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**A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF  
ENCOURAGING AS A SPEECH ACT  
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

**Field : ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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**M.A. THESIS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
(A SUMMARY)**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past, a series of studies regarding different speech acts have been carried out by Vietnamese authors such as greeting, requesting, advising, offering, prohibiting, thanking, expressing, gratitude and etc. However, little attention has been paid to the speech act of encouraging. In this paper, I would like to take a close look at the speech act of encouraging in communication. This will be conducted through an M.A thesis with the theme: **“A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENCOURAGING AS A SPEECH ACT IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE”**

It is hoped that the investigation into the ways the Vietnamese and the English encourage people when they have trouble in their life and work, and the study on existence of any differences or similarities will make potential contributions to the success in communication in a foreign language and partly in Communicative Language Teaching.

#### 1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

##### 1.2.1. Aims of The Study

- To investigate specific situations of encouraging under the influence of sociological factors in English and Vietnamese.

- To find out the similarities and differences in ways the Vietnamese and English encourage as a speech act.

- To raise awareness of differences in communication among teachers and learners of English as well as other potential interactants of international communication.

##### 1.2.2. Objectives of The Study

This research is intended to deal with the followings:

- To find out the common strategies of encouraging in Vietnamese as a speech act.

- To find out the common strategies of encouraging in English as a speech act.

- To compare and contrast the strategies employed by native speakers of English and native speakers of Vietnamese for encouraging as a speech act.

- To suggest solutions for the English teaching and learning of encouraging in English and Vietnamese as a speech act.

#### 1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on verbal communication and the analysis of the data collected from the survey questionnaires on encouraging expressions.

In addition, it is clear that the gender of interlocutors may affect the speaker's speech patterns. However, this factor is not

included as a part of the studying order to keep the number of Discourse Completion Task items to a minimum. The number of items would have doubled if the gender factor were included, which would have put a greater strain on the subjects to complete the DCT.

#### **1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. How do Vietnamese native speakers perform the act of encouraging in the given situations?
2. How do English native speakers perform the act of encouraging in the given situations?
3. What are the main similarities and differences in the ways Vietnamese native speakers and English native speakers perform the act of encourage in the given situations?

#### **1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In reality, the Vietnamese students have found that it is difficult for them to encourage in communication. As a result, they feel very awkward; this is a real phenomenon that I often encounter in their learning and my teaching. Especially, when they learn about how to perform the act of encouraging in their daily life in English and Vietnamese; though they have much knowledge of English and Vietnamese, they still fail in communication.

I hope that through my thesis, I can find some implications in teaching and learning expressions of encouraging in English and Vietnamese.

#### **1.6. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

##### **Speech act**

#### **1.7. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY**

Chapter 1 – “The Introduction”

Chapter 2 – “Literature Review and Theoretical Background”

Chapter 3 – “Methods and Procedure”

Chapter 4 – “Findings and Discussions”

Chapter 5 – “The Conclusion”

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Austin, J.L (1975) “*How to Do Things with Words, Oxford University Press, Oxford.*”[24]. In this book, he states and discusses performatives and constatatives, conditions for happy performatives, possible criteria for performatives.

Green, Georgia, M. (1989), “*Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Hisdale, New Jersey Hove and London.*”[43]. In the book, the author discusses the foundations of the analysis of language use, with the narrowest interpretation of pragmatics.

Olshtain, E. & Cohen, A. D. (1989), “*Speech act behavior across languages, Norwood, NJ: Ablex.*”[61]. One of the major concerns of discourse studies across languages is that of setting up comparable units of analysis within the various languages being studied.

Thomas, J. (1995), “*Meaning in interaction: An introduction to Pragmatics, Longman.*” [73]. This book accords a central place to the roles of both speaker and hearer in the construction of meaning and takes account of both social and psychological factors in the generation and interpretation of utterances.

Yule, G. (1996), “*Pragmatics, Oxford University Press.*”[84]. The author discusses speech acts with locutionary act, which is the basic of act of utterance and perlocutionary act, the act which the hearer will recognize its effect depending on the circumstances.

