

A Contrastive Research of Register in English and Vietnamese Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

The research explores and contrasts the similarities and differences in register, specifically the transitivity characteristics between English and Vietnamese advertising discourse through 280 advertisements (140 English advertisements and 140 Vietnamese advertisements). The research results show that in addition to the similarities in choosing the appropriate and flexible transitivity processes depending on the purpose and the receiver of the ads, there are also differences related to the frequency of using the transitivity processes between the two types of advertising discourse and between different types of advertising for products and services.

KEY WORDS: register, transitivity process, English advertisements, Vietnamese advertisements

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I. INTRODUCTION

Advertising have been playing a crucial role in bussiness activities of companies. However, up to now, according to Athukorala (2019) most of the researches about advertisements mainly focus on language use or images and then provide suggestions on how to improve the designing of effective advertisements. The researches on linguistics features in this field, especially contrastive analysis between advertisements in different languages are still quite limited. For that reason, we choose to conduct a contrastive study of register in English and Vietnamese advertisements. However, due to the limited time and resources, the study only concentrates on contrasting the transitivity process of advertisements in English and Vietnamese.

Additionally, the application of Halliday's theory of transitivity in analysing and contrasting advertising discourses is still limited. For that reason, the research is not only meaningful in investigating the similarities and differences in the linguistic features of the Vietnamese and English advertisements, but also in comprehending the contents of the advertisements. The research is expected to be useful for linguistic scholars as well as advertising designers in completing linguistic features in the advertising discourses in order to attract more customers to purchase products or services.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the English transitivity system, there are three main types of process: material, mental and relational one. On the borderline between 'material' and 'mental' are the behavioral processes which represent processes of consciousness and physiological states. Between 'mental' and 'relational' is the verbal process which symbolizes human consciousness and is enacted in the form of language. Similarly, between the 'relational' and the 'material' is the existential one which concerns with existence, the existential, or happening (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 171).

2.1 Material Process

The material process is involved with clauses of "doing" or "happening". It construes "a quantum of change in the flow of events". In this flow, the "doer" is called Actor and the second participant who is "affected" or "being done to" is called Goal. The Actor might be an abstract entity or an inanimate one and the Goal might be human or non-human. Its structure may be [Actor + Process (material) + Goal] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Hoang (2019), the material process in Vietnamese can be distinguished from the mental and the relational ones based on three criteria: participants, co-verb of direction and the probe. Specifically, the material process might have one or two participants acting as Actor and Goal. The participant might be either animate or inanimate. In terms of co- verb of direction, the material process is often associated with directional pro-verbs such as off, up, down, in, into... As for the probe, the material process can be recognized by asking questions: "X đã làm gì Y? (What did X do to Y?) and "Y làm sao thế?" or "Cái gì xảy ra với Y thế?" (What happened to Y?) (Hoang, 2019, pp. 126-129).

2.2 Behavioral Process

The behavioral process is the one between material one and mental one, so it has similarities with these processes. It reflects behaviors of both physical and physiological states such as crying, smiling, breathing, dreaming, starting... It has one animated participant who is behaving is called Behavior. In some clauses, it might be characterized by another apparent participant acting as complement, the Range, which typically adds specification to the process. Its structure may be [*Behaver + Process (behavioral) ± Range*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). According to Hoang (2018), in case there are two participants, they are Behavior and Range or Phenomenon respectively.

2.3 Mental Process

The mental process is concerned about the process of sensing. It might be subcategorized into Cognition (thinking, understanding), Affection (liking, hating), and Perception (hearing). One of the features of the mental process that distinguishes mental process from others is that mental process always involves at least one human participant. Its structure may be [*Senser + Process (mental) + Phenomenon*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

According to Hoang (2019), the mental process is related to “human consciousness” and “the activities of the mind”. He also showed six criteria to recognize the mental process in Vietnamese, including the participants, the probe, the manner circumstance, the senser, the phenomenon and the projection. The participants in the mental process are some entity or someone that “senses”. The mental process might be recognized by asking *X nghĩ/cảm thấy/biết gì về Y?* (What does X feel / think / know about?). In addition, the mental one may be distinguished from other processes by circumstantial manner of degree such as *asrất* (very), *rất lắm / nhiều lắm* (very much/a great deal). Besides, the Senser in the mental process is one with human features or non-human nominal Senser in fairy stories. Additionally, the phenomenon in this type of process may be a “thing” or a “fact”. In case it is a “fact”, it can be realized by an embedded clause (Hoang, 2019, pp. 175-184).

