Coherence in Bilateral Trade Negotiation Discourse from a Cross-cultural Pragmatic Perspective: A Comparison between English and Vietnamese

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Abstract: In government-level negotiations, discourse not only conveys information but also reflects communication strategies and cultural values. This study analyzes cohesive and coherence devices in the discourse of the Vietnam-US bilateral trade negotiations (2015-2024) from the perspective of cross-cultural pragmatics. Based on the theoretical framework of Halliday & Hasan (1976) and Hofstede (2001), the study examined 30 official documents, including press releases and memoranda. The method combines qualitative coding and frequency statistics to identify how cohesive devices contribute to coherence and strengthen arguments. The results show that Vietnamese discourse prioritizes repetition, modal expressions, and soft connections to maintain collective face and goodwill. In contrast, English discourse favors causal structures, meta-discourse, and short sentences to increase transparency and argument effectiveness. This difference reflects the influence of power distance and collective/individual orientation in the two cultures. The study affirms the value of the intercultural pragmatic approach in analyzing government discourse, and suggests applications in negotiation training, improving translation and interpretation skills, and drafting diplomatic documents.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization, trade negotiations are not only economic activities but also strategic intercultural communication processes. At the government level, discourse plays a key role in constructing arguments, expressing power and maintaining national image; therefore, the manner in which discourse is organized is always closely linked to linguistic and cultural factors.

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One of the core factors that determine the effectiveness of intercultural communication is cohesion and coherence. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), Beaugrande & Dressler (1981), cohesion is a formal relationship between linguistic elements, while coherence reflects the thematic unity and rationality of the discourse. Widdowson (1978) and Brown & Yule (1983) further emphasize that coherence is not only determined by the text itself but also depends on the cultural context and interpretive capacity of the reader or listener. Practice shows that Vietnamese discourse tends to be indirect, metaphorically rich, emphasizing collective face and goodwill to cooperate; while English discourse tends to be straightforward, linear and transparent in its arguments, reflecting cultural differences in communication strategies (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

In Vietnam, the studies of Nguyễn Thiện Giáp (2008), Diệp Quang Ban (2008) and Nguyễn Văn Khang (2008) have laid the foundation for the investigation of coherence and coherence, mainly at the syntactic and lexical levels. Recently, Trịnh Sâm (2022) and Lê Thu Lan (2023) have expanded to the pragmatic and argumentative levels in political discourse, but these works still focus on monolingual texts, not combined with intercultural perspectives or speech acts in trade negotiations. In the world, many works by Clyne (1994), Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris (1997), Bargiela-Chiappini (2018), Taboada & Mann (2006) have clarified the relationship between information organization, culture and communication strategy in multinational businesses, but mostly stop at corporate discourse or international conferences. Government-level negotiation discourse, especially between Vietnam and the US, is still a research gap.

Based on this reality and gap, the study approaches the Vietnam-US trade negotiation discourse from the perspective of intercultural pragmatics, aiming to clarify the relationship between language and culture in government-level communication, and at the same time propose implications for negotiation training, translation and interpretation, and drafting diplomatic documents.

On this basis, the study focuses on examining the organization of coherence in the government-level negotiation discourse between Vietnam and the US (2015-2024), drawing upon the combination of three theoretical directions: (1) coherence (Halliday & Hasan), (2) cross-cultural pragmatics (Scollon & Scollon, Hofstede), and (3) speech acts (Searle).

To achieve this goal, the study raises the following three research questions: (1) What cohesion and coherence devices are commonly used in Vietnam-US trade negotiation discourse? (2) How do similarities and differences in the deployment of these devices reflect cultural characteristics and communication strategies? (3) What implications do these differences have for training in negotiation skills, translation and interpretation, and document drafting in a multicultural environment?

