AN INVESTIGATION INTO LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH TEXTS INTRODUCING TRANSPORT SERVICES

Huynh Thi Anh Tram[i]
MA, School of Languages - Cultures - Arts,
Faculty of English Language,
Ba Ria, Vung Tau University,
Viet Nam

Abstract:

"Text Linguistics", which is a branch of linguistics, has attracted considerable attention of many linguists in the world. It is true that discovering and applying linguistic features plays an integral role in writing a text. In order to achieve the aim of identifying and examining linguistic features of English Texts Introducing Transport Services (ETITSs), this paper focuses on presenting syntactic features and lexical choices of 100 collected samples of ETITSs. The findings of this paper are hoped to provide language learners with a better insight into linguistic features of texts in general as well as English Texts Introducing Transport Services in particular; therefore, they can apply the linguistic knowledge in their own writings effectively.

Keywords: linguistic features; English texts; transport services; syntactic features; lexical choices.

1. Rationale

Transport has been playing a crucial role in the development of human civilization over the past centuries. It is almost impossible to imagine how the world would happen without the aid of transport. In fact, most of the demands and pleasures in our lives cannot possibly fit within the reach of our static bodies from birth to death. If we were incapable of travelling to other lands, we would not have the opportunities of communicating, discovering different cultures, exchanging as well as learning valuable experience. As a result, there would be no friendship, cooperation and commerce at all between nations, which prevents the world's development. Historically, transport system was early established in old towns in different territories, mainly based on geographic characteristics such as proximity to oceans, waterways, plains, mountains and the location of oases. Evidentially, the legendary "Silk Road" greatly supported the movement from one oasis or town to another, where there was no reliable water or road route. Later, thanks to the industrial revolution and great progress

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[i] Correspondence: email anhtram2110@gmail.com

of technology, transport has got remarkable achievements so as to satisfy the requirements of moving people and goods more effectively. Nowadays, in our modern world, transport continues to develop rapidly with the severe competiveness of a large number of companies in the world, whose transport services are more commonly introduced, particularly on mass media such as television, newspaper, magazine, radio and the internet. Customers, therefore, have more chances of choosing their expected ones by reading different texts introducing transport services which provide detailed descriptions and necessary information about the services. However, the task of writing an effective text to leave a strong impression on the potential customers and persuade them to spend money on the services is never easy and simple. It requires the profound knowledge of linguistics such as syntax, lexicology and other elements. This paper, consequently, is conducted with the hope that it will probably provide useful knowledge of linguistic features of texts, particularly ETITSs for Vietnamese learners of English, as well as those who are interested in the field.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 English Texts Introducing Transport Services
Crystal [1] regards text as a language unit with a definable communicative function.
Hence, *English Texts Introducing Transport Services* are likely English language units with the definable communicative functions used to introduce activities of moving people or goods from one place to another by using the sources of vehicles, crews, equipment and storage facilities.

2.2 Syntax and Syntactic Features
Syntax is defined as the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages by Chomsky [2].
        According to Eka [4], it is important to discover syntactic structures since they deal primarily with the rules that govern the combinations of words and groups of words to bring about meaningful sentences.

2.3 Lexicology and Lexical Choices
Halliday et al. [5] state that "*lexicology the study of content words, or lexical items*".
Edmonds and Hirst [3] claim that "*lexical choice is more than a problem of mapping from concepts to words; it is a problem of selecting words so as to meet or satisfy a large set of possibly conflicting preferences to express certain nuances in certain ways, to establish the desired style, and to respect collocational and syntactic constraints*".

3. Research Methods

The study combines descriptive, analytic and inductive method. Among them, descriptive method is primarily used to give a detailed description of linguistic features of ETITSs.
        The research has been carried out as follows: (1) Collecting and classifying ETITSs by length and selecting those of medium length to examine; (2) Analyzing those collected

ETITSs to point out their syntactic features, and lexical choices; (3) Synthesizing the findings and drawing out conclusion.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Syntactic Features of ETITSs
As for the study of the particular language, it is important to discover the common syntactic structures which are built up from words and governed by various linguistic rules. This paper investigates the most remarkable structures in *English Texts Introducing Transport Services*. They are Relative Clauses, Passive Voice and Imperative Sentences.

4.1.1 Relative Clauses
A. Restrictive Relative Clause (RC)
(4.1) *We have a network of offices nationwide **that offer prompt, door-to-door dependable vehicle delivery services at an affordable price***. [9]
The restrictive RC is employed to provide the benefits of "*network of offices nationwide"* which the customers can get. It cannot be left out of the sentence without affecting the meaning.

B. Non-Restrictive Relative Clause (RC)
(4.2) *AirRoad is owned and operated by its majority shareholders, **who care about the successful delivery of your consignments.*** [10]
The non-restrictive RC beginning with *"who"* is used to introduce people who take the responsibility of operating the transport services. It can be left out without affecting the meaning or structure of the sentence.
(4.3) *Services run throughout the day and night**, which enables you to catch your flight.*** [11]
The sentence relative clause refers back to the whole antecedent clauses, not just to one noun. It is employed to reveal the benefits the customers can get when using the transport services introduced in ETITSs.

