have metaphorical terms like *fixed cost* [chi phí cố định], *sunk cost* [chi phí chìm], etc. As illustrated in these terms, cost – an abstract concept – is conceptualised as a physical entity with distinct forms or structures due to our ability to manifest them physically through our conceptual system.

4.1.10 The Metaphor CAPITAL IS AN ENTITY In business economics, the term capital is used to characterise any entity that produces benefits or values for its proprietors. The most common categories of capital include working capital, equity, debt, and capital for trading. From an economist’s perspective, capital plays a crucial role in running any organisation, whether it is a family-owned business, a small firm, a group or an entire economy. Although capital is an abstract concept, it is usually comprehended via the domain of a physical entity, which can work, move or grow as illustrated by terms like *capital movement* [chu chuyển tư bản], *capital growth* [tăng trưởng vốn]; people can expand or raise capital (*capital expansion* [mở rộng vốn], *capital raising* [huy động vốn]), as capital has its own structure (*capital structure* [cơ cấu vốn, cơ cấu nguồn vốn]). The terms *working capital*, or *net working capital*, are translated into Vietnamese with a different metaphor: [vốn lưu động]. *Working capital* is a frequently employed measurement to evaluate a company’s short-term *financial health* and liquidity.

Furthermore, capital is metaphorically viewed as a liquid, which can flow in/ out or can be injected. This mapping is shown in metaphorical terms such as *capital flow* [dòng vốn], *capital inflow* [luồng vốn chảy vào], *capital injection* [rót vốn], *capital outflow* [dòng vốn ra], *cash flow* [dòng tiền, lưu kim], etc.

4.2 Metaphorical Terms in English with Non-equivalent Terms in Vietnamese

In English terminology, a company can metaphorically be viewed as an animal, in which salient characteristics of animals are attributed to the corporate entity, resulting in its embodiment as an animal. The abstract ideas related to types of companies are made concrete and endowed with meaning via conventional knowledge about the existence and behaviours of animals. Consequently, a company is metaphorically viewed as an animal via nouns like “bee”, “gorilla”, “elephant”, “cat”, “gazelle”, “turkey”, etc. denoting different types of company. The gorilla, being the largest among all extant primates, shares its most prominent characteristic, which is its size, with a company – an inanimate entity. In business, the term *gorilla* is used to describe a large company that dominates a certain industry. The *gazelle* is distinguished by its extraordinary speed, which is mapped onto the corporate characteristics to describe a company that experiences exceptionally rapid annual growth. *Killer bees* refer to organisations assisting firms in avoiding takeovers by creating and executing defensive plans to thwart hostile takeovers. The mapping highlights the adverse characteristics of bees – their stings, which can cause severe pain, can be fatal for individuals with allergies. Turkey is defined as “a stupid person who is not useful to anyone” (Hornby, 2015, p. 1625). In business, the term *turkey* is used to refer to a start-up company that may later go bankrupt. By conceptualizing our experiences in terms of animals, we are able to understand intangible concepts related to companies. Nevertheless, these terms do not have any equivalent in the Vietnamese language.

Animals also function as the source domain in terms describing the market. A *bear market* (or *bearish market*) refers to a financial market that is undergoing an extended period of declining prices. The opposite is a *bull market* (or *bullish market*) which denotes a market that is currently experiencing a consistent and significant increase in prices. The conceptual mappings are typically derived from our knowledge about the way bulls and bears attack. While a bull attacks from bottom up, a bear attacks in a downward motion. Meanwhile, a *deer market* is used to describe a *flat market* with minimum fluctuations in values, which is neither a *bull market* nor a *bear market*. These terms have no equivalence in Vietnamese; therefore, Vietnamese people employ the descriptive translation to refer to these phenomena.

Additionally, many English metaphorical terms denoting brands or companies don’t have equivalence in Vietnamese; instead, people utilise descriptive translation or borrowings. Here are some examples to illustrate this: *house of brands* is translated as [mô hình nhiều thương hiệu độc lập], *brand delivery* [mức độ truyền tải giá trị của thương hiệu tới khách hàng], *flagship brand* [thương hiệu dẫn đầu, thương hiệu chủ

chốt, thương hiệu Flagship], *umbrella brand* [thương hiệu mẹ], *branded house* is rendered into Vietnamese as [mô hình doanh nghiệp chỉ sử dụng một tên thương hiệu duy nhất cho tất cả sản phẩm], *cash-cow brand* [thương hiệu cash-cow], *click-and-mortar company* [công ty sở hữu cửa hàng vật lý và kênh bán hàng trực tuyến, công ty kết hợp Dotcom và truyền thống], etc.

