

INTERPERSONAL MEANING IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE ECONOMIC NEWS REPORTS – A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to explore the realization of interpersonal meanings in English and Vietnamese economic news reports from the perspectives of mood system and modality system based on the elaborated framework of Halliday's model of interpersonal meaning. The study employed a corpus of eighty economic news reports (forty in each language) downloaded from The Reuters and Thoi bao Kinh te Vietnam written within two years now. Combining both qualitative and quantitative analytical methods, the function of mood system and modality system was analyzed in expressing interpersonal meanings. It is found that declarative mood, taking up a predominant proportion, realizes the speech function of information-giving. Modal expressions are seldom seen in the samples and the journalist trends to use low and median values modal operators to express probability, by means of which his attitudes are easy to accept and a solid relationship with the reader is established. High and median values of obligation are applied to show the authority. It is feasible and rewarding to study interpersonal meanings in English and Vietnamese economic news reports from the perspective of functional linguistics. The present study can be instructive for English economic news reports writing and teaching.

Keywords: *Interpersonal meanings, mood system, modality system, functional linguistics, perspectives, economic news report.*

Ý NGHĨA LIÊN NHÂN TRONG CÁC BẢN TIN KINH TẾ TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT – MỘT NGHIÊN CỨU SO SÁNH

TÓM TẮT

Bài viết tìm hiểu cách hiện thực hóa ý nghĩa liên nhân trong các bản tin kinh tế tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt qua hệ thống thức và hệ thống tình thái, dựa trên khung lý thuyết của Halliday. Nghiên cứu sử dụng 80 bản tin kinh tế (40 mỗi ngôn ngữ) từ Reuters và Thời báo Kinh tế Việt Nam trong hai năm gần đây. Bằng phương pháp phân tích định tính và định lượng, nghiên cứu xem xét vai trò của hệ thống thức và tình thái trong việc biểu đạt ý nghĩa liên nhân. Kết quả cho thấy thức trần thuật chiếm ưu thế, đảm nhiệm chức năng cung cấp thông tin. Các phương tiện tình thái xuất hiện ít, và nhà báo chủ yếu dùng tình thái mức thấp và trung bình để diễn đạt khả năng, qua đó tạo sự dễ chấp nhận và gắn kết với người đọc. Tình thái nghĩa vụ mức trung bình và cao được sử dụng để thể hiện tính thẩm quyền. Việc nghiên cứu ý nghĩa liên nhân trong bản tin kinh tế từ góc độ ngôn ngữ học chức năng là khả thi và hữu ích, đồng thời mang lại gợi ý cho việc viết và giảng dạy bản tin kinh tế tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: *Ý nghĩa liên nhân, hệ thống thức, hệ thống tình thái, ngôn ngữ học chức năng, góc tiếp cận, bản tin kinh tế.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Economic news report is a genre of news discourse. Its function is to inform readers a

variety of daily economic information. In economic news reports, the journalist predicts economic trends, analyzes economic phenomena and situations when reporting professionally and objectively. The communicative sides are the journalist and the reader. The journalist tries to employ linguistic resources to influence the reader, to make his economic opinions easily accepted, apart from providing objective information (Rupar, 2007; Lut, 2020). In order to produce an attractive and convincing economic news reports, the writer can express his attitude, judgment and appreciation, and establish the relations with the reader and in this way, interpersonal meaning is realized. It is obvious that each language has its own discourse features. English and Vietnamese are not exceptions.

There is no doubt that reading newspaper is important for language learners in general and students of English in particular. Learning English through newspapers is believed to be of great help for both the reading skill and the writing skill (Khorsheed & Rassoul, 2018). Therefore, a study on news reports at the discourse level is necessary and show great potentials for teaching and learning the English language. However, to our best knowledge, most studies tried to find out the discourse features in terms of syntactic structures and cohesive devices. Little attention has been paid to interpersonal meanings in economic news reports. For this reason, this study is conducted to provide Vietnamese learners of English, especially students majoring in journalism with useful information about the interpersonal meaning of English and Vietnamese economic news reports.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Definition

Halliday (1994) proposed that any stretch of language acts to perform three metafunctions - ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings - simultaneously.

