

SEMANTIC PROPOSITIONS OF NOMINALISATIONS AS GRAMMATICAL METAPHOR IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Abstract - In the domain of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), the term 'grammatical metaphor' as coined by Michael Halliday (2004) refers to variation in the expression of meaning, which aims to transform the functions of grammatical elements that constitute meaning [1]. Grammatical metaphor (GM), also seen as an incongruent form of expression, has become a predominant feature of official or scientific discourses. However, these non-congruent metaphorical modes of expression or nominalisations have been increasingly used in other discourses, either in descriptive or media discourses. This article attempts to find out the semantic configurations of nominalisations as grammatical metaphor in English and Vietnamese media discourse. Based on the framework introduced by Halliday [1] and the categorisation of nominalised constructions suggested by Sušinskiene [2], it characterizes the semantic propositions of nominalisations as grammatical metaphor and compare the semantic representations of these constructions in the media discourse between English and Vietnamese.

Key words - functional grammar; grammatical metaphor; nominalization; semantic propositions; media discourse

1. Introduction

Metaphor is generally viewed as variation in the use of words. Metaphor, from a more conventional view, belongs to a theory of rhetoric which refers to a figure of speech which deals with verbal transference, or non-literal use of words. That is, when being used metaphorically, a word is said to embrace 'a transferred meaning' [1:340-1]. The use of *pool* in 'a vast *pool* of labour' or *unlock* in '*unlock* your life' can be typical instances of metaphor since they show a transfer of meaning from a concrete to an abstract sense, that is from a material to a mental process. Metaphor, thus, refers to a movement from something literal to something new, or figurative in meaning, and it is based on this movement or transfer of meaning that "enables us to recognise these examples as metaphorical" [3:19].

The term *grammatical metaphor* (GM) was coined by Halliday [1] in the last chapter of his introduction "*Beyond the clause: metaphorical modes of expression*". In this chapter, Halliday approaches the notion of GM in his general outline of traditional types of 'rhetoric transference', be it metaphor, metonymy, or synecdoche. Here, he stresses the importance of understanding the transferred meaning, not only by traditional lexical metaphor, but also by variations in lexical forms as representations of semantic functions. Put another way, lexico-grammatical variation should be seen as a feature of all linguistic metaphor, thus opening up the possibility for grammatical, as well as, lexical metaphor [4]. In Ravelli's terms, GM is an alternative lexico-grammatical realisation of a semantic choice, that is "one choice in the semantics may have two (or more) lexicogrammatical realisations" [4:40]. This idea of 'alternative realisations', inherently implies a conception of metaphor in terms of choice which, she argues as a fundamental concept in SFG.

2. Nominalisations as Grammatical Metaphor (N-GM)

2.1. Grammatical Metaphor and the Nominalising Tendency

Indeed, GM as a concept has aroused immense interest amongst linguists and grammarians. As an alternative way of encoding verbal meanings, GM which is predominantly a nominalising trend [1] is arguably a prominent feature of written discourse. With such functions as performing important ideological functions including deleting agency, turning processes into entities, or condensing long strings of shorter sentences into fewer longer ones [5], nominalisations can add to a text being more succinct, more abstract, and more sophisticated. As Thompson aptly put it, grammatical metaphor is generally accepted as "a key mechanism by which the resources for the making of meaning can be greatly expanded" [6:27].

The most general characterisation of GM in terms of 'alternative realisation', as many would argue, naturally leads to the conception of 'congruence'. If one of the alternative realisations is said to be 'the typical, expected, congruent one' [4:41], then the other form of expression, or the metaphorical mode, would be considered as not typical, or incongruent [1:321], [4:41]. This means, meaning can be represented by a selection of lexical words which may not be, in some sense, typical or unmarked. This leads to the conception that metaphor refers to "variation in the expression of meanings" [1:320]. Once the expression of meanings varies, we can expect to see variations not only in the selection of words, but also in the *wordings*, or rather, the lexicogrammar. These variations in the wordings have facilitated the *incongruent* forms of expressions, deviating from something which is **not metaphorical**, or *congruent* described by virtue of *markedness* or *typicality* [1]. This means, what is congruent conforms to either 'the typical ways of saying things', 'the typical patterns of wordings' [1:343], or 'the most straightforward coding of the meaning selected' [3:13].

