

**THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG
UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES**

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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LINGUISTIC
FEATURES OF VERBS AND THEIR
RELATION TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN
THE VERBAL PROCESSES IN ENGLISH AND
VIETNAMESE**

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

Most of the EFL learners have always dreamt of being capable of writing and speaking appropriately and effectively. The functional grammar, a grammar model developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s serves the communicative purpose of EFL students' learning the English language and provides the opportunity for EFL students to recognize the linguistic features of the language, which they need to learn for success at school. That is because the functional grammar emphasizes the way spoken and written language operate in different social situations.

In comparison with traditional grammar, which focuses on the ways words are organized within sentences and looks at a language as a set of rules, functional grammar is concerned with the way language is put together so that meaning is communicated for particular purposes, and looks at a language as a system of meaning.

The verbs of saying are one of the important issues in functional grammar theory by Halliday (1985). They belong to the field of experiential meaning in the clause as representation. These verbs still contain many interesting and also complex features that should be investigated although there have been some researches involved in their grammatical form and lexical meaning. Especially a comparison between this type of verbs in English and Vietnamese in terms of linguistic features and sub-classification on semantic and syntactic bases is still a gap. One more thing about these verbs is that the relation of them to the manner circumstances in the verbal process still stimulate for a further study. In practice, learners tend to

make some mistakes when using these verbs because there are many different verbs of saying and each of them has slightly different and often subtle shade of meaning, this causes some troubles for the learners.

As a master student of learning English language, I find it is difficult for Vietnamese learners to accurately use verbs of saying in speaking and writing English. Meanwhile, not much of research on verbal process verbs has been done. Therefore, I consider the using of verbs of saying in English as the appropriate data for doing research.

In this type of text, I will focus on investigating its meaning and the use of each verb of saying and their circumstances in appropriate context in the novel English and Vietnamese. The exploration of the linguistic features of these verbs is expected to identify the function of the verbs of saying and their linguistic features in both languages. Through my primary investigation in these verbs in English and Vietnamese, I also recognize the relation of these verbs and the manner circumstances which modify them in the process of saying inspires to study at the same time with the study of their semantic and syntactic features. For those reasons, I decided to choose to carry the research with the title: “An investigation into linguistic features of verbs and their relation to the manner circumstances in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese”.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

This study aims to provide a relatively comprehensive description and analysis of the semantic and syntactic features of five typical verb groups and their circumstances in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese. This study is expected to make a

comparison of linguistic features of these verbs in English and Vietnamese and their relation to the circumstance; a classification of these verbs is hoped to do on functional basis.

1.2.2. Objectives

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives are intended

- To explore the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese
- To investigate the relation of these verbs to the circumstances in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese
- To make suggestion for using verbs for learning and teaching English

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the scope of this study, the thesis focuses on the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese. This thesis limits the verbs of saying in novel “Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen” in English as source language and its Vietnamese translation “Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến by Diệp Minh Tâm., novel “Số Đỏ by Vũ Trọng Phụng” as source language and its English translation “Dumb Luck” by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman. More specifically, in this thesis the writer intend to investigate on five principal verb groups:

- + **Communicating verbs** (*say, tell, speak, talk and declare*)
- + **Positive verbs** (*Flatter, hope, thank, congratulate, praise*)
- + **Negative verbs** (*cry, condemn, blame, complain, quarrel*)
- + **Instructing verbs** (*explain, describe, instruct, guide, discuss*)
- + **Information verbs** (*answer, inform, mention, reply, ask*)

The relation of them to the manner circumstances in verbal process is also under this investigation. In this case manner circumstances comprise of four subcategories: Means, Quality, Comparison, Degree in English and Vietnamese's equivalents are in the scope of the study.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To achieve the aims and objectives mentioned above, the study seeks the information for the following research questions:

- What are the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese?

- What are the similarities and differences in the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese?

- What are the relations of these verbs to the manner circumstances in the verbal process in English and Vietnamese?

- What are the similarities and differences between these verbs in terms of their relations to the manner circumstances in the verbal process in English and Vietnamese?

1.5. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study consists of 5 main chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: “Introduction”, includes the rationale for the research, aims and objectives, significance, scope, research questions, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2: “Literature review”, briefly presents the overview of previous studies to metonymy. The concepts of idealize semantic and syntactic features will also be included in this chapter.