2. Literature review

2.1. Commercial negotiation discourse

In applied linguistics, commercial negotiation discourse is considered a highly goal-oriented type of discourse, in which all language choices and organization are directed towards reaching an agreement between the parties (Fisher & Ury, 1991; Brett, 2000; Lewicki et al., 2015). The prominent features of this type are strategic, result-oriented and continuous negotiation between different positions.

This study focuses on a specific branch: government-level trade negotiation discourse. Unlike standard business communication, this type of discourse is highly ritualistic, operates within an institutional framework, and is directly influenced by cultural, political, and diplomatic factors. In this context, speech is not only aimed at achieving economic agreements but also performs several crucial symbolic functions: affirming national stance, protecting face, maintaining diplomatic relations, and creating a political image in the international arena.

In the Vietnam-US trade negotiations during the 2015-2024 period, the spokespersons were often senior leaders or representatives of central agencies such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Government Office. Spokesperson documents include press releases, joint statements, or memorandums of understanding, directed both at direct partners and the international public. The goal of communication is not only to reach economic consensus but also to demonstrate goodwill for cooperation, affirm the role of the country, and maintain balance in bilateral relations.

The motivations for speaking in this type are strategic and linked to the cultural and political background of each country. For example, Vietnamese discourse often prioritizes expressing goodwill, maintaining collective face and emphasizing the principle of "mutual benefit", while English discourse tends to be direct, emphasizing strategic interests and clear commitments. This difference reflects the dominant role of culture, power and face in organizing and deploying arguments.

In order to systematically analyze this particular type of discourse, the study proposes to combine three theoretical approaches: (i) cohesion and coherence (Halliday & Hasan), (ii) cross-cultural pragmatics (Scollon & Scollon, Hofstede), and (iii) speech acts (Searle).

2.2. Discourse and coherence – coherence in discourse

In government-level trade negotiations, especially through press releases, joint statements or memoranda of understanding, the need for standardity, logic and coherence of discourse is paramount. These documents strictly adhere to the principles of discourse organization to ensure consistent messages and compliance with diplomatic standards.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), Van Dijk, (1980), cohesion is the formal relationship between linguistic elements such as reference, repetition, substitution, conjunction and lexical connection. Meanwhile, coherence reflects the

thematic unity and logicality of discourse. However, Widdowson (1978) and Brown and Yule (1983) argue that coherence does not simply originate from linguistic form, but is mainly constructed through the process of interpretation by the receiver with a specific communication context. Widdowson argues that the same text can be understood in many different ways, depending on the cultural background, interaction context and social status of the receiver, factors that formal coherence theory can hardly cover fully.

Complementing the above approaches, Taboada (2006) and Rhetorical Structure Theory argue that coherence can be modelled through rhetorical relationships between paragraphs, allowing for the analysis of argument structure rather than relying solely on the reader's interpretive capacity. This approach extends the analysis to the level of discourse organization strategies, which is particularly relevant for ceremonial-political negotiation texts.

In Vietnam, Trần Ngọc Thêm (1999), Đỗ Hữu Châu (2005) emphasized that coherence is not only a grammatical phenomenon, but also associated with discourse logic and reception orientation of each cultural community. However, recent studies (Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2008; Lê Thu Lan, 2023) mainly focus on the formal level, not yet deeply exploiting the relationship between linguistic devices and communication strategies within an intercultural context.

Comparative studies of cohesion and coherence reveal clear differences in the organization of information, the choice of argument structure, and the positioning of participants, all of which are strongly influenced by cultural variables. Especially in high-level communication, linguistic form not only conveys content but also represents face, power, and goodwill.

The theory of coherence provides a basis for identifying the way of organizing the surface of a text and explaining the relationship between linguistic means and communication strategies in government-level negotiations. This theoretical framework will be applied in the Results and Discussion sections to identify typical types of coherence, thereby the comparison and explaination of cultural differences in Vietnamese-English discourse.

