

# VOCATIVE EXPRESSIONS OF INTERPERSONAL MEANING IN NHAT KY DANG THUY TRAM AND THEIR TRANSLATIONAL EQUIVALENTS IN LAST NIGHT I DREAMED OF PEACE

Nguyễn Thọ Phước Thảo

***Abstract.** One of the most basic functions of language is to create interpersonal relationships between speakers and addressees through the way in which text is worded. Speech act functions establish whether we are offering or demanding, aiding or attacking, creating solidarity or emphasizing social distance. In these and other ways, we use language to take a stance towards and socially orient ourselves and our text to others.*

*In this paper, the author aims to clarify the vocative expressions denoting interpersonal meaning in Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram and its English version Last night, I dreamed of peace. The author also compares them to find out the similarities and differences in the way of addressing between English and Vietnamese which is very useful for language teachers and students in understanding the a text, in translating from Vietnamese to English and vice versa more correctly and effectively.*

***Keywords:** Interpersonal meaning, vocative expression*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram (Last night, I dreamed of peace) is an extraordinary document that narrates one woman's personal and political struggles. Above all, it is a story of hope in the most dire of circumstances-told from the perspective of our historic enemy but universal in its power to celebrate and mourn the fragility of human life.

On the basic of the corpus collected from Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram [7] and its English version Last night, I dreamed of peace [1], vocative expressions of interpersonal meaning are described and analyzed in order to help readers have more understandings on the interpersonal meaning in Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram. This will be also a good reference for teaching and learning English linguistics.

## 2. CONTENTS

### 2.1. Definition

According to Halliday [6], interpersonal meanings focus on the interactivity of the language, and concern the ways in which we act upon one another through language. In either spoken texts or written texts, an interlocutor expects to tell listeners/ readers via text. This means that each text has a relationship between providers of information and recipients of information.

*The interpersonal meaning expresses judgments, assessments, gives people, the relationship between texts and readers/viewers and the relationships within texts: "interpersonal...the grammar of personal participation; it expresses the speaker's role in the speech situation, his interaction with others". [6]*

In Vietnamese, Cao Xuan Hao, in “Tiếng Việt sơ thảo ngữ pháp chức năng”[3], did not mention directly interpersonal meanings but he described speech acts and modality in the first part of the book as an important part of interpersonal meanings.

In “Đại cương ngôn ngữ học, volume 2, Ngữ dụng học”, Do Huu Hao [4] also considers speech acts, allocution and interaction, an important part of interpersonal meanings.

Hadumod Hussmann in Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics [5] defined expression as things that people say or do in order to show their feelings, opinions and ideas.

According to But et al [2], although person is not labeled part of interpersonal analysis, any investigation must be concerned with the interplay of first and second person. Third person is the persons and things spoken about

## **2.2. Vocative expressions of interpersonal meaning in *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* and their equivalents in *Last night, I dreamed of peace***

### ***Personal pronouns***

Personal pronouns have a variety of functions in spoken as well as written language, which can be interpreted from the aspect of social and political roles. They can achieve different interactive effects and reflect the speaker’s perception of the relationship between the listener and himself/ herself.

In *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* [7], personal pronouns “I”, “We”, “You” are used many times and refer to different people. Although this is a diary, the author sometimes talked to herself, and she often talked to other people in her imagination. *You* can be her mother, father, sisters or brothers; *you* can also be her friends, her patients.

### ***Examples:***

- (1a) *Các anh* đi rồi nhưng tất cả nơi đây còn ghi lại bóng dáng của *các anh*.  
(1b) *You* have gone, but this place holds *your* shadow. [10/4/68]
- (2a) Hãy nén đau thương lại đi *chú*.  
(2b) Please smother *your* pain. [22/4/68]
- (3a) *Con* biết nói sao khi lòng *con* thương mẹ trăm nghìn triệu mà cũng đành xa *mẹ* ra đi.  
(3b) What can *I* say when I love you a hundred, a thousand, a million times over and still I had to leave *your* side. [23/4/68]
- (4a) Chị rất hiểu *em*.  
(4b) I understand *you*. [05/9/68]
- (5a) *Ba má* có tin rằng *con* sẽ vượt qua được không?  
(5b) Do *you* believe that *I* will prevail? [06/7/68]
- (6a) Nước nhà chưa thống nhất, đồng bào miền Nam chưa được đón *Bác* vào Nam, mà *Bác* đã yên giấc rồi.

