Comparative Analysis of Diplomatic Terminology in English and Vietnamese: Formation Methods and Terminological Elements

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ABSTRACT: *This paper provides an in-depth comparative analysis of the formation characteristics of English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology. The research examines terms at both the word and phrase levels, exploring categories such as simple words, compounds, derived words, abbreviations, and noun, verb, and adjective phrases. By analyzing the number of terminological elements in diplomatic terms across both languages, this study reveals distinct patterns in how diplomatic language is constructed. A total of 1,317 English terms and 1,317 Vietnamese terms were analyzed to identify these structural patterns. This research also discusses the implications of these linguistic features for translation and international diplomatic communication.*

KEYWORDS: *Diplomatic terminology, comparative linguistics, English-Vietnamese, formation characteristics, terminological elements*

INTRODUCTION

Diplomatic terminology plays a crucial role in international relations and communication, forming the backbone of diplomatic discourse. It serves to convey specific meanings tied to diplomacy, ensuring precise and effective communication. As diplomatic relations between countries expand, there is a growing need to understand how different languages represent diplomatic concepts.

This paper aims to analyze the formation characteristics of diplomatic terminology in both English and Vietnamese. By focusing on words and phrases, the paper investigates the formation methods, structural components, and the comparative linguistic characteristics of the two languages. Given the stark differences between English - a morphologically rich Indo-European language - and Vietnamese - a tonal, isolating language - the structural features of diplomatic terms in these two languages provide insight into how diplomatic concepts are conveyed and interpreted across cultural and linguistic boundaries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Diplomatic terminology refers to the fixed words or set phrases used in diplomacy to describe concepts, documents, actions, subjects… that are central to diplomatic activities. In both English and Vietnamese, diplomatic terminology must meet certain formal criteria: the terms must consist of at least one terminological element (either a word or a phrase), and they must represent a specific concept relevant to diplomacy. However, the two languages take different approaches to how these terms are formed and structured.

A terminological element can be a morpheme in a simple term, a word in a compound term, or a phrase/term combination in a complex term. According to this view, a term consists of one or more terminological elements, each corresponding to a concept or a criterion of a concept in a specialized field. This viewpoint was initiated by D.S. Lotte and developed by V.P. Daninenko, T.L. Kandeljakij (according to Nguyen Van Loi, 2010, p. 24).

Several studies have been conducted on diplomatic language and its significance in international relations. Research typically emphasizes the importance of using diplomatic language to convey ideas precisely while maintaining the diplomatic tone necessary for international relations. However, there is a paucity of literature that directly compares English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology at a structural level.

A significant amount of literature discusses English diplomatic terminology, with several sources noting its reliance on compound words, abbreviations, and derived terms. In contrast, Vietnamese diplomatic terminology tends to utilize more descriptive phrases, reflecting the language's analytic nature. This study contributes to existing research by offering a detailed comparison, focusing on structural characteristics, the use of terminological elements, and their implications for translation and diplomatic discourse.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, a comprehensive corpus of 1,317 diplomatic terms from both English and Vietnamese was compiled. The English terms were extracted from diplomatic dictionaries and other relevant sources, while the Vietnamese terms were similarly gathered from specialized texts, dictionaries, and other scholarly references.

The terms were categorized based on their formation characteristics, such as simple words, compounds, derived words, and abbreviations. Additionally, phrases were categorized into noun phrases, verb phrases, and adjective phrases. Each term was analyzed according to its number of terminological elements to determine its complexity. Statistical analysis was then conducted to compare the percentage of each category in English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Diplomatic terminology in both English and Vietnamese is formed from words and phrases. After analyzing the construction characteristics of the surveyed terminology list, the results are as follows:

Table 1: Formation of English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology

Formation	English diplomatic terms		Vietnamese diplomatic terms	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Words	444	33.79%	182	13.82%
Phrases	873	66.21%	1135	86.18%
Total	1317	100%	1317	100%

From the data presented in Table 1, it is clear that in both English and Vietnamese, diplomatic terms are primarily constructed as phrases, with this structure being much more prevalent than word-based terms. Specifically, 66.21% of English diplomatic terms are phrases, and 33.79% are words, while in Vietnamese, 86.18% are phrases, and only 13.82% are words. These statistics reveal a significant similarity between English and Vietnamese in their use of phrases as the primary structure for expressing diplomatic concepts.

