

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH TEXTS INTRODUCING TRANSPORT SERVICES

CÁC ĐẶC ĐIỂM NGÔN NGỮ HỌC CỦA CÁC VĂN BẢN TIẾNG ANH GIỚI THIỆU CÁC DỊCH VỤ VẬN TẢI

Nguyen Thi Quynh Hoa¹, Huynh Thi Anh Tram²

¹University of Foreign Language studies, the University of Danang; hoadang@dng.vnn.vn

²Master Student of the English Language Course 28

Abstract - Discovering the variety and functions of linguistic features of texts has attracted much attention of many linguists in the world. This paper is aimed at identifying and examining linguistic features of *English texts introducing transport services* (ETITSs). The research is conducted based on a combination of various methods such as descriptive, analytic and inductive ones. The paper focuses on presenting and analyzing the syntactic features and lexical choices of 108 samples of ETITSs collected from official websites of well-known transport companies in three English-speaking countries namely the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. It is hoped that the findings of this paper can provide language learners with a better insight into linguistic features of texts in general as well as ETITSs in particular so that they can apply the linguistic knowledge in their own writings effectively.

Key words - linguistic features; English texts; transport services; syntactic features; lexical choices.

1. Rationale

Nowadays, in our modern world, transport has obtained considerable achievements and developed remarkably with the fierce competitiveness of a large number of transport companies, whose transport services are more commonly introduced, particularly on the mass media such as television, newspaper, magazine, radio and the internet. Customers, therefore, have more chances of choosing their favourite transport companies by reading different texts introducing transport services which provide detailed descriptions and necessary information about the services. However, writing an effective text to leave a strong impression on the potential customers, send the condensed message to and persuade them to spend money on the services is by no means an easy and simple task. It requires a profound knowledge of linguistics concerning syntax, lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, stylistics and other elements. In line with this, the research in this paper has been conducted with the hope that it will probably provide useful knowledge of linguistic features of *English texts introducing transport services* ETITSs for Vietnamese learners of English, as well as those who are interested in the field.

2. Previous related studies

Text is a multidimensional unit and has been defined in different ways by different linguists such as Cook [2], Halliday and Hasan [7], Fowler [6], McCathy [11], etc.

In addition, some text analysts have directly related the term *text* to “the communicative act” such as Crystal [3], Hatim and Mason [9], Widdowson [14], etc.

Furthermore, other specific aspects of text linguistics

Tóm tắt - Việc nghiên cứu sự đa dạng và chức năng của các đặc điểm ngôn ngữ văn bản đã thu hút sự quan tâm của nhiều nhà ngôn ngữ học trên thế giới. Mục đích của bài viết này là nhận diện và phân tích các đặc điểm ngôn ngữ của các văn bản tiếng Anh giới thiệu các dịch vụ giao thông vận tải (ETITSs) dựa trên sự kết hợp của các phương pháp nghiên cứu khác nhau như miêu tả, phân tích và qui nạp. Bài viết này tập trung trình bày các đặc điểm cú pháp và lựa chọn từ vựng của 108 đoạn văn mẫu từ các trang mạng chính thức của các công ty vận tải nổi tiếng ở ba quốc gia nói tiếng Anh là Hoa Kỳ, Anh và Úc. Hy vọng kết quả của bài viết sẽ cung cấp cho người học một cái nhìn sâu sắc hơn về đặc điểm ngôn ngữ học văn bản nói chung và ETITSs nói riêng, để họ có thể áp dụng kiến thức ngôn ngữ này vào việc viết bài sao cho hiệu quả.

Từ khóa - đặc điểm ngôn ngữ học; văn bản tiếng Anh; các dịch vụ vận tải; các đặc điểm cú pháp; các lựa chọn từ vựng.

including syntax and lexicology have been examined by scholars such as Chomsky [1], Quirk [12], Halliday et al. [8], etc.

In Vietnam, there have been well-known researchers such as Hoàng Trọng Phiến [16], Diệp Quang Ban [15] and Trần Ngọc Thêm [17] who have shown their interest in text linguistics and its related features.

3. Theoretical background

3.1. English Texts Introducing Transport Services

Crystal [3] regards *text* as a language unit with a definable communicative function.

English texts introducing transport services, are English language units with definable communicative functions used to introduce activities of moving people or goods from one place to another by using sources of vehicles, crew, equipment and storage facilities.

3.2. Syntactic Features

According to Eka [5], it is important to discover syntactic features since they deal primarily with the rules that govern the combinations of words and groups of words to bring about meaningful sentences.

3.3. Lexical Choices

Edmonds and Hirst [4] claim that “Lexical choice is more than a problem of mapping from concepts to words; it is a problem of selecting words so as to meet or satisfy a large set of possibly conflicting preferences to express certain nuances in certain ways, to establish the desired style, and to respect collocational and syntactic constraints”.