(6b) Our compatriots in the South haven't had a chance to welcome *you*, yet *you* have lain down to sleep forever. [03/9/69]

In the above examples, the author Thuy used different personal pronouns to address such as: *Chị, em, con, các anh, anh, các em, ba má...* while their translational equivalents are *I* and *you*. It is easy to understand the differences between the way of addressing someone in English and Vietnamese. In English, "I" is used for the speaker and "you" is the hearer while in Vietnamese, a pronoun usually connotes a degree of family relationship or kinship. The personal pronouns used in the above sentences show the close relationship between the author and the receiver.

The pronoun *Tôi* (I), *Anh, mọi người, cô* (you) in the following examples show the relationship between a doctor and her patients, between her and her friends or someone she never met:

(7a) Cảm ơn tất cả *mọi người* đã dành cho *tôi* những tình thương mến thiết tha.

(7b) Thank *you* all for showering *me* with such warm affection. [13/4/68]

The pronoun *Cô* (You), *Mình* (I) are sometimes used to refer to the author when she wanted to talk to herself, and she is both the speaker and the hearer in these cases:

*Examples:*

(8a) *Mình* phải cố gắng hết sức vì San cũng như vì tất cả những người bệnh nhân!

(8b) *I* must do my best for San as well as for other patients! [15/4/68]

(9a) *Cô* vẫn là một đứa trẻ con.

(9b) *You* are still a child. [03/5/69]

In another situation, *Cô* (You) is used for a girl the author had never met before:

(10a) Người *cô* yêu sẽ không bao giờ về nữa.

(10b) *Your* lover will never come back. [13/3/69]

In English, 'We' is a plural pronoun to mention more than two persons including the speaker. However, in Vietnamese, there is an exclusive/ inclusive plural distinction in the first person: *chúng tôi* is exclusive (i.e., me and them but not you), *chúng ta* and *chúng mình* are inclusive (i.e., you and me).

By inviting the listener's judgment and thus enhancing listener's attention, the inclusive and exclusive 'we' was stressed in the following sentences:

(11a) Hứa với tất cả rằng *chúng tôi* và *riêng tôi* sẽ bình tĩnh vượt qua mọi khó khăn.

(12b) I promise all of you that *we* – especially *I* - will calmly overcome all these obstacles. [12/5/69]

(13a) *Chúng mình* đang sống trong những ngày căng thẳng tột bậc.

(13b) *We* are living in an extreme days. [16/6/70]

(14a) *Chúng ta* có tiếc gì đâu để đổi lấy độc lập tự do.

(14b) *We* do not regret anything exchanged for freedom and liberty. [12/5/68]

(15a) *Ta* vẫn còn đủ sức lật đổ hòn núi đó chứ các đồng chí?

(15b) Do *we* still have the strength to overturn this immensity? [30/7/69]

The use of ‘we’ referring to a group contributes to the construction of group identity by identifying and categorizing the members of the group and excluding others from membership in this group. While stating her membership of the group, the author defined her interpersonal relation with (members of) the audience by anchoring the group to her deictic center, thus determining it as proximal in terms of the dimensions of space, time and modality. Moreover, the establishment of a shared ideology and the continuity of in-group relations contributes to discourse coherence and to the perception of the existential coherence of the speaker and her comrades. The use of the pronoun “Chúng ta, ta” can create a context in which the writer assumes that others agree with her, or it can indicate the writer’s attempt to include other people in the group referred to.

From the analysis of the above examples, the personal pronouns used in *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* and their translational equivalents in *Last night, I dreamed of peace* can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Personal pronoun system

Vietnamese	English
Chị, em, tôi, con, mình	I
Chúng ta, chúng tôi, chúng mình	We
Anh, em, các anh, ba má, các em, cô, mọi người, chúng bay, cháu	You

### ***Proper names***

In Vietnamese, virtually any noun used for a person can be used as a pronoun. These terms usually do not serve multiple roles like kinship terms (i.e. the term has only one grammatical person meaning). They are called non-kinship terms used as pronouns.

In *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* [7], personal names were used regularly. She called her name more than once. See the following examples:

#### ***Examples:***

(16a) Hãy quên đi *Thùy* ơi!

(16b) Let’s forget it *Thuy*. [12/4/68]

(17a) Vẫn buồn ư *Thùy*

(17b) Why are you still sad, *Thuy*? [30/4/68]

When she added her name after the sentence, it is likely that she was reminding herself to what she was thinking, asking herself to overcome trouble. On the other hand, she was not only the speaker but she also played the role of an active receiver.