2.4 Verbal Process

The verbal process, which is considered intermediated between mental and material ones, is a process of “saying” in order to transfer a message. The person who acts as a speaker in the clause is called *Sayer*. Its structure may be [*Sayer + Process (verbal) ± Target + Verbiage*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Based on the study by Hoang (2019), there are some criteria to distinguish verbal process from other ones in Vietnamese. They are participant relationships and the circumstance of matter. In the verbal process, the participant who says something is called the Sayer. The Receiver is some entity or someone else to whom the Verbiage may be directed. In addition, one of the criteria that distinguishes the verbal process from others is the appearance of the collocational patterning of Process: verbal and the circumstance of matter (Hoang, 2019, pp. 205-213).

2.5 Relational Process

The relational process is a process of “being” or a related category of existential clauses. In this type of process, there is a relationship established between two separate entities or something is being said to be something else. Based on the systematic construction, relational processes consist of three main types: (a) intensive: x is a; (b) circumstantial: x is at a; (c) possessive: x has a and two modes (1) attributive: a is an attribute of x (2) identifying: a is the identity of x (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

If it is attributive, its structure may be [*Carrier: possessor + Process (relational) + Attribute: possessed*]. If it is identifying, its structure may be [*Identified + Process (relational) + Identifier*]. As mentioned by Hoang (2019), the relational process is quite complex to identify in Vietnamese. He also indicated that the relational process expresses “states of being of various kinds”, which is used to distinguish it from material and mental processes. In terms of grammar, the relational process cannot take the imperative form and cannot project (Hoang, 2019, pp. 223-234).

2.6 Existential Process

The existential process construes that something is happening or existing or the existence of any entity. In this existential one, there is only one participant called Existent which labels the entity or event which is being said or mentioned. In other words, Existent can be construed as action, event, thing, person, object, institution, abstraction... Its structure may be [*Process (existential) + Existent*] (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

According to Hoang (2018), in Vietnamese, the existential process can be identified by some criteria related to the participants, the verbs, and the semantic and grammar structure. Specifically, there is only one compulsory participant who is called the Existent, which may be a person, an object or an event etc. Besides, the existential process may be associated with a distinct circumstantial element of time or place. The existential process is also identified by verbs such as *tồn tại*(exist) and *còn*(remain/exist), *treo*(hang), *ngồi*(sit),

nôilên(emerge), *xuáthiệnl*(appear)... (Hoang, 2018). In terms of grammar, the expressions of modality, modulation as well as Circumstantials of quality and means cannot exist in the clause. Furthermore, these verbs are often followed by a clause to form a clause complex (Hoang, 2019, pp. 274-283).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data for the research is 280 advertisements, including 140 in English and 140 in Vietnamese divided into 4 groups as follows:

Group Language		Group 1 (job ads)	Group 2 (book ads)	Group 3 (consumer goods ads)	Group 4 (travel ads)	Total
English	quantity	35	35	35	35	140
	%	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%
Vietnamese	quantity	35	35	35	35	140
	%	25%	25%	25%	25%	100%

The comparison procedure is as follows:

- Step 1. Set the sample selection criteria
- Step 2. Collect ads and classify into 4 groups with each group containing 35 QC samples.
- Step 3. Analyze, describe ads by category.
- Step 4. Compare English and Vietnamese ads in terms of transitivity process
- Step 5. Comment and conclusion for research results.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Characteristics of transitivity process in English advertising discourse

The result of the survey on transitivity process of English ads is shown in the Table 1

Table 1. Types of transitivity process in English ads

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	40	46.51%
2. Behavioral	10	11.63%
3. Mental	6	6.98%
4. Verbal	7	8.14%
5. Relational	21	24.42%
6. Existential	2	2.32%
Total	87	100%

The results of Table 1: the order of the types of transitivity processes are as follows: the material process accounts for 46.51%, ranks 1st, the relational processes accounts for 24.42%, ranks 2nd, the behavioral processes accounts for 11.63 % ranked 3rd, verbal process accounted for 8.14% ranked 4th, mental process 6.98% ranked 5th, and existential process accounted for 2.32%. In the English advertising discourse, the writer prioritizes the choice of the material process and the relational process. Thus, when writing QC, the writer chooses the appropriate type of transitivity process in order to achieve the purpose of communication. For example, the ads Lancome Lipstick: Lipstick Lancome Lipstick “*Turn up your lips with gliding sensual shine!*” is suitable for the material process. The discourse can be analyzed according to the following model:

<i>Lancome Lipstick</i>	<i>turn up</i>	<i>your lips with gliding sensual shine!</i>
Actor	material	Goal

The choice of process depends on the advertiser’s intentions and the purpose of the discourse. The survey shows the discrepancy in the frequency of transitivity in 140 samples of English advertising discourse. The difference between the types of transitivity is shown in Figure 1.