Table 1: Distribution of Relative Clauses in ETITSs

Type of Relative Clause (RC)	Occurrence	Rate
Restrictive RC	225	94.9%
Non-Restrictive RC	11	5.1%
Total	**242**	**100%**

As can be seen from the table above, the relative clauses are included in a great number of ETITSs (242 cases). Among them, restrictive relative clauses are dominantly employed and account for nearly 95%. Non-restrictive relative clauses appear with the much lower frequency, taking up over 5%. In ETITSs, most of the relative clauses are used to provide necessary information about the nouns or phrases it refers to.

C. Present Participle (-ing participle) Clause
(4.4) *We offer an array of Transportation Services **including Regional Trucking, Intermodal Drayage, Air Freight pickup/deliveries, Courier Services***. [12]

D. Past Participle (-ed participle) Clause

(4.5) *Con-way Freight offers exceptional customer service at every level* **supported by industry professionals and state-of-the-art processes and technology.** [13]

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

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

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

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

4.1.2 Passive Voice

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

$$\text{Subject} + \text{Verb}_{passive}\ (be + P.P) + \text{Optional Agent}$$

A. With Agent

(4.6) *Fast dedicated and time critical deliveries* **are provided by** *our Express Courier Services to all UK European and International destinations.* [14]

B. Without Agent

(4.7) ***Key*** *elements such as safety ratings and insurance coverage* **are** *consistently* **monitored**. [15]

In the above examples, the passive sentences pay much attention to describe the fact, the process and the goal of transport services. That enables the customers to know more about the transport services in ETITSs.

(4.8) *These services* **can be customized** *based on your budget and preferences, but in some instances* **could be performed by** *our larger car transport truck.* [16]

The passive voice accompanied with the modal verbs enhances the sense of probability of providing various services with high quality.

Table 3: Distribution of Passive Voice with Agent versus without Agent in ETITSs

Passive Voice	Occurrence	Rate
With Agent	18	17 %
Without Agent	88	83 %
Total	**106**	**100 %**

As can be seen from the table above, in ETITSs, the passive voice omitting agent considerably outnumbers passive voice remaining agent (83% versus 17%). This shows the tendency that when writing ETITSs, putting the focus on the receiver of an action is more important than on the agent performing it.

4.1.3 Imperative Sentences

Quirk et al. [7] claims that imperative sentences are used for a wide range of illocutionary acts. There are two main forms of imperative in English:

A. Affirmative Imperative: Verb (base form)

(4.9) *Discounts vary depending on vehicles needed and other factors – so **contact** us to develop a special package for your wedding.* [17]

B. Negative Imperative: Do not (Don't) + Verb (base form)

(4.10) ***Do not hesitate*** *to contact us for reservations and rates for the services.* [17]

In the above examples, the imperative sentences formed without subjects increase the impersonal relationship between the writers and the readers effectively. These sentences are used to encourage and urge the customers to contact the providers of services to get the specific information about the services introduced in ETITSs.

Table 4: Distribution of Imperative Sentences in ETITSs

Imperative Sentences (IS)	Occurrence	Rate
Affirmative IS	137	96%
Negative IS	6	4%
Total	**143**	**100%**

As can be seen from the table above, affirmative imperative sentences are dominantly employed with the much higher frequency (96 %); whereas, negative imperative sentences are found in only 6 cases and occupies the low proportion (4%). This shows the tendency of using affirmative imperative in writing ETITSs to urge the readers to take immediate actions.

In summary, the use of syntactic features in ETITSs can be summarized in the following table:

Table 5: Distribution of Syntactic Features of ETITSs

Syntactic Features	Occurrence	Rate
Relative Clauses	333	59.7%
Passive Voice	106	19.0%
Imperative Sentences	119	21.3%
Total	**558**	**100%**

The figures in the above table reveal that the relative clauses are employed to modify their antecedent noun or noun phrases without starting new sentences, taking up with the highest proportion (51.3%). This employment makes ETITSs more condensed but still contains necessary information as well as benefits of the transport services the customers can get.

Besides, the copywriters have the tendency to use imperative sentences occupying 25.5% to urge the customer to act immediately. The smallest component in ETITSs is the passive voice (22.7%) is employed to describe the salient features of the services.

4.2 Lexical Choices of ETITSs
4.2.1 Descriptive Adjectives
As Leech's assumption [6], language used in texts is marked by a wealth of adjective vocabulary.