Andrew X. Pham [1] sometimes kept the word *Thuy* in his translation, but normally, *Thuy* was just only mentioned for the first time, and in the following sentences, *Thuy* was replaced by *you*. This is the difference in English and Vietnamese. While always referring to oneself or the audience by name in Vietnamese is considered friendly, and is the preferred way to converse among close friends, it would be considered strange in English.

*Examples:*

(18a) Đừng để nó nổi cơn phong ba bão táp giữa tâm hồn *Thùy* nhé.

(18b) Don't let them bring a storm into your soul, *Thuy*. [17/5/1968]

(19a) Có nghe không *Thuy*?

(19b) Are you listening, *Thuy*? [11/2/69]

However, their translational equivalents still keep the meaning and the tenor of the speaker.

Besides, there are a lot of name she called in her diary, such as brother Tan, M. , Thuan, Huong, Khiem... All the name she mentioned are her close sister, brothers and friends.

*Examples:*

(20a) *Anh Kỳ* ơi! Cảm ơn anh, em không bao giờ quên tấm tình của anh đối với em đâu!

(20b) Oh, *brother Ky*, thank you. I will never forget your love. [17/4/68]

(21a) *Hường* ơi! *Hường* đã chết rồi sao?

(21b) Oh, *Huong*! *Huong* died? [22/4/68]

(22a) *M.* ơi, *M.* lại vô đó ư ?

(22b) Oh, *M!* Are *you* coming in again? [28/6/68]

By calling their name, *Thuy* really wanted to call for their intention.

Moreover, the choice of a particular word among those with the same conceptual meaning but different emotive meanings can reflect the different degree of emotion, i.e. the intensity of like or dislike of what is being talked about. Hence it can denote the writer's positive or negative attitudes and judgments.

*Examples:*

(23a) "*Phuong* yêu ơi, ở ngoài đó có lúc nào em thấy nỗi chua xót trong cảnh chia ly đang đến với từng gia đình Việt Nam.

(23b) Dear *Phuong*, you always feel the pain of separation within each Vietnamese family. [19/01/69]

(24a) *Cánh Nam* thân yêu ơi, ở đó những người thân yêu của ta chắc vẫn lo lắng nhớ thương ta...

(24b) Oh, the dear *South Wing*! Over there, certainly, my dear ones still worry for me and miss me... [12/7/69]

The author uses the word “yêu, thân yêu” after a proper name to call a person, it means that ‘Phuong’ and ‘Cánh Nam’ are the person and the place which are close to her and she loves them so much. In English, the word Dear is used in front of name to make the same effectiveness.

A special point in *Nhat Ky Dang Thuy Tram* to express the interpersonal meaning is the way she called things around her. In her diary, she talked to the diary, to the North or even to her country.

*Examples:*

(25a) *Nhật ký* ơi! Đừng trách Th. nghe nếu như Th. cứ ghi vào nhật ký những dòng tâm sự nặng trĩu đau buồn.

(25b) Oh, dear *diary*! Don't begrudge me these mournful lines. [15/6/68]

(26a) Chào *Phố Khánh* thân yêu.

(26b) Good bye, *Pho Khanh* [31/12/69]

(27a) *Hà Nội* ơi! Đêm nay hồ Gươm vẫn vai chen vai.

(27b) Oh! *Hanoi*, tonight people are together. [06/2/70]

(28a) *Đất nước* ơi! Hai lăm năm trong lửa đạn vẫn còn kiên cường gan góc.

(28b) Oh, *my country*! Twenty –five years immersed in fire and bullets, we are still strong. [07/5/70]

(29a) Ôi, *Miền Bắc* xa xôi, bao giờ ta trở lại?

(29b) Oh, *the far North*, when will I come back? [16/6/70]

In this way, she expressed the close relationship between her and them and diary, country or the north are her close friends, and she treated them as people who can listen and understand what she said.

***Noun phrases***

The noun phrases were preferred in her diary and Andrew X. Pham [1] tried to keep the linguistic equivalents in his translation to make use of the effect of expressing *Thuy Tram*'s feeling such as Mom, Dad, brother...

Noun phrases (noun and adjective) were also used in the diary such as young brother, my beloved comrades, the heroic people....

