

# SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF RECREATION ACTIVITIES ADVERTISEMENTS IN ENGLISH VERSUS VIETNAMESE

## CÁC ĐẶC ĐIỂM CÚ PHÁP CỦA CÁC QUẢNG CÁO VỀ HOẠT ĐỘNG GIẢI TRÍ TRONG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT

Nguyen Thi Quynh Hoa<sup>1</sup>, Nguyen Thi Dieu Hao<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of Danang, University of Foreign Language Studies; hoangng@dng.vnn.vn

<sup>2</sup>Master Student of the English Language Course 28, The University of Danang

**Abstract** - With important functions and characteristics, syntactic features play crucial roles in the formation of sentences, phrases, and clauses, etc. Thanks to syntactic features, advertisers can make advertisements clear, informative, appealing, and easy to understand. In an attempt to show the importance of syntactic features in recreation activity advertisements and their effects on customers, I thoroughly conduct an analysis of three main features including the passive voice, conditional sentences and imperative sentences. These findings not only help English learners clearly understand how advertisements are created, but they also offer explanation for the impressiveness of recreation activity advertisements which always attract the attention of customers.

**Key words** - syntactic features; advertisements; recreation activities; passive voice sentences; conditionals; imperative sentence.

**Tóm tắt** - Với chức năng và những đặc tính quan trọng, những đặc điểm về ngữ pháp đóng vai trò thiết yếu trong việc hình thành nên cấu trúc câu, đoạn, mệnh đề, ... Nhờ vào những đặc điểm ngữ pháp, các nhà quảng cáo có thể viết những bài quảng cáo rõ ràng, đầy đủ thông tin và dễ hiểu. Nhằm mục đích làm rõ sự quan trọng và tầm ảnh hưởng của các đặc điểm ngữ pháp trong quảng cáo hoạt động giải trí, ba đặc tính cơ bản của ngữ pháp như câu bị động, câu điều kiện và câu mệnh lệnh được phân tích rõ trong bài báo. Các phát hiện của nghiên cứu này không chỉ giúp cho những người học tiếng Anh hiểu rõ những bài quảng cáo được hình thành như thế nào mà còn lý giải cho vai trò ấn tượng của quảng cáo hoạt động giải trí trong việc thu hút sự chú ý của khách hàng.

**Từ khóa** - đặc điểm ngữ pháp; quảng cáo; các hoạt động giải trí; câu bị động; câu điều kiện; câu mệnh lệnh.

### 1. Rationale

Recreation activities are performed solely for the enjoyment, pleasure and amusement of individuals. Recreation activities can range from physical activities such as team sports, playing in the park or taking a hike in nature, to spiritual activities. These activities allow people to activate their bodies and increase their levels of personal fitness for health-related reasons. Besides, recreation activities often boost a person's confidence due to the feelings of accomplishment and pride which are obtained from excelling at a chosen sport or certain type of leisure activities. Moreover, when joining in recreation activities, people not only feel relaxed, but they also have chance to build closer relationships with others. Because of the benefits of recreation activities and their effects on people's lives, in recent years, many kinds of recreation activity advertisements have been developed to attract and meet customers' requirements. In order to make the recreation activity advertisements become informative, authentic, persuasive and impressive, syntactic features are mainly focused on because with clear advertisements, customers can easily read, understand and choose what they wish to take part in. Hence, the aim of this paper is to analyze the syntactic features employed in recreation activity advertisements in English versus in Vietnamese and their effects on customers with the hope that it can provide significant knowledge to teachers and students about recreation advertisements.

### 2. Theoretical background

#### 2.1. Syntax and syntactic features

Generally, syntax is the study of the structural rules of language and the bodies of rules themselves. Chomsky, N [2] stated, "syntax is the study of the principles and

*processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages*".

In addition, according to Quirk, R. et al. [5], while lexicology deals with the study of words, syntactic features play important roles in "the regularities in their formation" which "are similar in kind to the regularities of grammar and are closely connected to them".

#### 2.2. Syntactic Features Categories

##### 2.2.1. Passive Voice

The passive voice is used to show interest in the person or object that experiences an action rather than the person or object that performs the action. In other words, the most important thing or person becomes the subject of the sentence.

There are three main types of passive voice listed by Quirk, R. et al [5] as follows:

- **Central Passives** is defined as "a direct active-passive relation".

