

**School of Education**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**“Anh Nam, the attach file is my report for trip to KL”:**

**An investigation into the emergence of a new variety of English in written  
Vietnamese business communication**

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**This thesis is presented for the Degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**of**

**Curtin University**

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**DECLARATION**

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

## **ABSTRACT**

This study seeks to examine whether distinct, localised features of English used in Vietnamese business communication are emerging under the influence of the Vietnamese socio-cultural context. English has a long history in Vietnam; and in the last two decades, it has developed with an unprecedented speed in business communication. Despite this ascendancy, there has been an absence of research regarding English in Vietnamese business communication; hence, English in Vietnamese business communication deserves an in-depth investigation. This research was framed within the theoretical perspectives of World Englishes and Systemic Functional Linguistics. Choosing to focus on the written features of English due to the heavy reliance of today's business world on written documents, the study addresses the research questions by using two methods of analysis: content analysis and discourse analysis. Business texts in various business sectors composed by Vietnamese writers were collected. They were then analysed with regard to their systemic functional characteristics to establish whether regular written features of English used in Vietnamese business communication are developing within the Vietnamese context of culture and context of situation. The findings of the study indicate that systematic features were exhibited across the data at lexico-grammatical level as well as contextual level, which, when woven together, demonstrated six major features of English used in Vietnamese written business communication. However, while systematic features of the data were unveiled, the functional perspective adopted in the study suggests that many issues of World Englishes, including paradigmatic and methodological issues, be revisited in light of the findings of this study.

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## **DEDICATION**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
CA	Content analysis
DA	Discourse analysis
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
IE	International English
SEA	South East Asia
SFG	Systemic Functional Grammar
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
WE	World Englishes

Note that a description of terminology used in this thesis is provided in the codebook (see Appendix 1).

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

The diverse forms and functions of Englishes in different continents have triggered substantial research investigating “the varied and continually evolving social and cultural characteristics of the language” (B. Kachru, Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2008, p. xvii). In South East Asia where Vietnam is geographically located, there have been numerous studies regarding localised varieties of English, such as Platt and Ho (1989), Nair-Venugopal (1997, 2000, 2001, 2003), Watkhaolarm (2005), Lim (2007), Alsagoff (2010), Khojasteh and Kafipour (2012), Tan-Chia, Fang, and Ang (2013), Gut, Pillai, and Don (2013), Kim and Sato (2013), and Smakman and Wagenaar (2013). However, in spite of significant issues about the status, features and functions of English used in written business communication, in Vietnam, there is a dearth of empirical studies about these issues (Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008, p. 140; Bolton, 2008a, p. 9; Chew, 2009, p. 372). Within that context, the current study examines whether systematic features of English have emerged in written Vietnamese business communication. To that end, the thesis is organised into six chapters. This introductory chapter will provide a description of the background to the study, outline the objectives, offer an overview of the overarching theoretical framework to achieve the objectives, discuss the significance of the study and, finally, present the organisation of the thesis.

### **1.1 Background to the study**

Unlike other languages, English has been in use in Vietnam for a relatively short period. As a consequence of colonisation, French was employed as a medium of instruction in schools for approximately 100 years (from about the mid-19th century to mid-20th century), however, English was only introduced to the South of Vietnam in 1957 because of the political involvement of the United States in that area at that time (Tran, 1998; Wright, 2002; H. Do, 2006). Since its introduction, the number of people learning English in the south of the country had increased dramatically as it was perceived to be a means to advance in the society (Wright, 2002). Between 1968 and 1969, it was estimated that the number of people learning English increased sevenfold (Wright, 2002). For those from rural and isolated areas who could not go to school to learn the language formally, an English-Vietnamese pidgin was developed to facilitate their communication (Wright, 2002). This vigorous growth of

English, however, only lasted for less than three decades; English use in the South went into a steep decline when Vietnam was reunified in 1975 and joined the communist bloc (S. Le, 2011). English was then marginalised and gave place to Russian (H. Do, 2006).

It was not until the economic reformations in 1986 that English once again became popular. Since Vietnam joined the World Trade Organisation in 2007 and, therefore, attracted a huge amount of foreign investment, English has become widely studied and highly esteemed (S. Le, 2011). As an English teacher in Ho Chi Minh City for several years, the researcher has witnessed Vietnamese people, from factory workers to office managers, flock to English language centres at night, at lunch time, and at the weekend in an endeavour to brush up on their English skills. As Tran (1998) notes, many Vietnamese people juggle “full-time jobs with evening [English] classes and private lessons” (p. 8). Not only adults but also children in Ho Chi Minh City are sent to English language centres and English-speaking childcare centres from an early age. Wilhelm (1995) also notices “many grey heads with receding hairlines” (p. 8) bending over English exercises in many English classrooms. As a result of this unprecedented demand, English language centres have mushroomed; English-teaching programmes and cartoons have filled Vietnamese TV channels (K. Brown, 1995a; Nunan, 2003). At the same time, Vietnamese Russian-language teachers have been seen to learn English hastily to keep up with the widespread shift while English textbooks written by Russian advisers have been gradually phased out as many people express their aspiration of speaking English in a more authentic manner (Lamb, 2000; Denham, 1992; H. Do, 2006; S. Le, 2011).

The ascendancy of English is also reflected in its widespread use in the past two decades. As Denham (1992) observed more than twenty years ago, English was readily used between Vietnamese people and non-Vietnamese in metropolitan areas. In Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam, where Russian was solely selected as a foreign language from 1954 due to the North’s political alliance with Russia (T. Le, 2011), English was claimed to be taking hold at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Lamb, 2000). Vietnamese people have also been seen to make use of any chance they can seize to practise their English with English speakers, in hotel lobbies, at tourist destinations, and in the streets (Denham, 1992; Mydans, 1995). As Mydans

(1995) writes in an article entitled “Vietnam speaks English with an eager accent”: “there is an overwhelming rush to speak English. It seems everybody speaks English now, if only a few phrases” (p. 4.16). Over time, not knowing English may equate with not being able to secure office employment as most employers require white-collar applicants to have at least a functional command of the language (Marks, 1998; Wright, 2002; H. Do, 2006). As Tran (1998) writes, “[y]oung people open up the newspaper and they see that jobs always ask for English” (p. 8). Not only does English play a critical role in employment in private corporations, but government bureaucrats under the age of 50 are also expected to be conversant in English (K. Brown, 1995a; Lamb, 2000). In 1997, the then Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet ruled that government officials would not be hired unless they had an advanced command of a foreign language, preferably English (Wilhelm, 1995). It is, thus, not surprising when Tran (1998) observes English has become an indispensable ticket to employment in Vietnam, a “language of choice for anyone who wants to get ahead” (p. 8).

In this bustling “English-language boom” (Mydans, 1995, p. 4.16), the current research project was triggered when the researcher noticed through personal and acquaintances’ working experience that English had been used in written business communication in some Vietnamese corporations, not only between Vietnamese people and non-Vietnamese, but, remarkably, also among Vietnamese speakers. Below are some representative samples:

*Sample 1:*

Dear A. A. [older brother A.],

There's been no new FA of L'AM, M is very busy & can't go there tomorrow, my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer when finish the installations & services of Nha Trang .

Regards

X (*text 3-6-X*)

*Sample 2:*

Dear colleagues,

Please take a look at the file attached and add any necessary information (person to share the room with, dietary restriction, etc).

As the cancellation and amendment policy is very strict (even 25% of first night revenue charge for cancellation or amendment made 61-90 days before arrival), please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to make any changes.

Thanks for your attention.

Y (*text 8-10-Y*)

*Sample 3:*

Dear Ms C,

As you know, we – TPFS Co., Ltd – as representative of FL in Vietnam and we have also supplied FL rupture disc for [Company 7] before as the attached.

Now, We have learnt that you have wanted to purchase spare FL rupture disc (3” AXIUS Rupture Disc) for your new project in Vietnam . You have placed the order to FL Thailand distributor through your project contact in Thailand . However, they already forwarded your demand to us in order to serve you.

Therefore, please kindly send us your official inquiry. It would help us send you the offer at the soonest.

Best regards,

GG (*text 7-32-GG*)

While English has been recognised as the language of commerce in Vietnam for quite some time (Mydans, 1995), the use of English among Vietnamese speakers rarely seems to be documented. Even in a multicultural English-speaking environment like the United States, Vietnamese people tend to use Vietnamese with

one another (Norman, 2002b). As Norman (2002b) quotes one Vietnamese bank teller who lives in the United States, “even for me – I’m fluent in English – to express exactly what I feel to another Vietnamese, I want to say it in Vietnamese” (p. 1). Therefore, in a country that is vastly monolingual like Vietnam (Chew, 2009), despite the apparent embrace of English as a foreign language, the use of written English among Vietnamese business communicators comes as somewhat of a surprise. While four decades ago, after the country’s reunification in 1975, English was condemned to be the language of ‘dirty’ capitalism (“Vietnam’s Socialist Ideals Fade as Business Rushes in,” 2006, p. 22; Norman, 2002a), or the language of the “decadent ‘American imperialist’ influences” (Wright, 2002, p. 235), it now appears to assume a different status for Vietnamese people. In spite of the government’s attempt to keep its ‘invasion’ at bay, such as by having English names translated into Vietnamese-sounding words in the media, sending out squads of police to remove and paint over English words on the facades of shops or restaurants in the name of a language purification campaign, and passing a law on linguistics to ban the use of English words in Vietnamese documents (Birchall, 1999), English seems to have discreetly crept into Vietnamese business communication among Vietnamese people.

Despite the employment of English as a means of written communication, another striking feature of it is the frequent borrowings of Vietnamese in English texts. These observations raise questions as to why Vietnamese communicators use English, not Vietnamese as the main means of communication with other Vietnamese in their written texts, whether this means a new variety of English is becoming manifest in Vietnamese written business communication, what implications the features of borrowings have, whether there are any other outstanding lexico-grammatical features, and whether this tells us anything about the contexts that give rise to these texts. As these initial queries arose from personal observations limited to a small number of texts from a few selected companies, there is a need to investigate whether this phenomenon exists on a larger scale in a more systematic way; hence, the motivation for the current study.

Examining the literature on English in Vietnamese business communication for an answer to these initial questions, one can find very limited research. The small number of studies that explore English in Vietnamese business communication only

focuses on one or two lexical or structural features of the language (e.g., Chew, 2005). Other articles about written business communication in Vietnam are often anecdotal, based on the writers' personal experience or the recount of a limited number of informants (e.g., Kohl, 2007). The vast majority of research to date regarding English in Vietnam concerns English teaching and methodology (e.g., Lewis & McCook, 2002; H. Pham, 2005; Nguyen-Hoa, 2011; S. Le, 2011; V. Ho, 2011a; Kieu, 2010; Anh, 2010; Luu, 2011) while another substantial body of studies have examined the features of English used by Vietnamese people overseas (e.g., G. Pham & Kohnert, 2010; G. Pham, 2011; G. Pham, Kohnert, & Mann, 2011).

This absence of research in written English business communication in Vietnam contrasts with today's business world's heavy reliance on written documents for sharing information, conducting and recording transactions, exchanging ideas, and maintaining a harmonious interpersonal relationship within a company and with external business contacts (Poe, 2006, pp. 3-4; Xu, 2012, p. 75). As Bruce, Hirst and Keene (1995) put it, "today's world of business lives on written documents" (p. 1).

Indeed, writing is a crucial communication tool for business people in the real world, influencing workplace productivity and efficiency (Sparks, 1999; Zhu, 2004; Xu, 2012). In a study on 280 business department chairs' perceptions of the importance of written communication, Wardrope (2002) reveals that writing is perceived to be more important than other business communication skills, such as speaking, interpersonal communication, team-group communication, listening, and cultural literacy skills. Schatz (2007) also stresses the importance of business writing: "Business graduates will have a hard time going beyond middle management if they do not possess good writing skills" (para. 2). Because of the primacy of written communication as well as the increasingly important status of English in Vietnam, English in Vietnamese written business communication deserves a detailed, comprehensive examination.

## **1.2 Objectives**

Given the importance of written business communication in the context that English is on the rise in Vietnam but still under-researched, this study sought to investigate whether systematic features of English used in Vietnamese written business

communication were emerging under the influence of the Vietnamese cultural and situational contexts. To achieve this goal, the study aimed at addressing the following research questions:

- What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?
- What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?
- To what extent does the nature of English used in Vietnamese written business communication support arguments regarding the existence of a ‘Vietnamese’ variety of English?

### **1.3 Overarching theoretical framework to achieve objectives**

Being an investigation into the emergence of a new variety of English, the study was generally situated in the paradigm of World Englishes (WE) because it examines the “realities of the presence of Englishes in their worldwide contexts” (B. Kachru, Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2006, p. xvii). However, despite this paradigmatic position, this study differed from a typical WE study in two main ways. First, unlike the majority of WE studies that utilise the ‘native-speaker’ norms as a point of comparison (e.g., Shrestha, 2003; Balasubramanian, 2009; Davydova, 2012; Yao & Collins, 2012; Nejari, Gerritsen, Haagen, & Korzilius, 2012), this study allowed the features of English business communication in Vietnam to emerge autonomously from the data, without comparing it with any inner-circle Englishes. Second, not focusing on “loan words and fossilised expressions” (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998, p. 150), the study examined the texts from a functional semiotic perspective that centres on the notions of cultural and situational contexts. To achieve these ends, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1994a; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday, 2009; Martin, 2009; Eggins & Slade, 2012; Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) was chosen as an analytical framework to develop the macro-questions for the macro-analysis as well as the codebook for the micro-analysis. Not only scaffolding the analytical tools, SFL also articulated the theoretical stance that can be seen woven throughout the study. Therefore, it can be said that SFL was the overarching theoretical framework that guided this study.

In WE, there have been a substantial number of research studies that focus on detailing the structural and lexical alterations of nativised varieties. While there is a discussion of the socio-cultural history of the emergence of the new varieties and an attention to pragmatics, a number of WE studies are devoted to the description of the structural forms, for example, Davydova (2012), Asante (2012), Yao and Collins (2012) and Starks and Thompson (2009). In addition to structural forms, another significant number of WE studies have focused on the description of the linguistic effects of language contact on lexical borrowings (e.g., Yang, 2005, 2009; Imm, 2009; Grant, 2012). As B. Kachru et al. (2006) admit, “there is indeed greater emphasis today than in the past on capturing the expanding fusions and hybridisations of linguistic forms” (p. xvii) of new Englishes. This form-focused direction of research in WE, which will be further explored in the literature review, often follows the identity-orientation model, which is tied to ethnicity, macro-culture or national identity.

However, language is a semiotic system, a meaning-making process (Halliday, 1978; Halliday, 2009; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Each language, not excepting English, offers its users a system of options to simultaneously express three strands of meanings: representational, interpersonal and intratextual (Matthiessen, Teruya & Lam, 2010). Thus, how speakers/writers use language to “construe reality and enact social relationships” (Webster, 2009, p. 1) is of more significance than what structural forms they use. Put differently, lexico-grammatical forms are only a means as they are the resources to enable language users to construe events and relate to each other in different ways (Halliday, 2009, p. 65). In business communication, as will be seen in the data, linguistic forms are the constituents of a semiotic system which the communicators select to construe reality while ensuring the establishment of an interpersonal relationship with respect to power and solidarity. Accordingly, the use of SFL, a grammar that “respects speakers’ rights to make up their own minds about how they choose to talk” (Martin, Matthiessen, & Painter, 1997, p. 3) to analyse the data assisted the researcher to understand why the texts were the way they were, rather than judging them on a comparative basis.

This functional standpoint, furthermore, allowed the study to avoid the methodological weakness often critiqued in previous studies within the WE

paradigm: using inner-circle Englishes such as British English and American English as a yardstick to uncover deviating features of nativised varieties (e.g., Davydova, 2012; Yao & Collins, 2012; Nejjari et al., 2012), which will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter. As Yano (2001) puts it, many studies in WE still seem to be constricted to the notion of “native-speaker-centreness” (p. 123). Moreover, if one inner-circle variety, for example, British English or American English, is used as a yardstick for standard, then the question is why other inner-circle Englishes such as Australian English, New Zealand English, or Canadian English are not selected. Using SFL as a theoretical framework, the study allowed features of English used by the Vietnamese writers to emerge in its own right, without having to compare the data with any other varieties.

As seen later on in this study, the systemic functional perspective enabled the researcher to explore the texts comprehensively, rather than to search just for features that do not conform to certain standards. According to Halliday (2009), SFL does not explore features in isolation, but in “a totality of relations in all linguistic strata” (p. 65). As Halliday (2009, p. 66) further asserts, it makes little sense to examine, for example, passive voice without looking at active voice. Nor does it make sense just to investigate negative without describing positive. In other words, language features have to be investigated as complete paradigmatic systems (Halliday, 2009, p. 66). In this study, as seen in the coding frame and data analysis (chapters 3 and 4), the study did not look for ‘faults’ in the texts, but explored all possible features holistically in each paradigmatic system. For instance, in the examination of processes (chapter 4), the study not only analysed *will be arrived* as in *It is expected that around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers will be arrived at HCMC for this project (text 4-8-M)*, but also examined *will arrive* as in *Our training team will arrive before shortly for the setup (text 3-33-D)*. Moreover, not only material processes like *arrive* were scrutinised, but all the other types of processes were also investigated. Similarly, not only the absence of hypotactic/paratactic conjunctions in some clauses were analysed, for example, *we have another key person in the North – Mr. G – [who] focuses to growing the Institutional accounts in the North as another CAE (text 3-12-N)*, but all the conjunctions used in the data were subject to investigation. The same comprehensive procedure was applied for all other analytical variables in

the coding frame. By looking at the data through the systemic domains of transitivity, theme, mood and modality, the analysis of the data avoided the deficit approach so as to provide a descriptively adequate picture of English used in Vietnamese business communication. As Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998, p. 150) point out, it is advisable to move towards a pragmatic, rather than linguistic, approach to exploring new varieties of English as it is inadequate to draw conclusions about a variety of English simply based on formal features such as loan words and fossilised expressions. According to Mahboob and Szenes (2010, p. 583), emerging varieties of English have to be seen as representing and construing the reality that their users live in.

The reality that Mahboob and Szenes (2010) suggest implies the contexts that account for selective departures from systemic regularities, including the expansion and development of the existing systems (Hasan, 2009, pp. 167-171). Taking the contexts of situation and culture into account, we can understand why language in the data exists as it does. As Hasan (2009) states, “to explain why [certain] patterns of wordings appear rather than any other, one must appeal to the meanings, which, being relevant to the context, activated those wordings” (p. 170). This socio-semantic explanation allowed the features of the texts in the data to be viewed from a scope of functionality, rather than from a generalised nationality/ethnicity-driven perspective. The employment of SFL as an overarching theoretical framework, therefore, appeared useful for this study to navigate away from a nationally marked variety of English to acknowledge the influence of such dynamic factors as domain of communication, social relationships, and communication goals.

#### **1.4 Findings**

The findings of the study indicate that systematic features were exhibited across the data at lexico-grammatical level as well as contextual level, which, when woven together, demonstrated six major features of English used in Vietnamese written business communication: orientation to actions, negotiation tactics, prevalence of relationship building, context dependence, lack of revision and language as choice. These features suggest that a ‘variety’ of English for written business communication in Vietnam has emerged.

## **1.5 Significance**

This study is significant because of its contribution to the literature of WE and Vietnamese business communication. It also has implications for English language teaching. Given the fact that little research has been conducted on English in Vietnam (Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008, p. 140; Bolton, 2008a, p. 9), the study seeks to contribute to the existing literature of WE. Moreover, with the employment of SFL as a theoretical framework and an analytical tool, I anticipate that this thesis will contribute a new method of approaching WE that can help to solve existing methodological pitfalls as will be discussed in the following chapters.

In addition, the study is expected to shed light on English used in written business communication in Vietnam, an area of research that is still in its infancy (Chew, 2009, p. 372). The findings are anticipated to assist interested bodies, including foreigners who want to conduct business in Vietnam, to get an insight into how Vietnamese business people make ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings in authentic communication.

Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to provide important information for English education policy-makers in Vietnam. It is anticipated that the findings will be available to help them make informed decisions in selecting suitable forms and meaning potential underlying the English language used in Vietnamese business communication to be incorporated into the English-for-specific-purposes (ESP) curriculum so as to help business students acknowledge the dynamics of context and its impact on the flexibility of texts, maximising their ability to identify important aspects of business communication to produce texts that are contextually adequate and professionally valued.

## **1.6 Organisation of thesis**

The next chapter (chapter 2) details the relevant context that situates the current study, providing a review of the literature in relation to WE, English in Vietnam, the use of SFL for a WE study, written business communication in general and written business communication in Vietnam in particular, and the influence of different factors on written business communication.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the methodology adopted in the study, including the research paradigm, the use of SFL as an analytical tool, the employment of content analysis and discourse analysis as the major research methods, issues of sampling and the coding scheme. This chapter also provides a full report of the four pilot coding stages, which helped to enhance the validity of the coding frame and the reliability of the analytical process. Issues of validity and reliability are also discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 4 is devoted to the presentation of the results of the micro analysis, offering a comprehensive revelation of the analysis of the thirteen variables that constitute the three dimensions of the situational context. Moreover, through the analysis of these variables, the lexico-grammatical features of the data are identified. This chapter helps address the first research question and the first part of the second research question.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the macro analysis, providing an insight into the topics and purposes of the texts, which, together with the lexico-grammatical features identified in chapter 4, sheds light on genres, the audience the texts aim at, the relationship between the writer and recipient in relation to frequency of contact, affective involvement and power relation, the mode of the texts realised through the way the texts are organised as well as the way the organisation is signalled. The findings in this chapter allow the researcher to address the second part of the second research question, that is, how the context of culture is manifested in the data.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by discussing the extent to which the findings in chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate the existence of a new variety of English in written Vietnamese business communication, and thereby addressing the last research question. This chapter also suggests implications for future research into English in written Vietnamese business communication and business teaching research. In addition, theoretical and methodological implications for WE future studies will also be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter provides a synopsis of the literature that informed the thesis and the framing of the research questions, including an exploration of existing paradigms to investigate a variety of English, a detailed discussion of the proposed theoretical framework for the current study and a review of research into Englishes in South East Asia in general and Vietnam in particular. This chapter also examines the literature related to the influence of contextual factors (i.e., national culture, corporate culture, professional culture, field, tenor and mode of business discourse) on written business communication.

### **2.1 Examining language varieties: Existing paradigms**

To examine a variety of English, it can be seen that there are currently three major paradigms a researcher may choose to adopt: World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or English as an International Language (EIL). While some scholars argue there are no clear-cut divisions among these paradigms (for example, J. Jenkins (2007) suggests that ELF is a branch of WE), the review below argues that each demonstrates a distinct set of beliefs and practices. Whether these paradigms overlap or not, however, each exhibits certain perceived weaknesses, as outlined below. On this basis, a modified theoretical framework was developed for the current study.

#### **2.1.1 World Englishes (WE)**

B. Kachru's pioneering work in fighting for the recognition of the legitimate status and cultural values of Indian English in the 1980s (e.g., B. Kachru, 1983) promoted the study of WE, now an established branch of linguistics/sociolinguistics (T. Mesthrie, 2008, p. 274). Over the last twenty years, it has highlighted "the existence and vitality of localised forms" of English throughout the world, reflecting the dynamic socio-cultural realities that underpin the varieties (Bolton, 2008a, p. 8).

The study of WE is associated with the colonial and postcolonial era (B. Kachru, Y. Kachru & Nelson, 2008, p. xvii). During colonial periods, the form of English used by professional people in England seemed to be "the only conceivable model" (Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens, 1964, p. 292). By the 1960s, however, things began to change. English was argued to be no longer "owned" (Halliday et al., 1964, p. 293) by the British, but had become an international language. Nowadays, it is used

in more non-L1<sup>1</sup> contexts than L1 ones (Cogo, 2008, p. 58). As Llamzon (1983) metaphorically maintains, it has developed into various distinct forms like “transplanted trees” that can “grow into healthy and vigorous plants and contribute to the beauty of the international landscape” (p. 92).

Crucial to the understanding of WE is the theoretical construct of varieties (T. Mesthrie, 2008, p. 275). According to Bolton (2008b, p. 289), ‘varieties’ is a neutral and technical term that encompasses a wide range of concepts, including language, dialect, accent, sociolect, style or register. Halliday (1978), however, characterises ‘varieties’ as including dialect and register, the former referring to “what a person speaks, determined by who he is” (p. 110) and the latter indicating “what a person is speaking, determined by what he is doing at the time” (p. 110). However, in colonial contexts and the study of WE, ‘varieties’ indicate the distinct characteristics of the English language as a result of nativisation and hybridisation; hence, such terms as ‘localised varieties of English’, ‘nativised varieties of English’ and ‘new varieties of English’ will be used in this thesis in this sense.

Another influential concept in the enterprise of WE is the Three Circle Model conceived by B. Kachru (1985). The inner circle is defined as countries where English is the primary language, for example, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The outer circle comprises postcolonial Anglophonic countries where English achieves official recognition, for instance, Singapore, India and Nigeria. The expanding circle refers to countries where English is learned as a foreign language (e.g., China, Japan, and Israel). According to this distinction, Vietnam may be said to belong to the expanding circle since there is no language policy that specifies the status of English in Vietnam (H. Do, 2006). However, this distinction will be explored further below.

While having made significant contributions to linguistics/sociolinguistics, the study of WE has been subject to debates and controversies. The first concern is about its orientation: linguistic or pragmatic. Dating from the late 1970s and early 1980s is the WE structuralist approach with a linguistic orientation, stressing the centrality of describing formal aspects of new varieties such as morphological and syntactic

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<sup>1</sup> English as a mother tongue

alteration (Bolton, 2005, p. 73). Although changes have occurred, this structuralist approach still persists, dominating a substantial body of research into WE. For instance, Davydova (2012) provides a detailed description of the forms of localised Englishes used in India and Russia, including the description of the uses of articles, omission of plural markings, omission of copula 'be', and extended uses of certain tenses. Asante (2012) offers a discussion of a variation of subject-verb agreement in Ghanaian English, which is categorised into several types such as zero marking of third person singular, auxiliary 'have' and singular subjects, and singular verbs with plural subjects. Yao and Collins (2012) present a description of the distribution of the present perfect in ten varieties of English as well as its co-occurrence with temporal adverbs such as *already*, *yet*, *never* and *ever*. Starks and Thompson (2009) examine the agreement patterns of the existential construction *there* used by the Niuean New Zealanders, showing a tendency towards *there is* followed by plural noun phrases.

As well as focusing on structural features, many WE studies also aim at detailing lexical borrowings. For example, Yang (2005, 2009) explores borrowed lexical items in Chinese English as a result of the close contact between Mandarin and English in China. Hashim and Leitner (2011) examine the borrowing of cultural and religious lexis from Malay, Chinese, Indian languages, and recently Arabic, into Malaysian English. Similarly, Imm (2009) investigates Chinese loan words in Malaysian English. Grant (2012) looks at "culturally motivated" (p. 162) loan words borrowed from the indigenous Maori language in New Zealand English.

However, as pointed out in chapter 1, it is inadequate to draw conclusions about a variety merely based on formal features such as loan words and fossilised expressions (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998, p. 150). Therefore, a study of a new variety should not only examine formal variations but also look at language as a meaning-making process grounded in the new contexts of culture and situation (Mahboob & Szenes, 2010, pp. 584-585). This view is in line with the functional perspectives adopted in this study.

The second concern regarding WE is its methodological strategies. As Dasgupta (1993) and Gorlach (1999) maintain, the discipline follows an anecdotal methodology, a form of "narrative linguistics" (Gorlach, 1999, p. 12). Another

methodological problem of WE, as Dasgupta (1993, p. 135) holds, is only comparing local forms with inner-circle Englishes. For instance, Davydova (2012) uses British English as a basis to examine the features of English in India and Russia. Likewise, Yao and Collins (2012) explore the uses of the present perfect in nativised varieties by comparing them to American and British uses, saying that “the distribution of the present perfect [...] in most of the English varieties investigated can be placed on a continuum with British English (BrE) and American English (AmE) lying at its two opposite ends” (p. 386). Similarly, Balasubramanian (2009) explores the use of circumstantial adverbials *also* and *too* in Indian English by comparing “the position preferences (medial, initial, final) of the adverbials in registers of Indian English versus registers of British and American English” (p. 485). In another study, Nejari et al. (2012) investigates Dutch-English pronunciation by examining its deviation from British English.

However, this approach has been challenged since it is inadequate to use British English or American English as a single point of comparison without viewing the linguistic features of a new variety “as a part of an autonomous system” (Cheshire, 1991, p. 7). Dasgupta (1993, p. 135), thus, suggests a two-step approach. First, features of a new variety are compared with metropolitan English norms. Second, they are examined against the local context. This methodology, he contends, “leads in practice to descriptively adequate results” (Dasgupta, 1993, p. 135). However, while recognising the importance of context in triggering a new variety, Dasgupta (1993) still seems to rely on a certain variety of English as a point of comparison. This approach is, therefore, avoided in this current study.

The third debate is related to WE conceptualisations. Pennycook (2001) critiques the study of WE for its “blindness to global forces” (p. 59) and “weak theorisation of hybridity” (p. 59). In a 2003 paper, he further critiques the WE paradigm for insisting on social, cultural and political neutrality of English, ignoring “the broader political context of the spread of English” (Pennycook, 2003, pp. 516-521). He also points to the shortcomings of the three-circle model, holding that it focuses only on nationally marked identities of Englishes without acknowledging the hybridity of subvarieties influenced by class, gender, education or ethnicity (Pennycook, 2003, pp. 516-521). In a later discussion, Pennycook alleges that the inner circle with the accompanying

notion of genetic nativeness fails to account for the increasing number of immigrants and the speakers of the supplanted indigenous languages (Pennycook, 2009). Other writers such as Holborow (1999), Baker (2009) and Mahboob and Szenes (2010) share similar views with Pennycook (2003) in this regard. Holborow (1999) argues that the concentric circle model does not take into consideration “social factors and social differences within the circles” (pp. 59-60). Likewise, Baker (2009, p. 568) critiques the concentric circles for their homogeneous nationality-language association. The author writes: “the concentric circles fail to clearly distinguish between regions, nationalities, and users of English” (Baker, 2009, p. 568). In a study on authentic texts written by different students from different countries in the Kachruvian outer circle, Mahboob and Szenes (2010, pp. 593-594) reported that, despite the differences in the students’ nationalities, they used similar linguistic resources to construct the meaning required in the tasks. The researchers, accordingly, suggest reconsidering the practice of naming the varieties based on the countries in which they are spoken. Because of these irregularities, Pennycook (2003) asserts that it is time to break away from the “constrictive circles with their many exclusions” (p. 521).

In response to the identified shortcomings of the three-circle model, some scholars have attempted to revise it. Modiano (1999a), for instance, recommends the centripetal circles to replace the national varieties and nationalities by individual competence. Yano (2001) suggests a three-dimensional (3D) cylindrical model that removes the notion of “native-speaker-centre-ness” (p. 123) to navigate away from native-speaker normativity. In this model, parallel circles of equal sizes that can be viewed from different angles are proposed, reflecting the acrolectal-basilectal continuum. Pennycook (2009, p. 198) elaborates on Yano’s (2001) suggestion to propose a “real” 3D model which includes a further lateral dimension of users and contexts.

However, advocates of WE put forward several arguments to support the validity of its conceptualisations. Bolton (2005, pp. 75-76), for example, argues that many of Pennycook’s (2001, 2003) paradigmatic claims are ill-founded. He quotes B. Kachru’s article “The power and politics of English” (B. Kachru, 1986) to demonstrate the discipline’s long-standing awareness of the political issues around

localised Englishes. However, he laments that Pennycook (2001, 2003), in demanding more attention for politics in WE, “plumps for a brand of critical linguistics with little linguistics” (Bolton, 2005, p. 75). Regarding the criticisms of the concentric circles, Bolton (2005) maintains that the model is never intended to be unchanging. In fact, B. Kachru (1992a) writes: “there are as many Indian Englishes as there are languages of India” (p. 505), emphasising the vibrant existence of subvarieties within a variety. B. Kachru (1985) also stresses the fact that the division between the outer and expanding circles “cannot be viewed as clearly demarcated from each other” (pp. 13-14). Moreover, according to Bolton (2008b), critics often fail to recognise the concentric circles are meant to be “a historical model” (p. 293) that captures the diasporic origins of nativised Englishes.

This discussion of the concentric circles is of significant relevance to the situation of English in Vietnam. As noted previously, Vietnam, according to the traditional Kachruvian categorisation, belongs to the expanding circle. However, this status is by no means static as the border between the outer circle and the expanding circle is becoming “more obscure” (Yano, 2001, p. 122) and “fragile” (Pennycook, 2009, p. 198). Although English in Vietnam has not been legislated as an official language, it has been widely used to serve different functions, including both transactional and interpersonal functions (H. Do, 2006). While it might be true that English in some expanding-circle countries has little room for localisation as it is used in limited domains (Shrestha, 2003, p. 30), in certain fields, it “actually functions as a second language, often with the development of nativised norms” (Lewenberg, 2002, p. 431). Vietnamese business communication is likely to be one of those fields in which Vietnamese EFL<sup>2</sup> speakers can “become functionally ESL [English as a Second Language] speakers” (Yano, 2001, p. 123) through frequent exposure to English. As discussed briefly in chapter 1 and will be elaborated in section 2.4, English in Vietnamese business communication nowadays is not only used between the Vietnamese and foreigners but also among Vietnamese business people. The findings of the study will, as seen in chapters 4, 5 and 6, shed further light on the inadequacy of the concentric circles and the concept of nationally-marked varieties.

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<sup>2</sup> English as a Foreign Language

The fourth debate around the paradigm of WE is the celebrated Quirk-Kachru debate over Standard English versus new Englishes. This debate is directly related to this study in that the present project examines whether a new variety with its systematic features has emerged in Vietnamese business communication. Thus, whether distinct features should be treated as errors/reflections of educational deficiency or whether they should be regarded as manifestations of a new variety is of key importance to this study.

In his thought-provoking article against “tolerant pluralism” (p. 10), Quirk (1990) argues for normativity and the standardisation of English. Open in his annoyance at the “irrelevant emphasis on different varieties of English” (p. 8), Quirk (1990) states that the importance of regional varieties, which, he suggests, are the consequences of the failure of the educational system, is being overvalued. He further argues that comprehensibility among the people speaking the same variety is by no means adequate. A standard, he adds, needs to be strived for to succeed in communicating with the wider English-speaking community (Quirk, 1990, p. 8). He concludes by stressing that “Standard English is alive and well, its existence and its value alike clearly recognised” (Quirk, 1990, p. 10). B. Kachru (1991, pp. 6-8) responds by acknowledging that, placed in a historical context, Quirk’s concerns share commonality with those of teachers and educators in the first language setting. However, he critiques Quirk for framing his arguments from the perspectives of a monolingual society; hence, a lack of consideration for the complex sociolinguistic realities existing in multilingual societies. He points out that, in ESL and EFL countries, the linguistic behaviour is shaped by the functional effectiveness and expectations of interlocutors of the local setting rather than outsiders’ attitudes. Regarding the educational reality, B. Kachru (1991, p. 7) suggests that ESL and EFL contexts face a lot of problems: resources, teacher training, teaching materials, and input for acquisition determined by peers, local teachers and media. Yet, above all, B. Kachru (1991, pp. 8-11) emphasises that it is the functional allocation of the varieties that calls for a pluricentric acceptance of localised Englishes.

This Quirk – B. Kachru debate is the preface for a wider debate over standardisation. Scholars who side with Quirk express concerns about intelligibility if a standard is not maintained. Abbott (1991, p. 56) believes that the emergence of diverse

Englishes inevitably leads to non-communication and miscommunication. Similarly, Chevillet (1992) contends that the advocacy of such nativised varieties as Nigerian English or Indian English can result in “a total breakdown in intelligibility” (pp. 27-28). Therefore, they suggest that it is necessary to adhere to some form of commonality – some yardsticks of pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary (Abbott, 1991, p. 56; Chevillet, 1992, p. 29). Other proponents of standards present their perspectives with empirical evidence. Investigating Malaysian students’ preference for a certain model of English, Y. Wang (1987) reveals that Standard British English was considered more desirable than Malaysian English. Similarly, based on a survey that investigated the attitudes of 60 teachers and 439 students at university level toward English in Malaysia, Crismore, Ngeow and Soo (1996) found that the respondents, despite their acceptance of the functionality of Malaysian English, were determined to learn Standard English because they regarded Malaysian English as ‘wrong’ English. In another survey study examining the views of 260 upper-secondary Singaporean students in five non-elite schools, P. Tan and D. Tan (2008) report that, despite the appreciation of roles the local variety – Singlish – plays in the community, the students display a clear preference for Standard English. Based on this result, the researchers maintain that the non-standard variety should be harnessed in order to promote the standard variety. The result of this survey is in line with the national campaign in Singapore called the ‘Speak Good English Movement’, which has set out to promote Standard English (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006b, p. 26; “Singapore Campaign on Good English Targets Little India,” 2013).

Some other authors, in expressing their deference to Standard English, address localised varieties with a pejorative overtone. For example, King (1990) writes:

I am constantly disheartened by the awareness that [my students] will walk out of my class and into a morass of slipshod, incorrect English usage as they meet with other speakers of what is increasingly becoming a pejorative term – ‘Malaysian English’ (p. 16).

Scholars who take B. Kachru’s side criticise Quirk (1990) for his imperialist views and for contradicting his own stance in an earlier publication *The Use of English* (Quirk, 1962, pp. 1-18), in which he holds that English has been adapted to different parts of the world and its ‘overseas varieties’ contribute to its richness and resources (Tripathi, 1992, p. 4; Bolton, 2008b, p. 290). Protagonists of WE also challenge the

sociolinguistic foundations of the advocacy of Standard English. Lewenberg (1993), for instance, argues that different socio-cultural values of different communities will give rise to diverse lexical and stylistic uses in different varieties. Claiming that the authority to create Standard English no longer resides with inner-circle speakers, the writer proposes changes in the construction of English language tests to accommodate this new notion of standards. Likewise, Bulley (1999, p. 40) questions what Standard English is. He quotes examples to demonstrate that some expressions considered standard in one inner-circle variety are not in another inner-circle variety and what is deemed standard at a certain time is not at another time. Thus, he points out that ‘standard’ just describes temporary conventions of some variety of a language (Bulley, 1999, pp. 40-41). Similarly, S. Gill (2009) holds that the issue of standards in language is difficult to define as language is not “a fixed commodity” (p. 132). Accordingly, what is acceptable to one speech community may not be considered in the same way in another group. Burrige (2007, p. 18) cites instances to illustrate that even prescriptive grammarians who seek to uphold Standard English flout their own grammatical rules in their personal correspondence. She asserts: “[L]anguage is not amenable to being forced into a standard mould and those who attempt to do so will inevitably find themselves bemired in contradiction” (Burrige, 2007, p. 19).

Regarding the concern about the difficulty in cross-variety comprehensibility, research has indicated that the increase in the number of varieties does not necessarily lead to problems in comprehensibility if users of English familiarise themselves with the varieties (L. Smith & Nelson, 2008). Moreover, it has been pointed out that intelligibility can be ensured if language users “create an appreciation of differences and readiness to negotiate diversity” (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006a, p. 209). In addition, while there are studies showing users’ preference for Standard English as cited earlier, there are also studies that report the acceptance of nativised varieties. Using a 20-item Likert scale questionnaire, Ngeow, Soo and Crismore (2003) explore workplace perceptions and attitudes toward Standard English and Malaysian English. Different from the results in their 1996 study (Crismore et al., 1996), the researchers reported in their 2003 study that, despite the recognition of the importance of international comprehensibility, civil sector and

private sector workers expressed a mixed attitude toward Standard English and a growing acceptance of Malaysian English (Ngeow, Soo, & Crismore, 2003).

Amidst the debate over Standard English and WE there are scholars who take a mediating stance. Crystal (2006b, pp. 142-143), for example, holds that the study of Standard English is important for promoting global intelligibility while the study of non-standard language is important for promoting local identity. Similarly, Modiano (1999b) maintains that what counts is a person's choice – an option to switch between a regionally restricted variety to an internationally accepted variety and vice versa. Rising out of this debate is the proposal that a new definition of Standard English should be offered. According to Modiano (1999b), Standard English should be characterised as the language spoken by proficient speakers, not a prescriptive model possessed by “privileged native speakers of a ‘prestige’ variety” (p. 4). Similarly, Lewenberg (1993, p. 96) describes Standard English as the language used by the speakers receiving the highest level of education in a variety. With this definition, Lewenberg (1993, p. 96) points out that Standard English differs minimally across varieties.

This issue of Standard English versus WE not only concerns linguists, but also interests practitioners in various domains including business communication. According to van Horn (2008, p. 631), in aviation and maritime industries, there has been a call for simplified Standard English for fear of fatal consequences of miscommunication. In foreign imports and exports, examples have been cited to illustrate severe “bypassing” – miscommunication when senders and receivers encode and decode messages differently – due to the use of diverse Englishes (Kameda, 1992, p. 5). In an investigation into international written communication of 120 companies from 39 states of the United States, Casady and Wasson (1994) reported that 46 companies had problems in their written communication with foreign associates, finding it difficult to understand “unusual and awkwardly structured messages” (p. 39). Among the suggestions these companies proposed was to keep messages in short and simple English, with clear wording (Casady & Wasson, 1994, p. 39). Similarly, in an examination of business communication between Japanese business people and their English-speaking associates, Kameda (1996) developed a theory of “reactive English”, encouraging the use of plain

Standard English to avoid bias and misunderstanding in written business communication.

In contrast, industries such as advertising and marketing tailor their messages to reflect as closely as possible the linguistic features of localised varieties to reach their customers (van Horn, 2008, pp. 631-632). In addition, to build rapport with customers, many businesses tend to adapt their language to the indigenous varieties (van Horn, 2008, pp. 631-632). In multinational companies in Malaysia, it is suggested that non-standard English is preferred to signify solidarity (Kuiper, 2007, p. 62). In Japan, Morrow (1995, p. 94) reveals that some business teachers argue for the teaching of Asian varieties of English on the grounds that their business students will mostly communicate with other Asians. Morrow (1995, p. 94) also points out that audio-visual materials of Asian varieties have been incorporated into the training curriculum of some Japanese companies like Toshiba. Likewise, some French companies express the willingness to use English in their communication if “new forms of English are allowed to develop” to reflect the internal situations (Deneire, 2008, p. 190).

In Vietnam, the issue of standard versus non-standard forms has been a contentious one. Studies have shown that Vietnamese students demonstrate a strong preference for standard pronunciation and expressions, favouring L1 English teachers over Vietnamese teachers when it comes to learning speaking and culture (e.g., Cao, 2009). In a study about Asian students’ beliefs regarding their English teachers, Oh (2012) reported that the respondents, several of whom were Vietnamese, claimed they preferred L1 teachers, as they assumed only L1 teachers were competent in teaching English. In the national foreign language scheme 2020, the Vietnamese government has signed a contract with an Australian company to bring more L1 English teachers into the country to improve Vietnamese students’ level of English competency (Asia News Monitor, 2013). It is apparent that, in Vietnam, L1 normativity is preferred to a localised variety not only at the micro/individual level but also at the macro/government level. In this context, this study explores the question whether English in Vietnamese business communication defers to Standard English or has developed its own norms.

### 2.1.2 English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The second paradigm that stands between Standard English and WE is English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), the perspectives of which, according to some authors (e.g., Sewell, 2009), are appropriate to explain the nature of new varieties of English. ELF as a concept is defined as a way of communication among people of different language backgrounds (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339; Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 7). Based on empirical data, ELF researchers aim at upholding a new model that celebrates international intelligibility through the establishment of a common core of English (Sewell, 2009, p. 42; Seiler, 2009, p. 47) while at the same time supporting the diversity of English in different lingua franca contexts (Cogo, 2008, p. 59). ELF places an emphasis on the communication of speakers in expanding-circle situations (Cogo, 2008, p. 58; Saraceni, 2008, pp. 21-22; Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 4), which makes it seem ideally appealing to the research of new expanding-circle varieties like the one under investigation in this study. Particularly, in Southeast Asia (SEA), where Vietnam is geographically located, the linguistic features and communicative strategies of ELF have been described (Kirkpatrick, 2007, pp. 155-170). However, a close examination of ELF epistemology reveals a number of debatable issues.

First, ELF is critiqued for the inconsistency in its definition. According to Saraceni (2008, p. 24), sometimes it is characterised as a singular English as seen in J. Jenkins' (2007) ELF definition: “an emerging English that exists in *its own right* and which is being described in its *own terms* rather than by comparison with ENL [English as a Native Language]” (p. 2, emphasis original). At other times, it becomes plural as in “ELF varieties are used internationally” (J. Jenkins, 2007, p. 17). Modiano (2009, p. 210) also questions whether ELF is restricted in a geopolitical sense or whether it refers to second-language use in the international discourse. J. Jenkins (2009) herself admits there has been an uncertainty regarding what ELF is: while it is sometimes interpreted as advocating too much diversity, it has also been critiqued for promoting monolithicity and overlooking pluricentricity (J. Jenkins, 2009, p. 200).

The second debate over ELF is whether it encapsulates a form or a function. ELF protagonists maintain that ELF encompasses both forms and functions – “what it looks and sounds like and how people actually use it and make it work” (Cogo, 2008,

p. 60; Seidlhofer, 2005, pp. 339-340). However, skeptics cast doubt on this assertion. Berns (2009) maintains that *lingua franca* refers to “an overarching function of language” (p. 192), not to any particular set of forms. Saraceni (2008, p. 26) argues that ELF places too much emphasis on forms and not so much on functions. Indeed, J. Jenkins (2006) maintains that the goal of ELF is to identify “frequently and systematically used forms” (p. 161) that are “widely used and widely intelligible across groups of English speakers” (p. 161). Likewise, the VOICE project directed by Seidlhofer also emphasises its ultimate aim of providing an “in-depth linguistic description” of ELF (“Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English,” 2011). Since ELF stresses unique formal properties rather than functions, “its theoretical validity is called into question” (Berns, 2009, p. 198).

Third, ELF is critiqued for attempting to replace one exonormative model (ENL) with another exonormative model (Saraceni, 2008, p. 22). ELF researchers reason that first language interference, which could be regarded as the manifestations of new varieties, is acceptable provided that intelligibility does not suffer (J. Jenkins, 2000). On the contrary, features that hinder communication and lead to misunderstanding have to be corrected based on certain standard realisations (J. Jenkins, 2000, p. 143). In other words, to facilitate international communication, speakers must get certain features right; hence, the necessity of a common core. Accordingly, despite advocates’ claims that ELF develops its internal rules or norms and, therefore, is an endonormative model (Cogo, 2008, p. 59), critics point out that ELF insistence on common core features based on standard realisations (J. Jenkins, 2000, p. 143) obviously betrays its exonormative orientation (Seiler, 2009, p. 46). Berns (2008a) metaphorically writes: the overthrow of ELF of “the tyrannical native speaker is simply meeting the new boss who is the same as the old boss or [replacing] the hegemony of the old with the hegemony of the new” (p. 333). By the same token, Seiler (2009) observes that the ELF approach is by no means endonormative since “it judges the suitability of ELF in terms of permissible deviations from an L1 [English as a mother tongue] model” (p. 46). Although ELF researchers stress the fact that L1 speakers are excluded from the research corpus (J. Jenkins, 2006, p. 160), critics observe that L1 speakers are always there “hovering in the background” (Prodromou,

2007, p. 410). In fact, Seidlhofer (2002), a strong advocate of ELF, confesses: “Natives are always lurking” in ELF (p. 204).

Fourth, some scholars express concerns about the effect of a “potentially reductive” (Pennycook, 2009, p. 200) lingua franca core on education. Prodromou (2006) argues that a lingua franca core with its simplifications will not meet the aspirations of learners who have acquired a highly proficient command of English. P. Tan, Ooi and Chiang (2006) maintain that a lingua franca core based on a new set of externally prescribed norms, being used alongside already existing ones, will require further efforts on the part of the learner who will have to adopt a new variety different from the reality outside the classroom.

Fifth, the notion of mutual intelligibility appears desirable, but unrealistic. According to P. Tan et al. (2006, pp. 88-91) and Berns (2008a, p. 331), the ELF attempt to safeguard international intelligibility is mythical due to a multiplicity of contexts, communicators’ levels of proficiency and conditions. Similarly, Seiler (2009) expresses his scepticism: “the idea that all Englishes around the world share a common core, not only in phonology, but also in grammar or lexicon is probably misleading” (p. 47). Since common core features are supposed to derive from Standard English (J. Jenkins, 2000, p. 143), we are brought back to the previous debate of what Standard English is. As Seiler (2009, p. 46) maintains, what is standard in one variety is not in another. For instance, vowel shifts in New Zealand English make its pronunciation distinct from other inner-circle varieties (Seiler, 2009, p. 46). According to B. Kachru (2009, p. 185), empirical studies do not support the assumption that there is intelligibility across inner-circle varieties. Therefore, the legitimacy of ELF intelligibility is challenged.

Sixth, the paradigmatic claims of ELF are questionable. ELF supporters argue that ELF and WE are overlapping paradigms, with ELF sitting “perfectly comfortably within a World Englishes framework” (Cogo, 2008, p. 59; J. Jenkins, 2007, p. 17). However, this assertion has been strongly contested. Rubdy and Saraceni (2006c, pp. 11-13) and Berns (2008a, p. 331) point out three differences between WE and ELF. First, while WE recognises the plurality and creativity of individual varieties, ELF is interested in codifying, standardising and teaching the common core of an

international English. Second, whereas WE encourages exposure to different varieties to develop intelligibility, ELF upholds the teaching of a prescribed lingua franca core to achieve international intelligibility. Third, while WE tolerates the polymorphous nature of English, calling for a sensitivity to multilingual and multicultural realities, ELF celebrates “an extended form of standard English” (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006c, p. 11). Therefore, despite ELF proponents’ attempts to associate ELF with WE (e.g., J. Jenkins, 2006), WE scholars themselves have explicitly dissociated their work from ELF (e.g., B. Kachru, 2005, pp. 212-220).

Because of these multiple controversies, ELF is not the preferred paradigm for this study. Through the above analysis, it is apparent that the focus of ELF is on the identification of a lingua franca core of English used by non-L1 speakers in international communication (Berns, 2009, p. 292). In contrast, the interest of this study is not the common core features of English, nor to ensure mutual intelligibility in communication among different ethnic groups of speakers. Rather, its primary concern is to examine written business English used by Vietnamese people in relation to the local cultural and situational contexts. Furthermore, the aim of the current research is to describe rather than prescribe. Therefore, the ELF framework, one that has been labeled ‘prescriptive’ (e.g., Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006a) does not appear to meet the purpose of this study. Instead, a more appropriate paradigm is needed to explain the complex sociolinguistic nature of English in written Vietnamese business communication.

### **2.1.3 English as an International Language (EIL/IE)**

Another paradigm that has been proposed is English as an International Language (EIL). For some scholars, EIL and ELF are used interchangeably (J. Jenkins, 2000, 2006; Seargeant, 2012). For example, Baccaglini (2013) contends that EIL is “used for international communication often by speakers from different countries whose L1 is not English” (p. 33).

For others, EIL is the alternative term of International English (IE) and is used to indicate different varieties of English around the world (Trudgill & Hannah, 1985). In this sense, EIL is synonymous with the more common label WE (Ross, 1997, p. 29). The notion of EIL also indicates the global spread of English: It is now a widely

accepted language in multiple domains, including education, business and science (Deneire, 1993, p. 169; Pennycook, 2007, p. 90). It is argued that EIL does not belong to any nations and that it is a pure and neutral means of communication (Lai, 2008, p. 39). However, some authors lament that EIL in this sense is the indicator of the linguistic imperialism of First World countries (Deneire, 1993, p. 169). Some authors allege that EIL is a creation of Western imperialism to promote Western powers and capitalism (Ndebele, 1987; Philipson, 1992). For the French, EIL is associated with the ideology, cultures, social conventions and beliefs of English-speaking countries (Deneire, 1993).

However, EIL is also viewed from a different stance: the purist perspective (Saraceni, 2008, p. 20). It is this position that has attracted substantial criticisms from WE scholars (Saraceni, 2008, p. 20). Johnson (1990) outlines three differences between WE and EIL/IE. First, while WE users produce English to invoke identity and solidarity, EIL/IE has no territory to be defended. In other words, concepts such as geopolitical origin and socio-political group membership are irrelevant to EIF/IE. Second, while varieties of WE are used to perform context-specific roles such as maintaining intragroup relationships and facilitating peculiarities of in-group behaviours, EIF/IE operates in global contexts where no local rules apply. Third, whereas WE users gain knowledge and skills specific to a national curriculum in order to promote a specific variety and its culture, EIL/IE users focus on knowledge and skills across multiple national curricula. As Bolton (2008c, p. 241) points out, the tension between WE and EIL/IE lies in their opposite orientation toward pluricentrism versus monocentrism.

Johnson (1990) also analyses three functions EIL/IE perform in the international discourse: ideational, interpersonal and textual. As far as ideational functions are concerned, EIL/IE users are more comfortable with expressing information in the professional domain than sustaining personal and social communication. In terms of interpersonal functions, while WE users can code-mix and code-switch to signal informality and social rapport, IE users enjoy no such resource. Therefore, IE production usually resembles formal communication. Regarding textual functions, while WE users mainly function in context-embedded discourse to interact with close

friends and relatives, IE users mostly perform transaction functions in context-reduced situations such as in the academic, commercial and professional discourse.

The proposal for EIL/IE has triggered three major concerns. First, it is critiqued for its L1 speaker starting point that takes a “colonial-celebratory position” to advocate monocentricity and standard language ideology (Pakir, 2009, p. 229). This criticism derives from EIL/IE proponents’ argument of an “essentially monomodal” framework (Johnson, 1990, p. 308) that is in line with Quirk’s (1985) contention of a “single, monochrome, standard form that looks as good on paper as it sounds in speech” (p. 6).

Second, the concept of EIL/IE is criticised as “fuzzy” (Baccaglini, 2013, p. 33; Kaye, 1999, p. 32) and “ill-defined” (Kaye, 1999, p. 32). EIL/IE advocates outline a common core that is “commonplace on a global scale” (Modiano, 1999a, p. 26) with linguistic items including only universally established concepts and “prepackaged” components (Johnson, 1990, p. 309) such as idioms and frozen metaphor. Similar to the concerns raised by ELF opponents, the notion of identifying a common core from different speakers of different varieties with various levels of competence has attracted scepticism (Kaye, 1999, p. 32).

Third, the ideological assumptions behind EIL/IE are regarded as unrealistic. On the one hand, as English is not an artificial language, each of its varieties is believed to be inseparable from a culture. Thus, the contention that it is neutral, unaffected by any regional varieties is judged as fictitious (Kaye, 1999, p. 32). On the other hand, because learning the composite features of EIL/IE, which is contended to represent “a single international standard that is emerging” (Baccaglini, 2013, p. 33), will be as painstaking as learning any varieties, one questions why one does not learn a natural, authentic variety (Chevillet, 1999, p. 33). Based on this analysis, it appears that EIL/IE, with its purist perspectives, may not provide a suitable framework for this study. As argued previously, the aim of this study is not to identify a “supranational variety” (Bolton, 2008b, p. 293); rather, it aims to investigate whether a new variety is emerging within Vietnamese written business communication. Thus, EIL/IE does not seem to be a suitable paradigm.

However, it should be noted that what is regarded unsuitable for this study is ELF and purist EIL/IE as a theoretical framework/model. That is not, by any means, to negate the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca or English as an international language (uncapitalised) – the worldwide spread of English and its global use. It is acknowledged that English has not only crossed national borders, but also the borders of rules and limits (Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006b, pp. 22-23) to perform a myriad of functions. Thus, English in Vietnamese written business communication may manifest its peculiar features distinct to the Vietnamese, or it may reflect the repertoire of users of English as a lingua franca/ English as an international language (as a linguistic phenomenon, not a research paradigm). In the international business context, English used by the Vietnamese may converge with other Englishes to result in shared features. If this is the case, then it aligns with the modern pluralistic view of WE which B. Kachru (2009) terms a ‘paradigm shift’. He asserts:

By pluralism, then, we mean the multiple identities which constitute a repertoire of cultures, linguistic experimentation and innovations, and literary traditions [. . .]. It is in this sense that English embodies multiculturalism. And it is in this sense that English is a global language. (B. Kachru, 2009, p. 177)

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will shed light on this issue.

## **2.2 WE viewed from the perspectives of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**

As outlined above, the three existing paradigms for a study of English demonstrate certain perceived weaknesses. Among the three, it has been argued that ELF and EIL/IE are not suitable to help address the research questions of the current study. While WE appears to be the most appropriate among the three due to its pluricentric perspectives that seem to offer a paradigm to explain the complex sociolinguistic nature of a new variety, as discussed it exhibits many unsolved issues, namely orientation, paradigmatic, methodological and conceptual issues. To address these, this study approached English in Vietnamese written business communication from the functional perspectives of Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

SFL is a linguistic theory that relates language – or text – to its context (Christie, 2002; Eggins, 2004; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Martin, 2009; Holmgren, 2012; Newnham, 2013; Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In SFL, it is argued that language is used to perform functions – to make

meanings under the influence of the situational and cultural contexts (e.g., Eggins, 2004; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Martin, 2009; Holmgren, 2012; Newnham, 2013; Read & Carroll, 2012; Aghagolzadeh & Farazandeh-pour, 2012; Matthiessen, 2013). In the paradigm of WE, it is acknowledged that the appearance of new Englishes results from the contact of English with different socio-cultural contexts (B. Kachru, 1990; T. Mesthrie, 2008), and that there is a need to contextualise nativisation (B. Kachru, 1990, p. 18; Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008, p. 140). In fact, it is the notion of context that differentiates a deviation, which is an important feature of nativisation, from a mistake, which may result from inadequate learning. As B. Kachru (1992b) puts it, while a mistake cannot be contextually explained, a deviation takes root from an “unEnglish” sociolinguistic context, with “its meanings derived with reference to the use/usage appropriate to that cultural context” (p. 303). Thus, as a theory that explores the interrelation of language and context, SFL provides an important framework for the analysis of WE. Commenting on the use of SFL in the study of WE, B. Kachru (1990) writes: “The advantage of such frameworks as that of Halliday is that they provide a context for description, they relate language to use, and yet they bring out the formal distinctiveness” (p. 17).

Along the same lines, Irwin (2009, p. 84) asserts that SFL helps examine a variety of English from both bottom-up and top-down perspectives. Mahboob and Szenes (2010, p. 584) also maintain that SFL offers an appropriate framework for the investigation of a developing variety because it considers the whole texts as units of examination. As Martin and Rose (2003) put it, “[s]ocial contexts are realised as texts which are realised as sequences of clauses” (p. 4), all of which are subject to SFL scrutiny. Therefore, the use of SFL as a theoretical framework allows for the deduction of the socio-cultural contexts from texts, enabling a study to move beyond a mere description of localised linguistic features towards the description of an autonomous functional systemic variety, the emergence of which is triggered by a natural response to the demand of a new context. Thus, the employment of SFL allows the current study to steer away from the critiques outlined in section 2.1.1 that other WE studies of new varieties usually face (e.g., being structurally oriented or using inner-circle Englishes as a yardstick to outline deviation features).

SFL stresses the fact that language does not exist in a vacuum. Language is a social fact, a product of the social process (Halliday, 1978, p. 1). In their seminal works, Halliday (1978, p. 2) and Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 4) hold that language is a manifestation of the social semiotic system – “a social system, or a culture”, which is “a system of meanings.” These concepts have been adopted, expanded, and researched extensively in linguistics and education by later scholars, for example, Harman (2008), Askehave (2010), Xue-de and Qing (2011), Wan (2012), Xu (2012), Bateman (2013), Jinping (2013), and Paugh and Moran (2013).

When a language is taken into a new social system, there is inevitably some semiotic change, resulting in the appearance of previously non-existent “thing-meanings” (Halliday, 1978, p. 75). SFL offers three explanations for this phenomenon. First, it is argued that members of different communities pay attention to different characteristics of events. Therefore, they build up a different framework for the systemisation of experience (Halliday, 1978, p. 199). An illustration of this re-semanticisation is the new use of “flowerbed” in Indian English to indicate “marriage bed” in Standard British English (Halliday, 2008, p. 357).

The second explanation for the appearance of new “thing-meanings” (Halliday, 1978, p. 75) is that language always develops to serve new social functions. As Halliday (1978) asserts, “language is as it is because of the functions it has evolved to serve in people’s lives” (p. 4). In the context of WE, when English is transplanted to a new environment like Vietnam, it evolves linguistically and pragmatically to meet the functional demands of the new cultural and situational contexts. In other words, it is the new society that gives rise to the need for new language to describe new physical, ideological and cultural items associated with that society; hence, the appearance of new features of the language. An example of this is the transfer of cultural elements in some varieties of English. For instance, in Thai English, kinship terms are often used before names when addressing acquaintances and even strangers (e.g., *mother Hiang* is used to address an unrelated shopkeeper) (Watkhaolarm, 2005). This cultural feature can only be understood and appreciated when it is examined within the local hierarchical collectivist society (Watkhaolarm, 2005) and will also be seen in the current data (chapter 4). As Halliday (1978) puts it,

“language and society is a unified conception, and needs to be understood and investigated as a whole” (p. 4).

The third explanation for the emergence of new features of Englishes from an SFL perspective is the replacement of the social semiotics as a result of language and culture contact. When English is taken from an L1 culture into a non-L1 one, its original social semiotic system, also called its “Anglo cultural baggage” (S. Peter, 1994, p. 398; Bhatia, 1997, p. 318), is carried with it. As it spreads, it either wipes out the language and culture it comes into contact with or it sheds its social semiotics. The second method, as S. Peter (1994, p. 389) points out, is far more common. Therefore, what often results is the substitution of its own social semiotics for the native one – a process called nativisation or indigenisation (Omoniyi, 2008; Bolton, 2008a; Mukherjee & Gries, 2009). Through these three explanations, it becomes evident that a nativised variety has to be interpreted in relation to the new socio-cultural context, which SFL distinguishes into *context of culture* and *context of situation*, which will be discussed in section 3.1.1.

As a consequence of the nativisation process, numerous Englishes have emerged, e.g., Hong Kong English (Bolton, 2000; Gisbone, 2000; Lee & Collins, 2008), Singapore English (Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008; Alsagoff, 2010; A. Tan, 2010; Tan-Chia et al., 2013; Kim & Sato, 2013), Indian English (Baumgardner, 1988; Valentine, 1991; Dabrowska, 2012; Latha, 2013), Kenyan English and Nigerian English (S. Peter, 1994; Ekpe, 2011; Okunrinmeta, 2013). Each new variety is the embodiment of the local socio-cultural values, performing diverse sociolinguistic functions spelled out by its situational and cultural contexts.

In the light of this analysis, it is not surprising when SF linguists state that there is no intrinsic value in the features of a standard variety of a language. Halliday (2008) figuratively maintains that Standard English is but a variety dressing in “a fancy uniform” (p. 350). As indicated previously, SFL regards language simply as a semiotic system, a system of signs (the signifier) that manifest certain content meaning (the signified) (Eggins, 1994, 2004). As Martin et al. (1997) demonstrate, utterances such as “I don’t have none” and “I don’t have any” (p. 4) cannot be judged on a right-wrong basis, but have to be situated in the functional contexts that give rise to them and interpreted according to the user’s functional choices. This principle

that guides SFL is particularly congruent with the present study as it highlights the irrelevance of the debate between standard versus non-standard English while at the same time stressing the primacy of pragmatics: For this research, it is what works for the writers in their context that matters.

Because of this functional point of view, SFL has also been employed elsewhere to examine localised features of English. For instance, Irwin (2009) uses the SFL framework to investigate the lexico-grammatical features of Aboriginal loan words in Canadian English, using a stratification model for loan words that derives from SFL.

In written business communication research, SFL has offered an important theoretical framework for previous studies (e.g., J. Thomas, 1997; Askehave, 2010; Wan, 2012; Xu, 2012). As meanings are socially constructed, the choices a business writer makes has to be examined in terms of “conscious or unconscious cultural and situational factors that she or he wants to express or would rather hide” (Sardinha & Barbara, 2009, p. 107). Thus, SFL is useful for the current study as it allows the researcher to see business texts not in isolation, but as a manifestation of the social semiotic system to scrutinise into the writers’ choice of expression features to achieve a certain business purpose. Moreover, as business language is highly contextualised, SFL enables the researcher to view the language in relation to several layers of contexts in which it is embedded: immediate context of situation, context of professional culture, context of organisational culture and context of national culture (J. Thomas, 1997, p. 50) (which will be reviewed in section 2.5). According to Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken (2007, p. 184), no texts have any meanings in and of themselves. They have to be placed within the community in which they are constructed so that patterns unique to the community can be observed. The employment of SFL as an overarching theoretical framework, therefore, allows features of written English typical to Vietnamese business people to be investigated in relation to contextual factors to see whether systematic and repeatable patterns of meaning making have emerged to “define and constitute” (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007, p. 184) the Vietnamese business community.

### 2.3 Englishes in South East Asia (SEA)

Geographically, Vietnam is located in Southeast Asia. In this region, Bautista and A. Gonzalez (2008, p. 130) hold that English is used as a second language in three countries, namely Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines. To Kirkpatrick (2007), Bolton (2008a) and Pakir (2010), English in Southeast Asia has developed into distinct varieties in four countries: Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei. In spite of this slight difference, these authors agree that whether a new variety of English has emerged in Vietnam is still under-researched (Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008, p. 140; Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 120; Bolton, 2008a, p. 3). While a multiplicity of studies have been conducted to examine Singapore English (SgE), Malaysian English (MalE), Philippine English (PhilE), Brunei English (BrE) and even so-called expanding-circle Englishes like Thai English and Cambodian English (e.g., Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008; Alsagoff, 2010; A. Tan, 2010; Tan-Chia et al., 2013; Kim & Sato, 2013; Dimalanta, 2000; Watkhaolarm, 2005; Gut, Pillai, & Don, 2013), research into English in Vietnam is still in its infancy.

### 2.4 English in Vietnam

To date, little research has been targeted at ‘Vietnamese’ English in written business communication. According to Schneider (2008, p. 65), the concept ‘Vietnamese English’ often refers to the language spoken by Vietnamese immigrant groups, such as in Australia (Tuc, 2003) and America (Rupp, 1980; Wolfram, Christian & Hatfield, 1986; G. Pham, 2011; G. Pham & Kohnert, 2010; G. Pham, Kohnert, & Mann, 2011). However, there is little research into the presence of ‘Vietnamese English’ in Vietnam (Bautista & A. Gonzalez, 2008, p. 140; Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 120; Bolton, 2008a, p. 3). One study conducted by Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) investigated whether an ASEAN<sup>3</sup> variety of English was developing. Nonetheless, this study did not shed much light on the English language in Vietnam because, among the 20 participants, only two were Vietnamese.

Despite this lack of empirical research, some scholars have used the phrase ‘Vietnamese English’ to refer to English used in Vietnam (e.g., Tickoo, 1996), assuming that a distinct variety has emerged. In his project, Tickoo (1996) examined what accounted for the selective marking of past tense in “Vietnamese English” (p.

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<sup>3</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations

183). Nevertheless, throughout his paper, Tickoo did not explain how the term “Vietnamese English” came into existence. Although some authors believe that English is increasingly favoured as a second language in Vietnam (Lederer, 1994, p. 41; Hayden & Lam, 2007, p. 14), it is, as Bautista and A. Gonzalez (2008, p. 140) and Bolton (2008a, p. 9) argue, difficult to make any claims about English in Vietnam due to the lack of detailed studies. Even so, if a new variety of English is emerging in Vietnamese business communication, then it deserves to be recognised. As B. Kachru (1992c) states, a variety “may exist, but unless it is *recognised* and *accepted* as a model, it does not acquire a status” (p. 56, emphasis original). Kirkpatrick (2010) also maintains that the codified norms of localised varieties need to be recognised to better understand “the way different language ideologies construct English locally” (p. 13). Moreover, the roles and importance of nativised varieties have to be stressed and validated because each variety reflects the cultural and pragmatic norms of its speakers, signalling the speakers’ identity in a speech community (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 172).

## 2.5 Written business communication in WE

As English becomes the language of global commerce, there is a growing interest in seeing how written communication is conducted within and between organisations as well as between organisations and customers (van Horn, 2008, pp. 620-622). However, due to propriety and the private nature of business communication, companies have been reluctant to give researchers access to written data; hence, there is a lack of a full picture of WE written business communication (van Horn, 2008, p. 622). Despite this limitation, the research into WE written business communication that has been done has explored a diversity of areas, including politeness strategies, register, genres, rhetorical style, discursal structure, lexico-grammar, and new varieties of business English (Chew, 2009). It is the last of these topics that the current study focuses on (i.e., examining the emergence of a new variety of English in written Vietnamese business communication).

Many of the past studies in this area have linked business texts to context to explain their localised features and to explain why writers of different nationalities construct texts the way they do. In Louhiala-Salminen’s (1999) words, “we have to see it [business communication] as a dynamic, context-dependent process where factors

such as time, roles, power relations, cultural aspects and communication methods always affect the message” (p. 113). This perspective is consistent with the underlying philosophy of SFL: the primacy of context to explain why texts the way they are (Christie, 2002; Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 2009; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). As Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007, p. 161) put it, business texts cannot be developed without the influence of the socio-cultural and institutional contexts, which, according to SFL, are divided into the context of culture and context of situation; the former is said to be realised in three forms: national culture, corporate culture and professional culture, while the latter is believed to manifest in the ideational, interpersonal and textual dimensions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday, 2009; Coffin & Donohue, 2012). The following discussion of written business communication and the realisations of contexts are, therefore, particularly relevant to the construct of contexts in the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*

### **2.5.1 WE written business communication and national culture**

Three interrelated concepts of culture have been found to be critical to the scrutiny of written business communication: national culture, corporate culture and professional culture (Ulijn, O’Hair, Weggeman, Ledlow, & Hall, 2000). Among these three “different but overlapping” (Ulijn et al., 2000, p. 299) contexts, national culture is the most extensively explored in relation to business communication (Freeman & Browne, 2004). As Hofstede (1991), the father of the national culture model (Luczak, Mohan-Neill, & Hills, 2010), argues, national culture is the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one culture from another” (p. 260). In the 1980s and early 1990s, the construct of national culture attracted sole attention from contrastive rhetoric researchers, many of whom sought to establish a correlation between national culture and written business correspondence. As business letters transform to faxes and emails, this interest continues well into the twenty-first century (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007).

However, whether national culture influences written business communication has been open to debate. Some scholars, for example, S. Jenkins and Hinds (1987), Haneda and Shima (1982), Y. Kachru (2008), Park, Dillon and Mitchell (1998),

Frank (1988), Nkemeleke (2004), Graves (1997), Vergaro (2004), van Mulken and van der Meer (2005), Sims and Guice (1992) and Maier (1992) claim that national culture does have an impact on written business communication. However, others are more cautious about this issue (e.g., Casanave, 2004; Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007; Omoniyi, 2010; Nickerson, 2010; van Horn, 2008).

In Asian business settings, research into Japanese letter writing has shown that Japanese cultural values of respect, modesty and politeness are manifest in the discursal features of Japanese business letters in English. Haneda and Shima (1982), for instance, demonstrated that Japanese business letters in English were typically written in a well-established order with expressions of greetings and thanks at the beginning followed by reasons or excuses and finally the main message. In addition, Japanese writers were found to have a polite way of expressing refusals that may strike 'native' speakers as ambiguous. Haneda and Shima (1982) also revealed that Japanese English business letters used a humble tone that may be mistaken for inability or lack of confidence. Along a similar line, Y. Kachru (2008, p. 374) has observed that, unlike American writers' assertiveness, Japanese writers tend to use mitigating devices such as *I think*, *perhaps*, *sad* and *sorrow*. They also tend to follow the specific-to-general rhetorical pattern with the main message located at the end of the letter (Y. Kachru, 2008, p. 374).

Also researching East Asian business discourse, Park et al. (1998) studied letters of complaint written in English, fourteen by Korean managers whose English was second/foreign language and seven by US managers whose English was first language. The researchers reported important rhetorical differences in the letters of the two groups. While the US managers tended to use direct organisational strategies with the main idea/problem stated first, the Korean managers tended to follow an indirect pattern, suspending readers' discovery of the main point. Another difference between the two groups lay in the way action was requested: the US managers requested action explicitly whereas the Korean managers appeared inconsistent in their requests. In other words, Korean letters of complaints may be perceived as "vague, emotional and accusatory" (Park et al., 1998, p. 328). Based on the findings, the researchers suggested that rhetorical choices were culture-specific, an understanding of which would be vital to success in business communication.

Likewise, Indian English (IE) sales letters have been reported to carry culture-specific conventions. In a comparative study of three direct marketing sales letters written by writers from India, Britain and America, Frank (1988) found that the IE sales letter may fail to reach Kachruvian inner-circle customers because its discursive features differed from the expectations of English 'native speakers'. While clarity, brevity and a linear organisation is normally expected by 'native' speakers, the IE sales letters in the study demonstrated a preference for reduplication, digression and cyclical presentation of ideas to achieve the emphatic effect. Nevertheless, the generalisability of this finding is open to question due to the study's limited scope.

Another early study that examined business genres in South Asia was Bhatia's (1989) work on job application letters. In an investigation of 200 job applications from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Bhatia reported that most South Asian applicants did not take advantage of the application letter to offer self-appraisal – a strategy of providing “a rational analysis of what they can or cannot successfully achieve” (p. 73). Rather, the writers tended to use the strategies of self-glorification, adversary-glorification and self-degradation, which are emotional and less effective ways of self-advertising. In Bhatia's (1993) monograph, the nativisation of South Asian job applications was revisited. Bhatia (1993) stressed: “In some contexts dominant socio-cultural factors do influence certain types of professional genres” (p. 69).

In North America, Graves (1997) explored direct marketing letters in English, 50 from American companies sent to American addresses and 12 from Canadian and American companies sent to Canadian addresses, to see how Canadian and American cultures were reflected in business discourse. The study suggested that Canadian culture, with its distinct features of collectivism, class awareness and a concern for others, affected the genre of direct mail letters (e.g., more direct organisation, more formal tone and more elaborate establishment of creditability than American letters).