*Examples:*

(30a) *Ồi người thương binh trẻ tuổi* kia ơi, tôi thương anh bằng một tình thương rộng rãi nhưng rất sâu xa.

(30b) Oh, *you young, brave wounded soldier*, my love for you is as vast as it is deep.

[10/4/68]

- (31a) Có hiểu không hở *cô gái bướng bỉnh*?  
 (31b) Do you understand that, you *stubborn girl*? [09/5/68]  
 (32a) Nghe chẳng, *người bạn bất tử* trong lòng tôi?  
 (32b) Do you hear me, Khiem, *immortal friend* of my heart? [14/8/68]  
 (33a) Sao mà em ngây thơ thế hở *đứa đứa em thông minh dũng cảm của tôi*.  
 (33b) Why are you so naive, *my courageous and intelligent little brother*? [17/8/69]

When the author used the adjectives to describe the person she wanted to talk to. This noun phrase showed that she knew them deeply.

*Examples:*

- (34a) Ôi! *Giặc Mỹ cuồng bạo*, tội ác của *chúng bay* đã chất đầy như núi.  
 (34b) Oh! *Cruel American bandits*, your crimes are piling up like a mountain. [5/11/69]

In the example above, the use of phrase, “Giặc Mỹ cuồng bạo (Cruel American bandits)” together with the pronoun “Chúng bay” has effectively showed a vindictive hatred for the enemy.

To sum up, in *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* [7], the author used various types of vocative to address somebody. She was the speaker and she played the hearer. She called her name when she wanted to persuade, to give advice to herself. In other cases, she talked to others; they are her father, mother, sisters, brothers, friends, patients and sometimes a stranger. She did not only talk to people but she also talk to the diary, talk to the country. By using personal nouns, personal names to call the hearers, she showed that she really wanted to call for the hearer’s attention. Moreover, the use of noun phrases makes the conversation more effective because she showed the close relationship with other. This plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness in conversations. In *Last night I dreamed of peace*, the translational equivalents pronouns follow the English linguistics that “You” “I” and “We” for direct interaction. On the other hand, the author also tried to keep the linguistic translational equivalents in using personal name or noun phrases which are not familiar in English.

### 3. CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, it is clear that the use of vocative pronouns, proper names and noun phrases in addressing plays an important role in denoting interpersonal meaning which contributes to the effectiveness of a written text. The comparison and contrast of the given examples in *Nhat ky Dang Thuy Tram* and its English version to find out the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese in the way of choosing words for vocatives can be a good references for teachers, learners and translators as well.

*For teachers and learners*

First, the findings provide English teachers and learners with an overview of linguistic expressions of interpersonal meaning in English and Vietnamese. In this way, they help us discover some of the features of a writing text, which are very important for the understanding of written texts.

Second, this knowledge is extremely helpful in helping students develop their language skills, especially those of reading and writing, which involve a good understanding of logical and semantic relation between elements in a clause complex, and broader.

Finally, English teachers will be more aware of the importance of functional grammar (especially interpersonal meaning) in understanding a language that undoubtedly encourages them to teach English in some way that is more active. This leads to the fact that English learners know how to use English effectively to convey their attitudes and opinions in different situations.

#### ***For translators***

Understanding the tenor of the author in the first language will undoubtedly help translators in their process of transferring the source text into the target language. In addition, the awareness of similarities and differences in noun phrases, pronoun use definitely help translators avoid mistakes in English – Vietnamese and Vietnamese- English translation.

### **REFERENCES**

- [1] Andrew, X. Pham (2007), *Last Night, I Dreamed of Peace*, Three Rivers Press, New York.
- [2] Butt, D., Fahey, R., Feez, S., Spinks, S. and Yallop, C. (2003), *Using Functional Grammar – An Explorer’s Guide*, Sydney: Macquarie University, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research.
- [3] Cao Xuân Hạo (2006), *Tiếng Việt: Sơ thảo ngữ pháp chức năng*, Nxb Khoa học xã hội.
- [4] Đỗ Hữu Châu (1993), *Đại cương ngôn ngữ học*, NXB Giáo dục, Hà Nội.
- [5] Hadumod, H. (2006), *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, Taylor and Francis – e-Library.
- [6] Halliday, M.A.K. (2000), *An introduction to functional grammar*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- [7] Vương Trí Nhân (2012), *Nhật ký Đặng Thùy Trâm*, Nxb Hội Nhà văn.