

# Exploring 'Give' in English and Equivalent Expressions in Vietnamese: A Cognitive Linguistics Approach

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## Abstract

This study investigates the metaphorical extensions and cognitive schemas of the English verb “give” and its Vietnamese equivalents through a corpus-based and cognitive linguistic approach. Drawing on data from trusted linguistic resources such as the Cambridge Dictionary, COCA, Hoàng Phê Dictionary, and Glosbe, the research explores how the verb “give” is extended metaphorically across various semantic fields (e.g., offer, allow, perform, grant) and how its Vietnamese counterparts (e.g., cho, tặng, biếu, ban) reflect cultural and cognitive distinctions. The study reveals that while both English and Vietnamese share fundamental embodied schema such as TRANSFER, CONTAINER, FORCE, Vietnamese emphasizes social hierarchy, relational politeness, and cultural formality much more explicitly. Through contrastive analysis and real context examples, this research highlights how verbs “give” not only express action but also encode deeply rooted cultural values and cognitive models. The findings have significant implications for language teaching, translation, and cross-cultural understanding by showing that literal translations of “give” may not always capture the intended nuance or function across languages.

**Keywords:** Cognitive linguistics, Metaphorical extension, Embodied schema, Cross-linguistic comparison, Vietnamese equivalents of “give”

## 1. Introduction

Language is one of the most important tools humans have for communication. It helps us shape the pathway we think, express ourselves, share information, and build social relationships

through understanding. Thanks to language, people can exchange ideas, interact with one another, and transmit knowledge from one generation to the next. To fulfill these functions, language components such as vocabulary, especially verbs or predicates, play a core role in expressing actions, states, and connections between ideas in communication.

It's certain that verbs are the most significant word classes in every language's system because they are the foundation for expressing something or someone as well as constructing coherent sentences. If a sentence has two parts "subject + predicate", the verb is the main function to convey action, which enables the speaker to clarify the activities performed by the subject. Once the subject's behavior, movement, and process have been described by these verbs, the sentence will gain meaning and give the listener/reader sufficient information. On the contrary, a few lexical items, which are not associated with physical movement, can be used to convey the condition or state of a person or thing, as well as to express emotions, preferences, perceptions, or needs. For example, in the sentence "*I am studying*" the verb "study" describes the subject's action, while in a sentence like "*I like ice cream*", the verb "like" expresses a state or preference of the speaker/writer. Moreover, verbs are a key component that links other elements in a sentence to make it meaningful. They build connections between the subject, object, and other sentence components, serving as the grammatical and semantic backbone. Furthermore, the types of verbs, whether a main verb, auxiliary verb, or modal verb as well as its position within a sentence, reveals important details about what is happening, when it happens, how it happens, and to whom or what it happens. By expressing tenses, aspects, and moods, verbs allow speakers to indicate when an action occurs in past, present or future, its aspect in which it unfolds in simple, continuous or perfect and connected with its indicative, imperative or subjunctive mood. These multifaceted roles of verbs ensure that sentences are not only grammatically accurate but also contextually rich, enabling the receiver to fully grasp the speaker's meaning, intention, and nuances of the communication.

In this regard, cognitive linguistics (CL) in this respect offers a powerful framework to analyzing language, as it focuses its lens on the interconnection between linguistic structures, human cognition or thought, and socio-cultural experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In contrast to traditional linguistic approaches, cognitive linguistics argues that linguistic constructions are shaped by cognitive processes such as perception, categorization, and metaphor. Through the theories of cognitive linguistics, it gives insight into how meaning is built and spread throughout different language contexts. As Evans and Green (2006) noted, "*Cognitive linguistics is based on our experience of the world and the way we perceive and conceptualize it.*" This perspective allows researchers to explore how metaphor, metonymy, and other figurative language forms are rooted in everyday cognitive functions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Moreover, cognitive linguistics sheds light on how language shapes and is shaped by human thought, which is evident in studies of conceptual metaphor theory and frame semantics (Fillmore, 1982). This comprehensive method emphasizes how important embodied cognition is to understanding how language is based on our perceptual and bodily experiences.

There exists a deeply intrinsic connection between body and mind; Since humans cannot directly observe the world through their minds but rather through their bodily sensations, Stolz (2015) argued that our conception of reality is a conceptual interpretation influenced by our

embodied experiences in the physical world rather than being genuinely objective. Among the vast array of verbs, “give” stands out as a particularly significant and complex example. “Give” is not only one of the most frequently used verbs in English but also one of the most versatile, highlighting the essential role verbs play in communication and in the human mind. At its core, “give” denotes an action of transfer, typically involving three participants: a giver (agent), a receiver (goal), and an item transferred (action). However, its role extends far beyond this basic meaning, making it a linguistically complex word. The verb “give” serves as an excellent illustration in the analysis of embodied cognition, describing how abstract concepts are often rooted in physical experiences. This verb refers to a physical transfer from one thing to another, but it can also refer to other metaphorical meanings, such as giving advice, giving permission, or giving a performance, in which no physical object is transferred but the conceptual framework is unchanged. As Johnson (1987) indicated, *“our conceptual system is grounded in, and constantly influenced by, our bodily experiences.”* Thus, the frequent use of the verb “give” across various contexts reinforces the notion that human cognition is fundamentally grounded in embodied experiences.

The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the various expressions of the verb “give” in English with its equivalent meanings in Vietnamese, focusing on structural, syntactic, and semantic differences. This study will discuss the usages of “give” in contexts, furthermore its inflected forms in English and Vietnamese equivalents (e.g., cho, đưa, tặng). Through this analysis, the research seeks to uncover the linguistic and cultural nuances embedded in each language's use of the verb.

To achieve this, the study will provide detailed statistics to illustrate the similarities and differences in the usage of “give” and its Vietnamese equivalents. We will look at examples from each language to illustrate how meaning, grammar, and context differ. By doing so, the research aims to offer a deeper understanding of how English and Vietnamese speakers use this essential verb to express actions of transfer and related ideas.