Chapter 3: “Methods and Procedures” consists of research methods, research procedures, description of samples and data analysis.

Chapter 4: “Findings and Discussion” describes the data through the samples of verbs of saying in verbal process in English and Vietnamese. This chapter presents the similarities as well as differences in terms of semantic and syntactic features of verbs of saying.

Chapter 5: “Conclusion and Implications”, briefly summarizes the results analyzed in Chapter 4 and also states some implications for teaching, learning English and some suggestions for further research.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE/JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

I would like to get to know more about the semantic and syntactic features of verbs of saying and their circumstances in English and its relation in Vietnamese. This study will help learners of English and Vietnamese have a comprehensive understanding about the verbs of saying and their circumstances in two languages. It also helps the learners know the importance of using each kind of verbs of saying.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1. An overview of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

2.1.2. The three metafunctions

2.1.2.1. The ideational function

2.1.2.2. The interpersonal function

2.1.2.3. The textual function

2.1.3. Transitivity: The Grammar of Experiential Meaning

2.1.3.1. Process, Participant, and Circumstances

2.1.3.2. Types of process

2.1.3.3. Circumstances

a. Expansion: Enhancing

b. Expansion: Extending

c. Expansion: Elaborating

d. Projection

2.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It can be clearly seen that the verb plays an important roles in a sentence in both English and Vietnamese. So far, verbs have been studied by many researchers and mentioned to linguistic features in many books.

Halliday (1994) stated that there are three principal types of processes found in the English clause: Material, Mental, and Relational. He also discussed the three subsidiary types: Behavioural, Verbal, and Existential. In Halliday view, verbal processes are the processes of saying, but “saying” has to be interpreted in a rather board sense. Therefore, verbal processes might also more

appropriately be called “symbolic” processes. In these processes, there are four participants: Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage and Target.

Phan Văn Hòa in an article published by language (2007) provided twelve models of verbal verbs, but the article just is focused on describing conceptions, activities of the verb “Say”, especially patterns “say” +x and their functional semantics.

Huỳnh Thị Diễm Trinh (2009) examined “The process of saying in English and Vietnamese: Models of Verbal verb + x”. The writer pointed out the similarities and differences in semantic features and relations of the models verbal verb + x.

In addition, some studies are carried out such as “Semantic features and syntactic relations realized by Say-Tell-Speak-Talk” by Trần Thị Phước Hạnh (2002) In her research, she distinguished features of VPVs. Besides, Trần Văn Chương (2011) studied “The linguistic features of saying verbs used in political documents in English and Vietnamese”. The author discussed the semantic and syntactic features of saying verbs, and pointed out the similarities and differences of these verbs.

Nguyễn Thị Mai Linh (2015) showed the similarities and differences of verbal processes in the short stories “Runaway” versus in its Vietnamese translation equivalent “Trốn chạy” in term of syntactic and semantic.

All of the documents could be applied the referent resources of this research. Besides, there has been so far no research into the semantic and syntactic features of verbs and their circumstances in the verbal processes, so I have decided on this thesis entitled “An investigation into semantic and syntactic features of verbs and their relation to the manner circumstances in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese”.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. METHODOLOGY

To meet the demand of objectivity, in this study, descriptive and contrastive methods are chosen as the dominant ones used in this paper.

Descriptive method: This method is used in order to describe and demonstrate the semantic and syntactic features of verbs and their manner circumstances in the verbal processes.

The contrastive method is used in analyzing data so that the writer can find out the similarities and differences in analyze the semantics and syntactic features of verbs and their manner circumstances in the verbal processes.

3.2. SAMPLING

To serve the study, the number of samples are 1000 in English and Vietnamese (400 in Vietnamese and 600 in English), collected from “Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen” in English as source language and its Vietnamese translation “Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến by Diệp Minh Tâm”, the novels “Số Đỏ by Vũ Trọng Phụng” as source language and its English translation “Dumb Luck” by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman. The samples are selected basing on the sentences or discourses which contain verbs of saying in the five groups of verb. Also, in the novel “Số Đỏ” the verbs are chosen if they have the verbs belonging to the five groups of verb in the English version. Besides, the selected verbs must be the main verbs of the sentences or discourses. For example: “*I want to say with him*” the verb “say” is not chosen because the main verb of the sentence is

“want” not “say”. However, in the example “*I say to him*” the verb “say” is selected since it is the main verb of the sentence.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

First of all, the system of criteria for choosing the sentences containing verbs of saying and their manner circumstances in the verbal process is established. The relevant data serving this study are taken from discourses in the novels, their versions and some from English and Vietnamese newspapers.

