

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

**LÊ THỊ NHÃ TÂM**

**A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH  
SPEECHES DELIVERED BY RECTORS AT  
THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR CEREMONIES  
OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES**

**Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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**(A SUMMARY)**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. RATIONALE**

The more society develops, the more information people get. People exchange information through verbal and non-verbal types of communication in our daily life. There are many types of verbal communication such as conversations, dialogues, presentations, announcements or speeches.

At least, once in lives, people have heard, seen or witnessed a live speech on television, on radio or directly in reality. It may be an inauguration speech by a president, a speech opening a festival or simply a new year's speech. In fact, at the beginning of every new school year, people have a chance to listen to opening speeches by principals at elementary school, secondary school, high school or university.

English speeches delivered by rectors are an indispensable part at the new academic year ceremonies of colleges and universities. They have many interesting things that need to be studied carefully. For example, the ways rectors begin a speech, how to use words to welcome new students or declare to start a new school year.

The study of language in use, *discourse analysis*, gives us an insight into various aspects of spoken as well as written form of texts. English speeches delivered by rectors at the new academic year ceremonies of colleges and universities (ESRCs) are known as a text which is prepared in advance. In addition, making a good speech is a

complex process of choosing words, arranging ideas and ordering them reasonably. The speeches need to be brief, concise and easy to remember. Especially, ESRCs are often distinguishing samples because they are written by learned people with extensive knowledge to declare a new academic school year as well as to welcome new students. As a result, much attention should be paid to such features as layout, semantic, syntax and stylistic devices. Through such speeches, we find out the beauty of language, strategies and techniques through the use of layout, semantics, syntax and stylistic devices that are expected to be beneficial.

Another strong motivation for my choice is the fact that this research will partly yield important insights into theoretical studies as well as practical knowledge of learning and teaching English. In addition, little research has been done on discourse features of ESRCs and little instruction has been given out in academic writing courses in Vietnam as well as the huge sources of information and data from the official websites of colleges and universities. I hope that this thesis will somehow provide an overview of this field of research.

Inspired from those theoretical and practical significancs, I choose to do research on the topic **“A Discourse Analysis of English Speeches Delivered by Rectors at The New Academic Year Ceremonies of Colleges and Universities”**.

## **1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **1.2.1. Aims**

The study which is carried out with the aim to investigate features of ESRCs in terms of the layout features, syntactic features, lexical features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices. The findings of the study, then, will help Vietnamese learners understand and grasp the language characteristics of ESRCs.

### **1.2.2. Objectives**

The study attempts to achieve some following objectives:

- Identify the layout features of ESRCs .
- Find out the syntactic features and the lexical features of ESRCs.
- Identify the cohesive devices and stylistic devices used in ESRCs.
- Suggest some implications for Vietnamese teachers and learners of English.

## **1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Because of the limit of the time, the study cannot cover all discourse features of ESRCs. It only deals with the description and analysis of the discourse features of written form of ESRCs in terms of the layout, syntactic features, lexical features, stylistic devices and cohesive devices. In addition, forty speeches are collected from thirty two official websites of colleges and universities in two native speaking English countries: The United States and Britain.

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

1. What are the layout features of ESRCs ?
2. What are the syntactic features, the semantic features, the cohesive and stylistic devices used in ESRCs?
3. What are the implications of the study for teachers and learners of English as well as for those who are interested in writing speeches in English?

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

Speeches play an indispensable part which is undeniable in seminars, ceremonies or conferences, especially, ESRCs. However, to write a good speech is not easy. Hence, this thesis is carried out to help learners as well as teachers find out the discourse features of ESRCs to find out the difficulties and ways to get over them when writing a speech.

#### **1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

Apart from the abstract, the references, the research consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Chapter 3: Methods And Procedure

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the review of the history of linguistics of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>, Harris is the pioneer who laid the foundation for linguistics with a well-known work “Discourse Analysis” which came out 1952. Moreover, many scholars including Brown and Yule, Cook, Hasan and Halliday, Nunan, and so on have made important contributions to the linguistics, especially discourse analysis.

