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RESEARCH

“BÁNH TRÔI NƯỚC” AND THREE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF TRANSLATION: A SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL COMPARISON

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Abstract: This paper is concerned with a comparison of the three English versions of translation: “The Floating Cake” translated by John Balaban, “The Cake That Drifts In Water” translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông and “Floating Sweet Dumpling” translated by Marilyn Chin with the source poem “Bánh trôi nước” by the Vietnamese renowned poetess Hồ Xuân Hương. The theoretical framework employed for analysis and comparison of the texts is systemic functional linguistics. The results show that there are both similarities and differences between the translated versions and the source poem, and between the translated versions in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings. The results also indicate that there are more differences in lexical choice (the choice of words and groups/phrases) than in syntactic choice (the choice of transitivity, mood, and thematic patterns) between the three translated versions and the original poem, and between the three translated versions.

Keywords: systemic functional linguistics, context, text, ideational metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, textual metafunction, source poem, translated versions

1. Introduction

In this paper, an attempt is made to compare three English versions of translation: “The Floating Cake” translated by John Balaban, “The Cake That Drifts In Water” translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông, and “Floating Sweet Dumpling” by translated by Marilyn Chin with the Vietnamese source poem “Bánh trôi nước” written by Hồ Xuân Hương. The theoretical framework employed for analysis and comparison of the texts is systemic functional linguistics. There are various reasons for choosing this topic, but four seem to be prominent. First,

both the source poem and the translated versions are short (each consists of five lines including the title). Secondly, the source poem is written by Hồ Xuân Hương – one of the most popular poets in Vietnam who is so renowned for her poetic skills that she is considered by the Vietnamese “bà chúa thơ Nôm” (the Princess of Vietnamese folk poetry). Thirdly, the poem is translated into English by three famous translators: John Balaban, an American poet, who is “twice a National Book Award finalist for his own poetry and is one of the preeminent American authorities on Vietnamese literature” (<https://www.amazon.com/Spring-Essence-Poetry-Xu%C3%A2n-Huong/dp/1556591489>), Huỳnh Sanh Thông, a Vietnamese-born American Yale scholar who is famous for his

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translation of *Truyện Kiều* (The Tale of Kieu) from Vietnamese into English, and Marilyn Chin, also a famous American poetess. And fourthly, the source poem is written in a folk style; it is not difficult to uncover its meaning through linguistic analysis. So the choice of this topic is perfect for “comparing the various translations done of the same original text by different translators into a single TL (target language) in order to systematize and objectify the teaching of translation” (Wilss, 1982: 28). The paper will fall into five parts. Following Part 1 – Introduction, Part 2 states the aim of the study and raises research questions for the study. Part 3 provides an overview of systemic functional linguistics, paying particular attention to those concepts of the model that are relevant to the analysis and comparison of the translated versions and the source poem. Part 4 deals with the design and methodology of the study in which I will present data collection, data analysis, and discuss and compare the results obtained from the analysis to establish the similarities and differences between the three translated versions and “Bánh trôi nước”, and between the three translated versions. Finally, Part 5 – Conclusion – summarizes the main points of the study, points out limitations of the study, and makes suggestions for further research.

2. Aim of the study and research questions

As stated, the overarching aim of this study is to make a comparison between the three English versions of translation and the original poem “Bánh trôi nước”, and between the three translated versions to establish the similarities and differences between them. To fulfil this aim, two questions are raised for exploration:

1. How are the source poem and the translated versions constructed in terms of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings?
2. To what extent are the translated versions

similar to and different from the source poem and to what extent are the translated versions similar to and different from one another in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings?

3. The theoretical framework

The theoretical framework adopted in this study is systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL is a model of language in context. It was originally developed by Halliday in the early 1960s. Since then the model has constantly evolved toward perfection and has been used as the theoretical framework for a great number of works in language description, discourse analysis, text generation, translation studies, dictionary compilation, etc. Accounts of the SF framework are now widely available in works by Halliday (1973, 1978, 1992, 1996), Matthiessen (1995), Halliday & Martin (1993), Halliday & Hasan (1985), Halliday & Matthiessen (1999), Matthiessen & Bateman (1991), Martin (1992), Burns (1990), Eggins (2004), Hoang (2001a, 2001b, 2005, 2012), Schleppegrell (2008), Hasan (2011), Hasan & Perrett (1994), Thompson (2004), Webster (2015), and many others. For the purpose of their study, however, each scholar approaches the model from a different perspective. As this paper is about a comparison of texts (a source poem and its three English versions of translation), I will try to be selective, relating my review of the SF model to those contents that appear to be relevant to its concern. To make the task manageable, I will begin by examining the notion of text. Then I will discuss the relationship between social context and functional organization of language. The review will end with a brief description of three strands of meaning (metafunctions) and their respective lexicogrammatical realizations as postulated in the SF model.

3.1. What is a text?

There are many ways to define a text/discourse (see Brown & Yule, 1983; Cook, 1989; Nunan, 1993; McCarthy, 2000; Hoang, 2005; Crystal, 2008; and many others), but in this paper, the definition by Halliday and Hasan will be adopted. In two of their seminal and most-cited books entitled *Cohesion in English* published by Longman in 1976 and *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in Social-semiotic Perspective* published by Deakin University Press in 1985, Halliday and Hasan conceptualize text as “any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole” (1976: 1); it is “language that is functional” – “language that is doing some job in some context” (1985: 10). They emphasize that a text is essentially a semantic unit (1985: 10) – a unit of language in use (1976: 1). It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a sentence (1976: 1), not something that can be defined as being just another kind

of sentence, only bigger (1985: 10). Halliday & Hasan (1985: 10) further state that a text is both an object in its own right (it may be a highly valued object, for example something that is recognized as a great poem) and an instance of social meaning in a particular context of situation. “It is an instance of the process and product of social meaning in a particular context of situation” (1985: 11). They suggest that there is a close relation between the text and the social context and that “If we treat both text and context as semiotic phenomena, as ‘modes of meaning’, we can get from one to the other in a revealing way” (1985: 11-2).

3.2. The relationship between social context and functional organization of language

Halliday (1991: 8) provides the best model for interpreting the relationship between the social context and the functional organization of language which is reproduced in Figure 1 below:

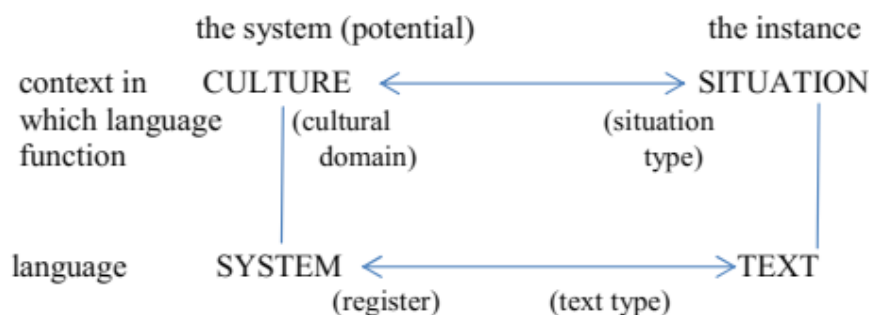


Figure 1. The relation between language and social context

* Notes: left – right: instantiation, top – bottom: realization

As Figure 1 shows, Halliday’s model consists of four constructs: (context of) CULTURE, (context of) SITUATION, (language) SYSTEM, and TEXT. According to Halliday (Ibid.), the context of culture is the context for meaning potential (for language as system), and the context of situation is the context for the particular instances (for

language as text). Halliday suggests that the relationship between context of culture and context of situation and that between language and text are that of instantiation: (context of) situation instantiates (context of) culture and text instantiates language. By contrast, the relationship between context of culture and language and that between context of situation

and text is that of realization: language realizes context of culture and text realizes context of situation. As this study is concerned mainly with the analysis and comparison of texts, it is useful to explore in some more detail the relationship between text and context of situation – the immediate environment in which the texts under study function.

It can be noted that although Figure 1 shows us the general realizational relationship between text and context of situation, it does not tell us “how to characterize a text in its relation to its social context”; neither does it show us “how to get from the context of situation to the text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1985: 12). To solve these problems, Halliday & Hasan (1985: 38) suggest we need to develop and incorporate into the general theory of SFL a “concept of a variety of languages, corresponding to a variety of situations”. The concept they propose is REGISTER – a conceptual framework of three headings: field of discourse, tenor of discourse, and mode of discourse. Halliday & Hasan then characterize these register dimensions as follows:

1. The field of discourse refers to what is happening, to the nature of the social action that is taking place: what is it that the participants are engaged in, in which the language figures as some essential components?
2. The tenor of discourse refers to who is taking part, to the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles: what kinds of role relationship obtain among the participants, including permanent and temporary relationships of one kind or another, both the types of speech role that they are taking on in the dialogue and the whole cluster of socially significant relationships in which they are involved?

3. The mode of discourse refers to what the language is playing, what it is that the participants are expecting the language to do for them in that situation: the symbolic organization of the text, the status that it has, and its function in the context, including the channel (is it spoken or written or some combination of the two?) and also the rhetorical mode, what is being achieved by the text in terms of such categories as persuasive, expository, didactic, and the like.

(Halliday & Hassan, 1985: 12)

3.3. Three strands of meaning and their lexicogrammatical realizations

Metafunction is a fundamental principle of language (Hoang, 2013). At the contextual level, the register (the context of situation) of a text can be analyzed in terms of the field of discourse, the tenor of discourse and the mode of discourse. At the linguistic level, a text can be analyzed respectively in terms of three metafunctions or strands of meaning realized through three respective lexicogrammatical structures: the ideational metafunction which comprises the experiential metafunction realized through the transitivity system and the logical metafunction realized through the expansion and projection systems, the interpersonal metafunction realized through the mood system, and the textual metafunction realized through the theme system. For analysis of the internal structure of the elements below the clause, some groups and phrases are also re-examined in this review.

3.3.1. The experiential metafunction and its realization through the transitivity system

The ideational metafunction is a general social function of language that we use to construe/represent reality in the linguistic system. It is a function of language

that expresses the 'reflective' as well as 'experiential' aspect of meaning through the system of transitivity. Transitivity refers to the different process (clause) types. Basically, there are three components in the process that provide the frame of reference of what goes on (Halliday, 1985: 101, 1994: 107). These are: the process itself, the participants in the process and the circumstances associated with the process. There are three main types of process: material, mental, and relational. In addition to these, there are three subtypes of process: behavioural, verbal, and existential.

Material process is the process of doing: action and event such as *kicking, striking, running, walking*. Related to the process itself, there may be one, two or even three participants. When a material process has one participant this role is referred to as **Actor** (one that does the deed) as in *He (Actor) was coming* (Process: material); when it has two participants, these roles are referred to respectively as **Actor** and **Goal** (one that is affected by the action) as in *I (Actor) shot (Process: material) an arrow (Goal) into the air (Circumstance)* (from "I Shot an Arrow into the Air" by Longfellow); and when it has three participants, these roles are referred to respectively as **Actor**, **Goal** and **Receiver** (one that benefits from the process) as in *He (Actor) gave (Process: material) a book (Goal) to her (Receiver)*. In terms of voice, like all other process types in the transitivity system, a material process can come in either the middle voice as in *The boy came in* or the effective voice as in *The boy kicked the ball*; it can also come in either the active voice as in *The boy kicked the ball* or the passive voice as in *The ball was kicked by the boy*.

Behavioural process is the process of physiological and psychological behaviour such as *breathing, crying, drinking*. Typical of

this type of process is that there is usually one participant referred to as **Behaver** (one who behaves) as in *She (Behaver) cried* (Process: Behavioural) *softly* (Circumstance), and this participant is always a conscious being, not a lifeless thing; e.g. *He laughed* but not *The tree laughed, The dog barked* but not *The door barked*, etc. However, when a behavioural process has two participants, these roles are referred to respectively as **Behaver** and **Range** (one that specifies the scope of the behavioural process) or **Phenomenon** (one that is behaved) as in *I (Behaver) breathed* (Process: behavioural) *a song (Range/Phenomenon) into the air (Circumstance)* (from "I Shot an Arrow into the Air" by Longfellow).

Mental process is the process of sensing such as *thinking, loving, wanting, hoping*. It consists of four main subtypes: cognitive (*thinking, knowing, realising*), perceptive (*hearing, sensing, feeling*), affective (*loving, hating, adoring, pampering*), and desiderative (*wanting, desiring, wishing*). In a mental process, there are usually two participants referred to respectively as **Senser** (one who senses, feels, thinks, or wants) and **Phenomenon** (one that is sensed, felt, thought of, or wanted) as in *The boy (Senser) loved (Process: mental) the girl (Phenomenon)*, and *I in I (Senser) heard (Process: mental) a noise (Phenomenon) from outside (Circumstance)*. Like the Behaver in a behavioural process, the Senser in a mental process is always a human being.

Verbal process is the process of saying such as *saying, telling, speaking, talking*. This type of process covers not only verbs of saying but any kind of symbolic exchange such as *showing, indicating*. Unlike behavioural and mental process, a verbal process may not require a conscious participant and it can contain one participant referred to as **Sayer** (one that puts out a signal) as in *He (Sayer)*

said (Process: saying) *loudly* (Circumstance); two participants referred to respectively, depending on each particular subtype of verbal process, as **Sayer** and **Target** (one that the verbalisation is directed to) as in *They* (Sayer) *told* (Process: verbal) *me* (Target) *so* (Circumstance), and **Sayer** and **Verbiage** (the name of the verbalisation itself) as in *He* (Sayer) *ordered* (Process: verbal) *two beers* (Verbiage); and even three participants referred to respectively as **Sayer**, **Target** and **Recipient** (one that benefits from the verbal process) as in *She* (Sayer) *spoke* (Process: verbal) *French* (Target) *to me* (Recipient).

Relational process is the processes of being, having, and being at. It comes under three subtypes: (i) the intensive as in *She's good* and *She's the teacher in charge*; (ii) the circumstantial as in *She is in the room*; and (iii) the possessive as in *She has a beautiful voice*. Like other process types which have the middle and effective voice, relational process comes under two modes: attributive (middle voice) and identifying (effective voice). When a relational process is in the attributive mode, it has one participant referred to as **Carrier** and the quality or the thing showing that the Carrier belongs to a class of things which is referred to as **Attribute** as in *She* (Carrier) *is* (Process: relational) *good* (Attribute), *My life* (Carrier) *is* (Process: relational) *like a red rose* (Attribute). The Carrier is realised by a nominal group and the Attribute is realised by an adjective or an indefinite nominal group. When a relational clause is in the identifying mode, it has two equating participants, one identifying the other, which are referred to respectively in two pairs of terms as **Identified/Identifier** and **Token/Value**; e.g. *He* (Identified/Token) *is* (Process: relational) *the best doctor* (Identifier/Value). Intensive process is the process which expresses being

in terms of 'x is a' as in *She is the teacher* and 'x is an instance of a' as in *She is a teacher*. Circumstantial process is the process which expresses being in terms of circumstantial elements such as time, place, distance, reason. The relation between the participant and its circumstantial element is that of **Carrier** and **Attribute**. Possessive process expresses being in terms of ownership, the relation between the two terms can be characterised as Possessor and Possessed but for generalisation and convenience, they are referred to as **Carrier** and **Attribute**; e.g. *He* (Carrier/Possessor) *had* (Process: relational) *a big car* (Attribute/Possessed).

Existential process is the process of existing, indicating that something or some natural force exists. In this type of process, there is generally a participant, the **Existent** and one or two circumstantial elements; e.g. *There is* (Process: existential) *a man* (Existent) *in the room* (Circumstance). (For details of process types in English, see Halliday, 1985, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; and for details of process types in Vietnamese, see Hoang 2005, 2012; Diep, 2005).

3.3.2. *The logical metafunction and its realization through the systems of expansion and projection*

In everyday communication, the speaker is less likely to focus on construing things or events as single, isolated phenomena. On the contrary, s/he often uses the infinite resources of language to form complex categories such as *Leave a kiss within the cup, and I'll not ask for wine* (from "To Celia" by Ben Jonson, cited in Halliday & Hasan, 1985: 18), in which two single states of affair *Leave a kiss within the cup* and *I will not ask for wine* are combined to form a clause complex having a logico-semantic or rhetorical pattern of *If x ... then y*. Clause

complex, according to Halliday (1985, 1994), Halliday & Hasan (1985), and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), is the resource for forming two general systems: (1) taxis and logico-semantic relation. Taxis is concerned with degrees of interdependency. It has two delicate systems each of which indicates a kind of logical relation between clauses: paratactic relation and hypotactic relation. When two clauses in a complex are of equal status, they are said to be in paratactic relation. In contrast, when two clauses in a complex are of unequal status, they are said to be in hypotactic relation. In systemic functional grammar, logico-semantic relation comprises two fundamental relationships: expansion and projection. Expansion refers to a complex in which the secondary clause expands the primary clause by means of (i) elaboration: “one clause elaborates on the meaning of another by specifying or describing it” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 396) (e.g. *My watch stops; it’s broken down*), (ii) extension: “one clause extends of the meaning of another by adding something new to it” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 405) (e.g. *Winter has gone, and spring has come*), and (iii) enhancement: “one clause [or subcomplex] enhances the meaning of another by qualifying it in one of a number of possible ways: by reference to time, place, manner, cause or condition” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 410) (e.g. *When he came, she had gone*). Projection refers to a complex in which the secondary clause is projected through the primary clause which instates it as a locution or an idea. Related to locution and ideas are two logico-semantic relations referred to respectively as quoting and reporting. Quoting refers to a complex in which one clause projects another clause and the projected clause represents that which is said (e.g. *He said: “She’s coming.”*), and the projected clause(s) and the projecting clause are of equal status. In contrast, reporting refers to a complex in

which one clause projects another clause and the projected clause represents the idea of that which is said/thought, and the projected clause and the projecting clause are of unequal status (e.g. *He said that she was coming*). (For more details of clause complexing, see Halliday, 1994, Chapter 7; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, Chapter 7; Hasan, 1993; Hoang, 2012, 2013).

3.3.3. *The interpersonal metafunction and its realization through the mood system*

The interpersonal metafunction is another general social function that we use language to enact roles and relations between speaker and addressee as meaning (Matthiessen et al., 2010: 128; Martin & Rose, 2013: 7). According to Halliday (1985, 1994) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), when a speaker interacts with others to exchange information or to influence their behaviour and get things done, he adopts for himself a certain role such as ‘questioner’ and, in so doing, assigns a complementary role, such as ‘informant’, to his addressee. Unless the conversation is very one-sided, the roles of ‘questioner’ and ‘informant’ tend to alternate between the interlocutors engaged in a conversation. Halliday (1994) provides a table to characterise the primary speech roles which can be represented in Figure 2 below.

| Commodity exchange / Role in exchange | (a) goods-&-services | (b) information |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| (i) giving | ‘offer’ Would you like this teapot? | ‘statement’ He’s giving her the teapot |
| (ii) demanding | ‘command’ Give me that teapot! | ‘question’ Is she giving me the teapot? |

Figure 2. Primary speech roles (Halliday, 1994: 69)

As Figure 2 shows, all the roles are traced back to a form of either giving or demanding. These roles are simultaneously related to the two general categories of commodity negotiated between people: goods-&-services or information. When speech roles interact with types of commodity they produce four general speech roles: giving goods-&-services = offer, giving information = statement, demanding goods-&-services = command, and demanding information = question. Giving goods-&-services can be realised

either by a declarative clause as in *He's giving her the teapot* or by an interrogative clause as in *Would you like this teapot?*; giving information is typically realised by a declarative clause as in e.g. *He's giving her the teapot*; demanding goods-&-services is typically realised by an imperative clause as in *Give me that teapot!*; and demanding information is typically realised by an interrogative clause as in *Is she giving me the teapot?* Figure 3 below represents a fragment of the mood system in English.

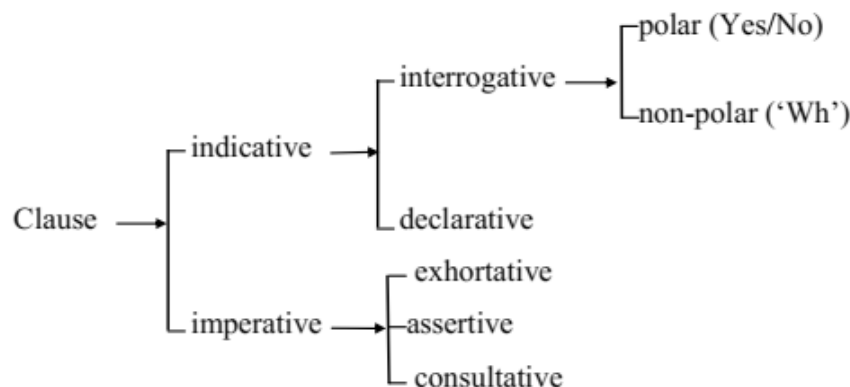


Figure 3. A fragment of the English MOOD system

Figure 3 shows that in the mood system, there are two choices: 'indicative' and 'imperative'. If 'indicative' is chosen, it will allow two more choices: 'interrogative' as in *Is Bánh trôi nước a lyric?* and 'declarative' as in *Bánh trôi nước is a lyric*; and between 'interrogative' and 'declarative', if 'interrogative' is chosen, it will open for two more delicate choices: 'polar' (requiring the answer "Yes/No") as in *Is Bánh trôi nước a lyric?* and 'non-polar' (requiring the answer to the missing information) as in *What kind of poem is Bánh trôi nước?* In contrast, if 'imperative' is chosen, it will allow three delicate choices: 'exhortative' as in *Read the poem*, 'assertive' as in *You have to read the poem*, and 'consultative' as in *Can you read the poem?*

As an exchange or interactive event, an English clause can be seen as consisting of two components: **Mood (M)** and **Residue (Res)**. The Mood is the component whose function in the clause is to carry the syntactic burden of the exchange and to carry the argument forward. In English, the Mood component consists of two functional elements: **Subject (Subj)** and **Finite (Fin)**. The Subject is the nominal component of the Mood; it is the thing by reference to which a proposition can be affirmed or denied. The Finite is the verbal element in the Mood which has the function of making the proposition finite; that is to say, it brings the proposition down to earth so that something can be argued about. The Residue is the remainder of the clause. It consists of

three functional components: (i) **Predicator (Pred)**, (ii) **Complement (Compl)**, and (iii) **Adjunct (Adjct)**. The Predicator is present in all non-elliptical major clauses. It is realised by a verbal group; the Complement is an element within the Residue which has the potential of being Subject, and like the Subject it is

typically realised by a nominal group; and the Adjunct is the element also within the Residue which is typically realised by an adverbial group or a prepositional phrase. Below is an example of the functions of these elements in the interpersonal clause in English:

| | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>She</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>reading</i> | <i>a book</i> | <i>in the library</i> |
| Mood | | Residue | | |
| Subject | Finite | Predicator | Complement | Adjunct |

Mood is concerned with polarity which can be positive (yes) or negative (no). Between positive and negative polarity, there lies an area of meaning referred to in systemic functional grammar as modality. Modality as an interpersonal subsystem has two main choices (types): modalization and modulation. Modalization (epistemic modality in traditional semantics) is concerned with some degree of probability as *can* in *She can be a poetess* and usuality as *always* in *He always changed his mind*. In contrast, modulation

(deontic modality in traditional semantics) is concerned with some degree of obligation as *should* in *He should tell her* and inclination as *won't* in *They won't go*. (For details of mood and modality in the English interpersonal clause, see Halliday, 1985, 1994, 2012; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Matthiessen et al, 2010; Martin & Rose, 2013; and for details of mood and modality in the Vietnamese interpersonal clause, see Thai, 2004; Diep, 2005; Hoang, 2009). Figure 4 represents the basic choices of the modality system.

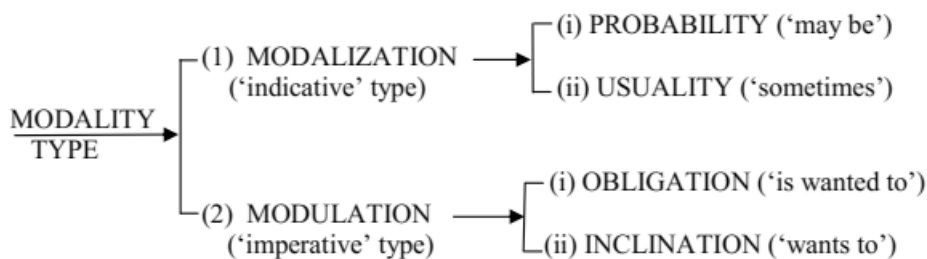


Figure 4. System of modality: basic types (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 618)

3.3.4. The textual metafunction and its realization through the theme system

The textual metafunction is the third strand of meaning that we use “to organize our enactments and representation as meaningful text” (Martin & Rose, 2013: 7). It is concerned with creating relevance between parts of what is being said and between the text and the

context of situation. It is expressed through the system of theme. Relevant to the realization of the system of theme are two functional elements: **Theme (Th)** and **Rheme (Rh)**. The Theme serves as the point of departure of the message, which coincides with the initial element(s) of the clause; and the Rheme is the remainder of the message. By analysing the thematic structure of the clauses

in a text we can find out the text's mode of development: how a topic is developed in the text and in what ways different parts of the text are related to each other semantically and logically. Theme may be realised by a nominal group, a prepositional phrase, an adverbial group, or even a clause in the case of predicated theme in English. In terms of structure, Theme may be single or multiple; in terms of meaning Theme may be marked or unmarked; and in terms of function, Theme may be topical, interpersonal or textual. A Theme is single when the thematic element itself is represented by just one constituent - a nominal group, an adverbial group, or a prepositional phrase. In contrast, a Theme is multiple when it has a further internal structure of its own. Here we distinguish between topical Theme, interpersonal Theme and textual Theme. A topical Theme is one that is conflated with an experiential element of the clause: it can be Actor/Agent, Goal/Medium or Circumstance. An interpersonal Theme represents the interpersonal element with which the speaker or writer acts on the listener or reader. An interpersonal Theme may contain (i) a modal Theme which consists of a modal adjunct, the definite element in the case of *yes/no* interrogative clauses, and (iii) a vocative element. And a textual Theme represents the meaning that is relevant to the context: both the preceding and the following text (co-text) and the context of situation. It may have any combination of three textual elements: (i) a continuative element, e.g., *yes, no, well*; (ii) a structural element, e.g., *and, but*; and (iii) a conjunctive element, e.g., *also, although*. An unmarked Theme is one that is usual or typical, whereas a marked Theme is one that is unusual. In the declarative clause, an unmarked Theme is one that conflates with the Subject, while a marked Theme is a constituent functioning as some element of

the rest of the interpersonal clause, including Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct.

Another aspect of the textual meaning has to do with what Halliday (1985, 1994, 2012) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) refer to as the **Given** and **New** information. To illustrate these two textual functions, let us consider the clause taken from the poem *Ozymandias* by the British poet Percy Bysshe Shelley *I met a traveller from an antique land* (cited in Hayakawa, 1959: 157). From the point of view of traditional grammar, this clause has a standard word-order of Subject (*I*) + Verb (*met*) + Object (*a traveller from an antique land*) (SVO). However, there are numerous other ways in which the semantic content of the clause can be realised. For example:

A traveller from an antique land was met by me.

It was me who met a traveller from an antique land.

It was a traveller from an antique land that I met.

Who I met was a traveller from an antique land.

Which of these options is actually selected by the writer/speaker will depend on the context in which the utterance occurs and the status of information within the discourse. One important consideration is whether the information has already been introduced into the discourse or is assumed to be known to the reader/listener. Such information is referred to as **Given** information (**G**). In contrast with information which is given, there is what Halliday calls **New** information (**N**) — information which is introduced for the first time. It is important to bear in mind, when considering the issue of given and new information in discourse, that the speaker/writer who decides what information should be considered given or new. Halliday (1985, 1994, 2012) and Halliday & Matthiessen

(2004) suggest that characteristically the speaker/writer will order given information before new information. They maintain that this should be considered a rule of thumb. Thus, in the clause *I met a traveller from an antique land*, the assumed or given knowledge is that “I met someone” and the new information is that “it was the traveller from an antique land that was met”.

Halliday (1985, 1994, 2012) and Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) further suggest that there is a close semantic relationship between thematic structure and information structure. All things being equal, a speaker will choose the Theme from within what is Given and locate the New somewhere within the Rheme. This way of patterning the textual clause is referred to as the unmarked (usual) case. Thus, in the clause *I met a traveller from an antique land*, *I* functions as Theme/Given and *met a traveller from an antique land* as Rheme/New, represented as follows:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>I</i> | <i>met a traveller from an antique land</i> |
| Theme | Rheme |
| Given → New | |

There are cases, however, in which Theme/Given and Rheme/New are not conflated. This way of patterning is referred to as marked case, exemplified as follows:

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>those</i> | <i>two</i> | <i>splendid</i> | <i>old</i> | <i>electric</i> | <i>trains</i> | <i>with pantographs</i> |
| Deictic | Numerative | Epithet 2 | Epithet 1 | Classifier | Head/Thing | Qualifier |

Verbal group is the constituent serving as Process in the transitivity structure and Predicator in the mood structure. In terms of experiential structure, it has lexical (main) verbs having the function of Event and grammatical verbs, including modal verbs such as *can*, *may*, *must*, having the function of

| | |
|--|--------------|
| <i>A traveller from an antique land,</i> | <i>I met</i> |
| Theme | Rheme |
| New → Given | |

(For more details of the concepts Theme, Rheme, Given and New, see Halliday, 1994, Chapter 3; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, Chapter 3; Fries, 1981; and Hoang, 2007).

3.3.5. Groups and phrases

Below the clause, there are groups and phrases having different functions in the experiential, interpersonal and textual clause. For the purpose of this review, however, two groups and one phrase are in focus: nominal group, verbal group and prepositional phrase. Nominal group is a group of nominal words which serves as participant roles (Actor, Goal, Behavior, Range, Senser, Phenomenon, etc.), in the experiential clause and Subject or Complement in the interpersonal clause. Experientially, a nominal group is organized by one or more of the functional elements such as Deictic, Numerative, Epithet and Classifier which precede the head noun serving as Head/Thing and Qualifier(s) which follow(s) the Head/Thing. Unlike the functional elements that precede the Head/Thing, which are words or word complexes, the Qualifier is either a phrase or a clause. Halliday (1994: 180) provides a good example of the English nominal group which can be reproduced below for illustration:

Finite/Auxiliary (in English) and Auxiliary (in Vietnamese). Below is an example of a verbal group in Vietnamese:

| | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| <i>có thể</i> | <i>sẽ</i> | <i>hát</i> |
| may be | shall/will | sing |
| (modal) Auxiliary 1 | (modal) Auxiliary 2 | Event |

Prepositional phrase consists of a preposition plus a nominal group, such as *into the air* in *I shot an arrow into the air* (from “I Shot an Arrow into the Air” by Longfellow). A prepositional phrase can be treated as a mini-clause. The reason is that unlike group, the structure of a prepositional phrase is like the transitivity structure of the clause in which the preposition functions as Minorprocess and the nominal group as Minirange. Thus in *into the air*, *into* functions as Minorprocess and *the air* as Minirange (see Matthiessen et al, 2010).

4. Research design and methodology

4.1. Data collection

The source poem “Bánh trôi nước” by Hồ Xuân Hương and the three English versions of translation: “The Floating Cake” translated by John Balaban, “The Cake That Drifts in Water” translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông, and “Floating Sweet Dumpling” translated by Marilyn Chin were collected from <http://www.chopsticksalley.com/single-post/2016/10/03/A-Tale-of-Three-Translations-in-Poetry>. The source poem was then double-checked and re-edited to ensure its originality.

4.2. Data analysis

The analysis of the source poem and the three translated versions will follow the

following steps:

- i. the source poem is analyzed in terms of field, tenor, and mode to relate the elements of context to the components of meaning in the text,
- ii. the source poem and the three translated versions are analyzed for baseline information,
- iii. the source poem and the three translated versions are analyzed for transitivity, mood and theme to uncover their experiential, logical, interpersonal and textual meanings,
- iv. the findings obtained from the analysis are discussed and compared to establish the similarities and differences between the three translated versions and the source poem, and between the translated versions.

4.2.1. Contextual analysis of “Bánh trôi nước”

The context of situation of a written text tends to be complex and that of “Bánh trôi nước” is about as complex as it is possible for it to be. Based on Halliday & Hasans’ (1985) conceptual framework, the context of situation in which the source poem functions can be briefly described as follows:

| | |
|--------|---|
| Field: | A lyric (poem) describing a rice flour cake that the Vietnamese serve in thickened coconut milk or syrup. Literally, it is about food; but figuratively, the cake becomes a metaphor signifying the hard and vagabond plight of a Vietnamese feudal woman. |
| Tenor: | Poetess to general readers, readers unseen, poetess addresses herself to readers intimately and assigns their role as senior/older, and adopts her role as junior/younger (<i>em</i>). Poetess as describer of the cake encoded in declarative clauses where the sense is that is how I (<i>em</i>) in the name of the cake am, and despite my hard and vagabond life, I am resolute to be a faithful/loyal woman. |
| Mode: | Written to be recited or read; text as “self-sufficient” as only form of social action by which situation is defined. |

4.2.2. Baseline data analysis

To get baseline information for further analysis and discussion, the source poem and the three translated versions are counted for the number of words; then they are analyzed for the number of clause complexes, the number of clauses (clause simplexes), and the number of embedded clauses. Due to the fact that there are no softwares for doing these things in Vietnamese, but fortunately, the source poem and the three versions of translation are all short, the counting and the analysis are done manually. Following Halliday (1985, 1994), Halliday & Matthiessen (2004), and Hoang (2005, 2006), I shall use the following notational conventions in my analysis:

- Three vertical strokes ||| to indicate the boundary of the clause complex
- Two vertical strokes || to indicate the boundary of the clause (clause simplex)
- Double square brackets [[]] to indicate the boundary of the embedded clause
- Roman numerals I, II,... to indicate the number of clause complex
- Arabic numerals 1, 2,... to indicate the number of clause (simplex)

- The Greek letter α to indicate the paratactic (main) clause in relation to the hypotactic (subordinate) clause in a clause complex
- The Greek letter β to indicate the hypotactic (subordinate) clause in relation to the paratactic clause in a clause complex
- The sign = to indicate the expansion: elaboration relation between clauses in a clause complex
- The sign + to indicate the expansion: extension relation between clauses in a clause complex
- The sign x to indicate the expansion: enhancement relationship between clauses in a clause complex.
- The sign ^ to indicate the sequence of elements within a clause.

To avoid confusion that may cause, I shall use “Bánh trôi nước”, the source poem, the original poem or the source text interchangeably; but I shall use the Balaban version to refer to the version translated by John Balaban, the Huynh version to the version translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông, and the Chin version to the version translated by Marilyn Chin. The data baseline analysis of the four texts is provided in Figure 5 below.

| Bánh trôi nước | |
|---|--|
| (I) ¹ α Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn ² + β 1 Bầy nổi ³ + β 2 ba chìm với nước non | |
| (II) ⁴ x1 Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn ⁵ 2 Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son (25 words) | |
| The Balaban version (The Floating Cake) | |
| (I) ¹ α 1 My body is white; ² + α 2 my fate, softly rounded, ³ + β 1 Rising ⁴ + β 2 and sinking like mountains in streams. | |
| (II) ⁵ x1 Whatever way hands may shape me, ⁶ 2 At center my heart is red and true. (32 words) | |

| |
|--|
| <p>The Huynh version (The Cake That Drifts In Water)</p> <p> ¹ My body is both white and round</p> <p>(I) ² 1 In water I now swim, ³+2 now sink.</p> <p>(II) ⁴ x1 The hand +[[that kneads me]] may be rough—</p> <p> ⁵ 2 I still shall keep my true-red heart (35 words)</p> |
| <p>The Chin version (Floating Sweet Dumpling)</p> <p> ¹ My body is powdery white and round</p> <p>(I) ² 1 I sink ³and +2 bob like a mountain in a pond</p> <p>(II) ⁴ x1 The hand +[[that kneads me]] is hard and rough</p> <p> ⁵ 2 You can't destroy my true red heart (36 words)</p> |

Figure 5. Baseline data analysis

As can be seen in Figure 5, both the source poem and the three translated versions are organized in five lines including the title. According to our analysis, “Bánh trôi nước” has the total number of 25 words, five clauses structured in 2 clause complexes of which complex (I) consists of three clauses: ||¹ *Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn* ||² *Bây nổi* ||³ *ba chìm với nước non* |||, and complex (II) consists of two clauses: ||⁴ *Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn* ||⁵ *Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son* |||, and no embedded clause. The Balaban version has the total number of 32 words, six clauses structured in two clause complexes of which complex (I) consists of four clauses: ||¹ *My body is white*; ||² *my fate, softly rounded*, ||³ *Rising* ||⁴ *and sinking like mountains in streams* |||, and complex (II) consists of two clauses: ||⁵ *Whatever way hands may shape me*, ||⁶ *At center my heart is red and true*. |||, and no embedded clause. The Huynh version has the total number of 35 words, five clauses structured in one independent clause: ||¹ *My body is both white and round* ||, and two clause complexes of which complex (I) consists of two clauses: ||² *In water I now swim*, ||³ *now sink*. |||, and complex (II) consists of two clauses: ||⁴ *The hand [[that kneads me]] may be rough—* ||⁵ *I still shall keep my true-red heart* |||, and one

embedded clause: [[*that kneads me*]] in clause 4. And the Chin version has the total number of 36 words, five clauses structured in one independent clause: ||¹ *My body is powdery white and round* ||, two clause complexes of which complex (I) consists of two clauses: ||² *I sink* ||³ *and bob like a mountain in a pond* |||, and complex (II) consists of two clauses: (II) ||⁴ *The hand [[that kneads me]] may be hard and rough* ||⁵ *You can't destroy my true-red heart* |||, and one embedded clause: [[*that kneads me*]] in clause 4.¹

The baseline information of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions can be summarized in Table 1 below.

¹ There may be some other ways of analysing the source text into clauses and clause complexes. One other way, based on traditional grammar, may treat the first line *Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn* as a compound sentence which consists of two clauses sharing the same subject *Thân em* as in *Thân em vừa trắng* and [*Thân em*] *lại vừa tròn*; the second line *Bây nổi ba chìm với nước non* as a simple sentence having implicit subject [*Em/Thân em*] *Bây nổi ba chìm với nước non*; and the third and the fourth lines *Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn* and *Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son* as a complex sentence of which *Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn* is the subordinate clause and *Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son* is the main clause.

Table 1. “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation: baseline information

| | Bánh trôi nước | The Balaban version | The Huynh version | The Chin version |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| Number of words | 25 | 32 | 33 | 36 |
| Number of clause complexes | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Number of clause simplexes | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Number of embedded clauses | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

4.2.3. *Transitivity, mood, and theme analysis*

In transitivity, the texts are analyzed for:

(i) types of process: material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential

(ii) types of participants in the process

(iii) types of incumbent circumstances

(iv) embedded clauses

In mood, the texts are analyzed for:

(i) types of clause mood: declarative, imperative, and interrogative

(ii) clause mood components: Subject and its semantic features, Finite (in English),

Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct

(iii) types of modality: modalization (probability and usuality) and modulation (obligation and inclination)

In theme, the texts are analyzed for:

(i) types of clause theme: topical/experiential theme, interpersonal theme, textual theme, single theme, multiple theme, marked theme, and unmarked theme

(ii) themeless clause

(iii) thematic progression

Details of the analysis are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Transitivity, mood and theme analysis of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions

Bánh trôi nước

| (I) | ¹ Thân em | | <i>vừa trắng lại vừa tròn</i> |
|----------------|--|--|-------------------------------|
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational (implicit) | Attribute |
| Mood D* | Subject (human; female; junior; intimate) | | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | | |

| | ² Bấy | <i>nổi</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Tran | Circumstance: extent | Process: material |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Predicator |
| Theme | Rheme | |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | ³ <i>ba</i> | <i>chìm</i> | <i>với nước non</i> |
| Tran | Circumstance: extent | Process: material | Circumstance: accompaniment |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Predicator | Adjunct |
| Theme | Rheme | | |

| | | | |
|---------------|--|----------------|------------------------|
| (II) | ⁴ <i>Rắn nát</i> | <i>mặc đầu</i> | <i>tay kẻ nặn</i> |
| Tran | Attribute | | Carrier |
| Mood D | Complement | Adjunct | Subject (human) |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; marked) | Rheme | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------|--|--|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| | ⁵ <i>Mà</i> | <i>em</i> | <i>vẫn</i> | <i>giữ</i> | <i>tắm lòng son</i> |
| Tran | | Behaver | | Process: behavioural | Range |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Subject (human; female; junior; intimate) | Adjunct | Predicator | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (multiple; topical; unmarked) | | Rheme | | |

The Balaban version (The Floating Cake)

| | | | |
|---------------|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| (I) | ¹ <i>My body</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>white;</i> |
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational | Attribute |
| Mood D | Subject (human) | Finite | Predicator Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | |

| | | | |
|---------------|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| | ² <i>my fate,</i> | | <i>softly rounded</i> |
| Tran | Carrier | (Process: relational) | Attribute |
| Mood D | Subject (human) | | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | |

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| | ³ <i>Rising</i> |
| Tran | Proc: material |
| Mood D | Predicator |
| Theme | Rheme |

| | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | ⁴ <i>and</i> | <i>sinking</i> | <i>like mountains</i> | <i>in streams</i> |
| Tran | | Process: material | Circumstance: manner | Circumstance: location |
| Mood D | | Predicator | Adjunct | Adjunct |
| Theme | Rheme | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------|--|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| (II) | ⁵ <i>Whatever way</i> | <i>hands</i> | <i>may</i> | <i>shape</i> | <i>me</i> |
| Tran | Circumstance: manner | Actor | Process: material | | Goal |
| Mood | Adjunct | Subject (non-human) | Finite (modal: probability) | Predicator | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; marked) | Rheme | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | ⁶ <i>At center</i> | <i>my heart</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>red and true</i> | |
| Tran | Circumstance: location | Carrier | Process: relational | | Attribute |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Subject (human) | Finite | Predicator | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; marked) | Rheme | | | |

The Huynh version (The Cake That Drifts In Water)

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--|
| | ¹ <i>My body</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>both white and round</i> | | |
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational | | Attribute | |
| Mood D | Subject (human) | Finite + Predicator | | Complement | |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| (I) | ² <i>In water</i> | <i>I</i> | <i>now</i> | <i>swim,</i> | |
| Tran | Circumstance: location | Actor | Circumstance: time | Process: material | |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Subject (human) | Adjunct | Finite | Predicator |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; marked) | Rheme | | | |

| | | |
|--------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| | ³ <i>now</i> | <i>sink</i> |
| Tran | Circumstance: time | Process: material |
| Mood D | Adjunct | Predicator |
| Theme | Rheme | |

| | | | | | |
|--------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--|
| (II) | ⁴ <i>The hand</i> [[<i>that kneads me</i>]] | <i>may be</i> | <i>rough—</i> | | |
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational | | Attribute | |
| Mood D | Subject (non-human) | Finite (modal: probability) | Predicator | Complement | |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | | | |

| | | | | | |
|-------|---|---------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| | ⁵ <i>I</i> | <i>still</i> | <i>shall keep</i> | <i>my true-red heart</i> | |
| Tran | Behaver | Circumstance | Process: behavioural | | Range |
| Mood | Subject (human) | Adjunct | Finite (modal: determination) | Predicator | Complement |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical unmarked) | Rheme | | | |

The Chin version (Floating Sweet Dumpling)

| | | | |
|---------------|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | ¹ <i>My body</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>powdery white and round</i> |
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational | |
| Mood D | Subject (human) | Finite | Predicator |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | |
| | | Attribute | Complement |

| | | |
|---------------|--|--------------------------|
| (I) | ² <i>I</i> | <i>sink</i> |
| Tran | Actor | Process: material |
| Mood D | Subject (human) | Finite |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme |
| | | Predicator |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | ³ <i>and bob</i> | <i>like a mountain</i> | <i>in a pond</i> |
| Tran | | Process: material | Circumstance: location |
| Mood D | | Predicator | Adjunct |
| Theme | Rheme | | |
| | | Adjunct | Adjunct |

| | | | |
|---------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| (II) | ⁴ <i>The hand [[that kneads me]]</i> | <i>is</i> | <i>hard and rough</i> |
| Tran | Carrier | Process: relational | |
| Mood D | Subject (non-human) | Finite | Predicator |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | |
| | | Attribute | Complement |

| | | | |
|--------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| | ⁵ <i>You</i> | <i>can't destroy</i> | <i>my true red heart</i> |
| Tran | Actor | Process: material | |
| Mood | Subject (human) | Finite (modal: inability) | Predicator |
| Theme | Theme (single; topical; unmarked) | Rheme | |
| | | Goal | Complement |

D* = Declarative

4.3. Discussion and comparison

4.3.1. Transitivity patterns of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions

The transitivity analysis in Table 1 shows that of the five processes (clauses) in “Bánh trôi nước”, two are relational (clauses 1, 4), two are material (clauses 2, 3), one is behavioural (clause 5), and no embedded clause; of the six clauses in the Balaban

version, three are relational (clauses 1, 2, 6), three are material (clauses 3, 4, 5), and no clause is embedded; of the five clauses in the Huynh version, two are relational (clauses 1, 4), two are material (clauses 2, 3), one is behavioural (clause 5), and one is embedded: *that kneads me* in clause 4: *The hand [[that kneads me]] may be rough*; and of the five clauses in the Chin version, two are relational (clauses 1, 2), three are material (clauses 2, 3,

5), and one clause is embedded: *that kneads me* in clause 4: *The hand [[that kneads me]] is hard and rough.*

A closer observation shows that quantitatively the Huynh version is more similar to the source poem than the other two translated versions in that both have five processes, of which two are relational, two are material, and one is behavioural. What makes it slightly differ from the source poem is that in clause 4, there is an embedded clause (relative clause in traditional grammar) [*that kneads me*] expanding the meaning of the head nominal group *The hand*. Ranked second in similarity to the source poem is the Chin version: it is also organized into five processes of which two are relational. What makes it differ from the source poem, however, is that it has three material processes and, like the Huynh version, in clause 4, there is an embedded clause [*that kneads me*] expanding the meaning of the head nominal group *The hand*. The biggest difference from the source poem is perhaps the Balaban version. Here instead of representing the poem in five clauses as the source poem, it is organized into six; and unlike the source poem, it has three relational processes and three material processes.

The quantitative results have revealed enough similarities and differences between the source poem and the translated versions, and between the translated versions themselves. But they still do not tell us much about similarities and differences between them at a more delicate level. To do this, we need one more step: taking a qualitative look at the transitivity pattern and the lexical choice of the texts — what Halliday (1961, cited in Hasan, 1987: 184) refers to as “most delicate grammar”. We will go through the source text and the translated versions line by line.

The first line. Our transitivity analysis in Table 1 shows that the first line in the source poem *Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn* is a relational process having the transitivity pattern of Carrier ^ Process: relational ^ Attribute, in which the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the noun *Thân* (body) functioning as Head/Thing and the noun *em* (*I* [junior/younger]) functioning as Qualifier (post modifier in traditional grammar), the relational Process is implicit, and the Attribute is realized by two adjectives in parallel paratactic relation (*vừa*) *trắng* (both white) and (*lại vừa*) *tròn* (and round).

A similar transitivity pattern and lexical choices can be found in the first line in the Huynh version *My body is both white and round*. It is also a relational process having the pattern of Carrier ^ Process: relational ^ Attribute, in which the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the possessive adjective *My* functioning as Deictic and the noun *body* functioning as Head/Thing, the relational Process is realized by the copula verb *is*, and the Attribute is realized by two adjectives in parallel paratactic relation (*both*) *white* and (*and*) *round*.

Similar to the source poem, the first line in the Chin version *My body is powdery white and round* is also a relational clause having the transitivity pattern of Carrier ^ Process ^ Attribute, in which the Carrier is realized by the a nominal group consisting of the possessive adjective *My* functioning as Deictic and the noun *body* functioning as Head/Thing, the relational Process is realized by the copula verb *is*, and the Attribute is realized by three adjectives *powdery*, *white*, and *round*. What makes it differ from the source clause lies in the representation of the Attribute where we find one more quality whose correspondence is not found in the source clause is added – *powdery* in *powdery white and round*.

The biggest difference from the source line is perhaps the Balaban version. Here instead of representing the The Floating Cake and its two qualities in one relational clause as in the source poem, the Balaban version constructs the first line in the poem into two clauses ||¹ *My body is white*; ||² *my fate, softly rounded* ||. Clause 1 is a relational process having the pattern of Carrier ^ Process: relational ^ Attribute, in which the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the personal possessive adjective *My* functioning as Deictic and the noun *body* functioning as Head/Thing, the relational Process is realized by the copula verb *is*, and the Attribute is realized by the adjective *white*. The second clause is also a relational process which has the pattern of Carrier ^ Process: relational ^ Attribute, in which *my fate* whose correspondence is not found in the source poem is realized by a nominal group consisting of the personal possessive adjective *my* functioning as Deictic and the noun *fate* functioning as Head/Thing, the relational Process is absent, and the Attribute is realized by a participial phrase consisting of the adverb *softly* and the participial adjective *rounded*. Note that although both *round* and *softly rounded* can function as Attribute in a relational clause, they differ in their delicate experiential meaning: while *round*, which can correspond to *tròn* in the source clause, is an adjective expressing the inherent state/quality of a thing, *rounded* is a passive verb form representing the affected state of the Carrier. So judging from these differences in both transitivity patterning and lexical choice, the equivalence of the clause complex in the Balaban version *My body is white; my fate, softly rounded* to the clause of the source poem *Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn* can be questioned.

The second line. Our analysis in Table 1 shows that the second line in the source text consists of two material clauses: ||² *Bảy nổi* || and ||³ *ba chìm với nước non* ||. The first clause (clause 2) has the transitivity pattern of Circumstance: extent ^ Process: material, in which the Circumstance is realized by the Numerative *Bảy* and the material Process is realized by the action verb *nổi*; and the second clause (clause 3) has the transitivity pattern of Circumstance: extent ^ Process: Material ^ Circumstance: accompaniment, in which the Circumstance, like clause 2, is realized by the Numerative *ba*, the material Process is realized by the action verb *chìm*, and the Circumstance by a prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition *với* and the compound noun *nước non*.²

Like the source text, the second line in the Balaban version also consists of two material clauses ||² *Rising* ||³ *and sinking like mountains in streams* ||. The first clause (clause 2) has the transitivity pattern of Process: material which is realized by the action verb *Rising*; and the second clause (clause 3) has the transitivity pattern of Process: material ^ Circumstance:

² It should be noted that *bảy nổi ba chìm* is a shortened variant of the expression *ba chìm bảy nổi chín lênh đênh*. Literally, this expression construes three states of affairs: *ba chìm* (three times submerge), *bảy nổi* (seven times emerge) and *chín lênh đênh* (nine times drift). Figuratively, however, they have been metaphorized to refer to “the plight of a drifting, hard, unlucky and now-up-and-now-down life” (Hoang *et al.*, 2002: 30). Seen from this point of view, *Bảy nổi ba chìm với nước non* can be treated as a material clause which has the transitivity pattern of Process: material (*Bảy nổi ba chìm*) ^ Circumstance: accompaniment (*với nước non*). However, the figurative meaning of *bảy nổi ba chìm* can still be perceived as consisting of two material processes as analysed in Table 1: *Bảy nổi* and *ba chìm với nước non*.

manner, in which the process is realized by the action verb *sinking* and the Circumstance by the a prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition *like*, the plural noun *mountains* and the prepositional phrase functioning as Qualifier consisting of the preposition *in* and the plural noun *streams*. At the more delicate level (group and lexical level), we can see discrepancies in this line in the Balaban version as compared to that of the source text. Here in clause 2, we only find the process *Rising* which corresponds to *nổi* in the source clause, while the element that corresponds to the Circumstance *Bảy* (seven times) in the source clause is not found. The same thing can be observed in clause 4. Here we only find the process *sinking* which corresponds to *chìm* in the source clause, while the Circumstance *ba* (three times) in the source clause is not found either. What makes clause 3 in the Balaban version differ more markedly from the source poem lies in both the function and the delicate meaning of *like mountains in streams*. The analysis in Table 1 shows that *like mountains in streams* functions as Circumstance of manner: comparison, while *với nước non* in the source poem functions as Circumstance of accompaniment. Seen from the point of view of our analysis, whether *like mountains in streams* is equivalent to *với nước non* in the source text is open to question.