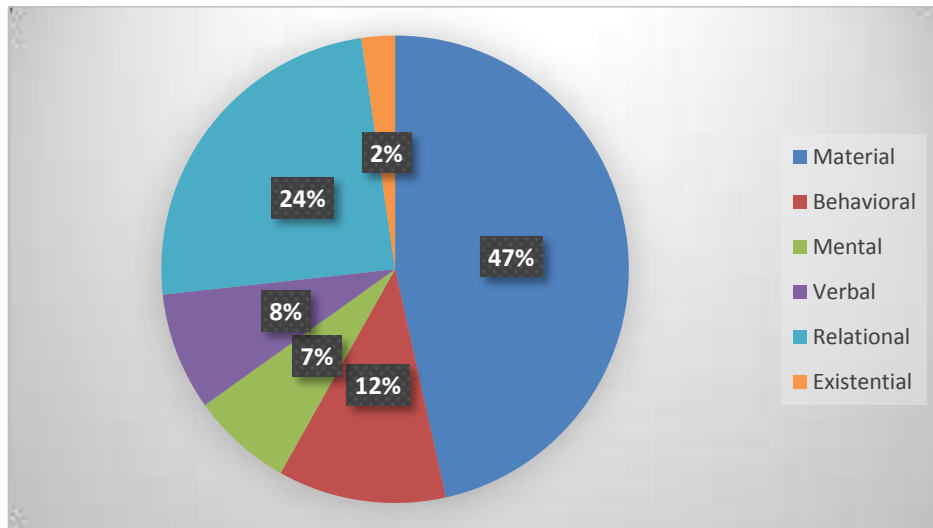


Figure 1. The frequency of types of transitivity process in English ads

Regarding the receiver of the ads, depending on the type of ads the writer chooses the appropriate type of process. The frequency of processes in the English job ads is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Types of transitivity process in English job ads

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	10	41.67%
2. Behavioral	10	41.67%
3. Mental	1	4.17%
4. Verbal	-	0.0%
5. Relational	3	12.49%
6. Existential	-	0.0%
Total	24	100%

Results of Table 2: The order of the types of transitivity process is as follows: the material process and behavior together account for 41.67% and rank 1st, the relational process accounts for 12.49%, ranked 2nd, the mental process accounts for 4.17%, ranked third, verbal process and existential process are not used in English job ads. Depending on the purpose of the advertiser, the appropriate transitivity process is selected. When writing job ads, the writer chooses the appropriate type of transitivity process in order to achieve the purpose of communication. For example, the job ads below are for the purpose of announcing a job position, so the advertiser wrote: "We have a vacancy for a part time cleaner". This is a material process, which can be analyzed according to the following model:

<i>We</i>	<i>have</i>	<i>a vacancy for a part time cleaner</i>
Actor	Material process	Goal

Therefore, the types of transitivity in the job advertising discourse are different. The differences in the frequency in the English job ads are shown in Figure 2.

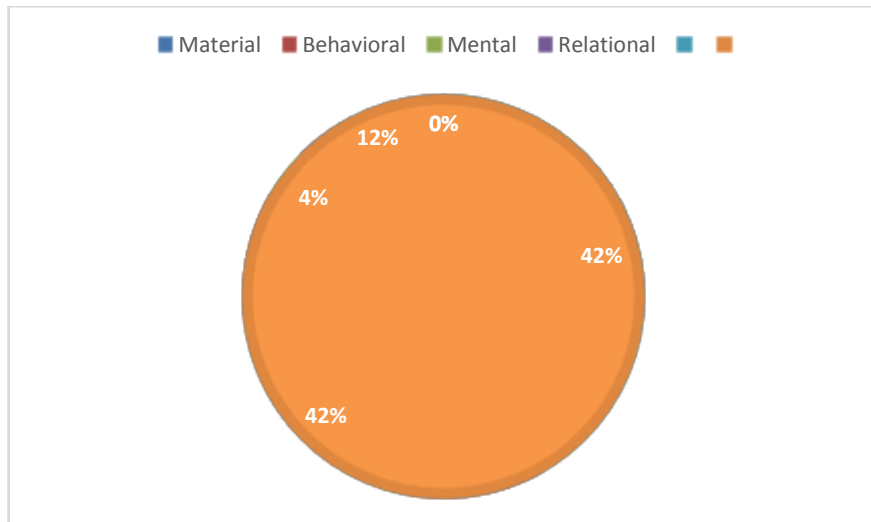


Figure 2. The frequency of types of transitivity process in English job ads

For the book, consumer goods and travel ads, the choice of the process is as follows: the material process accounts for 47.63%, ranked 1st, the relational process accounts for 28.57%, ranked second, the verbal process accounts for 11.11%, ranked third, the mental process accounts for 6.35%, ranked fourth, the existential and behavioral processes have the same rate of 3.17%; For details see Table 3.