Another study which further supported the influence of national culture on business communication was conducted by van Mulken and van der Meer (2005). In a genre analysis of American and Dutch company replies to customer inquiries, the authors revealed that emails by American producers often expressed gratitude while those

composed by Dutch producers had a tendency to express apologies for declining a request. They also found that cultural boundaries resulted in differences in the discourse structure and textual realisations.

Also comparing American with European business correspondence, Varner (1988) reported that American and French writers followed different conventions in written business communication in terms of inside address, salutation and signature. In particular, letters by French writers tended to be more formal, less concise and more direct when addressing negative information. Based on these findings, Varner (1988) concluded that “communication is culture specific” (p. 55). However, it is worth noting that the data in Varner’s (1988) study were taken from text books.

Other studies conducted by Sims and Guice (1992) and Maier (1992) also advocated the claim that national culture affects written business communication. Comparing 214 business letters written to American readers by ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers of English, Sims and Guice (1992) found that two groups of letters differed significantly in the number of mechanical errors, length and tone. The researchers also reported a difference in the salutations, closings and type of information communicated to the readers. Based on these differences, they confirmed their hypothesis that cultural factors beyond language affected written business communication.

Also interested in business letters written by ‘native’ (eight) and ‘non-native’ (ten) speakers of English in American business settings, Maier (1992) asked the subjects to write letters to respond to a fictitious business situation. Exploring the politeness strategies of these letters, the researcher revealed that, although the ‘non-native’ speakers showed sensitivity to politeness conventions, they used fewer politeness devices than the ‘native’ speakers, which made them appear more informal and direct. The researcher, therefore, concluded that letters written by ‘non-native’ speakers, despite their flawless appearance, may be perceived negatively by the ‘native’ reader.

In the European context, C. James, Scholfield and Ypsiladis (1994) examined the hypothesis that ‘non-native’ letters of application carried rhetorical and discursal features transferred from the writer’s first language and culture. The study involved

the evaluation of a composite application letter made up from ten components of eight application letters written by Greek applicants. First, the letter was assessed by a panel of British English speakers. The result was that eight out of ten sections were judged as distinct failure and two as acceptable. After that, the suitability of each section was evaluated by 45 'non-native' speakers of six nationalities (French, German, Greek, Polish, Portuguese and Syrian Arabic) on a five-point scale from two perspectives: Target Language English Judgement and Own Language Judgement. These 'non-native' participants were also required to vocalise their thoughts when they made the decision. The result was that they agreed with the British English judges on the two acceptable sections. However, regarding the other eight unacceptable sections, the judgement of this group varied greatly along a broad oriental-occidental cultural scale. The researchers thus concluded that 'non-native' speakers tended to be unaware of rhetorical and discoursal strategies transferred from the first language and culture, which could give rise to pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic infelicities (C. James et al., 1994, p. 335).

Also conducted in European business settings was a contrastive study on rhetorical differences between Italian and English sales promotion letters. In this study, Vergaro (2004) investigated the assumption that differences in national culture affected written business communication. By analysing contrastively a corpus of authentic Italian and English business letters, the project reported the cultural preferences of Italian and English writers, both at the macro- and micro-textual level, when they engaged in sales promotion letter writing. This study also indicated that there were differences in the ways in which discourse patterns were organised as well as in the use of mood and modality for the expression of politeness. From the findings, the researcher concluded that cultural differences exerted a significant impact on written business communication.

In the African business context, in a study of 99 Cameroonian job applications written in English, Nkemleke (2004) found a gap between the evaluation of the 'native speaker' of English and linguists and the expectations of the Cameroonian employers. While one 'native speaker' and three linguists assessed the writing style of the letters as unacceptable to the 'native speaking' context, the local employers saw no major concerns with the language, logics and relevance of the letters. Thus,

Nkemleke concluded that Cameroonian job applications had developed distinctive linguistic and discursual features under the impact of their national culture.

While a vast number of studies have claimed that national culture influences written business communication, some research projects do not report the same results. J. Wang (2010) revealed a different picture about the influence of national culture on business writing. Using a genre-based textual analysis to investigate the rhetorical patterns of claim letters written by two groups, one in China and one in the United States, the researcher found that both groups of writers did not demonstrate any differences in their rhetorical choices. J. Wang, hence, cast doubt on the assumption that national culture shaped business writing. She contended that rhetorical mechanism “is contextually sensitive rather than culturally bound” (J. Wang, 2010, p. 118).

Likewise, in an analysis of 66 questionnaires sent to the foreign counterparts of American companies (including organisations located in Kachruvian ‘inner-circle’ countries like Great Britain, Australia and Canada and ‘non-inner-circle’ countries like Germany, Japan, Thailand and Brazil), Kilpatrick (1984) found that 74% of the respondents identified no written communication problems and 71% reported no significant difference between domestic letters and foreign business letters in format (e.g., dateline, personal title and closing), which suggests that national culture does not have a major impact on written business communication.

Okamura and Shaw (2000) presented a more complicated finding. They examined the English transactional letters by 26 ‘native’ writers and 23 ‘non-native’ writers, and compared them with the efforts to write such letters by 21 ‘native’ and 23 ‘non-native’ non-professionals (British undergraduates and overseas English teachers) to find the contributions of subculture membership and target culture membership in writing transactional letters. The results indicated that the ‘non-native’ professionals could understand the rhetorical demands of the situation similarly to ‘native’ professionals, but they were a little less likely to use appropriate language. The ‘native’ non-professionals, on the other hand, were able to use appropriate language, but had very little idea of the rhetoric while the ‘non-native’ non-professionals produced letters that were inappropriate in both rhetoric and language. The

researchers, thus, suggested that professional knowledge, rather than national culture played a vital role in writers' linguistic and rhetoric choices.

In brief, this review of the literature on the relationship between national culture and written business communication has highlighted some significant issues. The first noticeable issue is that Kachruvian inner-circle or 'native' English varieties have often been used as "a default option" (Nickerson, 2010, p. 509) for business researchers to contrast other varieties to find out the influence of national culture on texts. While this approach has been critiqued earlier as being problematic (see section 2.1.1), another issue that is equally problematic is the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' speakers in most of these national-culture-oriented studies. Although these terms have been contended to be sociolinguistically incorrect (Medgyes, 2001), they seem to persist in the field of written business communication research. In the context of WE, B. Kachru (2005, p. 223) has pointed out that the distinction of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers is of doubtful validity. As R. Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, p. 36) argue, in multilingual societies, multilingual speakers can acquire several native languages, including English, from birth. Moreover, in situations where people migrate from one country to another, they may experience 'language shift' when their mother language is no longer used (Gafaranga, 2010); instead, the new language of the new context is spoken predominantly. Given these sociolinguistic situations, the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' stand out as confusing and misleading (R. Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008, p. 36; Conlan, 2007, p. 51). In addition, since English has become an international language, it is not "owned" (Halliday et al., 1964, p. 293) by any countries or any speakers. In fact, in settings where English is extensively used, non-L1 speakers can actually acquire L1 proficiency with respect to grammaticality, speech fluency, complexity and accuracy (Wei, 2008). Therefore, "it no longer makes any sense to differentiate between native and non-native speakers" (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 8).

The second issue that can be seen from this review is the debatability of whether written business communication is shaped by national culture. The tradition of contrastive rhetoric that presents "culturally unique patterns" in writing as described above has been critiqued for its "simple treatments and interpretations of complex

issues” (Casanave, 2004, pp. 36-38). Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007) also argue that this contrastive rhetoric exercise has used “limiting national stereotypes as interpretive categories” (p. 26) while, in reality, writing is influenced by a great diversity of factors. As Omoniyi (2010, p. 471) puts it, in this trend of globalisation, it is problematic to categorise writers and their writing according to their cultural and geographical identity, a practice that was indicated to be a weakness of WE (see section 2.1.1). In fact, English has transcended national and cultural barriers to become a neutral and shared code in business communication (Nickerson, 2010, p. 516). Therefore, care must be exercised when linking written business communication to the construct of national business cultures because “if they even exist, they may prove not to play into a particular context at all” (van Horn, 2008, p. 626). The literature has suggested that there may be other factors such as corporate culture and professional knowledge which can constrain the linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic features of written business communication.

### **2.5.2 WE written business communication and corporate culture**

In addition to the widely-researched concept of national culture, it has been maintained that corporate culture – patterns of beliefs, values and consistent vision that organisational members share – plays a fundamental role in moulding written business communication (A. Brown, 1995, p. 5; Suchan, 1995, p. 8; van Horn, 2008, p. 626).

In an investigation of corporate culture and English business writing in the Netherlands, Nickerson (1998) found that corporate culture played a crucial role in English business writing, influencing the amount and type of written English required. Accordingly, she concluded that “written communication patterns are partly a product of the corporate culture” (Nickerson, 1998, p. 292). However, she acknowledged that this study had one limitation: It described only one aspect of the corporate culture that affected business writing, namely, the relationship between Head Office and subsidiaries (Nickerson, 1998, p. 292).

Another research project by Suchan (1995) examined the influence of organisational metaphors on the staff’s language choices in their written communication. Gathering data from 23 staff members working for an organisation in the United States that

viewed itself as a smoothly operating machine, Suchan (1995) found that the writers described their written communication in mechanistic terms, resulting in a lack of audience awareness and difficult-to-read reports, suggesting that the way an organisation viewed itself significantly influenced the writer's language choices.

Similarly, in an examination of the use of communication modes in a large organisation, Turner, Grube, Tinsley, Lee and O'Pell (2006) reported that organisational norms along with supervisory behaviour influenced employees' choice of Instant Messages and emails. This selection of communication modes was reinforced by the organisation's system of rewards (i.e., employees who used Instant Messages and emails frequently would receive higher performance ratings).

Back in the 1980s, the role corporate culture played in written business communication also attracted business researchers' interest. For instance, Odell and Goswami (1982) reported that corporate culture manifested itself in writers' stylistic choices. Similarly, Freed and Broadhead (1987) showed that the subjects in their study made choices in style and content of the client proposals with consideration of corporate culture.

While corporate culture is believed to exert influences on written business communication, written communication, in turn, is argued to speak for corporate culture. Morley, Shockley-Zalabak and Cesaria (1997, p. 254) observe that explicit and implicit written messages, namely formal statements of organisational philosophy and messages written by corporate leaders, promote corporate culture. In a study of report letters written by CEOs of 30 companies in the United States and 24 Latin American companies, Conaway and Wardrope (2010) found that these letters communicated more than factual information; they created a voice of their companies that encouraged "support for organisational practices" (Conaway & Wardrope, 2010, p. 141).

In a similar study, Hyland (1998) examined 137 annual reports written by CEOs of international and Hong Kong-based companies to explore the rhetorical devices used to "construct and convey corporate image" (p. 224). Using quantitative methods to measure the frequency of the devices and qualitative methods to examine the contribution of each device, the researcher showed that the meta-discourse devices

allowed the CEOs to realise rational, credible and affective appeals to influence the readers and project a positive corporate image.

Another study by Swales and Rogers (1995) investigated the projection of corporate culture via mission statements. Using linguistic and textual analysis to analyse three mission statements of two American companies, the researchers reported that, despite different communicative purposes (i.e., the call for the protection of a historical vision versus a collaborative response to crisis), the mission statements employed similar linguistic and rhetorical devices to project the organisational philosophy. This study supported their earlier study (Rogers & Swales, 1990), in which the ethical code and policy statement of an American company called Dana were examined. The scrutiny of its linguistic features revealed that the document was “reflective of the goals of the corporation” (Rogers & Swales, 1990, p. 293).

### **2.5.3 WE written business communication and professional culture**

Professional culture, the least studied among the three cultural dimensions, refers to the extent to which professionals identify themselves with their professions rather than with their institutions or their countries (Ulijn et al., 2000, p. 299; Sheer & L. Chen, 2003, p. 55). Professional culture offers its own norms of behaviour, codes of ethics and regulations besides those provided by national and corporate culture (Sheer & L. Chen, 2003, p. 55). To date, research has been conducted on the impact of professional culture on spoken business communication (e.g., Sheer & L. Chen, 2003), but less has been done on written business communication.

In brief, this review of the relationship between written business communication and culture indicates that the concept of culture is highly complex. Therefore, the construct of culture examined in this study (in the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*) may be a difficult notion to investigate. However, by employing SFL, a firmly-grounded theoretical and analytical framework, this study addressed the notion of cultural context from a functional perspective, without necessarily using the existing categories of national culture, corporate culture and professional culture (see chapter 5). In this way, the

global purposes of the texts and the linguistic expressions realising their schematic stages, which define their generic identity, were taken into consideration (chapter 5).

#### **2.5.4 WE written business communication and field of business discourse**

Apart from the construct of cultural context, the second research question (*What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*) consisted of another notion: situational context, which is argued by SF linguists to be shaped by the contextual variables of field, tenor and mode (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Askehave, 2010; Paugh & Moran, 2013; Matthiessen, 2013). The first of these variables, field, refers to the topic of communication, determining the language choices of the experiential metafunction, for example, transitivity and naming (Christie, 2002, p. 20; Hasan, 2009, p. 172; Matthiessen, 2009, p. 47; Matthiessen, 2013, p. 450; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 33). In business discourse, field is “business itself” (J. Thomas, 1997, p. 50).

In business communication research, studies that use SFL as an analytical framework have indicated that field specifies certain lexico-grammatical realisations. For instance, in an investigation of how an image of an ideal bank manager was constructed in English job advertisements in a Danish bank chain, Askehave (2010) revealed that the topic of the advertisements entailed choices of second personal pronouns and leadership lexis as main participants in achievement-oriented processes<sup>4</sup>. Through those linguistic choices, a clear professional identity for the successful applicant was claimed to be projected.

Also using SFL as an analytical tool, J. Thomas (1997) reviewed annual letters sent to stockholders and found that active verbs were chosen to project the vitality of a business while the use of passive constructions implied the decline in profit and functioned as a means to distance the writer from the message. Few material processes of doing and action were used when decreased profitability was communicated. It was also indicated that, due to the nature of this type of business documents, few behavioral, verbal and existential processes were identified. On the contrary, relational processes together with non-human participants were frequently

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<sup>4</sup> A process is an SFL term that indicates a verb. This concept will be further explained in chapters 3 and 4.

used to suggest that the success/failure of a company was a fact and could not be questioned.

While J. Thomas (1997) and Askehave (2010) provided significant insights into the field of written business communication, it should be noted that research into the field of business discourse is rather limited. In the current study, as seen in chapter 4, the scrutiny of participants, processes and circumstances highlight the field of the texts, through which the writers' communication strategies of what to project and what to hide were elicited.

### **2.5.5 WE written business communication and tenor of business discourse**

The second dimension of the situational context is tenor, the interpersonal relationship of participants that influences language choices in communication (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004; Christie, 2002; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In business communication, tenor is characterised as “the relations among participants in the particular business activity” (J. Thomas, 1997, p. 50). Researchers investigating tenor in business discourse argue that language in business texts is socially constructed (Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007, p. 161) and that participants in communication play important roles in “the creation and maintenance of meanings” (Suchan & Dulek, 1998, p. 91). The impact of tenor on written business communication and the use of written business communication to develop and sustain business relationships have been the motivation for several studies.

In a case study of English fax communication in a Finnish fish brokerage company, Connor (1999) analysed faxes generated in two non-consecutive weeks and found that the fax authors accommodated their linguistic choices and rhetorical styles to meet the expectations of the receivers. This finding confirmed an earlier study by Louhiala-Salminen (1997), who investigated faxes produced in one week in a Finnish company (31 were written in English, 33 in Finnish and 5 in other languages). Using critical discourse analysis, Louhiala-Salminen (1997) revealed that the relationship between the writers and receivers affected the textual realisations of rhetorical moves. Whereas new relationships between buyers and sellers were found to result in additional moves to signal a formal and distant tone, older professional

relationships often appeared to lead to the omission of certain moves as “the parties trust each other [and] the relationship stabilizes” (Louhiala-Salminen, 1997, p. 330).

Jensen (2009) reported similar results in a study of 46 negotiation emails in English produced by one Danish security company and one Taiwanese supplier of electronic products. The researcher found that at the beginning of the business relationship (the contact phase), interactional markers such as hedges, boosters, self-mention and engagement markers were used more frequently than in later phases. In the negotiation phase, she found a decrease in engagement markers as the relationship shifted from an interpersonal focus to a transactional focus. However, in the last phase (the business phase), more interactional markers were reported to be used. The language became more personal, the openings and closings were friendlier and the shift from “we” to “I” signaled the evolution of the relationship from a corporate level to a more personal level. This study appeared to disconfirm Murphy and Levy (2006), who maintained that emails supported transactional rather than interpersonal relations.

Also interested in the influence of interpersonal relationships on written business communication, van Mulken and van der Meer (2005) looked into the impact of tenor on discourse structure and textual realisations of company replies to customers’ inquiries. Analysing 24 email messages, the researchers reported that some rhetorical moves (for example, “further contact”) functioned as a means to establish a relationship with customers. Moreover, some companies created rapport with customers by accommodating their language to accord with that of their customers as well as using the first personal pronoun ‘I’ or ‘we’. Also, the politeness marker (*please*) and attitude markers (*unfortunately*, *hope*, *sorry*) were employed as “rhetorical operationalisations of interpersonal relationships” (van Mulken & van der Meer, 2005, p. 105).

The tenor of business discourse appears to influence the textual features of not only electronic mediated communications like faxes and emails, but also other business text types. In an examination of clients’ expectations of business proposals, Lagerwerf and Bossers (2002) pointed out business proposals followed explicit and implicit genre conventions. Explicit genre conventions were determined by clients’

request for a proposal while implicit genre conventions depended on the relationship between the reader and writer. Put in a different way, it is the interpersonal relationship that was believed to determine the conventions of business proposals.

Interpersonal factors include writer-reader relationships and also encompass the communicator's job roles (Askehave, 2010). According to Suchan and Dulek (1998, p. 101), different job roles have impacts in diverse ways on the structuring of written messages. Job roles that involve high task-uncertainty like those of managers, executives and specialists will necessitate a high level of creativity whereas job roles with low task-uncertainty will be more likely to rely on prescribed formulas (Suchan & Dulek, 1998, p. 101).

The relevance of this literature to the current study is twofold: First, the influence of interpersonal factors on the linguistic and discursal choices of the Vietnamese writers in the data may reflect the way they accommodate the peculiarities of their local variety of English in their communication. Second, written business communication should be viewed as a social semiotic process, a process of ongoing meaning making and negotiation within a dynamic business context. As observed by Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007), the relationship between the situational context and organisational writing is "reciprocal and mutual constructive" (p. 183). This is also a part of the concern of the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*

### **2.5.6 WE written business communication and mode of business discourse**

The third dimension of the situational context is mode of discourse. In SFL, mode refers to the channel of communication, which influences the choice of language and the organisation of the message (Christie, 2002; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In business communication, mode is "the choice of medium on any specific business occasion" (J. Thomas, 1997, p. 50). 'New' modes of business communication such as emails have increasingly gained the same "evidential validity" as business letters and recorded telephone calls (J. Gimenez, 2006, p. 161). The appearance of these modes has led to new developments in the format, language and functions of written

business communication (Louhiala-Salminen, 2009, p. 309). As Hasan (2009, p. 172) and Matthiessen (2009, p. 43) argue, mode tends to determine patterns of cohesion, voice, theme, forms of deixis and lexical continuity.

After the brief era of faxes at the end of the 1980s, the computerised workplace saw the emergence, and later dominance, of emails. Emails now play a prevalent role in modern business communication, becoming “the most widespread and frequent means of written communication” (M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 11). A study by Rogen International (2001) showed that the use of emails increased more than 600 per cent from 1999 to 2001. This figure was validated by Briguglio (2005), who reported that 90 per cent of employees at a Malaysia company and a Hong Kong company claimed that the task they carried out most frequently at work was reading and writing business emails. These facts and figures are consistent with the dominance of emails in the data of the current study.

While some authors claim that email use may cause lower productivity and diminish the quality of work due to the quick distribution of information without proper checking, information overload and absence of face-to-face communication (Dawley & Anthony, 2003; Jackson, Dawson, & Wilson, 2001; Hewitt, 2006; Phillips & Reddie, 2007), others observe that emails have provided more convenient professionalism than faxes and business letters as they are cheap, can be quickly stored, retrieved, forwarded, and can be sent at any time and to multiple recipients if necessary, which explains their widespread dominance in business communication (Austin & Mendlick, 1993; G. Thomas et al., 2006; Crystal, 2006a; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2005). These reasons also justify why the data in the current study consisted of unsolicited emails.

Since the appearance of emails in the 1970s (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002, p. 229), substantial research has been conducted showing that business emails have developed distinctive features with respect to format, language and functions. For example, with regard to their format, research has revealed that, in addition to the conventional greeting formula as seen in formal letters (i.e., *Dear ...*) (M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 21), there can be a lack of salutation, closing and signature, as well as the absence of “elaborate rituals of social pleasantries and status observance” (Gains,

1999, p. 98) in a substantial number of emails, which is viewed as a typical manifestation of “bluntness in email communication” (van Mulken & van der Meer, 2005, p. 101) or a technique in business correspondence to express the closeness between the writer and recipient (M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 21). Within an organisation, it has been argued that emails fulfill similar functions to memos; therefore, personalised greetings, also referred to as salutations/openings, become unnecessary (Crystal, 2006a, p. 105). In many cases, greetingless messages are a part of embedded/chain emails – “the process of composition by which messages are textually connected” (J. Gimenez, 2006, p. 155). According to Crystal (2006a), the respondent in such messages considers them as a part of “an adjacency pair” (p. 105), resulting in the absence of an introductory greeting. In addition to this, the more prompt the reply is, the more likely it is that it will lack the greeting (Crystal, 2006a, p. 105). Another observation about the format of electronic-mediated communication is conventions for closings may have developed, with “thank you” signaling a request email and “names-only” signaling an information email (Gains, 1999). Added to this, automatic signatures are increasingly employed (Crystal, 2006a, p. 109).

With regard to language, while business letters are said to present the features of the typical written discourse (e.g., elaborate syntactic structures with few contracted and elliptical forms, J. Gimenez, 2000, p. 247), the language of emails is believed to share commonalities with the oral discourse. It is brief, concise, “more informal [and] less conservative” than traditional written language (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996, p. 47). In spite of the general improvement in business people’s command of English (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996), emails see less attention to the traditional linguistic forms associated with formal writing because, in technology-mediated communication, it is the content, business efficiency and expediency that matter, not accuracy (Louhiala-Salminen, 1996; J. Gimenez, 2005; Jensen, 2009). In spite of paying-attention-to-form advice from email guidebooks, (e.g., keeping an eye on spelling, grammar and punctuation, N. Flynn & T. Flynn, 2003), speed and spontaneity, which are typical characteristics of conversational language (Jensen, 2009), are said to make it difficult for email composers to reflect on the technical aspects of their messages, resulting in typing and linguistic errors and the failure to

adhere to punctuation and capitalisation conventions (Louhiala-Salminen, 1997; J. Gimenez, 2000; Yongyan, 2000; van Mulken & van der Meer, 2005; Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002; Crystal, 2006a).

An additional feature that makes emails resemble oral language is their syntactical structure, which is found to be customarily short, simple, loose, fragmented and straightforward with a dominance of co-ordinate ideas, imperative constructions and the existential “there” (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002, p. 230; Crystal, 2006a, p. 115; M. Gimenez, 2011, pp. 21-22). There is also an apparent reliance on the immediate context, such as through the use of reference propositions, demonstrative modifiers and elliptical forms (J. Gimenez, 2000; Crystal, 2006a; M. Gimenez, 2011). Furthermore, despite email guides suggesting the avoidance of acronyms and abbreviations so as not to confuse the recipients (e.g., Spink, Wells, & Meche, 1999, p. 145), the informal and personalised nature of emails is manifest in the frequent appearance of contracted forms and unconventional (but gradually becoming standard) abbreviations, namely *pls* for please, *tk*s for thanks, or *rgds* for regards (Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002, p. 230; Crystal, 2006a, p. 127; M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 16). As to lexical choices, colloquial expressions and acronyms are often used (M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 21), which further indicates the proximity between computer-mediated communication and unplanned, spoken language.

Another characteristic that makes emails similar to spoken language is self-initiated repair in the interest of successful communication. Exploring 400 email messages written by L1 and non-L1 speakers of English from open public discussion groups and a closed discussion group, Tanskanen and Karhukorpi (2008) reported self-correction strategies such as affirmatively formulated overstatements (e.g., *well, not exactly, but you know what I mean*), negatively formulated overstatements (e.g., *maybe... but...; of course... but...*) and non-extreme statements (e.g., *I don't mean to...*). Tanskanen and Karhukorpi (2008) point out that, while classic repairs prefer immediate same-turn corrections, repairs in emails often occur in the following turn (next-position repairs) when the writer realises the occurrence of miscommunication and need for adjustment. This conversational feature of self-repair is in line with J. Gimenez's (2005) study, which examined the dialogic nature of emails created by embedded messages. G. Thomas et al. (2006) also observe that email strings

(embedded emails) make emails resemble a conversation due to “layers of past and current knowledge about particular topics” (p. 264).

From these linguistic features, it is apparent that this mode of business discourse embodies “a pseudo-conversational form of communication” (Gains, 1999, p. 81), “the written conversation” (J. Gimenez, 2000, p. 239; Cumming, 1995, p. 5), or a blend of writing and talking (Lan, 2000, p. 23; G. James, 2001, p. 9; Hartley & Bruckmann, 2002, p. 230; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011, p. 3194; Evans, 2012, p. 5). Nonetheless, it has been pointed out that the degree of blending should be viewed as a continuum in that whether or not emails resemble spoken language or written language depends on the interpersonal relationship between the writer and recipient. For example, in a study about business emails in Hong Kong, Evans (2012) revealed significant linguistic differences between internal emails (written to recipients within a company) and external emails (written to recipients outside the company). Whereas internal emails are short, direct and to the point with no need for greetings and “thank you”, external emails are more formal and carefully composed to “convey an impression of competence and diligence” (p. 6).

Aside from its impact on formatting and linguistic aspects, the appearance of emails has also given rise to new communicative functions and values. Conducting semi-structured interviews with 31 professionals in Hong Kong, Evans (2012) reported that emails were often used to confirm the results of face-to-face/phone business transactions. According to Nickerson (1999), the dominant use of emails in written business communication has indicated that email writing has become an organisational practice to achieve the communicative purpose of reporting officially on the corporate process. Nickerson (1999) has also provided an insight into the use of email as a crucial source of information in a multinational company – “a fluid database of corporate knowledge” (p. 53) as they are often sent to multiple recipients.

Another fundamental characteristic regarding the functions of business emails is their transactional focus. While fulfilling the standard functions of business correspondence, be that making requests, providing information or direction, generally business emails are said to serve the function of information transmission rather than establishing social relationships with few uses of politeness indicators

(Murphy & Levy, 2006, p. 2; M. Gimenez, 2011, p. 21). In his study, Evans (2012) found that some Hong Kong professionals considered business emails to be a tool to get business done and, therefore, did not require the employment of fancy, sophisticated English. This finding is in line with Kankaanranta and Louhiala-Salminen (2010), who reported that English emails were mainly used to perform transactional rather than interactional functions. Hartley and Bruckmann (2002) also claim that emails contain “none of the politeness features that we expect in letters” (p. 229). However, this observation differs from Jariah and Chong (2003), who contend that business e-communicators make careful choice of words to demonstrate appropriate politeness to maintain a harmonious business relationship. Jariah and Chong’s (2003) findings confirm what Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996, p. 639) suggest about business correspondence: Politeness strategies in relation to status, power and imposition play a crucial role in business communication.

Furthermore, emails have adapted to international communication demands by evolving into ‘embedded emails’ – a series of emails that respond to the original email (J. Gimenez, 2005; 2006). This new function has brought about new communicative values, enabling business communication to be conducted across geographical borders and making it possible for multiple team members to participate in or witness a communication event. This new function is also reported to have an impact on the writer’s choice of language: Although many people may be cc’ed in to witness the interaction, only the active participants are addressed in the salutation and in the closing of the embedded email (J. Gimenez, 2005; 2006).

In the context of WE, research has revealed that emails generated by non-L1 writers manifest characteristics distinct to their local socio-cultural contexts, the most noticeable features among which are code-switching and code-mixing. Hadina and Rafik-Galea (2005), for example, reported that business emails written by Malaysian business communicators demonstrated code-switching features reflective of the Malaysian business community. Examining 150 emails composed by Malaysian writers at two Malaysian companies, Hadina and Rafik-Galea (2005) found that email writers code-switched from the native language (Bahasa Malaysia) to English in order to signify “power and acceptance of inequality” (p. 125) or from English to the native language to maintain “the spirit of camaraderie” (p. 127).

Hassan and Hashim (2009), who were also interested in English electronic communication by Malaysians, showed that the interlocutors in the e-data from a two-million-word corpus used code-switching and code-mixing between English and Malay, Chinese dialects, Tamil and Iban, an indigenous language of East Malaysia, to establish interpersonal relationships and convey a common identity with the interlocutors. In addition, discourse particles commonly found in colloquial Malaysian English were also used to convey emotive and affective attitudes.

In a study on English emails written by employees at a Hong Kong university, instances of code-mixing and code-shifting were also found, which, according to the researcher suggested that the Chinese emailers resorted to their mother tongue to add “colour to the message” (Lan, 2000, p. 29) as there were Chinese jokes, proverbs and idioms that were not easily translated into English.

Similar to Lan (2000), G. James (2001) examined emails produced by Hong Kong writers in the university context and found that Cantonese words and structures were often borrowed and used in English emails. These Cantonese additions were claimed to help the writers overcome their linguistic deficiency as well as enhancing solidarity and collectivity. In particular, G. James (2001) reported an observed outstanding characteristic typical of Hong Kong writers in the data – the addition of Chinese particles at the end of English sentences, a feature that was believed to enable the writers to express attitudinal and modal meanings in a similar way to their tonal mother language.

A considerable number of other studies of English emails written in different contexts have been conducted around the world, including mainland China, Thailand, Finland, Sweden, and the Caribbean region (Yongyan, 2000; Liwei, 2001; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles, & Kankaanranta, 2005; Hinrichs & White-Sustaita, 2011; Seargeant & Tagg, 2011). These studies have revealed similar findings regarding the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in business emails.

Apart from code-switching and code-mixing, another feature that has been found in English emails written in the WE context is the writers’ directness. In an investigation of 200 English request emails sent by Greek Cypriot university students

(non-L1 speakers of English) to 11 British faculty members, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) reported that the emailers resorted mainly to direct strategies of requests, using direct questions to request for information and imperative mood (with *please*) to request for actions. The directness of the emails was also characterised by the omission of greetings and closings (83.5% of the data). In addition, the study indicated the sparing use of modifiers to soften requests (e.g., *possibly, perhaps, a bit, a little, I'm afraid, I think*) and the extensive employment of intensifiers (e.g., *as soon as possible, urgently, right now*) to express the urgency of the requests. According to the researcher, these linguistic features were a manifestation of the Greek Cypriot students' culture of directness, which may make their emails appear impolite and discourteous to the British lecturers (p. 3210).

Louhiala-Salminen et al. (2005), who examined 114 English email messages composed by 27 Finish and 23 Swedish employees of two international corporations, also reported that the Finish writers tended to favour a direct writing style reflected in their use of imperatives for requests. However, the researchers found that the Swedish writers chose to use more indirect alternatives (e.g., using modal initials or declaratives) than the Finish writers.

In Asian business settings, politeness in English emails seems to be a dominant characteristic. In a study that focused on 115 request email messages written by 11 English language teachers of a public education institution in Hong Kong, V. Ho (2011a) reported that, to avoid eliciting negative feelings and resentment from recipients, the writers chose to distance themselves from discourse by referring to a prior mutual agreement when making a request. Moreover, requests were found to be frequently preceded by expressions of gratitude and were at times softened by the employment of humour.

Politeness has also been found in English emails written by Malaysian writers. Hadina and Rafik-Galea (2005) reported that politeness strategies such as careful choice of lexis, mood structures, honorifics and politeness marker *please* were used by Malaysian writers to express deference to older staff or people of higher status.

Besides code-mixing, code-switching, directness and politeness, research on WE emails has also reported certain localised linguistic features such as non-conventional spellings to express new meanings and functions, non-conventional use of punctuation, omission of prepositions, and peculiar subject-verb agreement (Lan, 2000; Hinrichs & White-Sustaita, 2011).

The findings from this body of research highlight the fact that emails in written business communication have developed distinctive characteristics unique to this mode of communication. Furthermore, emails composed in the WE context have demonstrated socio-cultural features typical of their origins. This raises some significant questions: What is the nature of English emails written by Vietnamese business interactants? Do they embody distinct features of the local business community? These questions will be addressed in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

### **2.5.7 Written business communication in Vietnam**

Although written business communication in Vietnam is “a source of comment and curiosity” (van Horn, 2008, p. 622), research about this is not widely available. While some studies have been carried out on spoken business communication, studies on written communication are fairly limited.

Comparing utterances constructed by Vietnamese staff working for a manufacturing company in California and utterances produced by Vietnamese counterparts for similar situations in Hanoi, Vietnam, Kleifgen and Le (2007) found that Vietnamese immigrants in the United States had a tendency to omit kinship terms and honorific markers favoured in spoken business communication in Vietnam. According to the researchers, the Vietnamese use of kin terms and politeness markers highlights the hierarchical relationships of the interlocutors, reflecting the primacy of maintaining interpersonal relations in the Vietnamese workplace.

In another study on Vietnamese spoken business communication, Chew (2005) provided an account of the strategic and politeness functions of the discourse marker *duoc* (meaning either “probably can” or “certainly can”). The marker was reported to unfold the Vietnamese preference for ‘face’ rather than communication efficiency.

To date, few studies on English used in Vietnamese written business communication have been documented. In an educational discussion of cohesive devices in English business correspondence written by native Vietnamese, Dillon (1992, p. 10) cites one example to illustrate a lack of cohesive ties, which may result in a meaningless piece of writing. The reason accounting for this “severity of cohesion errors” (Dillon, 1992, p. 10) was, the researcher explained, the transfer of mother tongue assumption in how to connect ideas. The researcher then suggested that English for Specific Purposes and business writing instruction had to shift their attention from stressing the importance of grammar to showing students how to connect their thoughts (Dillon, 1992, p. 14). However, it is worth noting that this paper is situated within the educational domain. As Lees (1984) states, “the encounter between English teacher and businessman is rarely a close one” (p. 133), implying the discrepancy between what educators uphold or critique and what actually takes place in the business world.

Emanating from the very little literature available on the topic of business communication, (e.g., Morrison & Conaway, 2007; Chew, 2009; H. Nguyen, Le & Boles, 2010), two main points regarding socio-cultural values manifested in Vietnamese written business communication can be noted. First, Vietnam is said to be a collectivist society in which decisions are not made by an individual; instead, family members’ consideration must be taken into account. Second, influenced by Confucian tradition, Vietnam is a hierarchical society. Although equality has been legislated in the constitution, each person considers himself/herself as having a place in the societal and familial hierarchy and has to know who to defer to. Collectivism and hierarchy are argued to be embedded in written business communication. The aged are regarded as more experienced, knowledgeable and wiser than the young; hence the use of such address terms as *anh* (elder brother), *chi* (elder sister), *chu/bac* (uncle), and *co* (aunt) in business communication to show deference even though the communicators have no kin relation. The use of kinship terms also reflects collectivism – the idea that each corporate resembles an extended family and each corporate member is treated as a family member. However, in the case of communication among unacquainted business people, formality is insisted upon, necessitating the use of professional titles (Morrison & Conaway, 2007, p. 194).

Furthermore, relationships and trust are highly valued, a cultural trait that has to be understood to appreciate the loose language in business documents such as business contracts (Chew, 2009, p. 374). As members of a high-context culture, the Vietnamese do not regard a business contract as “an agreement commonly understood to be enforceable between parties” as in western countries (Chew, 2009, p. 373). Rather, it has a subtle way of working depending on how well the relationship between the parties is built and maintained; hence, there is a lack of emphasis on the rigorous choice of language in contracts (Chew, 2009, p. 374). Moreover, it is noted that politeness forms of gratitude and apology (e.g., ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’) appear with different frequencies in Vietnamese business communication depending on the relationship of the business communicators (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2007, pp. 137-138). In transactions where interlocutors have no prior acquaintance, ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’ are frequently used. In contrast, when interlocutors know one another better, expressions of gratitude and apology are rarely used since they create a sense of formality and distance (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2007, pp. 137-138). T. Do (2004) also points out that Vietnamese people with seniority may not feel the need to apologise or thank their subordinates as they feel a junior or subordinate has an obligation or a duty to serve them. This observation aligns with the notion of hierarchy as indicated above.

Other research into Vietnamese business covers a wide range of topics, including how to do business successfully in Vietnam (E. Smith & C. Pham, 1996); household enterprises (Haughton & Vijverberg, 2002); challenges in managing partnerships with state-own enterprises (H. Nguyen & Meyer, 2005); trust in inter-firm relationships (T. Nguyen, Weinstein, & Meyer, 2005; Tuang & Stringer, 2008); diversified business groups (Berhanu, 2005); private firms getting bank financing (N. Le, Venkatesh & T. Nguyen, 2006); the connection among organisational culture, transactional leadership and the measurement of workplace performance in Vietnamese businesses (Luu, 2010); internal business organisation in the country’s private sectors (Lotte, 2009); and, corporate social responsibility (Tencati, Russo & Quaglia, 2008). Nevertheless, few touch upon the issue of English in Vietnamese written business communication. As Chew (2009) points out, “vast opportunities” (p. 382) remain in business communication in Vietnam for examination.

## 2.6 Chapter summary

In short, this literature review has explored the existing theoretical paradigms available for a study of English in written business communication. Through a detailed analysis of the three conceptual frameworks of WE, EFL and EIL/IE, it was suggested that each demonstrated certain perceived weaknesses. However, WE with its pluricentric perspectives appeared to be the most suitable framework to explain the complex sociolinguistic nature of English in Vietnamese written business communication. Although the validity of WE has been questioned with respect to its paradigmatic, methodological and conceptual orientation, its weaknesses were lessened in the current study through the employment of SFL as a theoretical framework and an analytical tool. In addition, significant constructs in the research questions (namely, context of culture and context of situation) have been examined, highlighting the complexity of ‘national culture’, ‘corporate culture’ and ‘professional culture’ as well as the intricacy of field, tenor and mode in written business communication. Furthermore, this literature review has illustrated the dearth of research into written business communication in SEA and, in particular, a lack of studies on Vietnamese written business communication. Though past studies have tapped several aspects of Vietnamese business, there is an absence of rigorous research into the English language used in Vietnamese written business communication. It is this gap that the present study sought to bridge.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes in detail the methodology that was used in this study, including an examination of the research paradigm within which the research was framed, a discussion of SFL as a vehicle for the systematic analysis of the data, and a description of the research methods, sampling procedure, coding scheme and data collection. In addition, this chapter provides a detailed report of the four pilot studies that led to the refinement of the codebook and coding scheme. Finally, issues of reliability and validity are discussed.

### 3.1 Research approach

This study was located within the research paradigm of heuristic pragmatism, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. While post-positivism is typically regarded as the underlying philosophy of quantitative research and social constructivism is typically seen as the underlying philosophy of qualitative research, pragmatism holds true for mixed methods approaches (Denscombe, 2008 p. 270; Creswell, 2009, pp. 7-10). Since pragmatists do not view the world as “an absolute unity” (Creswell, 2009, p. 11), they use all approaches available to understand inquiry. Pragmatists, with an anti-representational view of knowledge, aim at utility – the worthiness of the research questions and the practical application of the knowledge produced from answering those questions (Morgan, 2007, p. 72; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, p. 273; Feilzer, 2010, p. 8). Given the primacy of the research questions, pragmatism underpins the design of this research project. The advantage of this paradigm, as Morgan (2007) maintains, is the link between “epistemological concerns about the nature of knowledge [...] and the technical concerns about the methods” used to generate that knowledge, the result of which is “a properly *integrated methodology*” (p. 73, emphasis original).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 274), pragmatists view social phenomena as multidimensional and multifaceted. Feilzer (2010, p. 8) also states that, from the pragmatic stance, the world is measurable with different layers of reality. To unfold these layers, multiple methods are used; hence the convergence of quantitative and qualitative methods. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 274) contend, the more tools researchers has at hand, the better chances they have to truly

address the research questions. P. Scott and Briggs (2009, p. 228) also assert that, in the pursuit of reliable knowledge, the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is unavoidable.

For this study, the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches served two purposes. First, it helped weaken the drawbacks and increase the strengths associated with the chosen research methods – SFL-based content analysis (micro-analysis) and discourse analysis (macro-analysis). As Krippendorff (2004) maintains, text analysts following quantitative approaches have been criticised for rigidly relying on “numerical counting exercises” (pp. 87-88). Moreover, for the study of some social phenomena, quantitative indicators have been proven to be shallow and insensitive (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 10). In contrast, those following qualitative approaches have been criticised for being “unsystematic in their uses of texts and impressionistic in their interpretations” (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. 87-88). The convergence of qualitative and quantitative approaches in text analysis in this study, thus, helped compensate for their respective shortcomings. In addition to lessening the weaknesses, the combination of the two allowed for the reinforcement of their strengths. Qualitative text analysts are known for using existing literature to contextualise their reading of texts and present their interpretations in relation to the context of textual data, leading to more valid findings (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 88). Quantitative researchers, on the other hand, are acknowledged for their consistent application of the analytical procedure, resulting in a higher level of reliability/replicability (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 88). Therefore, the integration of both was desirable in the analysis of the texts in this study.

The second reason for choosing mixed methods was that, to understand the present research inquiry, complementary information was imperative. As Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010, p. 272) argue, qualitative or quantitative data alone are not enough for the thorough comprehension of the phenomenon under investigation. To identify whether a new variety of English was emerging in Vietnamese business communication, the data had to be examined for systematic patterns of lexicogrammatical features, best suited to a quantitative exercise. Moreover, the cultural and situational contexts that generated these features had to be scrutinised, requiring a qualitative analysis of texts. Nonetheless, as will be outlined below, the notions of

quantitative and qualitative used in the two methods of this project were not entirely clear-cut, but were more or less interwoven. Yet, their fusion complemented each other, yielding “a more complete picture” (Denscombe, 2008, p. 272; Feilzer, 2010, p. 8) about the reality of English used Vietnamese written business communication. As Bryman (2007) puts it, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings offers an insight which “could not otherwise be gleaned” (p. 9).

In addition, while qualitative research follows an inductive-subjective-contextual approach and quantitative research uses a deductive-objective-generalising approach, pragmatic research places an emphasis on three factors: abduction, intersubjectivity and transferability (Morgan, 2007, p. 73). These were also the conceptual foundations of this project.

First, in terms of the connection between data and theory, the textual data of the study were analysed abductively. Pragmatists hold that knowing begins with uncertainty, but at the same time is guided by some prior knowledge (P. Scott & Briggs, 2009, p. 230). This study was based on the same epistemological perspective. It commenced with an uncertainty – a question of whether a new variety of English was emerging in the Vietnamese business setting; yet it was also framed by the researcher’s prior knowledge of the Vietnamese socio-cultural factors and existing varieties in Southeast Asia. Hence, the starting point was neither completely “hypothetico-deductive” (P. Scott & Briggs, 2009, p. 230) nor strictly inductive. Instead, the study followed a pattern of abductive inferences, with separate deduction and induction at first and a combination subsequently as Feilzer (2010, p.10) discusses with regard to mixed methods research. To begin with, texts were scrutinised deductively based on a predetermined coding frame with a particular sequence of steps (so that the analytical tasks could be easily distributed among the coders) to explore the lexico-grammatical features (the first research question). Next, they were revisited inductively to elicit the situational and cultural contexts. Finally, the knowledge produced in each of these phases were brought together; interpretations were supported by weaving the lexico-grammatical features identified from the analysed texts and the contexts that gave rise to them, enabling the understanding of the data “from a multidimensional perspective” (Feilzer, 2010, p.

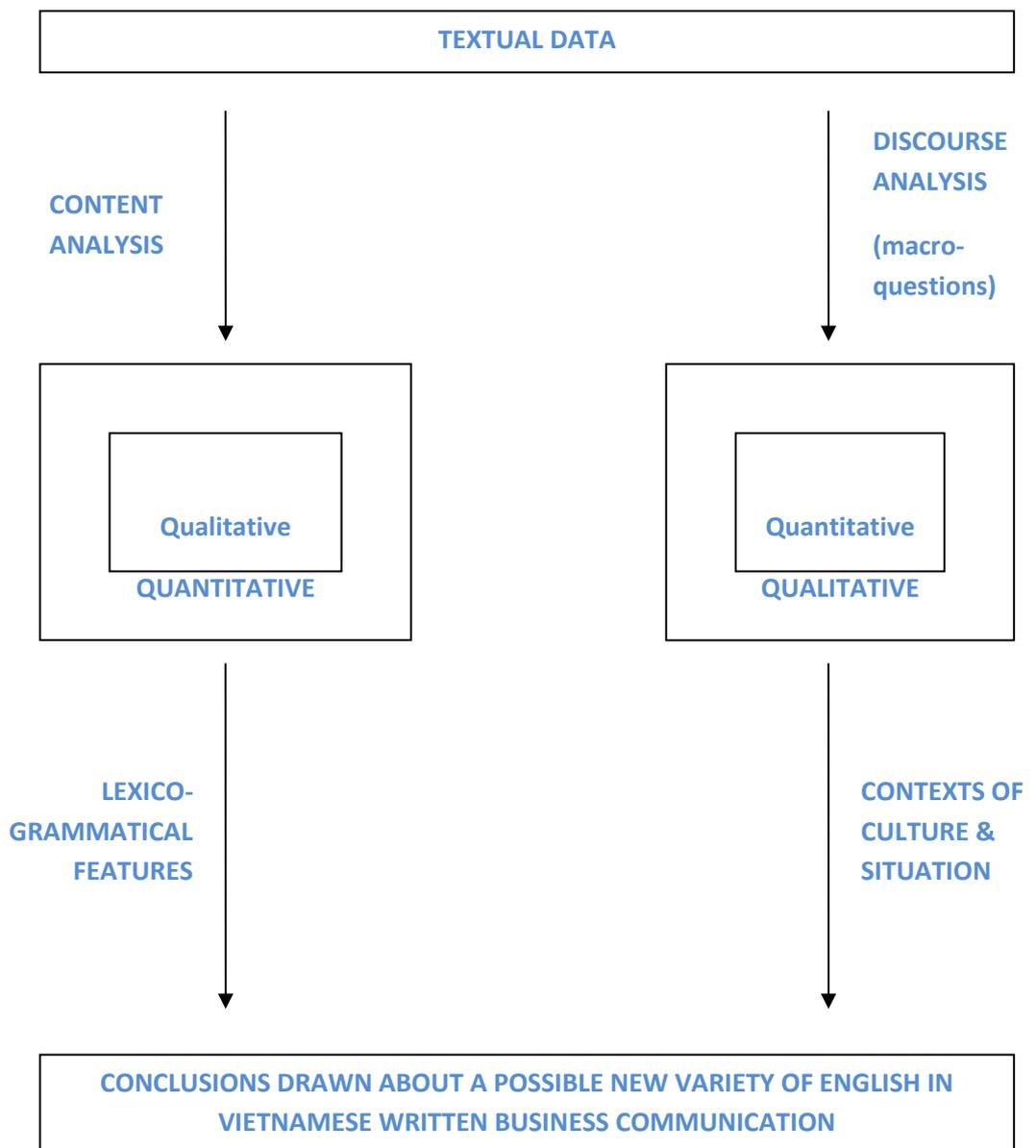
12). As Krippendorff (2004, p. 36) contends, inferences from text analysis are more often than not abductive in nature.

The second pragmatic factor of this study lies in its relationship to the research process: inter-subjectivity. Pragmatists argue that knowledge, the product of the inseparable combination of the mind and the external world, is socially situated (P. Scott & Briggs, 2009, p. 229). Investigating written business communication is also a socially situated inquiry – an inquiry that explores the existence of a variety within its socio-cultural context. Because this study was socially situated, it was not “a detached objective exercise” (P. Scott & Briggs, 2009, p. 229), but inevitably involved an element of subjective interpretation. Furthermore, as Morgan (2007, p. 73) argues, pragmatists have no difficulty mediating the two extremes of realism and constructivism. They not only believe in a single real world, but also in the unique interpretation each individual offers for that world (Morgan, 2007). By combining SFL-based content analysis and discourse analysis for analysing texts, this research project integrated two such worldviews. According to Krippendorff (2004, pp. 22-23), texts have no objective qualities. In other words, they have no inherent content waiting to be uncovered and separated from the form. Instead, texts are open for readers’ as well as the researcher’s interpretations, resulting in multiple readings from numerous perspectives. As Krippendorff (2004) asserts, “the meanings of a text are always brought to it by someone” (p. 22), aligning with the philosophy of constructivism. These interpretations of text content, nevertheless, are not based on a vacuum, but on the physicality of a text (characters, words and sentences, etc.) which is generated in a particular context and discourse for particular intents (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 24). Thus, it is hard to claim that the interpretations of the texts in the study were absolutely subjective; rather, they were intersubjective.

The third pragmatic element involves the inferences made from data – transferability (Morgan, 2007, p. 72). It is believed that the knowledge produced from this study is neither completely context-specific nor universal. To a certain extent, the findings may have implications for written business communication in some other companies and industries in Vietnam apart from the ones selected for the study. However, as the research was conducted on Vietnamese workplace settings, it is unlikely that the results can be applicable or generalisable to any other cultural and business setting in

the world. That is why the findings are neither absolutely context-specific nor universal.

In a mixed methods design, not only do researchers have to specify the rationale for their choice and the epistemological foundations, they also need to articulate a concrete plan for mixing the methods so as to best answer the inquiry at hand and at the same time avoid inconsistency and incoherence (Denscombe, 2008, p. 271; Creswell, 2009, p. 205). This project used the design that Creswell (2009, p. 210) terms “concurrent embedded design” (Figure 1). As can be seen from Figure 1, this design used an “identical sample” (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 277) for both quantitative and qualitative phases. Textual data were examined twice, using two methods: content analysis (micro-analysis) and discourse analysis (macro-analysis). These analyses were conducted simultaneously and did not have to follow each other in any particular sequence. In other words, data stemming from one phase did not inform data selected for the other phase as Collins et al. (2007) point out. In the first analysis (content analysis – micro-analysis), while quantitative data were given more priority as described above, they were not totally divorced from qualitative elements. As Krippendorff (2004, p. 16) claims, any reading of texts is qualitative in itself. In the second analysis (discourse analysis – macro-analysis), qualitative data received more weight, but there was still an embedded quantitative element in that the analysis followed a predetermined SFL coding frame.



**Figure 1 - The project's concurrent embedded design**

(adapted from Cresswell, 2009, p. 210)

In the following sections, the analytical tool – SFL – and two research methods used in this study – content analysis and discourse analysis – will be explored in detail.

### **3.1.1 SFL as a vehicle for systematic analysis of language**

As discussed in chapter 2, SFL is a linguistic theory that approaches language from an orientation to its social characters (Hasan, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Matthiessen,

2009; Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), enabling “types of meaning other than content meaning to be given equal prominence with content meaning” (Berry, 1999, p. 81). It is, as Martin et al. (1997, pp. 2-3) assert, an effective tool for insightful language analysis and interpretation, providing an understanding why language is the way it is.

SFL is a powerful vehicle for systematic analysis of language because it assists a researcher to deduce context from text (Holmgren, 2012; Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Newnham, 2013; Matthiessen, 2013). Systemicists argue that context is embedded in text via two means: three register variables (field, tenor and mode) and schematic structures (“the staged and goal-oriented organisation” of text, Eggins, 1994, pp. 36-49), the former of which are products of *context of situation* while the latter are products of *context of culture* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2013; Coffin & Donohue, 2012).

*Context of situation* indicates the environment of text, specifically the verbal environment and the situation in which the text was uttered (Malinowski, 1923). This concept was developed by Firth (1959) to describe the participants of the situation, the verbal and non-verbal action of the participants as well as the effects of the verbal action. Later, Firth’s student, Halliday (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Hasan, 1985) further elaborated on it with the conceptual framework of field, tenor and mode, a powerful framework to examine language. This framework has been adopted by Harman (2008), Xue-de and Qing (2011), Bateman (2013), Jinping (2013), and Paugh and Moran (2013), among others. In this framework, field refers to the nature of the social action that is taking place; tenor refers to the participants, their statuses and their roles; and mode refers to the role the language is playing and the channel (i.e., spoken or written or some combination of the two) as examined in chapter 2 (see sections 2.5.4, 2.5.5 and 2.5.6).

While context of situation is the immediate environment, there is a wider environment for language use: *context of culture*, which includes three modes of meanings: ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying (Halliday & Hasan, 1985; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday, 2009). To put it differently, culture indicates the “beliefs, values and ways of behaving” of particular social groups

which are often encoded in the language via text schematic structures (A. Hewings & M. Hewings, 2005, p. 34).

Accordingly, through the analysis of the register variables and schematic structures, the context of situation and context of culture which moulded the texts were revealed. SFL provides a detailed grammar that meets this demand. If traditional grammar and formal grammar present rules in terms of words and sentences, which “does not provide us with a way of interpreting the overall organisation” of language as a system of information (Halliday, 1994a, pp. x-xi), Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) looks at language from a discourse-semantic perspective and is therefore particularly suitable for “purposes of text analysis” (Halliday, 1994a, pp. x-xi). By examining the configurations of functions of language (i.e., ideational, interpersonal and textual functions), SFG helps unfold its context of use, namely the context of culture and context of situation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Coffin & Donohue, 2012). To be specific, the analysis of the ideational function (transitivity) revealed an understanding of the surrounding environment and the experience encoded in language. The analysis of the interpersonal function (mood) helped realise the social role relationships played by the interactants while that of the textual function (theme) provided an insight into the delivery and organisation of the message (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004; Martin et al., 1997; Christie, 2002; Hasan, 2009; Halliday, 2009; Coffin & Donohue, 2012).

In the current research, SFL was used as an analytical vehicle, however, it was embedded in a content-analysis design to develop the analytical variables for the micro-analysis (to address the first research question), and in a discourse-analysis design to develop the observational questions for the macro-analysis (to address the second research question). The employment of SFL as an analytical tool is described in detail later in this chapter (see section 3.1.5).

### **3.1.2 Content analysis (CA)**

The first method used in this project was content analysis (CA), which was selected as an unobtrusive method (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp. 279-314; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 494; Herbes & Ramme, 2014, p. 260) to learn about “definite social phenomena”, showing the underlying structures and social processes (Silverman, 2006, p. 154).

It has been maintained that CA can be used to make sense of a wide variety of data, including texts, images, sounds, mass-media content, symbols and technology-supported social interactions (Krippendorff, 2004, pp. xvii-xviii; Shelton & Skalski, 2014, p. 343). For this research project, the focus was on texts. Consistent with Silverman's (2006, p. 157) and Fraenkel and Wallen's (2006, p. 494) contentions, close analysis of textual data yielded three major advantages to the current study. First, it revealed the presentational subtleties of the texts, which helped address the first research question (*What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?*). Second, it assisted the researcher to access information that might be difficult or even impossible to obtain through direct observation and other means. Third, it may allow other researchers to replicate the study due to the availability of the texts.

As pointed out earlier, quantitative data were given more priority when the texts were analysed by CA. However, a qualitative element was also embedded. It is worth noting that CA, developed as a quantitative method of newspaper analysis, is argued to exist in two forms: quantitative and qualitative (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 5). Authors advocating the qualitative approach critique quantitative CA as a method of mechanical counting and measuring with a simplistic reliance on quantification (Druckman, 2005, p. 257). On the other hand, scholars who regard quantification an indispensable component of CA allege that the qualitative approach is only an impressionistic procedure for making content-descriptive observations while the quantitative approach offers an objective, reliable and systematic procedure for analysis (George, 2009, pp. 144-145). However, some others find the distinction between quantitative and qualitative in CA unnecessary. For example, Bauer (2000, p. 132) and Krippendorff (2004, p. 16) cast doubts on the validity and usefulness of this distinction since, they argue, any analysis involving texts is qualitative in itself. Accordingly, as explained in the previous section, the design of this research was a combination of the two although they were not given the same weight.

Contemporary CA is defined as a flexible method to make replicable and valid inferences from a focal text to its social contexts (Bauer, 2000, p. 133; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Given the research questions (*What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?*; *What do*

*English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*), the notion of linking the text to its social context was crucial to this project. As Bauer (2000, pp. 133-134) maintains, CA provides a means to infer the social context that may be inaccessible to the researcher. Through the analysis of the frequency of certain lexical and syntactical items as well as the co-occurrence and order of certain items, CA assisted the researcher to make informed guesses about the unknown sources such as a likely author or a likely type of audience (Bauer, 2000, p. 134). A detailed description of the use of CA in designing the coding frame for this study will be provided in the coding scheme (see section 3.1.5). The principles of CA will also be seen woven throughout the four pilot analyses.

### **3.1.3 Discourse analysis (DA)**

The second method employed in this study was discourse analysis (DA) – a method that studies ‘language in use’ (Nunan, 1993, p. 7; Woods, 2006, p. x). To put it another way, DA examines language beyond the level of linguistic elements with an orientation to the relationship between language and the socio-cultural context (Paltridge, 2006, p. 2). Its primary purpose is, as Paltridge (2006, p. 20) contends, to take us into the socio-cultural settings of language use to understand the choices of particular linguistic items and (inter)textual patterns. This is also the aim of the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*

Given the aforementioned characterisation of DA, some scholars consider DA and CA as overlapping (e.g., Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004). However, others (e.g., J. Potter & Wetherell, 1994) argue they are different methods. Although both depend upon coding, one major difference is that coding in DA is “not the analysis itself but a preliminary to make the task of analysis manageable” (J. Potter & Wetherell, 1994, p. 52).

Discourse analysts believe that language is constructive and constructed. While the traditional realist model of language views it as a transparent medium reflecting a straightforward reality, discourse analysts argue that language users use language to construct their vision of the world and in that process, they are constantly involved in

making choices from different pre-existing linguistic possibilities (J. Potter & Wetherell, 1994). This point of view is consistent with SFL: the choices a user makes are constrained by, and therefore have to be viewed in relation to, various contextual factors (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). This validates the necessity of using SFL-based DA to address the second research question.

In this research project, DA was used to scrutinise the “professional discourse” (Woods, 2006, p. xvi) or more specifically, written business discourse – written communication in commercial organisations viewed as social action (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 1999, 2002, 2009; Bargiela-Chiappini et al., 2007). As Woods (2006, p. xvi) argues, each profession has its own way of constructing its own discourse that may be seen as impenetrable, manipulative, forbidding or coercive. This discourse carries with it special knowledge and experience as well as power and authority which are encoded in language use (A. Hewings & M. Hewings, 2005, p. 44; Woods, 2006, p. xvi). This is by no means to say that each profession has a unanimous way of speaking or writing. Actually, research has indicated that, within a profession, there may be diverse institutionalised conventions that dictate different constructions of discourse (Odell & Goswami, 1982; Freed & Broadhead, 1987; Suchan, 1995; Nickerson, 1998 – see chapter 2). As Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007) hold, written business discourse is moulded by “practices, philosophies, ideologies, intentions and internal relationships” (p. 201) of the corporate discourse community. That is why DA was deemed an appropriate choice of method to help the researcher unfold the reality behind language, the notion of context posed in the second research question.

An essential part of discourse analysis is text analysis (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 3-5; Menendez, 2006, p. 852; Martin, 2009, pp. 154-155). In this study, SFG was used as a discourse analytical method. As Halliday and Hasan (1985) contend,

it is sometimes assumed that [discourse analysis or ‘text analysis’] can be carried on without grammar – or even that it is somehow an alternative to grammar. But this is an illusion. A discourse analysis that is not based on grammar is not an analysis at all, but simply a running commentary on a text (p. xvi).

Fairclough (1995) also argues that “textual analysis should mean the analysis of the texture of texts, their form and organisation, not just commentaries on the ‘content’

of text” (pp. 4-5). Since SFL provides a rich resource for text analysis (Martin, 2009, p. 154; Matthiessen, 2013, p. 441) and is “profoundly concerned” with the social characters of texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 5) as previously mentioned in chapter 2, SFG-based text analysis was most suitable to address the second research question. As Fairclough (1992) and Martin (2009) assert, SFL provides a basis for the analysis of not only what is in the text, but also what is absent from it – the context. Similarly, Matthiessen (2013) maintains that SFL equips a researcher with a tool to conduct a systematic analysis of texts based on “comprehensive descriptions of the systems that lie behind them” (p. 440).

Some discourse analysts (e.g., R. Gill, 2000; J. Potter & Wetherell, 1994; J. Potter, 2004a, 2004b, 2012; Worrall, 2013) claim that DA is a craft skill that can only be experienced by hands-on practice and can hardly be described in explicit guidelines. As J. Potter (2004b) rhetorically puts it, DA is “more like bike riding or chicken sexing” (pp. 147-148) than following a specific recipe, implying its fuzzy nature. However, Halliday (1994a) critiques this perspective, arguing that DA in this fashion is but a private exercise “in which one explanation is as good or as bad as another” (p. xvii). He points out that the subjectivity of DA can be lessened by the application of a discourse grammar – SFG. With SFG, he further explains, a text will be not only interpreted in explicit formal terms but also related to the non-linguistic environment that lies beyond the text – the cultural and situational contexts (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). This is what this project sought to achieve. How SFG-based DA was applied in this study is described in section 3.1.5.

### **3.1.4 Sampling**

#### ***3.1.4.1 Sampling strategy***

The sampling strategy of a study has to “stem logically from the conceptual framework” (Kemper, Stringfield & Teddlie, 2002, p. 275). Thus, consistent with the mixed methods design, the research study adopted a mixed methods sampling strategy which is intended to “generate a sample that will address the research questions” (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 86). According to Teddlie and Yu (2007, p. 78), mixed methods sampling strategies combine purposive sampling (to increase transferability) with probability sampling (to increase external validity). Moreover,

when messages to be analysed are generated by individuals or groups, the individuals or groups have to be sampled before the sampling of the messages (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 83). Based on these two theoretical guidelines, this study used mixed methods sampling with a sequential design: purposive sampling of companies followed by stratified sampling (a form of probability sampling) of texts produced by these companies if a large number of texts were collected.

Purposive sampling is characterised as the deliberate selection of institutions, organisations or individuals based on the specific purposes associated with answering the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 77). The purposive sampling technique chosen for this study was typical case sampling, a technique which “seeks those cases that are the most average or representative of the question under study” (Kemper et al., 2002, p. 280). In Vietnam, there were approximately 205,689 businesses statewide at the time data were collected (Bo Cong Thuong – Nuoc Cong Hoa Xa Hoi Chu Nghia Viet Nam, 2009). If the researcher had attempted to generate a sample size that reflected the population of within plus or minus 0.5 per cent, she would have had to sample 1,028 businesses, which was obviously beyond the time and resources of this study. Moreover, not all of them would help answer the research questions as some may not use English in their written communication. Therefore, a small number of businesses were chosen purposively based on certain selection criteria.

Since the study sought to examine a new variety of English used by Vietnamese business people, it aimed to investigate whether endonormative uses of English had emerged. In foreign-owned companies, the norms of using English could be imposed by the overseas headquarters. As Nickerson (1999, pp. 53-55) and Bargiela-Chiappini et al. (2007, p. 159) discuss, corporate policy may specify the use of English in business communication irrespective of the identity of the originator or recipient. In such cases, staff members of foreign-owned companies may correspond in English because they know their activities are under surveillance. In other words, their uses of English might be exonormative, which would not have served the purpose of this study. Additionally, in foreign-owned multinationals, communications tend to be standardised by formats provided from central departments. Some companies even require that correspondence be forwarded to

headquarters for content and form edition before being sent out to customers (van Horn, 2008). Hence, there would be few chances to see how English was used by Vietnamese staff members. Furthermore, in some service industries like hospitality, the needs for written communication are limited (Feiertag, 2007). Due to the constraint of these factors, it is apparent that Vietnamese-owned companies that used extended texts in their written communication would be most suitable for the purposes of this study. In Teddlie and Yu's words (2007), these companies provided "cases that [could] be learned most from" (p. 84). Patton (1990) also holds that "the logic and power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (p. 169).

Two other factors that needed to be taken into account to ensure a "feasible and efficient" sampling plan (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 97) were the practical issues of propriety and the private nature of business texts. As noted by Kemper et al. (2002, p. 274), only in an ideal world would a researcher have ample access to the entire population of interest. In reality, and especially in the reality of business communication, this is hardly the case. According to St John (1996), Bargiela-Chiappini and Nickerson (2003) and van Horn (2008), a major barrier to research on the uses of English in commerce is restricted access to spoken and written data inside organisations. As reviewed in chapter 2, this barrier has contributed to the significant absence of studies on English used in written business communication in SEA. Therefore, the companies selected for this study were not only Vietnamese-owned ones that used extended texts for written communication, but also the companies that were willing to give the researcher access to written communication data.

The second step planned in the sampling scheme was random stratified sampling of business texts, a method of drawing a random sample from various subgroups so that the sample could be representative of the population (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 78). In this study, the texts were sampled in two phases. First, each company was asked to donate texts of different text types written by different Vietnamese staff members at different periods of time from their databank. Initially, a plan of consecutive-day week sampling was proposed to ensure "cyclic variation" of content of various weekdays and allow texts to be self-generative (Riffe, Aust & Lacy, 2009, p. 54). However, this plan turned out to be impractical because, for reasons of business

confidentiality, not all texts produced in a particular week would be given to the researcher. According to J. Gimenez (2006), confidentiality often results in “limitations in terms of quality and quantity of the data to which researchers have access” (p. 159). Moreover, consecutive-day week sampling appeared to display a major weakness of not being able to represent what happened in other periods of the year. As Riffe et al. (2009) put it, consecutive-day week samples “are not a reliable means of estimating content for a six-month period or longer” (p. 58). Consequently, an alternative plan of text selection by text donors (companies) was chosen. It was anticipated that this plan of “drawing names out of a hat” (Kemper et al., 2002, p. 278) enabled texts of various text types written at different periods of the year(s) to have a better probability to be included in the sample. In the second phase, it was planned that the texts collected from the first phase would be randomly sampled if a large volume was obtained so as to make the data more manageable.

#### *3.1.4.2 Sampling size*

Riffe et al. (2009, p. 54) maintain that sample size is determined by the research objectives and design. To date, research on the appropriate sample size is limited (Riffe et al., 2009, p. 54). Ramakrishna (2009, p. 69) also maintains that there is a lack of guidelines determining the appropriate sample size for a study. However, it has been asserted that a balance in the sample size has to be struck (Riffe et al., 2009, p. 54). If the sampling size is too small, the data would be unreliable and the results invalid. On the contrary, if the sampling size is too big, the coding resources and the researcher’s time would be wasted. Therefore, in this study special consideration was given to the selection of an appropriate sample size.

The number of companies and texts chosen for this study was identified based on two factors: the principle of representativeness/saturation trade-off and consideration of the sample sizes of similar studies. The trade-off principle means the more emphasis attached to representativeness of quantitative data, the less emphasis there is on the saturation of qualitative data (Kemper et al., 2002, p. 277; Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 87). If multiple companies had been chosen, then the project could have achieved a higher level of representativeness; yet the saturation of text qualitative analysis would have been sacrificed as the sampling of too many companies, and hence too many texts, would have resulted in a lack of time for a thorough

interaction with texts. In contrast, if a small number of companies had been chosen, texts could have been analysed qualitatively in depth, hence saturation would be achieved, but the representativeness of the results could have been called into question.

In addition to the principle of representativeness/saturation trade-off, sample sizes of similar studies were also taken into account. Past research that investigated the use of English in business communication opted for various numbers of companies. For instance, when examining localised speech variation in Malaysian English, Nair-Venugopal (2000) selected two business organisations. Also exploring the linguistic realities in the Malaysian workplace, S. Gill (1999) chose a case of just one bank. Other researchers who used a single organisation are Morrow (1995), who studied the choice of English in Japan, and Friginal (2007), who scrutinised the use of English in a Philippine call centre. While a substantial number of studies selected one or two companies, Park et al. (1998) chose seven companies to examine a variety of English in Korea. A. Smith, Bhatia, Bremner and Jones (2010) selected ten companies to investigate employers' perceptions of the importance of English in Hong Kong.

With respect to the number of texts, previous research on written features of emerging varieties opted for different numbers of documents, ranging from eight (news texts, Shrestha, 2003), 50 (student essays, Y. Kachru, 1996), 184 (short stories, Ramakrishna, 2009) through to 205 (job and scholarship application letters, Bhatia, 1996). In the area of business communication, the number ranges from five to around 100. For example, five were used in an investigation of Malaysian English advertisements (Hashim, 2010), 21 in Korean English and non-Korean-English letters of complaint (Park et al., 1998), 69 in South Asian English letters of complaint (Hartford & Mahboob, 2004), 80 in Thai English and non-Thai-English letters of request (Chakorn, 2006), 91 in Brunei English letters of complaint (D. Ho, 2009), 99 in Cameroon English job applications (Nkemleke, 2004) and 123 in business emails (J. Gimenez, 2006). In summary, the number of institutions chosen for the examination of nativised Englishes ranges from one to approximately ten while the number of texts ranges from five to around 200.

Accordingly, to “meet the requirements for the representativeness of quantitative sources and the saturation of qualitative sources” (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 88) as well as to align with previous studies, nine companies and approximately 300 texts were selected (initially, ten companies were aimed at, but eventually nine consented to participate in the study). This sample size was deemed large enough to draw a plausible estimate of the target population, and also met the allocation of time and resources for this research project. As regards the number of documents – the main subject of analysis in this study, Fairclough (2003, p. 6), Krippendorff (2004, p. 111) and Silverman (2006, p. 194) hold that, to make CA and DA effective, it is crucial to have a limited body of texts. However, due to the short length of business texts, it was likely that the number of approximately 300 texts allowed for practicality, and at the same time enabled the stratification of text types as well as permitted “valid inferences” (Marshall, 1996, p. 522) to be made about the population. Figure 2 summarises the sampling plan of this study.

### **Sampling companies**

- purposive sampling
  - Vietnamese owned companies
  - companies that use extended texts in written business communication
- sampling scheme depending on practical issues
  - propriety of business communication
  - private nature of business communication

**Sample size:** 9 companies

- principle of representativeness/saturation trade-off
- consideration of sample sizes of past studies



### **Sampling business written texts**

- text selection by text donors (companies)
- random sampling of texts if a large number of texts were collected

**Sample size:** approximately 300 texts

- principle of representativeness/saturation trade-off
- consideration of sample sizes of past studies

**Figure 2 - Sampling plan**

(Adapted from Teddlie & Yu, 2007)

### 3.1.5 Coding schemes

#### 3.1.5.1 Coding schemes for first research question

For the first research question (*What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?*), the research method that was used is SFL-based CA and the units of analysis clauses. To begin with, the researcher developed an initial code list, deciding potential lexico-grammatical categories to be analysed based on SFL. As Shelton and Skalski (2014) maintain, developing a detailed coding scheme is the first step in a CA study (p. 343). Then, to facilitate the coding process, an initial codebook with definitions and examples of each variable was structured. It is worth noting that no instances of ‘Vietnamese English’ were provided as the study was investigating whether this variety was emerging. The categories selected for the coding frame included the variables below. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, systemicists pride themselves on the extravagance of their terminology (Martin et al., 1997; McGregor, 1997; Martin, 2003; Kilpert, 2003, Rose, 2006). Over the past few decades, systemicists have developed their theory to encompass a wide range of areas including discourse, ideology, and applications to education (McGregor, 1997; Halliday, 2009; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009). Given the richness of the theory, this study limited the choice of concepts to only those that closely addressed the research questions.

#### Analysing Experiential Meanings

Experiential metafunction is the grammatical resource for construing the reality, and representing and modelling patterns of experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Martin et al., 1997; McGregor, 1997; Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 2009; Hasan, 2009; Matthiessen, 2009; Matthiessen, 2013). To survey how Vietnamese business writers encoded their experience in their business texts, all three constituents of experiential meanings – participants, processes and circumstances – were examined. These constituents are clearly explained and illustrated in the codebook (see Appendix 1).

#### Analysing Interpersonal Meanings

Four variables were identified and used in the coding frame for the analysis of interpersonal meanings. Initially, another category called ‘Expert/Non-expert writer’ was included. However, the pilot analyses showed that the coders did not reach a

satisfactory level of agreement on this variable, which may have jeopardised the project's overall reliability; hence, it was eliminated from the coding frame (see section 3.2 for more detailed explanation).

### ***Mood***

The first interpersonal category *Mood* is a grammatical resource that recognises the participant role (Fawcett, 2008, p. 150). This category was used to explain the power-distance relation between the reader and writer via the (in)congruence between mood choice and speech functions. As a case in point, the choice of congruent imperative mood as in *Please have a look and give me your comment (text 8-6-O)* to realise requests would indicate a rather close relation, frequent contact, and/or possible high affective involvement (Eggins, 2004; Martin et al., 1997; Halliday, 2009; Painter, 2009). In contrast, the incongruent interrogative mood to realise a request as in *Would you confirm your mail receipt? (text 9-1-A)* indicates unequal power, a distant relation, infrequent contact and/or low affective involvement (Eggins, 2004; Martin et al., 1997; Halliday, 2009; Painter, 2009). However, there are two kinds of moodless clauses: non-finite clauses (e.g., *to get great prizes with the Music Quiz; to have a great time singing Karaoke with friends, text 9-2-C; having had an opportunity to work with all of you, text 8-1-B*) and minor clauses (e.g., *ok, thanks, hi, texts 3-1-B; 8-55-K*) that were not examined in the current analysis. This is clearly indicated in the codebook (see Appendix 1).