In the Huynh version, the second line is also constructed in two material clauses ||² *In water I now swim* ||³ *now sink* |||. What makes it differ from the source line is that instead of constructing the two clauses in the same pattern of Circumstance: extent (*Bảy*) ^ Process: material (*nổi*) and Circumstance: extent (*ba*) ^ Process: material (*chìm*) ^ Circumstance: manner (*với nước non*), the first clause (clause 2) of the Balaban version has the transitivity pattern of Circumstance:

location (*In water*) ^ Actor (*I*) ^ Circumstance: time (*now*) ^ Process: material (*swim*), and the second clause (clause 3), Circumstance: time (*now*) ^ Process: material (*sink*). At the more delicate level, except for the action verb *sink* which may correspond to *chìm* in the source line, all the remaining items *In water*, *I*, *now*, *swim*, and *now* do not have correspondences in the source line.

The second line in the Chin version is also constructed in two material clauses ||² *I sink* ||³ *and bob like a mountain in a pond* |||. But unlike the source poem and the other two translated versions, the first clause (clause 2) has the transitivity pattern of Actor (*I*) ^ Process: material (*sink*), and the second clause (clause 3) has the pattern of Process: material (*bob*) ^ Circumstance of manner (*like a mountain in a pond*). A closer examination of the line reveals that except for the two action verbs *sink* and *bob*, which may correspond to *chìm* and *nổi* respectively in the source line, other items such as *I*, *like a mountain in a pond* do not seem to have correspondences in the source line, and in particular items that render the meaning of *Bảy* (seven times), *ba* (three times), *với nước non* (with water) in the source line are not found.

The third line. The third line in the source poem *Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn* is a relational clause which has the transitivity pattern of Attribute (*Rắn nát*) ^ (Process: relational) ^ Carrier (*tay kẻ nặn*), in which the Attribute is realized by an adjectival group of two adjectives in implicit paratactic relation *Rắn nát* (hard and/or soft), the relational Process is implicit in the clause, and the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the noun *tay* (hand) functioning as Head/Thing and the noun *kẻ nặn* (maker/shaper) functioning as Qualifier.

The third line in the Balaban version *Whatever way hands may shape me* is also a clause, but quite different from the source clause, it is a material process which has the transitivity pattern of Circumstance: manner ^ Actor ^ Process: material ^ Goal, in which the Circumstance of manner is realized by a nominal group consisting of the pronoun *whatever* functioning as Deictic and the noun *way* functioning as Head/Thing, the Actor is realized by the plural noun *hands*, the material Process is realized by a verbal group consisting of the modal auxiliary verb *may* and the main action verb *shape*, and the Goal is realized by the first personal pronoun used in the objective case *me*. At the lexical level, only two items whose correspondence to the source clause can be established: *hands* may correspond to *tay* (kẻ nặn), and *shape* to *nặn*. The remaining items *Whatever way*, *may*, and *me* have no correspondences in the source clause.

Similar to the source clause, the third line in the Huynh version *The hand that kneads me may be rough* is a relational clause. What makes it differ from the source clause, however, is that unlike the clause of the source text which has the pattern of Attribute ^ (Process: relational) ^ Carrier, it is represented in the order of Carrier (*The hand that kneads me*) ^ Process: relational (*may be*) ^ Attribute (*rough*), in which the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the definite article *The* functioning as Deictic, the singular noun *hand* functioning as Head/Thing and the embedded relative clause *that kneads me* (elaborating the meaning of *hand*) functioning as Qualifier, the relational Process is realized by a verbal group consisting of the modal auxiliary verb *may* and the copula verb *be*, and the Attribute is realized by the adjective *rough*. A closer examination of the lexical item realizing the Attribute reveals that

the choice of *rough* has no correspondence either to *rắn* or *nát* in the source clause.

Similar to the source clause, the third line in the Chin version *The hand that kneads me is hard and rough* is also a relational clause. What makes it differ from the clause of the source poem is that, like the Huynh version, it has the pattern of Carrier (*The hand that kneads me*) ^ Process: relational (*is*) ^ Attribute (*hard and rough*), in which the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the definite article *The* functioning as Deictic, the singular noun *hand* functioning as Head/Thing and the embedded relative clause *that kneads me* (elaborating the meaning of *hand*) functioning as Qualifier, the relational Process is realized by a copula verb *is*, and the Attribute is realized by an adjectival group of two adjectives in paratactic relation *hard and rough*. A closer examination of the lexical items realizing the Attribute reveals that *hard* may correspond to *rắn* while *rough* does not correspond to *nát* in the source clause.

The fourth line. The fourth line in the source poem *Mà em vẫn giữ tâm lòng son* is a behavioural clause which has the transitivity pattern of Behaver (*em*) ^ Circumstance (*vẫn*) ^ Process: behavioural (*giữ*) ^ Range (*tâm lòng son*), in which the Behaver is realized by the noun *em*, the Circumstance by the adverb *vẫn*, the behavioural Process by the verb *giữ*, and the Range by a nominal group comprising the Head/Thing *tâm lòng* and the Epithet *son*.

The fourth line in the Balaban version *At center my heart is red and true* is also a clause, but unlike the source clause, it is a relational clause which has the pattern of Circumstance: location (*At center*) ^ Carrier (*my heart*) ^ Process: relational (*is*) ^ Attribute (*red and true*), in which the Circumstance of location is realized by a prepositional phrase consisting of the preposition *At* and the noun *center*,

the Carrier is realized by a nominal group consisting of the personal possessive adjective *my* functioning as Deictic and the noun *heart* functioning as Head/Thing, the relational Process is realized by the copula verb *is*, and the Attribute is realized by an adjectival group consisting of two Epithets in paratactic relation *red and true*. A closer examination reveals that because the content in this line is represented in a process different from that in the source line, only some lexical items whose correspondence to those in the source line can be established. Here we can find *heart* may correspond to *tâm lòng*, and *true* to *son*. Other items such as *At center*, *is*, and *red* do not have correspondences in the source clause.

Similar to the source poem, the fourth line in the Huynh version *I still shall keep my true-red heart* is a behavioural clause which has the transitivity pattern of Behavior (*I*) ^ Circumstance (*still*) ^ Process: behavioural (*keep*) ^ Range (*my true-red heart*), in which the Behavior is realized by the first personal pronoun *I*, the Circumstance is realized by the adverb *still*, the behavioural Process is realized by a verbal group consisting of the modal auxiliary verb *shall* and the main behavioural verb *keep*, and the Range is realized by a nominal group consisting of the noun *heart* functioning as Head/Thing, the compound adjective *true-red* functioning as Epithet, and the personal possessive adjective *my* functioning as Deictic. A closer observation reveals that several lexical items

whose correspondence to those in the source line can be established. Here we find *I* may correspond to *em*, *still* to *vẫn*, *keep* to *giữ*, and *heart* to *tâm lòng*. Other items such as *my* and *true-red* do not seem to have correspondences in the source line.

Unlike the source poem and the Huynh version, the fourth line in the Chin version *You can't destroy my true red heart* is a material clause which has the transitivity pattern of Actor (*You*) ^ Process: material (*can't destroy*) ^ Goal (*my true red heart*), in which the Actor is realized by the second personal pronoun *You*, the material Process is realized by a verbal group which consists of the modal auxiliary verb *can't* and the action verb *destroy*, and the Goal is realized by a nominal group consisting of the personal possessive adjective *my* functioning as Deictic, the two adjectives *true red* functioning as Epithets, and the noun *heart* functioning as Head/Thing. A closer examination reveals that because the content in this line is represented in a process different from that in the source line, except for the noun *heart* which may correspond to *tâm lòng*, the other items such as *you*, *can't*, *destroy*, *my*, and *true red* do not have correspondences in the source line.

Table 3 summarizes the main similarities and differences between “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation in terms of transitivity.

Table 3. Transitivity patterns of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation

| Process types | Bánh trôi nước | The Balaban version | The Huynh version | The Chin version |
|------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Number of clause | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Material | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 |
| Relational | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Behavioural | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Embedded | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |

4.3.2. Clause complexing patterns of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions

As shown in our baseline analysis in Figure 5, Section 3.2.2, the whole source poem consists of two clause complexes. Complex I (lines 1 and 2) consists of three clauses (clauses 1, 2 and 3). The relationship between clauses 2 and 3 and clause 1 is that of hypotactic expansion: extension (clauses 2 and 3 extend the meaning of clause 1); and the relationship between clause 2 and clause 3 is that of paratactic expansion: extension (clause 3 extends the meaning of clause 2). The complexing pattern of complex I can be represented as $\alpha \wedge \beta(\beta_1 \wedge \beta_2)$ actualized in $\| \alpha \text{ Thân em vừa trắng lại vừa tròn} \wedge \| \beta(\beta_1 \text{ Bầy nổi} \| \beta_2 \text{ ba chìm với nước non}) \|$. Complex II (lines 3 and 4) consists of two clauses (clauses 4 and 5). The relationship between them is that of paratactic expansion: enhancement (clause 4 enhances the meaning of clause 5). The complexing pattern of complex II can be represented as $x_1 \wedge 2$ actualizing in $\| \| x_1 \text{ Rắn nát mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ Mà em vẫn giữ tấm lòng son} \|$.

The Balaban version is also constructed into two clause complexes. But unlike the source poem, complex I (lines 1 and 2) consists of 4 clauses which have different layers of complexing and thus having different logico-semantic relationships. Our analysis in Figure 5 shows that two clauses in line 1 form a paratactic clause complex of expansion: extension relationship which has the complexing pattern of $1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $\| \| 1 \text{ My body is white;} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ my fate, softly rounded,} \|$; and two remaining clauses in line 2 form another paratactic clause complex of expansion: extension relationship which has the complexing pattern of $1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $\| \| 1 \text{ Rising} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ and sinking like mountains in streams.} \|$. The paratactic clause complex

in line 1 and the paratactic clause complex in line 2 form a hypotactic clause complex of expansion: extension relationship, yielding the total complexing pattern of $\alpha(\alpha_1 \wedge \alpha_2) \wedge \beta(\beta_1 \wedge \beta_2)$ actualized in $\| \| \alpha(\alpha_1 \text{ My body is white;} \wedge \| \| \alpha_2 \text{ my fate, softly rounded.}) \wedge \| \| \beta(\beta_1 \text{ Rising} \wedge \| \| \beta_2 \text{ and sinking like mountains in streams.}) \|$. And complex II (lines 4 and 5), like the source poem, consists of 2 clauses (clauses 5 and 6) of expansion: enhancement relationship which has the complexing pattern of $x_1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $\| \| x_1 \text{ Whatever way hands may shape me,} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ At center my heart is red and true.} \|$.

Similar to the source poem and the Balaban version, the Huynh version is also constructed into two clause complexes. Like the source poem, it begins with a clause, but unlike the source poem this clause does not enter into complexing relationship with the other two clauses in line 2. Instead, clauses 2 and 3 (line 2) in the Huynh version form a paratactic clause complex (complex I) of expansion: extension relationship which has the complexing pattern of $1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $\| \| 1 \text{ In water I now swim} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ now sink} \|$. And clause 4 (line 4) and clause 5 (line 5) form another paratactic clause complex (complex II) of expansion: enhancement relationship which has the complexing pattern of $x_1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $\| \| x_1 \text{ The hand} \text{ [[that kneads me]]} \text{ may be rough} \wedge \| \| 2 \text{ I still shall keep my true-red heart} \|$.

Like the source poem, the Balaban version, and the Huynh version, the Chin version is also constructed into two clause complexes. Similar to the source poem and the Huynh version, the Chin version begins with a clause. Unlike the source poem, but much like the Huynh version this clause in the Chin version does not enter into complexing relationship with the other two clauses in

line 2. Instead, clauses 2 and 3 (line 2) form a paratactic clause complex (complex I) of expansion: extension relationship which has the complexing pattern of $1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $||^2 1 I \text{ sink } \wedge ||^3 +2 \text{ and bob like a mountain in a pond } ||$. And clause 4 (line 4) and clause 5 (line 5) form the second paratactic clause complex (complex II) of expansion: enhancement relationship which has the complexing pattern

of $x1 \wedge 2$ actualized in $||^4 x1 \text{ The hand } [[\text{that kneads me}]] \text{ is hard and rough } \wedge ||^5 2 \text{ You can't destroy my true red heart } ||$.

The main similarities and differences between “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation in terms of clause complexing can be summarized in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Clause complexing patterns of the source poem and the three translated versions

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| “Bánh trôi nước”: | Complex I: $\alpha \wedge \beta(\beta1 \wedge \beta2) \wedge$ complex II: $x1 \wedge 2$ |
| The Balaban version: | Complex I: $\alpha(\alpha1 \wedge \alpha2) \wedge \beta(\beta1 \wedge \beta2) \wedge$ complex II: $x1 \wedge 2$ |
| The Huynh version: | Simplex $1 \wedge$ complex I: $1 \wedge 2 \wedge$ complex II: $x1 \wedge 2$ |
| The Chin version: | Simplex $1 \wedge$ complex I: $1 \wedge 2 \wedge$ complex II: $x1 \wedge 2$ |

4.3.3. Mood patterns of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions

As with transitivity and clause complexing, in this section we will begin our mood discussion and comparison with the source poem. Our mood analysis in Table 1 shows that all the five clauses of “Bánh trôi nước” are declarative, of which two are Subjectless (clauses 2 and 3) and three have Subject (clauses 1, 4, and 5). Our analysis also indicates that all three Subjects in the poem have the feature of “human”: *Thân em* (clause 1), *tay kẻ nặn* (clause 4), and *em* (clause 5) and that except for the Subject in clause 4, the two others have four additional features of “female”, “non-possessive”, “junior/younger” and “intimate”: *Thân em* (clause 1) and *em* (clause 5). What seems to be a prominent feature of the source poem is that all its five clauses are non-modalized.

5). In terms of Subject, two clauses are Subjectless (clauses 3 and 4) and four have Subject (clauses 1, 2, 5, and 6). Our analysis in Table 1 shows that of the four Subjects in the Balaban version, one has the feature of “non-human”: *hands* (clause 5) and three have the features of “human” and “possessive”: *My body* (clause 1), *my fate* (clause 2), and *my heart* (clause 6). But what makes the human Subjects in the Balaban version differ from those in the source poem is that they do not have the features “female”, “junior/younger” and “intimate”.

In contrast, of the six clauses in the Balaban version, five are declarative (clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6), and one is modalized containing the modal auxiliary verb *may* expressing probability/possibility (clause

Of the five clauses in the Huynh version, three are declarative (clauses 1, 2, and 3); and, different from the source poem and the Balaban version, two clauses are modalized, one containing the modal auxiliary verb *may* expressing probability/possibility (clause 4), and the other the modal auxiliary verb *shall* expressing determination (clause 5). Unlike the source poem, in the Huynh version four clauses have Subject of which three have the features of “human”: *My body* (clause 1), *I* (clause 2) and *I* (clause 5) and one has the feature of “non-human”: *The hand that kneads*

me (clause 4). What makes the Subjects in the Huynh version differ from those in the source poem is that like the Balaban version, they only have the feature of “human”, while the three other features “female”, “junior/younger” and “intimate” are not present.

The Chin version provides a somewhat different interpersonal picture as compared with the source poem. Of the five clauses in this translated version, four are declarative (clauses 1, 2, 3 and 4), and one is modalized containing the modal auxiliary in negative form *can't* expressing inability (clause 5). Like the Huynh version, of the five clauses, one is Subjectless and four have Subject. Of the four Subjects, three have the features of “human”: *My body* (clause 1), *I* (clause 2) and *You* (clause 5), and one has the feature of “non-human”: *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4). Unlike the source poem, but like the Balaban version and the Huynh version, the human Subjects in the Chin version only have the feature “human”, the three other features found in the source poem: “female”, “junior/younger” and “intimate” are not present. Furthermore, unlike the source

poem, the Subject in the Chin version varies from clause to clause. Except for clauses 2 and 3 which share the same Subject *I*, each of the three remaining clauses has a different Subject: *My body* (clause 1), *The hand* (clause 4), and *You* (clause 5). A comparison of these Subjects with those in the source poem reveals that the Subject *My body* [referring to The Floating Sweet Dumpling] in clause 1 may to some extent correspond to *Thân em* [referring to Bánh trôi nước] in clause 1 of the source poem; the Subject *The hand that kneads me* in clause 4 may to some extent correspond to *tay kẻ nặn* in clause 4 of the source poem. But the shared Subject *I* in clauses 2 and 3 has no correspondences to clauses 2 and 3 which are Subjectless in the source poem; and the Subject *You* [referring to the *The hand that kneads me*] in clause 5 has quite a different meaning from the Subject *em* [referring to Bánh trôi nước] in the corresponding clause of the source poem.

The main similarities and differences between “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation in terms of mood can be summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Mood features of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation

| Mood category | Bánh trôi nước | The Balaban version | The Huynh version | The Chin version |
|------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Number of clause | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Declarative | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Subject | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Modality | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |

4.3.4. Thematic patterns of “Bánh trôi nước” and the three translated versions

Our theme analysis in Table 1 shows that of the five clauses of “Bánh trôi nước”, two have single Theme: *Thân em* (clause 1) and

Rắn nát (clause 4), one has multiple Theme: *Mà em* (clause 5), three have topical Theme: *Thân em* (clause 1), *Rắn nát* (clause 4), (*Mà em* (clause 5), none has interpersonal Theme, one has textual Theme *Mà* (clause 5), two have unmarked Theme: *Thân em* (clause 1) and

(*Mà em* (clause 5), one has marked Theme: *Rắn nát* (clause 4), and two are Themeless (clauses 2 and 3). A more detailed analysis of the thematic patterns of the source poem shows that in clause 1, the poetess Hồ Xuân Hương uses *Thân em* [referring back to *Bánh trôi nước* in the title] which is single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *vừa trắng lại vừa tròn* as Rheme/New. Neither the Theme nor the Rheme in this clause is picked up in clauses 2 and 3. In these clauses there are no Themes, and both *Bảy nổi* and *ba chìm với nước non* function as Rheme/New. Clause 4 starts with a new Theme which is not connected with any of the Theme or Rhemes in the previous clauses. Here the order of the clause is reversed, and the Complement *Rắn nát* becomes single, topical but marked Theme/Given [Theme/Complement] and the remaining segment *mặc dầu tay kẻ nặn* is Rheme/New. The Theme in clause 1, however, is picked up as topical Theme in clause 5. Here, *Mà em* is multiple, topical and unmarked Theme/Given and *vẫn giữ tấm lòng son* is Rheme/New. The thematic pattern of the five clauses and their thematic progression pattern in “*Bánh trôi nước*” can be represented as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| • Theme 1 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 1 |
| • \emptyset^* | ^ Rheme 2 |
| • \emptyset | ^ Rheme 3 |
| • Theme 2 (single/topical/marked) | ^ Rheme 4 |
| • Theme 1 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 5 |

*Note: The sign \emptyset indicates the clause has no Theme

The Balaban version provides a different picture of thematic structure. Of the six clauses analyzed in Table 1, four have single Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *my fate* (clause 2), *Whatever hand* (clause 5), and *At center*

(clause 6), none has multiple Theme, four have topical Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *my fate* (clause 2), *Whatever way* (clause 5), and *At center* (clause 6), none has interpersonal or textual Theme, two have unmarked Theme [Theme/Subject]: *My body* (clause 1) and *my fate* (clause 2), two have marked Theme: *Whatever way* [Adjunct/Theme] (clause 5) and *At center* [Adjunct/Theme] (clause 6), and two are Themeless (clauses 3 and 4). A closer observation of the thematic patterns of this translated version shows that in clause 1, the translator John Balaban uses *My body* [referring back to *The Floating Cake*] which is single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *is white* as Rheme/New. Clause 2 begins with *my fate* which is also single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given and ends with *softly rounded* which is Rheme/New. Neither the Theme nor the Rheme in clauses 1 and 2 is picked up in clauses 3 and 4. In these clauses, like clauses 3 and 4 in the source poem, there are no Themes, and both *Rising* and *and sinking like mountains in streams* function as Rheme/New. Clause 5 starts with a new Theme which is not connected with any of the previous Theme or Rhemes. Here *Whatever way* which is single, topical but marked Theme/Given is used as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *hands may shape me* as Rheme/New. In a similar manner, clause 6 begins with *At center* which is single, topical but marked Theme/Given and ends with *my heart is red and true* which is Rheme/New. The thematic pattern of the six clauses and their thematic progression pattern in the Balaban version can be represented as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| • Theme 1 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 1 |
| • Theme 2 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 2 |
| • \emptyset | ^ Rheme 3 |
| • \emptyset | ^ Rheme 4 |
| • Theme 5 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 5 |
| • Theme 6 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 6 |

In the Huynh version, our analysis in Table 1 shows that of five clauses, four have single Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *In water* (clause 2), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4) and *I* (clause 5), none has multiple Theme, four have topical Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *In water* (clause 2), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4) and *I* (clause 5), none has interpersonal or textual Theme, three have unmarked Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4), and *I* (clause 5), one has marked Theme [Adjunct/Theme]: *In water* (clause 2), and one is Themeless (clause 3). A more detailed analysis of this version shows that like the Balaban version, in clause 1 the translator Huỳnh Sanh Thông uses *My body* [referring back to The Cake that Drifts in Water] which is single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *is both white and round* as Rheme/New. Clause 2 begins with *In water* which is also single, topical but marked Theme/Given and ends with *I now swim* which is Rheme/New. This is followed by clause 3 which only has *now sink* functioning as Rheme/New. Clause 4 starts with a new Theme which is not connected with any of the Theme or Rheme in the previous clauses. Here the translator places *The hand that kneads me* as single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given and *may be rough* as Rheme/New. In clause 5, the translator uses *I* which is single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *still shall keep my true red heart* as Rheme/New. The thematic pattern of the five clauses and their thematic progression pattern in the Huynh version can be represented as follows:

| | |
|--|------------------|
| • Theme 1 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 1 |
| • Theme 2 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 2 |
| • ∅ | ^ Rheme 3 |
| • Theme 4 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 4 |
| • Theme 5 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 5 |

It is shown in Table 1 that of the five clauses in the Chin version, four have single Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *I* (clause 2), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4) and *You* (clause 5). None has multiple Theme, four have topical Theme: *My body* (clause 1), *I* (clause 2), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4) and *You* (clause 5), none has interpersonal or textual Theme, four have unmarked Theme: *My body* (clause 1); *I* (clause 2), *The hand that kneads me* (clause 4), and *You* (clause 5), none has marked Theme, and one has no Theme. A closer examination shows that like the Balaban version and the Huynh version, in clause 1 the translator uses *My body* [referring back to Floating Sweet Dumpling] which is single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *is powdery white and round* as Rheme/New. Clause 2 begins with *I* which is also single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given as the point of departure of the message and the remaining segment *sink* as Rheme/New. This is followed by clause 3 which has no Theme and the segment *and bob like a mountain in a pond* functions as Rheme/New. Clause 4 starts with a new Theme which is not connected with any of Theme or Rheme of the previous clauses. Here, like the Huynh version, the translator places *The hand that kneads me* as single, topical and unmarked Theme/Given and *is hard and rough* as Rheme/New. The metaphorised Theme in clause 4 is picked up as Theme in clause 5. Here *You* [referring to *The hand that kneads me*] which is a single, topical Theme/Given is used as the point of departure of the message and *can't destroy my true red heart* as Rheme/New. The thematic pattern of the five clauses and their thematic progression pattern in the Chin version can be represented as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Theme 1 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 1 |
| • Theme 2 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 2 |
| • Ø | ^ Rheme 3 |
| • Theme 4 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 4 |
| • Theme 4 (single/topical/unmarked) | ^ Rheme 5 |

Details of Theme showing the similarities and differences between “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation can be represented in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Details of Theme in “Bánh trôi nước” and the three versions of translation

| Types of theme | Bánh trôi nước | The Balaban version | The Huynh version | The Chin version |
|------------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Number of clause | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Single theme: | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Multiple theme: | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Topical theme: | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Interpersonal theme: | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Textual theme: | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unmarked theme: | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Marked theme: | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Themeless clause: | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| [single; topical; unmarked]: | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| [single; topical; marked]: | 1 | 2 | 1 | 0 |

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary

In this paper, we have attempted to make a comparison between three English versions of translation – “The Floating Cake” translated by John Balaban, “The Cake That Drifts In Water” translated by Huỳnh Sanh Thông, and “Floating Sweet Dumpling” translated by Marilyn Chin with a popular Vietnamese poem – “Bánh trôi nước” written by the famous Vietnamese poetess Hồ Xuân Hương. The two research questions we raised for exploration are: (1) “How are the source poem and the translated versions constructed in terms of ideational, interpersonal, and textual meanings?” and (2) “To what extent are the translated versions similar to and different from the source poem and to what extent are the translated versions similar to and different from one another in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings?” To answer these questions, we

have used systemic functional linguistics as the theoretical framework; and based on the compositional feature of language, we have broken down the source poem and the translated versions into smaller meaningful parts: clause complexes, clause simplexes, groups/phrases, and words. Then we counted them, analyzing them in terms of transitivity, mood, and theme, and then comparing them, one by one. In comparing, we have tried to established points of similarities/equivalents and mismatches/differences between the translated texts and the source text and between the translated texts. It is clear from our comparison that there are both similarities and differences between the translated versions and the source poem and between the translated versions themselves in terms of logico-semantic complexing, transitivity, mood, and theme. To recapitulate, the similarities and differences between the source poem and the three translated versions can be summarized as follows:

Logically, the source poem is constructed into two clause complexes; the first complex has three clauses constructed in hypotactic relation and the second one has two clauses constructed in paratactic relation. The Balaban version is also constructed into two clause complexes; but instead of three as the source poem, the first complex has four clauses constructed in hypotactic relation and the second one has two clauses constructed in paratactic relation. The Huynh version, in contrast, is constructed into one independent clause and two clause complexes; the first complex has two clauses constructed in paratactic relation, and the second one has two clauses also constructed in paratactic relation. The Chin version, like the Huynh version, is constructed into one independent clause and two clause complexes; the first complex has two clauses constructed in paratactic relation, and the second one has two clauses also constructed in paratactic relation.

Experientially, the source poem is represented in five clauses of which two are relational, two are material, and one is behavioural. In contrast, the Balaban version is represented in six clauses of which three are relational and three are material. Like the source poem, the Huynh version is represented in five clauses of which two are relational, two are material, and one is behavioural. Unlike the source poem and the other two translated versions, the Chin version is represented in five clauses of which two are relational and three are material.

Interpersonally, all five clauses of the source poem are declarative of which two are Subjectless and three have Subjects that have the feature of “human”, and two of which have the features of “female”, “junior/younger”, and “intimate”. The Balaban version is constructed into three declarative clauses,

two non-finite clauses and one modalized clause. Of the four clauses that have Subject, three have Subjects which have the feature of “human” and one has Subject which has the feature of “non-human”. The Huynh version is organized around three declarative clauses and two modalized clauses. Of the four clauses that have Subject, three have the feature of “human” and one has the feature of “non-human”. The Chin version is organized around four declarative clauses and one modalized clause. Of the five clauses, four have Subject and one is Subjectless. Of the four Subjects, three have the feature of “human” and one has the feature of “non-human”. What makes the three translated versions differ from the source text is that the Subjects in these versions only have the feature of “human”; the other features “female”, “junior/younger”, and “intimate” which the Subjects of the source poem possess are not found in these texts.

Textually, the source poem has three clause themes of which Theme 1 and Theme 5 have (anaphoric) reference to the title: *Bánh trôi nước – Thân em – em*. The Balaban version has four clause themes of which only Theme 1 has reference to from the title: *The Floating Cake – My body*. There are two items that have reference to the title but they are placed in the Rheme: *me* (clause 5) and *my heart* (clause 6). The Huynh version has four clause themes of which two have reference to the title: *The Cake That Drifts in Water – My body* (clause 1) – *I* (clause 5). There are two other items that have reference to the title, but they are placed in the Rheme portion: *I* (clause 2) and *me* (clause 4). The Chin version has four clause themes of which two have reference to the title: *Floating Sweet Dumpling – My body* (clause 1) – *I* (clause 2). Like the Huynh version, there are two other items in the Chin version that have reference

to the title, but they are placed in the Rheme portion: *me* (clause 4) and *my true red heart* (clause 5).

As far as lexical choice is concerned, there are certain items in the translated versions which can be similar or equivalent to those in the source poem: the form *white* in the Balaban version, the Huynh version, and the Chin version can be equivalent to the form *trắng* in the source poem; the form *round* in the Balaban version, the Huynh version, and the Chin version can be equivalent to the form *tròn* in the source poem; the form *rising* in the Balaban version and *bob* in the Chin version to a certain extent can be equivalent to the form *nổi* in the source poem; the form *sinking* in the Balaban version and *sink* in the Huynh version and the Chin version to a large extent can be equivalent to the form *chìm* in the source poem, and the reference of *My body to The Floating Cake* in the Balaban version, *The Cake That Drifts In Water* in the Huynh version, and *Floating Sweet Dumpling* in the Chin version to a certain extent can be considered to be comparable to the reference of *Thân em to Bánh trôi nước* in the source poem. There are, however, grammatical and lexical choices in the three translated versions which are very different from those in the source poem. As shown in our analysis in Section 3.3.1, the choices of *my fate* and *Whatever way* in the Balaban version, *powdery, I, You,* and *You can't destroy* in the Chin version, and *The hand that kneads me* in the Huynh and the Chin versions do not have correspondences in the source poem. It seems that the more delicate level we explore, the more differences or mismatches we can find between the translated versions and the source poem and between the translated versions.

One important factor that contributes to making the three versions of translation

differ more markedly from the source poem is that there are some symbolic and cultural values attached to “Bánh trôi nước” having its origin in the Vietnamese culture (cf. Tran, 2012; Vuong, 2016) which do not seem to be laden in “The Floating Cake”, “The Cake That Drifts In Water”, and “Floating Sweet Dumpling”. In reading “Bánh trôi nước”, the reader is led into the realm of some metaphorical modes of meaning which, in this particular context, seem to be readily understood by the Vietnamese. For example, although the expression *Thân em* literally refers to the body of the *Bánh trôi nước*, it can be readily understood by the Vietnamese as a metaphor for the body of a woman; the expression *Bây nổi ba chìm với nước non* is realized non-metaphorically by two material clauses *Bây nổi* and *ba chìm với nước non*, it can be readily understood by the Vietnamese as a metaphorical expression indicating the vagabond now-up-and-now-down plight of the woman’s life; and the expression *tấm lòng son* is realized non-metaphorically as a nominal group consisting of the noun *tấm lòng* (heart) functioning as Head/Thing and the adjective *son* (red) functioning as Epithet, it can be readily understood as a metaphorical expression indicating the faithfulness or loyalty of a woman. Seen from this point of view, it is doubtful whether *Rising and sinking like mountains in streams* in the Balaban version, *In water I now swim, now sink* in the Huynh version, and *I sink and bob like a mountain in a pond* in the Chin version are equivalent to *Bây nổi ba chìm với nước non* in the source poem. It is even more doubtful whether *my heart is red and true* in the Balaban version, *my true-red heart* in the Huynh version, and *my true red heart* in the Chin version are equivalent to *tấm lòng son* in the source poem.

5.2. Limitation of the study and suggestion for further research

As pointed out in Section 3.1, a text is an instance of language (Halliday, 1991; Halliday & Hasan, 1976, 1985) which is a complex of several levels of meaning (Firth, 1957, 1968; Halliday & Martin, 1993; Hasan, 2011). The implication of this statement is that the analysis for the meanings of a text should be done from as many levels as possible. In this paper, we have only been able to analyze and compare the three translated versions with the source poem mainly at clause level and have only mentioned in passing some of the metaphorical meanings that lie behind the source text which the target versions do not seem to possess. Further research, therefore, should be done to reveal the total meanings of the texts so that more similarities and differences between the source text and the translated versions, and between the translated texts themselves will be established.

It has been widely recognized (Hatim & Mason, 1990; Bell, 1991; Venuti, 2008; Steiner, 1998; Levy, 2011) that poetic language is the most difficult to translate; and in most cases it is “untranslatable” (Jakobson, 2004: 118). This is because this kind of language usually contains in itself idiomatic expressions so unique to the experience of a culture that they cannot be fully translated into another language. Our examination and comparison of the three English versions of translation and the Vietnamese original poem “Bánh trôi nước” have demonstrated the challenges of poetic translation. The translators’ dilemma in this particular context is that when translating they must capture their poems’ phonological patterns (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration, assonance, etc.), morphological and syntactic patterns (words on the page and grammatical structures), semantic patterns (experiential, logical, interpersonal, and

textual meanings), and poetics (imagery, metrics, etc.) as truthfully to the original as possible. Furthermore, they must go beyond those linguistic aspects to capture the cultural values that lie behind the source poem whose grammatical categories carry a high semantic import. These translation competences are “a tall order” (Vuong, 2016) which very few translators could possess. Our study has shown that different translators give different versions of the source poem. This raises the question of translatability in poetic translation, but unfortunately, we have not been able to discuss it in detail in our study, especially when the source poem sets high formal, semantic and cultural challenges to the translator. More research, therefore, should be conducted to explore the degrees of translatability from the source poem into the target poems in terms of these challenges.

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“BÁNH TRÔI NƯỚC” VÀ BA BẢN DỊCH TIẾNG ANH: SO SÁNH THEO LÝ THUYẾT CHỨC NĂNG HỆ THỐNG

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết này so sánh ba bản dịch tiếng Anh: “The Floating Cake” của John Balaban, “The Cake That Drifts In Water” của Huỳnh Sanh Thông và “Floating Sweet Dumpling” của Marilyn Chin với bài thơ gốc tiếng Việt “Bánh trôi nước” của nữ thi sĩ lừng danh Hồ Xuân Hương. Khung lý thuyết sử dụng để phân tích và so sánh các văn bản là ngôn ngữ học chức năng hệ thống. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy có cả những điểm tương đồng và dị biệt giữa ba bản dịch với bài thơ gốc và giữa ba bản dịch với nhau trên ba bình diện nghĩa tư tưởng, nghĩa liên nhân và nghĩa ngôn bản. Kết quả nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng có nhiều điểm khác biệt ở cấp độ lựa chọn từ vựng (cấp độ lựa chọn từ và ngữ) hơn là ở cấp độ lựa chọn cấu trúc cú pháp (cấp độ lựa chọn các mẫu thức chuyên tác, thức và đề ngữ) giữa ba bản dịch và bài thơ gốc, và giữa ba bản dịch với nhau.

Từ khóa: ngôn ngữ chức năng hệ thống, ngôn cảnh, văn bản, siêu chức năng tư tưởng, siêu chức năng liên nhân, siêu chức năng ngôn bản, bài thơ gốc, các bản dịch

TEST TAKERS' ATTITUDES TO THE TEST CONTENT OF THE TWO LISTENING TESTS: IELTS AND TOEFL iBT

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Abstract: Ten aspects of test content in the two listening tests: IELTS and TOEFL iBT are investigated from the perspective of test-takers' judgment. Main findings reveal that there are both similarities and differences in test takers' attitudes to the two tests although the similarities outweigh the differences. The most obvious difference is that test takers have a more positive attitude to the IELTS listening test than to the TOEFL iBT listening test and test preparation has a strong effect to test takers' attitude to the test. In addition, test takers' positive attitudes to the test are strongly associated with better test performance. Substantial differences of test takers' attitude to the two listening tests can be seen in their judgment of difficulty level, new words/technical terms and familiarity of topics. Test takers found the IELTS listening test less difficult, having fewer new words and technical terms, and containing more familiar topics than the TOEFL iBT listening test. They also find the test method of the IELTS is less challenging than that of the TOEFL iBT listening test although their choice of the test to take heavily depends on which test they are being prepared for.

Keywords: IELTS listening test, TOEFL iBT listening test, test-takers' attitudes, test content, test method, test difficulty level, test performance, test choice

This study investigates test-takers' attitudes to the test content across the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests – the two international English tests which are worldwide used to measure English language proficiency for non-native language learners. In the Vietnamese context, it has also been widely used to measure English language proficiency of EFL students although there are various opinions among English language learners relating to the choice of either IELTS or TOEFL iBT.

1. Reasons to investigate the test content

Although test-takers' perception of test content can be considered a component of

construct validity, there are debates about the status of test takers' feedback. The researcher of this study takes the view that test takers' perceptions are indeed relevant to test validity. There are several reasons behind this conception.

Firstly, test takers should be engaged in the test so that they can perform to the best of their ability. This can only be done if the test content is familiar to them and they believe that the test can reflect their true ability. Test takers' engagement in the test can contribute to the test construct validity as Bachman and Palmer (1996) discussed. It can be assumed that test takers are inexperienced judges and thus their opinions should not be considered. In addition, whether or not they like the test, they have to take it anyway. For example, a patient does not

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like an injection, but s/he still has to take it in order to overcome the illness. However, if s/he knows about the process s/he will go through with the injection, the patient will cope with it better and might feel less pain. Similarly, a test taker might not like the test but s/he has to take it in order to be accepted into a university. Still, if s/he feels positive with the test, s/he can lower his anxiety and thus can give the best performance to his/her ability.

Secondly, test takers’ opinions are important because additional features of the task as well as additional challenges emerging while processing the task, which are not visible by test designers or test raters, might be discovered by test takers (Elder, Iwashita, & McNamara, 2002). Test takers and test stake holders often have strong belief in test content. In order to enhance the construct validity of a test, it is necessary to combine the understanding of test designers, test stake holders and test takers. However, the voice of test takers has been least heard so far (Hamp-Lyons, 2000).

2. Research contexts and participants

Participants in the study were 107 Vietnamese students who were taking IELTS or TOEFL preparation courses in Hanoi to study overseas in English-speaking countries. The IELTS preparation group consisted of 54 candidates and the TOEFL preparation group was comprised of 53 candidates. Both groups

were provided and had a trial with the test they were not prepared for before taking the tests. 95 candidates taking the two tests under test-taking conditions (providing quantitative data) and 12 candidates took the two tests with think-aloud protocols (providing qualitative data). Think-aloud in the context of this study means a pause was given after each block of listening questions to allow test-takers to verbalise what they were thinking while forming their answers to each item in the test.

3. Instruments

3.1. Listening tests

The test materials used in the study were the IELTS Specimen listening test versions 2005 and the TOEFL iBT practice test online 2005. While this may place certain constraints on the validity of the study, it should be noted that the IELTS Specimen practice test published by the British Council, IDP IELTS Australia, and University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations is closer to the actual IELTS test than any other commercially available IELTS practice test. Similarly, the TOEFL iBT practice test available online 2005 closely simulates the real TOEFL iBT test. The summary description of items and listening passages in the IELTS and TOEFL iBT used in the study is as follows:

Table 1. Description of IELTS Specimen listening test 2005

| | |
|--|---|
| Section 1: [conversation]: An interview between a policeman and a witness | 10 questions/ testing items Questions 1 to 10 |
| Section 2: [monologue]: A recorded message giving information about an English hotel. | 10 questions/ testing items Questions 11 to 20 |
| Section 3: [conversation]: Three students talking about their study programs. | 10 questions/ testing items Questions 21 to 30 |
| Section 4: [monologue]: A talk by a university lecturer in Australia on a type of bird in Tasmania. | 10 question / testing items Question 31 to 40 |

Table 2. Description of TOEFL iBT listening practice test 2005

| Part 1: 17 questions/ testing items | |
|---|--|
| Conversation 1.1: <i>A talk between a lecturer and a student about her missing from class and the handout she missed.</i> | 5 questions/ testing items Questions 1 to 5 |
| Lecture 1.1: <i>Biology: sound development in birds</i> | 6 questions/ testing items Questions 6 to 11 |
| Lecture 1.2: <i>History: the development of a historical place.</i> | 6 questions/ testing items Questions 12 to 17 |
| Part 2: 17 questions/ testing items | |
| Conversation 2.1: <i>A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library</i> | 5 questions/ testing items Questions 18 to 22 |
| Lecture 2.1: <i>Business</i> | 6 questions/ testing items Questions 23 to 28 |
| Lecture 2.2: <i>Astronomy</i> | 6 questions/ testing items Questions 29 to 34 |

3.2. Aspects of test content to be investigated and the questionnaire of test content

A comparison of test takers' attitude to the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests will be examined by (i) exploring test takers' general attitude to the test, (ii) performing correlations between test takers' attitudes to the test and test scores across both the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests, and (iii) investigating test takers' attitude to *each dimension* of test content, namely:

Aspect 1: the test as a whole (Part A of the questionnaire)

Aspect 2: the test instructions (Part B of the questionnaire)

Aspect 3: prediction before listening (Part C of the questionnaire)

a. the reading questions and the effect of reading questions before listening (the IELTS listening test), and

b. the visual stimulus and its effect on comprehension and concentration (the TOEFL iBT listening test)

Aspect 4: the challenge of reading questions, listening to stimulus and writing answers at the same time (the IELTS listening test) versus answering questions after listening to the stimulus (the TOEFL iBT listening test,) (Part D of the questionnaire)

Aspect 5: the time allocation (i) to check and transfer the answers (in the IELTS listening test), (ii) to read questions, answer and check the answer (in the TOEFL iBT listening test) (Part E of the questionnaire)

Aspect 6: the difficulty level of each section in the test (Part F of the questionnaire)

Aspect 7: the new words, technical terms in each section of the test (Part G of the questionnaire)

Aspect 8: the topic familiarity of each section of the test (Part H of the questionnaire)

Aspect 9: the relation between the test and listening ability (Part I of the questionnaire)

Aspect 10: the challenging level of the two tests and test takers' preference for one or the other (Part K of the questionnaire)

See the full questionnaire in Appendix 1A and Appendix 1B for the detailed aspects of test takers’ reflection on the two tests investigated in this study.

4. Data analysis and findings

4.1. Test takers’ general attitude to the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests

The 31 item questionnaire (given to the test takers after they had finished each listening test) investigates test takers’ attitude to the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests. These items cover 10 components of test content and comparison as listed above. For each item, test-takers were asked to judge their degree of agreement or disagreement by ticking an appropriate box as indicated below:

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① |
| strongly agree | agree | slightly agree | slightly disagree | disagree | strongly disagree |

In order to quantify responses and allow a comparison of test takers’ attitudes across the two listening tests, responses to negatively worded items were recoded so that all ‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’ responses on the Likert-scale were indicators of ‘positive’ attitude (feeling good about the test and its components).

The software program of Quest analyses was used to measure the degree to which test-takers’ had a positive attitude to the test. The positive logit values are indicative of positive

attitudes reflecting the fact that ‘strongly agree’ items were recoded as 6, ‘strongly disagree’ as 1¹.

The numbers of test takers with the positive values (for the IELTS and TOEFL iBT listening test respectively) shown in table 3 below reveal that those with a generally positive attitude to the IELTS listening test are greater in number than is the case with the TOEFL iBT listening test (54 vs. 41).

Table 3. A comparison of test takers’ positive attitude to the test across the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests

| | Positive attitude to the IELTS listening test (n = 95) | | Positive attitude to the TOEFL iBT listening test (n = 95) | |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | The IELTS preparation group (n = 48) | The TOEFL preparation group (n = 47) | The IELTS preparation group (n = 48) | The TOEFL preparation group (n = 47) |
| In each test preparation group | 37 (75%) | 17 (42.55%) | 13 (27.65%) | 28 (59.57%) |
| Total positive responses | 54/95 (56.84%) | | 41/95 (43.16%) | |

This finding that test takers had a more positive attitude to the IELTS listening test than to the TOEFL iBT listening test was confirmed by the mean attitude logit values: (.14 and 0 for the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests respectively.) This means that

the test-takers tended to have slightly positive attitude to the IELTS listening test and a

¹ Tables listing logit values of each test taker’s attitude to the two tests study can be provided by emailing the author.

neutral attitude to the TOEFL iBT listening test. From here two issues will be investigated further: (i) Is the difference between test takers' attitudes to the two listening tests statistically significant? (ii) Is there any significant correlation across test takers' attitudes across these two listening tests? With regard to the first issue, a Paired Sample T-test shows that the difference was not significant ($t = 1.987$, $p > .05$). As for the second issue, the result of a Pearson correlation 2-tailed ($r = .239$, $p = .019$ or $p < .05$) was significant indicating that attitudes to one test were strongly associated with attitudes to the other.

In addition, there is tentative evidence of the effect of test preparation on test takers' attitude to the test as shown in table 3. The numbers of test takers with positive attitudes to each test were unequally distributed across the two test preparation groups: more test takers from the IELTS preparation group felt positive about the IELTS listening than test takers from the TOEFL iBT preparation group (37 vs. 17 respectively). Similarly, more test takers from the TOEFL preparation felt positive about the TOEFL iBT listening test than test takers from the IELTS preparation group (28 vs. 13 respectively).

Test takers' attitude to each component of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests will be analysed and discussed in detail in section 4.3.

4.2. Correlation between test takers' positive attitude to the test and test scores across the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests

As argued in *reason to investigate the test content* above one of the reasons for investigating the test takers' reactions to the test is that a positive attitude to the test might lower test takers' anxiety and thus enhance their performance. The correlation between test takers' attitude towards each test and their performance will determine if that is the case.

Across both tests, the statistical values support the argument that test takers' positive attitudes to the test are associated with better test performance ($r = .412$, $p = .000$; and $r = .595$, $p = .000$). This correlation is significant across both the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests ($p < .001$). However, the relationship is stronger in the TOEFL iBT listening test than in the IELTS listening test ($r = .595$ vs. $r = .412$ respectively).

4.3. Test takers' attitude to each component of test content

4.3.1. Aspect 1: Test takers' attitude to the test as a whole

There were 5 items asking test-takers to indicate their attitudes to the test as a whole (Part A of the questionnaire): (1) the level of interest, (2) the test length, (3) the speech rate, (4) the accents and (5) the overall difficulty level. Test-takers judgments are summed up in the following table.

Table 4. Test takers' average mean judgments of the test as a whole

| A. ABOUT THE TEST AS A WHOLE | | A1 | | A2 | | A3 | | A4 | | A5 | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|
| N | Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | IELTS | TOEFL iBT | IELTS | TOEFL iBT | IELTS | TOEFL iBT | IELTS | TOEFL iBT | IELTS | TOEFL iBT |
| Mean | | 4.60 | 4.79 | 2.76 | 2.41 | 3.64 | 3.45 | 3.25 | 3.37 | 3.95 | 4.43 |
| Median | | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Std. Deviation | | 1.07 | 1.02 | 1.18 | 1.18 | 1.22 | 1.07 | 1.13 | 1.17 | 1.26 | .95 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

A1. I found the test interesting.

A2. I found the test short.

A3. I found the speech rate fast.

A4. I found some of the accents difficult to understand.

A5. I found the test difficult overall

Generally, there are no differences across the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests in test takers' judgments of (1) interest level (2) length, (3) speech rate, and (4) accents.

The only noticeable difference in test takers' attitude to the test in general was their judgment of the overall difficulty level of each test. They tended to agree that the TOEFL iBT listening test was difficult overall but only slightly agreed that the IELTS listening test was difficult overall (means of 4.43vs. 3.95 respectively). This difference in difficulty level across the two tests was large and statistically

significant (Wilcoxon 2-tailed $z = -3.369$, $p = .001$). See section 4.3.6 in this paper for more detailed results and a discussion of test takers' judgments of difficulty level across the two listening tests in general and each section of the test in particular.

4.3.2. Aspect 2: Test takers' judgment to the test instructions

Test takers tended to find test instructions on both the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests clear. The median and the mode value of 5 indicating agreement confirm this tendency.

4.3.3. Aspect 3: Reading questions or seeing visual stimulus before listening to the text

In the IELTS listening test, already noted, test takers are given time to read questions in each section before they listen to the listening stimulus. In the TOEFL iBT listening test, they can see the topic of the listening text and a visual stimulus before the listening stimulus begins. Part C in the questionnaire investigates test takers attitude to *reading questions or a seeing visual stimulus before listening to the listening text*.

Table 5. Test takers' judgments of reading questions (IELTS) and seeing visual stimulus (TOEFL iBT)

| C. READING QUESTIONS AND THE EFFECT OF READING QUESTIONS BEFORE LISTENING (IELTS) | | | | C. VISUAL STIMULUS AND ITS EFFECT ON COMPREHENSION AND CONCENTRATION (TOEFL iBT) | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | | | | N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | | | |
| | <i>IELTS C1</i> | <i>IELTS C2</i> | <i>IELTS C3</i> | | <i>TOEFL iBT C1</i> | <i>TOEFL iBT C2</i> | <i>TOEFL iBT C3</i> |
| Mean | 4.64 | 5.29 | 3.51 | Mean | 4.25 | 2.87 | 4.73 |
| Median | 5 | 5 | 4 | Medium | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.09 | .77 | 1.27 | Std. Deviation | 1.19 | 1.23 | 1.11 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS C1. I was given enough time to read questions before listening.

IELTS C2. I found reading the questions before listening helped my comprehension.

IELTS C3. I found it difficult to remember the questions I read before listening.

TOEFL iBT C1. I found the visual stimulus (e.g classroom, lecturer's office or a library scene) helped my comprehension.

TOEFL iBT C2. I found visual stimulus (e.g classroom, lecturer's office or a library scene) distracting as it stayed on the screen.

TOEFL iBT C3. I found that technical terms and/or an illustrative picture (of what the lecturer was saying) on the screen helped my comprehension.

The mean (and also median) for item IELTS C1 both show that test takers found the time given to read questions before they listened to the stimulus in the IELTS listening test sufficient. Consequently, they found it not very difficult to remember the questions they read before listening (item IELTS C3).

With regard to the effect of reading questions (item IELTS C2) or seeing the visual stimulus (item TOEFL iBT C1) before listening to the stimulus, test takers found these preview opportunities helpful to their comprehension. However, they found reading questions before listening to stimulus in the IELTS listening test more helpful than the visual stimulus in the TOEFL iBT listening test (mean = 5.29 vs. 4.25). This difference is very large and significant (Wilcoxon 2-tailed z

= -6.219, $p = .000$). In addition, there was little variation in their attitude to the effective impact of previewing questions before listening in the IELTS listening (standard deviation of only .770). An in-depth analysis reveals that up to 87 test takers (or 91.6% of them) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that reading questions before listening to the stimulus helped them comprehend the listening text better. In other words, test takers seem to have a strong belief in the usefulness of seeing questions before actually listening to the text. (Information on test takers' reaction to reading questions after having listened to the listening stimulus in the TOEFL iBT is provided in the next part when questionnaire items D are compared.)