This study is intended to contribute to the field of contrastive linguistics by offering insights into the complexities of verb usage in English and Vietnamese. It also aims to enhance the understanding of language learners and translators by providing practical examples and clear explanations of the differences in structure and meaning. Ultimately, this paper seeks to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps, fostering more effective communication between English and Vietnamese speakers in cognitive linguistics. To achieve the objectives, the paper hopes to answer the two research questions:

- 1) How do the conceptualizations of “give” in English and its equivalent expressions in Vietnamese reflect embodied cognitive schema?
- 2) What are the metaphorical extensions of “give” in English and its Vietnamese equivalents, and how do these extensions reveal cultural and cognitive differences between the two languages?

The purpose of this study is to explore the verb “give” in English and its equivalent expressions in Vietnamese from a cognitive linguistic perspective. By doing so, it aims to elucidate how

this verb is conceptualized and utilized in both languages, which is crucial for English as a second language learners (ESL). Language learners can better apprehend the deeper semantic and pragmatic meanings of “give” and its Vietnamese counterparts by understanding the complex nuances and cognitive foundations of these expressions. The study will contribute to second language acquisition (SLA) research by identifying potential challenges that language learners may encounter when learning verbs in general, and polysemous verbs namely “give” in particular. From a linguistic research standpoint, by analyzing the semantic networks, metaphorical extensions, and syntactic patterns of “give” in English and Vietnamese, the study will contribute to a broader comprehension of cross-linguistic cognitive semantics. In the domain of English language teaching, this research will offer significant practical applications for the design and enhancement of teaching methodologies, thereby creating diverse and effective instructional materials. It will provide valuable insights into how cognitive linguistics can enhance vocabulary teaching, thereby improving the pedagogical effectiveness of English language instruction and facilitating better language proficiency and learning outcomes for Vietnamese ESL learners.

## 2. Literature Review

Cognitive linguistics is a modern school of linguistic theory that originally emerged in the early 1970s and has been more active since the 1980s. This approach is a branch of linguistics that emphasizes the study of language in relation to human cognition. In comparison with formal linguistics, which frequently concentrates on syntax and abstract structures, cognitive linguistics holds that language has a deep connection to human experience and thought (Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 1987). Cognitive linguistics emphasizes that meaning is flexible and context-dependent, influenced by speakers' interactions with the surrounding world. This method has provided us substantial insight into how languages develop, how humans interpret meaning, and why specific linguistic patterns emerge in various cultural contexts.

One of the most fundamental concepts of cognitive linguistics is Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), image schemas, and embodiment. Conceptual Metaphor Theory, developed by Lakoff and Johnson, argues that metaphors are basic cognitive processes that enable us to comprehend abstract concepts through concrete experiences rather than only being language substitutions. The theory emphasizes that metaphorical expressions reflect deeper conceptual mappings in human minds that operate through systematic correspondences between different domains of experience and cognition. These metaphorical mappings are rooted in our physical experiences, demonstrating the principle of embodiment, the idea that our bodily experiences in the world fundamentally shape our cognitive processes.

Another essential component of this embodied perception is image schemas. The concept of image schemas was developed primarily by Mark Johnson, who introduced it in his 1987 book *The Body in the Mind*. Additionally, Fillmore (1975) defines image schemas as schematic versions of images, which are generalized patterns derived from embodied experiences. One particularly important image schema is the Source-Path-Goal schema, which structures how humans conceptualize movement, change, and purpose. This schema is deeply embedded in cognition because people experience the world through movement, whether walking from one

place to another or working toward a goal.

Since imaginary schemas are based on actual experiences, they provide substantial evidence for the claim that human perception is firmly rooted in bodily interactions with the outside world. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1999), human cognition is fundamentally shaped by our bodily existence. This perspective, known as the thesis of embodied cognition, is a core principle in cognitive semantics. It suggests that our physical structure and neurological makeup influence how we perceive and conceptualize the world. Consequently, our understanding of reality is limited by what our bodies can sense and what our brains can process. In simpler terms, the thesis proposes that the human mind doesn't operate independently of the body- rather, our thinking processes are deeply connected to our physical experiences.

The theory of cognitive linguistics maintains that language is deeply rooted in human cognitive processes, and English verbs have been a major topic of study within this framework. More precisely, verbs are not only a vital element of language but also represent how individuals perceive and interact with the world through their structure, which is derived from bodily experiences and conceptual metaphors. For instance, abstract verbs such as “understand” and “think” are understood through conceptual metaphors based on physical actions, while the verb “give” is closely related to the transfer schema, which involves a source, a recipient, and an object being transferred Lakoff (1987). Moreover, Taylor (2003) mentioned that embodiment is a key factor in polysemy, which displays some metaphorical extensions in a variety of contexts. As a result, this embodied viewpoint clarifies why some metaphorical variations of “give” (such as “give a hand,” “give a thought”) are universally understandable because they are based on shared human experiences. Similar to English, Vietnamese is a language that is shaped by embodiment and cognitive experiences, but its cultural and linguistic distinctions have produced extremely unique features. According to certain research on the Vietnamese language, such as Nguyen (2001), Do (2010), and Nguyen (2012), verbs in Vietnamese are strongly related to cultural contexts, which influence how they are used and understood. Nguyen (2012) stated that “Vietnamese verbs are not only shaped by bodily experiences but are also deeply embedded in cultural norms and social interactions” (p. 86). As an illustration, the verb “cho” in Vietnamese not only has the same meaning as in English but also reflects specific sociocultural values, including politeness, hierarchy, and interpersonal relationships. These differences between cultures show that although the experience of giving is similar, the way it is expressed in language and cognition differs across cultures.

Based on cognitive linguistics theories and the research objectives and scope, the paper proposes the theoretical framework as follows.

