

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
UNIVERSITY OF DANANG**

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**A STUDY OF PRE-SEQUENCES IN
ANNOUNCEMENTS IN
ENGLISH versus VIETNAMESE**

Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Code: 60.22.15

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

Danang, 2011

This thesis has been completed at
the University of Danang

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the M.A.

Time:

Venue: Danang University

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In verbal conversations, “the greatest risk appears to be when the other is put in a difficult position. One way of avoiding risk is to provide an opportunity for the other to halt the potentially risky act.” [37, p67]. In other words, it is often necessary to use pre-sequences which can supply speakers useful hints to get their communication purposes successfully. Let’s have a look at the example below:

Child : Mom, guess what happened? (=pre-sequence)

Mother :(Silence)

Child : Mom, you know what? (=pre-sequence)

Mother : Not right now, Jacy, I’m busy. (=stop)

[38, p67]

In the above conversation, there are two pre-sequences. The child is using pre-sequences to check if his mother is willing to pay attention. From the mother’s responses, the child can know that he is annoying her. Hence, it’s better for him to continue his announcement later.

The use of pre-sequences in announcements (or pre-announcements) can also be illustrated in the Vietnamese conversation as follows:

Nga : Cậu biết ca sỹ Thanh Lam không? (=pre-announcement)

Thảo : Thanh Lam à?

Nga :Ừ

Thảo : Tất nhiên

Nga : Cô ấy vừa xếp thứ nhất trong Top 10 ca sỹ được nhiều người yêu thích đấy. (=announcement) [4, p84]

In this conversation, Nga used a pre-announcement (PA) to check whether Thao knows the singer so that she can announce the information related to that singer.

In these situations, we can see that PAs prove to be very useful in preparing a good context for successful conversations. On recognizing of the need for such a study, we decide to choose “*A Study of Pre-sequences in Announcements in English versus Vietnamese*” as a topic of my MA thesis.

1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 Aims of the Study

- To find out the possible differences and similarities in the syntactic and pragmatic features of pre-announcements in English and Vietnamese.

- To increase knowledge and effective use of pre-announcements in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

1.2.2 Objectives of the Study

- Identify the syntactic and pragmatic features of pre-announcements in English and Vietnamese languages.

- Compare the features in their contrast in English and Vietnamese to find out the similarities and differences of these features in the two languages.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research is aimed at paying attention to the analysis of the way of using PAs in English and Vietnamese. These linguistic features will be examined and categorized syntactically and pragmatically. However, semantic, cultural and prosodic features of

PAs are not included in the scope of the study due to time constraint and the difficulties in data collection.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the syntactic features of the PAs in English and Vietnamese?

2. What are the pragmatic features of PAs in English and Vietnamese?

3. What are the similarities and differences in the syntactic and pragmatic features of PAs in English and Vietnamese?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study tries to clarify the similarities and differences of syntactic and pragmatic features of PAs in English versus Vietnamese with the hope that it will bring about paramount importance in the process of English learning. Knowing how to use PAs correctly can help learners of English achieve communication competence.

1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY:

The study is organized into five chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical background; Chapter 3: Method and procedures; Chapter 4: Findings and discussions, Chapter 5: Conclusions and implications

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Pre-sequences in announcements has attracted a lot of attention of linguists such as Mey [29], Levinson [24], Yule [38] in English and Nguyễn Đức Dân [4] in Vietnamese. The study also uses the thesis of Nguyễn Thị Kim Cúc [12] and Ngô Thị Bích Hà [18] for reference.

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1 Syntactic Theory

Based on the viewpoint of Greenbaum [15], sentences are classified as declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives.

2.2.2. Speech Act Theory

2.3.2.1. *The Concept of Speech Act*

The concept of speech act has been mentioned by some researchers such as Mey [29], Yule [38].

2.3.2.3. *The Function of Speech Act*

The functions of speech acts can be illustrated in such aspects as locutionary aspects, illocutionary aspects and perlocutionary aspects.

2.3.2.4. *Felicity conditions*

According to Yule [38], a speech act must need five types of felicity conditions: (i) *general conditions*, (ii) *content conditions*, (iii) *preparatory conditions*, (iv) *sincerity conditions* and (v) *essential conditions*

2.3.3. Conversation Theory

2.3.3.1. *The Concept of Conversation*

There have been many researchers mentioning the concept of conversation.