In Vietnam, there are also some linguists who are interested in researching the field of discourse analysis. For example, Nguyễn Hòa with “ Phân tích diễn ngôn phê bình” and “ Phân tích diễn ngôn- Một số vấn đề về lí luận và phương pháp” mentions various aspects of discourse analysis such as cohesion, context, speech acts, topic and some main approaches to this field. Besides, Trần Ngọc Thêm [1985], Nguyễn Thị Việt Thanh [1999], Phan Văn Hòa [2005] have a more detailed contribution to sub-aspects of discourse analysis respectively in “ Hệ thống liên kết văn bản Tiếng Việt”, “Hệ thống liên kết lời nói Tiếng Việt” and “Hệ thống từ nối biểu thị quan hệ lôgic và ngữ nghĩa trong Tiếng Anh và Tiếng Việt” respectively . In addition, Đinh Trọng Lạc [1966] has an overview

of the rhetorical means and measures in Vietnamese with “ 99 Phương tiện và Biện pháp tu từ Tiếng Việt”.

Also, there have been researches about the discourse analysis of opening speeches and political speeches in English and Vietnamese by Trần Thị Ngân [2009] and Ngô Thị Thanh Mai [2007], who are the first persons to have a study in this material.

Although several studies of discourse analysis have been carried out, there is no evidence that any research on investigating discourse features of ESRCs is conducted. In this thesis, I take into consideration discourse analysis, focusing on speech layouts, syntactic features, lexical features, cohesive devices, stylistic devices and give some implications which partly help students in academic writing.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1 Text and Discourse**

### **2.2.2 Concepts of Discourse Analysis**

### **2.2.3 Written and Spoken Discourse**

### **2.2.4 Common Types of Sentences**

### **2.2.5 Cohesion and Coherence**

### **2.2.6 Stylistics**

### **2.2.7 English Speeches Delivered by Rectors at The New Academic Year Ceremonies of Colleges and Universities.**

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.2 RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

In order to prepare data for research, I proceeded to collect data with some following criteria:

- ESRCs are selected from the forty-five official websites of forty-five colleges and universities in native English speaking countries : The united States and Britain.

- The medium length of ESRCs is more and less 2500 words.

- These speeches have been delivered since 2007.

#### **3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

#### **3.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 4.1. LAYOUT FEATURES OF ESRCs

Basically, the general layout of a ESRC can be divided into three primary parts as follows:

##### **Introduction section**

- Greeting the attendants.
- Welcoming to the new school year
- Contents

##### **Body section**

- Contents

##### **Conclusion**

- Wishing
- Contents

This general layout is just a frame of a ESRC. In order to write a complete and coherent ESRC, specific contents of each section should be analyzed and discovered carefully and fully.

#### **4.1.1 Introduction Section**

##### **Greeting:**

In every speech, a greeting part is indispensable at the beginning. As mentioned in table 4.1, the procedure of greeting to audience accounts for about 44% , but just 25% has specific greeting to participants who has high positions in the universities and colleges and the rest has general greetings sent to all participants.

- (1) *Good afternoon.* [79]
- (2) *Students, faculty, staff and alumni. Business and community leaders. Friends.* [76]
- (3) *Good morning, faculty and staff colleagues, students, parents, and distinguished guests.* [74]
- (4) *Chancellor Tisch, Chancellor Emeritus Joukowsky, Provost Schlissel, trustees and fellows, senior officers, deans, faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of Brown.* [78]

**Emotion:**

From the statistical percentage in table 4.1, it can be seen that 42 % of ESRCs express the speaker's emotion in the opening part. There are a number of ways to express the feelings to catch the attention of the attendants. In other words, the speaker wants the listeners to know that the new academic year is open. Here are some examples:

- (5) *It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I welcome you...*[39]
- (6) *I am delighted to be with you and to welcome you today.*  
[41]
- (7) *It is such an incredible honor for me to be here with all of you this morning...*[48]
- (8) *We are glad to have you joining the University of Michigan-Dearborn.* [55]

### **Welcoming:**

Besides expressing the feelings, the speaker also welcomes the audience after giving them a greeting. Especially, welcoming can replace greeting in some ESRCs. According to the statistics in table 4.1, welcoming accounts for about 71% which occurs frequently in ESRCs. The ways the speaker say *welcome* are diverse as follows:

(9) *The faculty and staff of UM- Dearborn extend our sincere welcome to you!* [55]

(10) *Welcome to an extraordinary university at an extraordinary time in our almost 250- year history.*[56]

(11) *...welcome to Stanford University.* [80]

(12) *And, for those of us already here, let me congratulate you for your wisdom and heart in warmly welcoming these newest additions to our Illinois College family!* [83]

The act welcoming can be also used to announce the listeners the name of the school the speaker wants to introduce.

### **Declaring:**

In this part, the speaker gives the information of how long the school has been established. Normally, the speaker introduces the duration of the history of the school attaching with welcoming part as well as marking the start of a new academic year. This part consists of 40 instances, equivalent to 45%.

(13) *This is the 147<sup>th</sup> time our university has gathered to mark the start of a new academic year, meaning you are part of a long and proud tradition of academic excellence.* [77]

(14) *... it is my great pleasure to declare the two- hundred- and -forty-ninth [249<sup>th</sup> ] academic year of Brown University.* [78]

(15)...*It marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Linfield College,....*[73]

(16) *...can you believe it is two hundred-forty-three year since our founding? And we are here today to celebrate another new beginning to a never-ending story.* [63]

#### **4.1.2 Body section**

The body of these speeches are concerned with the ideas that are stated in the opening part as well as give the clearer and farther information about the school, faculty, students... In particular, based on the results after analyzing these speeches, it can be seen that the body section mainly contains the following contents: introducing news students; messages or advice to students; the introduction of colleges or universities; the achievements or the development history of universties or colleges; challenges or difficulties to the coming years.

Introducing and welcoming new students and their parents appears with the rather high frequency of 23 instances ( 51%) in the body section. Here are some examples:

(17) “ *Now let me tell you about our new students. Students, you were selected for admission from the largest applicant pool in the history of the University. You follow in the footsteps of thousands of graduates of the University who attribute their success in large measure to Western New England Univerisity.... You number about 920-first-year students and transfer students. You have come from 842 public and private high schools with graduating classes ranging from about 30 to 965...*” [69]

Besides, it can be seen that the occurrence of messages or advice to students is composed of the highest percent ( 60 %) in the body section. Clearly, the examples below will illustrate this.

(18) .... *My remarks today are about choices. Choices are important. Our choices shape us...*” [40]

(19) “ *Sustainability is one of the themes of convocation this year. As a land-grant university, UC Davis personfies “ sustainability”...*” [48]

In addition, the introduction of the school mainly appears in the body section with 33,3%. Here, the speaker wants to emphasize the history and development of universities and colleges. Furthermore, introduction of faculties, organizations or leading professors are also mentioned. See the folowing examples:

(20) “ *We also want to honor others among our faculty for outstanding teaching, research and service. Justin Edmondson, president of the Alumni Association, will help make our next*

*presentation. Each year the Alumni Association recognizes an outstanding teacher with its Teaching Award of Honor...*

*We also are honoring two faculty members this morning for their scholarly and creative activity. Both have made significant contributions to their disciplines and to society in general, as well as to their students' classroom experience..." [59]*

Probably, the percentage of the achievements or challenges of universities and colleges composes of the two smallest proportion in all. They appear with the frequency respectively 26% and 15%. Let have a look at these following examples:

(21) *"Now, I would like to turn to the challenges ahead of us. Despite our successes I cited earlier, give the conditional decline in State support, we cannot continue to provide the quality education and services that our students deserve. The disinvestment in the CSU by the legislature has required significant reductions in our budget over the last seven years. The result is that our funding today is approximately 35% less in State support than we received in 1998. These continual reductions have significantly impeded our ability to provide the quality of instruction and the necessary student support services that are critical and essential to our students' success. The bottom line is that based upon the cuts we have absorbed over the last four years, we have made significant compromises. In some cases, our excellent programs have become- or are on the*

*verge of becoming- merely good programs; good programs are threatened to become simple adequate.” [39]*

In short, the body of ESRCs has different features compared with other kinds of speeches. The speaker aims at giving the audiences the information mainly about the universities or colleges such as introducing schools, students, faculties or telling achievements, challenges or history these schools.

#### **4.1.3 Conclusion Section**

The conclusion section is the final part in a the speech. It should be somewhat short and needs to accomplish the purpose: give the speech a sense of closure and completion. The main contents of the body section in ESRCs generally are declaring the new academic year, wishing all students, giving hopes to audiences and thanking.

With the content of declaration, the percent of the ESRCs containing them is the less with 8 instances(17%). Let consider the following examples:

*(22) It is, therefore, with great pleasure that on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2009, I declare Whitman College officially open for the 127<sup>th</sup> academic year! [66]*

Besides, there are also wishes that the speaker give to the students in the coming year. It seems that wishes and hopes go together in ESRCs. We can see clearly in the following examples:

*(23) Thank you, and may your time here at the College of William and Mary be rewarding, successful and enjoyable as you are*

*about to embark on one of the most important and fulfilling experiences of your lives [47]*

64% of the content have the act of thanking which thank the audience for taking part in the ceremony. In general, the thanking part is usually very short, just a phrase such as *thank you* or *thank you for coming*.

## **4.2 LEXICAL CHOICES AND SYNTACTIC FEATURES IN SECTIONS IN ESRCs**

### **4.2.1 Lexical Choices in ESRCs**

*a. Lexical Choices in Introduction section.*

*b. Lexical Choices in Body section*

*c. Lexical Choices in Conclusion section*

### **4.2.2 Syntactic Features in ESRCs**

Types of sentences used in ESRCs

<b>Types of sentences</b>	Simple sentences	Complex sentences	Compound sentences	Compound-complex sentences
<b>Occurrence</b>	1352	3198	676	544
<b>Rate</b>	23%	55%	11%	11 %

## **4.3 SYNTACTIC FEATURES IN ESRCs**

## **4.4 COHESIVE DEVICES IN ESRCs**

### **4.4.1 Grammatical Cohesive in ESRCs**

*a. Reference in ESRCs.*

### *a. Conjunction in ESRCs*

#### **4.4.2 Lexical Cohesion in ESRCs**

## **4.5 STYLISTIC DEVICES**

### **4.5.1 Rhetorical Questions in ESRCs**

To engage the audience's attention, a rhetorical question is commonly asked by a speaker, but no answer is expected from the audience. The rhetorical questions can be used in variety of purposes. For example, the most popular use of a rhetorical question is to engage the audience to think when they are may passively listen and absorb little. The other uses are inviting the audience to agree with the speaker by asking a rhetorical question, stir audience emotions, emphasize a previous statement and invoke misdirection. For example:

(24) *So, how does it come together? How do **we** strategically plan while not locking in our creativity in adapting to changing circumstances?* [43]

### **4.5.2 Quotation in ESRCs**

When the speaker wants to emphasize something important or illustrate points of view, he has intention of using quotation. Although quotation is used with a variety of purposes, the speaker aims at making his statements more convincible. The quotation can be a simple sentence, a complex sentence, a compound sentence or a paragraph. Here is an example:

(25) *Publisher Malcolm Forbes once said, “ Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one”. [74]*

### **4.5.3 Repetition in ESRCs**

In general, repetition is one of the stylistic devices employed most in ESRCs in order to help the listeners or the readers to remember the idea easily. In addition, repetition is also a major rhetorical strategy for producing emphasis, amplification, or emotional effect so it is an effective way to attract readers. There are many ways of repetition such as repetition of words and repetition of structures.