A. The Base Form
(4.11) *Transport operating agencies have been freed up to focus on service delivery – providing **safe, reliable, clean and efficient** transport services.* [18]

(4.12) *Our less-than-truckload service will get your freight to its destination on time, intact and at a **competitive** price anywhere in Canada or the United States.* [19]

(4.13) *One of the hallmarks of C.R. England is the quality of our drivers and support staff-professionals who are **experienced, accountable,** and **devoted** to customer satisfaction.* [20]

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

B. The Comparative Form
(4.14) *Our goal is not to just give you **lower** rate, we strive to give you **lower** operating costs and **more efficient** freight movement.* [21]

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

C. The Superlative Form
(4.15) *Through our global procurement team, we negotiate with first-class carriers to give you the **highest** service quality, space allotment and optimum pricing for your air freight.* [22]

The superlative in the example (4.15) demonstrates that the transport service introduced in ETITSs is the best one. Therefore, the customers will be easily urged to use to experience that perfect service.

Table 6: Distribution of Forms of Descriptive Adjectives in ETITSs

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

As can be seen from the table 6, the copywriters have a strong tendency of using the base form of descriptive adjective (59.6%) in order to highlight the striking features as well as benefits of the transport services. Furthermore, the comparative form is employed more frequently than the superlative form, taking up 32.2% and 11.1% respectively. The employment emphasizes that the transport services mentioned in ETITSs are much better and more beneficial than any others; even they are the best ones in the market. It makes ETITSs more impressive and persuasive to the readers.

4.2.2 Proper Nouns
A. Names of the Transport Enterprises
(4.16) *GKR Transport provides an exemplary service supporting all Industry sectors, including Automotive, Industrial, Heavy Haulage, Oil & Gas, Mining, Manufacturing and Machinery.… We believe that GKR Transport is at the forefront when choosing a long term Transport, Storage and Logistics supplier.* [23]

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

B. Names of Places
(4.17) *Wynne Transport has over 50+ years of experience transporting liquid and compressed gas chemicals and petroleum products in bulk. We currently operate in all 48 States of America, Canada, and inter-line export to Mexico.* [24]

As we can see, the proper nouns *"America, Canada, Mexico"* in the instance 4.17 referring to the names of many countries show the extensive availability of the services introduced in ETITSs.

C. Names of Transport Services
(4.18) *Pickup and Delivery Services*
Door-to-Door Service - DAS will pick up and deliver your vehicle at your specified locations (could be your residence, office, or any other location)…
Terminal-to-Terminal Service - This is our most affordable service. You will drop-off your vehicle at our nearest partner terminal and pick up your vehicle at our terminal nearest to your destination. [25]

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

D. Names of People
(4.19) *The key to our success is our staff. People like our Managing Director, Matt Everard who has grown up in the freight business; Simon Poole, our Operations Manager is our key problem solver and first point of contact for our customer base.* [26]

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

Table 7: Distribution of Proper Nouns in ETITSs

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

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

4.2.3 Commissive Verbs

According to Searl and Vanderveken [8], there are a great number of English commissive verbs such as "*commit, promise, pledge, vow, swear, consent, offer, assure, ensure, guarantee, etc*".

(4.20) *MSC is **committed** to providing transport solutions that meet the diverse needs of our customer.* [27]

(4.21) *Our service includes expedite service which **guarantees** pick-up within 48 hours.* [28]

In the above examples, the writers have a tendency of using the commissive verbs *"commit, guarantee"* so as to increase the degree of consistency, commitment and guaranty of the transport services in ETITSs.

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

Table 8: Distribution of Lexical Choices of ETITSs

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

As can be seen from the above table, there are a great number of descriptive adjectives, proper nouns and commissive verbs employed in ETITSs. Among them, descriptive adjectives appear with the highest frequency, accounting for 48.2%. They are primarily employed to provide information, outstanding features as well as benefits of transport services. Moreover, copywriters have a strong tendency to use proper nouns and commissive verbs to make ETITSs more impressive and persuasive, which take up 35.9% and 15.9% respectively.

5. Conclusion

This paper aims at investigating the syntactic features, and lexical choices of ETITSs. In terms of syntactic features, the most prominent structures consisting of relative clauses, passive voice and imperative sentences are examined. Among them, relative clauses appear in most of ETITSs and account for the highest proportion of nearly 60%. They provide necessary

information and benefits of the transport services clearly and concisely. The passive voice is also frequently used with the aim of describing the facts, the processes as well as emphasizing the prominent features of the transport services and their benefits the customers can get from those services. Moreover, imperative sentences play an important part in urging the customers to spend money on the transport services introduced in ETITSs effectively. With regard to lexical choices, it is noticed that descriptive adjectives used in the base form outnumber those used in the comparative form and the superlative form. Taking up the highest percentage of over 48%, the descriptive adjectives are employed to describe the quality, property and to highlight the benefits of particular transport services as well as to make the whole text more attractive. Furthermore, the writers have a strong tendency of using proper nouns referring to the names of transport companies, transport services or people taking the responsibility of operating the services so as to leave impression in the customers' mind. Lastly, thanks to various commissive verbs, ETITSs will become more confident and persuasive to the customers.

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