

# An analysis of prominent grammatical cohesive devices in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators

Ngo Thi Tuyet Nhung\*

*English Department, Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper,  
381 Doi Can streets, Ba Dinh, Hanoi, Vietnam*

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**Abstract.** Nowadays, online newspaper has drawn the increasing attention of the public. In Vietnam, online newspapers, especially those in foreign languages, have played an important role in providing information for foreign affairs. Through investigating thirty online news discourses updated on five online newspapers in English by Vietnamese translators, the author found that many grammatical cohesive devices have been used in online news discourses. However, the frequency of occurrence of grammatical cohesive devices is different from each others. Discourse analysis of grammatical cohesive devices in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators can help translators a lot in translating online news from Vietnamese into English correctly and coherently, and help readers, especially foreigners, easily catch up with the translator's message on online news discourse in English that is much affected by Vietnamese, the translator's mother tongue.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, together with the development of technology, especially Internet, there has been an increasing need for getting information in English on mass media, including online newspapers. Reading online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators has been a great interest for many readers, especially those who want to study more about Vietnam. In order to help these readers to understand more clearly about online news in English by Vietnamese translators, the author has conducted an analysis on prominent employed grammatical cohesive devices as cohesion is concerned with formal structures to

interact with underlying semantic relations or underlying functional coherence to create textual unity.

The author is trying to answer such questions as: (1) What are prominent grammatical cohesive devices used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators? (2) How can discourse analysis of prominent grammatical cohesive devices help the translation of online news discourse from Vietnamese into English? (3) How can discourse analysis of prominent grammatical cohesive devices help foreign easily get information when reading of online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators?

Based on this, the study is expected to help translators at Vietnamese press agencies to write pieces of coherent English online news by

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\* Tel.: 84-912663322.

E-mail: [tuyetnhungcpv@yahoo.com](mailto:tuyetnhungcpv@yahoo.com)

using grammatical cohesive devices, and readers, especially foreign ones to catch information on online news in English when English here is used as a foreign language.

The author incidentally selects 30 news updated on five online newspapers in English in Vietnam, including Communist Party of Vietnam Online Newspaper (CPV), People's Army Newspaper (PANO), the Voice of Vietnam's News (VOVNEWS), VietnamNet and Nhan Dan Online.

## 2. Discourse analysis, cohesion and grammatical cohesive devices

Discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relationship between language and the context in which it is used. This has been developed from the works of different disciplines in the 1960s and early 1970s, including linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology and sociology. Discourse analysts study language in use: written texts and spoken date of all kinds under the approach from those old grammarians. There have been numerous interpretations to what is meant by Discourse Analysis.

British discourse analysis was mainly influenced by Halliday's functional approach to language. Halliday's framework emphasized the social function of language and the thematic and informational structure of speech and writing. De Beaugrande (1980), Halliday and Hasan (1976) as well as Prague School of linguists have made their significant contribution to this branch of linguistics in pointing out the link between grammar and discourse.

Discourse analysis, therefore, is very important to understand and interpret a text. Only by studying the *language in use* can we recognize the message that the online news discourse wish to convey. One of the key technical terms in Discourse Analysis is cohesion.

Cohesion is a very broad category because there are a large number of cohesive devices proposed by various linguists and those devices are named differently in different languages. In English, Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify five types namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The first four are referred to as grammatical cohesion as contrasting to the last device.

## 3. Online newspaper in Vietnam

The Internet is a network of linked computers, allowing users to share information with one another. The appearance of Internet revolutionized the human communication. That means people just sit in front of a small screen and look at the actively running world outside.

An online newspaper, also known as a web newspaper, is a newspaper that exists on the World Wide Web or Internet, either separately or as an online version of a printed periodical.

According to Ha (2008), on March 5<sup>th</sup> 1997, Prime Minister signed a decision to establish an Internet National Management Board in Vietnam to manage and promote Internet services in Vietnam. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, Vietnam officially dissolved Internet. At that time the Vietnam Post and Telecommunication Corporation was the only enterprise to provide the domestic connection. When service providers established in Vietnam in 2002, putting an end of the exclusive agency in providing the Internet connect infrastructure, the Internet in Vietnam really developed with increasing competitiveness. One of the reasons to promote the development of Internet in Vietnam is the establishment of online newspapers.