According to Mey (1993) [29, p214], “*conversation is a way of using language socially, of “doing things with words” together with other persons.*” In Oxford Advanced learner’s Dictionary (2005) [30, p287], conversation is “*an informal talk involving a small group of people or only two; the activity of talking in this way.*” Hoàng Phê (1998) in *Từ Điển Tiếng Việt* [8, p4651] considers “*hội thoại*” as “*sử dụng một ngôn ngữ để nói chuyện với nhau*”

2.3.3.2. Conversation Structure

- a. Turn and Turn Taking
- b. Sequencing
- c. Adjacency Pair

2.3.3.3. Conversation Principles

Grice [16] suggested that conversation is based on a shared principle of cooperation, which was fleshed out in a series of maxims including maxims of quantity, maxims of quality, maxim of relation and maxims of manner.

2.3.4. Politeness Theories

2.3.4.1. Face

a. The Concepts of Face

Face has been defined by many researchers such as Virginia LoCastro (2003) [27], Yule (1996) [37] or in “*Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and applied Linguistics*” [32]

b. Face Classification

c. Face Threatening Acts

2.3.4.2. Politeness

a. The concept of Politeness

Politeness is defined as “*the use of language to carry out social actions where mutual face wants are respected, can be labeled linguistic politeness.*” [27, p112]

In the book *Một Số Vấn Đề Giao Tiếp Nội Văn Hóa Và Giao Văn Hóa* [9, p11], Nguyễn Quang defines **politeness** in communication as “*bất cứ hành vi nào (cả từ và phi ngôn từ) được sử dụng một cách có chủ đích và phù hợp để làm cho người khác cảm thấy tốt hơn hoặc ít tồi tệ hơn*”.

b. Politeness Strategies

Brown and Levinson (1987) outline four main types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, negative politeness, positive politeness, and off-record (indirect).

c. Choice of Politeness Strategies

FTAs have the ability to mutually threaten face, therefore rational agents seek to avoid FTAs or will try to use certain strategies to minimize the threat.

d. Politeness and Indirectness

In general, politeness is the chief motives behind indirect language use. The use of indirectness in communication is intentional, and a speaker has some purposes in using it.

2.3.5. Pre-sequences and Pre-announcements (PAs)

2.3.5.1. Pre-sequences

Mey (1993) [29, p221] discusses that certain utterances are usually (even, in some instances, always) felt to be “precursors” to another utterances. According to him, “*utterances which serve “precursors” to others are often called pre-sequences.*”

The concept of **pre-sequence** has also been mentioned by many other researchers such as P. H. Matthews (1997) [28, p317] in

Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics, Levinson (1997) [24, p345] in *Pragmatics*, Magdalena Wolska (2007) [37, p30] in *Conversation Structure*. In Vietnamese, it is discussed by Nguyễn Đức Dân (1998) [4]

2.3.4.2. Pre-announcements

According to Levinson (1997) [24, p349], a **PA** is an utterance used for “*delivering on newsworthiness of potential announcement, for validating newsworthiness in order to check someone’s attention that comes before the main announcement.*”

For example:

A: *Did you hear the bad news?* (Position 1)

B: *No. What?* (Position 2)

A: *Dan died.* (Position 3)

B: *Oh* (Position 4)

[37, p34]

Responses to PAs can be a “go-ahead” (acceptance and paying attention). A “silence”/“ignorance” (rejecting) or a “stop”(denying).

2.3 SUMMARY

CHAPTER 3

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

The thesis design is based on the combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODS

With the aim of achieving the set goal, several methods are simultaneously employed such as the descriptive method, the analytic method, the contrastive method, the inductive method. Among them, the descriptive and contrastive methods are the dominant ones which are most frequently used in the thesis.

3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.4. DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

200 samples of pre-announcements in English and 200 in Vietnamese must be from verbal or written dialogues and not contain adjacent pairs.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION

400 samples of pre-announcements in English and Vietnamese were selected from sources as follows: textbooks, pragmatics course books, stories, novels and websites.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, 200 samples of pre-announcements in English and 200 in Vietnamese selected for the analysis are in the form of written texts in the sources provided. They are analysed in terms of syntax and pragmatics and then compared and contrasted in order to find out the similarities and differences between them.

3.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF PRE-ANNOUNCEMENTS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.1.1 Syntactic Features of pre-announcements in English

Based on the examination of 200 samples of PAs from the cited sources, we can find that PAs in English can be categorized in many different structures such as interrogative, declarative, imperative, exclamative and phrasal ones. This is clearly illustrated in the following table.