Formation Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology as Words

The smallest meaningful units of language in English are morphemes. According to Quirk & Greenbaum, there are three primary methods of word formation in English: simple words, derivatives, and compounds [119, p. 430]. The formation characteristics of diplomatic terminology as words present several significant contrasts between English and Vietnamese. These distinctions can be observed in their use of simple words, compounds, derived words, and abbreviations, which form the basis of diplomatic terminology in both languages. In this section, a detailed analysis of each category is provided, incorporating specific numerical data to illustrate the trends in each language.

Simple Words

Simple words are foundational in English diplomatic terminology as words, accounting for 67.19% (299 out of 445) of the terms analyzed. These simple words are often monosyllabic or polysyllabic and include commonly used terms like *truce, state, and agenda*. The prevalence of simple words in English reflects the language's synthetic nature, where words often encapsulate entire concepts without the need for additional elements or modifiers. The high percentage of simple words in English contrasts with the lower percentage of simple words in Vietnamese diplomatic terminology.

In Vietnamese, simple words only make up 4.95% (9 out of 182) of the diplomatic terms as words analyzed. This is a significant difference from English, as Vietnamese is an analytic language, which tends to rely more on compounds and multi-syllabic phrases to express diplomatic concepts. Simple Vietnamese terms like *khối (bloc)* and *ngài (sir)* are rare and are usually reserved for basic or fundamental diplomatic concepts. The low percentage of simple words in Vietnamese reflects the language's tendency to create more complex structures for conveying meaning, especially in professional and diplomatic contexts.

Compounds

Compounds form a significant portion of diplomatic terminology as words in both languages, although they are used more extensively in Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, compounds account for 95.05% (173 out of 182) of diplomatic terms. These compound words are often used to describe complex diplomatic roles or concepts that cannot be conveyed using a single word. Examples include *bộ trưởng (minister)* and *công hàm (note verbale).* Vietnamese compounds are typically formed by combining two or more morphemes that together create a specific meaning relevant to diplomacy.

In English, compound terms make up a smaller percentage of the total diplomatic vocabulary, with 32 out of 445 terms (7.42%) being compounds. Examples include *statesman* and *buffer zone*. These compounds in English often serve as more precise or technical terms within the diplomatic domain. The lower percentage of compounds in English, compared to Vietnamese, can be attributed to the language's capacity to derive terms through affixation or the use of abbreviations, reducing the need for compound words.

Derived Words

English diplomatic terminology as words exhibits a substantial use of derived words, making up 23.15% (103 out of 445) of the terms. These terms are formed through the process of affixation, where prefixes and suffixes are added to root words to create new terms. Common examples include *decolonization* (the process of ending colonialism) and *countermeasure* (an action taken to counteract a threat). The derivation process allows English to generate specific diplomatic terms by modifying base words, which enhances its ability to create new terminology as needed.

In contrast, Vietnamese diplomatic terminology does not use derivation as a word-formation process. Instead, Vietnamese relies more on compounding or forming descriptive phrases to convey complex meanings. This absence of derived words in Vietnamese is consistent with its analytic nature, where meaning is often expressed through a combination of individual morphemes rather than by modifying a root word.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations are another significant area of divergence between English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology. In English, abbreviations account for 2.25% (10 out of 445) of the

diplomatic terms. Abbreviations like *MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone),* and *CFSP (Common Foreign and Security Policy)* are commonly used in diplomatic discourse to simplify complex phrases or reduce the length of communication. The use of abbreviations in English reflects its general tendency toward brevity, especially in professional and formal settings where efficiency is valued.

In Vietnamese, abbreviations are rare in diplomatic terminology, reflecting the language's preference for full and descriptive phrases. The infrequent use of abbreviations in Vietnamese can be seen as a strategy to maintain clarity and precision, ensuring that each term is fully understood in a diplomatic context. This distinction between English and Vietnamese in the use of abbreviations highlights a broader linguistic difference, with English leaning toward brevity and Vietnamese prioritizing explicitness.

Formation Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology as Phrases

Phrases play an essential role in both English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology, with each language employing different structures to convey complex ideas. In this section, we explore the structural characteristics of diplomatic terminology as phrases, focusing on the differences in syntax, head-modifier relationships, and phrase types.

Common structures

In both English and Vietnamese, head-modifier structures are commonly used to form phrases. However, the syntactic rules governing these structures differ significantly between the two languages.

