

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
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**A STUDY OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF
CONFESSIONS ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES
IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**M.A THESIS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

The great power of the Internet in varied fields of professions, entertainment and communication has never been so emphasized with the appearance of social networks.

Social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices. Most sites support the maintenance of pre-existing social networks, but others help strangers stay connected based on shared backgrounds, interests, attitudes or real-life connections.

As a powerful means for user's self-expressions and networking, social networks offer confessions. Confessions may involve the act of making statements relating to one's own moral and legal wrong or guilty. In social network sites, confessions do not carry just meaning but people's secrets are revealed as well.

Language in using to expressing people's feelings is always interesting and the development of social networking as well as its increasing importance in the academic world creates the need for scholarly research on the issue.

As a language learner, the writers realizes that the use of language in writing confessions on social network sites for both people in English-speaking countries and people in Vietnam has some similarities and differences. And this is also the main reason why the thesis entitled "*A study of linguistic features of confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese*" was conducted.

1.2. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1.2.1. Aims

The aim of the research is to carry out a study of confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese (CSNSEs and CSNSVs) in order to find out similarities and differences in the lexical choice and stylistic devices between the two languages.

1.2.2. Objectives

- To investigate the lexical features of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese;
- To investigate the pragmatic features of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese;
- To find out the similarities and differences of lexical and pragmatic features of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese;

1.2.3. Questions of the study

1. What are the lexical choices of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese?
2. What are the stylistic devices of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese?
3. What are the similarities and differences of lexical choice and stylistic devices of the confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese?

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study, due to the limitation of time and resources, just focus on analysing linguistic features including lexical choice and stylistic devices of confessions collected from the most popular social network site, Facebook in The U.S and Vietnam.

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review and theoretical background

Chapter 3: Methodology and procedure

Chapter 4: Findings and discussions

Chapter 5: Conclusion and implications

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Crystal (2001) proposes that the language particularly created for the use on the Internet has been gradually incorporated into our daily life and conversation. Crystal (2006) gives an overview of the language specifically used by Internet users. It is believed that a variety of languages used on the Internet displays features that are unique to the Internet.

Baron [5] inquires into email communication, which is a way of computer mediated communication, and gives a detailed account on the linguistics of email.

In Vietnam, Le Thanh Binh (2008) in his M.A thesis “A study of the Language on English blogs written by American people” investigates the language in English written by American people to find out its distinctive linguistics features over conventional diary writing..

In addition, Tran Thi Hoai Vy (2012) in her M.A thesis “ An investigation into the linguistic features of online chats in English and Vietnamese” tried to focus on online chats in terms of grammatical, commonly-used characteristics and paralinguistic cues.

These authors study the grammatical features and some discourse features of the language used on blogs or on-line chats. These above-mentioned studies do not mention any linguistic features of confessions on social networking sites in English and Vietnamese. Especially, the lexical choices and stylistic devices have

not been mentioned there yet. Thus “ *A study of the linguistic features of confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese* ” will be a contribution to fill the gap in this field.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Definitions of Terms

a. Social network sites

Social network sites are defined by Danah Boyd [6] as follow:

“ *Generally we define social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or se-mi public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connection and those made by others within the system*”. Thus, social networks are online service, platform or sites that focus on building and reflecting of social networks or social relations among people.

b. Confession and confessions on facebook

According to Sharrock [27] in her article of “*The Strange World Of High School Confession Pages*”, on facebook confession pages some students express their emotions: their excitements, troubles, fears, secrets, sexcapades .The anonymity of some pages can provide a safe space for people to talk and share their problems like their eating disorders, their thoughts of suicide, depression, or other struggles. The confessions on these pages are mostly met with support, encouragement, and advice. Some confessions aren't really confessions at all, many are just questions, funny movie quotes, or inside jokes about the institution.

2.2.2. Lexical features

a. Nouns

In some traditional school grammars, nouns are defined as all and only expression referring to a person, place, thing, event, substance, quality or idea.

Due the syntactical characteristics nouns can be classified in two categories: proper nouns and common nouns.

b. Verbs

Alston (1964) presents that when words like “to walk” or “to sit” are considered, they necessitate conception of an entity for which the action of walking or sitting happens. Therefore, he claims that such verbs are not self-subsistent and depend on “existing things” and such existing things are more basic concepts or in fact prerequisites to the conception of predicates.

c. Adjectives

As Robert and Mary (2003) define, adjective is a part of speech that modifies or describes a noun, giving more information about the noun and pronoun it companies. In adjectives, there are also markers called affixes marking them as adjectives.

d. Slangs

The origin of the term “slang” is still mysterious, and in his book, Asher (1994) believes it dates back to approximately 1750. He also points out that slang denotes “the restricted speech of low often criminal classes of society. It was not until about the 1890s that the word “slang” took on its meaning below under standard use and restricted speech.