#### ***a. Repetition of words***

Repetition of words or anaphora means the deliberate repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of several successive clauses, sentences or paragraphs. For example:

(26) *Life is not a noun. Life is a verb. Life is being a state of ever changing action and activity, the emergence of you occurs along the way. Life is process- doing and being- boday and spirit. Life is verb. Look around, a room full of verbs. [43]*

#### ***b. Repetition of structures***

Repetition of structures is more various than that of words, which is illustrated in a variety of structures. However, it depends on each structure so that the speaker wants to have a much more effect on what he is saying. There are some structures that are commonly used with repetition as follows:

**S +V + TO-V +O**

(88) *They want to challenge you. They want to teach you. They want to inspire your minds and , and your imaginations. They want to help you understand that you are capable of more than even you think or know possible.* [62]

**INVERSION WILL+ S...**

(27) *Never again in your life will you have the chance to learn from and with such people every day. Never again will such resources be so near. Never again will great visiting speakers and performers be yours to enjoy day in and day out practically at our doorstep.* [62]

**V + O**

(90) *Exercise your curiosity; develop your compassion; and broaden your strategies for discovery.*[54]

**EACH S + V**

(28) *Each college has a story. Each student has a story* [43]

**THE MORE S V THE MORE S V**

(29) *In deed, the more you engage, the more you may find yourself disappointed.* [44]

**S + V HOW TO, HOW TO...**

(30) *We are debating how to ensure your abilities in writing, how to assess so as to ensure and our continued improvements while to invest in the finest faculty in academic areas the future requires*

*and how to maintain strong departments while ensuring that our disciplinary expertise strengthens rather than constricts us. [45]*

### **IT MEANS + V-ING**

*(31) It means opening your eyes to the society you see around you; it means having compassion for the other people in your community; it means recognizing that action produces results, and inaction produces nothing. [55]*

#### **4.5.4 Alliteration in ESRCs**

Alliteration occurs when the initial sounds of a word, beginning either with a consonant or a vowel, are repeated in close succession. In fact, alliteration has the function of connecting a number of words or making the speeches smoother and easier to go into the hearts of the audience. In addition, it is used to unite words or concepts through a kind of repetition. For example:

*(32) Clearly, his **artistic and academic accomplishments** are significant. [41]*

#### **4.5.5 Antithesis in ESRCs**

Antithesis is a great way to lead into exactly how the speaker wants to portray an idea or argument. As a result, antithesis emphasises the contrast between two ideas. The structure of the phrases or clauses is usually similar in order to draw the reader's or listener's attention directly to the contrast.

Here are an example:

(33) *Second, we need to move – promptly but thoughtfully – toward what others have called “ a new normal ”.* [46]

#### **4.6 SUMMARY**

The study gives an overall look into the discourse features such as layout features, lexical features, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices used in ESRCs

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

This chapter presents the summary of findings from the data analysis and implications to the English teaching and learning concerning the manipulation of language in comprehending and texture of English speeches delivered by rectors at the new academic year ceremonies of colleges and universities.

#### **5.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The result of the analysis of samples of English speeches delivered by rectors at the new academic year ceremonies of colleges and universities enables these following remarks.

Regarding the aspect of layout features in ESRCs, there are three main parts: Introduction Section, Body Section and Conclusion Section.

The Introduction Section contains some following sub-sections: greetings, the speaker's emotion, welcoming and declaring a new academic year. Although the orders of these contents in this section can be interchangeable, this order usually appears in most of ESRCs. Noticably, the content which occurs with the highest frequency is welcoming the new students as well as the audiences. The rest contents occur less regularly.