2.3. Intercultural pragmatics and related issues

In government-level trade negotiations, especially through press releases, joint statements and memoranda of understanding, discourse must be standardized, logical and coherent in order to convey a consistent message, in accordance with diplomatic protocol.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is the formal relationship between linguistic elements such as reference, repetition, substitution, conjunction and lexical connection; while coherence reflects the thematic unity and logicality of discourse. However, Widdowson (1978) and Brown & Yule (1983) argue that coherence is not only dependent on grammar but is also constructed by the receiver through the socio-cultural context. A text can be interpreted differently depending on the receiver's cultural background, social status and interaction context – factor that the formal approach can hardly cover fully.

Expanding on this direction, Taboada (2006) and the Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) argue that coherence can be modelled through rhetorical relationships between paragraphs. This allows for the analysis of argument structure instead of relying solely on the reader's interpretation. This approach is particularly suitable for ceremonial-political negotiation texts, where argumentation is linked to communication strategies. In Vietnam, Đỗ Hữu Châu (2005) asserts that coherence is not only a grammatical phenomenon but also linked to discourse logic and reception orientation. However, recent studies (Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2008; Lê Thu Lan, 2023) continue to investigate coherence at the formal level and have not yet delved into the relationship between linguistic means and communication strategies in an intercultural context.

Overall, comparative studies point to differences in the organization of information, the structure of arguments, and the positioning of participants, which are strongly influenced by cultural variables. At the government level, linguistic form not only conveys content but also expresses face, power, and goodwill.

The coherence theory provides a foundation for identifying the organization of the text surface and explaining the relationship between linguistic form and communication strategy in negotiations. This framework will be applied to identify typical types of coherence, thereby explaining cultural differences in Vietnamese-English negotiation discourse.

2.4. Theoretical framework

Based on the synthesis of three theoretical approaches: (i) cohesion and coherence, (ii) intercultural pragmatics, and (iii) speech acts, the study proposes a three-dimensional analytical framework. This framework aims to examine the bilateral negotiation discourse of Vietnam - US through the following three integrated aspects: (1) linguistic form, (2) speech strategies, and (3) cultural - political background.

2.4.1. Cohesion theory

The cohesion theory of Halliday and Hasan (1976) considers cohesion as a formal relationship between elements in a text, expressed through means such as references, repetitions, conjunctions or substitutions. Coherence is understood as the unity of content and argumentation, associated with the reader's ability to interpret in a specific context. This theoretical framework is applied to analyze the surface structure, identify the types of connections and the ways of organizing information to ensure consistent and coherent messages - especially in negotiation texts with a high ceremonial and diplomatic nature.

2.4.2. Intercultural pragmatics

Intercultural pragmatics studies how people use and interpret language in

cross-cultural communication, where differences in values and social norms directly influence linguistic behavior (Thomas, 1983; Kecskes, 2013). In government-level trade negotiations, the decoding of utterances is always linked to strategic goals and cultural-political contexts.
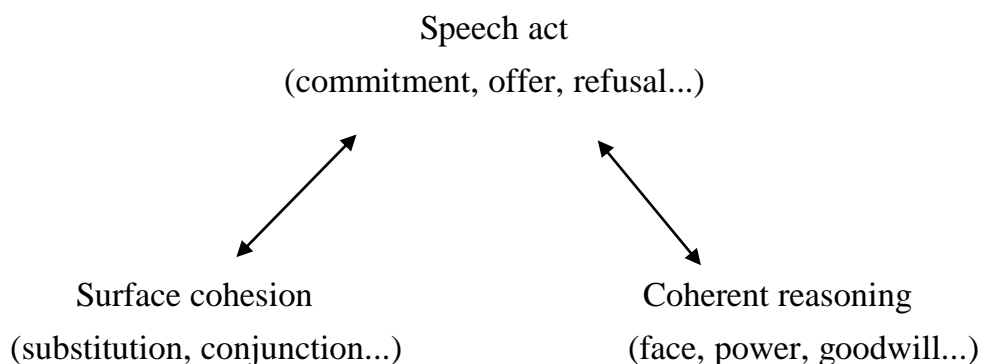
According to Hofstede (2001) and Scollon & Scollon (1995), variables such as power distance, individualism-collectivism, conflict avoidance or directness shape the organization of arguments and the coherence of texts. This is a key factor in political-diplomatic negotiations, when language simultaneously reflects goodwill to cooperate, national stance and soft power.

