INDIRECTNESS IN VIETNAMESE NEWSPAPER COMMENTARIES:
A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

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Since ESL literature has ascribed circuitous textual development, covert ideational connections, and usage of implicative devices to second-language-writing indirectness, the purpose of this project was to inquire into (1) whether Vietnamese writing in both English and Vietnamese exhibited any or all the three aspects of indirectness, (2) how the employment of the second language as a vehicle of thought as well as the concern with the intended audience might influence the writer’s utilization of such indirectness, and (3) whether such manifestations might negatively affect Western text interpretation. My survey of forty commentaries written in English and in the native language from eight Vietnamese newspapers, four targeting senior audience and four aiming at junior readers, indicated that (1) the general textual advancements were quasi-deductive and quasi-inductive, (2) texts in the second language seemed to be developed in an approach closer to the deductive method (i.e.; quasi-deductive), (3) the theme-delay progression appeared to be the general writing tendency in both the native- and foreign-language texts, (4) implicit inter-propositional connections might be problematic for Western readers, (5) the L2 inappropriate employment of indirectness devices might involve a lack of instruction in style and tone, and (6) more influences of language than audience on the usage of indirectness in all the three aspects. The findings also suggested explicit and specific instruction to address non-Western writing features in second-language composition. Further in-depth investigation is needed to confirm these findings and to explore rhetorical practices by Vietnamese, an area scarcely traversed by rhetoricians.
To my mother,
whose brave challenge against old age has enabled my pursuit of further studies;

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION

I. Rationale

Ample research has been conducted into “indirectness” in various languages and cultures in regard to politeness and “face” (i.e.; the individual’s image in public). Although this rhetorical feature also exists in Western cultures, the disciplinary literature has revealed indirectness / indirection as a rhetorical preference more common to non-Western cultures (Afifi and Reichert; de Kadt; Fox, “Analysis”/Listening; Fukuda; Hinkel; Liu; Matalene; Sew; Wu and Rubin). Not only in Asian L₁ discourse, indirectness / indirection has been found in L₂ composing with its three main features: digressive textual organization (Sun-I Chen; Cho; Hinds; Kaplan; Matalene), implicit ideational connections (Hinds, “Reader”; Liu; Matalene), or implicative devices (Hinkel “Indirectness”; Matalene). However, not all these characteristics have thus far been extensively investigated in one research project about one particular language, and no known work is available on Vietnamese cultural patterns. Indeed, the three investigations so far that have included Vietnamese students’ essays written in English are not particularly focused on Asian indirectness. Söter’s text linguistic study of narratives by English-, Arabic- and Vietnamese-speaking students at Australian schools only looks at how these students structure their stories. Hinkel’s 1994 survey aims at “native and nonnative speakers’ pragmatic interpretations of English texts,” and her large-scale project (SLWs’ Text), though including texts written by Vietnamese learners, delves into a wide range of linguistic and rhetorical features but does not encompass all the indirectness manifestations.

In Vietnam’s current situation, Vietnamese is an excellent language to study for contrastive rhetoric. Even students of English have almost no exposure to English rhetorical

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1 L₁: first / native language
2 L₂: second / foreign language
patterns. Second-year English majors at most colleges and universities only begin to write paragraphs, preparing for third-year short essays of 200-500 words within four or five paragraphs on a given topic (or one of a few alternatives). Many contrastive rhetorical studies have used student-generated essays for the database. Unfortunately, essays written by English learners in Vietnam are not useful, as the short paragraph structure is very rigidly controlled (by the organizational framework provided in class) with too shallow ideational developments for contrastive investigation purposes. Fortunately, a good alternative is available. Editorials are similar to English essays by L₁ and L₂ students because both editorial composing and academic writing are expected to be “in the rhetorical mode of argument/exposition to persuade and inform a general audience, which is rarely identified,” Hinkel points out (SLWs’ Text 162).

Furthermore, Sun-I Chen reasoned that editorials were a valid choice for her 1986 study of cultural and political impacts on Chinese writers’ rhetorical practices because “[editorials] employ highly acceptable mode of communication in the society,” which is comparable to college writing (“Argumentative” 25). However, it should be noted here that Western readers may find that the texts used in my study do not very much resemble Western editorials because Vietnamese editorials are not explicitly argumentative and may express the viewpoints solely of the authors, not necessarily of the newspapers; consequently, I hereafter refer to this form of public persuasion in my study as the newspaper commentary.

Such facts and foundational contrastive rhetorical literature inspired and scaffolded my pilot study. It was designed to explore all the three manifestations of indirectness / indirection as found in newspaper commentaries because this persuasive public discourse, written by Vietnamese authors, has the local people as its main audience and was consequently expected to be constructed within or largely influenced by the Vietnamese writing conventions. Nonetheless, ³

³ Refer to Ho Chi Minh City Open University website or An Giang University website for examples.
Vietnamese formal composition instruction does not seem to foster audience-awareness in student writing, the study was also expected to reveal whether the authors’ concerns with the intended readers while composing were significant.

For my project, the newspaper commentaries written by Vietnamese in both Vietnamese and English about a wide range of topics within Vietnamese culture and society are selected, from newspapers targeting different age groups. The goal of the study was to discover whether indirectness features emerged and whether the authors’ styles altered rhetorically with language and audience.

The following sections of this chapter will review the conceptualizing literature, present a brief history of Vietnam accounting for Chinese cultural impacts on Vietnamese composing, explain why Vietnamese newspaper commentaries were expected to be indirect, and provide an overview of the present research.

II. Literature Review

The transition from pure linguistic considerations to socio-psycholinguistic perspectives of L2 instruction and acquisition involves various disciplinary as well as interdisciplinary theories and approaches. I will thus trace back to (a) schema theory, the outset of cognitive view of literacy and performance; (b) contrastive rhetoric with its antecedent, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, as well as the complicated issue of basic writers in the U.S.; (c) analysis of texts for coherence; and (d) corpus analysis for various textual features.

A. Schema Theory & Reading/Writing Instruction

As far back as 1926, the Swiss cognitive psychologist Piaget, while studying the development of children’s cognition, postulated that the human mind is capable of developing abstract structures (individually referred to as schema and meaningfully interrelated into a
network) that organize stored information as well as help process new information by assimilating or adjusting it to fit in well. The existing mental “schemata” can also accommodate themselves to changes imported by stimuli from the outside world. The schema theory developed from Piaget’s work thus underscores the individual’s prior knowledge in comprehending the data input or predicting incoming events (Nunan 71).

In 1932 Bartlett, another cognitive psychologist, used the term “schema” to refer to the socially-shaped memory in his experiments of “serial reproduction” of an abstract line-drawing of an owl. The results, which finalized in a cat image, showed that, in reproducing the previous participant’s copy, each participant had made some changes in the information input to fit his/her perception of the drawing in relation to his/her real-world knowledge. Emphasizing the mutual influences between social background and knowledge, Bartlett viewed schemata not merely as passive organized mental constructs just for interpretation but as functional cognitive capacity enabling the individual to adapt to the immediate context (Middleton and Crook 382).

Later, educators extended the schema theory into various areas such as learning in general (Milligan) or anthropology (Guillet) or politics (Axelrod), but predominantly in the instruction of reading-comprehension. The 1970’s witnessed a boom in research into reading instruction built on the schema theory (e.g.; Mandler and Johnson; Meyer; Rumelhart; B. M. Taylor), which foregrounds the interaction between the reader and the text and thus, by assigning learners’ difficulties in comprehension or content recall to their lack of background knowledge, directs teachers’ attention to intra/extramural preparatory activities as well as careful selection of materials to enhance learning (Dubin et al.).

Rumelhart (“Schemata”) is also credited for further advancing the schema theory when advocating that schemata are developed from the individual’s interaction with other people,
objects, and incidents in that society functioning in that particular culture. This expansion to cultural influences provided more incentives for schema-based research into L2 reading instruction (e.g.; Carrell; Carrell and Eisterhold; Chu et al.; Connor and McCagg; McGee; Palmer; Pearson-Casanave) and reading/writing relationships in both L1 and L2 (Carrell “Cohesion”; Carson et al.; Crowhurst; McGinley; Spack, “Literature”; Strong; Winskel).

Schema theory in writing instruction, as advocated by Witte (“Pre-Text”), plays out in “pre-text” which comes in between the incubation and the act of writing in the composing process, mentally “translating” ideas into linguistic structures (e.g.; phrases, sentences). As “trial” versions, pre-text is stored in the writer’s memory and usually revised (like a written version) before it is actually projected onto the page in written words. Furthermore, as a key connection among stages of the writing process, “pre-text may have an immediate [or delayed, but] direct influence on written and rewritten text” (417). Blau further elaborates Witte’s mental composing with his “invisible writing,” which he compares to Vygotsky’s and Moffett’s “inner-speech.” He posits that invisible writing provides the author no means to re-read what has been produced and thus compels his/her concentration on the topic at hand, which in turn improves the quality of the essay. Finally, this survey would not be complete without accounting to schemata the indispensable assistance of memory in the invention stage of the writing process.

Not only does schema theory inform the field of composition, it soon sparks a new direction in the teaching of foreign/second languages, contrastive rhetoric. This new subfield, medial between applied linguistics and composition, marks a shift from focusing singly on the surface manifestations of language within the sentence boundaries to including consideration of the organization of continuous discourse which, as later research shows, account for many of the writer’s intrinsic inclination responsible for the unfavorable features in L2 composition.
B. Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive rhetoric is a growing inter-disciplinary field attempting to address the seemingly persistent foreignness in L2 writing. The following subsections only review how the evolution of this new field leads to the uncovery of L2 indirectness as one of the underlying cultural forces accounting for non-Western manifestations in L2 composition.

1. The Antecedent: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Almost concurrently with the emergence of schema theory, departing from universality, another view surfaced about diversities of language and thought across cultures, now known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. The strong version of this theory, linguistic determinism, argues that language dictates how individuals perceive reality and thus articulates a cultural inhibition on L2 acquisition. Much more popular is the weak version, linguistic relativity, which argues that language and culture interact, shaping one another. This interpretation encourages interest in cultural influences rather than inhibitions on the individual’s thoughts, hence disparities in cultural communications. Even though Sapir and Whorf seem extremist in their statement about communicative differences across languages, Hill and Mannheim argue that they “recogniz[ed] that linguistic and cultural particulars intersect with universals” (383).

With concerns about cultures, the Sapir Whorf Hypothesis paves the way for a new area in applied linguistics that expounds the invisible causes of non-native language production: contrastive rhetoric.

2. Contrastive Rhetoric: Socio-Cultural Impacts on Composing

In his 1966 seminal paper, Kaplan associates the foreignness and apparent disorganization of non-native compositions with the authors’ “cultural thought patterns.” He hypothesizes, “partly based on Whorfian ideas,” that “each language and each culture has a
paragraph order unique to itself, and that part of the learning of a particular language is the
mastery of its logical system” (“Thought Patterns” 14). In contrast to the Western linear
development of ideas, he found that the Semitic style prefers co-ordinate structures, the Oriental
opts for circular progression, the Romanic tends to ramble, and the Russian sounds weighty with
lengthy sentences and lexical redundancy.

While this landmark publication did incite widespread attention and subsequent research
as Kaplan had intended, it received no little criticism from disciplinary scholars. Although
recognizing that Kaplan had only presented his observations of repeated non-Western
organizational patterns in L2 English essays and called for further investigation, Hinds pointed
out that putting different Asian language groups under the one umbrella “Oriental” suggested
negligence of linguistic and cultural particulars and he further disagreed that foreign textual
organizations in such essays could definitely indicate negative L1 transfers, as L1 rhetorical
preferences should be investigated in L1 texts written for an L1 audience (“Contrastive
Rhetoric”). Mohan and Lo credited Kaplan’s initiative, but argued that a claim about linguistic
and cultural transfers would be invalid without considerations of instructional impacts as well as
individual cognitive developments. Matalene took Kaplan’s article as ethnocentric, as it seemed
to imply that the Western linearity and specificity in logical reasoning is preferable to alternative
rhetorical practices. According to Raimes, whether L1 transfers are significant or negative in L2
texts was questionable. And Scollon warned that the comparative study of text structures is
“contrastive poetics” rather than contrastive rhetoric, which should focus on persuasion
strategies, especially on the meaning-making process.

Notwithstanding all such criticism, forty years later, Kaplan’s 1966 seminal essay is
acknowledged as initiating the converging area between applied linguistics and rhetoric:

4 Refer to Kaplan’s article “Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited” (1987).
contrastive rhetoric, “an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to explain them” (Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric* 5).

Indeed, in Kaplan’s 2000 paper, he declares that “the organization of written text is culture-specific,” which furthers his 1966 initiative that “there is more than one form of logic,” recognizing rhetorics other than the Western Aristotelian one, and that rhetorics unfamiliar to the Western audience might account for the *strange*—and sometimes persistent—textual progressions in ESL ⁵ essays, making them incoherent and “out of focus” to the Western writing instructor (401). Reinforcing Kaplan’s contention, in the field of communication, Oliver (in consensus with Hall) recognized that there were other rhetorics with “many different modes of thinking, many different standards of value, many different ways in which influence must be exerted if [communication] is to be effective” (261). However, controversial discussions about Kaplan’s 1966 paper went on for years before contrastive studies started to compare rhetorical strategies in ESL writing with those preferred in the writer’s native language.

Since 1980s continually improved theories and research models have overcome previous flaws. Abundant contrastive rhetoric literature—such as Carrell; Cho; Connor; Eggington; Fox; Grabe; Hall; Hinds; Hinkel; Indrasuta; Kaplan; Kennedy; Leki; Lu; Oliver; Ostler; Park—has highlighted the East-West contrasting rhetorical conventions and thus emphasized the impacts of culture on writers’ or speakers’ rhetorical choices in discourse construction, particularly written discourse. In 1987 representative contrastive rhetorical studies were compiled in two invaluable collections: Connor and Kaplan’s *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text* as well as Purves’ *Writing Across Languages: Issues in Contrastive Rhetoric*. The continuing robust growth of this new discipline is most comprehensively recorded in Connor’s 1994 *Contrastive Rhetoric*:

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⁵ ESL: English as a Second Language
Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second-Language Writing as well as Hinkel’s 2002 Second-Language Writers’ Text: Linguistic and Rhetorical Features. More essentially, the research so far has indicated that learners of English as a Foreign/Second Language (EFL/ESL) are not necessarily basic writers. Frequently they produce circuitous but under-developed and/or ambiguous essays because of the cultural preferences in their home languages.

Since international students historically have been placed in developmental / remedial / basic writing courses at U.S. colleges and universities, forming a heterogeneous body adding to the institutional complexities of the discipline, I will next discuss briefly the writing student population composition as well as the characteristics of these apparently incompetent writers.

3. Basic Writers in the U.S. & L2 Writers

Initially, American composition instructors placed L2 writers attending U.S. public schools and colleges/universities in courses designed for basic writers because, by Western traditional standard, they were not considered ready for college-level writing (Matsuda, “Basic Writing”; Shaughnessy).

However, when basic writing emerged as a subfield in composition in the late 1970s, the U.S. college writing instruction context became too complicated for a single category or a simple definition of basic writing, Matsuda points out (“Basic Writing”). Indeed, while basic writers can be both U.S. citizens and foreign students, they cannot be homogenously described as such. On the one hand, international students might be native or non-native speakers of English. Of these non-native speakers, some students like those from India, the Phillipines or Kenya (i.e.; ESL) have been immersed and functioning in English as a second and official language since their early childhood; whereas others learn and use English as a foreign language (i.e.; EFL) for academic/specific purposes only. ESL students may also have had writing instruction in
accordance with the Western linear theme development; meanwhile, writing instruction for EFL learners is very likely deficient in rhetorical recognition of structures, and definitely not Aristotelian rhetoric organization. On the other hand, in spite of their U.S. citizenship, American basic writers include Black natives and recent immigrants’ children can be native-born (also known as Generation 2) or foreign-born (also known as Generation 1.5). The U.S. educational scenario is even more complex with these Generation 1.5 and Generation 2 students in public schools as well as attending colleges. They function in English, not as a mother tongue, but as a second language – second to their distinct home languages and cultures (Hartman and Tarone).

Because of these complexities, my study will consider only Asian L₂ writers of English, encompassing those for whom English is either a second or subsequent language. These writers have been immersed in their national / home cultures which may shape their communicative tendencies and behaviors with rhetorical practices quite distinct from Western ones.

4. L₂ Writing & Coherence

Since the basic writing population is so demographically and ethnically varied, they obviously bring to the writing classes their various home cultures with non-Western rhetorics that affect their ways of thinking and, accordingly, their writing (Kaplan; Kennedy; Lu; Oliver). Fox describes their writing in great detail as “lack of attention to audience needs, inadequate support, vagueness or sweeping generalizations, trouble making the main point clear, lack of transitions between ideas” (Listening xiv). More seriously, Fox noted that the issue persists in spite of “the repeated and careful explanations by their professors on how to improve [these students’] writing,” and it is very frustrating to the Western instructor regarding these writers’ previous education and “professional status” in their home countries (Listening xiv).
Whether this eminent rhetorical feature in EFL/ESL composition is referred to as lack/out of focus (Kaplan, “Thought Patterns”), non-linear progression of topic (Cho; Eggington; Hinds “Inductive”), or indirectness/indirection (Hinds “Reader-Writer”; Hinkel “Indirectness”/SLW’s Text; Kaplan “Thought Patterns”; Matalene), it fundamentally relates to Aristotelian coherence, the writing quality that helps Western readers make sense of the text.

In the words of Nunan, a renowned researcher in applied linguistics, coherence is the property of sentences that are not assembled randomly but “hang together” into discourse (116). However, this concept of coherence created by explicit “text-forming devices” (specifically, “anaphoric devices” and “simple repetition”) as Nunan illustrates with Hoey’s example (3-4) is questionable. Witte and Faigley contend that such hang-togetherness is cohesion, rather than coherence which refers to the “underlying semantic relations that allow a text to be understood and used” by fitting the details into the reader’s real-world knowledge as well as expectations of text genre and writing purpose (200/202). More comprehensively, Bublitz et al. define coherence as “a context-dependent, hearer- (or reader-) oriented and comprehension-based, interpretive notion” (2). Indeed, the consensus among most theorists is that the consistent flow of ideas conveying the writer’s intended message is not inherent in the text itself but is interpreted by the audience in their interaction with the text and the given cues (Connor, Contrastive Rhetoric 84; Lautamatti, “Coherence” 38; Witte, “Topical Structure” 317). Undoubtedly, “textual cues” provide cohesion that glues the sentences together but the set of sentences so connected can be only “minimally coherent” (Witte and Faigley 200) or, especially, the lexical cohesion through collocation may not fit in with the norms of the audience’s existing world and may thus make no sense to them at all (Connor, Contrastive Rhetoric 83-84; Enkvist 12-13; Johns qtd. in Connor, Contrastive Rhetoric 84; Witte and Faigley 193). Consequently, Witte, using Hobbes et al.’s
terms, suggests that, for a transparent message, the writer’s concern should be with “local coherence” – between sentences – as well as “global coherence” – between sentences and “discourse topic,” both of which reside in sentential semantic relationships most prominently assisted by lexical ties ("Topical Structure" 318). Similarly, Swales notes that from the reader’s schemata of world experiences as well as those text-related (Carrell, “Some Issues”), he/she has global expectations of the text’s content and organization that need to be met for fast and efficient reading (Bazerman) and, naturally, a sense of coherence can only fully perceived when the local cohesion exists to support the process (190). (For more details, refer to Chapter Two, I.B.1. Intersentential Connections: “Cohesion is not Coherence”.)

The paradigm shift from the text per se to mental processing of information and, especially, the new field of artificial intelligence sparked research (e.g.; Rumelhardt’s “Notes on Schema”/”Schemata”) that revived Bartlett’s schema theory about the impacts of memory or background information on communicative performances and thus further underscored cultural impacts on discoursal meaning-making. One such cultural influence, indirect communication, has emerged in the analyses of both native and non-native discourse, and is presented in the next section.

5. L₂ Indirectness / Indirection

Indirectness in interpersonal communication exists in various cultures around the world; however, it occurs in greater frequencies in L₂ writing than in Western composing. It can involve a circular discoursal style in which the communicative purpose is achieved strategically (by using such devices as hedges, rhetorical questions) or stated only after a number of remotely-related points have been presented. It can also be manifested in the unstated relationships between propositions or between propositions and the topic or central theme.
The circuitous approach to a proposition is employed when the speaker/writer feels a need to circumvent or defer that particular delicate point in a conversation or composition (Hinkel “Indirectness”; Scollon and Scollon 92/95), and even the delayed theme or digressive development in writing is intended to respect the reader’s judgement (Fox, Listening 13-15). Indirectness is thus most generally attributed to politeness (Brown and Levinson; de Kadt; Đỗ; Félix-Brasdefer; Gunarwan; Hinkel; Nakajima; Sew; Spees). Fundamentally, this cross-cultural communicative strategy is to remove the writer from (1) liability for the truthfulness of the information provided (Afifi and Reichert; Channel; Nguyễn T. G.), or (2) any potential conflicts with the reader arising from the propositions (Brenneis; Channel; Chew; Garner; Nguyễn T. G.; Pair; Rymes; Trần N. T.; Yum “Korean”) and thus ensure either the author’s self-protection (Channel; Rymes) or solidarity/harmony with the reader (Félix-Brasdefer; Fukuda; Garner; Tannen; Trần N. T.; Wu and Rubin). Further, this polite strategy is used to avoid “face-threatening-acts,” postulate Brown and Levinson, borrowing the term “face” from Goffman who, in his investigations about ritual constraints in social interactions, emphasized the role of “presentation of self” and “presentation of other” in constructing the social “face.” “Face” is thus the “public self-image” (Brown and Levinson 61; Yule 134) or, more specifically, the “emotional and social sense of self that every person has and expects everyone else to recognize” (Yule 134).

Regarding Chinese culture of group solidarity, Ji argues, not in conflict with upholding the communal benefits, individuals’ promotion of “face” as a “self-image” in public observation and assessment urges them to behave in harmony with the social conventions as well as take appropriate politeness strategies to preserve the harmonious connectedness (1060). Similarly, Hinkel postulates that “[i]n writing traditions based on Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist
philosophical precepts, rhetorical indirectness has the goal of maintaining harmony and avoiding impositions on both the writer and reader” (“Indirectness” 363).

In spite of its universality, this diplomatic implicitness varies from culture to culture, and the differences may disrupt cross-cultural communication with the audience; therefore, it can “seriously affect the credibility of non-native writers” due to divergent meaning-making systems (Mauranen, “Contrastive ESP Rhetoric” 2). Problems generated by this variation have prompted researchers to investigate textual coherence in student writing. Two types of analysis have developed in analyzing academic essays, text linguistics/discourse analysis and corpus analysis, which have become combined research tools in quantitative designs.

C. Text Linguistics & Discourse Analysis

Enkvist draws a distinction between text linguistics and discourse analysis. He defines the former as “the study of linguistic devices of cohesion and coherence within a [written] text” isolated from the communicative context. Discourse analysis is “looking at [spoken] texts in their interactional and situational contexts, including reference to the interchanges and communicative moves between speakers in face-to-face communication” (“Text Linguistics” 26). Additionally, according to Connor, “text linguistics is written discourse analysis, an analysis of texts that goes beyond the sentence level” (Contrastive Rhetoric 19), implying that speech was predominantly the research subject for discourse analysis; and so it was at the onset of discourse analysis (e.g.; Brown and Yule; Larsen-Freeman; Stubbs, Discourse Analysis; van Dijk, “Introduction”). Nevertheless, the distinction between “text” and “discourse” has narrowed recently. Now the general trend is to place texts in productive/receptive context, “text linguistics is concerned with the processes that readers and writers go through in their attempts to comprehend and produce texts” (Connor, Contrastive Rhetoric 19).
Initially working in differing paths toward their common goal to move the study of language from sentence grammar to grammars of text/discourse, the two fields of text linguistics and discourse analysis are simultaneously diverging and “contrapuntal” (de Beaugrande 41). Since both areas of study focus on discourse and process, van Dijk (“Introduction” 1) and de Beaugrande trace their inceptions back to classical Aristotelian rhetoric with its interest in creating persuasive texts in view of audience and context. Academic interest in rhetoric declined in the 19th century; however, new areas of human sciences were initiated at the beginning of the 20th century, and the resilient enthusiasm for text/discourse investigation rapidly spread to various disciplines, especially anthropological analysis of folktales as represented by Vladimir Propp’s Morphology of the Folktale. However, the emergence of the modern text linguistics and discourse analysis was not simultaneous.

Connor maps out the two major schools of text linguistics leading to the modern discourse analysis (Contrastive Rhetoric 81-83). As evident in the name, the Prague school had its dawn in the 1920s with Vilhém Mathesius and its heightened bloom in the 1950s and 1960s with numerous Czech linguists’ works pioneering a new look at how information flows through the entire text. Their theory, “functional sentence perspective,” highlights the two basic parts in the individual sentence variously known as “topic-comment,” “theme-rheme,” or “given/old-new information.” These two components shape the informational progression in the sequence of sentences to build up a communicative text. Also as the meanings suggest, the “topic” or “theme” refers to the central subject of the sentence, which the author assumes to be already familiar to the audience considering their mental schemata or the insight in the immediately/ remotely previous sentence, hence “given / old information;” and the “comment” or “rheme” must then be the “new information” about the sentence topic. This analytical examination of
individual and continual structures of the sentence inevitably led to consideration of not only the cohesion but also the coherence of a text.

Systemic linguistics, initiated by Halliday in 1961 on the foundations established by the Prague School, is the second school of text linguistics and the platform for ESL text linguistic research worldwide. Systemic linguistics contends that because people use language in social transactions, the meaning is determined by communicative contexts (Halliday). Its focal points are on functions rather than forms, semantic rather than syntactic aspects, the text rather than the sentence. Semantically, according to Halliday and Hasan (26-27), language has three functions that, Hinkel posits, enable the author to put together a contextually-meaningful text (SLWs’ Text 9). The first function, ideational, is responsible for the logical semantic connections, within the “context of culture,” contributing toward the central theme. The second task, interpersonal, is evinced in the writer’s effective interaction with the reader (from his/her own stance) regarding language use, historical setting, and social context (especially concerning “shared world views” or “tacit cultural knowledge”). Finally, the textual function consists of structural and non-structural components. The structural aspect involves organizational and transitional devices or strategies that make the text coherent with the context; the non-structural is grammatical and lexical cohesion. Strangely enough, L₂ indirectness has been detected in all these three functions of language essential for coherence and will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. I. “L₂ Indirectness/Indirection.”

Conversely, in the mid-1960s, enthused by the structuralists’ linguistic analysis, a new school of discourse analysis commenced. The French anthropological work of Lévi-Strauss’s provided an analytical study of Brazilian primitive cultures through myths. Barthes developed a rhetorical semiotic reading of the adversarial bourgeois culture through publicity photos. Similar
analyses were reported in the “Communications 4” (Van Dijk, “Introduction” 2-3). Meanwhile, in the United States, Hymes’s sociolinguistic collection *Language in Culture and Society* drew on influential figures in linguistic anthropology like Boas or Lévi-Strauss or Sapir whose interests went beyond the physical textual patterns to the overarching and penetrating influences of society, culture and history on discourse. Hymes’s work marked a substantial divorce from Chomsky’s context-devoid transformational grammar. One contributor to this landmark volume, Pike, introduced tagmemics. Although tagmemics resembles Harris’s sentence transformation with “slot” substitution, it importantly considers the inseparable constituents of language: form/structure and function/meaning. Shortly, Pike’s collaborator, Becker, applied it to paragraph analysis by identifying functional-slot patterns in expository paragraphs, from which later evolved grammars of the paragraph. This mellow blend of structural linguistics and anthropology duly served as a springboard for more systematic discourse studies to come.

The boundaries gradually blurred between these two approaches to the study of discourse before the ultimate integration. This interim witnessed increasing linguistic emphasis on language use and the dawn of socio-linguistics around the mid-1960s. Consequently, the two domains of text linguistics and discourse analysis “have expressly merged in concerted interaction [since the 1970s],” when linguists realized that language study could not separate linguistic “artifacts” (such as dialogues or texts) from the situation for / the process of textual construction and meaning-making which involves both the addresser and the addressee (de Beaugrande, “Text Linguistics” 41). The new unified field did not limit its subject of study to written texts but set out to explore speech or language in action, and van Dijk proclaims the 1970s as the establishment of discourse analysis as a new discipline (“Introduction” 4-7). Actually, discourse analysis rapidly embraced both speech and writing (obviously still with
distinct research tools for each type of discourse) as it became interdisciplinary in the 1970s and 1980s, involving not only linguists or applied linguists but also psychologists, psycho-linguists, compositionists and, especially, contrastive rhetoricians to improve writing instruction by examining the text’s global grammar that brings about coherence (Connor, *Contrastive Rhetoric* 82). As suggested in the title, Connor and Kaplan’s collection *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L₂ Text* presents major applications of text analysis to contrastive rhetoric issues. (For more details about discourse analysis, refer to Chapter Two. II. “Discourse Matrix for Discourse Analysis.”) Also, as mentioned earlier, technological advances allow computing large data sets in another type of text investigation: corpus analysis, to be explained in the next section.

**D. Corpus Analysis**

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s advances in computerizing enabled the processing of large corpora conducive to corpus analysis of discourse, which thrived so well in the 1980s and 1990s (Biber; Biber and Finegan; Channel; Collins; Connor and Kaplan; Hoye; Hyland; McCarthy and Carter; Sinclair; qtd. in Hinkel, *SLWs’ Text* 10). Authentic occurrences of discoursal features in all linguistic aspects (i.e.; syntax, lexis, semantics, pragmatics, rhetoric) could then be empirically quantified in large-scale projects. Significantly, Stubbs promotes corpus analysis as a powerful tool in language education, especially in comprehending “the many issues in grammar teaching, and language variability across different genre,” because “linguistics and, by extension, discourse analysis are essentially social sciences that analyze natural data and apply their findings to teaching ESL/EFL, teacher training, and dictionary making” (qtd. in Hinkel, *SLWs’ Text* 11-12). This promotion has been verified by Hinkel’s 2002 voluminous investigation of 242 native and 1,215 non-native student English essays (corpus of around 434,768 words) for 68 linguistic and rhetorical features in second-language composing.
Two contrastive rhetoric projects based on corpus analysis are in particular relation to my study. The first is Sun-I Chen’s study of forty L1 and L2 editorials utilizing Coe’s revision of Nold and Davis’s discourse matrix for Chinese paragraph structure (which supports Kaplan’s hypothesis of the “Oriental spiral”) as well as corpus analysis for tentative impacts of language and political stance on that structure (“Argumentative”). On a much larger scale, Hinkel (“Indirectness”) conducted an investigation of 150 essays in English written by American students and Asian students immersed in “Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist philosophical precepts” (365) for twenty-one indirectness devices, the majority of which were derived from Brown and Levinson’s Politeness.