In contrast to the positive attitude to the usefulness of viewing questions before listening, test takers were not so optimistic about the effect of context visual stimulus on their comprehension. The average mean of their attitude to this item was 4.25, indicating slight agreement. In fact, only 45 (or 47.4% of test takers) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that seeing the visual stimulus before listening helped their comprehension.

In addition to context visual stimulus, in the TOEFL iBT listening test, content visual stimulus such as technical terms and/or an illustrative picture (of what the lecturer was saying) also appear on the screen while test takers are listening to the text. Test takers found the content visual stimulus very useful to their comprehension (item TOEFL iBT C3) as the mean average, the mode and the median are around 5 indicating an agreement. This findings is coherent with what Ginther (2001) found in her research on the effect of visuals on performance of TOEFL CBT Listening-Comprehension: "when the visual presented information that complemented the audio text... their presence facilitated performance" (p. 25).

4.3.4. Aspect 4: Answering questions in the listening tests

In the IELTS listening test, test takers listen to the stimulus and write their answers at the same time. In the TOEFL iBT listening

test, they listen to the whole stimulus of a conversation or lecture and then answer the questions. Section D in the questionnaire investigates their attitude to this structure of the listening tests and the findings are summarized in the following table.

Table 6. Test takers’ attitude to questions across the two tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests)

| D. CHALLENGE OF READING QUESTIONS, LISTENING TO STIMULUS AND WRITING ANSWERS (IELTS) | D1 | D2 | D. BEING GIVEN QUESTIONS AFTER LISTENING TO THE STIMULUS AND ANSWERING (TOEFL) | D1 | D2 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--|--------------------------|------------------|
| N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | <i>IELTS</i> | <i>IELTS</i> | N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | <i>T O E F L iBT</i> | <i>TOEFL iBT</i> |
| Mean | 4.09 | 4.06 | Mean | 4.01 | 4.72 |
| Median | 4 | 4 | Median | 4 | 5 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.20 | 1.11 | Std. Deviation | 1.42 | 1.00 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS D1. I found it difficult to manage listening to the stimulus, looking at the question, and writing the answers at the same time

IELTS D2. As I had to listen to the stimulus for several questions, I found it challenging to match a question with the listening stimulus I was listening to.

TOEFL iBT D1. I found seeing the questions after I had listened to the whole listening stimulus (of each conversation or lecture) helped my comprehension.

TOEFL iBT D2. Controlling the speed of answering the questions within 20 minutes given in this test was good for my performance.

At first sight, the mean of 4.09 for item D1

suggests that test takers did not find listening to the stimulus, looking at the question, and writing the answers at the same time in the IELTS listening test very difficult. Similarly, they did not think matching a question with the listening stimulus they were listening to in this test (item D2) was very challenging (mean = 4.06). However, the relatively large standard deviation (>1) suggests that there was considerable variability in response to this item. A closer analysis revealed that around 40% of test takers “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that these activities were challenging to them. The difficulty is likely due to the complexity of activities of: (1) listening to the stimulus, reading the questions and writing the answers at the same time, and (2) matching the question with the stimulus while listening. The interviews with think-aloud participants below revealed the reasons for the challenge of this test method to the IELTS listening test takers.

| Original in Vietnamese | English translation |
|---|--|
| <i>D. Trong bài thi, bạn phải vừa nghe bài nghe, vừa nhìn vào câu hỏi, đồng thời viết câu trả lời</i> <i>Câu 1. Hoạt động này có gì khó đối với bạn?</i> | <i>D. In the test, you had to listen to the stimulus, look at the questions and write down the answers at the same time.</i> <i>Question 1: How did you find this activity?</i> |
| tT130 Đây là khó khăn chung của những người thi IELTS đều bị tình trạng như vậy cả. | tT130 This is the common challenge to all IELTS test takers |
| tT96 Khó. Nhiều chỗ phải viết tắt... nhiều chỗ nghe được rồi nhưng mình viết đầy đủ là dứt luôn... ví dụ như chỗ 17 dễ nghe, lúc nghe được nhưng do viết thông tin là bị <i>miss</i> luôn. | tT96 Difficult. Many places [I] had to take short-hand... Many questions [I] could catch the information but I wrote in full forms so got lost... For example, it was easy to catch information for question 17. I could catch it but I was busy to write down other information so I <i>missed</i> it. |
| iT28 Em thấy nó cũng như thói quen của mình ở trên lớp thôi vì mình vẫn vừa nghe vừa viết... tuy nhiên có nhiều lúc mình nghe được từ đấy nhưng mình nghe rất là... là... quen nhưng mình lại không nhớ là phải viết như thế nào và nghĩ thế là mình bị bỏ lỡ những từ khác... bị lỡ những thông tin khác tiếp theo. | iT28 I think it was just like my habit in the class as I often have to listen and write down at the same time... However, there were times I could hear the words and these words sound very... very familiar but I didn't remember their spellings and I thought about them thus I missed other words... missed other incoming information |
| iT18 Đôi khi rất là khó nếu mà từ đọc quá nhanh mà em không có kỹ năng viết tắt lắm. | iT18 Sometimes it was difficult if the speech rate was too fast and also I did not have skills of taking short-hand. |

In contrast to the IELTS, in the TOEFL iBT listening test, test takers can control the speed of answering questions within the total of 20 minutes given. Item TOEFL iBT D2 shows that test takers thought that control over the speed was good for their performance (mean = 4.72). In fact, 67 (or 70.52% of test takers) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” about its benefits.

Item TOEFL iBT D1 investigates the effect of seeing and reading questions after having listened to the listening stimulus of the whole conversation or lecture to test takers' comprehension. Test takers seem to be divided in their attitude to this issue (standard deviation = 1.42). Although the mean (4.01) suggests that they generally “slightly disagreed” with the statement that “seeing the questions after I had listened to the whole listening stimulus

(of each conversation or lecture) helped my comprehension”, there were 44 (or 46.31% of test takers) who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with that statement. In other words, test takers had different attitudes to this method of the TOEFL iBT listening test: while many thought it was helpful, many others did not think so.

Compared to the test method of the IELTS listening test: reading questions before listening to the stimulus (item IELTS C2), test takers seem to find it much more helpful than the test method of the TOEFL iBT listening test: reading questions after having listened to the whole listening stimulus (item TOEFL iBT D1): mean = 5.29 vs. 4.01 respectively. This difference is very large and significant (Wilcoxon 2-tailed $z = -5.976$, $p = .000$).

4.3.5. Aspect 5: Time allocation to answering questions

In the IELTS listening test, test takers answer the questions while listening, thus they are given time to check their answer and by the end of the test, to transfer them onto the answer sheet. In the TOEFL iBT test

takers only see the questions after the whole listening stimulus of a conversation or lecture finishes, thus they have to use given time to read questions, answer them and check each of them before moving to the next item. Part D in the questionnaire investigates test takers' attitude to this feature of the two tests.

Table 7. Test takers' attitude to time allocation to answering questions across the two tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests)

| E. TIME ALLOCATION TO CHECK AND TRANSFER THE ANSWERS (IELTS) | E1 | E2 | E3 | E. TIME ALLOCATION TO READ QUESTIONS, ANSWER AND CHECK THE ANSWERS (TOEFL) | E1 |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|------------|
| N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | <i>IELTS</i> | <i>IELTS</i> | <i>IELTS</i> | N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | <i>iBT</i> |
| Mean | 4.40 | 3.76 | 4.94 | Mean | 4.78 |
| Median | 5 | 4 | 5 | Median | 5 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.29 | 1.57 | 1.19 | Std. Deviation | 1.12 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS E1: I had enough time to check my answers after listening to each section stimulus.

IELTS E2: I found the one minute allowed for checking all my answers at the end of the test sufficient.

IELTS E3: I found the 10 minutes allowed for transferring my answers to the answer sheet sufficient.

TOEFL iBT E1: I found the overall time of 20 minutes given to answer all the questions in this listening test sufficient.

The means of all items show that across both tests, test takers generally found they had sufficient time to check the answer (in the IELTS listening test) and to answer and check the answers (in the TOEFL iBT listening test).

4.3.6. Aspect 6: Difficulty of each section in the test

In part F of the questionnaire, test takers were asked to indicate their perception regarding the difficulty level of each section (the conversation, monologue, or lecture) in each test by stating their level of agreement with the statement: "I found this section difficult." The following table summarizes test takers' judgments of each section and the mean of all sections in each test.

Table 8. Difficulty level of each section across the two listening tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT)

| F. DIFFICULTY LEVEL OF EACH SECTION IN THE TEST N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | <i>The IELTS Listening test</i> | | | | <i>The TOEFL iBT Listening test</i> | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | F1 Section 1 (everday conversation) | F2 Section 2 (everday monologue) | F3 Section 3 (academic conversation) | F4 Section 4 (academic monologue) | F1 Part 1 Conversation 1 | F2 Part 1 Lecture 1 (monologue lecture) | F3 Part 1 Lecture 2 (interactive lecture) | F4 Part 2 Conversation 2 | F5 Part 2 Lecture 3 (monologue lecture) | F6 Part 2 Lecture 4 (interactive lecture) |
| Mean | 3.03 | 3.48 | 4.17 | 4.59 | 3.08 | 3.94 | 4.78 | 3.16 | 4.78 | 5.40 |
| Average mean | 3.25 | | 4.38 | | 4.19 | | | | | |
| Median | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.27 | 1.19 | 1.12 | 1.05 | .93 | .88 | .86 | .86 | .67 | .86 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS F1, 2, 3, 4, and TOEFL iBT F1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: “I found this section difficult.”

Several points emerge from table 8. Firstly, the average mean of all sections across the two tests shows that test takers found the TOEFL iBT listening test more difficult than the IELTS listening test (4.19 vs. 3.82). This is rather consistent across all sections of the

two tests and it again confirms that test takers in general found the TOEFL iBT listening test more challenging than the IELTS listening test.

4.3.7. Aspect 7: New words/ technical terms in each section of the test

Assuming that new words or technical terms might affect test takers’ listening comprehension, section G in the questionnaire asks test takers to judge whether there were too many of them in each listening section they had just done. Their answers are summed up in table 9 below.

Table 9. New words/ technical terms in each section across the two listening tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT)

| G. NEW WORDS/ TECHNICAL TERMS OF EACH SECTION IN THE TEST N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | The IELTS Specimen listening test2005 | | | | The TOEFL iBT practice listening test2005 | | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | G1 Section 1 (every-day conversation) | G2 Section 2 (every-day monologue) | G3 Section 3 (academic conversation) | G4 Section 4 (academic monologue) | G1 Part 1 Conversation 1 | G2 Part 1 Lecture 1 (monologue lecture) | G3 Part 1 Lecture 2 (interactive lecture) | G4 Part 2 Conversation 2 | G5 Part 2 Lecture 3 (monologue lecture) | G6 Part 2 Lecture 4 (interactive lecture) |
| | Section 1: An interview between police and the witness. Section 2: A recorded message giving information about an English hotel. Section 3: Three students talking about their study programs. Section 4: A talk by a university lecture in Australia on a type of bird in Tasmania. | | | | Conversation 1: A talk between a lecturer and a student about her missing form class and the hand out she missed. Lecture 1: Biology: The sound development in birds Lecture 2: History: The development of a historical place. Conversation 2: A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library Lecture 3: Business Lecture 4: Astronomy | | | | | |
| Mean | 2.61 | 2.78 | 3.47 | 4.41 | 2.80 | 4.32 | 5.09 | 2.93 | 4.11 | 5.56 |
| Mean average | 2.69 | | 3.94 | | 4.14 | | | | | |
| Median | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.08 | 1.07 | 1.14 | 1.09 | .67 | .62 | .70 | .68 | .53 | .72 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS G1, 2, 3, 4, and TOEFL iBT G1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: “I found that this section has many new words/technical terms.”

The TOEFL iBT listening test was perceived to have more new words/technical

terms than the IELTS listening test overall (4.14 vs. 3.32). It is also worth mentioning that specific topics such as *the development of a historical place (in America)* and *Astronomy (Pluto)* in the TOEFL iBT test were perceived by test takers as having many new words/ technical terms than others. Nearly all test takers (100% and 98.94% of them) agreed that they found that these two lectures had many new words/ technical terms.

4.3.8. Aspect 8: Familiarity of topic of each section in the test to test takers

As discussed in the literature review, topic familiarity also has a certain influence

on listeners' comprehension. Section H of the questionnaire asks tests takers to judge whether each topic across the two listening tests was familiar to them. Table 10 below summarizes their judgments.

Table 10. Familiarity of topic in each section across the two listening tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT)

| H. TOPIC FAMILIARITY OF EACH SECTION IN THE TEST N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | The IELTS Specimen listening test2005 | | | | The TOEFL iBT practice listening test2005 | | | | | |
|---|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | H1 Section 1 (every-day conversation) | H2 Section 2 (every-day monologue) | H3 Section 3 (academic conversation) | H4 Section 4 (academic lecture) | H1 Part 1 Conversation 1 | H2 Part 1 Lecture 1 (monologue lecture) | H3 Part 1 Lecture 2 (interactive lecture) | H4 Part 2 Conversation 2 | H5 Part 2 Lecture 3 (monologue lecture) | G6 Part 2 Lecture 4 (interactive lecture) |
| | Section 1: An interview between police and the witness. Section 2: A recorded message giving information about an English hotel. Section 3: Three students talking about their study programs. Section 4: A talk by a university lecture in Australia on a type of bird in Tasmania. | | | | Conversation 1: A talk between a lecturer and a student about her missing form class and the hand out she missed. Lecture 1: Biology: The sound development in birds Lecture 2: History: The development of a historical place. Conversation 2: A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library Lecture 3: Business Lecture 4: Astronomy | | | | | |
| Mean | 4.48 | 4.48 | 4.43 | 3.26 | 4.99 | 3.65 | 3.42 | 4.84 | 3.59 | 1.93 |
| Mean average | 4.48 | | 3.84 | | 3.74 | | | | | |
| | 4.16 | | | | | | | | | |
| Median | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Std. Deviation | 1.00 | .861 | .919 | 1.20 | .51 | .56 | .69 | .42 | .62 | .99 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS H1, 2, 3, 4, and TOEFL iBT H1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6: "I felt that the topic of this section was familiar."

Overall test takers felt that the topics of listening sections in the IELTS listening test were more familiar to them than those in the TOEFL iBT listening test (4.16 vs. 3.74). Topic unfamiliarity level can contribute to the difficulty level of a test as found by other

researchers such as Chiang and Dunkel (1992), Long (1990), Markham and Latham (1987), and Schmidt-Rinehart (1994) and (Celestine & Ming, 1999), this can partly explain why test takers found the TOEFL iBT listening test more difficult than the IELTS listening test.

4.3.9. The relation between the test and test takers' listening ability

The most interesting aspect of test takers' attitude to the test is probably their belief in the fairness of the test itself. Section I in the questionnaire investigates if test takers thought the score on each test would reflect their true listening ability.

Table 11. Test takers' judgments of relation between the test and their listening ability across the two listening tests (the IELTS and TOEFL iBT)

| I. RELATION BETWEEN THE TEST AND LISTENING ABILITY | II | |
|--|---|---|
| | <i>The IELTS Specimen listening test 2005</i> | <i>TOEFL iBT practice listening test 2005</i> |
| N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | | |
| Mean | 4.22 | 4.44 |
| Median | 4 | 4 |
| Mode | 5 | 5 |
| Std. Deviation | .97 | .89 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

IELTS I1 and TOEFL iBT I1: "The score on this test will reflect my true listening ability"

Generally, test takers' responses indicated an agreement that their scores on both the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests were a true reflection of their listening ability. The raw data reveals that 76 (80% of test takers) and 80 (84.21% of them) believed so. Though test takers' belief in the fairness of the TOEFL iBT listening test was stronger than that for the IELTS test (4.44 vs. 4.22),

Table 12. Test takers' general comparison of the two listening tests (the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT)

| K. COMPARING TWO TEST AND MAKING A CHOICE | K1 | K2 |
|---|------|---------|
| N Valid: 95 Missing: 0 | | |
| Mean | 3.85 | 3.71 |
| Median | 4 | 4 |
| Mode | 5 | 4 (5,6) |
| Std. Deviation | 1.54 | 1.70 |

Note:

6 = strongly agree, 5 = agree, 4 = slightly agree, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree

K1: "In general I found the TOEFL listening

the difference was very small (.22) and not statistically significant (Wilcoxon 2-tailed $z = -1.517$, $p = .129$). In other words, we can say that test takers shared a similar belief in the capacity of the two listening tests to measure their listening ability.

4.3.10. Aspect 10: Comparing the two test and making a choice

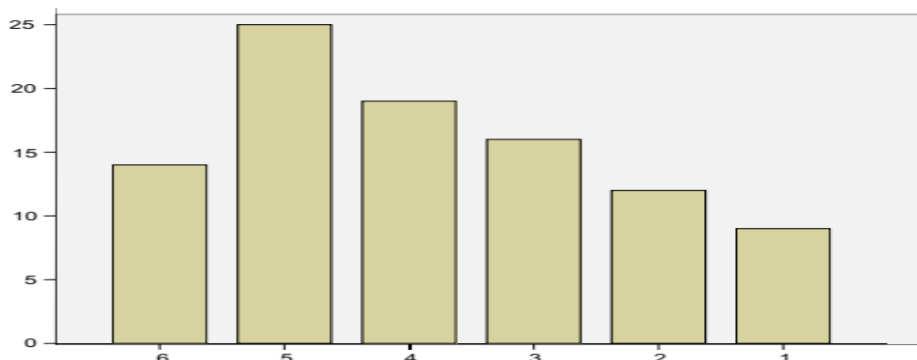
The last item in the questionnaire, item K, asks test takers to make a comparison between the two listening tests in terms of level of challenge and their preference for one or the other of them. Test takers' perception of the two listening tests is summed up in the following table:

test more challenging than the IELTS listening test."

K2: "If I had a choice, I would prefer to sit for the IELTS listening test rather than the TOEFL listening test."

The mean shows that test takers' response fell between "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree" categories, which indicates that the TOEFL iBT listening test was perceived to be more challenging than the IELTS listening

test (3.85). The raw data reveals that more than half of test takers agreed that the TOEFL iBT listening test was more challenging than the IELTS listening test as shown in the figure 1 below.

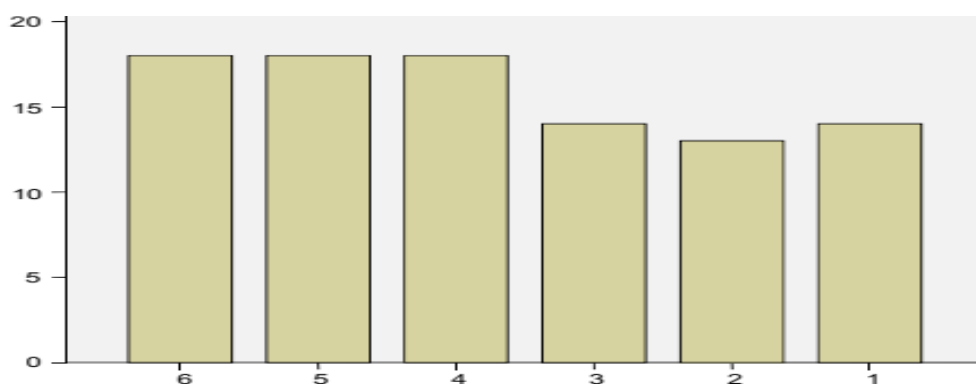


Note: 6: strongly agree, 5: slightly agree, 4: agree, 3: disagree, 2: slightly disagree, 1: strongly disagree

Figure 1. Test takers' judgments "the TOEFL listening test was more challenging than the IELTS listening test"

However the standard deviation of 1.54 indicates that test takers' opinions on the relative challenge levels of the two tests varied widely. This large variation is also evident for item K2 (preference for the IELTS vs. the

TOEFL iBT listening tests). The mean of 3.71 indicates that their responses were between "slightly agree" and "slightly disagree" indicating that they would choose the IELTS listening. A closer analysis of the raw data, however, shows that they were almost evenly split in half for their preference either for the IELTS or the TOEFL iBT listening test as indicated in figure 2 below.



Note: 6: strongly agree, 5: slightly agree, 4: agree, 3: disagree, 2: slightly disagree, 1: strongly disagree

Figure 2. Test takers' preference of the IELTS listening test to the TOEFL listening test

In short, no clear pattern can be seen in section K of the questionnaire. Test takers were split nearly 50-50 in their judgments as to whether the TOEFL iBT listening test was more challenging than the IELTS listening test. Similarly, they were split nearly evenly in their preference for one or the other test.

The interview data from the think-aloud participants reveal that the core of the preference for one or the other test related to which test the test takers had prepared for rather than to the nature of the test itself as shown below.

| Original questions and answers in Vietnamese | English translation |
|---|--|
| <i>Câu K2: Nếu được phép lựa chọn, bạn sẽ chọn bài thi nào, bài thi nghe TOEFL hay bài thi nghe IELTS?</i> | <i>Item K2: If you could make a choice, which test would you sit for: the IELTS listening test or the TOEFL iBT listening test?</i> |
| Participant tT121: Thi bài nào cũng được, phụ thuộc vào mình đi học nước nào. Người ta yêu cầu bài nào thì mình thi bài đấy. Nhưng em đã ôn TOEFL nhiều rồi nên sẽ thi TOEFL | Participant tT121: Any test will be OK, depending on which country I am going to study in. I'll sit for the test they require me to take. However, I have already prepared a lot for the TOEFL so I will sit for the TOEFL test |
| Participant iT18: Có lẽ vẫn phải chọn IELTS vì IELTS em luyện nhiều hơn và em tin là em làm tốt hơn. Còn nếu em được luyện thi đầy đủ cả 2 bài thi không quan trọng bài nào cũng được... vì xét cho cùng thì mỗi cái có cái hay của nó nhưng phải để thời gian luyện thêm... | Participant iT18: Perhaps [I] have to choose the IELTS test because I have prepared more for it and thus I believe I will do it better. If I am prepared well for both tests, it is not important which test I will sit for... as in fact, each test is interesting in its own way but more preparation time is needed... |

As (i) test preparation appears to be the main factor determining test preference and (ii) the number of participants in this study is nearly equal across the IELTS and the TOEFL preparation groups, the evenly split preference for each test cannot be considered a meaningful finding and may simply be a function of the sample in the current study.

5. Summary and discussion of test content from test takers' perspective

There are both similarities and differences in test takers' perceptions across the two listening tests: the IELTS and TOEFL iBT.

- Similarities are found in their perception about (i) the two tests in general,

- (ii) test instructions, (iii) time allocation, (iv) relation between the test and their self-assessed listening ability. In general, test takers found both tests interesting, not unduly short, not too fast in speech rate, not difficult to understand in terms of accents used in the listening stimulus, and not too difficult overall. They also found the test instructions clear and the time allocation for reading questions, recording answers and checking the answers sufficient. More importantly, they agreed that score obtained from each of these two tests could reflect their true listening ability. The finding that IELTS listening test is fair is coherent with what Cotton and Conrow (1998) found in their study in which students ranked the listening sub-test as the fairest one in the IELTS battery.

- Substantial differences across the two listening tests can be seen in difficulty level, new words/technical terms and familiarity of topics. Test takers found the IELTS listening test less difficult, having fewer new words and technical terms, and containing more familiar topics than the TOEFL iBT listening test.

- The most noticeably significant difference is test takers' attitude to the different test methods between the two tests. They found reading questions before listening to stimulus in the IELTS listening test more helpful than just seeing the visual stimulus but NOT viewing questions in the TOEFL iBT listening test. This belief in the effect of reading questions before listening of test takers is consistent with what Buck's (1991) reported in his study: all test takers agreed that they would have understood less without questions preview. Similarly, Sherman (1997) remarked that "previewed questions [in a listening test] seem more helpful than they really are" (p. 185).

- The visual stimulus in the TOEFL iBT listening test did not distract test takers as one might surmise though it stays on the screen. This finding is contradictory with that of Ginther (2002) who found that the "context-only visual" in the mini-talk of the old TOEFL listening test had a slightly negative effect on performance. It is, however, consistent with what Ockey (2007) found in his study comparing the engagement of test takers in two types of visual in the listening tests: the still image and the video; test takers in Ockey's study engaged "minimally" and "similarly" with the still images.

- Test takers' positive attitudes to the test might be strongly influenced by their test performance. For example, test takers' raw scores on the IELTS listening test were slightly higher than their scores on the TOEFL iBT listening test (19.65 vs. 18.40 respectively), and this might be a factor in

their more positive attitude to the IELTS than to the TOEFL iBT listening test (.14 vs. .00 respectively). This finding was similar to what Bradsaw (1990) and Brown (1993), Elder, Iwashita, & McNamara (2002), Shohamy (1982), Zeidner (1988), Zeidner (1990) noticed about the relationship between scores obtained and test takers' attitudes to test task: weaker candidates respond less positively than higher level candidates. In other words, lower scores were likely to be associated with less positive attitudes to the test.

- Test takers' have no clear preference for either of the test. Approximately half of them would choose the IELTS listening test and the other half would choose the TOEFL iBT listening test. Their choice of test as well as their positive feeling to each test heavily depends on which test they are being prepared for.

All these analyses reveal that except for the test method and difficulty level, the test content and construct of the IELTS and the TOEFL iBT listening tests are perceived to be similar rather than different from test takers' perspective. This finding might be true to the comparison of the IELTS and TOEFL listening and with the sample of participants in this study. In a larger context, researchers must be cautious when using test takers' reflection on the test as evidence of validity as they often based on their particular experience and in a particular context. Nevertheless, this finding is beneficial for test preparation instructors as well as test takers, particularly in Vietnamese context because test method and test difficulty level are factors significantly contributing to test performance.

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THÁI ĐỘ CỦA THÍ SINH VỚI HAI BÀI THI NGHE TIẾNG ANH: IELTS VÀ TOEFL iBT

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Tóm tắt: 10 phương diện trong nội dung của hai bài thi nghe: IELTS và TOEFL iBT được nghiên cứu từ góc độ đánh giá của thí sinh làm bài thi. Nghiên cứu cho thấy các thí sinh cảm nhận điểm giống nhau giữa hai bài thi này vượt trội hơn so với điểm khác biệt. Điểm khác biệt rõ nhất là thái độ lạc quan hơn của thí sinh với bài thi IELTS so với bài thi TOEFL iBT; thái độ của thí sinh với bài thi cũng chịu tác động mạnh của yếu tố học và luyện thi. Ngoài ra, thái độ của thí sinh với bài thi cũng có mối liên quan chặt chẽ với kết quả bài làm. Một số điểm khác biệt khác trong đó rõ thể hiện trong đánh giá của thí sinh về độ khó của bài thi, từ mới hoặc thuật ngữ chuyên môn trong bài thi và độ quen thuộc của các chủ đề trong bài thi. Thí sinh cho rằng bài nghe của đề thi IELTS đỡ khó hơn, có ít từ mới hơn và chủ đề quen thuộc hơn so với bài thi TOEFL iBT. Thí sinh cũng nhận thấy cách thức thi của bài thi IELTS đỡ thách thức hơn so với bài thi TOEFL iBT mặc dù thí sinh thể hiện sự lựa chọn bài thi phụ thuộc rất nhiều vào trải nghiệm đã được chuẩn bị và luyện thi.

Từ khóa: bài thi nghe IELTS, bài thi nghe TOEFL iBT, thái độ của thí sinh thi, nội dung bài thi, phương thức thi, độ khó của bài thi, kết quả thi, lựa chọn bài thi

APPENDIX 1A

Questionnaires for participants after taking the IELTS Listening Test

*(Note. The last column “*Note” in the questionnaire does not appear in the Vietnamese version given to the test takers)*

This questionnaire is intended to obtain information about your impression on the IELTS listening test you have just done. Please read each statement carefully and tick in the box to decide your degree of agreement or disagreement.

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① |
| strongly agree | agree | slightly agree | slightly disagree | disagree | strongly disagree |

A. ABOUT THE TEST AS A WHOLE

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| 1. I found the test interesting. | | | | | | | |
| 2. I found the test short. | | | | | | | recode |
| 3. I found the speech rate fast. | | | | | | | recode |
| 4. I found some of the accents difficult to understand. | | | | | | | recode |
| 5. I found the test difficult overall. | | | | | | | recode |

B. TEST INSTRUCTIONS

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| 1. I found the test instructions (e.g how many sections, where and when to write the answers...) clear. | | | | | | | |

C. READING QUESTIONS AND THE EFFECT OF READING QUESTIONS BEFORE LISTENING

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| 1. I was given enough time to read questions before listening. | | | | | | | |
| 2. I found reading the questions before listening helped my comprehension. | | | | | | | |
| 3. I found it difficult to remember the questions I read before listening. | | | | | | | recode |

D. CHALLENGE OF READING QUESTIONS, LISTENING TO STIMULUS AND WRITING ANSWERS

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| 1. I found it difficult to manage listening to the stimulus, looking at the question, and writing the answers at the same time. | | | | | | | recode |
| 2. As I had to listen to the stimulus for several questions, I found it challenging to match a question with the listening stimulus I was listening to. | | | | | | | recode |

H. TOPIC FAMILIARITY OF EACH SECTION IN THE TEST

| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Section 1: [conversation]: <i>An interview between police and a witness.</i> I felt that the topic of this interview was familiar. | | | | | | | |
| Section 2: [monologue]: <i>A recorded message giving information about an English hotel.</i> I felt that the topic of this interview was familiar. | | | | | | | |
| Section 3: [conversation]: <i>Three students talking about their study programs.</i> I felt that the topic of this interview was familiar. | | | | | | | |
| Section 4: [monologue]: <i>A talk by a university lecture in Australia on a type of bird in Tasmania.</i> I felt that the topic of this interview was familiar. | | | | | | | |

I. RELATION BETWEEN THE TEST AND LISTENING ABILITY

| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 1. The score on this test will reflect my true listening ability | | | | | | | |

K. COMPARING TWO TESTS AND MAKING A CHOICE

(*for those who did TOEFL listening test first and IELTS listening test later)

| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 1. In general I found the TOEFL listening test more challenging than the IELTS listening test. | | | | | | | |
| 2. If I had a choice, I would prefer to sit for the IELTS listening test rather than the TOEFL listening test. | | | | | | | |

APPENDIX 1B

Questionnaires for participants after taking the TOEFL Listening Test

(Note. The last column “*Note” in the questionnaire does not appear in the Vietnamese version given to the test takers)

This questionnaire is intended to obtain information about your impression on the TOEFL listening test you have just done. Please read each statement carefully and tick in the box to decide your degree of agreement or disagreement.

| ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|
| strongly agree | agree | slightly agree | slightly disagree | disagree | strongly disagree |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--------|
| Lecture 1.2: <i>History: development of a historical place</i> I found this conversation difficult. | | | | | | | | recode |
| Part 2 | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | | |
| Conversation 2.1: <i>A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library</i> I found this conversation difficult. | | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 2.1: <i>Business</i> I found this conversation difficult. | | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 2.2: <i>Astronomy</i> I found this conversation difficult. | | | | | | | | recode |

G. TECHNICAL TERMS IN EACH LISTENING PARTS

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------|
| Part 1 | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| Conversation 1.1: <i>A talk between a lecturer and a student about her missing from class and the handout she missed</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 1.1: <i>Biology: sound development in birds</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 1.2: <i>History: development of a historical place.</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |
| Part 2 | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | |
| Conversation 2.1: <i>A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 2.1: <i>Business</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |
| Lecture 2.2: <i>Astronomy</i> I found that this section has many new words/technical terms. | | | | | | | recode |

H. TOPIC FAMILIARITY

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| Part 1 | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
| Conversation 1.2: <i>A talk between a lecturer and a student about her missing from class and the handout she missed</i> I felt that the topic of this conversation was familiar. | | | | | | | |
| Lecture 1.1: <i>Biology: sound development in birds</i> I felt that the topic of this lecture was familiar to me. | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Lecture 1.2: <i>History: development of a historical place.</i> I felt that the topic of this lecture was familiar to me. | | | | | | | |
| Part 2 | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | |
| Conversation 2.1: <i>A talk between a student and a librarian about looking for reference books in the library</i> I felt that the topic of this conversation was familiar. | | | | | | | |
| Lecture 2.1: <i>Business</i> I felt that the topic of this lecture was familiar to me. | | | | | | | |
| Lecture 2.2: <i>Astronomy</i> I felt that the topic of this lecture was familiar to me. | | | | | | | |

I. RELATION BETWEEN THE LISTENING TEST AND LISTENING ABILITY

| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 1. The score in this test will reflect my true listening ability | | | | | | | |

K. COMPARING TWO TEST AND MAKING A CHOICE

(for those who did IELTS listening test first and TOEFL listening test later)

| | ⑥ | ⑤ | ④ | ③ | ② | ① | *Note |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------|
| 1. In general I found the IELTS listening test more challenging than the TOEFL listening test. | | | | | | | |
| 2. If I had a choice, I would prefer to sit for the IELTS listening test rather than the TOEFL listening test. | | | | | | | |

PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE STRUCTURE “I + COGNITIVE NON-FACTIVE VERB AND EPISTEMIC ADVERB COLLOCATIONS”

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Abstract: With 250 English examples containing the structure “I + cognitive non-factive verb and epistemic adverb collocations” from different sources such as novels, short stories and online materials, in the light of the Speech Act theory three main pragmatic features have been identified including *decreasing complaining/ admonishing, giving counselling, and reducing boasting*. These three pragmatic features are very helpful to learners of English in daily communication because by using the structure in his/ her utterances the speaker wants to decrease his/ her complaint or admonishment to make conversations more comfortable, give the hearer persuasive advice with his/ her own experience, and reduce boasting so that the hearer feels easy to co-operate.

Keywords: modality, pragmatic features, cognitive non-factive verb, epistemic adverb, collocations

1. Introduction

Modality has become an interesting aspect to linguists in the world because of its complexity and variety. To investigate modality, we not only concern about the form of the language but also the language in action, i.e. the interpersonal relationship, especially it is subjectivity that receives more attention and it means modality is always involved in all utterances because it is an indispensable factor playing an important role in imparting the speaker’s thoughts and attitude to the hearer. Consequently, Bally says that modality is the soul of the utterance, as cited in Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2008: 74). As a matter of fact, English possesses a variety of lexical means to express modality including modal nouns, adjectives,

adverbs and lexical verbs. In addition, “*Modal elements frequently combine and interact dynamically*” (Hoye, 1997: 3). Yet, according to Perkins “*Doing research on modality is very similar to trying to move in an overcrowded room without treading on anyone else’s feet*” (1983: 4). Despite its complication, the study of collocations has caught much interest from linguists and in recent years, many researches on the field have been conducted. With 250 utterances containing the structure with the singular first person subject *I* and collocations including a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb followed by a complement clause from different sources such as novels, short stories and online materials, the pragmatic features of the structure have been investigated to help learners of English or even native speakers of English use the structure more effectively in communication.

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2. Literature review and theoretical background

2.1. Literature review

Up to now, language collocations have been dealt with in numerous studies by linguists such as McIntosh (1961), Lyons (1977), Coates (1983), Perkins (1983), Hoyer (1997), Cappelli (2005, 2008), Võ Đại Quang (2009), and Trần Thị Minh Giang (2011, 2015).

First, McIntosh (1961) gave a clear and comprehensive definition of collocations. Later, Lyons (1977), Coates (1983) and Perkins (1983) made brief introductions to collocations. Next, Hoyer (1997) studied modal-adverb collocations. He found out a marked tendency for epistemic modals to attract adverb satellites. Then, Cappelli (2005) also mentioned modulating attitudes via adverbs but she only presented her general overview of adverbs co-occurring with verbs of cognitive attitude. For collocations, Võ Đại Quang (2009) discussed the possible collocations of adverbs and cognitive verbs; however, it is just a general introduction. Anyhow, his study proposed a basic theoretical ground of modality that has inspired us to conduct our own research. Noticeably, Trần Thị Minh Giang (2011) investigated harmony of adverb satellites on non-factive verbs. In addition, Trần Thị Minh Giang (2015) continued studying the harmony of cognitive non-factive verbs and epistemic adverbs in the pragmatic aspect based on the scale of certainty. Recently, there has been an article on speech act types in conversations of *New Interchange* by Nguyễn Quang Ngoan and Nguyễn Thị Ngọc Dung (2017), which discusses speech acts from the perspective of conversational analysis. It can be seen from the above review that until now a study on speech acts expressed by the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” remains an untouched area to be investigated.

2.2. Theoretical background

2.2.1. Epistemic adverbs

Epistemic adverbs are one of the most popular lexical devices showing modality since in communication, the speaker often uses them to convey his/her judgement and attitudes to the possibility of the states of affair conveyed in the proposition. According to Biber et al. (1999), epistemic adverbs consist of three kinds: *epistemic stance adverbs*, *attitude stance adverbs* and *style stance adverbs*. He thought that epistemic stance adverbs often used in communication are single word adverbs such as *certainly*, *perhaps*, *probably*, *possibly*, *maybe*, *surely*, *definitely*....

(1) **Perhaps** you'll be hurt just a little in the foot.

(A farewell to arms, 1993: 149)

(2) That is **certainly** the simplest explanation.

(The moon and six pence, 1998: 58)

However, Luru Quý Khương and Trần Thị Minh Giang (2012), support the division of epistemic adverbs into two kinds: assertive epistemic modal adverbs such as *certainly*, *surely*, *definitely*, *clearly*... and non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs such as *probably*, *possibly*, *perhaps*, *maybe*....

Based on the scale of certainty by Givón (1982), assertive adverbs can be presented on the continuum below:

Surely/Clearly Definitely Certainly


Figure 1. The scale of certainty of assertive epistemic modal adverbs

Palmer (1986) suggested that epistemic modality should involve any modal system indicating the degree of commitment by the

speaker to what he or she says – the extent to which the truth of a proposition is possible. Therefore, non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs can be described as possibility-based. The degree of possibility can be presented as follows.

Maybe/ Perhaps Possibly Probably

Figure 2. The scale of possibility of non-assertive epistemic modal adverbs

In this study, epistemic adverbs are also classified basing on the scale of certainty and possibility. Epistemic adverbs are divided into two kinds: assertive and non-assertive epistemic adverbs.

2.2.2. Cognitive non-factive verbs

In modality, there are a lot of modal lexical devices such as modal verbs, modal adjectives, and modal adverbs... However, among them, “Modal lexical verbs are the modal devices with the most frequency in both languages but especially in English with 75.11%” (Nguyễn Thị Thu Thủy, 2012: 60).

For Kiparsky (1968), modal lexical verbs are divided into two main types: factive verbs and non-factive verbs. Non-factive verbs work as an operator to mitigate the commitment and bring open-hearted atmosphere with the cooperation. In his research, Ngũ Thiện Hùng (2004) deals with three main types of non-factive verbs: cognitive non-factive verbs: *believe, think, expect, suppose, guess, hope* ..., perceptive non-factive verbs: *look, feel, sound, seem, appear*... and reportive non-factive verbs: *say that, tell, hear, it is said that*.... Cognitive non-factive verbs do not inform the listener or hearer of the subject’s action, but show the speaker’s attitude to the proposition. From the views on cognitive non-factive verbs by Palmer (1986), Thompson & Mulac (1991), Halliday (2004), and Hann

(2005), we can conclude that, syntactically, to become a modal lexical device, propositional attitude verbs like non-factive verbs must satisfy the following distinctive features:

- The subject is always in the singular first person.
- The verb is in simple present tense.
- Adverbial phrases of causes or purposes mustn’t be added in the sentence.
- In tag questions, the tag only aims at the subject of proposition (complement clause)
- As a modal device, these structures can stand in different positions in a sentence such as initial, medial, and final. Besides, they function as adjuncts.
- The complementizer *that* is often omitted (in about 90 % of the cases).

For example,

(3) ***I think*** you’re real rude to throw off on my poor hands.

(Gone with the Wind, 1947: 347)

(4) *The Advance of Red China, the challenge to Democracy, The Role of the West – these, I suppose, were the complete works of York Harding.*

(The Quiet American, 1980: 549)

(5) *They ragged him about me at the café, I guess.*

(The Sun also Rises, 1954: 242)

2.2.3. Speech-act modality

In his study, Nordstrom (2010) stated that all linguistic studies involving modality must eventually have a connection with the speech act theory by Austin (1962) and the notions of performatives & illocutionary force because one of the functions of modality is to denote speech acts. (Nordstrom; 2010: 49).

According to Siewieska (1991), in the past most logicians in the world only paid attention to the necessity and the possibility of the proposition, and the speaker's attitude towards what is said or the proposition, whereas nowadays functional linguists or pragmatic linguists bring out communicative intention in the definition of modality.

Usually, all types of speech acts originate from speaker's communicative purposes, such as *promising, complimenting, apologizing, complaining, requesting* or *inviting*. The performance of an act comprises three related acts: *locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act*. Among them, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts take an important part in the analysis of semantic-pragmatic aspect. Studying the effects of illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts of language in general and modal lexical verbs in particular is a meaningful task.

After Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), Yule (1996: 53-54) declared that "*One general classification system lists five types of general functions performed by speech acts: declaratives, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives.*"

In the scope of this study, the authors mainly dealt with the form of representatives or assertives, because the function of speech acts will be treated as the one with performatives. In fact, cognitive non-factive verbs and epistemic adverbs are contrary to performative verbs and adverbs because according to Austin (1962: 3) these modal verbs and modal adverbs only show the speaker's state of cognition or attitudes to the truth of the proposition without doing the act of utterance when producing utterances.

Searle (1976)'s view on speech acts concern the relation between the speaker

and what is said. This relation was also mentioned by Sweetser (1990) and Cinque (1999); especially Paparofragou (2000)'s study showed the speech-act modality in detail. Noticeably, in our study Sweetser's (1990) proposal on 'speech-act modality' was applied. The following examples by Sweetser (1990) illustrate the category of speech-act modality in daily communication.

(6) "He may be a university professor, but he sure is dumb".

(7) "There may be a six-pack in the fridge, but we have work to do."

(Sweetser, 1990: 70)

Following are four interpretations for the above two examples that the speaker may want to convey (Sweetser, 1990: 70).

(6a) I admit that he is a university professor, and I nonetheless insist that he is dumb.

(7a) I acknowledge your offer, and I nonetheless refuse it.

(6b) He may be a university professor, but I doubt it because he is so dumb.

(7b) There may be a six-pack in the fridge, but I'm not sure because Joe had friends over last night.

It can be seen that the interpretation in (6a) and (7a) is often applied to the conversational world, whereas modality in (6b) and (7b) only carries normal epistemic meaning. Therefore, the above two examples can be paraphrased as follows:

(6c) I do not bar from our (joint) conversational world the statement that he is a university professor, but...

(7c) I do not bar from our conversational world your offer of beer, but...

(Sweetser, 1990: 73)

Consequently, speech-act modality is the application of modal concepts to conversational interaction like Sweetser's statement: "*the speaker (or people in general) is forced to, or (not) barred from, saying what the sentence says*" (Sweetser, 1990: 73).

Since 1970s, the classification of modality based on view of utterance and action of utterance has been also affected by the theory of speech acts. In Vietnamese, Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) distinguished between modality of utterance-act (énonciation) and modality of statement (énoncé). In the past, all definitions of modality basically used to take interest in parameters of necessity or possibility and the speaker's attitude to the propositional content, but in recent years, depending on function and pragmatics in modality, linguists have suggested communicative intention in definition of modality. However, other linguists can give different terms like sentence-type modalities and matter of illocution. Siewieska (1991: 123) stressed "*What are often referred to as sentence-type modalities and other means used to transmit and modify the speaker's communicative intention are treated as matter of illocution, rather than modality sensu stricto.*"

Modality of utterance-act (énonciation) consists of statements, interrogatives, directive utterances grammaticalized in most languages (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991).

Modality of statements is divided into two categories: modality of sentences (main clause in which main lexical verbs indicate modality) and modality of predications (subordinate clause) (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991).

Consider the following example:

(8) "***I believe*** that she did the right thing."

(The Garden of Eden, 1986: 185)

Our brief analysis shows that the main clause "*I believe*" does no more than expressing the speaker's epistemic modality – that is his belief but what is the belief about? This answer can be found in the subordinate clause. The speaker's belief is toward the proposition "*she did the right thing.*"

3. Research methodology

3.1. Aim and research question

The study aims at investigating pragmatic features based on speech act theory in the structure "I + CNFV and EA collocations" to provide learners of English and native speakers of English with practical knowledge to use the structure more effectively in communication.

The research question to be answered is: What are pragmatic features of the structure "I + CNFV and EA collocations" based on speech act theory?

3.2. Samples and methodology

The data of 250 English samples consisting of the singular first person subject pronoun *I* and collocations of a cognitive non-factive verb and an epistemic adverb was collected from short stories, novels, and online materials including E-books and Brainy quotes. These English samples were written or spoken by English native speakers. All the data were analyzed to draw out pragmatic features of the structure with necessary interpretations.

To conduct the research, the qualitative approach was resorted to in this study to find out the pragmatic features of the structure. Besides, the quantitative one was employed to collect and figure out the frequency of the pragmatic category of the structure "*I + CNFV and EA collocations*" that are present in the collected data. Consequently, the analysis of the study was undertaken by the combination

between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

4. Findings and discussion

Examining 250 English samples, we have found out main pragmatic features in light of Speech Act Theory. Noticeably, the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” can be used to display different speech acts such as *decreasing complaining/ admonishing, giving counsel, and reducing boasting*.

4.1. Decreasing complaining or admonishing

By using the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” such as *I just hope, I really believe, I think maybe, I just think...*, the speaker wants to impart his/ her complaint or admonition to the hearer like in the following examples.

(9) “***I just hope*** you’ll have enough decency to disappear to wherever you came from.”

(The Storm Child, 2012: 185)

(10) “Do you think I’d go this far for sex? I can get any fucking girl in this god dam school but guess what? I chose you. I want you no one else but you.”

“I don’t think so Kyle. ***I really believe*** you think of me as a challenge not a lover.”

(To Love a Player, 2012: 13)

(11) “***I think maybe*** one weekend evening a week, not two, not all day together, is a very fair restriction. There is no reason for you to follow that boy everywhere he goes.”

(On Emma’s Bluff, 2013: 158)

(12) “***I just think*** it’s funny how you are so concerned about me forgiving my brother, while you shed nothing about your father.”

(Bedful of moonlight, 2009: 83)

In (9), the speaker showed his/ her annoyance with the hearer’s appearance;

however, by using the pattern *I just hope* the speaker decreased his/ her reproach a little and hoped that the hearer could identify his/ her uncomfortable attitude. Similarly, in (10) the speaker expressed her real thought that Kyle’s love to her is not a truth but a challenge. With the pattern *I really believe* the speaker’s reproach was transmitted to the hearer successfully. In addition, in (11) the speaker’s complaint was displayed to the hearer with the pattern *I think maybe*. It is certain that such admonition is from a person who is older and more experienced than the hearer and of course with higher social status. In this case, it is the father’s complaint about his daughter. Furthermore, in (12) the pattern *I just think* is employed to give the speaker’s admonition to the hearer. The speaker’s question is why the hearer is so concerned about the speaker’s brother and it is not the hearer’s business.

In brief, employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in giving complaint or admonition is effective in communication because the hearer will feel more comfortable to receive the speaker’s complaint or admonition.

4.2. Giving counsel

The next pragmatic meaning expressed by the structure is counselling. With the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, the speaker would like to impart to the hearer his/ her advice more easily. Consider the following examples:

(13) “***I think probably*** - I think, you know, when you’re first dating somebody, if they’re just not that physical with you, if they don’t want to make concrete plans with you, you know, if they’re sort of ambiguous about where everything is going, I think that’s a pretty good sign that they’re not into you.

(Greg Behrendt, Brainy Quotes)

(14) “***I really think*** that you have to find a partner that compliments you and is somebody that pushes you and is better at some things than you are, so they can push you to improve yourself as a person.”

(Ashton Kutcher, Brainy Quotes)

(15) “Whatever is about you that is translated into your art, that’s gonna keep you completely original and fresh and ***I just think that***, that’s just the best advice I can give, to an artist creatively.”

(Bubba Sparxxx, Brainy Quotes)

(16) “***I really believe*** the only way to stay healthy is to eat properly, get your rest and exercise. If you don’t exercise and do the other two, I still don’t think it’s going to help you that much.”

(Mike Ditka, Brainy Quotes)

(17) “***I just believe*** that sometimes in life you’re like a shark - you have to keep moving through water; otherwise, you’ll die.” (Michelle Ryan, Brainy Quotes)

From (13) to (17), it can be seen that *I think probably*, *I really think*, *I really believe*, *I just think*, *I just believe* are used to express the speaker’s counsel without imposition on the hearer and the hearer will feel more comfortable in receiving the speaker’s advice. In (13), with the pattern *I think probably* the speaker told the hearer his/ her own experience in dating to guess whether his dating is successful or not. Besides, in (14) the speaker advised the hearer to make a friend with a better person to look him/ her up. By employing *I really think*, the speaker showed his certain commitment to the hearer’s case. In addition, in (15) the speaker considers that creativity in art is very important, therefore he suggested the hearer keep himself original and fresh. Similarly, in (16) and (17) with patterns *I really believe* and *I just believe*

the speaker proposed the hearer the best way to stay healthy with moderation in eating, rest and exercise and especially in (17) the speaker encouraged the hearer to keep going ahead through difficulties in life like a shark moving in water.

The use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in giving counsel really plays an essential part in daily communication since the hearer will feel more certain with the speaker’s persuasive reasons thanks to his/ her own experience.

4.3. Reducing boasting

Employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” to reduce the speaker’s boast is one of the communicative strategies. By making use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, the speaker really wishes to reduce his/ her boast so that the hearer feels more comfortable in participating in conversations. Look at the following examples:

(18) “***I think probably*** one of the coolest things was when I went to play basketball at Rucker Park in Harlem. First, who would think that Larry the Cable Guy would go to Harlem to play basketball? And I was received like a rock star. It was amazing! There were people everywhere. There were guys walking by yelling, ‘Git ‘r done!’”

(Larry the Cable Guy, Brainy Quotes)

(19) “I went to a lovely school, and I got an incredible education. And ***I actually think*** that my education is what really sets me apart, ‘cause I’m very smart.”

(Lady Gaga, Brainy Quotes)

(20) “I’ve been extremely fortunate in my life. So ***I actually believe*** that I’m the living embodiment of living the American dream.”

(Dan Rosensweig, Brainy Quotes)

(21) “Honestly, this face of mine will always be familiar to people. It’s that unique quality, man. If it’s a dark and crowded room, people are just able to point me out. I think I’ll always be famous. *I just hope* I don’t become infamous.

(CeeLo Green, Brainy Quotes)

(22) “Well, now I have suffered and struggled enough! *I really believe* I am as good as many a one who sits in the church.”