Table 4.1. Relative Frequency of the PAs in English in terms of syntactic features.(200 collected samples)

Structures	English language	
	Number	Frequency (%)
1. Interrogative	103	51.5
2. Declaratives	65	32.5
3. Imperatives	15	7.5
4. Exclamatives	2	1
5. Expressions	15	7.5
Total	200	100

Besides, each type of structures above has different subtypes as in the tables below.

Table 4.2. Relative Frequency of the Interrogative Structures of PAs in English.

+ Interrogative Structures	English Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Yes/No Questions	62	60.19
2. Wh-Questions	6	5.82
3. Declarative Questions	14	13.59
4. Tag Questions	15	14.56
5. Alternative Questions	1	0.99
6. Incompleted Questions	5	4.85
Total	103	100

Table 4.3. Relative Frequency of the Declarative Structures of PAs in English.

+ Declarative Structures	English Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Affirmative Statements	47	72.30
2. Negative Statement	10	15.38
3. Incompleted Statements	8	12.32
Total	65	100

Table 4.4. Relative Frequency of the Imperative Structures of PAs in English.

+ Imperative Structures	English Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Affirmative	12	80.00
2. Negative	3	20.00
Total	15	100

4.1.2 Syntactic Features of Pre-Announcements in Vietnamese

After analyzing 200 collected samples of PAs in Vietnamese, we can identify a variety of structures of Vietnamese PAs, which is nearly similar to what we found in the English language, which is clearly shown in the following table.

Table 4.5. Relative Frequency of the PAs in Vietnamese in terms of syntactic features.(200 collected samples)

Structures	Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Interrogative	94	47
2. Declaratives	61	30.5
3. Imperatives	20	10
4. Exclamatives	9	4.5
5. Expressions	16	8
Total	200	100

Like in English, there are also subtypes of pre-announcements in Vietnamese. The following tables will illustrate this.

Table 4.6. Relative Frequency of the Interrogative Structures of PAs in Vietnamese

+ Interrogative Structures	Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Yes/No Questions	58	61.7
2. Wh-Questions	4	4.2
3. Declarative Questions	5	5.3
4. Tag Questions	14	14.89
5. Or-Questions	0	0
6. Incompleted Questions	13	13.91
Total	94	100

Table 4.7. Relative Frequency of the Declarative Structures of PAs in Vietnamese

+ Declarative Structures	Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Affirmative Statements	50	81.96
2. Negative Statement	6	9.83
3. Incompleted Statements	5	8.21
Total	61	100

Table 4.8. Relative Frequency of the Imperative Structures of PAs in Vietnamese

+ Imperative Structures	Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency%
1. Affirmative	17	85.00
2. Negative	3	15.00
Total	20	100

4.1.3 Similarities and Differences of Syntactic Features of Pre-announcements in English and Vietnamese

In order to have a general view on how similar and different the PAs in English and Vietnamese are as far as the syntactic features are concerned, let us consider the following tables.

Table 4.9. Relative Frequency of the PAs in English and Vietnamese in terms of syntactic features. (200 samples for each language)

Structures	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency (%)	Number	Frequency (%)
1. Interrogative	103	51.5	94	47
2. Declaratives	65	32.5	61	30.5
3. Imperatives	15	7.5	20	10
4. Exclamatives	2	1	9	4.5
5. Expressions	15	7.5	16	8
Total	200	100	200	100

Table 4.10. Relative Frequency of the subtypes of PAs in English and Vietnamese in terms of syntactic features.

+ Interrogatives	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency %	Number	Frequency %
1. Yes/No Questions	62	60.19	58	61.7
2. Wh-Questions (Q)	6	5.82	4	4.2
3. Declarative Q	14	13.59	5	5.3
4. Tag Q	15	14.56	14	14.89
5. Or-Q	1	0.99	0	0
6. Incomplete Q	5	4.85	13	13.91
Total	103	100	94	100

+ Declaratives	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency (%)	Number	Frequency (%)
1. Affirmative statements	47	72.30	50	81.69
2. Negative statements	10	15.38	6	9.83
3. Incomplete statements	8	12.32	5	8.21
Total	65	100	61	100

+ Imperatives	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency (%)	Number	Frequency (%)
1. Affirmative	12	80	17	85
2. Negative	3	20	3	15
Total	15	100	20	100

+ Exclamatives	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency (%)	Number	Frequency (%)
	2	100	9	100

+ Expressions	English Language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency (%)	Number	Frequency (%)
	15	100	16	100

4.1.3.1 Similarities

First, it is clear that PAs are frequently used in both languages in the forms of such structures that interrogatives, declaratives, imperatives, exclamatives and expressions. The five mentioned types in English rank in the same order as that in Vietnamese.

