

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO EXPRESSIONS  
DENOTING COMMENTS IN ENGLISH  
AND VIETNAMESE IN TERMS OF  
INTERPERSONAL MEANINGS**

**Field : THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 RATIONALE

Communication is an interactive process by means of language. In daily conversations, people use many ways of communication. In daily speaking, they are direct ways and indirect ways. Since communication is available to exist among people, it is inevitable influenced by interlocutors. Therefore, it is very important to pay much attention to how language makes meanings in spoken and written language in terms of grammar and meanings.

For example, in the following situation:

A: What does Sarah like?

B: She likes classical music. (1)

C: In my opinion, Sarah likes classical music. (2)

D: It seems to me that Sarah likes classical music. (3)

In (1), it is just a declarative answer that Sarah likes classical music.

In (2), this sentence contains “In my opinion” and in (3) contains “it seems to me that”. Those refer to comments on what Sarah likes is classical music but in different degrees.

The relationship between the responses is the involvement of the speaker/the questioner and the hearer/ the answer.

Nowadays, when linguists notice the roles and functions of language in communication, interpersonal meanings become an issue of linguistic studies. When someone utters an utterance, he/she makes significant acts on both society and the state of the world.

**“An Investigation into Expressions Denoting Comments in English and Vietnamese in Terms of Interpersonal Meanings”** is chosen as my research paper.

## **1.2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1.2.1 Aims of the study**

Investigating expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings. Make implications to teaching and learning English as a foreign language and Vietnamese for non-native speakers.

### **1.2.2 Objectives of the study**

To achieve this aim, the following objectives are set:

- Analyzing the situations which expressions denotes comments
- Identifying the aims of using these expressions
- Identifying syntactic features of these expressions
- Identifying the semantic features of these expressions
- Identifying the pragmatic features of these expressions
- Identifying interpersonal meanings expressed in expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese
- Finding out some implications of interpersonal meanings from expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese.

## **1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study is focused on syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings. In addition, we hope to find out the similarities and differences in linguistic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese.

The study has been placed on sources such as American political speeches and Vietnamese speeches.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In other to solve the problem found in the research paper, I try to find out the answer to the following questions:

1. What are syntactic, semantic and pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings?
2. What are the similarities and differences in linguistic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese?

## **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

A study of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings will contribute to the present knowledge of the field and the findings of the study will contribute to the learning and teaching English as well as to the contrastive analysis between the expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese.

The investigation of the study based on the view of Halliday's functional grammar will certainly bring an outlook and a way of using expressions denoting comments abundently.

## **1.6 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**

The thesis consists of five chapters:

Chapter 1: **Introduction.**

Chapter 2: **Literature Review and Theoretical Review**

Chapter 3: **Methods and Procedures**

Chapter 4: **Findings and Discussion**

Chapter 5: **Conclusion and Implications**

## **CHAPTER 2**

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

#### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

In terms of interpersonal meanings, Halliday (2004) suggests that it is a social interaction between two people ("I" and "you"); the focus here is on the participants.

Egins. (2004). An introduction to systemic functional linguistics, found that the link between language systems and the choice made by the speaker in the exchange: the extent of their intimacy, their level of familiarity with each other and their attitudes and judgments.

In Vietnamese, there are many linguists researching linguistics concerning to interpersonal meanings such as Đỗ Hữu Châu, Cao Xuân Hạo and others.

In “*Tiếng Việt sơ thảo ngữ pháp chức năng*” (2006) Cao Xuân Hạo do not mention directly interpersonal meanings but he described speech acts and modality in the first part of the book as an important part of interpersonal meanings.

In “*Đại Cương Ngôn Ngữ Học*”, volume 2, *Ngữ dụng học*” (2007), Đỗ Hữu Châu also considers speech acts, allocution and interaction as important parts of interpersonal meanings.

In “*An Investigation into Interpersonal Theme in English and Vietnamese Political Speeches*” (2007), Master thesis, the University of Danang (Ngô Thị Thanh Mai). The findings of the thesis are the similarities and differences of using interpersonal theme of political speeches of the two languages.

In “An Investigation into Linguistic Features of Interpersonal Metaphor in English and Vietnamese Equivalents” (2009), Master thesis, the University of Danang (Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hương). She presents the linguistics features of interpersonal metaphors in English and Vietnamese – describes and contrasts the problem expressions in the two languages.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.2.1 Definitions and classifications**

Expressions denoting comments are words or phrases used to express opinions or ideas. This is the way how to use words to express agreement, disagreement, analysis, relationship, etc.