(Andersen’s Fairy Tales, 1992, p.257)

With modality patterns *I think probably, I actually think, I actually believe, I just hope, I really believe* in samples from (18) to (22), the speaker wanted to show off his/ her talent in playing basketball, his/ her intelligence,

embodiment of American dreams, fame, moreover in (22) the speaker would like to confirm his/ her good behaviour like others in the church. Although the speakers’ main purpose is to show their boast, the presence of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” in their utterances lowers their boasting and the hearer will feel something modest and polite in the speaker’s way of speaking. In brief, reducing the speaker’s boast or pride by employing the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” is one of the most interesting pragmatic characteristics of the structure.

Below is the summary of pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”:

Table 1. Pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”

| Pragmatic features | Concrete Patterns | Orientation |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Complaining/ Admonishing | <i>I just hope, I really believe, I think maybe, I just think</i> | Hearer-orientation, reducing the speaker’s complaint/ admonition. |
| Counselling | <i>I think probably, I really think, I really believe, I just think, I just believe</i> | Hearer- orientation, avoiding the speaker’s imposition. |
| Reducing Boasting | <i>I think probably, I actually think, I actually believe, I just hope, I really believe</i> | Speaker- orientation, reducing the speaker’s boast. |

The following table will show the occurrence of the structure “I + CNFV and EA

collocations” in expressing pragmatic features in daily communication.

Table 2. Frequency of occurrence of pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”

| Pragmatic Features | Occurrence | % |
|--------------------------------|------------|------|
| Complaining/Admonishing | 103 | 41.2 |
| Counselling | 110 | 44 |
| Reducing boasting | 37 | 14.8 |
| Total | 250 | 100 |

In Table 2, it can be seen that the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” often occurs in daily communication. The pragmatic

features: complaining/ admonishing and counselling are used more often than reducing boasting with the percentages of 41.2%, 44%

and 14.8% respectively. In brief, pragmatic features based on Speech Act theory of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” can be employed effectively in communication; therefore, learners of English and native speakers of English should master them to get better conversations.

5. Conclusions and implication

Through the pragmatic features of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” mentioned above, we can see the importance of the structure in communication. It is impossible to use the structure effectively without mastering these pragmatic features such as *decreasing complaining/admonishing*, *giving counsel* and *reducing boasting*. With the survey numbers of frequent occurrence of pragmatic features based on speech acts such as 41.2% for decreasing complaining, 44% for counseling, and 14.8% for reducing boasting, the structure with these pragmatic features should be taught by teachers of English because good knowledge of the pragmatic features of the structure will help learners of English and even native speakers of English use them more effectively in communication. Practically, the pragmatic features of the structure such as *decreasing complaining/ admonishing*, *giving counsel* and *reducing boasting* should be mentioned in teaching and learning English as a foreign language. However, it must depend on learning and teaching goal and learners’ level because it is difficult to master the structure for language learners at the elementary and pre-intermediate levels. Finally, having good knowledge of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations”, especially pragmatic features based on speech-act theory is useful for English-Vietnamese translation work. In addition, the use of the structure “I + CNFV and EA collocations” should be mentioned in

English textbooks as a part of grammar so that learners can master the structure more easily and correctly.

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ĐẶC TRƯNG NGÔN NGỮ CỦA CẤU TRÚC “I + KẾT NGŨ GIỮA ĐỘNG TỪ PHI THỰC HỮU TRI NHẬN VÀ PHÓ TỪ TÌNH THÁI NHẬN THỨC”

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Tóm tắt: Trên cơ sở phân tích 250 ví dụ tiếng Anh có chứa cấu trúc với chủ ngữ là ngôi thứ nhất số ít *I* và các kết ngữ gồm một động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận và một phó từ tình thái nhận thức được thu thập từ những nguồn khác nhau như tiểu thuyết, truyện ngắn, trên mạng, nghiên cứu này đã xác định được những đặc trưng ngữ dụng của cấu trúc dựa vào lý thuyết hành động lời nói như *giảm bớt sự phàn nàn, khiển trách, đưa ra lời khuyên*, và *giảm bớt sự khoe khoang*. Ba đặc trưng ngữ dụng này rất hữu ích đối với những người học tiếng Anh bởi vì bằng cách sử dụng cấu trúc này trong phát ngôn của mình, người nói có thể làm giảm sự phàn nàn, khiển trách của người nói, cung cấp cho người nghe những lời khuyên đầy thuyết phục bằng kinh nghiệm của bản thân, và giảm nhẹ sự khoe khoang trong phát ngôn, giúp người nghe cảm thấy dễ chịu hơn khi tham thoại. Kết quả nghiên cứu có thể áp dụng vào việc nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: tình tình thái, đặc trưng ngữ dụng, động từ phi thực hữu tri nhận, phó từ tình thái nhận thức, kết ngữ

A REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN MOBILE ASSISTED COLLABORATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: The article reviewed a selection of research in the field of foreign language teaching into mobile assisted collaborative language learning (Collaborative MALL) – the practice of applying mobile technologies, e.g., applications on mobile phones and laptops, in language teaching context. This review aimed to examine: (1) popular theoretical frameworks previous collaborative MALL research was based upon; (2) merits of applying collaborative MALL in language classroom; (3) strengths and shortcomings of previous studies' research design and (4) implications for future research as well as for language teaching practice. The findings indicated that three common pedagogical approaches in collaborative MALL studies were game-based, task-based and seamless learning. The confirmed educational affordances of collaborative MALL systems involved facilitating language learners' collaborative learning process, personalizing learning experience, improving linguistic achievement and enhancing learning motivation/autonomy. Previous research was additionally found to have strong theoretical frameworks, well-designed mobile applications, and examination of both learners' linguistic improvement and their attitudes towards the technology implementation. However, several methodological weaknesses in previous studies were also identified, e.g., lacking control group in experimental design, insufficient information about the language test format and unclear grading process. Further research with more rigorous research design is warranted to explore the efficacy of collaborative MALL in augmenting learners' linguistic accomplishments with new mobile applications and in different educational contexts.

Keywords: collaborative learning, mobile assisted collaborative language learning, mobile learning, foreign language learning, pedagogical approaches

1. Introduction

In today's digital age, technology has become an integral part of our daily life. With respect to language learning context, both language teachers and learners can benefit from the advancement of information technology. In recent decades, the number of mobile phone users has increased dramatically, particularly in developing countries. Mobile devices,

including but not limited to mobile phones, smartphones and tablets, have become useful educational tools, holding great potentiality for language learning activities. This has led to a growth in the number of research publications examining the application of technology in language teaching and learning, the so-called mobile assisted language learning (MALL).

In recent years, another emerging trend in MALL research has been mobile assisted collaborative language learning (Collaborative MALL) (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Collaborative learning can be considered a knowledge-constructing process

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(Miyake & Kirschner, 2014), normally requiring language learners to collaborate with other peers to accomplish a learning task (Kukulka-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Information technology allows us to create educational mobile applications that afford language learners with opportunities to practice the target language and work together to co-construct knowledge both inside and outside the classrooms (Kukulka-Hulme & Viberg, 2018).

While MALL studies focus more on the general educational benefit of mobile technology, collaborative MALL research further emphasizes the significance of interaction among language learners. Interaction has long been recognized as an important condition for language acquisition (Benati & Angelovska, 2016). Two major ways that interaction can facilitate language learning process involve the modified input and feedback (Gass & Mackey, 2005). By communicating with other people, learners can notice new linguistic features, e.g., when clarifying the information. Receiving corrective feedback and practicing the target language are beneficial for the language learning process (Benati & Angelovska, 2016). This helps learners to recognize their mistakes (when receiving feedback) and examine the linguistic knowledge or skills they have learned.

Although there have been a plethora of studies examining the application of mobile devices in foreign language education, much fewer empirical studies have focused on designing collaborative learning tasks assisted by mobile applications for enhancing EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners' language skills. It is thus essential to conduct a review to refine our understanding of collaborative MALL research. This article

reviews a selection of research papers in collaborative MALL area published from 2010-2018 for several purposes. First, it aims to inform readers of the popular theoretical frameworks employed in previous collaborative MALL studies. Second, this review also discusses the educational benefits of cooperative learning with MALL assistance in foreign language education. Finally, reflections on the merits and drawbacks of previous studies, including research design, implications for future research, and pedagogical practice are also provided in this review paper.

2. Methodology

In this section, the process of procuring collaborative MALL papers is reported as well as the method for reviewing the obtained papers.

Concerning the research paper collection process, various journal databases were utilized to search for related studies, namely Google Scholar, Google, Eric, Scopus, and Web of Science. During the searching process, a variety of keywords were employed, e.g., "mobile assisted collaborative language learning", "mobile assisted language learning", "MALL studies", "collaborative MALL", "mobile collaborative learning systems", "mobile applications for language learning".

Several criteria were applied for the journal papers to be included in the current literature review:

- Being empirical studies, i.e., the researchers apply the mobile tools in teaching English
- Utilizing mobile applications to teaching English (e.g., apps on smartphones or personal digital assistant device)

- Involving collaborative learning activities, i.e., participants in the studies interact and cooperate with each other to accomplish the learning tasks.

- Being published between 2010 and 2018. This was to keep this literature review updated with newest trends in applying mobile applications, thus being more meaningful and relevant to its readers.

The papers which satisfied the abovementioned criteria were selected for the review process. Concerning the analysis process, the procured papers were firstly read through for general information. In the next stage, the papers were examined critically for their theoretical frameworks, research designs and results. The reviewing process was conducted in a cyclical manner, rather than in a fixed order, i.e., the author of this review had to read different parts of the collected papers flexibly and repeatedly. Emerging themes were grouped together during the reviewing process. For example, after reading the results of different studies, a common theme may be “language achievement”, i.e., collaborative MALL application was consistently found to improve EFL learners’ language accomplishments.

3. Results

3.1. Popular theoretical frameworks in research in mobile assisted collaborative language learning

Three popular theoretical frameworks employed in previous Collaborative MALL research involved game-based, task-based and seamless learning. This section will highlight several key features relating to each of the three.

3.1.1. Game-based learning

In game-based learning, learners normally follow the game rules to accomplish

preset educational goals. Through playing games, learners can engage in authentic situations with meaningful interaction in the target language. In addition, learning by playing games can also reduce anxiety, enhance motivation and allow learners to connect what they learn with real-world experience. In Hwang, Shih, Ma, Shadieff and Chen’s study (2016), high school students played “Jigsaw” and interactive games to learn vocabulary in addition to traditional flashcard method. Likewise, Lin (2014) employed an online extensive reading system which afforded students games-playing opportunities to stimulate their reading. Participants in Lan, Sung and Chang’s study (2013) played educational games such as unscrambling paragraphs for an English text.

Liu and Chu (2010) experimented a game-based learning procedure to improve students’ listening and speaking skills. In the first stage, students played a self-learning game in which they used their mobile devices to access different virtual places and then completed different learning tasks, e.g., visiting a library to watch a movie or practice a conversation. In the next stage of the game-based procedure, participants played treasure hunt game, visiting different places on their campus, scanning the given code at the location and completing the given task, e.g., recording their speaking. After accomplishing the first mission, they would be granted a virtual coin with hints leading to the next location. Compared to the control group students, who used print materials and listened to the audios on Mp3 players, students in the game-based learning group scored significantly higher on their language skill tests. In terms of affective factors, participants were reported to have higher level of confidence in using the target language and were more satisfied with their learning experience.

Game-based mobile assisted collaborative language teaching can be employed as an effective approach to create enjoyable context-aware learning activities for EFL learners.

3.1.2. Task-based language learning

In task-based learning approach, students are assigned tasks or projects to accomplish, usually with flexibility in terms of time and location. Lin (2014) assigned reading tasks to her participants via an online extensive reading system, encouraging the study students to read as much as possible anywhere and anytime on their tablets. In Lan, Sung and Chang's study (2013), elementary school students were instructed to read an English text, learn new words and subsequently share what they had read with other friends. Hwang, Chen, Shadiev, Huang and Chen's mobile system (2014) improved EFL sixth-graders' writing skill by allowing them to collect information for their writing missions at lunch time and around the school campus. Task-based language learning with scaffoldings (e.g., Hwang et al, 2014) afforded learners the flexibility and more autonomy in their learning, thus enhancing their learning motivation (Lin, 2014).

Shadiev, Hwang, Huang and Liu (2018) asked 26 junior high school students to collaborate and complete three language learning tasks through a Collaborative MALL application. In the first task, called "Give direction", students were requested to individually draw a map from the school to another place of his/her own choice, take a photo of it, write down the directions and then orally describe how to arrive at the place. In the second "mission", students needed to write and talk about the weather where they lived before commenting on other work asynchronously. In the final task, participants had to present

their favorite job common in their surrounding areas and describe themselves as a potential candidate for that profession. Unlike the second task where students commented on each other's work asynchronously, in this stage, they interacted synchronously, i.e., face to face, with their partners, commenting and suggesting improvements for other student's work. The high school students in the study greatly appreciated the task-based learning experience as it allowed them to collaborate and support one another, which facilitated their language learning progress.

3.1.3. Seamless learning

Seamless learning commonly refers to contextualized language teaching approach with the use of authentic materials. Shadiev, Hwang, Huang and Liu (2018) asked students to take pictures of places, weather and professions where they lived and talked about those photos. High school students in the aforementioned study appreciated the authenticity of the lesson as it might also be useful in the future when they needed to talk about their places. Participants also commented on the fact that tasks in the textbook were oftentimes neither much meaningful nor related to their life. Seeing the real photos was reported to facilitate the students' imagination and expression of their opinions about the photo in English.

Previous research employing seamless learning emphasized its personalized learning quality, i.e., learners could self-direct their learning tasks. To increase the authenticity of the writing tasks, Hwang et al's study (2014) enabled their students to take photos from their real-life environment to add to their own writing. Similarly, in Hwang et al's study (2016), high school students utilized their own imagination and personal real-life experience to create their own vocabulary flashcards. Lin

(2014) helped to personalize students' reading experience by permitting students to choose the reading materials in accordance with their own interest. Bringing the authenticity, flexibility and personalized learning into classrooms could favorably facilitate EFL learners' language acquisition.

In short, there is no clear cut in the boundary of the afore-mentioned approaches and researchers can always apply more than one theory in designing mobile-assisted learning tasks to maximize the effectiveness of language learning.

3.2. The educational affordances of mobile assisted collaborative language learning

Mobile assisted collaborative language learning is increasingly utilized in language classrooms due to its educational affordances (Kukulka-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). The following paragraphs will discuss key advantages of Collaborative MALL, i.e., enhancing collaboration, flexibility, individualized learning process, linguistic abilities and motivation.

3.2.1. Collaborative learning opportunities

First, Collaborative MALL application can facilitate the collaborative language learning activities among EFL learners. For example, students in the study by Hwang et al (2016) used a game-based mobile system to practice English in pairs, e.g., reading aloud and matching lexical cards to form an English sentence. In Hwang et al (2014), students assisted each other in English writing by providing peer comments for each other's work based on criteria in a writing rubrics. Anonymity was ensured so as for the participants not to feel anxious when making comments. Likewise, Lan, Sung and Chang (2013) divided eighteen elementary school students into small groups for them to discuss

vocabulary or reading materials via an online mobile learning system.

Andujar (2016) conducted a study to examine the effect of employing mobile instant messaging app, i.e., WhatsApp, on his students' L2 (English as a Second Language) writing development. Participants were 80 Spanish students who were taking a six-month English course. They were divided into experimental and control groups, taught by the same instructor. Initial analysis for their writing pretest indicated a nonsignificant result, suggesting the similar level of participants in the two groups. The experimental group, besides taking formal classes, also participated in a group chat created on WhatsApp. Students in this group took turns to post a new topic every day for discussion. The findings revealed a significant improvement in writing accuracy for the experimental group students compared to the control group students. The former group produced more error-free vocabulary, grammatical and mechanical structures. Interactions among students via chatting activities in the WhatsApp group proved to be useful for the development of L2 writing skill of the students.

Collaborative MALL affords language learners with plenty of valuable opportunities to collaborate and interact with one another which are not commonly found in traditional grammar-translation language classrooms. These meaningful collaborations or interactions have long been supported as crucial conditions for successful language acquisition in major learning theories such as sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and interaction hypothesis (Long, 1981).

3.2.2. Personalized language learning experience

Flexibility and individualized learning qualities, that is, allowing learners to utilize their

own interest/personal experience in language learning, are also advantageous features of collaborative MALL. Sixth-grade students in Hwang et al's study (2014) had the freedom to write about topics of their own interest. The participants could also take real-life photos from their surroundings to add to their composition. The availability of scaffolding materials in the mobile system allowed learners to actively seek for individualized linguistic support. Lin (2014) acknowledged the essential of providing students with flexibility in reading by enabling tenth graders to read the materials of their choice.

Foomani and Hedayati (2016) designed and implemented a four-phase learning procedure to help students learn English idioms. They recruited 24 Iranian students who were pursuing general English class to participate in the study. In the first stage, formal lesson was performed, teaching the participants the target English idioms. In the following stage, the students were divided into four groups and then instructed to collaborate with each other, making artifacts to illustrate the meaning of the afore-mentioned idioms. They could take photos of real-life objects and formulate their own examples to clarify the meaning of the idioms. During the third stage, the participants shared their idiom photos and example sentences online, commented and discussed with other classmates about their favorite artifacts. In the phase, students voted for the winner group who would then give a small talk about the procedure of creating the winning artifact. Data from the reflections and interviews of the learners indicated their favorable attitudes towards the collaborative mobile assisted learning design and an increase in learning autonomy. By providing opportunities for the language learners to contextualize their learning and collaborate with other peers, their attitude and self-

regulated learning can be greatly enhanced, which is crucial for language acquisition (Smith, Kuchah & Lamb, 2018).

Hsu, Hwang and Chang (2013) carried out a research utilizing a mobile-assisted system recommending reading materials based on reading preference information inputted by the students. Participants were 108 senior high school students in Taiwan who were separated into three groups, i.e., one control group and two experimental groups. While the two experimental groups studied with the support of the system equipped with reading-recommendation function, the control group did not. Both experimental groups scored significantly higher on their reading comprehension posttest compared to the control group. Reading materials of interest proved to benefit the EFL learners' reading comprehension in a significant way.

Personalizing learning experience is of great value as it allows EFL learners to utilize their personal experience to into language learning, making the learning process more meaningful to them. Once the learners' interest into the learning task is aroused, they will be more likely to put more effort into accomplishing it and subsequently gain more from the learning activity.

3.2.3. Language achievement

One of the most reported benefits from the employment of Collaborative MALL was the improvement of participants' language ability. Students' linguistic skills were significantly enhanced after a period of learning with Collaborative MALL program, e.g., enhanced verbal skill (Hwang et al, 2016), writing (Hwang et al, 2014), and reading (Lin, 2014; Lan, Sung, & Chang, 2013). Hwang et al (2016) further elaborated that their high school participants were able to improve their speaking regarding

both fluency and accuracy aspects.

Chang and Hsu (2011) created a collaborative MALL application for an intensive reading course employing PDA (Personal Digital Assistant) devices. The digital devices were equipped with language learning functions, e.g., instant translation, annotation and annotation sharing modes. Adopting an experimental design, the researchers split their participants, that is, 85 third-year undergraduates, into two groups, treatment and control group. Students in the experimental group were further heterogeneously divided into smaller groups of two, three, four and five students. They were provided with PDA devices to carry out collaborative reading. The participants read and shared annotation notes together via the system. Their reading comprehension ability was measured with comprehension tests tapping into the content of the essays they read. The study results indicated the experimental groups could significantly outperform the control group in reading comprehension achievement.

Liu and Chu (2010) examined how game-based learning influenced EFL students' language achievements and motivation. Seventh-grade students (N = 64) were split into treatment and control group. The treatment group participants were supplied with PDA devices equipped with game-based learning activities and materials. They were required to carry out different types of learning activities, including individual and collaborative ones. With respect to the collaborative learning activity, experimental students were asked to create an audio story together. To accomplish the task, the students in turn visited different places shown on their PDA devices and recorded a story for each place and then combined all the stories to make a complete one. In the end, students' learning

achievement was measured with listening and speaking tests. Survey and interview were also employed to extract the participants' attitude towards the game. The findings suggested significantly better learning outcomes for the experimental group who praised the opportunities of practicing English speaking and listening with their classmates.

In summary, it has been consistently confirmed in previous research that Collaborative MALL activities are effective in facilitating EFL learners' language acquisition. Language learners can assist each other in acquiring language skills while enjoying the learning process.

3.2.4. Learning motivation

Regarding the motivational facet, EFL learners commonly perceived collaborative MALL systems to be beneficial to their English learning, making them become motivated language learners (e.g., Hwang et al, 2016; Lin, 2014; Lan, Sung & Chang, 2013; Hwang et al, 2014).

Participants in Hsu, Hwang and Chang's study (2013) found the Collaborative MALL system, equipped with material-recommendation function, to be effective and useful for their language learning. The mobile language learning system allowed them to input their personal reading interest and subsequently, recommended suitable reading materials. Therefore, the EFL learners were kept motivated, reading books of their choice. Likewise, students in the research by Lin and Chu (2010) indicated that the game-based mobile learning system enhanced their learning motivation in terms of attention, relevance, confidence and satisfaction. After playing educational games, one of which was mobile-assisted treasure hunt on the campus, they became more focused on their learning

process and were able to connect the lesson content with their background knowledge, making them more confident and satisfied with their language learning experience.

Berns, Isla-Montes, Palomo-Duarte and Doderio (2016) conducted a study in which they created a game-based mobile learning application, named VocabTrainerA1 app, to support language learners. The study purported to investigate the learners' learning motivation, perceived usefulness and attitude towards the value of the application as well as enhancing their linguistic proficiency. The mobile application contained both individual and collaborative tasks, requiring learners to cooperate and solve a murder mystery game. Participants were distributed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) questionnaire and then interviewed about their attitude towards the collaborative MALL system. The study results showed that the MALL application significantly enhanced the language learners' learning motivation, and language proficiency.

In a nutshell, mobile-assisted collaborative language learning can benefit language learners in various ways, four of which involve opportunities for peer collaborating, personalizing learning experience, improving linguistic abilities, and enhancing learning motivation.

3.3. Reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the reviewed studies

In the following section, merits and drawbacks of previous studies in mobile-assisted collaborative language learning will be discussed, particularly regarding the research methodology.

3.3.1. Advantages

The above-stated studies have undeniably contributed valuable knowledge to

the research literature and language-teaching practice. Firstly, the design of Collaborative MALL system plays a distinctive role in the success of the technology application in EFL classrooms. Given the importance of designing process, Lan, Sung and Chang (2013) split their study into two phases, the first of which was dedicated to gathering the English teachers' suggestions for the system design. They even conducted the feedback survey two times to ensure the system had desirable features for its users. Another method to enhance the quality of the collaborative MALL application is to carefully employ previous theoretical frameworks. In both studies of Hwang et al (2016) and Hwang et al (2014), the researchers created their applications in accordance with effective pedagogical approaches, that is, communicative language teaching and situated language learning, which earned high appreciation from the students learning with the system. Finally, a great feature to be mentioned regarding these studies is that they all investigated participants' perception of the mobile technology in addition to their academic achievement, thus keeping educators informed of both the students' improvement in linguistic ability and learning attitude (e.g., Hwang et al, 2016).

3.3.2. Shortcomings

Despite the valuable contributions of the reviewed studies to the field of Collaborative MALL, several shortcomings threatening the validity and reliability of the studies can still be identified. First, the unclear grading process, regarding the graders' information (e.g., Hwang et al, 2014), grading rubrics and the inter-rater reliability (Hwang et al, 2016), may increase the probability of bias in the study results. For example, Hwang et al (2014) did not elaborate on the format of the writing test used to examine students' writing ability.

This can be considered a possible source of bias due to the fact that whether a written test was provided with contextual clues can make a difference to the results of the test-takers (Schuwirth & Van Der Vleuten, 2004).

Secondly, flawed experimental research design may reduce the credibility of the research findings. Without a control group, the participants' improvement in reading ability in Lan, Sung and Chang's study (2013) can be attributed to either the teachers' instructions *per se* or the collaborative MALL program employed. No report on the pretest scores and the fact that students allowed to retake the online reading tests many times in Lin's study (2014) may further raise concern for the reliability of the finding that students' reading ability was enhanced. This is because when the students were allowed to take the online reading tests many times, their scores could have been improved as a result of ruling out the incorrect answers chosen in the previous times, yet it did not reflect their true improvement in linguistic knowledge.

3.4. Implications

In this section, implications for research design and language teaching practice will be taken into consideration.

3.4.1. Research

As pointed out in the reflection section, future research in examining the collaborative MALL application should adopt a more rigorous research design to enhance the credibility of the research findings. In addition to utilizing an experimental design with a control group, researchers should also ensure the similar level of language proficiency among participants, which can be done through examining their pretest scores. Standardized tests should be preferred as the instruments for measuring participants' linguistic

achievements or at least, the researchers should provide details of test measures in regard to the validity and reliability aspects. In addition, regarding productive skills such as speaking and writing, more than one examiner should be involved in the grading process with inter-rater reliability provided in the research report.

Moreover, in future studies, researchers should also consider EFL students' suggestions for the Collaborative MALL application design, thus making the mobile applications more meaningful and effective in addressing EFL learners' real-life learning difficulties. With the fast-paced development of technology nowadays, more research in collaborative MALL is warranted to address the educational affordances of new mobile applications in various educational contexts, which serves to better inform relevant stakeholders in the field of language education.

3.4.2. Pedagogical practice

Given the positive research-based results in Collaborative MALL studies, English teachers should be proactive in integrating available mobile learning technology into language teaching practice. English teachers are advised to adopt the three language teaching approaches, i.e., game-based, task-based and seamless learning, in English teaching as these pedagogical approaches have been well-tested in previous studies and proved to be much effective in language education.

Specifically, to promote a learner-centered language classroom, students should be allowed more opportunities to collaborate with other students to co-construct linguistic knowledge and build up language skills (Kukulaska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). Designing game-based lessons are encouraged as they help motivate learners and make the learning experience less stressful as well as being more interactive.

Regarding task-based language teaching approach, English teachers can design major learning tasks that require students to collaborate and accomplish them together. This aims to provide more opportunities for practicing different language skills and enhancing social relationships among learners. As indicated in the reviewed studies, learning tasks can be completed outside the classroom and/or after the lesson. The flexibility in time and location of language learning tasks should also be promoted in language class to reinforce students' interest and learning autonomy. For example, by uploading the learning materials online, students can access and study the materials outside classroom without time and space constraints (Cong-Lem, in press).

Also, English instructors should make effort to personalize/individualize EFL learners' learning experience to address their individual differences in ability and interest, thus making the language learning activities more meaningful and relevant to the learners' personal life. For instance, providing language learners with a wide range of authentic materials and allowing them the flexibility of material choice serve to motivate as well as supporting EFL learners' self-regulated learning.

Collaborative MALL helps enhance not only language learners' linguistic abilities but also their affect, i.e., the learners' feelings and attitudes. This is essential for successful language learning since learners' emotion and attitude play a crucial role in determining continuous effort in their language learning process (Tseng, Liu & Nix, 2017). It is, hence, essential for language instructors to acknowledge the above-mentioned pedagogical approaches in designing language lessons in order to augment the English learners' linguistic achievement while maintaining their positive interest in foreign language learning.

4. Conclusion

The current review was conducted to examine empirical studies that investigated the educational affordances of mobile applications in collaborative foreign language learning. After reviewing major collaborative MALL studies published in high-ranking journals, it is safe to conclude that employing collaborative MALL generally brings about various advantages to modern language education. Previous studies primarily employed three pedagogical approaches, i.e., game-based, task-based and seamless language learning, as their main theoretical frameworks. These language learning theories have guided prior researchers in designing mobile applications or in employing the available ones to assist language learners in their English learning journey, making them become more competent and motivated language learners. Collaborative MALL allows a learner-centered language classroom by creating more opportunities for EFL learners to co-construct knowledge through collaboration, to utilize real-life objects and personal experience in their language learning, to improve linguistic proficiency and to strengthen learning motivation. However, as methodological drawbacks still exist in prior Collaborative MALL studies, more rigorous research is warranted to examine the educational affordances of new Collaborative MALL technologies in various educational contexts.

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TỔNG QUAN NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ ÁP DỤNG CÔNG NGHỆ THÔNG TIN DI ĐỘNG TRONG GIẢNG DẠY NGOẠI NGỮ NHẪM HỖ TRỢ NGƯỜI HỌC CÙNG CỘNG TÁC HỌC TẬP

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Tóm tắt: Bài tổng quan nghiên cứu này thảo luận về các nghiên cứu trong lĩnh vực giảng dạy ngoại ngữ có sử dụng thiết bị công nghệ thông tin di động để tạo cho người học cơ hội cộng tác với nhau trong học tập ngoại ngữ (Mobile Assisted Collaborative Language Learning hay Collaborative MALL), ví dụ: dạy ngoại ngữ với sự hỗ trợ của ứng dụng trên điện thoại di động, máy tính bảng và máy tính xách tay. Bài báo hướng tới cung cấp kiến thức về: (1) các khung lý thuyết phổ biến trong lĩnh vực nghiên cứu Collaborative MALL; (2) hiệu quả thực tiễn của việc áp dụng Collaborative MALL trong giảng dạy ngoại ngữ; (3) điểm mạnh và thiếu sót của các nghiên cứu trước đây, đặc biệt về phương pháp nghiên cứu; và (4) định hướng nghiên cứu trong tương lai cũng như giá trị về mặt sư phạm - phương pháp giảng dạy rút ra từ các nghiên cứu Collaborative MALL. Kết quả của bài tổng quan cho thấy 3 phương pháp giảng dạy phổ biến được dùng làm lý thuyết nghiên cứu trong lĩnh vực Collaborative MALL là học ngoại ngữ dựa trên trò chơi (game-based learning), học qua hoàn thành các nhiệm vụ (task-based learning) và học dựa vào ngữ cảnh (seamless learning). Lợi ích đã được chứng minh của việc áp dụng Collaborative MALL vào giảng dạy ngoại ngữ bao gồm cải thiện năng lực ngôn ngữ, tạo điều kiện cho người học cộng tác trong quá trình học, cá nhân hóa trải nghiệm học tập, và tăng cường động lực học tập, tính tự học. Một số điểm yếu trong phương pháp nghiên cứu trước đây gồm thiếu nhóm kiểm soát (control group) trong nghiên cứu thực nghiệm (experimental design), thiếu thông tin về hình thức và quá trình đánh giá năng lực của người học. Trong tương lai, cần nhiều hơn các nghiên cứu có chất lượng để khảo sát hiệu quả của các ứng dụng mới trong việc hỗ trợ giảng dạy ngoại ngữ trong nhiều ngữ cảnh khác nhau.

Từ khóa: giảng dạy ngoại ngữ, cộng tác trong học tập, học trên thiết bị di động, công nghệ thông tin trong giảng dạy

OVER AGAIN: POTENTIAL NOVEL PERSPECTIVES FROM LEXICAL CONCEPTS & COGNITIVE MODELS THEORY

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Abstract: This article aims at analyzing the approaches by different authors to the English preposition *over*; showing their strengths and weaknesses. We then try to apply the theoretical constraints of *Lexical concepts & Cognitive Models* (hereafter: LCCM) to treat *over* from a novel perspective. Seth (2009) can describe the pragmatics of *over* in stances of use, but he fails to present the distinct senses of the word. Though Lakoff's framework of *Full-Specification* could figure out the distinct senses of *over*, the vast proliferation of senses and a lack of methodological constraints make the approach inappropriate in certain cases. Other works by Kreitzer (1997), Tyler & Evans (2003), Deane (2005) and Maria Brenda (2014) could, to certain extent, fill the gaps of Lakoff, but they have failed to address the issue of combining both *the linguistic (parametric) and the non-linguistic (analogue)* representations in analyzing the semantics of *over*. It is hypothetically proved that as a linguistic vehicle, the preposition *over* encodes 17 lexical concepts with unique semantic and formal selectional tendencies.

Keywords: *over*, distinct, LCCM, lexical representation

1. Introduction: The challenge of *over*

English prepositions were once neglected and linguists never seemed to take them seriously (Jackendoff, 1983: 345) but prepositions turn out to be appealing to cognitive linguists. Perhaps the English preposition *over* is the most special one as it has different syntactic functions and has received a great deal of attention from numerous researchers (Brugman, 1981; Boers, 1996; Deane, 2005; Dewell, 1994; Kreitzer, 1997; Lakoff, 1987: 416–461; Tyler and Evans, 2003:64-106; Yoon, 2004; Set, 2009; Roussel, 2013; Maria Brenda, 2014). In general, the approaches of above-mentioned authors could be classified into three main

trends: The descriptivist approach (Seth, 2009); the Cognitive spatial division approach (Roussel, 2013) and the Cognitive semantics image-schemas approach (Brugman, 1981; Boers, 1996; Deane, 2005; Dewell, 1994; Kreitzer, 1997; Lakoff, 1987: 416–461; Tyler and Evans, 2003:64-106; Maria Brenda, 2014; Yoon, 2004).

1.1. *The descriptivist approach*

The preposition *over*, together with *above*, is introduced and analyzed in each instance of use by Seth Lindstromberg through the book *English Prepositions Explained* published in 2010. From the very beginning of chapter 9, Seth (2010:109) made a reference to Coventry *et al* (2008) to suppose that *above* has no or little functional meaning so its usages are far less varied as those of *over*.

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Seth Lindstromberg shows the usage of *over* and *above* in great details, and the difference between *over* and *above* was made clearly in each case of use from spatial senses to non-spatial ones. When denoting spatial meanings, *over* is neutral about geometrical separation while in every sense of *above*, the subject and landmark are separated. The pragmatics of *over* and *above* were shown through three levels: basic spatial meanings,

variations from basic applications, and additional metaphorical usages. In chapter 12, Seth Lindstromberg clarifies the usage of *under* and *below*. The preposition *under* is the approximate opposite of *over* while *below* is the opposite of *above*. Here are the four basic spatial configurations that the four prepositions denote according to Seth Lindstromberg.



Figure 1. Spatial configuration¹ denoted by *above* (Seth, 2010: 110)



Figure 2. Spatial configuration denoted by *over* (Seth, 2010: 110)



Figure 3. Spatial configurations denoted by *under* & *below* (Seth, 2010: 158)

What Seth was trying to do is to describe the real usages of the four prepositions and distinguish between two pairs of synonymous prepositions *over-above*, *under-below*. The approach by Seth

is similar to that of a dictionary with in-depth explanation and examples, which is of importance to learners of English. However, Seth fails to explain how extended senses of the four prepositions arise and the relationships between those senses.

¹ The dark sphere represents the Subject (or Trajectory), the rectangle represents the Landmark.

1.2. The cognitive spatial division approach

This approach is advocated by Roussel (2013) when he analyzes the structure A *over* B. Particularly, he uses the componential analysis of the inanimate and animate referents of B with the total number of 196 instances of use. The main findings of the study show that the use of *over* in the structure A *over* B, as written by Roussel, is:

Over exhibits properties combining visual limits and motion, which seems to be a sign for perceptive calculations governing the linguistic establishment of spatial relations. The preposition appears to prioritize the expression of the observer's visual assessment of their own relation to the surrounding entities. Therefore, the geometrical patterns and the various degrees of measure, place, position, height, passage or judgment may not reveal the meaning of the preposition, or the interpretation of the speaker, but they may convey the final stage of perceptive calculations which, subsequently, operate aspectually or pragmatically in the utterance.... More generally, the linguistic analysis demonstrates that the system of English prepositions seems not only to encode space relations egocentrically [DEANE 2005], but also allocentrically (by reference to the external world), as shown both by the body parts and the semantic features selected in the referents of A and B.

(Roussel, 2013: 223)

Although Roussel realizes the tendency of space limits of *over*, he fails to explain if the preposition in some cases carries or encodes distinct senses. The author is concerned with the "perception in the brain prior to the encoding of the extra linguistic world in new schematic forms", but Roussel does not analyze the speaker's meaning in each instance of use, or at least to generalize the speaker's meaning when using the preposition *over*.

1.3. The cognitive semantics image-schemas approach

This is the approach that a number of scholars make use of when analyzing the semantics of *over*. In fact, Lakoff with his case study of *over* laid a foundation for other discussions (Brugman, 1981; Boers, 1996; Kreitzer, 1997; Tyler and Evans, 2001, 2003; Yoon, 2004; Deane, 2005; Dewell, 1994; Maria Brenda, 2014). The first two approaches, namely, *Full-specification Approach* and *Partial-specification Approach*, were critically analyzed by Tyler and Evans (2001) who then developed an approach termed *Principled Polysemy*. Maria Brenda (2014) exploited Langacker's model of cognitive grammar (2000) to analyze the semantic and syntactic structure of *over*. The approach by Maria Brenda, to certain extent, can be described as *Extended Principled Polysemy*.

The notion of *image schema* was developed by Johnson (1987) and Lakoff (1987), and in their opinion, physical domain is the most significant level of human interaction. The two authors suppose that conceptual representations in human mind are arising from embodied experience. The definition of *image schemas*, proposed by Gibbs and Colston (1995: 347), are *experiential gestalts* and they come from different sensorimotor of human beings. Evans and Green (2006: 180-190) synthesized that image schemas possess eight properties: (i) Image schemas are pre-conceptual in origin; (ii) An image schema can give rise to more specific concepts; (iii) Image schemas derive from interaction with and observation of the world; (iv) Image schemas are inherently meaningful; (v) Image schemas are analogue representations; (vi) Image schemas are not the same as mental images; (vii) Image schemas are subject to transformations and; (viii) Image schemas can occur in clusters. In short, Lakoff supposes

that words are seen as radial categories, and the following figure represents the diagram to illustrate the radial categories.

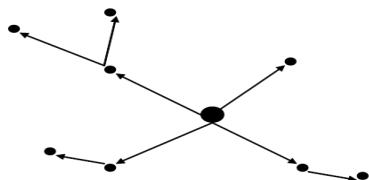


Figure 4. Modelling the radial categories (Evans & Green, 2006: 332)

The following part represents the above approaches with critical comments.

1.3.1. Full-specification approach

Lakoff took *over* as a case study in English prepositions and his analysis is sometimes described as the full-specification approach to lexical semantics. The core point in Lakoffian theory is that the senses associated with prepositions like *over*, which are grounded in spatial experience, are structured in terms of image-schemas. According to Lakoff, an image schema combining elements of both ABOVE and ACROSS is the prototypical sense of *over*. The distinct senses associated

with *over* are structured with respect to this image-schema which provides the category with its prototype structure. In sum, Lakoff claims that the schemas which are different from the central schema are considered to represent distinct senses associated with *over*. According to this model of word meaning, the central schema for *over* has at least six distinct and closely related variants (see Figure 5), each of which is stored in semantic memory.

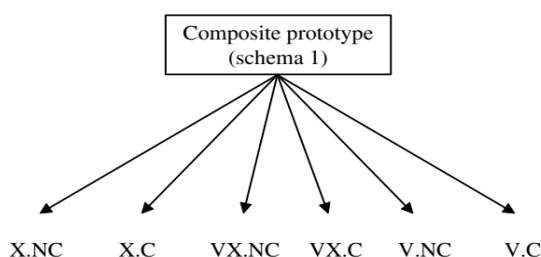


Figure 5. Central image schema (adopted from Lakoff, 1987: 423)

Beside the ABOVE-ACROSS sense, *over* denotes a number of other senses summarized in Table 1. As can be seen, this model results in a potentially vast proliferation of senses for each lexical item.

Table 1. Schemas proposed by Lakoff (1987) for *over* besides the central schema (Evans & Green, 2006: 337)

| Schema type | Basic meaning | Examples |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| ABOVE schema | The TR is located above the LM. | <i>The helicopter is hovering over the hill.</i> |
| COVERING schema | The TR is covering the LM | <i>The board is over the hole.</i> |
| REFLEXIVE schema | The TR is reflexive: the TR is simultaneously the TR and the LM. The final location of the TR is understood with respect to its starting position | <i>The fence fell over.</i> |
| EXCESS schema | When <i>over</i> is employed as a prefix it can indicate 'excess' of TR relative to LM | <i>The bath overflowed.</i> |
| REPETITION schema | <i>Over</i> is used as an adverb to indicate a process that is repeated. | <i>After receiving a poor grade, the student started the assignment over (again).</i> |

Consequently, *over* has, at the very least, several dozen distinct senses. Tyler and Evans (2001, 2003) show two main problems of Lakoff: (1) a failure to distinguish between polysemy and vagueness, (2) unconstrained methodology. They indicated that Lakoff denied the role of context in meaning altogether. Particularly, Tyler and Evans (2003) argue that the examples in (1) do not represent distinct senses of *over* (one specifying contact and one specifying lack of contact):

- (1a). The bird flew over the wall.
- (b). Sam climbed over the wall.

Instead, Tyler and Evans suppose that the interpretation of *over* with respect to contact or lack of contact derives from the integration of *over* with the other elements in the sentence. Our knowledge about birds (they can fly) and people (they cannot) provides us with the inference that birds do not come into contact with walls when crossing over them while people do. In other words, the linguistic context together with encyclopedic knowledge provides the details relating to the presence or absence of contact. According to Tyler and Evans, *over* here is vague with respect to contact. Tyler and Evans argue that while Lakovian position on polysemy as a conceptual phenomenon is correct, it is also important to take into account the crucial role of context in word meaning.

Lakovian approach has also been blamed for a lack of methodological constraints. In other words, Lakoff provides no principled criteria for determining what counts as a distinct sense. This means that the polysemy account presented for *over* (or whatever lexical item we might apply the approach to) results purely from the intuitions (and perhaps also the imagination) of the analyst rather than actually representing the way a particular category is represented in the mind of the language user. This problem has been discussed in some detail

by Sandra and Rice (1995) and by Sandra (1998) [cited in Evans, 2006: 342].

1.3.2. *Partial-specification approach*

Kreitzer (1997) made use of the works by Lakoff (1987) and Talmy (1983) to modify Lakovian framework to semantically analyze *over*. Kreitzer posits that there are three distinct levels of schematization inherent in the conceptualization of a spatial scene: the component level, the relational level, and the integrative level.

Evans (2001) criticized Kreitzer for failing to decide which sense is the primary sense of *over* and neglecting senses presented by Lakoff. Hence, there is a lack of how senses of *over* are distinguished.

1.3.3. *Principled Polysemy*

The framework's aim is to analyze the meanings of certain English prepositions and present them in semantic networks. In fact, the framework is built upon works by Lakoff and Claudia Brugman as part of cognitive lexical semantics and provides a theoretical constraint how a sense is counted as distinct. Founders of the framework provided two criteria: (1) for a sense to count as distinct, it must involve a meaning that is not purely spatial in nature, and/or a spatial configuration holding between the TR and LM that is distinct from the other senses conventionally associated with that preposition; and (2) there must also be instances of the sense that are context-independent: instances in which the distinct sense could not be inferred from another sense and the context in which it occurs.

Tyler and Evans (2003:64-106) took *over* as a case study to shed light on the analysis of other prepositions. They provided a semantic network for *over* with one central meaning and fifteen extended meanings.

The framework Principled Polysemy could successfully explain "how new

meanings develop from established ones on the basis of experiential correlations” (Thora, 2004). However, to the best of our knowledge, Tyler and Evans’ network may not help us trace the meaning of *over* in certain cases. Consider *over* in the following sentence,

(2). British Ambassador in hot water **over** joke.

The above example is a headline on BBC, and there is no verb. The complete sentence, as understood by readers, is “British Ambassador is in hot water **over** joke”. We can analyze the structure of the sentence like in the following table. “Over joke” is treated as something new because it needs analyzing to understand the meaning of the whole sentence.

Table 2. Analysis of “British Ambassador in hot water over joke”

| | | | |
|--------------------|------|--------------|-------------------|
| British Ambassador | is | in hot water | over joke. |
| Subject | Verb | Adverbial | Something new |

Normally, *over* may denote a spatial-physical configuration between a LM and a TR in the above sentence; but in fact there is no such configuration. So in this case, *over* denotes a non-spatial meaning. In order to understand the non-spatial meaning of *over*, we consulted several dictionaries²; however, the consultation yields no answers. The semantic network for *over* proposed by Tyler and Evans did not give us any clues to trace the meaning of *over* in this case. Yet, reading through the article, we can see that it is the joke that makes the ambassador himself in trouble. Tyler & Evans may argue that the use of *over* in (2) is constructed online and perhaps the prototypical spatial function of *over* can help readers guess the meaning of *over* joke. This is true to certain extent; however, we do not suppose that the polysemous use of *over* is sufficient in the following figure.

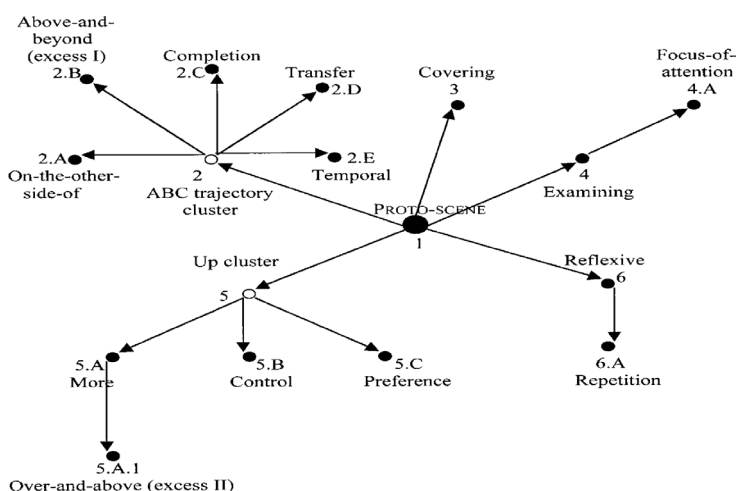


Figure 6. The semantic network for *over* (Tyler and Evans, 2003:80)

Yoon (2004) reanalyzed the semantics of *over* in the light of Principled Polysemy and proposed a revised semantic network for the

preposition as follows:

² Oxford Dictionary Online, Cambridge Dictionary Online, Merriam Webster Dictionary.

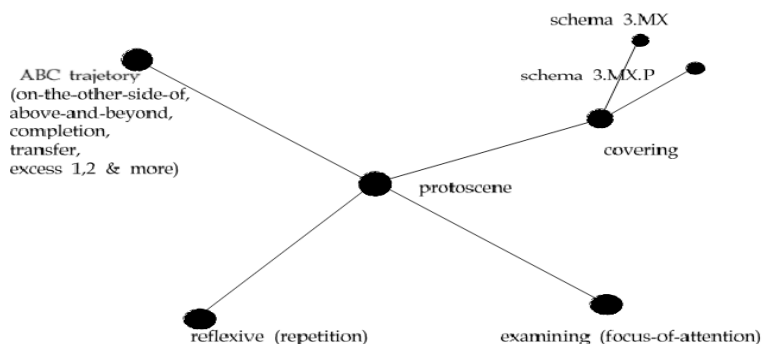


Figure 7. Revised semantic network for over by So Yeon Yoon (2004)

Additionally, recent research studies show that polysemy is not as simple as it is assumed, so Evans (2014) himself admitted errors in analyzing the phenomenon of polysemy:

In the final analysis, what this reveals is that polysemy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It is probably overly simplistic to assume, as has sometimes been done (e.g., Tyler and Evans, 2001, 2003) that discussions of polysemy boil down to the polemic of monosemy on the one hand, versus the multiple distinct sense-units of the principled polysemy approach that I espoused with Andrea Tyler in our 2003 book. This bifurcation is too neat, and consequently ignores some of the very phenomena that I have been addressing in this paper. While polysemy as viewed through the eyes of Charles Ruhl (1989) is surely empirically flawed, it is fair to say that the view of polysemy developed in Tyler and Evans (2003) is probably also too simplistic. There we argued for neat semantic networks, where word-senses constituted clearly demarcated, discrete nodes within a radiating lattice of semantic memory, which we thought, ultimately, would be locatable in the brain.

(Evans, 2014:122)

Hence, Principled Polysemy seems to be a rather simplistic view of *over*.

1.3.4. Extended Principled Polysemy

Inspired by Langacker’s work in 2000 and Tyler and Evans’ work in 2003, Maria Brenda wrote a monograph, published in 2014, on the cognitive perspective of the polysemy of *over*. We term the framework that Maria Brenda exploited *Extended Principled Polysemy*. Besides presenting what Tyler and Evans (2003) had done, Maria added new meanings of *over* by analyzing the syntactic structures of her corpus while taking context into consideration. She also succeeded in presenting the historic use of preposition *over* over the centuries. However, as Evans admitted (2015), the starting point of Maria Brenda’s work is rather, in Evans’ term, “simplistic”. In addition, the data collected were from various dictionaries, so it is *de facto* that usage-based model was not exploited.

1.3.5. Other works

Boers (1996) made a reference to Lakovian notion of image-schema to treat *over* in different metaphors. In general, what was semantically found by Boers was “grateful” to results of Lakoff and Brugman. However, Dewell (1994) proposed the six image-schema transformations more seriously to address *over* in each distinct sense. As a result, how extended senses of *over* arose from the prototypical sense was rigorously explained. Deane (2005) proposed a multimodality spatial representation to analyze *over*. He proved that the polysemy of *over* derives from the prototypical sense on the basis of preference rules.

Personally, we see that the works presented by above-mentioned scholars are of great significance and have their own values. In fact, **The case of *over*** by Lakoff laid a foundation for other theoretical framework to be built upon. However, there are two precautions that must be taken when treating English prepositions.

1. Linguists have proved that prepositions carry meanings, or in other words, encode certain senses. It is true that spatial configuration denoted by prepositions facilitates meanings in utterances. Non-spatial meanings are originally rooted from spatial ones through different mapping processes.

2. Evans showed that three prepositions *in*, *at*, *on* denote three types of polysemy: conceptual polysemy, lexical polysemy and inter-lexical polysemy. Then, he successfully proved the point of view that the polysemy of the three prepositions emerges from different sources and in different ways. Evans supposes that *an account of the nature of semantic structure - a representational format unique to language - and conceptual structure - a representational format that is wholly non-linguistic in nature* is needed (Evans, 2014:122).

Additionally, in reference to what Evans (2014) advocated, the works by Lakoff (1987), Brugman (1988), Kreitzer (1997), Tyler and Evans (2001; 2003), Maria Brenda (2014) and others have failed to address the issue of combining both *the linguistic (parametric) and the non-linguistic (analogue)* representations in analyzing the semantics of *over*. Hence, a more comprehensive framework would provide a more proper perspective for the polysemy of *over*.

2. A reanalysis of OVER

Inspired by Evans' works (2005, 2009, 2014), we suppose that frameworks that analyze the semantics of *over* must follow the premises and assumptions below (Navarro, 1998; Evans, 2009):

1. A prepositional vehicle³ is always meaningful, and always contributes to meaning construction no matter what syntactic construction where it occurs.

2. The meanings of all the uses of a preposition should be explained by virtue of a single coherent semantic structure.

3. The semantic structure should represent the polysemy⁴ of a preposition with primary cognitive model and secondary cognitive model.

4. All the senses of the semantic structure should be linked with no gap in the chain.

5. Metaphorical and abstract uses should be derivable from senses based on bodily experience.

6. The semantic structure should make apparent the mechanisms and patterns of meaning elaboration and extension. These mechanisms and patterns should explain how the semantic category extends and how it could possibly extend in the future, but they do not predict the exact way in which this will happen, or if it will happen at all.

7. The interface between language, communication, and cognition constitutes the process of meaning construction which is influenced by usage.