According to Bailey (1985), describing “slang” in term of a “register or variety according to use, a style whose distinguishing

feature is the intention” is the best way to find solution to a more universally accepted definition of slang.

2.2.3. Code-switching (CS)

CS is “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent.” Gumperz (1973) also refers to the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation. Code is here understood as a single language.

2.2.4. Stylistic devices

a. Definition of Stylistic Devices

Galperin (1981) defines that a stylistic device is “ *a conscious and intentional intensification of some typical structural and/or semantic property of a language unit (neutral or expensive) promoted to a generalized status and thus becoming a generative model*”. Most of stylistic devices display an application of two meanings: the ordinary one, in other words, the meaning (lexical or structural) which has already been established in the language-as-a-system, and a special meaning which is superimposed on the unit by the text, i.e a meaning which appears in the language-in-action.

b. Classification of Stylistic devices

Metaphor

Metonymy

Simile

Hyperbole

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The paper design was based on a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative approach was used to describe and analyze data to find out the distinctive features of facebook confessions pages as well as the similarities and differences between CSNSEs and CSNSVs in terms of their lexical choice and stylistic devices. The quantitative approach was useful for determining the occurrence, the percentage of some linguistic devices as well as comparing their frequency in CSNSEs and CSNSVs.

3.2. RESEARCH METHOD

- *Qualitative and quantitative methods:*
- *Statistic and descriptive methods*
- *Analytic and synthetic methods:*
- *Inductive methods:*
- *Contrastive methods*

3.3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The following steps will be included:

- Collecting 200 English and 200 Vietnamese confessions on social network sites.
- Classifying the data into two categories of linguistic features of confessions on social network sites in English and that in Vietnamese. Analyzing the data and presenting the results using tables.
- Making comparison and contrast to explore the similarities

and differences of confessions on social network sites in both languages in terms of lexical choices and stylistic devices.

- Synthesizing the findings and drawing conclusions.
- Giving some implications for teaching, learning language as well as using the language of writing confessions.
- Making recommendations for further researches.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

On the basis of 400 confessions on social network sites in both languages, the data analysis will be carried out to identify the language features used in confessions.

To begin with, after the data of each language is collected, the author will group them into two categories including language features of confessions on social network sites in English and those ones in Vietnamese. Then, the data will be analyzed to find out the lexical and pragmatic features used in confessions on social network sites in both languages.

The next step will be concerned with giving the statistics done by the researcher, presenting them using tables giving the explanation.

Finally, based on the results of data analysis, a comparison will be carried out to distinguish the similarities as well as differences in the linguistic features of confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese.

3.9. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In terms of reliability, the data source selected to be investigated are derived from the famous social network site, Facebook. The theoretical background on which investigation is

based are taken from related studies or previous research by famous English or Vietnamese linguists. Both data source and theoretical background source are good enough for the analysis and the conclusion are, therefore, reliable.

In terms of validity, this study meets all required criteria. In order to answer the formulated research questions, the observation and investigation techniques have been chosen to be the main instruments for data collection. About 400 confessions are taken from the confession pages on Facebook of high schools and universities in the U.S and in Vietnam, so they are truly representative of population. The supporting instruments such as calculation, statistics, tables, numeration are appropriately employed to eliminate irrelevant and unstable data to guarantee the quality of the research.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. LEXICAL CHOICES OF CONFESSIONS ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN ENGLISH

4.1.1. Nouns

a. Personal Pronouns

Here, the *subject pronouns* and *object pronouns* are often seen. A *subject pronoun* as “ I” in first person, “ you” in second person and “ *they, she, he*” in third person, *object pronouns* as “*you, me, him, her, they*” are often mentioned in confessions on social network sites.

The difficulty in identifying the speakers, the addressees and the overhearers is one of the most typical features of confessions on social networking sites.

b. Common Nouns

Through the studying of 200 samples of confessions on social network sites in English, the common nouns referring to people are widely used.

The language used in confessions is very informal due to the high occurrence of using informal nouns.

c. Proper Nouns

Individual places and organizations are often related to school life. They are names of schools and some organizations in schools. Except for the well-known people, proper nouns identifying schools, there is no case in which a certain individual person, especially in schools, is appeared. Therefore, even with the

appearance of proper nouns, the identification of the addresses is still ambiguous .