The ideational function relates to the inner and outer worlds of reality it is “language about something”. According to Halliday (1978), whenever one reflects on the external world of phenomena or the internal world of one’s consciousness, the representation of that reflection would take the form of content. This form of content is called the experiential meaning. Experiential meaning focuses the language on the clause level with respect to the notion of clause as representation. Textual metafunction is about the verbal world, especially the flow of information in a text, and is concerned with clauses as messages. It is described by Halliday (1994) as the ‘relevance’ or the enabling function. As a message structure, a clause consists of a Theme accompanied by a Rheme. The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message, and the Rheme is the part in which the Theme is developed. According to Eggins (1994) the Theme typically contains familiar, or given, information, i.e. information which has been given somewhere in the text, or is familiar from the context.

Halliday (1994) states the interpersonal function plays the role of setting up and maintaining social relations, and indicates the roles of the participants in communication. The interpersonal function is an interpersonal of language in its function as an exchange, which is a doing function of language; it is concerned with language as an action. This meaning represents the speaker’s meaning potential as an intruder that takes into account the interactive nature of relations between the addresser (speaker/writer) and the addressee (listener/reader). At the grammatical level of interpretation with respect to the clause function, it is interpreted that the clause is also organized as an interactive event that involves speaker, writer and audience (listener/reader). Clauses of the interpersonal function are clauses of exchange, which represent speech

role relationship. The interpersonal function is concerned with how language users interact through language and the way they take a position in their message. Language is seen as a tool for exchanging information and exchanging goods and services. We use language to interact with people for some purposes: we may want to influence their attitudes or behavior, or to provide information that they do not know, or to explain our own attitudes or behavior, or to get them to take some actions.

2.2. Mood system and modality system.

Systemic Functional Linguistics helps us express the speech functions such as

persuading, enticing, motivating, demanding, inviting, ordering, proposing, recommending, confirming, persisting, and denying through a set of Mood clause systems. The interpersonal metafunction is about the social world, especially the relationship between speaker (writer) and hearer (reader), and is concerned with clauses as exchanges. Halliday (1994, p.68) states, “The most fundamental types of speech role, which lie behind all the more specific types that we may eventually be able to recognize, are just two (i) giving and (ii) demanding”. He also classified two kinds of commodity, which he termed as “information” and “goods-service” and then four speech roles as in Table 1.

Table 1. Basic speech roles

role in exchange \ commodity exchange	goods-service	information
	giving	demanding
offer	statement	
command	question	

Source: Halliday, 1994

In the book “Introducing Discourse Analysis”, Hoang Van Van (2006) explained that 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 and services or information. When speech roles interact with types of commodity we have four general speech roles: giving goods & service = offer, giving information = statement, demanding goods & service = command, demanding information = question. Within the interpersonal meaning the speaker’s choice of a particular speech role is significant. The interpersonal metafunction involves the structure of clausal elements as they manage the interpersonal relationship between speaker and addressee and achieve the communicative purposes of a text and the Mood realizes this metafunction.

Halliday (1976, p.189-213) draws a distinction between modality and modulation. According to him, modality is the speaker’s assessment of the probabilities of what he is saying and his comments outside the propositional content of the clause. Modulation, on the other hand, has nothing to do with the speaker’s comments and is part of the ideational meaning of the clause. Accordingly, modulation is not a true modality, but quasi-modality. Halliday (1985) states that modality also plays an important role in carrying out the interpersonal metafunction of clauses showing to what degree the proposition is valid. He also asserts that modality concerns with three variables, i.e. types, orientation and value.

In terms of type, modality consists of modality, which refers to proposition, and modulation, which prefers to proposal. If the clause is indicative clause, then it is modality.

If the clause is imperative, then it is modulation. Modality expresses degree of probability and frequency. Modulation expresses degree of obligation and inclination. Degree of probability and frequency are expressed through the choice of finite modal operators, modal Adjunct probability and frequency, by both finite modal operators and modal Adjunct probability and frequency.