8. The meaning of the prepositions under supervision is attached to a distinct syntactic and semantic structure.

In reference to the presented hypothesis together with the above-analysis of previous approaches to the English preposition *over*, we come to the proposal that the theory of LCCM is the most potential to account for the

³ Evans' term, in his book entitled "How Words Mean" published by Oxford University Press in 2009.

⁴ Basically, there are two contrasting approaches to the semantics of prepositions: polysemy and monosemy. Recent studies have shown the appropriateness of the polysemy approach, especially in the light of cognitive linguistics (Tyler and Evans, 2003).

semantics and meaning transference of *over*. In the following part, we will first explain why LCCM is chosen as the theoretical framework, and then introduce how LCCM works, i.e. the semantics of *over* in the light of LCCM.

2.1. LCCM as the conceptual framework

It is seen that a new framework which can provide both the lexical representation and semantic compositionality of *over* is needed. In other words, that framework has to deal with the preposition’s conceptual structure and semantic structure - two distinct concepts which are discussed by Evans (2013:15) as follows:

Conceptual structure is a level of non-linguistic representation that derives from sensory-motor, proprioceptive and subjective experience. Semantic structure is a language-specific level of representation encoded at the semantic pole associated with words and other multiword constructions. These two levels are modelled by the theoretical constructs that give the theory its name: the lexical concept and the cognitive model.

(Evans, 2013: 15)

The novelty of LCCM is that “*lexical concepts – units of language-specific semantic structure – facilitate access to units of conceptual structure – cognitive models*” (Evans, 2013: 15). Additionally, LCCM also provides a detailed explanation

for the *linguistically instantiated processes of integration* (Evans, 2013: 21). That is the reason why LCCM is made use of.

As the name of the framework denotes, there are two important notions: *lexical concepts* and *cognitive models*. In Evan’s view, a lexical concept is part of the linguistic knowledge that conveys various types of highly schematic *linguistic content*. Specifically, linguistic content includes information relating to the selectional tendencies associated with a given lexical concept - the range of collocational and collostructional behaviour of a given lexical concept. Evans supposes that because the lexical concept of an open-class word gives access to numerous association areas within the conceptual system, it also guides to access to numerous cognitive models. A *cognitive model profile* of a lexical concept is the range of cognitive models to which it facilitates direct access, and the range of additional cognitive models to which it therefore facilitates indirect access. In fact, the framework is the result of Evans’ continuous works (Evans 2006, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2010b) which were based on works of Langacker (2002), Goldberg (2006); but the difference lies in the fact that it provides a methodological framework for conducting semantic analysis of lexical concepts (Evans, 2013:25). Here is the architect of the framework:

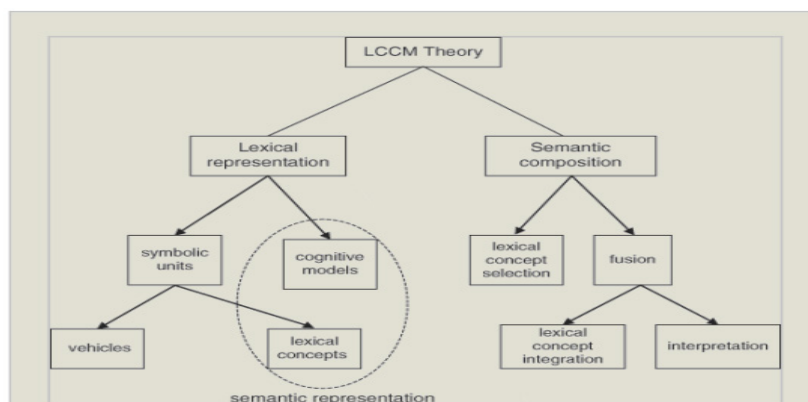


Figure 8. The architect of LCCM Theory (Evans, 2009: 76)

According to Evans, there are two mechanisms of linguistically mediated usage events namely *lexical concept selection* and *fusion* in the semantic compositionality. Lexical concept selection serves to identify the most appropriate lexical concept associated with a given form during the processing of an utterance.

Fusion is the integrative process and results in the construction of a conception. This is achieved by recourse to two sorts of knowledge: linguistic content and conceptual content. Fusion is itself made up of two constituent processes: *lexical concept integration* and *interpretation* (see figure 9).

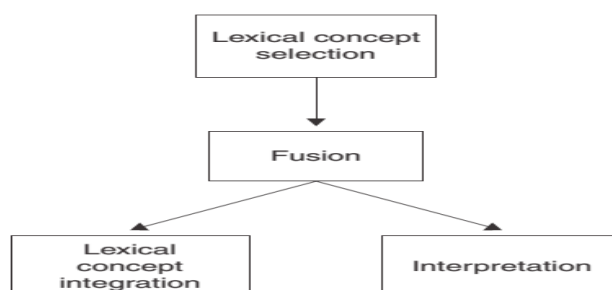


Figure 9. Processes of semantic composition in LCCM (Evans, 2009: 219)

One more issue addressed by LCCM is figurative language (metaphor and metonymy). Evans proves that literal meaning of an utterance is interpreted within the default or primary cognitive model profile while the non-literal meaning must be understood in the secondary cognitive model profile. The distinction between metaphor and metonymy is due to the emergence of alignment between what were termed figurative target and figurative vehicle. In case of metaphor, there is divergence between the two while in case of metonymy, there is alignment.

2.2. The methodology to account for the lexical representation of a linguistic unit in the light of LCCM

In reference to LCCM, we can make a methodological procedure to identify the lexical concepts of the preposition *over* as follows. A lexical concept shows *selectional tendencies* made up of two types of information. The first kind, termed the lexical concept's *formal selectional tendencies*, relates to the vehicle types that can encode the lexical concept. The second type concerns the semantic arguments that make up the

argument-structure lexical concept: its *semantic selectional tendencies*. A *lexical profile, in nature, refers* to the two types of selectional tendency, and it is assumed to be unique for any given lexical concept. Hence, a given lexical concept will exhibit a range of formal and semantic selectional tendencies that, in principle, should be sufficient for identifying a distinct lexical concept. Look at the following sentences from Oxford Dictionary⁵:

- (3). I went *over* and asked her name.
- (4). He's gone *over* to the enemy.

It is rather easy to schematize the spatial scenes denoted in sentences (3), (4) and there is a shift in movement towards the other side of something or somebody, which can be represented by the following figure:

⁵ We advocate the usage-based thesis of Langacker (2000) but due to the role of this paper as a proposal, the data were collected from various dictionaries namely Oxford, Cambridge, Collin COBUILD, etc. and some examples are ours which are reviewed by native speakers of English.

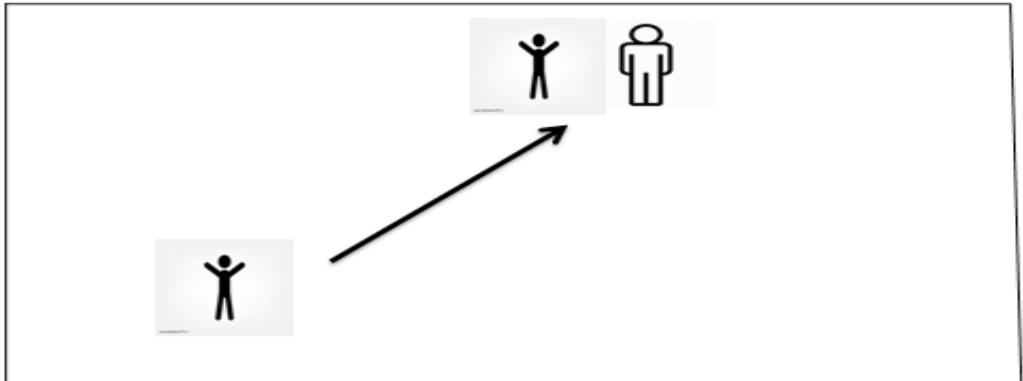


Figure 10. The schematization of “I went over”

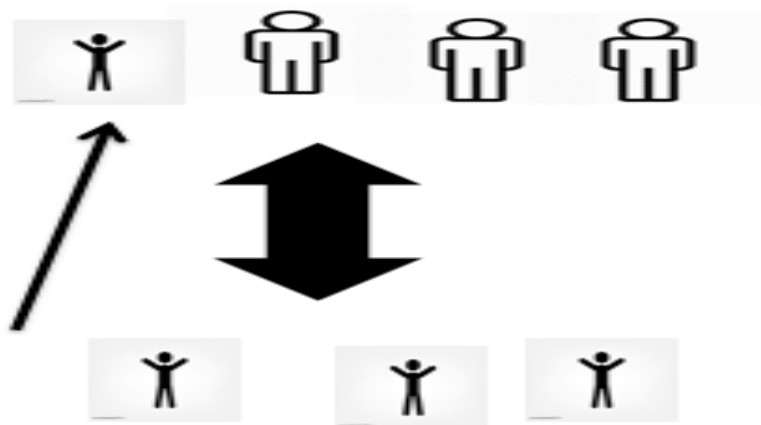


Figure 11. The schematization of “He’s gone over to the enemy.”

Tyler and Evans (2003: 87) also provided another schematization for Transfer Sense.



Figure 12. Transfer Sense (Tyler and Evans, 2003:87)

In figure 10, the use of a rectangular suggests that the participants in the conversation (I, her) must be in the same space, e.g. a classroom. In figure 11, the double arrow presents the hatreds between two parties, and the arrow in both figure 10 and 11 shows the moving direction of the speaker or person mentioned. It is noted that the space in sentence (3) may not be bounded in a particular room.

Now, it is time to review the above sentences in the light of LCCM. Examining the formal structures of sentence (4), we can see that the use of motion verb “go” makes a shift in movement in the cognitive process of the hearer, but the non-existence of “to” in sentence (4) denotes an “approaching action”. In sentence (4), the use of “to the enemy” shows that the subject “he” not only changed his position, from one side to the other side, but also merged with that side. Basing on such analysis, we suppose that *over* in sentence (3) denotes [APPROACHING] lexical concept; *over* in sentence (4) has [TRANSFER]⁶ lexical concept. In order to verify whether the concepts found are distinct lexical concepts or not, we then examine the formal selectional tendencies and the semantic selectional tendencies of both sentences (Evans, 2013: 47).

Now, we have to look at the formal selectional tendencies associated with those hypothesized lexical concepts, then the semantic selectional tendencies. In sentence (3), the first clause is “I went over” and of course without the phrase “and asked her name”, the meaning of the first clause is very vague. We suppose that the use of open-class elements in order to create this is crucial. In sentence (4), there is a prepositional phrase with the head noun “enemy” together with

the preposition “to” which is compulsory. Moreover, the opposite status between the involved subjects should be taken into account.

Based on the different sorts of *selectional tendencies* associated with these two distinct semantic functions, we could make the conclusion that *over* in the two sentences (3), (4) denotes two distinct lexical concepts which are glossed as follows:

1. a. Vehicle: NP VP over Conjunction OCE⁷
- b. Lexical concept: [APPROACHING]
2. a. Vehicle: NP VP over to-Prepositional
- b. Lexical concept: [TRANSFER]

2.3. *The hypothesized semantics of ‘over’ in the light of LCCM*

After being collected, the data⁸ were analyzed in the light of LCCM. To be clearer, as part of LCCM, Cognitive Construction Grammar by Goldberg (2006) and Cognitive Grammar by Langacker (2002) were made use of to account for the structure of the sentences in the data. Then we applied the methodological constraints of LCCM to explain if a lexical concept is distinct or not.

We are very clear that the meanings of a preposition are grounded in space, which serves as a basis for meaning extension to non-spatial ones. As we are dealing with the lexical representation of *over*, the processes of meaning extension are not the foci of the paper. Additionally, as a preposition, *over* has

⁶ The use of square brackets shows that the lexical concepts are termed by the writer of the paper.

⁷ OCE stands for Open-class elements.

⁸ We advocate the usage-based thesis of Langacker (2000) but due to the role of this paper as a proposal, the data were collected from various dictionaries namely Oxford, Cambridge, Collin COBUILD, etc. and some examples are ours which are reviewed by native speakers of English.

to collocate with certain verbs to constitute what is termed “phrasal verb”; so in some cases, the vehicles may be overlapped. Nonetheless, the semantic selectional

tendencies of distinct lexical concepts are totally different. This is the summarizing table of the lexical concepts and vehicles that *over* possesses.

Table 3. A summary of concepts and vehicles of the preposition “over”

| No | Lexical concept | Vehicle |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | [ABOVE-ACROSS] | NP (VP) over NP |
| 2 | [ON-THE-OTHER-SIDE-OF] | (NP) VP over NP |
| 3 | [ABOVE & BEYOND] (Excess I) | NP VP over NP |
| 4 | [COMPLETION] | BE over. |
| 5 | [TRANSFER] | VP over to-Prep |
| 6 | [TEMPORAL] | over NP-time |
| 7 | [COVERING] | NP VP over NP |
| 8 | [EXAMINING] | VP over NP |
| 9 | [FOCUS-OF-ATTENTION] | Verb-over (<i>over</i> can be paraphrased as <i>about</i>) |
| 10 | [MORE] | over NP-number |
| 11 | [OVER & ABOVE] (Excess II) | VP over NP (paraphrase: <i>Entity X causes entity Y to receive Z</i>) |
| 12 | [CONTROL] | over NP |
| 13 | [PREFER] | <i>Prefer/like/favour</i> NP over NP |
| 14 | [REFLEXIVE] | VP (a 90 degree arc) (NP) over |
| 15 | [REPETITION] | VP (process verb) over. |
| 16 | [APPROACHING] | VP over Conj OCE |
| 17 | [UNEASE OVERCOMING] | GET/BE over NP |

Here are the lexical concepts together with their vehicles of the preposition “over” in the light of LCCM; analysis of the semantic and formal selectional tendencies is also presented.

1. a. Lexical concept: [X is ABOVE and ACROSS Y]

b. Vehicle: NP (VP) over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The first noun phrase is the figure while the second noun phrase is the ground. The presence of the VP is optional. | The figure and ground are easily distinguishable. The ground is conceptualized as a point. Verbal ascription must involve a locative designation of height. The noun phrase must not make hearers conjure up an obscuration of vision. |

The [ABOVE & ACROSS] concept is the most common concept that *over* carries, and in reference to Lakoff (1987) and Tyler & Evans (2003) [ABOVE-ACROSS] is the prototypical sense of *over*. In fact, the above-described vehicle

can sometime carry other meaning rather than [ABOVE-ACROSS], e.g. [ON-THE-OTHER-SIDE-OF], but the difference lies in the semantics of the noun phrase or verb kinds. Here are some examples from Longman Dictionary:

(5a). A lamp hung over the table.

b. She leaned over the desk to answer the phone.

c. The sign over the door said “Mind your head”.

d. We watched a helicopter flying low over the harbor.

As discussed above, the vehicle *NP (VP) over NP* can denote [ON-THE-OTHER-SIDE-OF] lexical concept. Let’s look at the following examples:

(6a). Somehow the sheep had jumped over the fence.

b. over the river Thames (Longman Dictionary)

c. to leap over a wall (Dictionary.com)

Analyzing the characteristics of the noun

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|--|
| The presence of the first noun phrase is purely optional. The presence of the VP is optional. | The second noun phrase refers to a geographical barrier that can make an obscuration in vision or difficulties in commuting. |

The third lexical concept that *over* has is [ABOVE & BEYOND]. In this aspect, the noun phrase following *over* is conceptualized as a target point, or a limit and there is a force driving towards the target, but it fails. Look at the following examples:

(8a). Your paper is over the page limit.

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|--|
| The presence of the first noun phrase and second one is compulsory. In case of short answer to a certain question, the phrase <i>over NP</i> is sufficient to denote the concept. | The second noun phrase refers to a standard or required point. |

The fourth lexical concept of *over* we glossed here is [COMPLETION] which is characterized by the vehicle “VP over.” In this structure *over* is not a preposition, but its meaning is grounded in space so Tyler & Evans

phrase, we realize that the presence of the first one is purely optional while that of the second one is compulsory. If the first noun phrase refers to a human construction, e.g. a bridge; the preposition will conjure up a stretch in human mind. Here is an example:

(7). Look at the birds flying over₁ the bridge over₂ the Thames! (*my own example*)

*Over*₁ denotes the action of flying higher and in no contact with the bridge of the birds while *over*₂ refers to the fact that the bridge stretches from one side of the river to the other side. Here is the summary of the second lexical concept of *over*:

2. a. Lexical concept: [X is on the other side of Y]

b. Vehicle: (NP) VP over NP

b. The arrow flew over the target point. (Adapted from Tyler & Evans, 2003)

Here is the summary of the concept:

3. a. Lexical concept: [X is ABOVE & BEYOND Y]

b. Vehicle: NP VP over NP.

(2003:86) termed “adprep”⁹. Here is an example:

⁹ This is consistent with results of the previous researchers such as Langacker, 1992; Bolinger, 1971; O’Dowd, 1998.

(9). The game is over. (my own example)

4. a. Lexical concept: [COMPLETION]

b. Vehicle: NP BE over.

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|--|
| The structure BE over is permanent. | The noun phrase is conceptualized as an event. |

The next lexical concept of *over* is [TEMPORAL], coded by the structure *over + time*. In this case, the noun phrase is a chronological unit which can be years, weeks, etc.

5a. Lexical concept: [TEMPORAL]

b. Vehicle: over NP-time

(10a). Can we talk about this over dinner?

b. Over a period of ten years he stole a million pounds from the company. (Longman Dictionary)

The sixth concept is [TRANSFER] with some typical phrases like *go/turn/ switch/ hand NP over to NP*. It is noted that the verb designates a shift in direction or the possession state; and the *to-prepositional* phrase refers to the beneficiary of the movement. Look at the

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The presence of the first noun phrase is optional. The presence of the VP and to-prepositional phrase is compulsory. | The verb designates a shift in direction or the possession state. The noun phrase in the to-prepositional phrase refers to the beneficiary of the movement. |

The seventh lexical concept termed here is [COVERING] which is formally encoded by the structure *over NP*. In fact, the structure can be extended as follows: *NP VP over NP*. We realize that the first noun phrase is not necessarily higher than the second one, and even there is contact between them. Here is an example:

(13). The tablecloth is over the table. (Tyler & Evans, 2003: 90)

following sentence:

(11). She handed her money over to the robber. (my own example)

In this sentence, the figure is the woman's money which was forced to give the robber - the beneficiary of such an action. Of course, schematizing the spatial scene of the sentence helps us learn that the owner of the money is no longer the woman, but the robber. Another example is:

(12). The man has gone over to the other party. (my own example)

Here is the summary of the concept's information:

6. a. Lexical concept: [TRANSFER]

b. Vehicle: Verb over NP to-Prepositional

Apparently, the tablecloth must be in contact with the table and cover at least the central part or the whole table to beautify the table and provide the courtesy to the room. It is noted that both the table and the tablecloth are lower than our vantage point and we as construers/ viewers tend to perceive the *covering relationship* between the figure and the ground, rather than seeing that the figure is on and in contact with the ground. Analyzing

more examples denoting the same lexical concept, we see that the vantage point of the viewers/ construers changed to the position between the figure and the ground.

7. a. Lexical concept: [COVERING]

b. Vehicle: VP NP over NP/ NP BE over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The structure is compulsory; no parts can be omitted. | The figure covers most part or even the total surface of the ground from the cognition of viewers/ construers. The actual vantage point of the viewers/ construers has changed to the position between the figure and the ground. |

The eighth lexical concept that *over* possesses is [EXAMINING], formally encoded by the structure *VP over NP*. Typically, the verbs are those which denote a vision from a subject to another subject; and in this case the noun phrase is purely optional. However, if the verb does not denote such vision, e.g. *go*, the presence of the noun phrase is compulsory and it is the thing that can be presented in written or spoken form. Here are two examples:

(14). She carefully looked over the paper.

(15). Actually, it's time to go over the evidence again, more critically.¹⁰

8. a. Lexical concept: [EXAMING]

b. Vehicle: VP over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|---|
| If the verb denotes a vision, the presence of the noun phrase is purely optional. If not, the presence of the noun phrase is compulsory. | Typically, the verb denotes visions, e.g. watch, look. The noun phrase refers to something that can be presented in either spoken or written form. |

The next lexical concept to be covered is [MORE] which is encoded by *over NP-number*. It is very easy to notify the formal selectional tendencies of the noun phrase, i.e. numbers, following *over*.

9. a. Lexical concept: [MORE]

b. Vehicle: over NP-number

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|---|
| The noun phrase following <i>over</i> is elaborated by a number. The presence of verb phrase or noun phrase preceding <i>over</i> is purely optional. | The noun phrase following <i>over</i> denotes a number or quantity. The number or quantity is conceptualized as the ground which is lower than the figure. |

The tenth lexical concept that *over* has is [OVER & ABOVE] which can be encoded formally by the di-transitive structure *VP over NP*. By saying so we mean that any sentences containing *over* that denote this concept can be paraphrased by the structure *Entity X causes entity Y to receive Z* (Goldberg, 1995). Let's look at the following examples:

(16). The heavy rains caused the river to flow over its banks.

(17). Lou kept pouring the cereal into the bowl until it spilled over and onto the counter. (Tyler & Evans, 2003:99)

Here is the summary of the concept:

10. a. Lexical concept: [ABOVE & BEYOND]

b. Vehicle: VP over NP (paraphrase: Entity X causes entity Y to receive Z)

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|---|
| The typical structure <i>VP over NP</i> can be paraphrased by the di-transitive structure: <i>Entity X causes entity Y to receive Z</i> . | The figure and the ground are related to water or some forms of liquid. |

The next lexical concept is rather clear [CONTROL] via the use of some verbs like *control*, *stand* or nouns like *power*, *authority*. The formal structure of the concept is *VP/NP*

¹⁰ Source: <http://context.reverso.net>

over NP. If the component preceding *over* is a verb, the verb must directly evoke power or greater dynamic force than the referent of the noun phrase following *over*. If that component is a noun, the nouns are *power*, *control*, and *authority*.

11. a. Lexical concept: [CONTROL]

b. Vehicle: NP/ VP over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The nouns preceding <i>over</i> are <i>power</i> , <i>control</i> , and <i>authority</i> . The verbs preceding <i>over</i> are <i>control</i> , <i>stand</i> . | The figure is conceptualized higher and stronger than the ground. The figure can greatly influence the ground which to certain extent has to follow the figure. The verb preceding <i>over</i> must directly evoke power or greater dynamic force than the referent of the noun phrase following <i>over</i> . |

The twelfth lexical concept of *over* is [PREFER] encoded formally by the structure *prefer/ like/ favour NP over NP*. This structure is unique in terms of the explicitness of the component preceding *over* since the verb must denote a mental feeling of likeness. The semantic selectional tendencies are explicit; i.e. both noun phrases are options in a certain context. Here are two examples:

(18). I prefer tea over coffee. (my own example)

(19). I favour soccer over tennis. (Tyler & Evans, 2003: 103)

In the above examples, the first noun phrase is preferred and it is personal opinion in this context. To be clearer, the speaker wants to convey the desire towards the first choice by making use of verbs like *prefer* or *like*.

12. a. Lexical concept: [PREFER]

b. Vehicle: prefer/ like/ favour NP over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|---|
| The verbs are: <i>prefer</i> , <i>like</i> and <i>favour</i> . | The verb phrase denotes human feelings towards likeness. The first and second noun phrases are options in a certain context. |

The next lexical concept that *over* is an *adprep* is [REFLEXIVE] which is the result of a reanalysis of a process (Tyler & Evans, 2003:104). Let's look at the following example:

(20). Try not to knock that vase over. The wind must have blown it over. (Oxford Dictionary)

One again, the structure *VP over* encodes a novel meaning besides those presented. The semantic selectional tendencies of the concept are seen via verbs, e.g. *blow*, *roll*, *turn*, that make hearers conjure up a 90-degree arc. Tyler & Evans (2003), and Lindner (1981) noted that the figure and the ground possess multiple spatial configurations; however, they are still on one plane.

13. a. Lexical concept: [REFLEXIVE]

b. Vehicle: VP over (NP).

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|--|
| The verbs are: <i>turn</i> , <i>roll</i> and <i>bend</i> . The presence of the noun phrase is optional if the verb is intransitive. | The verb denotes a 90-degree arc in human cognition. |

Another frequent use of *over* is to denote repetition. Let's look at the following examples:

(21). He did the work so badly that I had to do it all over again. (Oxford Dictionary)

(22). He played the same piano piece over.

(23). After the false start, they started the race over. (Tyler & Evans, 2003:105)

We can see that if the verbs in [RELEXIVE] concept make hearers conjure up a 90-degree arc, the phrasal verbs in the above sentences provide readers with a 360-degree circle, or in other words, the concept involves a particular set of process verbs.

14. a. Lexical concept: [REPETITION]

b. Vehicle: VP NP over.

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| Verbs can be: <i>do, make, start</i> and <i>begin</i> . The noun phrase refers to things rather than humans. | The verb denotes a 360 degree circle in human cognition. The verbs denote a particular process. |

Another use of *over* is to denote a topic of attention, and in this case, *over* can be paraphrased by the word “about”. Here are two examples by Tyler & Evans (2003: 95):

(24a). The little boy cried over his broken toy.

b. The little boy cried about his broken toy.

(25a). The generals talked over their plans for the invasion.

b. The generals talked about their plans for the invasion¹¹.

Another example is from Collin COBUILD Dictionary:

(26). We had an argument over nothing.

In this sentence, “nothing” is not the foci of the talk; in fact, it could be the result of the argument, or it could refer to the topic of the talk which did not really focus on a particular theme. The sentence can be paraphrased as “We had an argument about nothing.”

¹¹ Dirven (1993) noted that *talk over* is a verb-particle construction while *talk about* is not, so we cannot say “We talk it about.” (Tyler & Evans, 2003: 95)

15. a. Lexical concept: [FOCUS-OF-ATTENTION]

b. Vehicle: Verb-over (*over* can be paraphrased as *about*)

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The construction <i>verb-over</i> cannot be changed except for the case of <i>talk over</i> . | The verb refers to a cause of interest, worries or discussion. |

Until now, we have been treating *over* in collocations with different kinds of verbs. Let’s look at the following examples when the verb preceding *over* denotes some kind of movement.

(27). I went over. (Hypothesized data)

The meaning of sentence (27) is vague. There is no context for hearers or readers to base on together with the encyclopedic knowledge to guess the exact meaning of the phrase *went over*. If following *over* is a plan, *go over* means *check*; or if it is the room, *went over* means *cross*. It is possible to say that the phrasal verb, i.e. *go over*, has ignited numerous access routes in human cognition. Talmy (2000:231-239) mentioned the strategies of both speakers and hearers to make the message across. According to Talmy, construers have to schematize a certain spatial scene by choosing certain spatial aspects while ignoring others; and when no preposition can convey the target meaning, the use of open-class elements after the phrasal verb is of great importance to make the meaning of the sentence coherent to listeners or readers.

(27’). I went over and asked her name. (Oxford Dictionary)

As discussed earlier, *over* in sentence (29’) possesses [APPROACHING] concept, encoded formally by the structure *VP over Conj OCE* in which the presence of conjunction and open-class element(s) is mandatory to help readers or listeners schematize the spatial scene and the whole processes. Hence, in the light of LCCM, *over* in this case denote a distinct concept.

16. Lexical concept: [APPROACHING]

b. Vehicle: NP VP over Conjunction OCE

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|--|--|
| The presence of the conjunction is compulsory as it is a strategy that speakers use to denote the concept, together with open-class element(s). Typical verbs are <i>go</i> and <i>come</i> . | The verb refers to an action of moving, especially in a small space. |

Let's look at some sentences without spatial configuration between the figure and ground:

(28a). I am *over* him now.

b. I think we're *over* the worst of the crisis now.

c. He had a fever last night, but he seems to be *over* it now. (Longman Dictionary)

In the above sentences, the use of *over* cannot directly trace any spatial meanings; however, in reference to the movement of time, we can present the state of the subject before and after a certain point as follows:

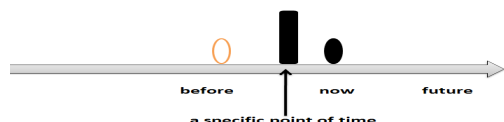


Figure 13. The presentation of the use of *over* in sentence (28)

Examining the connotational meaning of the words on the “right-hand” side of *over*, we realize that it refers to something or somebody causing a kind of **unease** for the participants involved. We advocate that *over* in those sentences denotes [UNEASE OVERCOMING] lexical concept. There can be a controversial issue concerning the denotational term. Some people would argue that it is better if the term is [PSYCHOSOMATIC], a term with more neutral and broader meaning. However, we argue that since the prototypical meaning of *over* is *above-across* (Lakoff, 1987; Tyler & Evans, 2003), the use of *over* is, originally, to

denote a kind of mental overcoming process. Surprisingly, if searching the sentence “**She is not over her ex**” on Google, we have 607 million results within 0.49 second¹². In this case, the semantic selectional tendencies of the noun phrase following *over* are different from that of other concepts, and of course the presence of the noun phrase is crucial for readers or listeners to understand the meaning of *over*.

17. a. Lexical concept: [UNEASE OVERCOMING]

b. Vehicle: NP GET/BE over NP

| Formal selectional tendencies | Semantic selectional tendencies |
|---|--|
| The order of the vehicle component cannot be changed. Situational BE/ GET is right before <i>over</i> to help readers or listeners construe the experience. | The first noun phrase refers to an entity that to certain extent can experience some processes. The noun phrase following <i>over</i> refers to a state or an entity that was conceived as a negative by the referent of the first noun phrase. |

In short, in the light of LCCM, *over* possesses 17 distinct lexical concepts encoded formally by 17 structures.

4. Conclusion

After hypothesizing the lexical concepts associated with *over* in different structures, we have seen some issues. First, some syntactic structures paired with certain concepts are formally similar; hence, we need to semantically analyze the verb and noun phrase surrounding *over* and then categorize them. The key differences lie in the features of those verbs and nouns. Secondly, though the framework tends to be feasible, an empirical research study on both the lexical representation and semantic composition of the preposition is necessary to prove the feasibility of the framework. Last but not least, in certain cases, the notion of *image-*

¹² <https://www.google.com.vn/search?q=she+is+not+over+her+ex&oq=she+is+not+over+her&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0l7.5762j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

schema is of great significance in order to treat the spatial configurations between the figure and the ground.

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GIỚI TỪ *OVER*: NHỮNG KHÍA CẠNH MỚI KHẢ DĨ TỪ THUYẾT KHÁI NIỆM TỪ VỰNG VÀ MÔ HÌNH TRI NHẬN

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết này phân tích những thành tựu và hạn chế của những đường hướng nghiên cứu giới từ tiếng Anh *over*. Sau đó, chúng tôi đề xuất áp dụng những nguyên tắc của lý thuyết *Khái niệm Từ vựng và Mô hình tri nhận* (LCCM) vào phân tích giới từ này. Seth (2009) có thể miêu tả ngữ dụng của giới từ qua những ví dụ cụ thể, nhưng ông không thể chỉ ra được những nghĩa khu biệt của nó. Mặc dù Lakoff với khung lý thuyết *Đặc tả đầy đủ* đưa ra được nghĩa khu biệt của *over*, nhưng sự dư thừa nghĩa và việc thiếu nguyên tắc phân tích làm cho cách tiếp cận này không phù hợp trong nhiều trường hợp. Những công trình khác của Kreitzer (1997), Tyler & Evans (2003), Deane (2005) và Maria Brenda (2014) xét ở một vài khía cạnh đã khỏa lấp hạn chế của Lakoff nhưng chúng vẫn chưa giải quyết được vấn đề kết hợp giữa tái biểu hiện ngôn ngữ (tham số) và phi ngôn ngữ (mô hình) trong việc phân tích ngữ nghĩa của giới từ *over*. Chúng tôi đã chứng minh được giả định rằng với tư cách là một phương tiện ngôn ngữ, giới từ *over* mang 17 khái niệm từ vựng và mỗi khái niệm được mã hóa bởi xu hướng lựa chọn hình thức và ngữ nghĩa khu biệt.

Từ khóa: *over*, khu biệt, *Khái niệm Từ vựng và Mô hình tri nhận*, tái biểu hiện từ vựng

A MOVE ANALYSIS OF CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS - PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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Abstract: This current paper presents the findings of move analysis of conference abstracts from the British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL). Reviewing different core perspectives of move analysis such as Biber et al. (2007); Swales (1981, 1990); Santos (1996), the paper employed suitable approaches namely Biber et al. (2007) for move identification and Santos (1996) for the analysis of moves in order to examine common linguistic features identified in the moves that are used to serve the social and communicative purpose of conference abstracts. The findings revealed that moves 1 (situating the research), 2 (presenting the research), and 3 (describing the methodology) are frequently included in the conference abstracts, whereas moves 4 (summarizing the results) and 5 (discussing the research) can be less frequent. It is concluded that this persuasive writing genre possesses 3 obligatory or strongly prototypical moves and 2 optional ones. Finally, some pedagogical implications are derived from the findings to inform further practice with regard to teaching and learning English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in second and foreign language learning contexts.

Keywords: move analysis, conference abstracts, applied linguistics, teaching and learning EAP

1. Introduction

Move analysis is used to explore rhetoric structures, language use and text organization of a particular genre. Biber et al. (2007) asserted that the goal of move analysis is to illustrate the communicative purposes of given texts by classifying the organizational patterns. This paper discusses a move analysis of eight conference abstracts in applied linguistics (AL) research which were selected from the BAAL 2017 booklet. The paper first identified and discusses some common language features identified in the moves, which are used to serve the communicative and social purpose of the

conference abstracts. It is followed by some pedagogical implications for innovative EAP as well as the limitation of the analysis.

2. Literature review

Researchers in the field of applied linguistics have analyzed corpus-based moves from diverse perspectives. Schiffrrin et al. (2001) argued that the analysis of moves could be grouped into three general categories namely (1) language use; (2) linguistic structure; and (3) social practices and ideological assumptions associating with language and/or communication. Amongst the three fundamental approaches to move analysis, the first two put the focus on the linguistic features of texts or discourse studies

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of linguistic organization beyond the sentence levels of particular texts. Research from this perspective has typically been conducted as qualitative inquiry research and is based on detailed analyses of a modest number of texts (Upton & Cohen, 2009).

Move analysis was typically conducted as a top-down approach (where the focus is on ideas and meaning) to explore the discourse structure of texts from a genre; the text is portrayed as a sequence of 'moves', where each move displays a stretch of text serving a particular communicative (that is, semantic) purpose. The analysis frequently starts with the development of an analytical framework, identifying the move types occurring in this genre: these are the functional or communicative distinctions that move types can serve in the target genre. Biber et al. (2007: 23) also refer moves to "a section of texts that performs a specific communicative function," which can vary in length but contain at least one proposition. In other words, moves represent functional and semantic sets of texts which serve specific purposes.

With regards to abstracts, an under-researched, yet significant, realm of language studies associated with research process genres is the domain of abstracts. Following Swales (1990), some scholars have interested in this essential academic genre across a myriad of areas including applied linguistics (Santos 1996). However, among genre studies, conference abstracts have not received due attention; they, therefore, deserve scrutiny.

Research on move analysis focusing on conference abstracts has been attempted by genre scholars. Some interesting studies such as Berkenkotter & Huckins (1995) found that

successful conference abstracts (CA) included both predictable forms and contents. For example, Raisanen (2002) found 2 obligatory moves (statement of purpose and methods) as well as 3 optional moves (territory, results, and conclusion/implications) in conference abstracts (CA). Studies on move analysis have also yielded distribution of moves and their frequency in texts on a research article (RA). For instance, Swales' (1981, 1990) CARS (Create a Research Space) model on research article introduction shows a sequence of moves and steps (Biber et al., 2007). These authors have well acknowledged that an introduction of an RA most probably consists of 3 moves with several steps in each move which are: (1) establishing a territory, (2) establishing a niche, and (3) occupying a niche.

3. Method

Move analysis directly examines texts at the discourse level regarding their rhetorical goals and how they function to achieve those goals (Tardy, 2011). Specifically, the analysis of conference abstracts in AL helps investigate how academic writers offer a substantially condensed version (Santos, 1996) of their research. The steps of move identification in this paper are based on the top-down approach suggested in Biber et al. (2007). The insight into this approach can be presented as follows. First, the author determined the rhetorical purposes of the genre as well as the rhetorical function of each segment in its local context; the author then identified the possible moves of the genre. In the next step, the author conducted a pilot coding (Appendix B) to test and fine-tune definitions of move purposes. The author then coded the full set of texts and checked with the intercoder, who is an M.A graduate in applied linguistics, to ensure that move definitions

are clear. The process of move analysis was discussed with the intercoder within two weeks. Eventually, two coders reached an agreement on the coding. The coding seems to “achieve high inter-rater reliability” (Biber et al., 2007: 35), as the two coders completely agreed on the common moves (Appendix A). The author finally identified the language features that are characteristic of the moves by the model of move analysis.

Several models of move analysis (e.g., Santos, 1996; Yakhontova, 2002; Halleck & Connor, 2006; Upton & Cohen, 2009) have

been referred to; however, Santos’ model (see Santos, 1996 for further details) was adopted for two main reasons. First, it provides a clear-cut distinction between each move. Second, this framework has been directly employed to analyze abstracts in AL. Through the lens of move analytical framework of abstracts adapted from Santos (1996), this paper attempts to investigate the rhetorical moves of these eight abstracts and the linguistic realizations of moves. The framework of a five-move pattern was used to code the eight abstracts. Detailed illustrations are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The framework for abstract analysis adapted from Santos (1996)

| Moves | Function/descriptions |
|---|--|
| Move 1: Situating the research (STR) | Setting the background for the current research topic generalization |
| Move 2: Presenting the research (PTR) | Stating the purpose of the study/research questions and/or hypothesis |
| Move 3: Describing the methodology (DTM) | Describing the materials, subjects, variables, procedures |
| Move 4: Summarising the results (STR) | Reporting the main findings of the research |
| Move 5: Discussing the research (DTR) | Interpreting the results/findings and/or highlighting the outcomes/giving recommendations/applications of the study/ highlighting its outcomes |

Mentioned earlier, the abstracts selected from BAAL 2017 booklet are considered by the conference organizing committee as high-quality papers focusing on AL’s engagement with policy and practice. The selection of abstracts to be analyzed was due to the nature of empirical-based studies. As these CA are independently structured texts, the purpose of which is to have an opportunity to present the study at a specific conference (Swales & Feak, 2000) or to get funded from sponsors (Halleck & Connor, 2006). In other words, CA is somewhat promotional. It means that these abstracts have already met the required

success criteria of conference abstracts set by BAAL 2017 reviewers. The study aims to seek the answers to the research questions:

- 1) How frequently do the moves occur in the abstracts?
- 2) To what extent are the moves embedded?
- 3) How are linguistic features presented in each move?

4. Results and discussion

The paper first presents the findings regarding the rhetorical moves of these eight abstracts including the frequency of moves,

the moves that are found embedded, it then discusses the linguistic realization of each move. Unlike Santos (1996) this paper does not discuss the sub moves. There are reasons as to why this study does not divide further into sub moves. The main reason is that the subdivision of sub moves in Santos’s research of abstracts was mainly based on Swales’s (1990) CARS model, which was not clearly distinguished (Swales, 2004; Pho, 2008).

4.1. Move frequency

The coding of moves allows different descriptive counts including move frequency as Biber et al. (2007) shows. In this case, the

paper only discusses the overall frequency of instances of each type of move. Identifying move frequency can help determine which moves are obligatory or non-obligatory. As shown in Table 2 below, 3 moves namely STR, PTR, and DMC occur in all eight abstracts. This means that moves 1, 2, 3 are obligatory. The results of move 2 and 3 confirmed the findings in Santos (1996) and Pho (2008), which found that 2 moves of PTR and DTM occur in almost all abstracts of their studies. Move 4 and 5 can be regarded as non-obligatory or optional, as they are found only in 3 and 5 out of the eight abstracts respectively.

Table 2. Move frequency

| Moves | Numbers of abstracts containing moves (N=8) | Percentages |
|--------|---|-------------|
| Move 1 | 8 | 100% |
| Move 2 | 8 | 100% |
| Move 3 | 8 | 100% |
| Move 4 | 3 | 37.5% |
| Move 5 | 5 | 62.5% |

4.2. Move embedding

Halleck & Connor (2006) argued that writers sometimes combine moves, so that one move can be embedded within another or two moves may occur in one sentence, which the authors called “blended” moves. The analysis from these eight abstracts shows that moves are embedded, and there are few instances, where DTM moves occur in the forms of phrases and clauses. For example:

1. (DTM) **Drawing upon** four-month fieldwork in three courts of a Chinese city that handles a large number of foreigner-related cases every year, (PTR) **this paper explores** the communication complexities in trial proceedings when foreign defendants, mostly from African countries, interact with Chinese interpreters in English.

2. (DTM) **On the basis of discourse analysis of** recordings of seven criminal hearings, (STP) **this paper shows** that communication becomes a challenge to both parties owing to their different ‘varieties of English.’

3. (DTM) **By examining** a range of these publicly available texts related to A&E services, (PTR) **I explore** the phenomenon of the model citizen construct, to discover and critique the discursive strategies present in these texts regarding ‘correct’ use of NHS services.

As observed, three embedded moves in the examples occur with DTM move (phrases), two of which are mixed with either PTR or STP moves. This finding shows a congruency with Pho (2008), which detected

that the possibility of move embedded between DTM move and other moves is significant. Pho (2008) also mentioned that DTM move acts as a noun phrase in complex sentences. The explanation for the mixing of moves can also be found in studies by Santos (1996) and Pho (2008) because of the highly condensed nature of the abstract structure.

4.3. Common linguistic features

Writers' social and communicative purposes are closely related to the required linguistic characteristics, which are intentionally used to realize those purposes. Specifically, moves in abstracts of AL are also grounded in common communicative purposes and are realized in particular linguistic utterances (Swales, 1990). Some instances are mentioned in Santos (1996) regarding thematization, tense choices, and voice choices as well as in Halleck & Connor (2006) regarding lexical devices. Similarly, Henry (2007) and Upton & Cohen (2009) stated that linguistic features are found through lexico-grammatical analysis. In this section, the paper discusses the linguistic realization of each move in greater details.

Move 1: Situating the research

Move 1 offers the audience an orientation regarding background knowledge of the topic (Santos, 1996). It may be in the forms of stating current knowledge or citing previous research to lead to their studies. The analysis of grammatical features across eight abstracts reveals that the most typical tense used in move 1 is present perfect, with 13 instances and active voice is dominant, with ten instances. The table below describes all the verbs used in move 1.

Table 3. The analysis of linguistic features in move 1

| Examples | Active voice | Passive voice | Abstract |
|--|--------------|---------------|----------|
| has been reassured has been established has been on the rise | V | V V | 1 |
| has attracted rely on is | V V V | | 2 |
| have become has identified has not been studied | V V | V | 3 |
| are (2) | V(2) | | 4 |
| has received has been | V V | | 5 |
| have become have taken has received | V V V | | 6 |
| have recently been | V | | 7 |
| was arose were | V V V | | 8 |

As seen from Table 3, verb tenses across move 1 found few occurrences of the present simple tense and simple past tense. The figures for the present perfect tense with active voice are highly significant. The reason for this occurrence, according to Santos (1996), may be interpreted regarding generality. In other words, move 1 acts as a discursual move, which claims a current state of knowledge generalizations. Reflecting moves in Halleck & Connor (2006), it belongs to "TERRITORY" move, which also serves to introduce a general topic of research or to establish the physical location of the proposal.

Move 2: Presenting the research

The primary aim of this move is the reference to the author's own research by presenting the key features of the research

questions or stating the purpose of the current study. Thus, move 2 is obviously signaled by a “grammatical subject that refers to the study itself” (Pho, 2008: 240). The following examples are given from abstract 1 to abstract 8.

1. *This project investigates*
2. *This paper explores*
3. *This study analyzed*
4. *This paper focuses*
5. *My paper draws*
6. *The study addresses*
7. *I explore*
8. *This ongoing postgraduate research aims*

A predominating subject is a third person, singular such as “*the paper*” “*this study*” and “*this project*,” which according to Santos (1996), refers to descriptive or purposive form. The clear preference for “this” can be explained the reasons for the writer effort to link the abstract to the central part of the paper and signal a report of what study is about. This is also in line with Khedri et al. (2013), which found one dominant feature referring to these narrowing and repetition of endophoric expressions. Most of the abstracts (seven out of eight) take present tense verbs with active voice, which intentionally refers to the description of the current research’s purpose as opposed to previous ones.

Move 3: Describing the methodology

As analyzed from move 3 linguistic features in all eight abstracts are variably used. “V-ing” is used in abstracts 2, present simple tense is used in abstracts 1, 4, 5, 6 and past tense is found in abstract 3, 4. The most significant feature found from this move is the use of lexical items such as “*data*,” “*method*,” “*methodologically*,” and “*analysis*,” which refers directly to a means of

conducting research (Upton & Cohen, 2009). Mentioned earlier, move 3 is often embedded with other moves, as it occurs within the same sentence, acting as a clause in complex sentences, which can be categorized as hybrid moves (Santos, 1996).

Move 4: Summarizing the results

This move serves to provide answers to the research questions, it, therefore, tends to briefly summarize the significant findings of the studies (Santos, 1996) or discuss the anticipated results (Upton & Cohen, 2009). The analysis of this move reveals that the most obvious lexical item is “*the paper shows that*”; “*the research shows that*” found in abstracts 2 and 6. In other words, move 4 exponents do not refer to the author of the abstract, but to the research itself. Regarding the thematization, a neutral, impersonal, scientific tone (Santos, 1996) is portrayed in move 4.

Move 5: Discussing the research

DTR refers to the discussion of the findings, suggestions, recommendations or evaluation of the findings. The realization of linguistic features from this move shows that there are signals with the use of verbs such as “*suggest*” and “*raise*” with a preference of present simple tense as strategies to discuss the meanings of the key findings. Another linguistic characteristic found in move 5 is the use of modal verbs such as “*could*” in abstract 3, which may act as a hedging device to tone down “claims to avoid potential audience rejection”(Hyland, 2004: 65).

Overall, the goal of the conference abstracts is to promote their work to other members of the field and the writers have to achieve this goal to sell the research (Yakhontova, 2002). The moves, which were analyzed to identify the rhetorical organization and linguistic features, in this case, may contribute to success criteria of accepted

abstracts of the BAAL 2017 conference. As seen, moves 1, 2 and 3 are frequently included in these conference abstracts, whereas moves 4 and 5 can be less frequent. In other words, this persuasive writing genre may possess three obligatory or strongly prototypical moves and two optional ones. It can infer that presenters of BAAL 2017 conference are less likely to present research results in abstracts.

To sum up, the overall findings reveal that the genre of abstracts in AL has its typical structures which can be made up of five moves, each of which fulfills a particular purpose and is realized by specific linguistic features.

5. Pedagogical implications and limitations

Move analysis of conference abstracts has important implications for English language community users and learners from diverse backgrounds (Samar et al., 2014). The knowledge of move analysis plays a significant role in helping language learners, teachers and EFL writers understand the nature of written discourse and the ways discourse analysis contributes to our understanding of written language in use. By analyzing move analysis, we can gain better insight into the conventions of written language and what the writers mean. The analysis of moves, therefore, informs L2 learners, language teachers and EFL writers of explicit knowledge of how certain writing conventions are linguistically organized. Thus, pedagogic applications can be implemented in EFL contexts, which will be discussed in this section.

First, rhetorical structures of specific genres should be explicitly provided to novice EFL writers, graduate students who struggle with writing well-structured abstracts so that they can get accepted and certified (Hyland, 2004) in conferences in the field. For example, some linguistic features of

conference abstracts can be incorporated into academic writing course for postgraduates so that they can be better prepared for their future world of publication. When students have the opportunities to gain core knowledge of move analysis, especially in CA and RA, they are informed of rhetorical structures of certain abstracts. Thus novice academics can be more reflective in shaping their future CA or RA of their research.

Second, a specific type of genre analysis can be adopted as a lexico-grammatical teaching approach in the settings (Henry, 2007; Flowerdew, 2016), where academic writing instruction is required such as composition and email writing. In the Vietnamese context, where a large number of language learners need to sit in VSTEP and IELTS writing exams, move analysis is extremely useful for them. Through scaffolding tasks of analyzing moves of academic essays, for example, L2 learners can examine language structures and linguistic features in relation to the required writing tasks. Thus, they can be better aware of useful lexico-grammatical patterns, which they may later transfer to their own writing work.

Last but not least, genre analysis allows language practitioners to adopt the language items in a more refined way for specific purposes of teaching, learning and linguistic research (Moreno & Swales, 2018). Teachers can incorporate research findings of genre analysis in their teaching materials for EAP to optimize the effectiveness of EAP classrooms. For instance, teachers may consider genre-based syllabus, genre-based tasks and activities suggested in Henry and Roseberry (1998), Jalilifar (2009), Swales and Feak (2009), and Yayli (2011) for teaching academic writing to raise students' awareness of the specific genre' rhetorical organization

and the linguistic realizations. Through such learning opportunities, learners can make use of these features to achieve coherent, purposeful written tasks.

Although the findings reveal that specific linguistic features are portrayed in 5 moves, they cannot be generalized to other cases. The reason for the limitation is the modest data, which somehow cannot represent the whole picture of analysis of conference abstracts in other disciplines.

6. Conclusion

As abstracts function “as advance indicators of the structure and content” of the complete research (Swales, 1990: 179), they are linguistically driven, which has been revealed through the move analysis. The results reveal that certain linguistic features in each move can be used as evidence to distinguish the moves and to justify the reasons why abstracts can be structured the way they are. The results show that these eight conference abstracts were written focusing on STR, PTR, and DTM rather than STP and DTR. Although the findings cannot be generalized beyond the context of this paper, they have, to some extent, shown the congruency with linguistic and rhetorical representation found in moves of RA and CA in AL from the literature. To conclude, the author would refer to Berkenkotter & Huckin (1993) saying that conference abstracts as a genre, when closely investigated from specific perspectives, “reveal much about a discourse community’s norms, epistemology, ideology and social ontology” (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993: 501). Examining genres, therefore, substantially allows practitioners to get informed of genre knowledge for their professional development and to create appropriate teaching materials for classroom use.

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PHÂN TÍCH HÀNH ĐỘNG TU TỪ TRONG TÓM TẮT BÁO CÁO HỘI THẢO NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ HỌC ỨNG DỤNG - HÀM Ý CHO HOẠT ĐỘNG DẠY VÀ HỌC TIẾNG ANH KHOA HỌC

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Tóm tắt: Bài báo trình bày kết quả của nghiên cứu phân tích hành động tu từ của các bản tóm tắt báo cáo hội thảo trong lĩnh vực ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng. Xem xét các mô hình khác nhau về phân tích hành động tu từ của các tác giả như Biber et al., (2007); Swales (1981, 1990); Santos (1996), nghiên cứu này áp dụng mô hình phù hợp nhất, cụ thể là phương pháp tiếp cận của Biber et al., (2007) nhằm xác định hành động tu từ và của Santos (1996) nhằm phân tích các hành động tu từ, để xác định các tính năng ngôn ngữ trong các hoạt động được các tác giả áp dụng cho mục đích xã hội và giao tiếp trong các tóm lược hội thảo. Kết quả cho thấy hành động 1 (đánh giá bối cảnh nghiên cứu), 2 (trình bày nghiên cứu) và 3 (mô tả phương pháp luận) thường được đưa vào tóm lược hội thảo, trong khi hành động 4 (tóm tắt kết quả nghiên cứu) và 5 (thảo luận nghiên cứu) xuất hiện ít hơn. Có thể kết luận rằng thể loại ngôn bản này có 3 hành động mang tính bắt buộc hoặc khuôn mẫu và 2 hành động tùy chọn khác. Cuối cùng, tác giả trình bày một số đề xuất nhằm nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học viết tiếng Anh khoa học trong ngữ cảnh học ngôn ngữ thứ hai và ngoại ngữ.