4.1.2. Adjectives

a. Adjective describing people's appearance

Adjectives describing appearance of people used in confessions are not often taken to describe any body parts like hair, face, nose but general expressions such as *beautiful, cute, sexy, hot, charming* with positive meanings than negative ones.

The abundance of using positive adjectives to describe people's appearance show that even if being anonymous , the writers of confessions does not want to give much criticism on Facebook confession pages.

b. Adjective describing people's personality

Most of the adjectives describe the positive characters like *interesting, successful, outgoing, caring*.

Another special linguistic feature of using adjectives to describe people in confessions is the using of intensifiers to emphasize the description.

c. Adjective describing people's feeling

Based on studying the data of 200 confessions found in facebook confession pages of high schools and universities in the U.S, adjective describing people's feelings are found including *fed up with, stressed, depressed, tired of , alone, clowsy, flooded, confused*.

The adjectives denoting negative feelings are more used than positive ones. It shows that the bad mood is often showed on confessions than the good one.

4.1.3. Verbs

a. Verbs expressing liking and disliking

Specially, these verbs represent token of *like* in different ways: *love, like, have a crush on, be still in love, fall in love with*

For denoting the token of dislike, the confession writers use some verbs such as *hate, dislike*.

b. Verbs expressing needing and wanting

Another typical feature of confessions in CSNSEs is the expression of wanting and needing. The verbs dealing with people's hope is thickly showed including *want, hope, wish and need*

4.1.4. Other lexical choices

a. Abbreviations

Shortenings used in confessions in English include *dorm, frat, pics, ex, final, caf, apt*.

Most of the shortening forms of words used in confessions are related to the topic of campus life and the youth. It means that the writers often talk about the places around them like apartments, cafeterias and dormitories; the people around them like fraternity and ex- boyfriend/girlfriend. Specially, the number of shortening for school's name appear with high rate.

Acronyms used in confessions in English include *LGBT, idk, tbh, LDR, FB, OMG, FML, bj, std, btw*. Acronyms insinuate the hard-saying problems, the hard-explaining problems especially about sex and gender. Schools' names are also abbreviated under the acronym form.

b. Slangs

Most of the slangs are related to "Sex" such as *fuck, hook*

up, chick, vagina, pole, dick. Offensiveness is also showed in some slangs there like *damn, shit, fuck, shit, bullshit, etc...*

4.2. LEXICAL CHOICES OF CONFESSIONS ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN VIETNAMESE

4.2.1 Nouns

a. Personal Pronouns

Vietnamese personal pronouns have more complications than English ones. Not only age, gender, person, the social context and attitude of the speaker to the listener but also the relationship between the speaker and listener are indicated through the way Vietnamese choosing personal pronouns in every day communication.

b. Common nouns

In Vietnamese confessions, a lot of common nouns referring to people are also found. The writers of facebook confessions specially prefer to use the slangs which are just popular in the community of the youth to refer to people around them. This makes the confessions very interesting and shows the glibness and mischievousness of the teenagers.

c. Proper nouns

Proper names referring to the schools, the working places that the addresses or the writers are studying or working are also used. The proper names are in some cases under abbreviation.

4.2.2. Adjectives

a. Adjectives describing people's appearance

The adjectives and adjective phrases describing people's appearance used in confessions in Vietnamese can be listed as:

xinh, có duyên, dễ thương, đẹp, xinh đẹp, phong trần, cao cao, gầy gầy, đẹp trai, xinh cực, xấu đã man, mặt lạnh như tiền, mặt lạnh như quỷ, xinh như tinh tinh, mi nhon, chuẩn men. In Vietnamese confessions, the general expressions of human are more often described than other body parts. It seems that the general expressions of women are described more frequently than those of men.

It is obvious that most of the words on confessions in Vietnamese are used with positive meanings. Criticism on confession pages is not what can be found easily.

b. Adjectives describing people's personality

The adjectives and adjective phrases describing people's personality used in confessions in Vietnamese are: *khùng, trẻ con, nhí nhố, vui tính, cá tính, hài hước, tình cảm, ngốc nghếch, năng động, tài năng, thân thiện, trầm tính, nữ tính, tốt bụng, nhiệt tình, nhí nhảnh, hóm trai, yếu đuối, bản lĩnh, gallant, chảnh, ngu có tiếng và lười biếng số một.* The adjectives denoting positive personality are used more frequently than ones denoting negative personality.

c. Adjectives describing people's feeling

The adjectives describing people's feeling found in confessions in Vietnamese are: *choáng, vui, xao xuyến, buồn, chơi vơi, bị bỏ rơi, giận, lo lắng, tự ti, đuối như trái chuối, ngại ngại, shock, không cảm xúc, rầu, hoang mang, nặng nề, có lỗi, hụt hẫng, hạnh phúc, xấu hổ.* Obviously, the adjectives denoting negative feelings take more places on Vietnamese facebook confessions than the adjectives denoting positive feelings.