Bảng 3. Types of transitivity process in English book, consumer goods and travel ads

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	30	47.63%
2. Behavioral	2	3.17%
3. Mental	4	6.35%
4. Verbal	7	11.11%
5. Relational	18	28.57%
6. Existential	2	3.17%
Total	63	100%

Similar to the English job ads, in the advertising discourse of books, consumer goods and travel, depending on the purpose of the ads, the writer chooses an appropriate process. The types of processes in the advertising discourse of books, consumer goods, and travel differ. The difference in the frequency in the English book, consumer goods and travel ads is shown in figure 3.

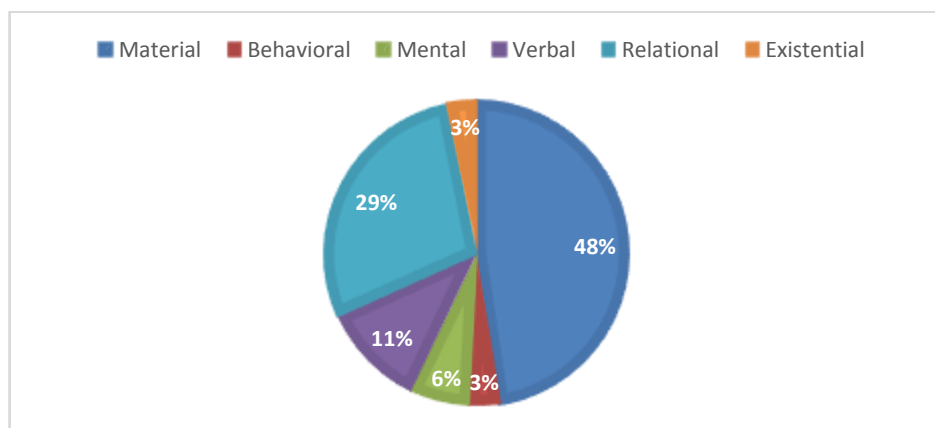


Figure 3. The frequency of types of transitivity process in English book, consumer goods, and travel ads

Comparing the frequency of different types of transitivity process in English job ads and English books, consumer goods, and travel ads, it is found that there are differences in the process types. For example, the material process: English job ads is less used than book, consumer goods and travel ads (accounting for 5.95%); Behavioral process: English job ads is used more than book, consumer goods and travel ads (accounting for 38.49%). Mental process: English job ads is less used than book, consumer goods and travel ads (2.18%); the verbal process and the existential process: the advertising discourse on books, consumer goods and travel is more than the one used by job ads (accounting for 3.17%); relational process: advertising discourse on books, consumer goods and travel is more than job ads (16.08%).

4.2 Characteristics of transitivity process in Vietnamese advertising discourse

The result of the survey on transitivity process of English ads is shown in the Table 4

Bảng 4. Types of transitivity process in Vietnamese ads

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	33	45.8%
2. Behavioral	18	25%
3. Mental	6	8.33%
4. Verbal	1	1.39%
5. Relational	13	18.09%
6. Existential	1	1.39%
Total	72	100%

Results of Table 3: The order of the types of transitivity processes is as follows: the material process accounts for 45.8%, ranked 1st, the behavioral processes accounts for 25%, ranked 2nd, the relational processes accounts for 18.09 % ranked 3rd, mental process accounted for 8.33% ranked 4th, verbal and existential process had the same rate of 1.39% and ranked 5th. The difference between the types of transitivity processes can be observed in figure 4.