According to a report made by the Press Department under the Ministry of Culture and Information, and the Press Department under the Party Central Committee's Commission on Education and Propaganda, up to September 2005, there were 73 online newspapers in Vietnam. Many of them have the English version.

According to Hoa (2003: 177, 178), news discourse provides a current event which interests a large number of people. In English newspapers, current events which attract readers are usually about such things as abnormal accidents, personal lives of important persons, speeches made by leaders, conflicts, violence, disasters, death, environment and so on. Information provided in online news discourse must be exact, short, objectively reported and timely updated. An online news discourse often consists of a number of short paragraphs. The main idea of a text is expressed in the headline and in the topic sentence. And texts written by different journalists and translated in different ways are also a matter of consideration so that we can achieve the validity of the study since each journalist and translator has their style of writing.

#### **4. An analysis of prominent grammatical cohesive devices in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators**

Grammatical cohesive devices are widely used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators as you can see in the following:

##### *4.1. Reference*

###### *4.1.1. Personal*

There are different personal forms as reference items with a cohesive function in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

[1] Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung and his wife and the Vietnamese Government's high-level delegation left Hanoi on March 7 for official visits to Qatar and Kuwait from March 7 - 12 at the invitations of Qatar's Prime Minister Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani and Kuwait's Prime Minister Nasser Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.

He is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Kiem

and many other senior officials and heads of corporations. (Nhan Dan Online).

[2] Addressing the meeting, State President Nguyen Minh Triet stressed that the academy must continue to prioritize its research for the sake of benefiting millions of patients. In addition, he added, the academy should step up cooperation with hospitals both inside and outside the army to translate the results of medical studies into reality. (VOVNEWS).

"He" in the first example refers to "Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung" and "he" in the second refers to "State President Nguyen Minh Triet." We often meet the personal "he" and its variant more frequently than "she" and "her" in online news in English because news related to famous people is much concerned. And men take more percentages.

In the example below, we meet the personal "they" and its variant.

[3] Contestants in this year's contest must also establish a group of two members, including an expert on the literature of Victor Hugo and an expert on the science of Louis Pasteur.

...Both of them must also show a fluency in the French language and harmonious cooperation amongst themselves during the contest. (CPV).

###### *4.1.1.1. Demonstrative*

Demonstrative is essentially a form of deictic indicator. The speaker identifies the referent by locating it on a scale of proximity.

[4] The Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) has reported that the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) has officially begun an anti-dumping investigation into the importation of shoes and waterproof rubber footwear and bottoms from Vietnam and China into the Canadian market. This announcement was made by the CBSA on February 27th, 2009. (CPV)

[5] The areas that may face level 8 earthquakes are Thanh Tri District, the area

along the Red River in the districts of Hoan Kiem, Hai Ba Trung, and Hoang Mai. The reasoning is based on the weak soil structure of these areas. (20. VietnamNet Bridge)

[6] “I want to convince them to visit Vietnam at least one time in their lives to see for themselves what I show and say on my blog. Here, in Vietnam, they are many business opportunities, and the cost of living is cheaper than in other countries”, he added. (PANO)

#### 4.1.1.2. Comparative

Comparative reference is also seen in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

[7] He is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem and many other senior officials and heads of corporations. (Nhan Dan Online)

[8] Another survey about administrative reforms shows that local officials often arbitrarily set new rules. Troublesome administrative formalities are a foundation for corruption. (19. VietnamNet Bridge)

#### 4.1.2. Substitution

Substitution is a good cohesive tie to avoid repetition in the sentences of the text. It is a means of cohesive device that uses different words or phrases that refer to the same entity. The cohesion is achieved through “the presupposed item is the presupposing item” relation.