As pointed out by Halliday [1:321], "if something is said to be metaphorical, there must also be something that is not". Put another way, for any given semantic configuration, there is at least one congruent realisation, and may be other non-congruent or *metaphorical* constructions in the lexicogrammar. While congruent forms are assumed to reflect the typical ways of construing experience, they are not assumed to be better or to function as a norm [7]. Instead, as Halliday puts it, "there are many instances where a metaphorical representation has become the norm, and this is in fact a natural process of linguistic change" [1:321].

In the light of GM, meaning is construed in a different way by means of a different grammatical construction.

These constructions can be said to be *congruent*, or *unmarked*, or they may be *non-congruent* or *metaphorical* in both the semantics and the lexicogrammar. Consider the following examples:

He **drove** rapidly down the hill (*congruent*)
 → His rapid downhill **driving** (*metaphorical*)

She is **honest** (*congruent*)
 → You can count on her **honesty** (*metaphorical*)

It is interesting to note that verbs encoding processes can be considered as natural ways of construing meaning, while nouns denoting more abstract domains refer more to incongruent or metaphorical meaning. To quote Goatly [8:83]:

When language maps experience in the most straightforward, congruent way, nouns represent things, adjectives the properties of things, verbs realise states and processes, adverbs the properties of processes, and prepositions the relationships between things.

From the view of systemicists and functionalists, GM is predominantly a 'nominalising' tendency [7:429]. Nominalisation contributes to the abstraction and sophistication of a text, thus being considered as a feature characteristic of scientific language and other formal registers since these registers need to embrace several abstract concepts.

At its most simple, from the systemic functional perspective, N-GM, which would usually be described by a verbal construction (e.g. *we study chemistry*), is presented in the form of a noun phrase (e.g. *the study of chemistry*). Similarly, activities or processes, which would naturally be coded by verbs, become things, and verbs changed into nouns. In other words, nominalisation allows different lexical categories to be 'rank-shifted' (i.e. shifted in hierarchical linguistic units - sentence, clause, group, word, and even morpheme) and become nominalised [1:187-196, 342-367]. Heyvaert [9:67] suggests adopting Gleason's concept of 'agnation' to describe the relationship between paradigmatic variants like *her sailing out of the room* and *she sailed out of the room* [10:134], or *the writing of business programs* and *people can write business programs* [1:349]. As noted by Ravelli, every metaphorical structure has an 'agnate' form that corresponds to its 'congruent realisation' [10:14].

The N-GMs expressed by verbal nouns, as has been touched upon, are referred to as *nominalised propositions* by Sušinskienė [2]. In her description of GM in scientific discourse, she notes the pragmatic usefulness of the metaphorisation in allowing the involvement of more *participants* in the realisation process. Indeed, the nominalised proposition has shifted from its original function to perform other semantic and syntactic functions and contribute to the construal of meaning as a whole. Besides, Sušinskienė observes that the *new* participants are not ordinary nouns since they are embedded with the original semantic information from the underlying verbalising process (i.e. the one that is expressed by the finite form of a verb). As noted by Lester, the process of nominalisation "produces a variety of surface forms with the same underlying meaning" [11:24].

With the conversion from another lexical category into a noun, or the combinations of words not originally assembled as a noun group into a noun group, N-GMs by means of a rank shift do facilitate the lexical density in the clause. As Saenz notes, N-GM is "one of the factors which contribute to the higher degree of lexical density in written English" [7:501]. That is, a *lexically dense* text is metaphorical since it appeared to be concretised with processes and movements appearing as things, or at least appearing to be more static. As such, by turning clausal patterns (which normally represent processes) into nominal groups (which represent metaphoric variants), the ideational metaphor could be achieved. In this light, nominalisation can be said to be the most productive form of GM - 'the transfer of meaning to the nominal group in the clause' [12:82]. By means of N-GM, processes can become 'the point of departure of the message' (i.e. theme) and can be placed in the final position of a clause (in the unmarked focus of information) [13:501]. The shift of focus now is on semantic propositions of N-GMs.

2.2. Semantic Functions of N-GMs

In what follows, N-GMs (or verbal nouns) are referred to as *nominalised propositions*. Sušinskienė who has adopted this notion to refer to nominalisation since, as identified by Jackson [14:137], a proposition consists of 'a situation type' together with 'its associated participants and circumstances'. In this light, participants involved in the proposition model are *entities*, which may be humans and non-humans (animate or inanimate), concrete or abstract. In the semantic structure of the sentence, participants may function as 'inherent' (obligatory) and 'non-inherent' (spatial and non-spatial) [2:76-81].