Từ khóa: phân tích hành động tu từ, tóm tắt báo cáo hội thảo, ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng, dạy và học tiếng Anh khoa học

APPENDIX A: MOVE IDENTIFICATION

| Moves | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | Frequency | Inter-coder agreement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|-----------------------|
| Move 1: Situating the research (Introduction) | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | 8 Obligatory | 100 % |
| Move 2: Presenting the research (Purpose) | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | 8 Obligatory | 100 % |
| Move 3: Describing the methodology (Methods) | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | v | 8 Obligatory | 100 % |
| Move 4: Summarising the results (Results) | X | v | v | X | X | v | X | X | 3 Optional | 100 % |
| Move 5: Discussing the research (Conclusion/discussion) | v | v | v | v | X | v | X | X | 5 Optional | 100 % |

APPENDIX B: PILOT CODING

| ABSTRACT 1 |
|---|
| <p>Move 1: <i>Situating the research (Introduction)</i></p> <p>Since the 1980s, due to the political liberalization and the rise of the Taiwanization Movement, multiculturalism has been reassured, and the importance of aboriginal language and culture rehabilitation emphasized. After the 1990s, several museums have been established as one of the political devices used to help celebrate indigenous history and culture. At the same time, indigenous (cultural) tourism has been on the rise and become an important part of the cultural/ tourism industry.</p> |
| <p>Move 2: <i>Presenting the research (Purpose)</i></p> <p>This project investigates the exhibition texts in four Taiwanese museums in which aboriginal artefacts are displayed. These include Shung Ye Museum of Formosan Aborigines, the National Prehistory Museum, the Shihsanhang Museum of Archaeology and National Museum of Natural Science. By closely examining museum texts, this study aims to understand the implicit dimension of how the properties of the indexicality of language scripts and related semiotics are presented to construct ideologies and sociocultural identity that shape and are shaped by the wider context of social structures.</p> |
| <p>Move 3: <i>Describing the methodology (Methods)</i></p> <p>The data are hybridised with different written texts and include a corpus of exhibition texts (labels) displayed in public spaces, including flyers, brochures, posters, and signposts. This study adopts multimodal discourse analysis as its methodological analysis tool because it involves both the analysis of language use and different types of semiotic resource in such communications.</p> |
| <p>Move 4: <i>Summarising the paper (Results)</i></p> <p>None</p> |
| <p>Move 5: <i>Discussing the research (Conclusion/ discussion)</i></p> <p>It is assumed that interaction between linguistic and the semiotic elements effectively enable the scripts to serve as instruments of inclusion and exclusion, thereby contributing to the production and reproduction of sociopolitical and cultural equality and inequality. Ultimately, the analysis of the texts will shed light on the processes of language use formation for indigenous tourism and make the power relations between the dominant and the dominated transparent.</p> |

A STUDY ON THE VALIDITY OF VSTEP WRITING TESTS FOR THE SAKE OF REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION

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Abstract: In the context of rapid regional and international integration, particularly the official establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, English capacity has become essential for Vietnamese people to create their competitiveness in employment, education and other opportunities. In the reform of English education and assessment in response to this demand, VSTEP tests were developed and introduced by the Ministry of Education and Training as national English assessment instruments. VSTEP tests are meant to be alternative to the existing expensive international standardised English tests (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL). But this requires VSTEP developers to take action to assure test validity. They also need to accumulate and disseminate evidence of validity of the tests to gain international recognition. By doing so, they have taken meaningful action to contribute to the nation's international and regional integration. The paper highlights the commitment of ULIS-VNU as a VSTEP developing institution in this mission. It reports a recent VSTEP validation study as an example of this commitment¹.

Keywords: VSTEP, test validation, scoring validity, assessing writing, English for ASEAN integration

1. Background

Regional and international integration is nothing new to all Vietnamese citizens. The impact and evidence of this process can be seen in every corner of the country, ranging from the presence of foreigners who come to Vietnam for various purposes with their increasing number and greater access to all parts of the land, to the increasing number of Vietnamese labourers from different areas and professions in the country to work overseas such as in Japan, Korea, and Taiwan. Particularly, with the official establishment of the ASEAN Economic

Community (AEC) in 2015, the connotation of regional and international integration becomes more pressing for Vietnamese government, its every sector and any ordinary person. On the one hand, the establishment of the AEC is a major milestone in the regional economic integration agenda in ASEAN, offering opportunities in the form of a huge market of US\$2.6 trillion and over 622 million people². In 2014, AEC was collectively the third largest economy in Asia and the seventh largest in the world. On the other hand, this means that citizens of one ASEAN nation can go and work in another. Employment now becomes more competitive not only within one nation's borders, but in the whole region. In this context, English capacity

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² <http://asean.org/asean-economic-community/>

plays a critical role, and language is often an assumption in ASEAN documents (Dudzik & Nguyen, T.N.Q, 2015). Article 34 of the ASEAN Charter designates English as the working language of ASEAN (ASEAN, 2008). The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community explicitly states English language capacity-building in its blueprint, along with educational investment, life-long learning, human resource training and capacity-building, and applying technology (ASEAN, 2007).

In response to growing regional and international demand for foreign languages, the government of Vietnam issued a decision to “thoroughly renovate the tasks of teaching and learning foreign languages within the national education system” in order to produce graduates who “gain the capacity to use a foreign language independently” (Government Decision 1400 I.1, 2008, p. 1). Decision 1400, entitled *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Educational System, Period 2008-2020*, gave birth to the National Foreign Language 2020 Project (NFLP 2020). Major goals of this project are to reform the teaching, learning and assessment of foreign languages, especially English in the education sector.

To date, two of the most significant achievements of the NFLP 2020 have been the development of the Vietnam’s Framework of Foreign Language Competency aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR-VN) and the locally-produced standardised English proficiency tests, so-called VSTEP. As for the former, instead of the six levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 as described in the CEFR introduced by the European Union, the CEFR-VN consists of levels 1 to 6 with similar descriptors of competences to the CEFR, but with adaptation to match the features

of English context and use in Vietnam. The latter, Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP), is a test of general English proficiency developed based on the Common European Framework of Reference. Two VSTEP test formats, one measuring levels 3-5 and the other measuring level 2 according to the CEFR-VN, have recently been issued by Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training as national test instruments for English assessment. The test consists of sections assessing reading, writing, speaking, and listening, with all four sections taken by all test takers. In fact, VSTEPs are the first ever locally-produced standardised English proficiency tests in Vietnam.

One major goal, among several others, of these initiatives is to assure fairness in English assessment in Vietnam, both because they are made suitable for Vietnamese learners and the context of English education and use in Vietnam, and because they are of lower cost and thus more accessible for the majority of English learners in the country (Nguyen. T.N.Q. & Do. T.M., 2015). At least the latter is evident. Since the arrival of the VSTEP, a great number of Vietnamese people, not limited to the education sector, have been assessed on their English proficiency against the CEFR-VN, aligned to the CEFR. Let alone at the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS-VNU), about 8,000 people took the VSTEP test in the year 2016.

However, a big challenge in the development of VSTEP tests is to assure their quality so that their test scores are valid and meaningful indicators of Vietnamese learners’ English ability levels as compared to international standards. That is, a level-3 learners according to the CEFR-VN should be equally proficient in English to those

identified at B1 level based on the CEFR, level-4 to B2 level, and level-5 to C1 level. It is highly important that VSTEP test developers in Vietnam take necessary quality assurance measures because such credibility and validity of their test scores are essential so that the international and regional public, such as employers who want to recruit Vietnamese labour, could trust the levels of English capacity of their Vietnamese counterparts reported by these test results.

In the following sections, the paper discusses the aspects of test validity, and the research taken to examine the validity of the VSTEP.3-5 tests at the ULIS-VNU as a commitment to gain international recognition of its VSTEP test scores.

2. Test validity

Validity has been regarded as ‘indisputably necessary for any serious test’ (Hughes, Porter & Weir, 1988: 4). In order to tell whether a test is ‘good’ or not, one often examines whether it is valid or not. Despite its universally agreed importance in testing and assessment, validity has been perceived as of a range of various concepts, not necessarily the same among test developers and researchers. Lissitz (2009) provided a collection of different perspectives of the concept of validity in language testing and assessment.

The most general and classic concept of test validity is the degree in which a test is truly measuring what it is intended to measure (Kelly, 1927; Lado, 1961; Cronbach, 1971; Henning, 1987; Davies, 1990; Hatch & Lazaraton, 1997). This view focuses primarily on the test itself, and such concepts as content validity and construct validity are of central attention. This unitary view of validity has attracted a lot of critiques and been modified by other theorists.

Messick’s (1989) unified view of validity defines validity as “an integrated evaluative judgment of the degree to which empirical evidence and theoretical rationales support the adequacy and appropriateness of inferences and actions based on test scores and other modes of assessment” (p.13). This view sees construct validity as the superordinate category for different test validities.

However, according to Weir (2005), “validity is perhaps better defined as the extent to which a test can be shown to produce data, i.e., test scores, which are an accurate representation of a candidate’s level of language knowledge and skills” (p.12). In such a view, validity is not an attribute of the test itself, but rather in the scores on a particular administration. Over time, if various versions of a test or administrations of the same test provide similar results, then synthetically a case may be made for that test being valid over time and across versions and population samples (Weir, 2005:13).

Modern theorists now seem to have reached a consensus that “validity is multifaceted, and different types of evidence are needed to support any claims for the validity of scores of a test” (Weir, 2005: 13). None of the evidences by itself is sufficient to demonstrate the validity of a particular interpretation or use of test scores (Bachman, 1990: 237).

In addition, it is also widely agreed that validity is a matter of degree, not all or none (Messick, 1989; Weir, 2005). This should be viewed as a relative concept. For example, in terms of content coverage against test specification, one test may present some other aspects of content described in the test specification from what another test does. Different tests may also differ in their claims to validity and across different types of validity

(Messick, 1989, 1998; Weir, 2005; Shaw & Weir, 2007). For example, version X of a writing test may be strong in theory-related validity and cover more content specified in the test specification, but its rater reliability is weak; while version Y covers less content, but is rated with higher rater reliability coefficient.

However, now comes the question of what types of evidences and for what types of validity test validators should collect in order to claim the validity of a test. In this regards, Weir (2005) presents a socio-cognitive framework for test validation. He distinguishes theory-based validity, context validity, scoring validity, and the two external validities, criterion-related validity and consequential validity of a test. He also suggests the types of *a priori* (i.e. taken before the test administration) and *a posteriori* (i.e. taken after the test event) validity evidence.

Weir's (2005) socio-cognitive framework has been further developed by himself and his colleagues to provide validation portfolios specific to tests of different macro skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. These models are very practical and useful for test developers.

3. VSTEP validity evidence for international recognition: an emphasized mission

The first section of this paper stresses the demand for English capacity of Vietnamese people in the new era of international and regional integration. For various types of purposes such as overseas employment and education, Vietnamese are to be able to provide the information and evidence of their English ability to gain their competitiveness. As discussed in the first section, instead of taking expensive English proficiency tests provided by international language testing organisations such as IELTS, TOEFL or Cambridge main suite tests (i.e. PET, FCE,

CAE), Vietnamese people can now choose to take VSTEP, which is of lower cost and tailored to English use and English teaching and learning context in Vietnam, to gain certification of their English proficiency (Nguyen. T.N.Q. & Do. T.M., 2015). Thus, it is justifiable to say that the development of VSTEP tests has both technical, practical, and humanitarian meanings. These are new EFL tests that are made in Vietnamese context, by Vietnamese experts and for Vietnamese English users.

However, as stated above, a challenge for VSTEP developers is to assure its validity. And what's more important is that they should be able to provide sufficient evidence of its validity. According to Messick (1992), it is a responsibility of test developers to provide evidence of validity of their test. However, the fact is that not many of test developers in the world have done so. They may have thousands of different reasons for not doing so, including constraints in terms of technical and financial resources for validation work, or simply their lack of commitment in providing transparent information of their tests. However, as for Vietnamese test developers of VSTEP, this is identified as an emphasized mission. Within the national borders, the use and recognition of VSTEPs are assured by the legal documents by Vietnamese governmental and education sectoral agencies. However, when it comes to regional and international contexts, sufficient evidence of VSTEP validity is essential to the recognition of international and regional counterparts. Foreign stakeholders, i.e. foreign employers, education institutions, researchers, etc., have their own right and choice whether to trust VSTEP test scores and their equivalent levels of English proficiency reported based on these scores or not. For their recognition consideration and decision, they deserve the right to know

about how the tests are developed, delivered, and scored, and whether these tests are up to international quality standards and can be used alternatively to the already widely-known and recognised international tests (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL).

Fully understanding the above responsibility, as one of the biggest VSTEP test developer nationwide, ULIS-VNU is committed to providing transparent and credible information of VSTEP validity, as a concrete action to gain regional and international recognition of their test results with an ultimate goal to contribute to the national reform of English education and assessment led by the NFLP 2020, and the integration of Vietnam to the world. A series of validation studies have been being conducted by ULIS researchers and in collaboration with international experts. The following section is a report on a recent study on the scoring validity of the VSTEP Writing Test as an example of ULIS-VNU effort and commitment in carrying out this mission.

4. Example: A study on scoring validity of VSTEP Writing Test³

4.1. Overview of the study

The aim of the reported study was to examine the consistency of scoring in the VSTEP Writing Test. This test consists of two tasks: Task 1 asks test takers to write a correspondence of at least 120 words for an intended purpose that is described in the task; Task 2 asks test takers to write an essay of at least 250 words about a given topic. The test

is 60 minutes long, with the recommended time allowance for Task 1 of 20 minutes and Task 2 40 minutes.

The study was to answer the two following research questions:

1. How consistent are the ratings of the VSTEP writing test?
2. How do various facets of the rating process contribute to score variation in writing?

4.2. Methodology

4.2.1. Data collection

The study examined three forms of the VSTEP writing tests administered in late 2015 (hereinafter called as Test A) (with 546 participants), mid 2016 (1212 participants) (Test B), and late 2016 (476 participants) (Test C).

Each task of the test was rated separately with a four-subscale analytic rubric: task fulfillment, organization, vocabulary and grammar. Raters provided scores for every subscale for each task out of 10. The score for each task was the average of four subscales and calculated out of 10. An exception was with Test A form, in which Rater 1 provided analytic scores, but Rater 2 only provided holistic scores of each task. The composite score of the Writing test was calculated as follows: $(\text{Task 1} + \text{Task 2} \times 2)/3$. This final score was rounded to 0.5.

As a measure to improve scoring validity, at ULIS-VNU, every student paper is double-rated by two raters at different times. If any ratings are disparate by 1 point or more (out of 10), the paper is marked by a third, lead rater. In addition, 15% of the papers are remarked by third rater for quality assurance. This rating procedure was applied at all the three studied test forms.

³ This study examines VSTEP.3-5 tests under the sponsorship of the University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS-VNU) in the project No. N.16.22. This was jointly conducted with a language testing specialist sponsored by the Regional English Language Office, US Embassy in Hanoi.

4.2.2. Data analysis

A review of literature shows that in estimating the scoring consistency of rated tests, there are a number of methodological options, none of which presents entirely satisfactory results by itself. Inter-rater correlations, for example (see, e.g., Bachman, 2004; Carr, 2010), while perhaps the simplest and most commonly used approach, tell nothing about the effects of other aspects of the testing process, such as differences in task difficulty or test takers' language ability. Generalizability theory (see Brennan, 2001; Shavelson & Webb, 1991), in contrast, tells us how such aspects of the testing process contribute to score variation, and to dependability, but yields no information on the ability of individual test takers, the severity or leniency of individual raters, or the difficulty of specific tasks. Finally, the many-facet Rasch model (see, e.g., Bond & Fox, 2001; Linacre, 2014; McNamara, 1996) does provide information at the individual level, but without the information at the facet level and the clearly interpretable estimates of overall consistency

provided by generalizability theory.

Therefore, this study adopts the triangulation approach employed in other studies (e.g., Bachman, Lynch, & Mason, 1995; Lynch & McNamara, 1998) of combining many-facet Rasch measurement with generalizability theory, while adding consideration of inter-rater score correlations as an additional source of information on scoring consistency.

Specifically, for each of the three test forms, the following statistical analyses were conducted: (1) the descriptive statistics for every subscale of the writing scores through SPSS; (2) Cronbach's alpha and correlations also through SPSS; and (3) generalizability theory (mGENOVA), many-facet Rasch (FACETS).

4.3. Results

4.3.1. Descriptive statistics

Tables 1-5 show the descriptive statistics for every subscale and the composite of the writing scores of the three test forms.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics – Task fulfilment

| | Test A (n=546) | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Mean | 6.2 | 5.1 | 4.7 |
| Median | 6.5 | 5 | 4.5 |
| Mode | 7 | 4 | -- ^b |
| SD | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.3 |
| Skewness | -0.6* | 0.3* | -0.1 |
| SES | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Kurtosis | 0.2 | -0.2 | -0.1 |
| SEK | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

Table 2. Descriptive statistics – Organisation

| | Test A (n=546) | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Mean | 6 | 4.8 | 4.5 |
| Median | 6 | 4.5 | 4.5 |
| Mode | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| SD | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| Skewness | -0.5* | 0.5* | 0.1* |

| | | | |
|----------|------|------|-----|
| SES | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Kurtosis | -0.2 | -0.2 | 0.1 |
| SEK | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

Table 3. Descriptive statistics – Vocabulary

| | Test A (n=546) | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Mean | 5.8 | 4.6 | 4.3 |
| Median | 6 | 4.5 | 4 |
| Mode | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| SD | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| Skewness | -0.6* | 0.5* | 0.1 |
| SES | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Kurtosis | -0.1 | -0.3* | 0 |
| SEK | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

Table 4. Descriptive statistics – Grammar

| | Test A (n=546) | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Mean | 5.7 | 4.5 | 4.2 |
| Median | 6 | 4.3 | 4 |
| Mode | 7 | 3 | 4 |
| SD | 1.7 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| Skewness | -0.6* | 0.5* | 0.2 |
| SES | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Kurtosis | -0.5* | -0.4* | 0.1 |
| SEK | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

Table 5. Descriptive statistics - Composite

| | Test A (n=546) | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Mean | 5.9 | 4.7 | 4.4 |
| Median | 6.1 | 4.5 | 4.3 |
| Mode | 6.8 | -- ^b | 3.5 |
| SD | 1.6 | 1.5 | 1.2 |
| Skewness | -0.6* | 0.5* | 0 |
| SES | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Kurtosis | -0.1 | -0.3* | 0.1 |
| SEK | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |

It can be seen from Tables 1-5 that the means of the test scores were very similar across all the subscales and to those of the composite scores of all the three test forms.

4.3.2. Traditional reliability analyses

The Cronbach’s alpha and inter-rater correlations (by subscale and for composite) were calculated for the three

test administrations. However, for the Test A, only Rater 1 provided analytic scores while Rater 2 provided holistic scores. Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha was only calculated for rater 1 only, while the inter-rater correlation was not done for this test administration. Results can be seen from Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Cronbach's alpha of the three test administrations

| Test administration | Cronbach's alpha |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| Test A (rater 1 only) | 0.973 |
| Test B | 0.988 |
| Test C | 0.974 |

The Cronbach's alpha for all three test administrations were all high and close to 1.0. These mean that in all three administrations, the internal consistency of the ratings across subscales and with the composite scores was very strong.

Table 8.1. Variance components results for Rater 1 analytic writing scores using the $p \times t$ model for Test A

| Source of variance | Task fulfillment | | Organization | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|--------------------|------------------|---------|--------------|---------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| p | 2.00601 | 70.10% | 2.52119 | 76.30% | 2.28469 | 79.20% | 2.76229 | 82.00% |
| t | 0.00315 | 0.10% | 0.00524 | 0.20% | 0.00737 | 0.30% | 0.00599 | 0.20% |
| pt, e | 0.85308 | 29.80% | 0.7759 | 23.50% | 0.59245 | 20.50% | 0.59932 | 17.80% |
| Total | 2.86224 | 100.00% | 3.30233 | 100.00% | 2.88451 | 100.00% | 3.3676 | 100.00% |

As seen above, the major source of variance in Rater 1's analytic scores of Test A across all four subscale was test-taker variability with the percentages for p were all above 70%.

Table 7. Inter-rater correlations

| Score | Test B (n=1212) | Test C (n=476) |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Task Fulfilment | .889** | .906** |
| Organisation | .905** | .912** |
| Vocabulary | .900** | .922** |
| Grammar | .903** | .903** |
| Composite | .942** | .946** |

It can be seen that all the calculated inter-rater correlations for Test B and Test C were strong and significant. These show that the raters scored very consistently across all four subscales (i.e. marking criteria) and with the composite in both VSTEP administrations.

4.3.3. Generalizability theory

Again, due to different rating systems between Rater 1 and Rater 2 for Test A forms, two different G-theory analyses were done for the scores by these raters using the $p \times t$ model, which means all test-takers take all tasks (items) and all tasks are scored in all of the rating categories (subscales). In addition, variance components results for holistic (task means for Rater 1 and holistic scores for Rater 2) writing scores were also calculated using the $p \times r \times t$ model.

Table 8.2. Variance components results for Rater 2 writing scores: $p \times t$ model

| Source of variance | Composite | |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| p | 2.26824 | 80.40% |
| t | 0.0012 | 0.00% |
| pt, e | 0.55167 | 19.60% |
| Total | 2.82111 | 100.00% |

Table 8.2 shows that Rater 2’s holistic scores of Test A writings also varied mostly due to the differentiation among test takers (80.40%).

Table 8.3. Variance components results for holistic (task means for Rater 1 and holistic scores for Rater 2) writing scores: $p \times r \times t$ model

| Source of variance | Composite | |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| p | 2.20644 | 94.40% |
| r | -0.00017 | 0.00% |
| t | 0.00148 | 0.10% |
| p_rt, e | 0.13079 | 5.60% |
| Total | 2.33871 | 100.10% |

As seen from Table 8.3, test-takers’ variance accounted for 94.40% the cause of the variation between Rater 1’s task mean scores and Rater 2’s holistic scores in Test A.

For further examination of the Test A, index of dependability (Φ) results were calculated, using $p'x \ t'$ model for Rater 1 scores, $p \times t$ model for Rater 2 holistic scores, and $p \times r \times t$ model for holistic (task means for Rater 1 and holistic scores for Rater 2) writing scores.

Table 9.1. Index of dependability (Φ) results for Rater 1 writing scores from the Test A administration: $p'x \ t'$ model

| Subscale | Φ |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Task fulfillment | 0.824 |
| Organization | 0.866 |
| Vocabulary | 0.884 |
| Grammar | 0.901 |
| Composite | 0.893 |

Table 9.2. Index of dependability (Φ) results for Rater 2 writing scores: $p \times t$ model

| Scale | Φ |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Rater 2 (holistic) | 0.891 |

Table 9.3. Index of dependability (Φ) results for holistic (task means for Rater 1 and holistic scores for Rater 2) writing scores: $p \times r \times t$ model

| Scale | Φ |
|------------------------|--------|
| Holistic scores | 0.876 |

Tables 9.1 - 9.3 all show that both Rater 1’s scores (across subscale and composite) and Rater 2’s were all highly dependable (all above .80).

As for the remaining two administrations Test B and Test C, $p'x \ r' \ x' \ t'$ model was used to calculate the variance components and index of dependability.

Table 10.1. Variance components results for Test B: $p'x \ r' \ x' \ t'$ model

| Source of variance | Task fulfillment | | Organization | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------|--------------|---------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| p | 1.86524 | 75.20% | 2.08608 | 76.80% | 2.08366 | 78.40% | 2.13199 | 79.20% |
| r | 0.00385 | 0.20% | -0.00003 | 0.00% | -0.00004 | 0.00% | 0.00081 | 0.00% |
| t | -0.00011 | 0.00% | 0.00755 | 0.30% | 0.00628 | 0.20% | 0.00081 | 0.00% |
| pr | 0.08443 | 3.40% | 0.06851 | 2.50% | 0.07966 | 3.00% | 0.08541 | 3.20% |
| pt | 0.28353 | 11.40% | 0.30433 | 11.20% | 0.27013 | 10.20% | 0.23847 | 8.90% |
| rt | 0.00209 | 0.10% | 0.00108 | 0.00% | -0.00012 | 0.00% | 0.0005 | 0.00% |
| p_rt, e | 0.2409 | 9.70% | 0.24995 | 9.20% | 0.2165 | 8.20% | 0.23465 | 8.70% |
| Total | 2.48004 | 100.00% | 2.7175 | 100.00% | 2.65623 | 100.00% | 2.69264 | 100.00% |

Table 10.1 shows that test-takers’ variability accounted for more than 75% the cause of Test B’s score variation for all four subscales.

Table 10.2. Dependability and reliability results for writing scores for Test B administration: p'x r' x t' model

| Subscale | Φ | E_p^2 |
|------------------|--------|---------|
| Task fulfillment | 0.883 | 0.884 |
| Organization | 0.892 | 0.893 |
| Vocabulary | 0.9 | 0.901 |
| Grammar | 0.906 | 0.906 |
| Composite | 0.914 | 0.914 |

The above table shows that raters' writing scores for Test B were highly dependable and reliable for all four subscales and the composite, with the dependability and reliability results all above .80.

Table 11.1. Variance components results for Test C: p'x r' x t' model

| Source of variance | Task fulfillment | | Organization | | Vocabulary | | Grammar | |
|---------------------|------------------|---------|--------------|--------|------------|--------|----------|---------|
| | p | r | t | e | p | r | t | e |
| p | 1.15549 | 48.40% | 1.1352 | 54.00% | 1.08188 | 55.70% | 1.06374 | 55.00% |
| r | 0.00139 | 0.10% | 0.00004 | 0.00% | -0.00028 | 0.00% | -0.00054 | 0.00% |
| t | 0.17594 | 7.40% | 0.07343 | 3.50% | 0.07666 | 3.90% | 0.08241 | 4.30% |
| Pr | 0.0317 | 1.30% | 0.0362 | 1.70% | 0.01603 | 0.80% | 0.03205 | 1.70% |
| Pt | 0.7978 | 33.40% | 0.67132 | 31.90% | 0.59088 | 30.40% | 0.57463 | 29.70% |
| Rt | -0.00035 | 0.00% | -0.00024 | 0.00% | 0.00024 | 0.00% | 0.00065 | 0.00% |
| p _{rt} , e | 0.22633 | 9.50% | 0.18577 | 8.80% | 0.17742 | 9.10% | 0.18016 | 9.30% |
| Total | 2.38865 | 100.10% | 2.10196 | 99.90% | 1.94311 | 99.90% | 1.93364 | 100.00% |

It can be seen from Table 11.1 that for Test C administration, person (i.e. test-taker variability) was the most important source of score variation across all four subscales, but the percentages were around 50%, lower than Test A and Test B. However, the second major source is the interaction between test-takers and the test tasks (person x task) (accounting for about 30% of the variance for all four subscales), with the remaining sources being all small.

Table 11.2. Dependability and reliability results for writing scores for the Test C administration: p'x r' x t' model

| Subscale | Φ | E_p^2 |
|------------------|--------|---------|
| Task fulfillment | 0.674 | 0.71 |
| Organization | 0.722 | 0.74 |
| Vocabulary | 0.737 | 0.757 |
| Grammar | 0.732 | 0.753 |
| Composite | 0.736 | 0.761 |

Table 11.2 shows that raters' writing scores of Test C were quite dependable and reliable with the results being all at around .70.

4.3.4. Rasch analyses

Rasch analyses were conducted to investigate the inter-relation between task type, test date and subscale. Tables 12.1, 12.2 and 12.3 show the results.

Table 12.1. Measurement report for task type (n=2328)

| Measure | Model | | Infit | | Outfit | | Estim. Correlation | N TaskType |
|---------|-------|-----|-------|------|--------|------|----------------------|-------------------|
| | S.E. | | MnSq | ZStd | MnSq | ZStd | | |
| | -.01 | .01 | .98 | -2.2 | .97 | -2.3 | 1.03 .47 .47 | 1 CORRESP |
| | .01 | .01 | 1.02 | 2.1 | 1.02 | 1.9 | .97 .47 .47 | 2 ESSAY |
| | .00 | .01 | 1.00 | .0 | 1.00 | -.2 | .47 | Mean (Count: 2) |
| | .01 | .00 | .02 | 2.2 | .02 | 2.1 | .00 | S.D. (Population) |
| | .02 | .00 | .03 | 3.1 | .03 | 3.0 | .00 | S.D. (Sample) |

Table 12.2. Measurement report for test date (n=2328)

| Total Score | Total Count | Obsvd Average | Fair(M) Average | Model Measure | S.E. | Infit MnSq | ZStd | Outfit MnSq | ZStd | Estim. Discrm | Correlation PtMea | PtExp | N | TestDate |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------|------------|------|-------------|------|---------------|-------------------|-------|---|-------------------|
| 24595 | 4064 | 6.05 | 5.28 | -.12 | .01 | .97 | -1.6 | .99 | -.6 | 1.00 | .57 | .56 | 1 | Test A |
| 99106 | 20910 | 4.74 | 4.89 | .05 | .00 | 1.03 | 2.9 | 1.02 | 2.3 | .99 | .38 | .38 | 2 | Test B |
| 33495 | 7612 | 4.40 | 4.85 | .07 | .01 | .94 | -3.8 | .94 | -3.8 | 1.04 | .18 | .21 | 3 | Test C |
| 52398.7 | 10862.0 | 5.06 | 5.01 | .00 | .01 | .98 | -.9 | .98 | -.8 | | .37 | | | Mean (Count: 3) |
| 33226.3 | 7251.2 | .71 | .19 | .08 | .00 | .04 | 2.8 | .03 | 2.5 | | .16 | | | S.D. (Population) |
| 40693.8 | 8880.8 | .87 | .24 | .10 | .00 | .05 | 3.4 | .04 | 3.1 | | .20 | | | S.D. (Sample) |

Table 12.3. Measurement report for subscale (n=2328)

| Total Score | Total Count | Obsvd Average | Fair(M) Average | Model Measure | S.E. | Infit MnSq | ZStd | Outfit MnSq | ZStd | Estim. Discrm | Correlation PtMea | PtExp | N | Subscale |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------|------------|------|-------------|------|---------------|-------------------|-------|---|-------------------|
| 41905 | 8147 | 5.14 | 5.35 | -.15 | .01 | .96 | -2.8 | .96 | -2.4 | 1.02 | .45 | .44 | 1 | TF |
| 39573 | 8147 | 4.86 | 5.04 | -.02 | .01 | 1.03 | 2.1 | 1.03 | 1.9 | .96 | .45 | .45 | 2 | Org |
| 38219 | 8146 | 4.69 | 4.87 | .06 | .01 | .99 | -.8 | .98 | -1.2 | 1.02 | .46 | .46 | 3 | Vocab |
| 37499 | 8146 | 4.60 | 4.77 | .10 | .01 | 1.02 | 1.4 | 1.02 | 1.0 | .99 | .46 | .46 | 4 | Gramm |
| 39299.0 | 8146.5 | 4.82 | 5.01 | .00 | .01 | 1.00 | .0 | 1.00 | -.2 | | .46 | | | Mean (Count: 4) |
| 1678.7 | .5 | .21 | .22 | .10 | .00 | .03 | 2.0 | .03 | 1.8 | | .01 | | | S.D. (Population) |
| 1938.4 | .6 | .24 | .25 | .11 | .00 | .03 | 2.3 | .03 | 2.0 | | .01 | | | S.D. (Sample) |

It can be seen that the measurement results were all close to zero in all three above Rasch analyses.

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1. Research question 1: How consistent are the ratings of the VSTEP writing test?

With the exception of Test C, writing scores exhibited very high dependability levels. As for the Test C test form, the writing scores were less dependable than the desirable rate of .80 (.736), and a bit lower than the other two administrations, yet still acceptable.

Task 2 (essay) scores generally tended to be close to Task 1 (correspondence) scores, but for Test C, they were markedly lower (.5 points for mean composite, .6 for median composite). For this administration only, the task facet contributed a noticeable proportion of total score variance (7.4%); person-task interaction was 33.4%.

This shows that there may have been something confusing about the prompt (which was expected to be a little on the easy side). However, the inter-rater correlations for writing scores were all very high, for both individual subscales ($\geq .889$) and composite scores ($\geq .937$).

4.4.2. Research question 2: How do various facets of the rating process contribute to score variation in writing?

Five facets were considered: person (i.e. test taker), rater, task type, test date, and subscale.

Person: It was clear from the results that person (i.e. test-taker) majorly contributed to score variation in all three test administrations. The person-task interaction effect made a noticeable contribution to total score variance in the three administrations for which it could be estimated (29.8%, 11.4%, 33.4%).

Rater: The rater facet contributed very little to total score variance. In addition, rater-person and rater-task effects were also minimal.

Task type: The task facet contributed very little to total score variance, aside from tasks in Test C ($\sigma^2_t = 7.4\%$). In the Rasch analyses, the correspondence and essay tasks were both very close to 0 in difficulty. Therefore, based on both G theory and Rasch results, task type does not seem to affect scores in any important way, although individual prompts may do so.

Test date: In the Rasch analyses, test date difficulty ranged from $-.12$ to $.07$, very close to 0, so it was not an important contributor to scores.

Subscale: Subscales all had difficulty measures from $-.15$ to $.10$, so this facet was also not important to total scores.

Clearly, overall the VSTEP Writing Test is demonstrating sufficient score dependability for high-stakes decisions. The dependability levels of the writing test also generally display high dependability, sufficient to support important decisions.

5. Conclusion

The above report of a validation study of VSTEP tests is an example of how VSTEP developers at ULIS-VNU are endeavoring to contribute to the process of regional and international integration of Vietnam. As elaborated earlier, it is critical that these made-in-Vietnam English proficiency tests be proven to be valid and reliable so as to be recognized not only by Vietnamese people, but also by stakeholders in the broader world. Such recognition would pave the way for Vietnamese learners of English to use their VSTEP test results (instead of expensive international tests) as proof of their English capacity, either for educational,

employment or any other relevant purposes in international contexts. It is believed that the accumulation of such empirical evidence will help to convince the world of the quality and seriousness of VSTEP tests. These are also concrete and meaningful contributions of ULIS-VNU and its VSTEP development team to the nation's will for international and regional integration.

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NGHIÊN CỨU TÍNH GIÁ TRỊ CỦA BÀI THI VIẾT VSTEP NHẪM ĐÓNG GÓP CHO QUÁ TRÌNH HỘI NHẬP KHU VỰC VÀ QUỐC TẾ

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Tóm tắt: Trong bối cảnh hội nhập khu vực và quốc tế mạnh mẽ, đặc biệt là việc thành lập chính thức của Cộng đồng Kinh tế ASEAN năm 2015, năng lực tiếng Anh đã trở nên thiết yếu đối với người Việt Nam để tạo ra tính cạnh tranh trong tuyển dụng, giáo dục và những cơ hội khác. Để đáp ứng nhu cầu này, trong công cuộc đổi mới dạy học và kiểm tra đánh giá tiếng Anh, các định dạng đề thi VSTEP đã được xây dựng và ban hành bởi Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo, được xem như là các công cụ kiểm tra đánh giá tiếng Anh quốc gia dành cho người Việt nhằm thay thế cho các đề thi đánh giá năng lực tiếng Anh chuẩn quốc tế rất đắt đỏ hiện nay như IELTS, TOEFL... Tuy nhiên, điều này đòi hỏi những đơn vị xây dựng đề thi VSTEP phải có những biện pháp cụ thể để đảm bảo tính giá trị của đề thi. Họ cũng cần phải thu thập và quảng bá những minh chứng về tính giá trị của các đề thi này để đạt được sự công nhận của quốc tế. Đây là nhiệm vụ có ý nghĩa quan trọng, góp phần vào công cuộc hội nhập khu vực và quốc tế của Việt Nam. Thông qua một nghiên cứu xác trị đề thi VSTEP được thực hiện gần đây, bài viết nhấn mạnh cam kết của Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội với tư cách là đơn vị phát triển VSTEP trong nhiệm vụ này.

Từ khoá: VSTEP, xác trị đề thi, tính giá trị của quá trình chấm thi, đánh giá kỹ năng viết, năng lực tiếng Anh cho hội nhập ASEAN

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CONTENT VALIDITY OF A VIETNAMESE STANDARDIZED TEST OF ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (VSTEP.3-5) READING TEST

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Abstract: This paper investigated the content validity of a Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP.3-5) Reading test via both qualitative and quantitative methods¹. The aim of the study is to evaluate the relevance and the coverage of the content in this test compared with the description in the test specification and the actual performance of examinees. With the content analysis provided by three testing experts using Bachman and Palmer's 1996 framework and test score analysis, the study results in a relatively high consistency of the test content with the test design framework and the test takers' performance. These findings help confirm the content validity of the specific investigated test paper. However, a need for content review is raised from the research as some problems have been revealed from the analysis.

Keywords: language testing, content validity, reading comprehension test, standardized test

1. Introduction

In foreign language testing, it is crucial to ensure the test validity – one of the six significant qualities (along with reliability, authenticity, practicality, interactiveness and impact) for test usefulness (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Accordingly, designing a valid reading test is of great concern of language educators and researchers (Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Alderson, 2000; Jin Yan, 2002).

The Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP.3-5) has been implemented for Vietnamese learners of

English since March 2015. The test aims at assessing English proficiency from level 3 to level 5 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages for Vietnamese learners (CEFR-VN) or from level B1 to level C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) for users in various majors and professions using four skills. There have not been many studies on this test since only two articles were published regarding the rater consistency in rating L2 learners' writing task by Nguyen Thi Quynh Yen (2016) and the washback effect of the test on the graduation standard of English-major students at University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University (VNU) by Nguyen Thuy Lan (2017). The test analysis has been so far under-researched.

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Like the other skills, the reading tests have been developed, designed and expected to be valid in its use. It is of importance that the test measures what it is supposed to measure (Henning, 2001: 91). In this sense, validity “refers to the interpretations or actions that are made on the basis of test scores” and “must be evaluated with respect to the purpose of the test and how the test is used” (Sireci, 2009). In the scope of this study, the author would like to evaluate the content validity of a specific VSTEP.3-5 reading test with a focus on the content of the test and the test scores. The results of this study, to an extent, are expected to respond to concerns about the quality of the test to the public.

2. Literature review

2.1. Models of validity

As it is claimed by researchers, validity is the most important quality of test interpretation or test use (Bachman, 1990). The inferences or decisions we make based on the test scores will guarantee the test’s meaningfulness, appropriateness and usefulness (American Psychological Association, 1985). In examining such qualities related to the validity of a test, test scores play the key role but are not the only factor as it needs to come together with the teaching syllabus, the test specification and other factors. As a result, the concept of validity has been seen from different perspectives, which leads to the fact that there are different viewpoints to categorize this most crucial quality of a test. Due to the purpose and the scope of this paper, the researcher will present two main types of validity, and how content validity can be examined.

Content validity

As test users, we have a tendency to examine the test content, which can be seen

from the copy of the test and/or test design guidelines. In other words, test specifications and example items are to be investigated. Likewise, when designing a test, test developers also pay their attention to the content or ability domain covered in the test from which test tasks/items are generated. Therefore, consideration of the test content plays an important role to both test users and test developers. “Demonstrating that a test is relevant to and covers a given area of content or ability is therefore a necessary part of validation” (Bachman, 1990:244). In this sense, content validity is concerned with whether or not the content of the test is “sufficiently representative and comprehensive for the test to be a valid measure of what it is supposed to measure” (Henning, 2001:91).

As regards the evidential basis of content validity, Bachman (1990) discussed the two following aspects: content relevance and content coverage. *Content relevance* requires “the specification of the behavioral domain in question and the attendant specification of the task or test domain.” (Messick, 1980:1017). According to Bachman (1990), content relevance should be considered in the specification of the ability domain – or the constructs to be tested, and the test method facets – aspects of the whole testing procedure. This is directly linked with the test design process to see whether the items generated for the test can reflect the constructs to be measured and the nature of the responses that the test taker is expected to make. The second aspect of content validity is named *content coverage* or “the extent to which the tasks required in the test adequately represent the behavioral domain in question” (Bachman, 1990:245). Regarding test validation, this is the basis to evaluate how much the test items represent the domain(s); in other words, how much they match the specification.

The limitation of content validity is that it does not take into account the actual performance of test takers (Cronbach, 1971; Bachman, 1990). It is an essential part of the validation process, but it is sufficient all by itself as inferences about examinees' abilities cannot be made from it.

Construct validity

According to Bachman (1990:254), construct validity "concerns the extent to which performance on tests is consistent with predictions that we make on the basis of a theory of abilities, or constructs." This is related to the way test scores are interpreted and how this interpretation can reflect the abilities the test aims to measure in advance.

By the 1980s, this model was widely accepted as a general approach to validity by Messick (1980, 1988, and 1989). Messick adopted a broadly defined version of the construct model to make it a unifying framework for validity when he involved all evidence for validity (namely content and criterion evidence) into the construct validity. He considered the two models' supporting roles in showing the relevance of test tasks to the construct of interest, and validating secondary measures of a construct against its primary measures. According to Messick (1988, 1989), there are three major positive impacts of utilizing the construct model as the unified framework for validity. Firstly, the construct model focuses on a number of issues in the interpretations and uses of test scores, and not just on the correlation of test scores with specific criteria in specific settings for specific test takers. Secondly, its emphasis lies in how the assumptions in score interpretations prove their pervasive role. Finally, the construct model allows for the possibility of alternative interpretations and uses of test scores. As can be seen from this analysis, the construct validity is based on the interpretations of test scores in "a two-

step process, from score to construct and from construct to use" (Kane, 2006:21)

2.2. Examining the content validity of the test

In the previous parts of the literature review, content validity and construct validity have been discussed on their own. In this section, the content validity is going to be examined with a link to the construct validity in some recent researchers' view to explain why the author chose to cover both the content and test performances in the analysis.

As synthesized by Messick (1980), together with criterion validity, content validity is seen as part of construct validity in the view of "unifying concept." However, the current standards suggest five sources of validity evidence in which rather than referring to "types", "categories", or "aspects" of proposes, a validation framework is proposed based on five "sources of validity evidence" (AERA et al., 1999: 11, cited in Sireci, 2009). The five sources include test content, response processes, internal structure, relations to other variables, and consequences of testing. Among them, evidence based on test content "refers to traditional forms of content validity evidence" (Sireci, 2009: 30).

Furthermore, Lissitz and Samuelson (2007: 482) are "attempting to move away from a unitary theory focused on construct validity and to reorient educators to the importance of content validity and the general problem of test development." Chalhoub-Deville (2009:242) absolutely supported the focus of attention on content validity which should be examined through "the qualities of test content, the interpretation and uses of test scores, the consequences of proposed score interpretation and uses, and theory refinement." The investigation of content validity, according to Chalhoub-Deville (2009), follows the operationalization of content that Lissitz and Samuelson presented

in their 2007 article. It includes test standards and tasks which are captured by domain description of the test in general, and test specification in particular. As a result, the content validity of the test can be primarily seen from the comparison between the test tasks/items and the test specification. This is what we do before the test event, called “*a priori* validity evidence” (Weir, 2005). After the test event, “*posteriori* validity evidence” is collected related to scoring validity, criterion-related validity and consequential validity (Weir, 2005). To ensure scoring validity, which is considered “the superordinate for all the aspects of reliability” (Weir, 2005:22), test administrators and developers need to see the “extent to which test results are stable over time, consistent in terms of the content sampling, and free from bias” (Weir, 2005:23). In this sense, scoring validity helps provide evidence to support the content validity.

In summary, the current paper followed a combination of methods in assessing the content validity of the reading test. It is a process spanning before and after the test event. For the pre-test stage, the test content was judged by comparing it with the test specification. Later the test scores were analyzed in the post-test stage for support of the content validity by examining if the content of the specific item needs reviewing based on the analysis of item difficulty and item fit to the test specification.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research subjects

The researcher chose a VSTEP.3-5 reading test used in one of the examinations administered by the University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU). This is one among the four separate skill tests that examinees are required to fulfill in order to

achieve the final result of VSTEP.3-5 test. Like other skills, the reading test focuses on evaluating English language learners’ reading proficiency from level 3 (B1) to level 5 (C1). There are four reading passages with 10 multiple choice four-option question per passage for test takers to complete in the total time of 60 minutes. The passages range in terms of length and topics. As a case study which is seen to be the basis of future research, this paper only focused on one test.

The particular test assessed was selected at random from a sample pool of VSTEP.3-5 tests which have undergone the same procedure of designing and reviewing. This aims at providing objectivity to the study. Also, only tests that were taken by at least 100 candidates were included in the sample pool to increase the reliability of test score analysis.

3.2. Research participants

For the pre-test stage, three experienced lecturers who have been working in the field of language testing and assessment participated in the evaluation of the test content by working with both the test paper and test specification based on a framework of language task characteristics including setting, test rubric, input, expected response, the relationship between input and response, which is originally proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996).

The research participants also included 598 test takers who took the VSTEP.3-5 reading test. This population is a combination of majored and non-majored English students at VNU and candidates who are working in a range of fields at various ages throughout the country. Therefore, the test scores are expected to reflect the performance of a variety of English language learners when taking the reading test.

3.3. Research questions

1. To what extent is the content of the reading test compatible with the test specification?

2. To what extent do the reading test results reflect its content validity?

3.4. Research methods and data analysis

The study made use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Firstly, an analysis of the test paper comparing it with the test specification was conducted. The framework followed the original one proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996). This widely used framework in language testing has been applied in previous studies such as Bachman and Palmer (1996), Carr (2006), Manxia (2008) and Dong (2011). However, as analyzed from Manxia (2008), this framework was not designed for any particular types of test tasks or examinations. According to the nature of reading and characteristics of reading tests, “characteristics of the input” and “characteristics of the expected response” are advised to be evaluated. In this study, “input” refers to the four reading passages that test takers were asked questions about during their examination. It involves length, language of input, domain and text level. This is also an adaptation from Bachman and Palmer’s model since it is closely related to the test specification – the blueprint or the guidelines of test design that test writers are supposed to follow. “Expected response” aims at the response types and specifically the options of each question. The analysis pointed out how similar and different the test paper under evaluation was written compared with the test specification. To be specific, regarding characteristics of the input, the study compared the length, language of input, domain and text level. In terms of expected response, it is response type and reading skills which are analyzed. The analysis was conducted by comparing these features

of the test with the description in the test specification. The data was collected using the Compleat Lexical Tutor software version 6.2 which is a vocabulary profiler tool (<http://www.lextutor.ca/>), the software provided the statistical data of inputted text based on the research from the British National Corpus (BNC) representing a vocabulary profile of K1 to K20 frequency lists. Moreover, the readability index was checked from the website <https://readable.io/> and cross checked with the result from Microsoft Word software. The website showed the level of the text at A, B and C; rather than one of the six levels of the CEFR.

After that, more qualitative data were collected through a group discussion between the researcher and three experts who did the analysis of the test paper. In the discussion, the experts shared their thoughts about the insights of the test related to the proposed and estimated item difficulty level, the characteristics of the stems and options as well as an overall evaluation of the compatibility between the investigated test paper and the reading test specification. These two methods helped collect the data to answer research question one which aims at the compatibility between the test items/questions and the test specification.

Secondly, the test scores were reported with descriptive statistics and item response theory (IRT) results as a means of incorporating examinee performance into the Bachman and Palmer model. IRT is basically related to “accurate test scoring and development of test items” (An & Yung, 2014). There are some parameters than can be calculated; however, this study focused on the item measure which means item difficulty and item fit to see how the examinees’ performance in each item/question matches the estimated item/question levels in the test specifications. In this way, we can evaluate the quality of the items with a real pool of examinees.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. *Research question 1: To what extent is the content of the reading test compatible with the test specification?*

As presented in the methodology, Bachman and Palmer's framework was adopted in this study with a focus on the analysis of characteristics of the input and the response.

Characteristics of the input

In terms of the input, attention was paid to specific features that suited reading passages. Table 1 displays the detailed illustration of the analysis by comparing the requirements in the test specification and the manifestations of the investigated test paper.

Table 1. Characteristics of the input

| | Characteristics of the input described in the test specification | Characteristics of the input in the test paper |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Length | Passage 1, 2, 3: ~ 400 words/passage Passage 4: ~ 500 words/passage | Passage 1: 452 words Passage 2: 450 words Passage 3: 456 words Passage 4: 503 words |
| Language of input | <i>Vocabulary</i> Passage 1, 2: mostly high-frequency words, some low-frequency words Passage 3, 4: more low-frequency words are expected | Passage 1: K1+K2 words 94.31% Passage 2: K1+K2 words 87.23% Passage 3: K1+K2 words 77.13% Passage 4: K1+K2 words 77.41% |
| | <i>Grammar</i> Passage 1, 2, 3: a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences Passage 4: a majority of compound and complex sentences | Passage 1, 2, 3, 4: the majority is compound and complex sentences |
| Domain | The passage should belong to one of the four domains: personal, public, educational and occupational | Passage 1 & 2: educational domain Passage 3 & 4: public domain |
| Text level | Passage 1: B1 level Passage 2 & 3: B2 level Passage 4: C1 level | Passage 1: Level B (Average grade level 6.9 Reading ease: 76.6%) Passage 2: Level B (Average grade level 9.4 Reading ease: 58.4%) Passage 3: Level C (Average grade level 11 Reading ease: 50%) Passage 4: Level C (Average grade level 13.8 Reading ease: 34.5%) |

The table shows that the test was generally an effective presentation of the test specification under the investigated characteristics of the input. Most of the description was satisfactorily met in the four reading passages. Regarding the length of the input and domain, all the passages were accepted in the range of word number as the total word counts can fluctuate within 10% of the total number and belonged to reasonable domains with suitable topics. In terms of lexical resource of the input, according to O’Keeffe et al. (2003), Dang and Webb (2016) cited in Szudarski (2017), the first two thousand words, i.e. K1 and K2 words are the high-frequency ones and the rest from K3, academic word list and off-list words. Based on these studies, it can be claimed that the proportion of high and low-frequency words in the four passages satisfied the test specification. Last but not least, the text level should be mentioned in this study as it is of the priority of the test design according to the test specification. As the goal of the test is to distinguish examinees’ reading proficiency level at levels B1, B2 and C1, the requirement from the test specification also aims at these three levels as seen from the table. The four passages were checked with the website <https://readable.io/> and Microsoft Word; however, it is admitted that there is not any official tool to assess the readability of the inputted text. Therefore, the result should be considered a reference to the study which partially reflects the requirement and needs more discussion with the test reviewers.