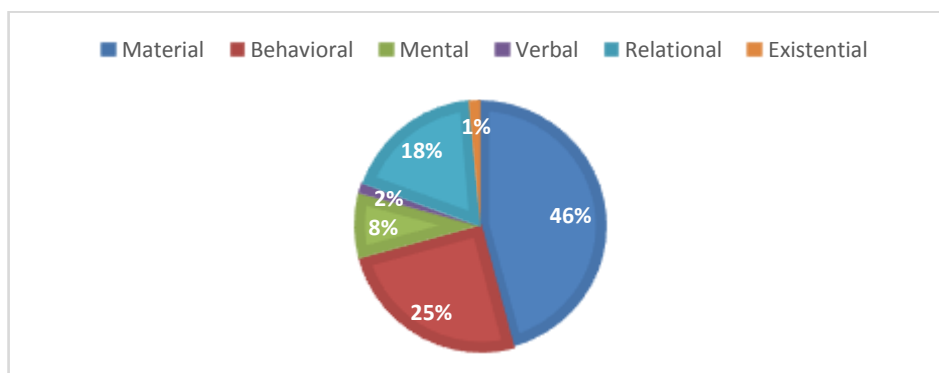


Figure 4. The frequency of types of transitivity process in Vietnamese ads

When writing ads, the writer chooses the appropriate type of transitivity process to achieve the purpose of communication. According to Halliday, the material process can be transitive or intransitive with the transitive material process including the two participants: the actor and the goal, while the intransitive material process only includes the goal. Let's consider the ads for La Roche-Posay Anthelios XL Dry Touch Gel-Cream Oil Colorless Sunscreen SPF 50+ UVB & UVA:

<i>Kem ChốngNắngKhôngMàuKiểmSoátDầu La Roche-Posay Anthelios XL Dry Touch Gel-Cream SPF 50+ UVB & UVA</i>	<i>Kiểmsoát</i>	<i>Bóngnhòntroing 9 giờ</i>
<i>La Roche-Posay Anthelios XL Dry Touch Gel-Cream Oil Control Sunscreen SPF 50+ UVB & UVA</i>	<i>control</i>	<i>Greasy shine in 9 hours</i>
Actor	Transitive material process	Goal

The behavioral process represents psychophysiological behavior, usually a neutral process and has only one inherent participant. The mental process manifests different types of sensations such as sense (“*feeling facial skin clean and greasy*” in product ads, “*watching the sunset at sea*” in travel ads etc.), perception (think, understand, know), affective process (love, hate, cherish, adore) and desire process (wish, want, hope). The verbal process is expressed in words (say, tell, remind, confide). This is a process that does not require the first participant (utterance can be anything, person or material, signs, etc). The relational process expresses general meanings such as existence (static), possession, and positioning. Each meaning is represented by a process type. Each process type is expressed in two forms of attribution and identification. The process of attributed contextual relationship represents the relationship between people or things in a certain context such as time, space, and scope. The participant in the circumstantial relationship process is assigned the active function, and the context in which the process takes place is assigned the Attribute function. Property relationship is the process of showing the “being possessed of an entity or thing. The existential process expresses experience by acknowledging the existence or happening of things presented in a static form. In this process, there is often an inherent participant called existent. It can also include one or more circumstances.

Regarding the receiver of the ads, depending on the type of ads the advertiser chooses the appropriate type of transitivity process. For job advertising discourses, the choice of transitivity process is shown as follows: the material process accounts for 46.43%, ranked 1st, the behavioral process accounts for 35%, ranked 2nd, the mental process 17.87% ranked 3rd. Verbal process, existential process and relational process are not used; For details see Table 5.

Table 5. Types of transitivity process in Vietnamese job ads

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	43	46.43%
2. Behavioral	10	35.7%
3. Mental	5	17.87%
4. Verbal	-	0.0%
5. Relational	-	0.0%
6. Existential	-	0.0%
Total	28	100%

Depending on the purpose of the writer, the appropriate transitivity process is selected. Therefore, the types of transitivity process in the Vietnamese advertising discourse differ. The difference in frequency in the Vietnamese job ads is shown in figure 5.