### **2.2.2 Mood system**

The mood system belongs to the interpersonal metafunction of language. The system of mood governs the basic structural features of the sentence - whether the sentence chooses between declarative, interrogative or imperative forms.

The mood system is thus the part of grammar which is most inherently linked with the roles which speakers adopt in the use of language. The Subject, Finite, and modal adjuncts all come under the mood block. All other elements come under *residue*.

### **2.2.3 Modality system**

Modality may be defined as the way in which the meaning of a proposition is modified as to reflect the speaker's/ subject's attitude towards the likelihood of the proposition content being or becoming true.

### **2.2.4 Speech acts**

Speech acts are acts of communication. Communication is to express a certain attitude, and the type of speech act being performed

corresponds to the type of attitude being expressed. For example, a statement expresses a belief, a request expresses a desire, and an apology expresses a regret. As an act of communication, a speech act succeeds if the audience identifies, in accordance with the speaker's intention, the attitude being expressed.

### **2.2.5 Conversation theory**

Conversation theory is presented by many linguists. Among these are famous linguists such as Gordon Pask, Paul Grice, Lakoff, etc.

### **2.2.6 Halliday's metafunctions of language**

#### ***a. Interpersonal meanings***

Interpersonal meanings are the interactivity of the language or the relationships between the speaker and the hearer of using language. Interpersonal meanings express the role of relationships associated with the situation.

Besides representing the context as they experience it, speakers of a language enact their roles as participants in the context, as they interact with each other.

#### ***b. Texture meanings***

Texture meanings deal with the ways in which the users of language can bring the language into text or how we can see it as using language to bring texts into being.

#### ***c. Ideational meanings***

Ideational meanings are concerned with how the language expresses the interlocutor's experience: how we talk about things, events, feelings, thoughts, and so on. It reflects the reality, the experience of the state of the world to what the interlocutor thinks and experiences.

## **2.3 SUMMARY**

To sum up, we have reviewed an overview of some notions associated with interpersonal meaning and approaches to interpersonal meaning. Along with the theories related to metafunctions of languages in general and interpersonal meaning in particular. We also present some previous studies related to the research paper as a source of useful references

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

#### **3.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

##### **3.1.1 Aims**

##### **3.1.2 Objectives**

#### **3.2 Research design**

The study is carried through the qualitative approaches. The research is planned to carry out the following things such as:

Providing a review of the studies related to the research topic.

Describing and analyzing the collected data for finding out the syntactic, semantic, pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments in order to find out interpersonal meanings expressed in these expressions.

Drawing conclusions and some implications of expressions denoting comments in terms of interpersonal meanings in daily conversations.

#### **3.3 Research methodology**

Firstly, collected data consisting of expressions denoting comments in the two languages based on official websites of Vietnam and America.

Secondly, applied Halliday's approaches to analyze the samples in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings.

Thirdly, contrasted and compared the issue involving in two languages English and Vietnamese.

These methods help to describe and demonstrate linguistic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese equivalents. A contrastive analysis was chosen to find out the differences and similarities of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese. In the process of studying the research, English is considered as the source language and Vietnamese as the target language.

In the study, expressions denoting comments were presented, described and classified together with their Vietnamese equivalents. The analysis was made and the differences and similarities were classified by examples taken mainly from political speeches. The findings of the study will have many contributions to teaching and learning English in Vietnam. Some problems of learning English are presented and some teaching and learning implications are mentioned in the hope that learners can deal with these problem easily.

### **3.4 SUMMARY**

Apart from making the paper design, pointing out the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methods for the study, I present the whole procedures that I use in my paper research

Firstly, the study is carried out through qualitative and quantitative approaches. These approaches are crucial to the aims and the objectives of the study. In this investigation, the qualitative approach is used in most of the stages of the study. Otherwise, the quantitative approach is used to get to know how interpersonal meaning functions in expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese.

Secondly, the data analysis is chosen to describe, analyse and contrast data from political speeches or daily speeches from official websites as the only method of the study.

Finally, the research subject as well as the procedures of the study is clearly mentioned according to a proper direction. And in the hope of making an investigation into expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning, this chapter has clarified the careful and reasonable preparation for the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 THE SEMANTIC, SYNTACTIC, AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF EXPRESSIONS DENOTING COMMENTS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE**

##### **4.1.1 The Semantic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese**

Every lexicogrammatical system realizes some systemic features. For example, the grammatical system of MOOD realizes the semantic system of speech function [proposition/proposal]. In an utterance, there are three levels of meanings: expression meaning, utterance meaning, and communicative meaning. It is inevitable to investigate semantic features under literal and non-literal meaning to see how context affects on meanings. And mood adjuncts take a very important role in making meaning in propositions.