Cohen, A.D. (1996), “*Speech acts, Cambridge University Press.*”[36].The study defines speech acts and provides a brief overview of how this field of discourse has been applied to second language acquisition.

Peccei, J.S. (1999), “*Pragmatics, TJ International LTD, Pastow, Corwnwal Longman.*”[63]. In the book, the author presents the relationship between semantics and pragmatics and covers some of the basic techniques and key concepts involved in studying and analyzing pragmatic meaning.

Đỗ Hữu Châu, with the books “*Đại cương ngôn ngữ học (1993),(2002) and Cơ sở ngữ dụng học (2003)*” [07] has created a new approach to pragmatics for Vietnamese linguists.

Nguyễn Đức Dân (1998), “*Ngữ dụng học, NXB Giáo dục.*” [09]. This book, with several theoretical bases about pragmatics, mentions and discusses speech acts.

Nguyễn Thiện Giáp (2001), “*Dụng học Việt ngữ, NXB Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội.*”[11]. He introduces some notions about pragmatics such as Contexts and Meaning, Conversational theory,

Politeness, Cooperative principle and Conversational implicature etc with analysis and Vietnamese data.

Trương Thị Phương Trang's M.A.Thesis (2001), "*A Study on Politeness Strategies in Disagreement*"[75]. In the study, the author describes and analyzes the syntactic and pragmatic features of directives in English and Vietnamese.

Trương Ánh Tuyết's M.A.Thesis (2003), "*A Study on Cross – Cultural Pragmatic Failure of Invitation in English versus Vietnamese*"[76]. In the paper, the author presents a contrastive analysis of cross- cultural pragmatic failure in invitation in the both languages.

## **2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1. Pragmatic Competence**

In a nutshell, pragmatic competence consists of pragmalinguistic competence, which refers to the knowledge of appropriate forms of language and communicative strategies that affect the intended pragmatic force, and the socio-cultural competence, which refers to assessment of contextual factors in light of the appropriate schemata of speech events and language behavior in a given culture.

### **2.2.2. Speech acts**

#### **2.2.2.1. Definition of speech acts**

Speech act is that utterances when issued perform an action (Austin, 1975). It means that actions that are carried out through language are called speech acts. In the other way, speech acts are actions performed via utterances

#### **2.2.2.2. Classifications of speech acts**

Searle (1975) has set up the following classification of illocutionary speech acts:

- \* Assertives/ representatives = speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed.

- \* Directives = speech acts that are to cause the hearer to take a particular action, e.g. requests, commands and advice

- \* Commissives = speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, e.g. promises and oaths

- \* Expressives = speech acts that expresses on the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition, e.g. congratulations, excuses and thanks

- \* Declaratives = speech acts that change the reality in accordance with the proposition of the declaration, e.g. baptisms, pronouncing someone guilty or pronouncing someone husband and wife.

#### **2.2.2.3. Direct and Indirect speech acts**

In the book "*Pragmatics*" [63], Jean Stillwell Peccei stated:

Speech acts can be classified as direct or indirect. In a direct speech act there is a direct relationship between its linguistic structure and the work it is doing. In indirect speech acts the speech act is performed indirectly through the performance of another speech act.

#### **2.2.2.4. Felicity conditions**

According to Yule (1996, p.50), there exist five kinds of felicity conditions:

- *General conditions*: Both S and H are able to understand the language.
- *Content conditions*: S predicts a future action.
- *Preparatory conditions*: S wants H to do/ not to do an action.
- *Essential conditions*: counts as an attempt by S to get H to do/ not to do an action.

### **2.2.3. Encouraging**

#### **2.2.3.1 Definition of encouraging**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary- 7<sup>th</sup> edition:

Encourage sb (in sth) to give sb support, courage or hope:

E.g

*My parents have always encouraged me in my choice of career.*

*We were greatly encouraged by the positive response of the public.*

to persuade sb to do sth by making it easier for them to believe it is a good thing to do

E.g

*Banks actively encourage people to borrow money.*

+ encourage sth (in sb/ sth) to make sth more likely to happen or develop

E.g

*They claim that some computer games encourage people to borrow money.*

#### **2.2.3.2. Encouraging as speech act**

Encouraging can be classified as one kind of directive, commissive, expressive, representative speech acts.