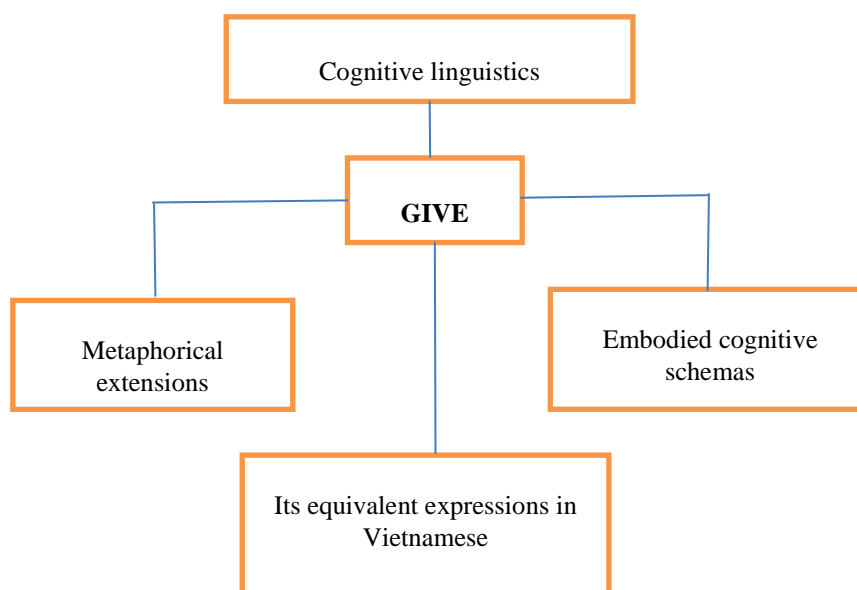


Figure 1. The theoretical framework of the paper suggested

### 3. Methods

This study uses two main research methods: the descriptive method to describe the meaning, structure, and usage patterns of “*give*” and its Vietnamese equivalents in real-life contexts, and the comparative method to conduct cross-linguistic comparisons that highlight the similarities and differences in perception and concepts between English and Vietnamese.

The study uses corpus-based methodology and authentic linguistic data from reliable sources to ensure accuracy and reliability. For English, there are 3 main sources used to collect data: Cambridge Dictionary and Collin Database, which is very popular among students and scholars and provides precise definitions, sample sentences, and semantic information about the verb “*give*” and its many forms; Longman Dictionary, which is created to collect comprehensive linguistic data to detect linguistic structures and patterns. For Vietnamese equivalents, the Hoàng Phê Dictionary serves as an important and reliable source of Vietnamese data, providing detailed meanings and examples of Vietnamese verbs corresponding to “*give*”, elucidating their functions and cultural nuances. In addition, Vietnamese dictionaries and resources include the LaBan Dictionary, a widely used Vietnamese dictionary that offers clear definitions, examples, and usage contexts for Vietnamese words, including equivalents of “*give*”; Vdict Dictionary, a Vietnamese-English dictionary that helps identify translation patterns of “*give*”; and the Glosbe database, a multilingual dictionary and corpus platform providing rich examples of the verb “*give*” and its Vietnamese equivalents in various contexts, making it invaluable for cross-linguistic analysis. Together, these resources ensure a comprehensive and authentic foundation for the research.

The previously listed dictionaries and corpora provided the data for this study, which focused



on the frequency and usage patterns of the English verb “give,” its equivalent Vietnamese translations in various contexts, and the same characteristics for other verb forms such as “gives”, “gave”, “given”, “giving”.

This study examines examples from selected texts to understand three main things. It first looks at how different forms of “give” in English (like “gives”, “gave”, “given”, “giving”) express various meanings and grammatical functions. Next, it explores how Vietnamese expresses similar concepts to “give,” noting how Vietnamese uses additional words and context rather than changing the verb form itself. Lastly, it compares how both languages handle this verb, showing how cultural and linguistic differences affect its use. This comparison helps reveal the unique characteristics of each language while also identifying commonalities in expressing the concept of giving.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Answer Research Question 1

How do the conceptualizations of “give” in English and its equivalent expressions in Vietnamese reflect embodied cognitive schema?

Table 1. Expressions of “give” and Vietnamese Equivalent

No.	English Meaning	Vietnamese Equivalent	Example Sentence (English)	Example Sentence (Vietnamese)	Source
1	Transfer Possession	Cho, trao, biếu, tặng, đưa,	Tom, give me a minute. I need to think. Please give me what you told me about a while ago. My department can give you the access and resources to help people.	Tom, cho tôi một phút. Tôi cần nghĩ đã. Xin hãy đưa cho tôi những gì bạn đã nói với tôi lúc này. Phòng ban của tôi có thể trao cho bạn quyền truy cập và tài nguyên để giúp đỡ mọi người.	Glosbe
2	Return	Trả, đưa lại	"Give me back my book!" "What book?"	"Trả tôi quyển sách đây!" "Quyển sách nào cơ?"	Glosbe
3	Yield, Surrender	Nhượng bộ	I'm not giving up a single foot of it.	Tôi sẽ không nhượng bộ một tấc đất nào.	Glosbe
4	Allow Use	Cung cấp	We are giving you all the information we have.	Chúng tôi đã cung cấp mọi thông tin chúng tôi có	Glosbe
5	Lead Cause	To, Dẫn đến, mang lại	This event is giving us a larger scale problem.	Sự kiện này đang dẫn đến một vấn đề quy mô lớn hơn.	Glosbe
6	Dedicate,	Cống hiến,	I will give it all that I	Tôi sẽ cống hiến hết	Glosbe