4.2.3. Verbs

a. Verbs denoting liking and disliking

To represent the token of like, people often use the words including *thích, yêu, kết, bị thích, cảm nắng, say nắng, trúng gió, để ý, bỏ kết*. The token of dislike is shown in the word: *ghét*.

b. Verbs denoting wanting and needing

Another typical feature of confessions in VCNSs is the expression of wanting and needing. The verbs dealing with people's hope is thickly showed there such as: *muốn, hy vọng, cần*.

4.2.4. Other lexical choices

a. Abbreviations

Firstly, a lot of English words are abbreviated there including *ad, tks, cmt, sts, vs, wth*.

Secondly, Vietnamese words and phrases are abbreviated a lot in confessions with two kinds: shortenings and acronyms.

Observation from this research reveals that while English writers of confessions tend to use some initial letters to represent the whole word, Vietnamese ones tend to use the very first letter, or once in a while, the first two letters as in : *e, a, y, r, kh, m, mic*

Acronyms are widely and abundantly used in Vietnamese confessions such as *mn, ny, ac, sv, sdt, tt, BCH, ktx, BTC, CMND, BHYT, MSSV, ntn, Bt, kb, DH, clb, K20, Nt, Hp, sn, tc, GATO*.

Nouns in Vietnamese are more abbreviated than other kinds like verbs or adjectives.

b. Terms

The words related to facebook are used most such as *wall, photo, add friend, see more, comment, status, avatar, profile, group,*

like, page, block, share, message.

c. Slangs

There are no slangs denoting “sex” or “offensiveness” in confessions in Vietnamese. The slangs has some meanings related to “love” and “gender” like “*cưa, hốt, lái máy bay*” and “*thăng, cong*” are frequently used. Several slangs infer to activities of commenting including: *ném đá, ném gạch, bán than, chém, soi*. Besides, the slangs denoting some people’s feelings as *quá nhỏ, đáng lòng, bực, nhoi* also popularly used in confessions in Vietnamese.

d. Borrowed words

Some foreign words used are *boy, girl, acoustic, toilet, time, teen, event, member, shock, tomboy, bus, valentine, highlights, level, troll, les, helmet, speaking, love, with, make colour, thank, teamwork, apply, freestyle, clip, job, fashion, tattoo, volume, full, fan, gay, everywhere, please, skill, stress, distance, cute, mood, war*

According to the data above, it is easily seen that the most common code-switching is happens to nouns, occurring 50.6 percentage out of 42 examples.

e. Emoticons

Here is the table containing the actions are written within two asterisks. Through these kinds of actions, the emotions and feelings of writers can be conveyed.

Table 4.18. Emoticons used in CSNSVs

No.	Emoticons	English meaning
1	*tung hoa*	Be happy
2	*oápz*	yawn
3	*ôm cột ngòì tự kĩ*	Be alone
4	*tung bông tung hoa*	congratulate
5	*chám nước mắt*	Be sad
6	*mặt hớn*	Be happy
7	*cấn gỏi*	Do not know what is happening, be surprised
8	*buồn*	Be sad

f. Nicknames

Nicknames are familiar or humorous names given to a person in stead of or as well as the real names. Nickname are used a lot in facebook confession in Vietnamese. People use nicknames to call themselves or other people like his girlfriends, his classmates, his friends.

g. Purposefully local accents

In confessions in Vietnamese, there are a lot of cases that people use the local accents in writing confessions. The local accents often make misspelling. Local accents are used with the purpose of creating the interesting speech and showing the difference of each individual and generation.

4.3. STYLISTIC DEVICES USED IN CONFESSIONS IN SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN ENGLISH

4.3.1. Metaphor

Metaphor is used in confessions to create figurative images which attract the readers and show the characters of the writers. Most of the writer of confessions use metaphor to emphasize their opinions about people and things around them. Metaphors are used to describe boyfriends or girlfriends, a friend, love-related problems, studying problems, daily problems like eating.

4.3.2. Metonymy

Metonymy can be formed based on different logical relations such as a part and totality, subject and belonging, tool and result, containing thing and contained thing, etc.