#### **2.2.3.3. Encouraging and Comforting**

According to Elizabeth Walter [88], “*encouraging is the act of talking or behaving in a way that gives SO confidence to do something*”. Whereas, “*comforting is the act of making SO feel less sad or worried*.”

## **2.2.4. Conversational Principle and Conversational Implicature**

### ***2.2.4.1. Conversational Principle***

The maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, The maxim of relevance, the maxim of manner.

### ***2.2.4.2. Conversational implicature***

The conversation implicature is a message that is not found in the plain sense of the sentence.

## **2.2.5. Issues of politeness and indirectness**

### ***2.2.5.1. Theory of politeness***

He also regards the Politeness Principle as part of the principle as part of the principles for interpersonal rhetoric

### ***2.2.5.2. Indirect and politeness***

Politeness and indirectness seem to be closely related because in fact directness/ indirectness in one of the means to achieve politeness communications

## **2.3. SUMMARY**

My survey on *a contrastive analysis of encouraging as a speech act in English and Vietnamese* is an attempt to exploit and verify the differences in encouraging behaviour

## **CHAPTER 3 METHODS AND PROCEDURE**

### **3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1.1. Research method**

The written Discourse Completion Task has been chosen as the means to collect data for its many advantages.

#### **3.1.2. Data collection instruments**

- The Metapragmatic Questionnaire (MPQ) was designed to test the validity and reliability of the situations that will be used in the study.

- The Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was designed to elicit forms of encouraging from English native speakers and the Vietnamese ones.

#### **3.1.3. Variables manipulated in data collection instruments**

Six most reliable and valid situations were selected from the bank 18 situations provided in the MPQ basing on the constellations and then used in open- ended written questionnaires. These questionnaires are translated into Vietnamese for the Vietnamese subjects. The content of these questions will be discussed in the next section.

#### **3.1.4. Contents of the questionnaires**

A full version of MPQ is provided in Appendix A and a version of DCT is in Appendix B. The two questionnaires were then translated into Vietnamese.

### **3.1.5. Participants**

The questionnaires were delivered to Vietnamese native speakers living in Quy Nhon and English native speakers living and working in Vietnam via email or directly.

### **3.1.6. Procedure**

Firstly, the items of the MPQ questionnaire were administered to two groups of intended respondents.

Secondly, after the six situations had been selected, the DCT was prepared and administered.

## **3.2. RESULTS OF THE MPQ**

### **3.3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.3.1. Encouraging and positive politeness strategy**

Some of these strategies can work well in performing an act of encouraging, namely: appreciating someone, reassuring h's feelings, offering help, predicting better future possibilities, suggesting things to do, giving advice, expressing belief.

#### **3.3.2. Encouraging and off- record strategy**

Giving encouragement

#### **3.3.3. Encouraging and the use of internal modification**

There are 7 kinds of internal modifications mentioned in this study: downtoners, subjectivizers, appealer, politeness marker, alerters, intensifiers, commitment upgraders.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1. OVERALL NUMBER OF STRATEGIES

English used greater number of strategies in business plan, saying sorry, attending summer holiday situations. Meanwhile, VNS used greater number of strategies in interview preparation and attending summer holiday situations.

#### 4.2. OVERALL USE OF STRATEGIES

As can be seen in chapter 3, there are eight encouraging strategies categorized from the data of the study. They are: (a) appreciating someone (b) reassuring H's feelings (c) offering help (d) predicting better future possibilities (e) suggesting things to do (f) giving advice (g) expressing belief (h) giving encouragement.