### ***Address terms or Vocatives***

The second category that reflected interpersonal choices is *Address terms* or *Vocatives*. According to Martin et al. (1997), a vocative embodies “an interpersonal attitude, an endearment (*dear*)” (p. 59, emphasis original). The choice of vocatives is therefore maintained to reveal important tenor dimensions (Eggins, 2004; Fawcett, 2008). When power is equal, vocative choice is reciprocal, that is, both interactants will use each other's first names. When power is unequal, the choice of vocatives is non-reciprocal so one interactant addresses the other by his/her first name while the other addresses him/her by a title (Eggins, 2004; Fawcett, 2008). In addition, the use of nicknames, diminutives, terms of endearment or the lack of vocatives also signifies the interpersonal relationship between the writer and reader (Eggins, 2004;

Fawcett, 2008). Because of these reasons, vocatives comprised an important variable in the coding frame to unravel the interpersonal dimensions of the texts investigated in this study (see Appendix 1).

### ***Modality***

The third interpersonal category *Modality* was used to analyse the writers' judgement of the probabilities, or the obligations involved in the text (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday, 2009; Armstrong, 2009). There are four kinds of modality: probability (may, might, can, could, probably, etc.), "usuality" (may, might, can, could, usually, etc.), obligation (may, might, can, could, definitely, etc.) and readiness (may, might, can, could, readily, etc.). Probability and "usuality" are referred to as modalisation while obligation and readiness are called modulation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Halliday, 2009; Armstrong, 2009). As an illustration, the choice of the obligation modality *should* as in *It should be submitted PD Accountant asap (text 3-3-A)* indicates a different level of obligation from *will* as in *You will start off on an hourly rate contract (text 9-29-U)* or the lack of modality as in *Please send the offer from your end (text 3-9-D)*.

In this study, the coders were required to identify if a modal was used in a clause, and classify whether the modal expressed probability, "usuality", obligation or readiness. Apart from congruent realisations of modality (e.g., *can, could, may, should*), coders were also asked to identify metaphorical realisations of modality (e.g., *I guess, I think, I know* for probability; *I want, I expect* for obligation). For instance, in the proposal *Your attendance is requested (text 9-43-G)*, no modal auxiliaries are employed. Yet the proposal still expresses a high level of obligation thanks to the metaphorical realisation of modality *is requested*. Thus, metaphorical realisations were also analysed as an important part of modality.

### ***Proposals/Propositions***

Due to the association of modalisation with propositions and modulation with proposals (Martin et al., 1997; Fawcett, 2008; Matthiessen, 2009), the next interpersonal category added to the coding frame is *Proposals/Propositions*. A proposal is defined as "a clause that is used to exchange goods and services", for

example, offers and commands, whereas a proposition is characterised as “a clause that is used to exchange information” (Eggs, 1994, p. 154). Put differently, a proposal is a clause that calls for action while a proposition is a possible fact which may be true or false (McGregor, 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Fawcett, 2008; Matthiessen, 2009). This category was added because, as Eggs (2004) asserts, proposals and propositions are indispensable in exploring the mood structure of a clause to see how information or goods and services are exchanged. Propositions/proposals and mood are interrelated. The same proposal/propositional content when realised by different mood choices can indicate different illocutionary force (McGregor, 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). For instance, the proposal content in the interrogative mood *Will you confirm your mail receipt? (text 9-1-A)* has a different illocutionary force from the imperative mood *Please confirm your mail receipt* or the declarative mood *You must confirm your mail receipt* (researcher’s examples). Of course, the illocutionary force of the proposal is also dependent on the presence and choice of modality. That is why in the current research the investigation of the interpersonal meaning of the data inevitably involved the examination of the grammar of proposals and propositions in conjunction with the examination of mood and modality. However, as with mood analysis, moodless clauses were not analysed for proposals or propositions as they have to be realised by grammatical mood options (Martin et al., 1997, p. 58).

### **Analysing Textual Meanings**

There were six categories in the third dimension of the analysis of the situational context. Initially, another variable called *Formal/Informal Language* was also included for the analysis of textual meanings. However, the pilot analyses (see section 3.2) showed that this category would be better elaborated upon in the macro-analysis than in the micro-analysis. Therefore, it was decided that the analysis of formal/informal language would be moved to the macro-analysis. Another category that was first devised for the analysis of textual meanings was *Spontaneous Language*. However, the coders in the pilot analysis reported they found this variable difficult to code, which led to its deletion from the coding frame (see section 3.2).

## *Themes*

The first element coded in the analysis of textual meanings was theme. A text is not only organised to express experiential and interpersonal meanings, but is also organised as a message to express textual meanings (Eggins, 2004, p. 296; Qi, 2012, pp. 198-199). According to SF linguists, one element that helps organise a text as a message, done by combining the starting points of the clauses, is theme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004; Fawcett, 2008; Halliday, 2009; Webster, 2009; Armstrong, 2009).

McGregor (1997, p. 289), however, critiques systemicists' notion of theme. He argues that theme, when characterised as "the element which serves as the point of departure of the message" (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 38), is defined formally based on the position of the constituent rather than its function. He critiques Halliday's (1994a) definition of theme as making a vacuous claim since "what comes first can hardly be anything but the point of departure of the message" (McGregor, 1997, p. 289). What comes first, McGregor (1997) maintains, can only be theme if it coincides with "some non-trivial semantic content" (p. 289). In this line of argument, the author asserts that conjunctions such as *and*, *thus*, *then*, *however* cannot be classified as theme, since they do not always stand at the beginning of the clause to serve as the anchoring point (McGregor, 1997, p. 291). Thus, he suggests the revision of the definition of theme to include only "non-trivial semantic content" (p. 289).

However, the analysis in this study departs from McGregor's (1997) position (for the reason given below), and therefore SFL categorisations of theme, which include interpersonal, textual, and topical themes, are applied. Accordingly, conjunctions such as *and*, *thus*, *then*, *however* are not regarded as having "trivial semantic content" (McGregor, 1997, p. 289), but as textual themes that carry the significance of reflecting the writer's choices. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2013, p. 3) point out, language is a meaning-making resource, or in Halliday's (1975) words, "a set of options with an entry condition" (p. 3). Thus, whether a writer chooses a certain element (e.g., a conjunction) to be a starting point or not is by no means trivial, but of textual significance. As an illustration, in the example *You will start off on an hourly*

rate contract. *However*, you will then be put on a full time teaching contract (text 9-29-U), the writer has chosen to put *however* at the beginning of the second clause. The effect would have been different if the writer had put *however* in a different position (e.g., *You will start off on an hourly rate contract. You, however, will then be put on a full time teaching contract.*). Accordingly, *however* cannot be argued to carry non-significant semantic content.

Similarly, the choice of the marked topical themes such as *in the south* in *We plan to bring several district OPCs to the provincial OPC and PAC in Thai Binh* [...] *In the south* you will visit HCM PAC and OPCs on Feb 14 (text 8-2-C) served to tie the messages together by way of location circumstances. Therefore, a different choice, for example, *We plan to bring several district OPCs to the provincial OPC and PAC in Thai Binh ... You will visit HCM PAC and OPCs in the South* on Feb 14 embodies a different textual meaning. As Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks, and Yallop (2000, p. 139) state, since all choices are meaningful, when we find a marked theme, we have to examine the purpose behind the writer's patterning.

In brief, the analysis of the data in this study included an examination of not only topical themes, but also textual and interpersonal themes, of not only unmarked topical themes, but also marked topical themes as it was deemed necessary to explore how different purposes and effects were achieved through the way writers made choices from the meaning potentials. Nonetheless, non-finite clauses were not included in the theme analysis as they were deprived of topical themes (Martin et al., 1997, p. 28).

### ***Clause simplexes/complexes***

The second textual variable is *Clause simplexes/complexes*. A clause complex is characterised as a “grammatical and semantic unit formed when two or more clauses are linked together in certain systematic and meaningful way” (Eggins, 2004, p. 255). If there is just one clause in a sentence, it is called a clause simplex (Eggins, 2004, p. 255). In the analysis of this study, clause simplexes/complexes are labelled according to SFL conventions, specifically 1 and 2 for independent clauses,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  for dependent clauses, “ for locution, ‘ for idea, ‘=’ for elaboration, ‘+’ for extension, and ‘x’ for enhancement (Eggins, 2004, pp. 255-257; Martin et al., 1997, pp. 168-

172; Halliday, 1994a, pp. 216-220). These codes were explained and illustrated in the codebook for the coders (see Appendix 1).

According to Martin et al. (1997, p. 165), the clause complex belongs to the ideational meta-function of language. However, in this study, the clause complex is classified as a textual element for two reasons. First, the clause complex was meant to show whether the texts were grammatically intricate or not. As Halliday (2009, p. 76) holds, the number of clause complexes correlate to the level of grammatical intricacy, that is, the more clause complexes, the more grammatical intricate the text is and vice versa. According to Martin et al. (1997) and Eggins (2004), written language, which is the subject of the present study, is less grammatical intricate than spoken language. Employing clause complexes to draw inferences about grammatical intricacy thus makes them more textual than ideational.

Moreover, in clause complexes, the relation between clauses and the system of interdependency (or tactic system) and the logico-semantic system of expansion and projection (or inter-clausal relation) is surveyed (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Halliday, 2009; Armstrong, 2009). In other words, the notion of clause complexes allows us to account for “the functional organisation of sentences” (Halliday, 1994a, p. 216) – or the organisation of clauses as a message. Thus, in this study, clauses complexes are classified as a textual element.

Other textual constituents that organise the text as a message include conjunctions, reference, lexical cohesion and ellipsis. They comprised four important variables in the coding scheme used to assist the researcher to identify the textual meanings of the data.

### ***Conjunctions***

According to Martin and Rose (2007, p. 115), conjunctions are categorised into external conjunctions, those that construe a field beyond the text, and internal conjunctions, those that are used to organise texts. Although two categories of conjunctions function at different levels of logical connections, they are both divided into four main types: addition, comparison, time and consequence (Martin & Rose, 2007, pp. 116-152). Further categories of conjunctions could have been included in

this study. For instance, temporal conjunctions could have been divided into temporal deictics (e.g., *now* and *then*) and temporal adverbials (e.g., *after*, *previously*, *subsequently*) (McGregor, 1997, p. 336). However, considering the number of categories already existing, the comprehensiveness of the conjunction subcategories had to be traded off for the manageability of coders' analysis. It is also worth pointing out that authors such as McGregor (1997, p. 336) classify relative pronouns (*who*, *which*, *that*, etc.) as conjunctions. However, in this study, since these items were already classified as textual themes, which function as a connective between one clause and another textually, they were not repeated as conjunctions.

McGregor (1997, p. 336) also discusses weak conjunctions such as the underlined words in the following example: *Bony was presented to Mrs. Merle Simmonds [...] Mrs Simmonds and her husband lived on pastoral property named Tallinhah eighty miles out of town.* However, these prepositions had already been addressed under the category *Circumstances* (e.g., *on pastoral property* would be *Location – Place*, see Appendix 1). Thus, this study only focused on conjunctions as a link between large grammatical entities (i.e., clauses).

### ***Reference***

The next textual category used in the coding scheme is reference, an important variable to identify the cohesive resource the writers used to “introduce participants and keep track of them” (Eggins, 2004, p. 33). In this study, coders were required to identify three types of reference: homophoric reference – reference whose identities can be retrieved from the general context of culture (e.g., *The sun* is hot today.), exophoric reference – reference whose identities can be retrieved from the immediate context of situation (e.g., Thank *you* for *your* time and consideration.), and endophoric reference, which in turn include anaphoric (the referent appearing at an earlier point), cataphoric (the referent appearing at a later point) and esphoric reference (the referent appearing immediately after the item) (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) (see Appendix 1).

### ***Lexical Cohesion***

Lexical cohesion is a way of establishing continuity in a text through the choice of words (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Lexical cohesion can be achieved by using synonyms, antonyms, co-occurring words, or repetition (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004). These are also the categories that coders were asked to choose from for the analysis of lexical cohesion (see Appendix 1).

### ***Ellipsis***

Ellipsis is characterised as a realisation of both interpersonal and textual meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). As for interpersonal meaning, ellipsis allows the interactants to centre the exchange on the validity of an assertion, omitting elements that are not the topic of the exchange (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). However, ellipsis is sometimes merely a manifestation of textual meanings, especially when two clauses are linked together by a paratactic structure so that the subject of the second clause can be ellipsed (Martin et al., 1997, p. 29).

As an illustration using data from the current study, the elliptical subject *I* as in *Wish you all the best in your life (text 8-1-B)* could be interpreted as a demonstration of the close interpersonal relationship between the writer and the recipient – a closeness that enabled the writer to ellipsis the subject in her mood choice. Nevertheless, the elliptical subject *I* as in *I'm sure I could master them and [I could] do the job smoothly (text 4-4-J)* could simply denote a textual meaning. As the two clauses *I could master them* and *do the job smoothly* were connected by a paratactic relation, the subject of the second clause may have been omitted because it could be retrieved from the textual context. As ellipsis could be ambiguous in terms of representing textual or interpersonal meanings, in this study, the category *Ellipsis* was included, but not placed in a clear-cut domain.

#### ***3.1.5.2 Coding scheme for the second research question***

With regard to the second research question (*What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*), there were two lines of inquiry: (1) how the context of situation and (2) how the context of culture were embedded in the texts. Regarding

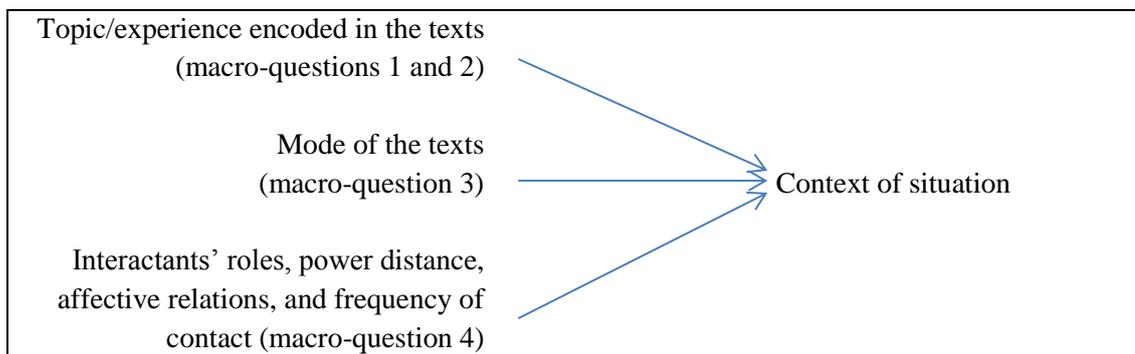
the first part of this research question, a macro-analysis of the texts was conducted, which encompassed the discourse analysis of texts guided by four macro questions. Initially, the following four questions were devised:

1. What is the text about? What makes you think that?
2. How are in the ideas in the text connected? What makes you think that?
3. How is the language in the text influenced by and representative of the method the text appears in?
4. What do you think the relationship between the writer and recipient is (power relation, affective involvement, and frequency of contact)? What makes you think that?

However, as the pilot analyses showed that the first three questions were problematic (see section 3.2), they were revised as follows:

1. What do you think the aim of the text is? What makes you think that?
2. What do you think the main topic of the text is? What makes you think that?
3. Do you think the language in this text is formal, informal, neutral or mixed? What makes you think that?
4. What do you think the relationship between the writer and recipient is (power relation, affective involvement, and frequency of contact)? What makes you think that?

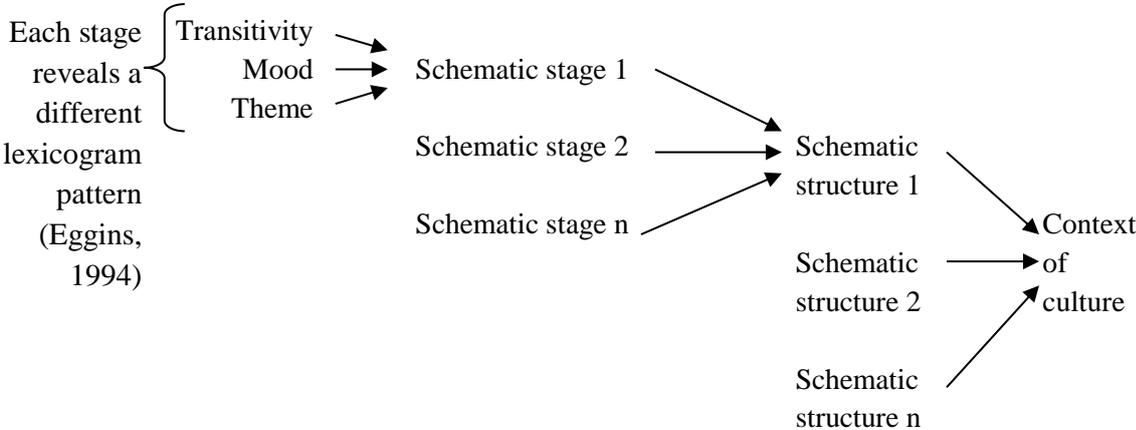
The examination of these macro questions provided information for the induction of the context of situation. Figure 3 presents a summary of how this was achieved:



**Figure 3 - Coding scheme for context of situation**

With respect to the context of culture, it can be induced from different schematic structures used in that culture (Eggs, 2004). A schematic structure, in turn,

comprises different schematic stages, each of which reveals a different lexico-grammatical pattern. This procedure of inducing the context of culture can be summarised as illustrated in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 - Coding scheme for context of culture**

Based on the aims of the texts as identified in the first macro question, the texts were grouped together accordingly. Then, using the lexico-grammatical features coded in the first research questions, the stages of each schematic structure were identified. Next, from different schematic structures, the context of culture was induced.

**3.1.5.3 The third research question**

For the third research question, data gathered from the first two questions were synthesised to examine whether the nature of English used in Vietnamese business communication represented a ‘Vietnamese’ variety of English.

**3.1.6 Ethical issues**

**3.1.6.1 Informed consent:** The companies from which textual data were obtained were fully informed of relevant aspects of the research through an information sheet. Their permission for the analysis of the texts was sought. The companies were also advised of the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any point of time without prejudice or negative consequences.

**3.1.6.2 Protection of privacy and confidentiality:** The privacy and confidentiality of the companies involved in the project were protected by the adoption of pseudonyms.

**3.1.6.3 Risks of harm to participants:** The risk of this research study relates mainly to the breach of the anonymity of companies. To minimise this risk, all texts were de-

identified. Pseudonyms were assigned before the texts were given to coders for data analysis.

**3.1.6.4 Institutional Approval:** An application for Curtin University HREC ethics clearance was sought prior to the commencement of the study.

### **3.1.7 Data storage**

Data for this project were generated from authentic written texts, which will be stored by the researcher in a locked cabinet within the School of Education for five years. Electronic data will be stored on a personal computer with a secure password for the same period.

### **3.1.8 Data collection<sup>5</sup>**

Following the sampling scheme described previously in section 3.1.4, the data of this project were collected from nine Vietnamese-owned companies that used extended English texts in their written business communication. These companies were located in three major industrial cities in the South of Vietnam: Ho Chi Minh City, Dong Nai and Vung Tau. In a four-week fieldtrip to Vietnam, the researcher paid a personal visit to each company to make sure the managers were fully informed of the research objectives and the types of texts required. Although ten companies were contacted, nine consented to participate. Despite the researcher's affirmation that their privacy and confidentiality would be protected as stated in the ethics approval, one company (a bank) refused to partake in the study due to the confidentiality of their business information, which, they reasoned, was paramount to their business competitiveness. For the nine companies that donated texts, while some instantly sent texts to the researcher via email after being approached (e.g., companies 1, 2, 3 and 8<sup>6</sup>), others were more reserved in their participation. For instance, it took three months for company 6 to consent to take part in the project as the issue of text donation had to be discussed at a number of meetings with several layers of management due to confidentiality reasons. Once this company consented to join the project, however, their donated texts had the writers' and recipients' details deleted in spite of the fact

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<sup>5</sup> The research methods, sampling scheme and data collection process are presented in this chapter in the order the research project was conducted (i.e., the research methods and sampling scheme were outlined before the data were collected).

<sup>6</sup> For reasons of de-identification, numerals from one to nine will be used to indicate the companies that participated in the study.

that the company had been informed of the de-identification process the researcher would undertake. Similarly, company 5 agreed to participate under the condition that their donated texts were de-identified by themselves. This was not surprising since confidentiality of texts, as discussed in the preceding sections, is an important issue in the workplace today (van Horn, 2008).

In addition to these issues, it is worth noting that, whilst the aim was to collect written business texts of various text types, all the texts collected were emails. Despite the researcher’s request, the nine participating companies donated only business email messages. Although some application letters were provided, these were only in an electronic form. This reality may, however, reflect a new trend in this era of technology. As Trappe and Tullis (2011) observe, business communication is now witnessing the rise of the internet that has “swept away the comfortable business models of the past and brought us all into a new, faster-paced business environment” (p. 6). Evans (2012) also states that communication in the workplace has been of late revolutionised by the dominance of emails. These observations, together with the data of this study, are consistent with the literature review in section 2.5.6 on the rising prevalence of emails in business communication. Table 1 shows the specific number of e-messages obtained from each company:

**Table 1- Number of texts donated by the participating companies**

<b>Co.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Business sector</b>	Hospitality	Import-export (electrical goods)	Chemical	Container trading	Tertiary education (communal among staff)	Pottery trading	Plastic manufacturing	Health care	English teaching (communal among staff)
<b>No. of texts</b>	10	29	986	15	30	39	40	68	32

As seen in Table 1, one unexpected issue arose in the data collection. Company 3 gave the researcher access to an abundant number of texts (986 documents) while the number of documents the researcher obtained from the other eight companies was 263 documents in total (with an average of 33 texts per company). Thus, before data could be analysed, the texts from that company had to be sampled.

While a sampling plan had been worked out before the collection of data as seen in section 3.1.4, the sizable number of texts received from company 3 presented the researcher with two possible options. The first was to conduct a cross-case analysis, treating company 3 as one case and the other eight companies as another case. If this choice was selected, the researcher would need to randomly sample 263 documents from the 986 texts company 3 donated (i.e., the same number as the total number of texts obtained from the other companies). The second option was to treat company 3 the same as other companies and, therefore, randomly sample the same number of texts from company 3 as the average number of texts the other eight companies provided the researcher (approximately 40 texts). After careful consideration, the second option was selected for the following reasons.

First, this method of sampling had the advantage of generating a manageable sample size, namely 303 texts (i.e., 263 texts from the other eight companies + 40 texts from company 3). Although this option did not present a sample as large as the first option, and hence the possibility of data being less representative, the sample size of 303 texts was actually much larger than most similar studies as reviewed in section 3.1.4. As noted by Collins et al. (2007, p. 286), mixed methods studies using sample sizes of 30 units or less are likely to represent inappropriate statistical generalisations; hence interpretive inconsistency. With 303 sampling units, this study's sample was well beyond this limit. That is, it was considered large enough to convey "warranted interpretations of the study's findings" (Collins et al., 2007, p. 287). Indeed, a sample size of approximately 300 sampling units was deemed sufficient to "achieve a desired statistical effect size" (Alise & Teddlie, 2010, p. 110) and to make statistical generalisations about the underlying population.

Second, this option allowed more in-depth interaction with texts than the first option of cross-case analysis. As experts on text analysis (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004; Fairclough, 2003) point out, the enormous number of texts presents a major hindrance to thorough interaction with texts, which could negatively impact on the quality of the qualitative phase of data analysis (discourse analysis). According to Sandelowski (1995), sample sizes for qualitative analysis should not be too small to obtain data saturation, theoretical saturation or informational redundancy, but at the same time should not be too large to undertake a deep analysis. This observation is in

accordance with the aforementioned principle of representativeness/ saturation trade-off (Teddlie & Yu, 2007; see section 3.1.5).

Third, this option aligned with the time and resources allocated for this study. As Bouma and Atkinson (1995) maintain, “considerations of cost – time, money, and effort – argue for the limitation of sample size” (p. 153). While a cross-case study may help to “confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate findings within a single study” (Creswell, Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003, p. 229), it bears a potential difficulty to integrate and compare inferences made from two sample sets (Creswell, 2005, p. 515). The possibility of inconsistent results between the two sets of data may make it “necessary to collect additional data to reconcile the differences” (Creswell, 2005, p. 515).

Taking these factors into account, it became apparent that the second option was more appealing in terms of the manageability of the data, the in-depth interaction with texts, time and resource practicality, and at the same time it still guaranteed the external validity of the study. To carry out this plan, the researcher applied simple random sampling to extract 40 documents (i.e., the same number as the average number of texts other companies donated, from the accessible population of 986 texts from company 3).

Simple random sampling is contended to be an “ideal method of drawing a sample” (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 144) because it allows each sampling unit to have an equal chance of being included in the selected sample (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p. 79). Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that random sampling procedures are often difficult to conduct due to the challenge of identifying and enumerating the entire population (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 145). However, for company 3, simple random sampling was possible because the researcher had access to the total text population this company donated. To carry out the procedure, the researcher first assigned numbers to all the given texts. After that, simple random selection of 40 texts was conducted, using a table of random numbers as suggested by Bouma and Atkinson (1995, p. 243).

### 3.1.9 Limitations

Shipman (1997) writes: “Social researchers should invite criticism and never close their work to outside scrutiny” (p. vii). The possible limitations of this study, thus, need to be spelled out so that future researchers who might wish to replicate the study could possibly foresee the potential problems. While measures were taken to try to ensure the rigour of the research design, the study appeared to be subject to two limitations in relation to the text selection process and the de-identification of texts.

The first possible limitation of the study may reside in the way in which the donors selected the materials. As discussed in the previous sections regarding the sampling plan (see section 3.1.4) and data collection (see section 3.1.7), the sampling scheme of this study involved a two-step random stratified sampling of the texts. In the first step, the donors were asked to perform a random selection of texts to enable messages of various text types written at different periods of the year(s) by different writers to be included in the sample. Despite this request, it was unknown to the researcher how the companies selected their texts. As widely documented by researchers in the area of written communication (e.g., St John, 1996; Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2003; van Horn, 2008), a major barrier to research on the uses of English in commerce is restricted access to written data inside organisations.

The second possible weakness of this study was the de-identification of the texts. As an ethical condition, all texts were de-identified to ensure the anonymity of the companies as well as the writers. A system of de-identification was worked out to include a two-digit and one-letter code for each text, for example, *3-1-A* meaning company 3, text 1, writer A. When all the alphabet letters were used up, double letters were employed to continue the de-identification, for example, *8-27-FF* (company 8, text 27, writer FF) or *8-62-WW* (company 8, text 62, writer WW). Within this system of de-identification, a key was provided to help retrieve the real identity of the companies and writers if need be. However, as described in the data collection (see section 3.1.7), there were two companies (company 5 and company 6) that performed the de-identification themselves without following any known systematic procedure. This practice, while consistent with the confidentiality issue in business communication raised by J. Gimenez (2006) and van Horn (2008), posed a difficulty for the researcher to ensure the consistency in the de-identification of the

texts. For the texts of company 5, for instance, the writers' names had been replaced by random codes such as HHHH, LLL or III, before the texts were given to the researcher. Since it was ambiguous whether these codes indicated the same writer or different writers and more importantly, no identities were revealed, it was decided that these codes were kept the same without any further de-identification; hence such examples as *5-20-HHHH* (company 5, text 20, writer HHHH), *5-25-LLL* (company 5, text 25, writer LLL) or *5-33-III* (company 5, text 33, writer III). For the texts of company 6, the names of all writers and recipients had been deliberately deleted. Thus, it was decided that all the writers of these texts were signalled by letter U, meaning 'writer unknown', for example, *6-1-U* (company 6, text 1, writer unknown), *6-2-U* (company 6, text 2, writer unknown) or *6-3-U* (company 6, text 3, writer unknown).

The third limitation of the study concerns the writers' English proficiency. As noted previously, the writers' identities were not always revealed to the researcher (e.g., texts collected from companies 5 and 6 were de-identified by the companies themselves). Therefore, it was not possible to conduct a 'proficiency' test to measure their level of English. However, as these writers were all employed in the actual world of work, their writing was deemed representative of Vietnamese written business communication regardless of their English proficiency.

## **3.2 Pilot coding**

Krippendorff (2004) maintains that it is important to make categories clear and unambiguous enough so that independent coders will have a high agreement. Pre-tests, therefore, have to be conducted so that categories can be adequately refined before the main analysis takes place (Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 2005). For that purpose, in this study, the codebook and coding frame were pre-tested by coders several times to ensure that categories did not overlap one another, were unambiguous and helped answer the research questions.

### **3.2.1 First pilot coding**

After the categories were developed based on SFL as presented in section 3.1.5 (also Appendix 1), they were then applied by the coders to a sample of material for coding. Five texts were purposively selected for their relative length, being not too long nor too short. If the texts had been too long, they would have been time-consuming and

therefore discouraging for the pilot coders (some texts could be as long as 130 clauses); in contrast, if they were too short (some texts could be as short as three words) and if they contained only minor clauses (e.g., *Receipt with thanks* – text 3-2-A), they could not demonstrate the (un)workability of the coding frame and codebook. Therefore, the texts were selected purposively. They were then pilot-analysed by three initial coders: C1 (coder 1), C2 (coder 2) and the researcher (these coders would not be involved in the final analysis as that would have reduced the reliability of the project – see section 3.3 for a discussion of the selection of coders).

To start with, the coders were required to break the texts down into clauses as the first step of text analysis is to determine what to analyse or the unit of analysis, be that the whole text, parts of the text, phrases or individual words (Martin et al., 1997, p. 4; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106).

Past studies that used SFL as an analytical tool used different units of analysis, for example, T-units (V. Ho, 2011a) or clauses (Lipovsky, 2006; Presnyakova, 2011). As the selection of units of analysis depends on the purpose of the research and the demands made by the analytical techniques (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 98), for this study clauses were chosen as the units of analysis. Since the research questions asked about how meanings and contexts were manifested in written Vietnamese business communication, it was imperative to investigate the three strands of meanings – ideational, interpersonal and textual – reflected in the three contextual dimensions of Field, Tenor and Mode. By doing so, the clause appeared to be the most suitable choice. As Martin et al. (1997) contend, there are different possible units of text analysis (i.e., sentences, turns or clauses). However, “the clause is the central processing unit in the lexico-grammar” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 10).

There are three ways to divide a text into clauses (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Martin et al., 1997). The first way, which is called ‘textual’, involves identifying the starting points at the beginning of successive clauses. However, this way of identifying a clause is not very reliable as few texts have consistent patterns of starting points (Martin et al., 1997, p. 6). The second way, which is termed ‘interpersonal’, treats a text as a dialogue. Therefore, the boundary of a clause is determined by propositions or proposals with which we can argue (e.g., *You had*

*cancelled these same classes without any notice [- hadn't you?] [text 9-11-A]).* The last way of deciding a clause, which is called 'ideational', involves looking for the processes, specifically the words that name the events taking place or the relationships among things (Martin et al., 1997, p. 5). In this way, a clause is defined as a unit of language with a process, its dramatis personae (*who's who*) and scenery (*where, when, how, why, etc.*) (Martin et al., 1997, p. 5). This last way of dividing texts into clauses was chosen by all three coders, since all of them, who majored in applied linguistics or had background knowledge of linguistics, were familiar with the notion of verbs in traditional grammar. As Martin et al. (1997) maintain, "if you have some idea of what a verb is, you can think of looking for processes as looking for verbs" (p. 5).

After the coders had divided the texts into clauses, they were required to read the codebook and apply the codes to the clauses they had determined (see Appendix 3 for an example of a worksheet the coders had to fill in for their micro-analysis). As the purpose of this step was to ensure the reliability of the selection of the units of analysis and the reliability of the application of the analytical variables in the coding frame, inter-coder reliability was measured. The results showed the percentage of agreement<sup>7</sup> was as follows:

$$\text{Percentage of agreement for clause divisions} = \frac{45(\text{agreed items})}{50(\text{total items})} \times 100\% = 90\%$$

$$\text{Percentage of agreement for micro-level analysis} = \frac{425(\text{agreed items})}{650(\text{total items})} \times 100\% = 65.4 \%$$

### *3.2.1.1. Clause division after the first pilot*

The high level of agreement among the coders regarding the division of clauses seemed to indicate that using a verb to look for a clause was a reliable method to identify the units of analysis. As clause division in this pilot was uncontroversial, the researcher then assumed the job of dividing all the texts into clauses herself to make the task of analysis more manageable for the other coders. From the second pilot

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<sup>7</sup> As this was the very first pilot coding, with a relatively small number of coded texts, only simple agreement was measured to determine in an approximate way of the workability of clause division and the codebook. Later, however, as the pilot codings proceeded with multiple revisions of the codebook, more sophisticated methods of reliability measurement were applied.

onwards, coders were presented with ready-divided clauses. However, they were given the option of questioning this division if they disagreed with the researcher in any clause boundary.

Although clause division was based on the presence of a process (i.e., a verb), it is noteworthy that some formulaic phrases were not divided according to this principle so as to retain their idiomatic meanings. For instance, the clause *the proposal will be soon reconfirmed by PACCOM (signed and sealed) (text 8-8-Q)* consisted of three processes, i.e., *reconfirmed*, *signed* and *sealed*. However, as *signed and sealed* is an idiom and put in brackets to modify the previous noun (i.e., *the proposal*), *signed and sealed* was not divided into separate clauses, but regarded as a part of the clause *the proposal will be soon reconfirmed by PACCOM*.

Previous studies that used SFL as a tool of analysis often omitted subordinate clauses in their analysis. For example, Lipovsky (2006, p. 1158) did not analyse relative clauses. As an illustration, in the clause *so I think I've developed with that some you know communication skills and um that kind of thing [which I think I could adapt um pretty well to the teaching]* (square brackets original), the relative clause *which I think I could adapt um pretty well to the teaching* was purposefully left out (Lipovsky, 2006, p. 1158). Likewise, Presnyakova (2011) excluded embedded clauses from her analysis as “they do not carry any separate experiential meaning and serve as Postmodifier in a nominal group or Head in a nominal group” (p. 23). For instance, in the sentence, *[Using different kinds of type and different colors] makes writing [fun to read.]*, the clauses in brackets (original) were not analysed by the author (Presnyakova, 2011, p. 23).

In this study, a framework was developed and used to account for every linguistic unit. This was done because the concern of the study was the semiotic features of written Vietnamese business communication. If certain units were left out deliberately, then important characteristics of the data might be overlooked. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) point out, “everything in a given text has to be accounted for” (p. 54). Thus, embedded clauses, also called rankshifted clauses by SF linguists (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 426), were also included in the analysis. For instance, in the sentence, *This letter is to ask for a plausible explanation*

*of your not coming to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1 (text 9-11-A)*, the main (complex) process is *is to ask*. However, the sentence also includes a rankshifted clause *to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1*. This rankshifted clause might be argued to be a post-modifier for the noun phrase *a plausible explanation of your not coming*. However, it was evident that *to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1* carried its own experiential meaning with *teach* as a material process and *2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1* as participants. More than that, this rankshifted clause acted as a clause of enhancement in the clause complex<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, such clauses were included in the data analysis in the current study.

However, as with aforementioned idiomatic units, embedded clauses which became meaningless if divided into separate clauses were retained in the main clause so as to ensure that the units of analysis made sense. For example, the segment *By this chance, I am also pleased to let you know...* (text 3-12-N) consisted of three processes *am*, *let*, and *know*, with *am* as the main process. *To let you know* could be divided into two clauses as it included two processes *let* and *know*. However, if the segment was unitised in such a way, *to let* would stand alone and did not make much sense as a rankshifted clause. Thus, to ensure the unit of analysis was meaningful, *to let you know* was considered as one single rankshifted clause, instead of two separate ones. After all, SFL was chosen for this study because it is a linguistic analysis that prioritises meaning over form – it regards language as a resource that allows the creation of meanings by making choices (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Therefore, the study would go against this key principle of SFL if rules were rigidly applied without consideration of meaning of the analysis units.

However, as the literature indicates, there are some difficulties in determining the boundaries of clauses. As Martin et al. (1997, pp. 116-117) maintain, it is not uncommon to have two lexical verbs in a single clause, for example, *we are planning to have a QI training course run by Dr D and Dr E in HCM on 15,16 (text 8-3-C)*. In this case, the complex process is:

are planning → to have

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<sup>8</sup> According to Martin et al. (1997, p. 188), to-infinitives form an enhancement logico-semantic relation in a clause complex.

According to Martin et al. (1997), “the second (non-finite) verb group is the relevant one for PROCESS TYPE” (p. 117, emphasis original). Therefore, *we are planning to have... (text 8-3-C)* is a relational clause with *have* as the main process. Based on this guideline, the researcher treated process groups such as *want to change*, *claim to know*, and *seem to have* as belonging to one single clause, with the main process being the non-finite one. Nevertheless, for cases such as

we need → you to hand-carry back to VN (*text 3-15-B*)

the interpretation is that there are two clauses to form a clause complex (Martin et al., 1997, p. 117). Accordingly, in this study, cases like these were treated as separate clauses.

### *3.2.1.2. Revision of the coding frame after the first pilot*

While the issue of clause division was settled, the first pilot showed that the percentage of coder agreement for the application of the rules in the initial codebook did not appear to be very high. This pilot analysis, therefore, resulted in a detailed re-examination of the coding categories. As Krippendorff (2004) states, researchers often report months of modification of the coding frame as a result of pre-tests, which leads to the refinement of the categories, the deletion of some, rephrasing of others, and addition of new categories. MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, and Milstein (2009, p. 216) also point out that the benefits of pre-tests are they allow the researcher to evaluate the utility of the codes.

A post-analysis interview with the first-pilot coders revealed they were unsure of some categories, for example, *Context-dependent language*, *Reference*, *Formal-informal language*, *Expert-non-expert writer*, and *Clause complexes/simplexes*. First, both coders C1 and C2 reported they were confused by the category *Context-dependent language*, which was initially in the codebook together with the category *Reference*. In the unrevised codebook, *Context-dependent language* was defined as the language that could be retrieved by both the writer and reader. For instance, in the clause *I agree with this*, *this* could be understood by both the writer and reader thanks to their shared knowledge of the immediate context of situation. *Reference*, on the other hand, were characterised in the initial codebook as words whose identity could be retrieved within the text (i.e., anaphoric or cataphoric), from the immediate

context of situation (i.e., exophoric – *I think he's wrong.*), or from the shared general knowledge of the writer and reader (i.e., endophoric – *The sun rises in the east*). From these two definitions, C1 and C2 pointed out that the category *Context-dependent language* appeared to be a sub-category of *Reference*. The researcher, therefore, revised the coding frame by collapsing the two variables into one – *Reference*.

Second, the category *Expert-Non-expert writer*, which was also included in the initial unrevised codebook, was reported to be vague. They found it difficult to decide whether a writer was an expert or non-expert, especially in the messages that addressed general topics (e.g., company holidays or a meeting). This category was thus removed from the coding frame.

The third category that had to be omitted was *Spontaneous language*. At first, this category was included to see whether the language in the data was typical of written language (without many instances of spontaneity) or spoken language (with a lot of examples of spontaneity). Therefore, while *Spontaneous language* was initially defined as ‘language that does not involve careful rehearsal or planning’, it was later determined through the pilot analysis that this definition was vague. Because of the difficulty in determining what careful rehearsal/planning was and what it was not, and also, the distinction between spoken language and written language seemed of little relevance since the categories of ‘spoken language’ and ‘written language’ are not strictly dichotomous, but highly “indeterminate” (Halliday, 1994b, p. 55), it was decided that this category would not be included. This omission did not influence the researcher’s ability to draw inferences about the textual meaning of the data, as there were six other categories, i.e., *Themes*, *Clause complexes/simplexes*, *Ellipsis*, *Reference*, *Lexical cohesion*, and *Conjunctions*, which would inform the researcher of the discourse mode of the data.

Through the first pilot testing of the coding frame, it appeared that more training should have been provided to the coders. For instance, without a detailed explanation of the codes used in the variable *Clause complexes/simplexes* (i.e., 1, 2,  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , +, x, =, ‘ and “, see Appendix 1), the coders reported that they were unsure about the symbols. Hence, coders used in latter stages of the research received standardised

training and were provided with formal written coding instructions (see Appendix 2). As Krippendorff (1980) asserts, formal written coding instructions “not only assure that data are reliably recorded but also explicate their meaning” (p. 75). He also points out that written coding instructions prevent coders from having access to sources of uncontrollable information and ensure that coders have “an absolute minimum of informal communication” with the researcher (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 74).

Moreover, in the first pilot coding, little information was elicited for the macro-level analysis. Therefore, more emphasis was given to coders in the latter stages of the research to improve this fundamental step of analysis, which played an important role in answering both the first and second research questions (i.e., *What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?* and *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*).

As a result of this first pilot, the codebook was further revised to include more examples so as to make it easy for any coder to use. Examples of confusing cases were also added.

### **3.2.2 Second pilot coding**

After the first pilot of the coding frame and the subsequent revision of the codelist, codebook, and coding procedure, these were piloted the second time to ensure coders feel “comfortable with what was expected of them” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 129) and to inform the researcher of the “overall viability of the coding scheme” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 133) before the final analysis. As with the first pilot analysis, five texts were purposively selected with respect to their length (i.e., not too short or not too long).

Initially, the codebook and coding form were designed in Excel as seen in Figure 5. It was designed in this way for the sake of ease of clicking on the tabs at the bottom of the Excel page to access the different pages in the codebook in relatively short time (each category was designed on one sheet of the file – Figure 5). By doing so, the coders would not have to physically flip through the pages of a hard copy codebook.

While the coders in the first pilot analysis did not comment on the use of Excel for these documents, the coders in the second pilot found Excel unwieldy and preferred to work with a Word document, which could be printed, and so they could consult the categories in a more convenient way. This remark was in accordance with Franke’s (2000) observation: Human text coding seems to be more efficient with hard copy. Neuendorf (2002, p. 135) points out that coders sometimes find it useful when they are able to mark up the pages.

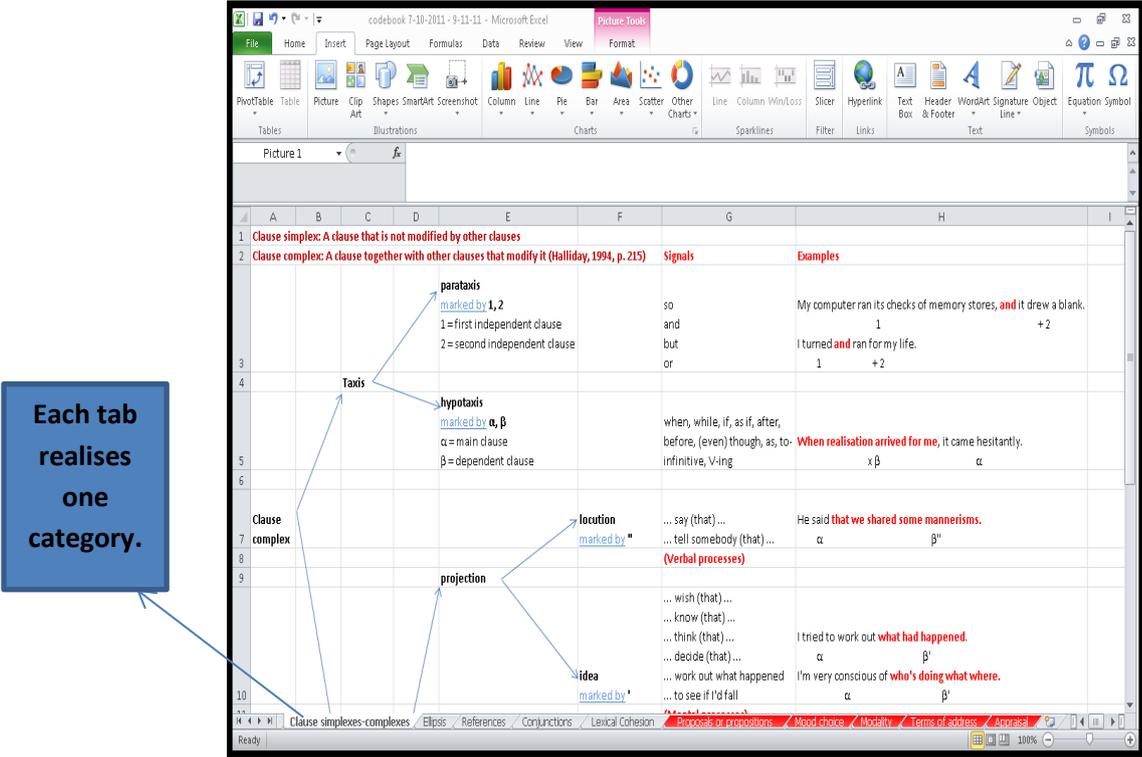


Figure 5 - Codebook in Excel

On the basis of the second pilot analysis, the codebook was not only revised in form but also in content. After the second pilot coding, in addition to being transferred to Word, the codebook underwent several other revisions as a result of the coders’ suggestions. First, an overview of the categories and (un)codable units was added at the beginning of the codebook to make it more self-explanatory so as to reduce informal communication between the researcher and coders, which “challenges the independence of individual coders” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 131). Second, the examples in the codebook were further refined to make them more relevant to business language. Third, codes for each category were introduced to reduce the



analysis in the second pilot, it appeared that, to answer the initial first macro-question *What is the text about?* the coders gave similar information to the one in the Field analysis, namely participants, processes and circumstances. To answer the initial second macro-question *How are the ideas in the text connected?* one coder gave the answers as below:

**Table 2 - One pilot coder’s answers to the macro-question *How are the ideas in the text connected?* (second pilot)**

<b>Text 3-3-A</b>	reference, connectives, coherence of topic
<b>Text 3-21-M</b>	ellipsis, connectives, coherence of topic
<b>Text 8-8-Q</b>	vocabulary, connectives, coherence of theme

(These texts can be seen in Appendix 4.)

From Table 2, it is obvious that this macro-question failed to elicit text-specific information as information generated from three different texts was almost identical. Likewise, the question *How is the language in the text influenced by and representative of the method the text appears in?* was reported to be unwieldy. Coders indicated they were not sure what answers were expected from them. As these questions failed to help answer the research questions, they were replaced by a set of new questions. Only the last question *What is the relation between the writer and reader (their relative status, power relation, affective involvement and frequency of contact)?* was retained as coders said it was clear and could elicit useful interpersonal information about the texts.

Regarding the micro-analysis, the table below illustrates the level of agreement amongst the coders. This was done using Recal – an online utility that computes intercoder/interrater reliability coefficients for nominal CA data (Freelon, 2010).

**Table 3 - Agreement results of the micro-analysis (second pilot)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Per cent Agr.</b>	<b>Cohen's Kappa</b>	<b>Krippendorff's Alpha</b>
<b>Participants</b>	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Processes</b>	53.3%	0.516	0.525
<b>Circumstances</b>	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Themes</b>	53.3%	0.516	0.525
<b>Clause complex</b>	x	x	x
<b>Ellipsis</b>	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Conjunctions</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931
<b>Reference</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931
<b>Lexical Cohesion</b>	86.7%	0.858	0.863
<b>Proposals/ Propositions</b>	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Terms of address</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931
<b>Mood choice</b>	60%	0.583	0.592
<b>Modality</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931

In the first pilot, a simple agreement was calculated to get a general idea of the applicability of the coding scheme. However, a simple agreement figure is “not sufficient to establish and demonstrate reliability” (Fico, Lacy, & Riffe, 2008, p. 124), since it does not take into account the possibility of chance agreement (Riffe et al., 2005, pp. 148-155). Despite the necessity to employ reliability coefficients in reliability measurement, CA literature is “full of proposals for so-called reliability coefficients” (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007, p. 77), namely Bennett et al.’s S, Scott’s pi ( $\pi$ ), Cohen’s kappa ( $\kappa$ ), Fleiss’s K, Cronbach’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ), Spearman rho ( $\rho$ ), Pearson correlation coefficient (r), Lin’s concordance correlation coefficient ( $r_c$ )

and Krippendorff's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) (Neuendorf, 2002, pp. 150-153; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007, p. 77). This study, however, chose to use two coefficients, namely Cohen's kappa and Krippendorff's alpha, because of three reasons. First, they are the most common reliability coefficients (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 277; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 154; Holdford, 2008, p. 178). Second, "a conservative approach when reporting interrater reliability" is to provide measurements of at least two different reliability indices (Holdford, 2008, p. 178) since each method has its limitations (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 280). Third, as these three coefficients were readily provided by Recal (Freelon, 2010), the report of them did not entail any laborious calculation.

As Table 3 indicates, nine out of thirteen variables achieved a high level of agreement among the coders, ranging from 80% to 93%. Reliability coefficients revealed that the agreement among coders was far above chance (i.e., from 0.787 to 0.931). However, three categories yielded a relatively low level of agreement, namely *Processes* (53.3%), *Themes* (53.3%), and *Mood choice* (60%). The variable *Clause simplexes/complexes* was reported to be confusing. Nevertheless, as no coder training had been provided yet (i.e., all the pilot coders only relied on the codebook and accompanied written coding instructions as their sole guide with no verbal explanations so as to test the workability of the workbook), this result was understandable.

Some misinterpretation of the codebook did occur, resulting in the low agreement percentage among the coders with regard to these variables. For instance, for *Themes*, the codebook defined a theme as a starting point of a message, which is the first element(s) of the clause from left to right (Halliday, 1994a; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). One of the coders, however, identified *you* in the clause *and again, thank you (text 8-1-B)* as a topical theme, which suggests a misunderstanding of theme. This type of misinterpretation would be prevented in the final analysis by careful coder training. As MacQueen et al. (2009, p. 216) put it, when inconsistencies are due to coder error (i.e., misunderstanding of terminology), it means coder training is insufficient. To resolve this, there are three words that help: "train, train and train" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 133). In addition, one coder was still fuzzy about *Clause simplexes/complexes*, which led to a blank for this category in the

pilot coding form. This problem was later solved by further coder training. As the literature has emphasised, coder training is an indispensable procedure for enhancing inter-coder reliability (Hak & Bernts, 2009; Shapiro, 2009; Krippendorff, 2009; Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2002).

Another reason that led to the low level of agreement in one of the variables – *Mood choice* – appeared to occur because of the deficiency in the codebook. For example, when coding this variable, one coder classified the clause *thank you so much for the support and cooperation you have provided me (text 8-1-B)* as an imperative while another categorised it as a declarative. This confusion may have been a consequence of declaratives being defined as a clause with a subject followed by a finite while an imperative was a clause without a subject. However, although the form of this clause resembles an imperative (i.e., *thank* is similar in form to predicators *stand* in *stand up* or *go* in *go out*), its function is not that of a command (i.e., to demand goods and services as in imperatives, Martin et al. 1997, p. 58). In fact, if we retrieve the missing subject, the clause will become *I thank you so much... (text 8-1-B)*. Thus, the function of this clause is to give information, a typical function of a declarative (Martin et al., 1997, p. 58). A similar example would be *Wish you all the best in your life (text 8-1-B)* or *Trust that you're fine (text 3-26-M)*, in which the subject *I* had been ellipsed. According to Martin et al. (1997, p. 70), such cases are called 'elliptical declaratives', where all or part of Subject, Mood or Residue is absent. The fact that this concept was not written down in the codebook led to a lack of consistency in coding, resulting in a low level of agreement in *Mood choice* (60%). This drawback was rectified by a revision of this category in the codebook. As MacQueen et al. (2009, pp. 211-212) hold, the process of refining the codebook is complex and dynamic, but is imperative for ensuring inter-coder reliability.

As for *Processes*, the coders disagreed on some subcategories, mostly behavioural and verbal processes. For instance, one coder classified *say* in *I would like to say goodbye (text 8-1-B)* as a verbal process while another coder regarded *say* as a behavioural one. This disagreement on process types had been reported by previous studies. Presnyakova (2011), for example, pointed out: "there is no clear border between process types; rather, they shade into one another" (p. 9). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) also state: "The world of our experience is highly indeterminate;

and this is precisely how the grammar construes it in the system of process types” (p. 173). As regards behavioural and verbal processes, even SFL experts disagree in their categorisation. As a case in point, Martin et al. (1997, p. 110) classify *speak*, *insult* and *praise* as behavioural processes while Halliday (1994a, p. 141) maintain that these processes are verbal. Both Martin et al. (1997, p. 109) and Halliday (1994a, p. 139), however, agree that behavioural processes are the least distinct of the six process types with no clearly defined characteristics of their own and that they are active versions of verbal and mental processes. Because of this, it was decided to leave it to the coders to categorise the processes according to their interpretation although training would be provided to draw their attention to basic examples of process types.

### 3.2.3 Third pilot coding

After the second pilot coding, since the coding frame still demonstrated weaknesses, it had to be revised and tested the third time. As it was envisaged that Vietnamese coders would assume the task of data analysis (see section 3.3.3), in the third pilot analysis, the texts were given to three Vietnamese pilot coders, but not those who were going to be involved in the final analysis. As Krippendorff (2004) states, those who take part in developing the constructs should not be the ones who apply them since “they will have acquired an implicit consensus that new coders cannot have” (p. 131). Moreover, the use of coders involved in the development of the constructs in the final analysis would make it impossible for other researchers to replicate the study (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 131).

Although the coders in the third pilot coding were not employed as coders for the final analysis, their selection followed the same criteria outlined for the recruitment of coders for the final coding, so as to see if those envisaged criteria would work or not. Some criteria for selecting coders outlined by J. Peter and Lauf (2002) and Krippendorff (2004) are: (1) cognitive abilities, (2) educational, cultural and linguistic background, and (3) age (see section 3.3.3). The selection of new coders for the third pilot coding also applied these criteria.

For in-depth interaction with texts in a DA fashion was quite time-consuming, in the third pilot analysis, only the macro questions were addressed to make the analytical

task manageable. In addition, as the micro-level coding scheme and many of its variables had been reported to be practicable after the second pilot with a relatively high percentage of agreement, and the issues with some aforementioned problematic variables seemed solvable by coder training and codebook revision, it was decided that the modified micro-analysis coding frame could wait until the fourth pilot. Table 4 provides an overview of the modification of the macro-questions.

**Table 4 - Macro questions in the second and third pilot analyses**

<p><b>Macro questions in the second pilot analysis:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the text about? How do you know that?</li> <li>2. How are the ideas in the text connected?</li> <li>3. How is the language in the text influenced by and representative of the method the text appears in (i.e., spoken or written or email)?</li> <li>4. What is the relation between the writer and the reader (their relative status, power relation, affective involvement and frequency of contact)? How do you know that?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Macro questions in the third pilot analysis:</b> (Coders to answer and provide reasons for their responses)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you think the aim of the text is?</li> <li>2. What do you think the main topic of the text is?</li> <li>3. Please comment on the style of this text.</li> <li>4. Do you think the language in this text is formal, informal, mixed or neutral?</li> <li>5. What do you think the power relation between the writer and recipient is?</li> <li>6. What do you think the affective involvement between the writer and recipient is?</li> <li>7. What do you think the frequency of contact between the writer and recipient is?</li> </ol>

It is worth noting that the coders in the third pilot analysis were not informed of the purpose of the study. They were given two business texts (8-1-B and 9-11-A, Appendix 4) together with the macro questions and were asked to answer them without further explanations. In other words, “blind coding” (Neuendorf, 2011, p. 283) was applied so as to avoid the “demand characteristics” (Orne, 1975, p. 186), a tendency for coders to try to give the researcher what he/she wants. The coders were required to work separately without consulting one another so as to ensure the reliability of the results as advised by Krippendorff (2009, p. 352).

Similar to the first and second pilot analyses, interrater reliability was calculated to measure the level of agreement among the coders. Below was the calculated reliability for the third pilot, using *Recal* (Freelon, 2010; see section 3.2.2).

**Table 5 - Average pairwise per cent agreement (third pilot – macro-analysis)**

<b>Average pairwise per cent agr.</b>	<b>Pairwise pct. agr. coders 1 &amp; 3</b>	<b>Pairwise pct. agr. coders 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>Pairwise pct. agr. coders 2 &amp; 3</b>
<b>76.19%</b>	<b>85.714%</b>	<b>71.429%</b>	<b>71.429%</b>

**Table 6 - Average pairwise Cohen’s kappa (third pilot – macro-analysis)**

<b>Average pairwise CK</b>	<b>Pairwise CK coders 1 &amp; 3</b>	<b>Pairwise CK coders 1 &amp; 2</b>	<b>Pairwise CK coders 2 &amp; 3</b>
<b>0.719</b>	<b>0.825</b>	<b>0.667</b>	<b>0.667</b>

**Table 7 - Krippendorff’s alpha (third pilot – macro-analysis)**

<b>Krippendorff's Alpha</b>	$\Sigma_c o_{cc}$	$\Sigma_c n_c(n_c - 1)$
<b>0.727</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>54</b>

As can be seen from the tables above, the average pairwise agreement percentage was not particularly high – 76.19%. Cohen’s kappa of 0.719 and Krippendorff’s alpha of 0.727 indicated that the results were approximately 72% above what could be expected by chance. Banerjee, Capozzoli, Mcsweeney, and Sinha (1999) hold that, if Cohen’s kappa is between 0.40 and 0.75, then coders achieve fair to good agreement beyond chance. Krippendorff (1980, p. 147; 2004, p. 221; 2009, p. 354), on the other hand, points out that, if Krippendorff’s alpha is between 0.60 and 0.80, then only “highly tentative and cautious conclusions” can be drawn. This level of

agreement among the coders in the third pilot could be explained by coders' comments below.

First, they all claimed that the phrase *affective involvement* in question 6 (*What do you think the affective involvement between the writer and recipient is?*) was difficult to understand. One of the coders wrote on the coding form: "I'm not sure of [the] meaning intended [for this question]" while another also noted: "not quite clear – the meaning?." For text 8-1-B (see Appendix 4), while the coders gave almost similar answers to the first five questions, their answers to question 6 (*What do you think the affective involvement between the writer and recipient is?*) were diverse as can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8 - Coders' answers to macro-question 6 - *What do you think the affective involvement between the writer and recipient is?* (text 8-1-B) (third pilot)**

<b>Coder 1</b>	Attempt to show appreciation and wish to extend relationship/friendship
<b>Coder 2</b>	The affective involvement is good. (the whole text – "having had an opportunity to work with all of you", "your very nice farewell party and gift." "Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future" "miss you and hope to see you again soon")
<b>Coder 3</b>	Friendship/close relationship between the writer and recipient

As Table 8 shows, coder 1 and coder 3 did not give reasons for their answers as they said they were unsure if they understood the question correctly.

Second, for question 7 (*What do you think the frequency of contact between the writer and recipient is?*), one of the coders reported that the term *frequency of contact* was ambiguous and confusing, and therefore gave a different answer from the other two coders. From these comments, it appeared necessary to give operational definitions for the interpersonal concepts in questions 5, 6 and 7 (i.e., *power relation*, *affective involvement*, and *frequency of contact*).

In addition, the coders in the third pilot observed that questions 3 (*Please comment on the style of this text*) and 4 (*Do you think the language in this text is formal, informal, mixed or neutral?*) were the same. For the pilot texts, they gave the same

answer “formal” (i.e., the style of the text was formal and the language of the text was formal too) for both questions. From this result, question 3 was omitted from the macro-question, as it elicited similar answers to question 4. However, compared to the previous set of macro questions as presented in the second pilot, this revised set elicited more in-depth information about the texts that was not generated from the micro-analysis, namely the aim of the texts, the topic, the level of formality, as well as the power relation, affective involvement and frequency of contact between the writer and recipient.

### **3.2.4 Fourth pilot coding**

The fourth pilot coding was conducted for two purposes: (1) to test the constructs one more time after the revision of the codebook and macro questions and (2) to prepare the coders for the final analysis.

The agreement percentage among pilot coders after the second and third pilot was relatively high; only some variables seemed problematic. Two causes had been identified: (1) the deficiency of codebook and (2) coder error due to the lack of coder training. To address the first issue, the codebook was revised. To address the second problem, training was provided to help coders improve their understanding of the concepts and the required tasks as advised by Hak and Bernts (2009, p. 222) and Shelton and Skalski (2014, p. 344) so that they could have a consistent interpretation of the variables to be coded.

However, training is a laborious process. Some content analysts have reported “spending months in training sessions” with coders before the final coding could take place (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 129). For this study, the codebook was a complex document with 13 constructs and a multiplicity of sub-constructs. Aside from the substantial number of categories, the constructs in the codebook were adopted from SFL, an extravagant grammar (Martin et al., 1997, p. 2; Martin, 2003, p. 1; Rose, 2006, p. 92) different from traditional grammar and formal grammar, with which most language learners, including the prospective coders, were more familiar. As a consequence, coder training would take a lot of time. Because of the envisaged strenuous nature of training, it was considered to be better to use the prospective final coders for this stage than someone who might not see the relevance of training.

Furthermore, at this stage, all the constructs had been developed, tested several times and refined. Thus, the coders were not required to further develop the constructs. In other words, they did not participate in “conceptual development” and were not involved in negotiation of “the boundaries of categories” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 13). In that sense, the use of prospective final coders in the fourth pilot did not appear to affect the replicability of the results of the final analysis.

Another reason for using prospective final coders in the fourth pilot was to see if they were suitable for the job or not. If they were suitable, then they would be employed for the final analysis. Otherwise, they would be replaced by new coders. The use of trainees in the pilot analysis, in Krippendorff’s (2004, p. 131) words, helps the decision of which individuals are suitable for the task.

#### *3.2.4.1 Coder training*

Coder training is indispensable in studies that employ human coders (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991, p. 245; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 283). As the literature has indicated, the first step in coder training is to familiarise coders with the concepts to be analysed, in order to increase their level of comfort with the training material and to give them an idea of what is expected from them in terms of energy and attention needed for the analysis (Riffe et al., 2005, p. 142; Herbes & Ramme, 2014; p. 260; Shelton & Skalski, 2014, p. 344). Accordingly, before the training session took place, the coders were given a 23-page codebook to read and were instructed to take notes when anything in the training session was unclear.

Added to this, coders were also asked to read *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Eggins, 2004) and Chapter 6 – “Discourse Grammar” in *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (Paltridge, 2006) before the training session. The links to the electronic copies of these books on Google Scholar ([www.scholar.google.com.au](http://www.scholar.google.com.au)) were provided in the codebook (see Appendix 1). As stated by Krippendorff (2004, p. 133), if additional training material is given to the coders, it has to be recorded so that the study can be replicated elsewhere. Although the coders did not have access to every page of the books on Google Scholar, they could still get a general picture of SFL to aid their understanding of the constructs in the codebook.

There were three reasons why *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Eggins, 2004) was recommended to the coders rather than other SFL “bibles” (McGregor, 1997, p. xii), for example, *An introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), *Halliday’s introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) or *Working with Functional Grammar* (Martin et al., 1997). First, the book is available online, so the coders would not have to go to the library to look for it. Because of this electronic availability, three coders could simultaneously access the book without having to take turns as in the case of a hard copy. Second, *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Eggins, 2004) is a “very well-organised and [...] very clear” (Menendez, 2006, p. 853) book for people beginning to learn functional grammar. Therefore, it was suitable for the coders of this study who needed “a clear and perspicuous introduction to SFL” (Menendez, 2006, p. 852). Third, the codebook was developed mostly based on *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (Eggins, 2004). Thus, reading this book would enable the coders to acquire a deeper understanding of the crystallised concepts in the codebook.

In addition, the coders were also asked to read Chapter 6 – “Discourse Grammar” in *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (Paltridge, 2006) for two reasons. First, this chapter of the book gives a summary of the basic discourse grammar concepts consistent with the SFL constructs including lexical cohesion, reference, conjunction, ellipsis and theme. Second, and more importantly, this was the book the coders had studied for their undergraduate degree, so they were already familiar with it. By preparing the coders well before training, it was assumed that it would be easier for them to engage in the training session. According to Riffe et al. (2005, p. 141), coders’ reading extra training material before training is a part of the familiarisation process and an important step to minimize coder differences.

A three-hour training meeting was conducted simultaneously with the three coders by tele-conferencing as the coders and the researcher were in different locations. This was done to ensure the consistency of instructions and to enable the coders to learn from one another’s queries. The researcher went through the constructs one by one, beginning with a description about each construct and following by a discussion of the coders’ queries. Apart from describing the constructs and addressing questions,

the researcher also emphasised that the coders should make frequent reference to the codebook during analysis so as to “refresh [their] memory of category definitions” (Riffe et al., 2005, p. 142).

The general comment the coders made after reading the training material and attending the training session was they could understand most constructs with relative ease. However, they did raise some questions during the training session as seen below:

1. **Minor clauses and major clauses:** We do not analyse minor clauses like *Thanks*. Therefore, *Thank you* should also be left out since it has the same meaning with *Thanks*. So, why does the codebook give an example of an analysis of *thank you* (Appendix 1 – Mood choice)?
2. **Exclamatives and declaratives:** According to the Cambridge Dictionary Online (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>), *thank you* is an exclamative. But in the codebook, *thank you* is classified as a declarative (Appendix 1 – Mood choice). Is that an error of the codebook?
3. **Marked and unmarked:** Can you clarify the difference between *marked* and *unmarked* tenses (Appendix 1 – Processes)?
4. **Elliptical theme:** Take *Wish you all the best* and *Pls submit your expense report* as an example. Why is *I* considered an elliptical topical theme in the first clause, but *you* is not an elliptical topical theme in the second clause (instead, *submit* is a topical theme) (Appendix 1 – Themes)?

According to Fico et al. (2008, p. 123) and Riffe et al. (2005, p. 141), it is crucial to address the questions coders pose because when there is a concern from the coders about a concept there are two possibilities: (1) the category is problematic and may need to be revised, or (2) the coders are confused about the category, which may prevent them from coding reliably.

To address the first question (i.e., minor clauses versus major clauses), the researcher pointed out that, whereas *thanks* and *thank you* express similar meanings, *thanks* is a minor clause (similar to *oh, yuk, hi* – Martin et al., 1997, p. 71) as it does not consist of a process to form a major clause. According to Halliday (1994a, p. 95), it is structured as a nominal group, not a major clause. Moreover, it only fulfils a minor

speech functional meaning and therefore only serves an interpersonal function as an acknowledgement (Halliday, 1994a, p. 95-96; Martin et al., 1997, p. 71). *Thank you*, on the other hand, consists of a crucial element of a clause – a process *thank*. While *thanks* does not display a Mood + Residue structure, *thank you* does: *I* (ellipsed subject) + *thank* (finite) + *you* (residue). Accordingly, *thank you* is a major clause and was subject to SFL analysis like other major clauses.

With regard to the second query (i.e., exclamatives versus declaratives), Fico et al. (2008, p. 127) state that coders may interpret the text based on the concepts they acquire from their educational background, which may not align with the terminology chosen by a study. This observation held true for the coders in this study as their earlier exposure to Traditional Grammar may make them think in different terms from Functional Grammar. This issue, as Fico et al. (2008, p. 127) assert, can be addressed and even solved by coder training. To address this query, the researcher explained that exclamatives are a sub-category of declaratives in SFL (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013). Therefore, it was not an error to put an exclamation under the category *Declaratives (Mood)*. Furthermore, as there are different branches of linguistics, each of which has its own way of classification, Cambridge Dictionary's (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org>) categorisation of the mood type of *thank you* does not necessarily correspond with SFL definition of an exclamation. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), an exclamation is characterised as a clause that has the mood structure of Wh- + Subject + Finite (e.g., *How quickly they will build the house!*). Based on this definition, *Thank you* is not an exclamation in SFL terms, but an elliptical non-exclamation, or more generally speaking, an elliptical declarative. The researcher also raised a similar case for the coders to discuss: *We will work it out //, then will ask help from you for Haithai supports in details (text 3-10-D)*. In the light of the previous discussion, the coders agreed that the second clause *then will ask help from you...* was an elliptical declarative, not an exclamation.

As for the third issue (i.e., marked versus unmarked tenses), the researcher explained that an unmarked tense is a “typical/usual” (Eggins, 2004, p. 318) tense for a process, whereas a marked tense is an “atypical/unusual” (Eggins, 2004, p. 318) use of tense for a process. To illustrate this point, the researcher used a common example: *I love you* is unmarked because simple present is the usual tense for the mental process *love*

while *I'm loving you* is marked, as the present continuous is not normally used with mental processes like *love*. From this point, the researcher also reminded the coders that the concept of “marked/ unmarked” not only applied for the tenses of the processes, but also for the themes in theme analysis (Appendix 1).

Regarding the last issue (i.e., elliptical themes), the researcher pointed out that *Wish you all the best* (1) and *Pls submit your expense report* (2), though appearing similar in form, belonged to two different mood choices, with the first being an elliptical declarative and the second an imperative. Their mood analyses, therefore, would be as seen in Table 9:

**Table 9 - Contrastive analysis of an elliptical declarative and an imperative**

	Mood		Residue	
	Subject	Finite	Predicator	
<b>Declarative</b>	(I)	wi---	---sh	you all the best.
<b>Imperative</b>			(Please) submit	your expense report.

Via this demonstration, the coders could see that *I*, being the first representational element, is the elliptical topical theme in the first clause while *submit*, the first representational element of the second clause, is its topical theme. This theme analysis is consistent with Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004), Eggins’ (2004) and Martin et al.’s (1997) contention about theme analysis. Eggins (2004, p. 309), for instance, maintains that theme analysis of elliptical declaratives depends on which constituents have been ellipsed whereas with imperatives, the subject and finite do not usually appear, resulting in the predicator functioning as the topical theme. This point had already been noted in the codebook for coders to refer to when necessary.

From this analysis, it appeared that the coders’ questions arose from the fact that they did not understand some of the concepts deriving from SFL or rules to operationalise them. After their questions were addressed, the coders agreed their confusion regarding those four issues were resolved.

In addition to the discussion of the constructs and the coders’ questions, coder differences and coder errors from previous pilot codings were also analysed, for

example, multiple themes (e.g., *and again, thank you – text 8-1-B*) and processes (e.g., *thank, make, see*), although these points were all written down in the codebook. As Riffe, Lacy and Fico (1998, p. 110) and Neuendorf (2002, p. 133) maintain, all disagreements and errors from earlier stages should be documented in the codebook and analysed in training so as to enable coders to achieve a high level of reliability. Coder training is a procedure not only for providing theoretical instruction, but also for giving practical advice (Hak & Bernts, 2009, p. 220). Therefore, the discussion of previous coder errors and misunderstandings provided the new coders with practical preparation to perform reliable analyses.

Samples of clause complexes were also analysed as the coders in the previous pilots (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2) reported that they found this category confusing. For example, the following clauses were taken as an illustration for the steps involved in analysing a clause complex (Table 10).

**Table 10 - Clause complex analysis (text 8-1-B)**

Clauses	Hypotactic and paratactic relationships		
I would like to say "Goodbye"	1		
and want to express my appreciation	+2	$\alpha$	
of having had an opportunity		$x\beta$	$\alpha$
to work with all of you.			$x\beta$

With this example, the researcher pointed out to the coders that when a complex consisted of several clauses (both finite and non-finite), the analysis had to be performed step by step. First, *I would like to say goodbye* and *and want to express my appreciation* have an independent-extension relation, so 1 was coded for the first, and +2 for the second (see Appendix 1 for an explanation of the codes). Next, *of having an opportunity* is a dependent, enhancement clause of *want to express my appreciation*, so  $\alpha$  was coded for the main clause and  $x\beta$  for the dependent clause. Similarly, *to work with all of you* is a dependent, enhancement clause of *of having had an opportunity*, so they were labelled  $x\beta$  and  $\alpha$  respectively.

After training, the coders were given five texts to analyse. They were also given the *Coding Instructions* (Appendix 2) to guide them through the steps of analysis and to prevent them from relying on any “extraneous sources of information” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 131). Coding was conducted independently with no informal consultation among the coders or between the researcher and the coders. As both Neuendorf (2002, p. 133) and Krippendorff (2004, p. 131) assert, coding needs to be performed without discussion or collaboration, for coding is not “a democratic, majority-rule situation” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 133); moreover, communication among coders makes replicability unlikely (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 131).

#### 3.2.4.2 Fourth pilot coding results

Coding reliability assessments, as stated in the previous pilots, are “a necessity, not a choice” (Riffe et al., 2005, p. 154). The reliability of the coders’ results in the fourth pilot was calculated as can be seen in Tables 11, 12 and 13.

**Table 11 - Average pairwise per cent agreement (fourth pilot)**

<b>Average pairwise per cent agr.</b>	Pairwise per cent agr. - coders 1 & 2	Pairwise per cent agr. - coders 1 & 3	Pairwise per cent agr. - coders 2 & 3
91.27%	87.143%	93.333%	93.333%

**Table 12 - Average pairwise Cohen's kappa (fourth pilot)**

<b>Average pairwise CK</b>	Pairwise CK coders 1 & 3	Pairwise CK coders 1 & 2	Pairwise CK coders 2 & 3
0.912	0.933	0.871	0.933

**Table 13 - Krippendorff's alpha (fourth pilot)**

<b>Krippendorff's alpha</b>	$\sum_c n_c(n_c - 1)$
0.912	1162

These pairwise agreement results as seen in these tables were high, specifically above 0.9 for all reliability measures. Despite this result, the literature indicates that it is necessary to use variable-by-variable assessments to achieve an accurate diagnosis of coding problems, and pairwise comparisons of coders to identify individual coders whose coding may be problematic (Fico et al., 2008, p. 124). Tables 14 and 15 present the variable-by-variable assessments calculated by *Recal* (Freelon, 2010).