Then, the data are divided into categories depending on their semantic and syntactic features. From the samples collected, we try to choose the best and correct ones with cares to illustrate what we want to mention. To the manner circumstances, the data for them are also classified into 4 types as announced in 2.2.3.3 above.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The samples of data used in the study are required to be precise and the collecting procedures must be logical. In this study, the collected data was analyzed on the basis of linguistic knowledge to investigate the similar and distinctive features of verbs and their circumstances in the verbal process used in novel “Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen” in English as source language and its Vietnamese translation “Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến by Diệp Minh Tâm”, novel “Số Đỏ by Vũ Trọng Phụng” as source language and its English translation “Dumb Luck” by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman. Therefore, we can draw out the similarities and differences on the linguistic features. The study strictly follows the research design, research methodology and research procedures as mentioned above.

In addition, since the researcher employed theoretical

background which based on Halliday's approach in two versions *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday, 1994) and *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday, 2004) this contributes to the reliability of the research. Moreover, conclusions were drawn from findings after the careful and accurate process of data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from the data analysis in term of the semantic and syntactic features of verbs and their relation to manner circumstances in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese as well as points out the similarities and differences of these verbs in these two languages. A description of all the components of the verbal processes will be given. In addition, the relation between these verbs and the four main types of manner circumstances are investigated in order to make clear the subcategories of circumstances in both languages. Finally, the result of comparison is used as a foundation for using these verbs for learning and teaching in the last chapter.

There are so many verbs denoting the verbal process in English and Vietnamese, so the writer classifies the verbs basing on the following criteria. First, basing on the pronouncing voice manner, the writer categorizes the verbs into *Communicating verbs*. Then, the *Positive and Negative verbs* are classified according to their function. If some verbs direct the writer in how to respond to a question, they are classified into *Instructing verbs*. Finally, the verbs are grouped into *Information verbs* if the verbs can provide information.

Therefore, the classification of verbs may be summarized in the following table:

Table 4.1. Verbs Denoting Verbal Process

Types	English Saying Verbs	Vietnamese Saying Verbs
Communicating Verbs	Say, Tell, Speak, Talk, Declare	Nói, báo, bày tỏ, nhắn, cho biết, nói chuyện, trao đổi, tiếp chuyện, tuyên bố, đáp, kể, bàn, mở miệng
Positive Verbs	Flatter, Hope, Thank, Congratulate, Praise	Tâng bốc, hi vọng, cảm ơn, chúc mừng, ca ngợi
Negative Verbs	Cry, Condemn, Blame, Complain, Quarrel	Thốt lên, lên án, trách, than phiền, tranh cãi
Instructing Verbs	Explain, Describe, Instruct, Guide, Discuss	Giải thích, mô tả, chỉ dẫn, hướng dẫn, bàn luận
Information Verbs	Answer, Inform, Mention, Reply, Ask	Trả lời, cho biết, đề cập, đáp, hỏi

4.1. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF VERBS OF SAYING

In this section, each verb groups will be discussed and analyzed carefully and compared between the novel “Pride and Prejudice” by Jane Austen and its Vietnamese translation “Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến” by Diệp Minh Tâm; and the novel “Số Đố” by Vũ Trọng Phụng and its English translation “Dumb Luck” By Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm. English verbs of saying are divided into five different types: communicating, negative, positive, instructing and information. As George Yule states in Pragmatics [45], semantics refers to “The study of the relationships between linguistics forms and entities in the world, that is, how words literally connect to

things. Semantic analysis also attempts to establish the relationships between verbal descriptions and states of affairs in the world as accurate (true) or regardless of who produces that description.” As mentioned in Chapter 2, in Verbal process the main participant is the Sayer by which messages can be represented or conveyed. There are also three participants involved in the verbal process: the Receiver, the Target and the Verbiage. In the verbal process, the verbs of saying can be realized in the following formula:

- (1) [SAYER + V]
- (2) [SAYER + V + VERBIAGE]
- (3) [SAYER + V + RECEIVER]
- (4) [SAYER + V + RECEIVER + VERBIAGE]
- (5) [SAYER + V + TARGET]
- (6) [SAYER + V + TARGET + VERBIAGE]
- (7) [SAYER + V + TARGET + RECEIVER]
- (8) [SAYER + V + TARGET + RECEIVER]

4.1.1. Semantic features of Verbs of Communicating

4.1.2. Semantic features of Positive Verbs

4.1.3. Semantic features of Negative Verbs

4.1.4. Semantic features of Instructing Verbs

4.1.5. Semantic features of Information Verbs

4.2. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF VERBS OF SAYING

4.2.1. The Syntactic Classification of Verbs

In former traditional grammar books and dictionaries, verbs are often classified into intransitive Verbs (come, laugh, go, vote, etc.), which do not take a direct object or follow by an Adverbial modifier (or Adjunct) and transitive Verbs (answer, get, say, etc.),

which often take as its complementation a direct object (and possibly followed by another element).

- **Intransitive verbs:**

- Verb used alone [V]
- Verb + adverb or prepositional phrase [V + adv/ prep.]

- **Transitive verbs:**

- Verb + noun phrase [V. NP]
- Verb + noun phrase + adverb or prepositional phrase [VN

+adv/ prep.]

- **Transitive verbs with two objects:**

- Verb + noun phrase + noun phrase [V.N.N]

- **Verbs used with clauses or phrases:**

- Verb + **that** clause [V- **that**]
- Verb + noun phrase + **that** clause [VN **that**]
- Verb + **Wh**-clause [V **wh**-]
- Verb + noun phrase + **Wh**-clause [VN- **wh**]
- Verb + **To** infinitive [V **To**]
- Verb + noun phrase **to** infinitive [VN **To**]
- Verb + **ing** phrase [V-**ing**]
- Verb + noun phrase **ing** phrase [VN -**ing**]

This latest contemporary classification of Verbs in accordance with the possible Verb patterns, to some extent, keeps in close connection with the conception raised by R.Quirk et al's 'A Grammar of Contemporary English' (1972) and 'A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language' (1985), also in S.Greenbaum's (1996) 'The Oxford English Grammar'. In these four English famous linguists' works, the general classification of English Verbs and also

any other language's Verbs universally, may be summarized in the table 4.1:

Table 4.53. Table of classifying of English verbs

Verbs	Intransitive	V + { or V + A (optional)
	Monotransitive	V + Od
	Complex Transitive	V + Od + Adj or V + Od + A
	Ditransitive	V + Oi + Od

4.2.2. The Syntactic Classification of Verbs of saying in the novels “Pride and Prejudice ” in English and its Vietnamese translation “ Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến”, the novels “ Số Đổ” and its English translation “ Dumb Luck”

Verbs make up one of the major form classes, comprising words which express the process. As we mentioned above, there are different kinds of major processes, namely Material process, Mental process, Relational process, Verbal process, Behavioural process and Existential process. In VPs, verbal clauses are divided into intransitive verbal clauses, monotransitive verbal clauses, ditransitive verbal clauses and complex transitive verbal clauses. Therefore, some VPs have only one participant, others have two or even three participants. VPs are classified into many subtypes, but I would like to present some main subtypes as follows:

- a. Intransitive verbs*
- b. Monotransitive verbs*
- c. Ditransitive verbs*
- d. Verbs used with clauses or phrases*

4.3. THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE SEMANTIC AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF VERBS IN THE VERBAL PROCESSES IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.3.1. The similarities in the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese

4.3.1.1. The similarities in the semantic features of verbs

4.3.1.2. The similarities in the syntactic features of verbs

4.3.2. The differences in the semantic and syntactic features of verbs in the verbal processes in English and Vietnamese

4.3.2.1. The differences in the semantic features of verbs

4.3.2.2. The differences in the syntactic features of verbs

4.4. THE RELATION OF VERBS OF SAYING TO THE MANER CIRCUMSTANCES

4.4.1. Manner

4.4.2. The Frequency of Circumstances of Manner

4.5. THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE VERBS IN TERMS OF THEIR REALATIONS TO THE MANNER CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE VERBAL PROCESS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