As for the Body Section, there are noun phrases used as transitional signals to let the audiences know which advice or messages are transmitted. Furthermore, the mottos or sentences quoted from the books or the scholars are chosen to highlight the messages. While in other parts, there are a variety of lexical choices and syntactic features used in the Body Section such as simple

sentences, complex sentences or compound sentences. In addition, the simple present and simple future tenses are used more than other tenses. This section is the longest in the three sections, so it contains the most complicated features in all.

As for the Conclusion Section, the choices of words and structures are a little different from the Introduction Section. In wishing and hoping parts, there are some positive adjectives like *good, best, productive, successful...* And the tense often used is the simple future that expresses something positive happening in the future.

Regarding the aspect of cohesive devices, grammatical device and lexical device are mentioned as two basic ways of making ESRCs coherent and cohesive. With the grammatical cohesive, reference, and conjunction are studied because their frequency is rather high. The use of personal composes of the highest frequency (72%) while the use of demonstrative and comparative is made up of 25 % and 1% respectively. While four categories of conjunction (Additive, Adversative, Causal and Temporal) are often used to link the ideas, thoughts and information together. With regard to lexical cohesion, the use of repetition takes up a very high level (37 %), followed by synonym with 25,8% , general words with 20,2% and, lastly super-ordinate with 16 %.

Finally, five sub-types of stylistic devices such as rhetorical questions, quotation, repetition, alliteration and antithesis are mentioned. Among of these devices, rhetorical questions are used the most commonly in most of the ESRCs. In rhetorical questions, there are two smaller types which are used to illustrate the information of the speaker. That is yes - no question and wh- question. Similarly,

repetition also has two categories such as repetition of words and repetition of structures. However, each type has its own function in making speeches smoother and easier for the audience remember what the speaker intends to say.

## **5.2 IMPLICATIONS**

This thesis is carried out with the hope that it will make a benefit for writing successful, suitable speeches, especially English speeches delivered by rectors at the new academic year ceremonies of colleges and universities but also contribute to a small part to the field of teaching and learning English to Vietnamese teachers and learners.

### **To the teachers**

This thesis will be a very useful resource for teaching English to Vietnamese learners. Hopefully, the result of this research will partly provide the teachers with basic knowledge of discourse analysis, especially the discourse features of ESRCs. In more detail, the findings after data analysis will supply some features of general layouts and thus will help teachers a lot in giving students some tips in writing a speech well and effectively. In addition, these findings are also great help in teaching students how to cohesive devices as well as stylistic devices in order to make their presentation in a logical and smooth way.

### **To the learners**

Similarly, this thesis also provides learners some discourse features namely: layout, lexical and syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices. Therefore, as English students, we should focus on these features to make a unified and logical speech, and little by little apply linguistic features to produce a successful

presentation. And above all, studying language is not only mastering how vocabulary or grammar work but also finding how the language work naturally and suitably.

In conclusion, the findings of this study have number of important implications for future practice of English and thus obviously contribute to the improvement in using English by Vietnamese users.

### **5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

This thesis is an attempt to make a detailed analysis of the discourse features of ESRCs in terms of their layout, lexical choices, syntactic features, cohesive devices and stylistic devices. However, within the limitation of time as well as reference materials, a full investigation cannot be done. For the sake of making further investigation into the field of ESRCs, I would like to offer some suggestions for further research:

1. An investigation into speech acts in this kind of speech in English and in Vietnamese.
2. An investigation into the thematisation of ESRCs.
3. An investigation into the argumentation of ESRCs.

This thesis has been completed with my greatest effort and to the best of my knowledge and understanding. However, shortcomings and inadequacies are inevitable. I sincerely hope to receive constructive as well as insightful comments from the teachers, friends and those who are concerned about the field.