In online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators, we sometimes see nominal substitution realized by items such as one, ones, and same. Below are the examples:

[9] The southern province of Ba Ria - Vung Tau welcome 1,3 million tourist arrivals including 35,000 international ones in the first two months, according to the Provincial Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism. (Nhan Dan Online)

[10] In addition, buses also formed a bridge that brought him to Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh City, he often takes buses as a regular means of

transport. “Vietnamese buses with air-conditioning are cleaner than Indonesian ones”, confided Fifo. (PANO)

#### 4.1.3. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is considered an ideal way to avoid reiteration and to shorten the text.

##### 4.1.3.1. Nominal ellipsis

Nominal ellipsis means ellipsis within the nominal group.

[11] Ancient boat discovered at river-bed

*A boat wreck has recently found at the depth of 10 metres in the Red River in the neighbouring area between Dai Tap commune, Khoai Chau district, Hung Yen province and Thuy Phu commune, Phu Xuyen district, Hanoi.*

However, the wreck was broken into two while being lifted out of the water. (VietnamNet Bridge)

[12] The proceeds raised by the tournament will be used to provide free eye surgery for poor people, heart operations for children, houses for homeless people, aid relief for helpless rural elderly, scholarships for poor pupils and victims of natural disasters. (VietnamNet Bridge)

##### 4.1.3.2. Verbal ellipsis

For Halliday, verbal ellipsis is found mainly in very closed bonded sequences such as question and answer in which the lexical verb either supplies the answer to “do what?” or repudiates the verb in the question. As a result, we can rarely recognize cases of online news discourse because readers do not have enough time to read over the presupposed items. However, auxiliary verbs in Headlines of online news discourse are usually omitted.

[13] KFW provides EUR 15 million in ODA for new bus system in Danang

The city of Danang People’s Committee has announced that a German bank (KFW) will provide EUR 15 million for a project to upgrade the public transportation system in the city from 2008 to 2015. (PANO)

Moreover, we can find only verbal ellipsis in the headlines of the online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators in the following examples:

[14] Dutch enterprises to explore Vietnam's market. (Nhan Dan Online)

[15] Annual contest to held again on French language and Vietnamese-French culture studies. (CPV)

[16] Hanoi to carry out a preservation project of its French quarter. (CPV)

[17] *Italian pianist Gabriele Carnano to perform in Vietnam.* (Nhan Dan Online)

[18] *Enterprises urged to improve competitive edge to stimulate demand.* (VOVNEWS)

#### 4.1.3.3. Clausal ellipsis

This type of ellipsis is hardly found in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators because it is used more frequently in conservation. However, among 30 collected news, we can find an clausal ellipsis.

[19] *Contestants in this year's contest must also establish a group of two members, including an expert on the literature of Victor Hugo and an expert on the science of Louis Pasteur.*

...*The Victor Hugo contestant will have to have deep information on Racine, Corneille, Baudelaire or Rimbaud, be able to give detailed answers on both French and Vietnamese literature, and also be fast at buzzing in letters and words. The Louis Pasteur contestant will have to be able to solve scientific problems logically and quickly buzz in calculations, good ideas and the right maths figures.* (CPV)

Here, the clause that contestants who expert in literature of Victor Hugo is omitted as the Victor Hugo contest, and similar to the Louis Pasteur contestant.

#### 4.1.4. Conjunction

Conjunction is a cohesive device because it signals relationships that can only be fully understood through reference to other parts of

the discourse. Different types of conjunction are much used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

##### 4.1.4.1. Addictive

Adversative sense is expressed by a number of words such as *however, yet, although, though, but, in spite of, in contrast, contrary to, adversely, nevertheless, despite*, to link words, phrases, clauses, sentences even paragraphs together to create a coherent text. In online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators, the addictive "however" is used for the greatest number to link sentences or paragraphs. Let consider the examples:

[20] The CBSA has not released a list of Vietnamese exporters being investigated as part of the case.