	Devote	hiến dâng	have, sir.	sức, thưa ngài.	
7	Describe, Report	Tường thuật	Jeremiah gives a detailed account of the fall of Jerusalem.	Giê-rê-mi tường thuật chi tiết về sự sụp đổ của Giê-ru-sa-lem.	Glosbe
8	Perform an Action	Thực hiện	She gave him a kiss.	Cô ấy hôn anh ấy.	Laban
9	Entertain	Mở tiệc, thết tiệc	I'm giving a dinner party next Friday evening.	Tối thứ sáu tới tôi sẽ thết tiệc.	Laban
10	Act in a Play	Biểu diễn, diễn kịch	How many performances of the play are you giving?	Vở kịch ấy các anh đã diễn bao nhiêu lần rồi?	Laban
11	Break Down, Collapse	Tan, trĩu xuống, lún xuống	The branch began to give under his weight.	Cành cây bắt đầu oằn xuống dưới sức nặng của anh ta.	Laban
12	Provide Money	Cấp tiền, phát tiền	Please give generously to famine relief.	Xin ông rộng lòng cấp tiền để cứu trợ nạn đói.	Laban
13	Grant Permission	Cho phép, cấp phép	Who gave you the right to tell me what to do?	Ai cho anh quyền bảo tôi phải làm gì?	Laban
14	Name Someone/ Something	Đặt tên	They gave the name Roland to their first child.	Họ đặt tên cho đứa con đầu lòng của họ là Roland.	Laban
15	Punish	Xử phạt, bắt phải chịu	The judge gave him a nine-month suspended sentence.	Quan tòa xử phạt nó chín tháng tù treo.	Laban
16	Transmit Disease	Truyền bệnh, làm lây	You have given me your flu.	Anh đã làm lây bệnh cúm sang tôi.	Laban
17	Make an Excuse	Viện cớ	Don't give me that rubbish about having a headache.	Đừng có viện cái cớ nhảm nhí đau đầu ấy ra.	Laban
18	Make a Phone Call	Gọi điện thoại	I'll give you a ring tomorrow.	Mai tôi sẽ gọi điện thoại cho anh.	Laban
19	Admit, Acknowledge	Thừa nhận, công nhận	It's too late to go to the party, I give you that.	Đi dự tiệc thì đã quá muộn, tôi thừa nhận điều đó.	Laban
20	Make a Sound	Phát ra, bật ra (một âm thanh)	Give a laugh.	Bật ra tiếng cười.	Laban
21	Propose a	Nâng cốc	Ladies and	Quý ông quý bà xin	Laban



	Toast	chúc	gentlemen, I give you his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales.	nâng cốc chúc Hoàng tử xứ Wales.	
22	Create Feeling	a Tạo cảm giác	All that heavy lifting has given me a pain in the back.	Tất cả công việc khuôn vác nặng đó đã làm cho tôi cảm thấy đau lưng.	Laban
23	Make a Profit	Sinh lãi	To give profit.	Sinh lãi.	VDict
24	Set Example	an Nêu gương	To give a good example.	Nêu một tấm gương tốt.	VDict
25	Exchange	Trao đổi	To give a horse for a cow.	Đổi con ngựa lấy con bò cạp.	VDict
26	Cause	Làm cho, gây ra	He gave me to understand that...	Hắn làm cho tôi hiểu rằng...	VDict
27	Dedicate Time	Miệt mài, chuyên tâm	To give one's mind to study.	Miệt mài nghiên cứu; chuyên tâm học tập.	VDict
28	Indicate, Point Out	Chỉ, đưa ra	The thermometer gives 23 °C in the shade.	Nhiệt biểu chỉ 23°C trong bóng râm.	VDict
29	Make a Decision	Quyết định xử, coi như	To give the case for the defendant.	Xử cho bị cáo được kiện.	VDict

According to Glosbe, there are over 50 different Vietnamese translations of the word "give." This indicates that "give" is a conceptually diverse term in English. Below are some conceptual meanings that can be summarized and systemized.

4.1.1 Transfer of Possession - Vietnamese Equivalent: cho, biếu, tặng, đưa, trả, trao đổi, tặng, cấp phát, đặt tên, cung cấp

In English, the verb "give" can be used in various contexts without indicating social distinctions or levels of respect between the giver and the receiver (e.g., *He gave me this gift - anh ấy cho tôi món quà này, I give you this book - tôi cho bạn quyển sách này*), both of which do not differentiate between levels of respect or social relations. However, in Vietnamese, various verbs are used in different contexts to highlight the relationship between the giver and the receiver, reflecting cultural values of seniority and courtesy.

For instance, the verb "cho" is a central verb, and is the most commonly and widely used. According to Hoang Phe's dictionary, "cho" often emphasizes a transfer without expectation of return (e.g., *Anh cho em cái đồng hồ - He gives me the watch*), or enables someone to receive something. It is used in informal situations or when the giver and receiver have an equal relationship. Similarly, "tặng" and "biếu" emphasize giving with the intention of expressing praise or affection. They are used to show respect, politeness, or in situations that require a

respectful attitude (e.g., *cô ấy tặng tôi một quyển sách làm kỷ niệm* - *She gave me a book as a souvenir, tôi biếu ông một hộp trà ngon* - *I gave my grandfather a fine box of tea*). In this case, “*biếu*” and “*tặng*” are often used when the recipient holds a higher status or when showing, such as in family, workplace, or social relationships. Meanwhile, “*trao*” carries a more formal nuance, indicating trust when transferring an item or responsibility (p.1025). Moreover, the verb “*trả*” means to give back something to someone that has been received or taken from them. First of all, “*trả*” can be used to refer to the action of returning something that has been borrowed or lent (*Trả sách cho thư viện* – *Give the book back to the library*). Moreover, it also expresses the act of returning an item that was received or taken earlier (*Trả hàng cho người gửi* – *Give back the goods to the sender, Trả lại tiền thừa* – *Give back the change*).