With regards to the discussion with the three reviewers, positive comments on the quality of the texts were noted. Reviewer 1 saw a good job in the capability to discriminate the level of the four passages, i.e. the difficulty level changed respectively from passage 1 to passage 4. Also the variety of specific topics allowed for examinees to demonstrate a breath of understanding. This feedback was also reported from reviewer 2 and 3. Reviewer 2, however, pointed out the problem with grammatical structures that the above table displays. The percentage of compound and complex sentences in all four texts outnumbered the simple ones, which might be challenging for readers at lower levels like B1 to process. For the text level, the experts emphasized the role of test developers in evaluating the difficulty of the input which should not solely depend on the readability tool. It is ultimately the test writer’s expertise at analyzing the language of the passage that best assesses the reading level of a text.

Characteristics of the response

Following the analysis suggested by Manxia (2008), this paper focused on two features of the response, namely response type and reading skills. Typically, the reading skills should be mentioned in the input regarding the test item; however, to make the analysis coherent and compatible with the test specification, the researcher decided to keep both the test item and the item options in this part. The analysis results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of the response

| | Characteristics of the response described in the test specification | Characteristics of the response in the test paper |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Response type | Multiple choice questions with four options | Multiple choice questions with four options |
| Reading skills | Reading for main idea Reading for specific information/details Reading for reference Understanding vocabulary in context Understanding implicit/explicit author's opinion/attitude Reading for inference Understanding the organizational patterns of the passage Understanding the purpose of the passage | Reading for main idea Reading for specific information/details Reading for reference Reading for vocabulary in context Reading for author's opinion/attitude Reading for inference Understanding the organizational patterns of the passage Understanding the purpose of the passage |

The table shows that the test met the requirement of the test specification in terms of response type and reading skills. All forty items were written in the form of multiple choice with four options and covered a number of sub-skills that the test specification suggested for different question levels. For an in-depth analysis into the test items, to evaluate the extent they matched the test specification, i.e. the content coverage, three reviewers were arranged to work individually and discuss in groups to assess the quality of test items. In the assessment, firstly, all reviewers agreed that there were a range of question types that aimed at different skills in the test. All these types appeared in the test specification. Secondly, the majority of the questions or items appropriately reflected the intended item difficulty. The test covers three CEFR levels (B1, B2, and C1); furthermore, the test specification adds three levels of complexity (low, mid, high) to each level, creating nine levels of questions from the test. Due to the confidentiality of the test, a detailed description cannot be presented here for either the test specification or the current test itself. In this research, the reviewers all claimed that nine levels of difficulty could be pointed out from the forty items. However,

a problem came about in this aspect when fewer B1 low questions were found than planned. Otherwise, there were more B1 mid, B2 low and B2 mid questions in the investigated paper compared to the test specification. There was an agreement among the test reviewers that the number of high-level items was more than that in the test specification. This explains a finding that low-level test takers had difficulty with this test, i.e. the test was more difficult than the requirement of the test specification. The reviewers also commented on the tendency to have several questions that test a specific skill in one passage. For example, in passage 2, four out of ten questions focus on sentence meaning, whether explicitly or implicitly expressed; and another passage had one question for main idea and one question for main purpose. In fact, this is not mentioned in the test specification as a constraint for the test designers; however, the test specification recommends that the test writer should balance and vary the kind of skills tested in each passage particularly and in the whole test overall.

To sum up, it can be concluded in this study that the test paper followed the test

specification with all requirements regarding its content. The analysis of the input and response by presenting statistical data and reviewers' feedback made it possible to confirm the content validity via content relevance and content coverage of the test.

4.2. Research question 2: To what extent do the reading test results reflect its content validity?

The evidence to answer this question was obtained from the analysis of test scores by using the descriptive statistics and the IRT model.

Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of the reading test are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Table 3. Score distribution of the test (N = 598)

| Items | N | Min | Max | Mean | Mode | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----------|------|-------|----------|----------|
| 40 | 598 | 4 | 37 | 15.080/40 | 15 | 5.082 | .288 | -.153 |

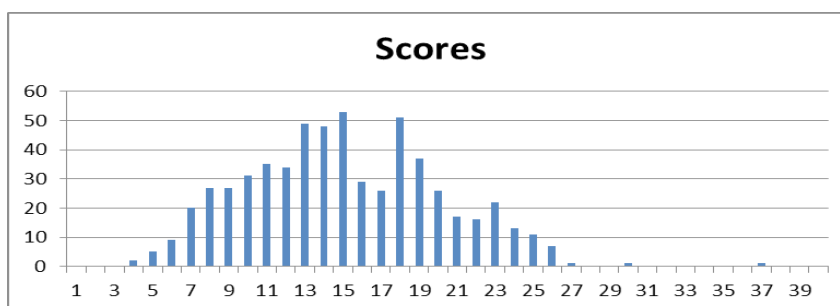


Figure 1. Score distribution of the test (N = 598)

It can be seen that the mean score is relatively low at 15.080/40. More importantly, the skewness is positive (.288), showing that the score distribution is slightly skewed to the right. This indicates that the reading test was rather difficult to the test takers. The initial analysis of descriptive statistics strengthened the comments that the three experts made about the level of the test providing an overall impression that it is more difficult than what is required in the specification.

IRT results

In order to get a detailed description of the test items and personal performance, the IRT results which focus on item difficulty and item fit to the test specification were collected. These are significant tools to assess whether

the content specification is maintained in the real test.

As shown in Table 4, the mean measures (difficulty) for item and person are .00 and -.62 respectively, which means the test takers found the test difficult in general. Additionally, it is evident from Table 4 that the infit and outfit statistics for both item and person are within the desirable range which is from .8 to 1.2 for the mean square and from -2 to +2 for the z-standardized values (Wright & Linacre, 1994). Therefore, it is safe to say that overall, the data fit the model expectations for both person and item. That is, the test is productive for measuring the construct of reading comprehension, and the data have reasonable predictability in general.

Table 4. Measure, fit statistics, reliability, and separation of the test (N = 598)

| | Measure | | Infit | | Outfit | | Reliability | Separation |
|------|---------|-----|-------|------|--------|------|-------------|------------|
| | Mean | SE | MNSQ | ZSTD | MNSQ | ZSTD | | |
| Item | .00 | .10 | 1.00 | -.3 | 1.03 | .0 | .99 | 9.37 |

Furthermore, the reliability estimate for reading items and the item separation resulted from Rasch analysis are high at .99 and 9.37 respectively, showing very high internal consistency for the items in the reading test. Simply put, the test has a wide spread of item difficulty, and the number of test takers was large enough to confirm a reproducible item difficulty hierarchy. This point matches the description in the test specification that the item difficulty levels range from B1 low to C1 high; and also matches the qualitative analysis from the three test reviewers presented in research question 1.

Item and person measure

First, a correlation analysis was run to examine the correlations between the person measure and the test takers' raw scores, and between the item measure and the proportion correct p value. The results are presented in Table 5, which shows that the correlations are nearly perfect, very close to ± 1 . From such results, the reading raw scores can be used legitimately to determine the performers' level of reading proficiency.

Table 5. Correlations between person measure and raw scores, item measure and proportion correct (N = 598)

| | Person measure | Item measure |
|----------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Raw scores | .995*** | |
| Proportion correct (p) | | -.992*** |

*** $p < .001$

Secondly, the item measure (item difficulty) of the test was investigated through

Rasch analysis. Table 6 provides the logit values of items which represent the difficulty of items (item measure) estimated by the Rasch model. In the Rasch model, the item with the higher logit value is more difficult, thus requiring a higher ability to solve. Figure 2 illustrates the spread of test takers' reading proficiency levels and the difficulty range of reading items over the same measure scale. As observed from the table and the figure, the item difficulties in the reading test ranged widely from -2.9 to 2.05 with the mean set at 0 by the model. Items 2, 13, and 28 are the most challenging while items 1, 11, and 7 are the easiest. It is easily seen from Figure 2 that the spread of item difficulty covered nearly the whole range of all persons' abilities. Only the persons at the top and bottom of the scale did not have the items of equivalent levels. That is, the easiest item seemed difficult for several examinees, and there were a few examinees whose reading proficiency surpassed the highest level tested. However, in general, the test could measure the proficiency of the vast majority of test takers. That the test cannot measure English reading proficiency at either extreme (low and high level) should not be considered detrimental to the test quality because the VSTEP.3-5 does not aim at identifying examinees' English proficiency at all six CEFR levels. Instead, the test targets are only three levels B1, B2, and C1. Therefore, if the examinees are at level A1, A2, or C2, their ability is not likely to be well measured by the VSTEP.3-5. It can be considered that the test items fulfilled their purpose to focus on three specific levels of the CEFR, rather than spread through all six levels.

Table 6. Item measure and item fit of the test (N = 598)

| Item | Measure | Infit | | Outfit | |
|------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | MNSQ | ZSTD | MNSQ | ZSTD |
| 1 | -1.78 | 0.90 | -2.24 | 0.83 | -2.87 |
| 2 | 2.05 | 1.06 | 0.51 | 1.57 | 2.99 |
| 3 | 0.31 | 0.86 | -3.57 | 0.83 | -3.36 |
| 4 | -1.52 | 0.80 | -5.47 | 0.73 | -5.70 |
| 5 | -0.45 | 0.94 | -2.55 | 0.93 | -2.37 |
| 6 | -1.28 | 0.84 | -5.07 | 0.80 | -4.90 |
| 7 | -2.09 | 0.89 | -2.02 | 0.78 | -2.91 |
| 8 | -0.77 | 0.96 | -1.78 | 0.95 | -1.70 |
| 9 | -1.32 | 0.89 | -3.34 | 0.85 | -3.57 |
| 10 | 0.17 | 1.03 | 0.77 | 1.04 | 0.80 |
| 11 | -2.02 | 0.95 | -0.95 | 0.83 | -2.36 |
| 12 | 0.50 | 1.05 | 1.08 | 1.09 | 1.43 |
| 13 | 1.69 | 1.00 | 0.02 | 1.15 | 1.11 |
| 14 | -0.33 | 0.95 | -1.91 | 0.95 | -1.57 |
| 15 | -0.41 | 1.00 | 0.09 | 1.01 | 0.28 |
| 16 | -0.30 | 0.95 | -1.74 | 0.95 | -1.44 |
| 17 | -0.26 | 1.01 | 0.52 | 1.01 | 0.42 |
| 18 | 0.37 | 1.04 | 0.95 | 1.08 | 1.33 |
| 19 | 0.27 | 0.98 | -0.57 | 0.99 | -0.17 |
| 20 | 0.38 | 1.07 | 1.74 | 1.10 | 1.79 |
| 21 | -0.53 | 1.04 | 1.76 | 1.05 | 1.75 |
| 22 | -0.23 | 1.02 | 0.82 | 1.04 | 1.01 |
| 23 | -1.03 | 0.97 | -1.14 | 0.97 | -0.89 |
| 24 | 0.36 | 1.09 | 2.24 | 1.15 | 2.65 |
| 25 | 0.27 | 1.07 | 1.74 | 1.09 | 1.63 |
| 26 | -0.33 | 0.93 | -2.88 | 0.93 | -2.27 |
| 27 | -0.09 | 1.06 | 2.08 | 1.10 | 2.44 |
| 28 | 1.65 | 1.11 | 1.11 | 1.40 | 2.72 |
| 29 | 0.07 | 1.01 | 0.27 | 1.04 | 0.84 |
| 30 | -0.03 | 0.91 | -2.86 | 0.90 | -2.61 |
| 31 | 1.05 | 1.06 | 0.94 | 1.26 | 2.64 |
| 32 | 0.72 | 1.04 | 0.71 | 1.09 | 1.18 |
| 33 | 0.78 | 1.04 | 0.73 | 1.10 | 1.35 |
| 34 | 0.30 | 1.10 | 2.58 | 1.14 | 2.60 |
| 35 | 0.62 | 1.09 | 1.78 | 1.14 | 2.02 |
| 36 | 0.74 | 1.11 | 2.02 | 1.19 | 2.44 |
| 37 | 0.76 | 1.03 | 0.62 | 1.08 | 1.09 |
| 38 | 0.43 | 0.98 | -0.43 | 0.96 | -0.60 |
| 39 | 0.74 | 1.08 | 1.47 | 1.13 | 1.66 |
| 40 | 0.54 | 1.01 | 0.28 | 1.02 | 0.34 |

perform as expected with this group of test takers. As a result, content review is necessary for them. This point is worth more effort of item review before and after the test as it is directly related to the test content regarding item difficulty. Again, this is what the three test reviewers commented in their analysis when showing that it was hard to find low-level items in the test, while more items were found at mid or higher levels compared with the test specification. It can be claimed that the statistical analysis did support the test analysis of content validity in this study.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of major findings

The qualitative and quantitative data analysis has shown that both the test content and test results reflect its content validity. In the first place, the paper followed the guidelines of the test specification when considering its input characteristics such as length, language, domain, text level and its response features of type and skills. This claim is made from the data comparison and the three test reviewers' feedback. What was developed in the test covered the main requirements of the test specification, and this is proved from the analysis of the test paper made by the reviewers. Some problems, nevertheless, were seen to remain with the study. Texts chosen for the test had a majority of compound and complex structures while the first two passages should contain more simple structures according to the test specification. With an online readability tool, the analysis also showed that the readability level of one passage was higher than it should have been. This is not a particularly big concern, but it is worth noting for future test review.

Secondly, a wide range of difficulty levels in the questions that spread from B1 low to C1 high was reported, following the CEFR

levels applied for VSTEP.3-5. There exists an agreement between reviewers about the variety of item difficulty levels throughout the test, especially that all nine required levels appear in the test. However, the analysis from the three experts and the test scores reveal a gap between the proposed difficulty and actual difficulty of some items. In the test, some questions did not follow the difficulty order assigned for them, and the levels seemed to be higher or lower than planned. This leads the researcher to believe that the test is a bit more difficult than what is designed in the test specification.

As a result, it is necessary that the specific items pointed out from the analysis be edited. The item edition should begin by reviewing reading skills assessed by the question to reduce the concentration of such questions for any one text. Additionally, some options that were excessively challenging in terms of lexical and grammatical structures should be rewritten.

Generally speaking, the investigated test can be considered a success to guarantee the content validity of VSTEP.3-5 reading comprehension test.

5.2. Limitations of the study

It cannot be denied that the current research has some limitations which should be taken into consideration for future studies. As this is a small-scale study, the focus was one reading test with three reviewers involved. Therefore, to reach generalized conclusions, more tests should be investigated.

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NGHIÊN CỨU TÍNH GIÁ TRỊ NỘI DUNG CỦA BÀI THI ĐỌC THEO ĐỊNH DẠNG ĐỀ THI ĐÁNH GIÁ NĂNG LỰC SỬ DỤNG TIẾNG ANH BẬC 3-5 (VSTEP.3-5)

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết này trình bày kết quả của một nghiên cứu về tính giá trị nội dung của một bài thi Đọc theo định dạng đề thi đánh giá năng lực sử dụng tiếng Anh bậc 3-5 (VSTEP.3-5) thông qua phân tích số liệu định lượng và định tính. Mục đích của nghiên cứu là đánh giá tính phù hợp của nội dung đề thi với bản đặc tính kỹ thuật của đề thi và năng lực thực tế của thí sinh dự thi. Nghiên cứu mời ba giảng viên có chuyên môn về lĩnh vực khảo thí phân tích nội dung đề theo khung phân tích tác vụ đề thi của Bachman và Palmer (1996). Đồng thời, nghiên cứu phân tích điểm thi thực tế của 598 thí sinh thực hiện bài thi này. Nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng tính giá trị nội dung của đề thi được khảo sát phù hợp với các công cụ phân tích. Tuy nhiên, đề thi vẫn cần được kiểm tra lại để hoàn thiện với một số vấn đề nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra.

Từ khóa: kiểm tra đánh giá ngôn ngữ, tính giá trị nội dung, bài kiểm tra kỹ năng đọc hiểu, bài thi chuẩn

DISCUSSION

DEVELOPING LEARNER AUTONOMY-BASED FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ENHANCEMENT MODEL FOR VIETNAM'S PUBLIC OFFICIALS, CIVIL SERVANTS AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES¹

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Abstract: Autonomy is a popular research theme among scholars worldwide. This article explains the selection, analysis, evaluation and deployment of learner autonomy model which is suitable for Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees to acquire and master foreign languages who would benefit from the State-level research project *A study to develop foreign language proficiency enhancement models for public officials, civil servants and public employees in the Customs, Foreign Relations, Tourism and Border Guards sectors for public service delivery amidst the international integration trend in the Northwest* conducted by ULIS-VNU under the Program "Science and Technology for sustainable development of the Northwest" coded KHCN-TB/13-18. The article also formulates recommendations on ways to improve foreign language proficiency for Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees, considering that there is a need for innovation in foreign language teaching and learning methods in order to enable learners to use foreign languages at work effectively.

Keywords: model, foreign language proficiency, learner autonomy, public officials, civil servants, public employees

The State-level research project *A study to develop foreign language proficiency enhancement models for public officials, civil servants and public employees in the Customs, Foreign Relations, Tourism and Border Guards sectors for public service delivery amidst the international integration trend in the Northwest* (hereafter referred to as the Project) conducted by ULIS-VNU (which stands for the University of Languages and International Studies under

Vietnam National University, Hanoi) under the Program "Science and Technology for sustainable development of the Northwest" coded KHCN-TB/13-18 aims to develop an appropriate model for enhancing foreign language proficiency for public officials, civil servants and public employees in Northwest provinces of Vietnam. Such development of an effective foreign language curriculum or model involves many factors that need to be carefully considered by curriculum designers. The authors consider the most important factor being the identification of an appropriate approach, as this is the guideline controlling

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the operation, content of textbooks and learning materials, amongst others.

1. The selection of learner autonomy-based approach

Considering the current situation of foreign language proficiency, the demand for enhancing foreign language proficiency, the requirements and conditions of public service delivery by public officials, civil servants and public employees, new viewpoints on foreign language proficiency enhancement models from inside and outside the country, the feasibility and effectiveness of teaching methods in Vietnam, the authors reckon that “learner autonomy-based approach” is the most appropriate for the following reasons:

Firstly, through our own observation, we find that traditional Vietnamese education is still oriented towards “good student, good child” thinking, which aims at training students who rigidly follow examples with little creativity and innovation. This, *inter alia*, we believe, results in Vietnam’s low productivity compared to that of other countries in the region. Training, retraining, improvement and self-improvement are not considered inevitable trends. Generally, teachers prioritise learners’ acquisition of bookish knowledge from textbooks rather than focusing on helping learners to be confident, inspiring learners to figure out meanings for their life and work, and adding values to society. The teaching and learning of foreign languages in Vietnam are in the same situation. Foreign language teachers tend to use imported textbooks, and closely follow their content, which may not all be relevant to Vietnamese learners’ interest. Teachers may not pay due attention to and spend sufficient time on learners’ psychology and needs; nor do they instruct learners to do self-directed learning, construct learners’ profiles, develop a learning roadmap for each of them. They do not pay

attention to learners’ use of foreign languages at work to give comments and feedback, either. Thus, in order to support public officials, civil servants and public employees, firstly there should be a big transformation to change perceptions and habits of teachers and learners about the learning process towards more self-discipline to make the learning process become more effective and better meet the demand of using foreign languages in delivering public services.

Secondly, learning materials play a very important role, and must be specific to each group of learners. Therefore, the crucial point is developing learning materials that can meet learners’ demand of using foreign languages. The development of learning materials these days cannot be separated from, or fail to make use of, advances in information technology, as this is an inescapable trend in foreign language education. Authentic materials from sources such as the Internet, television and radio are trustworthy and accurate materials to help learners get familiar with the native use of foreign languages. Besides, learning materials which are developed specifically for the purpose of enhancing foreign language proficiency are also encouraged if they are carefully designed to meet the demand of learners as they can assist learners at work.

Thirdly, the theory and practice of autonomy always attach great importance to learners’ psychology; teachers’ organisation and management skills; the needs for learning environment and learning materials; the application of modern technology to optimise the effectiveness of the learning process. Therefore, this approach is appropriate for fixing issues as analyses of surveys on proficiency and demand of foreign languages of public officials, civil servants and public employees have revealed.

2. Review of learner autonomy models in foreign language education

When researching and reviewing learner autonomy models, the authors pay attention to those which are highly applicable to learners who study in foreign language classrooms, adult learners who want to use foreign languages in delivering public services; models that can contribute to forming the solid foundation for implementing learner autonomy development strategies effectively in various contexts, especially in developing countries. For each model, the authors study the approach, outline specific features and extensively developed aspects, and analyse the applicability of the model to the enhancement of foreign language proficiency for Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees. In the following part, the authors review models that are deemed most suitable for Vietnam's conditions and adult learners who want to improve their foreign language proficiency at work. Models are presented in chronological order according to the time they were introduced by researchers.

Nunan's model (1996)

Nunan mostly pays attention to the 'content' and 'process' of language teaching and learning. He proposes a five-level model of 'learner action', consisting of 'awareness', 'involvement', 'intervention', 'creation' and 'transcendence'. Nunan's model, which is perceived as a spectrum, suggests that the development of the learner takes place between 'awareness' (the left side of the spectrum) where learners start by acquiring knowledge of concepts and then gradually move towards 'transcendence' (the right side of the spectrum). At the awareness level, learners would be made aware of pedagogical goals and contents of materials as well as identify strategy implication of pedagogical tasks and learning styles and then identify their favourite learning styles and strategies. The 'involvement', 'intervention',

and 'creation' levels help learners continue to practice this knowledge. This is the trial-and-error process for adjustment and gaining experience to help learners become more autonomous. At the 'involvement' level, learners only follow instructions while at the 'intervention' level, learners would propose their own ideas. 'Creation' is a higher level. At the 'transcendence' level, learners would make links between the content learnt in the classroom and the outside world, and they would become teachers, researchers, and the like. They would use language exquisitely to achieve success in work and life. Autonomy indicates the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own learning. Extending perspectives of autonomy to any broader contexts, it seems that the concept of autonomy indicates a higher-level goal, making autonomy a greater generalised individuals' attributes. In the authors' viewpoint, Nunan's model focuses on learners' perspectives, and is appropriate to be used in language teaching and learning. This model also helps learners become aware of where they are in the language acquisition process. Besides, this model can help educators and foreign language teachers design the most appropriate testing and assessment methods.

Littlewood's model (1997)

Littlewood expects that a detailed explanation on how autonomy develops in a language learner is made through the language learning process. He expands the view beyond the limit of language acquisition and attempts to distinguish three types of autonomy: autonomy as a communicator (aims to develop students' ability to use the language to communicate in real situations); autonomy as a learner (aims to develop students' ability to choose and apply meaning strategies to real situations); and autonomy as a person (aims to develop learners' ability to communicate, study and work independently; and develop greater generalised autonomy as individuals). With this

approach, Littlewood’s model is appropriate for developing projects on enhancing language proficiency for adult learners who have stable employment; along with clear and specific purposes of language use. The role of learners in the society help project developers clearly identify the foundation and role of learners in the language learning process as well as determining which factors learners already have and which factors they do not have yet in order to use language to do their jobs most effectively.

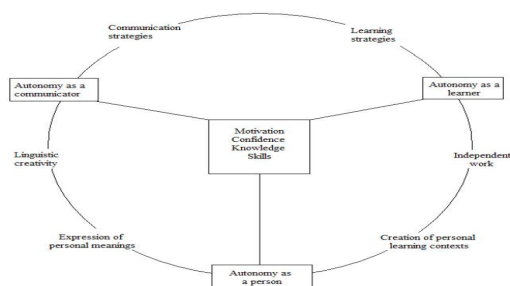


Figure 1. Developing autonomy through teaching (Littlewood, 1997: 83)

The figure contains four components: motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills, which contribute to a learner’s willingness and ability to act independently and help them gradually become “communicator”, “learner”, and “person”. The six additional labels around the circle including communication strategies, learning strategies, linguistics creativity, independent work, expression of personal meanings, creation of personal learning contexts show some of the concrete ways to express the three kinds of autonomy in learning. Each way is placed next to the kind of autonomy to which it most closely relates, e.g. expressing linguistic creativity by the creative use of language and/or employing communication strategies in order to convey meanings; demonstrating and developing language learners’ independence as communicators; applying personal learning strategies and/or engaging in independent work to demonstrate and develop ability as

independent learners; creating personal learning contexts and/or expressing personal meanings to demonstrate and develop autonomy.

In his study on autonomy, Littlewood proposes an autonomy model that is used not only for language teaching and learning, but also for learning strategies in general and aiming to developing individual as members of society. Therefore, this model can help educators identify important factors in the implementation of projects on developing foreign language proficiency for public officials who need to enhance their language proficiency to do their jobs.

This three-stage model has another advantage, that is the distinction between ‘proactive autonomy’- which affirms learners’ individuality and sets up directions which they themselves have partially created, and ‘reactive autonomy’- which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organise their resources autonomously in order to reach their goals. As learners of the Project are individuals who have permanent jobs and clear goals of using foreign language to do their jobs, they already possess some attributes to acquire foreign language that others do not have. Thus, Littlewood’s model is very appropriate for them. The Project developers can analyse and exploit this model to concentrate on important tasks that need to be carried out in order to support public officials, civil servants and public employees learning foreign languages in the most appropriate and effective way.

Scharle and Szabo’s model (2000)

Scharle and Szabo propose another three-phase model consisting of ‘raising awareness’, ‘changing attitudes’ and ‘transferring roles’. They published a landmark book for the development of autonomy named *Learner Autonomy: A Guide to Developing Learner Responsibility*. This model of learner

autonomy involves dimensions that relate to the control over the language learning and teaching processes. These dimensions are learning management, cognitive processing and the content of learning. This model is similar to Nunan's model in terms of content and form; however, it is simplified for easier comprehension and better application. The biggest advantage of this model is that it can be used as guideline for educators and teachers in designing interactive activities for learners. The book provides suggestions and even sample activities for each phrase of the model; for example, opinion sharing, awareness of the learning process, identification of difficulties, self-correction, or self-evaluation. Teachers can use these sample activities, or base on them to design other activities that are suitable for their learners and their teaching conditions. Nunan's and Scharle's models share similar viewpoints but they are based on different approaches. The two models are constructed for learners of English in Asian countries, where English is a foreign language, not a second one. Nunan's model can support teachers in helping learners become aware of where they are in language acquisition as well as designing relevant testing and assessment instruments. Scharle and Szabo's model can support teachers in designing interactive activities for learners.

Blidi's study (2017)

The recent study of Blidi does not introduce any specific model; instead, it discusses five influential factors in developing and fostering learner autonomy. *Voluntariness* is the first factor that plays a role in enhancing or inhibiting learners' perception and attitudes to learner autonomy. Through this action research, Blidi suggests that in some cases compulsion might emerge as a necessary initial stage, part of the preparation work to develop learner autonomy and, primarily, to overcome some cultural and psychological

hindrance, such as shyness, hesitation, and lack of self-confidence, which have a negative impact on learner's readiness and willingness to develop autonomy. The second factor is *learner choice* of learning tasks, pace, location and related conditions, which is perceived as central in directing learners towards embracing learner autonomy. Lee (1997) stresses learner choice as essential to autonomous learning. Holec (1981) perceives learner autonomy as an exercise of learning that involves making decisions. Lennon (2012) claims that successful teachers offer learners "freedom to learn in their own way" regardless of rigid curricula and textbooks. Teachers need to design open tasks, recommend suitable learning activities, or encourage and suggest learners to relate lessons to their personal interests, etc. These facilitate learners' practice of making choice and making decision, which inspire and foster autonomy. The third factor is *flexibility*, which is important to establish a supportive environment that facilitates and fosters learner autonomy. This is in line with learners' need to identify learning opportunities available for them. The relationship that the teacher establishes with learners, supporting and guiding them in their learning, plays a crucial role in fostering autonomy. The fourth factor is *teacher's role*. In fact, teachers need to embrace a supportive role as a facilitator who helps learners formulate their goals more clearly, and provides feedback, encouragement and reinforcement. The teacher facilitates the process of re-orientation and personal discovery. The fifth factor is *peer support*. Being autonomous and self-directed does not necessarily mean discarding peer support; instead, collaboration brings better results, as working in teams easily create motivation and inspiration for young learners who always have the need to prove themselves and get

recognition. Teachers can base on Blidi's judgement and conclusion to guarantee that their activities aim at supporting learners to develop their inner force and optimise their existing foreign language proficiency and choose the learning and practice of language skills and knowledge to best suit their jobs.

3. Discussion of the application of an appropriate model to develop and deploy a foreign language proficiency enhancement model for Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees

The above analysis and judgement show that the models and components of "learner autonomy" do not exclude each other. These models all value learners' awareness and attitudes, which form the first essential stage. Nunan, Scharle and Szabo use the term *awareness*. Littlewood further specifies that the key factors in awareness are *motivation* and *confidence*. Meanwhile, Blidi stresses *voluntariness*. The terms may be used differently; however, they all refer to the readiness of learners and consider it the most important factor that need to be activated by teachers to help learners get into an appropriate state of mind. Each component has its contributions. The models are flexible and encourage gradual development of learner autonomy.

Besides, the models help readers figure out the changing roles of teachers and learners in the teaching and learning process. The perceptions of teachers and learners need to be changed. Teachers gradually "let go" of control; their job is organising, guiding, counselling, suggesting, regulating, comforting, and encouraging learners. In order to do so, teachers need to spend time guiding learners to develop self-directed learning, planning their teaching, organising activities, meeting learners, and collaborating

with colleagues. Learners make progress and demonstrate their independence by creating opportunities to put the knowledge and skills they learn into practice; understand themselves and what they want to achieve. The principle of 'Teach Less, Learn More', which has transformed Singapore's education only in one generation, has not been adequately recognised in Vietnam. Teaching less does not mean working less; rather, it means lessons need to be carefully designed to help learners (who are public officials, civil servants, public employees with experience and clear learning goals) use foreign language to improve their work efficiency. Learner autonomy models can help learners study better and improve themselves. In order to achieve this, teachers need to study different contexts, teaching conditions, the mind and need of learners; spend time and effort designing and organising class activities to best facilitate learners.

Each model has its own distinct features depending on the authors' interest in certain aspects. For instance, Blidi (2017) stresses the importance of peer support; Aston (1996) and Reinders (2011) focus on the important role of learning environment and learning materials; while others focus on rearrangement of content, practical skills, testing and assessment which are suitable for autonomy-based approach. This is understandable as learners in different contexts and learning environments have different attributes, needs, conditions and contexts. Nunan (1996) claims that 'the choice of model is dependent on teaching and learning environment'. This is one important thing to be considered when applying learner autonomy models.

Littlewood's model

In the context of establishing foreign language proficiency development model for public officials, civil servants and public

employees in Vietnam, Littlewood's model of developing autonomy through teaching is the most appropriate for the following reasons:

Firstly, Littlewood provides a general overview, expands the view beyond the limit of language acquisition and attempts to distinguish three types of autonomy: autonomy as a communicator, autonomy as a learner and autonomy as a person. For each social role, learners need a different type of support to improve themselves. Littlewood's model helps identify the roles of learners in society, and their mission and goals for each role. This identification helps the Project developers know exactly the hierarchy of tasks that need to be done to help learners use language effectively in doing their jobs. For example, considering two factors contributing to an autonomous communicator, which are communication strategies and language creation, learners who are public employees already have good communication strategies thanks to their work experience; however, they have difficulty with language creation as their foreign language have not been exploited to communicate at office. Therefore, Littlewood's model is appropriate in the initial stages of the Project as they already have professional competence, background knowledge, and certain understanding of language learning. In the figure designed by Littlewood, each component of the figure can be referenced to factors that need to be developed or consolidated, therefore the figure can be the guideline for developing the project.

Secondly, this model consists of key factors of the learner autonomy-based approach to develop learners' language proficiency, create learners' voluntariness and independence and value awareness through stimulating "motivation" and boosting "confidence" for learners. This model has

a similar approach to that of other learner autonomy models and can be combined with other models in different stages of the Project.

Thirdly, besides raising awareness through stimulating motivation and boosting confidence for learners, the two factors that have been mentioned in Littlewood's figure are knowledge and skills. Littlewood claims that if knowledge can meet the demand of learners, it can be acquired more effectively. Therefore, teaching should be tailor-made, and learners should be allowed to choose relevant learning tasks. With this approach, necessary skills to complete learning tasks are practised and sharpened.

Other models

In the next stage, when carrying out experiments with specific classes, the model of Scharle and Szabo is more detailed, helping educators or teachers working directly with learners know necessary skills, and steps to help learners become independent, autonomous in their learning strategies; discover and exploit appropriate learning materials; practise skills to gain knowledge and form habits with new methods; aim at sustainable learning and life-long learning. This model is appropriate for teachers who directly organise classes because it helps them pursue clear objectives in each learning phase. Then educators and teachers can adjust activities to make them relevant to these objectives.

In conclusion, while Littlewood's model can be the guideline deciding the hierarchy of priorities for project developers to work on tasks that need to be done as well as the amount of each task, Scharle and Szabo's model help teachers who carry out experiments in classes or who directly teach classes organise their activities and instruct learners to follow directions in their activities. In the application of models into developing

interactive activities in class, and organising classes, educators and teachers need to pay attention to influential factors, such as Blidi's factor of peer collaboration, or Nunan's factor of self-awareness in order to implement models effectively.

4. Factors fostering learner autonomy in foreign language proficiency enhancement model for public officials, civil servants, and public employees in Vietnam

When planning and developing foreign language proficiency enhancement models, based on approaches of different models which have been selected and used in different phrases of the Project, the authors analyse and synthesise the following main factors that need to be considered when implement the learner autonomy-based project.

Enhancing learners' motivation

Nunan (1996), Littlewood (1997), Scharle and Szabo (2000), Blidi (2017) who propose models for developing learner autonomy, share one viewpoint that learner autonomy is a cognitive category that depends on learners' motivation and preference. Therefore, stimulating 'motivation' is the number one condition to help learners 'voluntarily' participate in learning activities. In order to achieve that, some researchers suggest doing the following things: observe and listen to learners, research and explore topics that interest students and develop those topics instead of rigidly following themes in textbooks. Lennon (2012) suggests teachers providing students with a list of tasks for them to choose, as he claims successful teachers are those letting students have the 'freedom to study in their own way' regardless of rigid curricula and textbooks. James Chapman (2015), through a number of quantitative studies, proves the failure of constructivist approach and 'one-size-fits-all' approach. He suggests the use of 'differentiated instruction' for learners to make sure that learners are

supported timely and appropriately, thus helping them to connect to lessons and achieve optimal effectiveness within their capacity.

Boosting learners' confidence

In the figure of developing learner autonomy through teaching, Littlewood (1997) mentions four components in developing voluntariness and independence, they are: motivation, confidence, knowledge, and skills. Apart from motivation, confidence is also very important to language learning. However, many of Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees receive an education that focuses on theoretical knowledge, embraces passive learning and prioritises achievement for years, resulting in a lot of knowledge learnt at schools ending up being useless. Therefore, they do not have confidence in learning foreign languages. Teachers should help learners overcome psychological barriers; encourage them to use foreign languages to talk about topics of their interests (e.g. projects for professional development, or relevant employment contracts, etc); assign them specific tasks that require thinking to conduct and ask them to create tangible products. Thus, language is only a tool to convey ideas or share the work that learners care about. Learners would present what they create wholeheartedly. The pride in presenting their forte helps them become more confident and ignore their reserve in learning foreign languages.

Innovating teaching content

Knowledge plays the key role in teachers' lectures. However, teachers often closely follow the imported textbooks; while in language teaching, it is not advisable to be dependent on only one source, especially when imported textbooks often cater for different learners' background and needs. It is understood that if background knowledge

can meet the demand of learners, it can be acquired more effectively. Therefore, teaching should be tailor-made, allowing learners to choose appropriate learning tasks. It is important to pay attention to content and topics that are relevant to learners' age instead of focusing on linguistic aspects such as phonetics, grammar, vocabulary. Teachers' understanding of learners and proactive search influence the choice of learning content. For example, Vietnam's public officials, civil servants and public employees can extend their vision, develop critical thinking skills in doing activities and their jobs if teacher engage them in carrying out activities with authentic materials such as reading books, watching news reports about their jobs done by native speakers instead of focusing only on textbooks. Gradually, they acquire the habit of using foreign languages as a tool for searching, thinking, communicating and cooperating, not just to study grammar without content.

Practising skills associated with practical tasks

During the course of performing tasks, necessary skills are practised and fostered. The skills include not only reading, writing, listening, speaking, but also social skills that are necessary for fulfilling required learning tasks. So, developing proficiency in general is done alongside developing language skills because this helps learners to use critical thinking skills to solve problems inside and outside classroom, as well as practise necessary skills.

Guiding self-directed learning

In this context, teachers organise, instruct, counsel, suggest, control, comfort, and encourage groups of learners. In order to do so, teachers need to spend some time guiding learners to do self-directed learning; and teachers themselves need to study. In Finland, teachers "teach less" and spend more time planning their teaching, meeting

learners, collaborating with colleagues, adjusting and suggesting learning products for learners (Hargreaves, 2012). As long as Vietnamese people still hold stereotypes about unconventional teaching methods, teachers do not want to leave their "comfort zone" to help learners gain valuable things and develop the national education.

The "letting go" of teachers

Teacher should empower learners to foster learner autonomy. Kirschner and Merriënboer (2013) suggest that controlling learners' learning should be considered carefully based on their proficiency. The authors consider this the guideline for teachers to be "wiser" in helping learners foster learner autonomy, deciding when to intervene, when to support, and when to let learners search for themselves. In these cases, the borderline is quite thin. Teachers with their interpersonal experience, pedagogical knowledge, and the wish to improve quality of teaching, would gain more experience in diverse situations thanks to the teaching and practice with learners. These above studies show that the amount of "letting go" and "creativity" helps learners develop motivation for learning and move forward.

Testing and assessment

Apart from testing four skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing after each stage, it is also important for teachers to be instructed to create and update learners' portfolios and learning roadmap. Due to the fact that language learning is associated with tasks, teachers should assess learners' products based on general proficiency framework besides foreign language proficiency framework. Thus, learners can be aware of what they need to do to produce better projects, what skills they need to practise to accomplish tasks better, what attitude they need to adopt to cooperate better. These

help learners use foreign languages more effectively in their jobs and life. However, this is an unprecedented task; thus teachers can encounter various difficulties, especially those who do not work in the same professional field as learners. In this case, the passion for learning, dynamic teaching and learning styles can lead to fundamental and effective changes in testing and assessment, which holds the key to support learners to be more independent and autonomous in searching for information and seeking practice opportunities for themselves.

Peer support

The current teaching approach values the role of “group of learners” and collaboration among them instead of “learners” (Dam, 1995; Blidi, 2017). The researchers claim that autonomous learning does not mean individual learning without peer support. When the whole group or class do things together to achieve the same goal, young learners are encouraged and inspired as they always have the need to prove themselves and get recognition. Teachers should give learners opportunities to cooperate with each other, share their learning strategies, learning products as well as new ideas.

Establish learning environment beyond classroom

Language learning is no longer restricted to classroom environment. Learning environment which is beyond classroom environment facilitates teachers and learners in designing creative activities and tasks instead of ordinary textbook activities, and facilitating autonomy-based tasks such as: writing daily work journals in foreign languages, summarising work-related materials or carrying out role-play, developing the habit of listening and reading in foreign language beyond classroom; forming forums; making connection with foreign partners, participating in projects promoting the development of learning materials or the

use of foreign languages; joining foreign language community, etc.

Developing diverse and appropriate learning materials, taking advantage of information technology in language teaching and learning

Apart from an open learning environment, learning materials need to be appropriately designed to create optimal effectiveness for learners. Designing and developing learning materials for autonomous learning is really time-consuming and challenging, especially in the early stages. Learning materials that are available in markets many not be appropriate, and for some teachers this kind of material is a totally new experience. Reinders (2011), in his study on developing learning materials beyond classroom, concludes that “Teachers can find complete satisfaction in knowing that the final result will help their learners improve not only their language skills, but also their life-long learning skills”. Many educators such as Aston (1996) and Littlejohn (1997) encourage learners to take part in materials creation.

5. Conclusion

The analysis offers key findings, principles and guidelines to the development of foreign language proficiency enhancement model for public officials, civil servants and public employees from the stage of applying models to plan relevant tasks to the stage of applying the model and factors contributing to fostering of learner autonomy in a specific pilot class for public officials, civil servants, and public employees in Vietnam. Then educators and teacher can organise activities and gain experience in order to help learners study effectively. With the autonomy-based approach in foreign language education, an open learning environment with diverse and appropriate learning materials facilitates the creation of creative learning activities and tasks

and fulfilment of tasks. In implementing this, teachers' organization and guidance as well as peers' collaboration would help learners achieve autonomy and gain experience, as acknowledged in various theoretical and empirical studies.

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XÂY DỰNG MÔ HÌNH NÂNG CAO NĂNG LỰC NGOẠI NGỮ CHO ĐỘI NGŨ CÁN BỘ, CÔNG CHỨC VÀ VIÊN CHỨC VIỆT NAM THEO HƯỚNG TIẾP CẬN TỰ CHỦ

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Tóm tắt: Tính tự chủ là một chủ đề được đông đảo giới khoa học các nước quan tâm, nghiên cứu và áp dụng. Bài viết đã lý giải việc lựa chọn, phân tích đánh giá và triển khai mô hình phát triển tính tự chủ phù hợp để hỗ trợ đội ngũ cán bộ, công chức và viên chức Việt Nam lĩnh hội và làm chủ ngoại ngữ. Bài viết cũng cung cấp một số giải pháp nhằm nâng cao năng lực ngoại ngữ cho đội ngũ này trong bối cảnh cần đổi mới phương pháp dạy học ngoại ngữ chất lượng hơn để có thể sử dụng hiệu quả trong công việc.

Từ khóa: mô hình, năng lực ngoại ngữ, tự chủ, cán bộ, công chức, viên chức

THE IMPACTS OF EXPLICIT INSTRUCTIONS ON COHESIVE DEVICES ON IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: This action research examines the effectiveness of an explicit cohesive device training procedure on improving foreign language learners' reading comprehension. The research was carried out in a six-week experimental teaching process for a class of 24 non-English majored students with the aid of two main data collection instruments, including two reading comprehension tests (a pre-test and a post-test) and a survey questionnaire. The data was mainly analyzed quantitatively using the Paired Sample T-tests. The overall result revealed that there was a significant improvement on students' reading comprehension, which indicated that the technique worked well and was found effective in the study.

Keywords: reading comprehension, cohesive devices, International Standard Program (ISP)

1. Introduction

With regard to the great importance of reading competence in academic and occupational contexts, teaching reading comprehension has been always the focus of much concern. However, it is observed after years of practice in reading, second language learners still find it difficult to make sense of the texts they read. As pointed out by many scholars such as Cook (1989) and Nuttal (1982), one of the reasons the failure to interpret the writer's cohesive signals as intended which leads to readers' inability to understand correctly the functional value of individual sentences in regard to their relationship with one another and within the whole reading passage.

In the view of Halliday and Hasan (1976) the continuity that cohesive relations bring

about is a semantic continuity. This makes it possible for cohesive patterns to play an indispensable role in the processing of text by a listener or reader. It is, therefore, necessary to help our students identify different kinds of cohesive relations which form the backbones of different types of text, because those chains signal organizational patterns of different types of text.

Within the recent decades, there have been a number of studies on cohesion, coherence and EFL reading worldwide, which have shown the important role played by cohesion and coherence in facilitating reading comprehension. Chapman (1983) finds a relationship between reading ability and the ability to complete anaphoric relation in a cloze test, and he concludes that the masters of such textual features - including cohesive ties is a central factor in fluent reading and reading comprehension. Mackay (1979) and Cowan (1976) similarly argue

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that the recognition of conjunctions and other intersentential linguistic devices is crucial to the information gathering skills of second language readers. As a result, the teaching of reading should include classroom instruction on the cohesive devices of English, and their function across sentences and paragraphs. Many other researchers have also come to the conclusion that all types of textual cohesive conjunctions facilitate reading comprehension in the same way such as Cooper (1984), Chung (2000), Degand & Sanders (2002).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Cohesion and coherence

Basically, cohesion can be thought of as all the grammatical and lexical links that link one part of a text to another. Halliday & Hasan (1976) assert that cohesion refers to the ranges of possibilities that exist for linking one sentence with the others that have gone before or are previously mentioned. According to these researchers, cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary. Halliday & Matthiessen (2004: 523) provide a more comprehensive elaboration of cohesion; that is:

“set of lexico-grammatical systems that have evolved specifically as resources for making it possible to transcend the boundaries of the clause - that is the domain of the highest-ranking grammatical unit.”

Coherence, on the other hand refers to the semantic relations that underline texts. Van Dijk (1979: 93) writes:

“Coherence is a semantic property of discourse formed through the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences, with “interpretation” implying interaction between the text and the reader.”

With this definition, Van Dijk (1979) highly relates coherence with the interpretation of the text. However, the text here is limited to written texts, not covering spoken texts.

Briefly put, a text has cohesion, or is cohesive if its elements are tied together with explicit linguistic marking of meaning relation. Meanwhile, a text has texture, or is coherent, if it makes sense. In other words, it builds up mental creation of meaning relations during text processing.

2.2. Cohesive devices

The grammatical and lexical links are indicated through a system of cohesive devices. However, there are certain differences in the categories of cohesive devices.

Oshima & Hogue (2006) point out four ways to achieve coherence including repeating key nouns, using consistent pronouns, using transitional signals and arranging ideas in a logical way. However, this is quite meager classification as it excludes a number of means to link ideas in a written text like synonyms and ellipsis.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) distinguish five cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The first four are grammatical devices, and the last, lexical. Lexical cohesion devices include reiteration and collocation. Reiteration is further divided into full and partial repetitions. Full repetition means two lexical items are the same in both form and meaning while partial repetition involves two lexical items which are different in form but having certain similar semantic features, including synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy and general nouns. Collocation refers to the co-occurrence of lexical items. This is a thorough classification of cohesive devices which is utilized as the theoretical background of the study.

A number of studies have pointed out the importance of understanding cohesion and cohesive devices in reading comprehension. Connor (1984) asserts that the appropriate use of cohesive devices enables readers to capture the connectedness between what precedes and what follows. This means the dependency of the linguistic elements on one another in a text constructs a semantic unit. This shows that connectedness is an indispensable element in any written discourse.

In fact, Brown & Yule (1983) points out the 4 roles of cohesions in assisting reading comprehension.

1. Cohesion provides the main thread of a text by showing that some entity or circumstance, some relevant feature or argument persists from one moment to another in the semantic process as meanings unfold.

2. Cohesion creates the characteristic “feel” of a text. The continuity expressed by cohesion not only makes a text interpretable, but also provides it with its affective power.

3. Cohesion enables readers to supply all the missing items necessary for the interpretation of a text.

4. Cohesion provides the basis for making predictions and building expectation.

Muto (2007), in his study named “The Use of Lexical Cohesion in Reading and Writing”, provokes the considerable effect that the knowledge of lexical cohesion has on readers’ understanding of the story. The necessary information, which authors hint at in the text, could be exposed by paying attention to the cohesive ties among words.

3. Research question

The research is conducted to address the following two research questions:

1. How do the instructions of cohesive devices improve the reading comprehension of

students who study English as a foreign language?

2. How do students perceive the effectiveness and necessity of the instructions of cohesive devices in improving their reading comprehension?

4. Research design

4.1. Participants and training procedure

The participants of the study were 24 first-year non-English majored students from the International Standard Programme (ISP) who had achieved B1 level and were studying to reach B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference. The homogeneity in terms of language proficiency of the participating students was established thanks to a placement test at the beginning of the course. These students were selected because they all belonged to one class to whom the researcher was in charge of teaching reading and they all had no experience with instructions of cohesive devices.

The students took part in a 6-week training procedure, during which they had reading lessons; each lasted 100 minutes and was delivered by the researcher.

In the original shape of a reading lesson, students had 50 minutes to explore the reading text and to do the following reading exercises in the book which are designed in the form of multiple choice questions and short-answer questions about the main idea, detailed information and vocabulary in the reading text; the other 50 minutes was used for post-reading activities regarding vocabulary consolidation, topic discussion and writing reflection. However, the researcher used the time of the post-reading part for delivering instructions of cohesive devices. The post-reading exercises were assigned as homework. The intervention was illustrated in the following table:

| Time | Original lessons | Adapted lessons |
|------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 50 minutes | Reading practice | Instructions about cohesive devices |
| 50 minutes | Post-reading (vocabulary consolidation + topic discussion + writing reflection) | Reading practice |

During the training procedure, students experienced explicit instructions on 5 types of cohesive devices (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion). For the instruction of lexical cohesion, the researcher only taught students about repetition using synonyms, antonyms and general nouns. Aspects related to hyponymy, meronymy were excluded as they were considered to be beyond students's B1 level. Each type of cohesive devices was taught in two lessons so that students could have chance to consolidate what they learnt.

During each lesson, students were trained to recognize cohesive devices and their functions across the text and guided to apply their knowledge and understanding during the reading process to enhance comprehension. Each lesson lasted 100 minutes and was divided into two phases, namely knowledge development and skill practice. In phase 1, the teacher gave explicit instruction on the cohesive devices by providing controlled practice tasks related to the use of cohesive devices. In the second phase, students were guided to locate cohesive items in the reading passage and analyze their use. After analyzing and making sure that students understood the types of cohesion, the teacher let students do the reading exercises provided in the course book.

4.2. Research instruments

Reading comprehension tests

Two reading comprehension tests (one pre-test and one post-test) were designed

by the researcher. The time allowed was 40 minutes with 3 reading passages; each includes 10 multiple choice questions. The pre-test and the post-test were carefully selected from the TOELF reading practice passages to have the same level of difficulty regarding the number of questions, question types, the length of the text, the text structure. Regarding vocabulary range, a software named Lexical tutor was used to make sure the passages in the pre-test and post-test were at similar lexical level.

The pre-test was delivered before the training session for the teacher to identify the reading level of the students and the post-test was conducted after the training session. All the students' scores then were recorded and analyzed using a software named SPSS, more specifically the Paired Sample T-tests to show whether the training session did have a significant effect on students' reading comprehension or not.

Survey questionnaire

After the intervention, the students were asked to complete a survey questionnaire to express their their opinions of the training process and the knowledge and skills they grasped.

Since the questionnaire was designed for collecting factual, behavioral and attitudinal data, so it uses various types of questions regarding yes/no questions, multiple-choice items, open-ended questions, and Likert-scale. However, most of the questions do belong to the two main kinds: multiple-choice and Likert-scale.

The results from multiple choice, yes/no questions and Likert-scales were counted and presented in forms of charts. Those from open-ended questions were simply recorded due to the limited number of participants.

5. Results and discussion

The results and discussions cover two main parts in accordance with the research questions, namely students' level of improvement in reading comprehension after training procedure; and students' perception of the necessity and effectiveness of the instructions on cohesive devices in improving their reading comprehension.

5.1. Students' level of improvement in reading comprehension

The participants' reading comprehension ability was measured by counting the number of correct answers out of the 30 multiple choice comprehension questions. In order to determine whether the training procedure had an effect on reading comprehension, two measurements were made. First, the class average scores in the pre-test and post-test were calculated and compared. Second, the students' scores were processed using the Paired Sample T-tests in order to reveal the significance value of the scores.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the group's performance in the pre-test and post-test

| Paired Samples Statistics | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------|----|----------------|-----------------|
| Pair 1 | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Pre-test | | 5.8750 | 24 | .85019 | .17354 |
| Post-test | | 6.3125 | 24 | .60456 | .12340 |

As can be clearly seen, there was a significant rise in the average score of all the students. In the pre-test, the mean stood at 5.8750. After 6 weeks' training, this figure rose to 6.3125, which is an indicator of the students' general improvement. Besides, the standard deviation in the post-test was 0.60456 which was

lower than the the standard deviation in the pre-test. This means the difference in the students' reading scores was significantly narrowed. In other words, the instruction on cohesive devices not only helped improve students' reading comprehension but also appeared to help reduce the gap in reading ability among them.