The inherent and non-inherent semantic functions of nominalised propositions, or N-GMs are now presented. According to Sušinskienė [2], nominalised propositions, or participants derived from processes, can perform a variety of semantic functions in the sentence: *The Agent, the Affected* (i.e. *object of result*), *the Recipient, the Senser, the Phenomenon, the Sayer, the Verbiage*, etc. These semantic functions are referred as inherent in the nominalisations since processes from which participants derived are the core of a situation, or human construal of experience [1].

Non-inherent semantic functions of nominalised constructions can be seen in non-spatial and spatial terms. While the non-spatial functions include *the Beneficiary, the Accompaniment* (a joint participant in the process), *the Circumstance of Means, the Role, the Time, the Contingency*, the spatial ones are normally found in their *time* and *place* representations [2:79-81].

2.3. Construction of N-GMs

N-GMs in English can be constructed in several ways, of which affixation is generally the most productive. In English, abstract nouns are often formed by means of a suffix [15], [16] or a *nominal-iser* in Kroeger's terms [17:254-8], and the noun derived from a verb is called a *de-verbal noun*. There are two main nominal suffixes, i.e. *de-verbal nominalisers* and *de-adjectival nominalisers*.

Some of the common nominal suffixes are (i) *-ion*, or its variants *-ation*, *-sion*, or *-xion* (e.g. *organisation*,

conversion); (ii) *-ment* (e.g. *development*, *agreement*, *amendment*); (iii) *-al* (e.g. *arrival*, *approval*, *denial*); (iv) *-ance* (e.g. *tolerance*, *assistance*); (v) *-ing* (e.g. *making*, *handling*); and (vi) *-ity* (e.g. *prosperity*). These nominalised constructions can occur in isolation, or in a series like “in any additional *information*, *clarification*, *correction* of errors, or *modifications* of bidding documents” (ADB Procurement Guidelines).

In Vietnamese, N-GM is often realised by means of *nominal markers*, or *classifiers* that go before a verb phrase or an adjective phrase to turn the whole thing into a nominalised construction. Common markers like *việc* or *sự* or *tình hình* or *tình trạng* are often found in official documents, whereas in more descriptive or media discourses, other nominal markers can be recognised including *nét*, *vẻ*, *kiểu*, *loại*, *con*, *nỗi*, *niềm*, etc.

3. Methodology

In this paper, which adopts mainly the descriptive and qualitative approach, corpus-based web resources have been used with English nominalised constructions being taken from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and their Vietnamese counterparts extracted from web resources via Google search engine. Six hundred samples of English N-GMs were extracted from COCA, using SEARCH and KWIC functions, and so were their respective 600 samples in Vietnamese selected in random from the news or media sources. While the former cover suffixes like *-ment*, *-ion*, *-al* as de-verbalisers, and *-ance*, *-ence*, *-ness*, *-ity* as de-adjectival markers, the latter refer to those with such classifiers as *sự*, *việc*, *hiện tượng*, *khả năng* for de-verbal nouns and *tính*, *lòng*, *niềm*, *nỗi*, *vẻ*, *nét* for de-adjectival nouns.

4. Semantic Propositions of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese Media Discourse

4.1. Inherent Semantic Propositions of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese Media Discourse

The semantic propositions of N-GMs can fall into two categories – one refers to the inherent meanings and the other refers to non-inherent meanings. Table 1 shows the semantic configurations of N-GMs of a more inherent type, including the *Agent*, the *Affected*, the *Recipient*, the *Senser*, the *Phenomenon*, the *Sayer*, and the *Verbiage*. These different types of inherent meanings of N-GMs can be realised via their syntactic functions.

Table 1. Inherent semantic propositions of N-GMs

Inherent Semantic Propositions	Examples of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese media discourse
<i>The Agent</i> (realised by <i>Subject</i>)	(1) <i>The arrangement</i> puts West German banks at the hub of what some call "Germany, Inc - <i>WashPost News 1990</i> (2) <i>Việc đồng baht tăng giá quá mạnh</i> cũng khiến kinh tế Thái Lan tổn thất nặng nề - news.zing.vn
<i>The Affected</i> (realised by <i>Direct</i>)	(3) They <i>control education</i> and replace our nations History with Political Correctness - shtfplan.com 2012