##### **4.1.2 The Syntactic Features of Expressions Denoting Comments in English and Vietnamese**

We use language to *enact* our personal and social relationships (the *interpersonal metafunction*), to *construe* our experience and our consciousness (the *experiential metafunction*), to organise discourse and create continuity and flow in our texts (the *textual metafunction*) (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Each function has its own role in texts or in making meanings corresponding with their functions.

This part of the study is carried out under functional grammar of Hallyday's metafunctions.

##### **4.1.3 The Pragmatic Features of Expressions Denoting Comments in English and Vietnamese**

***a. Locutionary Acts in English and Vietnamese***

***b. Illocutionary Acts in English and Vietnamese***

***c. Perlocutionary Acts in English and Vietnamese***

In this section, we will examine how locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act express their pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments. Locutionary acts are acts of utilizing elements of language such as word, phonology, combinations of words and sentences, etc., to create an utterance in form and content. It is also an act of uttering a sentence with a certain sense and reference, which is roughly equivalent to ‘meaning’ in the traditional sense.

The illocutionary act is closely connected with speaker’s intentions, such as accosting, accusing, admitting, apologizing, challenging, complaining, condoling, congratulating, declining, deploring, giving permission, giving way, greeting, leave-taking, mocking, naming, offering, proposing marriage, promising, protesting, recommending, surrendering, thanking, toasting, stating, questioning, , requesting, giving commands, threatening and many others. Do Huu Chau [36, p.90] quoted as Ducrot, clearly explained illocutionary acts.

In sum, expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese are examined carefully under linguistic features that express the meanings of an utterance, syntactic features of expressions and pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments.

## **4.2 MODAL AUXILIARIES AND OTHER AREAS OF MODALITY UNDER SEMANTIC VIEWS**

### **4.2.1 Modal Auxiliaries**

- *Modal Auxiliaries Of Likelihood*
- *Deductions And Predictions*
- *Likelihood Based On Conditions*

- *Teaching Conditionals*
- *Modal Adjuncts*
- *Personal Judgment Of Likelihood*
- *Impersonal Judgments Of Likelihood*
- *Modal Auxiliaries Of Requirement*

#### **4.2.2 Other areas of modality**

The areas of *frequency, inclination, potentially, and ability* can be regarded as kinds of modality.

### **4.3 THE INTERPERSONAL CONTEXT OF COMMENTS UNDER PRAGMATIC VIEWS**

Speaker's intentions and hearer's inference which belongs to the interpersonal context take an important role in examining expressions denoting comments. According to Nick Riemner [29], "*Austin did not believe that illocutionary acts were accompanied by any predictable grammatical or lexical markers. Both he and Searle did, however, believe that the making and understanding of speech acts are governed by social conventions*" but he supposed that it was difficult to point out what this convention was behind the speech acts. He pointed out that the conventions governing statements seem inadequate: we often state things for which we do not have evidence.

### **4.4 THE INTERPERSONAL METAPHOR DENOTING COMMENTS UNDER PRAGMATIC VIEWS**

Modality, in English, is also considered as an aspect of interpersonal metaphor based on the semantic relation of projection. In this kind of metaphor, the speaker's opinion is relevant to *ability/ possibility*. It is necessary to concentrate on the metaphorical aspects of subjectives and objectives.

Subjective features and objective features which belong to interpersonal metaphor concerning with interpersonal meaning aspect. These two sides make it lively and abundant in expressing meaning in utterances, especially in expressions denoting comments

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

As we have discussed and analysed in this chapter, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features of expressions denoting comments in English and Vietnamese are really different in some ways in terms of interpersonal meaning. We also discussed an important part involved: grammatical metaphor about comments. It is really difficult for us to understand perfectly and Vietnamese learners who are learning English as a foreign language in this matter. For that reason, I have paid much attention to them in the hope that it is useful for English language teaching and learning. In this chapter, for example, I would like to refer to all kinds of features of expressions denoting comment in terms of interpersonal meaning, which concern with many aspects of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features. Take for instance, pragmatic feature, I am interested in their speech acts which contains locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and also speaker's intention of utterance meanings. However, it is extremely for me to master the semantic features of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning without analyzing different factors in their syntax. Because of this, I have to pay much attention to syntactic features of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese. In this part, I would like to give examples, illustrations and tables to explain and make a conclusion to the problem which I am concerned about.