4.1.2 Granting Permission - Vietnamese Equivalent: *cho phép, phê duyệt, đồng ý, tạo điều kiện, cung cấp phương tiện hoặc cơ hội*

On the one hand, in English, the verb *give* is frequently combined with nouns such as “*give carte blanche*,” “*give permission*,” or “*give a chance*” to denote the act of allowing or granting rights. The act of giving is conceptualized as a transfer of control or opportunity from one person to another, similar to handing someone an item. The metaphor of “*giving*” frames permission as a tangible entity that can be bestowed or withheld.

Vietnamese, on the other hand, there are more specific verbs to describe this action, such as “*cho phép*” (to allow), “*ban*” (to grant, often from a higher authority), “*trao quyền*” (to give power), and “*cấp*” (to issue). These words highlight the role and responsibility of the person making the decision, showing that power is not just “*given*” but often comes with authority and hierarchy. This demonstrates that in Vietnamese, there are many expressions that convey the meaning of “*granting permission*”, and when these are used, they are often not translated back into English using the word “*give*” (e.g., *Cha tôi không cho tôi đi xem phim một mình* - *My father doesn't allow me to go to the movies alone, Tại sao chính phủ Mỹ cho mọi người sở hữu súng* - *Why does the US government let people have guns?*)

4.1.3 Causing - Vietnamese Equivalent: *dẫn đến, gây ra cảm giác, truyền bệnh, làm phát sinh hành động*

In the examples from table 1, we can see that phrases like “*give an appetite*,” “*give a shock*,” and “*give a headache*” all use the verb *give* to indicate the cause of a state or condition. In English, “*give*” functions as a general verb that introduces a result, regardless of whether the effect is positive, negative, or neutral.

In Vietnamese, however, different verbs are used depending on the nature of the cause. If the cause is negative, they use “*gây*” (e.g., *gây khó chịu* - *annoying*). For neutral causes, “*làm*” is common, as in “*làm thay đổi*” (cause a change). If the cause is positive, they often use “*tạo*” or “*tạo ra*” (e.g., *tạo cơ hội* – *create an opportunity, tạo động lực* – *create motivation*). If the cause is indirect, Vietnamese often uses the verb *khiến* to express it. According to Hoàng Phê *khiến* is used when an action or event influences someone’s emotions or psychological state (e.g., *khiến tôi vui* - *make me happy, khiến tôi bực mình* - *make me angry*).

#### 4.1.4 Reporting - Vietnamese Equivalent: tường thuật, mô tả, viện cố, thừa nhận, chỉ ra, truyền đạt

Phrases like “*give a speech*,” “*give a report*,” and “*give instructions*” all involve reporting or conveying information. In English, the verb “*give*” is used to emphasize the act of providing information, regardless of formality or context.

However, in Vietnamese, different verbs are used depending on the context and level of formality. “*give a speech*” - đọc bài phát biểu, “*give a report*” - báo cáo, “*give instructions*” - hướng dẫn. This distinction shows how Vietnamese places greater emphasis on the context and manner of communication, rather than using a single general verb like English.

#### 4.1.5 Expressing and Induced Feelings - Vietnamese Equivalent: tạo cảm giác, gây ấn tượng, làm người khác cảm thấy điều gì đó

In table 1, examples such as “*give a smile*”, “*give a cold shoulder*”, and “*give expression to something*” show that English conceptualizes emotions as something that can be given or received. This reflects a basic metaphor in which emotions function as transferable gifts - a person can “*give*” a smile or “*give*” someone the cold shoulder.

In contrast, Vietnamese expresses emotions through specific verbs that directly convey one’s emotional actions. For example, “*mỉm cười*” (smiling) describes the physical act of smiling, while “*phớt lờ*” (ignoring) emphasizes the act of disregarding someone. Instead of using a general verb like “*give*,” Vietnamese distinguishes between active and passive emotional experiences.

For instance, in expressions like “*give a huge fillip*”, “*give motivation*,” and “*give encouragement*,” the speaker actively influences the listener’s emotions, intending to uplift and encourage them through a direct act of support. On the other hand, examples such as “*give a shock*” and “*give a fright*” illustrate situations where the emotion is caused by an external factor, and the person experiencing it has no control over their emotional response.

#### 4.1.6 Performing Actions - Vietnamese Equivalent: gọi điện, nâng cốc, biểu diễn, tổ chức tiệc

In English, the verb “*give*” is often combined with nouns like “*give a hug*,” “*give a kiss*,” and “*give a handshake*” to express a specific physical action. In these cases, “*give*” functions as a light verb, serving as a grammatical support for the main action rather than carrying its own distinct meaning. This structure allows English to use a general verb (*give*) while letting the noun specify the action.

On the contrary, Vietnamese does not use “*cho*” as a supporting verb in these situations. Instead, it directly employs action verbs that explicitly describe the motion. For example, “*give a hug*” is simply “*ôm*,” “*give a kiss*” is “*hôn*,” “*give a handshake*” is “*bắt tay*,” “*give a ring*” is “*gọi điện*”, and “*give performance*” is “*biểu diễn, trình diễn*”. This linguistic difference reflects a broader contrast in how the two languages structure actions. English often employs verb-noun combinations, while Vietnamese prefers direct verbs that inherently carry the full meaning of the action.

#### 4.1.7 Social or Interpersonal Impact - Vietnamese Equivalent: xử phạt, nêu gương, nhường bộ, cống hiến cho cộng đồng

In "*give the benefit of the doubt*" and "*give credit*", the English verb "*give*" is used to emphasize the act of respecting, recognizing, or trusting someone. In these cases, "*give*" functions as a general verb that highlights the act of acknowledging someone's merit or extending trust in social interactions.

In contrast, Vietnamese tends to use more specific verbs to clearly describe culturally specific actions related to merit, politeness, and social evaluation. For example, "*give credit*" can be translated as "*công nhận*" (acknowledge), "*hy sinh*" (sacrifice), or "*đền đáp*" (repay), depending on the context. Similarly, "*give a good example*" is expressed as "*nêu gương*" or "*làm gương*," while "*give in*" or "*give way*" may be translated as "*nhường bộ*," "*nhường nhịn*" (yield) or "*chịu thua*" (concede), depending on the specific situation.