<i>Objective Complement</i>	(4) Trong mắt của kẻ si tình, tất cả phụ nữ đều đẹp, đều là những con người mang những <i>nét quyết rũ mà bí ẩn</i> - www.facebook.com
<i>The Affected</i> (realised by <i>Subject</i> in the <i>Passive constructions</i>)	(5) So overcrowded are the region's airports that <i>economic development is threatened</i> – Chicago News 2004 (6) <i>Sự tinh tế của nét văn hóa vùng cao được</i> khéo léo <i>đấu</i> giữa kiến trúc Châu Âu lồng lẫ mà vẫn không kém phần duyên dáng - kinhtenongthon.vn
<i>The Recipient</i> (realised by <i>Direct Objective Complement</i>)	(7) You want to <i>fix education</i> ? Let's start with helping teachers do a better job bonding with their students - southerneddesk.org 2012 (8) Ở Việt Nam, biến đổi khí hậu cũng gây nên <i>tình trạng xâm nhập mặn nghiêm trọng</i> ở các tỉnh phía Nam - www.tinmoi.vn
<i>The Senser</i> (realised by <i>Subject</i> of a <i>Comment clause</i>)	(9) The report indicated that <i>the sharing</i> of the information did not violate any laws – <i>New York 2010</i> (10) Những <i>hiện tượng cầu vồng thú vị và tuyệt đẹp</i> - giaoducthoidai.vn
<i>The Phenomenon</i> (realised by <i>Direct Objective Complement</i> or in <i>Existential clauses</i>)	(11) The discipline of futurology is undergoing <i>more development and increasing practice</i> and Lee hopes that it will continue to do so - <i>Futurist 2013</i> (12) <i>Hiện tượng kỳ ảo khó tin</i> trên đỉnh Fansipan - fansipanlegend.sunworld.vn (13) Từ đầu năm đến nay, <i>hiện tượng thiên nhiên thú vị</i> này đã xuất hiện nhiều lần ở một số vị trí quen thuộc - fansipanlegend.sunworld.vn
<i>The Sayer</i> (realised by <i>Subject</i> of <i>Verbal processes</i>)	(14) <i>This arrangement</i> seems to explain why Gibbs and Abby have appeared in far fewer scenes together - <i>Vanity Fair Magazine 2018</i> (15) <i>His presence</i> alone was enough to make you want to tell him - BkSF:DruidShannara 1991 (16) <i>Việc nhận định Xinh</i> là do bắt nguồn từ cảm nhận một cách trực quan - www.facebook.com
<i>The Verbiage</i> (realised by <i>Object</i> of <i>Verbal processes</i>)	(17) The book ... <i>documented the development of the teaching</i> described in the various contexts to which it spoke – <i>America 2010</i> (18) WHO tuyên bố <i>tình trạng khẩn cấp toàn cầu</i> - <i>Trí Thức VN</i>

4.2. Non-inherent Semantic Propositions of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese Media Discourse

The semantic configurations of N-GMs which are of a more non-inherent type include such categories as the *Beneficiary*, the *Accompanient*, the *Circumstance-Means*, the *Circumstance- Role*, the *Circumstance-Time*, the *Contingent-Purpose*, the *Contingent- Reason*, and the *Addesive-Place*. These non-inherent semantic functions are realised by their syntactical functions (Table 2).

Table 2. Non-inherent semantic functions of N-GMs

Non-inherent Semantic Functions	Examples of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese media discourse
<i>The Beneficiary</i> (realised by <i>Indirect Objective Complement</i>)	(19) City began with the same job categories and have moved into <i>real estate, software development, business consulting and insurance</i> - <i>Futurist 2013</i> (20) ... <i>hoa hồng xanh chính là loài hoa</i>