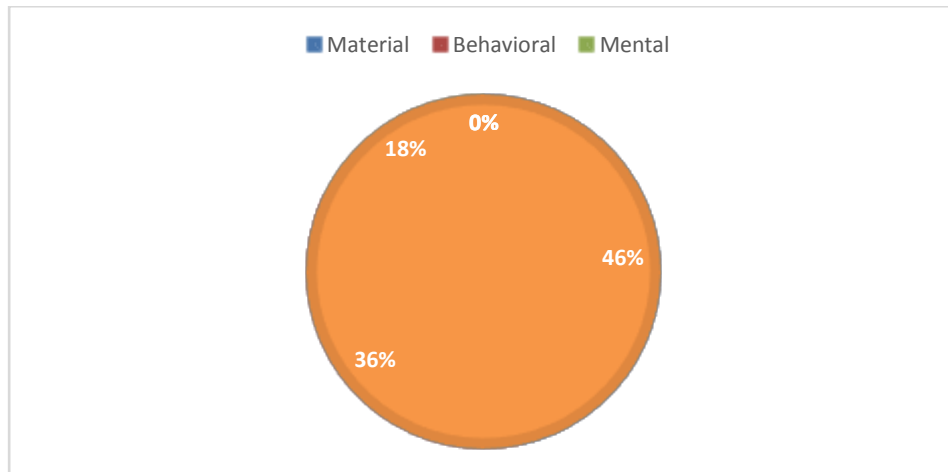


Figure 5. The frequency of types of transitivity process in Vietnamese job ads

For the advertising discourses of books, consumer goods and travel, the choice of the process is shown as follows: the material process accounts for 45.46%, ranked first, the behavioral process accounts for 18.18%, ranked second, the relational process accounted for 29.55%, ranked third. The verbal process, the existential process and the mental process had the same rate of 2.27%; For details see Table 6.

Bảng 6. Các kiểu quá trình trong diễn ngôn QC sách, sản phẩm hàng hóa và du lịch tiếng Việt

Types of process	No of discourse	Percentage
1. Material	20	45.46%
2. Behavioral	8	18.18%
3. Mental	1	2.27%
4. Verbal	1	2.27%
5. Relational	13	29.55%
6. Existential	1	2.27%
Total	44	100%

Similar to the job ads, in the advertising discourses of books, consumer goods and travel, depending on the purpose, the advertiser chooses an appropriate transitivity process. The types of processes in the advertising discourses of books, consumer goods, and travel differ. The difference in frequency in the advertising discourse of Vietnamese books, consumer goods and travel is shown in figure 6.

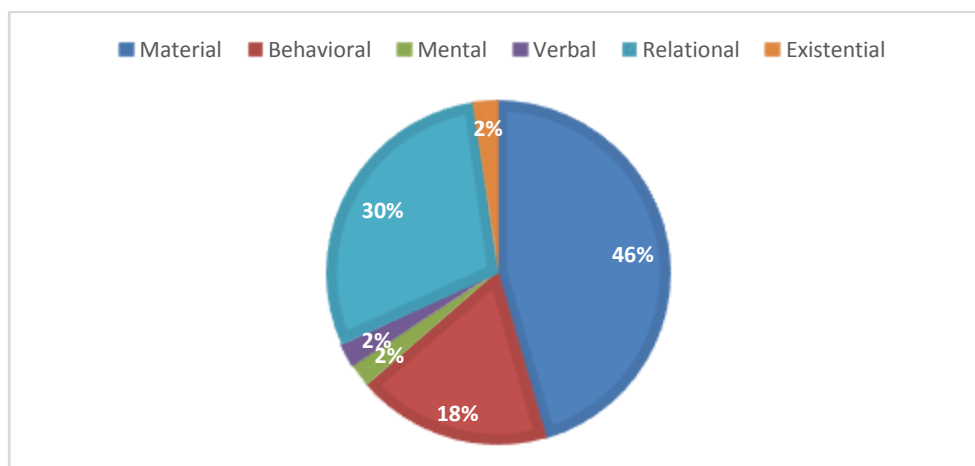


Figure 6. The frequency of types of transitivity process in Vietnamese book, consumer goods, and travel ads

Comparing the frequency of of different types of transitivity process in job ads and book, consumer goods and travel ads, it is found that there are differences in the process types. For example, the material process: the job ads use more than the book, consumer goods and travel ads (0.97%); Behavioral process: the job ads use more than the book, consumer goods and travel ads (17.52%). Mental process: the job ads use more than the book, consumer goods and travel ads (15.6%); the verbal process and the existing process: the book, consumer goods and travel ads are higher the one used by the job ads (2.27%); relational process: the book, consumer goods and travel ads is higher the one used by the job ads (29.55%). The difference in transitivity types is shown in Figure 7.