From this, it can be concluded that "*give*" is a versatile verb. Its basic structure follows "*Giver + Give + Object + Recipient*". This structure not only applies to the transfer of tangible objects but also extends to abstract concepts such as power, emotion, responsibility, and information, treating them as exchangeable entities.

Like English, Vietnamese is also based on the embodied cognitive schema of transfer. However, due to differences in linguistic thinking, culture, and lived experiences, Vietnamese has a broader range of specific verbs to express different nuances of "*give*." Vietnamese clearly distinguishes between social relationships and varying degrees of giving, using different words to convey the extended meanings of "*give*" with greater precision.

#### 4.1.8 Embodied Cognitive Schemas of "Give"

Cognitive structures rooted in bodily experiences that shape how we understand the world. Therefore, "*give*" is considered a container, force, transfer, fairness, and a journey that shapes people's thoughts.

Through the data, the cognitive schema can be drawn as "*Happiness is giving*". It is grounded in the container schema reflected in language, philosophy and psychology. In these aspects, people think that "*giving*" is a source, not just a physical act but a spiritual one, bringing a sense of meaning in life, social connection and fulfillment. "*Happiness*" in "*Happiness is giving*" is a journey, a target that brings meaning in life and fulfillment.

In Alberto Rios (1952), "*When giving is all we have*". We see some sayings:

- (1) "We *give* because someone *gave* to us.
- (2) We *give* because nobody *gave* to us.
- (3) We *give* because *giving* has changed us.
- (4) We *give* because *giving* could have changed us.
- (5) Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet, big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.

- (6) Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand, mine to yours, yours to mine.
- (7) You gave me blue and I gave you yellow. Together we are simply green, you gave me.
- (8) What you did not have, and I gave you.
- (9) What I had to give together, we made.”

It can be seen in these sayings, in (1), “*Giving is a circle.*” We give because we have received. The act of giving is conceptualized as something passed down from one person to another, creating a continuous transfer of positive kindness and generosity. In (2), “*Giving is a way to fill a gap in life*”. The absence of receiving generosity in the past creates a desire to provide for others, ensuring they don’t experience the same hardship. In (3), “*Giving is a force of change*”. The act of kindness leads to positive change, reinforcing the belief that giving contributes to personal happiness and fulfillment. In (4), “*Giving is a reflection.*” If a person who has no chance or regrets not being generous earlier in life may choose to give now, and realize its impact. In (5), “*Giving is boundlessness.*” It can be big or small, noticeable or unnoticed, valuable or invaluable. However, the belief reinforces that every act of giving carries value, regardless of its scale or visibility. In (6), (7) and (8), “*Giving is a social collaboration, co-creation and growth.*” It is conceptualized as a direct exchange between people, reinforcing social exchange. In (7), “*blue + yellow = green*” hypothesized that if you give me a positive thing, I will give you a positive one. And if you give me a negative thing, I will give you a negative one. And if we give positive things to each other, we will create new things. In (8), “*Giving is beyond one’s selfishness.*” It expresses a personal contribution, sharing whatever one has. In (9), The journey of giving results in a transformation of what was once just “*what I had*” becomes something larger and more meaningful through collaboration.

In summary, from these analyses, we think that “*Happiness is giving*” - “*Happiness is a journey*” - “*Giving is receiving*”, etc., are interconnected through cognitive schema that shapes how we perceive happiness, generosity, and fulfillment in life. Giving is an intrinsic source of joy and fulfillment and a target of receiving. It emphasizes that relationships and shared experiences bring happiness. It is also seen as an ongoing experience rather than a final destination. Giving does not deplete the giver but enriches them in return, whether through emotional satisfaction, stronger relationships, or self-growth. The act of giving creates a cycle where generosity is returned in different forms. Therefore, giving is a key part of the happiness journey because it creates meaning, strengthens connections, and reinforces a cycle where kindness leads to fulfillment in life.

From the data, the paper categorizes some utterances according to some main cognitive schema suggested to demonstrate that these conceptualizations are appropriate and scientifically grounded.

Table 2. Cognitive schema of the paper

Happiness is giving	Giving is a transfer	Giving is a force	Giving is a journey
<i>She gave me a smile.</i>	<i>Researchers were given a £10,000 grant to continue their project.</i>	<i>I'm nearly ready - just give me a couple of minutes.</i>	<i>I've never done yoga before, but I'll give it a try.</i>
<i>The winner's name was given (out) on the news.</i>	<i>Give me back my book.</i>	<i>Ted and his lawyers gave the company 11 months to sell off everything.</i>	<i>Give her a break – she's just a beginner.</i>
<i>I've been giving blood for over twenty years now.</i>	<i>He asked me to give his regards to all of you.</i>	<i>Women were given the vote in the early 1900s.</i>	<i>Give me a break! I already said I was sorry!</i>
<i>The company's given me a free hand to negotiate a deal.</i>	<i>He also wants to give a lecture in history to students while on visits.</i>	<i>She's giving the champion a run for her money in the finals.</i>	<i>The bridge gave way under the heavy load.</i>
	<i>She gave us a set of saucepans as a wedding present.</i>	<i>The ball was clearly out, but the line judge gave it in.</i>	<i>I don't know if he's lying, but I'll give him the benefit of the doubt.</i>
	<i>They gave us T-shirts and stickers.</i>	<i>The referee has given a penalty.</i>	<i>The doctor gave us advice on the symptoms we should look out for.</i>
	<i>Let me give you some advice.</i>	<i>I'll give that boy what for when I see him!</i>	<i>Give me a call when you get back from your holiday.</i>
		<i>I was so mad, I gave him a piece of my mind!</i>	<i>He's a very smart kid and just needs someone to give him a chance.</i>
		<i>You should give credit to the team for their hard work.</i>	<i>I'm never going to guess the answer if you don't give me a clue.</i>
		<i>The police gave chase to the suspect.</i>	
		<i>The children's parents gave consent for them to take part in the trial.</i>	
		<i>He was reluctant to give evidence against his two colleagues.</i>	
		<i>You give a command and the elephant lifts its front leg.</i>	



#### 4.2 Answer Research Question 2

What are the metaphorical extensions of “give” in English and its Vietnamese equivalents, and how do these extensions reveal cultural and cognitive differences between the two languages?