**Table 14 - Macro-analysis detailed pairwise inter-coder reliability (fourth pilot)**

	CODERS 1 & 2			CODERS 1 & 3			CODERS 2 & 3		
	Per cent agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per cent agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per cent agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha
Q1	75%	0.733	0.742	83.3%	0.821	0.827	91.7%	0.91	0.913
Q2	91.7%	0.91	0.913	83.3%	0.821	0.827	75%	0.733	0.742
Q3	83.3%	0.821	0.827	83.3%	0.821	0.827	83.3%	0.821	0.827
Q4	91.7%	0.91	0.913	91.7%	0.91	0.913	83.3%	0.821	0.827

**Table 15 - Micro-analysis detailed pairwise inter-coder reliability (fourth pilot)**

VARIABLES	CODERS 1 AND 2			CODERS 1 AND 3			CODERS 2 AND 3		
	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha
<b>Participants</b>	86.7%	0.858	0.863	93.3%	0.929	0.931	93.3%	0.929	0.931
<b>Processes</b>	80%	0.789	0.794	93.3%	0.929	0.931	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Circumstances</b>	86.7%	0.858	0.863	86.7%	0.858	0.863	100%	1	1
<b>Themes</b>	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	1	1
<b>Clause simplexes/ complexes</b>	86.7%	0.858	0.863	100%	1	1	86.7%	0.858	0.863
<b>Ellipsis</b>	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	1	1
<b>Reference</b>	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	100%	1	1
<b>Conjunctions</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931	100%	1	1	93.3%	0.929	0.931
<b>Lexical cohesion</b>	80%	0.789	0.794	93.3%	0.929	0.931	86.7%	0.858	0.863
<b>Proposals/ propositions</b>	86.7%	0.858	0.863	100%	1	1	86.7%	0.858	0.863
<b>Mood choice</b>	80%	0.789	0.794	100%	1	1	80%	0.789	0.794
<b>Modality</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931	93.3%	0.929	0.931	100%	1	1
<b>Terms of address</b>	93.3%	0.929	0.931	93.3%	0.929	0.931	100%	1	1

As can be seen from Table 15, the variable-by-variable pairwise agreement percentage was high (most variables achieved the agreement percentage above 80%), reflecting the effectiveness of the training session. Moreover, Tables 12, 13 and 14 showed that Cohen's kappa and Krippendorff's alpha were also high (with an average of 0.912), indicating that the coders' agreement was well beyond chance. This result appeared to indicate that the coding frame and the three coders operated satisfactorily. It was, therefore, decided that it was time to conduct the final analysis.

### **3.3 Issues of coders (final analysis)**

Up to this point, it has been seen that the four pilot analyses employed two to three coders to analyse the texts. However, no rationale has been provided for this choice. Before the final analysis took place, it was important to decide on issues of coders with regard to the number and their qualifications.

#### **3.3.1 The necessity of having more than one coder**

There are important reasons why more than one coder must be used in CA studies that employ human observers. While computers, with their speed and sophistication, are said to play an increasingly important role in CA (Conway, 2006, p. 186; Neuendorf, 2002, pp. 125-126; Herbes & Ramme, 2014, p. 260) and computer programmes have been developed to read textual data without human involvement (e.g., *The General Inquirer* and *CATPAC*), there are areas where computer programmes fail to code (Shapiro, 2009, p. 240; Krippendorff & Bock, 2009, p. 209). In a study that compares human coding and computer coding, Conway (2006) reported a major discrepancy between the two methods despite the fact that they were employed in the same project with the same research questions and codebook. For this study, computer coding had been tried (i.e., with *Word Smith*). Nonetheless, the software program failed to help the researcher answer the research questions as it was impossible for the machine to read the texts and apply SFL to analyse meanings the way human coders did.

When human coders are chosen over computers, there must be more than one coder because of two reasons. First, different people "may interpret texts differently" (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 351). A text always involves several layers of meanings and there is always some degree of interpretation when approaching a text (Graneheim &

Lundman, 2004, p. 106). Second, researchers must assure themselves that the results emerging from the data are trustworthy (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 351). As W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) observes, the more people involved in the coding, “the better the researcher is able to assess the degree to which different people would *all* arrive at the same decisions” (p. 274, emphasis original).

Furthermore, the complexity of SFL demanded more than one coder to examine the data. Past SFL-based studies that used only one coder in data analysis exhibited limitations in applying SFL concepts in interpreting the data. As a case in point, in a study about science textbooks, Deleuil (1998) applied SFL to examine transitivity, metaphor and modality to unravel the link between style and constructivism in science texts. Not employing any other coders apart from the researcher himself, the analysis of the data demonstrated a multiplicity of problems with respect to the use of SFL to interpret the data. For instance, *are* in *there are spaces filled with fluid* was classified as a material process (Deleuil, 1998, p. 195) while *there + be* is generally considered an existential structure by SF linguists (Martin et al., 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004). In addition, whereas *are* in *even when the temperatures outside the body are at freezing point* (Deleuil, 1998, p. 197) and *is* in *5 percent is the fluid portion of blood* (Deleuil, 1998, p. 196) were regarded as material processes, they are often interpreted as relational processes by Martin et al. (1997), Halliday and Matthiessen (2013) and Eggins (2004). Another debatable interpretation suggested by Deleuil (1998) in his analysis was the confusion between what Martin et al. (1997, p. 115) term “receptive (passive) material processes” (e.g., it *was broken* by a stone) and “attributive relational processes” (e.g., it *was broken* and useless). Despite this SFL distinction, Deleuil (1998) treated the process in *These wastes must be removed from the cells constantly* as a relational process (Deleuil, 1998, p. 107) when another possible interpretation could indicate that it was a passive material process. Deleuil’s (1998) controversial treatment of SFL may have been resolved by the employment of more coders. As Riffe et al. (2005) maintain, “a single coder may not notice the dimensions of a concept being missed” (p. 141). Thus, to avoid this potential problem, the current study employed several coders to apply SFL to analyse the nature of written data, which are “full of ambiguities and context dependencies” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 71).

### 3.3.2 Number of coders

With regard to the number of coders, CA scholars have stressed that at least two coders must be used in CA studies in order to establish interrater reliability (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 352; W. Scott, 2009, p. 347; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 51; W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, 273; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 283). Krippendorff, (2009) maintains that “at least two but ideally many” (p. 352) coders have to be employed, and that new coders may be used in the process, as long as there is enough duplication with previous coders to measure the reliability of the data. Similarly, W. Scott (2009) suggests using a minimum of two coders with a random sample of data assigned for “check-coding” (W. Scott, 2009, p. 347). Neuendorf (2002, p. 51; 2011; p. 283) also mentions the recruitment of at least two coders with at least 10% overlap so that reliability can be checked. However, Neuendorf (2002) emphasises the fact that, for the practical advantage of “splitting up the coding tasks” (p. 142) for more texts to be processed, up to 30 or 40 observers can be employed.

Past studies using human observers have recruited different numbers of coders. Hak and Bernts (2009), for example, employed two coders together with one of the researchers. V. Ho (2011a) used two coders, one of whom was the researcher. Nacos et al. (2009) recruited two coders, both of whom were the researchers among the study’s several researchers. Guo and Goh (2014) used two observers, with the second one coded 10% of the messages. Studies that used more than two coders are Shelton and Skalski (2014) with five coders, Davidson et al. (1996) and Zander, Strack, Cierpka, Reich, and Staats (1995) with six coders, Olsen and Shorrock (2009) with 11 coders in Study One and two coders in Study Two, and Olsen (2011) with four coders in Study One and three coders in Study Two.

In a PhD study that also used SFL as a theoretical framework for data analysis, V. Ho (2011a) investigated textual and interpersonal features of Vietnamese argumentative essays compared to those favoured by American instructors. While V. Ho (2011a) investigated only two SFL aspects – textual and interpersonal – of 104 essays (a smaller number of texts than this study), his study used two coders, the researcher and another Vietnamese coder, with the second coder analysing a third of the data. The reason why V. Ho (2011a) required his second coder to analyse just a part of the data was the limited “time and resources available for the project” (p. 91).

In the final analysis of this study, three coders were employed to undertake both the macro and micro analysis. Each of them was required to perform the analysis of all the texts. In other words, the study used a 100% overlap design (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 275).

### 3.3.3 Coders' qualifications

Krippendorff (2004, p. 127) maintains that the most important coder qualification is appropriate background. In the current study, coders were recruited based on four criteria that were relevant to the nature of the study: being Vietnamese, being familiar with research, having a linguistic background and having a good English language competence. As CA literature has indicated, coders' characteristics has a vital impact on intrarater and interrater reliability (J. Peter & Lauf, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004; Hak & Berns, 2009).

The first qualification to be taken into account was nationality. In order for data to be analysed from an insider's perspective, Vietnamese coders were selected. The data contained several cultural concepts, such as the import of Vietnamese address terms into English business communication (e.g., *anh* [older brother], *chi* [older sister], *em* [younger brother/sister], and *co* [auntie]), which may not be fully understood and interpreted by coders from other cultural groups, including L1 speakers of English. Previous researchers have suggested the limitations in using L1 speakers of English in studies that investigate the emergence of new varieties of English, stressing the challenge the lexicography of emerging varieties presents to L1 speakers' intuition (e.g., Dolezal, 2008, p. 702). Furthermore, if coders of a certain variety of English were chosen, then they may bring their own assumptions about their variety into the analysis of the current data. The interpretation would be seen from different lenses than the insiders'. As Berns (2008b, p. 721) contends, only insiders can understand the social and cultural parameters relevant to the setting in which they find themselves.

The second requirement for choosing coders was that they had some familiarity with research so that they could understand the rigorous requirements of this study. As J. Peter and Lauf (2002, p. 821) and Fico et al. (2008, p. 123) state, the positive impact of research experience is that coders are prepared to cope with the fatigue of coding –

“a highly repetitive analytical task that requires strenuous attention to details” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 127). Since all the coders participating in this project had studied a unit called *Foundation in Research* for their undergraduate degree at the University of Education (Ho Chi Minh City), it was anticipated they would understand the importance of maintaining consistency in coding throughout their analysis despite expected fatigue and task repetition.

The third requirement was a background in linguistics. Candidates without such a background could be discouraged by the abundance of categories (13 main categories and a multiplicity of sub-categories). Accordingly, it was decided a coder with a background in linguistics would find the task of reading the codebook and applying the codes less onerous. As Krippendorff (2004) contends, researchers should not “underestimate the importance of coders’ familiarity with the phenomena under consideration” (p. 128).

The fourth criterion to be considered was coders’ linguistic competence. Research has indicated that coders’ language skills influence both intrarater and interrater reliability (J. Peter & Lauf, 2002, p. 815), particularly when English is not a mother tongue for most Vietnamese people. If Vietnamese coders were to be chosen to analyse English business texts, their English competence had to be one of the criteria for recruiting coders. As J. Peter and Lauf (2002, p. 821) point out, restricted language skills may result in problems in material comprehension, which in turn leads to difficulties in coding (i.e., coders’ uncertainty in making a coding decision, especially with foreign language material). For this study, all coders majored in English language teaching and had graduated from university with a grade point average above 8.0 (out of 10). Thus, they were believed to be reasonably good users of English.

Based on these four criteria, three Vietnamese coders who were competent users of English and had educational background in research and linguistics were recruited. The fact that coders shared a similar background (e.g., similar education, culture and social sensitivities) has been maintained to aid reliability (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 128; J. Peter & Lauf, 2002).

### **3.4 Final analysis**

After the coding scheme had been piloted four times, it was deemed valid, reliable and manageable enough for the final analysis. Following the rigorous session of coder training (see section 3.2.4.1), the researcher sent the three coders 20 texts every ten days by email. The coders analysed, sent the coding back to the researcher by email and received a new batch for the next period. As with the pilot analyses, coders were required to work independently so as to avoid group consensus, that is, a group sharing a certain way of understanding of certain variables which may subsequently be built into their coding and make them deviate from the coding protocol (J. Peter & Lauf, 2002, p. 816). After approximately four months of laborious coding, data analyses were completed.

### **3.5 Issues of reliability and validity**

#### **3.5.1 Reliability assessment**

##### *3.5.1.1 Reliability calculation*

As discussed in the pilot analyses, reliability, especially inter-coder reliability, is paramount in CA studies (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991, p. 249; Riffe et al. 1998, p. 105; J. Peter & Lauf, 2002, p. 815; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007, p. 78; Neuendorf & Kane, 2010; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 283; Shelton & Skalski, 2014, p. 344). Reliability indicates the reproducibility of the coding instructions and coding scheme, reflects the property of the phenomena of interest and is a necessary condition for validity (Krippendorff, 2009; Neuendorf, 2002; Riffe et al., 1998; Riffe & Freitag, 1997; Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Nevertheless, one critique that CA studies often receive is the insufficient report of reliability, or what Lacy and Riffe (1993) call “a sin of omission” (p. 133). In an examination of media framing studies in the world’s leading communication journals from 1990 to 2005, Matthes (2009, p. 358) found that 55% of the articles failed to report inter-coder reliability and 21% only reported simple agreement without employing reliability coefficients. This finding is in accordance with Riffe and Freitag’s (1997, p. 519) investigation of CA studies from 1971 to 1995 in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, which showed that only half of the studies reported inter-coder reliability. Added to this, Matthes (2009, p. 358) revealed that, among the studies reporting reliability, only 2% reported variable-by-variable reliability. This finding is

consistent with what Riffe and Freitag (1997, p. 519) and Kolbe and Burnett (1991, p. 250) found (i.e., very few studies in their examination cited variable-by-variable reliability). Regarding this point, Neuendorf (2002, p. 143) and Krippendorff (2009, p. 355) assert it is possible for variables with low reliability to be hidden in the overall average reliability, resulting in the possibility of “drawing invalid conclusions from unreliable data” (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 354). Thus, it is imperative to calculate not only overall reliability but also variable-by-variable reliability (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 275; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 285), which was done in the pilot analyses as well as the final analysis in the current study.

To calculate inter-coder reliability in the final coding, a random sample for the reliability test (Riffe & Freitag, 1997, p. 519; Lacy & Riffe, 1996, p. 963; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 159) was selected. Unlike purposive sampling, random sampling for reliability tests ensures that each unit in the tests represent the data (Lacy & Riffe, 1996, p. 963). As regards reliability sample size, Krippendorff (2004) stresses that “reliability data need to be representative of the population of data whose reliability is in question” (p. 238). To be specific, Kaid and Wadsworth (1989, p. 209) suggest a sub-sample of 5-7% of the total sample to be sufficient for assessing reliability. Neuendorf (2002, p. 158; 2011, p. 283) mentions a larger sub-sample size of 10% to 20%. Lacy and Riffe (1996, p. 968) propose various numbers of units needed for reliability tests based on various population sizes. For a population of 303 units as with this study, Lacy and Riffe (1996, p. 968) as well as Riffe et al. (1998, p. 127) recommend a reliability sample size of 54-84 units (18%-28.8%). Krippendorff (2004, p. 239-240), however, argues that the sample size for reliability tests depends on the number of categories to be analysed. The more categories, the bigger the sampling size has to be so as to account for rare variables (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 239). With a consideration of these suggestions, 30% of the analysed texts (a higher number than Kaid and Wadsworth’s (1989) and Lacy and Riffe’s (1996) recommendations as the coding frame consisted of a multiplicity of categories and sub-categories) were randomly selected for reliability tests by a random number table (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995, p. 243).

As with the pilot analyses, the level of agreement among the coders was calculated by Recal (Freelon, 2010). The reliability calculation of 30% of randomly chosen texts for the final macro-analysis and micro-analysis is presented in Tables 16 and 17.

**Table 16 - Macro-analysis detailed pairwise inter-coder reliability (final analysis)**

Question	Coders 1 & 2			Coders 2 & 3			Coders 1 & 3		
	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha
Q1	85%	0.848	0.849	86.7%	0.865	0.866	86.7%	0.865	0.866
Q2	81.7%	0.814	0.815	81.7%	0.814	0.815	80%	0.797	0.799
Q3	81.7%	0.814	0.815	86.7%	0.865	0.866	83.3%	0.831	0.832
Q4	88.3%	0.881	0.882	83.3%	0.831	0.832	85%	0.848	0.849

**Table 17 - Micro-analysis variable-by-variable pairwise reliability calculation  
(final analysis)**

VARIABLES	CODERS 1 AND 2			CODERS 2 AND 3			CODERS 1 AND 3		
	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha	Per. agr.	Cohen's kappa	Krip's alpha
<b>Participants</b>	81.7%	0.814	0.815	80%	0.797	0.799	80%	0.797	0.799
<b>Processes</b>	86.7%	0.862	0.863	80%	0.794	0.795	83.3%	0.828	0.829
<b>Circumstances</b>	90%	0.897	0.897	90%	0.897	0.897	86.7%	0.862	0.863
<b>Themes</b>	100%	1	1	100%	1	1	96.7%	0.966	0.966
<b>Clause sim./ complexes</b>	90%	0.897	0.897	86.7%	0.862	0.863	83.3%	0.828	0.829
<b>Ellipsis</b>	93.3%	0.931	0.931	90%	0.897	0.897	90%	0.897	0.897
<b>Reference</b>	93.3%	0.931	0.931	90%	0.897	0.897	83.3%	0.828	0.829
<b>Conjunctions</b>	86.7%	0.862	0.863	86.7%	0.862	0.863	86.7%	0.862	0.863
<b>Lexical cohesion</b>	81.7%	0.814	0.815	80%	0.794	0.795	83.3%	0.828	0.829
<b>Proposals/ Propositions</b>	93.3%	0.931	0.931	86.7%	0.862	0.863	86.7%	0.862	0.863
<b>Mood choice</b>	90%	0.897	0.897	90%	0.897	0.897	86.7%	0.862	0.863
<b>Modality</b>	90%	0.897	0.897	86.7%	0.862	0.863	83.3%	0.828	0.829
<b>Terms of address</b>	93.3%	0.931	0.931	90%	0.897	0.897	86.7%	0.862	0.863

### *3.5.1.2 Acceptable level of inter-coder reliability*

According to Lacy and Riffe (1996, p. 964), researchers have to achieve a higher level of reliability in the reliability test than the minimal acceptable level of agreement in order to account for chance agreement. For example, if the minimal acceptable reliability is 80%, then the researcher has to achieve at least 83% in the reliability test to control for chance agreement (Lacy & Riffe, 1996, p. 964).

With regard to the acceptable level of inter-coder reliability, different figures have been proposed. Krippendorff (2004; 2009), for instance, suggests that only Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  above .80 is acceptable while Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  in the range of .67 to .80 can only be used for "drawing tentative conclusions" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 241; 2009, p. 354). Banerjee et al. (1999) suggest that Cohen's kappa above .75 represents "excellent agreement beyond chance" (p. 6) while values between .4 and .75 indicate fair to good agreement beyond chance. Riffe et al. (1998), without specifying the coefficient, propose reliability figures "in the .80 to .90 range" (p. 131) although they contend that research breaking new ground can target at a lower reliability level. Nonetheless, they stress the fact that studies with reliability below .70 are "hard to interpret and the method of dubious value to replicate" (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 131). Despite this, Neuendorf (2011, p. 283) recommends an acceptable level of at least .60. From these figures, it can be seen that there is a lack of a uniform standard on the acceptable level of reliability. In W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein's (1999) words, there is no "definitive, absolute, confident answer" for the question "How much reliability is enough?" (p. 282). In spite of this absence of agreement, Krippendorff (2009) maintains that reliable data should "not significantly deviate from perfect agreement" (p. 355).

As seen from Tables 16 and 17, inter-coder reliability in both macro-analysis and micro-analysis was high, with percentage agreement all above 80% while Cohen's kappa and Krippendorff's alpha was all satisfactorily around .80 or above. This result of reliability assessment indicates the reliability of the research methods as well as a high level of agreement among the coders, which demonstrate the workability of the coding frame and its variables.

### 3.5.1.3 Resolving coder discrepancies

Coder discrepancies derive from several factors, namely insufficient coder training, coder fatigue, concept complexity and latent content being more difficult to code than manifest content (Weber, 1990, p. 24; Riffe et al., 1998, p. 107; W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 271; Neuendorf, 2002, pp. 145-146). Coder discrepancies are divided into two categories: (1) systematic differences, which can be explained by the spurious structures in the data, coding instructions, and coder training; and (2) random differences, which can be explained by coder fatigue (Krippendorff, 2009, p. 356). In this study, while coders achieved a high level of agreement in such categories as *themes*, *ellipsis*, *reference*, *conjunctions*, *proposal/proposition*, *mood choice*, *modality* and *terms of address*, there was a certain extent of disagreement in other categories, for example, *participants*, *processes*, and *circumstances*. To be more specific, the coders sometimes disagreed with one another on how to code these three variables when the writers ‘deviated’ from the conventional form of English. A case in point is the clause *it should be submitted PD Accountant asap (text 3-3-A)*. Coder 1 treated *PD Accountant* as a participant, namely a beneficiary of the material process *submitted*, whereas coders 2 and 3 coded it as a circumstance of place, that is, *PD Accountant* meaning *to PD accountant*. Another example is *then [we] will ask help from you (text 3-10-D)*. While coders 1 and 3 identified *ask* as the process of the clause, coder 2 indicated that *ask for* was the process although *for* did not exist in the original clause.

In some cases, coders had difficulty deciding whether a verb was used as a process or not. For example:

Would you please find Vietnam holidays for the year of 2008 as per attached  
(no question mark, *text 3-39-P*)

For this case, while the coders agreed that *find* was the process of the first clause *Would you please find Vietnam holidays for the year of 2008*, they were unable to reach a consensus on the second part *as per attached*. Coder 1 noted that *as per attached* was not a clause and that there was no processes in it; coder 2 regarded this as a clause with *attached* as a material process; and coder 3 coded *attached* as a participant which functioned as a noun (similar to *as per your instructions*) and not a verb.

In addition, at times the coders demonstrated instances of intra-coder inconsistency, which may be explained by “coder fatigue” (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 108; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 145; Krippendorff, 2009, p. 356), a result of the length of the codebook and the number of units to be coded in a given period of time. For instance, coder 1 missed *if* in the clause *if I have* (text 3-14-II) when coding *Conjunctions*; or coder 2 missed *my* in *my guys will be there* (text 3-6-X) when coding *Reference*. Although these intra-coder inconsistencies accounted for a low percentage, they did constitute a part of coder differences.

In addition to these discrepancies, *Lexical cohesion* appeared to be a difficult category to code, as it required the coders to look across the clauses to find “the meanings embedded in the content” (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 107). For short texts that included only one or two clauses (e.g., 3-20-D, 3-19-M, 3-18-B, 3-17-NN and 3-15-B), it was easy for coders to agree on the absence of lexical cohesion. Longer texts (e.g., 3-5-W, the text can be seen on pages 334-335), nonetheless, posed some challenges for coders. Below is a simplified illustration of the number clauses in which lexical cohesion was identified as present or absent in text 3-5-W by the three coders (Table 18).

**Table 18 - Lexical cohesion in text 3-5-W as identified by the coders**

	<b>Presence of lexical cohesion</b>	<b>Absence of lexical cohesion</b>
<b>Coder 1</b>	11 clauses	9 clauses
<b>Coder 2</b>	10 clauses	10 clauses
<b>Coder 3</b>	4 clauses	16 clauses

This problem is well-documented in the literature. As Riffe et al. (1998, pp. 107-108) state, the more latent the content is, the more difficult it is to code. Indeed, “[w]ith manifest content, the coding task is one of clerical recording” (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 265). Latent content, nevertheless, needs greater coder effort and generally leads to lower reliability scores (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 146).

While all these coder differences required a resolution, coder disagreements were only resolved after reliability had been calculated. As Krippendorff (2004) discusses,

“the data before [...] reconciliation are reliability data proper and do yield reportable reliabilities” (p. 219). Reconciliation is only a measure to enhance the researcher’s confidence in drawing conclusions from the data, not a way to improve publishable reliability (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 219). It has been suggested in the literature that the following methods can be used for resolving coder discrepancies: (1) employing expert judges, (2) using majority rule among the coders, and (3) using non-CA data (e.g., survey data and coder interviewing) (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 160; Krippendorff, 2009, pp. 351-353). In this study, majority rule among the coders was selected instead of the other two methods because of the following reasons. First, if expert judges were employed, more people would be involved and this may lead to further disagreement (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 269). Moreover, Neuendorf (2002, p. 116) points out that the use of expert judges is inconsistent with the CA and DA scheme, specifically that the coding scheme has to be usable by various coders. Second, coder interviews may not yield a truthful representation of what the coders really thought as they may change their mind to please the researcher. Majority rule among coders, on the contrary, did not involve either expert judges or further information elicitation from the coders. Accordingly, this method was employed.

It should also be noted that, while some texts contained typographical errors, they did not seem to interfere with meanings, as coders had no difficulties identifying and interpreting the processes from the contexts. For these cases, no reconciliation of discrepancies was required. Below are some examples.

**Table 19 - Typographical errors and coder interpretations**

<b>Examples</b>	<b>Typo errors</b>	<b>Coders’ interpretations</b>
My travel application form as requested. ( <i>text 3-36-N</i> )	requested	requested - verbal process
Whether RNS has bough it from [Company 3] in the past? ( <i>text 3-28-VV</i> )	bough	bought - material process

### 3.5.2 Validity

Reliability is a necessary condition, but does not guarantee validity (Holsti, 1969, p. 143; W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 272; Krippendorff, 2009, p. 356;

Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). While coders may make correct and consistent judgements about the required variables, this does not necessarily ensure that the variables help answer the research questions about the phenomenon of interest. That is why validity is as crucial as reliability. However, unlike reliability, formal assessment of the validity of CA and DA measures is uncommon (Punch, 2005, p. 98; Janis, 2009, p. 358; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). As Linn (2010, p. 181) observes, validity is not a matter of all or none; it is a matter of degree on a continuum.

According to the literature, validity indicates the extent to which a research procedure measures what is intended to be measured (Holsti, 1969, p. 142; Andren, 1981, p. 43; Lynn, 1986, p. 382; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 112; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 313; Rubio, 2005, p. 495; Punch, 2005, p. 97; Janis, 2009, p. 358; Linn, 2010, p. 181; Crowe & Sheppard, 2011, p. 1505). This study is argued to have achieved external validity, social validity, and internal validity (including content validity, construct validity, face validity and ecological validity).

To begin with, the detailed report of text analysis procedures, with clear descriptions of the codebook and coding scheme, supported the replicability of the project and together this aids “the measures’ external validity” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 115). As Neuendorf (2011) notes, a common “methodological offense” (p. 285) many research studies commit is poor documentation, a threat to replicability, the existence of which is vital to external validity (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 115; 2011, p. 285). According to Kolbe and Burnett (1991), the absence of detailed reportage raises concern about “judging precision and the capacity to adequately replicate and extend past studies” (p. 247). As can be seen in this chapter, not only the final analysis, but also the four pilot stages have been clearly documented (together with the codebook and coding frame in the appendices), allowing other researchers to replicate the study if need be. In other words, the full report of the research procedure enables the study’s results to be extrapolated to other circumstances (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 115).

External validity is argued to be related to social validity, the degree to which the research findings contribute to the public discussion of an important issue (Riffe et al, 1998, p. 137; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 314). The issue that this research study centres on is within WE, that is whether a new variety of English is becoming

manifest in business correspondence in Vietnam. It is positioned within the movement to validate the legitimacy and socio-cultural values of localised varieties (B. Kachru, 1983, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, 1992d; Dasgupta, 1993; Qiong, 2004; T. Mesthrie, 2008; Bolton, 2008b; Kirkpatrick, 2007, 2010; Mahboob & Szenes, 2010) and the ongoing debate of whether localised varieties should be taught to ESL/EFL students (K. Brown, 1995b; Matsuda, 2003; Rajagopalan, 2004; J. Jenkins, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Shahbaz & Liu, 2011). To put it another way, the topic of localised varieties not only concerns researchers but also practitioners and educators. As Riffe et al. (1998, p. 146) hold, when a research topic appeals to audiences beyond the academic community, it is socially valid.

Apart from external validity and social validity, the study also achieves internal validity, the type of validity that concerns the research design of data collection and analysis (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 137). The first type of internal validity is content validity, the extent to which one or multiple measures fully represent a specified domain (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 117; Rubio, Berg-Weger, Tebb, Lee, & Rauch, 2003, p. 94; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 315; Punch, 2005, p. 97; T. Brown, 2010, p. 31; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). Content validity, the most crucial type of validity in the interpretations of the research findings and understanding of their applications (Lynn, 1986, p. 385; Rubio, 2005, p. 495) is reflected in the coding scheme, that is, the coding scheme allows the researcher to fully measure the phenomenon at hand (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 261; Poole & Folger, 2009, p. 367). As W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999) assert, the most important step in establishing content validity is to develop a coding scheme that “lays out variables, their definitions, their values, and rules for recognising these variables in the content being coded” (p. 270). It has been widely suggested that the content validity of a study’s instrument should be evaluated by experts based on the index of content validity (CVI) (Lynn, 1986, pp. 383-384; Riffe et al., 1998, pp. 138-139; Rubio et al., 2003, pp. 94-95). However, it has also been acknowledged that there are three shortcomings to this method. First, experts may hold biased opinions which may result in low interrater agreement (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 141; Rubio et al., 2003, p. 95; W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 269). In Riffe et al.’s (1998) words, the quality of the measures, like beauty, is “in the mind of the beholder” (p. 141).

Second, the number of experts to be used to assess a study's content validity is difficult to define (Lynn, 1986, p. 384; Rubio et al., 2003, pp. 95-96). Third, the use of experts does not necessarily help to identify the areas that might have been omitted from the instrument (Lynn, 1986, p. 384; Rubio et al., 2003, p. 96).

In this study, instead of employing experts, the development of the coding scheme was deductively guided by an existing theory – SFL. When a study resides on a detailed theory to build the coding scheme, its designer is said to be “on solid ground to create a valid coding scheme” (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 282). In fact, four macro-questions and thirteen micro-variables developed and refined after a series of pilot tests helped capture three strands of meanings the first research question attempted to answer, which led to the answers for the second research question about the situational and cultural contexts (Figure 7). As W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999, p. 282) argue, the implementation of a series of pilot tests increases the validity of the results.

However, it is worth noting that to some extent the exhaustiveness of the coding frame had to be balanced against reliability. As documented in the pilot analyses, while the variable *Expert/Non-expert writer* was initially included to measure interpersonal meanings, eventually it had to be dropped because of the low agreement among the pilot coders. As Riffe et al. (1998) observes, “however plausible a model may be, there is always something – a lot of things – that are left out” (p. 139).

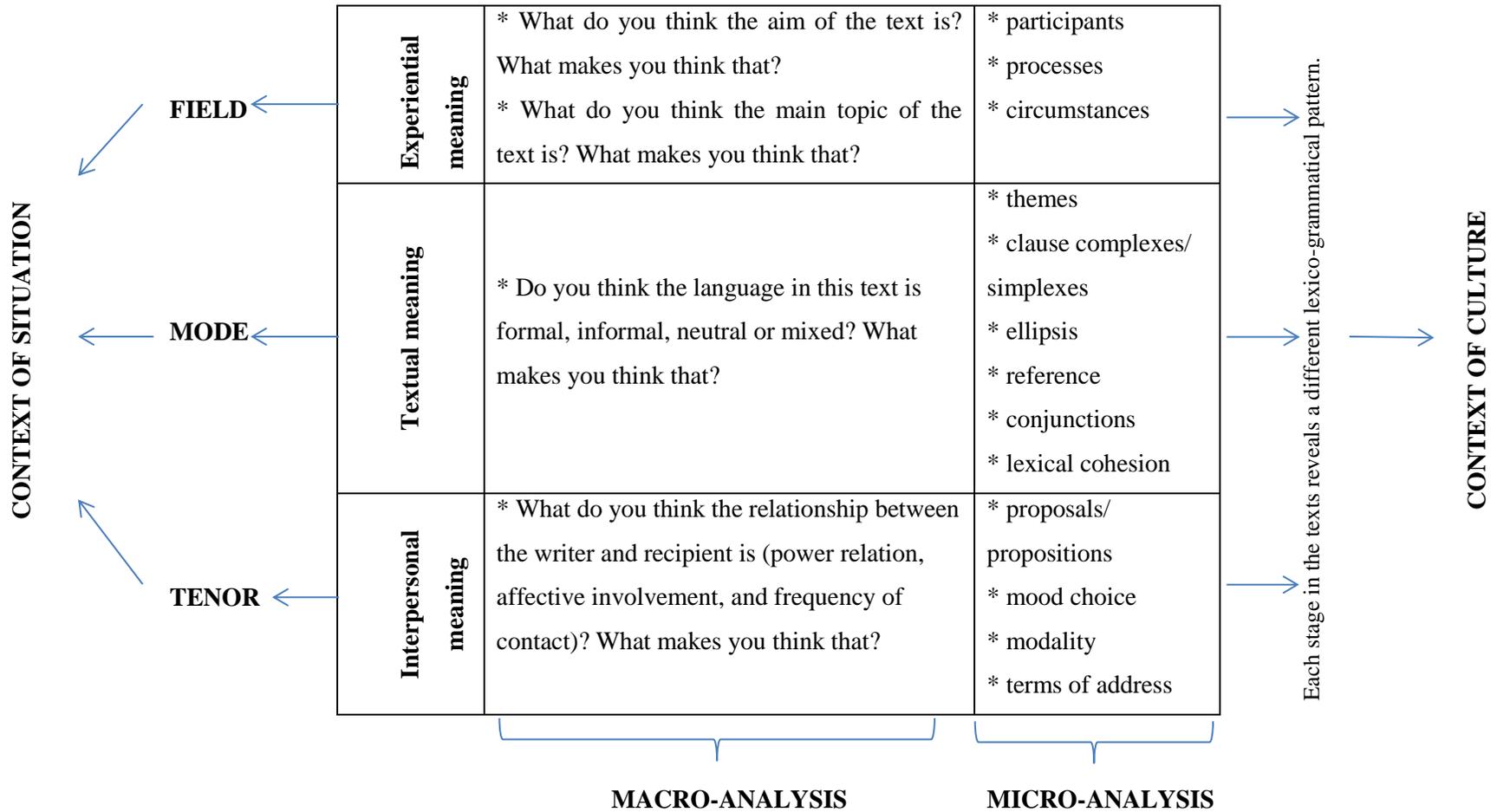
Aside from content validity, another important type of internal validity is construct validity, which examines “whether a measure relates to other measures in ways that are consistent with theoretically derived hypotheses” (Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). Some writers argue that construct validity encompasses all notions of validity (Messick, 1989; T. Brown, 2010). However, according to Krippendorff (2004, p. 315), since construct validity develops in social sciences where many concepts are abstract and cannot be observed directly, the relationship between a construct and its content spelt out by the researcher has to be examined based on the construct-related theory (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 315). This observation is in accordance with other content analysts' perspectives (e.g., Holsti, 1969, p. 148; Weber, 1990, p. 19; Riffe et

al., 1998, p. 144; Neuendorf, 2002, p. 117; Punch, 2005, p. 98; Neuendorf, 2011, p. 282). In the current study, what each construct entailed has been validated by SFL experts. For example, Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), Martin et al. (1997) and Eggins (2004) all agree that processes include six types, circumstances ten types, and so on. According to W. Potter and Levine-Donnerstein (1999, p. 264), when the constructs in a coding frame are developed deductively from a theory, construct validity is likely to be ensured.

In addition, the theory-based coding frame also forms “the basis for an argument for face validity” (W. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, p. 264). The SFL-based coding frame used in the current study encompassed three types of meanings: experiential, interpersonal and textual, which construe the three dimensions of the situational context (i.e., field, tenor and mode) and the schematic structures of the cultural context (Figure 7). Thus, on the face, research findings elicited from this coding scheme were likely to be “plausible and believable” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 313) to address the research questions about how meanings and contexts were manifested in the research data. The existence of face validity, according to Rubio et al. (2003, p. 94) and Rubio (2005, p. 496), consolidates the content validity of the measures.

### **3.6. Chapter summary**

In short, this chapter has described in detail the research paradigm that guided the study and the research methods used to address the research questions. Figure 7 summarises the macro-questions and the thirteen variables that assisted the researcher to approach the enquiries at hand. In addition, this chapter has fully reported the four pilot analyses to test the workability of the coding variables and coding frame. Issues of reliability and validity have also been discussed at length. The following chapters, chapters 4 and 5, will present the research findings.



**Figure 7 - Multiple variables representing the domains to be measured**

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF MICRO-ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the findings of the micro-analysis of the data to help address the first research question: *What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?*. As the micro-analysis coding frame comprised 13 variables, this chapter will be organised into 13 sections accordingly: participants, processes, circumstances, themes, clause simplexes/complexes, ellipsis, reference, conjunctions, lexical cohesion, proposals/propositions, mood choice, modality, and terms of address. As the data analysis unfolded, a number of lexico-grammatical features in relation to representational, interpersonal and textual meanings were highlighted and these are also described in this chapter.

### 4.1 Participants

In this section, the variable of participants is presented in relation to the six process types (material, mental, verbal, relational, behavioural and existential) as each has its own configuration (Martin et al., 1997, pp. 103-109; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 169; Eggins, 2004, pp. 214-246). While in the coding frame, the coders were not required to code the names of each type of participant (e.g., Actor, Goal, Beneficiary, Range, Sayer, Receiver, Verbiage, etc.), they did identify the participants and the relevant processes, which assisted the researcher to identify the type of participants as described below. As material processes accounted for nearly 50% of the total (see section 4.2), participants used with them also constituted the largest group, followed by participants in mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential processes.

#### 4.1.1 Participants in material clauses

Participants in material clauses comprise the Actor (the participant performing the process), Goal (the participant at whom the process is directed), Range (the participant that expresses the scope of the process) and Beneficiary (the participant that benefits from the process) (Eggins, 2004, pp. 216-218; Martin et al., 1997, pp. 103-105). Whereas the Actor plays an inherent role in material clauses, the data as analysed by the coders showed that the presence of the other participants was optional. In the following instances, only the Actor was present:

Our training team	will arrive	before shortly	for the setup
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Circumstance: Time</b>	<b>Circumstance: Cause</b>

(text 3-33-D)

This shipment	will arrive	to our factory	on tomorrow.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Circumstance: Place</b>	<b>Circumstance: Time</b>

(text 7-21-C)

While the Actors in these two clauses were quite easy to identify, in many cases the data revealed an ambiguity of the Actors. For example:

It is expected that around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers<sup>9</sup> will be arrived at HCMC for this project. (text 4-8-M)

The passive clause could be analysed as follows:

around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers	will be arrived	(by [?])	at HCMC for this project.
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Process: passive</b>	<b>Actor</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

The active version would have been:

[?]	will arrive	around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers	at HCMC for this project.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: active</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

This analysis shows that the Actor in the above clause was unidentifiable. However, when the probe for Actor (Martin et al., 1997, p. 104; Eggins, 2004, p. 216) is employed – “Who/what arrived?”, it is clear that the entity *around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers* performed the action of arriving. In other words, *around 05 vessel of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers* was the Actor, rather than Goal, of the material process (*will*) arrive, despite the employment of the receptive (passive) form. This close analysis showed that only one participant was

<sup>9</sup> In this section (*Participants*), relevant participants are underlined while processes are italicised. As with *Participants*, in the subsequent sections, features under discussion will also be underlined.

inherent in the process *arrive* (i.e., the unfolding of the process did not extend to another participant). According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 179) and Eggins' (2004, p. 216), *arrive* functions as an intransitive material process, with the outcome of the action confined to the Actor itself. Nonetheless, Halliday (1994a) observes that sometimes "the Actor is involuntary, and thus in some respects like a Goal" (p. 111). This observation holds true for the above example as well as other cases in the data, such as:

As per below email, this student *was passed away*. (text 5-5-FF)

As the Actor *this student* was involuntary (i.e., dying was not his/her wish), he/she was treated as a Goal by the writer. However, the processes *arrive* (4-8-M) and *pass away* (5-5-FF) expressed a happening rather than a doing, with the probe being "what happened to the five vessels of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers/ the student?" instead of "what did the five vessels of bulk cargo voyages and 160 containers/ the student do?". As Halliday (1994a) points out, with some abstract processes, the difference between active and passive is so little that both forms can exist side by side, e.g., *The girls' school and the boys' school combined/were combined* (Halliday, 1994a, p. 111). However, Halliday (1994a) does emphasise that when the passive form is used, the Actor can be probed by asking "Who by?" (p. 111). This question, nonetheless, seems unanswerable in the above examples 4-8-M and 5-5-FF as well as the following:

I am writing this email because I am looking for you in two continuous days, but I *was failed* as you are quite busy. (text 5-7-MM)

As schedule, the Safety Committee meeting on 31 Mar., 2011, *It will be coincided* with working time of ISO core team. (text 7-7-J)

I *have been worked* as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year. (text 3-5-W)

While only one participant was identifiable in the above examples, there were instances that comprised three participants, the Actor, the Goal and the Beneficiary:

We	are sending	thousands letters	to candidates.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>

(text 5-16-*QQQ*)

We	will check and send	quotations	to you
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>

(text 2-8-*A*)

In these instances, the Goals *thousands letters* and *quotations* were impacted by the material deed *send* while the Beneficiaries *candidates* and *you* were the participants that benefited from the doing. In these two cases, as the Beneficiaries stood behind the Goals, the preposition *to* was employed. However, when the Beneficiary preceded the Goal, this preposition became unnecessary:

Please	send	us	your offer	for supply 2 items of Mobil jet oil
	<b>Process: material</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

(text 2-13-*M*)

This is consistent with Eggin's (2004, p. 220) observation: Beneficiaries may occur with or without prepositions, depending on their position in the clause. However, the data showed that the preposition *to* was often used in front of the Beneficiaries, even when they preceded the Goal:

Then [we] will *send to him invoice about lift* (text 4-1-*A*)

Pls *send to us invoice* for for the preventive maintenance services (text 7-6-*E*)

I would like to *send to you the list of lawful OSHE requirements* (text 7-8-*BB*)

This phenomenon was not only identified with the material process *send*, but also with the material process *provide*:

Please kindly check and inform if you could *provide to us below items* within 7 days (text 2-3-*A*)

In this example, *below items* was the Goal while *us* was the Beneficiary of the doing *provide* and was signalled by the preposition *to*. Nevertheless, in two other examples of *provide*, we can see that another preposition, *with*, was used:

Our ultimate aim is to make sure we can *provide* all our customers with the equipment they need (*text 4-15-U*)

I would appreciate you can *provide* me with the useful information relating to [company 4] services (*text 4-8-M*)

In 4-15-U and 4-8-M, *provide* was no longer followed by the Goal. Instead, circumstances of accompaniment were used, namely *with the equipment* and *with the useful information*, which aligns with Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004, p. 189) description of the pattern of the material process *provide*. However, this use of *provide* was only identified in these two cases (4-15-U and 4-8-M) while the rest employed the combination of the Beneficiary and Goal:

...pls advise if you could *provide* us discount for this one? (*text 2-11-A*)

Attached please find our presentation which *provides* you more detailed information about our facility... (*text 4-14-B*)

please *provide* us your target price, we will calculate the size for you. (*text 6-9-U*)

This, in Halliday’s (1994a) words, suggests that “the line between participants and circumstances is not a very clear one” (p. 159), which seemed to hold true to the present data.

This blurred line between participants and circumstances could also be found with the material process *submit*:

So we must *submit* the official letter to Customs and Bank. (*text 7-29-C*)

...we can *submit* PACCOM another official proposal/letter and then PACCOM will review to return us an official confirmation. (*text 8-9-Q*)

Pls *submit* to me your expense report for taxi cost Oct 2007 (*text 1-2-Q*)

Below is the analysis of 7-29-C:

We	must submit	the official letter	to Customs and Bank.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance: Place</b>

(*text 7-29-C*)

In this analysis, *to Customs and Bank* was identified as a circumstance of place because it answered the probe “Where to submit the official letter?”. However, in examples 8-9-*Q* and 1-2-*Q*, the constituents following *submit* could alternate their positions for each other:

We can *submit* PACCOM another official proposal/letter : We can *submit* another official proposal/letter to PACCOM (*text 8-9-Q*)

Please *submit* to me your expense : Please *submit* your expense to me (*text 1-2-Q*)

As Halliday (1994a, p. 159) maintains, whenever there is systematic alternation between a prepositional phrase and a nominal group, the elements in questions are interpreted as participants. In the light of this observation, the participants following *submit* in 8-9-*Q* and 1-2-*Q* were Beneficiaries and Goals:

We	can submit	PACCOM	another official proposal/letter.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Goal</b>

(*text 8-9-Q*)

Please	submit	to me	your expense.
	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Goal</b>

(*text 1-2-Q*)

Contrasting these instances, we see that *to Customs and Bank* (7-29-*C*) functioned as a spatial circumstance while *to me* (*text 1-2-Q*) functioned as a Beneficiary. Again, the data seemed to validate Halliday’s (1994a, p. 159) and Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2004, p. 295) observation: the line between participants and circumstantial elements is sometimes an obscure one.

The pattern of Beneficiary and Goal accompanying *submit* was also exemplified in a passive case:

It should be submitted PD Accountant asap. (*text 3-3-A*)

Passive:

It	should be submitted	PD Accountant	asap.
<b>Goal</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

Active:

You	should submit	it	PD Accountant	asap.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

Beneficiaries and Goals were also found to follow other material processes:

...pls try your best to *supply us shore cranes* (text 4-10-Q)

[I] need your help to *share me the TCOC file* last month (text 3-26-M)

So, his company will *transfer us money* (text 4-1-A)

...he can not *support us this shipment* (text 4-1-A)

Please *help me this case*. (text 5-5-FF)

According to Egging (2004, p. 216), the Goal is a direct participant in a material clause. As a case in point, *your offer* was the direct participant in *Please send us your offer [...] (2-13-M)*. In this example, the Goal was the participant at which the process is directed. However, in *he can not support us this shipment (4-1-A)*, the participant at which the process *support* was directed was *us*, not *this shipment*. Therefore, while the two clauses *Please send us your offer [...] (2-13-M)* and *he can not support us this shipment (4-1-A)* were similar in form, they differed in terms of the functions of the participants. Whereas 2-3-M could be expressed in two ways:

Please send us your offer: Please send your offer to us (text 2-13-M)

4-1-A did not make sense when the participants reversed their positions:

he cannot support us this shipment: he cannot support this shipment to us (text 4-1-A)

A similar case was *Please help me this case (5-5-FF)*. Looking at the surface structure, we can see that it had the participant roles as follows:

Please	help	me	this case.
	<b>Process</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Goal</b>

(text 5-5-FF)

Nonetheless, when using the probe for the Goal “who/what is impacted by the performance of the process?” (Martin et al., 1997, p. 118), we can see the answer was *me*, not *this case*. Accordingly, *me* was not the Beneficiary (indirect participant), but the Goal (direct participant). If *me* acted as the Goal of *help*, then the seeming participant *this case* functioned as a circumstance, as it only participated peripherally in the clause. In that case, the clause could have been analysed as follows:

Please	help	me	(with) this case.
	<b>Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance: Matter</b>

(text 5-5-FF)

Also exhibiting a pattern of Beneficiary and Goal was the following instance, in which the Beneficiary became subject:

This list of student need to be *prepared* student card for the next semester - Spring 2011. (text 5-5-FF)

The analysis of the participants of the passive and active clauses of example 5-5-FF revealed a similar pattern to the patterns of *send*, *provide*, *submit*, *help*, *support*, etc. discussed above:

Passive:

This list of student[s]	need to be prepared	student card[s]	for the next semester – Spring 2011.
<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

Active:

You	need to prepare	this list of student[s]	student card[s]	for the next semester – Spring 2011.
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Beneficiary</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

Also having two participants, the following clauses, however, had no Beneficiaries:

Please *find* attached file the report. (*text 8-39-T*)

Please *find* attached file my report for the OPC in QQ hospital 103. (*text 8-43-T*)

While *the report* (8-39-T) and *my report* (8-43-T) acted as the Goal of the material process *find*, the participant *attached file* appeared to function as a circumstance of place, in the same way as the circumstance *attached* might have done. However, this participant (*attached file*) assumed the position of a Beneficiary (i.e., standing in front of the Goal, which made the two clauses resemble the structure of process + Beneficiary + Goal).

Up to this point, three types of participants in a material clause in the data have been presented: the Actor, the Goal and the Beneficiary. The fourth type is Range, the participant that expresses the scope of the process (Eggins, 2004, p. 217; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, 346). In the cases below, it was difficult to identify whether the participant following the process was a Goal or a Range:

I'm 27 years old and *graduated* a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City. (*text 3-5-W*)

I found out that your good company is suitable for me. So I *applied* it. (*text 4-4-J*)

Please *refer* the attached notice for your further reference. (*text 4-12-U*)

While the Goal can be probed by the question “What does x do to y?” (Martin et al., 1997, p. 104; Eggins, 2004, p. 217), this probe does not seem to work with the above examples: *What did the writer do with a Bachelor of Chemistry? He graduated it* (3-5-W), *What did the writer do with the company? He/she applied it* (4-4-J), or *What did the recipient do with the attached notice? He/she referred it* (4-12-U). As these probes and answers did not appear to make sense, the underlined participants were unlikely to be the Goals of the processes.

That leaves us with the related participant: Range. According to Martin et al. (1997, p. 104), while a Goal is impacted by the performance of the process (e.g., *She moved the chair into the corner*: The position of the chair is changed), a Range elaborates or

enhances the process (e.g., *He plays the piano*: The piano is not changed; it only specifies what he plays). In the light of this distinction, we can see that the underlined participants in the examples above functioned as Ranges, specifically *the Bachelor of Chemistry (3-5-W)*, *the company (4-4-J)* and *the attached notice (4-12-U)* were not affected by the performance of the processes. Instead, they represented the scope of the performance of *graduated*, *applied* and *refer*. As Martin et al (1997, p. 119) maintain, when a participant functions as a Range, it can often be preceded by a preposition to specify the nature of this scope. Therefore, the above clauses could have been reworded as:

I'm 27 years old and *graduated **with** a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University*, Ho Chi Minh City. (*text 3-5-W*)

I found out that your good company is suitable for me. So I *applied **for** it*. (*text 4-4-J*)

Please *refer **to** the attached notice* for your further reference. (*text 4-12-U*)

The omission of the prepositions, once again, shows that the line between participants and circumstances in the data was not a very clear one.

#### 4.1.2 Participants in verbal clauses

The participants in verbal clauses comprise the Sayer, the Receiver (the addressee) and the Verbiage<sup>10</sup> (the content of what is said) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 256). The following example illustrated a typical verbal clause in the data with the presence of all three participant roles:

I cannot leave// without bidding you all farewell. (*text 5-15-MMM*)

(I)	bid[ding]	you all	farewell.
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

(*text 5-15-MMM*)

In the data, several verbal processes employed this combination of the Receiver and Verbiage. The one that appeared the most frequently was *inform*:

<sup>10</sup> Sayer, Receiver and Verbiage are SFL terms that indicate the participants in verbal processes.

I will *inform* you any information from IH Hotel if I have (text 3-14-II)

...we would like to *inform* you the amendment of Terminal cut off time (text 4-5-K)

I will *inform* our plan to An Giang to ask them to make these surveys in An Giang, Kien Giang and Dong Thap first. (text 8-28-FF)

So, the Safety Committee meeting will be postponed to another time. Exactly time, Safety section will *inform* to all of you. (text 7-7-J)

Among the instances of *inform*, only one had a different pattern in which *inform* was followed by the circumstance of matter:

...you are cordially invited to the textbook transition and teaching workshop to be *informed* of the conversion to the new course book (text 9-31-U)

The active form of the process *inform* of this example could have been worded as below:

The textbook transition and teaching workshop	informs	you	of the conversion
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Circumstance: Matter</b>

(text 9-31-U)

Apart from this example, other instances of *inform* were accompanied by the Receiver and the Verbiage. For example:

I	will inform	you	any information from IH hotel
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

(text 3-14-II)

We	would like to inform	you	the amendment of Terminal cut off time
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

(text 4-5-K)

In a way that is similar to the alternation of the positions of the Goal and Beneficiary as discussed previously in material clauses, the participants in the verbal process

*inform* exhibited the same phenomenon, that is, the Receiver alternated its place with the Verbiage by standing in the final position:

I	will inform	our plan	to An Giang
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>	<b>Receiver</b>

(text 8-28-FF)

Exact time	Safety section	will inform	to all of you.
<b>Verbiage</b>	<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>

(text 7-7-J)

The pattern of Receiver and Verbiage following the verbal process *inform* were not only found in active instances, but also consistently identified in passive examples:

Please be *informed* the new timetable (text 5-26-A)

...pls keep us *informed* the dimensions, the weight (text 2-18-A)

Clause 5-26-A could be analysed as below:

Passive:

Please	(you)	be informed	the new timetable.
	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Process: verbal</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

Active:

I	would like to inform	you	the new timetable.
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

Clause 2-18-A could be rewritten as follows:

...pls keep us *informed* the dimensions, the weight: pls *inform* us the dimensions, the weight

Below is their transitivity analysis:

Pls	keep	us	informed	the dimensions, the weight
	<b>Process: causative</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

Pls	inform	us	the dimensions, the weight
	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>

This combination of Receiver and Verbiage was found to be transferable to other verbal processes:

Please *confirm* me the shipping schedule soon (text 2-19-A)

Please *confirm* us the dimensions, weight... of the cargo soon (text 2-22-A)

It is our deep grief to *announce* you the death of student II. (text 5-27-HH)

We have *recommended* to them carriers MK / CMA / UASC for the shipments from Germany (text 4-9-L)

We have *recommended* to them GSL / CC for the shipments from Thai Land (text 4-9-L)

Hence, please *advise* us the most appropriate offer. (text 2-10-A)

In all these verbal instances, the participants were realised by noun groups. However, some participants in verbal clauses comprised fact-nouns, which were embedded clauses functioning like a simple noun (Eggins, 2004, p. 228):

Please kindly check and *inform* if you could provide to us below items within 7 days: (text 2-3-A)

...please *inform* me and Dr. H whether it is ok. (text 8-17-N)

Please *advise* if the container will be shipped or delay one week. (text 6-11-U)

...pls *advise* if you could provide us discount for this one? (text 2-11-A)

In these examples, the fact-nouns acted as the Verbiage of the verbal processes *inform* and *advise*.

As with material processes, whether a verbal process was accompanied by a participant or a circumstance was sometimes inconsistent. The verbal process *discuss* is a typical example of this inconsistency. In some cases, *discuss* was followed by the Verbiage:

A meeting to *discuss* your class performance and teaching position has been scheduled at 15:00 on Tuesday, 7th, 2006. (text 9-32-U)

we would like to organize a conference call and invite all of you to join that conference to *discuss* and finalize these templates (text 8-7-P)

We plan to bring several district OPCs to the provincial OPC and PAC in Thai Binh to *discuss* QI activities they will do after this ongoing course. (text 8-2-C)

However, this verbal process was also often accompanied by circumstance of matter, signalled by the preposition *about*:

We have two meetings to *discuss* about Module 3 training in Can Tho (text 8-24-FF)

Then we will *discuss* about the backlash data and the solution as well. (text 8-35-KK)

I have *discussed* with Dr. H about this trip (text 8-17-N)

In one case, the circumstance of matter following *discuss* was expressed by the preposition *on*:

...further more we can *discuss* on our Partnership agreement (text 3-31-D)

Similar to *discuss*, the verbal process *ask* was also found to be followed by either a Verbiage (3-10-D, 7-9-A, 2-29-R) or a circumstance of cause (9-11-A):

We will work it out then will *ask* help from you for Haithai supports in details. (text 3-10-D)

Now we will co-operate with Purchasing to *ask* the procedure and document that are necessary to sent these spare parts to you. (text 7-9-A)

Ask price for material (text 2-29-R)

This letter is to *ask* for a plausible explanation of your not coming to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1 (text 9-11-A)

In one case, the verbal process *say* was followed by a Verbiage:

A staff of the agency checked and *said* apology to me (text 8-13-C)

#### 4.1.3 Participants in mental clauses

Participants in mental clauses are the Senser and the Phenomenon (Eggins, 2004, p. 227). Typical examples of these participants in the data are:

If	you	would like	lower price...
	<b>Senser</b>	<b>Process: mental</b>	<b>Phenomenon</b>

(text 6-9-U)

We	need	packing size of 1 liter/can.
<b>Senser</b>	<b>Process: mental</b>	<b>Phenomenon</b>

(text 2-6-A)

Like verbal clauses, the Phenomenon in mental clauses in the data could be a fact-noun:

Please let me *know* if you have any comments and questions. (text 8-2-C)

*Regret* we are unable to assist with balance listed. (text 2-28-A)

We will have more coming this week, to *see* if any of them can match. (Text 3-35-U)

While most mental processes were followed by one participant – the Phenomenon, the mental process *wish* was found to be accompanied by two participants: the Receiver and the Phenomenon:

I *wish* each and every one of you the very best in all your future endeavors (text 5-15-MMM)

*Wish* you all the best in your life (text 8-1-B)

[We] wish you good luck in your teaching career. (*text 9-28-U*)

#### 4.1.4 Participants in relational clauses

Participants in attributive relational clauses are called the Carrier and the Attribute (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 205; Martin et al., 1997, p. 106). Examples of the Carrier and the Attribute in the data are:

M	is	very busy
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: attributive</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

(*text 3-6-X*)

Your attendance	is	compulsory
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: attributive</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

(*text 9-29-U*)

The Attributes were not only realised by adjectives, but also nouns:

We	have	another key person	in the North.
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: attributive</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

(*text 3-12-N*)

...if	you	have	any comments or questions.
	<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: attributive</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

(*text 8-2-C*)

While the Attributes in attributive relational clauses serve to classify the Carriers, the Values in identifying relational clauses define the Tokens:

...the last day for registration	is	Jul.15.
<b>Token</b>	<b>Process: identifying</b>	<b>Value</b>

(*text 9-8-E*)

Whereas the participants in an attributive clause are not reversible (e.g., we cannot say “Very busy is M” for text 3-6-X), the participants in an identifying clause are reversible (Eggs, 2004, p. 242). For example:

Jul. 15	is	the last day for registration
<b>Token</b>	<b>Process: identifying</b>	<b>Value</b>

(text 9-8-E)

The Values in the identifying clauses in the data were often found to identify the location of the Tokens:

Attached is the invitation to the workshops (text 9-4-D)

Following is some information (text 9-23-E)

...hereafter is his reply (text 8-9-Q)

#### 4.1.5 Participants in behavioural clauses

Participants in behavioural clauses are named the Behaver and Behaviour (Eggins, 2004, p. 233). Below is an example:

Let's join the event to compete to get great prizes with the Music Quiz and most interestingly to have a great time *singing* Karaoke with friends and colleagues. (text 9-2-C)

[We]	sing	Karaoke
<b>Behaver</b>	<b>Process: behavioural</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>

(text 9-2-C)

As behavioural processes were rarely used in the data (see section 4.2), in this study few examples of the Behaver and Behaviour were identified. The examples below were among those few instances:

Please take a look at the file attached (text 8-10-Y)

So, could you please take a look at my schedule (text 8-17-N)

As Martin et al. (1997, p. 128) point out, sometimes it is difficult to interpret whether a structure is process + participant or process + circumstance. Example 8-10-Y and 8-17-N were such cases. One coder interpreted them as:

Please	take a look at	the file attached
	<b>Process: Behavioural</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>

(text 8-10-Y)

So	could	you	please	take a look at	my schedule?
		<b>Behaver</b>		<b>Process: Behavioural</b>	<b>Behaviour</b>

(text 8-17-N)

However, the other two coders interpreted these instances as:

Please	take a look	at the file attached
	<b>Process: Behavioural</b>	<b>Circumstance: Place</b>

(text 8-10-Y)

So	could	you	please	take a look	at my schedule?
		<b>Behaver</b>		<b>Process: Behavioural</b>	<b>Circumstance: Place</b>

(text 8-17-N)

However, as indicated previously, these instances were few and far between.

#### 4.1.6 Participants in existential clauses

Existential clauses have only one participant, the Existent (Martin et al., 1997, p. 109; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 256). For instance:

There	certainly	are	some technical problems	concerning the use of PP slides...
	<b>Circumstance</b>	<b>Process: Existential</b>	<b>Existent</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

(text 9-7-E)

There	is	a workshop	on the topic "Teaching EFL to low level learners"...
	<b>Process: Existential</b>	<b>Existent</b>	<b>Circumstance</b>

(text 9-19-E)

In some instances, while the existential process was plural, the existent was in singular:

There *are* misspelling on some slides (text 8-11-AA)

There *are* a lot of change in personnel these years at OPCs (*text 8-24-FF*)

With regard to realisation, while participants are typically realised by noun groups (except some Attributes in attributive clauses) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 177), the data showed that some participants were expressed by verb groups:

...she is absolutely willing to give a coordinate for checking policy No. 2 at the 1st floor. Please send her the time you need a support. She then shall respond & sort it out. (*text 5-6-W*)

I am doing TCOC practise now and need your help to share me the TCOC file last month (*text 3-26-M*)

This marked realisation can also be identified with the noun groups in other positions:

Thanks for your advise. (*text 7-25-CCC*)

Thank you for your kind confirm! We will let you know status soon. (*text 2-7-A*)

Tks for yr supported (*text 2-26-P*)

In addition, some clauses had two participants of the same identity performing the function of the subject:

As schedule, the Safety Committee meeting on 31 Mar., 2011, It will be coincided with working time of ISO core team. (*text 7-7-J*)

As you know, we – TPFS Co., Ltd – as representative of FL in Vietnam and we have also supplied FL rupture disc for [Company 7] before as the attached. (*text 7-32-GG*)

This phenomenon of double participants was also identified in the complement:

...total cargo already stuffed till morning at SPCT port 500mt (20fcls) but no stuffing today as the port has no supply the cranes for lifting the cargo from Barges to containers. (*text 4-10-Q*)

However, there were not many instances of double participants identified.

## 4.2 Processes

The second variable to identify the lexico-grammatical features of the data was processes, which were coded to consist of six types: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural and existential. Among these, material processes were the most frequently used, accounting for nearly 50% of the processes occurring in the data. Existential processes, by contrast, were the least used, constituting only about 1%. Table 20 provides an overview of the distribution of processes in the data.

**Table 20 - Distribution of processes**

Processes		Frequency	Percentage
Material		969	49.8%
Mental		284	14.6%
Relational	Relational (attributive)	202	10.4%
	Relational (identifying)	137	7%
Verbal		192	9.9%
Behavioural		143	7.4%
Existential		18	0.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1945</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 4.2.1 Material processes

From Table 20, it is apparent that material processes were strongly represented, comprising nearly half of the total processes. This strong favour of material processes indicates that the texts were primarily about construing the material business world, focusing on actions rather than classification/description of static phenomena and description of symbolic activities (i.e., perception, cognition, affection and saying). Below are typical examples of material processes employed in the data:

We already sent out the PILAX 130 in the sample box. (*text 3-13-D*)

...it [the file] should be submitted PD Accountant asap. (*text 3-3-A*)

In the south you will visit HCM PAC and OPCs on Feb 14. (*text 8-2-C*)

... we can use it as a legal document... (*text 8-8-Q*)

Please buy tickets at your campus. (*text 9-2-C*)

In several cases, material processes in passive voice were found to be formed as follows:

Please kindly be confirmed that the ISO Document Deployment Meeting periodically on April 22, 2011 will be cancel (*text 7-38-II*)

I simply won't be satisfy of just doing the job, I have to do it well and better than the person before me did it. (*text 5-29-III*)

Please advise me which earliest [Company 3] shipment can be add the below available items in (*text 3-40-P*)

Please kindly be informed that our shipment will be arrive HCM port on 16 Jan., 2010. (*text 7-23-C*)

In addition, some material processes were written consecutively:

For invoice, please remember fill the date before date of AWB. (*text 7-33-C*)

...pls try revert soonest for revert update to our area trade office (*text 4-6-U*)

Please help print it again. (*text 5-23-C*)

#### 4.2.2 Mental processes

The next largest group in this study was mental processes, verbs that describe cognition, perception and affection (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) (accounting for about 15%). In this group, as identified by the three coders, *thank* and *appreciate* were the most common mental processes, constituting approximately 33% (about 30% *thank* and 3% *appreciate*) of the mental processes. If we compare the frequency of *thank* and *appreciate* (about 90) to the number to texts (303), we can see that these processes were used in nearly one third of the texts. Below are some examples:

Thank you for your attention. (*text 9-21-E*)

Thank you for your time and consideration. (*text 4-4-J*)

Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated. (*text 9-10-E*)

We highly appreciate your participation on that conference (*text 8-7-P*)

Some texts used as many as three mental processes to express appreciation as seen in text 8-1-B below:

Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me. (*text 8-1-B*)

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. (*text 8-1-B*)

... thank you and goodbye. (*text 8-1-B*)

Some texts employed the mental process *thank* at both the beginning and the end. For example:

Thank you very much for your time and your warm welcome and enthusiasm this afternoon. I am very happy to see the facilities here which are of international standard. I do wish to work full time because in so doing, I can work part time for HU university and VU.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you vey<sup>11</sup> much. (*text 5-12-XX*)

This mental process was frequently found with the circumstances of cause to indicate the reason for the gratitude. Table 21 provides an illustration of *thank* used with circumstances of cause.

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<sup>11</sup> All typographical errors were presented as they appeared in the texts to ensure the authenticity of the quotes.

**Table 21 - Mental process *thank* with circumstances of cause**

<b>Examples of <i>thank</i> with circumstances of cause</b>	<b>Texts</b>
Thank you very much <i>for your attention and interest.</i>	9-10-E, 9-17-E
Thank you <i>for your support</i>	8-3-C
Thank you <i>for the support and co-operation</i>	8-1-B
Thank you <i>for your kind confirm</i>	1-9-B
Thank you very much <i>for your kindness</i>	3-38-D
Thank you <i>for your contribution</i>	5-17-TTT

*Thank* was also used with the circumstance of manner *very much* or *so much* to intensify the gratitude (e.g., texts 8-1-B, 8-17-N, 8-21-N, 8-23-N, 8-84-N, 3-11-M, 3-34-D, 3-38-D, 9-7-E, 9-10-E, 9-12-E and 9-16-E). Likewise, *appreciate* was intensified by the circumstance of manner *highly* (e.g., texts 9-10-E, 8-7-P and 8-23-N). Apart from *highly*, in one instance *appreciate* was modified by the intensifier *very*, i.e., *Very appreciate that* (text 1-7-T)

Other mental processes used in the data were distributed as shown in Table 22 below.

**Table 22 - Other mental processes**

<b>Mental process</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
know	47	23.9%
need	43	21.8%
hope	22	11.2%
think	16	8.1%
wish	7	3.6%
note	5	2.5%
Other (e.g., consider, trust, hear, encourage, miss, believe, see and forgive)	57	28.9%

As can be seen in Table 22, *know* was the second commonly used mental process, after *thank*, constituting nearly one fifth of all mental processes. It often occurred in

the phrase *let me know* together with the interpersonal theme *please* to express writers' willingness to learn about customers'/recipients' difficulties, concerns and interests:

Please let me know if anything need to change (*text 3-33-D*)

Please let me know if you have any comments and questions. (*text 8-2-C*)

If you need help with hotel booking let K know (*text 8-18-DD*)

*Know* in *let me know* was also used to request information from the recipients:

So when you submit the application, please let me know (*text 8-33-K*)

Please discuss and let me know the way to solve (*text 8-40-S*)

To make soon and easily the surveys to know about the need of Module training ... (*text 8-25-FF*)

*Know* was also employed to communicate information to recipients:

I'm pleased to let you know (*text 3-12-N*)

Just a quick note to let you know (*text 9-25-E*)

In addition, this mental process was employed to convey shared knowledge between writer and recipient(s):

I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :) (*text 8-1-B*)

Or to refer to recipients' prior knowledge to explain a proposal/ proposition:

As you know we are expanding QI implementation in many different OPCs and integrating QI/ TA. One of things we need to do is making standardized reports...(*text 8-7-P*)

As you may know I am leaving our [Company 8] family. (*text 8-4-C*)

As you know, We - DD, V and I - will go to Mekong Delta provinces next week. Can we hire a car for this trip? (*text 8-57-K*)

Apart from these uses, *know* was used to express writers' knowledge/awareness of a matter:

I'm pleased to know that your company is now recruiting new staff (*text 3-5-W*)

I know that the deadline for submitting is yesterday (*text 8-12-T*)

As far as I know about the presenter, Prof. Z – an expert teacher trainer, audience will be provided with a handful of tips (*text 9-13-E*)

Other mental processes, namely *think*, *need* and *believe* which were used to project opinions, will be discussed in depth in the metaphorical realisations of subjective modality (see section 4.11).

#### 4.2.3 Relational processes

Another major group of processes identified by the coders was relational processes, constituting about 17% of the sample (approximately 7% relational identifying and 10% relational attributive). Some examples of relational identifying processes were:

Today is my last working day. (*text 8-1-B*)

that is the reason why I am a potential candidate for Sales Executive position in your good company (*text 4-4-J*)

While relational identifying processes define the identity of the subject, relational attributive processes describe or classify the quality of the subject. Below are some instances identified by the coders:

I am kind of busy during that time (*text 3-32-D*)

If you are interested in any workshop listed, please feel free to let me know (*text 9-9-E*)

Many attributive clauses constituted explicitly objective modality to distance the writers from the proposal/proposition:

It is excellent to have pictures for each condition (*text 8-11-AA*)

... as it is too difficult to describe the skin lesion/diseases by words. (*text 8-11-AA*)

This will be discussed in depth in section 4.11. In some instances, relational processes were used in double forms:

Yesterday is was still holiday in [Company 7]. (*text 7-9-A*)

Safety contest was be moved on that day. (*text 7-38-II*)

#### 4.2.4 Verbal processes

An important function of a verbal process is to project (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 65). This function was commonly found in the data:

I am sorry to inform you that I could not come to Phu Quoc island to attend our retreat on time. (*text 8-13-C*)

Please be informed that the company will organize medical check-up for all Vietnamese employees. (*text 6-17-U*)

Please confirm our understanding is correct. (*text 6-14-U*)

In the clauses below, *call* and *ask* were also used to project:

zim/gsl VEC(car liner service) is having an inquiry to call our VEC ship carry 400 cars from Israel to HCM. (*text 4-6-U*)

I'd ask you confirm your attendance at the earliest opportunity (*text 5-28-RR*)

More in-depth discussions of verbal projection will be presented in section 4.5. A related analysis of verbal processes has also been provided in section 4.1.2.

#### 4.2.5 Behavioural processes

Behavioural processes accounted for about 7% of the processes. Some examples are:

Please view the attachment for details of SH [Hotel] Reconciliation (*text 3-29-M*)

I've talked with the guy processing our application (*text 8-9-Q*)

Please have a look and give me your comments. (*text 8-6-O*)

More discussions can be found in section 4.1.5.

#### 4.2.6 Existential processes

As analysed by the coders, existential processes only accounted for a small number of instances (less than 1%). Below are some examples coded by the observers:

there still have different ideas in these template (*text 8-7-P*)

There're re samples were made incorrectly with distressed, unglazed.., (*text 6-20-U*)

With regard to realisations, while some verb groups were employed as participants (see section 4.1), some noun groups were identified to perform a process function:

DNV will introduction their service in certification activity (*text 7-40-O*)

Plz advice on this matter. (*text 8-65-K*)

I will leave for HCM on early Monday, April 4th. and flight back Hanoi on Saturday April 9th. (*text 8-21-N*)

We are sorry but pls kindly error this mail below. (*text 6-27-U*)

With respect to subject-finite concordance, while Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) state that the subject “is assigned the finite responsibility” (p. 182), the data showed that this was not always the case, with singular subjects sometimes aligning with plural finites:

My back have improved after using Mydocalm and Diclofenac (*text 8-40-S*)

In this case, it make no sense if we revise the quote with increasing too much at the beginning. (*text 6-7-U*)

This list of student need to be prepared student card for the next semester - Spring 2011. (*text 5-5-FF*)

Pls wait for a while as our supplier need to finish some additional packing. (*text 2-23-A*)

### 4.3 Circumstances

Aside from participants (section 4.1) and processes (section 4.2), *Circumstances* is the third element that helps construe representational meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 261; Martin, 2009, p. 159). According to Martin and Rose (2007, p. 95), circumstances can be divided into two subcategories: outer circumstances (those that do not participate in the activity) and inner circumstances (those that involve people and things in the activity). In the current study, and as shown in Table 23, outer circumstances outnumbered inner circumstances by almost two to one (65%: 35%).

**Table 23 - Distribution of circumstances**

Circumstances		Examples	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Outer Circumstances</b>	location: place	in Thailand (7-32-GG)	330	22.8%
	location: time	within today (7-31-C)	312	21.6%
	cause	for future shipment (4-1-A)	283	19.6%
<b>Inner Circumstances</b>	manner	highly (8-7-P)	293	20.3%
	matter	regarding the NEF course outlines (9-23-E)	101	7%
	accompaniment	with all of you (8-1-B)	52	3.6%
	role	as representative of FL in Vietnam (7-32-GG)	26	1.8%
	extent	since last Friday (3-37-M)	18	1.3%
	contingency	regardless of our warning (9-28-U)	15	1.1%
	angle	According to your photo (6-28-U)	13	0.9%
<b>Total</b>			<b>1445</b>	<b>100%</b>

As seen in Table 23, the number of instances of location circumstances was high, constituting nearly 45% of the total number of occurrences. This percentage indicates that a significant number of circumstances focused on specifying the time and places

of the activities. This dominance of location circumstances aligned with the high use of material processes to represent business activities, as presented in the preceding section (see section 4.2).

**4.3.1 Temporal circumstances**

Temporal circumstances enabled the writer to unfold the construed experience in time:

I am doing TCOC practise now and need your help to share me the TCOC file last month you made for IH [HOTEL] BKK and presented it during the Advance Training Workshop in BKK (Group A) for my learning and reference. (*text 3-26-M*)

We can start the equipment installation earlier but I am kind of busy during that time in training, if you agree I will send our technician team to start on the 3 Nov and I myself will catch up later at end of week and we can start our classroom training as planned from 8-11 Nov 08. (*text 3-32-D*)

A close examination of temporal circumstances identified by the coders revealed the distribution shown in Table 24.

**Table 24 - Distribution of temporal circumstances**

Circumstances		Examples	Freq.	Percentage
<b>Location: Time</b>	<b>Absolute</b>	in 2008 ( <i>3-12-N</i> ) from 8-11 Nov 08 ( <i>3-32-D</i> ) by January 7, 2011 ( <i>8-41-S</i> ) by Friday 15 April, 2011 ( <i>text 9-6-E</i> )	111	35.5%
	<b>Relative</b>	now ( <i>3-5-W</i> ) tomorrow ( <i>3-10-D</i> ) on that day ( <i>3-20-D</i> ) soon ( <i>8-8-Q</i> ) from 5th Mar – 6th Mar ( <i>3-16-KK</i> )	201	64.5%

Table 24 shows that relative temporal circumstances were selected much more frequently than absolute temporal circumstances. As can be seen from the examples in Table 24, while absolute temporal circumstances specified the definite time that was identifiable regardless of the situational context, relative temporal circumstances could be either definite (e.g., *tomorrow*) or indefinite (e.g., *soon*) and may only be identifiable from the immediate context. The high use of relative temporal circumstances in the data indicates the interactants' reliance on the shared context of situation:

I can come there at the earliest tomorrow noon-afternoon. (*text 8-13-C*)

I plan to go to HCMC early next month in order to visit Peds 1 and 2 hospitals. (*text 8-21-N*)

I think that we should send them official letters and the form to collect information next week. (*text 8-25-FF*)

The temporal locations in these instances were not static. As Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, 2013) state, they come and go. Therefore, like exophoric reference (see section 4.7), their identity may only be retrievable by the writer and recipient at the time the text was written, unless outsiders have access to the time-date details on the text.