E.g. - *Coal has been replaced by oil*

- **Semi-passives** represents a "mixed or semi-passive class whose members have both verbal and adjectival properties". According to Quirk, R. et al [5], the adjectival properties include the possibility of:

(a) The participle with an adjective.

E.g. - *Peter was interested in English.*

(b) The participle with *quite, very, rather, etc;* or the adjective with *be* can be replaced by *feel* or *seem*

E.g. - *I feel rather encouraged and happy*

- **Pseudo-passives** has neither an active transform nor a possibility of agent addition

E.g. - *The house is already built*

Besides, in Vietnamese language, Diệp Quang Ban [3] divides the subject functions in the passive voice into six types including:

- (a) The goal: *Nó bị (cảnh sát) phạt.*
- (b) The recipient: *Chủ nợ đã được (con nợ) trả tiền.*
- (c) The arrival: *Thùng được (người ta) đổ đầy nước.*
- (d) The beneficiary: *Em bé được mẹ rửa chân cho.*
- (e) The maleficiary: *Nhà bị (bão) tốc mái.*
- (d) The place: *Tường được (chủ nhà) treo đầy tranh.*

#### 2.2.2. Conditional Sentences

Murcia, M. et al. [4] divide conditional sentences into three main types including factual conditional sentences, future or predictive conditional and imaginative conditional sentences

- **Factual conditional sentences** are used in everyday speaking and writing. Factual conditionals are divided into timeless and time-bound. Timeless conditional sentences are used to express habits; especially, they are also used in scientific writing.

E.g. *If you heat water to 100 degrees Celsius, it boils.*

In time-bound conditional sentences, the result clause in takes modals such as ‘must’ or ‘should’

E.g. *If someone works for you, you must pay them.*

- **Future or predictive conditional sentences** comprise an if-clause in the simple present tense and the main clause with will or shall to express future time.

Besides, the future conditional sentences are also used to express a prediction with modal verb such as may, might or should

- **Imaginative conditional sentences** include: hypothetical and counterfactual conditionals. Hypothetical conditionals refer to events unlikely and impossible to happen; the counterfactual express impossible events which are stated in the if-clause. Counterfactual conditionals can refer to the present as well as the past.

Besides, Beaumont, D. and Granger, C. [1] also point out that “*we also use the imperative in the main clause*”.

#### 2.2.3. Imperative sentences

According to Quirk, R. et al. [4] “*Imperative sentences are used for a wide range of illocutionary acts*” because illocutionary depends on the relation as well as on the benefits of the action between the speakers and the hearers.

### 3. Research methods

The study makes use of descriptive, analytical and comparative methods for the syntactic feature analysis of recreation activity advertisements in English versus Vietnamese.

While the descriptive method is used to find out the syntactic features of recreation activity advertisements, the analytical method extends the descriptive approach to suggest or explain why or how syntactic features affect recreation activity advertisements. Besides, the contrastive method is used to compare the syntactic features of

recreation activity advertisements in English versus Vietnamese to find out the similarities and differences between them.

### 4. Findings and discussion

#### 4.1. The syntactic features of ERAds and VRAds

##### 4.1.1. Passive Voice

In ERAds and VRAds, the passive voice is used not only to emphasize the activities’ features, but it also offers an impression that the readers will be able to fully experience the activities that they are involved in.

##### a. Passive Voice in highlighting the impression of activities’ features

###### In English

Subject (passive) + Verb (be + P.P) + Optional Agent (by-Phrase).

(3.1) *It is equipped with an easy swim platform, a large bathroom, sun and shade areas, and a fresh water rinse.* [6]

(3.2) *Racing through the launch station, momentum sends you on a lightning fast series of ascents and descents, rocking forwards and backwards on the gigantic loop before the ride car is caught in mid-air and lowered back to the base.* [7]

The example (3.1) provides a description of “*scuba diving*” while example (3.2) evokes an exhilarating and thrilling image of the car ride to the readers, who will experience the ride that “*is caught in mid-air and lowered back to the base*”.