4. Research methods

The study combines descriptive, analytic and inductive methods. Among them, descriptive method is primarily used to give a detailed description of linguistic features of ETITSs.

The research has been carried out with the following steps: (1) Collecting and classifying ETITSs by length and selecting those of medium length to be examined; (2) Analyzing those collected ETITSs to point out their syntactic features, and lexical choices; (3) Synthesizing the findings and drawing out conclusions.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1. Syntactic Features of ETITSs

As for the study of a particular language, it is important to discover those common syntactic features which are structures built up from words and governed by various linguistic rules. This paper investigates the most remarkable structures in ETITSs. They are relative clauses, the passive voice and imperative sentences.

5.1.1. Relative Clauses

a. Restrictive Relative Clause (RC)

(5.1) We have a network of offices nationwide that offer prompt, door-to-door dependable vehicle delivery services at an affordable price.

(<http://www.autodriveaway.com/...page-1>)

The restrictive RC is employed to provide the benefits of “network of offices nationwide” which the customers can get. It cannot be left out of the sentence without affecting the meaning.

b. Non-Restrictive Relative Clause (RC)

(5.2) AirRoad is owned and operated by its majority shareholders, **who care about the successful delivery of your consignments.**

(<http://www.airroad.com.au/...Express.aspx>)

The non-restrictive RC beginning with “*who*” is used to introduce people who take the responsibility of operating the transport services. It can be left out without affecting the meaning or structure of the sentence.

(5.3) *Services run throughout the day and night, which enables you to catch your flight.*

(<http://www.nationalexpress...airport.aspx>)

The *relative clause* refers back to the whole antecedent clauses, not just to one noun. It is employed to reveal the benefits the customers can get when using the transport services introduced in ETITSs.

Table 1. Distribution of Relative Clauses in ETITSs

Type of RC	Occurrence	%
Restrictive RC	225	94.9
Non-Restrictive RC	11	5.1
Total	242	100

As can be seen from the table above, the relative clauses are included in a great number of ETITSs (242 cases). Among them, restrictive relative clauses are dominantly

employed and account for nearly 95%. Non-restrictive relative clauses appear with a much lower frequency, taking up over 5%. In ETITSs, most of the relative clauses are used to provide necessary information about the nouns or phrases it refers to.

c. Present Participle (-ing participle) Clause

(5.4) We offer an array of Transportation Services including Regional Trucking, Intermodal Drayage, Air Freight pickup/deliveries, Courier Services.

(<http://www.sjtrans.com...Services.htm>)

d. Past Participle (-ed participle) clause

(5.5) Con-way Freight offers exceptional customer service at every level supported by industry professionals and state-of-the-art processes and technology.

(<http://www.con-way.com/en/freight>)

In short, the *present participle clause* and the *past participle clause* are reduced relative clauses. The former denotes the active voice in which its antecedent is its subject and the doer of the action. Meanwhile, the latter denotes the passive voice, in which its antecedent is its object, the receiver of the action.

Table 2. Distribution of Present Participle Clause versus Past Participle Clause in ETITSs

Types of Non-finite RC	Occurrence	%
Present Participle Clause	67	73.6
Past Participle Clause	24	26.4
Total	91	100

The table above shows that in ETITSs, the present participle clauses linked with the active voice are used more frequently than the past participle clauses linked with the passive voice (73.6% versus 26.4%). The writers tend to focus on introducing the agent and the information of transport services rather than on what is being done.

5.1.2. The Passive Voice

In ETITSs, the passive voice is formed via the following construction:

Subject + Verb_{passive} (be + P.P) + Optional Agent

a. With Agent

(5.6) Fast dedicated and time critical deliveries **are provided by** our Express Courier Services to all UK European and International destinations.

(<http://www.garrardstransport...services.php>)

b. Without Agent

(5.7) **Key** elements such as safety ratings and insurance coverage **are consistently monitored.**

(<http://www.airnet.com...transportation.aspx>)

In the above examples, the passive sentences centre around describing the fact, the process and the goal of transport services. That enables the customers to get to know more about the transport services in ETITSs.

(5.8) These services **can be customized** based on your budget and preferences, but in some instances **could be performed by** our larger car transport truck.

(<http://www.dasautoshippers...services>)

Table 3. *Distribution of Passive Voice With Agent versus Without Agent in ETITSs*

Passive voice	Occurrence	%
With Agent	18	17
Without Agent	88	83
Total	106	100

As can be seen from the table above, in ETITSs, the use of the passive voice with the agent omitted considerably outnumbers that the one with the presence of the agent (83% versus 17%). This accounts for the tendency that in ETITSs, it is more important to put emphasis on the receiver of an action than on the agent performing it.