Table 2. Results of the paired-sample T-tests

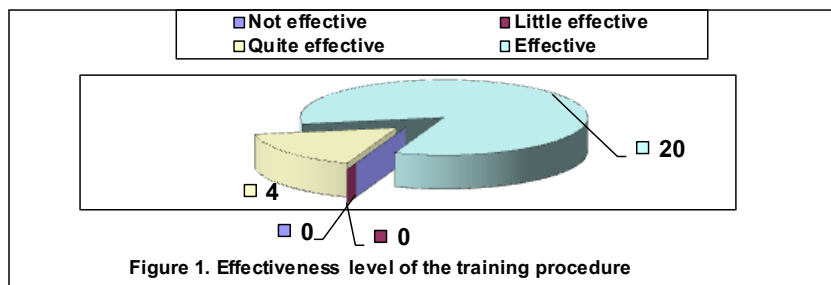
| Paired Samples Test | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|---------|--------|----|-----------------|
| | | Paired Differences | | | | | T | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | |
| | | | | | Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 | Pre-test - Post-test | -.43750 | .68067 | .13894 | -.72492 | -.15008 | -3.149 | 23 | .004 |

$P < .005$

As the level of significance shows, it was smaller than 0.05 in the results of the groups, which means the experimental teaching phase did have positive effects on the studied students' reading comprehension performance.

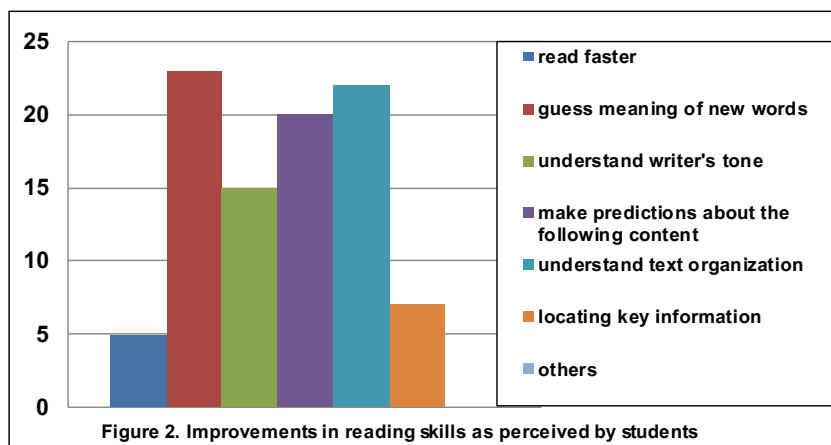
5.2. Students' perception of the necessity and effectiveness of the instruction on cohesive devices

The success of the training procedure was also revealed in the students' answers in the survey questionnaire after the intervention. In fact, all the students stated that the training procedure was effective for their study with twenty students choosing "effective" and four choosing "quite effective". The evaluation of the students was illustrated in the pie chart below:



The majority of the students confessed that they were satisfied with the six-week learning session as through it they gained considerable knowledge about cohesion that they had never learnt about before and their

reading skills had considerable improvement. In the survey questionnaire, the students also identified the reading skills that they acquired improvement after the treatment procedure.

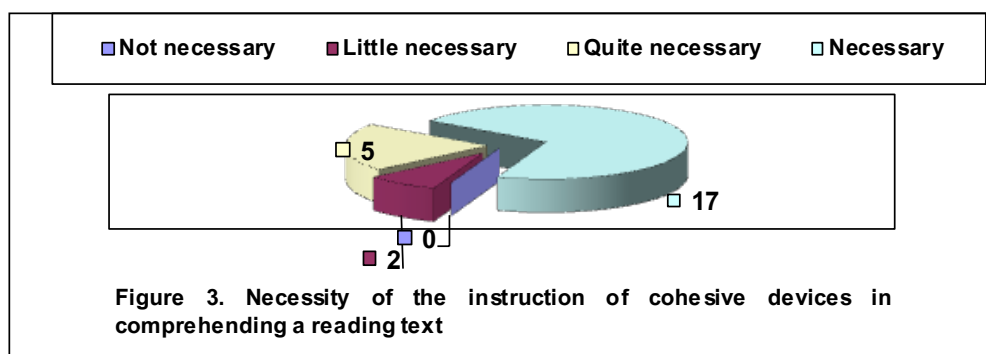


As can be seen from the bar chart, the biggest improvements in students' reading skills were related to the ability to guess the meaning of new words based on the context with 23 students. Such improvement was not difficult to explain as with the knowledge of

cohesive devices, students could understand the lexical ties within a paragraph which greatly facilitated their ability of guessing new vocabulary. This is also demonstrated by Brown & Yule (1983) when he points out that cohesion enables readers to supply all the

missing items necessary for the interpretation of a text. A majority of the students stated that they did better with questions involving text organization (22 students), making predictions about the following content (20 students), and understanding the writer’s tones (15 students). These results also correlate with Brown & Yule (1983)’s expansion of the role of cohesion in assisting reading comprehension that cohesion provides the main thread of a text

by showing that some entity or circumstance, some relevant feature or argument persists from one moment to another in the semantic process as meanings unfold and cohesion provides the basis for making predictions and building expectation. However, the instructions of cohesive devices did not help much in improving students’ reading pace and ability to locate key information with just 5 and 7 students respectively.



All the students agreed that it was necessary to understand cohesive devices when comprehending a reading passage with two students saying “little necessary”, five “quite necessary” and seventeen “necessary” because understanding of cohesive devices helped them to follow the reading texts more easily, as responded by the majority of the students. Overall, it can be seen that the students had strong motivation to learn about cohesion since they all believed this would help them improve their reading ability.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of major findings

From the analysis and discussions of the data collected from the survey questionnaires and score analysis, significant findings were identified.

First, it was discovered that students are highly motivated to learn about cohesive devices in reading lessons. The evidences of such great motivation came from the results of

the survey questionnaires and the test scores. Specifically, all the students admitted that the instruction of cohesive devices played a crucial role in their reading comprehension and it was necessary to learn about cohesive devices while practising reading skills. All the students wished to continue learning about cohesive devices in their reading comprehension lessons.

Second, apparently the instruction of cohesive devices did facilitate students’ reading comprehension. After the training procedure about cohesive devices, the students’ scores in the reading test improved significantly compared with the scores in the test they did before. The score analysis also indicated that the gap in students’ reading competence was considerably narrowed. This finding was of real significance in teaching reading comprehension.

6.2. Recommendations

With the success of the experimental teaching phase so far, several suggestions are put forward to enhance the effectiveness of the model

teaching as well as to make a step toward a new way of teaching reading comprehension.

First, it is important to raise teachers' awareness of the instruction of cohesive devices in teaching reading comprehension. This can be achieved by holding seminars and professional meetings, in which teachers share their experience in working with cohesion and reading teaching. Creative techniques will be exchanged; difficulties will be shared so as to seek solutions and pedagogical suggestions will be raised in order to better the new method. Besides, competitions on designing and teaching reading lessons based on cohesion instructions among teachers should be encouraged. In such competitions, different teaching techniques will be introduced and shortcomings will be detected, thus providing helpful guides for teachers to apply the new method better.

Second, one of the difficulties in teaching cohesive devices to improve students' reading comprehension was the source of materials, especially reading texts. Therefore, one way to enhance the application of this method is to form a reading materials bank. Teachers of the same professional groups should share with one another their reading materials in which they focus on analyzing one type of cohesive devices that appears the most in the passages and build up a bank. Once the materials in such banks are regularly revised and updated, they can be reused for a long time. Furthermore, for better exploitation, teachers are advised to run workshops in which they consider and reflect on samples of cohesion-reading materials with references to the classes they teach. In addition, serious studies should be conducted to have deeper insights into the use of the materials as well as to provide theoretical base and references for better exploitation.

These are the two recommendations which provide helpful incentives for educational administrations and teachers to expand the

teaching of cohesion to improve students' reading ability.

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TÍNH HIỆU QUẢ CỦA QUÁ TRÌNH GIẢNG DẠY VỀ CÁC PHƯƠNG TIỆN LIÊN KẾT VĂN BẢN TRONG VIỆC NÂNG CAO KĨ NĂNG ĐỌC HIỂU TIẾNG ANH

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết miêu tả kết quả của một nghiên cứu hành động xuất phát từ thực tiễn giảng dạy tiếng Anh của tác giả cho sinh viên không chuyên. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là xem xét tính hiệu quả của việc lồng ghép giảng dạy lý thuyết về các phương tiện liên kết văn bản nhằm nâng cao khả năng đọc hiểu của người học ngoại ngữ. Nghiên cứu được tiến hành thông qua một quá trình giảng dạy thực nghiệm kĩ năng đọc hiểu tiếng Anh kéo dài sáu tuần cho một lớp gồm 24 sinh viên không chuyên với sự trợ giúp của hai công cụ thu thập dữ liệu chủ yếu, bao gồm câu hỏi khảo sát và hai bài kiểm tra trước và sau quá trình thực nghiệm. Kết quả tổng thể chỉ ra rằng việc giảng lý thuyết liên kết văn bản đã có những tác động tích cực đối với việc phát triển kĩ năng đọc hiểu của nhóm thực nghiệm.

Từ khoá: đọc hiểu, lý thuyết liên kết văn bản, phương tiện liên kết văn bản, sinh viên Nhiệm vụ chiến lược

USING EXTENSIVE READING TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC VOCABULARY FOR SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES – VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI

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Abstract: There are different ways to improve vocabulary knowledge and one of them is through extensive reading. This paper aims to identify benefits of extensive reading on some aspects of vocabulary learning and ways to conduct a successful extensive reading program. In order to answer the two research questions, the researcher collected and analyzed online journal articles which focus on the relationship between vocabulary development and extensive reading. The results show that extensive reading not only improves new vocabulary knowledge but also fosters previously met words. Moreover, some specific aspects of vocabulary learning are benefited thanks to extensive reading such as meaning, spelling and grammar. Finally, some recommendations on how to carry out an extensive reading are raised at the end of the result section based on various researchers' opinions.

Keywords: vocabulary acquisition, extensive reading, language learning

1. Introduction

It cannot be denied that to master a language, learners not only have to be fluent in all four skills including speaking, listening, reading and writing but also take vocabulary learning into consideration. According to Xu (2010), vocabulary learning is crucial in the process of foreign language learning. It is a great challenge and enormous duty for learners as well as teachers. Admitting that vocabulary is remarkably important, Wilkins (1974, as cited in Xu, 2010) claimed that people cannot communicate without vocabulary.

Regarding vocabulary learning, some researchers mentioned "extensive reading" as a useful method. In 1993, Stoller and Grabe raised an idea that vocabulary improvement

should be considered both cause and effect of reading proficiency. Sharing the relatively similar ideas, Day (2002) concluded that apart from benefits on motivation and attitude towards reading, extensive reading can help develop learners' vocabulary. There have been a number of studies on reading and vocabulary improvement such as Learning Second Language Vocabulary from Extensive Reading (Horst, 2005), Vocabulary Acquisition from Extensive Reading (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006) or Extensive Reading - a Stimulant to Improve Vocabulary Knowledge (Soltani, 2011). All these researchers admitted benefits that extensive reading brings to learners on vocabulary acquisition.

However, two substantial questions related to this issue are raised as to how extensive reading can improve vocabulary knowledge and how an extensive reading

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program should be conducted to foster its benefits. Recognizing the importance of the relationship between extensive reading and vocabulary acquisition, the researcher decided to conduct a secondary research on this topic and aimed to answer the two above-mentioned questions. Afterwards, some recommendations are also raised to help second-year students at the University of Languages and International Studies to improve their economic vocabulary after an extensive reading program. Economic vocabulary is really important in Vietnamese current context because economy-related jobs are plentiful and to have a good job, English fluency including economic vocabulary is essential.

2. Research questions

The paper aims to answer two questions:

1. How can extensive reading help improve vocabulary knowledge?
2. How should an extensive reading program be conducted to foster its benefits?

3. Literature review

3.1. Vocabulary knowledge

In the research process, a number of definitions of vocabulary knowledge and extensive reading have been found. In 2000, Blachowicz and Fisher considered vocabulary knowledge a clue of “power and wisdom” because it helps people to convey and exchange ideas as well as understand others both in speaking and writing. As for vocabulary acquisition, Ellis (1995) raised two alternative hypotheses including implicit and explicit vocabulary learning. He distinguished these hypotheses by stating that implicit vocabulary learning process takes place when learners subconsciously acquire the meaning of the words through “repeated exposures” in different contexts. It means that,

in this case, learners totally do not recognize the acquisition process. In explicit vocabulary learning, on the contrary, learners acquire new words by applying various “metacognitive strategies” such as (1) identifying unfamiliar words, (2) attempting to infer the meaning based on the context or look up the word in dictionaries, (3) trying to remember the word by repetition or learning strategies.

3.2. Extensive reading

Regarding extensive reading, in 1989, Hafiz and Tudor (1989: 85) stated extensive reading is reading a large amount of second language material for pleasure without any task or exercise fulfillment. From the similar point of view, Grabe and Stoller (2002) considered extensive reading “an approach to the teaching and learning of reading in which learners read large quantities of material that is within their linguistic competence”. This definition is somehow different from Krashen’s ideas (1982) when he supposed that the difficulty level of materials in an extensive reading should be higher than learner’s current reading level. Additionally, Rodrigo et al. (2007) defined extensive reading as reading in a huge amount to thoroughly understand the text or to enjoy the reading experience. All these definitions share the same idea that extensive reading involves *reading a large quantity of second language materials, reading for interest and enjoyment.*

4. Methodology

As this is a secondary research, the author focuses on collecting and then analyzing journal articles related to the topic. Besides, online journal articles are chosen as the main references. Most of the articles are taken from online journals specialized in English Language Teaching, English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign

Language. The main sources are The English Teacher, Reading in a Foreign Language and The Reading Matrix. The collected articles are studies conducted in various learning contexts and countries such as China and Japan. The participants of those studies are also mostly college students and adult learners.

The methodology which is chosen for this paper is qualitative research. There are some reasons for conducting a qualitative research, but not a quantitative one. According to Nagy & Leavy (2011), this kind of methodology is suitable for a small-scale context. Besides, qualitative research uses “inductive” method starting with specific data which will be analyzed to a more general understanding of the topic or the field. Research questions in qualitative studies are open-ended questions and they offer explanations and descriptions in the report papers. For all of the above reasons, qualitative methodology is suitable for this research paper. The study focuses on analyzing six main journal articles; therefore, it is really small-scale. Research questions are also open-ended ones and the researcher aims to seeking more general understanding of benefits of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition.

Regarding participants, the article “Vocabulary Acquisition from Extensive Reading: A Case Study” only focused on a 27-year-old student (Pigada & Schmitt, 2006). Meanwhile, there were 43 adult literacy students participating in “Implementing an Extensive Reading Program and Library for Adult Literacy Learners” (Rodrigo et al, 2007). Another study, “Bridging the Gap between Receptive and Productive Vocabulary Size through Extensive Reading” involved 67 students from one co-educational class at a private university in Tokyo, Japan (Yamamoto, 2011). The other studies are just analysis and synthesis of theoretical background.

5. Results

This part aims to find out the answer for the two research questions. After reading some articles related to the topic “Role of Extensive Reading in Vocabulary Development”, the researcher realized that most of the studies had figured out some certain benefits of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition. Then, the researcher analyzed the similarities and the differences in their ideas and reported below.

5.1. Benefits of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition

Benefits of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition have been mentioned by a number of researchers. Based on Lee and Mallinder (2017), extensive reading particularly benefits incidental vocabulary acquisition. He cited two studies to prove this argument. In Min’s paper, there were 12-grade students who participated in a reading-plus-vocabulary-enhancement program. After the program, these participants improved 50 items of vocabulary. Likewise, 38 participating college students were capable of gaining 10.5% new words after reading 16 articles.

Also in their research, Lee & Mallinder (2017) pointed out some of extensive reading features which contribute to bring along benefits on EFL vocabulary development. They are:

Variety

Whereas daily communication mostly take advantage of 2000 basic words (Schmitt, 2000), extensive reading provides language learners opportunity to expose to variety of vocabulary which may not occur in spoken language.

Repetition

Clearly, repeated exposure to a word in different reading contexts will increase the chance for learners to acquire that word. Thus,

learners are able to strengthen their recently acquired knowledge thanks to extensive reading.

Flexibility

It is the truth that teachers do not have enough time to teach every new word. In an extensive program, after school, learners can continue to read and enjoy their reading experience. They, consequently, will become more independent and responsible for their vocabulary learning.

Another aspect of extensive reading benefits is also paid attention by Yamamoto (2011). Meanwhile many other studies focus on learning new vocabulary as an outstanding feature of extensive reading, Yamamoto (2011) mentioned benefits of extensive reading on improving previously met vocabulary. This researcher affirmed that language learners can deepen their knowledge of already acquired words by exposing to the words repeatedly. Nation (2001) thought that extensive reading is a “gradual process of one meeting with a word adding to or strengthening the small amounts of knowledge gained from previous meetings”.

From another point of view, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) mentioned benefits of extensive reading on some aspects of vocabulary knowledge such as spelling, meaning and grammar characteristics. Specifically, the results of their research showed that there was a strong improvement in word spelling. In the pre-test, the participant only got 98 points out of 266; however, the mark came to 159 out of 266 in the post-test. Besides, meaning aspect also got improvement. The mark the participant got in the pre-test and post-test were 22 and 63 out of 266 respectively. The last aspect which was taken notice in the research is grammatical characteristics. After conducting the study, the authors concluded

the participant improved quite a lot in grammatical mastery of nouns (for example knowledge of appropriate articles). The results presented the language learner who took part in the questionnaire got 18 out of 140 for the pre-test, compared with 60 in the post-test. Overall, it can be concluded that knowledge of word spelling was benefited most by extensive reading. Knowledge of meaning and grammatical features is also improved but at a lower extent.

5.2. Implementing an extensive reading program

To answer the question how an effective extensive reading can be implemented, Day and Bamford (2002) raised an idea of Top Ten Principles for Teaching Extensive Reading. These principles are believed to be the basic ingredients of extensive reading. In their opinion, not only does extensive reading have huge impact on reading and language ability, but it is also “a key to unlocking the all-important taste for foreign language reading among students” (Eskey, 1995, as cited in Day & Bamford, 2002).

The reading material is easy

This principle relates to the number of “new words” in a text. In order to have an effective extensive reading program, the selected reading texts must be beyond the learners’ language competence. To be specific, for beginner students, the materials which are considered beyond their ability must contain no more than one or two unknown words per page. The learners at intermediate level can deal with the texts with no more than five difficult words per page. Hu and Nation (2000) suggest that in order to have thorough understanding of a fiction text, the learners must know at least 98% of the words.

A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available

To have a successful extensive reading program, the teachers must know how to motivate and attract the learners to read. This depends a lot on the variety of the texts. Specifically, the reading text should be as varied as the learners who read them and the purposes for which they read them. Some kinds of the text include books, magazines, newspaper, fiction, nonfiction, texts that inform or texts that entertain. According to William (1982: 42) in order to choose a suitable reading source, the teachers should “ask what they like reading in their own language, peer over their shoulders in the library and ask the school librarian”.

Learners choose what they want to read

This principle means that in extensive reading programs, learners are free to choose their reading texts as they do in their own language. They can choose the texts that meet their level to have the best understanding and similarly, they can decide to stop reading if they find the texts too difficult or out of their interest.

In Henry’s opinion (1995), “My students needed to read for them, not for me”. Especially, for the students who are familiar with textbooks and teacher-selected texts, the freedom to choose reading materials and to stop reading will help them think that foreign language reading is something personal.

Moreover, although there may be homework, extensive reading puts the students in charge in other important ways. Also in his research, Henry affirmed that “the purposes and pleasure to which students put their reading are entirely their own” (p.69). This will motivate the students and help them become more responsible for their reading. Sharing this opinion, Samuels (1991, as cited in Day and Bamford, 2002) claimed that “unless we phase out the teacher and phase

in the learner, many of our students will fail to become independent because throughout their education they were always placed in a dependent role -- dependent on the teacher”.

Learners read as much as possible

This is the most crucial element in extensive reading which a lot of teachers agree with. There is only one problem, which is the students are not being given the opportunity or incentive to read, read and read more.

There is no maximum limit for the amount of time students should spend on reading, but they are expected to finish a book in a week. That is the minimum speed which can help them achieve the benefits of extensive reading and set up a reading habit. This is realistic for the learners at all level because the books written for beginners are often rather short.

Reading is its own reward

The main focus of extensive reading approach is the learners’ experience when they read the texts, just as it is in reading in everyday life. Therefore, extensive reading does not normally go with comprehension exercises. Instead, it is the teacher’s duty to check the students’ comprehension through follow-up activities. There are some reasons for this. First, the teachers can be sure what the students understood and experienced from reading thanks to those follow-up activities. Second, the students’ attitude towards reading can be monitored. Apart from that, the teacher can also keep track of what and how much students read, make reading a shared experience, link reading to other aspects of the curriculum. Therefore, after reading, the students may be asked to do such things as write about their favorite characters, write about the best or worst book they have read, or do a dramatic reading of an exciting part of a novel.

Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower

When learners deal with the texts within their level, for personal interest, for general understanding, they will focus on reading fluency. Nuttall notes that “speed, enjoyment and comprehension are closely linked with one another” (1996, as cited in Day and Bamford, 2002). She describes “The vicious circle of the weak reader: Reads slowly; Doesn’t enjoy reading; Doesn’t read much; Doesn’t understand; Reads slowly”. Extensive reading can help readers “enter instead the cycle of growth. The virtuous circle of the good reader: Reads faster; Reads more; Understands better; Enjoys reading; Reads faster” (p.127).

The teachers also encourage their students not to use dictionaries in reading. In extensive reading, they can experience some skills like guessing the meaning of the words, ignoring the new words or simply accepting ambiguity in reading.

Reading is individual and silent

Different from classroom reading in which the students may be asked to read aloud or translate the text into their own language to practice reading skills and strategies, extensive reading is individual and silent. The students have chance to experience reading and interact with the text. Therefore, apart from freedom to choose the reading materials, individual silent reading is also a crucial element in extensive reading approach which helps the students discover how foreign language reading fits into their lives.

Extensive reading means learners reading at their own pace. It can be done both in the students’ own time when and where the student chooses, or inside the classroom when part or all of a classroom period is set aside for silent, self-selected reading. In the latter case, teachers may witness.

Teachers orient and guide their students

Extensive reading can be very different from normal reading practice in class. Normally, in reading sections the students have to deal with difficult texts, answer series of questions. However, in this approach, the texts are much easier and they hardly have reading comprehension exercises. For serious learners, they may not understand the purpose of this approach.

Consequently, the students need to have thorough introduction and guide from the teachers at the very beginning of the program. Teachers can explain that reading extensively leads not only to gains in reading proficiency but also to overall gains in language learning. Some other details of the program also need to be introduced, for example students’ choosing texts or percentage of understanding (general, less than 100%). It should be emphasized that there will be no test after reading. Instead, teachers are interested in the student’s own personal experience of what was read -- for example, was it enjoyable or interesting, and why?

The teacher is a role model of a reader

There are a lot of researchers who have the same ideas in this principle. Nuttall famously said “Reading is caught, not taught” (1996: 229). Maley explains the implications of this for teachers when he said “We need to realize how much influence we have on our students. Students do not just (or even) learn the subject matter we teach them; they learn their teachers. Teacher attitude, more than technical expertise, is what they will recall when they leave us” (1999: 7). In short, to have a successful extensive reading program, the teachers are readers themselves.

In Henry’s opinion (p. 52), teachers of extensive reading “have to commit to reading what their students do”. He explains that when reading the texts that students read, the

teachers will become a part of the reading community. Besides, if both the teachers and the students read, the classroom will become a place where they can share about reading experience, discuss about the books or answer questions related to reading.

Sharing the same concern with Day & Bamford, Lee & Mallinder (2017) pointed out some essential criteria for successful extensive reading. In their opinion, to conduct an effective extensive reading program, teachers have to take notice of the period of time, the number of reading texts and the appropriateness of materials. To be detailed, interesting comprehensible materials are the key to the success of this kind of program. The materials chosen should be:

- *Readable*: Reading materials should not be too long and should be with learner's reading competence.

- *Appropriate and authentic*: The reason given is that each learner's own background knowledge can affect the reading process; therefore, the texts should be authentic and familiar in terms of culture.

- *Attractive and various*: The materials should cover a range of topics and should be attractive to the students. Once they are interested in reading, they will read more as well as apply more reading strategies into reading comprehension.

Apart from the criteria for choosing reading texts, some recommendations are made to facilitate extensive reading program.

Family literacy

This means that parents should play as a model of reading so that children are encouraged to read more at home. For native English-speaking students, family literacy plays a remarkable important in their language proficiency development and academic success.

A number of studies have proved that these kinds of students have overall better language competence and are more academically successful than other students whose parents do not read to them frequently. Moreover, with English language learners, family literacy activities at home can provide supplementary practices, apart from learning at school.

Introductory workshop

An introductory workshop is advised to be conducted on the first day of the program. The main purpose is to let students understand the strength as well as advantages extensive reading can have on vocabulary learning. Also, teachers should explain how they are going to include extensive reading into the regular syllabus. Any requirements related to selected texts should be raised in the workshop.

Supportive learning environment

In the workshop, or at any time before starting the program, teachers should provide learners with essential reading strategies. Some other familiar skills should be also introduced such as consulting a dictionary. Teachers; moreover, may need consider creating a collaborative learning environment in students' extensive reading.

Internet resources

Teachers should direct students to various websites and advise learners to take advantage of these sources. Teachers, along with learners, can build up an online library with a number of e-books, stories, novels or even magazines and newspapers. With Internet, both teachers and students and enjoy free extensive reading. Because of easy access to Internet, students can decide what, when and how long to read.

Focusing on adult learners, Rodrigo et al. (2007) mentioned four components of the Extensive Reading for Adult Literacy Learners.

Sustained silent reading

This component means that teachers and learners read their chosen books silently. During the reading process, teachers can help students choose books, answer their questions and observe their reaction; but their conversations must not interfere others' students' silent reading.

Book talk

Sharing opinion about a book with others will encourage students' curiosity. They will have a chance to exchange ideas and know some more books. This activity can be conducted after each sustained silent reading session.

Reading aloud

This component is one of the keys to promote an extensive reading program. It provides learners opportunity to expose to unfamiliar books or stories that they do not ordinarily read. It also helps build the connection between sounds and writing symbols. Teachers carry out this activity by choosing a book which students may not read easily by themselves to read aloud to them while they follow silently with their copies.

Students' reaction

After the first reading-aloud session in which teachers choose reading materials on their own, learners should be asked for input for the next reading-aloud session. This will help teachers choose interesting and appropriate reading texts to the learners.

6. Conclusion

For the first research question about benefits of extensive reading on vocabulary acquisition, reasons why extensive reading helps improve vocabulary learning are raised including its variety, repetition and flexibility features. Besides, the result of the research shows that not only new vocabulary but also previously met words are required through

reading process. This somehow changes some researchers' point of view towards extensive reading while many of them frequently focus on new vocabulary acquisition. Regarding how extensive reading benefits vocabulary learning's aspects, this study indicates that spelling, meaning and grammatical characteristics are improved thanks to extra reading but to different extents. Specifically, spelling is gained most; meanwhile, meaning and grammatical features are also improved at a lower level.

The second research question concerning how an extensive reading should be implemented, some recommendations are found. Features that teachers need to consider include duration of time, number of reading materials and appropriateness of materials. Some other recommendations are also given to have an effective extensive reading program. To be detailed, teachers should conduct an introductory workshop, create a supportive learning environment and take advantage of Internet resources. However, it is quite strange that creating a supportive learning environment does not mean that teachers let students read and share reading experience together or teachers help students when they encounter difficulties. "Supportive" here means teachers supply their learners with necessary reading strategies at the beginning of the program so that they can read by themselves. Last but not least, four components of an extensive reading program are pointed out including sustained silent reading, book talk, read aloud and students' reaction.

Based on the theoretical background discussed above, the writer recommends designing an extensive reading program for second-year students at University of Languages and International Studies to improve economic vocabulary. The program follows the principles which Day and Bamford (2002) and Lee & Mallinder (2017) raised in their studies.

The extensive reading program should last in 3 months. Once a week, each student is asked to read a financial report. According to Day and Bamford (2002), in an extensive reading program, learners should choose what they want to read. Consequently, the students should be required to find reports by themselves. However, these authors also concluded that the reading material must be easy; therefore, there are some requirements for the materials chosen. First, the reports should be no more than two thirds of a page and the number of new words should be no more than 10.

After reading the text, the students have to note the new words in a vocabulary learning form to learn these words (the form is taken from Barron's 600 essential words for the TOEIC). In this form, there are five columns including *new word*, *synonym*, *definition*, *original sentence and my sentence*. These notes will be submitted to the teacher in the next lesson.

Subsequently, in the next lesson, a fifteen-minute activity should be conducted on this reading. In the activity, the students will be asked to work in groups of four or five and share their reports to the others. When sharing the information, they can take notes if they want. After five to seven minutes, the teacher asks some students from some groups to come to the board and present a piece of news they like most in the group. The piece must not be theirs, but the others'. The purpose of this step is to let the students have a chance to explain their news to the others and make sure that the group understand their explanation. Questions can be raised after each presentation.

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SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG THỨC ĐỌC MỞ RỘNG ĐỂ NÂNG CAO VỐN TỪ VỰNG VỀ KINH TẾ CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ HAI, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ - ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI

Trương Thị Phụng

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Tóm tắt: Có nhiều cách khác nhau có thể áp dụng để nâng cao vốn từ vựng cho người học, một trong những cách đó là phương thức “đọc mở rộng”. Bài báo này được thực hiện với mục đích tìm ra lợi ích của “đọc mở rộng” đối với việc học từ vựng và những quy tắc để thiết kế một chương trình đọc mở rộng hiệu quả. Để trả lời hai câu hỏi nghiên cứu trong bài báo này, tác giả đã thu thập và phân tích các bài báo chuyên ngành tập trung vào mối quan hệ của đọc mở rộng và học từ vựng. Kết quả cho thấy rằng, đọc mở rộng không những giúp người học biết được từ mới mà còn củng cố lại những từ đã biết. Hơn nữa, đọc mở rộng còn giúp người học nhớ được các chi tiết như ý nghĩa, chính tả và chức năng ngữ pháp của từ. Cuối cùng, bài báo đưa ra những gợi ý để có thể thực hiện được một chương trình đọc mở rộng hiệu quả, dựa trên ý kiến của nhiều tác giả khác nhau.

Từ khóa: học từ vựng, đọc mở rộng, học ngôn ngữ

APPENDIX

Vocabulary Learning Form

| New word | Synonym | Definition | Original sentence | My sentence |
|----------|---------|------------|-------------------|-------------|
| | | | | |
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| | | | | |

INFORMATION

TEACHING SELVES: IDENTITY, PEDAGOGY, AND TEACHER EDUCATION

Jane Danielewicz

State University of New York Press, 2001

Pham Hai Yen*

Haiphong University, Phan Dang Luu, Kien An, Haiphong, Vietnam

Teaching Selves

Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education

JANE DANIELEWICZ



1. Core contents of the book

Teaching Selves by Jane Danielewicz is a book about how identities, the word referring to how individuals know and name themselves and how they are recognized and regarded by others, arise and the issue of becoming – the process of how a person becomes someone, particularly of how students become teachers. In it, the author, who works in teaching teachers, proposed pedagogy for identity development – the process of becoming basing on her belief that

“What makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving.” Besides, she described the qualities that must characterize the author and her colleague’s teaching so that the students they encounter become something other than students as they believe that education is about growth and transformation, not only of culture, but of persons too. Concentrating on identity, the stories of six undergraduate students enrolled in a secondary teacher education program at a large state university

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were told. The author applied a qualitative method with interviews, observations, and teaching experiences with the subjects over a three-year period to explore the process of becoming a teacher, focusing on the influences of education courses and other characteristics of the teacher education program. This is a paperback text consisting of seven chapters. Chapter one looks at identity and pedagogy, Chapter two mentions aspiring teachers, Chapter three explores them seeing themselves as teachers, Chapter four investigates selves at the boundaries, Chapter five clarifies practicing teachers, Chapter six presents a pedagogy for identity development and Chapter seven highlights teaching selves. The results of analysis are backed up with the reflections at the end of each chapter.

Chapter one - Identity and Pedagogy - consists of the following parts: Getting ready, Insisting on Identity, Defining identity, The role of discourse, The secondary teacher education program, The idea of pedagogy, Proposing a pedagogy and Reflection. All the contents expressed the author's experiences that she had got from the real teaching practice as well as her knowledge and perspectives of some theoretical issues such as identity, discourse and pedagogy.

Stating her self's experiences in training teachers, the author drew many experiential lessons on how to become a good teacher and how to educate teachers. Take page 9 for example, the author claimed that "becoming a teacher means that an individual must adopt an identity as such. I take this strong position —insisting on identity— because the process of teaching, at once so complicated and deep, involves the self." To do that, she advises the students who are trained to become teachers to develop personal theories of action —

how they might act if they were teachers. This has several benefits. "First, the students can realize that teaching is complicated and that it is a generative process. Second, they are able to feel how theory and practice are yoked together. Without much effort, they can see why they must link the methods they adapt to their beliefs. Finally, proposing theories of action forces students to integrate the whole range of variables involved in any teaching situation rather than operating from one perspective alone."

Besides, the authors' points of view in the term "identity" and the relationship between identity development and discourse were analyzed. To begin with, identity is defined as our understanding of "who we are" and of "who we think other people are". Reciprocally, it also comprises "other people's understanding of themselves and others (which includes us)". Theoretically, there are two notions involved in the concept of identity: similarity and difference. So identities function as the ways we relate to and distinguish individuals (and groups) in their social relations with other individuals or groups. In terms of characteristics, she wrote: "identities can never be unified or fixed; they are always influx, always multiple and continually under construction. Yet this doesn't mean that selves don't exist or are unrecognizable; there are moments and conditions of coalescence." In terms of the way of forming, identity has dependent relationship with discourses. According to the author, individuals' identities are produced through participation in discourse. To be more specific, identities are the result of dynamic interplay between discursive processes that are internal (to the individual) and external (involving everyone else). In terms of dimensions, the author followed Jenkins (1996)'s theory which mentioned two main dimensions of

the concept of identity, one aspect having to do with a single person - individual identity - and the other with groups - collective identity. Having clarified the above theoretical issues, the author pronounced her scope of the study: “describing the identity development of the students who are the center of this book, I will show how certain contexts and practices (for instance, composing a philosophy of teaching) promote the individual dimension while other situations and persons (for instance, the teaching practicum) contributes to the collective aspect of a teaching identity.” (p.12)

For pedagogy, the chapter presents the author’s idea and proposal. Firstly, “the best pedagogy gets its shape and force from its theoretical roots” which means a teacher applies her knowledge into practice basing on the material conditions and needs of her students, and then begins the cycle of reflection and reconception. Thus, teaching is supposed to be an act that once started is never over. Secondly, with both evidence and testimony from six participants in the study, the writer gives a proposal that describes a set of principles (ten in all) that, taken together, constitute pedagogy for identity construction. The principles include discourse richness and openness, dialogue and a dialogic curriculum, collaboration, deliberation, reflexivity, theorizing in practice, agency, recursive, representation, authority, and enactment. All principles depend on the theoretical notion that selves and identities are constructed by discourses themselves and everyday discursive practices.

Chapter two - *Aspiring Teachers* - is written about the contents: A Teacher’s Past, Newcomer, Six Students, Positions and Reflections. They are about the author self and her six students’ stories that help her come to some conclusions of identity construction.

First of all, “participating in multiple discourses, as we all do simultaneously, (on the streets, in classrooms, at home, in churches) alters not only the individual but also the social communities within which we are always situated.” Secondly, “in the ever-constant process of identity construction, it is the ways that we are like and unlike others that make and mark our identities as individuals”. Thirdly, the students’ existing identities shaped by the social class background and economic conditions of their families affect, influence, interact with, and often conflict with an individual’s attempt to become a teacher, to develop a professional identity. Last but not least, the author mentioned the role of positions in constructing identity pointed out by Stuart Hall (1997): “it is how we are represented by the positions we adopt (or are forced to adopt) at different times and places, and the social roles we play in each varying circumstance, that make us (momentarily) who we are.” (p.32)

Chapter three - *Seeing Themselves as Teachers* - reveals how the different positions each student occupies at any one time and place forms the path and journey each takes toward becoming a teacher through the parts named: Explaining Selves, Why Teach?, What Kind of Teacher? and Reflections. Through analyzing the students’ answers to the question “How did you decide to be a teacher?”, the dialectical process by which identity positions are achieved was revealed. The themes drawn for it are Always known, Difference between feeling and being, Role models, Teaching as service, Loving English, Altruism, Saving grace, A calling or ... a job. The chapter also explores each student’s idea as they anticipate being teacher interns, a hybrid position existing on the cusp between being known as students and/or as teachers. More specifically, the students with ideas are: Michaela: identifying with and

beyond her mentor teacher; Donna: Sharing with her mentor the goal to center instruction on students; Lauren: Being a teacher depends on other people's perceptions; Rick: Identity commitments are rooted in prior experience; Elizabeth: Developing identity depends on seeing a place for yourself; Howard: Being a good teacher depends on the freedom to do something different.

Chapter four - Selves at the Boundaries - with subtitles as Two Stories of Becoming, Elizabeth's Story, Rick's Story, focuses on two students, Elizabeth and Rick, and tells their stories in more depth to demonstrate how variable identity processes are. The stories demonstrate how selves are fluid and ever changing, labile and mutable, responsive to the forces of inner desires and outer conditions. The stories provided the evidence for the author's conclusion that identities are momentary, almost ephemeral and "boundaries of the self" - a metaphor - presumes a stability that is nonexistent. Additionally, she supposed the variability, intensity, and richness of the experience was significant to Elizabeth and Rick's development as people. Then she concluded, "Without worrying too much about uniformity or regulation, we as teacher educators can try to provide fertile, changeable, and challenging environments both in our classrooms at the university and in public school contexts that invite and engage students in the dynamic process of becoming teachers."

Chapter five - Practicing Teachers, divided into smaller parts as Crossing Boundaries, Unpredictable and Reflection, focuses on the development of collective identity - being recognized by others as a teacher - through interactions between interns and mentor teachers in an actual school context. The interns' collective identities, then, are contingent on two things: their being involved in actual teaching situation

with a professional teacher, and their affiliation with mentor. The word affiliation refers to a relationship not only between individuals, which suggests some form of association, alliance, union, or connection, but also between institutions and individuals. Affiliations can have negative or positive valences, may exist when power differentials are slight or imbalanced, and can range from weak to strong. The stories in this chapter show that institutions do affect the development of individuals' collective identity. To be more specific, there are eight affections identified: Affiliation through identification, Affiliation through differentiation, Performing the role in a substantive manner, Joint problem solving in a local context, Oppositional affiliation, Disharmony between individual and group identity, Institutions act upon identities, Identities develop concurrently. The stories of the students in this chapter confirm the evolving nature of collective identity formation, demonstrating how such identities are "flexible, situational and negotiable" (Jenkins, 1996: 102).

Chapter six - A Pedagogy for Identity Development, about the contents entitled The Second Paragraph Must Have Eight, Pedagogy, Discourse, The Literacy Course, Principles of Pedagogy, Principles, Reflections, proposes and provides detailed explanation of ten pedagogy principles introduced in chapter one. Five of them are structural principles which refers to the way the social environment of the classroom is structured, designed or arranged, as well as to the nature of interactions that occur there. The others are performative principles that refer to individuals and their actions or performances as well as to the implications of action in particular social settings. Figure 1 below outlines the classification of these principles as well as extracts some key words that each principle refers to for helping to define them.

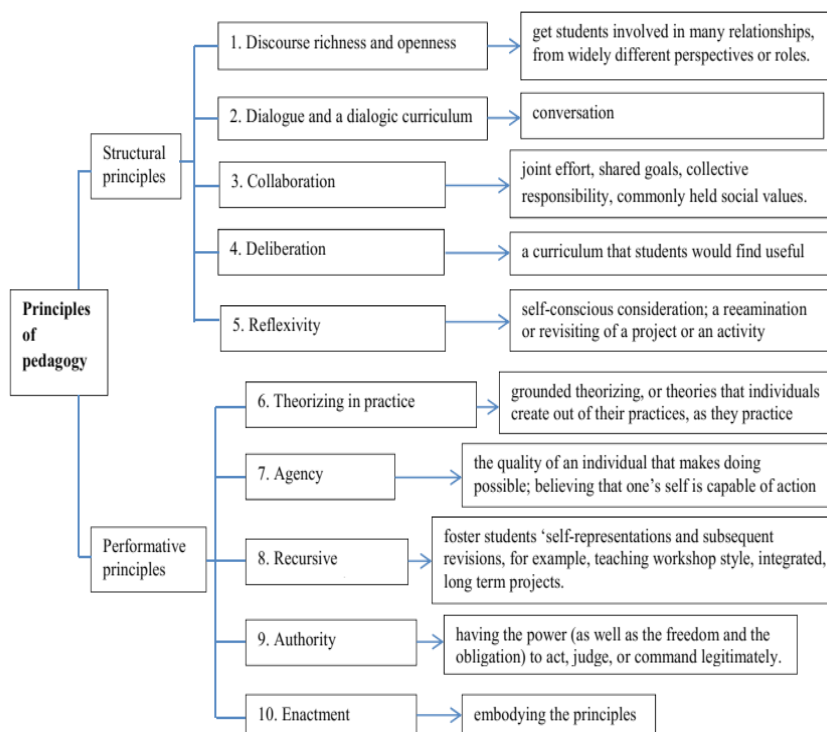


Figure 1. Principles of pedagogy by Jane Danielewicz (2001: 139-175)

In *Chapter seven* - Teaching selves, with the subdivisions called Process and Patience, Failure, Six Students a Year or So After Graduation, A Few Necessities, Principles (One Last Time), Reflections, some more meaningful ideas for teaching identity can be found. Firstly, it defines a process teacher as one who teaches students a process - how to be a teacher - by engaging them in a process - learning to be a teacher. For this job, patience is necessary because identities themselves are always unfinished and in the making; identities develop through continuous processes. More noticeably, the author suggested that the ideal teacher education program should be: active, holistic and integrated, embedded in a discourse community, rich in relations, and morally engaged.

2. Values of the book

There are several values brought by the book among which theoretical and applicable values are the most prominent.

Theoretically, the book is not only a qualitative research that contributes to widening knowledge and experiences in doing research on teacher identity, especially with the authors' definition of teacher identity, analysis of the relationship between identity and discourse and her applying research techniques and doing qualitative analysis, but also a meticulous study whose results have enriched the educational literature, especially with her point of view that education is about growth and transformation, and a rather great amount of pedagogical principles drawn from the study.

Firstly, the author's definition of teachers' professional identity as she wrote: "I regard "becoming a teacher" as an identity forming process whereby individuals define themselves and are viewed by others as teachers" (p.3) shares the common views with other writers during the period 1988-2000. For example, Beijaard,

Meijer and Verloop (2004) found out, “Most of the researchers saw professional identity as an ongoing process of integration of the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’ sides of becoming and being a teacher.” (p.113). This contributes to the insistence in understanding the term “teacher identity”, an abstract issue, in research work, which is really useful for the beginners in this field when there are a lot of different ways of defining it, as seen in Table 1 - Overview of the studies on professional identity formation (p.110) by Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004).

Secondly, identifying “identities are produced through participation in discourse” (p.11), the author wrote, “I am acutely selfconscious that discourse is simultaneously a set of practices to be taught, a medium of instruction, and the very material substance out of which identities arise.” Exploring a pedagogy and a teaching program basing on this relationship between identity and discourse opens a noticeable and unique approach in studying teacher identity formation. This can be considered a novel idea which meets the science’s demand because it can help to fill the gap in the store of knowledge of teachers’ professional identity. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) confirmed, “It is argued that, in future research on teachers’ professional identity, more attention needs to be paid to the relationship between relevant concepts like ‘self’ and ‘identity’, the role of the context in professional identity formation, what counts as ‘professional’ in professional identity, and research perspectives other than the cognitive one that may also play a role in designing research on teachers’ professional identity.”

Thirdly, the study can be admirable for the thickness of longitudinal data which is an essential criterion for qualitative analysis. This characteristic was identified by Wolcott (1999): “It is longitudinal in nature, allowing

you as the researcher to observe and record changes over time” and by Nunan (1992) “Longitudinal: The research is relatively long-term”. The book is a rich collection of the authentic stories from the participants and the author herself, which provides a solid foundation for the arguments and themes that emerged through the telling of these stories. Thus, the readers will be convinced with the results and recommendation of the study. The authors’ way and skill of collecting data in the book should be considered a lesson for other researchers, especially the novice ones.

Apart from these merits, in my opinion, the most important theoretical value of the book is ten principles of pedagogy, the main result of the research, which is presented in figure 1. Among them, the structural principles describe general properties that should characterize the curriculum, shape the classroom environment, and inform the teacher’s approach to course design and methods. In contrast, performative principles concern what individuals do, focus on persons as actors and on the drama of social interaction among them. I totally agree with the author that these pedagogical principles are not directives; rather, they are characteristics of the learning environment and philosophical lenses through which teachers can look. In this sense, the principles offer a kind of pragmatic theory; they describe an approach, a disposition, a sensibility, or a temperament toward teaching. Besides, backing up the point of view that education is about growth and transformation, the book introduced her training program and her learners’ reflections on it, which widens readers’ knowledge on teacher training job.

In terms of application, teachers and administrators working in teacher education would enjoy the stories which are rich real experiences and it is important we document these. By reading the book, they can draw out

different points relating to the experiences of the educators and administrators. Both graduate and undergraduate students studying teacher education would find this a useful text. They have a lot to learn from the stories and the principles of pedagogy provided in the book to build their teacher identity and to do a good job in becoming a teacher. For researchers, the book provides not only theoretical background but also suggestion for further research. Take Alsup J. (2005) for example, she mentioned this book when defining ‘the border land’ and gain some lessons from the strong and weak points of the point of view that “education is about growth and transformation, not only of culture, but of persons too” (p.1) and the principles of pedagogy proposed by ‘Teaching selves’.

Briefly, *Teaching selves* is a book of value in both theory and practice. People who work in education would get valuable lessons from it.

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THẺ LỆ GỬI BÀI

1. **Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài** là ấn phẩm khoa học chính thức của Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, kế thừa và phát triển *Chuyên san Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài* của Tạp chí Khoa học, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Tạp chí xuất bản định kỳ 06 số/năm (03 số tiếng Việt/năm và 03 số tiếng Anh/năm từ năm 2018 trở đi), công bố các công trình nghiên cứu có nội dung khoa học mới, chưa đăng và chưa được gửi đăng ở bất kỳ tạp chí nào, thuộc các lĩnh vực: *ngôn ngữ học, giáo dục ngoại ngữ/ngôn ngữ, quốc tế học hoặc các ngành khoa học xã hội và nhân văn có liên quan.*

2. Bài gửi đăng cần trích dẫn ÍT NHẤT 01 bài đã đăng trên **Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài.**

3. Bài báo có thể viết bằng tiếng Việt hoặc tiếng Anh (*tối thiểu* 10 trang/khoảng 4.000 từ đối với bài nghiên cứu và 5 trang/khoảng 2.000 từ đối với bài thông tin-trao đổi) được soạn trên máy vi tính, khổ giấy A4, cách lề trái 2,5cm, lề phải 2,5cm, trên 3,6cm, dưới 4,3cm, font chữ Times New Roman, cỡ chữ 11, cách dòng Single.

4. Tất cả các bài báo phải có tóm tắt (không quá 200 từ) và từ khóa (không quá 5 từ) bằng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt. Tên bài báo bằng chữ hoa in đậm.

5. Bài báo phải được trình bày theo thứ tự sau: Tên bài báo, (Các) Tác giả, Tên cơ quan của (các) tác giả, Tóm tắt, Từ khóa, Nội dung của bài báo, Lời cảm ơn (nếu có), Tài liệu tham khảo, Phụ lục (nếu có). Tác giả liên hệ phải được chỉ rõ cùng với địa chỉ cơ quan, e-mail, số điện thoại trên trang nhất của bản thảo.

6. Tài liệu tham khảo phải được chỉ rõ trong bài báo. Ở cuối bài, tài liệu tham khảo được sắp xếp riêng theo từng ngôn ngữ, trong đó tiếng Việt đầu tiên, ví dụ như Việt, Ả Rập, Trung, Anh, Pháp, Đức, Nhật, Hàn, Nga, Thái, theo thứ tự bảng chữ cái của tên tác giả Việt Nam hoặc của họ tác giả nước ngoài và được trình bày theo APA như sau:

+ *Đối với các tài liệu là sách:*

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Saussure, Ferdinand de (1959). *Course in General Linguistics*. Edited by Charles Bally and Albert Sechehayé in collaboration with Albert Reidlinger, translated by Wade Baskin. New York: Philosophical Library.

+ *Đối với các tài liệu là bài báo, báo cáo hội nghị hội thảo:*

Trần Thị Cúc, Đỗ Thị Thanh Hà (2015). Patterns of Code-Mixing of English in Hoa Hoc Tro Magazine in Vietnam. *VNU Journal of Science: Foreign Studies*, 31(4), 11-24.

Lâm Quang Đông (2015). Quá trình tư duy ở người lớn học ngoại ngữ: một trường hợp điển cứu. Kỷ yếu Hội thảo quốc tế *Đổi mới việc dạy-học & nghiên cứu Hàn Quốc học tại Việt Nam*. Hà Nội, ngày 10 tháng 4 năm 2015, tr. 172-191.

+ *Đối với các tài liệu truy cập trên mạng:*

Baker, Mark C. (1989). Object Sharing and Projection in Serial Verb Constructions, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 20 (4) (Autumn, 1989), pp. 513-553, Cambridge: The MIT Press. Available through <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4178644>>, Accessed 14/03/2012 06:49

An Ngọc (2013). *Nghề biên-phiên dịch thiếu chuẩn mực nghề nghiệp*, Truy cập lúc 10:30 ngày 29/11/2015 tại <http://www.vietnamplus.vn/nghe-bienphien-dich-thieu-chuan-muc-nghe-nghiep/234990.vnp>.

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Baker, Mark C. (1989) 'Object Sharing and Projection in Serial Verb Constructions', *Linguistic Inquiry*, 20 (4) (Autumn, 1989), pp. 513-553, Cambridge: The MIT Press. Available through <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4178644>>, Accessed 14/03/2012 06:49

An Ngọc (2013). *Nghề biên-phiên dịch thiếu chuẩn mực nghề nghiệp*, Truy cập lúc 10:30 ngày 29/11/2015 tại <http://www.vietnamplus.vn/nghe-bienphien-dich-thieu-chuan-muc-nghe-nghiep/234990.vnp>.

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