Like Halliday (1994), Diep (2004) indicates that the system of modality in Vietnamese consists of modalization and modulation. Modality expresses degree of probability and usuality. Modulation expresses degree of obligation and inclination. The choice of modality expression implies assertiveness, which are high, median and low. Diep (2004) claims that modality is also realized by the three linguistic resources – Modal Finites and Modal Adjuncts. The terminologies used in his model are exactly the same as those in Halliday's 1994 model. However, a closer examination of the linguistic resources for the expression of modality suggested by Diep shows some marked differences between his model and Halliday's. In English, there is no semantic relation between modality and passivization, but in Vietnamese, passive voice is considered to be a form of Modality. Besides, the words of physiological need that are seen as Modal Finites in Vietnamese cannot be found in English.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Data description

This study was conducted in accordance with a set of criteria for collecting samples, which included considerations such as the number of texts, their length, the sources from which they were drawn, the types of news items, and their dates of publication. In order to ensure consistency and comparability, particular attention was given to selecting news reports that dealt with issues of trade, import - export, and banking - topics that are

central to economic discourse and frequently reported in the press. A total of eighty news reports were compiled, consisting of forty texts in English and forty texts in Vietnamese. These samples were randomly chosen from two established newspapers, namely Reuters for the English Economic News Reports (EENRs) and Thời báo Kinh tế Việt Nam (The Vietnam Economy Times) for the Vietnamese Economic News Reports (VENRs), both of which were accessed through their online platforms. Furthermore, only those articles with an average length ranging from 200 to 300 words were included in order to maintain uniformity in text size and to facilitate systematic comparison across the two corpora. Following the compilation of the dataset, the analysis proceeded with the identification and examination of the mood system and the modality system in both EENRs and VENRs, which formed the core of the linguistic investigation.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data collected were classified and analyzed into each clause in the texts (including 40 texts of EENRs and 40 texts of VENRs). To answer the research questions stated previously, Halliday's model of interpersonal meaning as the framework for this study. For the MOOD system, the presence and ordering of mood elements (Subject and Finite), types of mood (declarative, imperative, etc.) and mood adjunct. The structure of the Mood revealed the clausal mood and then the speech functions/roles were realized. Speech functions illustrated the communicative exchange in a particular utterance and could be defined as the specific positions or identities that were established by this exchange through the mood structure of clausal elements. Different mood structures represented different speech functions. The result of this was put on the tables in percentage terms. From that the frequency of each category was determined and the results were discussed. For the modality system, two main points were

focused. The first point was identification of modality in EENRs and VENRs. In identifying the modality, Halliday's modality theory (1994) was used as a basis. Modality in EENRs and VENRs was realized typically by the choice of finite modal operators and modal adjuncts. The second point was classification of modality occurrences by using Halliday's category of modality and system of value. The number of each type was counted and followed by its frequency. The result was presented in percentage terms for analysis and evaluation. Finally, the analysis result of EENRs and

VENRs would be examined and compared in each of the above categories in an attempt to find out the similarity and differences between the two languages.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Mood system in EENRs and VENRs

The analysis unfolds a noticeable fact that the speech roles of the declarative mood and the interrogative mood are the same in both EENRs and VENRs. Table 2 presents the distribution of mood choice in both languages.

Table 2. Mood types in English and Vietnamese

Mood types		English		Vietnamese	
		Number	%	Number	%
Declarative	Full	1095	88,31	1264	87.29
	Elliptical	142	11,45	165	11.40
Interrogative	Wh-questions	0	0	0	0
	Yes/No-questions	3	0.24	19	1.31
Total		1240	100	1448	100

Source: Compiled by the author

EENRs and VENRs share a similarity in frequencies of two mood structures. Among the two mood structures, declarative takes the prominence in total with 1237 cases (99.76%) in EENRs and 1429 cases (98.69%) in VENRs. This can be attributed to the main function of this genre, namely giving information. The ratios of declaratives in EENRs and VENRs are similar to each other and there is a gap between the frequencies of declaratives in these two news reports. EENRs provide much

more information to the readers, showing the willingness of the negotiation with the readers. This analysis shows that in both EENRs and VENRs there is an incongruent transference in the process of the realization of speech functions, such as offer, command, statement, and question. One speech function can be realized by various moods, and one mood can realize different speech functions. Consider the following examples:

Table 3. Example of Declarative mood in English

(4.1) Chinese factories and service firms suffered a marked fall in business in January and had heightened worried about an unexpectedly sharp economic cooling.