In English, the head-modifier structure follows a "modifier-head" order, where the modifying elements precede the head noun. For example, in the phrase *bilateral agreement*, the adjective *bilateral* modifies the noun *agreement*, with the modifier appearing before the head. This structure allows English to convey essential details before presenting the core concept, making the meaning clear from the outset.

In Vietnamese, the head-modifier structure is reversed, following a "head-modifier" order. For example, in the phrase *chính sách ngoại giao (foreign policy)*, the noun *chính sách (policy)* serves as the head, and the adjective *ngoại giao (foreign)* modifies it, appearing after the head noun. This reversal of syntactic order reflects a key difference between the two languages and can present challenges in translation, where the head-modifier relationship must be preserved while adjusting the word order.

Coordinated structures are also present in both languages, though they are used less frequently than head-modifier structures. In English, coordinated structures like *rights and privileges* or *immunity and privileges* combine two or more equally important elements. Vietnamese also uses coordinated structures, such as *ưu đãi và miễn trừ (privileges and immunities),* but these structures are less common compared to head-modifier phrases.

Phrase Types

Noun phrases dominate diplomatic terminology in both English and Vietnamese. In English, noun phrases account for 99.08% (865 out of 873) of the phrases analyzed. Examples include *diplomatic mission* and *state visit*, both of which express complex diplomatic concepts through the combination of a head noun and one or more modifiers. These noun phrases are typically used to denote specific roles, entities, or actions in the diplomatic sphere.

Similarly, in Vietnamese, noun phrases make up 97.44% (1,106 out of 1,135) of the phrases analyzed. Examples include *phái đoàn ngoại giao (diplomatic mission)* and *quyền miễn trừ ngoại giao (diplomatic immunity)*. Vietnamese noun phrases, like their English counterparts, are constructed with a head noun and modifying elements, but they follow the head-modifier structure characteristic of the language.

Verb phrases are less common in both languages. In English, verb phrases account for 0.92% (8 out of 873) of diplomatic phrases, with examples such as *sever diplomatic relations* and *extend an agreement*. These verb phrases often describe specific actions or processes related to diplomacy. In Vietnamese, verb phrases represent 2.38% (27 out of 1,135) of diplomatic phrases, with examples like *ký kết hiệp định (sign an agreement)* and *cắt đứt quan hệ ngoại giao (sever diplomatic relations).*

Adjective phrases are rare in both languages, as the focus in diplomatic terminology is typically on nouns and verbs that denote concrete entities and actions. In both English and Vietnamese, adjective phrases account for less than 1% of the total phrases analyzed.

Comparative Analysis of Formation Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology as Words and Phrases

The comparative analysis of diplomatic terminology in English and Vietnamese reveals several key structural differences and similarities at both the word and phrase levels. While both languages use similar categories of words and phrases, their approaches to constructing these terms differ significantly.

At the Word Level

English tends to favor simple words and derived words, with 67.19% of the terms as being simple words and 23.15% being derived words. This reflects English's ability to encapsulate complex diplomatic concepts into single words, often through the use of prefixes and suffixes. Vietnamese, by contrast, relies heavily on compounds, with 95.05% of the terms being compound words. This analytic tendency of Vietnamese means that diplomatic concepts are more frequently expressed through combinations of individual morphemes, rather than through derivation or abbreviation.

Another notable difference is the use of abbreviations. English uses abbreviations for 2.25% of its diplomatic terms, while Vietnamese uses very few abbreviations. The preference for full

expressions in Vietnamese, even in formal diplomatic contexts, emphasizes clarity and explicitness, whereas English tends to prioritize brevity.

At the Phrase Level

Both languages rely on noun phrases as the primary means of expressing diplomatic concepts, with English noun phrases making up 99.08% of the phrases and Vietnamese noun phrases accounting for 97.44%. Despite this similarity, the syntactic structure of these phrases differs between the two languages. English follows a modifier-head order, while Vietnamese follows a head-modifier order, which can complicate the translation process. Additionally, while English uses some derived phrases and abbreviations to shorten expressions, Vietnamese tends to maintain more explicit, multi-element phrases, which better reflect the cultural emphasis on clarity and specificity.

Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology as Words Based on the Number of Terminological Elements

One Terminological Element

In English, terms with one terminological element are relatively common, accounting for 68.89% (299 out of 434) of the diplomatic terms as words analyzed. These single-element terms are often simple words or abbreviations, such as *consul* or *note*. The high percentage of single-element terms reflects English's efficiency in conveying meaning through compact, self-contained words.