When discussing speech acts, it is essential to mention the work of J.L. Austin, published under the title *How to Do Things with Words* in 1962 (revised in 1975). Austin argues that each utterance not only conveys informational content but also performs an action (*performative utterances*). He identifies three levels of speech acts:

- The locutionary act is the act of producing a meaningful and grammatically correct sentence. This represents the literal meaning or the linguistic content of the utterance.
- The illocutionary act refers to the speaker’s communicative intention when making the utterance. It is the action performed through speaking, such as affirming, requesting, promising, ordering, apologizing, etc.
- The perlocutionary act is the actual effect the utterance has on the listener. This could include making the listener believe, understand, feel convinced or moved, or prompting them to take a particular action.

Table 3. The metaphorical extensions of “give” in English and its Vietnamese equivalents

Speech acts	Similarities		Differences	
	English	Vietnamese	English	Vietnamese
Locution	Grammatically correct, meaningful, expressing the act of transferring something from the giver to the receiver	Similar structure and function – a clear act of giving or transferring is communicated	Often follows S + V + Indirect Object + Direct Object structure in most cases, and can metaphorically extend “give” broadly (e.g., give a smile, give what for).	Vietnamese tends to shift to alternative verbs (e.g., “mim cười” instead of “cho nụ cười”) and uses more descriptive structures in metaphorical cases.
Illocution ( <i>metaphorical extensions of “give”</i> )	An act of transfer – whether literal or metaphorical		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use of “give” extends to idioms and emotional or evaluative expressions.</li> <li>- Can express requests (<i>Give me that pencil</i>), assertive acts (<i>She gave me a</i></li> </ul>	Performs similar speech acts, but structure and idiomatic expressions are culturally specific (e.g., <i>mắng cho một trận</i> to mean <i>scold</i> )

*smile*), threats (*I'll give him what for*), or compliments (*She's giving the champion a run for her money*)

Perlocution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involves interaction between giver and receiver; listener reacts based on context.</li> <li>- Giver - Receiver dynamics; Elicits emotional, cognitive, or behavioral responses (e.g., admiration, obedience, fear, surprise).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involves interaction between giver and receiver; listener interprets speaker's intention. creates emotional impact, listener responds or reacts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Often produces more direct responses in trigger admiration, empathy, curiosity, emotional connection, urgency, or pressure depending on the context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vietnamese interpretations may carry added cultural nuances. The listener may experience similar emotions (respect, emotional closeness, face-saving), but the cultural context shapes how strongly these messages are felt (e.g., threats or compliments may carry different weight in Vietnamese culture)</li> </ul>
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### 4.3 Discussion on Similarities and Differences Between "Give" in English and Vietnamese Equivalents

#### 4.3.1 Similarities

Although the structures of English and Vietnamese are different, both languages share some basic concepts and metaphorical extensions of the verb "give". In both languages, the verb "give" not only transfers tangible objects but also transfers abstract concepts and emotions. For example, some expressions in English such as "give love" or "give a smile" imply giving emotions and gestures. These are reflected in Vietnamese as "*ban tặng/ cho tình yêu*" or "*cho nụ cười*", where the actions "cho" or "ban tặng" are used to express the emotional or symbolic act of giving something intangible. It could be seen at "*Ai **cho** tôi tình yêu để làm duyên nụ cười*" (*Who gives me love to grace my smile*)" in the song of Truc Phuong "*Ai cho tôi tình yêu*".

Next, regarding the cognitive schema of transfer, the English sentence "*I give you a book*" and its Vietnamese equivalent "*Tôi tặng bạn một quyển sách*", "*Tôi cho bạn một quyển sách*", or

“tôi gửi bạn một quyển sách” all follow a unified structure where an agent transfers an object to a recipient. This suggests that both languages share common experiences of transfer and giving, and also reflects a deeper cognitive and cultural belief that giving is not simply an act of exchange, but a profound source of emotional fulfillment and happiness. Both languages share the idea that “*happiness is giving*”, and this concept appears widely in Vietnamese culture, emphasizing the emotional richness and fulfillment that comes from generous acts. The value of giving is affirmed through the lyrics of the song “*Hạnh phúc là cho đi (Happiness is giving)*” by Nguyen Van Chung:

*“Hạnh phúc là khi ta **cho đi** yêu thương vô điều kiện...”*

*(Happiness is found when we **give** love unconditionally...)*

*“Cho đi bao nhiêu yêu thương, là **nhận về** bấy nhiêu hạnh phúc.”*

*(The more love we **give**, the more happiness we **receive**.)*

In these two verses, the verb “give” does not carry a transactional meaning but rather a symbolic and altruistic one. Moreover, “love” is portrayed as a transferable entity, something that can be passed from one person to another. Through these sayings, in Vietnamese culture, there is a conventional expression that can be summarized as “Giving A leads to receiving B” or “If you give A, you receive B”. Also, strong expressions of this value can also be found in the poem “*Một khúc xuân*” by poet Tố Hữu:

*“Nếu là con chim, là chiếc lá (If I were a bird, or a leaf on a tree)*

*Thì chim phải hót, chiếc lá phải xanh (The bird must sing, the leaf must be green.*

*Lẽ nào vay mà không trả (How could I borrow and not repay?)*

*Sống là **cho**, đâu chỉ **nhận** riêng mình (To live is to **give**, not just to **take** for myself)”*