An important aspect influencing the discourse is the power asymmetry between the parties, as in the Vietnam-US negotiations, which often leads to differences in language choice and face handling. In this regard, the concept of "pragmatic appropriateness" (Thomas, 1983) emphasizes that coherence is not only determined by the text but also depends on the ability to adjust the utterance to fit the cultural context and power relations. Cross-cultural pragmatics provides a useful analytical framework to identify cultural variables, negotiating positions and language strategies in Vietnam-US trade discourse.

2.4.3. Speech act theory

Speech act theory (Searle, 1969; Thomas, 1983) asserts that each utterance not only conveys information but also performs actions such as commitments, requests, concessions, warnings or agreements. In government negotiations, these actions are strategic, deployed in a series to establish relationships, direct arguments and assert national power. They are often combined with formal means of cohesion such as references ("this agreement"), conjunctions ("in this regard") or substitutions ("the latter"), contributing to strengthening both content and strategy coherence. As Widdowson (1978) and Thomas (1983) point out, discourse coherence is not just a grammatical phenomenon but is the result of the organization of utterances associated with communicative goals.

Diagram 1. The Relationship between Speech Acts, Formal Cohesion and Discourse Coherence.

Speech act

(commitment, offer, refusal...)

Surface cohesion

(substitution, conjunction...)

Coherent reasoning
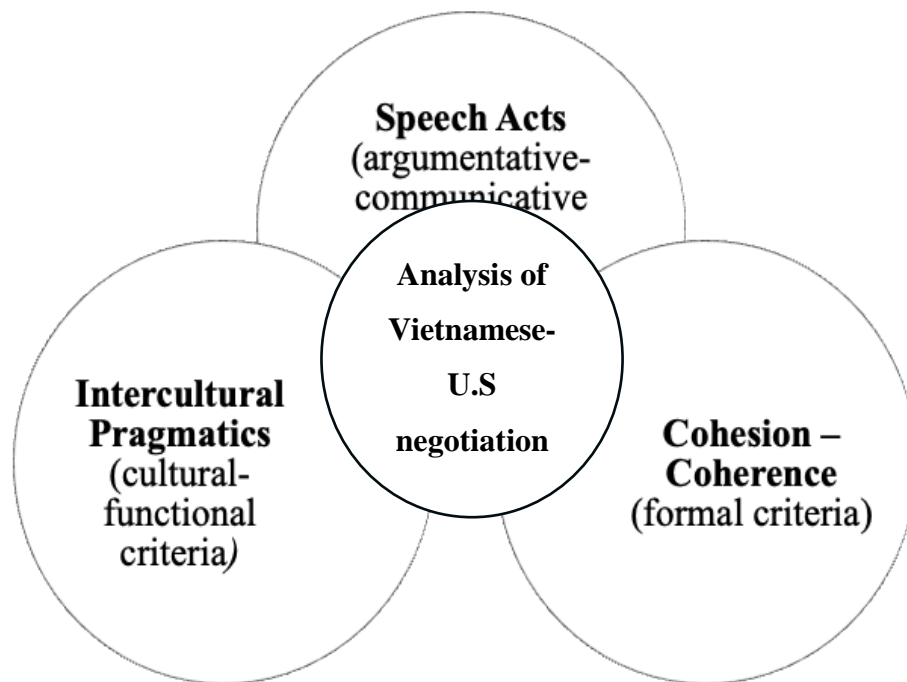
(face, power, goodwill...)

Source: Searle (1969).