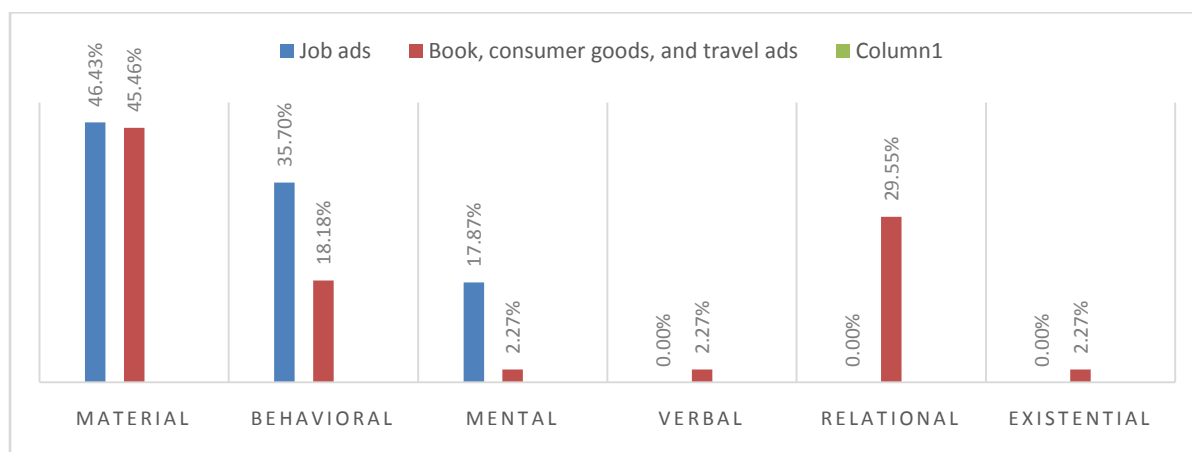


Figure 7. Comparing the frequency of types of transitivity process in Vietnamese ads (job ads vs book, consumer goods and travel ads)

Considering figure 7 we can see: The Vietnamese job ads do not use the verbal process, relational and existential process. In contrast, the advertising discourse of books, consumer goods, and travel do.

4.3 Similarities and differences

Similarities: In the English and Vietnamese advertising discourse, the advertiser actively chooses the flexible appropriate transitivity processes. The choice of the processes depends on the intentions and purposes of each type of advertising discourse. The English and the Vietnamese advertising discourse both prioritize the use of material, behavioral and relational processes over existential, verbal, and mental processes. Depending on the type of product advertised, the interpersonal relationship between the writer and the reader influences the choice to achieve the communicative purpose of the ads. The second similarity in both languages is the advertiser choose to use the transitivity process depending on the receiver of the product or service advertisements.

Differences:

Because of the differences between the two languages, the characteristics of the advertising discourse of both languages also differ in the frequency of using transitivity processes. Considering the overall 140 Vietnamese advertising discourses and 140 English advertising discourses, a difference is found in the choice of using the processes, which is shown in Figure 8.

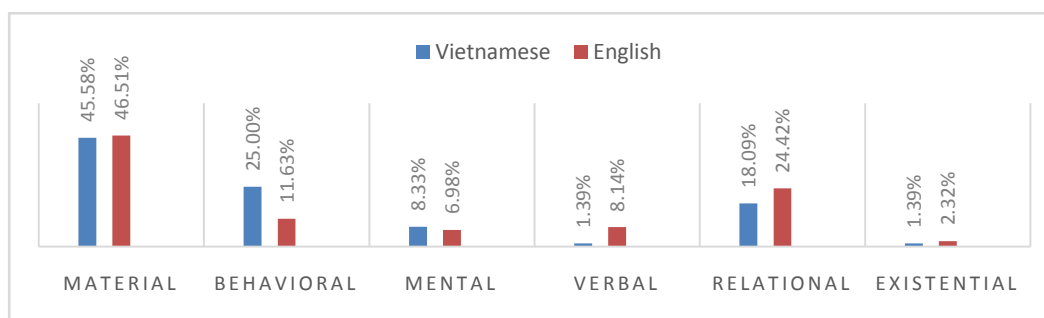


Figure 8. Comparing the frequency of types of transitivity process in English and Vietnamese ads

Statistical results in Figure 8 show that in English advertising discourse, material, verbal, relational and existential processes are preferred by ads designers over Vietnamese advertising discourse; namely more than

0.93% (material process), 6.75% (verbal process), 6.33% (relational process) and 0.93% (relational process). In contrast, the Vietnamese ads use more behavioral and mental processes than the English ones; namely 13.37% (behavioral process) and 1.35% (mental process).

In terms of job ads, there is a difference in the frequency of using different types of transitivity process in Vietnamese and English advertising discourse, which is illustrated in Figure 9.