#### 4.3. USE OF STRATEGIES BY SOCIAL VARIABLES

It is easy for us to see that English used (c) offering help and (f) giving advice most often in the high- status situations; (e) suggesting things to do and (g) expressing belief frequently happened in the equal- status situations; (a) appreciating someone and (h) giving encouragement are two strategies used in low- status situations. Differently, VNS tended to use (c) offering help and (d) predicting better future possibilities in the high- status situations, (f) giving advice in the equal- status situations, and (h) giving encouragement in the lower- status situations. Especially, (c) offering

help most often in high- status, equal- status and lower- status situations.

Both English and VNS used more appreciating someone, offering help and giving encouragement strategies in relatively-familiar situations than in the familiar situations whereas they employed the rest strategies more frequently in the familiar situations than in the relatively- familiar situations.

#### 4.4. USE OF STRATEGIES BY SITUATIONS

##### 4.4.1. Choice of encouraging strategies in high- power settings (+P)

##### 4.4.1.1. Choice of encouraging strategies in Sit.4 (+P, =D)

In this case, predicting better future possibilities means that S tends to predict or sometimes assures better possibilities in the future to help H become more optimistic and hopeful for the better. Very few E liked to use this strategy, for example, 'You will carry out it best'. Meanwhile, VNS often made use of this strategy, for example, 'Chuyến đi này sẽ rất thú vị và có ý nghĩa'

##### 4.4.1.2. Choice of encouraging strategies in Sit.12 (+P, -D)

In sum, strategies (b), (c), (f), (h) were most favored and used very often by both E and VNS in two high- power settings. Especially, there was a significant difference in using strategy (d) - predicting better future possibilities by both groups.

#### 4.4.2. Choice of encouraging strategies in equal- power settings (=P)

##### 4.4.2.1 Choice of encouraging strategies in Sit.1 (=P,=D)

We can see that there were significant differences in every strategy except for appreciating- someone and reassuring -H's feelings strategies. Of the six significant strategies, E used more of reassuring- H's feelings, suggesting things to do, expressing- belief strategies and fewer of the rest three strategies than VNS.

##### 4.4.2.2. Choice of encouraging strategies in Sit.3 (=P,-D)

Quite different from the interview- preparation situation, offering help, giving advice and giving encouragement were the most frequent and preferred strategies in love- expressing situation by E and VNS. Further more, the use of the suggesting- things to do strategy between two groups is significantly different.

In interview- preparation situation, English used only six strategies to encourage other people. Meanwhile, they employed all the eight situations in the love- expressing situation. This thing verifies that the social distance did affect the use of strategies by both groups when they encouraged others.

#### 4.5. USE OF INTERNAL MODIFICATION

##### 4.5.1. Use of downgraders in strategies and situations

*Table 4.15. Table of selected downgraders used by English and VNS by percentage*

Situations	Downtoner		Subjectivizers		Appealer		Politeness markers	
	E	V	E	V	E	V	E	V
<i>Situation 4</i>	7 %	5%	19%	10%	14%	14%	29%	23%
<i>Situation 12</i>	6%	4%	0%	0%	29%	34%	17%	15%
<i>Situation 1</i>	0%	0%	20%	22%	0%	0%	22%	18%
<i>Situation 3</i>	15%	8%	6%	0%	23%	24%	26%	19%
<i>Situation 15</i>	8%	9%	0%	20%	25%	17%	24%	22%
<i>Situation 16</i>	10%	14%	18%	15%	25%	23%	27%	25%

##### 4.5.2. Use of upgraders in strategies and situations

The social distance significantly affects the distribution of this internal modifier. It is clear that difference of distribution appears in situations where the social distance is relatively familiar (=D) such as situation 1 (attending summer holiday), situation 4 (doing important task) and situation 16 ( business plan).

#### 4.6. DISCUSSION

Both English and Vietnamese native speakers categorized eight following encouraging strategies: appreciating someone, reassuring H's feelings, offering help, predicting better future possibilities, suggesting things to do, giving advice, expressing belief and giving encouragement. For different situations, they were inclined to employ variable strategies and at least two strategies were used for each situation. As can be seen from Table 4.1, both groups liked to use the strategy of giving advice as the most common strategy. English rarely employed predicting- better future- possibilities to encourage someone. Meanwhile, suggesting things- to do strategy was the least frequent strategy.