Besides, I have spent a lot of time to collect and select documents and sample research carefully from many speeches of American and Vietnamese politicians before analyzing each problem. This is not a perfect thesis, but I think, in my opinion, the fundamental problems are solved in the thesis. For example, in this chapter, I try to provide and explain all the main points of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Each language has its own functions and duties in communicative purposes. This leads to the differences and similarities between the two languages. But I try my best to put them in the order for my investigation and findings:

Firstly, I present the semantic features of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Secondly, the presentation of syntactic features of expressions denoting comment is carried out to compare the differences and similarities in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Thirdly, I pay much attention to the pragmatic features of expressions denoting comment in the roles of speech acts to find out utterance meaning in these expressions.

Moreover, interpersonal meaning of expressions denoting comment concerns with interpersonal context explained carefully in this chapter to find out speaker's intentions and hearer's inference that is important to deal with interpersonal meaning.

And interpersonal metaphor is considered under another angle as subjective and objective features in the hope that it can contribute to

the liveliness and abundance of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese.

Finally, I hope that in this chapter “Discussions and Findings”, I can contribute to the readers some more knowledge of interpersonal meaning in expressions denoting comment which is very important both in daily conversations and important speeches in English and Vietnamese.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION – IMPLICATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

In this study, I have paid much attention to collect data, classify, analyze and illustrate the main problems and concern with my thesis. My thesis is about an investigation into expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meaning consists of four chapters.

Chapter one is about the induction of the study, the scope of the study, the research questions and organization of the study.

Chapter two reviews the theoretical background and some previous studies in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Chapter three represents the methods and procedures of the thesis including aims and objectives.

Chapter four, the most important chapter in the thesis, is the discussions and findings of the study in the view of interpersonal meaning.

From the findings, we have investigated the linguistic features of expressions denoting comment in English and Vietnamese in terms of interpersonal meanings. We also investigate speech acts expressed in expressions denoting comments through locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Expressions denoting comments are also examined in the aspect of modal auxiliaries and other areas of modality. Besides, we also pay attention to the interpersonal context of comments to see how contexts affect on expressions denoting comments on meanings. And it is inevitable to

look at and investigate expressions denoting comments under the interpersonal metaphor aspect.

It is possible to conclude from the findings of the thesis that in order to make it clearly interpersonal meaning, it is inevitable to see it in many aspects of linguistics, not only just in functional grammar but is also in semantics and pragmatics. The interpersonal meaning is the interference of many linguistic subjects.

All the examples used in the study taken from a lot of speeches of American and Vietnamese politicians. In order to make it clearly interpersonal meanings in expressions denoting comments, I have concentrated on speech acts carefully by providing description of locutions, illocutions, and perlocutions, those are highly considered as a part of interpersonal meaning.

Furthermore, one more important point is that the speaker's intention is sometimes different from the hearer's intention, so it is carefully discussed to find out what is real behind the utterances denoting comments.

We have discussed the main points of the thesis in terms of interpersonal meaning in expressions denoting comments. Now we can infer from the thesis the difference and the similarity between the two languages.

Firstly, there are some differences.

In English, the system of English language is basically different from the system of Vietnamese language. In this study, we have investigated the syntactic structures to find out the relationship between the speaker and the hearer through the use of utterances denoting comments. It is specially represented in the mood structures in English and Vietnamese. They are different in some ways. For

examples, In Vietnamese, the syntactic structures of Vietnamese is different from the syntactic structures of English, and as a result, the mood structure in Vietnamese is different in English. Besides, the modality element in English is not the same as those in Vietnamese. English uses the intonation to express its semantic aspects while Vietnamese has tones to make it lively and diversified expressive.

We can also see that in mood structure of English, a clause consists of Subject and Finite while there is no finite in Vietnamese. Vietnamese uses other modality devices to express '*finite*'.

Secondly, there are some similarities between the two languages.

Although there are some differences in syntactic structures, there are also some similarities in semantics and pragmatics between the two languages. The study investigates the meaning of utterances in terms of interpersonal meaning to infer the speaker's intention and the hearer's inference. They are sometimes difference but there are some common points. The problem is that communicative purposes. In English and Vietnamese, the speaker performs the speech acts which are inherent in the utterance or intent to carry out. In each type of speech act, it always involves one or more communicative purposes. And in each type of communicative purpose, it also contains high, mid or low degree of utterances. This is discussed in chapter four carefully to see how the speaker performs speech acts in context.