Hinkel’s 1997 study did not include essays by Vietnamese, who also come from Confucian-Buddhist-Taoist culture. Although Vietnamese are grouped as sharing rhetorical traditions with Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans in her 2002 large-scale research, the investigation was not focused on indirectness. Moreover, there has obviously been little published information available in English about such cultural connections, except for very brief mentions (Scollon and Scollon 138; Taylor and Taylor 151; Trueba et al. 29). Until recently few Vietnamese students entered the higher educational system in the United States. Thus, the few who were noticed were convincingly included with all other East Asians. Because the focus of this research is on Vietnamese writing and this country’s culture is generally unfamiliar to the scholars interested in contrastive, rhetoric, it is necessary to scroll through some of Vietnam history, especially as provided by Vietnamese scholars, that illustrates Chinese imprints on the language and thoughts of the local people. Additionally, Vietnam’s current socio-political situation suggests indirectness in newspaper commentaries.
III. Chinese-Vietnamese Commonalities

Hinkel’s 1997 study points out that indirectness is a salient rhetorical practice shared by cultures immersed in Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. These philosophies either originated or flourished in China, and in a small southern country bordering on China, “[t]he Vietnamese, who lived under Chinese rule for a thousand years, assimilated many of the Chinese values, including the value of literacy, art and philosophy” (Trueba et al. 29), which is firmly attested by Vietnam history.

A. Brief Background History of Vietnam

Indeed, Vietnamese and Chinese cultures have a lot in common. More testifying historical details about Chinese influences on Vietnam as well as its people and language can be found in Nguyên and Đặng’s *Vietnam History from the Beginning to the 10th Century*. Vietnam was first established as a nation – by the name Văn Lang – between the 7th and 5th centuries BC (58), when the people took to agriculture and settled down in the fertile deltas of the large rivers in what is now North Vietnam. Initially they had a primary form of nation governing themselves by customs rather than written laws, and there is no proof of a writing system then.

Small in size while abundant in natural resources, this country in the South easily fell prey to numerous foreign invasions. The first Chinese invasion came in 214 BC and lasted till 210 BC, when the Chinese king Qin-Shi Huang died. The second Chinese invasion by Zhao Tuo, a Chinese warlord, started in 181 BC; however, not until 179 BC was this small Southern country defeated, beginning the Chinese 1,000-year dominion (179BC – 905AD). Nevertheless, hardly any cultural changes took place under Zhao Tuo’s ruling, as his policy was for “the local people to govern the local people” (Nguyễn and Đặng). Drastic impacts only started in 111 BC, when this Chinese warlord lost to the Han dynasty.
As part of the conquest of this Southern colony, the Han *dai* initiated a forceful policy of cultural assimilation. Not only did they appoint Chinese to all high governing positions while keeping Vietnamese only as direct administrators to facilitate the Chinese ruling, but the Han also sent ordinary Chinese to this newly-acquired land to live among the natives so that they could intermingle with the local people. Furthermore, the Chinese officials imposed Chinese rituals and customs upon the indigenous activities in addition to the Chinese language instruction for Buddhist monks and low-level officials. These actions gradually introduced a substantial Chinese vocabulary into the local language, forming the scholarly lexis currently employed and referred to as *Hán Việt* [i.e.; Sino-Vietnamese].

**B. Chinese Influences on Vietnamese Culture and Language**

Confucianism, the foundation of Chinese philosophy and cultural ideology as “legitimized and institutionalized by Emperor Han Wu [in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C.]” (Lu, *Rhetoric* 3) was introduced into Vietnam in the early years of colonization, evidently to subdue the local people’s resistance against the Chinese dominion (Nguyễn and Đặng). This precept “focuses on dependency and interdependency of family, friends, and community” (Lu, *Rhetoric* 3) and especially dictates the observation of the three hierarchies: ruler-ruled, father-son and husband-wife. Such societal hierarchies were also embraced in *wu lun* (*ngũ luân* in Sino-Vietnamese pronunciation, meaning the Five Ethical Codes): ruler-ruled, father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, and friend-friend; which compels respect for elders/superiors and group harmony (Chen and Chung 95; L. Chen 22; Ng 36). Another hierarchy required men’s absolute obedience, in priority: king-teacher-father. For example, when commands from his father were in conflict with his teacher’s, a man had to obey his teacher. This concession to authority and community is prominently invested in *li* (pronounced *lê* in Sino-
Vietnamese; translated by Lu as “rites, rituals, propriety, and codes of conducts”; Rhetoric 158) because

Li can be understood as self-monitored and controlled verbal and nonverbal behavior proper and appropriate to norms of filial piety, ancestor worship, and official ceremonies, exhibited through listening, speaking, singing, dancing, and performing the rites and rituals. (Lu, Rhetoric 159)

While all the three Confucian moral principles – ren (nhân in Sino-Vietnamese; meaning benevolence), li and zhong yong (trung dung in Sino-Vietnamese; meaning the Middle Way) – permeate all aspects of the Vietnamese society, li is profoundly reinforced with the formal education from kindergarten to secondary school, which ingrains in students great respect for the teacher. This educational emphasis is conspicuously displayed on a large poster in every classroom: “Li first, wen later” (wen, or văn in Sino-Vietnamese, means “language art”) because “[a person] who [only] possesses wen appears benevolent on the surface but does not act in benevolent ways” (Confucius qtd. in Lu, Rhetoric 168). Since li also involves propriety and proper conducts, together with zhong yong it urges people to achieve as well as maintain harmony in communication not “by submission to authority, as Kincaid, Oliver, and Jensen contend” but rather “by avoiding extremes” without sacrificing “individuality” (Lu, Rhetoric 30/160). In other words, individual dignity (or “face”) can and should be preserved for both participants.

Inevitably, Taoism and especially Buddhism from China quickly spread to Vietnam and reinforced the Buddhist foundation already established by Indian priests around the 2nd century A.D. (Đặng 115; Durand and Nguyễn 8). On the one hand, besides reinforcing Confucian zhong yong with his rhetorical stance for “appropriateness, similar to the Greek notion of kairos” (Lu,
Laozi conceives the universe as coming into existence all at once upon the original chaos, a totality constructed by a “horizontal” sum (rather than a hierarchical system) of smaller units in “aesthetic” connections (rather than rational or logical), each one an entity by itself while related to the larger entirety on the same level of significance (Hall 61). This “correlative thinking”, as opposed to the Western linear and causal reasoning, partly accounts for the East Asian roundabout way of discourse construction (Cho). In other words, Taoism promotes “identification of the individual with nature,” yan-yin balance and recognizes nature’s non-logicality, which induces (1) appreciation of non-action/spontaneity rather than logical reasoning/contention (against the course of nature), (2) preservation of communal harmony with ethical values, (3) implicit communication rather than direct, confrontational negotiation for truth (Kennedy 158). The third implication of Taoism is that persuasion can be achieved by employment of “literary style and aesthetic appeal” to indirectly urge readers to muse for self-enlightenment (Lu, Rhetoric 228).

Alternately, Buddhist rhetoric, as practiced by Buddha (born Siddattha Gautama) while preaching, “avoided direct refutation and sought instead a common ground of agreement” (Oliver 74) and thereby strengthens the Confucian concept of “face” and social harmony as well as Taoist natural ethics. This rhetorical preference is furthered by Buddhist philosophy’s profound implantation in Vietnamese culture because, even from the first independent Vietnamese sovereign, Buddhist priests won the royal veneration and, as “the emperors’ confidants, and their amanuenses and ambassadors,” the priesthood also meant “the custodians of culture” (Durand and Nguyễn 8-9).

Formal instruction in Vietnam was a close copy of contemporary Chinese education, from instructional activities to ideological structure for all the social institutions (Taylor and

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6 Graham’s term (1986)
Taylor 151). However, for the first ten centuries, education was principally for Buddhist monks to read religious scripts in Chinese, and not until the national independence in 939AD was education in Vietnam extended to young laymen (Lê). The core curriculum consisted of the Confucian “Five Classics” (“Ngũ Kinh,” in Sino-Vietnamese) and “Four Books” (“Tứ Thư,” in Sino-Vietnamese) as well as other Chinese classics, preparing young men for the Civil-Service Examinations, which selected lower-ranking public officials for the royal government. Obviously, the national education and examination systems then “closely followed [those] adopted in China,” which required “memorization of large portions of classical texts, and the ability to compose a formal essay and a poem in accordance with the [Chinese] classical rhetorical paradigm” (Durand and Nguyễn 7-8; Nguyễn Đ. H. qtd. in Hinkel, SLWs’ Text 35).

Vietnamese education in the Chinese language continued even after chữ Nôm (i.e.; the vernacular script) was developed in the 14th century, by combining two Chinese characters (one for sound, the other for meaning) to make one Vietnamese word, for recording and composing in the Vietnamese language. In spite of this new script the national educational system still modeled after the Chinese; however, “the literature of Vietnam’s early period” was now supplied with scripts of “a rich tradition of popular narrative and … some major works [in chữ Nôm] in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (Durand and Nguyễn 8). After all, with writing in Chinese persisting till the 1940 official ban (Taylor and Taylor 209) and national written examinations in Chinese being administered until 1919, the Chinese rhetorical and linguistic influences on Vietnamese composing are not surprising.

Specifically, recorded in the Concise History of Vietnamese Literature is the conventional prose organization bát cố in parallel with bagu, the Chinese traditional eight-legged essay (Dương 87-90). These eight parts of Vietnamese classical prose correspond perfectly to
Connor’s explanation of the functions of bagu (Contrastive Rhetoric 37): (1) phà đê just slightly touches the topic like the “opening-up” poti, (2) thừ đê elaborates more extensively like the “amplification” by chengti, (3) khởi giảng comes closer to the theme like the “preliminary exposition” qijiang, (4) khai giảng/hoàn đê starts the “first [point of] argument” like qigu, (5) trung cô is the middle point like the “second argument” xugu, (6) hầu cô makes the subsequent point, not different from the continuing “third argument” zhongu, (7) kết cô states the closing point like the “final argument” hougu, and (8) thúc đê ends the essay like the “conclusion” dajie. This traditional organizational similarity is also singular in that it has not been demonstrated in Japanese or Korean classical prose.

In addition to the eight-legged essay, a four-part model found in more recent Chinese, Japanese, and Korean composition (Connor, Contrastive Rhetoric; Eggington; Hinds; Taylor and Taylor) is reflected in the Vietnamese later text organization. Table 1 displays, in the spellings of the four organizational components, certain degrees of similarity in pronunciation in the four languages.

Table 1. Names of components the four-part essay model in the four languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Korean</th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qi / chi</td>
<td>ki</td>
<td>ki</td>
<td>khởi</td>
<td>“prepares the reader for the topic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheng / chen</td>
<td>shoo</td>
<td>sung</td>
<td>thừ</td>
<td>“introduces &amp; develops the topic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jun/juan/zhuan</td>
<td>ten</td>
<td>chon</td>
<td>chuyen</td>
<td>“turns to [loosely-related] subject”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he / jie</td>
<td>ketsu</td>
<td>kyl</td>
<td>ket</td>
<td>“sums up the essay”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, the local Vietnamese people, although writing in Chinese characters and style, did not speak classic Chinese but rather mingled the Chinese superstructure lexis with the Vietnamese daily-life vocabulary. The Chinese words, while intact in their visual features, were
pronounced in the Vietnamese way and referred to as Sino-Vietnamese (as they are not quite phonologically recognizable to native speakers of Chinese). Furthermore, these Sino-Vietnamese words were fit into Vietnamese sentential structures although they could retain their original compound formations (Trần T. T., “Impacts”). Consequently, while it is true that “the political, philosophical, religious, and educational ties between Vietnam and China were so strong,” it is questionable that “according to some historical sources, … for centuries the Vietnamese considered themselves to be part of China” (Nguyễn Đ. H, “Vietnamese” qtd. in Hinkel, SLWs’ Text 35) or that the Vietnamese and Chinese composing features are all identical. In fact, it is expected that some disparities, though far fewer than similarities, will be found between Chinese and Vietnamese writing preferences. Following is a brief description of the social context that suggests the necessity of indirect communication in Vietnamese newspaper commentaries.

C. Current Vietnamese Socio-Political Scenario

Vietnam is currently a socialist republic under the ultimate leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam; hereafter “the Party” as it is domestically referred to (“Mastering”). In other words, while most governments are the nation’s highest and most powerful body to regulate all the domestic and foreign affairs, the Vietnamese government –like other Communist ones– is to administer the policies formulated by the Central Committee of the Party. The actual leader of the nation is thus the Secretary General of the Party, not the President. This organizational principle of “Party-led, State-run, People-owned” permeates all units in the government system, from the public school or the village committee to the Cabinet. No less complicated is the present socio-political climate in Vietnam; recourse to the recent history would shed some light on it.
Since the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China were the two leading Communist nations, the socialist state of Vietnam in its inception just followed in their steps, sometimes in harmony and sometimes in controversy. However, the sharp contrast between the Soviet failure and China’s success in their economic management in the 1970s, and especially the national economic crisis in the early 1980’s, prompted Vietnam to travel in the wake of China and in 1986 adopt “Đôi Mới” [Renovation], an economic reform allowing multiple economic sectors (instead of the centrally-planned economy) together with an open-door policy to welcome foreign investment. This move has been translated into a more relaxed political atmosphere at home and abroad.

In foreign relations, Vietnam has strived for normalization with influential nations and states, which used to be considered in adversarial positions like China (1991), the United States (1995), or the Vatican (2007). Toward expatriates, a potential resource for national economic boost, the general principle is inclusive, approving and welcoming. Domestically, under pressure from giant investing countries and corporations, especially during its efforts to gain accession to the World Trade Organization, Vietnam has recently undertaken measures to promote democracy as well as contain the blazing political corruption among high officials. Most salient are direct conversations (by phone or by e-mail) with the President / Prime Minister or a related Cabinet Minister about some current issue and newspaper commentaries contributed by non-professionals (in addition to those written by the editors).

However, it should be noted that democracy in Communism is rather democratic centralism, in which members can participate in discussions or debates but have to uphold the final decisions made by the majority or by the Party leader(s). Additionally, as in China, for Vietnam’s stance in national and foreign affairs, Marxism has been the ideological model, which
is enhanced by the “great thoughts” of the founder of the national Party (Lu, “Rhetoric” 304) and which is still valid in the modern times regardless of monumental changes since the days of Karl Max (Hà Đặng). In Vietnam also exists a socio-political context similar to that of the People’s Republic of China that observes “the absolute moral infallibility of the ruler” (Lu, “Rhetoric” 305). Although the idolization of the leader ceased with the death of the revered President Hồ Chí Minh, “the absolute moral infallibility” stays with the ruling Party, which is never wrong and cannot be denounced.

Besides, with large numbers of illegal Vietnamese emigrants now residing in capitalist countries, the Party is always on guard of counter-revolutionaries, both domestic and overseas, and is relentless in preventive measures against all signs of harmful schemes. That means even constructive criticism must be very carefully worded and structured so as not to be considered detrimental to the regime. Furthermore, internationally, media monitoring is an essential “means to audit democracy;” that is, to make sure freedom of press is exerted with accountability in order to serve public interests (Nordenstreng and Griffin 1-2). In such circumstances, Vietnamese newspaper commentaries as political communication were expected to be indirect in addressing governmental or administrative issues. Noteworthy, too, is that the author’s stance was often not clearly stated in a commentary text.

So far, I have attempted to locate Vietnamese EFL composing practices within the global context of shared Asian Confucian-Buddhist-Taoist cultural communication that, for communal harmony and social hierarchy, harbors indirectness which in turn calls for the interactants’ shared previous knowledge in the meaning-making process. In this light and on the foundation of contrastive rhetoric text linguistics as well as corpus analysis, the purpose of my study is to make its modest contribution to the existing literature about East Asian cultures and L2 writing.
IV. This Pilot Study: Public Persuasive Discourse

The contrastive rhetoric research history on Vietnamese thus far has student compositions as its subject of study. However, after an online tutoring project that I conducted for fourth-year English majors at a university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, in the fall of 2004 proved an unviable venue for research. Essentially the essays with which I worked showed limited lexical range as well as length (200-500 words). And the same assigned topics were given to all students, restricting their ideational development within the guided textual organization.

Consequently, I decided to look for another source of public persuasive discourse. Vietnamese newspaper commentaries were chosen because, while they are supposed to formalize the public opinions, they are essentially behavior-guiding/shaping. As such, especially in the rising competition with audio-visual media, this public written discourse should be not only formal but also informal and indirect in order to reach and influence, ultimately, the most readers possible – probably more local than international in anticipation. Accordingly, Vietnamese newspaper commentaries potentially had the necessary features needed for the study: depth, length, and addressing native Vietnamese readers.

The newspaper commentaries were selected from two groups of newspapers, one targeting young and the other senior readers. Each group of newspapers consisted of two subgroups according to the language used: Vietnamese and English because I hypothesized that language as a means of composing and the age as well as social status of the intended audience might affect the author’s rhetorical preferences in constructing the text.

V. Project Overview

Since indirectness/indirection has been attributed to Chinese composition, is it employed in Vietnamese exposition/argumentation, too? Which indirectness features stratgies are utilized
then? Does the usage of indirectness vary according to language (Vietnamese vs. English) and audience (young vs. senior)? And can such rhetorical preferences negatively affect the text in Western reading perspectives?

To address these research questions, this pilot study investigated forty newspaper commentaries on socio-economic issues from the electronic editions of eight newspapers (five texts from each one), between June 2005 and October 2006. Half of the selected newspapers were published in Vietnamese, and half in English. All the newspapers in Vietnamese were also in print with very large circulations, while those in English were only published online. The newspapers in either language fell into two categories according to the target readers’ age groups (i.e.; young vs. senior). Two (Thanh Niên for younger readers and Sài Gòn Giải Phóng for seniors), primarily published and circulated in Vietnamese, had their supplementary electronic English editions (i.e.; Thanh Nien News & Sai Gon Giai Phong-English), which were also included in my study.

Statistical tests were replicated from Sun-I Chen’s (“Argumentative”) and Hinkel’s (“Indirectness”) research although my pilot study, slightly departing from the norm of comparing EFL/ESL or non-English L₁ texts with native-English ones, only looked at L₁-versus-L₂ and audience-oriented rhetorical behaviors in Vietnamese composing. Replication of the former study aimed to identify the general tendency for circuitous textual development, unstated connections between details and the central theme of the text. The design basing on the latter was to detect indirectness strategies / markers.

Since Chen utilized the discourse matrix, revised by Coe from the Nold and Davis’ original, which requires identifying and numbering the propositions (i.e.; T-units⁷, in this study) in the texts as well as drawing matrices to indicate the levels of generality (by which to infer the

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⁷ For more information, refer to Chapter Two. II. C. 1. “The T-unit.”
ranges of specificity) and logical relationships between propositions, I initially invited four teachers of English currently teaching in Vietnam and the States, and finally engaged two to do the coding and matrixing. One was a college instructor in Vietnam; the other was teaching in a U.S. public school. However, the email contact between the matrixer in Vietnam and me failed, and none of the matrices produced by the other matrixer was identical to mine for the same sample newspaper commentaries. As a result, I went to Vietnam and recruited two of the highest-achieving English majors at a university in the Mekong Delta to do the matrixing. An instructor of English at the same university volunteered to help with any unmatched matrices. After the training period and matrixing practice, the matrixers worked independently and, in case of disparities in the drawings, consulted with the volunteer teacher. However, discussions on the differences were adopted rather than a third person’s independent matrixing because the matrixers as well as the volunteer teacher did not feel completely confident in their decisions on the semantic relationships between propositions and very few pairs of matrices were truly identical while each pair might match up to 95%, which was a similar situation to the previous drawing.

In addition, I later requested the help from two experienced American college ESL instructors with the second matrixing: (1) in-depth on the five newspaper commentaries from a randomly-selected newspaper (which happened to be the VOV News), and (2) cross-sectionally with one newspaper commentary on an economic issue from each of the eight newspapers. Very much like the Vietnamese matrixers, these ESL instructors preferred discussions about the divergences in the matrices they had produced independently so as to arrive at the final drawings on which they both agreed. The extent of the differences was to inform me of the potential negative effects L₂ texts might produce on a Western audience.
The total number of T-units, the unconnected (i.e.; irrelevant) as well as indirectly connected (i.e.; implicit) T-units, the idea strings, the node strings, and the levels of generality in each text were then counted for the statistical tests. Because of the relatively small sample, the t-tests were performed on the raw data and double-checked with the median tests to determine how homogenous the effects of each independent variable (e.g.; language) from a pair of subcells in a data cell (e.g.; Thanh Niên & Tuổi Trẻ for the data cell Vietnamese language – Junior audience) were on each dependent variable so that each pair of subcells could be collapsed into one for more powerful test results.

Multivariate analysis for causal-comparative inquiry (i.e.; MANOVA test) helped “[determine] whether groups [i.e.; language & audience, in this study] differ on more than one dependent variable” (Gall et al. 309), either macro-level or micro-level; that is, to see whether language and/or audience significantly influenced the authors’ rhetorical choices such as depth of topical development (Rgen), subtopics modifying a topic (AnN), or elaborating information (AsubN).

The Pearson Product-moment Correlation test allows computing the correlation between variables from raw scores/data (i.e.; without converting into z scores) so as to “establish a relationship between the scaled [i.e.; ranked] or scored data of one [dependent] variable with those of another” (Hatch and Lazaraton 433-5). Differently put, this test was to reveal interactions, if any, between the dependent variables on the same level (i.e.; macro- or micro-level) and also to assess the reliability of the data (Spata 63).

In replicating Hinkel’s research, language and audience were also the independent variables, and all the twenty-one features she selected were examined as dependent variables because Vietnamese essays had not been included in her study and Vietnamese newspaper
commentaries, though of serious writing, are not for academic purposes and the style might thus be somewhat less formal.

Percentage rates of the features over the commentary length were first performed as the basis for ranking them. Just as in Hinkel’s study, non-parametric tests (i.e. the median test & Mann-Whitney U test) were used since most percentage rates in my project “were not normally distributed [because of very extreme scores], and the number of [texts] that did not contain all types of indirectness strategies and markers was high” (366). The comparison of the features in two groups of newspaper commentaries (i.e.; young vs. old / English vs. Vietnamese) were then processed by the Mann-Whitney U test as this test “compares two groups on the basis of their ranks above and below the median (i.e.; regarding their influences over each of the dependent variables)” (Hatch and Lazaraton 274) to see which dependent variables were significantly affected and which level of an independent variable was stronger in a particular effect.

VI. Study Limitations

This pilot study, the first done in the uncharted field of Vietnamese rhetoric, is inevitably under a number of restraints.

♦ Most of the selected newspapers for the study did not seem to target an audience within a single age group. For the largest circulations possible, many Vietnamese newspapers do not clearly aim at a single type of audience. Instead, their commentaries appeared to embrace readers in the working age range from twenties to fifties. It seemed also to be the case for online newspapers in English, which are supposed to reach especially well-educated readers and expatriates. The clear-cut exceptions were the Lao Động [Labor] and Nhân Dân [People], which are state-funded and subscribed to by all state-governed units. Even newspapers and magazines for teenagers and young people, explicitly declared in their names such as the Thanh Niên
[Young People] and Tuổi Trẻ [Youth], appeared to extend the age range of potential readers even to late thirties with news of interest for more mature readers. In my study, audience did not significantly affect the writers’ rhetorical choices probably also because Vietnamese writers are not formally trained to be sharply aware of the intended audience (Nguyễn Đ. M. et al 9/21). The test results appeared to reflect this limitation with significantly fewer impacts of audience than language on the texts regarding all the three aspects of indirectness.

♦ Newspaper commentaries are written by professional or capable writers, aiming to persuade a large, unidentified audience; accordingly, they can better reflect the popular writing trend of the nation than student essays. Nevertheless, a rough comparative discussion of these in reference to the results of Hinkel’s student-paper investigation is obviously unfit. Further, some newspaper commentaries were translated, not directly composed in English, and I did the translation of the commentaries in Vietnamese for the Western matrixers. The verbal choice as well as the ideational and sentential connections in those translated texts might deviate from the original writing.

♦ I could not select five newspaper commentaries from each of the eight newspapers on the same five topics, while Hinkel (SLWs’ Text) has found that some, though not all, writing prompts (i.e.; discourse topics) may affect the writer’s utilization of indirectness devices. That means the comparison across the newspapers may not be consistent.

♦ Obviously, the relatively small number of newspaper commentaries selected within a short span of time cannot be sufficient for generalization of the Vietnamese rhetorical paradigm, and this pilot study is principally an exploration for more extensive investigation of Vietnamese persuasive discourse.
Immersed in a holistic culture, Vietnamese people in general seem to be unfamiliar with identifying semantic and rhetorical relations between details as well between details and the thesis, which is decisive in matrixing. The Vietnamese matrixers’ difficulties with such relationships in the text might refract the accuracy of the matrices. This speculation had not been in my expectation; therefore, I had not designed an interview of teachers of Vietnamese composition (i.e.; L₁ writing) to verify it for a more appropriate training for the matrixers. Also as a result, for cases of discrepancies, discussion was adopted instead of third-party matrixing, which is supposed to avoid the matrixers’ subjectivity (Chen, “Argumentative” 24/32). Curiously enough, discussions also took place between the Western matrixers, as it seemed that Western meaning-making had a hard time with L₂ mosaic⁸ composing, too.

For equivalent indirectness markers in newspaper commentaries written in Vietnamese, I could not find corresponding sources and had to figure them out by myself. Therefore, the Vietnamese equivalents used in my study might not be true counterparts of the English ones.

Hinkel (“Indirectness”) did not state whether she herself or multiple coders perform the counting of the occurrences of indirectness markers in the essays, and I undertook the task myself, which while providing native-speaker insights might reflect some subjectivity on my part.

VII. Chapter Overview

Since my project surveys three facets of indirectness in Vietnamese public argumentation, Chapter Two reviews how L₂ indirectness has been portrayed in existing literature; textually, ideationally, and interactionally. The chapter also presents how the

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⁸ Cho’s term, similar to Graham’s “correlative thinking” to describe Asian holistic perception of the world
disciplinary investigation into discoursal construction with text linguistics and discourse analysis has unfolded toward quantitative study designs with graphic representations of text structure and identification of indirectness markers, which provide the impetus for my project.

Chapter Three presents the study in the particular circumstances of Vietnam. The peculiar attribution of democracy to public argumentation resulted in non-traditional criteria for identification and selection of newspaper commentaries. Moreover, the Vietnamese syntax required specific definitions for the basic concepts as applied to the newspaper commentaries. The chapter also explicates how the statistical tests were supposed to reveal L₂ indirectness in newspaper commentaries written by Vietnamese.

Chapter Four discusses the tests results in reference to previous research and existing literature, with special consideration of Vietnamese cultural contexts. The representative status of the newspapers selected might be affected by the blurred boundary for the intended audience. More essentially, the unexpected variations of the newspaper commentaries’ textual as well as topical progressions resulted in some reconsideration of the indicative potential of some variables. Additionally, observations of matrices were supplementary to the test results for interpretations.

Chapter Five reviews how far the findings provided answers to the research questions, including the supplementary consultation of the matrices. It also factors in Vietnamese L₁ and L₂ composition instructional circumstances for EFL/ESL pedagogical implications, in general as well as specifically for EFL writing programs at Vietnamese colleges. The chapter also suggests considerations for further research.
CHAPTER TWO. CULTURAL PREFERENCE FOR INDIRECTNESS

While Chapter One projects the panorama of L1-L2 writing studies and situates Vietnamese prose in the East-Asian shared communicative conventions, Chapter Two zooms in on L2 indirectness with: (1) its three manifestations as revealed in the literature, and (2) analytical approaches to representations of textual organization. In particular, the discourse matrix is a potential means to uncover two of the three aspects of L2 implicitness (i.e.; theme development and inter-propositional linkage) whereas the third aspect (i.e.; interactional strategies) can be inspected with Hinkel’s indirectness markers (“Indirectness”).

I. L2 Indirectness / Indirection

While pragmatic studies prove that indirectness is universal, implicitness is part of cultural / social conventions and thus varies from culture to culture and from context to context (Yule 134). Consequently, this communicative strategy can be problematic for non-native writers who may violate Western expectations as described in Grice’s co-operative and relevance principles for effective communication because implicitness requires “communal, tacit knowledge” (Matalene 802) necessary for inferencing toward textual interpretability (Enkvist “Seven Problems”) or interactional coherence of discourse (Lautamatti “Coherence”). Similarly, the writing feature that, in the Western perspective, can negatively affect L2 textual coherence will next be discussed in three facets: (1) non-linear approach to the main topic (often referred to as indirection), (2) implicit sentential connection (designated as indirectness), and (3) interactional strategies for indirectness.

A. Indirection: Non-Linear Textual Progression

As Hinkel (SLWs’ Text) has pointed out, very early on and even before Halliday’s cohesion analysis was disseminated, Hinds (“Korean Discourse”; Aspects; “Retention”;
“Inductive”) persistently researched into what might account for “incoherence” in L2 writing by Koreans, Japanese, Chinese and Thai. In consistence with Kaplan’s preliminary discovery, Hinds asserted not only that the Oriental essay is developed with indirectly relevant details structured around the central theme but also that the thesis statement is delayed till the end of the Asian composition. Nonetheless, this theme-delay advancement might not be the inductive style as generally presumed by Western readers and compositionists. Hinds argued that this ideational progression with the delayed thesis is quasi-inductive, as it differs from the Western inductive approach where all the arguments directly work toward the text purpose at the end, also because this theme-delayed approach stimulates the reader to derive their own conclusions from the information provided rather than persuade or convince the audience of the arguments made (“Inductive”). This first facet, *indirection*, specifically indicates the digressive or non-linear progression with topics and subtopics circuitously structured around an implied central text purpose (Eggington 158; Kaplan, “Thought Patterns” 8; Tsao qtd. in Gregg 356) and is aptly depicted by Cho as a “mosaic” pattern of East Asian “correlative”9 thinking, in which all supporting details are “horizontally” relevant – all and at once – to the central topic. In other words, East Asian writers tend to see all the available supporting details of equal importance and thus include those that would be considered irrelevant in the Western perspective while they are unable to clearly and convincingly state the connections between such details and the theme.

From the communication view, Oliver postulates that discoursal and textual indirection is impacted by the value system of each particular culture in a process he calls “cultural orientation of communication” (1). Further, Hall explains that digressive composing patterns are shaped by “polychronic” cultures which perceive the multiple events of the world as occurring

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9 Graham’s term (1986)
simultaneously and thus of equal significance; whereas, the American “monochronic” culture contemplates things one after another hierarchically, hence the linear direct topic progression.

The diverse text structures, besides the inductive and circular discourse pattern, are articulated by native scholars, too. Ron Scollon and his Chinese-native spouse, Suzanne Wong Scollon, denounce the “east-west dichotomy” and contend that both the deductive and inductive textual organizations exist in Western as well as Asian discourse. Although they postulate that the organizational choice depends rather on the rhetorical context, they do not reject the underlying role of culture (95). Likewise, matrixing essays by renown Chinese figures (e.g.; Lu Xun, Mao Ze-dung), Jia Shan, one of the researchers contributing to Coe’s “grammar of passages,” found two paragraph structures: the western inductive and the “Oriental spiral” (54). In her impressive monograph about “rhetoric in ancient China,” Lu asserts that, although not a resemblance to Aristotelian argumentation, deductive reasoning was utilized as complimentary to the inductive method in ancient Chinese texts, like the following quote by Hughes: “Man can live well in society; we men of Lu State and its neighbors are men; therefore, we must be socially minded, i.e., man-to-man-ly (Jen)” (Rhetoric 32/106/120/193). She concludes the book with a reminder for students of rhetoric, “Like the Greek notion of rhetoric, Chinese rhetorical perspectives are not monolithic but rather diverse, evolutionary, and contextual in nature” (Rhetoric 289).