5.1.3. Imperative Sentences

In ETITSs, the imperative is common in constructions with a complement following the base form of a verb.

Affirmative Imperative

= Verb (base form)+ (Complement)

(5.9) Contact our local office to get specific details.

(<http://www.viarail.ca/en/resources/chartered-car-rental>)

(5.10) Discover the Ship North America Advantage today!

(<http://www.shipnorthamerica.com/services>)

Negative Imperative

= Do not (Don't) + Verb (base form) + (Complement)

(5.11) Do not hesitate to contact us for reservations and rates for the services.

(<http://www.roanokeats.com/services.htm>)

Imperative sentences are used for different illocutionary acts or to achieve the ideal goal of urging customers to act immediately.

Table 4. *Distribution of Imperative Sentence in ETITSs*

Imperative Sentence	Occurrence	%
Affirmative	137	96
Negative	6	4
Total	143	100%

As can be seen from the table above, affirmative imperative sentences are dominantly employed with a much higher frequency (96 %), whereas negative imperative sentences are found in only 6 cases and occupy a low rate (4%). This shows the tendency of using the affirmative imperative in ETITSs.

Table 5. *Distribution of Syntactic Features of ETITSs*

Syntactic Features	Occurrence	%
Relative Clauses	242	51.8
Passive Voice	106	22.7
Imperative Sentences	119	25.5
Total	467	100

The statistics in the above table reveal that relative clauses are employed to modify their antecedent noun or noun phrases without starting new sentences, taking up with the highest proportion (51.3%). This usage makes

ETITSs become more condensed but still contain necessary information as well as benefits of the transport services the customers can get. Besides, the copywriters have a tendency to use imperative sentences (occupying 25.5%) to urge the customers to act immediately. The smallest component in ETITSs is the passive voice (22.7%), which is employed to describe the salient features of the services.

5.2. Lexical Choices of ETITSs

5.2.1. Descriptive Adjectives

According to Leech's assumption [10], language used in texts is marked by a wealth of adjective vocabulary.

a. The base form

(5.12) Transport operating agencies have been freed up to focus on service delivery – providing **safe, reliable, clean and efficient** transport services.

(<http://www.transport.nsw...services>)

(5.13) Our less-than-truckload service will get your freight to its destination on time, intact and at a **competitive** price anywhere in Canada or the United States.

(<http://www.kindersleytransport...index.Htm>)

(5.14) One of the hallmarks of C.R. England is the quality of our drivers and support staff-professionals who are **experienced, accountable, and devoted** to customer satisfaction.

(<http://www.crengland.com...national>)

In the above examples, the writers tend to employ the descriptive adjectives “safe, reliable, clean and efficient” to describe the salient properties of the transport services or “competitive” to introduce the price of the service or “experienced, accountable, and devoted” to emphasize the efficiency of the staff. This usage is an effective way of urging the customers to use the services in ETITSs.

b. The comparative form

(5.15) Our goal is not to just give you **lower** rate, we strive to give you **lower** operating costs and **more efficient** freight movement.

(<http://www.combinedtransport.com/logistics>)

As can be seen in the above example, the comparative is used in order to persuade customers that their transport services are better than other ones. This can catch the customers' attention and persuade them to believe in the transport services' quality effectively.

c. The superlative form

(5.16) Through our global procurement team, we negotiate with first-class carriers to give you the **highest** service quality, space allotment and optimum pricing for your air freight.

(<http://www.us.dsv.com/air-freight>)

The superlative in the example (4.14) demonstrates that the transport service introduced in ETITSs is the best one. Therefore, the customers will be easily urged to use to experience that perfect service

As can be seen from Table 6, the copywriters have a

strong tendency to use the base forms of descriptive adjectives (59.6%) in order to highlight the striking features as well as benefits of the transport services. Furthermore, the comparative form is employed more frequently than the superlative form, taking up 32.2% and 11.1% respectively. The employment emphasizes that the transport services mentioned in ETITSs are much better and more beneficial than any others; they even are the best ones in the market. It makes ETITSs more impressive and persuasive to the readers.

Table 6. *Distribution of Forms of Descriptive Adjectives in ETITSs*

Descriptive Adjectives	Occurrence	%
Base Form	236	59.6
Comparative Form	44	11.1
Superlative Form	116	29.3
Total	396	100

5.2.2. Proper Nouns

a. Names of the transport enterprises

(5.17) **GKR Transport** provides an exemplary service supporting all Industry sectors, including Automotive, Industrial, Heavy Haulage, Oil & Gas, Mining, Manufacturing and Machinery.... We believe that **GKR Transport** is at the forefront when choosing a long term Transport, Storage and Logistics supplier.