###### In Vietnamese

According to Diệp Quang Ban’s categorization about the passive voice [3], I took the goal, the recipient and the beneficiary to analyze the passive voice in Vietnamese recreation activities advertisements

(3.3) *Mẹo nhỏ cho bạn: nhớ chú ý các combo, package được phát hành thường xuyên tại các quầy lễ tân giúp bạn chơi nhiều hơn, chi trả ít hơn!* [8]

(3.4) *Nhà banh được thiết kế để phù hợp cho trẻ từ 4 đến 12 tuổi với đa dạng các địa hình kết hợp để trẻ thỏa sức chơi, thỏa sức khám phá.* [9]

In the examples above, example (3.3) explains that the packages promotion offers reasonable price and benefits to the readers while example (3.4) shows the purpose of the recreational activity

##### b. Passive Voice in highlighting the benefit for the customers

###### In English

Subject (passive) + modal verb (will) + V (be + P.P)+ Optional Agent (by-Phrase).

(3.5) *At full speed you’ll be propelled at over 50kph down a 63m long wave-like track that plunges and climbs.* [10]

(3.6) *When you arrive you will be greeted by the friendly skydive team.* [11]

In example (3.6), the advertiser lets the readers feel pleased when they read the expression “*you’ll be greeted*”.

The readers are more likely to understand that they not only have chance to try the thrilling ride but they will also be able to release stress and enjoy happy moments with the “friendly skydive team”. The example (3.5) illustrates the pieces of advertisements which entail multiple nuances that can make the riders feel scared, excited and curious about the thrilling activities.

### In Vietnamese

(3.7) *Trên tầm cao 10 mét so với mặt đất, bạn sẽ được quay tròn.* [12]

The example (3.7) shows the experiences the customers can get when they join in the activities. They can be very pleased when reading the advertisement and that feeling can make them decide quickly the activities they like the most.

In short, I realize that in ERAds, the passive voice highlighting the benefits the customers can obtain in Table 1 is higher than that highlighting the impression of activities’ features, which accounts for 47.8%. However, Table 2 shows that the passive voice in VRAds which highlights the activities’ features is used at higher rate than that used to highlight the benefits for customers, which is at 32.4%.

### In English

**Table 1.** Frequency of the passive voice in ERAds

The Passive Voice	ERAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Highlighting the activities’ features	32	47.8
Highlighting the customers’ benefits	35	52.2
Total	67	100

### In Vietnamese

**Table 2.** Frequency of the passive voice in VRAds

The Passive Voice	VRAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Highlighting the activities’ features	23	67.6
Highlighting the customers’ benefits	11	32.4
Total	34	100

#### 4.1.2. Imperative Sentences

In ERAds and VRAds, imperative sentences used not only to persuade the customers to try their activities, but also guide them what or what not do to have good experiences from the activities.

### In English

There are two main forms of imperative sentences:

- Affirmative imperative: V(base form of the verb).
- Negative imperative: Do not + V (base form).

(3.8) ***Jump*** on the train for a light-hearted, breezy ride through the rambling trails of the desert. [13]

(3.9) ***Don’t plan*** on staying dry! [14]

As we can see from the examples above, the affirmative imperatives in example (3.8) shows the readers what to do when they participate in the activities. When the readers

read the verb “***jump***”, they can have a strong feeling about the thrilling activities. In example (3.9), the negative imperatives is used to alert or warn the readers what they should not do.

In ERAds, the affirmative imperative form is used at a rate of 91.5%, which is roughly 10 times higher than the rate of 8.5% in negative imperative form.

**Table 3.** Distribution of affirmative imperative and negative imperative sentences in ERAds

Imperative sentences	ERAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Affirmative Imperative	130	91.5
Negative Imperative	12	8.5
Total	142	100

### In Vietnamese

Like English, the Vietnamese language makes use of imperative sentences for giving direct suggestions or other purposes such as giving instructions or advices.

According to Diệp Quang Ban [3], *hãy* is used in affirmative imperatives and *đừng*, *chớ* are commonly used in negative imperative sentences.

(3.10) ***Đến Helio Center*** trượt băng mỗi tuần vì một cơ thể khỏe mạnh hơn! [15]

(3.11) ***Đừng ngần ngại! Hãy đến*** với Khu trò chơi cảm giác mạnh tại Công viên Văn hóa Đầm Sen, bạn sẽ được chơi thỏa thích.! [16]

As we can see, with the affirmative imperatives and negative imperatives such as “***hãy đến***”, “***đến Helio Center***”, “***Đừng ngần ngại***” in the examples above, the advertisers are advising as well as suggesting the readers to choose their activities because of their benefits.