However, Asian social interactions with focal points in harmony and “face” seems to substantially actuate indirectness and non-linear progression of propositions. Regarding Vietnamese discourse, Trần N. T. postulates that “in communication, Vietnamese prefer tactfulness, thoughtfulness and harmony. This preference leads Vietnamese to communicate in
‘the Three-Warring-States approach,’ never directly introduce or approach a topic as Westerners do” (original emphases, 282), which is exactly one of the problems when Asian students try to write in Western styles.

Likewise, Oliver cites indirection in the form of “outflanking” as a very efficient refutation strategy by Gautama – Buddha’s family name – because this circular maneuvering, individually-oriented, never directly addresses the sensitive issue while sparing time for individual interpretation and acceptance (74). However, Woolever asserts that the roundabout approach to the topic can frustrate the audience or even disrupt communication, as “each audience has certain expectations of rhetorical structure based on the traditional forms of rhetoric in their culture” and “negotiating [the relationship of culture, language and rhetoric] across multiple cultures can wreak havoc” (49). Here emerges a remarkable disparity between Western writing, in which textual clarity is the writer’s responsibility, and non-western prose, which places such responsibility on the reader (Cho; Hinds “Reader”; Matalene; Ostler).

Not only can the audience feel abashed by an unaccustomed theme progression but they may also be disoriented by some seemingly dangling ideas in the text, as pondered in the next section.

B. Indirectness: Covert Inter-Propositional Connection

The second aspect of L₂ indirectness involves the text coherence as worked out by the reader’s interaction with the text, which requires information from both inside and outside the text. This is where the boundary between cohesion and coherence is blurred, resulting in the scholarly exchanges presented in the next section.

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10 the Three-Warring-States approach: a circuitous, repetitious approach of story-telling as used in the Chinese classic work The Three Warring States.
1. Intersentential Connections: “Cohesion is not Coherence”

Halliday and Hasan’s 1976 monograph on cohesion was the first to look beyond the sentence and systematically lay out intratextual (i.e.; within the text) linguistic “ties” across sentences, previously instinctively recognized only. Their “cohesion theory” was welcomed with great enthusiasm especially as a solution to ESL writing instruction (Carrell, “Cohesion” 486). Nevertheless, in these authors’ attempt to define “texture” (i.e.; the quality of “being a text” or coherence) as ultimately achieved by cohesion (7), an obvious confusion arises between cohesion (which links the propositions together as a “unity”) and coherence (which helps the reader/listener to make sense of such a sequence of propositions as a text). They acknowledge that cohesion can reside within as well as beyond the sentence precinct and such binding relationships can exist between elements inside as well as outside the text. Conversely, neglecting the “exophoric ties” (to items outside of the text) which operate in the interactants’ mental schemata to construct the thematic unity, these linguists maintain that only explicit sentence-level and intratextual “cohesive ties” constitute the “texture” of a sentence sequence. They even sound self-contradictory. On the one hand, they assert that cohesion “refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that defines it as a text” (4). On the other hand, they posit that cohesion “does not concern what a text means; it concerns how the text is constructed as a semantic edifice” when they seek to differentiate cohesion from register, which refers to the text’s appropriateness regarding “contexts of situation” (26).

The blurred boundary between these two co-existing factors for textuality (i.e.; cohesion and coherence) is acknowledged in Wales’s definitions: coherence is “semantic cohesion” and cohesion is “textual coherence” (qtd. in Diệp 60). Likewise, cohesion rather than coherence, endophoric rather than exophoric reference, is discussed in the works of two leading Vietnamese

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11 Carrell’s article title (1982)
linguists, Trần N. T. (Hệ thống Liên kết) and Diệp. Both were educated in Russia and are conspicuously influenced by Russian linguists and, recently, also by Halliday and Hasan.

Not surprisingly, the confusion of cohesion with coherence, diffusing throughout Halliday and Hasan’s book, as well as contemporary practitioners’ eager instructional applications of this cohesion theory has given rise to fervent discussions and verifying research. Citing theoretical analysis together with empirical studies, Carrell (“Cohesion”) fundamentally criticizes Halliday and Hasan for treating cohesive ties as cause instead of result of coherence and warns against unrealistic faith in cohesion analysis as an omnipotent solution to reading/writing disability. Although extremist-sounding, Carrell has good reasons to indicate that Halliday and Hasan reduce textuality to strictly linguistic relations visible in the written words because Halliday and Hasan remove cohesion/coherence from the rhetorical context and interaction (i.e.; exophoric reference).

Witte and Faigley analyze five high-scored and five low-scored freshman essays for cohesion-coherence inter-relation, employing Halliday and Hasan’s two categorizations of cohesive ties: according to functions and to “text-span.” In spite of the correlation between cohesion density and rating, Witte and Faigley find that the types (rather than the frequency) of cohesive ties used are indicative of coherence and writing quality. Not dismissing the significance of cohesion in “texture,” they prove that a sequence of sentences can be cohesive but not coherent and thus not a text. They strongly remind teachers to avoid “narrow emphasis on cohesion,” as “cohesion [only] defines those mechanisms that hold a text together, while coherence defines those underlying semantic relations that allow a text to be understood and used” (202).
In the next section, the missing component in Halliday and Hasan’s treatment of texture eventually comes into play in implicit relationships between propositions in L2 texts.

2. Implicit Ideational Transition Between Sentences

Actually, as Matalene points out—and supported by Tsao and Nguyễn T. G. as well as Đỗ—the connections between ideas presented in the East Asian text “are almost all left up to the reader” to work out from a “communal, tacit knowledge” (801-802). Additionally, while negating traces of the eight-legged essay\(^{12}\) in present-day Chinese composing, Liu acknowledges Chinese implicative composing style and explains that it suggests “sentences over, beneath, within or outside the sentences [on the page]” and thus is preferable to “the kind of overtess that leaves nothing subtextually” for the readers to explore and discover for themselves (330). This comment is shared by Suzuki’s claim that the Japanese “anticipate with pleasure the opportunities that such writing offers them to savor this kind of ‘mystification’ of language” (qtd. in Hinds, “Reader” 145) and is similarly affirmed by the international graduate students in Fox’s 1992 study.

Relating to research by de Beaugrande and Dressler (Introduction) as well as that by Brown and Yule, and Levinson, Enkvist explicates that this indirect sentential relationship or “metamessage” occurs when, for the economy of words and time, the writer skips the transitional middle proposition \(q\) (in the series of propositions of transitivity relationship: “if \(p\) then \(q\), if \(q\) then \(z\); therefore, if \(p\) then \(z\)” leaving \(q\) to be inferred by readers from their “shared world picture,” which significantly constitutes a text’s “cultural cohesion” (“Seven Problems” 17-18).

What makes the following excerpt coherent, he asks. “Life with Stephen, who as you know is nine, is just great. For Christmas he got a chainsaw from his godmother. I am wondering how much the new floor will cost me” (“Seven Problems” 17). Undoubtedly, a metamessage is

\(^{12}\) Refer to bagu, p. 25, for more information.
necessary to bridge the meaning between the first and the second, then between the second and the third sentences; and so much needed for the reader to recognize the implied irony in the phrase “just great,” Enkvist points out.

This revelation is advanced by Hinds (“Reader”) when he presents his new typology of “reader vs. writer responsibility” to validate the legitimacy of East Asian textual development and ideational relationships as comprehensibly deduced from the expected reader-writer shared world experience. For underpinning, Hinds cites Kaplan’s contention in 1966 that “good English writing is characterized by unity and coherence,” the responsibility for which – he explains – can be culturally assigned to either the creator or the recipient of a text, and communication can thus be disrupted when the author and his/her audience are from differing cultures, like the East and the West (“Reader” 146). That is, while the Western speaker/writer is held responsible for the explicit textual purpose in a hierarchically logical sequence of strictly relevant details, the Eastern rhetorical conventions have the listener/reader figure out the implicit cohesive and/or coherent clues with the assistance of the common cultural and temporal knowledge. Such explicit transitivity from one sentence to the next provides “propositional coherence,” which in turn contributes to “textual coherence” (van Dijk qtd. in Lautamatti, “Coherence” 31). Other than propositional coherence, according to Lautamatti, “interactional coherence” – functioning principally on shared background knowledge and situational clues – is abundant in richly-contextualized daily communications, both in the East and in the West, as shown in the following example by Widdowson (qtd. in “Coherence” 31):

A₁: That’s the telephone.

B: I’m in the bath.

A₂: O.K.
Evidently, Lautamatti analyzes (“Coherence” 36-7), A and B have recognized the tacit “discourse topic” – “who is going to answer the phone” – and communicated successfully in spite of their apparently-incoherent dialogue. The implicit/missing “transivity relationship” between A₁ and B, expressed by q (in Enkvist’s term), would be “Please answer it.” Similarly, the “interactional coherence” between B and A₂ is achieved by a covert request: “So I can’t answer it. Could you answer it for me, please?”

Alternately, Blum-Kulka expounds this communicative phenomenon with cultural conventions that contextualize social interactions and allow this type of indirect response. She further explicates that such conventional indirectness is normally received with appropriate interpretations on two levels: semantic and pragmatic, and this “duality of conventional indirectness renders its use both communicatively effective and interactionally safe” (68).

Interactional/interpersonal coherence can also equate to the pragmatic dimension in van Dijk’s model of discourse analysis developed in the late 1990s and refined from his text-grammar theories in the 1970s. Closely corresponding to Halliday and Hasan’s concept of major functions of language (26-27), his “context/ pragmatic model” posits that the global structure of discourse consists of (a) syntactic dimension (or “schematic superstructure of discourse” that deals with form/organization; i.e., corresponding to Halliday and Hasan’s textual coherence), (b) semantic dimension (i.e.; “its topics/ macrostructure;” that involves meaning in relation to the speaker(writer’s cultural and personal experience, and thus, Halliday and Hasan’s ideational coherence), and (c) pragmatic dimension (i.e.; “global speech act” rooted in the social interaction; in other words, Halliday and Hasan’s interpersonal coherence) (7-8).
Profuse instances can be found in Vietnamese speech in which “interactional/ pragmatic/ interpersonal” coherence is essential in meaning-making, even within a single utterance, as cited and explained by Đỗ (2003):

[In their poverty-stricken situation and in response to his wife request to get medication for the ailing children, the husband grumbles]

“‘OK, medication! Older kid, medication; younger kid, medication… Medication and medication, and beggars someday!’ (from Nam Cao’s Nước Mắt [Tears])

The implicature “Money will be all gone” could be reconstituted in the exchange as: “The older kid needs medication, and the younger kid needs medication, too, while medication is outrageously expensive. So much medication will guzzle all our money; without money and without jobs, we’ll all turn beggars someday.” (394)

More crucially, the sophisticated communication of our post-modern world reveals significant divergence between the oral and written forms of language. While individual words, phrases or sentences can be communicative in the spoken language richly supported by contexts (Ong), the meaning of written discourse – so often removed from specific real-life situations and an authentic audience – requires far more complex linguistic and rhetoric capacities (Swales) and depends largely on textual coherence (Ong; Lautamatti “Coherence”), which can be broken when some information/transition is not explicitly presented in the text, and supposed to be interpreted by “inferencing” instead (Enkvist, “Seven Problems” 18). According to Lautamatti, with “cognitive frames” (i.e.; schemata), “the human mind stores information relating to different objects, events, etc., in a hierarchical, and thus maximally economical, way” (“Coherence” 31); and a written text’s ideational coherence largely relies on the audience’s juxtaposition of the
appropriate “cognitive frames” – in common with the writer’s – to the ones explicitly presented in the text (“Coherence” 36). Implicit inter-sentential connection (or interactional/pragmatic coherence) can thus work smoothly only in transactions between communicators from the same or similar culture(s); conversely, this inferencing/ juxtaposing process is precarious and can refract or terminate communication because, not sharing the same cultural background knowledge from which to retrieve a matching “cognitive frame” for meaning-making, an international audience can thus become not only confused but also frustrated as, Enkvist explains further, “the text remains incoherent unless [the text interpreter can] fill in the missing middle propositions” (“Seven Problems” 18).

Besides the tacit shared world experience, partners must possess the ability to recognize and appropriately interpret markers of indirectness, as presented next, for communication not to go awry.

**C. Indirectness: Implicative Strategies**

Although Western writing is expected to be clear and to the point, appropriate use of implicative strategies is part of writing competence (Channel 3). Indeed, when manipulating language to suit the rhetorical situation, speakers / writers sometimes need to be vague, even in academic contexts. A proposition can be indirectly presented through such indirectness devices as hedges, exaggeration, approximations or vague quantifiers and co-ordinations (Channel); or in the form of requests, suggestions or rhetorical questions, hints, analogies, or innuendoes (Oliver 98). Implicit discourse as such removes the listener/reader’s social self-image from being undermined (Channel; Rymes) and thus shows the speaker/writer’s good intention as well as co-operation, which in turn will promote social harmony or solidarity (Félix-Brasdefer; Fukuda; Garner; Tannen; Trần N. T.; Wu and Rubin). Moreover, indirectness in the form of strategic
vagueness can safeguard the speaker/writer from the responsibility for information accuracy or shield the message recipient from the shock of direct expressions, which will then save both interlocutors from potential conflicts. This communication code stems from a “strictly hierarchical” society where every individual is “firmly embedded” in an intricate network of relations with kin and friends/neighbors/colleagues (Young 9) and which consequently demands the individual to respect the social echelon and strive for group or social harmony/benefit, even through self-effacement (Hall 96-99; Nguyễn T. G., Dụng Hoc 103-104).

Similarly, Trần N. T. – an influential figure in Vietnamese culture – discusses the tactful indirectness in Vietnamese communicative practices:

Tactful and thoughtful communication is a product of a way of life that promotes harmony and a thinking that highly values human relations. It induces the practices of careful consideration and prudent speech. (282)

Differently put, indirectness in language use is employed in communication especially in Asian cultures like Vietnamese, fundamentally influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (Hinkel, “Indirectness” 361), when the speaker/writer is concerned with the issue of “face.” Central to socialization in these cultures is this concept of “the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for [her/himself]” from how the other people see of her/his social activities and interactions as well as “the reciprocated compliance, respect, and/or deference that each [interacting] party expects from, and extends to the other party” (Ho 883).

Ho also recognizes that the concept of “face” is “universal” though it varies from culture to culture (881-882). Later, Brown and Levinson develope the politeness theory with three components: face, face-threatening acts, and politeness strategies.
Not only in speech acts, Scollon and Scollon verify the role of politeness in Chinese written communication (99-102). Further, Brooks as well as Davis note that “indirect expressive modes” such as rhetorical questions or analogy are used with great frequency in Chinese composing (qtd. in Gregg 356). Likewise, Hinkel’s 1997 study supports findings by Cherry, Myers (“Pragmatics”), and Swales (Genre Analysis) that indirectness devices “associated with spoken discourse are also employed in [both L₁ and L₂] academic prose” (382). In her project, “based on [indirectness devices] identified in earlier research” (Biber; Biber and Finegan; Brown and Levinson; Quirk et al. Comprehensive Grammar; Swales Genre Analysis), she classifies twenty-one indirectness markers into three categories, which are described in detail in Chapter Three.

Nevertheless, as Channel has also postulated, “strategic vagueness”¹³ in Anglo-American academic writing should be employed with prudence; hence, inappropriate use of this type of language might rupture communication or, worse, might create an unfavorable impression on a Western reader (21). For instance, a Western instructor might wonder about the truth value of propositions like this one, “In life everyone has ambition,” in a Vietnamese EFL essay.

Concisely, Asian composition may fail to convey its intended meaning to a Western audience, as cultural indirectness may negatively affect its interpersonal and ideational coherence whereas indirection can tarnish its textual coherence.

II. Discourse Matrix for Discourse Analysis

Scholars’ endeavors to understand written texts have resulted in discourse analysis (initially chiefly for speech) and text linguistics (initially chiefly for writing), which gradually merged into one. For analyzing written discourse, a trend in graphic representation of text organization led to the discourse matrix, which was utilized in my study.

¹³ Myers’s term (1986)
A. Discourse Analysis in Composition

As Connor has noted, besides small-scale studies by individual compositionists, discourse analysis engaged three large-scale research programs reaching out beyond the boundary of a single nation: (1) the longitudinal Study of Written Composition as part of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), (2) the Scandinavian NORDWRITE project (part of NORDTEXT), and (3) systemic applied linguistic research (“Discourse Analysis” 165-171).

The 1983-1988 IEA writing investigation was conducted simultaneously in 14 countries from all continents for, among its multiple goals, speculation of L2 writing disparities and patterns regarding cultures, curricula and pedagogies. IEA findings posted at their website strongly support Kaplan’s 1966 hypothetical explication of the foreignness in L2 writing: (1) composing is culture-based, ideology-shaped and task-oriented, (2) underlying the instructors’ consensus on content management and style appropriateness are differing national and local rhetorical preferences, (3) students’ perceptions of composing essentials similarly diverge beneath their unanimous focus on explicit writing mechanism and the final product, and (4) writing performance as indicated by essay scorings are more influenced by students’ home environments than formal instructions.

The three-year NORDWRITE project in four Nordic countries performed discourse-level analyses of high school and college ESL/EFL writing centralizing on both textual cohesion and coherence. Stemming from the results of this Nordic study are Evensen’s 1986 volume and instrumental articles on coherence such as Enkvist’s, Wikborg’s and especially Lautamatti’s on topical structure analysis. These works supplemented Christensen’s grammar of the paragraph and generated theories as well as studies on theme development in the paragraph as well as in the
entire essay (For more information, see the next section, B. Text Grammars & Graphic Representations).

The systemic-linguistic-based works, according to Connor (“Discourse Analysis” 166-167), found that: (1) logical textual advancement must go hand in hand with relevant “contextual semantics” for expected interpretation of text (Couture), (2) good academic essays contain genre-specific features (Martin and Rothery), and (3) topic-comment arrangements vary with disciplines (Lovejoy).

Apart from the scopic projects above, text-based studies have focal points in cohesion, coherence and super-structure, Connor synthesizes (“Discourse Analysis” 167-171). Starting with Halliday and Hasan’s cohesive devices, L1 empirical research disclosed cohesion-coherence correlation in college writing (Witte and Faigley) but not in high school composition (Tierney and Mosenthal). Meanwhile, L2 in contrastive studies indicated (1) no ties between cohesion and coherence (Carrell, “Cohesion”), (2) less variety though no difference in frequencies of cohesive markers (Connor, “A Study”), (3) cultural and thematic impacts (Leimkuhler), and (4) non-native difficulty with certain cohesive devices (Johns).

B. Text Grammars & Graphic Representations

One of the directions of development in discourse analysis to uncover the text’s organizational structure as well as ideational relationships is to visually represent them in drawings that finalize in the discourse matrix. Benefiting from the predecessor “discourse bloc” with its purpose to portray the paragraph/text’s rhetorical operational structure as semantic relationships between propositions, the discourse matrix has proved to be a more efficient tool for writing researchers or instructors as it is simple enough to learn to use while sophisticated enough to show the intricate propositional connections. As such, the matrix can help explore two
aspects of indirectness (i.e.; indirect ideational development and implicit links between topics / subtopics), for it can reveal how the text purpose is advanced and whether the details are overtly relevant, implicitly connected or even irrelevant to the central theme.

1. Foundational Concepts & Graphic Representations

Continuing the Prague school’s theme-rheme connections in the paragraph, Lautamattti’s analysis of simplified texts result in five types of sentence and three types of topical progressions in the coherent text. In a sentence, the grammatical subject of the main clause is the mood subject, and the topical subject refers to a topic/subtopic. That is, a sentence may have two distinct subjects: mood subject and topical subject; or only one when the grammatical subject also introduces a topic. Sentences are thus grouped into five categories according to the [non]coincidence of the two subjects in the initial sentence position: Type 1 (only one subject in initial position), Type 2 (only one subject but not in initial position), Type 3 (mood subject in initial position but separate from topical subject), Type 4 (topical subject in initial position but distinct from mood subject), and Type 5 (neither mood subject nor topical subject in initial position). In her study, the mood subject can be topical or non-topical or even a dummy subject (i.e.; IT / THERE); the topical subject can then be in a subordinate clause preceding or following the main clause; modality markers or discourse connectives occupy the initial position if neither subject is there.

More importantly, she has discovered three types of topical progression. In the parallel progression, the topical subject (i.e.; theme / given information) remains the same in all the sentences of the sequence. The sequential progression has the rheme of a sentence as the new theme in the next. The sequential progression can sometimes interrupt the parallel progression and make the extended parallel progression. This third type is found most commonly in high-
rated essays because when the topical subject is changed in successive sentences, new subtopics are introduced and topical depths are created in text development. Above all, regarding the topical depth, the topic in the first sentence of the paragraph is generally of the highest level and dominance (See Appendix 1).

Witte (“Topical Structure”) discusses that “discourse topic” (comparable to František Daneš’s “hypertheme”) should, on the one hand, govern the sentence topics and, on the other hand, relate to the audience’s comprehension of that theme, which may not solely derive from the text itself. However, Lautamatti advocates that the topical progression can facilitate the reader’s comprehension (qtd. in Witte 320). Witte’s application of Lautamatti’s work in his study of student revision finds that (1) topical progression analysis clearly searches for “textual cues” and thus bares incoherence/ misconnection/ irrelevance, if any, for revision; and (2) management of topical progressions in revising corresponds with clarity and topical depth. The caveats, he warns, are that (1) unskilled management of topical progression and topical depth can affect the focus of the discoursal topic, (2) propositions in student writing are shorter and less complicated than those in expert composing, and (3) the most commonly-used type of sentence in student writing accordingly has the topical subject as the mood subject and in the sentence frontal position. That is, syntactic simplicity also reduces semantic content.

Concomitantly, with the paragraph as the instructional focal point till the mid-1980s, studies of textual coherence, concentrating on the rhetorical construction of discourse (specifically the paragraph) with conspicuous emphasis on reader-text interaction and pedagogical applications, seem to be inspired by Christensen’s initiatives and continue “the Christensen tradition” (Coe 12).
In 1962, noting that most student writing was “thin” or even “threadbare” (i.e.; underdeveloped) and sharing ideas with Kaplan and Winterowd, Christensen attempted to move from Chomsky’s context-devoid mechanical structural grammar toward a rhetoric-based lively grammar that helps learners to build “generative” sentences in communicating a theme. He proposed four principles for the sentence that “generate ideas,” which he claimed to be applicable to the paragraph as well (156-160). First, “composing is essentially a process of addition,” represented by the “cumulative sentence” with modifications added to the nouns, verbs, or main clause. Second, the cumulative sentence is “dynamic” with the fluidity of modifications shifting back to be placed in front of or forward to after the modified base. Third, crucial are different “layers of structure” accumulated with modifications moving up and down the scale of “levels of generality/abstraction” – higher for more generality and lower for more specificity. Finally, such additions build up the desirable, varying density of the sentence “texture.” In essence, Christensen, who obviously favors the simple and compound sentences over the complex one (161), advocates that what gives life to the sentence is not the addition itself (as taught in structural grammar) but its “layers of structure” which are made up of information on different levels of generality and thus create ideational richness as well as rhetorical effects.

Foundational for later attempts at portraying the semantic relationships between propositions within a paragraph (or in discourse) is his introduction of the graphic representation of different “layers of structure” (i.e.; levels of generality) in a sentence. Christensen used one further indentation as well as increase the number for each lower level of generality (i.e.; the lower the level, the higher number and the further left), as illustrated below in his examples with
sentences by famous writers (“Sentence” 158). There may be four levels of generality in a short sentence and all modifiers follow the base, as in Example 1.

Example 1

1 He shook his hands,
   2 a quick shake, (NC)
   3 fingers down, (Abs)
   4 like a pianist. (PP) –Sinclair Lewis

Meanwhile, the information in a long sentence may be on only three levels, as in Example 2, because all the modifiers on level 2 refer to the subject “they” in the level-one base information and only one phrase is on level 3 modifying “faces” (in the preceding level-two phrase). Note that the modifiers are distributed both before and after the base, illustrating Christensen’s assertion about the fluidity of modifiers.

Example 2

2 Calico-coated, (AC)
2 small bodied, (AC)
2 with delicate legs and pink faces (PP)
   3 in which their mismatched eyes rolled wild and subdued, (RC)

1 they huddled,
   2 gaudy motionless and alert, (AC)
   2 wild as deer, (AC)
   2 deadly as rattlesnakes, (AC)
   2 quiet as doves. (AC) –William Faulkner
Modifiers can also be parenthetical and inserted in the middle of the modified clauses, as in Example 3.

**Example 3**

1. *The bird’s eyes, / , remained fixed upon him;*

2. *bright and silly as a sequin (AC)*

1. *its little bones, / , seemed swooning in his hand. –Stella Benson*

2. *wrapped … in a warm padding of feathers (VC)*

Christensen added the abbreviations in parentheses in the analysis above to indicate the “grammatical characters” of the additions: NC, noun cluster; AC, adjective cluster; VC, verb cluster; RC, relative clause; Abs, absolute phrase [i.e.; phrase with its own subject]; PP, prepositional phrase. Since decisions on levels of generality rely on semantic relationships between the modifier and the modified, it is complimentary to teach/learn “diction –abstract-concrete, general-specific, literal-metaphorical, denotative-connotative;” and that is how grammar and writing come into a bilateral bond (Christensen, “Sentence” 159).

Furthering his above-mentioned claim that “composition is a process of *addition*” (“Sentence” 156, original emphasis), Christensen argues that, since the “addition” is meant for the depth of the text, it should provide the topics as well as subtopics with more specific insight which very often narrows down the range of the base sentence (i.e.; topic/ subtopic). The new specific information is thus subordinate to this preceding sentence and “at a lower level of generality.” Although he also recognizes the possibility of more generality in “an added sentence” (i.e.; super-ordinate modifier), Christensen adds only one more level: co-ordination – when the new sentence presents another detail instead of elaborating on the previous one (hence on the same level). More significantly, he challenges the traditional conception when he
contends that the paragraph, similarly to the “cumulative” sentence, should be “a logical entity” which is constructed by “a sequence of structurally related sentences,” not merely an indented bloc of sentences. He also observes that the topic sentence is “nearly always the first sentence of the sequence” and on the top level. The only exception is a paragraph without a topic sentence because the topic can be inferred from or illogically retained as part of the previous paragraph.

Basing upon his observations above, analyzing the paragraph structure is quite simple. The paragraph topic is almost always the first sentence. Then, the sentential relationships can be inferred from scanning two consecutive sentences for “likeness” (i.e.; a form of repetition) which indicates co-ordination; otherwise, it is a subordinate connection. The generativeness of his model is that students can be taught to anticipate the audience’s needs as well as responses and to use “subordinate sentences” for explanation or more depth/specificity but “coordinate sentences” for emphasis or listing (156). Reality, however, has proved that this view of propositional relationships is rather simplistic but it initiated healthy debates with disciplinary interests transcending the sentence boundary.

Further, Christensen initiates the visual presentation of the different levels of generality by indenting as well as numbering the sentences: the greater the number (i.e.; lower level), the farther right the indentation. Additionally, he notes that paragraphing is, for published authors, not solely to signal the completion of an ideational entity and, in examples of such “illogical paragraphing,” he utilizes the paragraph symbol ¶ to mark an indentation for a new paragraph that ideationally still belongs to the logical sequence. Christensen died young and Pitkin, his student, continued his work. In fact, Christensen lays out a solid conceptual foundation inspiring later improvements.
In 1965, as a result of his long collaboration with Pike and Young and the inspiration from Christensen’s generality theory, Becker worked out “a tagmemic approach” to analysis of the expository paragraph, which holds that “meaning cannot be separated from form or form from meaning without serious distortion” (237). Rhetorically, this analytical method finds two recurring patterns in the expository paragraph. First, the TRI pattern consists of three slots: the statement of the topic (T), whose scope is then restricted with a “metaphoric restatement” or a definition (R) and whose support comes as depicting details or illustrative examples (I). The other pattern engages only two slots: a problem or phenomenon (P) and one or more solutions/explanations (S). Becker acknowledges, however, that there may be “variations of these patterns” resulting from one or more of the “four kinds of operations: deletion, reordering, addition, and combination” (240). Since the emerging need was more for rhetoric than linguistics, the structural features Becker advocates did not win corresponding interest of contemporary scholars although the slot-pattern description of the paragraph structure was later adapted into TBER (standing for Topic-Bridge-Examples-Restatement)\textsuperscript{14} for teaching EFL composition.

The point Christensen makes about the level of more generality is picked up and elaborated by Karrfalt as “completion,” a level subsuming all the “foregoing” sentences in the unit (which is later named super-ordination). He metaphorically refers to the now three levels as one “horizontal dimension” (i.e.; co-ordination) and “two vertical dimensions” (i.e.; subordination & super-ordination) of the paragraph (211). A remarkable improvement is that Karrfalt diagrams the entire text by indenting the paragraphs, each in a box, to depict the relations between them in terms of generality. Also notably, the numbers are now to mark the order of occurrence of the sentences in the paragraph rather than a surplus representation of

\textsuperscript{14} Refer to Can Tho University’s webpage for paragraph writing practice.
levels of generality. The logical connection between consecutive propositions is further indicated by their being in the same box, smaller than and included in the large box for the entire paragraph. However, still containing the actual words of the analyzed text, his diagram does not enjoy a warm welcome, as it is inconvenient and, in case of long texts, may look complicated with smaller boxes within larger ones.

Contending that Christensen’s model did not “comprehend all paragraphs,” Rodgers proposed “a discourse-centered rhetoric of the paragraph” which was realized in a “stadium of discourse” (“Stadium” 184). The discourse stadium is composed of “a single topic, together with any accrete extensions or adjunctive support [that specify, explain, elaborate so that the reader can understand and approve of the argument]” (“Stadium” 184). The paragraph topic is at the highest level of generality, and the supporting details should move downward to more specificity. More than one, just one, or just part of a stadium of discourse can constitute the physical paragraph (“Stadium” 184), as indentation might result from “second influences” (e.g.; length constraint, rhetorical effect, variety, rhythm), because “[p]aragraphs are not composed; they are discovered [by the writer and meant to be interpreted by the reader]” (“Discourse-Centered” 5-6). Rodgers’ concept of a “flexible, open-ended” paragraph structure based on the stadium of discourse is the most acclaimed (Coe; d’Angelo; Eden and Mitchell; Nold and Davis; Stern) and corresponds with Coe’s “idea string” (34).