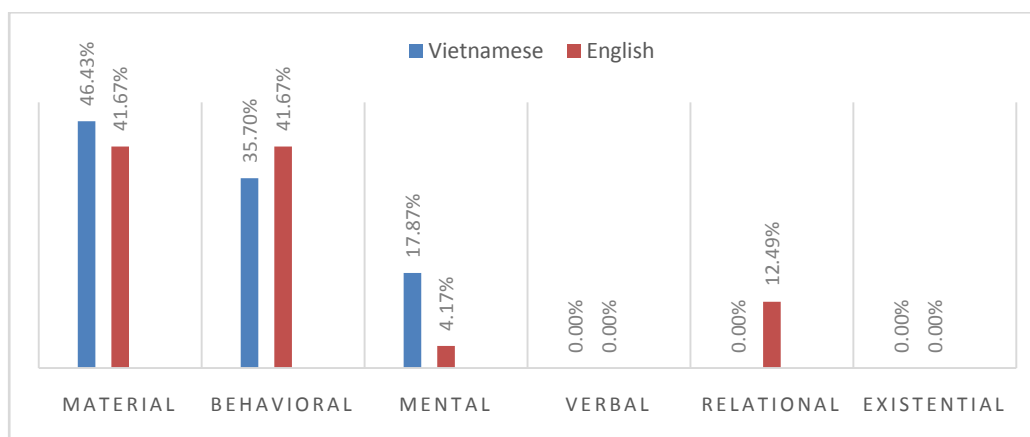


Figure 9. Comparing the frequency of types of transitivity process in English and Vietnamese job ads

Figure 9 shows that the Vietnamese job ads and the English ones do not use existential and verbal processes. In English job ads, behavioral and relational processes are preferred by advertising designers to Vietnamese ones; namely more than 5.97% (behavioral process), 12.49% (relational process). In contrast, the Vietnamese job ads use more material and mental processes than that of English advertising discourse; namely 4.76% (behavioral process) and 13.63% (mental process).

In terms of advertising discourse of books, consumer goods and travel, there is also a difference in the frequency of using different types of transitivity process in Vietnamese and English advertising discourse, which is illustrated in Figure 10.

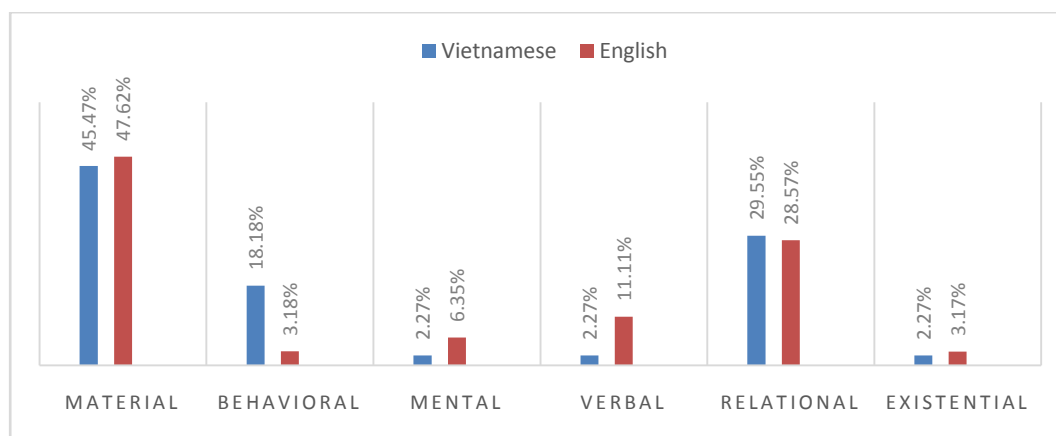


Figure 10. Comparing the frequency of types of transitivity process in English and Vietnamese book, consumer goods and travel ads

Considering figure 10, it can be seen that in the English advertising discourse of books, consumer goods and travel, material, verbal, relational and mental processes are preferred by advertising designers to Vietnamese ads, namely more than 2.15% (material process), 8.91% (verbal process), 4.08% (mental process) and 0.9% (existential process). In contrast, the Vietnamese advertising discourse on books, consumer goods and travel uses more behavioral and relational processes than in the English ads, namely 15% (behavioral process) and 0.98% (relational process).

V. CONCLUSION

The results of the survey on the transitivity processes show that in the English and Vietnamese advertising discourse, the advertiser actively chooses the appropriate transitivity processes. The choice of the transitivity processes depends on the advertiser's intentions and purposes of the discourse. Both English and

Vietnamese advertising discourse prioritize the use of material, behavioral and relational processes over existential, verbal, and mental processes. Depending on the type of product being advertised, the personal relationship between the writer and the reader affects the choice to achieve the communication purpose of the advertising discourse. The second similarity is that in both English and Vietnamese languages, the advertiser chooses to use the transitivity processes depending on the receiver of the product or service being advertised. Due to the different types of languages, the register in general and the transitivity process in particular in the advertising discourse of both languages also have discrepancies in terms of frequency of using the transitivity processes.

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