4.3 Translation Methods from English Metaphorical Terms into Vietnamese

Based on the preceding explanation, it is evident that ontological metaphors are prominent in both English and Vietnamese with a negligible difference in the number of terms whose constituent elements are ontological metaphors, encompassing a total of 357 English terms and 365 Vietnamese business economics terms. The methods of translating English metaphorical terms into Vietnamese are presented in Figure 2.

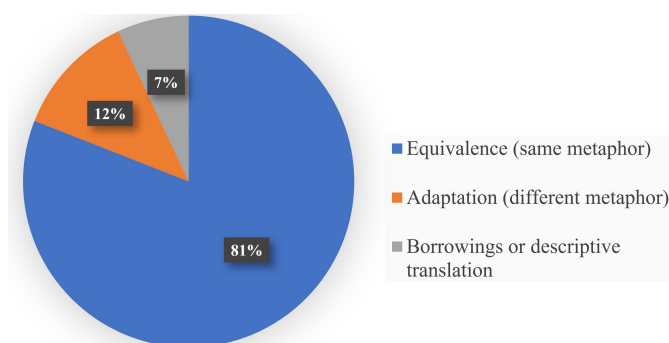


Figure 2. Frequency of translation techniques from English metaphorical terms into Vietnamese.

As we can see from Figure 2, when translating English terms into Vietnamese, three methods are employed. The most salient translation method is translation equivalence, which means an ontological metaphor in English is rendered using the same metaphor in Vietnamese, accounting for 81%. In applying this translation method, the majority of English terms have one Vietnamese equivalent term. A small number of English terms have two or three corresponding terms in Vietnamese. The second way to translate English terms into Vietnamese that can be observed in the collected corpus is adaptation, by which an ontological metaphor in English is translated using a different metaphor in Vietnamese, making up 12%. For English terms without equivalence in Vietnamese, borrowings or descriptive translation is used, which represents 7%.

5 Conclusion

Utilizing the Conceptual Metaphor Theory and metaphor classification identified by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), together with the procedure for identifying metaphors recommended by Pragglejaz Group (2007) to analyse the collected corpus, the study has revealed a widespread use of ontological metaphors in nominating business economics terminology. The research findings have clarified multiple ontological metaphors in English and Vietnamese business economics vocabulary describing a company, brand, market, business activity, industry, economy, price, cost, and capital. By conceptualizing our experiences in terms of physical objects, substances, materials, or living creatures, we are able to describe abstract, intangible, non-physical concepts in business economics in terms of concrete, tangible, dynamic, physical, or personified entities, which is much easier to comprehend. The use of ontological metaphors in business economics reflects a wider cultural understanding that business economics goes beyond mere conceptualisation, embodying an active and basically tangible aspect of everyday life and societal structure. Furthermore, these findings confirm the previous conclusions that emphasised the use of metaphorisation as a promising approach for

creating new terms and enhancing specialised vocabulary, as demonstrated by Khachmafova et al. (2021) and Hanh (2024a, 2024b).

Additionally, the present study reveals that in English, the source domain ANIMAL is occasionally utilised in business term nomination, encompassing terms that incorporate the name of an animal. Metaphors are formed based on similarities in typical functions, characteristics or appearance of animals which are mapped onto the target domains of the market, companies, etc. The ideals of individuality, assertiveness, and market dynamism that are fundamental to Anglo-American capitalism are reflected in these metaphors, which portray fierce competition and instability in the financial environment. In contrast, the Vietnamese populace harbors distinct perspectives regarding certain animals, including bears, bulls, cows, and others in comparison to those in English-speaking nations. When English terms with animal source domains are translated into Vietnamese, borrowings or descriptive translation with English annotations is frequently utilised. This lack might have its origins in Vietnamese cultural views of animals, which tend to identify them more with folk wisdom, moral precepts, or agrarian life than with financial abstraction. This cross-cultural disparity demonstrates how the usage of metaphors in business is not only linguistically based but also heavily influenced by historical and sociocultural factors.

The study also indicates that a great proportion of English terms have their equivalence in Vietnamese with the method of translation equivalence. A minority portion of English terms don't have Vietnamese equivalence; in this case, adaptation, borrowings or descriptive translation is used. This finding further validates that Vietnamese terms used in business economics are derived from either translation or borrowing from English, which is the official language of developed countries with well-established economic advancement. This finding is consistent with the research by Ha (2012) who confirms the foreign origins of numerous Vietnamese specialised terms.

There are some limitations to the present study that can be translated into opportunities for future research. In reality, other abstract concepts like companies and brands can also be embodied as human beings, or other source domains which are not described in the present study. It is therefore hoped that other researchers might study the mapping projected from these domains in nominating business economics terminology.

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