In short, although there are some differences and similarities between the two languages, they share the common purpose of communication. They introduce and intend to the audiences the ways how to make comment successfully and efficiently in a discourse. Being aware of this matter, we can have our own ways to achieve and master both languages. As a result, we can obtain a suitable

procedure in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language and cognize the beauty of own native language.

## **5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

The thesis is concerned with the broad field in which I have to investigate expressions denoting comments in terms of interpersonal meaning.

Firstly, owing to a limited of time and resources of materials relating to the problem under unvestigation, there are some unavoidable weaknesses in this study such as the shortage of examples for linguistic features in terms of interpersonal meaning which I have spent a lot of time to collect from political speeches.

Secondly, being less personal experience of knowledge of functional grammar, the study was not focused deeply and thoroughly into semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features although I have spent a lot of time trying to find out their linguistic features.

Finally, it should be better to study more in cultural view between the two languages to find out inter-cultural and cross-cultural aspects.

## **5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

As we have studied in the thesis, expressions denoting comments are very abundant and diversified in the way they are expressed. They are also important in daily conversations and speeches which are used often not only in formal conversations but also in informal conversations.

Many professionals - diplomats, agency representatives, and business people, teachers, students, have to take part in meetings, which are conducted in English. The language of such meetings follows definite patterns, even if the users of English use their English good, not all

the language of meetings is obvious. There are a lot of useful phrases which are used in different situations which arise during such a meeting. There is also a certain amount of special vocabulary and a long list of standard phrases.

In classroom teaching and learning of these phrases, it should be better if the learners learn how to use these kinds of expressions in order to better their ways of expressing opinions and ideas in any talk or conversation. There are many kinds of situations in which the speaker should use appropriate expressions to make his speech more attractive and meaningful. This will help them to convey information effectively and control the flow of given and new information in developing the argument in a discourse such as opening an argument or a discussion in a meeting or simply in a school yard. It is very helpful if the speech is prepared carefully with full information and is presented reasonably. Besides, when the teacher shows the learners how to arrange old and new information in a conversation or writings, the learners have gained a powerful tool for arranging and deploying the meanings of the writings or a speech.

Moreover, the teachers must really understand the semantics and pragmatics of the two languages English and Vietnamese and the cultural aspects when using and teaching these kinds of expressions.

Furthermore, the teachers should know the differences and similarities between the two languages in expressions denoting comments to have a comparison to find out the easiest ways to use these kinds of expressions before applying to teach the learners. The teachers should conduct students to learn these kinds of expressions in topics and apply them in real situations in which they can be full used appropriately.

The learners should pay much attention to the usage of expressions denoting comments in order to apply and deploy them both in communication and in making important speeches or lectures in front of the crowd. This would help the users of language be confidently and attract the audiences through the arranging and expressing opinions or ideas. On the other hand, before studying a certain kind of expression, the learners should think of the language they intend to use during a meeting or a speech to achieve objectives relying on the language they already know, do not write these expressions into the book but make a note of them on a piece of paper, practice using these expressions alone or with other learners. The focus is that try to pay attention to the language needed for a particular part of a speech or a meeting effectively.

Experience has shown that it is often easier to remember expressions denoting comments if they are practised in a light-hearted relaxed, and concentrate on the language of meetings, rather than the content of what is being said.

In conclusion, my thesis “An Investigation into Expressions denoting Comments in English and Vietnamese in terms of Interpersonal Meaning” is aimed at giving some opinions, examples, illustration in English and Vietnamese in the hope that it can be a helpful idea for further studies in the future to better the issue raised in this matter.

#### **5.4 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

In this research, we have just completed the analysis of investigation into expressions denoting comments in terms of interpersonal meaning, in which the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic features are found out to see how interpersonal meaning functions in such expressions. We try to point out the differences and

similarities between the two languages in these expressions denoting comments to bring back a fundamental look on this matter. But due to the limited of time ad the lack of reference and resources, there are some other aspects that have not been dealt with in this study. It should be taken into consideration for further researches the following points:

The first, expressions denoting comments under social and cultural views should be studied to find out the relation between the two languages of culture.

The second, the further researches should deal with discourse analysis to find out more aspects of interpersonal meaning and the roles of the speaker and the hearer in a discourse context.