Absolute temporal circumstances, on the other hand, specified a clear temporal location that can be identified irrespective of the context of situation:

...we can start our classroom training as planned from 8-11 Nov 08. (*text 3-32-D*)

To help you plan your holidays for the 3rd fiscal year, from October 1, 2010 to September 30, 2011, here is some information on our national holidays. (*text 8-22-K*)

Notably, 15.2% of the relative temporal circumstances were temporal expressions that contained *soon*, some of which expressed a sense of urgency of the requests:

If there was not any adjustment, it should be submitted PD Accountant asap.  
(text 3-3-A)

...please let me know as soon as possible (text 8-10-Y)

Can you help me to make a letter for both Can Tho and An Giang the sooner the better (text 8-29-FF)

Relative temporal circumstance *soon* was also used to enhance the writer's eagerness to perform an action:

About the rental program from HOBART, I try to push them for the rental program and will keep you informed the soonest. (text 3-32-D)

Please keep us aware of any problems you have had so that prompt actions will be taken to make sure that things will go on smoothly as soon as possible. (text 9-7-E)

It would help us send you the offer at the soonest. (text 7-32-GG)

The writer's readiness to perform an action was also expressed by other relative temporal circumstances:

...the guaranteed letter of payment will be sent shortly for your consideration.  
(text 4-11-R)

Our staff will contact you within today. (text 7-31-C)

I will work about this with my manager and will let you know in very short times (text 1-10-H)

In terms of constituency, temporal circumstances were realised most frequently by adverbial groups (32% of temporal circumstances, e.g., *soon*, *early*, *shortly*, and *already*) and prepositional phrases (48% of temporal circumstances, e.g., *on tomorrow*, *on that day*, *within today*, *within this afternoon*, *in 2008*). While Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) observe that "under certain conditions a temporal preposition may be left out, as in *let's meet next Wednesday, they left last week*" (p. 265), the preposition *on* tended to be used in the data with days, regardless of modifiers *next* or *this*:

We will have a big event on next Sunday (*text 1-8-T*)

Please advise if you would like to send IVY first, then the rest samples on next Tuesday OR send them together on next Tuesday. (*text 6-10-U*)

Since I'll be leaving for Hongkong on this Sunday, [...] please help to contact RC directly (*text 6-21-U*)

In some instances, *on* was used with *tomorrow*:

This shipment will arrive to our factory on tomorrow. (*text 7-21-C*)

I would like to confirm with you for the meeting with the Certification Body DNV at around 9:30 – 10:00 AM on tomorrow... (*text 7-40-O*)

*On* was also identified in other cases:

I will move the TA day on May for Binh Duong. (*text 8-54-S*)

Deliver term: CIF Augsburg Germany (planning to send on beginning of 2010). (*text 7-24-C*)

While most temporal expressions were realised by prepositional phrases and adverbial groups, some noun groups, foregrounded as marked themes (see section 4.4) were used as temporal circumstances:

December 2, 2010 January 3, 2011 [Company 4] will increase rates for all cargos (*text 4-7-U*)

Exactly time, Safety section will inform to all of you. (*text 7-7-J*)

In the following examples, the noun group *today morning* was used rather than *this morning*. With regard to form, it was constructed in the same way as *tomorrow morning*:

Thus pls offer for this today morning (*text 4-3-U*)

Particularly as mentioned today morning we are going to open Dong Nai port (*text 4-14-B*)

### 4.3.2 Spatial circumstances

Spatial circumstances, which allowed the writer to construe experience in space, accounted for 22.8% of circumstances and their distribution is shown in Table 25.

**Table 25 - Distribution of spatial circumstances**

Spatial circumstances		Examples	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Location: Space</b>	<b>Absolute</b>	in Thai Binh (8-2-C) in Ho Chi Minh (9-4-D) to Danang (3-20-D)	91	27.6%
	<b>Relative</b>	from my CV (3-5-W) at the club (9-3-C) somewhere (8-30-T)	239	72.4%

As with temporal circumstances, relative spatial circumstances were selected much more often than absolute spatial circumstances, indicating the communicators' dependence on the situational context:

As per below email, this student was passed away. But I find his name in the new registered list. (text 5-5-FF)

Just noted that there're some thing woring in the schedule. (text 3-16-K)

It was likely that only the writer and recipient (and probably those involved in the immediate context) could retrieve the identity of *in the new registered list* and *in the schedule*. Readers who do not share the context are unlikely to be able to decode these relative spatial circumstances.

In particular, relative spatial circumstances were often combined with exophoric reference (italicised; see section 4.7 for more discussion) to express shared knowledge of the immediate context of situation:

...please send the offer from your end. (text 3-9-D)

I will leave it at my desk in the office today (text 3-37-M)

Should HPV be mentioned in this lecture? (text 8-11-AA)

In addition to the incorporation of exophoric reference, the sense of shared context was also conveyed by the use of abbreviations in some spatial circumstances. These abbreviations may only be decoded by participants in the relevant field:

...he can not support us this shipment at SPCT (text 4-1-A)

We plan to bring several district OPCs to the provincial OPC and PAC (text 8-2-C)

There are a lot of change in personnel these years at OPCs. (text 8-24-FF)

Furthermore, it is worth noting that 15.5% of the relative spatial circumstances (comprising 15% of all texts) were expressions that referred to the attachments that had been delivered with the email (see more discussion in section 4.4):

Please find attached the chemical guarantee cost August 2009. (text 3-17-NN)

Attached please find the survey results of February. (text 9-1-A)

Please see the sheet 2 in the attached excel file to have a picture on the database status of the courses ... (text 8-35-KK)

Relative circumstances of place sometimes functioned as a means for the writer to employ what Bhatia describes as an ‘adversary glorification strategy’ (1993, p. 70):

...we plan to send our first cruise ship [...] to your good port (text 4-11-A)

...that is the reason why I am a potential candidate for Sales Executive position in your good company (text 4-4-J)

This adversary glorification strategy was not only identified in spatial circumstances, but also in other positions:

...found out that your good company is suitable for me. (text 4-4-J)

(I) will contribute a remarkable part in a success of your good company. (text 4-4-J)

In addition to the dominance of relative spatial circumstances, absolute spatial circumstances comprised nearly one third of spatial circumstances and could be identified from the general context of culture:

...we are planning to have a QI training course run by Dr D and Dr E in HCM (*text 8-3-C*)

I hope to continue to collaborate with you in improving HIV/AIDS care and treatment in Vietnam. (*text 8-4-C*)

I must fly to Da Nang with a Tho on that day (*text 3-20-D*)

The identity of these absolute spatial circumstances could be easily retrieved by people other than the interactants in this email exchange, particularly by Vietnamese people. However, as seen in Table 25, these absolute spatial circumstances were not frequently selected by the writers, reflecting the lack of need to refer to the general context of culture.

With regard to their form, some absolute spatial circumstances were realised by noun groups, not the typical adverbial groups or prepositional phrases, as seen below:

Then I have had to come back Hanoi (*text 8-13-C*)

I will leave for HCM on early Monday, April 4th. and flight back Hanoi on Saturday April 9th. (*text 8-21-N*)

...our shipment will be arrive HCM port on 16 Jan., 2010. (*text 7-23-C*)

In examples 8-13-C and 8-21-N, it is unclear whether *back* was used to modify the motion processes *come/flight (fly)* or the circumstance *Hanoi*. However, this ambiguity was non-existent in 7-23-C where *HCM port* stood on its own as a spatial circumstance to specify the destination of the shipment in question.

#### 4.3.3 Circumstances of cause

Table 23 above shows that the last type of outer circumstances was circumstances of cause, comprising nearly one fifth of the total. This group included three categories: purpose, reason and behalf and were distributed as presented in Table 26.

**Table 26 - Distribution of causal circumstances**

<b>Circumstances of cause</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Purpose	183	66.4%
Reason	89	32.6%
Behalf	11	1.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100%</b>

As seen in Table 26, circumstances of purpose outnumbered circumstances of reason two to one, revealing the tendency to express the intention behind an action rather than explicating the existing conditions that led to the actualisation of the action:

...we will either ship a replacement to you or will document this for the reconciliation computation in the future. (text 3-4-N)

Attached file is a presentation on TA I prepare for the retreat. (text 8-12-T)

5% of circumstances of purpose conveyed the writer's intention of providing the recipient with information, which was expressed by the prepositional phrase *for your information* (FYI):

Please find attached FYI. (text 3-30-D)

Please read the forwarded email below FYI. (text 9-26-E)

For your inf, PCA produces 100% of the light weight items for [customer name] for this season. (text 6-6-U)

*For your information* was sometimes used as a strategy to provide the recipient with unsolicited information about the writer's product/company. For example:

For your information, We - FLS- have been known globally as professional project logistic provider. (text 4-8-M)

This strategy could also be identified with circumstances of reason:

Thanks to your concern, we would like to introduce our highly recommended products (text 3-8-Y)

Other circumstances of reason that “represent the reason for which a process takes place” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 269) included:

I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :) (*text 8-1-B*)

Please forgive me for my late. (*text 8-13-C*)

I am moving away to a new living place due to personal reasons. (*text 5-15-  
MMM*)

With regard to form, while most circumstances of cause (both reason and purposes) were signalled by the preposition *for* (89%), some were expressed by the preposition *to*:

Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (*text 3-7-D*)

We will have a letter with L's signature to VAAC on Monday with your and E passports and CVs and tentative schedule for VAAC to support coordination to the PACs and sites. (*text 8-2-C*)

Apart from circumstance of purpose and reason, the third group of causal circumstances comprised circumstances of behalf (1.8%), representing the people “for whose sake the action is undertaken” (Halliday, 1994a, p. 155):

KK oi, Could you please book the air ticket for me: (*text 8-21-N*)

Working facilities have been provided for Mr. IIII (*text 5-20-HHHH*)

On behalf of [Company 5], we wish you all the best in the new year. (*text 5-  
14-RR*)

#### 4.3.4 Circumstances of manner

As presented in Table 23 above, the largest type of inner circumstances identified in the data was circumstances of manner, making up 20.3% of circumstances. Table 27 illustrates their distribution in the data.

**Table 27 - Distribution of manner circumstances**

<b>Circumstances of manner</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Quality	230	78.5%
Means	39	13.3%
Comparison	24	8.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>100%</b>

The first subcategory was circumstances of quality, which characterised the process by answering the question “*how...?*” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 268). This group, accounting for the majority of manner circumstances, included intensifiers, downtoners and other adverbial groups.

Intensifiers, according to Martin and Rose (2007, p. 42), are a resource for amplifying the force of attitudes. Intensifiers constituted nearly half of circumstances of quality and were distributed as seen in Table 28.

These intensifiers expressed the writer’s evaluation or judgement:

We would like to thank you very much for your supports and trust in [COMPANY 3] products and services which absolutely will help your Kitchen Operations achieve challenges in hygiene, sanitation and food safety issues. (*text 3-8-Y*)

With 2 CAEs taking care of our business growth, we definitely expect to achieve our challenging targets in 2008... (*text 3-12-N*)

We are sorry that we cannot offer any reduction on the price. The sizes of these 2 items are very big and the rejection is very high. (*text 6-9-U*)

**Table 28 - Distribution of intensifiers**

<b>Circumstances of manner: intensifiers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
very much	34	34%
(very) well	13	13.2%
(very) highly	8	7.9%
best/better	8	7.9%
very	8	7.9%
most	5	5.6%
strongly	5	5.2%
certainly	5	5.2%
greatly	5	5.2%
excellently	3	2.6%
absolutely	3	2.6%
definitely	3	2.6%
really	3	2.6%
a lot	3	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>100%</b>

While circumstances generally enact representational meanings, intensifiers carry not only representational meanings but also interpersonal meanings, as they are concerned with negotiating attitudes (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 25). In the examples above, the force of attitudes was amplified to a high degree, expressing how strongly the writers felt about the subjects in question. In examples 3-8-*Y* and 3-12-*N*, the intensifiers *absolutely* and *definitely* enabled the writers to convey a sense of certainty of their propositions. In example 6-9-*U*, the intensifier *very* provided the writer with a resource to explain their rejection of the recipient’s earlier proposal.

Intensifiers were also used to enhance the necessity for the recipient to comply with a command:

Your prompt reply is highly appreciated. (*text 6-11-U*)

Your ideas and comments will be very highly appreciated. (*text 8-23-N*)

Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated. (*text 9-10-E*)

Your help to set-up training room with LCD, flipchart, makers and attending list for signing is greatly appreciated. (*text 3-11-M*)

In these instances, the recipients were indirectly requested to perform actions, such as to reply (*6-11-U*), to give ideas and comments (*8-23-N*), to participate in the workshop (*9-10-E*) and to help set up the training room (*3-11-M*). The intensifiers (*very*) *highly*, *certainly*, and *greatly* amplified the degree of obligation of these commands.

Intensifiers were also found to appear in elliptical clauses to enhance the writers' appreciation or expectation:

Very appreciate that. (*text 1-7-T*)

Very much looking forward to your kind confirmation on new shipdate. (*text 6-19-U*)

Unlike the high use of intensifiers, downtoners accounted for only 6% of manner circumstances of quality.

We can start the equipment installation earlier but I am kind of busy during that time in training (*text 3-32-D*)

I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development. (*text 3-5-W*)

Just a quick note to let you know that I appreciate all your efforts... (*text 9-25-E*)

The second subcategory was circumstance of means, constituting about 13% of manner circumstances. These concern "the means whereby a process takes place" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 267) and answer the question "How?" or "What with?":

...please feel free to let me know via either email (E@[Company 9].edu.vn) or phone text message (0907 55 55 96). (*text 9-9-E*)

It is excellent to have pictures for each condition as it is too difficult to describe the skin lesion/diseases by words. (text 8-11-AA)

I and Dr. M have talked about providing a form guiding physicians at sites how to present a case for consultation via telephone. (text 8-23-N)

In the following instance, the circumstance of means resembled a circumstance of cause:

Please complete your quarter reports on TA due to attached forms (text 8-41-S)

Despite the surface resemblance because of *due to*, a close examination of the meaning reveals that *due to attached forms* was not a circumstance of cause, but a circumstance of manner: the recipient was required to complete the quarter report using the attached forms.

The third subcategory of manner circumstances was circumstances of comparison, which accounted for approximately 8% of the total:

We have two meetings to discuss about Module 3 training in Can Tho (Dr GG) and An Giang (Dr HH) as our wishes... (text 8-24-FF)

Please be informed that in addition to the tentative schedule below which I also sent you previously... (text 8-3-C)

For sake of office management, you are urged / requested to do the same as mine. (text 3-36-N)

#### 4.3.5 Circumstances of matter

Table 23 shows that the second largest group of inner circumstances was circumstances of matter (7%). While Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 276) observe that matter is typically expressed by prepositions such as *about*, *concerning*, and *with reference to*, the data revealed that only 27% of matter circumstances were introduced by *about* or *regarding*:

Please find in the attachment some tips for TESOL re "Keeping your class in order". (text 9-15-E)

To make soon and easily the surveys to know about the need of Module training in Mekong Delta provinces I think that we should send them official letters and the form (*text 8-25-FF*)

Instead the majority of matter circumstances were expressed by the preposition *on* (45%):

We will also meet with Dr II, Hanoi PAC and Dong Da OPC on their QI projects. (*text 8-2-C*)

PACCOM needs to get feedback from relevant authorities such as Ministry of Health, our partners etc on our operation in Vietnam during the past few years. (*text 8-9-Q*)

Plz advice on this matter. (*text 8-65-KK*)

12% were expressed by the preposition *with*:

With Can Tho we have to wait till 31 Mar (*text 8-28-F*)

Please be informed that we're organizing this month's Teachers' Club with the topic "Can You Name This Tune?". (*text 9-2-C*)

14% of circumstances of matter were given prominence by being construed as marked theme (see more discussion in section 4.4)

About the rental program from HOBART, I try to push them for the rental program... (*text 3-32-D*)

For the 2009 Food Safety Audit, may I suggest that we can conduct on 8th July 09? (*text 3-34-D*)

#### **4.3.6 Circumstances of accompaniment**

Circumstances of accompaniment represent the meaning of “together with” (Martin et al., 1997, p. 104) and in the current study they accounted for 3.6% of circumstances. Three sub-categories were found: “accompanied by”, “not accompanied by”, and “as alternative to” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 272-273). Below are examples of the first sub-category “accompanied by”:

You can send us a Purchase request from now and we can carry up there together with equipment. (text 3-32-D)

(I) want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. (text 8-1-B)

Circumstances of accompaniment expressed the meaning of “not accompanied by”:

When your engineer went to our factory to do the first service, he took these hose assembly to us without customs declaration sheet (text 7-3-E)

Please find attached the price for these items as vases, without fire pot. (text 6-9-U)

Circumstances of accompaniment expressed the meaning of “as alternative to”:

Reduce quantity of item ECO-STAR SOFT C 20 LT.48 can (instead of 72 can) (text 3-1-A)

It has recently brought to our attention that some [Company 5] members were seen using tissue in the WCs to dry their hands instead of using the hand dryers (text 5-25-LLL)

#### 4.3.7 Circumstances of role

Circumstances of role comprised 1.8% of circumstances. According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 274), circumstances of role are categorised into two groups: guise (what as?) and product (what into?), both of which were manifested in the data. Below are some instances of circumstances of guise:

I shall always cherish this as one of the most satisfying phases in my career. (text 5-15-MMM)

As an ESL Teacher for 16 years, his focus has been on helping teachers and learners (text 9-7-E)

As can be seen from these two examples, the circumstances of role related to the participants in the clause. Circumstance *as one of the most satisfying phases in my career* referred to *this* (5-15-MMM) while *as an ESL Teacher for 16 years* related to *his* (9-7-E).

Apart from circumstances of guise, some instances of role circumstances comprised product:

Please see our order PO-F-09-1175 as attached file (*text 7-35-C*)

So, I prepare the INVOICE & PACKING LIST as attached file (*text 7-12-C*)

While also signalled by *as*, the circumstances of role in 7-35-C and 7-12-C conveyed the meaning of “become” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 275).

#### 4.3.8 Circumstances of extent

Circumstances of extent were rarely seen in the data of the current study, constituting only 1.3% of circumstances. Those that did occur construed the processes in time, not in space. In other words, they answered the questions “How long?” rather than “How far?”. Below are some examples:

M will put in some for the dispersers which had been used for long time in RRSHT,SSHT etc. tomorrow. (*text 3-35-D*)

I have been worked as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year. (*text 3-5-W*)

I can't log in my PC since last Friday (*text 3-37-M*)

#### 4.3.9 Circumstances of contingency

Circumstances of contingency convey the meaning of “in what circumstances?” (Martin et al., 1997, p. 104) and made up about 1% of circumstances:

It has recently brought to our attention that some [Company 5] members were seen using tissue in the WCs to dry their hands instead of using the hand dryers dispite the tissue dispensers were purposely mounted away from the washing areas. (*text 5-25-LLL*)

Regardless of our warnings, you still proved not to be able to meet the school requirements in terms of punctuality and last-minute class cancellation (*text 9-28-U*)

The others items are expected 100% in good condition. (*text 6-11-U*)

The circumstances of contingency in 5-25-LLL and 9-28-U carried the meaning of concession, whereas the contingency in 6-11-U expressed the meaning of condition.

#### 4.3.10 Circumstances of angle

The least used type of circumstances was circumstances of angle (less than 1%), which refer to the source of information (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 276). The data revealed that most circumstances of angle were expressed by *(as) per*:

Per discussion with Ms. H this morning, she is absolutely willing to give a coordinate for checking policy No. 2 at the 1st floor. (*text 5-6-W*)

As per email below from Ms. N, she needs a support from Marketing Department (*text 5-7-MM*)

Some circumstances of angle were introduced by *according to*:

As there are many kinds of PP material, according to your photo, we cannot identify which PP material should be used. (*text 6-8-U*)

According to the conclusion of DIZA’s Chief Inspector at the meeting with [Company 7], on April 19th, 2011, [Company 7] must have Chief Accountant. (*text 7-39-KKK*)

#### 4.4 Themes

The next variable is theme which is the point of departure of the message (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 106; Paltridge, 2006, p. 146). Theme analysis was crucial in this study because it showed “the structural configurations by which the clause is organised” (Eggins, 2004, p. 286). Table 29 displays the frequency of the three types of themes.

**Table 29 - Frequency of themes**

Topical themes	Interpersonal themes	Textual themes
1701	316	579

As can be seen in Table 29, the number of themes was not presented as a percentage, but as a frequency, for the three distinct types of themes perform distinct functions.

To be more specific, while topical themes, the first ideational element in a clause, were found in all finite clauses (Eggins, 2004, p. 304), interpersonal and textual themes did not necessarily occur unless the writer selected to use them to express interpersonal and textual meanings. Topical themes were used the most, and textual themes were used almost twice as much as interpersonal themes.

#### 4.4.1 Topical themes

Three kinds of topical themes, unmarked, marked and elliptical, were distributed as shown in Table 30.

**Table 30 - Distribution of topical themes**

<b>Topical themes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Unmarked topical themes	1361	80%
Marked topical themes	119	7%
Elliptical topical themes	221	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1701</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### 4.4.1.1 Unmarked topical themes

Unmarked topical themes are “when Theme conflates with the Mood structure constituent that typically occurs in first position in clauses of that Mood class” (Eggins, 2004, p. 318). In other words, topical themes are unmarked when they are also playing the role of subject (in declaratives), predicator (in imperatives), finite (in interrogatives) and WH elements (in WH interrogatives) (Eggins, 2004, p. 318). As Table 30 shows, 80% topical themes used were unmarked. They were comprised of elements such as *I, we, you*, unmarked imperative themes, and themes about other business matters, with the business themes being the most prevalent and *I* the most common amongst the pronouns (see Table 31).

**Table 31 - Unmarked topical themes**

Unmarked topical themes	Frequency	Percentage
I	238	17.5%
we	171	12.5%
you	125	9.2%
unmarked imperative themes	277	20.4%
themes about other business matters	544	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1361</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 31 indicates that approximately 60% of the unmarked topical themes were exophoric reference to the interlocutors (*I*, *we*, *you*) and unmarked imperative themes, showing the tendency of texts to foreground deixis and to be organised as a series of actions (examples of which are described below). It is worth noting that first person referential themes (singular *I* and plural *we*) outnumbered second personal referential themes (*you*) three to one, indicating writers' tendency to foreground their position/perspective (via the individual topical theme *I*) or the company's position/perspective (via the collective topical theme *we*).

*Exophoric reference as topical themes to foreground interpersonal interaction:*

I am very happy to be considered one of your candidates. If I may become your staff, I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development. (*text 3-5-W*)

Since there still have different ideas in these template and take times to have all comments, we would like to organize a conference call and invite all of you to join that conference to discuss and finalize these templates (TA/QI and site reports) ... We will sent draft versions to you in next few days. (*text 8-7-P*)

We highly appreciate your participation on that conference and we are looking forward to meeting you all. (*text 8-7-P*)

*Unmarked imperative topical themes to organise texts as a series of actions:*

Please see the PO as attached file and prepare the schedule for this jobs. (*text 7-2-C*)

I didn't find your report from NN on Q3. Please do it and send me asap. (*text 8-36-NN*)

Please adjust NTH PO#2011-16 as below:

1- Add in :

a. OASIS PRO 65 ACID BATHROOM CLEANER 10 ctn

b. WASH N WALK 10 LIT 10 can

2- Reduce quantity of item XXX-STAR SOFT C 20 LT.48 can (instead of 72 can)

(*text 3-1-A*)

As indicated, about 40% of the unmarked topical themes were business-specific:

When your engineer went to our factory to do the first service, he took these hose assembly to us without customs declaration sheet ... (*text 7-3-E*)

This quantity is a compensation / replacement of the defective bottles for PH hotel, [company 3] will borrow this quantity from your stock (*text 3-4-N*)

#### **4.4.1.2 Marked topical themes**

Marked topical themes are when topical themes do not conflate with the typical constituents from the mood system, that is they are themes which are not subjects in declaratives, nor predicators in imperatives, finites in polar interrogatives or WH-elements in WH- interrogatives (Eggins, 2004, p. 318). Marked topical themes used in the data accounted for 7% of topical themes and consisted of the elements shown in Table 32:

**Table 32 - Marked topical themes**

Category	Instances of marked topical theme	Frequency	Percentage
Predicator	Attached (9-4-D, 9-5-E, 8-15-C)	23	19.1%
Compliment	Anything (3-34-D, 3-35-D, 3-38-D)	8	6.3%
Circumstantial adjunct of cause	Thanks to your concern (3-8-Y) For further information (4-5-K)	21	17%
Circumstantial adjunct of place	Attached (3-3-A, 8-11-A, etc.) Below (9-8-E, 9-19-E, etc.) In the south (8-2-C)	18	15%
Circumstantial adjunct of time	This morning (8-13-C) Now (8-13-C) Beginning June 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2009 (9-31-U)	15	12.7%
Circumstantial adjunct of matter	About the rental program (3-32-D) On their suggestion (8-24-FF)	10	8.5%
Circumstantial adjunct of angle	Per request from D (3-4-N) As per your guidance (3-11-M)	10	8.5%
Circumstantial adjunct of contingency	With your approval (3-31-D) With assistance of Q (8-13-C)	8	6.3%
Circumstantial adjunct of role	As an ESL teacher for 16 years (9-6-E)	2	2.1%
Circumstantial adjunct of manner	By this chance (3-12-N)	2	2.1%
Circumstantial adjunct of accompaniment	In addition to the tentative schedule below (8-3-C)	2	2.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>119</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 32 shows that *attached* was the most used marked topical theme, constituting 22.9% of the total marked themes (19.1% as predicator and 3.8% as circumstantial adjunct of place).

*Attached* as a predicator – the verb group that specifies temporality, modality or voice of the finite (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) – can be seen in the following instances:

Attached is the list of TQM workshops in March 2010. (text 9-1-A)

Attached is detailed plan for pilot QA in Binh Chanh. (*text 8-6-O*)

Attached are some pictures of MC ... (*text 8-11-AA*)

If unmarked, the clauses could have been written as follows:

The list of TQM workshops in March 2010	is	attached.
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Predicator</b>

(*text 9-1-A*)

Detailed plan for pilot QA in Binh Chanh	is	attached.
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Predicator</b>

(*text 8-6-O*)

Some pictures of MC	are	attached ...
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Predicator</b>

(*text 8-11-AA*)

In addition to serving the function of predicators, *attached* also acted as circumstantial adjuncts of place in the position of marked topical theme:

Attached please find BLZ result from Vietnam. (*text 3-18-B*)

Attached please find the survey results of February. (*text 9-1-A*)

In these examples, *attached* was used in a structurally different way from the previous instances. Whereas in *9-1-A*, *8-6-O* and *8-11-AA*, *attached* was a predicator that specified the voice of the clause, in *3-18-B* and *9-1-A*, *attached* was used to specify neither the voice nor the temporality of the finite *find*. Instead, it was employed as a circumstantial adjunct of place to answer the cue “where to find the thing mentioned in the complement”. In unmarked clauses, they could have been written as below:

Please	find	attached	BLZ result from Vietnam.
<b>Interpersonal element</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Adjunct: Circumstance of place</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 3-18-B*)

Please	find	attached	the survey results of February.
<b>Interpersonal element</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Adjunct: Circumstance of place</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(text 9-1-A)

In addition to the tendency to foreground the predicator and adjunct *attached* in order to draw the recipients' attention to the attached files, circumstantial adjuncts of cause, time and place were also foregrounded:

For sake of office management, you are urged / requested to do the same as mine. (text 3-36-N)

For further information please contact us. (text 4-5-K)

In the above examples, the circumstantial adjuncts of cause were used as a point of departure of the clause to provide explanations for the proposals of actions that followed: *you are urged/requested to do the same as mine* (3-36-N) and *please contact us* (4-5-K).

Apart from circumstantial adjuncts of cause, circumstantial adjuncts of time and place were used substantially as marked themes (see Table 32) to provide temporal and spatial links between events in the texts:

We plan to bring several district OPCs to the provincial OPC and PAC in **Thai Binh** to discuss QI activities they will do after this ongoing course. We will also meet with Dr II, **Hanoi** PAC and **Dong Da** OPC on their QI projects. In the south you will visit HCM PAC and OPCs on Feb 14. (text 8-2-C, *emphasis added*)

I may be return for work in **Monday next week**. On the same occasion, I have a case study of OPC Cantho. (text 8-40-S, *emphasis added*)

In example 8-2-C, the marked theme *In the south* provided a continuity of the places mentioned previously, e.g., *Thai Binh*, *Hanoi* and *Dong Da*. Similarly, in 8-40-S, the marked theme *on the same occasion* provided a temporal connection to the previous temporal expression *Monday next week*.

#### 4.4.1.3 Elliptical topical themes

As Table 30 shows, elliptical topical themes comprised 13% of the total instances of topical themes. Elliptical themes in the data were coded to serve two functions: textual and interpersonal.

Elliptical topical themes serving textual functions made up nearly 40% of elliptical topical themes. In paratactic clauses, elliptical topical themes were employed to avoid theme repetition:

...we will either ship a replacement to you // or [we] will document this for the reconciliation computation in the future. (*text 3-4-N*)

I would like to say "Goodbye" // and [I] want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. (*text 8-1-B*)

...we will discuss problems [...] // and [we will] suggest possible solutions. (*text 9-10-E*)

In addition to serving textual functions, slightly more than 60% of elliptical topical themes were used to establish an interpersonal relationship between the writer and recipient. The following clauses with elliptical themes show that they did not carry ideational meanings; rather, they were used to convey a sense of rapport with the recipient:

Trust that you are fine and things gone well (*text 3-26-M*)

Wish I can go but I must fly to Da Nang with a Tho on that day. (*text 3-20-D*)

Wish you all the best in your life ... (*text 8-1-B*)

Look forward to welcoming you and your friends. (*text 9-2-C*)

Hope to see you there. (*text 9-4-D*)

will see you in hcmc! (*text 8-18-DD*)

Hi chi [older sister] O,

Hope you're doing well over there! (*text 3-15-B*)

In example 8-18-DD, the use of elliptical theme together with the lack of capitalisation of the first letter of the sentence (*will*) and the proper name Ho Chi Minh city (*hcmc*) expressed a sense of informality and closeness to the recipient. In example 3-15-B, the elliptical theme accentuated the solidarity expressed by the

Vietnamese kinship term *chi* (*older sister*). In addition, these elliptical clauses occurred in mental clauses (e.g., *trust, wish, look forward to, hope*). Another mental process that accounted for the high occurrence of elliptical topical theme *I/we* was *thank* in the clause *thank you* (accounting for 48% of elliptical topical clauses):

Dear Ms. HHH,

Thank you for your signed contract and invoice/packing list.

Please kindly revise contract as attached file. (*text 7-33-C*)

Dear Mr. EE,

Thank you very much for your well arrangement and support with training concerns. As per your guidance as well as our arrangement in advance with hotel Heads, please view herewith our training details... (*text 3-11-M*)

Dear Mr. GGG,

Thank you very much for your time and courtesy to meet up with us and let us know some of your concerns regarding environment, food safety in kitchen and also your plan for July 2009. For the environment concerns please find in the enclosed files for your references... (*text 3-34-D*)

In the examples above, the elliptical mental clause *thank you* was apparently used as a politeness strategy to establish an interpersonal relationship with the recipient and before requesting him/her to perform an action, namely to revise the contract (*text 7-33-C*), to view the training details (*text 3-11-M*) and to read the enclosed files (*text 3-34-D*).

Apart from mental clauses, elliptical topical themes that served interpersonal purposes also occurred with relational processes (*be*):

Dear Anh [older brother] K,

Would be so kind to book a hotel room for me during my trip in HCMC?

(*text 8-44-N*)

Dear chi [older sister],

Sorry for late reply. (*text 1-1-A*)

In these instances, the use of elliptical theme *you* (8-44-N) and *I (am)* (1-1-A) appeared to enhance the sense of solidarity conveyed by the Vietnamese kinship terms *anh* (*older brother*) and *chi* (*older sister*) in the salutations.

In one instance, an elliptical theme occurred with a material process. Similar to the aforementioned cases, the closeness expressed by the elliptical theme in this example seemed to be strengthened when used together with the kinship term *anh*:

Dear anh [older sister] S,

I am sorry that did not send cc to you. (*text 8-39-T*)

The substantial use of elliptical topical themes to establish interpersonal relationships is in accordance with the significant use of interpersonal themes *please* and *kindly* as discussed in the following section.

#### **4.4.2 Interpersonal themes**

The use of interpersonal themes is argued to establish the relationships between the participants in the text or showing the writer's position or point of view (Paltridge, 2006, p. 147). Interpersonal themes in the data were most common in auxiliaries, adjuncts *please* and *kindly*, and occurred occasionally with other comment adjuncts, vocatives, polarities, and Wh- elements (see Table 33 for the distribution of interpersonal themes).

**Table 33 - Interpersonal themes**

<b>Interpersonal themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Adjuncts</b>	please	188	59.5%
	kindly	34	10.8%
	other comment adjuncts (again, hopefully, normally, etc.)	16	5.1%
	vocatives (name + “oi”)	10	3.2%
	polarities (yes, sure)	2	0.6%
<b>Auxiliaries</b>	can, could, will, do, don’t, etc.	51	16.1%
<b>Wh-elements</b>	what, how, why, when, etc.	15	4.7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>316</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen in Table 33, *please* was the most frequently used interpersonal theme, comprising about 60%. *Please* occurred 188 times in 303 texts (i.e., in 62% of the texts). In some cases, *please* was combined with another interpersonal theme, *kindly*, an interpersonal theme to express entreaty (Paltridge, 2006, p. 147), to enhance the politeness of the proposals:

Please kindly find the attached file for the list of recommended products, including the product name, packing size, applications and use level. (*text 3-8-Y*)

Thus, please kindly instruct your SK students to use this worldlist so as to enhance their learning outcomes. (*text 9-16-E*)

Therefore, please kindly send us your official inquiry. (*text 7-32-GG*)

The use of auxiliaries (16.1%) and WH- elements (4.7%) as interpersonal themes made up about one-fifth of interpersonal themes. These were used to signal that an answer was expected from the recipient (Martin et al., 1997, p. 24):

Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (*text 3-7-D*)

And when will 8 units of AIRSPACE II DISP W/ LCD 6/ CASE # 113-92024629 be available for shipment? (*text 3-40-P*)

Is there any other solution? (*text 7-1-A*)

Should the title of the lecture be HIV and Dermatology rather HIV Dermatology? (*text 8-11-AA*)

There were also other adjuncts used as interpersonal themes to comment on the propositions or proposals (about 5%):

... and again, thank you and goodbye. (*text 8-1-C*)

Hopefully, the proposal will be soon reconfirmed by PACCOM (signed and sealed) so that we can use it as a legal document to deal with our partners' request. (*text 8-8-Q*)

Normally, it takes 01 months since application was officially submitted. (*text 8-9-Q*)

In-text vocatives as interpersonal themes formed by first names plus the Vietnamese particle *oi* (*hey*) constituted about 3% of the data. This borrowing of the Vietnamese friendly vocative particle highlighted the close interpersonal relationship between the writer and the recipient. However, all the instances of vocatives with *oi* were used by writers from the same company (company 8).

T oi, I did not receive your report from Nghe An OPC last Quater (Q3) (*text 8-38-S*)

K oi: Can you help me to make a letter for both Can Tho and An Giang the sooner the better (*text 8-29-FF*)

KK oi, Could you please book the air ticket for me ... (*text 8-21-N*)

Polarity, *yes* or *no*, was found to be rarely used as interpersonal themes in the data (less than 1%):

Hi anh [older brother] K,

Sure, we'll let you know. (*text 8-34-Y*)

Dear Ms. CCC,

Yes, 6 sets in the 1st time. (*text 7-26-C*)

The use of *sure* and *yes* as interpersonal themes in these examples indicates the writer's position/opinion to a certain proposition which was shared knowledge between the writer and recipient.

#### 4.4.3 Textual themes

Textual themes are those that provide prominence to textual elements with a linking function (Paltridge, 2006, p. 146; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, pp. 105-107). In the data, textual themes were used more than interpersonal themes. There were almost twice as many (579) textual themes employed as interpersonal themes (316) (again see Table 29). In the data these consisted of three types, namely structural conjunctions, cohesive conjunctions and relative elements. The distribution of these is shown in Table 34 below.

**Table 34 - Distribution of textual themes**

<b>Textual themes</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Structural conjunctions</b>	and, but, or, so, that, because, when, if, since, as	446	77.1%
<b>Cohesive conjunctions</b>	however, also, furthermore, then, thus, therefore, so, but	85	14.7%
<b>Relative elements</b>	which, who, that	48	8.2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>579</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### 4.4.3.1 Structural conjunctions as textual themes:

Structural conjunctions are conjunctions that link two clauses in a coordinating (paratactic) or subordinating (hypotactic) relation (Martin et al., 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Structural conjunctions far outnumbered the other two types (see Table 34).

Please check// and advise us (*text 7-1-A*)

I regret too with your information,// because we wait for// and welcome you come to TOT' Nurses training in last week of February... (*text 8-66-A*)

#### **4.4.3.2 Cohesive conjunctions as textual themes:**

Cohesive conjunctions are those that provide a cohesive connection to the previous discourse (Martin et al, 1997, p. 26). Cohesive conjunctions accounted for nearly 15% of textual themes.

I can speak and write English well. Also I can use computer excellence on common soft wares of winwords, excel, powerpoint... (text 3-5-W)

We have all items that you need. But Today Mr. CC have meeting in HCMC so can you wait until tomorrow? (text 7-9-A)

Conjunctions will be further discussed in the section 4.8.

#### **4.4.3.3 Relative elements as textual themes:**

The least used type of textual themes was relative elements, which accounted for approximately 8% of textual themes.

Attached is the new form of required annual report to PACCOM, // which I have been notified. (text 8-45-Q)

This letter is to ask for a plausible explanation of your not coming to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1, // which caused difficulty to the admin work and harm to the school reputation. (text 9-11-A)

Following is some information // that should be noted regarding the NEF course outlines (text 9-23-E)

### **4.5 Clause simplexes/complexes**

The notions of clause simplexes and complexes are important in the analysis of texts because they show the level of grammatical intricacy of the texts and the logico-semantic relations among clauses (Eggins, 2004, p. 256). The analysis of the data showed that clause simplexes and complexes occurred in roughly the same proportion (i.e., 48% simplexes and 52% complexes, as seen in Table 35).

**Table 35 - Distribution of clause simplexes and complexes**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Clause simplexes	504	48%
Clause complexes	546	52%

Clause complexes (52%) constituted a slightly higher proportion than clause simplexes (48%). In 546 complexes, there were a total of 1924 hypotactic and paratactic clauses. On average, each complex had 3.5 clauses. Compared with Eggins' (2004, p. 97) finding where the written language in her sample had a grammatical intricacy score of around 2.6 clauses per sentence, the data in this study manifested rather grammatically intricate structures with 3.5 clauses. According to Halliday (1994a, p. 224), Martin et al. (1997, p. 289) and Eggins (2004, p. 97), grammatical intricacy is a typical characteristic of spontaneous, spoken or informal written language rather than formal, careful written texts. As Eggins (2004) observes, complexing requires "little forward planning" (p. 269) where the writer simply "chain[s] on another unit of the same type" (p. 269). Below are examples of grammatically intricate clauses (hypotactic structures are signalled by Greek letters  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ , etc. and paratactic structures by ordinary numbers 1, 2, 3, etc. See the codebook (Appendix 1) for more explanations of the codes.):

And we would appreciated	$\alpha$			
if you could reserve some time in your most convenience during this week	$x\beta$	1		
so we can present our trial result report		$x2$	1	
and further more we can discuss on our Partnership agreement			+2	
then we [Company 3] will have a chance			$x3$	$\alpha$
to serve CH [Hotel] better.				$x\beta$

*(text 3-31-D)*

Because there are some remote sites	$\alpha$	1	$x\beta$			
those we can not go for TA visit frequently, for example: Cao Bang, Nghe An...	$=\beta$					
and Doctors from many sites may have sudden needs for our consultation,		+2	$x\beta$			
I and Dr. M have talked			$\alpha$	$\alpha$		
about providing a form				$x\beta$	$\alpha$	
guiding physicians at sites					$x\beta$	$\alpha$
how to present a case for consultation via telephone.						$x\beta$

(text 8-23-N)

The formation of the clause complex involves two systems: interdependency (i.e., whether clauses are linked together as dependent or independent) and logico-semantic (i.e., whether clauses project or expand each other) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Martin et al., 1997; Eggins, 2004). The following sections will present the findings of the analysis of these two systems in the data.

#### 4.5.1 Interdependency

The distribution of interdependency in the data as indicated by the coders is shown in Table 36 below.

**Table 36 - Distribution of interdependency**

<b>Interdependency</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
parataxis	462	24%
hypotaxis	1462	76%

Clearly hypotactic clauses outnumbered paratactic clauses three to one. However, hypotactic structures and paratactic structures sometimes occurred in the same clause complex, such as:

Please let me know	$\alpha$	1
if you have any questions	$x\beta$	
and thank you for your support.		+2

(text 8-3-C)

Please see in the enclosed file our Proposal for your consideration	1		
and let us know	+2	$\alpha$	
if anything we can help		$x\beta$	$\alpha$
to make it better.			$x\beta$

(text 3-38-D)

Even so, the proportion of hypotactic structures was much higher than paratactic structures. There were clauses that only included hypotactic clauses:

Please keep us aware of any problems	$\alpha$	$\alpha$		
you have had	$=\beta$			
so that prompt actions will be taken		$x\beta$	$\alpha$	
to make sure			$x\beta$	$\alpha$
that things will go on smoothly as soon as possible.				$\beta'$

(text 9-7-E)

To process the post test and results,	$x\beta$		
I think	$\alpha$	$\alpha$	
that we can assign 4 staff		$\beta'$	$\alpha$
to work in 15-20 minutes.			$x\beta$

(text 8-14-T)

The examination of interdependency relationships among the clauses unveiled some unexpected absences of paratactic and hypotactic conjunctions, as well as some ambiguous boundaries among the clauses.

#### 4.5.1.1 Lack of paratactic conjunctions

Among the paratactic clauses (signalled by 1, 2, 3, 4, etc., see Appendix 1), there were about 6% of the texts where new paratactic clauses were combined with the

initiating ones simply by commas, and not by paratactic conjunctions (e.g., *and*, *but*, *so*). For instance:

There's been no new FA of L' AnMien,	<b>1</b>		
M is very busy	<b>+2</b>		
& can't go there tomorrow,	<b>+3</b>		
my guys will be there	<b>+4</b>	$\alpha$	
to change new Control module of Girbau big washer		$x\beta$	$\alpha$
when finish the installations & services of Nha Trang.			$x\beta$

(text 3-6-X)

Ms BB – Chef’s secretary just asked	$\alpha$		<b>1</b>
what kind of product she should use	$\beta''$	$\alpha$	
to clean her restaurant table surface,		$x\beta$	
please send the offer from your end.			<b>+2</b>

(text 3-9-D)

We had arranged for test run tomorrow,	<b>1</b>
the German technician will arrive tomorrow.	<b>+2</b>

(text 3-10-D)

We agreed to plus this amount in service fee,	<b>1</b>		
this is the reason	<b>+2</b>	$\alpha$	
that Services Contract No. PO-H-09-252A clearly mentioned		$x\beta$	$\alpha$
that per maintenance visit charges would be Thb.138,780.			“ $\beta$ ”

(text 7-3-E)

#### 4.5.1.2 Lack of hypotactic conjunctions

In addition to the lack of paratactic conjunctions, in some cases there was also an absence of hypotactic conjunctions (occurring in approximately 4% of the texts). Below are examples of dependent hypotactic clauses ( $\beta$ ) that were not combined with the dominant clauses ( $\alpha$ ) by dependency markers (e.g., *who*, *which*, *if*, etc.).

we have another key person in the North – Mr. G –	$\alpha$
<b>[who]</b> focuses to growing the Institutional accounts in the North as another CAE.	$=\beta$

(text 3-12-N)

I would like to send to you the list of lawful OSHE requirements	$\alpha$
<b>[which]</b> need to be complied by each section.	$=\beta$

(text 7-8-BB)

this is our group VEC own service	$\alpha$
<b>[which]</b> is long time fixed liner regular Far East (japan, korea, south east asia) to/from middle/blacksea via Israel	$=\beta$

(text 4-3-U)

Thus pls offer for this today morning	$\alpha$
<b>[if it]</b> is possible	$x\beta$

(text 4-3-U)

we can handle break-bulk vessels	$\alpha$
<b>[which]</b> depend on the details of their break-bulk vessels.	$=\beta$

(text 4-9-L)

There're samples	$\alpha$
<b>[which]</b> were made incorrectly with distressed, unglazed..,	$=\beta$

(text 6-20-U)

Since we are not pleased with quality of some items	$\alpha$	$x\beta/1$
<b>[which]</b> have come out the kiln	$=\beta$	
& we would like to remake them.		$\alpha/+2$

(text 6-19-U)

These examples seem to reveal that the elaboration hypotactic conjunction *which* and *who*, which help to add further information to the nouns (see section 4.5.2.3 for more information on elaboration), tended to be used as an ellipsis.

#### 4.5.1.3 Blurry boundaries between primary and secondary clauses

In some cases, primary clauses (marked by 1 or  $\alpha$ ) simultaneously acted as secondary clauses (marked by 2 or  $\beta$ ). In other words, the complex did not have clear-cut primary clause(s).

Refers to our telecon today regarding to our supplier, KT,	$x\beta/1$	
[our supplier, KT] is stuffing their cargo total 120fcls of Delmas shipping at your port,	$\alpha/+2$	
understood	$\alpha/+3$	$\alpha$
that total cargo already stuffed till morning at SPCT port 500mt (20fcls)		$\beta'$

(text 4-10-Q)

As M is preparing a list of things	$\alpha$		$x\beta/1$
that we need you	$=\beta$	$\alpha$	
to hand-carry back to VN for Inst.		$x\beta$	
so I will send it to JJ			$\alpha/+2$
and cc you tomorrow.			$\alpha/+3$

(text 3-15-B)

Since we are not pleased with quality of some items	$\alpha$	$x\beta/1$
[which] have come out the kiln	$=\beta$	
& we would like to remake them.		$\alpha/+2$

(text 6-19-U)

In example 4-10-Q, the first clause *Refers to our telecon today regarding to our supplier, KT*, which was categorised as a clause because it started with the finite *refers*, seemed to be marked by a hypotactic dependent marker *refers to* (referring to). However, this clause was used as an initiating paratactic clause (**1**) for the next two clauses *[our supplier, KT] is stuffing their cargo total 120fcls of Delmas shipping at your port* (+2) and *understood* (+3). Nonetheless, it may also be argued that these two clauses acted as the dominant hypotactic clauses ( $\alpha$ ) for the first clause ( $x\beta$ ).

In example 3-15-B, while the clause *As M is preparing a list of things ...* was structurally marked for dependency by the hypotactic conjunction *as* (x $\beta$ ), it was later used as an initiating paratactic clause (1) for the continuing paratactic clauses *so I will send it to JJ* (+2) and *and cc you tomorrow* (+3), which were marked for paratactic interdependency by the paratactic conjunctions *so* and *and*. By the same token, it could also be interpreted that *so I will send it to JJ* and *and cc you tomorrow* functioned as the dominant clauses ( $\alpha$ ) for the dependent clause *as M is preparing a list of things*. In other words, the tactic relations among these clauses were ambiguous.

Similarly, in 6-19-U, while the clause *Since we are not pleased with quality of some items* appeared to be marked by the hypotactic conjunction *since*, it was used together with a paratactic clause *& we would like to remake them*, which was marked by a paratactic conjunction *&* (*and*). Therefore, it was ambiguous whether the interdependency was hypotaxis or parataxis.

#### 4.5.1.4 Hypotactic clauses and non-finite clauses used as clause simplexes

Also identified by the coders were instances in which hypotactic clauses and non-finite clauses were used as clause simplexes. For example:

Because only the general information of the trainees has been entered, not the detail answers for the pre and post tests. (*text 8-35-KK*)

Because i lost my cell phone a fews day ago. (*text 5-22-RR*)

That the conditions they have deal with Tan Thuan Terminal. (*text 4-1-A*)

According to our Chart “a chief accountant and financial director with appropriate qualification and experience to manage its accounting and financial affairs. (*text 7-39-KK*)

In examples 8-35-KK and 5-22-RR, while the clauses were marked for interdependency by the hypotactic conjunction *because*, they were not combined to primary clauses, standing by themselves like simplexes. Likewise, the hypotactic elaboration clause *they have deal with Tan Thuan Terminal* (4-1-A), which elaborated on *the conditions*, was employed as a simplex. Example 7-39-KK shows

that *manage* in the non-finite clause *to manage its accounting and financial affairs* acted as the finite for this simplex.

#### 4.5.2 Logico-semantic relations

The second system identified as used in clause complexes is logico-semantic relations. These included expansion and projection relations (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Expansion was comprised of enhancement, extension and elaboration and these were used far more frequently than projection, which is made up of locution and idea (see Table 37 for an overview of these).

**Table 37 - Distribution of logico-semantic relations**

Logico-semantic relation		Frequency	Percentage
expansion	enhancement	939	48.8%
	extension	457	23.7%
	elaboration	232	12%
projection	idea	189	9.8%
	locution	98	5.2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1817</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### 4.5.2.1 Enhancement (x)

Enhancement indicates relations of development (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Enhancement was identified to be the most used logico-semantic relation, accounting for nearly 50% of the total. Below are some examples of enhancement:

If you have any interests,	$x\beta$	
please contact us	$\alpha$	$\alpha$
so that the quotation will be sent to you soon.		$x\beta$

(text 3-8-Y)

Let's join the event	$\alpha$	
to compete to get great prizes with the Music Quiz	$x\beta$	
and most interestingly to have a great time	$x\gamma$	$\alpha$
singing Karaoke with friends and colleagues.		$x\beta$

(text 9-2-C)

As can be seen in these examples, the dominant clauses ( $\alpha$ ) were embellished around with circumstantial features of condition (e.g., *If you have any interests*) and cause (e.g., *so that the quotation will be sent to you soon, to compete to get great prizes with the Music Quiz, to have a great time*). Condition and cause were the two most frequently employed circumstantial features of enhancement realised by the relevant enhancement markers as shown in Table 38:

**Table 38 - Enhancement markers**

Category	Finite	Non-finite		Percentage
	Conjunction	Conjunction	Preposition	
<b>Temporal</b>	then as soon as as after when	while when	before	9.5%
<b>Spatial</b>	as far as	-	-	0.6%
<b>Manner/ Comparison</b>	as	as	let alone as per	5.6%
<b>Cause – reason</b>	as since because	for	with about	10.1%
<b>Cause – purpose</b>	so that	-	to for in of	54.7%
<b>Cause - effect</b>	so			2.2%
<b>Condition</b>	even though as long as if	-	-	17.3%

As shown in Table 38, enhancement clauses of cause (reason, purpose and effect) were the most frequently employed, constituting nearly 70% of the total of enhancement clauses. Enhancement clauses of condition also comprised a significant proportion (17.7%).

The data shows that the preposition *for* was often used as an enhancement conjunction of cause-reason (i.e., it was used with a finite clause):

Thank you very much	$\alpha$
<b>for</b> your arrange the time	$x\beta$

(text 7-40-O)

We will print out	$\alpha 1$	
and make it available at registration desk	$\alpha 2$	
<b>for</b> every one pick up.		$x\beta$

(text 8-51-W)

While most enhancement clauses were hypotactic, a small percentage was paratactic (4%), signalled by the temporal enhancement marker *then* and cause-effect enhancement marker *so*:

K can write a letter	1
<b>then</b> you sign on it?	$x2$

(text 8-27-FF)

I hope	$\alpha$		
that everything will be smooth	$\beta'$	1	
<b>so</b> I can come		$x2$	1
and attend our retreat in remaining days.		$x3$	+2

(text 8-13-C)

#### 4.5.2.2 Extension (+)

Extension which is used to show relations of addition (Eggins, 2004, p. 259) constituted 23.7% of the logico-semantic relations. It was almost exclusively used with the unmarked paratactic clauses (98.7%). For example:

Please discuss	1
and let me know ...	+2

(text 8-40-S)

[A chief accountant] shall be selected,	1
appointed	+2
and dismissed by the Members Council	+3
and supervised by the General Director.	+4

(text 7-39-KKK)

You can send us a Purchase request from now	1
and we can carry up there together with equipment.	+2

(text 3-32-D)

You can email me (E@[Company 1].edu.vn)	1
or send me a text message (xxxx 55 55 96)	+2

(text 9-20-E)

The extension markers identified in the texts are shown in Table 39.

**Table 39 - Extension markers**

Category	Extension markers	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Addition – positive</b>	and	142	74.7%
	comma	11	5.8%
<b>Variation – alternative</b>	or	8	4.2%
	except	1	0.5%
<b>Addition adversative</b>	but	20	10.5%
	however	8	4.2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>190</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen in Table 39, positive addition extension markers were the most frequently used, comprising nearly 75%. Notably, about 6% of the extension paratactic markers were commas, which reflected the lack of paratactic conjunctions discussed previously. (Note: Conjunctions will be further discussed in section 4.8).

While extension was mostly used with parataxis, in one case it was used to extend a hypotactic dominant clause ( $\alpha$ ) with the extension marker *except*:

FYI that I did not install anything (soft or hard ware) into my PC recently	$\alpha$	
<i>except</i> using it	$+\beta$	$\alpha$
to do SDRs report.		$x\beta$

(text 3-37-M)

#### 4.5.2.3 Elaboration (=)

Elaboration indicates relations of restatement or equivalence (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). As presented previously, elaboration was used much less than enhancement and extension, constituting 12% of the logico-semantic relations. It consists of non-defining relative clauses, not defining relative clauses, that function as hypotactic elaboration (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004). Non-defining relative clauses add further characteristics to a thing/a person that is already fully specific ( $\alpha = \beta$ ) whereas defining relative clauses define subsets (i.e.,  $\alpha$  is not equal to  $\beta$ ) and therefore is only an embedded structure in a noun group (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Martin et al., 1997; Eggins, 2004). One important signal in writing to distinguish between the two types of relative clauses is the existence or absence of commas (Halliday, 1994a, p. 228). In the data, some elaborating clauses were marked by punctuation (commas or dashes). For example:

All of us congratulate on MS . B	$\alpha$
– who has been nominated for Sales & Admin Support COE award .	$=\beta$

(text 3-25-O)

However, punctuation was not always used to separate these clauses from the primary clause. For instance:

Thanks to your concern, we would like to introduce our highly recommended products	$\alpha$		
that are the most suitable products and services	$=\beta$	$\alpha$	
to assist [company] PP		$x\beta$	$\alpha$
in meeting its cleaning and sanitation needs.			$x\beta$

(text 3-8-Y)

In this example, the relative clause *that are the most suitable products and services* did not seem to specify a subset of the noun group *our highly recommended product*. Instead, it added a further descriptive attribute to the noun group ( $\alpha = \beta$ ). Nonetheless, there was no punctuation to separate the elaborating clause ( $\beta$ ) from the dominant clause ( $\alpha$ ). Similarly:

We would like to thank you very much for your supports and trust in [company 3] products and services	$\alpha$	
which absolutely will help your Kitchen Operations	$=\beta$	$\alpha$
achieve challenges in hygiene, sanitation and food safety issues.		$x\beta$

(text 3-8-Y)

In the above example, while the meaning of the noun group *[company 3] products and services* appeared to be specific and the relative clause only functioned as an expansion of the primary clause, it was not marked off by a comma or dash. Likewise:

Please be informed	$\alpha$	
that in addition to the tentative schedule below <<which I also sent you previously>>, we are planning to have a QI training course	$\beta''$	$\alpha$
<<which I also sent you previously>>		$=\beta$

(text 8-3-C)

While the noun *the tentative schedule* was apparently fully specific thanks to the location modifier *below*, it was not separated from the relative clause *which I also sent you previously* by a comma (the comma after *previously* appeared to separate *in addition to ...* from the primary clause). This use of elaboration clauses seemed to comprise a special feature of this cohort of users' English.

**4.5.2.4 Projection of idea ( $\beta'$ )**

As Table 37 above indicates, projection comprised about 15% of the logico-semantic relations, with the projection of ideas selected more frequently than the projection of locution. To do this, mental processes such as *know, hope, think, believe, wish, trust* and *note*, were used (also see section 4.2.2). For example:

... but I <i>believe</i>	$\alpha$
that some errors still exist somewhere.	$\beta'$

(text 8-30-T)

<i>Trust</i>	$\alpha$
that you are fine	$\beta'$

(text 3-26-M)

While most mental processes used to project ideas appeared in active voice, *note* was often found to be used in a passive voice:

... <i>be noted</i>	$\alpha$
that these expenses are not including V.A.T.	$\beta'$

(text 4-11-A)

Please <i>be noted</i>	$\alpha$
that the tissue is used for your personal hygiene only, not for any other purpose such as drying hands, cleaning shoes etc....	$\beta'$

(text 5-25-LLL)

Please <i>be noted</i>	$\alpha$
that the last day for registration is Jul.15.	$\beta'$

(text 9-8-E)

However, it was also used as an active process by some writers:

Kindly <i>note</i>	$\alpha$
that the exchange rate is around 1USD/19,000VND.	$\beta'$

(text 3-30-D)

Just <i>noted</i> [subject ellipsis]	$\alpha$
that there're some thing woring in the schedule.	$\beta'$

(text 3-16-KK)

In one instance, a material process was used to project an idea:

While negotiating with the hotel for a check out late (latest 2:30pm),	xβ	
we should <i>arrange</i>	α	α
the course finishes before 12:00am.		β'

(text 8-15-C)

In this example, material process *arrange* was used to project the idea *the course finishes before 12:00am* in the same way as a mental process (i.e., *I hope the course finishes before 12:00am* or *I know the course finishes before 12:00am*).

#### 4.5.2.5 Projection of locution (β'')

Locution, which involves direct or quoted speech (Eggins, 2004, p. 236), was projected by verbal processes, including *ask*, *recommend*, *inform*, *advise*, *suggest*, *affirm*, *say* and *explain* (see section 4.2.4). For example:

We sincerely regret to <i>inform</i> you	a
that your work at [Company 9] will be terminated as of April 21, 2006.	β''

(text 9-28-U)

Mr. H / [Company] BL just <i>informed</i> me	a
that he can not support us this shipment at SPCT	β''

(text 4-1-A)

They <i>said</i>	a
that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me,	β''

(text 8-13-C)

While in these examples, the subjects of the locution were identified (i.e., *we* in 9-28-U, *Mr. H* in 4-1-A and *they* in 8-13-C), the coded data showed that 37% of the verbal processes used to project locution were in passive voice with the subjects of the locution being unidentified:

Please <i>be informed</i>	α
that [company 3] tutor will conduct the training for both 2 respective departments for the above topics on 12 June 2009.	β''

(text 3-33-D)

Please <i>be advised</i>	$\alpha$
that the password to use the PP slides is [company 9]105	$\beta''$

(text 9-7-E)

<i>It is suggested</i>	$\alpha$
that the Cambridge Flyers Practice should be done	$\beta''$

(text 9-14-U)

The use of a passive voice suggests that the writers elected not to be held responsible for the idea/locution put forward. As Halliday (1994a, p. 76) observes, in passive clauses, the actor (in this case, the subject of the locution and the Senser of the idea) is hidden, which dissociates the actor from the responsibility held for the statement, offer or command. However, another explanation could be that these passive projections may simply have been used as formulaic expressions for written business correspondence.

#### 4.6 Ellipsis

Ellipsis is referred to as a resource of creating cohesion (Martin, 2009, p. 155; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 652), allowing the writer to leave out “parts of a structure when they can be presumed from what has gone before” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 535). According to this definition, ellipsis performs the textual function of establishing continuity in a text. However, in the current data ellipsis served not only textual functions, but also interpersonal functions including subject, finite, subject + finite and complement ellipsis (see Table 40 below).

**Table 40 - Distribution of ellipsis**

Ellipsis		Frequency	Percentage
Subject	Subject ellipsis for textual purposes	39	33%
	Subject ellipsis for interpersonal purposes	48	40.7%
Finite		5	4.2%
Subject + finite		9	7.6%
Complement		5	4.2%
Deictic		12	10.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>118</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 4.6.1 Subject ellipsis

Subject ellipsis serving textual functions includes an elimination of the repeated subjects. For example:

I have just received Observations about MK from dr FF's report, but [I] have no recommendations (*text 8-37-K*)

Let's welcome them and [let's] work together towards our achievement. (*text 3-12-N*)

The subject *I* in the second clauses of each of these sentences was used to avoid unnecessary repetition. At the same time, the ellipsis enabled the writers to focus on the contrast of ideas (*received Observations* and *have no recommendations*, 8-37-K), or addition of ideas (*welcome them* and *work together*, 3-12-N). (Note: Discussion of elliptical themes was included in section 4.4.1.3).

In the following instances, the subjects of the second clauses were presumed to be the same as the first:

...my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer when [my guys] finish the installations & services of Nha Trang. (*text 3-6-X*)

I am sorry that [I] did not send cc to you. (*text 8-39-T*)

Unlike examples 8-37-K and 3-12-N, where the ellipsis of subjects occurred in paratactic clauses, examples 3-6-X and 8-39-T revealed subject ellipsis in hypotactic clauses. It is worth noting that the verb groups of the second clauses remained finite, i.e., *finish* and *did not send cc*, while in typical hypotactic clauses, when the subject is ellipsed, the finite is often changed into non-finite. For instance:

While negotiating with the hotel for a check out late (latest 12:30pm), we should arrange the course finishes before 12:00am. (*text 8-15-C*)

Nonetheless, in the hypotactic clauses of 3-6-X and 8-39-T, the finite remained unchanged despite the ellipsis of the subjects.

Moreover, while Eggins (2004) observes that “the ellipsis of the subject can only happen [...] because readers know to infer that the subject of the second clause is the

same as the subject of the first clause” (p. 265), in the following example it is difficult to identify the missing subject:

I have discussed with Dr. H about this trip and He supports my plan and need the confirmation from you. (*text 8-17-N*)

It is unclear whether the subject of *need* was *I* or *he* (*Dr. H*), as *need* stood closer to *he*, but was in agreement with the subject *I* (i.e., *I need*, not *he needs*). Therefore, it is difficult to interpret who needed the confirmation from the recipient.

Apart from serving textual functions, about 40% of subject ellipsis served interpersonal functions:

Hope you're doing well over there! (*text 3-15-B*)

Wish you all the best (*text 8-1-B*)

Will see thru all other rustic ones and come back if any proposal for you in case. (*text 6-35-U*)

(Note again: This function was discussed at length in section 4.4.1.3).

#### 4.6.2 Finite ellipsis

4.2% of the data was found to consist of finite ellipsis, making the clauses appear as notes. For example:

The valves [are] ready to pack for return to Germany. (*text 7-28-C*)

I [am] working in sales & marketing about chemicals in Personal Care Industry. (*text 3-5-W*)

... total cargo [has] already [been] stuffed till morning at SPCT port 500mt (20fcls) (*text 4-10-Q*)

The presumed finites in these cases were the relational *be*, which is a grammatical element rather than a content-conveying one. Thus, the ellipsis may have been considered by the writer to be non-influential to the meaning of the clauses.

However, there were also some instances where with the content-carrying finite ellipsis was used to avoid repetition. For instance:

Please recheck your Friday e-mails as all of the others she sent on the same day were well received so I am not sure why this would not have been [received]. (*text 6-38-U*)

#### 4.6.3 Ellipsis of subject and finite

In the data it was apparent that some clauses tended to be written in note form, particularly when ellipsis was used for the subjects and finites:

[This is] My travel application form as requested. (*text 3-36-N*)

[There are] Possible regular calls in future if prospects potential workable costing vs bookings of cars/trucks import (*text 4-3-U*)

Will see thru all other rustic ones and come back if [there is/we have] any proposal for you in case. (*text 6-35-U*)

We confirm to receive your email. We will study and raise question if [we have] any. (*text 6-12-U*)

[It is] Well noted, H. (*text 8-20-Q*)

These examples show that only the content words appeared to matter to the writers and functional words that did not interfere with the meaning were left out. In these cases, the presumed subjects did not appear to carry much importance and did not provide the recipient with new information. For instance, in the examples above the presumed cataphoric reference *this* referred to the noun *My travel application form* (3-36-N) while the presumed existential *there* represented the existence of *possible regular calls in the future* (4-3-U) or *any proposal for you in case* (6-35-U); they therefore provided the recipient with no new information. In example 6-12-U, the presumed subject *we* and the relational finite *have* contain non-significant information and, perhaps for this reason were left out. The presumed subject *it* of the last example (8-20-Q) exophorically referred to a previously-discussed topic, one that the recipient was supposed to be aware of and thus the information was not salient to the recipient. Therefore, ellipsis of the relational/existential process *be*, the relational *have* and the unimportant subjects seemed to allow the writer to focus on the new information while conveying a sense of brevity. This phenomenon of

subject-finite ellipsis resembles conversational discourse where speakers often leave out “words of low information value” (Paltridge, 2006, p. 165).

Subject and finite ellipsis was also found in email messages that resembled a part of an adjacency pair. In the example below, ellipsis appeared to occur when elements were assumed to be understood by the recipient:

Yes, 6 sets in the 1st time. (*text 7-26-C*)

The noun group *6 sets* may have functioned either as a subject or a complement. In the first case (i.e., *6 sets* being the subject), the finite could have been: *Yes, 6 sets [came] in the 1st time*. In the second case, *6 sets* may have been the complement and the subject and finite could have been left out: *Yes, [there were] 6 sets in the 1st time*. This is what Paltridge (2006) characterises as “situational ellipsis in conversation” (p. 165).

The ellipsis of subjects and finites also occurred in cases where the subjects unmistakably referred to the writer *I* and the process was the relational *am*. As can be seen in the examples below, the subjects and finites were not mentioned so as to give salience to the apology and the reason for apologising:

[I am] Sorry by my absence at the Staff meeting with Pro. EE. (*text 8-40-S*)

[I am] Sorry reply late (*text 7-9-A*)

[I am] Sorry for late reply. (*text 1-1-A*)

[I am] Sorry for delay your payment. (*text 7-20-C*)

However, also conveying the same sense of apology, some writers selected the full mood with the collective subject *we*:

We are very sorry about this. (*text 6-11-U*)

We are sorry to advise you that 76 pcs of Keta vase H105 need to be rejected  
(*text 6-13-U*)

We are sorry but pls kindly error this mail below. (*text 6-27-U*)

By contrasting the two types of apology, we can see the differences in the distance of the relationships between the writer and recipient as well as the (lack of) importance of the identity of the wrong-doer. While the ellipsis of the subject and finite in 8-40-S, 7-9-A, 1-1-A, and 7-20-C expressed a closeness and familiarity between the interactants, the selection of the full mood in 6-11-U, 6-13-U and 6-27-U revealed a formal, distant tenor. In addition, whereas the ellipsis of the subject in the first group (8-40-S, 7-9-A, 1-1-A, and 7-20-C) apparently indicates the writer as the presumed person accountable for the problem/mistake (the writer did not clarify otherwise), the choice of the collective subject *we* in the second group (6-11-U, 6-13-U and 6-27-U) seemed to imply that the company, not the writer, was to be held responsible.

However, the ellipsis of subjects and finites sometimes caused difficulty in decoding the identity of these. In present participle cases it was clear that the subjects were identical to the subjects of the main clauses, for example:

I do not agree to do post test before finishing lectures. To process the post test and results, I think that we can assign 4 staff to work in 15-20 minutes.  
(text 8-14-T)

While negotiating with the hotel for a check out late (latest 12:30pm), we should arrange the course finishes before 12:00am. (text 8-15-C)

In past participle cases, however, it was difficult to determine the identity. For example:

Dear Mr. JJJ,

Our accounting department transferred on 25 Dec 2009. Please check your account again and inform me if not yet received. (text 7-36-C)

In this instance, the reduced clause *not yet received* was ambiguous because the antecedent of the missing item was not retrievable from any element in the preceding linguistic context. It might be inferred from the choice of lexis, namely *our accounting department*, *transferred* and *your account*, that item could have been “money”. In that case, the full sentence may have been *Please check your account again and inform me if the money has not been received yet*.

A similar case of ambiguous subject-finite ellipsis was:

Pls wait for a while as our supplier need to finish some additional packing.  
We will advise you once finished. (text 2-23-A)

In the second sentence *We will advise you once finished*, it was unclear what would be finished. However, from the previous sentence, it could be inferred that the subject of *finished* in the second clause could have been *some additional packing*. In that case, the second sentence might have been:

We will advised you once [some additional packing is] finished.

If this had been what the writer intended, then the missing elements could not be retrieved within the same sentence, but in the surrounding context.

Another example of ambiguous ellipsis is:

As spoken, zim/gsl VEC (car liner service) is having an inquiry to call our  
VEC ship carry 400 cars from Israel to HCM (text 4-6-U)

It is unclear whether the verb group *As spoken* was “passive participle” (Halliday, 1994a, p. 278), that is *As [the car liner service has been] spoken* (1), or *As [we have been] spoken* (2), or “perfective” (Halliday, 1994a, p. 278): *As [we have] spoken* (3), or *As [the car liner service] has spoken* (4). A scrutiny of the first two possibilities, (1) and (2), shows that they did not appear to make sense. Moreover, the verbal process *speak* is maintained to be only used in passive when the Verbiage is the name of a language, for example, Arabic (Halliday, 1994a, p. 141). While cases (3) and (4) seemed more likely, the subject *we* in case (3) was non-existent in the neighbouring linguistic context. However, a closer examination of (4) revealed that *the car liner service* was neither a person nor company; therefore, it could not possibly be the person in the verbal process reflected by the word *speak*. Moreover, the examination of similar examples written by writers in the same company (4-11-R and 4-14-B below) revealed that case (3) may have been what the writer had in mind:

As spoken, we plan to send our first cruise ship (MV. Costa Classica - 1.400 passengers and 1.200 crew members) to your good port within 02 days (05-06.03.2011) as an inspection trip. (text 4-11-R)

Particularly as mentioned today morning we are going to open Dong Nai port to serve customers in the Northern part of Ho Chi Minh City (*text 4-14-B*)

In these two instances, the subjects of the main clauses were *we*. The ellipsis, therefore, could have been recovered as *As we have spoken (4-11-R)* and *as we have mentioned (4-14-B)*. If that was the case, then the subject *we* and the finite *have* were not used, while the predicators (*spoken* and *mentioned*) were retained.

#### 4.6.4 Complement ellipsis

In addition to the use of ellipsis for subjects and finites, it also occurred for complements:

Please do it and send [it to] me asap. (*text 8-36-S*)

...I believe that some errors still exist somewhere. Please help me to correct them if you find out any [errors]. (*text 8-30-T*)

I will inform you any information from IH Hotel if I have [any information]. (*text 3-14-II*)

As can be seen from these instances, the identity of the missing complements could be retrieved from the preceding context. By contrasting *8-30-T* and *3-14-II*, it can be seen that, although both were conditional constructions, they differed slightly in terms of ellipsis. The hypotactic conditional clauses could be analysed as follows:

if	you	find out		any [errors]
	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Predicator</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 8-30-T*)

if	I	have		[any information]
	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite</b>	<b>Predicator</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 3-14-II*)

This analysis shows that whereas in *8-30-T*, only a part of the complement (i.e., errors) was omitted, in *3-14-II* all the complement was left out.

While the ellipsis in the above examples could be easily recovered from the preceding linguistic context, in the following case the missing complement could not be retrieved from within the text:

Hi anh [older brother] K,

Sure, we'll let you know. (*text 8-34-Y*)

What was meant after *know* is unclear and could only be retrieved by examining the preceding email:

Chao anh MM va Y [Hello older brother MM and Y],

So when you submit the application, please let me know, so I can send the letter to PACCOM (*text 8-33-K*)

As discussed in the ellipsis of subjects and finites, the ellipsis of the complement in *8-34-Y* is what Paltridge (2006) terms “elliptic replies” (p. 166), which often occur in conversational discourse.

#### 4.6.5 Deictic ellipsis

In the current data deictic ellipsis occurred in about 10% of all ellipsis:

The attach file is my report for [the] trip to KL (*text 3-27-L*)

Please view the attachment for details of SR during [the] period of 11/2006 to 09/2007. (*text 1-6-A*)

I myself will catch up later at [the] end of week (*text 3-32-D*)

... we wait for and welcome you in [the] last week of February (*text 8-66-A*)

Thanks for your quick action! However, for the AEROSHELL FLUID 41, we need [the] packing size of 1 liter/can. (*text 2-6-A*)

While the underlined noun groups had no deictic elements in their structure, the heads of these noun groups were all specified by the subsequent prepositional phrases. In other words, specific subsets of the things in question were identifiable. For instance, the noun *trip* (*3-27-L*) was clarified to the recipient: “You know which trip: it is the trip to KL.” Similarly, in *1-6-A*, the noun *period* means: “You know

which period: the one from 11/2006 to 09/2007.” Despite appearing to be specific, these noun groups were not modified by deictic elements.