2. The Discourse Bloc

In 1969, benefiting from the contemporary disciplinary conversations (Becker; Harris; Karrfalt; Pike) and especially corroborating Rodgers’ stadium of discourse as well as continuing Christensen’s ideas, Pitkin proposed the discourse bloc. In comparison, “[a]ll ‘stadia of discourse’ are discourse blocs, but the reverse doesn’t hold” because a discourse bloc can
subsume more than one stadium of discourse ("Discourse Blocs" 138). Just as Christensen found the visual paragraph unreliable, Pitkin disapproved of both the traditional sentence and paragraph. He also contended that the discourse unit need not always be the sentence as in Christensen approach but, with “a discrete function in the discourse,” it can be a sentence or only part of a sentence ("Discourse Blocs" 142). As “a revision,” he postulated that “[c]onnected discourse is a hierarchy of discourse blocs [not sentences and paragraphs]” ("Discourse Blocs" 139/142). He emphasized that the discourse hierarchy in Christensen’s as well as his model is functional rather than semantic. As implied in the term “hierarchy” which refers to “levels of functional inclusiveness” ("Hierarchies" 649), a discourse bloc – not a paragraph – can comprise of such minimal functional units or “lesser” blocs for a more encompassing rhetorical function. Moreover, he criticized the ranges of Christensen’s two levels of generality: co-ordination being too narrow while subordination too embracing. Co-ordination, he stipulated, should include the two “horizontal relations”: (a) “simple co-ordination,” where two co-ordinate discourse units are subsumed under a common “super-ordinate” unit, and (b) “complementation,” where no super-ordination is involved. Vertically, Pitkin advocated, subordination – the relation between two units on two different levels – should refer to not only lower levels but also higher level (i.e.; super-ordination) than the preceding one. For marking these relations in the diagram, he borrowed from prosody the symbols: ´ (for higher level) and ´ (for a lower level); thus superordination [¨ ], subordination [´ ], co-ordination [¨ ], and complementation [´¨ ]. In his diagram, in spite of their names, the lines do not represent the two relational dimensions. Actually, vertical lines separate the individual minimal units, while horizontal lines indicate bloc boundaries as well as levels of generality – “the higher the line the more inclusive the function of those blocs” ("Discourse Blocs" 144). Additionally, he asserts that “[a]t any given level of the
hierarchy there will be only two blocks [in the graphic representation]” (“Discourse Blocs” 142). At the base of the diagram are paragraph signals: horizontal braces marked with roman numbers. He even re-analyzes one of Christensen’s examples [See Appendix 2].

This diagrammatic representation serves well its intended purpose: “a method of investigating the discourse of professionals” (148) since “there are no structural gaps in what we recognize as well-formed discourse” (141); whereas, it may not be applicable for student self-analysis and revision because novice ESL/EFL writers may produce quite confusing writing with gaps or irrelevant units/blocs which this diagramming cannot efficiently portray.

Then Grady made an attempt to apply Christensen’s generative rhetoric of the paragraph to the entire composition as an Introductory Sequence: beginning with the introductory paragraph (or topic paragraph) followed by subsequent supporting paragraphs, each one (or two, if necessary) elaborating one major subtopic. Therefore, the semantic relationships between the paragraphs can similarly be on three levels of generality (coordination, subordination, or superordination). Since this is a closely connected sequence, a change anywhere in the sequence will entail a change in the introductory paragraph, too. The Concluding Sequence, varying according to the overall length of the composition –between one sentence to a few paragraphs, should then bring the composition to a solid end.

Slightly distinct from Grady, D’Angelo narrows the focal point from the introductory paragraph down to its topic sentence, called the “lead sentence,” from which the essay progresses. His view of the rhetorical paragraph is in consensus with Rodgers’s discovery and Pitkin’s discourse bloc, possibly embracing more than one physical paragraph. But significant is his clearer explanation of how to determine the semantic relationship between paragraphs: as subordinate (if “giv[ing] an example, a reason, a statistic, a fact, or a detail”), or coordinate (in
case of repetition, or enumeration). D’Angelo’s graphic representation is basically the same as Christensen, with the only addition of the paragraph number centering on the page, announcing the paragraph.

Actually, continuing his idea exchanges as well as the collaborative effort with Christensen, in 1972 Kaplan revised Christensen’s diagram for the discourse bloc analysis, which is much simpler than Pitkin’s complicated graphic representation. He retains that a text comprises of (supposedly semantically- and structurally-interrelated) chunks of information called discourse blocs, each of which is in turn constituted by “closely related” propositions or discourse units. A discourse unit can be “a phrase, a clause, a sentence or a cluster of several sentences” (“Contrastive Rhetoric”). The discourse bloc is comparable to the stadium of discourse, which may or may not correspond with a physical paragraph. Kaplan further explicates that a discourse bloc analysis resembles an outline, as it utilizes indentations to represent different levels of generality but the numbering now contain Roman numbers for the discourse units (expressing subtopics), then come upper-case letters before small numbers and lower-case letters (See Appendix 3). The discourse bloc recognizes the old-new topical progression with a rightward movement. Alternately, the leftward movement accounts for parallel, segmental, non-consecutive or irrelevant propositions. The topical depth can then be inferred from the rightward curve within each discourse bloc, created by the indentations of the propositions.

From her experience with the discourse bloc in her corpus analysis of 160 English student essays by four groups of native-speakers (English, Spanish, Japanese, and Arabic), Ostler posits that a “more revealing method” than the discourse bloc, one that “account[s] for three dimensions [of discourse: length, depth, and breadth; …] is needed” (“A Study” 247). And the
response seems to be the method that Nold and Davis put together their efforts to realize: the discourse matrix.

3. The Discourse Matrix

Nold and Davis (1980) adopted Hunt’s T-unit as the discourse unit and developed the discourse matrix, a “three-dimensional structure of interconnected T-units” based on the “notion of level of generality” of Christensen’s generative rhetoric. They advocated that immediately consecutive T-units are semantically related on three levels of generality: co-ordination (i.e.; horizontal), subordination (i.e.; vertical), and super-ordination (i.e.; up and forward to another “plane” / topic). These three relationships form a cubic framework, hence the name “matrix.” In discourse matrixing, the propositions –Hunt’s T-units (i.e.; independent clauses together with all the modifying phrases/clauses)– are first identified and numbered in the sequential order of occurrence in the text, then drawings are made to describe the semantic relationships (namely; co-ordination, subordination and super-ordination) between the propositions, which are represented by their circled numbers. All the subsequent propositions are to the right of their precedents. “Level of generality is indicated on the drawing by the relative positions [i.e.; higher/lower/on par] of the circles” (Coe 108).

Nold and Davis also introduced the concepts of node pairs and node strings. A superordinate T-unit and the one immediately to its right (but not necessarily consecutive) on the same level of generality form a node pair; and the more T-units come between the two nodes, the more difficult it is for both the writer and the reader to produce and process the coming information in relation to the information communicated within the node pair. A chain of nodes (excluding those expressing restatements) on the same level of generality make a node string, and the “primary node string” – the node string at the very top level of the paragraph – tends to
represent the subtopics that develop/support the paragraph topic (Nold and Davis, 152). While this new graphic description is simpler than the discourse bloc and more potential in student self-revision, the drawing is quite complicated as are the technical terms and concepts (e.g.; “flow vectors,” “spheres,” “planes,” or the constraints on the directions of flow vectors’ movements).

Significantly helpful to EFL learners, Coe’s modified version of Nold and Davis’s original model is much simpler with only two dimensions (i.e.; horizontal and vertical) [See Appendix 4]. He detailed what semantic relations are categorized as co-ordinate, subordinate, or super-ordinate (32). Slightly different from Nold and Davis, Coe argued that a proposition (or T-unit) has a semantic relationship with one or more others preceding or following it. The logical relationships are then indicated by lines which link each circled number (i.e.; proposition) to one or more others on the same or higher/lower levels of generality into a supposedly continuous string. Each paragraph beginning is marked by the sign ¶. Designed as such, the revised discourse matrix can represent both the semantic and functional hierarchies, as discussed by Pitkin (“Hierarchies” 649).

In addition to Nold and Davis’s node string, Coe introduced the idea string, parallel to Rodgers’ stadium of discourse, which encompasses a set of propositions “either subordinate or co-ordinate to the immediately preceding [one … and] tends to begin before or after any rise in the level of generality” (original emphasis, 34). Most practical to my study of indirectness, he accounts for an instance of irrelevancy/ incoherence with an isolated circled number (See Appendix 4).

Comparatively, both the discourse bloc and the discourse matrix representations have advantages and disadvantages. While the discourse bloc analysis can display the depths of topical developments, there is no indication of relations between non-consecutive units or
irrelevant propositions. On the other hand, in the discourse matrix more basic concepts must be learned, but the visually simpler representing graphics of the matrix is obviously easier for the EFL/ESL instructors and students to learn to use. More significantly, the connecting lines in the matrix can display the complicated logical relations; that is, relations between conjoining or even non-consecutive units. With such logical linking, the discourse matrix can also indicate indirect propositional connections and irrelevancy.

III. Research into Indirectness/Indirection in L₂ Composing

Two corpus-analytical studies investigated two different aspects of L₂ indirectness: markers of strategic vagueness and indirect textual progression, utilizing two different methods of data collection (i.e.; identifying lexical items marking indirectness strategies, and matrixing the propositional semantic relationships).

A. Investigation of L₂ Strategic Vagueness

Accordingly, in 1997 Hinkel conducted a large survey of indirectness in 150 student TWE\(^{15}\)-simulated and major-oriented placement essays in the mode of argument/ exposition by 30 native speakers and 120 non-native speakers “raised in Confucian, Taoist and Buddhist societies” (namely; Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indonesian), based on twenty-one “specific features and markers associated with indirectness in Anglo-American academic writing” which were grouped in three major categories: Rhetorical Strategies & Markers, Lexical & Referential Markers, and Syntactic Markers & Structures. These will be presented together with the Vietnamese equivalents for my study in Chapter Three. From this research, Hinkel found that indirectness devices used in speech also exist in writing and L₂ inappropriate utilizations of these strategies may indicate a lack of instruction in academic style and tone.

\(^{15}\) TWE: Test of Written English
To investigate into indirectness in written language, as has been mentioned in Chapter One, the graphic depiction of text, benefiting from the advantages of both text linguistics (or text grammars) and discourse analysis, is adopted for my project because of its advantageous visuality (especially in view of verbal language difficulty) and thus potential instructional application in EFL contexts.

B. Exploring Editorials for L₂ Textual & Interactional Coherence

In 1986, Sun-I Chen “examined paragraph structure in Chinese and English” argumentation as represented in editorials, which “employ highly acceptable mode of communication in the society” and thus comparable to academic writing (23). She selected editorials written in L₁ Chinese as well as in L₁ and L₂ English on domestic economy from eight daily newspapers “with the greatest circulation” (23) and employed the discourse matrix for data generation. Statistical tests (t-test, two-way multivariate analysis, and correlation test) were then run for data analyses.

The findings brought out conspicuous disparity between Chinese and L₁ English texts while L₂ English ones seemed to be a combination of Chinese and Western organizational patterns. Furthermore, regarding textual progression in Chinese editorials, the matrices revealed rambling and insufficient support. Differently put, when writing in Chinese, the writers tend to “[develop more] subtopics rather than […] subordinate details under a generalization,” which “evinces the emphasis of parallelism, or Kaplan’s contention or ‘spiral’ development in Oriental writing” (Chen 40). In addition, the highest level of generality in the matrix (i.e.; the major theme) was mostly in the middle or the end of the paragraph / text.

As demonstrated in Chen’s study, the discourse matrix can help disclose the topic progression in the paragraph / text, especially the (under)development of ideas in a paragraph
(i.e.; topical depth). For my project, the discourse matrix was also utilized to exhibit irrelevancy and implicitness of details regarding textuality (i.e.; coherence).

Both Hinkel’s and Chen’s studies have inspired as well as provided research models for my project to investigate the three features of indirectness in Vietnamese persuasive writing as embodied in newspaper commentaries. These texts were selected for the study also because Vietnamese college courses have found that newspaper articles can provide “not only the language in pragmatic uses but also the knowledge about the Vietnamese politics, society, economy, and culture” (“Tiếng Việt qua Báo Chí”).

Chapter Two presents how discourse analysis evolved into graphic representations of texts and how L2 indirectness is identified and portrayed in pragmatics and contrastive rhetoric. Chapter Three will showcase how my study was designed to investigate indirectness in Vietnamese newspaper commentaries, provide more insight into the subjects of the study as well as the variables employed in the statistical tests and analyses, and describe the survey process.
CHAPTER THREE. THE STUDY

Chapter Two presented L2 indirectness as detected in the existing literature in three aspects (i.e.; textual, ideational, and interactional) and the discourse analytical approaches (i.e.; matrixing and corpus analysis) for investigation into this rhetorical feature. Chapter Three analyzes the potential of newspaper commentaries to help us understand indirectness in public persuasive writing.

It should also be mentioned here that, in order to survey the three indirectness aspects in the texts created by Vietnamese, the study was in two distinct parts: discourse matrixing and indirectness marking. A reader-based method for exploring textual progression and interpropositional relationships, the discourse matrixing involves two activities probably still unfamiliar to many composition and language instructors: (1) identifying the unit for discourse analysis (i.e.; the T-unit) that serves as a measurement of “maturity in writing” embedded in each of the “complete thoughts” (Hunt 300) recognized by the reader, and (2) drawing the discourse matrix that depicts semantic relationships among the propositions in a text, as interpreted by the matrixing audience. The discourse matrix can reveal how the writer organizes the text to advance the theme. On the other hand, the task of indirectness marking explored for the strategies to imply politeness, consolidarity, modesty or prudence in formal texts.

The peculiar situation in Vietnam presenting commentaries not in every newspaper nor under the same category name led to some special considerations in the selection of texts for the study.

I. Selection of Newspaper Commentaries

Since the editorial column did not appear on every Vietnamese newspaper in print, a brief survey was made of the newspapers and magazines (in the Vietnamese language) on display at
An Giang University library. The result suggested a tendency apparently to attract more readership, considering the general assumption about tedious and dogmatic newspaper commentaries, by excluding this mass-media form of persuasion altogether or by putting it under a more reader-friendly disguise. Statistically, newspaper commentaries were not included in a third (33.33%) of newspapers or magazines. Further, not all the retained commentaries (traditionally Xã Luận in Vietnamese) were explicitly categorized as such; rather, the majority appeared not only in sections variously entitled (the closest connotations being Binh Luận [Commentary] 11.42%; Thời Luận [Comment on Current Issues] 9.52%; or Thời Sự & Suy Nghĩ [Current Issues and Thoughts] 7.14%) but also on different pages – not necessarily the front page as before. However, all the English online newspapers, including those supplementary to print editions, were more straightforward in classifying their persuasive articles, even under the customary name “Editorial.”

In an email response to my question about this phenomenon, Phùng Hoài Ngọc, a university lecturer in the Vietnamese Department, postulated that the various titles assigned to the editorial column and the appearance of the authors’ names also purported to demonstrate part of the freedom of press: freedom to name the column and freedom to express individual opinions. Since the editorial column was so variously named, I followed his suggestion that a potential editorial/commentary should be identified if the theme is “about the latest news or some important issues of the day, the week, or the present time” in addition to the visual criterion of being highlighted in a boldfaced frame on the print edition.

This general tendency of the newspapers to put their commentaries in disguise led to an encompassing selection criterion for this study: arguing for a position about or solution to a current issue. Specifically, newspaper commentaries were found in the column “Chào Buổi

Since all of the newspapers seemed to focus on one or two areas of interests (e.g; corruption, WTO accession) for publicizing their opinions during a certain period of time, it was virtually impossible to obtain, for my study, eight commentaries across the eight papers on the same topic or vary the topic within the commenting section of the same paper. As a result, the chosen topics were subsumed under the overarching category of domestic issues and, for topic variety, some commentaries were selected from columns other than those listed earlier. For instance, during the selection period, the commenting articles in the Viet Nam News appeared to centralize on natural disasters, so three persuasive articles were chosen from the column “Socio-Culture” instead of “Comment.” Conversely, when the argumentative articles (not restricted to the commentary column alone) in a newspaper concentrated on too few topics, more than one text in the same category was taken.

In particular, forty newspaper commentaries from June 2005 to October 2006 were selected, five from each of the eight newspapers selected. For reasons cited earlier, the numbers of newspaper commentaries in the six non-proportional categories are (from the most to the least numerous): economy (14 texts), society (7 texts), environment (7 texts), corruption (6 texts), mismanagement (4 texts), and democratic communication (2 texts). The text lengths varied between the two extremes of 10 and 46 T-units, with the median being 20 and the modes being 16 / 18 / 20 T-units. Seven of the twenty texts in English were explicitly indicated as translated,
evidently by professional translators hired by the newspapers because of the same translators’ names on commentaries from the same newspapers.

The newspaper commentaries were chosen from eight native—not overseas—Vietnamese newspapers (for print and/or online circulations) because, in the same environment of the native land, rhetorical strategies as employed in the newspaper commentaries potentially could help predict some composing practices tentatively manifested in EFL student writing, as presented in Table 2 for the ease of reading.

**Table 2. Newspaper Grouping for Independent Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Readers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuổi Trẻ [Youth]</td>
<td>Việt Nam News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanh Niên [Young Adults]</td>
<td>Thanh Niên News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior Readers</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao Động [Labor]</td>
<td>VOV News</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These mass media publications (in both Vietnamese and English) were chosen on the basis of their target readers so as to discover whether or not the authors’ rhetorical preferences were consistent across age groups (i.e.; young or senior) and means of communication (i.e.; Vietnamese or English language). Tuổi Trẻ, the news agency of Ho Chi Minh City’s Youth League, and Thanh Niên (both editions), the tribune of Vietnam’s Youth Association, as well as Việt Nam News, the national English language daily, supposedly write for an audience in their late teens or into their twenties. Meanwhile, senior and administrative readers can certainly find articles of interests in Lao Động, the voice of Vietnam’s Labor Union Federation, and Sài Gòn
Giải Phóng (both editions), the gazette of Ho Chi Minh City’s Party Committee, or VOV News, the digital publication of the broadcasting service Voice of Vietnam. Those in the English language were either independent (VOV News, Việt Nam News) or supplementary editions to the print ones (Sài Gòn Giải Phóng, Thanh Niên News).

The next sections present how the analytical approaches, utilizing matrixing and indirectness marking, were used to explore these Vietnamese texts for implicit verbal communication.

**II. Matrixing**

Actually, only two Vietnamese matrixers were needed for the project. However, since it appeared that Vietnamese have difficulty identifying the semantic relationships between T-units for the drawings and virtually no pair of matrices for the same newspaper commentary was completely identical, two American ESL instructors were later also engaged in matrixing to see if a Western audience might have difficulty making sense of those texts.

**A. Training for Vietnamese Matrixers**

In preparation for the matrixer training at An Giang University, besides drawing matrices for forty commentaries, I managed to contact by electronic mail Dr. Richard Coe, who revised Nold and Davis’s discourse matrix, about matrixing and how to determine semantic relations between propositions.

Since the formal concept of persuasion in communication is unfamiliar to Vietnamese notwithstanding actual rhetorical practices in all kinds of daily activities, a conceptualizing seminar was conducted for An Giang University’s Department of Foreign Languages. Besides the faculty, participants included four English majors with outstanding academic performances. Due to the faculty’s and students’ busy schedules, the brief introduction to rhetoric-composition
and the discourse matrix had to be delivered within a single seminar, at the end of which one instructor interested in learning about discourse analysis and matrixing signed up for training sessions together with the four students.

Training was done in three sessions within the first week following the seminar. For the initial one, after some basic information about discourse analysis and the discourse matrix, the trainees worked in pairs on five sample paragraphs and were given three short texts for homework. The next two sessions were for discussing both similarities and differences in the drawings of the assigned texts. After the third sessions, two students who had yielded better work were accepted to do the matrixing with the trained instructor as their consultant, in addition to the trainer. During the training as well as the working periods, the participants were requested to do the matrixing independently (i.e.; numbering the propositions & drawing the matrices) of the original versions (Vietnamese/English) of the newspaper commentaries before consulting the others or the trainer if they were in doubt or had questions. In the original plan, the instructor would be the third matrixer in cases where the two matrices for the same newspaper commentary did not coincide. Nonetheless, no pairs of drawings for any of the first five newspaper commentaries completely matched while the divergence on a pair of matrices for the same text could be as little as 5%\textsuperscript{16}. Consequently, it was decided to resolve differences in the matrices by conferencing, instead of third matrixing.

B. Training for the American Matrixers

It should be noted first that matrixing by the American coders was not included in the processed data. Initially, I met with the two American ESL instructors who were willing to help with the matrixing. After the explanation of key points about the discourse matrix and matrixing,

\textsuperscript{16} Most newspaper commentaries were quite short; the median length being 20 T-units per article and the shortest article with only 10 T-units.
these instructors practiced on one sample newspaper commentary by working independently first then discussed their drawings. These American matrixers then read Coe’s book for further information.

The second matrixing was performed on 12 newspaper commentaries: 5 from a newspaper randomly chosen by the matrixers (i.e.; the VOV News) for deeper insight into the composing strategies of one newspaper, and 8 commentaries on economy across the 8 target newspapers (i.e.; 1 from each) for a cross-sectional study. The numbering of T-units in each newspaper commentary was retained for general consistency of matrixing in later comparative work.

C. Basic Concepts

Even though the drawing appears to depict the text as removed from the rhetorical situation, the discourse matrix was chosen as the tool for text analysis because the graphic representation actually results from “the meaningful relationship perceived in the mind of the person that makes that particular analysis” (Karrfalt 216), or from the writer-reader-text interaction.

In order to do the matrixing, identifying and numbering the T-units in the text is essential. Then the T-units are arranged according to their levels of generality as well as semantic/logical relationships with other T-units in the discourse matrix. After that, to calculate the raw data for the variables in the study, the idea strings, node strings, indirect connections and irrelevant T-units must be identified and counted. Following are basic concepts central to the discourse matrixing of text analysis.
1. The T-unit

Kellogg Hunt’s T-unit resulted from his 1965 award-winning study of four groups of writers at different levels of writing maturity: “average students” in the fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades, and authors of published expository articles (300). His close analysis of the writing samples showed that the more mature writers lengthened and complicated their sentences with phrasal modifiers and subordinate clauses in contrast with the inexperienced writers’ preference for co-ordinate phrases/clauses. He named such “shortest possible grammatically allowable sentences” that demarcate writing maturity “minimal terminable units,” abbreviated as “T-units.” Consequently, the T-unit consists of “one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses [and non-clausal structures] happen to be attached to or embedded within it” (305). In other words, regardless of sentence length, there is only one T-unit in a simple or complex sentence, while there are two or more T-units in a compound / compound-complex sentence, in which independent clauses are joined by co-ordinating conjunctions (i.e.; and, but, or, for, so) or by conjunctive adverbs (such as: however, moreover). Nonetheless, co-ordinate clauses with a shared grammatical subject are counted as only one T-unit (e.g.; The water buffaloes strained their necks and plodded slowly along in the muddy field). Note also that co-ordinating conjunctions can join two clauses of the same type and function; therefore, the two clauses so-connected can be either independent or subordinate to the same main clause.

The T-unit (not the clause as in Chen’s research) was employed as the unit of analysis in this project for two reasons, as Hunt’s empirical study has proved. First, while “sentence length is a significant index of maturity,” only the complex sentence distinguishes the accomplished author from the elementary writer (308). Second, as English majors, the Vietnamese matrixers were more familiar with English grammar than with Vietnamese grammar and could recognize
the T-units more easily than the clauses in a text written in Vietnamese. An explanation could be that people tend to treat L1 grammar lessons lightly as they can largely rely on their natural language acquisition. Another possibility is that, rather than grammar lessons, Vietnamese children were taught writing lessons by making and then combining sentences using connectors because, according to the list of resources on grammar (“Một số Tài Liệu”) at Ngôn ngữ, books on Vietnamese grammar were not available until the late 1980s. Additionally, resources for students’ composing could be their own oral communicative competence and reading materials.

For the newspaper commentaries written in Vietnamese, since the trainer and the matrixers were more familiar with English grammar, the T-units were discussed and decided upon basing upon the concepts of the English clauses and modifiers in conjunction with the pragmatic meanings of the Vietnamese sentences. For example, a group of words in a Vietnamese sentence that has no grammatical subject but its functional meaning corresponds to a clause as perceived in terms of English grammar was still considered a clause, not a phrase. In the following Vietnamese sentence from a newspaper commentary in the Lao Động, there seems to be only one grammatical clause (underlined) because the first two had no subjects.

Không đảm đổi hồi các vị phải động tâm và động não trước cái chết thương của hàng trăm con người; chi xin yêu cầu một điều rất nhỏ rằng: Các vị đó có cảm thấy ấy nửa chút nào không? [(1) Not asking these influential figures to feel for and think hard about hundreds of devastating deaths; (2) only asking a minimal question: (3) do they feel any remorse at all?] (“Bài học [Lessons]”)

Nonetheless, a closer look will reveal three clauses in two semantic relationships: a contrasting one (i.e.; co-ordination) between the first and the second, and a specifying one (i.e.;
subordination) between the second and the third. Accordingly, the sentence was marked as having two T-units.

(1) Nobody would ask these influential figures to feel for and think hard about hundreds of devastating deaths; (2) we have only a minimal question: do they feel any remorse at all?

It is the reverse in other instances like the excerpt below, from a newspaper commentary in the Thanh Niên, in a somewhat literal translation.

Reading the interview of the Vietnamese Minister of Planning-Investment Ministry about the Rusalka Project on the Liberated Saigon newspaper dated June 28, 2005, we see a huge gap in our administration, very vulnerable to defrauds, it is similar to the digital-electric-meters case being dealt with by Ho Chi Minh City.

The last group of words (underlined) contains a grammatical subject but no conjunction to connect it with the preceding one. The matrixers decided to take it as a phrase modifying “huge gap” (i.e.; “such as in the digital-electric-meters case being dealt with by Ho Chi Minh City”), not as a clause, since it does not make a significant contribution to the entire sentence, semantically.

Or, in the absence of a conjunction / preposition, the type of a clause / phrase was determined by its semantic relationship to the remaining part(s) of the sentence, too. For instance, in another text in the Thanh Niên, the underlined phrase seems to have no connection with the clause after it, and knowledge of English grammar can supply a preposition of place as a connector for it: “trường đua chó ở Vũng Tàu bỗng nhiều con chó đua đột tử [the training school in Vung Tau several race dogs suddenly died]” (“Khi sân chó”).
2. Levels of Generality & Semantic Relationships

It is indispensable in my study to consider levels of generality, as “it is this notion [i.e.; levels of generality] that is crucial to analyses of coherence” (Christensen, “Sentence” 157). In fact, the concept of generality derives from generalization, the process of drawing a conclusive idea/opinion from the already-stated information. Such a conclusion embraces the shared aspect(s) of the preceding statements, as the concept of flower is emanated from the range of roses, chrysanthemums, tulips, daffodils, dandelions, and so forth. The concluding proposition is thus more general than the premise. This comparative perception about different degrees of generality gives rise to levels of generality, the focal point in the Christensen tradition of text analysis.

The level of generality of a proposition (or T-unit) is established in regard with the previous one(s), whether immediate or farther-removed. That is, in such comparison, it can be more general and on a higher level (i.e.; superordination), or as general and on the same level (i.e.; coordination), or less general and on a lower level (i.e.; subordination). Doubtlessly, the graphic description puts these three levels on the vertical dimension while the numerical advancement is horizontal, from left to right.

What then is the criterion for classifying a statement as being more or less general than another? Needless to say, textual coherence is concerned with semantic and pragmatic aspects, both fundamentally about the text’s meaning. The following criteria for such classification are derived and elaborated from Coe’s (27-41).

- Co-ordination:

A T-unit is co-ordinate to one or more preceding ones when it restates, contrasts or contradicts the previous information; or adds a detail not any more specific. In the following
instance, the two T-units describe simultaneous incidents. Note that the semi-colon in the sentence is an equivalent to a co-ordinating conjunction.

Figure 1. Co-ordination in Matrixing

Far away, (1) a boat lost its light; (2) its engine apparently failed. (Mạnh Dương)

- Subordination:

Similar to the function of a subordinate clause, a subordinate T-unit modifies a preceding proposition by providing further information, definition, explanation, example, reason, or inferential opinion. Subordination is typically the relationship between a topic/subtopic and its supporting details. The further down the ladder of generality, the more depth and clarity in idea/theme development. And that is what a Western reader looks for in a piece of writing. In the following example, the second statement gives more specific information.

Figure 2. Subordination in Matrixing

(1) The wage gap between men and women starts long before a woman has children. (2) Surprisingly, it often starts right out of college with the very first job. (Stark)

Although coordination generally occurs with coordinators like and or but, this rule of thumb can be violated, especially in the case of co-ordinators of result/consequence. In this example, the second proposition (i.e.; about Socrates only) can be deduced from the first one (i.e.; about all humans) and thus more specific and must be placed on a lower level: “(1) All people are mortal. (2) Therefore, Socrates is mortal.”
- **Superordination:**

  Generalizing, commenting, and concluding inductively are propositions subsuming the preceding units, and thus on a higher level of generality: superordination. The second sentence in the following example contains an inductive conclusion.

  **Figure 3. Superordination in Matrixing**

  (1) Nobody thought that Typhoon Chanchu could suddenly change its directions from west to north and then north-east. (2) Consequently, a natural disaster occurred. (“Lessons”)

  Additionally, when the author decides to start a new paragraph, the first sentence in the new paragraph is superordinate (and with / without connection) to the last sentence immediately precedes the indentation, as in the following example. The paragraph break is marked with the sign ¶.

  **Figure 4. Paragraph Sign**

  (1) Once bribery or corruption reaches the super-master level, the bribes take diverse forms including investing for opportunities for power. (2) It is high time that society and legislation put this issue in perspective. (Thanh Binh)

  Since a statement may be logically related to more than one other proposition, the connecting lines should clearly mark such relationships, as explained in the next section.
3. Logical-Relationship Marking

Connecting lines can clarify (1) the relationships between one T-unit and different others, (2) irrelevant T-units, and (3) implicit connections. The last two kinds of relationships were hypothetical expectation of indirect writing style.

- Different Connections for Individual T-units

A T-unit can be logically connected with one or more other T-units coming before or after it. This connection is indicated by one or more continuous lines radiating from that particular circled number. Such lines in a discourse matrix will help the reader to trace logical connection(s) among the T-units (See Figure 5).

- Irrelevances

A proposition is considered irrelevant when it does not contribute toward making the point in the thesis statement. Thus the T-unit representing it is left unconnected to any other T-unit in the text (See Figure 6).

- Implicit Connections

When the matrixers felt that they had to rely on their background knowledge of Vietnamese communicative culture to see the connection between two statements and were not sure a Western audience would detect the relationship, they marked such an implicit connection with a broken line (See Figure 7).

4. Idea String

According to Coe, the range of idea strings “correlate with the boundaries of what readers perceive as stadia, what writers mark as paragraphs” (34). Such a sequence begins with a topic at the highest level of generality then moves down to lower levels in a “simple lineal [ideational] development.” In other words, an idea string can correspond to either an under-developed
paragraph or a subtopic in a well-developed paragraph. In Sun-I Chen’s study design, several idea strings seem to be subsumed under a node string as apparent in her numbers for the appendixed editorial: 15 node strings and 28 idea strings (27).

For my project, since a number of newspaper commentaries have consecutive one-sentence paragraphs that show semantic relations, the idea string is not necessarily a physical paragraph or a paragraph component but, rather, Rodgers’ stadium of discourse that can be “broken into [several] paragraphs” or constituted of only a single one (8). An idea string is thus a sequence of semantically-related T-units on at least two levels of generality, starting with the topic T-unit on the highest level which is supported by at least two other T-units on one or more lower levels. An idea string of merely a few T-units long may have no node string [See Appendix 4]. The final superordinate T-unit, if any, is inclusive but not requisite.