*However, VCCI has warned Vietnamese footwear exporters to pay attention to the time, deadlines and any orders issued in this case.* (CPV)

[21] *The project will be divided into four stages; firstly, surveying; secondly, a mapping of the space; thirdly, the drawing of a pilot map' and finally the establishing of management tools.*

*However, according to experts, to implement these stages, it will be necessary to first design a policy on architectural management for the French Quarter which matches up with the other restoration plan for Hanoi's Old Quarter and its urban management process.* (CPV)

##### 4.1.4.2. Adversative

The typical context for an addictive conjunction "and" is one in which a total, or almost total, shift in the participants from one sentence to the next, and yet the two sentences are very definitely part of the text.

In addition, the adversative is also expressed by *and also, in addition, furthermore, moreover, besides*, which can be seen much in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

[22] In addition, the Foreign Ministers emphasized that the ASEAN Human Right Body should be credible, realistic, effective and evolutionary. (CPV)

[23] *The film week will screen 10 feature films by Vietnamese directors who studied at the VGIK and 19 Russian films by well-known Russian directors such as A. Tarkovsky, N. Mikhaikov and R. Khamdamov.*

*Besides, some outstanding films by both former and current students at the VGIK in the last ten years were also selected to be screened on this occasion.* (Nhan Dan Online)

[24] *The new international roaming service will be applicable for MobiFone's prepaid subscribers, and the company is also planning to expand service to 100 additional networks later this year.* (PANO)

#### 4.1.4.3. Causal

Causal relation is expressed by so, thus, hence, therefore, nevertheless, however, consequently, accordingly..., and a number of expressions like as a result (of that), in consequence (of that), because of that...to reflect the cause and effect. It is much used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

[25] *Returning to discussing his blog, Fifo shared, "There is still little information about Vietnam in foreign countries. Some people even think of Vietnam as a war not a country. Therefore, through photos of Vietnam, I would like to introduce a different Vietnam to them".* (PANO)

[26] *The Ministry of Industry and Trade (MoIT) has submitted to the government a project to stimulate demand, boost the consumption of goods and expand the local market.*

*...Under the project, the State will support enterprises in conducting market research, organizing some seminars, selling products and offering training courses on sales skills in rural areas.* (VOVNEWS)

#### 4.1.4.4. Temporal

Online news discourse is often about events recently happened in a specific time. However, a discourse must be unified whole, reflecting the whole process of an episode. Being an episode the event or the story has to develop in accordance with the sequence of time. Temporal conjunction can be seen in the following examples:

[27] *The new international roaming service will be applicable for MobiFone's prepaid subscribers, and the company is also planning to expand service to 100 additional networks later this year.* (PANO)

[28] *Tourism promotion programmes, launched by tourism enterprises and travel agencies are expected to attract more and more tourists to the province in the coming time.* (VOVNEWS)

## 5. Major findings and suggestions for translators and readers

### 5.1. Major findings

Having analyzed 30 online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators about different fields updated on different online newspapers of Vietnam, we could realize that cohesion is one of the factors to produce interesting and coherent news. Through above analysis, we found that online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators exploit nearly all the items grammatical cohesive devices. However, some items are used much more than others.

Firstly, all types of references are used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators. However, the personal reference is used in all news discourse because news must be about a person, a thing or an event. So after mentioning the person, thing or event in the news, it is often replaced by the personal reference "he, him, his/ she, her, hers/ it, its/ they, them" in the following sentences.

“I, me, my” and “you, your, yours” can be seen less than other personal reference in news discourse because they are only used in quotations. Especially, “I, me, my” have never been used to give the writers or translators’ point of views. In addition, the neutral demonstrative reference can be found in almost every news. The other demonstrative reference is less used than the neutral one.

Secondly, substitution is rarely used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators. Only nominal substitution is found during the analyzing 30 online news discourse.

Thirdly, although ellipsis is the cohesive device to shorten the discourse, it is not very common in the online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators, except the nominal ellipsis because ellipsis is used much in spoken language, not written language.

Finally, all kinds of conjunction are used in online news discourse in English by Vietnamese translators.

## 5.2. *Suggestions for translators and readers*

### 5.2.1. *Suggestions for translators*

The function of online news is to provide updated information to readers. This makes the online news different from many other genres such as poems, narratives, novels or advertisements. Translating online news have drawn the participation of many translators.