Other noun groups not specified by prepositional phrases were also found to be without deixis. They seemed to have been written like notes, with words of “low information value” (Paltridge, 2006, p. 165), such as deixis, left out:

Thanks for your copy invoice. Pls send [the] original invoice to us ASAP.  
(text 7-4-E)

In [the] future, we hope you can work with [the] buyer (text 6-2-U)

Thank you for your kind confirm! We will let you know [the] status soon.  
(text 2-7-A)

In 7-4-E, the noun *invoice* was specified by the epithet *original*; thus, it could have been modified by the determinative deictic *the*. Likewise, the other nouns *future*, *buyer*, and *status* could have been accompanied by *the* as they may have been specific in the discourse shared by the writer and recipient. Nonetheless, the writers elected not to use deixis. The omission of a deictic *the* with the seeming purpose of making the message concise is seen most clearly in the following example:

Please adjust NTH PO#2011-16 as below:

1- Add in:

a. OASIS PRO 65 ACID BATHROOM CLEANER 10 ctn

b. WASH N WALK 10 LIT 10 can

2- Reduce [the] quantity of item ECO-STAR SOFT C 20 LT 48 can (instead of 72 can)

(text 3-1-A)

Along with the use of numerals to organise the text, the ellipsis of the deictic *the* in front of *quantity* seemed to make the text appear a concise note.

In addition to this ellipsis, the non-specific deictic *a/an* was also often left out:

I am fully aware of your great effort in preparing the outdoor samples in such [a] short period (*text 6-4-U*)

We had arranged for [a] test run tomorrow (*text 3-10-D*)

Today Mr. CC have [a] meeting in HCMC so can you wait until tomorrow? (*text 7-9-A*)

#### 4.6.6 Substitution

A variant of ellipsis in terms of cohesive relation is substitution (Martin, 2009), which was found in four texts (about 1% of texts):

If you would like lower price, we suggest reducing the size. If so, please provide us your target price (*text 6-9-U*)

I would like to know your opinions on this, whether or not we need to do this. If so, what should be revised (*text 8-23-N*)

We hope the third time will not happen. If it does, we are obliged to refer your case to the H&R department to terminate the contract. (*text 9-11-A*)

Deadline for submitting of the Nomination will be May 5th, 2011; if not [Company 7] will be fined with the amount of VND 10Mil. (*text 7-39-KKK*)

The substitutes *so*, *does* and *not*, according to Halliday (1994a, p. 317), serve as place-holding devices which indicate that other language items have been omitted. In the cases above, the substituted items were not a single noun, but rather the whole clauses: *If so* = *If you would like a lower price and agree to reduce the size* (6-9-U), *If so* = *If we need to do this* (8-23-N), *If it does* = *if the third time happens* (9-11-A) and *If not* = *If we do not submit the nomination on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011* (7-39-KKK).

#### 4.7 Reference

Reference is an important cohesive resource that shows how the writer introduces participants and keeps track of them in the text (Eggins, 2004, p. 33; Martin, 2009, p. 155). The analysis by the coders showed that exophoric reference constituted the majority (81.8%), followed by anaphoric reference (17.3%) while esphoric reference and cataphoric reference were used minimally. Homophoric reference was not

employed in any instances (details of the distribution of reference are shown in Table 41).

**Table 41 - Distribution of reference**

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
exophoric	1439	81.8%
anaphoric	304	17.3%
esphoric	9	0.5%
cataphoric	8	0.5%
homophoric	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1760</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.7.1 Exophoric reference

The analysis of the data strongly indicates that exophoric reference, that is, items whose identity can be retrieved from outside the text (Paltridge, 2006, p. 132) was the most common type of reference use (slightly more than 80%). This tendency of relying on exophoric reference shows the writer’s and recipient’s orientation to their shared knowledge of the situational context. Exophoric reference was constructed in various ways, with the most common being second-person singular/plural, first-person plural and first-person singular (see Table 42).

**Table 42 - Exophoric reference**

<b>Exophoric Reference</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>first-person singular</b>	I, my, me, mine	371	25.7%
<b>first-person plural</b>	we, our, us, ours	462	32%
<b>second-person singular/plural</b>	you, your, yours	563	39%
<b>singular neuter</b>	it	1	0.06%
<b>demonstratives</b>	this, that, these, there	42	2.9%
<b>Total</b>		<b>1439</b>	<b>100%</b>

While theme analysis shows that first-person exophoric reference used as topical themes outnumbered second-person exophoric reference three to one (see section 4.4), Table 42 reveals that second-person exophoric reference (nearly 40%) was

actually used nearly as much as first-person exophoric reference (nearly 58%) when non-theme positions were taken into account:

As per our discussion on the Depot Contract for your containers at our terminal, Can you please help to check some of the terms and service as follows. We will come back with our draft contract offer ASAP. (*text 4-2-F*)

Our staff will contact you within today. (*text 7-31-C*)

Attached is my monthly report. (*text 8-44-S*)

In one text, the exophoric reference was a singular neutral personal pronoun:

Hi anh I,

I'm working on it. (*text 8-55-K*)

While most exophoric reference consisted of pronouns, a small percentage (2.9%) comprised demonstratives, which expressed a sense of shared knowledge between the writer and recipient:

Dear C [chi – older sister] O,

Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (*text 3-7-D*)

Hi Chi [older sister] O,

Hope you're doing well over there! (*text 3-15-B*)

#### **4.7.2 Anaphoric reference**

As can be seen in Table 41, anaphoric reference, items whose identities can be retrieved at an earlier point in the text (Eggins, 2004, p. 34), was used much less than exophoric reference, comprising roughly 17% of the sample. When it was used, most commonly this was done of deictic demonstratives, plural and neutral pronouns. Table 43 illustrates the distribution of this group of reference.

**Table 43 - Anaphoric reference**

<b>Anaphoric Reference</b>	<b>Subcategories</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Personal pronouns</b>	singular: masculine	he, him, his	22	7.2%
	singular: feminine	she, her	15	4.9%
	singular: neuter	it, its	52	17.1%
	plural	they, them, their	83	27.3%
<b>Demonstratives</b>	deictic	this/that/ these/those	123	40.5%
	adjunct	there	9	3%
<b>Total</b>			<b>304</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 43 indicates that anaphoric reference in the data mostly comprised neutral singular personal pronouns, plural personal pronouns and deictic demonstratives. Below are some examples of these three commonly used types of anaphoric reference:

Therefore, please kindly send us your official inquiry. It would help us send you the offer at the soonest. (*text 7-32-GG*)

Now I am waiting for the ticket agency. They said that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me ... (*text 8-13-C*)

I think that we should show the very typical/classical pictures for participants as many of them may have never seen those conditions before (*text 8-11-AA*)

Note, in example 8-13-C, *the ticket agency* was replaced by plural anaphoric reference *they* in the second clause. Similarly, in the examples below, the province *An Giang*, the company *FLS* and the Thai distributor *FL* were referred to as plural nouns by the plural anaphoric reference *they*, *their*, and *them*:

I will inform our plan to An Giang to ask them to make these surveys in An Giang, Kien Giang and Dong Thap first. (*text 8-28-FF*)

FLS would like to use SPCT as their depot gateway to concentrate their import cargo. Then they will carry this shipment by truck to Binh Phuoc. (*text 4-9-L*)

We have learnt that you have wanted to purchase spare FL rupture disc (3” AXIUS Rupture Disc) for your new project in Vietnam. You have placed the order to FL Thailand distributor through your project contact in Thailand. However, they already forwarded your demand to us in order to serve you. (*text 7-32-GG*)

Apart from the various organisations being referred to as a plural entity, in the example below (*4-4-J*), the noun *job* was also referred to as a plural noun through the use of a plural anaphoric reference *them*:

I'm seeking a new job with the good environment to contribute and develop my career, then I found out that your good company is suitable for me. So I applied it. I am sure that I could master them and do the job smoothly and will contribute a remarkable part in a success of your good company. (*text 4-4-J*)

In contrast, the anaphoric reference *it* was at times not used to represent a singular noun:

The valves ready to pack for return to Germany. Please arrange time to pack & pick up it. (*text 7-28-C*)

These are the advances courses (some are master-level) in a University, but I believe I can lower the difficulty level to help students in Vietnam understand it. (*text 5-33-III*)

Thank you for your signed invoice & sales contract. Could you scan it again because I can't see the content clearly. (*text 7-16-C*)

Anaphoric demonstrative adjuncts were rarely employed, comprising approximately 3% of anaphoric reference:

...we are planning to have a QI training course run by Dr D and Dr E in HCM on 15,16. I hope our meeting room there could fit 15 people, including 5 staff from Hanoi. (*text 8-3-C*)

They said that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me, and I can come there at the earliest tomorrow noon-afternoon. (*text 8-13-C*)

It should be noted that the anaphoric *there* in example 8-13-C was used with the motion process *come*, not *go*.

#### 4.7.3 Esphoric reference

As Table 41 reveals, only 0.5% of reference was esphoric, that is, reference whose identity can be retrieved immediately after the referent item (Eggins, 2004, p. 35):

M will put in some for the dispersers which had been used for long time in RRSB, SSHT etc. tomorrow. (*text 3-35-D*)

Here we know immediately which dispensers were being talked about from the modifier *which had been used for long time in RRSB, SSHT etc. tomorrow*. Similarly:

Would you please find Vietnam holidays for the year of 2008 as per attached. (*text 3-39-P*)

In this example, the prepositional phrase *of 2008* specified the referent item *the year*.

#### 4.7.4 Cataphoric reference

Cataphoric reference, items whose identities can be retrieved at a later point in the text (Paltridge, 2006, p. 132; Eggins, 2004, p. 35), were rarely used, constituting only 0.5% (again see Table 41), however, when used all instances of cataphoric reference were for the locative demonstrative *here*.

... here is some information on our national holidays [information followed]. (*text 8-22-K*)

...here are their opinions: [opinions followed] (*text 8-24-FF*)

Here is the expenses for March 2011 [expenses quoted]. (*text 8-58-K*)

#### 4.7.5 Homophoric reference

While homophoric reference, reference whose identity can be retrieved from the general context of culture (Paltridge, 2006, p. 132; Eggins, 2004, p. 34), was included in the coding frame, none were identified in the data.

#### 4.8 Conjunctions

Along with ellipsis and reference, conjunctions constitute an important resource to create textual cohesion (Butt et al., 2000, p. 171; Eggins, 2004, p. 47; Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 116; Martin, 2009, p. 155). In traditional grammar conjunctions are considered to be the device that combines clauses, phrases or words (Gleitman, 1965, p. 263), however, conjunctions are characterised differently in SFL. According to Butt et al. (2000, p. 171), Eggins (2004, p. 47) and Martin and Rose (2007, p. 116), conjunctions function at the clause level, not at the word level. They are “connectors which link clauses in discourse” (Martin, 2009, p. 155). As conjunctions are concerned with binding clauses in SFL, this section will not examine connectives that link below-the-clause constituents together, for example, *Thank you very much for your well arrangement (noun) and support (noun) with training concerns (text 3-11-M)* or *Please find attached (adjunct) or below (adjunct) the list of workshops (text 9-27-E)*. Instead in this analysis the framework proposed by Martin and Rose (2007) was used and the conjunctions in the data were classified into four categories, namely consequence, addition, time and comparison. On this basis it was found that consequence was the most commonly used conjunction, followed by addition, time and comparison (see Table 44).

**Table 44 - Distribution of conjunctions**

<b>Conjunctions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
consequence	209	45.5%
addition	186	40.5%
time	47	10.2%
comparison	17	3.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen in Table 44, of the 2051 clauses a total of 459 conjunctions were used. This means that on average, one conjunction was used in every four clauses. This ratio indicates a low use of conjunctions. In fact, some texts did not employ any conjunctions at all. For example:

Dear Ms. D,

Thanks for your copy invoice. Pls send original invoice to us ASAP.

Best regards,

E (*text 7-4-E*)

Dear chi [older sister],

Sorry for late reply. Pls check the attached file. (*text 1-1-A*)

Dear B,

Receipt with thanks

Regards,

A (*text 3-2-A*)

#### **4.8.1 Conjunctions of consequence**

The most common conjunctions, those of consequence, consist of five sub-groups in SFL (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In the current data they were identified by the coders to be distributed as follows:

**Table 45 - Distribution of conjunctions of consequence**

Conjunctions of consequence	Examples		Frequency	Percentage	Total
	Informal or neutral	Formal			
Cause-reason	because		16	7.7%	23%
	as		23	11%	
		since	9	4.3%	
Cause-purpose	so that		7	3.3%	6.2%
	so		6	2.9%	
Cause-effect	so		25	12%	19%
		therefore	7	3.3%	
		thus	4	1.9%	
		hence	4	1.9%	
Concession	but		20	9.6%	15.4%
		however	8	3.8%	
		despite	1	0.5%	
		although	2	1%	
		even though	1	0.5%	
Condition	if		75	35.9%	36.4%
	as long as		1	0.5%	
<b>Total</b>			<b>209</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 45 shows that conjunctions of condition constituted the biggest group of conjunctions of consequence (more than 35%). Below are some examples:

If you issue invoice in Feb., we will have a problem with auditing the accounts.  
(text 7-6-E)

He is afraid that if docs is unclear he company will be fine (text 4-1-A)

If all are agreed, we will send the original copies to you within this afternoon.  
(text 4-11-R)

Furthermore, informal or neutral conjunctions of consequence (e.g., *so, but, because*) outnumbered the formal ones (e.g., *therefore, thus, hence, however*) four to one (83% vs. 17%) (as shown in Table 45). Comparing the following examples, we can see the

difference in the tenor distance between the writer and recipient manifested by the choice of conjunctions *but* versus *however*:

I believe that H will answer our/your tel calls for pending works, but refrain from putting him on email CC list any more. (*text 1-5-H*)

Thanks for your quick action! However, for the AEROSHELL FLUID 41, we need packing size of 1 liter/can. (*text 2-6-A*)

You have placed the order to FL Thailand distributor through your project contact in Thailand. However, they already forwarded your demand to us in order to serve you. (*text 7-32-GG*)

Using the formal-informal differentiation criteria proposed by Eggins (2004, p. 101), we can see that the informal tenor of *1-5-H* was characterised by the choice of the informal conjunction *but*. This informal tenor was also exemplified by the use of the abbreviation *tel*, which shows the frequent contact between the interactants and the direct instruction expressed by the congruent imperative (*refrain from putting him on email CC list any more*). In contrast, texts *2-6-A* and *7-32-GG* demonstrated a distant/formal tenor illustrated by the choice of the formal conjunction *However*. Different from the hedge-less language of *1-5-H*, the formal tenor of *2-6-A* was expressed through politeness *Thanks for your quick action* while the lack of frequent contact between the interactants in text *7-32-GG* appears to be represented by the careful explanation of the context *You have placed the order to FL Thailand distributor through your project contact in Thailand*. As Table 45 shows, the informal conjunction *but* was used twice as often as the formal conjunction *however*.

Similarly, the tenor differences were also manifested in the following examples through the different choices of *so* and *therefore*:

Hi Chi [older sister] O,

Hope you're doing well over there!

As M is preparing a list of things that we need you to hand-carry back to VN for Inst. so I will send it to JJ and cc you tomorrow. (*text 3-15-B*)

Dear Mr. L,

Beginning June 1, 2009, [Company 9] will be using the Solutions series by Oxford University Press (OUP) for the teenagers' program (YL 1-6) in place of American Headway and Grammar Sense. Therefore, you are cordially invited to the textbook transition and teaching workshop. (*text 9-31-U*)

As Eggins (2004) observes, the linguistic realisations of a text are significant indicators of the tenor. In fact, the choices of the conjunctions *so* versus *therefore* in the two texts above corresponded with the selection of other lexico-grammatical realisations. Whereas in *3-15-B* the frequency of contact and a certain level of affective involvement were realised by the kinship term *chi* (older sister), the distance between the interactants in *9-31-U* was manifested by the formal salutation *Mr.* Moreover, while both instances included a demand for goods and services (i.e., the recipient in *3-15-B* was required to hand-carry things; the recipient in *9-31-U* was asked to attend a workshop), the way the commands were expressed differed in terms of directness. Whereas in *3-15-B* the command was direct with the selection of the subject *we* and modality *need* conveying a strong sense of obligation, the command in *9-31-U* was tempered by the low-obligation mood adjunct *cordially* and was expressed through the use of the passive voice, with the agent demanding goods and services being hidden. In accordance with these differences, the choice of conjunctions was another linguistic consequence of the tenor: The selection of the informal conjunction *so* was consistent with the informal tenor in *3-15-B*, whereas the choice of the formal conjunction *therefore* aligned with the formal tenor in *9-31-U* (see chapter 5 for further discussion). As indicated in Table 45, the informal conjunction *so* was employed four times as frequently as the formal conjunction *therefore*.

In one case, two conjunctions of consequence, one informal and one formal, were simultaneously employed to indicate the relation of concession:

I know that the deadline for submitting is yesterday, but, however, it should be sent to you even late. (*text 8-12-T*)

In another case, the preposition *despite* was used as a conjunction that functions in a similar way to *although* (i.e., followed by a clause, not a noun group):

...some [Company 5] members were seen using tissue in the WCs to dry their hands instead of using the hand dryers dispite the tissue dispensers were purposely mounted away from the washing areas. (text 5-25-LLL)

In some instances, hypotactic conjunctions of cause-reason *as* was used together with paratactic conjunction of cause-effect *hence/so* (see more in-depth discussion in section 4.5):

As we had placed order in the past (April 2010) with prices and packing size as below:

1. For AEROSHELL FLUID 41, please quote us in 1 liter/can
2. MOBIL JET OIL II, please maintain the price of 9.6 usd/can

Hence, please advise us the most appropriate offer. (texts 2-10-A, 2-14-A)

As M is preparing a list of things that we need you to hand-carry back to VN for Inst. so I will send it to JJ and cc you tomorrow. (text 3-15-B)

In one instance, it was unclear whether the writer meant to use the conjunction *so that* to express the relation of effect or purpose:

Is there any other solution ? beacuse we have to operate all Air compressors (4 sets) for our production so that we can not stop this Air compressor for along time ? (text 7-1-A)

Within this context, it seemed that the clause *we cannot stop this Air compressor for a long time* was the effect of the clause *we have to operate all Air compressors (4 sets) for our production*. While this cause-effect relationship was signalled by the conjunction of cause *because*, the conjunction of purpose *so that* seemed to project the clause *we cannot stop this Air compressor for a long time* as a purpose of the preceding clause. Nonetheless, if the conjunction the writer had intended was *so*, then we would have a case of the hypotactic conjunction *because* used together with

the corresponding paratactic conjunction *so* in the same sentence, similar to examples 2-10-A, 2-14-A and 3-15-B above.

In a different scenario, *so* was found to be used as a conjunction of purpose instead of effect:

Please send proforma invoice ASAP so I can arrange deposit payment to your account. (*texts 6-25-U, 6-28-U*)

And we would appreciated if you could reserve some time in your most convenience during this week so we can present our trial result report (*text 3-31-D*)

...when you submit the application, please let me know, so I can send the letter to PACCOM. (*text 8-33-K*)

#### 4.8.2 Conjunctions of addition

The second largest group of conjunctions comprised those of addition, with the informal-neutral conjunction *and* being used the most (83.3%) followed by *also* (10.2%) and *or* (3.8%). Formal conjunctions accounted for a small percentage (see Table 46).

**Table 46 - Distribution of conjunctions of addition**

Conjunctions of addition		Frequency	Percentage
Informal or neutral	Formal		
and		155	83.3%
also		19	10.2%
or		7	3.8%
	moreover	2	1.1%
	besides	2	1.1%
	furthermore	1	0.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>186</b>	<b>100%</b>

As presented in Table 46, it is clear that informal and neutral conjunctions of addition occurred far more frequently than the formal ones. In particular, approximately 10% of the instances of *and* were in ampersand:

M is very busy & can't go there tomorrow (*text 3-6-X*)

Once the date is confirmed & approved I will cc to all the respective department heads for references and supports. (*text 3-34-D*)

Please arrange time to pack & pick up it. (*text 7-28-C*)

Formal conjunctions of addition were found in only a few instances (less than 3%):

Please confirm me the shipping schedule soon. Moreover, I can see you corrected some points in the contract, and we would like to make sure that we can receive the equipment with COC (*text 2-15-A*)

...we can present our trial result report and further more we can discuss on our Partnership agreement (*text 3-31-D*)

HK has only 4.8cm tape and our local one has 7.2cm i.o of 7.5cm. Pls help to check if 7.2cm is acceptable? Besides, the printed tapes are not popular and they don't usually have stock. (*text 6-7-U*)

### 4.8.3 Conjunctions of time

The third group of conjunctions was those of time, constituting 10.2% of the total. Among these, hypotactic conjunction *then* (40.4%) and paratactic conjunction *when* (34%) were the most frequently used. Table 47 illustrates the distribution of this group.

**Table 47 - Distribution of conjunctions of time**

<b>Conjunctions of time</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
then	19	40.4%
when	16	34%
while	4	8.5%
before	3	6.4%
after	3	6.4%
as soon as	1	2.1%
since	1	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

As presented in Table 47, *then* and *when* were the most used conjunctions of time:

...my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer when finish the installations & services of Nha Trang. (*text 3-6-X*)

This form should be one A4 page as a checklist for Doctors when they want to present a case to us via telephone. (*text 8-23-N*)

I 'm seeking a new job with the good environment to contribute and develop my career, then I found out that your good company is suitable for me. (*text 4-4-J*)

FLS would like to use SPCT as their depot gateway to concentrate their import cargo. Then they will carry this shipment by truck to Binh Phuoc. (*text 4-9-L*)

While both examples 3-6-X and 8-23-N employed the same conjunction of time, they expressed two different types of time relationships. In 3-6-X, *when* signalled a successive time relation (i.e., the event *my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer* happened after the event *[they] finish the installations & services of Nha Trang*). In 8-23-N, however, *when* did not express this successive time relationship. In fact, *when* in 8-23-N expressed the meaning of “right at that time”. In contrast to this, the time conjunction *then* in 4-4-J and 4-9-L represented the same successive time relation as 3-6-X.

#### 4.8.4 Conjunctions of comparison

Conjunctions of comparison accounted for a small percentage of conjunctions (3.7%). Table 48 provides a summary of their distribution.

**Table 48 - Distribution of conjunctions of comparison**

Conjunctions of comparison	Frequency	Percentage
as	15	88.2%
in general	2	12.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100%</b>

Below are some examples of conjunctions of comparison:

As we have discussed, I just schedule my trip as follows (*text 8-17-N*)

It's best if all the letters go in at the same time as we submit our application.  
(*text 8-24-FF*)

In general, the pictures are typical for each condition. (*text 8-11-AA*)

#### 4.9 Lexical cohesion

The last variable to create textual cohesion was lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion concerns the way lexical items are organised in a text to establish textual continuity (M. Gonzalez, 2010, p. 601; Hoey, 1991, p. 3; Paltridge, 2006, p. 133; M. Gonzalez, 2011, p. 168; Martin, 2009, p. 155; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 642). The main kinds of lexical cohesion identified in the texts in the current data were repetition, the most common type used, followed by collocations (co-occurring words), synonymy and antonymy, which were infrequent (this distribution is shown in Table 49).

Table 49 - Distribution of lexical cohesion

Lexical cohesion	Frequency	Percentage
Repetition	668	64.7%
Co-occurring words	198	19.2%
Synonyms or words that have related meanings	146	14.1%
Antonym	21	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1033</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 49 shows that 1033 instances of lexical cohesion were identified in 303 texts, indicating the employment of an average of nearly four instances of lexical cohesion in each text. However, short texts that comprised few clauses did not demonstrate the use of lexical cohesive devices. For example:

Dear Mr. GGG,

Our staff will contact you within today.

Best regards,

C (*text 7-31-C*)

Dear B,

Receipt with thanks

Regards,

A (*text 3-2-A*)

Dear all,

This is just a reminder of the A Workshop.

Regards,

A Program Office (*text 5-1-A*)

#### **4.9.1 Repetition**

As indicated, repetition was the most frequently used lexical device, constituting about 65% of all instances of lexical cohesion. Below is typical of a text that employed repetition for lexical cohesion:

Dear Sirs & Mesdames,

As schedule, the Safety Committee meeting on 31 Mar., 2011, It will be coincided with working time of ISO core team.

So, the Safety Committee meeting will be postponed to another time. Exactly time, Safety section will inform to all of you.

For your Information,

Thank you & best regards,

J - Safety Section (*text 7-7-J*)

Table 50 below offers an analysis of the lexical cohesive devices employed in this text.

**Table 50 - Analysis of the lexical cohesion of *text 7-7-J***

Lexical cohesive device	Lexical chains of 7-7-J <sup>12</sup>
Repetition	the Safety Committee meeting – the Safety Committee meeting; the Safety Committee – Safety; time – time – time; inform – information
Synonyms or words that have related meanings	-
Antonyms	schedule – postpone
Co-occurring words	schedule – meeting; postpone – meeting

According to Halliday (1994a, p. 337), the analysis of the lexical cohesion of a text revealed its transitivity structure. Examining the lexical cohesive devices employed in *7-7-J*, we can see that repetition was selected more often than the other lexical cohesive devices. The participant *the Safety Committee meeting* was repeated twice while *time* was repeated three times. A point worth highlighting is that, while *inform* and *information* were not exactly in the same forms, they have still been identified as examples of repetition. As Halliday (1994a) maintains, “in order for a lexical item to be recognised as repeated, it need not be in the same morphological shape” (pp. 330-

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<sup>12</sup> The analysis of lexical cohesion in this section is presented holistically. Unlike the other components discussed in this chapter, lexical cohesion can hardly be seen when presented as separate linguistic items.

331). M. Gonzalez (2011, p. 170) refers to this type of repetition as derivational inexact variation, while Hoey (1991) names it “complex lexical repetition” (p. 55).

Below are more examples of the frequent use of repetition as a major device of lexical cohesion (apart from the existence of other devices):

Dear Mr A,

Please kindly check below request and quote<sup>13</sup> us:

The dead-line to send the quotation is before 08 Oct'10

rgds,

H (*text 2-4-H*)

Dear ...,

You mean we should send 1 sample of wanda bowl with lighter leaf as revised graphic to FM. Please confirm our understanding is correct.

We have sent samples twice and this is the third time. Therefore please kindly tell FM to review the graphic carefully before sample is sending for saving time and cost.

Thanks and best regards, (*text 6-14-U*)

Dear Mr. AA,

We would like to thank you very much for your supports and trust in [COMPANY 3] products and services which absolutely will help your Kitchen Operations achieve challenges in hygiene, sanitation and food safety issues. Thanks to your concern, we would like to introduce our highly

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<sup>13</sup> Examples of repeated items are underlined.

recommended products that are the most suitable products and services to assist [COMPANY] PP in meeting its cleaning and sanitation needs.

Please kindly find the attached file for the list of recommended products, including the product name, packing size, applications and use level.

If you have any interests, please contact us so that the quotation will be sent to you soon. We will be happy to serve you.

Best regards,

Y (*text 3-8-Y*)

In these texts, the repeated lexis projects the field of business that was under discussion. In *2-4-H*, the items repeated were *quote-quotation*, which coincided with the main topic of the text, namely the request to the recipient to give him/her a quotation. Likewise, *6-14-U* centred on *send-sample-graphic-time-FM* while *3-8-Y* focused on *recommended products-services-sanitation*. As Li (2010, p. 3454) asserts, the analysis of repetition can provide important insights into the construction of transitivity within a text. Along the same lines, Hoey (1991, p. 104) observes that repeated lexical items create a net of threads that weave the central theme of a text. Furthermore, repetition acts as an important topic continuity device in a text, creating immediate-mediated as well as remote-mediated ties (M. Gonzalez, 2011, p. 176). In text *2-4-H*, the item *quote* was immediately echoed in the subsequent clause by *quotation* whereas in the longer text *3-8-Y*, some items such as *services* and *sanitation* created rather remote ties with three clauses coming between the two repetitions. The use of repetition, according to M. Gonzalez (2010, p. 615; 2011, p. 176), is usually a prominent feature of spontaneous, unrehearsed conversations rather than planned written language, as it eases the information processing burden on the working memory and facilitates understanding in conversations.

#### 4.9.2 Synonymy

Whereas 65% of texts employed repetition as a lexical cohesive device, approximately 14% of texts were found to use synonymy or words that have related

meanings (including hyponymy and meronymy). Text 3-13-D below demonstrates the employment of such cohesive device:

Dear Mr. GG,

We already sent out the PILAX 130 in the sample box.

The Lime Away is the delimer for Dish machine. For the stain in toilet bowl and shower head due to water hardness you can use other product name Saniguard to clean it. I will send the sample for your trial.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-13-D*)

The analysis of the lexical cohesive patterns of this text can be seen in Table 51.

**Table 51 - Analysis of the lexical cohesion of *text 3-13-D***

<b>Lexical cohesive device</b>	<b>Lexical chains of 3-13-D</b>
Repetition	sent – send; sample – sample
Synonyms or words that have related meanings	the Pilax 130 – the Lime Away – other product – Saniguard (related to products); toilet bowl – shower head (related to the bathroom)
Antonyms	Lime – delimer
Co-occurring words	stain – clean; sample – trial

Unlike text 7-7-J (see section 4.9.1), this text relied on synonymy as its major device of lexical cohesion. The concept of synonymy employed in this study consisted of not only absolute synonymy but also near synonymy as well lexical items that have related meanings such as hyponymy and meronymy (M. Gonzalez, 2011, p. 170). Thanks to the lexis *other product*, we can induce that *Pilax 130*, *Lime Away* and *Saniguard*, around which the text centred, were product names. These items, therefore, were related in meanings to one another. In other words, they were co-meronyms of *products*. Another pair of co-meronyms identified in this text was *toilet bowl* and *shower head*, which comprised parts of the bathroom.

### 4.9.3 Co-occurring words

Co-occurring words or collocations accounted for nearly one fifth (19.2%) of the lexical cohesive devices employed in the texts (again see Table 49). Text 8-1-B below illustrates an orientation towards an expectancy lexical relation realised by the extensive employment of co-occurring lexis:

Dear [Company 8] staff,

Today is my last working day. I would like to say "Goodbye" and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me.

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future. I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)

Wish you all the best in your life, and again, thank you and goodbye.

*Warm regards,*

B (*text 8-1-B*)

The lexical cohesive ties in this text can be seen in Table 52.

**Table 52 - Analysis of the lexical cohesion of *text 8-1-B***

Lexical cohesive device	Lexical chains of 8-1-B
Repetition	today – day; working – work; thank – thank – thank; goodbye – goodbye
Synonyms or words that have related meanings	today – in future; want – would like; goodbye – farewell; appreciation – thank
Antonyms	-
Co-occurring words	my last working day – goodbye; my last working day – miss; my last working day – farewell party; my last working day – gift; work – support; work – cooperation; staff – work

The analysis above shows that this text employed substantial lexical cohesive devices. Aside from repetition and synonymy, the lexical cohesion of this text was created by the extensive selection of co-occurring words. Whereas repetition and synonymy express taxonomic lexical relations (Eggins, 2004, pp. 42-43), co-occurring words express expectancy relations (M. Gonzalez, 2010, p. 601; Eggins, 2004, pp. 42-43), specifically that there is a predictable relation between *my last working day* and *goodbye, miss, farewell party* and *gift* as well as between *work* and *staff, support* and *cooperation*.

#### 4.9.4 Antonymy

Unlike repetition, synonymy and collocation, antonymy was used much less often, accounting for only about 2% of lexical cohesive devices. Below are some examples:

Please keep us aware of any problems you have had so that prompt actions will be taken to make sure that things will go on smoothly as soon as possible. (*text 9-7-E*)

Since there are similarities in skin lesions between different conditions/diseases, I think that we should show the very typical/classical pictures for participants as many of them may have never seen those conditions before. (*text 8-11-AA*)

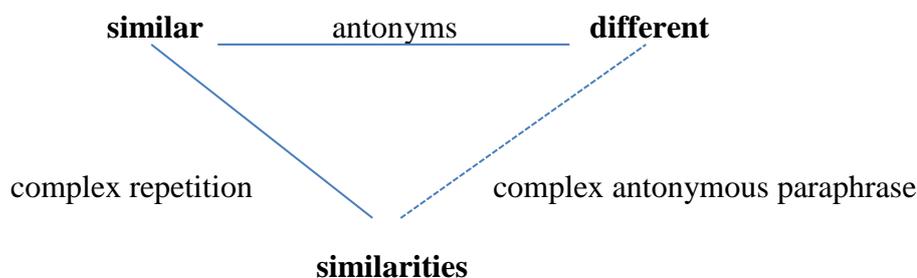
Now I am waiting for the ticket agency. They said that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me, and I can come there at the earliest tomorrow noon-afternoon. I hope that everything will be smooth, so I can come and attend our retreat in remaining days. Please forgive me for my late. (*text 8-13-C*)

Should we make some changes for the last day of the DoD course:

1. Post test session: from 8:00am to 8:30am
2. Maintain the fixed agenda: 8:30am lecture by Hn PAC (*text 8-15-C*)

Further, the antonyms identified by the coders in the data were not necessarily of the same word class, for example, *problems* (noun) vs. *smoothly* (adverb); *similarities*

(noun) vs. *different* (adjective); *earliest* (adverb) vs. *late(ness)* (noun); *changes* (noun) vs. *fixed* (adjective). They were coded based on the contrast in their meanings rather than forms. This is what Hoey (1991) characterises as “complex paraphrase” (p. 64). Figure 8 demonstrates an illustration of the complex paraphrase of the antonymous items *similarities* and *different* (8-11-AA).



**Figure 8 - Complex paraphrase of *similarities* and *different***

(adapted from Hoey, 1991)

#### 4.10 Speech functions and mood

The first two variables to express interpersonal meanings, namely the relationship between the writer and recipient, were speech functions and mood. However, the structures used to realise these functions are interrelated. Therefore, while they were coded as two different variables in the coding frame, they are presented together in this section to illustrate the interrelationship.

##### 4.10.1 Speech functions<sup>14</sup>

Halliday and Matthiessen (2013, p. 136) contend that, while there is a vast range of speech functions in the English language, they concern either giving or demanding commodity. Depending on the context, this commodity can be either goods and services or information. The exchange of goods and services give rise to the speech functions of commands and offers, whereas the exchange of information involves the speech functions of statements and questions. Accordingly, in the SFL context, commands, offers, statements and questions are not used in the ordinary sense of such terms (Fairclough, 2003, p. 108).

<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that minor clauses (e.g., *hi, yes, thanks*) and non-finite clauses (e.g., *to send us the invoice, booking the conference venue*) were not included in the analysis of speech functions and mood structures as indicated in chapter 3 and Appendix 1.

These speech functions as identified by the coders were distributed in the data as presented in Table 53.

**Table 53 - Distribution of speech functions**

<b>Commodity</b>	<b>Speech functions</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
goods and services	proposal	command	167	25.41%
		offer	50	7.6%
information	proposition	statement	426	65.4%
		question	15	1.7%
<b>Total</b>			<b>658</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 53 reveals that the analysed finite clauses tended to provide information (statements), and demand goods and services (commands). The request for information (questions) and the provision of goods and services (offers), on the other hand, accounted for a low percentage.

As shown in Table 53, a large percentage of clauses were information-giving, with about 65% being statements:

Mr. H/ [Company] BL just informed me that he can not support us this shipment at SPCT due to L/C open at Tan Thuan. (*text 4-1-A*)

However it is lucky that we have IVY in 3 colors available in our showroom. (*text 6-10-U*)

I enclosed payment proof for 1st transaction (50%). (*text 2-19-A*)

Perhaps because of the context of the data (i.e., business communication) clauses that demanded goods and services constituted a substantial proportion of the total. As can be seen in Table 53, commands made up 25.41% of all clauses:

Pls check the attached file. (*text 1-1-A*)

Please send it to me via email of hard copies. (*text 5-2-D*)

Clauses giving goods and services (i.e., offers) comprised 7.6%:

Our staff will contact you within today. (*text 7-31-C*)

[I] will let you know in very short times. (*text 1-10-H*)

Information requesting clauses (i.e., questions) accounted for only 1.7%.

Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (*text 3-7-D*)

And when will 8 units of AIRSPACE II DISP W/ LCD 6/ CASE # 113-92024629 be available for shipment? (*text 3-40-P*)

#### 4.10.2 Mood

The mood structures used to realise the above speech functions were distributed as shown in Table 54.

**Table 54 - Distribution of mood structures**

<b>Mood</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Declarative	Full declarative	438	63%
	Elliptical declarative	88	12.4%
WH interrogative		5	0.6%
Yes-No interrogative		20	2.9%
Imperative		107	16.2%
<b>Total</b>		<b>658</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 54 shows the writers relied heavily on declaratives (75.4% of texts, including full and elliptical declaratives). Imperatives were also frequently selected (16.2%). The high use of these two mood structures corresponds with the high percentage of statements and commands as illustrated in Table 53. However, Table 55 shows that declaratives did not always perform the speech function of information giving. Likewise, imperatives were not only used to demand goods and services. In fact, the mood structures (as presented in Table 55) fulfilled various speech functions.

**Table 55 - Congruency between speech functions and mood**

		<b>Speech functions – mood</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Congruency</b>	<b>Proposals and typical mood</b>	command – imperative	104	15.9%
		offer – interrogative	2	0.2%
	<b>Propositions and typical mood</b>	statement – declarative	426	64.8%
		question – interrogative	8	1.2%
<b>Incongruency</b>	<b>Proposals and non-typical mood</b>	command – modulated interrogative	15	2.3%
		command – modulated declarative	46	7.3%
		command – declarative	2	0.2%
		offer – imperative	3	0.5%
		offer – modulated declarative	45	7%
	<b>Propositions and non-typical mood</b>	statement – tag declarative	0	0
		question – declarative	7	0.7%
	<b>Total</b>			<b>658</b>

### 4.10.3 Congruency between speech functions and mood

Approximately 80% of the clauses demonstrated a congruency between speech functions and mood choices (see Table 55). This unmarked correlation between speech functions and sentence structures indicates close relationships between the writer and recipient (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, pp. 139-144), who were likely to have frequent contact and equal power relation (Eggins, 2004, p. 143-148).

#### 4.10.3.1 *Command – imperative*

Most congruent commands in imperatives were tempered by the politeness marker *please* and/or *kindly*:

Please sign it and send to us. (*text 7-35-C*)

Please send it to me via email of hard copies. (*text 5-2-DD*)

Please kindly find the attached file for the list of recommended products (*text 3-8-Y*)

Kindly have figures of SH [hotel] Mar, 2010 C&Is enclosed in the attached and help to cross check. (*text 3-23-M*)

In several cases (30% of commands in imperatives), the close relationship between the writer and recipient expressed through the use of the congruent mood imperative was enhanced by the abbreviation *pls/plz*. In example *6-37-U* below, this closeness was accentuated by an emoticon. In *1-2-Q*, the friendly relationship between the interactants was expressed by the Vietnamese kinship term *anh* (older brother), while in *5-19-EEEE*, the informality was further highlighted by the salutation *Hi*.

Plz advice on this matter. (*text 8-65-KKK*)

Just come out today, still very hot... ;) Pls see attachments. (*text 6-37-U*)

Anh [older brother] A

Pls submit to me your expense report for taxi cost Oct 2007 (*text 1-2-Q*)

Hi FFFF & GGGG: pls prepare facilities as requested. (*text 5-19-EEEE*)

The abbreviation *pls* was also identified to precede direct commands in texts where the tenor was neutral or formal.

Dear Mr A,

Pls see our agent in Uk

Pls take note : They will contact shipper to pick up this shmt (*text 2-24-P*)

Dear Ms. R,

Pls find attachment for more details. (*text 2-28-A*)

In the instances above, the salutation *Dear* and the address terms *Mr* and *Ms* signified a neutral/formal relationship. Nonetheless, the interactants might have had frequent contact, since another abbreviation was employed in *2-24-P*, namely *shmt*, indicating shared knowledge of the situational context.

While most commands in imperatives were moderated by *please*, 3% of these were very direct and not accompanied by any politeness indicators:

Pack the old valves (6 x pneumatic actuator type) at Dong Nai to return to Augsburg, Germany. (*text 7-24-C*)

Call me if you need any assistant. (*text 1-9-B*)

Contact B for further needed assistance. (*text 3-37-M*)

Morpheme *let*, which functions “to enable the expression of the subject” (Eggs, 2004, p. 177), was also substantially used in direct commands in imperatives (12%):

Let's welcome them (*text 3-12-N*)

Let's join the event to compete to get great prizes (*text 9-2-C*)

Please let me know if anything need to change (*text 3-33-D*)

Please let me know if you have any comments and questions. (*text 8-2-C*)

In the first two examples (*3-12-N* and *9-2-C*), *let's* functioned as inclusive imperative to indicate both the writer and recipient, whereas in the subsequent examples (*3-33-D* and *8-2-C*), *let* was exclusive, indicating the only the writer. The coded data revealed that most commands with the morpheme *let* were exclusive imperatives.

#### 4.10.3.2 Offer – interrogative

As can be seen in the examples listed below, the writer offered goods and services to the recipient: *ask CDC Hanoi to arrange a meeting* and *do it now*. While the two clauses differed in subjects, they both involved the writer (*me, I*) as the crucial agent responsible for the success of the offer. The interrogative mood, which provided the recipients with an option of accepting or refusing the offer, put them in an authority position.

Do you need me to ask CDC Hanoi to arrange a meeting? (*text 8-2-C*)

Can I do it now? (*text 8-31-K*)

#### 4.10.3.3 Statement – declarative

As seen in Table 55, congruent statements accounted for a large percentage of speech functions, constituting approximately 65% of the total:

Attached file is a presentation on TA I prepare for the retreat. (*text 8-12-T*)

However, he can support us for future shipments (*text 4-1-A*)

Our accounting department transferred on 25 Dec 2009. (*text 7-36-C*)

#### 4.10.3.4 Question – interrogative

Congruent questions in interrogatives constituted 1.2% of speech functions:

Anh I oi [Hey brother I], do we have any sources for this expense (*text 8-61-K*)

Dear C [chi – older sister] O,

Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (*text 3-7-D*)

The informal relationship between the writer and recipient in the instances above was exemplified by the congruent, direct questions, together with the borrowing of the Vietnamese kinship term *anh, chi* and Vietnamese vocative particle *oi*.

Some direct questions were not accompanied by question marks:

Anh I oi [Hey brother I], do we have any sources for this expense, estimated, less than \$100 for 20 people: [Company 8] staff and TDH OPC staff (*text 8-61-K*)

If so, what should be revised to make it the most convenient form both for them and us. (*text 8-23-N*)

#### 4.10.4 Incongruency between speech functions and mood

Table 55 indicates that approximately 18% of clauses employed an incongruent relation between speech functions and mood choices. This choice of incongruency was likely to be influenced by tenor dimensions such as distant relationships, power differences between the writer and recipient, or low contact and involvement (Eggins, 2004, pp. 143-148). While most of these marked choices comprised

proposals (17%), only 0.7% of the incongruent choices were in relation to propositions. This marked imbalance between incongruent proposals and incongruent propositions shows that the negotiation of action received more wording attention than the negotiation of information. When the exchanges of goods and services were concerned, the writer had a tendency to select “variation in the expression of a given meaning” (Halliday, 1994a, p. 342) as a politeness strategy in order to ask the recipient to perform an action. This action could be one that benefited the writer (Lassen, 2003, p. 290):

[Please be noted that] your attendance is requested. (*text 9-5-E*)

Could you please confirm the receipt of this email? (*text 9-16-E*)

Or it could be one that benefited the recipient (Lassen, 2003, p. 290):

...you are welcome [to the banquet] if you can come on that day. (*text 1-8-T*)

...we will [...] ship a replacement to you (*text 3-4-N*)

If congruent mood structures had been selected, the above instances would have been:

**Table 56 - Illustration of congruent mood structures**

<b>Speech functions</b>	<b>Congruent mood</b>	<b>Examples</b>
command	imperative	(Please) attend the workshop. ( <i>text 9-5-E</i> ) (Please) confirm the receipt of this email ( <i>text 9-16-E</i> )
offer	interrogative	Would you like to come to the banquet? ( <i>text 1-8-T</i> ) Would you like us to ship a replacement to you? ( <i>text 3-4-N</i> )

#### **4.10.4.1 Incongruent moods for proposals**

##### **Incongruent commands**

Table 55 shows that commands were expressed by two metaphorical (incongruent) mood choices: modulated interrogative and (modulated) declarative. In other words,

modality of obligation was used together with interrogative or declarative mood structures to perform the speech function of commands.

*Command – modulated interrogative (2.3%):*

Will you confirm your mail receipt? (*text 9-1-A*)

Can you also confirm this price as well? (*text 2-9-A*)

By using polarity interrogatives, the writer provided the recipient with a choice of complying with the command or rejecting it. As Martin and Rose (2007) observe, the use of interrogatives to realise commands indicates the inequality in status between the writer and recipient. Since the grammar of interrogatives is congruently the grammar of demanding information, using this mood structure for a command positions the recipient as the one who knows the answer, “the authority in the situation” (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 229). A congruent version of the commands above would have put the writers in a position of more authority:

Please confirm your mail receipt. (*text 9-1-A*)

Please find the holidays ... (*text 3-39-P*)

Please confirm the price as well. (*text 2-9-A*)

Notably, 47% of the commands in modulated interrogatives were not accompanied by question marks:

Could you scan it again because I can't see the content clearly. (*text 7-16-C*)

KK oi, Could you please book the air ticket for me: (*text 8-21-N*)

Can you help me to make a letter for both Can Tho and An Giang the sooner the better (*text 8-29-FF*)

The absence of question marks in these incongruent commands indicated the tendency to use interrogatives as declaratives (the grammar of statements), showing the writer's expectation of the recipient's compliance with the commands.

*Command - modulated declarative (7.3%):*

...it [the report] should be submitted PD Accountant asap. (*text 3-3-A*)

Following is some information that should be noted regarding the NEF course outlines (*text 9-23-E*)

...the Cambridge Flyers Practice [...] should be corrected in class. (*text 9-14-U*)

In these examples, modality of implicit obligation *should*, which expresses a median level of obligation (see section 4.11), was used to soften the commands. With the modal operator “should”, the commands became advice, reducing the level of the writers’ imposition on the recipient. The clauses can be analysed as follows:

...it [the report]	should	be submitted	PD Accountant asap.
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite: modulated</b>	<b>Predicator</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 3-3-A*)

...that [some information]	should	be noted	regarding the NEF course outlines.
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite: modulated</b>	<b>Predicator</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 9-23-E*)

...the Cambridge Flyers Practice	should	be corrected	in class.
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Finite: modulated</b>	<b>Predicator</b>	<b>Complement</b>

(*text 9-14-U*)

As declaratives, these clauses foregrounded the subject of “things” (i.e., *the report, the information, the Cambridge Flyers Practice*), which tempered the illocutionary force of the commands. Together with the subjects of “things”, the passive predicator obscured the agency of the commands, objectifying the instructions. In Eggins’ (2004) words, these clauses are “a covert attempt to get people to do things without having to take responsibility for issuing the command” (p. 186). If imperatives had been used, the commands would have been much more direct:

Please submit it to PD Accountant asap. (*text 3-3-A*)

Please note the information regarding the NEF course outlines. (*text 9-23-E*)

Please correct the Cambridge Flyers Practice in class (*text 9-14-U*)

In some modulated declaratives, the commands appeared to give information:

You can send us a Purchase request from now (*text 3-32-D*)

[Please register at least one day prior to workshop dates.] You can email me (E@[Company 9].edu.vn) or send me a text message (xxxx 55 55 96). (*text 9-20-E*)

Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated. (*text 9-10-E*)

In the south you will visit HCM PAC and OPCs on Feb 14. (*text 8-2-C*)

Despite the disguise of their forms, these clauses in fact demanded goods and services. As Martin and Rose (2007, p. 223) point out, while negotiating information involves a verbal response, negotiating goods and services results in actions. It could be seen that the aforementioned clauses required the recipient to perform actions, such as to send a purchase request (*3-32-D*), email or send a text message (*9-20-E*), attend the workshop (*9-10-E*) or visit HCM PAC and OPCs (*text 8-2-C*). The subject choice of these clauses was *you(r)*, highlighting the focus of the negotiation of action on the recipient. By borrowing the grammatical meaning of declaratives (i.e., giving information), the above clauses utilised an indirect way to realise commands (i.e., demanding goods and services).

Some commands in modulated declaratives were embedded in a clause complex as a dependent clause to enhance the primary clause of appreciation *I (would) appreciate*:

I appreciate if you can give your cooperation in sharing support as her email. (*text 5-17-TTT*)

I would appreciate you can provide me with the useful information relating to [company 4] services ... (*text 4-8-M*)

...we would appreciate if you could reserve some time in your most convenience during this week (*text 3-31-D*)

In some other modulated declaratives, the commands were framed with the modality of inclination *would* and the verb of desiring *like*:

...we would like to ask each partner to send us a one-page brief about their organization/ activities. (*text 8-51-VV*)

I would like to ask for your help to forward this email ... (*text 5-21-KKKK*)

We would like to ask for your approval for delaying this order till vessel date July 9th i/o June 30th as planned. (*text 6-19-U*)

The subject typically specifies the one who is responsible for realising an offer or command (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). However, unlike typical commands, the subjects of these command clauses, which comprised first-person reference *I* and *we*, were dissociated from the actor, that is *you*. Nonetheless, there were elements in the clauses that specified the recipients as the ones responsible for the success of the proposals: *each partner* (8-51-VV), *your help* (5-21-KKKK) and *your approval* (6-19-U).

#### *Command – declarative functioning as interrogative*

In one example, the command was expressed by a declarative that functioned as an interrogative:

K can write a letter then you sign on it? (*text 8-27-FF*)

Instead of using a modulated interrogative *Can you sign it?* as a command, the writer used the declarative *you sign on it* together with the question mark signalling an interrogative to realise the indirect command.

#### *Command – declarative*

A small number of commands were realised by the choice of incongruent declaratives:

Please you print out the new one then sign again and scan with full page same as my PO and send back us. (*text 7-16-C*)

...please you sign it & send back us for correct it. (*text 7-12-C*)

### **Incongruent offers**

Offers were realised by two incongruent moods: modulated declarative and imperative (see Table 55).

*Offer – modulated declarative (7%):*

... we will [...] ship a replacement to you (*text 3-4-N*)

We will sent draft versions to you in next few days. (*text 8-7-P*)

...[if you agree] I will send our technician team to start on the 3 Nov (*text 3-32-D*)

As can be seen from these examples, modality of readiness *will* was used together with declaratives to offer goods and services to the recipient, for example, ship a replacement (*3-4-N*), send draft versions (*8-7-P*) and send the technician team (*3-32-D*). The subject choices of these clauses were first-person reference *I* and *we*, which emphasised the role of the writer as the giver of the goods and services.

*Would like* was also used in modulated declaratives to express the writer's desire to give goods and services to the recipient:

I would like to send my monthly report Dec, 2010. (*text 8-62-WW*)

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as a suitable candidate for position. (*text 3-5-W*)

I would like to send to you the list of lawful OSHE requirements (*text 7-8-BB*)

In these offers, the subject *I* (the writer) was the one responsible for the success of the proposals: send the report (*8-62-WW*), introduce self (*3-5-W*), and send the list of lawful OSHE requirements (*7-8-BB*).

*Offer – imperative (0.5%):*

Have a good working week ahead. (*text 9-15-E*)

Have a nice weekend. (*text 9-17-E*)

...have nice weekend (*text 8-36-S*)

Although these clauses are imperatives – the grammar of commands, in fact, they expressed the speech function of offer (i.e., inviting the recipient to do something that benefits him/her (Lassen, 2003, p. 290)). The mood choice of imperatives made the offers more direct than those in declaratives, for example:

(I) Wish you all the best in your life. (*text 8-1-B*).

...we wish you all the best in the new year. (*text 5-14-RR*)

I wish each and every one of you the very best in all your future endeavors  
(*text 5-15-MMM*)

#### **4.10.4.2 Incongruent moods for propositions**

As Table 55 indicates, the incongruent mood used for propositions comprised a much lower percentage than for proposals. All of the incongruent mood choices for propositions (0.7%) concerned questions – the demand of information:

Please advise me which earliest [Company 3] shipment can be add the below available items in (*text 3-40-P*)

Please advise when I should send the hardcopy of the letter to PACCOM (*text 8-31-K*)

...let us know which one you will send first (*text 7-25-CCC*)

I would like to know your opinions on this, whether or not we need to do this.  
(*text 8-23-N*)

These indirect questions were expressed by modulated declaratives, preceded by the command clauses *Please advise me (3-40-P)*, *Please advise (8-31-K)*, *let us know (7-25-CCC)* and *I would like to know your opinions on this (8-23-N)*.

As discussed previously, the speech function of questions is to demand information whereas that of a command is to demand goods and services. In examples 3-40-P, 8-31-K and 7-25-CCC, the modulated declarative used to demand information was combined with the imperative mood to demand action *Please advise (me) and let us know*. As Martin and Rose (2007, p. 230) observe, when an imperative is used to ask for information (i.e., command the recipient to give it), it puts the writer in a position of more authority.

Example 8-23-N differed from other examples in that the command in the form of a modulated declarative *I would like to know your opinions on this* was used together with the modulated declarative *whether or not we need to do this* to ask for information. Whereas 3-40-P, 8-31-K and 7-25-CCC commanded the recipient to give the information, 8-23-N expressed the writer's willingness to learn the information from the recipient via the modality of inclination *would like*. Thus, unlike 3-40-P, 8-31-K and 7-25-CCC, the writer in 8-23-N placed the recipient in a position of authority.

Apart from modulated declaratives used as indirect questions, as seen above, there were declaratives employed as direct questions:

...that means whole set or only bull gear housing? (*text 7-1-A*)

...we have to operate all Air compressors (4 sets) for our production so that we can not stop this Air compressor for along time? (*text 7-1-A*)

In these two instances, the question marks were the only device to signal the questions; there was no inversion of subject and finite as normally seen in interrogatives. While the typical speech function of declaratives is to give information, these declaratives were used metaphorically to demand information. According to Fairclough (2003), these questions are called "declarative questions" (p. 117).

There were also some embedded questions in declaratives followed by question marks:

Please advise [...] whether RRSB has bough it from [Company 3] in the past? (*text 3-28-VV*)

...pls advise if you could provide us discount for this one? (text 2-11-A)

Pls advise you're working on this and reverting to us soon with further advice about final volume? (text 6-24-U)

Preceded by the verbal clause of projecting *Please (Pls) advise*, the questions above selected their function as embedded/indirect questions. While embedded questions are normally found in declaratives as presented in examples 3-40-P, 8-31-K, 7-25-CCC and 8-23-N earlier in this section, the embedded questions in 3-28-VV, 2-11-A, 6-24-U were realised in declaratives with question marks at the end.

#### 4.11 Modality

The next variable to identify interpersonal meanings in the data was modality. The four major types of modality identified by the coders included readiness, which appeared the most, followed by probability, obligation and “usuality”, which was used marginally (see Table 57).

**Table 57 - Distribution of modality**

<b>Modality</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
readiness	184	39.2%
probability	156	33.3%
obligation	119	25.4%
“usuality”	10	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>100%</b>

The writers employed mostly subjective selections for modality (about 94%), including both congruent and metaphorical realisations. Objective selections, on the other hand, were rarely used (about 6%). Moreover, the modality in the data manifested an implicit subjective orientation with nearly 70% being finite modals. The majority of modality expressed a median-to-high degree of modal judgement, accounting for more than 80% of modality (see Tables 58 and 59).

**Table 58 - Realisations of modality**

Kind of modality	Congruent realisations		Metaphorical realisations	
	Finite  Implicitly subjective	Adjunct or predicator  Implicitly objective	Mental clause  Explicitly subjective	Attributive clause  Explicitly objective
<b>Modality of readiness</b>	will can could would	-	I would like I want to I am pleased to I look forward to I am happy to	-
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>29.2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<hr/>				
<b>Modality of probability</b>	will can may might could	hopefully certainly	I think I hope I believe I know (I) trust	It is possible
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>22.5%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
<hr/>				
<b>Modality of obligation</b>	should could will would can must have to	be suggested be requested be obliged be urged be recommended be compulsory be in need of definitely	I/We need you to I look forward to We expect to I hope	it is best it is perfect
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>15.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<hr/>				
<b>Modality of “usuality”</b>	-	always, normally in general, etc.	-	-
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Table 59 - Values of modality**

<b>Values of modality</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Modality of readiness</b>	will I would like I want to	can could would I'm pleased to I look forward to I'm happy to	-
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>11.1%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Modality of obligation</b>	must have to be requested be obliged be urged I/We need you to be compulsory be in need of definitely it is best it is perfect	should we expect to	can could will would look forward to be suggested I hope
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>
<b>Modality of probability</b>	will I know I believe I trust certainly	can may I think	might could I hope hopefully it's possible
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>16.4%</b>	<b>8.3%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>
<b>Modality of "usuality"</b>	always, never	normally, usually, often, in general	-
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>17%</b>

### 4.11.1 Readiness

The modality of readiness was the largest group, comprising nearly 40% of the total instances of modality (as shown in Table 57). This high frequency of readiness modality indicated the writers' inclination to perform an action or to put forward a proposal. As Eggins (2004, p. 172) asserts, whereas modality of probability and “usuality” is used to argue about the probability or frequency of propositions, modality of readiness is used to argue about the inclination of proposals. Table 60 shows the congruent realisations of readiness.

**Table 60 - Congruent realisations of readiness**

	<b>Congruent realisations of readiness</b>	<b>Degree of readiness<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Implicitly subjective</b>	will	high	106	77.4%
	can	median	23	16.8%
	could	median	6	4.4%
	would	median	2	1.5%
<b>Implicitly objective</b>	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>		<b>137</b>	<b>100%</b>

The implicitly subjective modal finite *will* was extensively employed, constituting 77.4% of congruent realisations of readiness (Table 60). This conveys a high degree of readiness of the proposal:

This quantity is a compensation / replacement of the defective bottles for PH hotel, [company 3] will borrow this quantity from your stock; we will either ship a replacement to you or will document this for the reconciliation computation in the future. (*text 3-4-N*)

Schedule will be confirmed to you soon. (*text 3-25-O*)

Please keep us aware of any problems you have had so that prompt actions will be taken to make sure that things will go on smoothly as soon as possible. (*text 9-7-E*)

<sup>15</sup> The degree of readiness, probability, obligation and “usuality” in this section was drawn on Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), Eggins (2004) and Martin et al. (1997).

*Can* and *could* were less selected than *will*, accounting for approximately 20%.

Wish I can go but I must fly to Da Nang with a Tho on that day. (*text 3-20-D*)

If I am given two or three day's notice, I could attend an interview at anytime. (*text 3-5-W*)

I hope that everything will be smooth, so I can come and attend our retreat in remaining days. (*text 8-13-C*)

In SFL, *can* is a realisation of modality of ability, which is a sub-category of readiness modality (Martin et al., 1997; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). In the examples above, it can be seen that *can* was used as a low variant of inclination, with *can* expressing the writer's willingness to perform an action.

Apart from congruent realisations of readiness, metaphorical realisations were also identified as presented in Table 61.

**Table 61 - Metaphorical realisations of readiness**

	<b>Metaphorical realisations of readiness</b>	<b>Degree of readiness</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Explicitly subjective</b>	I would like	high	24	51.1%
	I look forward to	median	11	23.4%
	I am/we are pleased to	median	6	12.8%
	I am/we are happy to	median	4	8.5%
	I want to	high	2	4.3%
<b>Explicitly objective</b>	-	-	-	
<b>Total</b>			<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

This table shows all the metaphorical realisations were explicitly subjective clauses realised by the subjects *I* or *we*:

I would like to say "Goodbye" and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. (*text 8-1-B*)

I'm pleased to know that your company is now recruiting new staff. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as a suitable candidate for position. (text 3-5-W)

We look forward to welcoming you at the club. (text 9-3-C)

We will be happy to serve you. (text 3-8-Y)

#### 4.11.2 Probability

The second frequent type of modality used in the sample was probability, making up about one third of modality (33.3%). In this sub-group, roughly two thirds comprised congruent realisations, with implicitly subjective realisations *may*, *might*, *will*, *can* and *could* as well as implicitly objective realisations such as *hopefully* and *certainly* (Table 62).

**Table 62 - Congruent realisations of probability**

	<b>Congruent realisations of probability</b>	<b>Degree of certainty</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Implicitly subjective</b>	will	high	64	58.2%
	can	median	26	23.6%
	may	low	10	9.1%
	might	low	4	3.6%
	could	low	2	1.8%
<b>Implicitly objective</b>	hopefully	low	2	1.8%
	certainly	high	2	1.8%
<b>Total</b>			<b>110</b>	<b>100%</b>

Below are some examples of implicitly subjective finite modal operators used to argue for the probability of propositions:

I hope that you will find them helpful. (text 9-15-E)

I think that we can assign 4 staff to work in 15-20 minutes. (text 8-14-T)

If I may become your staff, I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development. (text 3-5-W)

While most congruent realisations of probability were implicitly subjective, four implicitly objective instances of probability modality were employed, via mood adjuncts of probability:

Hopefully, the proposal will be soon reconfirmed by PACCOM. (text 8-8-Q)

Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated. (text 9-10-E).

Apart from those congruent realisations that functioned as modal operators, the other group of probability modality was the metaphorical realisations, which were made up from the mental processes of cognition, e.g., *I think*, *I hope*, *I believe*, etc. and attributive clauses of probability, e.g., *it is possible* (Table 63).

**Table 63 - Metaphorical realisations of probability**

	<b>Metaphorical realisations of probability</b>	<b>Degree of certainty</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Explicitly subjective</b>	I hope	low	21	45.7%
	I think	median	13	28.3%
	I believe	high	5	10.9%
	I know	high	5	10.9%
	(I) trust (ellipsis)	high	1	2.2%
<b>Explicitly objective</b>	it is possible	low	1	2.2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>46</b>	<b>100%</b>

The pseudo clauses with the first person *I* and the mental processes of cognition are explicitly subjective metaphorical realisations of modality (Martin et al., 1997, p. 68; Fairclough, 2003, p. 169; Eggins, 2004, p. 175). They convey the idea that the writer is explicitly responsible for their evaluation of probability (Martin et al., 1997, p. 68; Fairclough, 2003, p. 169). For example:

I think although there is a discrepancy with our most recent SOP, the sampling is legitimate ... (text 8-5-C)

I do believe we mix up some napkins in the towel wheel. (text 3-22-D)

I know that the deadline for submitting is yesterday (*text 8-12-T*)

Trust that you are fine. (*text 3-26-M*)

Explicitly subjective metaphorical selections were sometimes used together with implicitly subjective congruent modal operator:

I hope that you will find them helpful. (*text 9-15-E*)

Whereas explicitly subjective realisations of probability modality were substantially employed, explicitly objective selections were not strongly favoured. In fact, only one explicitly objective realisation of probability was used, via the structure of an attributive clause:

...it's possible to approve an extension of Permit of Operation (*text 8-9-Q*).

#### **4.11.3 Obligation**

While modality of readiness made up about 40% of modality, modality of obligation accounted for about 25%. As modality of readiness and obligation constitute modulation, the grammar of offers and requests (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), their substantial employment reflects the texts' strong orientation to the exchange of goods and services. Table 64 illustrates the distribution of congruent realisations of obligation modality in the data as coded by the observers.

**Table 64 - Congruent realisations of obligation**

	<b>Congruent realisations of obligation</b>	<b>Degree of obligation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Implicitly subjective</b>	should	median	30	36.1%
	could	low	11	13.3%
	must	high	11	13.3%
	have to	high	7	8.4%
	can	low	6	7.2%
	would	low	4	4.8%
	will	low	3	3.6%
<b>Implicitly objective</b>	be requested	high	3	3.6%
	be in need of	high	3	3.6%
	be obliged	high	1	1.2%
	be urged	high	1	1.2%
	be recommended	low	1	1.2%
	be compulsory	high	1	1.2%
	definitely	high	1	1.2%
<b>Total</b>			<b>83</b>	<b>100%</b>

The finite modal operator *should* was frequently used, contributing nearly 36.1% of the congruent realisations of obligation (Table 64). This implicitly subjective modal conveys a median degree of obligation:

The attached file is the revised reconcil for PDL in Jan – 2009. Please crosscheck again. If there was not any adjustment, it should be submitted PD Accountant asap. (*text 3-3-A*)

I know that the deadline for submitting is yesterday, but, however, it should be sent to you even late. (*text 8-12-T*)

While negotiating with the hotel for a check out late (latest 12:30pm), we should arrange the course finishes before 12:00am. (*text 8-15-C*)

In some cases, the modal finite *should* was combined with an explicitly subjective mental clause of probability (e.g., *I think*) to temper the obligation. For instance:

I think that we should show the very typical/classical pictures for participants as many of them may have never seen those conditions before. (text 8-11-AA)

On their suggestions I think that we should get along well with their situations. (text 8-24-FF)

Apart from *should*, the other modal finites of obligation used were *can*, *could*, *will*, *would*, *must* and *have to*. Below are some illustrations:

...can I use your electronic signature? (text 8-26-K)

And we would appreciate if you could reserve some time in your most convenience during this week so we can present our trial result report (text 3-31-D)

Will you confirm your mail receipt? (text 9-1-A)

Would be so kind to book a hotel room for me during my trip in HCMC? (subject ellipsis, text 8-44-N)

Wish I can go but I must fly to Da Nang with a Tho on that day. (text 3-20-D)

With Can Tho we have to wait till 31 Mar to make an official letter. (text 8-28-FF)

The other group of the congruent realisations consisted of the implicitly objective selections of obligations, which were in form of predicators (e.g., *requested*, *obliged*, *urged*, *compulsory* etc.) and mood adjunct (e.g., *definitely*). Most carry a high degree of obligation:

For sake of office management, you are urged / requested to do the same as mine. (text 3-36-N)

We hope the third time will not happen. If it does, we are obliged to refer your case to the H&R department to terminate the contract. (text 9-11-A)

Please be noted that your attendance is requested. (text 9-5-E)

...your attendance is compulsory. (text 9-29-U)

In some cases, low-obligation modality was combined with an adjunct to intensify the obligation. For example:

I strongly believe that this workshop will be greatly beneficial for our teaching. Therefore, your attendance is strongly recommended. (text 9-13-E)

In addition to the congruent realisations, obligation was also expressed by metaphorical realisations, as illustrated in Table 65.

**Table 65 - Metaphorical realisations of obligation**

	<b>Metaphorical realisations of obligation</b>	<b>Degree of obligation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Explicitly subjective</b>	I/we need (you) to	high	15	41.7%
	I look forward to	low	14	38.9%
	I hope	low	1	2.8%
	We expect to	median	1	2.8%
<b>Explicitly objective</b>	it is suggested	low	3	8.3%
	it is best	high	1	2.8%
	it is perfect	high	1	2.8%
<b>Total</b>			<b>36</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most used metaphorical realisation of obligation is the explicitly subjective mental clause *I/We need (you) to ...*, which, according to Halliday (1994a, p. 362), expresses a high degree of obligation.

As M is preparing a list of things that we need you to hand-carry back to VN for Inst. so I will send it to JJ and cc you tomorrow. (text 3-15-B)

One of things we need to do is making standardized reports for sites, including word and ppt template. (text 8-7-P)

I am doing TCOC practise now and need your help to share me the TCOC file last month you made for IH [HOTEL] BKK and presented it during the Advance Training Workshop in BKK (Group A) for my learning and reference. (text 3-26-M)

Another commonly used metaphorical selection was *I look forward to*. For example:

Please find attached the memo on Power Point Briefing. I look forward to receiving your confirmation. (text 9-21-E)

While *I look forward to* was previously identified as a metaphorical realization of readiness, it was also coded as obligation. As a case in point, whereas the clause We look forward to welcoming you at the club (text 9-3-C) expressed the meaning of readiness (i.e., we are keen to welcome you), the clause I look forward to receiving your confirmation in 9-21-E above conveyed a sense of obligation (i.e., I expect you to confirm).

Similar to *I look forward to*, *I hope* was coded as performing two functions: obligation and probability. For instance, *I hope* was used as a mental clause of probability in the following text:

Now I am waiting for the ticket agency. They said that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me, and I can come there at the earliest tomorrow noon-afternoon. I hope that everything will be smooth, so I can come and attend our retreat in remaining days. (text 9-13-C)

Nonetheless, in the following example, *I hope* conveys the sense of obligation, specifically warning the recipient not to cancel classes again:

This letter is to ask for a plausible explanation of your not coming to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1, which caused difficulty to the admin work and harm to the school reputation. This was the second time you had cancelled these same classes without any notice (the first time was on March 4,2006), let alone the fact that you have cancelled other weekend classes before. We hope the third time will not happen. If it does, we are obliged to refer your case to the H&R department to terminate the contract. (text 9-11-A)

In one instance, a congruent, implicitly objective mood adjunct of obligation (*definitely*) was used together with a metaphorical, explicitly subjective mental clause (*we expect*) to enhance the sense of obligation:

With 2 CAEs [Corporate Account Executives] taking care of our business growth, we definitely expect to achieve our challenging targets in 2008 and the coming future. (text 3-12-N)

There were also explicitly objective selections of obligation modality by which the writers distanced themselves from the obligation (2.58%). The use of the structure *it is... enables* the writer to “hide behind an ostensibly objective formulation” (Eggins, 2004, p. 175).

Would be so kind to book a hotel room for me during my trip in HCMC? It is perfect if I can stay at a hotel near our office. (*text 8-44-N*)

It's best if all the letters go in at the same time as we submit our application. So I'll include the letter with out application and when we submit it, you can send it on the same day. (*text 8-32-MM*)

It is suggested that the Cambridge Flyers Practice, which takes about 5 to 10 minutes, should be done. (*text 9-14-U*)

#### 4.11.4 “Usuality”

The least used modality was “usuality”, occurring in only a few instances (0.87%). All of these instances were implicitly objective (Table 66).

**Table 66 - Distribution of modality of “usuality”**

“Usuality”	Frequency	Percentage
always	3	30%
normally	2	20%
in general	2	20%
usually	1	10%
often	1	10%
never	1	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

Below are some examples of “usuality” modality:

Normally, it takes 01 months since application was officially submitted. (*text 8-9-Q*)

Besides, the printed tapes are not popular and they don't usually have stock. (*text 6-7-U*)

In general, the pictures are typical for each condition. (*text 8-11-AA*)

## 4.12 Terms of address

The last variable that manifested important dimensions in the relationships between the writers and recipients was terms of address. This included such terms as first names, which were used the most, followed by titles + first names, group address terms, kinship terms and terms of endearment. Table 67 illustrates the distribution of terms of address in the data as coded by the observers.

**Table 67 - Distribution of terms of address**

<b>Terms of address</b>	<b>Frequency<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>Percentage</b>
first names	105	34.7%
groups	92	30.1%
titles + first names	48	16%
Vietnamese kinship/respect terms	32	10.1%
texts with no terms of address	27	8.6%
endearment	1	0.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>100%</b>

First names constituted the most frequently used address terms in the current data, accounting for 34.7% of the total. Among the first names, it is worth pointing out that the vocatives of eight texts (2.7%) employed Vietnamese particle *oi* (hey). These vocatives were formed by first names plus *oi*. This borrowing of the Vietnamese friendly vocative particle highlighted the close interpersonal relationship between the writer and the recipient.

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<sup>16</sup> A few texts included more than one terms of address. For example:

Dear O,

My travel application form as requested.

To all other teammates,

For sake of office management, you are urged / requested to do the same as mine.

Best regards,

N (*text 3-36-N*)

T oi, I did not receive your report from Nghe An... (*text 8-38-S*)

K oi: Can you help me to make a letter... (*text 8-29-FF*)

KK oi, Could you please book the air ticket for me... (*text 8-21-N*)

Other examples of first-name vocatives used with Vietnamese lexis included:

CHUC MUNG M, T va DD [Congratulations, M, T and DD]

Congratulations,

A (*text 8-67-A*)

Chao anh MM va Y [Hello older brother MM and Y],

So when you submit the application, please let me know, so I can send the letter to PACCOM. (*text 8-33-K*)

An example related to text 8-67-A above in terms of field was:

Congratulations! WW, U and I for your tireless efforts in the fighting with staircase climbing. Hehe.

O (*text 8-68-O*)

This text did not begin with a conventional salutation “Dear X”, “Hello X” or “Hi X”. The first-name address terms *WW*, *U*, and *I* were instead incorporated into the body of the message, conveying a sense of familiarity between the writer and recipients. This closeness was also exemplified by the inclusion of the giggling *Hehe*.

Other texts that exhibited the same use of address terms included:

Well noted, H.

Cheers,

Q (*text 8-20-Q*)

Thanks O and P for making the detailed plans for Binh Chanh and Thai Binh.  
[...]

Cheers,

C (*text 8-5-C*)

According to Crystal (2006a), vocatives placed in the body of the message are more informal than those placed at the head of the message. In these two examples, the familiarity between the writer and recipients manifested by use of vocatives in the body of the texts was enhanced by the choice of the friendly closing *Cheers*, the elliptical clause *well-noted*, as well as the informal *thanks*.

Similarly, some texts began with names alone without the initial endearment *Dear*, or greetings *Hello* or *Hi*:

N & A

I believe that H will answer our/your tel calls for pending works, but refrain from putting him on email CC list any more.

I will take care of all his tasks as usual.

Best regards,

H (*text 1-5-H*)

CC,

We had arranged for test run tomorrow, the German technician will arrive tomorrow. We will work it out then will ask help from you for Haithai supports in details. [...]

With best regards,

D (*text 3-10-D*)

In contrast, one email started with just *Hi* and no personal names:

Hi,

Since I'll be leaving for Hongkong on this Sunday, 26/6 and will only resume to work on July 4th, please help to contact RC directly for up-date regarding samples and AWB no. for now. Thanks!

Kind regards, (*text 6-21-U*)

While the message began with the informal *Hi*, it closed with the formal farewell *kind regards*. A similar phenomenon could also be identified in texts *1-5-H* and *3-10-D* above, which had personalised greetings (first names *N & A* and *CC*) but formal closings *Best regards (1-5-H)* and *With best regards (3-10-D)*. In fact, examining the body of the message, we can see that its lexico-grammatical realisations aligned with the informal greeting. For example, in *1-5-H*, the abbreviation *tel* was used together with the informal conjunction *but*, and the congruent imperative *refrain from putting him on email CC list any more* to realise the command. Likewise, in *6-21-U*, the informal greeting *Hi* was in accordance with the contraction *I'll*, the direct imperative *please help to contact RC directly for up-date* to express the command, and the informal expression of gratitude *thanks*. The consistency between the informal greetings and the informal language of the body of the messages seemed to put the formal closings out of place. However, Crystal (2006a) offers an explanation for this inconsistency. He observes that closings in institutional emails are often automatically generated, which means the lack of modification to suit different interpersonal relations.