Like ERAds, the affirmative imperative sentences in VRAds are used more than the negative ones, which only make up 13.8%.

**Table 4.** Distribution of affirmative imperative and negative imperative sentences in VRAds

Imperative sentences	VRAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Affirmative Imperative	50	86.2
Negative Imperative	8	13.8
Total	58	100

#### 4.1.3. Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences are the crucial syntactic features that need to be analyzed in ERAds and VRAds. The purposes of conditional sentences in recreation advertisements are varied, including giving offers or giving recommendations or warnings to the customers. Here are some examples to illustrate this:

### In English

#### a. Giving offers to meet the customers’ needs

(3.12) ***If you want to be tied up & thrown off with a friend, then this is the Bungy Site for you, as it offers Queenstown’s only Tandem Bungy Jump.*** [17]

In example (3.12), the customers will be very curious about the “*Bungy site*” because the challenging and thrilling characteristics shown clearly in the advertisements satisfy their hobby and requirement.

#### b. Giving guidance or warning to customers

(3.13) *There are 2 ways to get up and down this beast. If you ride the “lift” tower, it will blast you nearly instantly to the top.* [18]

In example (3.13), the advertiser lets the reader have a strong feeling because when reading, they can imagine what will happen to them if they join in the activity.

**Table 5.** Distribution of conditional sentences’ purposes in ERAds

Conditional sentences	ERAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Giving offers to customers	16	59.3
Giving guidance and warning to customers	11	40.7
Total	27	100

It is interesting to see that in ERAds, the conditional sentences used to give offers to customers constitute 59.3%, which is higher than those used to give guidance and warning to customers, which is at 40.7%

#### In Vietnamese

In Vietnamese, Diệp Quang Ban [3] states that the compound conditional sentence is a sentence in which the subordinate clause is called the conditional clause with the words such as *nếu, hễ, miễn, giả như...* and the main clause is called as the consequence clause with the word *thì*. This sentence can be recognized by following structures:

**Nếu.....thì.....**

**Hễ.....thì.....**

**Miễn (là).....thì.....**

**Giả như/ giả sử.....thì.....**

However, in VRAds, the structure mainly used is **Nếu....thì....** in normal sentences or in reverse sentences. Sometimes, the word *thì* is eliminated or the main clause is imperative

#### a. Giving offers to meet the customers’ needs

(3.14) *Nếu bạn đang tìm kiếm cảm giác tốc độ, hãy thử mô tô trượt nước của chúng tôi.* [19]

(3.15) *Nếu là một fan hâm mộ các cuộc đua kì thú trong bộ phim hoạt hình nổi tiếng ‘Cars’ và muốn trải nghiệm cảm giác phấn khích qua các trò chơi tốc độ, bạn không nên bỏ qua trò chơi Xe điện dụng tại Sông Hồng Resort.* [20]

While the imperative conditional sentence with “*hãy thử*” in example (3.14) persuades customers to try the activity, the example (3.15) raises the curiosity of the customers because when they join in the activity, they can do the things they want.

#### b. Giving guidance or warning to customers

(3.16) *Nếu là lần đầu, người chơi phải đi trên sân có mặt phẳng để làm quen.* [21]

In example (3.16), the advertiser asks the customers who first join in the activities that they should “*đi trên sân có mặt phẳng để làm quen*” to ensure the safety for them,

**Table 6.** Distribution of conditional sentences’ purposes in VRAds

Conditional sentences	VRAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
Giving offers to customers	9	47.4
Giving guidance and warning to customers	10	52.6
Total	19	100

As we can see in the table above, the occurrence of conditional sentences giving offers or guidance to customers are approximately equal. While the rate of conditional sentences used to give offers to customers takes up to 47.4%, the conditional sentences used to give guidance or warnings to customers have a rate of 52.6%.

#### 4.2. Frequency of Syntactic Features used in Recreation Activities Advertisements in English versus Vietnamese

As we can see in the analysis above, the passive voice, imperative sentences and conditional sentences play crucial parts in ERAds and VRAds. They are not only used to highlight the activities’ features, but they also emphasize the benefits the customers can have from them. Here are the comprehensive tables showing the distributions of sentences types in ERAds and VRAds respectively.