5. Node String

Nold and Davis explain that two superordinate T-units (or nodes), not necessarily consecutive but on the same level of generality, form a node pair (150) and a node string is a sequence of more than two such nodes (151). Coe also asserts that the top-level node string signals the set of subtopics or macrotext developing a topic (Kintsch and van Dijk qtd. Coe 34). That is, a node string can consist of a series of idea strings (i.e.; superior to idea string) or form a sequence of details developing the main proposition in an idea string (i.e.; inferior to idea string). (See Appendix 4 for an example).

Although the node string in Chen’s research seems to be superior to the idea string, in my study the node string is inferior to the idea string and might contain only two nodes because (1) the discourse stadia in an editorial did not begin on the same level of generality to form a top node string, (2) it was not often that more than two nodes in an idea string could be found.
6. An Example from a Vietnamese Newspaper Commentary

It is not superfluous to remind the reader that, harmony rather than self-accentuation prevails in Asian communication, and the speaker/writer seeks the interactant’s approval and alliance rather than to display evidence of sharp reasoning. Besides, *face* is self-contradictory, as it requires simultaneous observation of both aspects: “involvement” (i.e.; positive face) and “independence” (i.e.; negative face); neither should be dominant (Scollon & Scollon 47-48). Further, so as not to sound extremist and combative against the regime, yet wishing to engage the readers’ interest in the subject being discussed, the newspaper commentary writer is inclined to adopt a mild, objective tone – almost like narrative – leaving plenty room for the audience to make their own judgements on the subject matter.

Following is an excerpt from a narrative-like newspaper commentary written by a Vietnamese, with single-sentence paragraphs, as matrixed by Vietnamese.

(21) In numerous interviews with the media, the officials responsible for weather forecasting gave a series of reasons and arguments to support their actions.

(22) Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Nguyen Cong Thanh, affirmed that weather forecasters had complied with the Government’s regulations on the issue.

(23) "Forecasting the direction of a specific storm is not easy, but we have tried our best."
Director of the National Centre for Hydro-Meteorology Forecasting, Le Cong Thanh, said that "our capacity only allows us to give forecasts for the next 24 hours."

A junior colleague, Duong Lien Chau, had another viewpoint: "We have little preventive measures against typhoons occurring offshore in the East Sea."

Thanh said they had indeed forecast that the storm would move northward, "but a little bit late."

Figure 8. Sample Matrix of an Idea String (i.e.; Discourse Stadium)

As seen in the matrix (Figure 8), these six single-sentence paragraphs form a stadium about instances of how high government officials defended themselves publicly in the wake of Typhoon Chanchu, which resulted in unacceptably devastating human losses for Vietnam. Note that these quotes are presented as a matter of fact, without any information about the author’s view except for a hint like the quotation marks for the phrase “but a little late.”

In particular, the topic of “high officials’ defensive statements” (i.e.; T-unit 21) is detailed by three subtopics (i.e.; T-units 22, 25 and 26), which in turn are further elaborated (except for # 26). As such, in this excerpt, there is only one idea string with one node string of two developed nodes (#22 and #25) and an undeveloped one (#26).
D. Variables for Matrixing

1. Independent Variables

In replicating Chen’s study, with an adjustment (i.e.; the audience’s age instead of the writer’s political stance), the newspapers were put into two groups of independent variables at two levels for each variable. The independent variables, language and audience, were selected to reflect any similarities and differences in the authors’ audience-oriented and language-specific rhetorical choices. Two levels were also set for each variable for specificity. Vietnamese and English were chosen for language, as I hypothesized that the authors, when writing in the native language or in the foreign language of English, might have taken into consideration different writing conventions. Similarly, senior and junior were designated levels for audience because the authors’ sense of appropriateness, whether situation- or recipient-oriented, might have presented them with different rhetorical options. Specifically, one pair of newspapers was grouped together in each main data cell, as in Table 3.

Table 3. Independent Variables at two levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Lao Động [Labor]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sài Gòn Giải phóng [Liberated Saigon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Tuổi Trẻ [Youth]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thanh Niên [Young Adults]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Dependent Variables:

As in the original study by Sun-I Chen, dependent variables investigating the text structure are on two levels of coherence: macro-level and micro-level. Two variables, categorized as Other, were added to account for the indirect connections between propositions, which could be local as well as global.

- Macro-Level Variables

The macro-level coherence is created by the strong, clear connections between the overarching thesis and the supporting ideas. Accordingly, (1) the ratio of levels of generality over T-units ($R_{gen}$) represents the depth of topic development; (2) the ratio of node strings over T-units ($R_{ns}$) indicates the extent of topic support by subtopics; and (3) the ratio of idea strings over T-units ($R_{is}$) shows the range of support for the central theme. These data will tentatively reflect the degree of focus or digression in the different authors’ textual moves because “good [Western] writers [elaborate] on a few arguments, rather than introducing many different subpoints” (Ferris 53).

- Micro-Level Variables

To determine the micro-level textual features, the number of subordinate clauses, nodes, and node strings were counted and calculated for the four dependent variables: (1) the average of nodes in a node string ($AnN$) represents the breadth of topical advancement; (2) the average of subordinate T-units in a node string ($AsubN$) displays the breadth and depth of topical elaboration; (3) the average of levels of generality in an idea string ($AgenI$) expresses the profoundness of arguments; and (4) the average of subordinate T-units in an idea string ($AsubI$) demonstrates the richness in sub/topic extension.
- Other Variables

Additional dependent variables particularly for indirect sentential connections, classified as Other in statistical tests, are the ratio of irrelevances over T-units \((Rir)\) and the ratio of implicit connections over T-units \((Rimp)\), which measure the densities of instances of irrelevant information as well as implied relationships within a text. These two variables cannot be grouped in either the macro-level or micro-level because the irrelevant and implicit instances involve both the local relationships between sentences and the global coherence between sentences and the central theme.

E. Statistical Tests

1. Tests for combining data cells

- t-test

As Chen Sun-I explains, because data from small samples (i.e. five newspaper commentaries representing each newspaper) are not very strong, a t-test was performed to compare all the nine dependent variables (i.e.; three macro-level, four micro-level and two additional) for each pair in each of the four main data cells (for the independent variables) to see whether they were homogenous and thus could be combined into one (i.e.; one value for each cell) for more solid values (See Table 3).

At the 0.05 level of significance \((\alpha)\), the t-test results showed that all data could be compounded except for two cases. First, there were zero recordings for the ratio of irrelevances over T-units \((Rir)\) for the two newspapers in English intended for young readers, Thanh Nien News and Viet Nam News. Second, the average of subordinate T-units in an idea string \((A_{subf})\) as well as the ratio of implicit connections over T-units \((Rimp)\) differ considerably for the SGGP-
English and the VOV News because the obtained level of probability \( (p) \) for these variables were smaller than the specified level of significance \( (\alpha = .05) \), as seen in the values reported below.

\[ A_{subI}: t (8) = -2.87, \ p = .0208 < .05 \]

\[ R_{imp}: \ t (8) = 5.69, \ p = .0005 < .05 \]

- median test

The results from t-tests were double-checked with the median test, a non-parametric method, in concern with the small size of the samples (five for each minor cell) as well as the irregularity of the data (e.g.; 35% of newspaper commentaries in Vietnamese and 5% of newspaper commentaries in English have no node strings). The median tests displayed strong relations between all variables, except that between the English-language commentaries for senior audience and the ratio of implicit connections over T-units \( (R_{imp}) \), with the \( z \) value at 3.000, greater than the critical value of \( z = 1.96 \) (for \( \alpha = .05 \)).

The results from the t-test and the median test were not completely identical, and the decision was for the non-parametric median test. Accordingly, except for the relationship between \( R_{imp} \) and the English newspaper commentaries for senior readers, the remaining data were combined for the next two tests.

2. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

According to Spata (164-5), since my study had to deal with two independent variables (i.e.; language and audience), it was of a factorial design with two levels (e.g.; English & Vietnamese) for each variable (e.g.; language); it was also a multivariate experiment, as it involved several dependent variables. Further, multiple-factor designs allow examining all the independent variables simultaneously as well as observing interactions, if any (143). Additionally, the conditions in which the data are gathered do not affect the multivariate and
correlational studies, which are “primarily [concerned] with discovering relationships between categories of data” (Seliger and Shohamy 130).

More specifically, the use of MANOVA tests (or multivariate analysis of variance) for causal-comparative inquiry in multiple factor designs helps “[determine] whether groups [i.e.; language & audience, in my study] differ on more than one dependent variable” (Gall et al. 309), either macro-level or micro-level. More advantages of MANOVA are articulated by French and his co-authors that this test can indicate which dependent variable/s is/are significant as well as avoid Type I errors (that lead to rejection of a true null hypothesis).

Hatch and Lazaraton recommend the GLM (General Linear Modeling) procedure in the SAS program for the MANOVA test, one subcommand of SAS, as GLM is safe in that it manipulates both balanced and unbalanced designs while SAS does not give a warning regarding an unbalanced design (386).

**3. Pearson Correlation Test**

Since my study aimed at describing the writing behaviors as reflected in the selected newspaper commentaries, it was non-experimental (that is, without manipulation of the conditions that had generated the data). As suggested by Spata, correlation tests were run to see “whether two (or more) variables are related, how they are related, and how strong that relationship is” (206). The indicativeness of such inter-relationships between variables would help in the data analysis. Further, the Pearson Correlation test allows computing the correlation among variables from raw scores/data, which are percentages and averages in my study, (i.e.; without converting into z scores) so as to “establish a relationship between the scaled [i.e.; ranked] or scored data of one [dependent] variable with those of another” (Hatch and Lazaraton 433-5).
The matrixing, as discussed in this section, was supposed to uncover the covert ideational advancement and connection in Vietnamese texts. The next section, indirect marking, was to examine the strategic vagueness, another feature of implicitness in communication.

III. Indirectness Marking

For insight into interpersonal coherence, a replication of Hinkel’s 1997 research into “Indirectness in L₁ and L₂ Academic Writing” was implemented, but no raters were engaged, as newspaper commentaries cannot be “graded” like students’ essays. All the features selected by Hinkel were examined because I wished to find out which indirectness devices were employed in the newspaper commentaries.

Since searching for indirectness markers had to be done on the original versions of the newspaper commentaries and there were no authorized sources about such devices in Vietnamese, I had to pick out actual equivalent words / phrases / sentences while working on Vietnamese commentaries. Both English and Vietnamese examples will be listed in italics at the beginning of each part on an individual device. The English samples for each device are taken from Hinkel’s article, except where none is provided. The Vietnamese instances and the English supplementaries come from newspaper commentaries under examination in my study or real-life practices. No translations of the Vietnamese examples will be provided, as they are semantic and pragmatic equivalents to the English ones and for the purpose of reference only.

A. Independent Variables

The same independent variables as set for matrixing were also utilized for indirectness marking (See Table 3). That is, the variable language was on the two levels of Vietnamese and English, and the variable audience was also on the levels of senior and junior to explore for any
similarities and differences in the authors’ audience-oriented and language-specific rhetorical practices.

**B. Dependent Variables – Indirectness Devices**

Citing insight from works by renowned figures in the field of language, Hinkel (“Indirectness” 368-381) classified twenty-one devices in three groups: rhetorical strategies and markers, lexical and referential markers, and syntactic markers and structures. Definitions and related literature as well as accompanying research results in this section derive from Hinkel’s “Indirectness in L₁ and L₂ Academic Writing,” unless otherwise stated. The specific page citation for each device is also recorded next to the category heading. In this section, the devices will be numbered continuously all through the three major categories, just as I identified them for data recording and processing.

1. Rhetorical Strategies and Markers

This category consists of five items, recognized through their persuasive objectives.

(1) **Rhetorical Questions and Tags** (368)

*If Vietnamese laws ban these “marriages”, how can matchmakers – illegal on paper – thrive?*

*Nhu thể chẳng bắt công làm ước? Bạn cũng mong thế, thì? Không phải … thì …?*

*Làm sao mà không …?*

Western scholars note that the rhetorical question is not recommended for academic writing although it is commonly used as an interactional tool to circumvent unpleasant and unnecessary confrontation as well as remove the assertive effects in case of ambivalence while eliciting solidarity. Similar practices are recognized in Asian communication, without
discouragement. Doubtlessly, in the original study by Hinkel, this type of question was found in more frequencies in non-native-speaker (NNS) essays than in native-speaker (NS) ones.

(2) **Disclaimers and Denials** (369-370)

“do(e)/be-forms *not mean* (meant) to imply/intend/say; xxx is not yyy; not (+ adjective(s)); not(+ noun(s)); not (+adverb(s)); not even; no way (and contractions) distinguished from negatives and negations” (Hinkel 369)

*những cay đắng với nước ta không phải dễ chịu được; khó khăn lại không ít*

Disclaimers and denials are resorted to when the communicator realizes the possibility of disagreement or dislike. Hinkel, quoting Quirk et al, pointed out that “[negatives] operate on the truth-value of a proposition and [denials] on its syntactic elements.” I think, as in the case of rhetorical and true questions, the difference between negatives and denials is pragmatic rather than syntactic because the text-recipient has to rely on his/her real-world experience, not the syntactic structure *per se*, to interpret the negative phrases/sentences as such. Even though pragmatic interpretation takes into consideration the semantic context of consecutive sentences (or syntactic markers of interrogation or negation), the syntactic consecutiveness (or markers) cannot be a decisive feature.

Since persuasion involves empathy and connectedness, in both Western and Oriental formal writing, rhetorical negation is preferable to direct assertion of opposition or comment so as not to be imposing or face-threatening while recognizing the audience’s possible opposite stance. However, non-native speakers’ (NNS) enthusiastic use of disclaimers may be “excessive or inappropriate” to NS readers. NNS papers under study exhibited larger numbers of disclaimers and denials than NS ones.
(3) Vagueness and Ambiguity (370-371)

- Numerical Quantifiers:

  lots / a lot (of); approximately; around; between xxx and yyy; many/much; a number of; piece(s) of; tons/dozens/hundreds/thousands/millions of; xxx or yyy (e.g.; five or six); xxx or so; several
  hões / trên; dăm ba; gần; cơ man nào

- Non-Numerical Quantifiers:

  xxx aspects/facets of; at least; at best
  giới lâm [thì]

- Scalar Qualifiers:

  excellent/good/bad; always/usually/often/occasionally/sometimes/ never;
  large/small; high/low; tall/short; hot/warm/cool/cold; wet/damp/dry
  bao giờ cùng; vô cùng; không hề; đáng kể; bèn bè; phân lón;

- Classifiers:

  and all; and all that; and that; and so on; things/stuffs (like that); who knows
  what/why; whatever [pron] want(s)/do(es)/; the whole bit/works
  tương tự như thể/ na ná như; ai mà biết được/có Trời mới biết; biết đâu …

In general, these words/phrases offer information of an extensive range or of an ambiguous nature so as to evade responsibility from specificity and certainty. Surprisingly, vagueness can also be achieved with exaggerations like always or never. This indirectness strategy is acceptable in formal writing not only in the East but also in the West, and it inevitably appears in greater densities in NNS student texts.
(4) **Repetition** (371)

Since repetition (including derivational forms; e.g.; economy, economic) is equated with redundancy in Western perspective, students are warned against it in academic composition. However, repetition is commonly utilized in Eastern writing for consistency effects as in theme-rheme coherence and for additive impacts in contrast to the Western “synthetic or analytic” style. Studies have found more instances of repetitions in NNS essays than in NS counterparts.

(5) **Irony** (371-372)

Irony can be employed to tangentially indicate dissension, doubt or disapproval. Even more ambiguous than rhetorical questions and disclaimers, ironic propositions require clear context and shared real-world schemata as well as familiarity for pragmatic inferences. Because of the informative “burden” on the interactant as well as its negative implications, this communicative practice is considered awkward even by student writers in previous research.

2. **Lexical and Referential Markers**

This group embraces eight tools relying on their meanings as well as relationships to indirectly approach / present the claim.

**Hedges and Hedging Devices** (372-374)

According to Brown and Levinson, hedging “[softens] background assumptions about cooperation, informativeness, truthfulness, relevance, and clarity” in concern for face (146), by eluding “a precise communication” with a diminishing (sometimes exaggerating) vagueness (116). Leech adds that hedges can relieve the intrusion of “beliefs which are costly to [the hearer/reader]” (114). Further, hedges allow us to “‘weasel out’ of responsibility for our statements […] or smooth] over a disagreement with a conversational partner” (Hatch 127).
Therefore, hedges occur in great frequencies in Anglo-American academic writing to demonstrate “honesty, modesty, proper caution, and diplomacy.”

In non-Western formal writing, hedging is exploited to express self-effacement and prudence, particularly when offering a personal opinion to the public. This rhetorical strategy plays an even more crucial role in community-oriented societies like Chinese.

Hedging is manifested as in the five groups below.

- (6) Lexical hedges:

  (at) about; in a way; kind of; maybe; more or less; most something like; sort of //

  [my addition: very; extremely]

  hỏi hỏi ... / khá ... / cùng .../ cùng có...

- (7) Possibility Hedges:

  by (some/any) chance; hopefully; perhaps; maybe; possibly; in case (of); if ...

  (possible conditions) // [my addition: may/might (have), could (have)]

  có lẽ / có thể ...; may ra ...; lỡ / nhỡ khi ...

Even elliptical possible conditions can serve as hedging devices in Vietnamese composing. For example, “without any more difficulty beyond prediction [i.e.; “if there is no more difficulty beyond prediction”], Vietnam will become an official member of this organization by the end of this year” sounds less risky on the writer’s part – regarding the accuracy of the information – than the direct assertion: “Vietnam will become an official member of this organization by the end of this year.”

- (8) Quality Hedges:

  as is (well) known; (as) you/everyone know(s); (as) people say; one/you

  may/might/can say; they say
These hedges, transferring the responsibility for the truthfulness of the information to outsiders, are as common in the West as in the East but the accepted contexts for such uses may be distinctive.

- (9) Performative Hedges:

  apparently; basically;( most/very) likely; seemingly; supposedly; certainly; surely; clearly; obviously; undoubtedly; definitely // [my addition: it is no surprise/necessary/essential/ apparent/ no doubt]

  hình như, có bàn là, rõ ràng là, rất có thể là, coi như là, chú yêu là

- (10) Hedged Performative Verbs:

  can / may / want to / would like to + ask / call / comment / discuss / explain / note / mention / point out / remark / state / tell ...// I think; it’s hard; I wonder; I’m not sure; I don’t really know (Hatch 128)/ must / regret to / be sorry to + V. (Leech 140) // [my addition: should / must / need to; in my opinion; I think]

  muốn / có thể / thè/ tăm/ phải/ chi xin + hỏi / bàn về / nói đến / nhận xét / cho (là); không dám đòi hỏi; xin (hãy) ...

Generally, all hedges, except for possibility and hedged performatives, were found in greater percentages in NNS papers than in NS ones. NS student texts exceeded only in the utilization of possibility hedges.

(11) Point-of-View Distancing (374-375)

  I/we feel/ hope/wonder/worry that ...; I am concerned that ...; I want/would like to think/believe/understand/suggest that ...
These devices reduce the author’s assertiveness or aggressiveness by introducing the matter as one limited to the writer/speaker’s subjectivity. NS and NNS compositions differed only slightly in this strategy.

(12) **Downtoners** (375)

*at all; almost; hardly; mildly; nearly; only; partially; partly; practically; slightly; somewhat / [my addition: less]*

*chút nào chẳng; có chẳng; kém; thiếu*

Downtoners temper the force of propositions, but not all scholars see disparities between hedges and downtoners. Due to their popularity in formal writing to express probability, these markers obtain the name “academic hedges” (Chafe and Danielewicz). Nonetheless, few occurrences of them were found in student essays, either NS or NNS.

(13) **Diminutives** (375)

*(a) little ...; a (little) bit ...; (a) few*

*dăm ba ...; một chút / ít ...; nhỏ nhỏ; lặt vặt*

Diminutives lessen the claim, even further than downtoners do, to a minimal level and thus remove potential threat to the audience and lower the risk of rejection. Likewise, cooperation is more likely to be strengthened, and there is more chance of approval, as in the following example of a son asking his father for his share of inheritance, in a Vietnamese context: “Ba ơi, con cần một ít đất để chặt một căn nhà nhỏ nhỏ” [Dad, I need a little land to build a little, little house] (modified from Brown and Levinson 157). Nevertheless, discourse studies demonstrate that this persuasive practice tends to be used more in oral rather than
written communication, and no considerable disparities regarding this strategy were displayed in NS and NNS essays.

(14) Discourse Particles (376)

well; now; anyway; anyhow; anyway(s)
à; dù sao đi nữa

A disfluency besides the downtoner and the diminuitive, the discourse particle smooths out ripple effects on the interlocutor from previous utterances. Although the discoursal function seems to be unclear though varied across the particles, one may be more evidently hedging than another, the common impact is “the linking of frames [or] frame orientation.” Differently put, these particles signal a return to a previous topic, a recapitulation of the theme, or a shift to a new subject. Universally, discourse particles are assigned to speech rather than to prose composing, especially formal writing. NS and NNS papers did not diverge perceptibly in the use of these softening particles.

(15) Demonstratives (376)

this; that; these; those
này; đó; ấy; vậy

As referential and deitic markers, demonstratives may be used interchangeably with the noun determiner the. This ambiguity arises from a parallel in the “referential and situational roles” of these two types of noun markers as cohesive devices. Theorists dissent on the employment of demonstratives in written discourse. Specifically, on the one hand, the ambiguous reference offered by demonstratives is contended to be their shortcoming and thus are not recommended for academic compositions; on the other hand, their merit in distancing the writer from the claim is recognized in their frequent appearance in academic writing.
This same ambiguity in reference of demonstratives, especially demonstrative pronouns, is placed in broader pragmatic and contextual applications in non-Western cultures, and L2 writers may unknowingly leave their demonstratives unattached to specific referents. In Hinkel’s study demonstratives occurred not only in larger numbers but also in more unusual contexts in NNS texts than in NS ones.

**Indefinite Pronouns and Determiners** (377-378)

Being indefinite, these pronouns may appear to resemble numerical quantifiers, like *some* or *no*. In fact, the difference can be explained on a continuum of measurements, as in the group descriptions below.

- (16) Universal and Negative:
  
  *all, both, every, no, each ...; everyone/body/thing; nobody/one/thing; none; neither*/ [my addition: *another, other, others (without specifying appositions)]

  *cả hai / tất cả / mọi / mỗi ...; toàn ...; đều ...; một / những ... khác; chẳng / không

  *+ ai / điều/ cái gì

Indeed, while quantifiers scatter all along, this subcategory of exaggerating indefinites cluster at either end of the continuum: one expressing “total inclusions” (like *all, every*), the other reserving absolute “exclusions” (like *no, none, neither*). The negatives in this group are the true opposites of the affirmatives; for example, *all – none, both – neither*.

While experienced scholarly authors in the West seldom employ these exaggeratives, inexperienced writers tend to rely on them for more ethical strength “without being precise.” Conversely, exaggerations are so much the norm in Eastern persuasion that L2 texts may accommodate these indefinites in contexts quite unexpected to L1 readers. Accordingly, these exaggeratives were utilized in far greater numbers in NNS essays than in NS compositions.
- (17) Assertive and Nonassertive:

\[
\text{anyone/body/thing; someone/body/thing; any, either, some (meaning “certain”)/} \\
\text{[my addition: one (meaning “anyone”)]}
\]

\[
bát cứ / chẳng …; … nào đó; có …
\]

The distinctive unity trait also exhibits in the second group of indefinites gathering in the middle of the continuum, with their meanings implying partiality. Unlike those in the first group of opposites, the same members of the second group can occur in either positive or negative sentence structures and are thus “contextually and deictically marked.” For instance, *Something inside keeps telling her to be more cautious, as someone may not be kind and can do unbelievable harm to her.*

With their vague meanings, these indefinites – just as much as the exaggeratives – serve as a means to safeguard the Asian speaker/writer from possible errors; therefore, research findings revealed more observations of these partitives in L₂ essays.

(18) Understatement Markers (379)

*fairly / pretty (+ adj.); rather, quite (+ adj.); not too/very/half (bad, ...)*

\[
\text{không ... quá / làm; chí hỏi …; không may...; không ... là bao}
\]

Similar to diminuitives, understatement markers deflate the truth-value of the claim for safe removal of the author’s responsibility, increasing the chance of acceptance. Unlike diminuitives, they modify adjectives or adverbs, not nouns. Considered a popular hedging device in both the West and the East, these markers won equal employment in both L₁ and L₂ compositions under study.
3. Syntactic Markers and Structures

This third major category includes indirectness devices manifested in the sentence structures.

(19) Passive Voice (379-380)

Be + Past Participle

bị / chịu / được / phải ...

Since the grammatical subject is generally suppressed in the passive voice, this structure is an adequate tool to remove the writer’s stance out of focus and thus promote neutrality and impartiality, very common in college writing (Atkinson; Biber; Myers). However, appropriate use of English passives is not simple, as some English verbs are more appropriate in the passive voice while some others are not (Swales and Feak) and passive voice is generally idiomatic and thus collocationally depends on the meaning of the constituent noun, which is normally “inanimate or abstract” and very likely altered in the L2 writer’s mental/actual translation process (Master).

Alternately, Asian passives seem to be “topic-dependent” and serve to manipulate fronting for theme-rheme coherence while similarly idiomatic and lexical. Rhetorically, Oriental passives appear to promote the sense of belonging and communal bond as well as respect for the reader’s stance. So diverse in usage, passives in NNS texts under investigation were found in considerable quantities and in contexts unusual to NSs.

(20) Nominalization (380-381)

English nominalization of verbs and adjectives in prose produces a soft reading effect, as it shifts from vigorous acts to meek states / conditions, from “a directive to a suggestion.”

Further, due to its sophisticated norm-based nature, nominalization is well established in
academic discourse, which may imply that NNS users as well as inexperienced NS writers are not familiar with their use. Meanwhile, non-Western nominalization seems no less inhibitive to novice writers with its context-bound and genre-dependent usage. Not surprisingly, research detected no significant difference in NNS and NS papers regarding nominalization cases.

(21) Conditionals (381)

hypothetical / unreal conditions

giá nhu; giá nhu ...

Hypothetical rather than factual conditions convey a hedging effect on the illocutionary force of the proposition because, with the implication of non-factuality, they can project a meta-message about respect for the audience and anticipation of possible rejection or refutation, thus increasing the chance of ratification. Nonetheless, this caution can also “mark the proposition as problematic, questionable, or delicate.”

In the absence of tense-markers in Oriental languages like Chinese or Vietnamese, “a precise presupposition marker” (such as giá nhu; giá nhu) is requisite for unreal conditions, and the “discoursal implications entailed” in English imaginary conditions (such as past hypothetical conditions, especially those with modal verbs like could have, might have) are virtually non-existent in the native mind. Quite within expectation, Asian EFL learners have great difficulty understanding and producing counterfactual suppositions (Bloom; Matalene). NS and NNS essays examined in previous research showed no divergence in the use of contrary-to-fact postulations.

C. Data Tabulation

The indirectness markers were identified in the original versions of the selected newspaper commentaries (i.e.; in Vietnamese or English) and counted. Similar to Hinkel’s
design, the ordinal rating scale was first performed: the percentage rate of each feature over the text length (i.e.; the total number of words) was then performed for the basic data. Since a small pool of subjects (only forty newspaper commentaries) were used, the data were compiled for individual newspaper commentaries, not combined into groups for each newspaper / language / age.

D. Statistical tests

1. t-test

A t-test was run to describe the usage of indirectness markers in the individual groups (i.e.; English, Vietnamese, Senior, Junior) and later to provide the values of medians for the decision on which independent variable had more influence over a particular dependent variable. The t-test also revealed the irregularity of the data leading to the same non-parametric test, the Man-Whitney U test, as used in Hinkel’s research.

2. Mann-Whitney U Test

As Hinkel (1997) has stated, “[n]on-parametric statistical comparisons of [group data] were employed because the majority of percentage rates were not normally distributed, and the number of [texts] that did not contain all types of indirectness strategies and markers was high” (366). Therefore, the comparison of the features in newspaper commentaries written in Vietnamese (or for senior readers) with those in newspaper commentaries written in English (or for young audience) was processed by the Mann-Whitney U test – also known as Wilcoxon Rank Sums test – as this test “compares two groups [for significant difference] on the basis of their ranks above and below the median” (Hatch and Lazaraton 274) in a study of “between-subjects design” (Spata 127).
The next chapter will discuss the test results as to what aspects of indirectness were employed to what extent, whether such manifestations were within or beyond expectations, which features could have troubled the Western readers. The data analysis will also disclose the influences of language (as means of communication) and audience on textual organization, propositional connections, and use of indirectness markers. The chapter ends with reflections on what still remains for further investigation.
CHAPTER FOUR. DECIPHERING THE IMPLICIT

Following Chapter Three describing the study design, this chapter will present the findings regarding the three aspects of indirectness: (1) indirect textual development, (2) implicit ideational connections, and (3) implicative strategies; which were revealed by the statistical tests based upon the discourse matrix and the indirectness markers. The analysis of the matrix results will also discuss the emerging limitations in the indicative potential of variables due to unexpected textual progressions. The matrix statistical results about implicit propositional connections will be supplemented with data from the second matrixing by Western matrixers to illustrate the prospective impacts of L₂ indirectness on Western readers. The findings about employment of indirectness devices will be investigated first among the newspaper commentary groups and then in contrast with the Chinese and native speaker groups in Hinkel’s original study of “indirectness in L₁ and L₂ academic writing.”

Since my project replicated two distinct studies, it was not an absolute replication of either in all aspects, but rather a combination largely derived from both. Errors in the study were reduced because:

- the critical level of probability / significance (α) was set at 0.05 for all the statistical tests;

- the sample size for the independent variables (i.e.; language / audience) was the same as that in Sun-I Chen’s (i.e.; 20) though smaller than that in Hinkel’s (i.e.; 20 < 30). This size is not too small for experiment power (Spata 108);

- the t-test (even double-checked with the median test in the case of matrixing) was performed first to see whether the pairs of data subcells could be merged into main data cells for
the matrixing section, and whether the data distribution was normal or skewed for the decision on a parametric or non-parametric test for the indirectness marking section;

- the Pearson correlation tests were performed to determine the effect size (Spata 109-110) in order to support the impacts of the independent variables on the dependent variables found by the MANOVA tests;

- a possible secondary variance (Spata 36) in matrixing, potentially arising from the matrixers’ subjectivity, was largely controlled by discussions among the matrixers in case of disparities.

The discussion of the results will be presented in three main sections according to the three aspects of indirectness: textual development, propositional connection, and strategic vagueness. The first two aspects were explored through matrixing, and the last one through indirectness marking.

I. Indirection: Non-Linear Textual Progression

Matrixing was employed to probe the textual organizations in the newspaper commentaries. On the data from the matrices, two types of statistical tests were implemented to inquire into and measure the relationships as well as the interactions among the variables. Some insight can start even from the data source: the matrices themselves.

A. The Discourse Matrix per se

The discourse matrix efficiently described the diverse organizational structures of the newspaper commentaries. In most matrices, no top node string represented the major topics that support the theme. Rather, in 47.5% (10% English & 37.5% Vietnamese) of the matrices, the discourse stadia started at different levels of generality, sometimes lower, sometimes higher than the previous stadium, and the final proposition mostly reached the climax. Such spiraling theme
progression with topics/details sometimes more specific and sometimes more general, first noted by Kaplan (1966), was clearly depicted and readily observed in the matrix.