Moreover, approximately 30% of address terms appeared in salutations to address groups of recipients. Some of the examples included:

Dear colleagues, (*text 8-10-Y, 8-40-S, 8-41-S*)

Dear All Institutional staffs, (*text 3-12-N*)

Hi all, (*text 1-3-H, 8-11-AA, 8-14-T, 6-18-U*)

Whereas Eggins (2004, p. 101) maintains that the choice of address terms is an important area that differentiates the informal from the formal, the collective

greetings showed that the choice of vocatives did not necessarily provide an accurate reflection of the tenor of the text. For example, some texts used formal vocatives:

Dear Sirs & Madams, (*text 7-8-BB*)

Dear Sirs & Mesdames, (*text 7-7-J*)

Dear Sirs & Mesdames, (*text 7-11-J*)

However, an examination of the message revealed the discrepancy between the formality of the salutation and the neutral-informal language of the body message:

Dear Sirs & Mesdames,

Pls, score for STOP cards in Apr.,2011 and send the result to Safety Section within afternoon 11 May.,2011.

Pls, kindly be informed for the meeting:

Date: 12 May.,2011 (Thursday)

Time: From 13:30 PM

Place: 5F room- Admin building.

Attendants: S.T.O.P committee members.

Thank you & best regards,

J (*text 7-11-J*)

An analysis of this text demonstrated that, aside from the formal choice of collective vocatives *Sirs* and *Mesdames* and the comment adjunct *kindly*, most lexicogrammatical choices of the text ranged from neutral to informal. This could be seen in the use of abbreviations *pls* (twice) and *Apr.*, and the selection of direct imperatives to express commands *score for STOP cards in Apr.,2011, send the result to Safety Section within afternoon 11 May.,2011, and be informed for the meeting.* Therefore, while it was tempting to believe that the vocatives *Sirs* and *Mesdames* projected formal tenor dimensions, the language in the body message did not support this initial impression.

In another scenario, while the email was sent to multiple recipients, one particular recipient was identified and addressed by the Vietnamese kinship term *co* (auntie), showing the writer's respect to this older recipient:

Dear *co* A [auntie A] and all our colleagues,

Please find attached file the zipped file with materials for basic nursing course. I have tried my best, but I believe that some errors still exist somewhere. (*text 8-30-T*)

This choice of Vietnamese kinship terms was found to be quite common in the data. Table 67 showed that 10.1% of the texts employed kinship terms as terms of address, treating the recipients as family members:

Dear Chi DD [older sister DD], (*text 8-17-N*)

Dear KK and Anh K [older brother K], (*text 8-21-N*)

Anh I [older brother I], (*text 8-50-V*)

Anh A [older brother A] (*text 1-2-Q*)

Kinship terms used in salutations were not only in full forms, but also in abbreviations, showing a higher degree of informality:

Dear A. A [Anh A - older brother A] (*text 3-6-X*)

Dear A. B [Anh B – older brother B] (*text 4-6-U, 4-3-U*)

Dear C. O [Chi O – older sister O], (*text 3-7-D*)

While Vietnamese kinship terms were employed quite substantially, an examination of the response email in the message chain revealed that the responder did not always employ the same kinship term in return. Below is an example:

Initiating email:

Dear Chi DD [older sister DD],

How are you getting on?

I would like to plan my trip to HCM City in April to attend the monthly meeting and OPC visits at Children Hospital No 1 and 2.

As we have discussed, I just schedule my trip as follows:

- Sunday April 3rd: Flight to HCM
- Monday April 4th: Attend the monthly meeting at Children Hospital No1
- Tuesday and Thursday April 5th and 7th: Visit Ped OPC at Children Hospital No2
- Wednesday April 6th: Visit Ped OPC at Children Hospital No1
- Friday morning: Discuss with Dr. DD at [Company 8] office about activities for Peds
- Friday afternoon: Flight back to Hanoi

I have discussed with Dr. H about this trip and He supports my plan and need the confirmation from you.

So, could you please take a look at my schedule and please inform me and Dr. H whether it is ok.

Thank you very much,

Regards,

N (*text 8-17-N*)

Response email:

hi N,

that sounds fine. If you need help with hotel booking let K know. It's probably most convenient to stay nearby the office on xxx Vo Van Tan, dist 3

changes to schedule:

Mon: office

Tues: grand round

Wed/Fri: peds 1

Tues/Thurs: peds 2

will see you in hcmc!

DD (*text 8-18-DD*)

According to Eggins (2004, p. 101), the use of non-reciprocal vocatives is an important indicator of unequal power relationships. While the writer of the initiating email addressed the recipient with deference by positioning her higher than him in the social hierarchy *Dear Chi DD [older sister DD]*, the responder replied informally, addressing the recipient by the first name *hi N*. In addition to the choice of vocatives, there were other lexico-grammatical features of the two texts that supported this. Whereas *8-17-N* employed full clauses and generally conformed to the rules of capitalisation, *8-18-DD* had one elliptical clause *will see you in hcmc* and did not seem to observe capitalisation rules closely (*hi N, that sounds fine, changes to schedule, will see you in hcmc*). Moreover, the farewell of *8-17-N* was quite formal with the pre-closing *Thank you very much* and the closing *Regards*, while *8-18-DD* did not include a conventional closing. Added to this, the writer of *8-17-N* used words in their full forms (e.g., *Monday, Tuesday, etc.*) whereas the responder replied in abbreviations when referring to the same items (i.e., *Mon, Tues, etc.*). All of these lexico-grammatical features, together with the selection of non-reciprocal vocatives, indicate an unequal power relationship between the communicators.

The interpersonal relationship manifested by the choice of Vietnamese kinship terms was further highlighted when kinship terms were not only used in salutation but also in signatures. This combination signified the establishment of solidarity as well as showing the writer's deference to the recipient. In the instances below, the writer called himself *em* (younger brother), treating himself as a family member of the recipient and simultaneously putting himself in a lower position than the recipient, who was referred to as *anh* (older brother) or *chi* (older sister):

Anh I oi [Hey older brother I],

Here is the list of trainees who need financial support from [Company 8] and the draft budget.

Em K [younger brother K] (*text 8-47-K*)

Hi anh I [older brother I],

I'm working on it.

Em K [younger brother K] (*text 8-55-K*)

Chi DD oi [Hey older sister DD],

Here are some letters for your reference.

Em K [younger brother K] (*text 8-60-K*)

In one case, a Vietnamese address term other than kinship terms was employed to signify the writer's deference to the recipient's status:

Dear Thay BB [teacher BB]:

Thank you very much, one more time, for having given us a chance to get your pupils to know about our school.

I hope your students will join [the school] and enjoy our programs soon.

AA (*text 5-4-AA*)

At the same time, this text shows that the writer was not the recipient's student: The choice of *your pupils/your students* vs. *our school* implied that they might have worked for different schools. Nonetheless, the writer still addressed the recipient in a formal way by which a Vietnamese student addresses their class teacher. This choice of address term *Thay* demonstrated the writer's respect to the recipient's status.

In one instance, the term of address was personalised by possessive deictic *my*:

My dear,

The first part is correct

It should be Sericol not Sour.

I do believe we mix up some napkins in the towel wheel as the smell is quite oily, protein or fat. I did recommend Mr. UU to look into this matter.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-22-D*)

While the message started with a personalised endearment, the closing was the formal *With best regards*, consistent with Crystal's (2006a) observation about automatically generated signatures.

Of the address terms used, 16% comprised titles (e.g., *Dr, Mr, Ms*) plus first names. This phenomenon differs from Crystal's (2006a) observation that titles in the Western tradition are often followed by surnames. However, this finding might be a cultural difference – something common within Vietnamese society. Below are some examples in the data:

Dear Dr S [first name],

Please find attached file my report for the OPC in QQ hospital 103.

Thanks. (*text 8-43-S*)

Dear Ms. D [first name],

Pls send to us invoice for for the preventive maintenance services carried out for the 4rd time in Jan 2011 within today. (*text 7-6-E*)

Dear Mr B [first name]

Thank you very much for your support. (*text 7-1-A*)

Another significant feature of the texts in the data was the embedding of messages within messages, which resulted in the appearance of address terms twice in each text:

Dear KK and Anh K [older brother K],

I plan to go to HCMC early next month in order to visit Peds 1 and 2 hospitals.

KK oi [Hey KK], Could you please book the air ticket for me: I will leave for HCM on early Monday, April 4th. and flight back Hanoi on Saturday April 9th.

Thank you very much

Regards,

N (*text 8-21-N*)

Hi I and K,

The I's electronic signature is a good solution, now.

K oi [Hey K]: Can you help me to make a letter for both Can Tho and An Giang the sooner the better

Thanks (*text 8-29-FF*)

Dear O,

My travel application form as requested.

To all other teammates,

For sake of office management, you are urged/ requested to do the same as mine.

Best regards,

N (*text 3-36-N*)

While most texts began with the salutations or included address terms as seen in the preceding discussion, Table 67 indicates that 8.6% of texts had no salutations or vocatives:

Attached is the revised one with Thai Binh and total funds included.

Thanks for your advice.

Cheers,

Q (*text 8-16-Q*)

It's best if all the letters go in at the same time as we submit our application.

So I'll include the letter with out application and when we submit it, you can send it on the same day.

MM (*text 8-32-MM*)

As request.

Best regards,

B (*text 3-23-B*)

According to Eggins (2004, p. 100), the lack of vocatives could indicate the infrequency of contact. However, Crystal (2006a, pp. 100-101) argues that institutional emails do not always contain a greeting and this practice is not necessarily an indicator of the infrequency of contact. He points out two explanations for the absence of vocatives. First, emails are often used to send out information to all staff members, and in this way they function as memos; therefore, personalised greetings are not applicable. Second, as emails are used to send prompt responses, an introductory greeting is unnecessary. Crystal's (2006a) second explanation seems to apply to the emails cited above. An examination of the email that initiated *8-32-MM*, for example, appeared to support Crystal's (2006a) point.

Initiating message:

**On Thu, Mar 5, 2009, K wrote:**

Chao anh MM va Y,

So when you submit the application, please let me know, so I can send the letter to PACCOM.

Thanks,

K (*text 8-33-K*)

Response message:

**On 3/5/09, MM wrote:**

It's best if all the letters go in at the same time as we submit our application.

So I'll include the letter with out application and when we submit it, you can send it on the same day.

MM (*text 8-32-MM*)

In this case, Eggins' (2004, p. 100) contention about the meaning of the lack of vocatives (i.e., infrequent contact) may not hold true. While the writer of *8-32-MM* did not use a vocative to address the recipient, we can see through this exchange that he/she must have had frequent contact with the recipient. In the preceding email, K addressed MM as *anh* (older brother), which showed some closeness in their relationship. In fact, the electronic details on this chain of emails reveal that they were both composed on the same date (Thursday, March, 2009). This time frame indicates the promptness of the second email, showing that the responder might have regarded the message as the second part of adjacency pair. Consequently, a salutation might have been considered unnecessary.

Apart from greeting-less messages, there were also other texts that had no salutations, closings nor signatures, which could mean the high degree of familiarity between the interactants or the nearness between the initiating email and the response email:

Many, many thanks

Looking forward to seeing the finished products (*text 6-3-U*)

I have received additional qty from David & added to PO001576 as attached.

Please send proforma invoice ASAP so I can arrange deposit payment to your account. (*text 6-25-U*)

Pls advise you're working on this and reverting to us soon with further advice about final volume? (*text 6-24-U*)

#### **4.13 Chapter summary**

In short, chapter 4 has presented in detail the results of the micro-analysis as performed by the three coders. This analysis has highlighted a number of lexicogrammatical features characteristic of the Vietnamese business communicators in this cohort. For example, with regard to the representational meanings, the data illustrated an unclear boundary between participants and circumstances; the tendency to use passive voice to construe events happening beyond the writer's wish (e.g. *fail, pass away, coincide*) and the dominance of material processes and business-related themes to represent the field of business. As to the textual meanings, it was found that the texts demonstrated a high level of grammatical intricacy, a low use of conjunctions and a reliance on repetition as a lexical cohesive device, which made the data resemble spontaneous, unplanned language. There was also a utilisation of finite ellipsis, deictic ellipsis, subject and finite ellipsis to make the email messages appear concise and note-like, and a tendency to rely on exophoric reference, which suggests the writer's and recipient's orientation to their shared knowledge of the situational context. Finally, with respect to interpersonal meanings, there was a high frequency of obligation and readiness modality, indicating the orientation of the texts to the exchange of goods and services. In addition, there was a dominance of the congruency between speech functions and mood choices, and an employment of Vietnamese particles and kinship terms to signal a close interpersonal relationship between the writer and the recipient. This analysis has therefore addressed the first

research question: *What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?*. In the next chapter, the findings of the macro-analysis will be provided to address the second research question.

## CHAPTER 5: RESULTS OF MACRO-ANALYSIS

Whilst chapter 4 describes the results of the micro-analysis to address the first research question, this chapter presents the findings of the macro-analysis to address the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*. This question comprised two parts: context of culture and context of situation. The former was realised through genre analysis whereas the latter through an examination of field, tenor and mode.

### 5.1 Context of culture: Genres

The first macro questions for the macro-analysis, *What do you think the aim of the text is? What makes you think that?*, were aimed at unveiling the purposes of the texts, which provided a foundation for the interpretation of genres which, in turn, are the realisations of the cultural context. In SFL, genre refers to “a recognised and recurrent social activity achieved collaboratively through language” (Eggins & Slade, 2012, p. 216). As a first step to identify genres, the following question needs to be addressed: “what purpose the text fulfils” (Eggins, 2004, p. 55). Bhatia (1993, p. 45), although following a different tradition of genre analysis, also maintains that the communicative purpose of the genre is the most important factor in genre identification.

After the identification of aims, texts with similar purposes were grouped together to uncover their “generic identity” (Eggins, 2004, p. 55). This process allowed exploration of the “ways in which a particular text is similar to, reminiscent of, other texts circulating in the culture” (Eggins, 2004, p. 55). As identified by the coders, texts that were oriented to the exchange of goods and services (58%) outnumbered those used for the exchange of information (42%, as seen in Table 68). It is important to highlight that, while the concepts ‘offer/demand information’ and ‘offer/demand goods and services’ were employed in the discussion of speech functions in the previous chapter to explicate the purposes of individual clauses (see section 4.10), they are referred to in this section as indicating the purposes of the texts holistically.

**Table 68 - Findings of the first macro question in the macro-analysis**

<b>General aims</b>	<b>Examples of specific aims</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Commodity</b>	
To offer information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To say goodbye</li> <li>- To inform the recipient of a training course</li> <li>- To inform the recipient about an event</li> <li>- To inform the recipient of some changes to a schedule</li> </ul>	112	37%	42%	<b>Exchange of information</b>
To demand information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To ask for the recipient's opinion</li> <li>- To ask for information about a product</li> </ul>	15	5%		
To offer goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To send the recipient a document</li> <li>- To invite the recipient to a meeting</li> </ul>	73	24%	58%	<b>Exchange of goods and services</b>
To demand goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To request the recipient to modify a document</li> <li>- To request the recipient to deliver the ordered products</li> <li>- To ask the recipient to arrange an appointment</li> <li>- To request the recipient to double check a document</li> <li>- To ask the recipient to fix a computer</li> <li>- To request the recipient to book a hotel room</li> </ul>	103	34%		
<b>Total</b>		<b>303</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

By contrasting speech functions at clausal level discussed in the micro-analysis (see section 4.10) with the generic purposes of the texts in the macro analysis, it can be seen that, whereas at clausal level, more clauses were concerned with the exchange of information than the exchange of goods and services (65% and 35% respectively), at textual levels, more texts were more concerned with the exchange of goods and services than the exchange of information (58% and 42% respectively). This difference may be explained by the fact that a substantial number of clauses were used to provide information of the context before an offer or command was made, and to express gratitude before the closing of the exchange. Therefore, even texts whose main purposes were to exchange goods and services comprised more propositions than proposals. This is evident in the schematic structures of various genres as described in the sections that follow.

While field is related to the aim of the text in that it orients to “some global purpose” (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 304), the analysis of the first and second macro questions (*1. What do you think the aim of the text is? What makes you think that? 2. What do you think the main topic of the text is? What makes you think that?*) suggests that while some texts were in different fields, they may actually serve the same purpose. For instance, whereas text 7-13-C was concerned with an invoice and text 1-2-Q an expense report (see Appendix 4), they both served the same macro-purpose of demanding goods from the recipient, namely requesting the recipient to send an invoice (7-13-C) and requesting the recipient to submit the expense report (1-2-Q). These texts, thus, were classified by the coders as belonging to the same macro genre.

To identify the schematic stages of a genre, apart from “the cultural purpose of texts” (Eggins, 2004, p. 54) as seen in Table 68, it is also important to take into account the lexico-grammatical patterns manifested in each. As Eggins (2004, p. 65) stresses, generic analysis cannot be conducted accurately without an analysis of the linguistic realisations of each element of the schematic structure. In this study, the lexico-grammatical features of the texts coded in the micro-analysis became the pivotal basis for the identification of the schematic stages of each genre, since each schematic stage is often associated with a distinct pattern of words and structures (Eggins, 2004, p. 68). As can be seen in Table 68, for the four macro aims, there

were four corresponding macro genres, and within these it is possible to identify a range of micro genres.

### 5.1.1 Macro-genre 1: Offer of information

This macro genre, as shown in Table 68, accounted for 37% of the texts. This genre had some distinct micro genres, namely farewell emails and application emails as described below.

#### 5.1.1.1 Micro-genre 1.1: Farewell email – Aim: to say goodbye to recipients

For example:

Dear [Company 8] staff,

Today is my last working day. I would like to say "Goodbye" and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me.

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future. I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)

Wish you all the best in your life, and again, thank you and goodbye.

*Warm regards,*

B (*text 8-I-B*)

The comparison of texts that demonstrated similar purposes revealed the schematic structure of this genre with schematic stages such as *context*, *farewell*, *expression of gratitude*, *wishing the recipient well*, and *expression of hope to keep in touch* (see Table 69).

**Table 69 - Schematic structure of farewell emails**

Genre	Schematic stage <sup>17</sup>	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Offer of information: Farewell email	Context	<p>Today is my last working day. (8-1-B)</p> <p>As most of you know, I am moving away to a new living place due to personal reasons. This Friday is my last day at work (5-15-MMM)</p> <p>As you may know I am leaving our [Company 8] family. (8-4-C)</p>	<p>Characterised by circumstances of angle: <i>as you may know, as most of you know</i></p> <p>Material processes: <i>am moving, am leaving</i></p> <p>Participants: <i>last working day, last day at work</i></p> <p>Mood choices: declaratives to give information about the context of the email</p>
	Farewell	<p>I would like to say "Goodbye" (8-1-B)</p> <p>I cannot leave without bidding you all farewell. (5-15-MMM)</p>	<p>Characterised by verbal processes: <i>say, bid</i></p> <p>Participants: Verbiage <i>goodbye, farewell</i></p> <p>Modality of readiness used to introduce the purpose of the text: <i>would like, cannot</i></p> <p>Mood choices: declaratives to give information about the purpose of the email</p>
	Expression of gratitude	<p>Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me. (8-1-B)</p> <p>Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your</p>	<p>Characterised by mental processes: <i>thank, accept my sincere thanks, want to express my appreciation</i></p> <p>Circumstances of cause to specify the reasons of the offer</p>

<sup>17</sup> The order of the stages of the schematic structures discussed in this chapter may vary from text to text. Moreover, not all the stages are present in all texts.

	<p>very nice farewell party and gift. (8-1-B)</p> <p>Please accept my sincere thanks to your guidance and support over the past eight months. (8-4-C)</p> <p>...want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. (8-1-B)</p>	<p>of gratitude: <i>for the support and co-operation you have provided me, for your very nice farewell party and gift, of having had an opportunity to work with all of you, to your guidance and support over the past eight months</i></p> <p>Mood choices: elliptical declaratives/ imperatives to offer gratitude to the recipients</p>
Wishing the recipients well	<p>Wish you all the best in your life (8-1-B) I wish each and every one of you the very best in all your future endeavors in both professional and personal lives. (5-15-MMM)</p>	<p>Characterised by mental process: <i>wish</i></p> <p>Circumstances of location: <i>in your life, in your future endeavors in both professional and personal lives</i></p> <p>Mood choices: (elliptical) declaratives to express wishes</p>
Expression of hope to keep in touch	<p>...hope to see you again soon (8-1-B)</p> <p>I am glad if I could keep in touch with you via my new email <a href="mailto:mnk@yahoo.com.vn">mnk@yahoo.com.vn</a>. (5-15-MMM)</p> <p>I hope to continue to collaborate with you in improving HIV/AIDS care and treatment in Vietnam. (8-4-C)</p>	<p>Characterised by mental process <i>hope</i> and relational process expressing mental meanings (affective) <i>I am glad</i></p> <p>Mood choices: (elliptical) declaratives to express hopes for future contact</p>

**5.1.1.2 Micro- genre 1.2:** Application email - Aim: to offer information about self to get a job

For example:

Dear Sir/Madam:

I'm pleased to know that your company is now recruiting new staff. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as a suitable candidate for position.

I'm 27 years old and graduated a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City. I have been worked as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year.

I can speak and write English well. Also I can use computer excellence on common soft wares of winwords, excel, powerpoint.....

I working in sales & marketing about chemicals in Personal Care Industry.

I am very happy to be considered one of your candidates. If I may become your staff, I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development.

Please find any further information from my CV and other certificates attached here with. If I am given two or three day's notice, I could attend an interview at anytime.

Yours faithfully

W (*text 3-5-W*)

The comparison of texts of this purpose highlighted the schematic stages of *indication of response to recipient's demand, statement of purpose, personal characteristics, training and qualifications, skills and abilities, working experience, envisage of contribution to prospective company, reference to CV, request for an interview, and expression of gratitude* (see Table 70).

**Table 70 - Schematic structure of application emails**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Offer of information: Job application email	Indication of response to recipient's demand	I'm pleased to know that your company is now recruiting new staff. (3-5-W)	Realised by mental process <i>know</i> Mood choice: declarative to give information
	Statement of purpose	I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as a suitable candidate for position. (3-5-W) I'm seeking a new job with the good environment to contribute and develop my career, then I found out that your good company is suitable for me. So I applied it. (4-4-J) I am writing to apply for marketer. (5-26-LL)	Realised by material processes: <i>applied, apply, seek</i> to indicate the writer's purpose of applying for a job Mood choices: declaratives to introduce the purpose of the letter
	Personal characteristics	I'm 27 years old (3-5-W) With the open minded, diligent characteristics, (4-4-J)	Realised by epithets: <i>27 years old, open-minded, diligent</i>
	Training and qualifications	...graduated a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City. (3-5-W) I graduated from Bachelor of art in Polical major in Falculty of Philosophy of USSH [UNIVERSITY] where I was always considered to be one of the top students. (5-26-LL) In addition, I finished the Master course of Philosophy of in USSH [UNIVERSITY], Ho Chi Minh city, 2010. (5-26-LL)	Realised by material processes: <i>graduated, finished</i> Participants: <i>Bachelor, Master, University</i> to indicate the writer's training and qualifications Mood choices: declaratives to give information about the writer's training and qualifications

	Skills and abilities	I can speak and write English well. Also I can use computer excellence on common soft wares of winwords, excel, powerpoint.....(3-5-W)	Realised by modality of ability: <i>can</i> Mood choices: declaratives to give information
	Working experience	I have been worked as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year. (3-5-W) I working in sales & marketing about chemicals in Personal Care Industry. (3-5-W) ... about three years experience in shipping line company as a salesman, (4-4-J) I worked as an authority in Nha Trang committee of the Party, after that I worked in UFM [UNIVERSITY] and now I am a lecture in there. (5-26-LL) In addition, I used to work as Career consultant in University entrance exam in four years for a Careers consultant board of the UFM [UNIVERSITY]. (5-26-LL)	Realised by material processes: <i>work, worked</i> Circumstances of location: <i>in chemicals, in sales &amp; marketing, in Personal Care Industry, in shipping line company, in UFM [UNIVERSITY], in University entrance exam</i> Circumstances of role: <i>as Sales &amp; Marketing Executive, as a sales man, as an authority, as Career consultant</i> Circumstances of extent: <i>3 year, three years, four years</i> Mood choices: declaratives to give information about working experience
	Envisagement of contribution to	If I may become your staff, I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development. (3-5-W) I am sure that I could master them and do the job smoothly and will contribute a remarkable part in a success of your	Realised by hypotactical conditional clause <i>if</i> and modality of readiness <i>will</i> Material processes: <i>contribute, make a contribution</i> Circumstances of location: <i>to your company's development, in a success of your good company, to the University</i>

prospective company	<p>good company. (4-4-J)</p> <p>I realize that with my education and employment background, I could make a valuable contribution to the University in this position. (5-26-LL)</p> <p>I will try my best to work if I am recruited. (5-26-LL)</p>	<p>Participants to envision contribution: <i>my best, a remarkable part, a valuable contribution</i></p> <p>Mood choices: declaratives to provide an envisagement of contribution</p>
Reference to CV and certificates	<p>Please find any further information from my CV and other certificates attached here with. (3-5-W)</p> <p>My curriculum vitae is enclosed simply to give you some information about my background. (4-4-J)</p>	<p>Realised by participants: <i>CV, curriculum vitae, other certificates and further information, information</i></p> <p>Mood choices: imperatives/declaratives to give information about the attached documents</p>
Direct/indirect request for an interview	<p>If I am given two or three day's notice, I could attend an interview at anytime. (3-5-W)</p> <p>I'd be delighted to discuss my application further with you. (4-4-J)</p> <p>Look forward to speaking with you about this employment opportunity. (4-4-J)</p>	<p>Realised by congruent and metaphorical modality of readiness: <i>could, would be delighted, look forward to</i></p> <p>Verbal processes: <i>discuss, speaking</i></p> <p>Mood choices: (elliptical) modulated declaratives to request an interview</p>
Expression of gratitude	<p>Thank you for your time and consideration. (4-4-J)</p> <p>Thanks for giving me a little of your time to considerate my application file. (5-26-LL)</p>	<p>Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or nominal <i>thanks</i>) to express gratitude to the recipient's consideration</p>

Apart from these two distinct micro genres of the macro genre of information offer, other information-offering texts showed little variation and followed the schematic structure in Table 71.

**Table 71 - Schematic structure of information-offering texts**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Offer of information	Expression of gratitude	Thank you very much for your well arrangement and support with training concerns (3-11-M) Thanks for your email. (3-14-II) Thanks O and P for making the detailed plans for Binh Chanh and Thai Binh. (8-5-C)	Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or nominal <i>thanks</i> ) to express gratitude Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your (...) training concerns, for your email, for (...) your concerns</i> . The recipient's concerns were apparently used as a reason for the current email.
	Provision of information	Please be informed that [company 3] tutor will conduct the training for both 2 respective departments for the above topics on 12 June 2009. (3-33-D) Please be informed that we're organizing this month's Teachers' Club with the topic "Can You Name This Tune?". (9-2-C) Please be informed that in addition to the tentative schedule below which I also sent you previously, we are planning to have a QI training course run by Dr D and Dr	Realised by declaratives (congruent) and imperatives (incongruent) to give information Verbal processes: <i>be/keep informed</i> ; relational processes <i>is/are</i>

	E in HCM on 15,16. (8-3-C) hereafter is his reply (8-9-Q)	
Offer of provision of more information	Please let me know if you have any comments and questions. (8-2-C) Please let me know if you have any questions (8-3-C) If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Academic Manager at your campus (9-14-U)	Realised by imperatives: <i>let me know, feel free to contact</i> Participants: <i>comments, questions, this matter</i> Hypotactical conditional clauses <i>if</i>
Expression of gratitude	thank you for your support (8-3-C) Thank you for your co-operation. (9-14-U) Thanks for your attention. (8-10-Y)	Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or nominal <i>thanks</i> ) to express gratitude Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your support, for your co-operation, for your attention</i>
Social pleasantries	Nice weekend to your family! (3-14-II) Have a good working week ahead. (9-15-E)	Realised by noun groups: <i>nice weekend, a good working week</i>

### 5.1.2 Macro-genre 2: Demand for information

This macro-genre only accounted for a small percentage of text (i.e., 5%) (see Table 68). Below is a text that was categorised as belonging to this genre.

Dear Mr. N,

Thanks for your call this morning.

Following the MRT standard for bird flu pandemic, there are two new items:

1. Anti-Viral Dispensable Disinfectant
2. Anti-Viral Aerosol Disinfectant

Please advise what are these? Whether RRSB has bought it from [Company 3] in the past?

Thanks and Regards

VV (*text 3-28-VV*)

Overall, the second macro genre did not demonstrate many distinct variations and comprised the schematic stages of *expression of gratitude for a previous exchange, context, information request, expression of urgency*, and again, *expression of gratitude* as illustrated in Table 72.

**Table 72 - Schematic structure of information-demanding texts**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Demand for information	Expression of gratitude for a previous exchange	Thanks for your call this morning. (3-28-VV) Thanks for the info. (3-40-P) Thank you very much for your support. (7-1-A)	Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental processes <i>thank</i> (or nominal <i>thanks</i> ) to express gratitude Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your call this morning, for the info, for your support</i>
	Context	We had arranged for test run tomorrow, the German technician will arrive tomorrow. We will work it out then will ask help from you for Haithai supports in details. (3-10-D) Just noted that there're some thing woring in the schedule. (3-16-KK) Following the Marriott standard for bird flu pandemic, there are two new items: 3. Anti-Viral Dispensable Disinfectant 4. Anti-Viral Aerosol Disinfectant (3-28-VV)	Realised by (elliptical) declaratives to provide information Existential processes: <i>there're, there are</i>
		Could we offer 1 month trial FOC as with the standard prices comparing with [COMPANY] PD under old prices (could not increase last year) and CG this baby could not survive in the first few months? (3-10-D) Do you want to make the appointment from 5th Mar - 6th Mar???	Realised by WH- and polar interrogatives as well as imperatives to demand information

	Information request	<p>Do we have this gift to our customer this year? (3-7-D)</p> <p>What do you think of this schedule? (8-52-K)</p> <p>Please advise what are these? Whether RRSB has bought it from [Company 3] in the past? (3-28-VV)</p> <p>Please advise me which earliest [Company 3] shipment can be add the below available items in</p> <p>And when will 8 units of AIRSPACE II DISP W/ LCD 6/ CASE # 113-92024629 be available for shipment? (3-40-P)</p>	
	Expression of urgency	<p>Urgent please (7-1-A)</p> <p>We are looking forward to hearing from you soon. (2-14-A)</p>	Realised by temporal circumstance: <i>soon</i> and epithet <i>urgent</i>
	Expression of gratitude	Thanks (3-28-VV, 7-1-A)	Nominal <i>thanks</i> to express gratitude

### 5.1.3 Macro-genre 3: Offer of goods and services

This genre constituted about a quarter of all the texts (24%) (see Table 68). Within this genre, there were some sub-genres as seen below.

**5.1.3.1 Micro- genre 3.1:** Document delivery – Aim: To send the recipient a document in the attachment

This genre comprised brief texts, compared to the other genres discussed above. For instance:

Dear B,

Attached please find the survey results of February. Will you confirm your mail receipt? Thank you.

Best wishes,

A (*text 9-1-A*)

The schematic structure of the document-delivery genre included schematic stages of *provision of attached file*, *action request*, *comment(s) on the attached file*, and *expression of gratitude* (see Table 73).

**Table 73 - Schematic structure of document-delivery emails**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Offer of goods and services: document-delivery email	Provision of attached file	Attached please find the survey results of February. (9-1-A) Kindly have SR May C&Is in the file attached (3-19-M) Kindly have figures of SH [hotel] Mar, 2010 C&Is enclosed in the attached (3-23-M) Please find attached FYI (3-30-D) Please find attached the PL Vietnam Issue 11. (9-17-E) The attach file is my report for trip to KL (3-27-L)	Realised by the mood choices of imperatives or declaratives to offer goods (the attached file) to the recipient, softened by politeness adjuncts <i>kindly, please</i> Circumstances of location indicating the attachment: <i>in the file attached, in the attached, attached</i> Participants indicating the attachment: <i>the attach[ed] file, attached file, the attachment</i>
	Action request	...and help to cross check. (3-19-M, 3-23-M) Will you confirm your mail receipt? (9-1-A) Pls confirm upon your receipt. (8-46-Q)	Realised by mood choices: imperatives (congruent) or interrogatives (incongruent) to realise a command
	Comment(s) on the attached file	Hope you will find more motivations and ample ideas for your creative teaching. (9-17-E) I know that the deadline for submitting is yesterday, but, however, it should be sent to you even late. (8-12-T)	Realised by elliptical declaratives to offer extra information about the attachment
	Expression of gratitude	Thank you for your attention and interest. (9-17-E) Thanks for your advice. (8-16-Q) Thanks (8-39-T, 8-43-T, 8-49-K)	Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or the nominal <i>thanks</i> ) to express gratitude Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your attention and interest, for your advice</i>

**5.1.3.2 Micro-genre 3.2:** Workshop/meeting invitation email – Aim: To invite the recipient(s) to a meeting/workshop

While both micro-genres *document-delivery* and *meeting/workshop invitation* offered goods and services to recipients, the writer tended to close the email by expressing gratitude to them.

For example:

Dear Teacher,

You are welcomed to the Oxford Workshop on new series “Everybody Up” with the theme ‘The power of music: Teaching English with Songs’ presented by the author DT.

DT is co-founder of Super Simple Learning. As an ESL Teacher for 16 years, his focus has been on helping teachers and learners approach English education with confidence.

Time: 8:00 – 11:00 a.m, Tuesday 19 April, 2011.

Venue: Continental Hotel, XXX Dong Khoi Street, District 1, HCMC

Please find the attached file for the invitation and confirm your attendance with me (E@[Company 9].edu.vn, xxxx 55 55 96) by Friday 15 April, 2011.

Thank you for your attention.

Best regards,

E (*text 9-6-E*)

The schematic stages of this genre were identified and these are shown in Table 74.

**Table 74 - Schematic structure of workshop/meeting invitation emails**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Offer of goods and services: Workshop/meeting invitation email	Invitation	<p>You are welcomed to the Oxford Workshop on new series “Everybody Up” (9-6-E)</p> <p>...we would like to organize a conference call and invite all of you to join that conference (8-7-P)</p> <p>...you are cordially invited to the textbook transition and teaching workshop (9-31-U)</p>	<p>Verbal processes to realise the invitation: <i>welcome, invite</i></p> <p>Congruent and metaphorical modality of readiness to invite: <i>will, would like, cordially</i></p>
	Evaluation of the event	<p>As far as I know about the presenter, Prof. Z – an expert teacher trainer, audience will be provided with a handful of tips of planning and teaching a lesson successfully in accordance with the textbook structure. I strongly believe that this workshop will be greatly beneficial for our teaching. (9-13-E)</p> <p>I think these workshops, esp. the first and second ones, are very useful to your teaching English. (9-4-D)</p> <p>the sessions provide teachers with teaching techniques, useful tips on classroom management and [Company 9] expectations of students’ learning outcomes (9-29-U)</p>	<p>Realised by participants/circumstances to provide evaluation of the event: <i>confidence, expert, handful of tips, successfully, greatly beneficial, very useful, useful</i></p> <p>Metaphorical modality of possibility to indicate personal judgments: <i>As far as I know, I strongly believe, I think</i></p>
	Information about	<p>Time: 8:00 – 11:00 a.m, Tuesday 19 April, 2011. Venue: Continental Hotel, XXX Dong Khoi Street, District 1,</p>	<p>Realised by temporal and spatial locations</p>

time and venue	<p>HCMC (9-6-E)</p> <p>...on Feb.25, 2010 from 8:30 to 11:30 at NKKN campus, XXX NKKN street, 8th floor. (9-13-E)</p> <p>The call will be live in Hanoi at 8.30 am May 4th 2011. (8-7-P)</p>	
Reference to attachment	<p>Please find the attached file for the invitation (9-6-E)</p> <p>Please find attached the invitation to the workshop on International Express (9-13-E)</p>	<p>Realised by the mood choice of imperatives, softened by polite adjunct <i>please</i></p> <p>Circumstance of place <i>attached</i> or participant <i>attached file</i></p>
Expectation of addressee's attendance	<p>Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated. (9-10-E)</p> <p>Hope to see you there. (9-4-E)</p> <p>...your attendance is strongly recommended (9-13-E)</p> <p>...your attendance is compulsory (9-29-U)</p>	<p>Realised by congruent and metaphorical modality of obligation: <i>will, hope, is strongly recommended, is compulsory,</i></p> <p>Participants: <i>your participation, your attendance</i></p> <p>Mental processes: <i>appreciate, hope</i></p>
Expression of gratitude	<p>Thank you for your attention. (9-6-E)</p> <p>Thank you very much for your attention. (9-13-E)</p> <p>Thanks (8-7-P)</p>	<p>Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or the nominal <i>thanks</i>) to express gratitude</p> <p>Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your attention</i></p>

#### 5.1.4 Macro-genre 4: Demand for goods and services

This genre comprised about 34% of the texts (see again Table 68). Below is an illustration of a typical text that was classified as a demand for goods and services:

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your signed invoice & sales contract.

Could you scan it again because I can't see the content clearly.

By the way, I revised the payment term of contract PO-F-10-0903 because of the mitake in 30 with 30%

Please you print out the new one then sign again and scan with full page same as my PO and send back us.

Thanks & Best regards,

C (*text 7-16-C*)

This macro-genre did not comprise micro-genres that possessed distinct characteristics. Instead its schematic stages can be described as consisting of *expression of gratitude for a previous exchange*, *action request(s)*, *reason(s)*, *deadline*, *possible repercussion(s)*, and *expression of gratitude* (see Table 75).

**Table 75 - Schematic structure of texts that demanded for goods and services**

Genre	Schematic stage	Example	Lexico-grammatical realisations
Demand for goods and services	Expression of gratitude for a previous exchange	Thanks for your kind information. (2-1-A) Thanks for your kind feedback. (2-16-A, 2-18-A) Thank you for your signed invoice & sales contract. (7-16-C)	Realised by elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or the nominal <i>thanks</i> ) to express gratitude Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your kind information, for your kind feedback, for your signed invoice &amp; sales contract</i>
	Action request (s)	Please complete your quarter reports on TA due to attached forms and send me by January 7, 2011. (8-41-S) Could you please book the air ticket for me (8-21-N) Can you help me to make a letter for both Can Tho and An Giang the sooner the better (8-29-FF) Would be so kind to book a hotel room for me during my trip in HCMC? (8-44-N) we would like to ask each partner to send us a one-page briefer about their organization/ activities. (8-51-VV)	Realised by congruent imperatives, softened by the polite adjunct <i>please</i> , or metaphorical modulated interrogatives/declaratives Modality of obligation: <i>can, could, would, would like</i>
		In order for all partners to get to know each other better in the PEPFAR Partners' meeting on January 14 (8-51-VV) for clearance (7-13-C) because I can't see the content clearly (7-16-E)	Realised by circumstances of cause or full declaratives to give information about the cause of the request(s)

Reason(s)	<p>I will leave for HCM on early Monday, April 4th. and flight back Hanoi on Saturday April 9th. (8-21-N)</p> <p>Today I received the Arrival Notice that the shipment arrived on 03 Dec., 2010 but you have not infomed us yet. (7-14-C)</p>	
Deadline	<p>It's highly appreciated if you send this to us by Thursday morning Jan13. (8-51-VV)</p> <p>Can I get all of your infos before this weekend Nov 03 2007? (1-3-H)</p> <p>within 7 days (2-2-A)</p> <p>The dead-line to send the quotation is before 08 Oct'10 (2-4-H)</p>	<p>Realised by absolute and relative temporal circumstances: <i>Thursday morning Jan13, before this weekend Nov 03 2007, within 7 days, before 08 Oct'10</i></p> <p>Congruent and metaphorical modality of obligation: <i>is highly appreciated, can</i></p>
Possible repercussion(s)	<p>This shipment by airfreight (600 kgs), if we delay in clearance, we must pay a lot of money for storage fee. (7-14-C)</p> <p>If you issue invoice in Feb., we will have a problem with auditing the accounts. (7-6-E)</p> <p>If delay in submitting original invoice &amp; packing list, we will bear the penalty from customs. (7-19-C)</p>	<p>Realised by hypotactical clauses of condition <i>if</i></p> <p>Collective subject: <i>we</i>, indicating the writer and his/her company as the bearer of possible repercussions</p> <p>Modality of obligation <i>must</i> and modality of possibility <i>will</i></p>
Expression of gratitude	<p>Thank you very much (8-21-N, 7-11-J, 8-51-VV)</p> <p>Thanks (8-29-FF, 8-41-S, 7-5-E, 7-14-C, 7-6-E, 7-17-C)</p> <p>Thanks for your shared support. (1-3-H)</p> <p>Thanks for your co-operation &amp; support! (2-1-A)</p>	<p>Elliptical declaratives and mental process <i>thank</i> (or the nominal <i>thanks</i>) to express gratitude</p> <p>Circumstances of cause-reason: <i>for your shared support, for your co-operation &amp; support</i></p>

In summary, the analysis of the lexico-grammatical features of the texts sharing similar purposes highlights the schematic structures of four macro-genres: *offer of information*, *demand for information*, *offer of goods and services*, and *demand for goods and services*. The way these macro-genres and their micro-genres were constructed illustrates how the members of the examined Vietnamese business community achieved their communicative goals through the establishment of the staged structures of genres. This is how the context of culture was manifested in the data.

## 5.2 Field

In addition to identifying the context of culture realised through genres, the macro-analysis was used to determine the situational context of the data, realised through field, tenor and mode.

The second pair of macro questions in this analysis, *What do you think the main topic of the text is? What makes you think that?*, aimed at uncovering the field of the texts. To achieve this, the coders' categorisation consisted of business reports, invoices, price quotations, information about products/services, shipping issues, personnel issues (e.g., employment termination and staff's punctuality), and training, followed by other issues such as purchase orders, contracts, work schedules and holidays (see Table 76).

**Table 76 - Field of texts**

<b>Field of texts<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
business reports	47	14.7%
invoices	42	13.1%
product price/quotation	31	9.7%
other business documents	30	9.4%
information about goods/products	22	6.9%
shipping	22	6.9%
personnel issue (e.g., employment termination, staff's punctuality)	16	5.0%
training	16	5.0%
offer emails	13	4.1%
purchase orders	11	3.4%
contract	11	3.4%
presentation	8	2.5%
work schedule	6	1.9%
holidays	6	1.9%
company event (e.g., party or music show)	6	1.9%
business trip	5	1.6%
business proposal	5	1.6%
discussion of customers	3	0.9%
hotel booking	3	0.9%
moving office	3	0.9%
job application	3	0.9%
delivery	3	0.9%
technical problem	2	0.6%
expression of appreciation	2	0.6%
acknowledgement of email receipt	2	0.6%
business expense	2	0.6%

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<sup>18</sup> One text may cover more than one field.

Examples and analyses of the texts in some of these fields are provided in the following sections (sections 5.3 and 5.4).

### 5.3 Mode

The third pair of questions in the macro-analysis, *Do you think the language in this text is formal, informal, neutral or mixed? What makes you think that?*, aimed at unveiling mode – the role language plays in an interaction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). As can be seen in Table 77, two-thirds of all texts were either formal or neutral; informal texts accounted for less than a quarter and the remainder was mixed.

**Table 77 - Language use in the data**

<b>Mode</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
formal	118	38.9%
neutral	85	28.4%
informal	74	24.1%
mixed	26	8.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>303 texts</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 5.3.1 Formal

As indicated, nearly 40% of texts were identified to be formal, reflecting the relationship of the interactants (also see section 5.4). Below is an example:

Dear Mr. H,

We sincerely regret to inform you that your work at [Company 9] will be terminated as of April 21, 2006.

Regardless of our warnings, you still proved not to be able to meet the school requirements in terms of punctuality and last-minute class cancellation, which forced us to terminate the employment.

We appreciate the time you have spent with the school and wish you good luck in your teaching career.

Kindest regards,

U (*text 9-28-U*)

One of the reasons the coders provided for their categorisation of formal texts was the employment of noun groups instead of full clauses. This phenomenon is referred to as nominalisation (Egins, 2004, p. 94; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, pp. 437-441; Heyvaert, 2003, pp. 68-69). Halliday (1994a) asserts that “nominalising is the single most powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor” (p. 352), a typical characteristic of formal language. In the text 9-28-U, for instance, one sentence was densely constructed, with ideas packed into several noun groups:

Regardless of our warnings, you still proved not to be able to meet the school requirements in terms of punctuality and last-minute class cancellation, which forced us to terminate the employment.

The noun groups could have been unpacked as follows:

Regardless of	our	warnings
	<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Thing</b>

↔

Although	we	have warned	you
	<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>

The	school	requirements
<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Classifier</b>	<b>Thing</b>

↔

the school	requires	you	to ...
<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	<b>Receiver</b>	

Punctuality	
<b>Thing</b>	

↔

you	have been	unpunctual
<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process: Relational</b>	<b>Attribute</b>

last-minute	class	cancellation
<b>Epithet</b>	<b>Classifier</b>	<b>Thing</b>

↔

you	have cancelled	your classes	at the last minute
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstance: Time</b>

The	employment	↔	we	employ	you
<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Thing</b>		<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process:</b> <b>Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

Eggins (2004, p. 94) maintains that nominalisation is an important feature that differentiates typical formal language from typical informal language: While informal language is said to be concerned with human actors in thematic positions, formal language is argued to employ abstract ideas or reasons as topical themes, which are realised through nominalisations (Eggins, 2004, p. 94). According to Fairclough (2003, p. 13), by representing processes as entities, nominalisation enables the writer to organise the text in terms of reasons or causes in an objective way. In the short excerpt above, nominalisations such as *school requirements*, *punctuality*, and *last-minute class cancellation* presented the reasons that *forced [the writer] to terminate the employment*. As Fairclough (2003, p. 14) argues, the use of nominalisations allows the writer to construct a sense of objectivity by avoiding human agency, which is a characteristic often found in planned formal language. Eggins (2004) also observes that, by changing verbs into nouns, writers can use nominalisations to allow them to “get away from the dynamic and usually real-world sequencing” (p. 95). Nominalisations, therefore, play an important role in the rhetoric organisation of a formal written text (Eggins, 2004, p. 95). In the text 9-28-*U* above, nominalisations were used as the topical themes to organise the message as illustrated in Table 78.

**Table 78 - Thematic organisation of text 9-28-*U* that employed nominalisation**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
Regardless of our warnings,	you still proved not to be able to meet the school requirements in terms of punctuality and last-minute class cancellation,
which [your not meeting the school requirements in terms of punctuality and last-minute class cancellation]	forced us to terminate the employment.

Besides helping with the rhetorical organisation of a text, nominalisation also enables the writer to increase lexical density by packing more lexical content into a sentence (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013; Eggins, 2004). In the text 9-28-U above, instead of saying *you have cancelled your classes at the last minute*, the writer eliminated the non-content carrying words such as the auxiliary *have*, preposition *at*, article *the* and pronoun *your* and reorganised the clause into a nominal group *last-minute class cancellation*. As Eggins (2004) contends, while grammatical intricacy characterises typical spontaneous language, lexical density is a feature of “rehearsed, polished, redrafted” (p. 96) language.

Nominalisations were often found in texts identified as formal. Below is another example:

Dear All Institutional staffs,

I am pleased to announce the coming back of our friend Mr. D to our Institutional department!

Per Mr. FF’s instructions, we will have CAE – Corporate Account Executive.

D as a CAE will focus to the South and Central accounts.

By this chance, I am also pleased to let you know that we have another key person in the North – Mr. G – focuses to growing the Institutional accounts in the North as another CAE. G also provides his shared support to D and the Southern team when – if required – we convert the accounts in the Central into our circles.

With 2 CAEs taking care of our business growth, we definitely expect to achieve our challenging targets in 2008 and the coming future.

Let’s welcome them and work together towards our achievement.

Best regards,

N (*text 3-12-N*)

Some nominalisations in this text could have been unpacked as below:

The	coming back	of our friend Mr D to our Institutional department	↔	our friend Mr. D	has come back	to our Institutional department
<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Thing</b>	<b>Qualifier</b>		<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Circumstance: Place</b>

Per	Mr. FF's	Instructions	↔	As	Mr. FF	instructed
	<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Thing</b>		<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Process: Verbal</b>	

His	shared	support	to D and the Southern team	↔	He	supported	D and the Southern team
<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Epithet</b>	<b>Thing</b>	<b>Qualifier</b>		<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

Our	achievement	↔	We	achieve	our targets
<b>Deictic</b>	<b>Thing</b>		<b>Actor</b>	<b>Process: Material</b>	<b>Goal</b>

The unpacking of these nominalisations demonstrated that, while the ideas could have been expressed clausally (e.g., *I am pleased to announce that our friend Mr. D has come back to our Institutional department*), they were instead worded nominally (e.g., *I am pleased to announce the coming back of our friend Mr. D to our Institutional department*), which crystallised the ideational content into densely packed noun constructions. The process of rewording clauses into noun groups is a complex process of grammatical metaphor typical of planned written/spoken language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Apart from nominalisations, the second reason that the coders gave for their coding of formal texts was the use of passive voice. An example of this can be taken from text 9-28-U above:

[We sincerely regret to inform you that] your work at [Company 9] will be terminated as of April 21, 2006 (*text 9-28-U*)

The agent responsible for the termination of the recipient's employment was omitted, construing the Goal *your work at [Company 9]* and the material process *will be terminated* as the focus of the clause. This agentless clause left the recipient to locate the source by asking the question "Who by?" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 298), the answer of which was implicit: *we* (the collective subject of the other clause that included the writer). This selection of agentless passivation, thus, impersonalised the clause, allowing the writer to distance himself/herself from the process *terminate* and thus projecting a sense of objectivity. Together with nominalisation, passivation creates the typical features of formal language (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 144-150)

More examples of passivation in formal texts included:

Your confirmation on receiving this email is highly appreciated. (*text 5-13-UU*)

Working facilities have been provided for Mr. IIII who started to work at Bld. 7 at the beginning of this month. (*text 5-20-HHHH*)

Please be informed that we're organizing this month's Teachers' Club with the topic "Can You Name This Tune?". (*text 9-2-C*)

Further discussion of passive voice can be found in chapter 4 (see sections 4.1 and 4.4).

Other reasons that the coders gave for their categorisation of formal texts included the use of formal salutations (*Dear...*), formal closings (*Best regards, Kindest regards, Regards*), formal conjunctions (*however, therefore, thus, moreover*), polite comment adjuncts (*kindly, please*), modality (*could you, would you*) and incongruent mood structures to realise speech functions, all of which had been discussed in depth in chapter 4.

### 5.3.2 Neutral

As seen in Table 77, nearly 30% of the texts were coded to be neutral. For example:

Hello Ms. N,

I hope you are fine.

Per discussion with Ms. H this morning, she is absolutely willing to give a coordinate for checking policy No. 2 at the 1st floor. Please send her the time you need a support. She then shall respond & sort it out.

Best regards,

W (*text 5-6-W*)

While the text employed a direct command realised by the congruent imperative *Please send her the time you need a support*, it had one nominalisation (*per discussion with Ms. H*) and no elliptical clauses that served interpersonal purposes (see section 4.4). In addition, the salutation *Hello* was identified to be neither too formal nor too informal. Those were the reasons the coders provided for their categorisation of the text as neutral.

Below were some other examples of neutral texts:

Dear EEE,

Please check sales contract PO-F-09-1175 & appendix of sales contract PO-F-07-745 then sign and send back us for preapre clearance.

Please send us draft invoice, packing list for PO-F-09-1175 & PO-F-07-745 for checking.

Thanks & Best regards,

C (*text 7-34-C*)

Dear RR,

Today I received the Arrival Notice that the shipment arrived on 03 Dec., 2010 but you have not infomed us yet.

Please send us the invoice, packing list and AWB for clearance. This shipment by airfreight (600 kgs), if we delay in clearance, we must pay a lot of money for storage fee.

Thanks & Best regards,

C (*text 7-14-C*)

Dear H,

I regret too with your information, because we wait for and welcome you come to TOT' Nurses training in last week of February...

With best wishes for you and your family,

A (*text 8-66-A*)

These texts were coded as neutral because of the following reasons given by the coders. First, they employed *Dear* and first names in the salutations, instead of *Hi* or *Dear* and title. Second, the commands were direct, realised by the congruent imperative, but softened by the politeness adjunct *please* in its full form: *Please check sales contract PO-F-09-1175*, *Please send us draft invoice (7-34-C)*, and *Please send us the invoice (7-14-C)*. Third, the language of the body text was not heavily loaded with nominalisations as with formal texts. Fourth, no abbreviations, contractions, colloquial lexis or ellipsis for interpersonal purposes were found.

### 5.3.3 Informal

As indicated above, informal texts accounted for nearly a quarter of the texts (24.2%). Below is an example that the coders identified to be informal:

Dear A. A [Anh A – older brother A],

There's been no new FA of L'AM, M is very busy & can't go there tomorrow, my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer when finish the installations & services of Nha Trang .

Regards

X (*text 3-6-X*)

The reasons the coders provided for their categorisation of informal texts included the presence of abbreviation, contractions, colloquial language, the absence of formal conjunctions, and the dominance of human actors. Taking text 3-6-X for instance, the salutation was rather informal with the abbreviation of the kinship term *anh* [older brother]: *A. A (i.e., Anh A)*. Furthermore, contractions were used: *there's, can't*, as was the use of the colloquial lexis *my guys*. Moreover, some clauses were connected by commas rather than by formal conjunctions, for example: *There's been no new FA of L'AM, M is very busy & can't go there tomorrow, my guys will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer*. Added to this, in contrast to formal texts which employ nominalisations in thematic positions to focus on abstract reasons or ideas as seen in the previous section, informal texts like 3-6-X were found to be concerned with human actors in thematic positions. The thematic progression of 3-6-X can be analysed as seen in Table 79.

**Table 79 - Thematic progression of text 3-6-X**

<b>Textual theme</b>	<b>Topical theme</b>	<b>Rheme</b>
	There	been no new FA of L'AM,
	M	is very busy
&	(he)	can't go there tomorrow,
	my guys	will be there to change new Control module of Girbau big washer
When	(they)	finish the installations & services of Nha Trang.

This theme analysis shows that four out of five topical themes comprised human actors. Among these themes, the personal possessive deictic *my* in *my guys* reflected the subjectivity of the text, which differed from the objectivity projected by nominalisations in more formal email messages.

Similar to 3-6-X, the text below was also identified as informal due to the use of first names *M* and *T*, elliptical clauses *Wish I can go* and *All to best to you*, abbreviation of the kinship term *a T* (*anh T* - older brother T), colloquial lexis *mate* and thematic human actor *I*:

Dear M,

I got your message but could not get it through back. Wish I can go but I must fly to Da Nang with a T on that day.

All to best to you mate.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-20-D*)

While the formal closing *With best regards* seemed inconsistent with the informal language in the body of the text, the coders observed that it may have been automatically generated as it appeared unchanged in all other texts written by the same writer:

Dear B,

Pls. help to double check whether anything we need to add up. Thx. M will put in some for the dispersers which had been used for long time in RRSB, SSHT etc. tomorrow.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-35-D*)

My dear,

The first part is correct

It should be Sericol not Sour.

I do believe we mix up some napkins in the towel wheel as the smell is quite oily, protein or fat. I did recommend Mr. UU to look into this matter.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-22-D*)

Dear C. O [chi O – older sister O],

Do we have this gift to our customer this year?

With best regards,

D (*text 3-7-D*)

Some other examples of informal texts included:

Hi I,

As you know, We - DD, V and I - will go to Mekong Delta provinces next week. Can we hire a car for this trip?

@ YY also informs that the cost of car will be 8,7 M VND

--

FF (*text 8-57-FF*)

Hi anh K,

Sure, we'll let you know.

Y (*text 8-24-Y*)

Hi I,

Tomorrow morning ( 21/3) do you still stay in HCMC? K can write a letter then you sign on it? (*text 8-27-FF*)

These texts were coded as employing an informal form of salutation: *Hi* followed by first names or kinship terms and first names, together with an absence of closing and sometimes signature. In addition, the language was direct, using congruent mood structures to realise the typically corresponding speech functions, such as an interrogative to express a question *do you still stay in HCMC?* (8-27-FF), a declarative to express a statement *we'll let you know* (8-24-Y), and an imperative to express a command *Pls use this template to finalize for the South* (8-45-Q). Moreover, human actors, several of whom were realised by personal pronouns (i.e.,

*I, we and you*) mostly occupied thematic positions to project actions rather than reasons or abstract ideas.

Apart from these features, some texts were identified as informal because of their friendly closing *Cheers*:

Attached is the revised one with Thai Binh and total funds included.

Thanks for your advice.

Cheers,

Q (*text 8-16-Q*)

Thanks O and P for making the detailed plans for Binh Chanh and Thai Binh. I think although there is a discrepancy with our most recent SOP, the sampling is legitimate (we need to pick 1 chart from every 6 charts to obtain 56 from the pool of 298 patients for example).

Please see the attached file with minor changes.

Cheers,

C (*text 8-5-C*)

#### **5.3.4 Mixed**

Finally, about 9% of the texts were coded as using mixed language. Below is an illustration:

Dear [Company 8] staff,

Today is my last working day. I would like to say “Goodbye” and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me.

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future. I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)

Wish you all the best in your life, and again, thank you and goodbye.

Warm regards,

B (*text 8-1-B*)

Overall, the text was observed to be formal, with the formal salutation *Dear ...* and formal closing *Warm regards*. Moreover, some nominalisations were used: *my appreciation, the support and cooperation, and your warm friendship*, together with the employment of the formal modality of readiness *would like*. However, amidst that overall atmosphere of formality, there was a sense of shared secrecy *many of you know for what*, the informality of which was enhanced by the use of the smiley :).

Similarly, the text below was identified as employing a combination between formal language and informal language:

Dear B,

Thanks for your kind information.

Kindly note that, for drop shipment purpose as usual, pls replace your invoice by our invoice VD-10-0006 (pls find here attached) into the package.

The forwarder will contact to your pointed contact early next week for picking up.

Thanks for your co-operation & support!

Thanks & Best regards

A (*text 2-1-A*)

Some formal features in this text included the adversary-glorification strategy (Bhatia, 1993) *kind (your kind information)*, the politeness adjunct *kindly* and the formal opening *Dear* and closing *Best regards*. While including these formal features, the text also demonstrated several informal exemplifications: the informal *thanks* (used three times) instead of *thank you*, the abbreviation *pls* (used twice) instead of the full form *please*, and the direct commands realised by the congruent imperatives *replace your invoice by our invoice VD-10-0006* and *find here attached*,

rather than indirect mood structures, e.g., *Can/Could you replace your invoice by our invoice VD-10-0006...?*.

Below is another example of mixed language:

Dear Mr H,  
Very appreciate that.  
Looking forward to seeing you.  
Best regards,  
T (*text 1-7-T*)

While the email had a formal salutation of *Dear* and *title*, and a formal closing *Best regards* that matched the formal salutation, the body text was rather informal with two elliptical clauses *Very appreciate that* and *Looking forward to seeing you*.

In summary, the majority of the texts were either formal or neutral. Although informal texts and texts of a mixed mode constituted a smaller proportion, they carried with them some significance about the data: While the interactants were business people, their communication were not always formal or neutral. Indeed, the level of formality of their messages depended on many interpersonal variables such as power relation, frequency of contact and affective involvement. This is manifested in the following analysis of tenor.

#### 5.4 Tenor

The last pair of questions in the macro-analysis was: “*What do you think the relationship between the writer and recipient is (power relation, affective involvement, and frequency of contact)? What makes you think that?*”. It aimed at uncovering the “social role relationships played by interactants” (Eggins, 2004, p. 99). It is crucial to note that the selection of the mode is often in accordance with the tenor (see section 5.3, Table 77), which, in turn, is influenced by the communicators’ frequency of contact and their affective involvement. As Martin and Rose (2007) maintain, the metafunctions “are interwoven with each other” (p. 7) so that we can achieve different social functions simultaneously. The inter-relation of these dimensions as analysed by the coders has been summarised and is presented in Table 80 below:

**Table 80 - Tenor and its relation to other dimensions**

Mode	Tenor (sender – recipient)		Frequency of contact <sup>19</sup>		Affective involvement <sup>20</sup>			Freq. in data	Per. in data
			Freq.	Infreq.	high	neutral	low		
neutral/ formal	External communication	supplier/service provider – customer or business partners	85	3	5	14	69	88	28.9%
formal		candidate – prospective employer	0	3	0	0	3	3	1%
formal/ neutral/ informal	Internal communication – Colleagues	individual staff member – individual staff member	78	5	45	35	3	83	27.4%
neutral/ formal/ mixed		individual staff member – group	50	0	18	22	10	50	16.3%
formal/ mixed		individual staff member – all staff	24	0	5	8	11	24	7.9%
formal/ informal		individual staff member – head	3	0	2	2	0	2	0.5%
neutral/ informal		head – individual staff member	2	4	0	2	4	6	2.4%
formal/ neutral/ informal		head – group of staff/ all staff	45	0	0	13	32	45	14.7%
<b>Total</b>			<b>287</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>100%</b>

As indicated, while most texts demonstrated frequent contact, there was usually neutral or low affective involvement between the writer and recipient. This result is in line with Egging's (2004) observation: whereas friends or lovers are usually

<sup>19</sup> Data presented in terms of the number of texts that demonstrated the (in)frequency of contact

<sup>20</sup> Data presented in terms of the number of texts that demonstrated affective involvement

affectively involved, “work associates are typically not” (p. 100). However, at the same time, quite a significant number of texts (75 texts, about 25%) manifested a certain degree of closeness between the communicators, as seen in the result of ‘High affective involvement’ in the table.

#### 5.4.1 Tenor in external communication

##### 5.4.1.1 Provider-customer or business partners

Table 80 shows that about 29% of the texts exhibited the tenor of product/service provider-customer or business partners. Interactants in this relationship exhibited frequent contact, but neutral or low affective involvement. Below is an example:

Dear Mr. GGG,  
  
Our staff will contact you within today.  
  
Best regards,  
  
C (*text 7-31-C*)

As the coders pointed out, this text had no explanation of the context, no elaboration on the background or self-introduction. The body text comprised only one clause *Our staff will contact you within today*, which illustrated shared knowledge between the writer and recipient: why the interactants were in contact was unknown to the readers. This shows that the writer and recipient must have had some contact previously. However, the language of the text demonstrated no affective involvement between the communicators. The formal greeting *Dear* and the title *Mr.*, the formal closing *Best regards* and the full clause *Our staff will contact you within today* reflected a distance between the writer and recipient.

Similar cases included:

Dear Mr. C,  
  
As the meeting with you and Executive Chef this morning, I will work about this with my manager and will let you know in very short times  
  
Best regards,  
  
H (*text 1-10-H*)

Dear Mr. XX,

This shipment will arrive to our factory on tomorrow.

Best regards,

C (*text 7-21-C*)

Dear Mr. GG,

We already sent out the PILAX 130 in the sample box.

The Lime Away is the delimer for Dish machine. For the stain in toilet bowl and shower head due to water hardness you can use other product name Saniguard to clean it. I will send the sample for your trial.

With best regards,

D (*text 3-13-D*)

While most texts between business partners suggested a neutral-to-distant relationship, discussing strictly business matters as seen above, a few texts illustrated the closeness between the writer and recipient. For example:

Just come out today, still very hot... ;) Pls see attachments. Hope you are happy with them. We will apply full sample quantity and put them in next container leaving early Dec. (by shipping line's schedule). (*text 6-37-U*)

According to the coders, while the text comprised lexis showing that the writer and recipient were business partners (e.g., *sample*, *next container*, and *shipping*), the language was informal, indicating the closeness between the communicators. The elliptical clauses *Just come out today, still very hot* implied a sense of shared knowledge that excluded people who did not share the context (i.e., outsiders cannot easily interpret who or what had just come out/who or what was still very hot). Another elliptical clause was *Hope you are happy with them*, showing that the writer and recipient were close enough to leave out the subject. Apart from subject ellipsis, the ellipsis punctuation (...) together with the emoticon ;) seemed to further accentuate the high level of affective involvement between the interactants.

Below is another text that showed a close relationship between business partners:

Dear A. B,

Pls offer costs for all ranges of cars for various kind/wgt of vehicle in tons, seat/unit etc. This consider below adhoc! Possible regular calls in future if prospects potential workable costing vs bookings of cars/trucks import, since this is our group VEC own service is long time fixed liner regular Far East(japan, korea, south east asia) to/from middle/blacksea via israel

Thus pls offer for this today morning is possible as we have to report to liner trades inquiry and already some other offers which also wish to have spct offer soon to complete our general business plan view

Thanks

Best Regards,

-----

Sent using BlackBerry® (text 4-3-U)

The text was identified as being sent between business partners as the writer asked the recipient to *offer costs for all ranges of cars*. Moreover, there was some self-introduction: *our group VEC own service is long time fixed liner regular Far East(japan, korea, south east asia) to/from middle/blacksea via Israel*, which indicates that the communicators worked for different companies. Nevertheless, despite the self-introduction, the interactants seemed to know each other well, for instance, the writer addressed the recipient by the abbreviated kinship term and his first name *A. B (anh B – older brother B)*. Moreover, abbreviations *A., pls., wgt., and spct* were used while proper names were not capitalised *japan, korea, south east asia, blacksea, and israel*. Apart from the abbreviations and the absence of capitalisation for proper names, there was a lack of full stops at the end of the second and third paragraphs, which showed a casualness in the language of the text, a reflection of the close tenor. In addition, an elliptical clause was used: *Possible regular calls in future*. This use of ellipsis, together with direct commands *Pls offer costs for all ranges of cars* and *pls offer for this today morning*, indicates frequent contact and an equal power relationship between the interactants.

Some texts demonstrated a change in the closeness between the business partners as a result of frequent contact. The three texts below were written by the same writer (C) to the same recipient (XX):

**From:** C

**To:** XX

**Cc:** ZZ ; Y ; QQ ; YY

**Sent:** Wednesday, November 25, 2009 4:54 PM

**Subject:** PO-F-09-743

Dear Mr. XX,

Sorry so much for our delay clearance the PO-F-09-743. The PO-F-09-333A passed already.

The customs didn't allow us declare the PO-F-09-743 for Project, so we must declare for consumable materials.

Please kindly give us the unit price of each items in invoice & attached sheet of sales contract for pay the import tax & VAT.

Thank you & Best regards,

C (*text 7-22-C*)

**From:** C

**To:** XX

**Cc:** AAA

**Sent:** Tuesday, December 01, 2009 1:45 PM

**Subject:** Re: PO-F-09-743

Dear Mr. XX,

This shipment will arrive to our factory on tomorrow.

Best regards,

C (*text 7-21-C*)

**From:** C

**To:** XX

**Sent:** Thursday, December 03, 2009 5:13 PM

**Subject:** Re: PO-F-09-743

Dear XX,

Sorry for delay your payment. We will make the payment within next week.

The shipment arrived to factory yesterday and under checking.

Thanks & best regards,

C (*text 7-20-C*)

It can be seen in these texts that the tenor changed as the communicators had more contact. According to Eggins (2004, p. 101), one important aspect that manifests in the tenor is the choice of vocatives. In the first email, the writer addressed the recipient by the formal title *Dear Mr. XX*. In the second email, the writer still addressed the recipient in the same way. However, in the third email, the form of address had changed: the writer only addressed the recipient by his first name *Dear XX*.

#### *5.4.1.2 Candidate and prospective employer*

As shown in Table 80, only 1% texts were sent from candidates to prospective employers. They manifested infrequent contact and low affective involvement. For instance:

Dear Sir/Madam:

I'm pleased to know that your company is now recruiting new staff. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as a suitable candidate for position.

I'm 27 years old and graduated a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City. I have been worked as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year.

I can speak and write English well. Also I can use computer excellence on common soft wares of winwords, excel, powerpoint.....

I working in sales & marketing about chemicals in Personal Care Industry.

I am very happy to be considered one of your candidates. If I may become your staff, I will try my best to fulfill my obligations, to contribute partly to your company's development.

Please find any further information from my CV and other certificates attached here with. If I am given two or three day's notice, I could attend an interview at anytime.

Yours faithfully

W (*text 3-5-W*)

As discussed in the previous chapter (see section 4.11), modality is an important aspect of interpersonal meanings. In this text, the coders pointed out that, while there was only one congruent expression of readiness modality *I will try my best*, the metaphorical realisations of modality of readiness were substantially used: *I'm pleased to, I would like to, I am very happy to*, showing the distance between the interactants. Moreover, the selection of probability modality enabled the writer to temper the language of the text (e.g., *If I may become your staff* and *I could attend an interview at anytime*), which helped reduce the directness of the propositions.

In addition, while there was an absence of capitalisation of some proper nouns (*winwords, excel, powerpoint*), the writer used capitalisation quite consistently with other proper nouns *Bachelor of Chemistry, [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City, Sales & Marketing Executive, English, Personal Care Industry*), which may mean the writer treated *winwords, excel* and *powerpoint* as common nouns. Added to this, the text contained several details of self-introduction, for instance, *I'm 27 years old and graduated a Bachelor of Chemistry at [NS] University, Ho Chi Minh City, I have been worked as Sales & Marketing Executive in chemicals for 3 year*, indicating the absence of prior contact. This lack of prior contact was also reflected in the impersonal salutation: *Dear Sir/Madam*. These linguistic realisations suggest the infrequency of contact and the low affective involvement.

## 5.4.2 Tenor in internal communication

### 5.4.2.1 Individual staff member to individual staff member:

Of the texts sent, approximately 55% (see Table 80) manifested as not only frequent contact, but also high affective involvement. For example:

Hi Chi O [older sister O],

Hope you're doing well over there! As M is preparing a list of things that we need you to hand-carry back to VN for Inst. so I will send it to JJ and cc you tomorrow.

Best regards,

B (*text 3-15-B*)

According to the coders, the writer addressed the recipient informally by *Hi* and a kinship term *Chi* (older sister), and used an elliptical clause *Hope you're doing well over there!* to consolidate the interpersonal relationship with the recipient. Added to this, the subjective modality of high obligation *we need you to* shows the directness of the command, which could indicate either an unequal power relationship in which the writer was more powerful than the recipient or closeness in tenor. The former case (unequal power) seemed unlikely, as the writer expressed deference to the recipient via the use of *Chi* and attempted to establish an interpersonal relationship by *Hope you're doing well over there!*, which apparently leaves us with the second interpretation: a closeness in tenor.

Other examples of this type of tenor included:

Anh I oi [Hey older brother I],

What do you think of this schedule?

K (*text 8-52-K*)

Chi DD oi [Hey older sister DD],

Here are some letters for your reference.

Em K [Younger brother K] (*text 8-60-K*)

Anh A [Older brother A]

Pls submit to me your expense report for taxi cost Oct 2007

230,000 VND

Q (*text 1-2-Q*)

Apart from texts that showed relatively high affective involvement (e.g., via kinship terms as seen in the texts above), Table 80 reveals that about 46% texts sent among individual staff members exhibited neutral or low affective involvement, despite the fact that the majority of them demonstrated a frequency of contact. For instance:

Dear JJJ,

I can't log in my PC since last Friday due to the errow of hardware or soft ware installation as per computer noticed.

FYI that I did not install anything (soft or hard ware) into my PC recently except using it to do SDRs report.

Please help to remote and fix the problem. I will leave it at my desk in the office today for being treated. Contact B for further needed assistance.

Best regards,

M (*text 3-37-M*)

The coders observed that the writer and recipient may be of the same rank and age, as the writer addressed the recipient by name only (no title). Moreover, this equal power relationship was reflected in the use of the contraction *can't* and the direct command *Please help to remote and fix the problem*. In particular, one command was given without politeness softeners: *Contact B for further needed assistance*.

While the employment of the acronyms SDRs showed some shared knowledge between the interactants, there was no indication of any affective involvement between them, since the language of the text was entirely business. The writer even created some distance by the use of nominalisations, using such expressions as *further needed assistance* and *the error of hardware or software installation*, and the passive voice *being treated*. The use of the formal closing *Best regards*, if it was not automatically formatted, further accentuated the distance between the interactants.

#### 5.4.2.2 Individual staff member to group of staff

Table 80 shows that the texts written from individual staff members to a group of staff (accounting for 16% of the texts) demonstrated frequent contact and most reflected a close/neutral relationship. For example:

Dear KK and Anh K,

I plan to go to HCMC early next month in order to visit Peds 1 and 2 hospitals.

KK oi [Hey KK], Could you please book the air ticket for me: I will leave for HCM on early Monday, April 4th. and flight back Hanoi on Saturday April 9th.

Thank you very much

Regards,

N (*text 8-21-N*)

We can see that this email message was sent to three recipients (*Dear KK, Anh K and KK oi*). According to the coders, although the language of the body text seemed neutral, the selection of vocatives reflected a certain degree of affective involvement: *Anh K* (older brother K) and *KK oi* (Hey KK). In the second part of the email, while the writer could have used the congruent command realised by the imperative (e.g., *Please book the air ticket for me*), he/she employed the incongruent command expressed by the interrogative mood *Could you please book the air ticket for me*. As Martin and Rose (2007) explain, whereas “the command positions the addressee as the one to carry out the service, as the servant of the speaker” (p. 229), interrogative

mood gives the addressee the option of refusing, and thus masks the inequality in status.

#### *5.4.2.3 Individual staff member to all staff:*

As presented in Table 80, 8% of the texts were sent from individual staff member to all staff. They amplified frequent contact, but neutral or low affective involvement. For instance:

Dear all,

I would like to send my monthly report Dec, 2010.

Thanks and regards,

WW (*text 8-62-WW*)

Dear All,

Attached is my monthly report

Thanks,

S (*text 8-44-S*)

Dear colleagues,

Please take a look at the file attached and add any necessary information (person to share the room with, dietary restriction, etc).

As the cancellation and amendment policy is very strict (even 25% of first night revenue charge for cancellation or amendment made 61-90 days before arrival), please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to make any changes.

Thanks for your attention.