The factors of social statuses and social distances did have remarkable influence on the use of strategies and internal modification for each situation by both groups. At least two strategies are used for each situation. It is clear that social was usually inclined to produce significant differences in the use of strategies. We can see that strangers were excluded from this study for the fact that people do not tend to give words of encouragement who are not distant from them. Acquaintances and intimates are two main subject groups to participate in this study. Moreover, social distance also had considerable impact on the use of internal modification.

#### 4.7. SUMMARY

### CHAPTER 5

#### CONCLUSION–IMPLICATIONS– RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 5.1. CONCLUSION

Encouraging is considered a complex speech act which is normally performed by the combination of more than one strategy together with suitable internal modifications.

The objective of the present study was to provide some insight into the performance of the speech act of encouraging between English and Vietnamese native speakers. This paper has grouped and investigated eight encouraging strategies used by both English and Vietnamese native speakers and seven types of internal modification. The results and findings were collected by means of an MPQ and more importantly a DCT questionnaire including six situations assigned with different social factors. The findings of the DCT reveal several comparisons of the ways in which both English and Vietnamese used these strategies as well as internal modification to perform the act of encouraging.

##### 5.2. LIMITATION

The study has just mentioned to reliable samples of giving advice used in a certain situation. My thesis hasn't been founded on the basis of samples from novels, short stories, article, written and spoken discourse. Thus, may be, my thesis lacks formality.

More over, because of the limitation of time and data, it is certain that my thesis still cover problems relating to the topic.

### 5.3. IMPLICATION

Following the emergence of English as an international language in this century, there are a great number of the Vietnamese people who learn and speak English. In fact, in learning English as a foreign language, the Vietnamese learners of English usually apply what they have accumulated from the various textbooks. As a result, in some cases, they might know a grammatical structure and its pragmatic functions yet use the structure in non- targetlike fashion. For example, they have a thorough grasp of grammar to form interrogative as a questioning strategy. However, they do not have the sociopragmatic knowledge to assess when the use of questioning strategy is appropriate and effective.

Learning to perform words of encouraging in an appropriate, nativelike manner is not an easy task for learners of English as a foreign language. Accordingly, we would like to have some suggestions for the teachers in helping students to achieve ability to interact effectively and politely with members of the target language speech community and for learners in improving the communicative competence with the use of encouraging as a speech act.

Firstly, where applicable, teachers should point out the transfer of features from Vietnamese to English in making speech act of

encouraging and make students aware that this interference will induce them to deviate from native speaker norms.

Secondly, it is true that assessments of size of imposition, social distance, power are indeed culture- specific. This paves the way for our suggestion that raising awareness of culture norms to students is surely an asset for language teachers, which would then contribute toward a more effective and therefore more rewarding job. On the other hand, teachers should develop a student's ability to analyze language use in a conscious manner. This may be achieved by pointing out that which encouraging strategy may be chosen in any given context depends on many cultural factors. Knowing these things, in social interaction with specific native speakers of English, students might be sensitive to the choice of appropriate strategies of encouraging. And so, they will be more effective in making someone more confident.

Thirdly, employing encouraging strategy in different situations can be troublesome for students. Hence, they need to be given more practice. The frequent practice helps students produce grammatically correct utterance. It is necessary that practice exercises require student-centered interaction. Activities such as role- play, simulation and drama will engage students in different social roles and in many communicative situations as well. Such activities provide opportunities to practice the wide range of pragmatic and

sociolinguistic abilities that students need in interpersonal encounters outside the classroom.

#### **5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In fact, there remain many interesting aspects which merit further research, including:

- Investigation of how Vietnamese learners of English perform the speech act of encouraging and the pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2,
- The focus of the gender factor to study the differences and similarities in performing the speech act of encouraging between two sexes,
- Study of teaching materials for stimulating students' interest in intercultural communication.