Diagram 1 illustrates the three-way relationship between speech act – formal coherence - discourse coherence, in which the speech act plays a central role. Organized utterance chains, supported by coherence elements, will construct a

coherent and strategic discourse within an intercultural-political context.

2.4.4. Three-dimensional integrated model

Based on the synthesis of the three theoretical foundations mentioned above, the study proposes a three-dimensional integrated model to analyze the discourse of government-level trade negotiations in an intercultural context. This model is developed based on suggestions from the pragmatic triangle proposed by Blum-Kulka (1991) and House (2000).

Diagram 2. Three-dimensional Theoretical Framework in the Analysis of Vietnam-US Negotiation Discourse.

Source: Adapted from Blum-Kulka (1991) and House (2000).

Integrating the above three theories helps the study approach discourse in an interdisciplinary - systematic - multi-layered way: from the formal surface (connection), to the speech strategy (speech act) and the cultural - political depth (intercultural pragmatics). This theoretical framework will be applied to decode the way the parties construct discourse, choose linguistic forms and implement communication strategies in Vietnam-US trade negotiation documents.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The study applies the framework of cross-cultural pragmatics and a mixed-method design, combining contrastive discourse analysis and cross-linguistic comparison, to examine the means of cohesion and coherence in Vietnam-US trade negotiations.

The qualitative method plays a leading role, supported by NVivo software to code and analyze phenomena such as references, omissions, substitutions, conjunctions, lexical links and coherent expressions (information order, topic consistency, logical relationships). In parallel, the descriptive quantitative method is used to count the frequency and location of occurrence of these devices, helping to increase objectivity and reliability. The mixed design allows to approach the discourse from the linguistic form and the pragmatic-cultural depth. Thereby, the study clarifies the face value and negotiation strategies characteristic of the two discourse communities.

3.2. Textual resources

The corpus for this study consists of 30 bilingual documents (15 in Vietnamese, 15 in English) collected from the 2015-2024 period, belonging to three main groups: (1) post-negotiation press releases; (2) official statements at economic forums; (3) excerpts of meeting minutes or officially published video statements.

The documents were selected according to two criteria: (i) issued by central government agencies or government representatives speaking within the framework of the Vietnam-US negotiations; (ii) have equivalent bilingual versions, clearly reflecting the means of connection and the structure of the text. Vietnamese documents demonstrate a diplomatic style that prioritizes harmony, collective face and indirect politeness while English emphasizes directness, transparency and goal orientation.

The source of documents is collected from official government information portals such as baochinhphu.vn, mofa.gov.vn, moit.gov.vn, ustr.gov and high-level trade forums. This is an important practical basis, helping to identify information organization models, argument strategies and pragmatic-cultural elements in Vietnam-US negotiation discourse.

3.3. Corpus analysis

Corpus analysis is implemented in four steps, combining qualitative, quantitative description and comparison, to ensure depth and reliability.

Step 1: Coding of formal linking devices according to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification, including: references, omissions, substitutions, conjunctions and lexical linking with the support of NVivo to ensure consistency in data processing and re-verification.

Step 2: Analyze discourse coherence based on three criteria: (i) information order, (ii) logical relationships, and (iii) thematic consistency. These criteria are

built from the theoretical framework of Brown and Yule (1983) and Widdowson (1978). This step helps to identify pragmatic strategies such as argument orientation, conflict regulation, or expression of goodwill.

Step 3: Compare and contrast the two discourse systems of Vietnamese and English to identify differences in information organization, speech strategies and coherence construction. The analysis is placed in the framework of intercultural pragmatics, based on variables such as: power distance, communication style and discourse goals (Thomas, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Hofstede, 2001).

Step 4: Synthesize quantitative and qualitative results to build a specific discourse organization model in Vietnam - US negotiations, thereby proposing implications for translation - interpretation training and cross-cultural communication.