On the other hand, in another 47.5% (40% English & 7.5% Vietnamese) of the text drawings, in conjunction with the highest or second highest point (i.e.; the thesis) at the first idea string, the discourse stadia portrayed a seemingly deductive linearity of ideas, starting at the same level, descending two levels at the most for more specificity, and mostly ascending (sometimes very abruptly) at the last proposition to the level as high as (or even higher than) the top level in the first stadium. Even though this ideational advancement quite corresponded with the expectation of a Western reader, the topical development inclined toward co-ordination (which might be an indication of rambling) and lacked in depth. Therefore, imitating Hinds, I name this type of progression quasi-deductive. The distribution of the different theme progressions is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of textual development types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>English (n = 20)</th>
<th>Vietnamese (n = 20)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1: quasi-inductive</td>
<td>10% (n = 4)</td>
<td>37.5% (n = 15)</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2: quasi-deductive</td>
<td>40% (n = 16)</td>
<td>7.5% (n = 3)</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3: non-pattern</td>
<td></td>
<td>5% (n = 2)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two matrices for Vietnamese commentaries (5%) disclosed bizarre composing styles. The first one showed the consecutive stadia just continued down the ladder of generality (suggesting an over-elaboration of one subtopic and thus digressive), and the thesis at the end rose abruptly to the top level in connection with the top T-unit of the first idea string (See Figure 9).
The second “bizarre” matrix resembled an upturned bell shape (i.e.; another form of meandering ideational advancement with Idea string 3 developing T-unit 8 in Idea string 2 while there is not sufficient support for the theme in T-units 20-21), still with the central topic in the final position. See Figure 10.

Regarding the position of the thesis statement, 80% (37.5% English & 42.5% Vietnamese) of the matrices indicated a clear theme-delay composing with the highest point at the very end of the text. Of the remaining 20%, five percent of the English newspaper commentaries expressed the text purpose in the second idea string, and fifteen percent (12.5%
English & 2.5% Vietnamese) had the first proposition at the highest point in the discourse matrix, as in Table 5.

Table 5. Distribution of theme positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English (n = 20)</th>
<th>Vietnamese (n = 20)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>theme-delay</td>
<td>37.5% (n = 13)</td>
<td>42.5% (n = 19)</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme in 1st stadium</td>
<td>12.5% (n = 5)</td>
<td>2.5% (n = 1)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme in 2nd stadium</td>
<td>5% (n = 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering both the organizational patterns and the positions of the thesis, the theme-delay strategy was predominant, with very slight difference with regard to language (37.5% English vs. 42.5% Vietnamese), whether the paragraph structures might mirror the inductive/deductive or even non-pattern development. English newspaper commentaries (i.e.; L2 texts) outnumbered the Vietnamese ones (17.5% vs. 2.5%) in the 20% quasi-deductive ideational advancement, with the thesis statement in the first or second stadium. In other words, the suggestions of these data correspond with (1) Hinds’ description of L2 theme-delay progression: quasi-inductive; (2) Sun-I Chen’s finding that L2 writing is a “compromise” between the L1 organizational pattern and that used by native speakers of the target language (24), which I call quasi-deductive; and (3) Kaplan’s hypothesis of the Oriental “spiraling” development.

B. Statistical Tests

1. Macro-Level Findings

The MANOVA test results indicated no significant influences of language. Meanwhile, audience, with the obtained level of significance of 0.0323 (i.e.; smaller than the 0.05 level of probability) for $F$ value of 4.96 (i.e.; greater than the $F_{crit}$ of 4.10), was linearly related to only
one variable: $R_{gen}$ (i.e.; ratio of levels of generality over T-units). Further, the Tukey’s Studentized Range test for $R_{gen}$, with a higher Mean for Senior Audience ($0.26751 > 0.20483$) suggested that the authors tended to develop the details (i.e.; topics and subtopics) in greater depth when they were concerned with factors of life experience and socio-political status of senior readers.

However, the above indication seemed to be disconfirmed by the Pearson test, which detected one correlation between the ratio of idea strings over T-units ($R_{is}$) and the ratio of levels of generality over T-units ($R_{gen}$), with $p$-value under 0.05 as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlations among macro-level variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$R_{gen}$</th>
<th>$R_{ns}$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$R_{is}$</td>
<td>0.38038</td>
<td>-0.14275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>0.0155</em></td>
<td>0.3796</td>
<td>$r$-value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R_{ns}$</td>
<td>0.30680</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.0542</td>
<td></td>
<td>$p$-value</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p < 0.05$

The $R_{is}$-$R_{gen}$ correlation means a parallel increase in individual texts: the more idea strings, the more levels of generality. A close examination of the matrices of commentaries for senior readers revealed that the levels of generality (indicated by $R_{gen}$) were increased due to unexpected manners of topical progression (even in L2 texts): (a) sporadic discourse stadia continuing down the generality scale, and (b) occasional upward topical developments. That is, a new idea string began either from/below the lowest level of the preceding string and descended to lower levels (i.e.; further elaboration of a supporting detail in the previous topic) or from the highest level of the foregoing one and ascended to higher levels (i.e.; inductive ideational development, also likely to ramble). As discussed in the previous section about the descriptive potential of the discourse matrix, these unusual textual features indicated a digressive writing
style in which more and more information is added to a single topic or a topic is elaborated with more and more general details. An illustrative matrix [Figure 11] is provided below.

Figure 11. Matrix with Idea Strings Developed both Downward and Upward

![Diagram of Idea Strings](image)

This matrix for the VOV News commentary “Weapon Toys from China Cause Headache” showcases (a) continuous downward moves of consecutive idea strings (i.e.; 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} idea strings), (b) rambling development with tangentially relevant details (i.e.; T-unit #5), and (c) upward topical advancement (i.e.; the last idea string) to higher generalizations. Following is an explanatory description of the text content in relation to the graphic representation (See Appendix 6 for the text).

Four idea strings were identified: (a) the string 1-2 about Chinese toys being smuggled into Vietnam again, (b) the string 3-4-5 about the immediate popularity of Chinese weapon toys in spite of the widely-affecting harm, (c) the string 6-7-8-9 about drastic injuries that toy guns can do to children, and (d) the string 10-11-12 about the police’s responsive action and the author’s plea for further actions on a larger scale. The second idea string introduces a toy item (implying an instance of dangerous toys mentioned in T-unit 2) and is thus more specific than the first one. The third string particularizes T-unit #4 (about weapon toys) with two varieties of toy
guns. The more and more general information in the fourth idea string sums up the text as well as advances the text purpose, and the stadium is thus superordinate to the first two.

Whereas it might be argued that the structure of the last idea string is typical of the inductive approach and within expectation, this illustration suggests considering (a) the $R_{gen-Ris}$ interaction caused by non-Western elaboration of discourse stadia such as the second and third in this newspaper commentary; (b) the ensuing limitation of $R_{gen}$ indicativeness (i.e.; a high-value $R_{gen}$ might not reflect profound, particular insight in the text content). Further, lack of balance or focus in the development of individual topics can similarly affect $R_{gen}$. Indeed, only one over-developed idea string can inflate the value of $R_{gen}$ and thus statistically add non-existent texture to a text replete with co-ordination patterns. Alternately, an under-developed text with desultory elaboration of a single detail may have similar statistical interpretation. It is, therefore, recommended to consult the matrices in data analysis.

2. Micro-Level Findings

The MANOVA tests showed more significant impacts of independent factors on the micro-level structure. Three out of four micro-level variables were found to be influenced by language, with the obtained level of significance lower than the set level of probability ($p < \alpha$) and $F$ value greater than $F_{cri}$, as summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Effects of language on micro-level variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>$F$ value</th>
<th>$Pr &gt; F$ ($p$ value)</th>
<th>Effect size ($r^2$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$AnN$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>0.1804</td>
<td>0.1354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AsubN$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.0418*</td>
<td>0.2428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AgenI$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>0.0081*</td>
<td>0.2161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$Asubi$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>0.0097*</td>
<td>0.2741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $p < \alpha$ (0.05)
The post-hoc Tukey’s Studentized Range tests pointed to English, with greater mean values than those for Vietnamese [See Table 8], as the factor affecting the writing moves on the local level as indicated by: $A_{subN}$ (average of subordinate T-units in a node string), $A_{genI}$ (average of levels of generality in an idea string), and $A_{subI}$ (average of subordinate T-units in an idea string).

Table 8. Specific language effects on micro-level variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Tukey grouping</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$A_{subN}$</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.0567*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.2755</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_{genI}$</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.4185*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>2.0135</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_{subI}$</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>2.6765*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.8365</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differently put, while the newspaper commentaries did not significantly differ in the numbers of subtopics in a developed topic (as supposedly indicated by $A_{nN}$), those written in English seemed to display more depth in ideational advancement with: (a) more specific details in a node string ($A_{subN}$), (b) more levels of generality in developing a discourse stadium ($A_{genI}$), and (c) more specificity in a stadium ($A_{subI}$).

In the Pearson tests, with all the $p$ values smaller than .05 (four of them even less than .0001), all the micro-level variables exhibited strong interactions [See Table 9]. The most robust relationship was found between the average of subordinate T-units in an idea string ($A_{subI}$) and the average of subordinate T-units in a node string ($A_{subN}$) with $r$-value of 0.73699, which appeared to designate a proportionate range of development in a stadium and a sequence of
subtopics. Another strong relationship ($AnN$-$AsubN$; $r = 0.69463$) suggested that newspaper commentary writers provided more specificity when they decided to include more topics. Contrary to expectation, the correlations $AgenI$-$AsubI$ (i.e.; the more levels of generality, the more subordinations in a stadium) and $AgenI$-$AsubN$ (i.e.; the more levels of generality in a stadium, the more subordinations in a sequence of supporting details) yielded less strong $r$ values (0.68126 and 0.6235). A seeming tendency is that the sub/topics were developed in more specific details when more subtopics were engaged ($AsubI$-$AnN$ with $r = 0.41583$). The most feeble mutual relationship was between the number of levels of generality in a stadium and the number of subtopics ($AgenI$-$AnN$) suggesting that the writers did not necessarily provide equally more particulars when they added more subtopics/details.

**Table 9. Correlations among micro-level variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$AnN$</th>
<th>$AsubN$</th>
<th>$AgenI$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$AsubN$</td>
<td>0.69463</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
<td>0.62350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AgenI$</td>
<td>0.36215</td>
<td>0.62350</td>
<td>1.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0217</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$AsubI$</td>
<td>0.41583</td>
<td>0.73699</td>
<td>0.68126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.0076</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the macro-level variables, consultation of the matrices appears to attribute the rigorous $AsubN$-$AsubI$ inter-relationship to the fact that, in my study, the node string was generally inferior to the idea string and structurally representative of the idea string encompassing it; therefore, it is inferable that the two had a consistent ratio of subordinate statements. For example, in Figure 12, the idea string consists of 21-22-23-24-25-26-27; the node string 22-25-26 actually comprehends 23, 24 and 27; and the idea string is only one T-unit larger.
than the node string. The $A_{subN}-A_{subI}$ correlation in such a case might not be truly indicative of two local structures of the text (e.g.; topical / subtopical development).

**Figure 12.** Node String Inferior to Idea String

Additionally, the matrices in my study disclosed that the node string was absent in 25% of the commentaries and did not occur in all the idea strings in the other commentaries. These findings provide evidence that most topics (i.e.; idea strings) were superficially developed with few co-ordinate details, which rarely became subtopics (i.e.; nodes in node strings) with further elaboration. This observation also presents concern that the sturdy correlation $AnN-A_{subN}$ might not have strong indicative potential. When, the general scenario is that the nodes (i.e.; subtopics) in a node string are shallowly developed with a few co-ordinate T-units (i.e.; details) like the example in Table 16, the number of subordinate T-units and the number of nodes in the individual node strings should be in a consistent ratio. In other words, a vigorous $AnN-A_{subN}$ inter-relationship might not indicate a proportionate topical development with both breadth and depth. This is one more strong recommendation to support statistical data with matrix observations.

Although not disproved by matrix observation, it seems arguable that the harmony between $AgenI$ and $AsubI$ may be indicative of topical development at all, as these variables seem to be overlapping measurements of particularity in sub/topical elaboration, as both levels of generality and subordination are expected to reflect informational profundity (or texture, as
Christensen terms it). Actually, while the number of levels of generality indicates the depth of topical development, the number of subordinate T-units in an idea string account for not only depth but also breadth of the topic content. For example, in Table 16, the six subordinate T-units 22-25-26-23-24-27 cover both dimensions. Consequently, the \textit{AgenI-AsubI} interaction provides stronger warrant for an interpretation of proportionate topical development.

In summary, apart from possible impacts by unusual textual progressions, the combined results of the MANOVA and Pearson tests suggested that when composing in L2, Vietnamese authors (1) develop the theme with more stadia (i.e.; idea strings) with more specific information (i.e.; levels of generality) when concerned about older readers; (2) elaborate topics and subtopics with more propositions in greater depth. These statistical indications correspond to Sun-I Chen’s 1983 finding that L2 writing displays a combination of rhetorical features as used in L1 and as practiced by native speakers of L2 (Coe 56). Although these test results do not as directly support earlier findings about non-western L1 theme progression as the raw data from observation of the matrices (See the section “The Discourse Matrix \textit{per se}’’), they do not reject what has been found in this respect. In other words, the strengths of inter-relationships (\textit{AsubN-AsubI}; \textit{AsubI-AgenI}; \textit{AsubN-AgenI}) confirmed the influences of language to indicate that, using English as a vehicle of thoughts, writers were more specific in supporting both topics and subtopics and advanced the theme in a structure closer to the Western deductive approach, strategies which did not show in their L1 composing.

II. Indirectness: Covert Interpropositional Connections

A. Statistical Test Results

Since this ideational aspect of indirectness was not included in either Chen’s or Hinkel’s research, I added two variables: ratio of irrelevances over T-units (\textit{Rir}) and ratio of implicit
connections over T-units (Rimp). In individual newspaper commentaries, such instances of rhetorical covertness were not detected in every text nor were the indirect relations strictly between adjacent sentences; they could occur across (non)consecutive idea strings. Further, the MANOVA tests were run on Rimp, not both variables, because only one irrelevant statement (Rir) was recorded in one matrix. Quite within expectation, with virtually no recording for Rir, no correlationships were found between the two variables Rir and Rimp with the p value at 0.5791.

The MANOVA test results showed the influences of both language (F = 16.03; p = 0.0003) and audience (F = 9.26; p = 0.0047) on the variable Rimp. Unexpectedly and curiously, the Tukey’s Studentized Range tests indicated that, with significantly higher means, the impacts were more likely from (a) writing in English (i.e.; 1.90 vs. 0.65) and (b) aiming at younger audience (i.e.; 1.75 vs. 0.8).

Initially, this indication seems to be contrary to the general assumption that indirectness occurs more in non-Western cultures (inferably, more in L1 than in L2, in my study) and is chiefly associated with politeness (inferably, in texts for older rather than younger readers). However, close inspection of these texts reveals that the two commentaries with the highest recordings of indirect ideational connections (i.e.; Commentary “Vietnam Must Prevent Women Trafficking Under the Mask of Marriage” with 4 instances and Commentary “Trade in Junk Appliances” with 5 occurrences) adopted an explicitly narrative style with the first-person narrator.

Just as Söter has discovered in her 1984 study of narratives by native speakers of Arabic, Vietnamese and English, the Vietnamese stories tend to focus on “the attributional features of characters (especially with respect to emotional and mental processes of the characters) [...] on
relationships among the participants in the telling of the story situation and on the inner states of characters within the story” than on the plot (198). Similarly, these two newspaper commentaries include a great deal of details about the writer’s tangentially-relevant reflections and emotional reactions as well as personal relationships. As such, these texts require from the audience more of the writer-reader shared schemata than any other commentaries in my study to figure out the implicit connections between seemingly irrelevant statements and the discoursal goal. The following excerpt from Commentary “Vietnam must Prevent Women Trafficking Under the Mask of Marriage” illustrates such instances.

9We will never resolve this issue unless we look at it squarely in the face and analyze why such things happen daily.

10If Vietnamese laws ban these “marriages”, how can matchmakers – illegal on paper – thrive?

11The more I think about it, the more ashamed and grateful I feel towards those Korean friends in “We and I” organization who recently condemned their country’s Chosun newspaper for humiliating Vietnamese women by portraying them as dying to wed Koreans.

12It is their compassion and sensitivity to human dignity that enabled the Korean friends to speak out.

13We must have appropriate measures to prevent the selling and buying of Vietnamese women.

14Several years ago, I had the honor of getting acquainted with several Korean friends in that organization. 15I know they reserve warm affection for the Vietnamese people and nation.
Although T-unit #9 evokes an analysis of the situation for an appropriate solution and #10 seems to start the analysis, #11 sounds so out-of-focus when it suddenly inserts the writer’s mental process and emotional reaction as well as an introduction of some characters only remotely related to the theme of “preventing women-trafficking under the mask of marriage.” However, a Vietnamese reader would be able to make connections between #10 and #11 as well as #12. The rhetorical question in #10 certainly implies that the Vietnamese do (or have done) nothing to stop those fake marriages. In writing statement #11, the writer obviously assumed that the audience had already read recent news about Vietnamese women marrying foreigners, especially Taiwanese and Koreans, and these marital unions had surged to such an alarming number that the Chosun newspaper published an insulting article to the effect that Vietnamese women were eager to marry just any Korean men, to which no official reactions had been shown from the Vietnamese people. Statement #12, praising the Korean friends for putting their humanitarian deed before their patriotism, is intended to urge the Vietnamese readers to action in defense of their female compatriots. T-unit #13 moves back to the central theme while #14-15-16 depart to another flashback of the author’s, just like the back-and-forth movement between “the frame [for another tale] and the encompass[ing] tale” in the Vietnamese narrative identified by Söter (195).

**B. First – Second Matrixing Comparative Analysis**

In order to be more readily accepted by readers, authors of English commentaries in newspapers for a young audience might assume a young person’s viewpoint. The covert connections found in the English newspaper commentaries for young readers thus appear to result from the authors’ relaxed feelings when “talking” to peers or juniors rather than focusing
on strategies of politeness or harmony. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to expect more instances of implicit ideational relationships than those shown on the matrices drawn by the Vietnamese, since the writer-reader tacit communal knowledge might affect these matrixers’ reading and thus matrixing. With that in mind, while recording the raw data for statistical tests, I requested two American college ESL instructors to help with the secondary matrixing. The raw data from their matrices for five newspaper commentaries (numbered as Ed31, Ed32, Ed33, Ed34, Ed35; in Table 10) from VOV News, one newspaper of their random choice (for in-depth investigation into different authors’ writing styles oriented to the same audience and in the same language), in contrast to those from corresponding matrixing by the Vietnamese unveiled interesting cultural and schematic disparities [See Table 10].

Table 10. Comparison of Variable Values for five VOV News Commentaries in 1st & 2nd matrixings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ed31</th>
<th>Ed32</th>
<th>Ed33</th>
<th>Ed34</th>
<th>Ed35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rir</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.325</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.090</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimp</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though these secondary matrixers randomly selected the VOV News, an English daily publication supposedly for senior audience (i.e.; different from the MANOVA result: English texts for young readers exhibited the most indirect connections), their matrices for the five newspaper commentaries showed more instances of irrelevancy (Rir) and implicitness (Rimp) than the Vietnamese matrices did.

An analysis of the two matrices for Commentary “Businesses Gear up for Post-WTO Competition” from the VOV News displays a wide gap between the Vietnamese and the
In the lineal mind of the American matrixers, this commentary seemed to present two major discourse stadia along with some irrelevancies, which could not be combined into a single matrix. Therefore, the Western schema on the matrixers presented the drawing in three layers: the first two layers depict two major topics, on the bottom layer are four irrelevant strings and a single T-unit. These Western readers perceived T-unit #1 as starting a major topic: performances of businesses are decisive for Vietnam’s economic success after joining WTO. This topic is next advanced by a more specific detail at #3 “enterprises remain weak bodies” and then delayed until #12, which resumes the topic with a statement about a different commercial situation that businesses will have to cope with. The topic is further elaborated with more co-ordinate propositions and very scarce specificity.

T-unit 2 is taken as starting another topic: the State (i.e.; the government) has supported businesses with various privileges. This topic, after a brief break at #3, is then developed continuously from #4 to #11 and, after the second break, reassumes at #19-20 and then finalizes with the last stadium 34-35-36-37-38 so as to reach the climatic thesis statement at #39 about the pitfall of the fostering policies.
On the lowest layer, irrelevancies are in four groups and one isolate. The first group #21-22-23 breaks away from the discussion about the national subsidy policies for businesses and presents the shortcomings of these enterprises as well as the challenges for them in the future. The 24-25-26 group relates the experience when joining the ASEAN. The 27-28-29-30 group points out the shortcomings of the industrial sector. Weaknesses in human resources are portrayed in 31-32-33. Lastly, the lone #40 does not make much sense.

On the other hand, the quasi-deductive matrix below was drawn by Vietnamese for the same commentary [Figure 14]. This is the newspaper commentary with the only recording of irrelevancy, T-unit 1, as T-unit 4 was not considered disconnected from the others because a stadium (or paragraph) can be semantically related to the central theme without being semantically connected to another stadium, such as the other breaks at #5, #8, #24 and #34.

Figure 14. Vietnamese matrix for Commentary “Businesses Gear Up for Post-WTO Competition”

In this matrix the two units #2 and #3 are conjoined while they are interpreted as belonging to two distinct major topics by the American matrixers, yet the entire text seems to be more coherent to the Vietnamese readers. I will explain the differences in the two drawings, and now my reading, obviously influenced by the interpretations of both the American and Vietnamese matrixers, assigns even more coherence to the text. First, I can see #2 as a consequence of #1, and the cohesive tie is “the large playing field” referring to the competitive world market which would be accessible after the WTO entry (stated in #1). The opening
argument then continues with the national economic impotency in #3 as a sharp contrast to the
government’s capacitating assistance for businesses, mentioned in #2. These two T-units serve as
an introduction to two leading arguments/topics (i.e.; government’s subsidies for weak
businesses in hope of a robust national economy to compete in the world market vs. sluggish
malfunctioning businesses) for the author’s stance in #40 (i.e.; government’s subsidies do more
harm than good for businesses).

The irrelevancies in the first matrix also seem to stem from the Western lineal, writer-
responsibility mindset coupled with the absence of shared schemata when interpreting an Asian
composition. Instead of two separate threads of details advancing the two topics, the Vietnamese
author chose to weave them together in juxtaposition for more intense contrast, which is
reflected in the different layers of matrices in the first matrix by the American readers.
Contrarily, probably from their correlational and non-linear thinking (Hall and Ames), the
Vietnamese matrixers (and perhaps the Vietnamese author, too) found two seamless moves (a)
from #11 about difficulties ensuing the nurturing policies to #12 about the post-WTO challenges,
and (b) from a fact (#18) to its sequel (#19).

Similarly, the first set (#21-22-23) about the international trade scenario seems to the
Western readers to interrupt the on-going conversation about the State’s enabling efforts to
vitalize the national economic sectors. However, in the Vietnamese text decoding, this set of
statements comprising an inference adding one more instance of the government’s incompetent
business administration which hinders rather than boosts up the businesses. In this reading, #21
should be co-ordinate and connected to #20. The Vietnamese matrixers probably had trouble
understanding the English term “equitization,” which the Vietnamese government uses in
English texts to indicate “privatization of the State-owned companies” (“Vietnam Equitization”), and thus took #21 as specifying #20.

The second set #24-25-26 about the unimproved foreign trade conditions after joining ASEAN does seem out of place. Nonetheless, a Vietnamese audience can realize that it is employed to “set the scene” as well as provide an implied analogical reasoning. First, the ASEAN market is regional, but it is also an international context, a miniature of WTO. Second, ASEAN entry did not make foreign trade any better for Vietnam, and so very likely will the WTO entry.

The third and fourth sets are in one paragraph probably because, in the Vietnamese thinking-reading, #31-32 is conjoined with #30 to elaborate the two factors in #29 while #33 concludes the stadium. The Vietnamese matrixers put #31-32 as particularizing #30 because (a) they had seen #30 as contrasting to #29 and (b) the name of Polytechnic University as well as overseas training are easy connections to the term “technology” in #30.

T-unit 40 becomes an irrelevant loner in the matrix by the Americans probably due to a wrong word choice by the author and the ambiguity of the pronoun this. I think the term precedent in #40 is a literal “dictionary” translation of the Vietnamese term tiến đề which, in Vietnam (not abroad), currently assumes the pragmatic meaning of “springboard” rather than “preliminary act serving as guide for subsequent cases.” Accordingly, in that beguiled context, the Western readers could not relate the pronoun this to an appropriate antecedent. On the contrary, the ambiguous pronoun allowed the author to refer to the fallacy of government subsidies to some businesses, implied in #39.

It is why both the Vietnamese and the American matrixers saw logical connections not only between propositions (i.e.; T-units) but also between discourse stadia (i.e.; idea strings),
though not always. The broken line in the American matrix represents a covert relationship between the third idea string (but 4th in the Vietnamese matrix) and the first idea string (2nd in the Vietnamese drawing), in addition to the overt connection between the second and third idea strings (3rd and 4th in the Vietnamese matrix).

Inherently, “texts may be ambiguous” and lead to different readings (Coe 38); however, the above example reveals the underlying causes of L2 features that have been noted in the existing literature: schemata (e.g.; Piaget; Bartlett; Meyer; Rumelhart; Carrell), cultural impacts (Sapir-Whorf), and East-West rhetorical contrasts (e.g.; Kaplan; Hinds; Connor; Hinkel). More importantly, the analysis of this sample text also suggests that Vietnamese indirectness in conjunction with a reader-responsibility writing style produces more irrelevancy and implicitness for a Western audience than the writer could realize.

III. Indirectness: Implicative Strategies

The t-test was run first to describe how frequently each indirectness device was used. The median, and sometimes the mean, values provided by the t-test were the decisive data as to which independent variable in a pair (i.e.; English-Vietnamese; Senior-Young Readers) found in the Mann-Whitney test was more influential on the dependent variables. Then the Mann-Whitney U test was performed to explore the effects of the audience’s age and the language used (i.e.; Vietnamese or English) on the authors’ choices of indirectness devices.

1. t-test

Since the median and range were reported as the test results in Hinkel’s research and the sample size in my study is relatively small (i.e.; 20 per group), the results from the t-tests are likewise reported (Refer to Table 18 in Appendix). The median (the score at the true center of each group) denotes the group’s central tendency in the indirectness usage, and the median value
of 0 indicates that at least half the texts in the group did not contain that particular indirectness device. The range, considering the scores at both ends of the distribution, expresses the spread of the scores (above and below the median); that is, the greater the range, the farther apart the scores (or the bigger differences in the use of a particular indirectness device in the group).

A number of strategies were in high frequencies of use across the independent variables, language and audience (See Table 11). In each cell of result for the use of a particular indirectness marker in a particular group of newspaper commentaries (e.g.; written in English/Vietnamese, or written for senior/junior audience), the median value is on the line above the range.

Table 11. Usage of High-Frequency Indirectness Devices (Median %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy/marker</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>0.0693*</td>
<td>0.0349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0.1308</td>
<td>0.0451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagueness/ambiguity</td>
<td>0.0296*</td>
<td>0.0159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0.0420</td>
<td>0.0369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominalizations</td>
<td>0.0253*</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0.0752</td>
<td>0.0177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal &amp; negative indefinite pron.</td>
<td>0.0049*</td>
<td>0.0015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>0.0162</td>
<td>0.0145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < 0.05

It is not surprising that the highest median values were found in the use of repetition, especially in L2 commentaries. Probably as McCarthy posits, Vietnamese may be among cultures that generously tolerate the recurrence of the same words in prose (166). Although Vietnamese do vary the lexical terms in writing, neither the writer nor the reader will bother very much about the repetition of the same words in a text, especially when referential cohesion is involved.
(Matalene). In addition, the limited L2 lexical range doubtlessly escalated this rhetorical practice in L2 newspaper commentaries.

The same L2 lexical limitation probably accounts for the dense occurrences of nominalization, which is quite close to repetition. Indeed, in English the inflection only makes minimal or no changes in the word form and the resultant noun is not much different and thus easy for the learner to adopt into her/his EFL/ESL vocabulary as well as to retrieve for use. On the contrary, the Vietnamese words do not inflect for different parts of speech, and those few instances of nominalization in L1 commentaries were identified by their grammatical functions and by their initial appearance in the text.

L1 culture may also be responsible for the second highest frequencies of vague expressions in the L2 newspaper commentaries, since markers of vagueness (particularly vague numerical quantifiers and scalar qualifiers) can be detected in Vietnamese daily social communication. Exchanges with vague-meaning numerical quantifiers (i.e.; three meaning some) like this friendly invitation to stay for lunch/dinner “Hey! Eat three grains of rice before leaving for home” are not uncommon. The number three (or the duos: three-five, three-seven) in Vietnamese represents a small quantity and is mostly employed like the English indefinite quantifier some in colloquial conversations. Vague numerical quantifiers (e.g.; many, approximately, thousands of) also appear in prose where it is unnecessary to be precise, and the L2 commentaries about economic issues and natural disaster requiring numerical expressions raised the L2 usage of vagueness substantially. However, it should be noted that the densities of scalar qualifiers (e.g.; good, usually, hot, cool) in spoken or written Vietnamese do not necessarily stem from the speaker/writer’s need to be ambiguous. Actually, qualifying adjectives like hot or blue are never questionable as to what specific temperature or what hue it is supposed
to evoke; therefore, these adjectives might also be significantly responsible for impressive data of this usage in L₂ texts.

Also striking in the newspaper commentaries are the frequencies of *universal* and *negative indefinite pronouns*: while in similar use with regard to *audience*, they occurred in far greater density in L₂ commentaries. Cultural/rhetorical practice in L₁ might account for this device, which expresses extremes on a quantifying continuum: representatively from *all* to *none* (like *everyone / nobody*), since they function in Vietnamese speech and prose like hyperboles to achieve convincing impressions without accounting for the truth value of the information.

Among the features that were absent in most of the commentaries (i.e.; with the zero median value across the groups) are *lexical hedges, quality hedges, point-of-view distancing, downtoners, diminuitives, understatements, and conditionals*. The low occurrences of these devices can be traced to their employment chiefly in L₁ informal speech. Not surprisingly, *discourse particles* are considered too informal in Vietnam to be used in serious writing at all.

The observations of the t-test results above are confirmed by the Mann-Whitney tests in the next section as to which rhetorical choices are significantly affected by *language* and/or *audience*.

2. Mann-Whitney U test

According to the Mann-Whitney test results, *language* had considerable effects on the writers’ uses of several indirectness devices, and the median values (or the mean values, in cases where the medians are identical) provided by the t-test helped determine which level of *language* (i.e.; English or Vietnamese) exerted the impacts, as in Table 12.
Table 12. Effects of Language on Usage of Indirectness Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical question</td>
<td>0.0099</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagueness</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
<td>0.0296*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>0.0002</td>
<td>0.0693*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
<td>0.0010</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical hedge</td>
<td>0.0288</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility hedge</td>
<td>0.0392</td>
<td>0.0023*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal &amp; neg. indef. pron.</td>
<td>0.0155</td>
<td>0.0049*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non)Assertive indef. pron.</td>
<td>0.0405</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td>0.0448</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive voice</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>0.0076*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominalization</td>
<td>&lt;.0001</td>
<td>0.0253*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * higher median value ** higher mean value

It can be interpreted from the results above that, writing in L$_2$, the Vietnamese authors/translators tended to employ vague expressions, repetitions, possibility hedges, universal and negative indefinite pronouns, passive voice, and nominalizations. Besides repetition and nominalization, passive voice is reasonably expected to occur in L$_2$ writing more than in L$_1$ composition, because far fewer passive verbs are used in Vietnamese discourse and a large number of commonly-used Vietnamese transitive verbs "would sound odd" in the passive form (Trần M. T.).