Second, when using interrogative structures as PAs in conversations, both English and Vietnamese people tend to make Yes/No questions and tag questions more often than other kinds. Besides, very few people in the two languages use or-questions.

Third, English and Vietnamese people both share the same habit of making PAs in declarative structures. Besides, the number of occurrence of the three types of statements are exactly in the same order: affirmative, negative and then incomplete ones.

Fourth, more affirmative imperative structures are made in English as PAs than negative ones, which is also similar in Vietnamese.

Fifth, both English and Vietnamese people are similar in using vocatives and greetings in their different types of PA structures.

4.1.3.2 Differences

First, there are differences in the subtypes of questions. English speakers have a tendency to use more declarative questions than Vietnamese ones. In contrast, less incomplete questions are used in English than that in Vietnamese

Second, the number of occurrence of exclamatives as PAs is quite different. Moreover, the structures of exclamatives are also different in the two languages.

Third, the formation of Yes/No questions as PAs in English and Vietnamese is quite different. Besides, English Yes/No questions are always produced with a rising tone which is rarely found in the Vietnamese ones.

Fourth, a Wh-question in English is formed by the inversion of the subjects and the question operator, but that in Vietnamese is made by the use of the question word only. Moreover, the position of the question word is not the same in the two languages. Besides, English speakers usually end Wh-questions with a falling intonation, whereas, Vietnamese needn't.

Fifth, the structure of a tag question in English and Vietnamese has a little difference from the question tag. Besides, its construction is also not the same. Moreover, a question tag must be put at the end of the question in English, but in Vietnamese, it is not only at the end, but it is also inverted to the beginning of the question to express the emphasis of the S's intention.

In summary, there are both similarities and differences between the syntactic features of PAs in English and Vietnamese.

4.2 PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF INSERTION SEQUENCE IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.2.1.1. Getting attention of the Hs**4.2.1.2. Confirming***a. Confirming Personal Information**b. Confirming Action**c. Confirming Pre-knowledge***4.2.1.3. Surveying****4.2.1.4. Suggesting the Topic****4.2.1.5. Providing News Evaluation****4.2.1.6. Checking***a. Checking Pre-knowledge**b. Checking Pre-action**c. Checking Condition***4.2.1.7. Showing pity****4.2.1.8. Showing necessity****4.2.1.9. Showing wishes****4.2.1.10. Ordering**

In summary, there are a lot of illocutionary acts performed through the use of PAs in English interaction. However differently PAs are used, the S's main intention is to achieve success in giving the news to the recipient.

Table 4.11. Relative Frequency of the PAs in English in terms of pragmatic features (200 collected samples)

Pragmatic features	English language	
	Number	Frequency
+ Getting attention of the H	21	10.5
+ Confirming	37	18.5
+ Surveying	21	10.5
+ Suggesting the topic	9	4.5
+ Providing the news evaluation	11	5.5
+ Checking	56	28
+ Showing pity	12	6
+ Showing necessity	9	4.5
+ Showing wishes	13	6.5
+ Ordering	11	5.5
Total	200	100

4.2.2. Pragmatic Features of PAs in Vietnamese**4.2.2.1. Getting Attention of the Hs****4.2.2.2. Confirming***a. Confirming Personal Information**b. Confirming Action**c. Confirming Knowledge***4.2.2.3. Surveying****4.2.2.4. Suggesting the Topic****4.2.2.5. Providing News Evaluation****4.2.2.6. Checking***a. Checking Pre-knowledge*

b. Checking Pre-action

4.2.2.7. Showing pity

4.2.2.8. Showing necessity

4.2.2.9. Showing wishes

4.2.2.10. Ordering

In summary, Vietnamese people use PAs with various intentions in mind. Although the illocutionary force made by such PAs may differ in each situation, the S's final aim is to make their news valuable to the H, avoid FTAs and become successful news deliverers.