4. Results

4.1. Results of analysis of Vietnamese trade negotiation discourse

The results of analysis of 15 Vietnamese texts from 2015-2024 show that Vietnamese discourse prioritizes repetition and substitution, and linking phrases such as "on the basis of", "in order to", "therefore" to maintain the indirect discourse flow. Sentences are often long, with many subordinate clauses, reflecting the tendency to avoid direct confrontation, expand arguments and maintain collective face.

Pronoun referential links such as "we", "both sides", "two sides" are repeated to maintain the topic, and emphasize the spirit of cooperation in the discourse. This result is consistent with the observation of Lê Thu Lan (2023) on the characteristics of indirect links and the collective nature in Vietnamese political-diplomatic discourse.

4.2. Results of analysis of English (US) trade negotiation discourse

In contrast to the indirect and expansive tendency of Vietnamese, English negotiation discourse tends to be short, clear and linear. Sentences are often divided into independent clauses, using many logical conjunctions such as "if", "therefore", "thus", "in addition" to increase coherence. Meta-discourse markers such as "let me clarify", "in this regard" reflect the strategy of controlling the flow of information and guiding the receiver, enhancing transparency and rational efficiency in communication. This direct - brief - deterministic discourse structure is consistent with the culture of personalization and argumentative power orientation, as pointed out by Hoey (2001), Hyland (2005), and Nguyễn Văn Khang (2008).

4.3. Comparing and contrasting Vietnamese and English

In terms of coherence, the Vietnamese text maintains the theme by repeating goodwill phrases such as "in the spirit of cooperation", "for the common good", "promoting partnership" to create a "thematic anchor" that helps maintain a harmonious and socio-centric relationship. In contrast, the English text focuses on the logical sequence: assumption – result – condition to show a coherent argument. This difference shows the contrast in the way ideas are connected: Vietnamese leans towards social solidarity, while English leans towards rational structure and argumentative effectiveness.

This shows that while Vietnamese discourse emphasizes maintaining diplomatic relations and goodwill, English tends towards logical argumentation and establishing a clear position.

Table 1: Frequency of Some Prominent Linking Devices in the Analyzed Corpus

Manner of cohesion	Occurrences in Vietnamese	Occurrences in English	Examples
(Repetition)	58	17	"on the basis of…", "in the spirit of…"
(Substitution)	33	12	"both sides" instead of "Vietnam and the United States"
(Conj.)	14	41	"therefore", "thus", "if"
Meta-discourse markers	0	23	"to be specific", "in this regard", "let me clarify"
deixis	46	22	"chúng tôi", "các bên" (in Vietnamese); "we", "they" (tiếng Anh)

Comparison of the overall cohesion - coherence

Table 2. Summary of the Prominent Differences in the Means of Cohesion - Coherence

Criteria	Vietnamese	English
Main means of communication	Repeat, replace, soft sequence (aim, on the basis of)	Logical conjunctions, conditions, meta-discourse (*if, thus*)
Sentence type	Long sentences, many subordinate clauses, extended connections	Short sentences, separate ideas, clear arguments
Stay on topic	Collective pronouns, goodwill phrases ("we", "both sides")	Reader orientation signs (*to clarify,* "in this regard")
Coherent style	Repeat the topic, maintain the reconciliation relationship	oherent reasoning, logical structure, clear conditional constraints
Cultural influence	promote group dignity, avoid direct confrontation	Personalized, transparent, and rational efficiency

Source: Synthesized from data

The research results not only confirm the theoretical assumptions of Halliday and Hasan (1976), Hoey (2001), but also are consistent with recent findings of Hyland (2018) and Lê Thu Lan (2023), clarifying the relationship between

coherence and cultural characteristics - strategic communication in government-level negotiations.