<i>Chinese factories and service firms</i>		<i>suffered</i>		<i>a marked fall</i>	<i>in business in January</i>
Subject		finite	predicator	complement	adjunct
Mood			Residue		
Mood type: Declarative mood					
Speech function: Statement (giving information)					
<i>and</i>	<i>(Chinese factories and service firms)</i>	<i>had heightened</i>		<i>worried</i>	<i>about an unexpectedly sharp economic cooling.</i>
Conjunctive adjunct	Subject (elliptical)	finite	predicator	complement	adjunct

	Mood	Residue
Mood type: Declarative mood		
Speech function: Statement (giving information)		

Source: Compiled by the author

Table 4. Example of Declarative mood in Vietnamese

(4.2) *Viet Nam sẽ xuất 8,13 triệu tấn gạo năm nay, nhưng đang phân đấu đạt mức hơn 9 triệu tấn.*

<i>Viet Nam</i>	<i>sẽ</i>	<i>xuất</i>	<i>8,13 triệu tấn gạo</i>		<i>năm nay</i>
Subject	finite	predicator	complement		adjunct
Mood		Residue			
Mood type: Declarative mood					
Speech function: Statement (giving information)					
<i>nhưng</i>	<i>(Việt Nam)</i>		<i>đang</i>	<i>phấn đấu</i>	<i>đạt mức hơn 9 triệu tấn.</i>
Conjunctive adjunct	Subject (elliptical)		finite	predicator	Adjunct (Non-finite clause)
	Mood		Residue		
Mood type: Declarative mood					
Speech function: Statement (giving information)					

Source: Compiled by the author

In EENRs and VENRs, it seems that when the writers use interrogative clause, interaction is encouraged. The writers are speaking directly with the readers in a sense, asking them for their opinions and often for an agreement with the events that have already been shown in the news reports. When writers use the interrogative mood in their news reports, they play both the roles of writers and

readers. They ask a question, and then they answer it themselves. The main purpose of using the interrogative mood is to emphasize the importance of the events or information they give. Moreover, the writers want to shorten the distance between the writers and the readers so that the readers are much likely to accept the information

Table 5. Example of Interrogative mood in English

(4.3) *Is manufacturing moving oversea?*

<i>Is</i>	<i>manufacturing</i>	<i>moving</i>	<i>oversea?</i>
Finite	Subject	predicator	Adjunct
Mood		Residue	
Mood type: Interrogative mood			
Speech function: Yes-No question (demanding information)			

Source: Compiled by the author

Table 6. Example of Interrogative mood in Vietnamese

(4.4) *Lãi suất cho vay sắp đón đợt giảm mới?*

<i>Lãi suất cho vay</i>	<i>sắp</i>	<i>đón</i>	<i>đợt giảm mới?</i>
Subject	Finite	predicator	Adjunct
Mood		Residue	
Mood type: Interrogative mood			
Speech function: Yes-No question (demanding information)			

Source: Compiled by the author

Although the realization of interpersonal meaning in English and Vietnamese can be similar, some differences exist between them. In terms of mood type, the declarative mood in

English is used more often than that in Vietnamese. On the contrary, the interrogative mood in Vietnamese has the higher percentage than that in English (1.31% versus 0.24%). It

means that using interrogative clauses to emphasize the contents of the events in VENRs is more frequent than in EENRs. In addition, mood choices in questions in English have the different forms from those in questions in Vietnamese. In fact, interrogative form in English is typically formed with the inversion of the finite operator or modal finite and the subject of the sentence. In contrast, questions in Vietnamese typically have the Subject Finite ordering of the mood elements that is the same as in the declarative mood.

4.2. Modality system in EENRs and VENRs

Halliday (1994) asserts that modality is constituted by three interrelated variables: modality type, modality value, and orientation of modality. These dimensions collectively provide a comprehensive framework for examining the ways in which speakers or writers encode degrees of certainty, obligation, or probability in discourse. However, in the

present corpus of English Economic News Reports (EENRs) and Vietnamese Economic News Reports (VENRs), the dimension of modality orientation, typically realized through explicit markers such as “I think”, “I am certain”, is scarcely employed by the writers. This limited occurrence suggests that the genre of economic news reporting tends to favor a more impersonal and objective stance, thereby minimizing overt authorial intrusion. As a result, the analysis presented in this section focuses exclusively on the remaining two variables, namely modality type and modality value, as these are more salient and systematically distributed across the texts under investigation. The distribution patterns of these variables are illustrated in Table 7 and Table 8, which present the frequency and occurrence of modality types and modality values in both EENRs and VENRs.