(<http://www.gkrtransport.com.au/services>)

In the above example, the proper noun “GRK Transport” is used as the trade-mark and repeated honourably so as to promote the brands in the customers’ mind.

b. Names of places

(5.18) **Wynne Transport** has over 50+ years of experience transporting liquid and compressed gas chemicals and petroleum products in bulk. We currently operate in all 48 States of **America, Canada**, and inter-line export to **Mexico**.

(<http://www.wynnetr.com/Services>)

It is clear that the proper nouns “America, Canada, Mexico” in the instance (4.16), which refer to the names of many nations, show the extensive availability of the services introduced in ETITSs.

c. Names of transport services

(5.19) PICKUP AND DELIVERY SERVICES

Door-to-Door Service - DAS will pick up and deliver your vehicle at your specified locations (could be your residence, office, or any other location)...

Terminal-to-Terminal Service - This is our most affordable service. You will drop-off your vehicle at our nearest partner terminal and pick up your vehicle at our terminal nearest to your destination.

(<http://www.dasautoshippers.com...services>)

In the above example, listing the proper nouns referring to the names of transport services - the service-marks attracts customers to read ETITSs more effectively since they do not have to spend much time on reading and

finding out the services they are looking for.

d. Names of people

(5.20) The key to our success is our staff. People like our Managing Director, **Matt Everard** who has grown up in the freight business; **Simon Poole**, our Operations Manager is our key problem solver and first point of contact for our customer base.

(<http://www.barringtonfreight...shipping.php>)

The names of people who are responsible for operating transport services accompanied with the description of their out-standing efficiency in the above instance (4.18) makes ETITSs more believable and persuasive to the customers.

Table 7. *Distribution of Proper Nouns in ETITSs*

Proper Nouns referring to	Names of	Occurrence	%
	Companies	238	46.8
	Services	97	32.9
	Places	56	19.0
	People	4	1.3
	Total	295	100

As can be seen from the above table, proper nouns are primarily used to refer to the names of the companies, accounting for the highest proportion (46.8%). Proper nouns that denote the names of people appearing in 4 cases of ETITSs, make up the lowest percentage (1.3%).

5.2.3. Commitment Verbs

According to Searl and Vanderveken [13], there is a great number of English commissive verbs such as “commit, promise, pledge, vow, swear, consent, offer, assure, ensure, guarantee, etc”.

(5.21) **MSC** is **committed** to providing transport solutions that meet the diverse needs of our customer .

(<http://www.msc.com/usa/our-services>)

(5.22) *Our service includes expedite service which guarantees pick-up within 48 hours.*

(<http://www.autodriveaway.com...page-1>)

In the above examples, the writers have a tendency to use the commissive verbs “commit, guarantee” in order to increase the degree of consistency, commitment and guaranty of the transport services in ETITSs.

To sum up, the use of lexical choices of ETITSs can be presented in the following table:

Table 8. *Distribution of Lexical Choices of ETITSs*

Lexical Choices	Occurrence	%
Descriptive Adjectives	396	48.2
Proper Nouns	295	35.9
Commissive Verbs	131	15.9
Total	822	100

As can be seen from the above table, there is a great number of descriptive adjectives, proper nouns and commissive verbs employed in ETITSs. Among them, descriptive adjectives appear with the highest frequency, accounting for 48.2%. They are primarily employed to

provide information, outstanding features as well as benefits of transport services. Moreover, copywriters have a strong tendency to use proper nouns and commissive verbs to make ETITSs more impressive and persuasive, which take up 35.9% and 15.9% respectively.

6. Conclusion

This paper aims at investigating the syntactic features, and lexical choices of ETITSs. In terms of *syntactic features*, the most prominent structures that consist of relative clauses, the passive voice and imperative sentences are examined. Among them, relative clauses appear in most of ETITSs and account for the highest proportion of 46%. They provide necessary information and benefits of the transport services clearly and concisely. The passive voice is also frequently used with the aim of describing the facts, the processes as well as emphasizing the prominent features of the transport services and the benefits the customers can get from those services. Moreover, imperative sentences play an important part in urging the customers to spend money on the transport services introduced in ETITSs effectively. With regard to *lexical choices*, it is noticed that descriptive adjectives used in the base form outnumber those used in the comparative form and the superlative form. Taking up the highest percentage of over 48%, the descriptive adjectives are employed to describe the quality, property and to highlight the benefits of particular transport services as well as to make the whole text more fascinating. Furthermore, the writers have a strong tendency to use proper nouns referring to the names of transport companies, transport services or people taking the responsibility of operating the services in order to create deep impressions on the customers' minds. Lastly,

thanks to the use of commissive verbs, ETITSs will become more persuasive and appealing to the customers.

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