The final saying “*Sống là cho, đâu chỉ nhận riêng mình (To live is to give, not just to take for myself)*” has become a symbol of Vietnamese moral ideals, suggesting life becomes meaningful when each individual contributes, even in small ways. There is also a saying with similar meaning that originates from the Christian Bible, specifically in the *Book of Acts 20:35*, where the Apostle Paul reminds his listeners of the words of Jesus:

*“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**” (Acts 20:35, New King James Version).”*

The saying “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” highlights the value of generosity in Western culture. It underscores the joy and fulfillment that come from giving, reflecting the belief that giving is not merely a material act but also a way to nourish one's emotional and mental well-being. Similarly, the Vietnamese proverb “*Một miếng khi đói bằng một gói khi no (A bite when hungry is worth a whole package when full)*” reflects the same convention “*the value of giving lies not in the size of the gift, but in its timing and sincerity*”. Both expressions emphasize that generosity, especially during times of need, carries deep emotional and moral significance.

This profound awareness is not only conveyed through poetry, music, proverbs, idioms, but also in communication behaviors in the daily lives of Vietnamese people. The verb “*give*” plays an essential role in everyday communication through speech acts, where its function extends to performing social actions. From the theory and the data collected above, it is evident that “*give*” in both English and Vietnamese is not simply an act of material transfer, but also carries distinct speech acts - that is, using language to carry out actions. In both languages, the locution expresses a clear act of transfer, whether literal or metaphorical. The illocution reflects the intention behind the giving, such as offering, advising, or informing. The perlocution involves the listener's interpretation, cooperation and reaction, often leading to emotional, cognitive, or behavioral responses.

#### 4.3.2 Differences

Through the examples and analysis in question number 1, such as “*give permission*”, “*give advice*”, “*give a shock*”, “*give a report*”, “*give a speech*”, *etc.*, it is clear that the verb “*give*” in English is polysemous and has a high level of generalization. The use of the same verb to express a wide range of meanings across different domains, including actions, emotions, social interactions, and interpersonal effects, contributes to the flexibility, colorfulness and richness of the language.

In contrast to English, which often uses a single verb like “*give*” across many situations, Vietnamese uses different words or phrases to express each specific context. For example, actions such as “*give a hug*”, “*give a kiss*”, “*give a handshake*”, or “*give a call*”, *etc.*, are expressed directly with distinct verbs in Vietnamese. Even when conveying the same meaning as “*give*”, Vietnamese offers a range of verbs suited to different contexts and levels of formality. “*Cho*” is common and neutral or central, “*tặng*” is more formal in some circumstances, “*biếu*” shows respect when the giver is in a lower position than the receiver, “*hiến or hiến dâng*” implies devotion or sacrifice for a noble cause, “*bố thí*” carries a negative or pitying tone, *etc.*, This variety highlights how Vietnamese uses a single word to express a rich and flexible system of verbs to express not only the action but also the intention, social relationship, and emotional tone between the speaker and the listener.

The fundamental difference between English and Vietnamese arises from their distinct linguistic structures. English, as an inflectional language, primarily uses word order, sentence structure, and contextual signals to communicate grammatical relationships and social nuances. On the contrary, Vietnamese is an isolating language that expresses this meaning through its choice of vocabulary, especially verbs. Despite this difference, politeness strategies play an essential role in both languages. They are crucial in communication, helping to build, maintain, and enhance interpersonal relationships. These strategies reflect the speaker's social identity, knowledge, and status, while promoting mutual respect and understanding between speaker and listener (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Austin, 1975). In Vietnamese, where politeness is directly encoded in verbs such as “*biếu*” or “*tặng*,” the relationship between speaker and listener becomes immediately transparent. However, the English verb itself does not encode politeness. Rather, it is frequently deduced from the tone, indirect phrasing, or surrounding context, which makes it more implicit and challenging to recognize. For example, the phrase

“Could you *give* me a hand?” sounds polite not because of the verb “give” but because of the modal “could” and the softening structure.

## 5. Conclusions

This study was conducted to explore the conceptualizations of the English verb “give” and its Vietnamese equivalents from a cognitive linguistic perspective, using a detailed analysis of corpus data collected from diverse and reliable sources. It applied Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Image schema, speech act theory, and other relevant frameworks, which proved instrumental in uncovering key findings.

Firstly, the English verb “give” is polysemous, with both literal and figurative meanings. It not only represents the act of transferring an object from the giver to the receiver, but also extends to metaphorical meanings such as providing help “*give a hand*”, expressing emotions “*give a smile*”, creating opportunities “*give a chance*”, conveying information “*give advice*”, and causing psychological effects “*give a shock*”. These extensions reflect basic cognitive schemas such as Transfer, Journey, Force, Container, and Fairness. As a result, “give” can be seen as embodying these schemas, shaping how people think about various actions and interactions.

Secondly, Vietnamese also demonstrates a rich semantic range through equivalent expressions such as “*cho*,” “*tặng*,” “*biếu*,” “*gửi*,” and “*cung cấp*,” among others. However, as an independent language, the choice of these equivalents often depends on the social context, including factors such as the level of formality, the relationship between participants, social status, and politeness. To account for these factors, careful selection of vocabulary is crucial for the speaker to engage in effective communication.

Finally, although both languages view “giving” as the transfer of something (such as an object, emotion, permission, etc.), in English, the verb “give” typically refers to an individual action, without taking into account factors like age, social status, or the relationship between participants. In contrast, Vietnamese relies on these factors to carefully select words that align with its cultural identity. This difference highlights broader cultural patterns: English culture tends to be more individualistic, emphasizing personal actions, while Vietnamese culture is more collectivistic, prioritizing harmony and social relationships.

In conclusion, the verb “give” shows how human experience shapes language differently across cultures, how experience is expressed informs how language is used, and how cultural values guide the choice and interpretation of words.

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