Y (Ms.) (*text 8-10-Y*)

The frequency of contact in these texts was reflected in the absence of elaboration on the context that gave rise to the texts. For instance, texts 8-62-WW and 8-44-S both comprised only one clause in the body text, with no explanation of what the report was about. Likewise, the writer of 8-10-Y did not provide any background information about *the attached file, the cancellation and amendment policy*. This indicates shared knowledge of the situational context between the writer and the all-staff recipients. Despite evidence of frequent contact, the writers of the texts above used neutral/formal language to enact the role relationships with the addressees: the formal salutation *Dear* and the politeness expressions *Thanks and regards* (8-62-WW), *Thanks* (8-44-S) and *Thanks for your attention* (8-10-Y).

Whereas most texts sent from individual staff members to all staff manifested this type of neutral-formal relations, some texts reflected a certain degree of closeness between the writer and the recipients:

From: O

Date: Wed, Jan 26, 2011 at 11:45 PM

Subject: Re: Staircase Climbing Competition

To: hcmcstaff, T

Congratulations! WW, U and I for your tireless efforts in the fighting with staircase climbing. Hehe.

O (*text 8-68-O*)

The language of this message illustrated a high level of affective involvement via the choice of no greetings, no closings, and the informal giggling *hehe*. The coders observed that the writer and recipients seemed to be involved as friends as well as colleagues.

This friend-colleague relationship was also exhibited in the following email through the employment of the emoticon :) and the clause *many of you know for what*:

Dear [Company 8] staff,

Today is my last working day. I would like to say "Goodbye" and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me.

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future. I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)

Wish you all the best in your life, and again, thank you and goodbye.

Warm regards,

B (*text 8-1-B*)

#### *5.4.2.4 Staff to head vs. head to staff*

Table 80 shows that approximately 3% of the texts were sent between staff members and those in leadership positions (e.g., department heads, co-ordinators, managers, supervisors, CEOs). Comparing a text written by a staff member to their head of department and two texts written by the head to staff, we can see the difference in the language used to realise the social role relationships:

*From staff member to head:*

Dear anh N,

The attach file is my report for trip to KL

Best regard

L (*text 3-27-L*)

*From head to staff:*

Dear O,

My travel application form as requested.

To all other teammates,

For sake of office management, you are urged / requested to do the same as mine.

Best regards,

N (*text 3-36-N*)

N & A

I believe that H will answer our/your tel calls for pending works, but refrain from putting him on email CC list any more.

I will take care of all his tasks as usual.

Best regards,

H (*text 1-5-H*)

While 3-27-L was concerned with providing information: *The attach file is my report for trip to KL*, texts 3-36-N and 1-5-H involved the demand of goods and services: *you are urged / requested to do the same as mine (3-36-N) and refrain from putting him on email CC list any more (1-5-H)*. Both of the commands in 3-36-N and 1-5-H (identified as written by supervisor/manager) were strong and direct, amplifying the non-reciprocal power relation between the writers and addressees. As seen in 3-36-N, the command employed the modality of high obligation *You are urged/requested*. One coder observed that the subjective modality (i.e., *you are urged/requested*) was employed rather than the objective one (e.g., *it is requested that...*), which indicates the lack of need to mask the inequality between the writer and the recipient. The command in 1-5-H (*refrain from putting him on email CC list any more*), realised by the imperative mood without the softening of the politeness adjunct *please*, was

especially direct. According to Martin and Rose (2007, p. 230), imperatives put the writer in a position of authority.

In addition, while text 3-36-N comprised one clause regarding the submission of a form (*My travel application form as requested*) as with text 3-27-L (*The attach file is my report for trip to KL*), the former exemplified the top-down power relation between the writer and the addressee due to the employment of subject-finite ellipsis (e.g., [*Attached is/ Here is*] *my travel application form as requested*).

Apart from the speech functions, mood and ellipsis, another feature that reflected the unequal social role relationships in the texts was the vocatives in the salutations. The texts coded as being sent from head to staff (3-36-N and 1-5-H) employed first names in the salutation as well as a group address term: *Dear O, N & A* and *To the other team mates*, which positioned the writer as equal or superior to the addressee(s). In contrast, in the text that was identified as being sent from a staff member to their leader (3-27-L), the address term expressed deference, through the use of the kinship term *anh* (older brother), positioning the recipient in a higher hierarchical position.

Nonetheless, the following text, while coded as being sent from a staff member to his head of department, illustrates a close affective involvement:

Hi I,

As you know, We - DD, V and I - will go to Mekong Delta provinces next week. Can we hire a car for this trip?

@ YY also informs that the cost of car will be 8,7 M VND

--

FF (*text 8-57-FF*)

The text was identified as being sent from a subordinate to a superordinate because it contained a proposal asking for permission: *Can we hire a car for this trip?*. This indicates that the recipient can either approve or reject the request. As Martin and Rose (2007) point out, “interrogative mood positions the addressee as the one who knows the answer, the authority in the situation” (p. 229). Despite this possible

power relation, the text also demonstrated a relative closeness between the interactants, which was manifested in the use of the first-name informal salutation *Hi I*, the absence of the closing, the use of the symbol @ (which may have been employed as the conjunction *and*), as well as the lack of punctuation at the end of the sentence @ *YY also informs that the cost of car will be 8,7 M VND*. This relative closeness may have had an inter-relationship with the frequency of contact between the interactants, which was represented by *As you know*, indicating that the recipient had already known that *DD, V and I - will go to Mekong Delta provinces next week*.

### **5.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter has presented the results of the macro-analysis to address the second research question: *What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?*. Through the four macro-analysis questions, generic structures of the texts have been analysed and the three dimensions of the situational context (field, tenor and mode) illustrated. The next chapter will present a summary and discussion of these findings and then address the final research question.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The vibrancy of English in Vietnamese written business communication has been demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5. While it has been observed that “English seems to carry little cultural or historical baggage for the Vietnamese” (Mydans, 1995, p. 16), the data illustrated a substantial number of important features that appeared to mark a ‘variety’ of English in Vietnamese written business communication. As early as 1996, Tickoo (1996) in his article about the way the Vietnamese people use the past tense suggested a variety of ‘Vietnamese English.’ The present study, however, shows that there is more to English in Vietnamese written business communication than just past tense marking. Through an SFL analysis of the texts it appears that there are significant lexico-grammatical and contextual features of Vietnamese business communication in English. Those findings have addressed the first two research questions:

1. What are the lexico-grammatical features that realise written English for business communication in Vietnam?
2. What do English business texts by Vietnamese writers tell us about how the contexts of situation and culture are being construed through language?

The lexico-grammatical and contextual features found for these two questions provided the basis to address the third research question, which will be discussed in this chapter:

3. To what extent does the nature of English used in Vietnamese written business communication support arguments regarding the existence of a ‘Vietnamese’ variety of English?

### 6.1 Summary and discussion of major findings

The analysis of the lexico-grammatical and contextual features of the texts, as shown in chapters 4 and 5, suggests six major characteristics of a ‘variety’ of English for written business communication in Vietnam, namely: orientation to actions, negotiation tactics, prevalence of relationship building, context dependence, lack of revision and language as choice.

### 6.1.1. Orientation to actions

The first feature that seemed to emerge from the data was that the texts appeared to be action-oriented. As presented in chapter 4, there was a dominance of material processes over other type of processes. Material processes, which involve “doing, usually concrete, tangible actions” (Eggins, 2004, p. 215), accounted for approximately 50% of all processes while the other five groups of processes (being, thinking, feeling, saying and behaving) shared the other 50%. This strong favour of material processes suggested that the majority of the texts were not constructed as physiological, reflective, cognitive, affective or verbal activities. Rather, they represented concrete actions.

Further, the thematic organisation as well as their transitivity appeared to suggest the orientation of the texts to actions. Theme analysis showed that the texts were organised as a series of actions through the frequent use of unmarked imperative themes (see section 4.4). According to Webster (2009), the choice of themes reflects the way a message is organised “around what the speaker wants to say” (p. 8). The substantial appearance of unmarked imperative themes, thus, possibly indicates the writers’ choice of foregrounding actions as a way of organising the texts to achieve their purpose of conducting business. For instance:

Please adjust NTH PO#2011-16 as below:

1- Add in :

a. OASIS PRO 65 ACID BATHROOM CLEANER 10 ctn

b. WASH N WALK 10 LIT 10 can

2- Reduce quantity of item XXX-STAR SOFT C 20 LT.48 can (instead of 72 can)

(*text 3-1-A*)

In addition, there was a sparsity of conjunctions to link the clauses together (one every four clauses, see section 4.8), which may show that the choice of action-themes provided sufficient implicit cohesion for the text to “hang together and make sense” (Eggins, 2004, p. 321).

Furthermore, the analysis of ellipsis (see section 4.6) revealed that there was a frequent omission of non-content elements, including deictics, subjects and finites (e.g., *Reduce [the] quantity of item ECO-STAR SOFT C 20 LT 48 can [text 3-1-A]* or *My travel application form as requested [text 3-36-N]*). In many cases, the subjects that unmistakably referred to the writer were also left out (e.g., *Will see thru all other rustic ones and come back if any proposal for you in case [text 6-35-U]*). This omission of “low information value” (Paltridge, 2006, p. 165) made the texts appear to be concise and, to further consolidate the aforementioned findings, action-focused.

### 6.1.2. Negotiation tactics

A second major finding was the substantial employment of negotiation/persuasion tactics. The analysis of transitivity showed that there was considerable use of relative temporal circumstances expressing a sense of urgency of requests (e.g., *as soon as possible, asap, the sooner the better, the soonest, early, shortly*). The writers not only conveyed the exigencies of the situation, they also seemed to communicate a necessity for the recipients to comply with the requests through the sizable appearance of intensifiers that amplified the force of attitude (e.g., *certainly, highly, very, strongly, greatly*) (see section 4.3). Together with intensifiers, this sense of compulsion was further accentuated by the frequent election of high-value modality of obligation (see section 4.11) (e.g., *Your participation to this workshop will certainly be highly appreciated [text 9-10-E], your attendance is strongly recommended [text 9-13-E], Your ideas and comments will be very highly appreciated [text 8-23-N]*).

Apart from the tendency to pressure the recipients into complying with requests, the writers were also seen to express their earnestness to provide goods and services to their business partners. In many cases, relative temporal circumstances were employed (see section 4.3), suggesting the writers’ readiness to perform a business move (e.g., *within this afternoon, within today, in very short times*). In addition to temporal circumstances, modality of readiness (see section 4.11) was extensively selected (nearly 50% of modality), indicating the writers’ willingness to support their customers: *Schedule will be confirmed to you soon (text 3-25-O), Please keep us aware of any problems you have had so that prompt actions will be taken to make*

*sure that things will go on smoothly as soon as possible (text 9-7-E), We will be happy to serve you. (text 3-8-Y).*

In the data it could also be seen how the writers framed their proposals/propositions with a sense of certainty through the use of intensifiers that seemed to express their strong evaluation or judgement (e.g., *[COMPANY 3] products and services [...] absolutely will help your Kitchen Operations achieve challenges in hygiene, sanitation and food safety issues [text 3-8-Y], With 2 CAEs taking care of our business growth, we definitely expect to achieve our challenging targets in 2008... [text 3-12-N], We are sorry that we cannot offer any reduction on the price. The sizes of these 2 items are very big and the rejection is very high. [text 6-9-U]). As intensifiers are concerned with negotiating attitudes (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 25), they were likely to allow the writers to appear firm in presenting their position, enabling them to convince their business partners of the quality of their goods and services, emphasise their viewpoint, as well as “close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty” (Hyland, 2005, p. 52).*

Another negotiation tactic that seemed to emerge from the data was the detailed explanations of business moves, lateness, or requests, which apparently allowed the writers to establish a persuasive context for their negotiation. The analysis of the data indicates that there was extensive use of circumstances of cause (about 20% of circumstances; see section 4.3) and enhancement clauses of cause (about 65% of enhancement clauses; see section 4.5). These circumstances and clauses of cause comprised both purposes (e.g., *If you have any interests, please contact us so that the quotation will be sent to you soon [text 3-8-Y]*), and reasons (e.g., *We would like to ask for your approval for delaying this order till vessel date July 9<sup>th</sup> i/o June 30th as planned. Since we are not pleased with quality of some items have come out the kiln & we would like to remake them [text 6-19-U]*). It was clear that the use of circumstances of cause and enhancement clauses of cause allowed the writers to justify their decisions, actions or proposals.

Another noticeable negotiation tactic was the writers’ tendency to elevate the recipients by employing “adversary glorification strategy” (Bhatia, 1993, p. 70). This strategy was found to be employed in (1) spatial and causal circumstances (see

section 4.3) (e.g., *we plan to send our first cruise ship [...] to your good port* [text 4-11-A], *[I] will contribute a remarkable part in a success of your good company* [text 4-4-J], *Thanks for your kind information* [text 2-1-A], *Thanks for your kind feedback* [texts 2-16-A, 2-18-A]) and (2) participants that referred to the recipient (e.g., *[I] found out that your good company is suitable for me* [text 4-4-J]). In brief, negotiation tactics in the data seemed to include not only pressing but also elevating; not only an expectation for compliance, but also an eagerness to provide goods and services.

### 6.1.3. Prevalence of relationship building

The third feature that emerged from the data was the prevalence of relationship building reflected in the texts. It was found that the writers employed several strategies to establish a close relationship with their interactants. For example, Vietnamese kinship terms (e.g., *anh, chi, em, co*, meaning older brother, older sister, younger brother/sister, auntie respectively) were substantially used, addressing the recipients as family members (see section 4.12). Other Vietnamese lexis, such as *Chuc mung* (congratulations), *va* (and), *chao* (hello), and vocative particle *oi* (hey), were also used from time to time within the texts, possibly signalling in-group membership and solidarity.

Furthermore, the establishment of a closeness between the communicators also appeared to be reflected through the use of colloquial/informal language (e.g., *my guy* [text 3-6-X], *cheers* [text 8-16-Q], *my dear* [text 3-22-D], *thx* [text 3-35-D], *thru* [text 6-35-U]). In addition, a significant number of texts employed elliptical topical themes for interpersonal purposes (about 40% of ellipsis; see sections 4.4 and 4.6), which seemed to convey a sense of rapport between the writers and recipients (e.g., *Trust that you are fine and things gone well* [text 3-26-M], *Hope you're doing well over there!* [text 3-15-B], *Hope to see you there* [text 9-4-D]). These elliptical clauses appeared before and/or after the main business content, suggesting that the writers not only focused on getting their business done, but also attached priority to the development of a good relationship with their business partners.

Aside from linguistic strategies, paralinguistic features such as emoticons (e.g., *I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)* [text 8-1-B], *Just come out today , still very hot... ;)* [text 6-37-U]), and 'written' giggling (e.g.,

*Congratulations! WW, U and I for your tireless efforts in the fighting with staircase climbing. Hehe.* [text 8-68-O]) were also employed (see section 5.4), which appeared to demonstrate an attempt to boost a friendly business relationship.

Relationship building was not only reflected through the establishment of friendliness and closeness, but also through the use of politeness strategies. The micro-analysis of processes revealed that *thank* and *appreciate* constituted nearly 40% of the mental processes (see section 4.2), suggesting the writers' tendency to use them to achieve positive politeness effect or what Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1996) term "maximisation of support" (p. 645). As described in section 4.4, the elliptical mental clause *thank you* was frequently used as a politeness strategy to establish an interpersonal relationship with the recipient before requesting him/her to perform an action (e.g., *Thank you for your signed contract and invoice/packing list. Please kindly revise contract as attached file.* [text 7-33-C]). The macro-analysis (chapter 5) further showed that *thank you/thanks* were not only present in texts that demanded goods and services, but also in texts that offered goods and services, offered and demanded information. In other words, these expressions of gratitude were found in the schematic structures of all the four macro genres. This, again, seemed to indicate that creating a positive relationship may have been crucial for the interactants in the data.

In addition to the mental processes *thank* and *appreciate*, another politeness strategy the writers often appeared to employ for interpersonal purposes was the use of adjuncts *kindly* and *please*, which constituted nearly 70% of interpersonal themes (see section 4.4). In many cases, both of these interpersonal themes were combined through the expression *please kindly* (e.g., *please kindly send us your official inquiry* [text 7-32-GG], *Please kindly find the attached file for the list if recommended products* [text 3-8-Y]), which seemed to heighten the politeness of the proposals.

The third strategy the writers were observed to use to build relationships was to allow the recipients to question the 'truthfulness' of their propositions by the adoption of a personal, subjective discourse stance. The analysis of reference (see section 4.7) showed that first-person singular reference (e.g., *I, me, my*) was selected frequently, accounting for nearly one third of exophoric reference (see 4.7). The

frequent use of first-person singular reference suggested that the writers presented their personal, rather than the company's, point of view (e.g., *I believe that H will answer our/your tel calls for pending works [text 1-5-H], I believe that some errors still exist somewhere [text 8-30-T], However, I don't think this is a good way [text 8-26-K]*). As Jensen (2009) points out, "Self mention can explicitly contribute to the development of a relationship with the readers" (p. 19), as the writers do not identify themselves with the institution. This personal stance, therefore, enables the meanings of the propositions/proposals to be expressed subjectively (Jensen, 2009, p. 19).

This apparent subjectivity was also reflected in the frequent use of subjective modality. As presented in section 4.11, more than 90% of modality was subjective, with 67% being implicitly subjective and 27% explicitly subjective (e.g., *I think although there is a discrepancy with our most recent SOP, the sampling is legitimate [text 8-5-C], I hope that you will find them helpful [text 9-15-E]*). As subjective modality implies the writers' low level of commitment to the truth (Fairclough, 2003, p. 166), it seemed to allow them to avoid imposing on the recipients as they intimated that the propositions/proposals were possibly only the writers' personal opinions, which were not necessarily true. Thus, it was likely that the election of a personal, subjective stance enabled the writers to relate more effectively to the recipients than through the use of a collective, objective stance.

#### **6.1.4. Context dependence**

The fourth major finding was the dependence of the language of the texts on the immediate situational context. The data analysis showed that many of the texts were produced in a shared temporal context (i.e., the writers and readers shared a temporal space), which apparently exerted a significant impact on the lexico-grammatical features of the messages. There were substantially more relative than absolute spatial and temporal circumstances (relative spatial circumstances accounted for 73% of spatial circumstances and relative temporal circumstances constituted 64% of temporal circumstances). As discussed in section 4.3, relative circumstances are those whose identities can only be retrieved by the interactants (e.g., *this afternoon, next month, in the schedule, in the new list*). The extensive use of relative circumstances, therefore, indicates the likelihood that the texts were exchanged within a short time. The writers and recipients, while not necessarily in the same

physical context, possibly shared the immediate temporal context, just as speakers and listeners do. Thus, there seemed to be no need to provide a full explanation of the background of the topic of discussion with absolute circumstances.

To complement relative circumstances, there was a considerable employment of exophoric reference whose identities could not be identified within the texts (exophoric reference comprised more than 80% of all reference; see section 4.7), suggesting a shared knowledge of the context of situation (e.g., *Do we have this gift to our customer this year?* [text 3-7-D]). This heavy reliance on the immediate situational context was further consolidated by the prevalence of exophoric themes. Approximately 40% of the unmarked themes (see section 4.4) comprised exophoric reference, using personal pronouns only identifiable to the interactants as the departure point to organise the message (e.g., *When your engineer went to our factory to do the first service, he took these hose assembly to us without customs declaration sheet ...* [text 7-3-E]).

In addition, the analysis of ellipsis also showed that the writers had a tendency to leave out content-carrying elements such as subjects and complements, which often could not be retrieved from within the text (see section 4.6). While this employment of ellipsis could imply the writers' attempt to establish a closeness with the recipients as discussed in the previous point (e.g., *[I] Hope you're doing well over there!* [text 3-15-B]), it could also indicate the shared knowledge of the immediate context in many cases. For instance, some texts contained only the polarity (*Yes/No*) and a certain element of an ellipsed clause, which made them resemble the second part of an adjacency pair in conversations (e.g., *Yes, 6 sets in the 1st time.* [text 7-26-C], *Sure, we'll let you know* [text 8-34-Y]). As the identity of the ellipsed elements in these examples was unretrievable from the preceding/surrounding linguistic context, it was apparent that the writers and recipients shared knowledge of what was left out.

#### **6.1.5. Lack of revision**

The fifth finding that emerged from the data was the apparent lack of revision in the texts. The analysis of lexical cohesion (see section 4.9) revealed that more than 60% of the lexical cohesive devices in the data comprised repetition while meronymy, hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy each accounted for only a small percentage. The dominance of repetition suggested that the texts were likely to be produced in

haste, as the “speed of production” often results in the choice of repetition over other lexical cohesive devices (Biber, 1995, p. 42). Furthermore, there was a frequent absence of paratactic and hypotactic conjunctions (see section 4.5), which were often replaced by commas (e.g., *We had arranged for test run tomorrow, the German technician will arrive tomorrow [text 3-10-D], There's been no new FA of L' AnMien, M is very busy & can't go there tomorrow, my guys will be there [text 3-6-X]*). The frequent use of repetition and absence of paratactic/hypotactic conjunctions, therefore, seemed to indicate a possible lack of careful revision and editing of the texts.

#### 6.1.6. Language as choice

The sixth prominent finding that emerged from the data appeared to be the dynamics of the situational and cultural context, which was represented in the writers' choice of language. As discussed in chapter 2, language is a semiotic system that presents users with choices to realise their purposes in a particular context. This proposition seemed to be manifested in the data, as the writers apparently exhibited semiotic choices of various kinds: choice of ways to construe reality, choice of ways to enact relationships, choice of cohesive devices to create textual cohesion and choice of schematic stages to realise generic structures.

The first was the writers' choice of ways to construe externalities. As can be seen in the analysis of participants (see section 4.1), passive voice was used for non-passive processes (e.g., *will be arrived, was passed away, was failed, will be coincided, have been worked*), with the Actors of the processes treated as Goals to express the idea of an event occurring beyond the Actors' wish.

Another way of construing externalities was the employment of plural reference to refer to singular antecedents as a way to express a collective concept such as a group or a company (see section 4.7) (e.g., *Now I am waiting for the ticket agency. They said that they will arrange the trip to Phu Quoc for me... [text 8-13-C], You have placed the order to FL Thailand distributor through your project contact in Thailand. However, they already forwarded your demand to us in order to serve you. [text 7-32-GG]*). In contrast, singular reference was used to refer to plural antecedents to convey the idea of a single entity, implying the antecedents are of one kind (e.g., *The valves ready to pack for return to Germany. Please arrange time to*

*pack & pick up it.* [text 7-28-C]. *Thank you for your signed invoice & sales contract.*  
*Could you scan it again because I can't see the content clearly.* [text 7-16-C]).

Some circumstances were construed in such a way so as to suggest participants take part directly in the processes (e.g., *We will work it out then will ask help from you* [text 3-10-D], *Now we will co-operate with Purchasing to ask the procedure and document* [text 7-9-A]). This choice of Verbiages (*help, the procedure and document*) after the verbal process *ask* could also be seen in other verbal processes (e.g., *Please confirm me the shipping schedule soon* [text 2-19-A], *please advise us the most appropriate offer* [text 2-10-A]). The combination of Receivers and Verbiages were extended to other processes such as *inform, announce* and *recommend*. Similarly, in material processes, it was found that Beneficiaries and Goals were combined after certain material processes, for example, *Please help me this case* (text 5-5-FF), *he can not support us this shipment* (text 4-1-A). This way of construing participants in material processes was also observed in other processes, such as *provide, submit, share, transfer, prepare* and *find* (see section 4.2).

Apart from the writers' choice of ways to construe externalities, it could also be seen that they seemingly demonstrated choice with regard to ways of enacting social role relationships. This was manifested in their choice of building solidarity or maintaining power and distance. In the analysis of mood and speech functions (see section 4.10), it could be seen that more than 80% of the mood choices were congruent with the speech functions, which appeared to indicate the writers' choice of exhibiting an equal power relation with their recipients. Incongruent mood choices, although accounting for less than 20%, involved mostly proposals that concerned the exchange of goods and services (not the exchange of information). This choice seemed to suggest that, while the writers generally chose to maintain a friendly relationship with their interactants, when it came to the negotiation of action, they tended to select the incongruency of mood and speech functions to enhance the politeness of the proposals (e.g., *Will you confirm your mail receipt?* [text 9-1-A], *Can you also confirm this price as well?* [text 2-9-A]).

However, despite the commonality of this incongruent choice of interrogatives to realise commands, nearly 50% of the commands in modulated interrogatives were

not accompanied by question marks (see section 4.10). This option of not using such punctuation in modulated interrogatives indicates the possibility that the writers, while employing incongruency as a politeness strategy to express their commands, implicitly expected compliance from their interactants (e.g., *Can you please help to check some of the terms and service as follows. [text 4-2-F], KK oi, Could you please book the air ticket for me: [text 8-21-N], Could you scan it again because I can't see the content clearly. [text 7-16-C]*).

In addition to the election of mood and speech functions, other choices to enact tenor were also identified, for example, choice of vocatives, modality, and discourse stance, as analysed in the previous section with respect to relationship building. Among these, the choice of Vietnamese vocatives was apparently reflective of the writers' intention of enacting a good relationship with their interactants. Although English comprises a rich variety of address terms to show (non-)reciprocity of status (e.g., *Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss, Madam, Sir, Lady, my friend, sister, uncle, auntie, mate, etc.*, Q. Chen, 2010; Nevala, 2004), the writers of the texts employed Vietnamese kinship terms in a significant number of texts, suggesting their presumably deliberate choice of signalling in-group identity and, therefore, solidarity with the recipients.

The third conceivable demonstration of the writers' semiotic choice could be seen in the selection of cohesive devices to create textual meanings, realised most clearly through the use of conjunctions. As the analysis of conjunctions unfolded (see section 4.8), informal/neutral conjunctions were employed more frequently than formal ones. Informal/neutral conjunctions of consequences (e.g., *so, but*) outnumbered their formal counterparts (e.g., *thus, therefore, however*) three to one while informal/neutral conjunctions of addition (e.g., *and, or, also*) outnumbered the formal ones (e.g., *moreover, furthermore*) nine to one. Comparing the potential and actual meaning choice, we can see the writers could have made more formal choices, but what they actually chose was a dominant selection of informal/neutral conjunctions. This choice could be explained when we scrutinise the contextual dimension of tenor, where, as discussed previously, the writers tried to establish a friendly relationship with their interactants. Therefore, the choice of an informal/neutral way of creating textual cohesion appeared congruent with and reminiscent of the writers' underlying purposes.

Last but not least, the writers' semiotic choice could be induced from their election of the stages in the schematic structures of genres to realise a certain communicative purpose. As seen in the genre analysis (see section 5.1), each type was identified as possessing its own schematic structure with a certain set of schematic stages. For instance, a farewell message (offer of information) comprised such schematic stages as context, farewell, expression of gratitude, and good wishes; an application letter (offer of information) constituted various stages, including indication of response to recipient's demand, statement of purpose, personal characteristics, training and qualifications, skills and abilities, working experience, envisagement of contribution to prospective company, reference to CV and certificates, request for an interview, and expression of gratitude; a workshop/meeting invitation email (demand for goods and services) was made up of such stages as invitation, evaluation of event, information about time and venue, reference to attachment, expectation of addressee's attendance, and expression of gratitude. From the generic structures, it can be seen that the writers developed "patterned ways" (Eggins, 2004, p. 54) in relation to the presence and order of the schematic constituents to achieve their goals. It could also be observed that the constituents in each genre were stimulated by not only pragmatic motivations (realised by such stages as context, farewell, statement of purpose, personal characteristics, etc.), but also interpersonal motivations (realised by such stages as expression of gratitude and good wishes).

Overall, the analysis of the findings from ideational, interpersonal, textual and generic perspectives has demonstrated how in this study the context of situation, context of culture, the writers' choice and purposes impacted on the linguistic realisations of content/meaning. This seemed to reiterate Eggins' (2004) observation that language is a system of values that "represents a point at which a choice has to be made" (p. 196). Thus, this study has consolidated a systemic functional view of language, a "theory of choice" (Webster, 2009, p. 1), to account for how the emails got constructed in Vietnamese written business communication.

From this systemic functional viewpoint we have seen the emergence of the lexicogrammatical and contextual features of the texts (see chapters 4 and 5) which helped address the first two research questions. Moreover, we have also seen the emergence of six prominent features of English in written business communication in Vietnam:

an orientation to action, certain negotiation tactics, relationship establishment, context reliance, lack of revision and language as choice. In this way, the third research question has been addressed. These findings support a view of varieties of English as involving context-motivated choices and functions, and moving away from approaches that have at their core notions of deviation from standards. As new context motivates innovation of language use (Hasan, 2009, p. 170), the centrality of the notion of context in the study allowed for a meaningful explanation of language change, explaining why English in Vietnamese written business communication is “maintaining existing patterns and innovating new ones” (Hasan, 2009, p. 170) that best accommodate its users in their specific contexts of situation and culture, assisting them to meet their socio-semantic needs linguistically. The notion of context is thus necessarily related to the notion of functionality, stressing what worked for the users in the data rather than what was right or wrong.

In addition, the findings of this study seem to confirm Mahboob and Szenes’ (2010) contention that language should be considered as a meaning making resource and “not just as a marker that identifies the country/region that the user of this language belongs to” (p. 597). The English language in the data was shown to be a system of meanings and meaning potentials that users chose to (or not to) employ to conduct business and organise ideas while enacting relationships. While the study unveiled systematic features in written Vietnamese business communication, this is not to say these features apply to English communication of all Vietnamese, in fact, care has to be exercised when associating a certain semiotic system with national identities. In Mahboob and Szenes’ (2010) words, “using names of countries as labels to classify language varieties is, arguably, imposing a nationalistic twist to linguistic varieties” (p. 580).

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest a new approach to describing a variety of English. As seen throughout the study, SFL provided an effective theoretical framework and analytical tool to help describe the semiotic system that the Vietnamese users in the data employed to make meanings. Through the employment of the descriptive apparatus of SFL (Halliday, 2009, p. 61; Matthiessen, 2013, p. 438), the semiotic system that was depicted emerged in its own right, without having to resort to any outside system such as comparing a variety with other

varieties of Englishes (e.g., inner-circle varieties with outer-circle ones). Moreover, the use of SFL appears to have allowed the nature of English used in written Vietnamese business communication to be explored comprehensively, from lexicogrammar to semantics, from the below the clause, at the clause level, to textual level, as well as from syntagmatic relations (e.g., Actor + Process + Goal) to paradigmatic relations (i.e., examination of elements that could have been used in place of a certain element such as the potential use of interrogative instead of imperative to realise a command and the potential differences of their impact on the recipient). This holistic examination of the data assisted for the thorough understanding of English in written Vietnamese business communication, prioritising uses and meanings and therefore avoiding a structural orientation. In addition, while one may hear the complaint that “SFL is too complicated” (Halliday, 2009, p. 61), its extravagance of terms (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 3; Rose, 2006, p. 92) furnished the researcher with sufficient functional terminology to describe the complexity of an emerging variety of English in a specific context (i.e., English in Vietnamese written business communication), allowing for an evidence-based description of texts from three simultaneous strands of meanings (i.e., textual meanings, representational meanings and interpersonal meanings) and the interplay of these meanings in the formulation of the email messages, enabling the study to steer away from surface “running commentaries” of texts (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. xvi; Fairclough, 1995, pp. 4-5). Therefore, SFL, a theory that involves a model of language made out of meanings (Matthiessen et al., 2010, p. 2; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013, p. 20) appears to be a suitable framework to investigate a new linguistic variety, offering an “appropriate theoretical apparatus for perceptive interpretation” of texts (Hasan, 2009, p. 174) and a “coherent and viable account of the architecture of language as a system” (Hasan, 2009, p. 167).

## **6.2 Implications for future research**

The findings of the study have some implications for business communication research, business pedagogy, sociolinguistic research, WE theory and research methodology.

First, the findings of this study present implications for further research in Vietnamese business communication. In the current study, since the focus was on

texts produced by Vietnamese writers, the identity of the recipients was not examined. The process of de-identification of the texts revealed some recipients' non-Vietnamese names addressed by Vietnamese kinship terms and Vietnamese vocative *oi* (hey), for example, *Anh* [non-Vietnamese name] *oi* (texts 8-47-K, 8-49-K, 8-52-K, 8-58-K), *Anh* [non-Vietnamese name] (text 8-50-V), *Hi anh* [non-Vietnamese name] (texts 8-54-S, 8-55-K). However, whether those recipients were non-Vietnamese or Vietnamese using foreign pseudonyms was not pursued, as it was not within the scope of the research questions to do so. Nevertheless, it might possibly be fruitful for future research to compare English business texts communicated among Vietnamese interactants with those exchanged between Vietnamese writers and non-Vietnamese recipients to examine whether the six prominent features of Vietnamese business communication identified in this study are consistently demonstrated between the two groups. It might also be worthwhile to investigate whether non-Vietnamese recipients are treated the same way as their Vietnamese counterparts in terms of relationship development, which may have an impact on the linguistic realisations of the texts (e.g., vocatives, modality, and the congruency between mood and speech functions).

Another area that is likely to merit future research is the similarities and differences between English communication in the academy and business worlds in Vietnam. In this study, among nine organisations from which the data were collected, there were two academic institutions (company 5 and 9). However, the texts from these institutions involved only the communication among the staff working in different departments. As the data analysis indicated, these texts demonstrated similar features to those composed by business people in other sectors (e.g., healthcare, import and export, chemical, shipping, etc.). Nonetheless, as English is increasingly used in official communication in Vietnam, it might be interesting to examine the extent to which the features identified in this study apply to academic communication between academic staff and students, a social relation in which power is likely to be unequivocal and affective involvement low.

Apart from these implications for Vietnamese communication research, the data in this study suggest implications for business textbook design and business teaching methodology. In a study about business textbooks, Bremner (2008) reports that the

writing exercises in the examined textbooks often arise from “scripted context” (p. 314) conceived by the writers. From the present study, it can be seen that the ‘real world’ of business communication can be highly complicated, being simultaneously subject to multiple forces of field, tenor and mode. Moreover, the notion of ‘correctness’ in business communication seemed to be elusive, as it appeared to be defined by the writers’ semiotic choices, which was in turn governed by contextual factors, i.e., the situational and cultural contexts. Thus, it could be useful for future research to look into the incorporation of authentic business texts into business textbooks, and the impact of using authentic texts on teaching business writing.

The findings also suggest that it may be useful for future research to investigate the use of functional analytical activities in business teaching. As the study revealed, the analytical activities in the data analysis shed light on the intricacy of multiple contextual dimensions and their influence on the production of texts. Therefore, it might be fruitful to examine the extrapolation of this discourse approach to classroom teaching. Functional analytical activities that can possibly be explored in teaching business writing include the analysis of the topic and purpose of the texts, the target audience, the relationship between the writer and recipient in relation to frequency of contact, affective involvement and power relation, the way the texts are organised and, finally, the way the organisation is signalled.

With regard to sociolinguistic research, it may be important to explore the reasons why English, rather than Vietnamese, is the preferred means of communication among Vietnamese interactants in certain organisations. Whether the use of English as the corporate language disempowers some Vietnamese employees or not may also be a productive area for future research.

Additionally, some studies have reported that a significant number of Vietnamese still defer to inner-circle Englishes, exhibiting a preference to study with American or British teachers (e.g., Cao, 2009). Hence, while this study has shown that features of Vietnamese written business communication have emerged, it is still not clear what the perceptions of the users of this ‘variety’ and other English-speaking Vietnamese are towards this. Furthermore, it might also be gainful to investigate

whether Vietnamese teachers are willing to include this ‘variety’ into their classroom.

Aside from the perceptions of users and teachers, it would be worthwhile to examine the comprehensibility and acceptability of this ‘variety’, particularly if it is used for communication with non-Vietnamese business recipients. Whether it facilitates or obstructs cross-cultural communication is a promising subject of inquiry.

Last but not least, as discussed earlier, it has been contended there is no right or wrong language from a functional viewpoint; there are only functional choices that users make to suit their purposes in a particular context, that is, who says what in what kind of situation to whom (Martin et al., 1997, p. 3). This has enabled the emerging features of the data to be viewed from a perspective different to most of the existing ones in the WE literature (see chapter 2). The results of this study seem to indicate that it could be useful for future research to approach WE studies from a functional viewpoint, using SFL as an analytical tool to uncover how Englishes are employed in different contexts to enact social meaning-making processes.

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## APPENDIX 1: CODEBOOK

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. CATEGORIES

This codebook defines and provides examples to illustrate 13 categories required for coding data in the micro-level analysis. Instructions of how to use the categories for coding are also provided and highlighted (General coding instructions are provided in a separate document called *Coding instructions*). The categories in this codebook are:

1. **Participants**
2. **Processes**
3. **Circumstances**

4. **Themes**
5. **Clause simplexes/complexes**
6. **Ellipsis**
7. **Reference**
8. **Conjunctions**
9. **Lexical Cohesion**

10. **Proposals/Propositions**
11. **Mood choice**
12. **Modality**
13. **Terms of address**

These categories belong to three groups:

- **Categories from 1 to 3** express ideational meanings, i.e., what the texts are about.
- **Categories from 4 to 9** express textual meanings, i.e., how ideas in the texts are connected.
- **Categories from 10 to 13** express interpersonal meanings, i.e., what the relationship between the writer and recipient is.

#### 2. (UN)CODABLE UNITS

- The unit of analysis for these categories is the clause (Please read the *Coding Instructions* for more information). However, **for non-finite clauses** (*i.e., to fetch her dog a bone, to introduce myself, finishing my work early*), there are three categories that are **NOT** analysed:

- **Themes**
- **Proposals/Propositions**
- **Mood choice**

- Minor clauses (*hi, thanks, yuk, ok*) are not analysed for any categories and, therefore, deleted from the micro-analysis coding frame although they are still retained in the intact text for the macro-level analysis.
- When a clause does not have an element for a certain category, put a cross (x) in the slot under that category.  
For example, in the clause “I have to go”, there are no circumstances (i.e., adverbial groups or prepositional phrases). Then put a cross (x) under the category *Circumstances* in the coding frame.

### 3. CODES

To help you save time, codes have been provided, e.g., **Ma** for material processes, **Me** for mental processes or **P** for circumstances of location-place. You can use either upper cases, lower cases or mixed for these codes, e.g., **MA** or **ma** or **Ma** for material processes.

### 4. ONLINE REFERENCES

If you would like to find out more about the concepts in this codebook, further information can be accessed at the following links.

Eggs, S. (2004). *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Continuum. Retrieved from [http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=sS7UXugIIg8C&oi=fnd&pg=PR13&dq=systemic+functional+linguistics&ots=xaoBRpQC-d&sig=L\\_mlyZ8W7YkCTRk2npJHRrXx9c#v=onepage&q=systemic%20functional%20linguistics&f=false](http://books.google.com.au/books?hl=en&lr=&id=sS7UXugIIg8C&oi=fnd&pg=PR13&dq=systemic+functional+linguistics&ots=xaoBRpQC-d&sig=L_mlyZ8W7YkCTRk2npJHRrXx9c#v=onepage&q=systemic%20functional%20linguistics&f=false)

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## 1. PARTICIPANTS

**A participant** is a person, a group of people (including a company or an organisation) **(P)**, an object **(O)** or an event **(E)** (Halliday, 1994a, p. 109). Participant is similar to a subject or object in traditional grammar.

**Probe:** To find out what a participant is, these questions can be asked: **Who?/ By whom?/ What?/By what?**

**Indicate which element of the clause is a participant by underlining it or typing it in the slot provided for “Participants” in the coding frame. Use the appropriate codes for each type of participants (P, O or E). There may be more than one participant in a clause.**

### EXAMPLES

They work in the factory.

The workers in the factory met yesterday. (A participant can be a noun phrase with post-modifiers, e.g., “in the factory” after “the workers”.)

Today is Monday. (A participant can be a time/day).

It was an old timber house (A participant can be a noun phrase with pre-modifiers, e.g., “old timber” before “house”.)

In Switzerland, they give you a cognac.

In Switzerland, they give a cognac to you. (One clause can have three participants or more.)

My blood was tested by them. (An agent in the passive clause is also a participant.)

Diana went to Geneva last week.

(Egins, 1994, 2004; Martin et al., 1997)

## 2. PROCESSES

**Processes** are verb groups that name events taking place or relationships among things (Halliday, 1994a, p. 109).

There are six types of processes:

CODES

- Material → **Ma**
- Mental → **Me**
- Behavioural → **B**
- Existential → **E**
- Relational → **Ra (for relational attributive); Ri (for relational identifying)**
- Verbal → **V**

Indicate which element in the clause is a process (there is only one major process in a clause). Then write the code next to the identified process, e.g., *arrive* – *ma* (i.e., *arrive* is a material process).

2.1. **Material processes (Ma)** are verbs that name events (happening) (e.g., *The sugar dissolved.*) and action (doing) (e.g., *She stirred the coffee.*).

**Probe:** To find out whether a process is material, this question can be asked: **What did x do?**

**Unmarked tense:** present continuous

### EXAMPLES – Material Processes

Arrive	buy	play	run	Put	fall
give	end	build	adapt	hold	fly
receive	purchase	dance	chase	try	kill
work	go	lecture	formulate	strike	reform
write	take	cook	open (the door)	touch	raise
start	avoid	make (a mistake, a	pay	stop	pull

accept	join	cake)	combat	travel	eat
happen	spend	serve	dry	throw	hang
leave	test	reach	perform	move	grow
influence	clear	listen	pass	keep	obtain
wait	carry	visit		die	turn

2.2. **Mental processes (Me)** are verbs that name perception (*She saw the car.*), cognition (*I don't know her name.*) and affection (*I hate injections.*).

**Probe:** To find out whether a process is mental, this question can be asked: **What do you think/feel/know about x?**

**Unmarked tense:** present simple

#### EXAMPLES – Mental Processes

hear	regret	please	be scared	consider	love
see	remember	wish	be pleased	disappoint	prefer
wonder	think (I think you're right.)	upset	be delighted	realise	want
believe		annoy	be worried	feel	delight
understand	decide	hurt	be puzzled	hope	enjoy
notice	know	worry	be impressed	convince	be amused
convince	hate	recognise	be frightened	guess	(not) give a shit
like	distress				

2.3. **Behavioural processes (B)** are verbs that name physiological behaviour (*She laughed.*) and psychological behaviour (Be quiet! *I'm thinking.*). They are more like 'doing' than 'thinking/feeling'.

### EXAMPLES – Behavioural Processes

think (Be quiet! I'm thinking.)	cough	look over	praise	tremble
solve	smile	observe	flatter	sit (sit up straight)
work out	sniff	listen	insult	breathe
sing	laugh	smell	kiss	sleep
dream	cry	taste (He's tasting the soup.)	hug	scream
sigh	look at	ponder	embrace	drive (a car)
talk	watch	meditate	dance	blame
	stare	ruminare	sweat	criticise
	gawk	mumble		
	view			

2.4. **Existential processes (E)** are verbs presenting that something exists or happens (*There's your father on the line.*).

**Probe:** To find out whether a process is existential, this probe can be used: **There was/is something.**

### EXAMPLES – Existential Processes

(there +) be	come about
(there +) seem	happen
exist	take place
remain	rise
arise	emerge
occur	grow

2.5. **Relational processes** are verbs that are attributive (*Maggie was wrong.*) or identifying (*Maggie was our leader.*).

**Probe:** To find out whether a process is relational attributive or relational identifying, the following probes can be used:

- **Relational attributive (Ra):** 'x is a member of class a', 'x carries attribute a'

- **Relational identifying(Ri):** 'x serves to define the identity of y'

**EXAMPLES – Relational Attributive Processes (Ra)**

belong (The piano belongs to Peter.)	seem (It seemed unlikely.)	keep (She kept quiet.)
be (She is beautiful.)	sound (His story sounded suspicious.)	start out (She started out healthy.)
turn (He turned pale.)	appear (The luggage appeared harmless.)	stay (Stay still.)
become (She became suspicious.)	look (She looked jaundiced.)	remain (Remain patient.)
grow (She grew serious.)	taste (The soup tasted wonderful.)	have (Max has lots of energy.)
turn out (It turned out OK.)	smell (The soup smells fantastic.)	make (She made him a good wife.)
start out (She started out healthy.)	feel (I feel funny.)	cost (It cost him a pretty penny.)
end up (She ended up dead.)	stand (A litre of milk stands this tall.)	come (We come from Bourke.)
		get (They get very old.)

**EXAMPLES – Relational Identifying Processes (Ri)**

be (She is my daughter.)	take (The operation took one hour.)
own (Max owns the property.)	last (The operation lasted one hour.)
surround (The trees surround Mary.)	name (They named the baby John.)
equal (One plus two equals three.)	vote (They voted him president.)
add up to (One plus two adds up to three.)	elect (They elected him president.)
make (Manners make the man.)	occupy (The fair occupies the whole day.)
signify (Signing a contract signifies agreement.)	resemble (She resembles her mother.)
mean (Quantum leap means a discrete jump.)	follow (Applause followed her act.)
defines (The word 'exuberant' defines his style.)	influence (Pressure influences rainfall.)
spell (C-A-T spells cat.)	be associated with (A bronze skin is associated with health and beauty.)
indicate (The presence of rust indicates moisture.)	concern (This chapter concerns the rise of imperialism.)

express (Her smile expressed pleasure.)

act as (The commissioner acts as the mediator.)

symbolise (An \* symbolises an unacceptable clause.)

play (Robert de Niro played Caprone.)

represent (The milk bottle represents one litre.)

reflect (His dancing reflects tremendous artistry.)

stand for (@ stands for at.)

refer to ('Quantum leap' refers to a sharp jump.)

exemplify (His behaviour exemplified the typical terrorist.)

**2.6. Verbal processes (V)** are verbs of saying (e.g., *I asked him a question.*) and can be used for reporting and quoting.

**Probe:** To find out whether a process is verbal or not, use this probe: **What did x say?**

**EXAMPLES:**

agree	promise	indicate	insist	confirm
say	suggest	show	make (a speech)	inform
ask	repeat	demonstrate	state	prove
tell	describe	signify	note	reply
demand	outline	convince	forgive	imply
command	explain	persuade	assert	answer
		speak		

**Note:** For complex processes (i.e., two processes combined by “to” or “-ing”), the main process for analysis is the **second** one.

**EXAMPLES:**

want to go → go (material)

began to grow shorter → grow (relational)

enjoy dancing → dance (material)

### 3. CIRCUMSTANCES

**Circumstances:** adverbial groups or prepositional phrases.

There are ten types of circumstances:

- |                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| • Extent →           | <b>E</b>   |
| • Cause →            | <b>Ca</b>  |
| • Location (time) →  | <b>T</b>   |
| • Location (place) → | <b>P</b>   |
| • Matter →           | <b>Mat</b> |
| • Manner →           | <b>Man</b> |
| • Role →             | <b>R</b>   |
| • Accompaniment →    | <b>Ac</b>  |
| • Contingency →      | <b>Co</b>  |
| • Angle →            | <b>An</b>  |

Indicate which element in the clause is a circumstance (there may be more than one circumstance in a clause). Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., *for the night* – E (i.e., “for the night” is an extent circumstance).

#### 3.1. Extent (E)

**Probe:** How long?/ How far?/ At what intervals?

#### EXAMPLES – Extent Circumstances

I've given blood <u>36 times</u> .	for six miles	every second step
They made him the barman <u>for the night</u> .	every three hours	every ten yards
	for three hours	again

### 3.2. Cause (Ca)

**Probe:** Why?/ What for?/ Who for?/ On whose behalf?

#### EXAMPLES – Cause Circumstances

My daughter survived <u>thanks to two Swiss men</u> .	because of you	for lack of \$5
She laughed <u>at the girl's stupidity</u> .	for better results	in the hope of a good deal
She was crying <u>with frustration</u> .	thanks to him	on behalf of us all
He wanted the land <u>for himself</u> .		
William prepared <u>for his journey</u> .		
He played a trick <u>for a laugh</u> .		

### 3.3. Location (time) (T)

**Probe:** When?

#### EXAMPLES – Location (time) Circumstances

They rang me up <u>on the Saturday night</u> .	in September	during the lesson
	before tea	afterwards
	recently	

### 3.4. Location (place) (P)

**Probe:** Where?

#### EXAMPLES – Location (place) Circumstances

I delivered it <u>to the clinic where she was</u> .	in the yard
It has six white bars <u>across it</u> .	from Paris
The eye has a black stripe <u>through it</u> .	miles away
	on the news

### 3.5. Matter (Mat)

**Probe:** What about?

#### EXAMPLES – Matter Circumstances

As for <u>Greece</u> , they give you nothing.	about this
Nobles feuded among themselves <u>over land and power</u> .	with reference to that

### 3.6. Manner (Man)

**Probe:** How? / With what?/ How -ly? (Quality)/ What ... like?/ By what means?

#### EXAMPLES – Manner Circumstances

They did the transfusion <u>through the umbilical artery</u> .	unlike most marsupials
He coughed <u>loudly</u> .	with a hammer
The tongue is extremely long, <u>as in all mammalian ant or termite eaters</u> .	by trickery
He lay <u>with open eyes</u> .	quickly
The bells were ringing <u>sweetly</u> .	as fast as possible
You'll know him <u>by his hat</u> .	like a top
	with despair

### 3.7. Role (R)

**Probe:** What as?/ What into?

#### EXAMPLES – Role Circumstances

She was travelling to Israel <u>as a tourist</u> .	as a concerned parent
They exploded <u>to bits</u> .	(smashed) into pieces
James dressed <u>as a yeoman</u> .	

### 3.8. Accompaniment (Ac)

**Probe:** Together with?/ And whom? /what else?

**EXAMPLES – Accompaniment Circumstances**

She got on the plane without her boyfriend.

You can come with me.

with(out) our friends

as well as them

instead of them

### 3.9. Contingency (Co)

**Probe:** In what circumstances?/ Under what conditions?/ Despite what?

**EXAMPLES – Contingency Circumstances**

Without more help, we can't do it.

He laughed in spite of himself.

in the event of rain

in spite of the rain

in the absence of proof

### 3.10. Angle (An)

**Probe:** says who?

**EXAMPLES – Angle Circumstances**

According to Willie, he was just a yeoman.

It seemed odd to him.

#### 4. THEME

**Theme** is a local departure of a clause, the initial position in a clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013).

- Theme extends from left to right, to include textual theme(s), interpersonal theme(s) and the first topical theme.
- Do not analyse *themes for non-finite clauses* (i.e., *to fetch her dog a bone, to introduce myself, finishing my work early*) and *minor clauses* (*hi, thanks, yuk, ok*).
- There are four kinds of theme. Do not stop theme analysis **until you find a topical theme**.
- **Indicate which element in the clause is a theme (there may be more than one theme in a clause). Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., *but – te* (i.e., “but” is a textual theme).**

<b>Textual theme (Te)</b>	<b>Interpersonal theme (I)</b>	<b>Topical theme (To)</b>	<b>Predicated theme (P)</b>
<p>is the first element of a clause that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a structural conjunction (e.g., and, or, but, so, because, if, since, whether, while, etc.)</li> <li>- a relative pronoun (e.g., who, which, that, etc.)</li> <li>- a conjunctive preposition (despite, after, before, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLES:</b> I love the smell of jasmine, <u>but</u> I adore napalm. (<b>Note:</b> “but” is a textual theme; “I” is a topical theme).</p>	<p>is the first element of the clause that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- an auxiliary verb (should, do, are)</li> <li>- WH element (who, what)</li> <li>- vocative (terms of address)</li> <li>- an adjunct (adverb)</li> <li>- first and second person mental clauses (I think that ...)</li> <li>- comment adjuncts (fortunately, surprisingly, hopefully, frankly, honestly)</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLES:</b> <u>Should</u> <b>they</b> be doing that? (<b>Note:</b> “Should” is an interpersonal</p>	<p>is the first topical element of the clause</p> <p><b>EXAMPLES:</b> <u>Bernard Shaw</u> was born in Dublin. <u>The house</u> was gloomy. <u>In 1876</u> , Shaw joined his mother in London. (<b>Note:</b> “In 1976” is a <b>marked topical theme</b>, i.e., Theme is not the same as subject)</p> <p><u>On the upper floor of such premises</u>, a person cannot stand erect. (<b>Note:</b> “On the upper ...” is a marked topical theme, i.e., Theme is</p>	<p>Emphasis is given to an element of a clause that would otherwise be unemphasised.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> <u>It was Diana</u> who donated blood 36 times.</p>

<p><u>Furthermore</u>, <b>this alternative</b> would be too costly.          (Note: “Furthermore” is a textual theme; “this alternative” is a topical theme.)          The minister said <u>that</u> ...          Prof. Smith's lecture, <u>which</u> ...</p>	<p>theme; “they” is a topical theme.)”  <u>Don't</u> touch that.  <u>Why can't</u> <b>you</b> come over?  <u>Please</u> contact me.  <u>Usually</u>, <b>Jeremy</b> is drunk.</p>	<p>not the same as subject. Write “<b>marked to</b>” in your analysis for <b>marked topical theme</b>)</p>	
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**Note:**

- For **elliptical declaratives**, e.g., *thank you* or *wish you all the best* (the subject *I* is ellipsed), the topical theme is the ellipsed *I*. In your analysis, please write *I – E/To* (i.e., *I* is an ellipsed topical theme).  
 Another example is *I will miss you and hope to see you again soon*. In the second clause *hope to see you again soon*, the ellipsed topical theme is “I”. Please write *I – E/To*.
- For **imperatives**, for example, *Pls submit your expense report*, the topical theme is the process *submit*. In your analysis, please write *submit – To* (i.e., *submit* is a topical theme).

## 5. CLAUSE SIMPLEXES/ COMPLEXES

**Clause simplex** is a clause that is not modified by other clauses. Write “sim” in the slot if the clause is simplex.

**Clause complex** is a clause together with other clauses that modify it (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013). If the clause is part of a complex, write the corresponding symbols 1, 2, or a, b as well as ‘, “, =, + *or x* as outlined below.

There are two types relationships in clause complexes: Taxis and Logico-semantic.

**First, mark 1, 2, or a, b for taxis.**

- **Parataxis:** the clauses are independent, and are linked together by *and, but, or, so, semicolon (;), etc.*  
Mark 1 for the first paratactic clause and 2 for the second paratactic clause.

**Examples:**

My computer ran its checks of memory stores, and it drew a blank.

1

2

I turned and ran for my life.

1

2

- **Hypotaxis:** one clause is dependent on another, and is linked to the other by *when, while, if, as if, after, before, (even) though, as, to-infinitive, V-ing, which, ...who, ...whose, ...as (similar to), that, etc.*  
Mark “a” for the main clause and “b” for the dependent clause.

**Examples:**

He's a damaged man, as many vets are.

a

b

I spoke to some people who were living with PTSD.

a

b



## 6. ELLIPSIS

**Ellipsis** refers to abbreviation or shortened clauses (Egins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

**Indicate which element in the clause has been ellipsed. Write it in the slot named “Ellipsis”. There may be more than one elliptical element in a clause.**

### EXAMPLES

He roared in fury and ( ) struggled with all his might. (*'he' is ellipsed in the second clause.*)

Hope you're doing well. (*'I' is ellipsed in 'I hope'.*)

Just noted that there are ... (*'I have' is ellipsed in 'I have just noted...'*)

Do you think he's wrong? Yes, I believe so. (*'I believe he's wrong.' → 'he's wrong' is ellipsed.*)

Have you read it? Yes, I have. (*'Yes, I have read it.' → 'read it' is ellipsed.*)

Thanks. (instead of *'Thanks, I'm taking the book.'* → *'I'm taking the book' is ellipsed.*)

Does he have a copy of the book? He does. (*'He has a copy of the book' → 'has a copy of the book' is ellipsed.*)

## 7. REFERENCE

**Reference** is a person, a thing or a place introduced at one place in the text whose identity can be retrieved from within the text or from context (e.g., *he, she, it, I, us, you, this, that, there, etc.*) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013).

**Indicate which element in the clause is a reference (there may be more than one reference in a clause). Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., you – exo (i.e., “you” is an exophoric reference).**

There are three types of reference:

<p><b>Homophoric (H)</b> The identity of the referent item can be retrieved from the general context of culture.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLES</b></p> <p>How hot <u>the</u> sun is today.</p> <p>(We all know which sun is being talked about.)</p>	<p><b>Exophoric (Exo)</b> The identity of the referent item can be retrieved from the immediate context of situation.</p> <p><b>EXAMPLES</b></p> <p><u>I</u> am writing about ... (<i>I</i> refers to the writer of the text.)</p> <p>Put <u>it</u> down next to <u>her</u>. (<i>it</i> refers to the object the speaker is pointing to; <i>her</i> refers to the female in the room.)</p> <p>As per <u>your</u> request, ... (<i>your</i> refers to the recipient of the text.)</p> <p><u>We</u> think <u>you</u>'re right. (<i>we</i> and <i>you</i> refer to the writer and recipient of the text.)</p>	<p><b>Endophoric</b> The identity of the referent item can be retrieved from within the text. There are three kinds of endophoric reference:</p> <p><b>1. Anaphoric (Ana)</b> The referent has appeared at an earlier point in the text. I have a daughter. <u>She</u> had premature jaundice when she was 3. (<i>She</i>: a daughter)</p> <p><b>2. Cataphoric (Cata)</b> The referent has not appeared yet, but will be provided subsequently. My point is <u>this</u>: We should carry out the plan. (<i>this</i>: ‘We should carry out the plan’)</p> <p><b>3. Esphoric (Es)</b> The referent occurs in the phrase immediately following the referent item (within the same nominal group/noun phrase, not in a separate clause) I had to deliver it to <u>the</u> clinic <u>where she was</u>.</p>
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## 9. LEXICAL COHESION

**Lexical cohesion:** Choice of words in a text to establish continuity, e.g., word repetition, synonyms, antonyms, words that have a tendency to co-occur (Eggins, 2004).

**Indicate which element in the clause creates a lexical cohesion with a previous clause/ clauses (there may be more than one element that creates lexical cohesion with previous clauses). Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., *daughter* –*rep* (i.e., “daughter” is repeated, and therefore provides repetition lexical cohesion).**

There are four types of lexical cohesion:

<b>Word repetition (Rep)</b>	<b>Synonyms or words that have related meanings (Syn)</b>	<b>Antonyms (Ant)</b>	<b>Words that tend to co-occur (Co)</b>
<p>Diana's <u>daughter</u> was very sick. In fact, she needed a blood transfusion. My <u>daughter</u> was sick too. She was yellow as butter.</p>	<p>clinic - hospital jaundice - pneumonia illness - cold trees - leaves eat - nibble rodent - mouse tail – mouse</p>	<p>wet - dry happy - sad tall - short high - low fast - slow</p>	<p>mouse - squeak cheese - nibble baby - cry dog - bark doctor - operate smack - child eat - dinner play - piano blood - donor</p>

## 10. PROPOSALS/ PROPOSITIONS

**A proposal** is a clause that is used to exchange goods and services (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013)

A proposal can be an offer, a command, advice, permission or willingness.

→ Response to a proposal: **OK, or performing actions.**

**(Write 1 for proposals)**

### EXAMPLES:

Would you get me another beer?

Get me another beer.

Can I have a coffee?

Will you lend me the book?

Must I read it now?

Can I go out?

I want to lend you the car.

I'd like to lend you the car.

I'm willing to lend you the car.

I'm happy to lend you the car.

I'm determined to lend you the car

Lend me your car.

You shouldn't take my copy of "The Bostanians".

You're required to read Henry James.

I'm willing to make the coffee.

You have to start studying.

**A proposition** is a clause that is used to exchange information (Eggins, 1994, p. 154)

A proposition is a fact or an opinion.

→ Response to a proposition: **Yes/No.**

**(Write 2 for propositions)**

### EXAMPLES:

Henry James wrote "The Bostanians".

Did Henry James write "The Bostanians"?

It's possible that Henry James wrote "The Bostanians".

He wasn't a physicist.

What I was looking for was pink champagne.

I learned English from this guy.

George is reading Henry James.

How amazing he was!

The book might have been written by Henry James.

I'm sure he wrote the book.

I reckon he wrote the book.

I think that George has to start studying.

He always writes incredibly long sentences.

Who is Bernard Shaw?

Unfortunately, the book can't be bought in local bookshops.

**Note: Do not analyse Proposals/ propositions for non-finite clauses** (*i.e., to fetch her dog a bone, to introduce myself, finishing my work early*) **and minor clauses** (*hi, thanks, yuk, ok*).

## 11. MOOD CHOICE

**Mood choice** is the order of the subject and the finite verb in a clause.

Indicate what mood the clause is in (there is only one mood for each clause). Then write the code in the slot provided for “Mood Choice”, e.g., *de* (i.e., the clause is declarative).

There are four mood choices:

<b>Declarative: Subject + finite</b> <b>(De)</b>	<b>Interrogative (yes/no)</b> <b>Finite + subject + ...?</b> <b>(YN)</b>	<b>Interrogative (Wh-)</b> <b>Wh + finite + subject ...?</b> <b>(Wh)</b>	<b>Imperative</b> <b>(Function: Command)</b> <b>---</b> <b>(Imp)</b>
<p>The spy came in from the cold.                      He will help me.                      There's a copy of the "Bostanians" here.</p> <p>Thank you. (<b>I thank you</b> →                      Elliptical declarative → Write  <b>E/De</b>)</p> <p>Trust that you are fine. (<b>I trust</b>                      ... → <b>E/De</b> )</p> <p>How cool it was! (exclamative-                      declarative → write <b>Ex/De</b>)</p>	<p>Did he come in from the cold?                      Will he help me?                      Would you get me another beer?                      Would you like to borrow my                      copy?</p>	<p>Who came in from the cold?                      Where did the spy come in from?                      Who will help me?</p>	<p>Let me see.                      Let's go.                      Come in!                      Help me!                      Get me another beer!                      Here, take it!</p>

**Note: Do not analyse Mood choices for non-finite clauses** (i.e., *to fetch her dog a bone, to introduce myself, finishing my work early*) **and minor clauses** (*hi, thanks, yuk, ok*).

## 12. MODALITY

**Modality** expresses the speaker's judgement of probability, "usuality", obligation, and readiness.

**Indicate which element in the clause is modality (there may be more than one modality element in a clause). Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., *can - p* (i.e., "can" is a modal of probability).**

There are four kinds of modality:

<b>Probability (P)</b> (often associated with propositions)	<b>"Usuality" (U)</b> (often associated with propositions)	<b>Obligation (O)</b> (often associated with proposals)	<b>Readiness (R) (inclination/ability)</b> (often associated with proposals)
can (I think he <b>can</b> be late.)	can	can ( <b>Can</b> you get me a beer?)	can / could (I <b>can</b> do it for you.)
could	could	could	may
may	may	may (be allowed to)	might
might	might	might	will (I' <b>ll</b> send it to you asap.)
will (e.g., I think he' <b>ll</b> be late.)	will	should (be supposed to)	would
would	would	must (be required to)	shall
should	should	have to (be obliged to)	must
must	must	definitely	willingly
probably	usually	absolutely	readily
possibly	sometimes	possibly	gladly
certainly	always	at all costs	certainly
perhaps	never	by all means	easily
maybe	ever	necessarily	eagerly
be sure	seldom	it is permitted	be determined to
I guess	rarely	it is expected	be willing to
I think	it is unusual	it is necessary	be happy to
I know		I expect him to leave.	would like to
			be pleased to

it is probable it is possible it is certain		I want him to leave. I need you to leave.	be delighted to be keen to I'd like to leave I want to leave It would be lovely to leave. It is possible for him to leave.
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### 13. TERMS OF ADDRESS

**Terms of address** are terms that name the addressee/the recipient (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, 2013)

**Indicate which element in the clause is a term of address. Then write the code next to the identified element, e.g., *George - f* (i.e., “George” is a first name).**

There are six kinds of address terms:

<b>Title (T)</b>	<b>First name (F)</b>	<b>Nick name (N)</b>	<b>Term of endearment (E)</b>	<b>Group (G)</b>	<b>Vietnamese kinship term (K)</b>
<p><u>Mr. Eliot</u>, why do you disagree?</p> <p><u>Dr. Smith</u>, I wonder if you'd mind giving me a quick hand.</p>	<p>What do you mean, <u>Veronica</u>?</p> <p><u>Sharon</u>, come for a drink.</p> <p>Ah, <u>Dan</u>, stop that.</p> <p>I don't think so, <u>John</u>.</p>	<p>Hey, <u>Johnno</u>! Get off your butt and give me a hand.</p> <p><u>Freddie</u>, shove that chair over closer to the desk.</p>	<p>It's a form of life, <u>dear</u>.</p> <p><u>honey</u></p> <p><u>darling</u></p> <p><u>Petie-pie</u></p> <p><u>Georgie-Porgie</u></p>	<p>Dear <u>all</u>,</p> <p>Dear <u>colleagues</u>,</p>	<p><u>anh/A</u>. (older brother)</p> <p><u>chi /C</u>. (older sister)</p> <p><u>em</u> (younger sister/brother)</p> <p><u>co</u> (auntie)</p>

## APPENDIX 2: CODING INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. Read the codebook

- Open the Word file named *Codebook*.
- There are 13 categories divided into three groups. The first three categories represent ideational meanings – what the texts are about; the next six categories represent textual meanings – how the language in the texts is connected; and the last four categories represent interpersonal meanings – how the relationship between the writer and reader is manifested.
- Read the definitions and examples for each category.
- Within each category, a definition is given at the top of the page. Below the definition are subcategories and their examples.

### 2. Perform the macro-analysis

- Open the Word file for the texts (e.g., 3-1-A)
- There are four pairs of macro-questions below the text.
- Read the text.
- Answer the macro questions. Type the answers in the rows on the same line as the questions.

### 3. Perform the micro-analysis

- Read each ready-divided clause.
- Fill in the slots under each category with appropriate elements and/or codes specified in the codebook.
- Clarify which subcategory the element belongs to as specified in the codebook.
- One element may fall into two categories as long as these categories belong to two different strands of meanings (indicated by different colours of the category).
- When there are no elements in the clause that match the category, put a cross (x) in the slot under that category.

### APPENDIX 3: EXAMPLE OF MACRO- AND MICRO-ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

3-34-D

(Company 3 – text 34 – writer D)

**From:** D  
**Sent:** Saturday, June 13, 2009 10:09 AM  
**To:** GGG  
**Subject:** Thank you ...

Dear Mr. GGG,

Thank you very much for your time and courtesy to meet up with us and let us know some of your concerns regarding environment, food safety in kitchen and also your plan for July 2009.

For the environment concerns please find in the enclosed files for your references and let me know if anything we can assist in this matter.

For the 2009 Food Safety Audit, may I suggest that we can conduct on 8<sup>th</sup> July 09? Please feel free to revise the date to suit your operation. We will start from receiving area and follow the FLOW OF FOOD to the cleaning corner. Once the date is confirmed & approved I will cc to all the respective department heads for references and supports.

With best regards,

**D**

**MACRO ANALYSIS: Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.**

1. What do you think the aim of the text is? What makes you think that?	
2. What do you think the main topic of the text is? What makes you think that?	
3. Do you think the language in this text is formal, informal, neutral or mixed? What makes you think that?	
4. What do you think the relationship between the writer and recipient is (power relation, affective involvement, and frequency of contact)? What makes you think that?	

**MICRO-ANALYSIS:**

**1. Representational Meanings**

**Fill in the slots with the corresponding elements in the clause. For *Processes* and *Circumstances*, identify the sub-categories the element belongs to, using the codes as provided in the codebook.**

Clause		<b>Participants</b>	<b>Processes</b>	<b>Circumstances</b>
<b>1</b>	Thank you very much for your time and courtesy			
<b>2</b>	to meet up with us			
<b>3</b>	and let us know some of your concerns regarding environment, food safety in kitchen and also your plan for July 2009.			

<b>4</b>	For the environment concerns please find in the enclosed files for your references			
<b>5</b>	and let me know			
<b>6</b>	if anything we can assist in this matter.			
<b>7</b>	For the 2009 Food Safety Audit, may I suggest			
<b>8</b>	that we can conduct on 8 <sup>th</sup> July 09?			
<b>9</b>	Please feel free to revise the date			
<b>10</b>	to suit your operation.			
<b>11</b>	We will start from receiving area			
<b>12</b>	and follow the FLOW OF FOOD to the cleaning corner.			
<b>13</b>	Once the date is confirmed			
<b>14</b>	& approved			
<b>15</b>	I will cc to all the respective department heads for references and supports.			

## 2. Textual Meanings

Fill in the slots with the corresponding elements in the clause. Within each category, identify the sub-categories the element belongs to, using the codes as provided in the codebook.

For clause complexes, use the symbols as outlined in the codebook (1, 2, a, b as well as ‘, “, +, =, x).

Clause		Themes	Clause simplex/complex	Ellipsis	Reference	Conjunctions	Lexical cohesion
<b>1</b>	Thank you very much for your time and courtesy						
<b>2</b>	to meet up with us						
<b>3</b>	and let us know some of your concerns regarding environment, food safety in kitchen and also your plan for July 2009.						
<b>4</b>	For the environment concerns please find in the enclosed files for your references						
<b>5</b>	and let me know						
<b>6</b>	if anything we can assist in this matter.						
<b>7</b>	For the 2009 Food Safety Audit, may I suggest						
<b>8</b>	that we can conduct on 8 <sup>th</sup> July 09?						
<b>9</b>	Please feel free to revise the date						
<b>10</b>	to suit your operation.						
<b>11</b>	We will start from receiving						

	area						
<b>12</b>	and follow the FLOW OF FOOD to the cleaning corner.						
<b>13</b>	Once the date is confirmed						
<b>14</b>	& approved						
<b>15</b>	I will cc to all the respective department heads for references and supports.						

### 3. Interpersonal Meanings

Fill in the slots with the corresponding elements in the clause. Within each category, identify the sub-categories the element belongs to, using the codes as provided in the codebook.

For *Proposal/proposition*, identify whether the clause is a proposal (1) or proposition (2).

For *Mood choice*, identify the mood of the clause as outlined in the codebook (decl, yn, wh, imp)

Clause		<b>Proposal/ Proposition</b>	<b>Mood Choice</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Terms of address</b>
<b>1</b>	Thank you very much for your time and courtesy				
<b>2</b>	to meet up with us				
<b>3</b>	and let us know some of your concerns regarding environment, food safety in				

	kitchen and also your plan for July 2009.				
<b>4</b>	For the environment concerns please find in the enclosed files for your references				
<b>5</b>	and let me know				
<b>6</b>	if anything we can assist in this matter.				
<b>7</b>	For the 2009 Food Safety Audit, may I suggest				
<b>8</b>	that we can conduct on 8 <sup>th</sup> July 09?				
<b>9</b>	Please feel free to revise the date				
<b>10</b>	to suit your operation.				
<b>11</b>	We will start from receiving area				
<b>12</b>	and follow the FLOW OF FOOD to the cleaning corner.				
<b>13</b>	Once the date is confirmed				
<b>14</b>	& approved				
<b>15</b>	I will cc to all the respective department heads for references and supports.				

## APPENDIX 4: TEXTS USED IN PILOT ANALYSES

**1-2-Q**

**(Company 1 – text 1 – writer Q)**

From: Q

Sent: Wednesday, October 31, 2007 9:05 PM

To: A

Subject: expense report

Anh A [FIRST NAME]

Pls submit to me your expense report for taxi cost Oct 2007

230,000 VND

Q

**3-3-A**

**(Company 3 – text 3 – writer A)**

From: A

Sent: Friday, February 13, 2009 3:32 PM

To: E

Cc: N; O; D; M; Q

Subject: P-D Reconcil 2009-01

Dear All,

The attached file is the revised reconcil for PDL in Jan – 2009.

Please crosscheck again.

If there was not any adjustment, it should be submitted PD Accountant asap.

Thanks and regards,

A

**3-21-M**

**(Company 3 – text 21 – writer M)**

From: M

Sent: Sunday, June 13, 2010 8:53 PM

To: A

Subject: SR May C&Is

Dear Mr. A [FIRST NAME],

Kindly have SR May C&Is in the file attached and help to cross check.

Best regards,

M

**7-13-C**

**(Company 7 – text 13 – writer C)**

From: C

Sent: Wednesday, December 08, 2010 8:07 AM

To: OO

Cc: PP; QQ; RR; SS; TT

Subject: Re: Shipping Document

Dear OO (A),

Please send us the invoice in THB same as CONTRACT & PO-F-10-0902 for clearance. It must be same the currency.

Thanks & Best regards,

C

**8-1-B**

**(Company 8 – text 1 – writer B)**

----- Forwarded message -----

From: A

Date: Wed, Dec 1, 2010 at 4:20 PM

Subject: Re: Good bye

To: B

Cc: [Company 8]-staff

On Tue, Nov 30, 2010 at 1:38 AM, B wrote:

Dear [Company 8] staff,

Today is my last working day. I would like to say "Goodbye" and want to express my appreciation of having had an opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for the support and co-operation you have provided me.

Thank you so much for [Company 8] Hanoi staff for your very nice farewell party and gift. Your warm friendship will encourage me a lot in future. I will miss you and hope to see you again soon (many of you know for what :)

Wish you all the best in your life, and again, thank you and goodbye.

*Warm regards,*

**B**

**8-8-Q**

**(Company 8 – text 8 – writer Q)**

From: Q

Date: Fri, Apr 29, 2011 at 9:52 AM

Subject: PA application

To: H, I, M, T

Cc: K, R

Hi all,

As suggested, I've made a draft to send PA for official confirmation of our application status. Hopefully, the proposal will be soon reconfirmed by PA (signed and sealed) so that we can use it as a legal document to deal with our partners' request. The guy processing our application affirmed that if PA confirms on this proposal, it will remain in full force and effect as our Permit of Operation that PA did grant us.

Pls let me know if any changes should be made.

Thanks,

Q

**9-11-A**

**(Company 9 – text 11 – writer A)**

Ho Chi Minh City, March 28,2006

Dear Mr. H,

This letter is to ask for a plausible explanation of your not coming to teach 2 classes IF4A1 and XXI F5A1, which caused difficulty to the admin work and harm to the school reputation. This was the second time you had cancelled these same classes without any notice (the first time was on March 4,2006), let alone the fact that you have cancelled other weekend classes before.

We hope the third time will not happen. If it does, we are obliged to refer your case to the H&R department to terminate the contract.

Thank you for your attention.

Regards,

A

Academic Deputy Director  
[COMPANY 9]