Translation is the replacement of a representation of the text in one language by a representation of an equivalent text in a second language. So the translator needs to make his translation understandable in the target language. He must have good competence of both the source language and the target language.

According to Beaugrande (1981), cohesion is one of seven criteria which have to be fulfilled to quality either a writer or a spoken text as a discourse. And discourse analysis of

cohesive devices in online news in English by Vietnamese translators can help translators a lot in producing good news because of the following reasons. First, understanding each grammatical cohesive device in particular and cohesive devices in general to employ certain devices to create coherence to makes a great contribution to the translation of good news. Secondly, thanks to cohesive devices, the translators can convey information in the news to readers and help readers easily get updated information.

Therefore, the translator can apply knowledge of cohesive devices in translating or producing a informative and persuasive news. In other words, he must have a good skill in processing the cohesive ties in the news, which can help readers easily keep up with the main idea of the passage even though there are some unknown items.

### 5.2.2. *Suggestions for readers*

As far as you know, most of readers of online news in English by Vietnamese translators are foreigners as they want to get more information about Vietnam. The problem here is that the news is translated by press workers whose English is used as a foreign language. Therefore, their language is much affected by the translators’ mother tongue as well as their culture. In some cases, this may cause misunderstanding for the readers. Therefore, there is a need for the readers to improve their social knowledge which can help them to keep up with the main idea of the news. In addition, readers also should know the discourse of journalistic style. Usually, the first paragraph of the online news is called the lead. It almost always gives the readers the main topic and most important information. Knowing that, readers can guess the message that press translators would like to convey to readers.

## 6. Conclusion

The development of Internet has changed the face of mass media in many countries,

including Vietnam. Although online newspapers in Vietnam were launched later than ones in many countries, it has drawn the increasing attention of the public. Therefore, online newspapers, especially those in foreign languages, have played an important role in the mass media in Vietnam in providing information for foreign affairs. Through investigating thirty online news discourses updated on five online newspapers in English in Vietnam, we found that many grammatical cohesive devices have been used in online news discourses. However, the frequency of occurrence of grammatical cohesive devices is different from each others.

Discourse analysis of grammatical cohesive devices can partly help translators a lot in translating online news from Vietnamese into English correctly and coherently. Understanding grammatical cohesive devices, translators can know how to use them reasonably and effectively when translating online news. In addition, applying the knowledge of discourse analysis of grammatical cohesive devices in translating can help the translators relate to the target language so that they can have good translation versions.

Moreover, discourse analysis of grammatical cohesive devices also helps readers, especially foreigners, easily catch up with translators' message in online news.

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# Nghiên cứu những phương tiện liên kết ngữ pháp nổi trội trong các bản tin tiếng Anh do người Việt dịch trên báo điện tử

Ngô Thị Tuyết Nhung

*Ban tiếng Anh, Báo điện tử Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam,  
381 Đội Cấn, Ba Đình, Hà Nội*

Ngày nay, báo điện tử ngày càng thu hút sự quan tâm của độc giả. Ở Việt Nam, báo điện tử, đặc biệt là những trang báo tiếng nước ngoài, giữ một vai trò quan trọng trong cung cấp thông tin đối ngoại. Qua nghiên cứu 30 bài báo trên 5 báo điện tử tiếng Anh do người Việt dịch, tác giả nhận thấy các phương tiện liên kết ngữ pháp được sử dụng nhiều trong diễn ngôn tin. Tuy nhiên, các phương tiện liên kết ngữ pháp này được sử dụng với tần suất khác nhau. Nghiên cứu những phương tiện liên kết ngữ pháp trong các bản tin tiếng Anh do người Việt dịch có thể giúp người dịch các bản tin từ tiếng Việt sang tiếng Anh một cách chính xác và rõ ràng, mạch lạc; đồng thời giúp độc giả, đặc biệt là những độc giả người nước ngoài, hiểu được thông điệp mà các dịch giả muốn truyền đạt một cách dễ dàng.