On the other hand, when composing in the native language, the Vietnamese writers appeared to incline toward rhetorical questions, irony, lexical hedges, assertive and non-assertive indefinite pronouns, and understatements. Of these strategies, irony has the most restricted situational usage in the native language since its face-threatening potential requires rhetorical appropriateness (including the wording). It is then unsurprising that this sarcastic criticism only
appeared in L₁ commentaries. The remaining devices show similar but not striking popularity in Vietnamese discourse.

The concern with the audience’s age and social status did not have much influence over the writers’ rhetorical preferences, except that the authors seemed to opt for hypothetical conditions when writing for young readers \( p = 0.0216; \) median = 0; mean = 0.0008).

The more refined tests, considering the impacts of both language and audience, provided more specific results as reported in Table 13.

**Table 13. Effects of Language & Audience on Usage of Indirectness Devices (Median)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>English</th>
<th></th>
<th>Vietnamese</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhetorical question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0007</td>
<td>0.0025*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vagueness</td>
<td>0.0250</td>
<td>0.0367*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>0.0743*</td>
<td>0.0692</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irony</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0059*</td>
<td>0.0018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical hedge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0008*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility hedge</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0033*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal &amp; neg. indef. pron.</td>
<td>0.0035</td>
<td>0.0063*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Non)assertive indef. pron.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0028*</td>
<td>0.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understatement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive voice</td>
<td>0.0082*</td>
<td>0.0053</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominalization</td>
<td>0.0298*</td>
<td>0.0160</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * higher median ** with higher mean

In particular, the newspaper commentaries written in English for a senior audience disclosed high densities of repetition, passive voice and nominalization. Meanwhile, English commentaries written for young readers saliently utilized ambiguity, possibility hedges, universal and negative indefinite pronouns, and contrary-to-fact conditions. While the findings
about L₂ writing for older readers, as a whole, appeared to show remarkable EFL/ESL limitations; the analysis of L₂ texts for a juvenile audience revealed a general tendency to converse in a relaxed, collegial manner that allows ambiguity.

Inspection of L₁ newspaper commentaries for a senior audience suggested that the authors practiced irony, lexical hedges, and assertive and non-assertive indefinite pronouns, much like the style found in friendly conversations among elderly people about serious matters. No clear explanation could be found from the writers’ apparent preference for rhetorical questions and understatements in L₁ texts for young readers.

3. Analysis in Reference to Chinese & Native-Speaker Writing

Even though the subjects of my project were newspaper commentaries while Hinkel studied student essays, I will roughly compare the results in my study in reference to those in Hinkel’s 1997 research for some further insight into the Asian rhetorical practices of indirectness because newspaper commentaries. Since the English texts in my study were written by Vietnamese (i.e.; L₂ writing; hereafter L₂), they will be examined in parallel with the Chinese group (i.e.; L₂ writing; hereafter CH) as well as the native-speaker group (i.e.; L₁ English writing; hereafter NS). The contrast also takes into account the Vietnamese newspaper commentaries (hereafter L₁). The discussion will be arranged in the order of the markers as presented in Chapter Three, but only indirectness devices with significant disparities in usage between L₂ and L₁ newspaper commentaries will be considered.

- Rhetorical questions

The data clearly displayed a parallel between newspaper commentaries and student essays: a significant distance between the two degrees of recurrences resulting from the absence of rhetorical questions in more than half the English texts (NS and L₂). Interestingly, the English
newspaper commentaries are actually L2 compositions, and yet the comparative English-Vietnamese rhetorical behavior still appears to mirror the L1-L2 contrast. The refining t-test even singled out NS and L1 newspaper commentaries for young readers as exhibiting more of this kind of hedge, which may imply the writer’s critical posture while engaging the readers’ opinions (Wong; Maynard qtd. in Hinkel, SLWs’ Text 153/154). This usage of rhetorical questions to reach out to a junior audience also corresponds to Asian communicative norm “to display the author’s authoritative stance and the broad applicability of his or her propositions” (Taylor and Chen qtd. in Hinkel, SLWs’ Text 153).

- Vagueness and Ambiguity

As compared with the statistics for the native and Chinese essays, the newspaper commentary data provide a seemingly reverse scenario, where a salient tendency for opaque expressions emerge more in L2 texts in newspapers supposedly targeting young readers (according to the refining t-test). Nevertheless, this result of prevalent practice of vagueness in English newspaper commentaries seems to support Channel’s finding that strategic vagueness is popular in English academic writing to circumvent the responsibility for the precision of the proposition and not to impose the information on the reader, which is in turn congruent to the CH academic writing.

- Repetition

Although substantially higher percentages of lexical recurrences were found in L2 newspaper commentaries in a surpassing range, this manifestation can be viewed in conjunction with that in CH texts, which are also L2 writing. Moreover, of all the indirectness strategies, *repetition* registered the highest median values across all groups of newspaper commentaries (See Table 11). This fact is comprehensible. First, Asian cultures like Chinese, Japanese and
Thai have been noted for utilizing lexical repetition as a cohesive device (Matalene; McCarthy; Indrasuta). Second, in order to alternate direct repetition with other cohesive items (like synonyms, near-synonyms, or hyponyms), foreign language learners need “a fairly rich vocabulary” as well as knowledge of lexical relations in contexts, which may not be acquired at the time (McCarthy 67-71). Differently put, more occurrences of repetition in Vietnamese L2 composing are within expectation.

**- Irony**

It is understandable that irony is considered inappropriate for academic writing but acceptable in newspaper commentaries, a writing style both formal and informal. Further, the irony in the newspaper commentaries was solely for criticism, *e.g.* One of the reasons ... *is the poor quality of such “model apartment complexes.”* Note that the quotations marks serve as a signal that the phrase is not to be taken literally. Perhaps because this is an “awkward strategy” (Leech), it was employed more in L1 commentaries.

**- Hedges**

Just as in Hinkel’s study, the usage of various hedges did not remain steady in one group: more lexical hedges occurred in L1 newspaper commentaries, but more possibility hedges were found in L2 commentaries and CH essays, and no difference between NS and CH groups regarding lexical hedges. As I have mentioned earlier, hedges are more common in Vietnamese speech than in prose. Additionally, it is difficult to find a perfect English equivalent for a commonly-used Vietnamese hedge. For example, a Northern Vietnamese would hedge a suggestion or a personal question with this phrase “Nói khí không phải, …” to acknowledge the sensitiveness of the main proposition. A rough translation for the phrase might be “What I’m going to say might not be appropriate, but …” Therefore, a reasonable explanation could be that
Vietnamese writers may be more comfortable using the formal-sounding possibility hedges, rather than the other hedges, in L2 composing.

- **Indefinite Pronouns**

  While the CH papers exhibited more instances of indefinite pronouns (both sub-categories), the Vietnamese writers tended to use more universal and negative indefinite pronouns for L2 composing but more assertive and non-assertive indefinite pronouns for L1 commentaries. Unfortunately, my reflection on Vietnamese communicative norms could not produce an acceptable explication for these results.

- **Understatements**

  Significantly more understatements were employed in L1 newspaper commentaries than in L2 ones, while this indirectness marker appeared in similar frequencies in NS and CH essays. There might be two reasons for this finding. First, to some extent, understatements are similar to vague quantifiers, which are more common in Vietnamese communication. Second, it seems that Vietnamese only employ these understatement markers when they feel disinclined to commit to the truth of the proposition, and the purpose of this device thus shaped might be considered inappropriate for L2 writing.

- **Passive Voice**

  In contrast to the considerable divergence leaning toward the CH essays in Hinkel’s study, the significant use of the passive voice in L2, rather than L1, newspaper commentaries is understandable. Similar to the perception in the West, the passive voice is usually considered unfavorable (Hairston et al 308) in Vietnamese prose and is predominantly used for fronting emphasis on the object of verb or for removal of the agent that may be face-threatening or
unnecessary in communication. For example, “Nam bị đánh rất riết” [Nam has been flunked] or “Tôi đã đốn rồi” [Dinner is served (already)].

- Nominalization

The NS and CH groups utilized similar percentages of nominalizations, but the L2 newspaper commentaries had significantly more nominalizations than the L1 ones. This finding is also sensible, as (1) nominalization is not common in the Vietnamese discourse, and (2) Vietnamese words do not inflect for different parts of speech, hence this device is not easy to detect in the L1 text. The counting of nominalizations was thus based upon knowledge of English grammatical functions (e.g.; subject / object / complement). For instance, in this sentence “Ai mà nỡ hại những trẻ thô ngày [Nobody has the heart to do harm to innocent children]” the underlined compound (meaning “innocent”) is usually an adjective qualifying nouns/pronouns whereas the same compound functions as the grammatical subject and is thus considered a noun as in this example “Thơ ngày đau phải là cái tôi [Innocence/Naivety is not a fault].”

- Conditionals

Although the NS and the CH groups exhibited no disparity in the employment of imaginary conditions, the refining t-test revealed significant occurrences of hypothetical conditions in L2 commentaries for young readers. The lower frequency of this device in L1 text is understandable since Vietnamese has no verb tenses and thus cannot express distinct types of conditions. However, the significantly higher usage in L2 writing may not be indicative of interactional impacts because four out the five conditionals found were either in direct quotation or indirect speech.
A general speculation of the Vietnamese L₁-L₂ variations in the usage of indirectness markers with reference to NS-CH divergence suggests that L₂ practice of indirectness is comparable to interlanguage: a “compromise” between L₁ and NS preferences.

IV. Conclusion

In summary, the study of forty newspaper commentaries written by Vietnamese (twenty in Vietnamese and twenty in English) has revealed L₂ writing concerns as expressed in the literature about second language writing. In general, indirectness appeared to be employed in Vietnamese newspaper commentaries as a public persuasive writing style. Textually, whereas L₂ texts seemed to be developed in more depth and in a structure closer to the Western linear progression, the textual advancement was mostly non-linear, but only quasi-inductive and quasi-deductive (i.e., not truly inductive or deductive). This result supports the findings by Hind (“Inductive”) and Chen (“Comparative”). Ideationally, while statistical data revealed that implicit propositional connections were significant in English newspaper commentaries in newspapers intended for young readers, the secondary matrixing indicated that (a) more irrelevances and covert ideational relationships occur in other groups of texts; and (b) the Vietnamese reader-responsibility writing style is likely problematic for the Western reader. Interactionally, the Western readers may detect in Vietnamese newspaper commentaries a sense of vagueness, which may be created not merely by the seemingly informal tone / unsuitable style but rather by the combined impacts of non-Western organizations, of inclusion of tangentially-related details, of unstated connections among propositions, and of inappropriate usage of strategic verbal expressions. Regarding the two independent factors, the statistical test results indicated that language, English in particular, had more significant influences on micro-level texts features, such as ideational breadth and depth, as well as on such indirectness markers as
repetition and vagueness/ambiguity. Contrarily, audience statistically impacted only on the utilization of hypothetical conditions and only one macro-level feature (Rgen-Ris), which apparently indicated meandering text development with both deductive-like and inductive-like approaches.

Generally, the study has provided answers to the research questions. This preliminary insight into Vietnamese composing basically supports the existing theory about the culture-specific nature of discourse construction. However, further research should be conducted for more solid findings and generalizability.

Chapter Five will present an overview of how the findings respond to the research questions and consider the pedagogical implications of the findings. Reviewing the current EFL writing instruction in Vietnam with regard to the existing literature of L1 composition and discourse studies, I will propose some focal points for addressing ESL writing difficulties in general, for EFL college writing courses in Vietnam (including practical suggestions for portfolio assessment to promote the writing process and foster accumulative efforts), as well as ideas for further investigations.
CHAPTER FIVE. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, based on the findings, I presented the influences of *language* (as means of communication) and *audience* on the writer’s tendency to structure the text, develop the topics, and be strategically ambiguous. This chapter is to assess the extent of the study in regard with its initial purpose and its prospective contribution to EFL/ESL writing instruction in general. Specifically, the following sections include: (1) a review of the research questions together with the emerging limitations, (2) a discussion of the current L₁ and L₂ composition instruction in Vietnamese high school as a shaping input, in addition to the cultural norms, for Vietnamese EFL learners, (3) EFL/ESL pedagogical implications, in general and in Vietnamese context, as well as (4) suggestions for further investigations.

For consistency, in this chapter, I will use L₁ and L₂ to refer to writing/newspaper commentaries in Vietnamese and in English, respectively.

I. Review of the Study Findings in Regard of Research Questions

In Chapter One, I related the rigorous cultural and linguistic commonalities between Vietnam and China and thus hypothesized that Vietnamese composing might incorporate some degree of indirectness, like what has been found in Chinese writing. There have appeared in Vietnamese literature works on pragmatics (by Đỗ; Nguyễn T. G.) and text linguistics (by Trần N. T.; Diệp) or even books recommending organizational/ stylistic strategies for effective writing (by Nguyễn Đ. M. et al.). However, these publications principally present the disciplinary theories with examples gleaned from Vietnamese spoken discourse (i.e.; daily conversations in both real life and fictions) or written texts. No research has been conducted into Vietnamese textual development or indirect communication in the written text. My study was, therefore, designed to explore for this rhetorical practice in newspaper commentaries, a form of public
written persuasion which potentially mirrors the general communication norms, as these are serious texts aiming at a secular audience and thus not so rigidly conformed to form and style as academic composing.

Chapter Four has presented and analyzed the test results in reference to Vietnamese communication norms, existing L2 composition literature and cross-cultural communicative issues. The following sections will review how the findings responded to the research questions and in what respects some of the variable designs were not appropriate for the research aims.

**Research Question 1.** “Since indirectness/indirection has been attributed to Chinese composition, is it employed in Vietnamese exposition/argumentation, too?”

To the first question, the test results render a positive answer. The newspaper commentaries appeared to display, to various extents, all the three aspects of indirectness/indirection. Textually, the test results indicated digressive development and indirectly suggested that L1 theme advancement is quite different from the Western deductive approach. Regarding ideational connections, some instances of irrelevance or implicitness were found. Strategic vagueness was also detected in the newspaper commentaries through the employment of a number of indirectness markers.

**Research Question 2.** “Which indirectness features/strategies are utilized?”

This question requires a more detailed review of the findings with regard to the three aspects of indirectness concerning the text structure, cohesion/coherence, and vagueness.

On the macro-level, newspaper commentaries intended for senior audience in both L1 and L2 displayed non-western theme progression. The significant correlation $R_{gen-Ris}$ indicated a parallel increase/decrease in the number of levels of generality and the number of idea strings, which suggested abnormality from a Western perspective in topical development as well as in
topical semantic relationship. Observations of the matrices showed different forms of digressive ideational elaboration: idea strings continued to develop a detail in the preceding one (i.e.; semantically subordinate to the preceding one) and topical development contained more and more general details (i.e.; inductive alternate with deductive progressions).

Although not proven by statistical results, matrix observations also suggested that (1) Vietnamese writers preferred the theme-delay progression in both L1 and L2 writing; (2) L2 writing advanced the theme in an approach closer to the Western conventions which I call quasi-deductive; (3) quasi-inductive as well as quasi-deductive organizational structure were utilized in both L1 and L2 writing; and (4) textual progressions tended to ramble rather than sufficiently elaborating on individual topics/subtopics.

On the micro-level, apart from possible effects of unexpected topical development (i.e.; with more and more general information; with co-ordinate undeveloped details) and theme progression (i.e.; consecutive discourse stadia developing one detail in the previous one), the significant influence of L2 on three variables AsubN, AgenI, AsubI, further strengthened by the substantial inter-relationships among all the micro-level dependent variables, appeared to designate an L2 textual development closer to the Western deductive approach.

However, in extrapolating the results, I realized some limitations of four variables in the face of unexpected textual organizations: Rgen, Rns, AnN and AsubN. In other words, Sun-I Chen worked out the variables, and I adopted them, with the Western deductive development in mind; however, the actual variations of non-deductive organizations could then refract the indicativeness of the variables in various manners.

In the lineal progression of the deductive approach, the topics (or discourse stadia) in a text are supposed to begin on the same level of generality and the elaborating details should be
more (and more) specific (resulting in more levels of generality in a downward movement). Similarly, an idea string can be a component of a node string (i.e.; one of a series of supporting subtopics) or consists of one or more node strings (i.e.; one topic supported by one or more subtopics). Accordingly, on the macro-level, the variable \( R_{gen} \) (i.e.; ratio of levels of generality over T-units) is supposed to indicate the text’s informational depth, as it accounts for the number of levels of generality in individual texts.

However, in my study, stadia in a text could start from below or above the previous one, and topical elaboration might be with more particular or more general details. Such ideational development adds more levels of generality but it does not create the desirable depth for the text; consequently, the indicative potential of \( R_{gen} \) might unpredictably fluctuate. Also in my study, observations of the matrices revealed unusual textual organizations and supplemented the test results for more reliable interpretation, as the indicativeness of the variables seemed to be limited by the Vietnamese unexpected writing styles.

\( R_{gen} \) was also found sensitive to a form of rambling elaboration. Consecutive stadia (i.e.; idea strings) may keep developing a detail/subtopic in the immediately preceding one, instead of advancing new topics to contribute to the persuasive strength of the theme. Topical development may digress from the text purpose with occasional over-developed details/subtopics. Such meandering progressions can inflate the value of \( R_{gen} \) and thus negatively affect its indicativeness.

In interpretation of the test results, Chen relied on another macro-level variable \( R_{ns} \) (i.e.; ratio of node strings over clauses/T-units) as an indication of meandering theme progression and thus implying that the node string represents a rambling co-ordination (40). This conclusion is questionable because each node in a node string is supported by at least one particular detail.
Instead, the number of nodes in a node string (i.e.; co-ordinate subtopics) rather the number of node strings in a text accounts for rambling elaboration. On the other hand, $R_{ns}$ does not account for a superficial/drifting elaboration with undeveloped co-ordinate propositions, as in Figure 15, because these co-ordinate T-units (i.e.; propositions) are not nodes (i.e.; with supporting subordination) and do not form a node string.

**Figure 15. Co-ordinate Elaboration**

On the micro-level, observations of the matrices in my project showed that the majority of node strings were subsumed under idea strings and constituted virtually all the encompassing idea strings; the node string and the idea string were then almost identical and had a consistent ratio of subordinate statements. As a result, the correlation $A_{subN}-A_{subI}$ (i.e.; average of subordinate T-units in a node string / in an idea string) may not indicate proportionate development of topics and subtopics.

Likewise, the two variables $A_{nN}$ and $A_{subN}$ are likely to produce a consistent ratio (in a correlation) because a node always starts a subordination. Therefore, the $A_{nN}-A_{subN}$ inter-relationship might not indicate desirable topical development in both breadth and depth.

Regarding the second aspect, cohesion and coherence, the newspaper commentaries exhibited occurrences of both irrelevance and implicitness, and the contrast between the primary and the secondary matrixing suggested schematic and cultural impacts on the meaning-making during constructing / interpreting a text. Specifically, the primary matrices showed only one instance of irrelevance and fewer instances of implicitness in comparison with the secondary ones. My contrastive analysis of two pairs of matrices in Chapter Four illustrate how the Vietnamese matrixers’ cultural and social background knowledge shared with the writers might
have played an important role in their construction of meaning, and how the lack of such “tacit communal knowledge” (or shared schema) seemed to prevent the American matrixers from seeing the connections between details / topics in the text. Therefore, Asian covert propositional connections in conjunction with the reader-responsibility writing style might unfavorably influence a Western audience’s perception of the text.

Vagueness, the third aspect, was noted in the newspaper commentaries through significant usage of some indirectness markers while some others were hardly or not found at all. Differently put, corresponding to Hinkel’s research, my findings indicated that not all L2 indirectness markers/strategies derive from the writer’s L1 composing conventions nor do they entirely account for the Western reader’s impression of “vague and indirect” writing style in L2 texts (i.e.; considering irrelevant claims and indirect relationships between propositions). Instead, some indirectness strategies could be traced to insufficient L2 lexis (e.g.; repetition, nominalization) or lack of instruction in style, especially tone (e.g.; rhetorical questions).

**Research Question 3.** “Does the usage of indirectness vary according to language (Vietnamese vs. English) and audience (young vs. senior)?”

Test results in response to the third question indicated that language exerted more impact than audience on the employment of indirectness in all the three aspects: textual organization, inter-propositional connections, and interactional strategies.

As discussed earlier, L2 commentaries appeared to bear more resemblance to Western organizational norms but still exhibit inductive progression, implicit ideational connections as well as significant occurrences of indirectness markers. Meanwhile, L1 newspaper commentaries were only notable for some indirectness devices like *irony* or *understatement* that are transactionally better in the native language.
Audience appeared to have demonstrably fewer influences over the practice of indirectness in the newspaper commentaries: textually. This was found only on the number of levels of generality (i.e.; $R_{gen}$); and, interactionally, only on the use of hypothetical conditions. This languidness might result from composition instruction in Vietnam as well as from the newspapers’ flexible consideration of audience. First, $L_1$ composition instruction in Vietnam does not take the audience into consideration (Nguyễn D. M. et al 9/21) although appropriateness is perceptibly emphasized in social communication. This appropriateness is manifested even in the selection of personal pronouns in accordance with the relationship between the speaker/writer and the listener/reader; for example, the first person, singular pronoun can be Tôi [equivalent to the English pronouns “I” / “me”] in formal context removed from all personal relationships, or em in interactions with older siblings but chị/ anh / tao with younger siblings. Because he/she is not trained to do so, the writer’s rhetorical decisions might not involve very much consideration of audience. Second, as I explained in Chapter Three, the newspapers generally extend the range of the target audience so as to attract more readers and raise the circulation (in the case of print editions) or website hits (in case of online editions). Consequently, there might be substantial convergence in the different newspapers’ concern about readers in their rhetorical considerations. Concisely, Vietnamese writers, including EFL students, are not so audience-oriented while composing as Western authors.

Research Question 4. “Can such usage of indirectness negatively affect the text, from Western reading perspectives?”

The answer to the last question is positive regarding propositional connection and textual progression but not proven regarding the employment of indirectness markers.
Unfavorable effects were displayed particularly through the secondary matrixing by Westerners. Since these readers only helped with the matrixing, they were principally concerned with understanding the text purpose and the propositions that advance that theme. Therefore, what might cause difficulties for these readers was also what the discourse matrix was supposed to display: the textual organization and the inter-propositional connections. In these two aspects, the decision to discuss disparate matrices and the drawings did reveal the Western matrixers’ difficulties with the inter-relationships between propositions and thus also with some textual development (e.g.; the text structure that interwove the two major topics).

The secondary matrices showed more irrelevant propositions and implicit propositional connections, which is quite predictable. As pragmatics and compositionists have pointed out, implicit ideational connections occur in speech as well as writing across cultures in the world, and the writer-reader shared schemata provide the tacit metamessage that bridges the information gap between propositions, facilitating communication (Blum-Kulka; Enkvist, Lautamatti; Matalene; van Dijk). However, when there is a lack of shared background knowledge, the reader has to rely on explicit connections in the text for meaning-construction, and that is when covert relationships between details become problematic. My comparative analysis of two pairs of Vietnamese-American matrices in Chapter Four illustrates such implicitness and the resultant effects.

The secondary matrices also disclosed more non-Western patterns in the American reading. Since the secondary matrixing was only added later during data collection, it was not performed on all the newspaper commentaries; therefore, the contrast was observational rather than empirically proven by statistical tests. The two conspicuous ideational progression patterns
were (1) undeveloped co-ordination and (2) rambling with consecutive stadia developing one
detail in the preceding stadium.

On the other hand, these American matrixers did not seem to have trouble with the
employment of indirectness devices (although they did have difficulties with metaphors in dense
occurrences, as in Commentary “WTO from Hanoi Perspective” in Appendix 11). This may be
because (1) indirectness markers do not seriously affect the lexical meanings, and (2) the
informal tone might not sound very strikingly inappropriate in a newspaper commentary, which
can be either formal or informal.

In sum, although the findings provided answers to all my research questions, the
unexpected textual developments of the newspaper commentaries might have affected the
variables and thus diminished or altered the indicative capacity of the test results. Observations
of matrices as well as texts were thus complimentary to the statistics for more reasonable and
reliable interpretations.

The next section reviews how L₁ and L₂ composition is taught in Vietnam. The insight
can present some Asian L₂ writing actualities to be considered and pedagogical implications for
EFL/ESL writing instruction.

II. L₁ & L₂ Composition Instruction in Vietnam

Vietnam has been through two crucial periods of long-lasting foreign occupations that
predictably influenced how the Vietnamese compose: the Chinese dominion (179BC – 905AD)
and the French colonization (c.1858-1954).

Writing has been included in Vietnam’s formal education since the inception of national
Sino-Vietnamese instruction in 939. Back then three forms of academic writing were tested in all
the three levels of Civil Service Examinations (from regional to national): creative writing (i.e.;
poetry); argumentation (i.e.; prose about literary and political topics); formal writing (e.g.; reports, speeches, decrees, …) (Nguyễn Đ. M. et al. 6). After a thousand years of composing in the classic Chinese characters and style, from the eight-legged essay to the four-part composition, the Vietnamese undoubtedly retained deep imprints of Chinese rhetorical practices (e.g.; indirectness, vagueness) in their writing even later when using solely quốc ngữ, the romanized script completed (between 1619-1630) by the French missionary Alexandre de Rhodes and later revised by Vietnamese for use up to now.

The Western influx came with the French 100-year colonization imposing French as the sole language of instruction, as revealed in Vietnam history (Đinh et al; Nguyễn N. C. et al). Ultimately, newspapers, as a powerful propaganda tool, significantly contributed to publishing activities making this drastic linguistic change in society: from Sino-Vietnamese to French and, especially, the romanized Vietnamese script. This historical period has undoubtedly led Vietnamese writing away from the more recent Chinese four-part composition (i.e.; qì-chéng-jùn-hé) to the Western three-part essay (i.e.; introduction-body-conclusion). Nevertheless, the topical development in each part was not specified.

At present, according to Nguyễn Đ. M. et al., the Vietnamese L₁ writing curriculum has two foci for writing development: creative writing about the familiar world around the students (e.g.; familial/social life, relationships, nature etc.) in elementary and middle school, and argumentation in high school (6-7). However, argumentative writing in high school, as a component of the Vietnamese literature curriculum, is predominantly a form of literary analysis, which requires as a rule arguing for the beauty of a literary work already studied in class (7-8). Writing literary analysis, as taught in Vietnam, places tremendous pressure on students to memorize excerpts of not only poems but also prose to quote as proofs for their arguments at
writing examinations. This approach is similar to instruction in China as described by Hammond and Gao. Nonetheless, this single-genre composition teaching does not actually foster students’ critical thinking, as it is prescriptive in that students only particularize appreciation of the literary work as explained in class by the teacher. In such an instructional context, the essay invariably aims at the literature teacher’s reading, as Nguyễn D. M. et al. noted. Vietnamese student writing displayed a lack of audience-awareness and they suggested that writing prompts should evoke from students consideration of the rhetorical situation (9/21). Moreover, in reference to foreign sources, writing scholars are now professing the deductive theme progression while recognizing that both deductive and inductive approaches are applicable (Điệp 107; Nguyễn D. M. et al. 75-76).

Nonetheless, these suggestions might not reflect the Vietnamese students’ actual organizational practices. Furthermore, the interviews of two of nineteen Vietnamese Fulbrighters in their first year at U.S. higher-education institutes for my 2003 seminar project about Vietnamese graduate students’ reading/writing difficulties revealed features in consensus with theories about Asian rhetorical preferences: “flowery writing” appealing to the senses rather than factual proofs appealing to the mind (Fox, “Ally”; Hall and Ames; Lan) and Taoist spontaneity rather than contention/ rationality (Kennedy 158; Lu, Rhetoric 227/233-4). The informants, who claimed to be good at composition in high school, could easily state the three major parts of an essay (i.e.; introduction-body-conclusion) but could not clearly describe how they advanced the theme. These informants’ fuzzy ideas about textual development in conjunction with the availability of various collections of model essays, on topics commonly assigned for homework or timed-writing tests, at any bookstores in Vietnam seemed to suggest that Vietnamese students learn composing principally by imitating writing models.
In terms of EFL writing, instruction in Vietnamese middle and high schools only aims at grammatically correct sentences and sentence-level cohesion created by conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs, exactly corresponding to the common assumption about EFL teaching/learning: “well-formed sentences indicate a mastery of the [target] language” (Mauranen, “Discourse Competence” 196).

The situation then presents the college EFL programs with gigantic challenges when the entrance examinations, as required by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), test prospective EFL majors in three subjects: English, mathematics and Vietnamese literature; the passing score being the total of the three scores. While the English score has recently been doubled before the total to reduce the unfavorable effects of the other two scores, the MOET now designs the written tests in all subjects for the entrance examinations at all national colleges/universities, and for English it is a multiple choice test largely on vocabulary and grammar. The obvious result is numerous false beginners for the college EFL programs.

Accordingly, as I briefly presented in Chapter One about the EFL writing syllabi in Vietnamese college nowadays, only in the third writing course are students taught to write a paragraph, basically in the structure: topic sentence – supporting details – concluding sentence. The short paragraph structure is controlled by assigned/ suggested themes similar to that of the reading material used in preparatory writing activities. Problems emerge when students begin to write entire essays. The paragraphs can be short and tangentially connected, or even unconnected. Alternately, longer paragraphs are composed of irrelevant or poorly connected statements. Writing issues may include undetected implicit propositional relationships and quasi-inductive / quasi-deductive progressions, probably from mixed influences of Chinese and French colonizers, a situation Fox has noted about academic writing in colonized countries (Listening xix).
To sum up, L2 student writers may (1) unknowingly develop the essay in the theme-delay approach with implicit ideational connections; (2) not have explicit instruction on how to develop a topic/essay and thus not have a clearcut concept about textual development while falsely assuming – from the three-part essay – that they are writing in the Western organizational pattern, (3) be spontaneous rather than organized in textual development, (4) not be aware of the intended audience, and (5) be more concerned about local problems like grammaticality.

III. Pedagogical Implications for EFL/ESL Composition Instruction

Although all rhetorics in the world are logical and efficacious by their own rights (Kennedy), one has to function properly in the conventions anticipated in a particular rhetorical context if one means to succeed there academically, professionally, or just communicatively (Hinds, “Reader”; Hinkel, SLWs’ Text; Swales). Ideally, L2 writing should exhibit the representative features of writing quality in the target language. This goal for L2 composition instruction is not impossible though difficult, since existing literature about cross-cultural issues manifested in L2 writing, while acknowledging the demonstrable influences of the writers’ L1 rhetorical practices, does not negate the role of instruction (e.g.; Carlson; Coe; Connor; Ferris; Hinkel; Kaplan; McCarthy; Scarcella & Lee; Ostler; Ventola & Mauranen). Even explicit instruction in rhetorical strategies has been reported with positive results (Carrell; Carrell and Eisterhold; Connor and Farmer; Connor et al; Crowhurst, “Interrelationships”).