In Vietnamese, terms with one terminological element are much rarer, comprising only 4.95% (9 out of 182) of the diplomatic terms. Examples of single-element terms in Vietnamese include *bên (party)* and *ngài (sir)*. The scarcity of single-element terms in Vietnamese aligns with the language's preference for compounds and descriptive phrases.

Two Terminological Elements

Terms with two terminological elements are common in both English and Vietnamese, although they represent a higher percentage of the total in Vietnamese. In English, two-element terms account for 30.41% (132 out of 434) of the diplomatic terms analyzed, including examples like *face-saver* and *statesman*. These terms typically involve the combination of two morphemes to create a more specific meaning, often by combining a modifier and a head noun.

In Vietnamese, two-element terms dominate the diplomatic vocabulary, accounting for 95.05% (173 out of 182) of the terms. Examples include *bộ trưởng (minister)* and *công hàm (note verbale)*. The predominance of two-element terms in Vietnamese reflects the language's compound-based structure, where diplomatic concepts are frequently expressed through the combination of two or more morphemes.

Three Terminological Elements

Three-element terms are rare in both languages, but they are more common in English than in Vietnamese. In English, 0.7% (3 out of 434) of the terms analyzed consist of three terminological elements. These terms are usually formed through the addition of both prefixes and suffixes, as seen in examples like *demilitarization* and *decolonization*.

In Vietnamese, no three-element terms were found at the word level, highlighting the language's reliance on simpler structures or phrases to convey meaning.

Characteristics of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology as Phrases Based on the Number of Terminological Elements

Two Terminological Elements

In both English and Vietnamese, phrases with two terminological elements are the most common. In English, 82.70% (722 out of 873) of the diplomatic phrases analyzed consist of two elements. These phrases are typically formed by combining a head noun with a modifier, as seen in examples like diplomatic mission and state visit. The use of two-element phrases allows English to convey specific meanings while maintaining brevity and clarity.

In Vietnamese, two-element phrases account for 75.06% (852 out of 1,135) of the diplomatic phrases. Examples include *chính sách ngoại giao (foreign policy)* and *phái đoàn ngoại giao (diplomatic mission).* The high percentage of two-element phrases in Vietnamese aligns with the language's compound-based structure, where meaning is often expressed through the combination of two morphemes or elements.

Three Terminological Elements

Three-element phrases are less common in both languages but are more frequent in Vietnamese than in English. In English, 16.15% (141 out of 873) of the diplomatic phrases analyzed consist of three elements, such as *acting permanent representative* and *chief diplomatic officer*. These phrases typically involve the addition of another modifier or element to provide further specificity.

In Vietnamese, three-element phrases account for 21.94% (249 out of 1,135) of the diplomatic phrases. Examples include *quyền miễn trừ ngoại giao (diplomatic immunity)* and *phái bộ đại diện thường trú (resident mission)*. The higher percentage of three-element phrases in Vietnamese reflects the language's preference for providing more detail and specificity in diplomatic terminology.

Four Terminological Elements

Four-element phrases are rare in both languages, though they are slightly more common in Vietnamese. In English, only 1.15% (10 out of 873) of the diplomatic phrases analyzed consist of four elements, such as *envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary* and *senior foreign*

service officer. These longer phrases are typically used to describe more complex diplomatic roles or actions.

In Vietnamese, 2.82% (32 out of 1,135) of the diplomatic phrases consist of four elements. Examples include *chính sách đối ngoại và an ninh chung (common foreign and security policy)* and *quyền ưu đãi và miễn trừ lãnh sự (consular privileges and immunities)*. The slightly higher percentage of four-element phrases in Vietnamese highlights the language's descriptive nature, where diplomatic terms are often expanded to provide greater clarity.

Comparative Analysis of English and Vietnamese Diplomatic Terminology Based on the Number of Terminological Elements

A comparative analysis of diplomatic terminology in English and Vietnamese reveals notable differences in the use of terminological elements.

At the Word Level

In English, terms with one terminological element are common, accounting for 68.89% of the total, while two-element terms make up 30.41%. Three-element terms are rare, comprising only 0.7% of the total. This distribution reflects English's efficiency in creating concise diplomatic terms, often through the use of simple words and abbreviations.