Illustrative table of corpus comparison

The Table 2 summarizes some typical excerpts from the analyzed corpus, thereby clearly comparing the differences in the form of connection and coherence between Vietnamese and English discourse in trade negotiations.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Typical Passages in the Vietnam-US Negotiation Discourse

No.	Language/Paragraph Type	Excerpt from the text	Cohesion & Coherence	Pragmatic analysis
1	Vietnamese	"Trên cơ sở đó, Bộ trưởng đã đề nghịTrưởng Đại diện Thương mại Hoa Kỳ… nêu quan điểm…" (Phiên đàm phán cấp Bộ trưởng Việt Nam – Hoa Kỳ, Bộ Công Thương, ngày 4/6/2025)	Soft joint cluster. Political reference, indirect structure	Create a foundation of goodwill before taking action, be ceremonial, avoid confrontation
	English	"Both sides agreed on the importance of making swift progress…" (USTR Readout of Ambassador Jamieson Greer's Virtual Meeting,)	Strong action conjunction (agreed on), direct argument	Emphasize action and transparency in consensus, prioritizing results
2	Vietnamese	"Trong 3 ngày đàm phán… trên tinh thần thiện chí, thẳng thắn… hài hòa lợi ích…" (MOIT, 5/6/2025)	Soft links, multi-clause structures	Show goodwill and be gentle in your statements; follow diplomatic protocol
	English	"Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen and develop cooperation…" (Joint Statement, 23/5/2016)	Meta-discourse and active verbs	Communicate directly, establish a clear stance

Source: Synthesized from data

Table 3 illustrates the differences in discourse organization between Vietnamese and English through bilingual excerpts. Vietnamese texts often use

repetition, soft references and complex multi-clause sentences, combined with ceremonial phrases such as "on the basis of" and "in the spirit", to evoke goodwill, reduce confrontation and maintain collective face. Meanwhile, English texts prioritize linear structures, active verbs, logical conjunctions and meta-discourse markers, emphasizing directness, transparency and action orientation.

This contrast reflects two different discourse systems: Vietnamese is communal, formal and ceremonial; English is more individualistic, direct and rational. More importantly, the choice of means of cohesion and coherence is not simply a linguistic issue, but a strategic decision, serving communication goals such as building goodwill, asserting stance or adjusting position. Thus, the difference in cohesion and coherence in Vietnamese-English negotiation discourse reflects the interweaving of linguistic system characteristics and intercultural communication strategies in a political-diplomatic context.

5. Discussion

5.1. What cohesive and coherent means are commonly used in Vietnamese-English trade negotiation discourse?

Corpus analysis shows that Vietnamese negotiation discourse often uses repetition, substitution, and soft linking phrases with goodwill such as "in the spirit of cooperation", "for the common good". Meanwhile, English discourse prioritizes logical conjunctions (if, therefore), meta-discourse markers (let me clarify, in this regard), and explicit sentence structures. These means not only contribute to creating a continuous flow of text but also demonstrate the specific argumentative strategies of each language community.

5.2. How do the similarities and differences in the deployment of these means reflect cultural characteristics and communication strategies?

Comparative analysis shows that the differences in the deployment of cohesive and coherent means clearly reflect cultural and social characteristics. Vietnamese discourse tends to be communal, using collective pronouns, goodwill phrases and indirect structures to maintain face and avoid confrontation, in accordance with group-oriented culture (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, English discourse emphasizes individuality and rationality, with clear information deployment, linear logic, many causal conjunctions and direct speech, reflecting the strategy of "asserting position - achieving results" typical of Western negotiation culture (Scollon & Scollon, 1995).

5.3. What implications do these differences have for training in negotiation

skills, translation and interpretation, and document drafting in a multicultural environment?

Identifying the means of cohesion and coherence, and the dominant cultural values holds practical implications for training in negotiation skills, translation and interpretation, and diplomatic document drafting. Learners need to develop the ability to translate language not only grammatically but also strategically, actively avoiding literal translation that distorts the national stance or reduces the effectiveness of persuasion. In training, it is important to emphasize that discourse is a product of communication goals, cultural background, and political position; understanding these differences help diplomatic messages to be persuasive, flexible, and limit conflicts.