Consequently, it may be beneficial for EFL/ESL students to have explicit instruction in rhetorical considerations for composing. The first and most important point is overtly addressing the undesirable rhetorical features because the instructor’s feedback is not sufficient for L2 students, who do not “[understand] the ideas of ‘organization,’ ‘coherence,’ ‘clarity,’ ‘depth,’ and ‘continuity’ in the same way as [Westerners do]” and may seem “resistant” to the professors’
advice (Fox, Listening xv). The lack of understanding the differences is also reflected in Hinkel’s conclusion about L2 students’ interpretations of “advanced notions and conceptualizations of writing” (“Native” 373-374). For example, all L2 students must have known from composition textbooks that the thesis statement should be in the introduction, but a Western reading by classmates or the instructor would find the theme at the very end of the L2 essay. What happens is that the “thesis” L2 students express in the introduction may still only “touch” the topic and the specific text purpose (or writer’s stance) is stated in the conclusion instead. Additionally, in my study, L1 and L2 texts displayed varied combinations of both deductive and inductive textual organizations. Thus, it is reasonably inferred that EFL/ESL writers might have developed similar rhetorical combinations and only have fuzzy distinction of the two approaches, leading to a false notion that they are composing in a linear ideational progression while they are actually not.

Concerns about cultural and ethnic sensitivity as well as student empowerment in U.S. colleges/universities might also have prevented the instructor’ open talks with L2 students about their writing difficulties (Fox, Listening xvi) and explicit instruction addressing such undesirable writing features. Additionally, it may seem that L2 students refuse the help of the professor’s expertise because they rarely show up at the professors’ offices. On the contrary, L2 students very likely expect specific instruction regarding their writing deficiencies to improve their academic performances. Indeed, cultures such as those influenced by Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism promote the social hierarchy teacher-student with students’ appropriate respect for the teacher as well as recognition of the teacher’s authoritative knowledge and wisdom, a relationship established long ago with former students like Tzu-kung returning for Confucius’ advice and even chastisement (Oliver, Communication 129). However, while L2 students would show respect and gratitude to the teacher both inside and outside the classroom, they would be
extremely reluctant to seek a professor’s help outside the classroom unless “he or she had
developed a rather close one-to-one relationship greater than the ordinary student-professor
relationship reached through classroom interaction” (Yum, “Practice” 95). The resulting
instructional norms in such cultures disclose “perfectionist” students enthusiastically asking for
correction of every error (Fox, Listening 1) in spite of hesitation to trouble the instructor outside
the classroom. Accordingly, explicit instruction involving detailed input with exercises or
activities directly tackling each particular rhetorical feature may be recommendable and
necessary for ESL composition.

Another indication indirectly derived from the matrixing in my project. The Vietnamese
matrixers seemed to be unfamiliar with propositional semantic relationships and had a hard time
deciding whether a statement was more general or more specific than the previous one(s) and
preferred to come together to discuss the differences in the matrices they had drawn. This fact
can be translated into difficulty determining the generality or specificity of the detail to be
selected for advancing a topic or the theme, which may lead to meandering elaboration with
more general, irrelevant details. Since the level of generality of a word/phrase/sentence does not
depend as much on that lexical item as on the contextual meaning it creates in the reader/
listener’s mind and thus may vary from context to context or from person to person (Coe 24), it
can be even more difficult for L2 students. Additionally, Hinkel found that both native speaker
and nonnative speaker groups in her 1994 research agreed that major topics in a text should be
advanced with more specific details, but they had different concepts about specificity (“Native”
369). It is then recommended to acquaint L2 learners, through explicit exercises/tasks, with the
semantic concept of generality/specificity, as introduced by Christensen (“Sentence”), since
experience with matrixing in my project suggested that drawing matrices to represent the logical, semantic reading of a text enhances the understanding of generality/specificity.

An implication from my study, Vietnamese tendency for more but shallowly-developed topics in a text, corresponds with Hinkel’s 1994 finding about Vietnamese students’ “pragmatic interpretations of English texts.” Of the two texts in her study, 100% Vietnamese students (and the majority of other Asian students) thought that Text A with two well-developed major topics “contain[ed] too little supporting information” and the majority (89%, 78%, 67%) found that Text B with seven brief illustrations was “more specific, more convincing, and [better related to audience].” Consequently, teaching semantic concept of generality/specificity before topical and textual development may be more beneficial for L2 writers.

As for the reader-responsibility writing with implicit ideational connections, Hinds proposed that “it maybe necessary to instruct [L2] students […] that the writing process in English involves a different set of assumptions from the ones they are accustomed to working with” (“Reader” 152). Here evidently arises the need for teaching audience-awareness. However, this may be not simple because “writing instruction in L1 educational setting” may give L2 students a misconception of the purpose of L2 academic writing (Liebman qtd. in Hinkel, “Indirectness” 382). For example, the Vietnamese L1 composition instruction may lead students to perceive the aim of academic writing as merely expressive – to express how they feel about a literary work, or how much they know about it – and there is no need to consider a possible audience other than the literature/writing teacher nor to persuade this invariable reader. Consequently, EFL/ESL composition instructors may need to inform L2 students that Western exposition aims to persuade the readers to accept the writer’s perspective/stance and thus exhibits consideration of the audience’s needs and interests as well as controversy (Neman
This awareness may be difficult for L2 students to acquire, considering the complexity of the rhetorical situation as discussed in “mainstream” composition (Berlin; Ede and Lunsford; Elbow; Kroll; Ong “The Writer”). Nevertheless, teaching consideration of audience through tone may be facilitative since tone in writing involves appropriateness (Morenberg et al. 187), which –required and enforced by *li*– permeates Asian social interactions and discourse (Hall; Lu; Oliver).

Obviously, audience awareness also includes responsibility for writing clarity. However, it may not be easy for L2 students to avoid implicit propositional connections, either, because (1) cultural influences are underlying forces in a person’s subconsciousness which he/she is generally not aware of, and (2) metamessage that creates interactional coherence in discourse exists in every culture (Blum-Kulka; Enkvist, Lautamatti; Matalene; van Dijk). Naturally, the writing instructor’s specific feedback as well as the classroom activity of peer-review may help the L2 writer realize where more information is needed for clarity. In a homogenous class or a class of students from cultures that share the same “philosophical precepts,” drawing matrices for the reviewed drafts and discussing the logical connecting lines may be helpful, as the matrixer needs to think more carefully about the relationships between the propositions in reference to the central theme, and the writer would see where he/she needs information outside the text to explain the connection.

Concomitantly, matrixing with reference to the text purpose may also enable L2 writers to realize the global construct of the text and decide on the focus as well as irrelevant details, a task unfamiliar to learners coming from cultures with “a relational mode of inquiry” which sees more points as relevant than the Western “dichotomized mode of inquiry” (Lan 74).
Lastly, the inappropriate employment of indirectness markers may involve a lack of instruction in style, too. In addition to L₁ cultural impacts, this instructional deficiency may result from the current trend of EFL coursebooks to emphasize transactional communicative skills, utilizing more informal/colloquial than formal language. Therefore, L₂ writers may not know that the essay would sound informal with the use of the first and second personal pronouns or rhetorical questions to “establish a relationship between [the writer] and the reader” (Morenberg et al. 191), a stylistic preference very common in Vietnamese L₁ academic composition. Nor may they realize that demonstrative and indefinite pronouns, so common in English coursebooks, are considered inappropriate in Western academic writing (Swales and Feak). Similarly, L₂ teaching in L₁ setting seems not to encourage students to vary the lexical items in their essays.

While it may be sufficient for ESL/EFL students to be informed of the inappropriateness of other stylistic lexical errors, to avoid using complete repetition, it may be necessary to suggest that students do topic-oriented reading to accumulate relevant contextualized/collocational vocabulary and thesaurus for their writing assignments.

In sum, L₂ writing difficulties largely involve arrangement and style and appear to originate from L₁-L₂ cultural and schematic disparities. Accordingly, L₂ instruction and feedback addressing these unfavorable composing features should be “explicit,” “specific,” suggestive and even guiding, when necessary, as Ferris proposes in her report about “the influence of teacher commentary on [ESL] student revision” (“Influence” 332-333).

IV. Pedagogical Implications for EFL College Composition in Vietnam

Considering the current composition teaching/learning in Vietnam, I would like to propose, in addition to instructional suggestions in the preceding section, introduction of (1)
concepts of rhetorical construction of text into the first college writing course, and (2) portfolio assessment in conjunction with timed-writing tests.

Explicit instruction that most writing is to be read and that Western readers do not readily accept the proposition ultimately advanced in the text should have top priority in EFL composition because it may help address most of the problematic writing features indicated and discussed in my study. Indeed, once EFL writers are aware of a critical audience, they may have considerations (such as the purpose of the writing) which enable rhetorical choices for focus, specificity, clarity, appropriateness. For example, writing about his/her mother, the writer now may not just write down whatever details about the mother that happen to come to his/her mind, but may first consider why he/she wants to write about his/her mother and for whom to read, and accordingly select details that foregrounds the purpose to the target audience. Awareness of the audience can also lead to choices for appropriate style and tone. However, specificity and clarity may require more instruction and practice, with discourse-analysis activities such as matrixing.

Learning to make such rhetorical decisions with totally new concepts may be challenging for EFL students, and the pressure could be significantly lessened if the instruction were introduced in the first writing course, when students do not have to manage the complexity of writing an entire long essay. Moreover, the beginning writing course allows more time for practice in writing workshops, and it is more acceptable for students at the “beginning” stage to discuss macro-level choices in L1, as suggested by McCarthy (166).

Further, I strongly suggest that portfolio assessment be implemented in conjunction with traditional writing tests to facilitate L2 writing and foster the writing process, during which students “examine and organize, and then reexamine and reorganize, their thinking” (Spack, “Initiating ESL” 45). Most importantly, a portfolio of essays accumulated over a semester can be
more representative of a student writer’s growth in composing than timed-writing tests. Additionally, multiple revisions are typical of most serious composing in reality, Aaron Barlow argues in an email on the Conference on Basic Writing listserv, while “on-demand” writing is mostly technical and very rare in any vocational area. Another incentive is that selecting the most exemplary compositions for the portfolio gives students more chances of better grades and thus may reduce their “fear” of writing. Just as multiple drafts may encourage more revision, the requirement to save and compile all drafts for each assignment submission can keep students through the writing process, which may not happen when only the final writing product is rated.

V. Suggestions for Further Investigation

For more generalizability, additional research should consider repeated studies with a larger sample size (e.g.; 30-50 texts per group) instead of one with an overly large sample size, since too large sizes of samples can increase the possibility of Type I error of rejecting the null hypothesis and claim significant influences of independent variables on dependent variables (Spata 109). Moreover, it is recommendable to double the matrixing with both native- and nonnative-speaker matrixers for more reliable comparative analysis.

Regarding the discourse matrix, it may be necessary to reconsider the variables so that they can comprehend the properties of non-Western rhetorical moves in theme advancement. For example, there may be additional criteria for counting levels of generality so that the variable $R_{gen}$ can be truly indicative of ideational depth. Or what variable other than $R_{ns}$ can account for strings of undeveloped co-ordinate statements? Or, for $A_{subN}$ and $A_{subI}$, should subordinate T-units mean only those subordinate to the immediately preceding T-units? Should the idea string and the node string be more specifically defined so that there will not be overlapping between the two strings?
Additionally, since academic writing requires appropriate style and tone, one direction for research could be identifying indirectness markers in Vietnamese discourse, both spoken and written. The findings of different usage frequencies as well as the recommendability/discouragement for individual devices to circumvent a possible confrontation/imposition in Vietnamese discourse may provide further indications for ESL/EFL composition instruction.

VI. Conclusion

This pilot study has further narrowed the description of Asian writing style, not as merely digressive. Hinds contends that this unusual textual progression is not the Western inductive method but rather a “quasi-inductive” one. Shan’s study supports Lu’s as well as Scollon and Scollon’s assertion that Chinese writing displays both deductive and inductive approaches. Sun-I Chen has discovered that L₂ textual advancement is a “compromise” between those of native-and of foreign/second-language composing. In my project, while the theme-delayed approach seems to be the general preference in both L₁ and L₂ writing, L₂ texts demonstrably reveal a quasi-deductive development and L₁ composing predominantly “quasi-inductive.” It has also empirically supported (1) Kaplan’s postulation about the “culture-specific” nature of composing, (2) the role of schema (or background knowledge) in constructing and interpreting discourse, as well as (3) Hinds’ discussion about the reader-responsibility writing style. Equally important, it has vindicated Hinkel’s finding as well as Fox’s observations that L₂ students have very different concepts about rhetorical contracts, such as specificity or clarity.

In conclusion, ESL/EFL writing courses, in general, should take into consideration L₂ indirectness, as it involves to some extent all the “three major areas that predict the quality of student essays [...] : features of syntax, coherence, and persuasion” (Connor, “Linguistic” 84). Since cultural and schematic differences seem to have a role in all the three aspects of L₂
indirectness and L₂ students may not have the right notions about abstract rhetorical features in writing, explicit and specific instruction as well as feedback is strongly recommended. As Chaudron has found out, instructors seldom correct errors, and even less so when the same errors are repeated (qtd. in Carson 198). Carson argues that this may suggest that instructors tend to consider the developmental factor, especially in interlanguage, that students will in time learn to correct their own errors (198). However, this is not the case, as Fox has aptly proved (Listening).
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In the following example from an editorial written in English by a Vietnamese ("Vietnam should Exert"), the lines show that T-unit 2 provides some further information about the corruption investigation mentioned in T-unit 1, whereas T-unit 3 is a comment on corruption on a larger scale of the entire nation rather than a further modifier for T-unit 2 or a co-ordinate detail to T-unit 1.

1. Recently, the project management board for the fight against corruption under the Central Department of the Interior released the results of corruption investigations.

2. The investigation contributed to testifying to the real state of corruption in Vietnam, defining the causes of corruption and proposing orientations and solutions to increase the efficiency of the fight against corruption in the 2005-2010 period.

3. Deputy head of the Central Department of the Interior Nguyen Van Quyen said corruption is a national evil, which is complicated and related to economics, legal politics and social affairs.

4. According to the investigation's results, the land and housing management area topped the list of 10 areas riddled with corruption, followed by customs, export-import, transport police, financial and tax staff, agencies involved in granting construction licences, public health, planning and investment, units from transport sectors and economic police.
In the following example, Coe points out that T-unit 3, though seemingly related to T-unit 2, is not logically contributing to the main topic of the paragraph and thus no line connects it to any other T-unit.

(1) One American Indian tribe, the Iroquois, consider themselves as a nation apart from the United States, even though they are citizens. (2) When the United States declared war on Germany in 1917, the Iroquois sent a message to Washington that they too had declared war. (3) They intended to use bows and arrows, though. (4) Since Germany made no separate peace treaty with the Iroquois at the end of World War I, the Iroquois didn’t think it was necessary to declare war again in 1941. (5) Some other Indian tribes also think of themselves as separate nations.
Figure 7. Implicit Connection Marking

In the following figure, a broken line connects the first two units because T-unit 2 is implicitly conjoined to T-unit 1, indicating that such preparation in anticipation of tropical storms (mentioned in # 1) is just a matter of fact to a tropical country.

1Over the past years, the State has poured more investment into repairing and upgrading the river and sea embankment systems, helping mitigate the consequences of natural disasters.

2Every year, a tropical country like Vietnam braces for natural disasters. 3When the stormy season comes, it develops in a complicated manner.
Figure 16. Matrixes for Commentary “Businesses Gear up for Post-WTO Competition”
(5-a) When a human infant is born into any language community in any part of the world, it has two things in common with every other infant, provided neither of them has been damaged in any way either before or during birth. (5-b) Firstly, and mostly obviously, new born children are completely helpless. (5-c) Apart from a powerful capacity to draw attention to their helplessness by using sound, there is nothing the new born child can do to ensure his own survival. (5-d) Without care from some other human being or beings, be it a mother, grandmother, sister, nurse, or human group, a child is very unlikely to survive. (5-e) This helplessness of human infants is in marked contrast with the capacity of many new born animals to get to their feet within minutes of birth and run with the herd within a few hours. (5-f) Although young animals are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with human infants they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves. (5-
g) It would seem that *this long period of vulnerability* is the price that the human species has to pay for the very long period which fits man for survival as a species.

(5-h) It is during this very long period in which the *human infant* is totally dependent on others that it reveals the second feature which it shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language. (5-i) For this reason, biologists now suggest that *language* is “species-specific” to the human race, which means they consider the human infant to be programmed in such a way that it can acquire language. (5-j) This suggestion implies that just as *human beings* are designed to see three-dimensionally and in colour, and just as they are designed to stand up rather than to move on all fours, so are they designed to learn and use language as part of their normal development as well-formed human beings.
APPENDIX 2. Pitkin’s discourse bloc

[1] 1 The purpose of science is to describe the world in an orderly scheme of language which will help us to look ahead.

[2A] 2 We want to forecast what we can of the future behaviour of the world;

[2B] particularly we want to forecast how it would behave under several alternative actions of our own between which we are usually trying to choose.

[3] 3 This is a very limited purpose.

[4] 4 It has nothing whatever to do with bold generalizations about the universal workings of cause and effect.

[5] 4 It has nothing to do with cause and effect at all, or with any other special mechanism.

[6] 4 Nothing in this purpose, which is to order the world as an aid to decision and action, implies that the order must be of one kind rather than another.

[7] 5 The order is what we find to work, conveniently and instructively.

[8] 5 It is not something we stipulate;

it is not something we can dogmatize about.

[9] 5 It is what we find;

it is what we find useful.


(Note: Pitkin’s units are bracketed numbers at the farthest left so as to be used in the diagram that follows).
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TEXT 1:

On the trail of the first Americans

(1) It has been believed for a long time that the first inhabitants of America were people from northeast Asia. (2) Anthropologists believe that small bands of nomadic hunters followed herds of animals across the Bering Straits land bridge and into what is now Alaska, later spreading throughout North and South America.

(3) There is now some evidence to support this belief. (4) Examination of 20 teeth and 64 tooth sockets of paleo-Indians (the first Americans) which were discovered in Chile in 1936 shows a number of common characteristics which are also found in Asiatic teeth. (5) These characteristics include a shovel-like slope on the front and back of the incisors, an L-shaped ridge on the chewing surface of the lower molars, small bumps on the chewing surface of the lower molars and three-rooted front molars. (6) Since dental features are genetically determined and do not change over long periods of time, it is significant that these teeth are similar to the teeth of northeast Asians (as well as the teeth of present-day North and South American Indians). (7) For example, 353 teeth of paleo-Indians, present-day Indians, and northeastern Asiatics were examined, and all had the shoveling on the incisors. (8) Of 8,000 white American and European teeth, less than one-third had this feature.

(9) These findings, then, corroborate the theory that the first Americans came from northern China, Mongolia, Japan, and Asiatic Siberia (Chedd, 1954).

Kaplan’s Note: The sentences are numbered for ease of reference.
ANALYSIS 1:

1. **Topic statement**: ...the first inhabitants of America were people from northeast Asia .... [Note relationship to title.]

   2. **Support**: ...Anthropologists believe that small bands of nomadic hunters followed herds of animals across the Bering Straits land bridge and into what is now Alaska...
      
      a. **Support**: ...later spreading throughout North and South America...

3. **Claim of Evidence**: ...There is now some evidence to support this belief...

   4. **Evidence**: ...Examination of 20 teeth and 64 tooth sockets of paleo-Indians ... which were discovered... shows a number of common characteristics which are also found in Asiatic teeth...
      
      a. **Definition**: ...(the first Americans )...
      
      b. **Location**: ...in Chile...
      
      c. **Dating**: ...in 1936...

   5. **Detailed support**: ...These characteristics include:...
      
      (I.) **List**: ...a shovel-like slope on the front and back of the incisors,...
      
      (II.) **List**: ...an L-shaped ridge on the chewing surface of the lower molars,
      
      (III.) **List**: ...small bumps on the chewing surface of the lower molars and...
      
      (IV.) **List**: ...three-rooted front molars....

   6. **Argument**: ...dental features are genetically determined

   (I.) **Support**: and do not change over long periods of time,

   f. **Argument**: ...it is significant that these teeth are similar to the teeth of northeast Asians...

   ... (I.) **Sub-Argument**: ...(as well as the teeth of present-day North and South American Indians)....
7.2. Evidence: ...For example, 353 teeth of paleo-Indians, present-day Indians, and northeastern Asiatics were examined, and all had the shoveling on the incisors.

8.3. Evidence: ...Of 8,000 white American and European teeth, less than one-third had this feature...

9. B. Summary and Recapitulation: ...These findings, then, corroborate the theory that the first Americans came from northern China, Mongolia, Japan, and Asiatic Siberia ....
**TEXT 2:**

*Language Policy in the Former USSR*

(1) Soviet period is the most intensive for language planning activities and therefore the understanding not only mechanisms of Soviet language policy, but also the political, historical and demographic context in which all these decisions were taken are of crucial significance to understanding the present day language situation in [name of geographic area] as well as any other regions.

(2) In general two factors determined the character of Language Policy in Soviet Union, which are: demographic on the one hand, and political on the other. (3) The significance both of them difficult to overestimate.

**Political factors:**

(4) When the soviet power had been established the administration was faced with two pressing requirements: mass communication and mass education. (5) The majority of the indigenous population remained to be uneducated, the majority of the former languages remained to be unwritten.

(6) Within this particular situation a certain Language policy become necessary. (7) However its realization was mostly determined by Central Policy, which took into consideration one or another ideological concepts. (8) At the same time those ideological concepts could be realized within certain political and psychological context.

(9) The following factor also played significant role in Language Policy in Soviet union: it was believed that the contact of different cultures and languages is at least potentially beneficial. (10) Based on this assumption many leaders of national minorities work toward the realization of this goal. (11) The first effort of the government toward the promotion of Russian naxodil vseobshuju podderzhku i ponimanije v nacional’nyx regionax....

Kaplan’s Note: [This] text is, obviously, marked by some surface-level non-native speaker characteristics which will be ignored in this analysis.

**ANALYSIS 2:**
1. **Topic Statement**: ...Soviet period is the most intensive for language planning activities and

   **A. Explanation**: ...therefore the understanding not only mechanisms of Soviet language policy, but...

   **B. Explanation**: ...also the political, historical and demographic context in which all these decisions were taken are of crucial significance to understanding the present day language situation in [name of geographic area] as well as any other regions....

   [NB: The thesis statement invokes Soviet language policy, but the argument moves quickly to the language policy situation in a particular former Soviet territory.]

2. **C. Explanation**: ...In general two factors determined the character of L[anguage] Pol[icy] in Soviet Union, which are:....

   1. **Specification**: ...demographic on the one hand ...

   2. **Specification**: ...and political on the other....

3. **D. Explanation**:...The significance both of them difficult to overestimate....

4. **E. Explanation**:...When the soviet power had been established the administration was faced with two pressing requirements:

   1. **Specification**: ...mass communication and mass education....

5. **F. Parenthetical material**: ...The majority of the indigenous population remained to be uneducated, the majority of the former languages remained to be unwritten....

6. **G. Parenthetical Material**: ...Within this particular situation a certain Language policy become necessary....[NB: One must assume that the particular situation is the absence of literacy described in I.F, but this argument does not follow from I.A-E. Thus, this is a topic shift.]

7. **H. Contrast**: ...However its realization was mostly determined by Central Policy....

   1. **Specification**: ...which took into consideration one or another ideological concepts....

   8. **Explanation**: ...At the same time those ideological concepts could be realized within certain political and psychological context...

9. **I. Explanation**:...The following factor also played significant role in L[anguage] Pol[icy] in Soviet union:....
1. **Explanation**: ...it was believed that the contact of different cultures and languages is at least potentially beneficial....

10. **Explanation**: ...*Based on this assumption* many leaders of national minorities work toward the realization of this goal.

11. **Explanation**: ...The first effort of the government toward the promotion of Russian naxodil vseobshuju podderzhku i ponimanje v nacional’nyx regionax....

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APPENDIX 4. Nold & Davis’ discourse matrix
There is an amazement proper to the experience of all great art, but the special amazement which *War and Peace* revives in me while I am reading it is like that of a child. The child does not expect the unexpected; that would already be a preparation against it. He does not for an instant doubt that a certain event had to happen; such a doubt obscures. He may even have been told beforehand that it was going to happen; such knowledge is as little a part of him as is a label in his cap. He is able to look at the thing itself. The event reaches him radiant with magical causes but not yet trapped in sufficient cause. Tolstoy does not, as many do, achieve this freshness by transforming the reader into a never-never land. On the contrary, his fictional mode is realistic; the people in his novel appear and behave like possible people in the world we daily live in. His achievement is the greater because he uses the mode of realism, for realism offers a threat to which other literary modes are not subject, the encroachment of mediocrity.

(from “A Piece of Lettuce” by George Elliott, p. 248, Random House)
The Node String vs. the Idea String

In the matrix above drawn by Coe for Nold and Davis’ reading, T-units three-five-seven-nine are in a node string (Note: Nold and Davis consider T-unit #10 on a plane different from that of #3-5-7-9), and another string consists of T-units two-eleven-fourteen (Note: T-units eleven and twelve together make only one proposition on a par with two and fourteen). The top node string (i.e.; two-eleven-fourteen) can be said to be a sequence of subtopics supporting the idea string (beginning with #1) with three nodes (i.e.; subtopics) starting minor idea strings #2, #11-12, and #14. Of the minor idea strings, the one starting at #2 is more developed with a lower-level node string (three-five-seven-nine). The four nodes (three-five-seven-nine) can be considered as representing further-minor idea strings supporting the subtopic stating by #2.

APPENDIX 5. Commentary “Weapon Toys from China Cause Headache”
The toys like ghost candy and sex cards illegally imported [sic] from China. This form of unhealthy entertainment has come again to Viet Nam with even more dangerous toys.

Guns, a familiar image of war and death, become toys for children. All kinds of arms are produced in miniature, which cause serious danger for both children and pedestrians.

These weapon toys, worth around VND100 thousand each, became the most favorite article for children to buy, who have received a lot of money* after “Tet”** holidays.

Some of these toys are laser beam shooters which cause harmful effects to the eyes. If people unintentionally contact laser beams, the strong lights can damage their vision and even make them blind, says Tran Anh Tuan, an eyes surgeon of the Medical University in Ho Chi Minh City.

The Ho Chi Minh City Eyes Hospital on February 12, 2006 received a child with a plastic bullet in his eye. This child suffered a severely injured pupil with clotted blood.

Police in District 4 have recently seized many weapon toys when learning that some people were shot with plastic bullets and laser beams. Confiscating these toys, however, is just an immediate measure but not a comprehensive solution.

It is high time for police to launch an investigation campaigns to stop the spreading of these dangerous toys.

K.L. - Translated by Van Hanh; Feb 17, 2006


APPENDIX 6. Commentary “Businesses Gear up for Post-WTO Competition”

* The money here implies the “lucky money” children get from elders (i.e.; older siblings, parents, older relatives) during the Lunar New Year’s holiday.
** Tet is the Vietnamese word for the Lunar New Year.
Whether Vietnam will achieve successes or suffer failures when it joins the World Trade Organisation (WTO) depends on efforts from businesses. To engage in the large playing field, the State has supported enterprises with a great deal of policies including protection policies but enterprises remain weak bodies with certain shortcomings.

Preferences for 130 industrial parks to be abolished

In the eyes of US negotiators, Vietnam has provided quite a lot of subsidies for enterprises, particularly export subsidies through incentive policies to attract investment to industrial parks (IPs) and export processing zones (EPZs).

Immediately after Vietnam officially announces its entry to the WTO, the country will have to abolish many kinds of subsidies such as export bonuses, preferential interest rate policies, debt clearance and a series of incentive policies to call for foreign investment in industrial and export processing zones within five years from Vietnam’s admission to the organisation.

According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment, by the end of the first quarter of 2006, Vietnam had 130 open economic zones, IPs and EPZs. In 2004, 31 provinces removed legal barriers by implementing incentive policies comprising lower business income tax and land tax rates than the common incentive tax rates set by the State in a bid to call for more investment from enterprises.

The State has asked for early removal of these policies while the US has also demanded that Vietnam abolish its incentive policies and tax preferences for enterprises operating in the 130 IPs and EPZs.

Economic experts said that this will pose huge challenges for businesses operating in the 130 IPs and EPZs as there will no longer be State subsidies for enterprises to help them dominate export markets and run joint-ventures with foreign partners to produce products on a large scale.
Deputy head of the Foreign Investment Department under the Ministry of Planning and Investment Nguyen Anh Tuan said businesses in IPs and EPZs benefit greatly from available facilities and subsidies. They will encounter a lot of difficulties if they are no longer provided with any incentives.

When joining the WTO, business and production management systems and operation forms will differ from previous ones while the command structure will no long [sic] exist. Enterprises’ operations will have to abide by the law and their self-control will make it possible to go bankrupt. Dr Vu Tien Loc, Chairman of the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry said post-WTO competition will result in the dissolution of a segment of businesses because of their failure to compete. Enterprises vulnerable to this outcome are small and medium-sized ones due to their weak financial capacity, late establishment and limited advantages in production materials compared to State-owned enterprises. According to economic experts, an issue of great concern is that State-owned enterprises will have to try their best to recoup capital. Despite being protected by the State, State-owned enterprises are considered the ones causing the most losses for the country.

To improve the sector’s competitive capacity, the State has carried out the equitisation process and strictly controlled project management, however, only nine percent of the total capital has been equitised. Regarding international trade relations, despite high export value, Vietnam has an import surplus, as the country has to import a lot of materials and machines. Garments, footwear and woodwork products have high export value, but they are likely to face difficulties competing with those from other WTO members.

Enterprises to face international risks
According to the Ministry of Trade, during the ASEAN integration process, Vietnam has not gained any benefits from cutting tariffs under the AFTA roadmap. Minister of Trade Truong Dinh Tuyen explained that Vietnamese products such as vegetables, fruits, rice and poultry meat are similar to others from regional countries. In addition, economic experts affirmed that this is due to the low capacity of Vietnamese enterprises.

At a recent scientific and technological conference, Minister of Industry Hoang Trung Hai said the industrial sector’s growth rate is high but its quality is low. In the modern competition process, if enterprises want to develop they must have advanced technology and qualified employees, but the technology levels of many Vietnamese enterprises are low. Regarding human resources, Mr Hai said when the country built the North-South 500KV electricity transmission line, the electricity sector employed all the outstanding students of the Polytechnic University and sent them abroad to take post-graduated training courses. However, when the students returned home, it took them another two years to undertake this work. This is a major stumbling block to enterprises in the course of international integration.

In addition, some policy analysts said some enterprises are weak due to subsidy policies. The current import policy of used cars is a typical example. The policy should be focused on helping enterprises strengthen trade with foreign partners in order to gain experience before Vietnam joins the WTO, but enterprises barely trade in the field due to the current tax rates. Private enterprises also cannot access the car trading market. The current tax policy is not good for enterprises as most domestic automobile manufacturers are subsidised while importing enterprises cannot trade at the current tax rates. This is far from being a precedent but, in fact, only isolates enterprises in the open door period.

http://www.vov.org.vn/?page=126&nid=13052 (05/19/2006)