	biểu tượng cho sự mạnh mẽ, cho sự thủy chung , trường tồn mãi mãi theo thời gian - <i>mrhoa.com</i>
The Accompaniment (often preceded by prepositions with / without or as)	(21) <i>As part of the settlement arrangement</i> , Holmes will pay a \$500,000 fine - <i>Ars Technica 2008</i> (22) The events served <i>as a revival of sorts for women</i> who had been awed by their show of force last year - <i>The Boston Globe News 2018</i> (23) Cẩm sao chép dưới mọi hình thức nếu không có sự chấp thuận bằng văn bản - <i>thanhnien.vn</i>
The Circumstance-Means (often marked by prepositions with, in, by)	(24) Keeney and Mooney were chastened <i>by the arrival of the U.S. military brass and bombers</i> - <i>American Experience 2016</i> (25) <i>With the new ticket allocation arrangement</i> , the company is making a major foray into a Super Bowl luxury PrimeSport - <i>Seattle Times 2017</i> (26) Có khá nhiều khách sạn sang trọng tại Sapa lấy cảm hứng thiết kế từ vẻ đẹp văn hoá vùng cao - <i>kinhtenongthon.vn</i>
The Circumstance - Role (marked by the preposition as or in the attributive position)	(27) Economic growth and job creation plan, <i>through creation of a Business Development Committee</i> - <i>Chicago News 2010</i> (28) <i>As one of the nation's premier historic preservation organizations</i> , Historic Denver, Inc. protects the historic neighborhoods that make Denver unique. - <i>mollybrown.org 2012</i>
The Circumstance - Time (marked by prepositions after, since, by, during)	(29) She had stifled her tears and got up to her feet quickly <i>after regaining consciousness in Sam's place</i> - <i>Overland 2014</i> (30) <i>During the making of Rumours</i> , Mick Fleetwood called Stevie Nicks into the studio parking lot to tell her - <i>RollingStone Magazine 2018</i> (31) <i>Trong quá trình</i> giáo dục, bằng cách khuyến khích con giúp đỡ người khác, chúng ta cũng cố thể dạy cho trẻ nhận thức tổng quan về giá trị của sự tử tế - <i>www.ntdvn.com</i>
The Contingent - Purpose (often marked by the preposition for)	(32) The PM visited the state after a visit to Odisha to mark the commencement of work <i>for the revival of the Talcher fertilizer plant</i> - <i>Arizona Daily 2018</i> (33) ... Các quốc gia đã chi hàng tỷ USD cho việc hỗ trợ người chăn nuôi và phòng, chống dịch bệnh - <i>www.msn.com</i>
The Contingent - Reason (often marked by the prepositions because of, due to, on account of, owing to, for)	(34) ... you're here to join our effort, but I fear the reason <i>for your arrival</i> is something other than that - <i>Black Sails TV 2016</i> (35) Sở Tài nguyên và Môi trường thành phố Hồ Chí Minh công bố nguyên nhân gây mù trời là do hiện tượng sương mù quang hóa - <i>hanoimoi.com.vn</i>
The Addesive - Place (often marked by the prepositions at, by, with, near,	(36) But hearing him use it just now, so <i>near the actual arrival of it</i> , it sounds different. It feels different. Not far from here - <i>Black Sails TV 2016</i> (37) Howard shook his head, a vague

functioning as Time/Place Adjuncts	as movement <i>in the darkness</i> - <i>BkSF: Mailman 1991</i> (38) Đi tìm chuẩn mực trong nét đẹp của người phụ nữ á đông - <i>amadoraspa.vn</i>
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4.3. Discussion

From the collected data, we can see that N-GMs have their semantic propositions configured via syntactic means in both English and Vietnamese media discourse. These semantic configurations can be recognised in both inherent and non-inherent terms. One striking thing to note is that N-GMs in both English and Vietnamese media discourse have their representation of the inherent type far outstrip its non-inherent counterpart. More specifically, the inherent semantic functions can be recognised in 363 out of 600 samples of English N-GMs, making up 60.5%, and similarly, in 428 occurrences (71.3%) in Vietnamese (Figure 1).

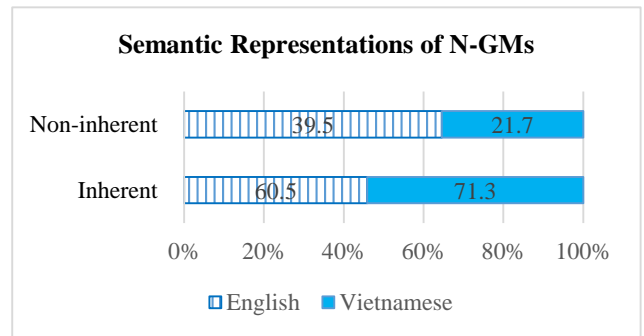


Figure 1. Semantic Representations of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese

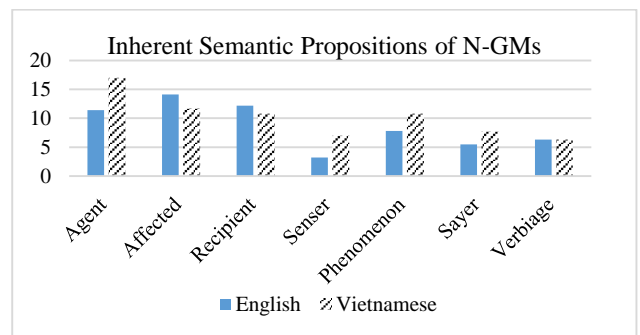


Figure 2. Inherent Semantic Propositions of N-GMs

The prevalent representation of the N-GMs in the inherent type may indicate the tendency towards using more abstract wrapping of semantic meanings via syntactic functions. These include the Subject, carrying the meaning of the Agent like in (1) and (2), the Direct Objective Complement as can be seen in (3) and (4), or the Subject of a passive construction indicating that the N-GMs representing the meaning of the Affected in (5) and (6). Such semantic functions as the Recipient and the Phenomenon are also realised by means of Direct Objective Complement as can be found in (7), (8) and (11). Yet the Phenomenon as a characteristic of semantic configuration of Vietnamese N-GMs can be seen in existential clauses such as (12) and (13). Other inherent semantic propositions of N-GMs are the Senser and the Sayer which are realised by the Subject of a comment clause and of verbal processes in (14-16). Meanwhile,

when functioning as the Verbiage, N-GMs often take the objective function of a verbal process starting with ‘documented’ in (17) and ‘tuyên bố’ in (20). These last three are also the least represented semantic propositions at more or less than 5% compared with the most common type - the *Affected* in English (14%) and the *Agent* in Vietnamese (17%) (See Figure 2).

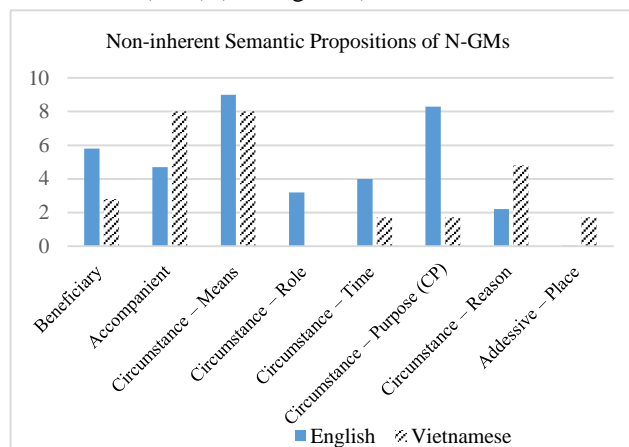


Figure 3. Non-Inherent Semantic Propositions of N-GMs

Of the non-inherent category, the English corpus data also show its higher representation of N-GMs with 39.5% compared with 21.7% of their Vietnamese counterparts (See Figure 1). Chief among the semantic configurations of this category are the *Beneficiary* realised by Indirect Object Compliment in English (example 19) or via such markers as *cho* in ‘*cho sự mạnh mẽ, cho sự thủy chung*’ in Vietnamese as in (20). Others include the *Accompaniment* preceded by such prepositions as *with* or *without* in (21-23) or the *Circumstances* with *Means*, *Time*, *Purpose* or *Reason* marked by prepositions such as *with*, *in*, *by*, *as*, *after*, *since*, *during*, *for*, *because of*, *with*, *near* as in the remaining examples (23-38) (See Table 2).

It is also interesting to note that English N-GMs are more commonly represented when functioning as *Circumstances* denoting *Means* and *Purposes* of the verbal processes compared with Vietnamese nominalised constructions. Equally interesting is the absence in representation of the *Circumstance-Role* in Vietnamese though this semantic configuration is underrepresented with only 3.2% reported in the English corpus data. This may be due to the fact that English N-GMs can be take attributive position in such noun phrases as a **Business Development Committee** (7) while there are no such occurrences found in the Vietnamese collected data.

5. Conclusion

This paper has so far attempted to present the semantic configurations of N-GMs in English and Vietnamese media discourse. Such concepts as grammatical metaphor, the nominalising tendency, the construction of N-GMs via de-verbalisers and de-adjectivals have been revisited, based on the theoretical underpinnings of SFG introduced by Halliday (2004) and other contemporaries in the field. It has stated the necessity of manipulating the use of

nominalised constructions in academic and scientific discourse, and in this paper, it has evidenced how N-GMs have been well used to convey a wide range of ideational meanings in the media discourse. The paper has found that N-GMs once being used in the media discourse have embedded within their configurations a wide range of semantic propositions, which fall into two categories - the inherent and the non-inherent, and which are realised via different grammatical and syntactical means. The findings have revealed some similarities and differences in the representation of these semantic configurations via the lexical grammar, making the inherent type better represented, especially with the *Affected* and the *Agent* realised by the *Subject* of the verbal processes while other being underrepresented in English and Vietnamese media discourse.

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