In most of the metonymies used in confessions in English, the body parts are frequently used with the meaning of using the parts to modify the totality.

4.3.3. Simile

It is easily seen from the examples above that most of the writers mention their feelings and compare them with another thing such as a certain thing like shit, an activity like drowning, a certain person like a cougar or a frosh.

4.3.4. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech that uses an exaggerated or extravagant statement to create a strong emotional response.

The writers of confessions use hyperbole mostly to express their feelings, their situations and their idols.

4.4. STYLISTIC DEVICES USED IN CONFESSIONS IN SOCIAL NETWORK SITES IN VIETNAMESE

4.4.1. Metaphor

Metaphors are used in confessions in Vietnamese mostly describe the feelings and thoughts related to love of the youth, to significant time in life.

4.4.2. Metonymy

Metonymy is defined as a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated. Metonymy describes something indirectly by referring to things around it. In facebook confessions page in Vietnamese, the image of hands stood for the body is used very popularly.

These metonymies are formed based on the logical relations between the part “tay” (hands) and the totality “em/anh” (whole body). It is these metonymies that make the confessions more imaginery.

4.4.3. Simile

Simile is also a very popular stylistic device used in vietnamese confessions. A simile is a figure of speech that makes a comparison, showing similarities between two different things. Unlike a metaphor, a simile draws resemblance with the help of the words “like” or “as”. Therefore, it is a direct comparison.

In Vietnamese language, the simile can be showed in the markers “ *như, cũng như, là* ”.

4.4.4. Hyperbole

Not only the body parts is exaggerated in confessions, the energy of the body is also amplified. The hyperboles in confessions

are usually used to exaggerate the parts of body, the daily activities or the hometown lifestyle. It is easy to comprehend the hyperbole but, it still depends on the co-text to realize the purposes of each hyperbole.

4.5. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES OF LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF CONFESSIONS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.5.1. Similarities and differences of lexical choice of confessions on social networking sites in English and Vietnamese

a. Similarities

Both English and Vietnamese confessions writers have the same ideas on word use in confessions. That is, nouns referring to people, adjectives describing people and feelings, verbs denoting feelings, slangs and abbreviations, all appear in both English and Vietnamese

b. Differences

Emoticons, nicknames and purposefully local accents are often used in Vietnamese confessions, but it is not the case in English confessions. Mixed-language especially Vietnamese – English is frequently used by Vietnamese confession writers, not by English ones.

4.5.2. Similarities and differences of stylistic devices of confessions on social networking sites in English and Vietnamese

a. Similarities

The confession writers in both English and Vietnamese use some similar stylistic devices like metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole. Almost the stylistic devices have reached their goals: giving

their own views of speakers or writers, drawing attention and making strong impression on listeners or readers. So it can be seen that the function of the stylistic devices in two languages are almost similar.

b. Differences

The frequencies of occurrences in the two languages are different. In English confessions, metaphor takes the highest frequencies of occurrences (30%). With the special effect to create vivid or graphic mental images, it seems that English confession writers want to attract the attention of listeners by that way. Meanwhile, in Vietnamese ones, hyperbole is most effective way for speakers to emphasize certain aspects in their views (35 %).

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

With the reference to the lexical choice, English and Vietnamese confessions have many similarities as well as differences. As far as similarities are concerned, both English and Vietnamese confession writers have the same ideas on word use in confessions.. The first difference is that emoticons and nicknames are often used in Vietnamese confessions, but it is not the case in English confessions. In the second place, mixed-language especially Vietnamese – English is frequently used by Vietnamese confession writers, not by English ones.

With regard to stylistic devices, there are some similarities. The confession writers in both English and Vietnamese use some similar stylistic devices like metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole.

In English confessions, metaphor takes the highest frequencies of occurrences (30%). With the special effect to create vivid or graphic mental images, it seems that English confession writers want to attract the attention of listeners by that way. Meanwhile, in Vietnamese ones, hyperbole is most effective way for speakers to emphasize certain aspects in their views (35 %).

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

A language, like other things on the planet, always moves. Recently, confessions pages have become very popular without limitation of national boundaries. The research on the language in its greatly contribute to the research of language development of Vietnamese language in particular and English language in general.

5.3. LIMITATIONS

It seems difficult to identify all types of lexical choices or stylistic devices used in confessions. Lexical choice and stylistic devices are studied, other possible features might have been left untouched.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Topics for further research may include:

- An investigation into syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of confessions on social network sites in English and Vietnamese
- An investigation into linguistic features of Slangs in English and Vietnamese facebook confession pages.