Table 4.12. Relative Frequency of the PAs in Vietnamese in terms of pragmatic features.(200 collected samples)

Pragmatic features	Vietnamese language	
	Number	Frequency
+ Getting attention of the H	15	7.5
+ Confirming	20	10
+ Surveying	10	5
+ Suggesting the topic	18	9
+ Providing the news evaluation	25	12.5
+ Checking	40	20
+ Showing pity	9	4.5
+ Showing necessity	13	6.5
+ Showing wishes	32	16
+ Ordering	18	9
Total	200	100

4.2.3. Similarities and Differences of Pragmatic Features of PAs in English and Vietnamese

Consider the table below.

Table 4.13. Summary of relative frequency of the PAs in English and Vietnamese in terms of pragmatic features.

(200 collected samples)

Pragmatic features	English language		Vietnamese Language	
	Number	Frequency	Number	Frequency
+ Getting attention of the H	21	10.5	15	7.5
+ Confirming	37	18.5	20	10
+ Surveying	21	10.5	10	5
+ Suggesting the topic	9	4.5	18	9
+ Providing the news evaluation	11	5.5	25	12.5
+ Checking	56	28	40	20
+ Showing pity	12	6	9	4.5
+ Showing necessity	9	4.5	13	6.5
+ Showing wishes	13	6.5	32	16
+ Ordering	11	5.5	18	9
Total	200	100	200	100

4.2.3.1. Similarities

First, in both languages, PAs are used with different functions. This means that PAs are widely utilized in both English and Vietnamese.

Second, the frequency of occurrences of PAs used for checking is the most in both languages. This similarity shows that both English and Vietnamese conversationalists have a great tendency to use PAs to check the H's pre-action, pre-knowledge or condition.

Third, most of the PAs with the same functions are realized to be the same in structures.

Fourth, although English and Vietnamese conversation makers use PAs with various functions, they both share the final aim, ie to achieve politeness in communication, avoid FTAs and become successful news deliverers.

4.2.3.2. Differences

Beside some similarities, there are still some differences between pragmatic feature of PAs in English and Vietnamese.

First, although PAs exist in various functions in both English and Vietnamese, the position of each function is quite different in the two languages.

Second, from the table 4.13 we can see that the frequencies of occurrences of some functions are quite different. This means that the English and Vietnamese intentions in using PAs are quite different.

4.3. SUMMARY

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS – IMPLICATIONS – LIMITATIONS – RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY

In order to carry out the study effectively, we have planned out the study in details. Then we have read a lot of books, theoretical materials to choose the supporting points of view which the study follows.

As for the samples collected from a lot of different sources, we have classified them according to suitable types, described, analyzed and made a contrastive analysis to clarify the similarities and differences between PAs in English and Vietnamese.

5.2 BRIEF RE-STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS

5.3 IMPLICATION FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING

As a common phenomenon in communication, PAs cannot be ignored in the learning and teaching of English. Through the study of pre-sequences in English and Vietnamese, we hope that the study will become part of contribution to the process of teaching and learning English. Therefore, we should suggest some useful implications for learning and teaching English as a foreign language.

5.3.1. Implications for learners

First, learners should know the purpose when using PAs. The correct choice of the structure for each communicative purpose is really necessary for learners to develop their communication skills.

Second, for successful communication in general and effective news delivery in particular, learners should know the frequent use of PAs to avoid FTAs as well as become polite communicators.

Finally, Vietnamese learners of English should know the similarities and differences of PAs in English and Vietnamese to study English better as well as have effective use in their daily communication.

5.3.2. Implications for teachers

First, teachers should give learners more opportunities to practice PAs in conversations. In order to do that, teachers need to create a teaching environment with a lot of real situations so that learners can practice how to use PAs effectively.

Secondly, teachers should help learners know how to use PAs effectively by showing the essential structures as well as functions used for PAs. Besides, it is also important for teachers to raise learners' awareness of the similarities and differences of PAs in English and Vietnamese so that they can be more confident when using PAs.

Lastly, teachers should encourage learner to talk a lot. In order to do this, teachers should create comfortable atmosphere in speaking class.

5.4. LIMITATIONS

Although we have tried our best in doing this thesis, limitations are unavoidable due to the lack of time and materials for finding samples as well as the limited knowledge of the writer.

5.5. SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

If the further research is conducted in this direction, the following aspects will be taken more consideration and investigation:

- PAs in everyday conversations.
- The influences of cultural aspects on the use of PAs.
- How to response to PAs in English and Vietnamese.