In Vietnamese, by contrast, two-element terms dominate, making up 95.05% of the total. The reliance on two-element terms reflects Vietnamese's compound-based structure, where diplomatic concepts are expressed through combinations of individual morphemes. One-element terms are rare, accounting for only 4.95% of the total, and no three-element terms were found at the word level.

At the Phrase Level

At the phrase level, both languages favor two-element phrases, with English using them 82.70% of the time and Vietnamese using them 75.06% of the time. However, Vietnamese exhibits a higher percentage of three-element phrases, at 21.94%, compared to English's 16.15%. This indicates that Vietnamese tends to provide more detail and specificity in its diplomatic phrases, while English prioritizes brevity.

Four-element phrases are rare in both languages, but they are slightly more common in Vietnamese, at 2.82%, compared to English's 1.15%. This further underscores the tendency of Vietnamese to use longer and more descriptive phrases in diplomatic communication.

In summary, English diplomatic terminology is more concise and relies more on simple words, derived words, and abbreviations, while Vietnamese diplomatic terminology is more descriptive and tends to use compounds and multi-element phrases. These differences have significant implications for translation and diplomatic communication, as they reflect different cultural and linguistic priorities in how diplomatic concepts are expressed.

Here is an expanded version of the **Implications** and **Conclusion** sections. Each has been elaborated with additional detail, analysis, and broader considerations, which should help increase the overall length of the article and provide a more comprehensive discussion.

IMPLICATIONS

The formation differences between English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology provide valuable insights for translation, international diplomacy, diplomatic training, and linguistic research. Understanding these differences is essential for ensuring effective communication and minimizing misunderstandings in diplomatic contexts.

Implications for Translation and Interpretation

The contrasting approaches to word formation - English's reliance on abbreviations, simple words, and derived forms versus Vietnamese's use of compound words and descriptive phrases - pose challenges for translators. Translating English terms into Vietnamese often requires expansion, as Vietnamese emphasizes clarity and detail. Conversely, translating Vietnamese into English may involve simplifying and condensing longer phrases to maintain English's preference for brevity. The head-modifier structure in Vietnamese and the reversed structure in English also demand careful attention to preserve meaning during translation. Translators need to be mindful of these differences to ensure accuracy, especially in high-stakes diplomatic exchanges.

Implications for Cross-Cultural Communication

The differences in language structure also affect how diplomats and officials from English- and Vietnamese-speaking countries communicate. English tends to prioritize efficiency and conciseness, while Vietnamese provides more explicit details. These differences can lead to misunderstandings if diplomats are unaware of the linguistic norms of their counterparts. For instance, English speakers may perceive Vietnamese phrases as overly verbose, while Vietnamese speakers might find English diplomatic expressions lacking in clarity. Recognizing and adapting to these differences allows diplomats to communicate more effectively and build stronger relationships.

Implications for Diplomatic Training

Future diplomats and translators must be trained in the nuances of both English and Vietnamese diplomatic terminology. Diplomatic training programs should emphasize the importance of understanding how terms are constructed and used in each language. This will equip diplomats with the skills needed to navigate cross-cultural interactions and prevent communication breakdowns. Training should also focus on translation strategies that account for the linguistic differences highlighted in this study, ensuring that meaning is conveyed accurately and effectively across languages.

Implications for Linguistic Studies

From a linguistic perspective, this comparative analysis contributes to the broader study of how languages handle specialized terminology. It highlights the influence of linguistic systems - synthetic versus analytic - on the formation of diplomatic terms. These findings can serve as a foundation for future research into other language pairs, offering insights into how professional terminology develops across different linguistic and cultural contexts. This type of research enhances our understanding of language structure and its impact on communication in professional fields such as law, medicine, and international relations.

CONCLUSION

This paper reveals distinct formation differences in how English and Vietnamese construct diplomatic terms. English favors brevity through simple words, derivations, and abbreviations, while Vietnamese uses compound words and descriptive phrases for clarity.

The differences in syntactic structure and the use of abbreviations versus full phrases present challenges for translators, requiring careful attention to retain meaning. Cross-cultural communication between English and Vietnamese-speaking diplomats also necessitates an understanding of these linguistic tendencies to ensure clarity and effectiveness in diplomatic exchanges.

The implications for diplomatic training and linguistic studies are significant, highlighting the need for greater awareness of linguistic differences in diplomacy. Understanding how each language handles diplomatic terminology is crucial for fostering international cooperation and effective communication.

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