#### In English

**Table 7.** Distribution of sentences types in ERAds

Sentences Types	ERAds	
	Occurrence	Rate (%)
The Passive Voice (P.A)	67	28.4
The Imperative Sentences	142	60.2
The Conditional Sentences	27	11.4
Total	236	100

#### In Vietnamese

**Table 8.** Distribution of sentences types in VRAds

Sentences Types	VRAds	
	Occurrence	Rate(%)
The Passive Voice (P.A)	34	30.6
The Imperative Sentences	58	52.3
The Conditional Sentences	19	17.1
Total	111	100

As shown in Table 7 and Table 8, imperative sentences in ERAds and VRAds cover the highest portion at 60.2% and 52.3% respectively. In Table 7 and 8, the passive voice sentences hold the second highest rates compared to other types of sentences. These rates are 28.4% for ERAds and 30.6% for VRAds. The smallest component in VRAds and ERAds is conditional sentences, which is at 11.4% and 17.1% respectively.

#### 5. Conclusions

From the result of the study, I find that the analysis of the syntactic structures of English and Vietnamese

recreation activity advertisements is applied. With respect to the syntactic features, there are some similarities between the two languages. Firstly, the passive voice is considered to be important because it focuses on enabling readers to get clear information about features of recreation as well as clearly understand the benefits they can get from each activity. Secondly, in two languages, while if – clause is used to raise the customers' needs or the chances for the customers to try the activities, the main clause is the advertisers' persuasion for them. Thirdly, with respect to imperative sentences, the advertisers would like to give offers, guidance or warning to the customers to make them clearly understand the advertisements. As for the rate of syntactic features, the highest rate of both ERAds and VRAds is the imperative sentences, which account for 60.2% and 52.3% respectively. In addition, both ERAds and VRAds have the same lower rate in the passive voice, which takes up to 28.4% and 30.6% and the lowest rate belongs to the conditional sentences, which is at 11.4% in ERAds and 17.1% in VRAds. However, the occurrences of sentences types in ERAds are higher than those in VRAds.

With the clear illustration and analysis of syntactic features in recreation activity advertisements in English and Vietnamese, the teachers as well as the English learners can understand the importance of syntactic features in showing the impression of advertisements and the benefits the customers can obtain from them.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Beaumont, D. and Granger, C., *Heinemann English Grammar*, Heinemann, 1992.
- [2] Chomsky, N., *Syntactic Structures*, London, 1957.
- [3] Diệp Quang Ban, *Ngữ Pháp Tiếng Việt*, Nxb Giáo Dục, 2004.
- [4] Murcia, M. et al, *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course*, Heinle & Heinle, 1999.
- [5] Quirk, R. et al, *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*, Longman, 1985.
- [6] <http://www.waterplayusa.com/tour/438/snuba-go-scuba-diving-without-being-certified/>
- [7] <https://www.dreamworld.com.au/rides/thrill-rides/buzzsaw>
- [8] <http://helio.vn/vie/play-s/tro-choi-cam-giac-manh/tomado-voi-rong.html>
- [9] <http://helio.vn/vie/play-s/tro-choi-van-dong/ballicity-nha-banh.html>
- [10] <https://www.dreamworld.com.au/rides/family-rides/shockwave>
- [11] <http://www.tigermothworld.com.au/skydive/>
- [12] <http://damsenpark.com.vn/vi/super-swing>
- [13] <https://www.sixflags.com/magicmountain/attractions/road-runner-express>
- [14] <https://www.sixflags.com/magicmountain/attractions/roaring-rapids>
- [15] <http://helio.vn/vie/play-s/tro-choi-van-dong/ice-skating-san-truot-bang.html>
- [16] <http://damsenpark.com.vn/vi/tro-chi-cm-giac-mnh>
- [17] <http://www.ultimatequeenstown.com/thrill/air/kawarau-bridge-bungy.3/>
- [18] <https://www.sixflags.com/greatescape/attractions/sasquatch>
- [19] <http://picnic.whitesanddoclet.com/water-sports/>
- [20] <http://songhongresort.com/phongnghi/show/34/Xe-Dien-Dung.html>
- [21] <http://www.aseanresort.vn/vui-choi/hang-muc-vui-choi/truot-pa-tanh.html>

*(The Board of Editors received the paper on 14/12/2015, its review was completed on 26/04/2016)*