Table 7. Modality types in EENRs and VENRs

Modality types		English		Vietnamese	
		Number	%	Number	%
Modality	Probability	148	91.36	180	95.24
	Usuality	0	0	0	0
Modulation	Obligation	14	8.64	9	4.76
	Inclination	0	0	0	0
Total		162	100	189	100

Source: Compiled by the author

Table 8. Modality value in EENRs and VENRs

Modality types		Value	English		Vietnamese	
			Number	%	Number	%
Modality	Probability	high	0	0	0	0
		median	113	69.75	140	74.07
		low	35	21.61	40	21.16
	Usuality	high	0	0	0	0
		median	0	0	0	0
		low	0	0	0	0
Modulation	Obligation	high	3	1.85	4	2.12
		median	11	6.79	5	2.65
		low	0	0	0	0
	Inclination	high	0	0	0	0
		median	0	0	0	0
		low	0	0	0	0
Total			162	100	189	100

Source: Compiled by the author

Table 7 shows that modality of probability in EENRs and VENRs occupy the majority of the all modality resources. This is

in line with the tenor of this genre, which is to give information and to persuade the readers to pay attention to the news reports. Particularly,

probability in EENRs is realized with 91.36% and that in VENRs with 95.24%. Obligation in EENRs is used with 8.64% and that in VENRs with 4.77%. Probability indicators in both languages realizing the interpersonal meaning are mainly used in declaratives. In order words, the writers in the corpus mostly express their judgement or opinions to the probability of something happening.

With regard to modality value, as seen in Table 8, writers in EENRs and VENRs shows a similar tendency in using probability value which occurs at levels of median, and low in terms of hierarchy system. Another similarity between the two languages is that no usuality and inclination values are found in both languages. Probability in English is more often used than that in Vietnamese and in contrast, obligation in English is more than double that in Vietnamese. We might say that the English writers have a stronger sense of obligation, i.e. they think more about what they should do, or what other people should do. What is more, the use of some linguistic resources to indicate the interpersonal features such as solidarity, intimacy, belief, sympathy, shareness, etc is rather similar in both languages.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has presented relatively detailed analysis and explanations of interpersonal meanings in English and Vietnamese economic news reports from a comparative perspective, drawing on a corpus of 80 pieces of news from the two newspapers - The Reuters and The Thoi bao Kinh te Vietnam (The Vietnam Economy Times) on the internet. Overall, in both languages the declaratives and interrogatives are found, but no imperatives and exclamatives; questions in English and Vietnamese have different form. The frequency of the interrogative mood in VENRs has the higher percentage than that in EENRs reveals the contents of events in VENRs are emphasized more often than in

EENRs. The findings in term of modality system show that writers in EENRs and VENRs not only have a tendency to give information on news events but also try to provide the readers with their own judgments and comments through mainly modality. Besides, in VENRs, the writers mainly concern about identifying what would happen in the future by using the higher number of the predictive modals. On the other hand, with the overwhelming number of modal finite 'should', written in EENRs are occupied with what should be done.

This research aims to establish a meaningful contribution to the literature on functional grammar, particularly in relation to the exploration of interpersonal meaning. By situating the analysis within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics, the study seeks not only to enrich the theoretical discourse but also to highlight the pedagogical implications of such research. From a teaching and learning perspective, the findings of this study may serve as a valuable reference point for future researchers who are concerned with the application of functional grammar in various contexts. These findings could provide a basis for the refinement of methodologies and the development of more nuanced approaches, thereby enhancing both the depth and the quality of subsequent research. Moreover, future scholars may benefit from re-examining similar topics from alternative perspectives, which could allow for more comprehensive insights and lead to more accurate and reliable analyses.

Although the research has reached its aims, there remain some unavoidable limitations which need to be acknowledged and addressed in future research. The first limitation relates to the size and scope of the data. The corpus of news reports was drawn exclusively from two newspapers - Reuters and The Vietnam Economy Times. As such, it would be problematic to generalize the findings as fully

representative of the ideological stances of either American or Vietnamese press. Secondly, the thematic scope of the collected texts was restricted to trade, import-export, and banking. This narrow topical focus inevitably constrained the diversity of linguistic resources available for analysis, thus limiting the extent to which broader generalizations could be made. Finally, the sole focus of the research was confined to interpersonal function, while other crucial dimensions of functional grammar, the ideational and textual functions, were left unexplored. Addressing these aspects in future studies would not only complement the present findings but also provide a more holistic understanding of the interplay between language, ideology, and communicative purpose.

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