The study simultaneously consolidates the theoretical foundation of Halliday & Hasan, Hoey, and adds empirical data for the development of strategic communication competence. In particular, the discovery of meta-discourse in English opens up a new research direction on intentionality in Western government communication, which remains an open research area in Vietnam.

6. Conclusion

The study analyzes the means of cohesion and coherence in the discourse of Vietnam-US trade negotiations (2015-2024) from the perspective of cross-cultural pragmatics, based on the theoretical framework of Halliday and Hasan, Brown and Yule, and Hofstede and Spencer-Oatey (2008). The results show a clear difference: Vietnamese discourse tends to use repetition, substitution, and soft succession to maintain collective face and social relations, while English discourse prioritizes causal structures, meta-discourse, and short sentences to increase transparency and argumentation efficiency. These findings affirm the value of the cross-cultural pragmatics approach in the study of government-level discourse and suggest applications for translation and interpretation training, bilingual negotiation training, and diplomatic document drafting.

Building on these results, the study reinforces the position that the pragmatic norms underlying discourse construction are not merely linguistic preferences but culturally embedded strategies shaped by broader socio-cultural expectations. The Vietnamese preference for cohesive devices such as repetition and substitution reflects a communicative orientation that values relational harmony and continuity. From a pragmatic standpoint, these strategies help interlocutors preserve collective face, signal respect for hierarchy, and establish interpersonal alignment - all of which play a crucial role in shaping the tone and progression of high-level negotiations. In contrast, the English reliance on causal linkages, explicit meta-discourse markers, and concise syntactic structures aligns with communicative norms that emphasize clarity, individual responsibility, and procedural transparency. These discourse strategies serve argumentative functions, guiding the audience through a linear and logically structured progression of ideas, which is consistent with expectations in English institutional communication.

By systematically comparing the two discourse patterns, the study

demonstrates how cohesion and coherence function as both linguistic and cultural resources. The observed contrasts underscore the importance of exploring discourse not solely at the grammatical or textual level but also through the lenses of cultural cognition and interactional expectations. This cross-cultural pragmatics perspective therefore offers a more comprehensive account of why negotiators from different cultural backgrounds structure their discourse in particular ways, and how these structures implicitly communicate intentions, evaluations, and interpersonal stances.

The study's findings further highlight the significance of culturally informed discourse analysis for professional practice in high-stakes intercultural settings. In domains such as translation and interpretation, awareness of culturally preferred cohesive and coherence strategies can assist practitioners in producing output that is not only accurate at the informational level but also pragmatically appropriate. For bilingual personnel engaged in negotiation or diplomatic communication, understanding how each party constructs coherence - whether relationally or argumentatively - can help anticipate potential sources of misalignment, reduce the risk of unintended pragmatic effects, and improve overall communicative effectiveness. Likewise, in the drafting of diplomatic documents, greater sensitivity to the discourse expectations of both cultures can contribute to constructing texts that convey the intended tone, maintain strategic politeness, and support mutual understanding.

Moreover, the study contributes methodologically by illustrating how the integration of models from Halliday and Hasan, Brown and Yule, and Hofstede and Spencer-Oatey (2008) offers a productive analytical framework for examining government-level discourse. The combination of textual, conversational, and cultural dimensions enables a nuanced understanding of negotiation discourse that would be difficult to achieve through a single theoretical lens. The findings thus reaffirm the continued relevance of these foundational frameworks and demonstrate their applicability to contemporary political communication contexts.

In conclusion, the study enriches the literature on cross-cultural pragmatics by providing empirically grounded insights into how Vietnamese and English discourse strategies operate in a high-stakes institutional domain. While focused specifically on trade negotiations between 2015 and 2024, the results underscore broader tendencies in intercultural communication between the two nations. As global interactions continue to deepen and diversify, such analyses remain essential for promoting mutual comprehension and improving the effectiveness of professional communication across cultural boundaries.

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