4.5.1. The similarities between these verbs in terms of their relations to the Manner circumstances in the verbal process in English and Vietnamese

4.5.2. The differences between these verbs in terms of their relations to the Manner circumstances in the verbal process in English and Vietnamese

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this study, the Verbs of saying (VS) have been analyzed in syntactic and semantic features in the light of functional grammar. The interesting characteristics and distinctions of the VS can be summarized as follows:

Through the whole research, the verbs of saying are classified into five groups: Communicating verbs, Positive verbs, Negative verbs, Instructing verbs and Information verbs. Each group of verb has a distinctive feature and creates different effects on performance and certain impact on readers. Among these five categories, Communicating verbs are the most predominant ones, accounting for over 50% in both Vietnamese and English works.

In the verbal process, the number of participants in both English and Vietnamese novels is quite equal. However, in some circumstances, the participants in the original works are more or less than those in the translational ones. It can be seen that in some translation clauses some words are added while some are omitted compared to original clauses.

Some interesting points can also be found in term of the syntactic features. There is the change of some of existing positions in the intransitive verbal clauses between English and Vietnamese. We can see that the Verb or Reporting verb like Said can stand in front of the Subject in Direct speech in English. However, we cannot put the Verb in front of the Subject in Vietnamese verbal clauses; the Verb is usually behind the Subject in the Direct or Indirect speech. Besides, there is a similarity between *monotransitive verbal verbs* and

ditransitive verbal verbs is that they are used the prepositions in Vietnamese. The prepositions are added into Vietnamese clause due to the habit of the Vietnamese people in communication context, which is aimed at clarifying the meaning of the clauses.

Last but not least, in both English and Vietnamese the four types of Circumstances are employed in the clauses. This is because the writer wants to emphasize his/her attitude or feeling of the Sayer. However, the Manner Circumstances of Quality occurs much more frequent than the rest three. Also, we can see that most of the Circumstances are put in front or behind the saying verbs in Vietnamese and English clauses without changing the meaning of the Circumstances as well as the clauses. In addition, in some context, the Circumstances are omitted from the original clause.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the four chapters previously mentioned, we have attempted to give answers to the research questions made about the syntactic and semantic features of VS in English and Vietnamese. When dealing with VS, I realize that English language learners normally have difficulty in grasping the semantic features as well as the syntactic features of VS in English and Vietnamese to use them effectively. The findings of the research, therefore, enable us to explore appropriate suggestions that will help students overcome the difficulties in their learning.

Firstly, the overview of the processes in the transitivity system helps the students distinguish between different types of processes and draw their attention to structural patterns in the clause which may otherwise be considered by some students as arbitrary rather than

being related to meaning and function. In addition to that, to some students, the structural patterns are considered arbitrary rather than being related to meaning and function. Therefore, it is important and useful for teachers to implicate VS and guide the students to make grammatical analysis when learning grammar.

Secondly, at the more advanced levels of learning, teachers, students and translators as well, should pay closely attention to cases of English and Vietnamese translational equivalents and non – translational equivalents concerning the English and Vietnamese verbal process verbs.

Thirdly, it is important to emphasize here that the definition of Verbiage as “what is said” does not mean that it should cover the quoted and reported speech as it is usually treated in non-systemic functional grammar. In fact the function of verbiage should not be identified with the function of the projected clause in a verbal clause complex. In order to avoid this mistake when dealing with English VS, learners should be provided not only well-rounded knowledge of VS in both languages but also opportunities to practice them in context.

Lastly, the results of the study enable to help English learners have a comprehensive understanding about the semantic and syntactic features of VPs in both languages. Therefore the learners are able to use verbal verbs effectively.

5.3. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Within the scope of a master thesis we cannot cover all the features of VPs in both English and Vietnamese, the study just limits itself to the syntactic and semantic features of VPs in novel “Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen” in English as source language and its

Vietnamese translation “Kiêu hãnh và Định kiến by Diệp Minh Tâm”, novel “Số Đỏ by Vũ Trọng Phụng” as source language and its English translation “Dumb Luck” by Nguyễn Nguyệt Cầm and Peter Zinoman. Therefore there are still areas for further studies such as:

- An investigation into pragmatic features of Verbs of Saying in English and Vietnamese.
- An investigation of Manner circumstances in English and Vietnamese.