

AN ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENTIAL MEANING OF THE STORY “QUÀ...TỨC LÀ NGƯỜI” BY THẠCH LAM

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Abstract: This paper is concerned with exploring experiential meaning realized through transitivity resources in the story “*Quà...tức là người*” by Thạch Lam. The theoretical framework adopted in the study is systemic functional grammar (SFG). The findings show that in composing the story, the writer has employed a high frequency of relational, material, mental processes and a low number of existential, behavioural and verbal processes. Remarkably, relational clauses were deployed to describe the taste and flavor of street foods and the way Hanoians enjoy such foods. The author implies that the choice as well as the way of enjoying food, to some extent, can tell people’s personality. This explains why the story was named “*Quà...tức là người*”. In addition, a high number of circumstances are found in the story with the high frequency of circumstances of manner, among which the circumstance of manner is mostly used in relational clauses to specify the taste and flavor of street foods.

Keywords: systemic functional grammar, experiential meaning, transitivity, Thạch Lam

1. Introduction

Over the past decades, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has proved to be “an applicable theory” (Bartlett & O’Grady, 2017) in a lot of fields including linguistics, education, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and language teaching. Numerous publications in the field of SFL have focused on discourse analysis. These include works by Benson and Greaves (1985a), Benson et al. (1988), Steiner and Veltman (1988), Ventola (1991), Davies and Ravelli (1992), Ghadessy (1993a), Fries and Gregory (1995), Ghadessy (1995), Hasan and Fries (1995), Sanchez-Macarro and Carter (1998), Ghadessy (1999), Ventola (2000), Stainton and de Villiers (2001), and Hasan et al. (2005, 2007) (as cited in Halliday & Webster, 2009), and many others.

SFL offers a valuable framework for analyzing discourse in various contexts in many different languages, and Vietnamese is no exception. Upon reviewing the existing literature, it becomes apparent that there is a lack of similar research focused on examining experiential meaning in the work by Thạch Lam; hence, this serves as the primary motivation for undertaking the present study.

The examined story is “*Quà...tức là người*” which is extracted from the collection “*Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường*” by Thạch Lam. This anthology explores the cuisine and the close connection of culinary art with the sophisticated cultural and social life of the elegant people of

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Hanoi. Thạch Lam, with his skillful writing, takes us through the ancient streets to rediscover the essence of Thăng Long - the old Hanoi. The anthology has been highly appreciated by a number of literature critics such as Dang (2021):

Không kể đến toàn bộ văn nghiệp của Thạch Lam, chỉ với bút kí “Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường”, Thạch Lam đã “làm cho lòng người thêm trong sạch và phong phú hơn”, yêu quý quê hương, đất nước, yêu quý, Thăng Long – Hà Nội ngàn năm văn hiến của mình hơn.

(Excluding the entire literary career of Thạch Lam, with just the anthology "*The 36 streets of Hanoi*," Thạch Lam has "made people's hearts cleaner and richer," cherishing his homeland, the country, and cherishing his thousand-year-old cultural capital, Thăng Long – Hanoi even more.)

As an initial step in understanding the story, this paper attempts to delve specifically into exploring the experiential meaning realized through transitivity patterns in the story. Two questions are put forward to fulfil the objectives of the study.

1. What transitivity resources does the writer employ to construct the story “*Quà...tức là người*”?

2. How are those transitivity resources employed?

2. The Theoretical Framework

2.1. An Overview of SFG

The theoretical framework adopted in the research is systemic functional grammar (SFG) which is a part of systemic functional linguistics (SFL). SFL was developed by Michael Halliday, a prominent linguist. Halliday's exploration of language in relation to social context began in the 1950s and was further developed in the 1960s, drawing inspiration from linguists like J.R. Firth. His influential book, *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978), established the foundation of SFL by presenting language as a social semiotic system with a focus on its functional aspects in meaning-making within social contexts. This theory acknowledges that language is a complex semiotic system consisting of four main strata: phonology, lexicogrammar, semantics and context. In SFL, lexicogrammar is concerned with the analysis of how language structures (grammar) are organized to convey meaning and fulfill various communicative functions in different situations.

In SFG, language has three main functions: ideational function (consisting of experiential and logical components), interpersonal and textual function. This study explores experiential meaning in clause simplexes in the story by Thạch Lam; hence, the details of this strand of meaning will be presented in the next part. In Vietnam, drawing on Halliday's theory, Hoang Van Van (2012) described the experiential meaning of Vietnamese clause and displayed some specificities of the language.

2.2. An Experiential Grammar of the Vietnamese Clause

Hoang Van Van's special monograph in 2012 offers an examination of Vietnamese grammar from the perspective of SFL. The book, based on his doctoral dissertation, is divided into three parts. The initial part “*Foundation*” begins with a general introduction and then focuses on an exploration of systemic functional linguistics and the concept of the clause in Vietnamese. The second part “*The system of transitivity in Vietnamese*” provides the readers

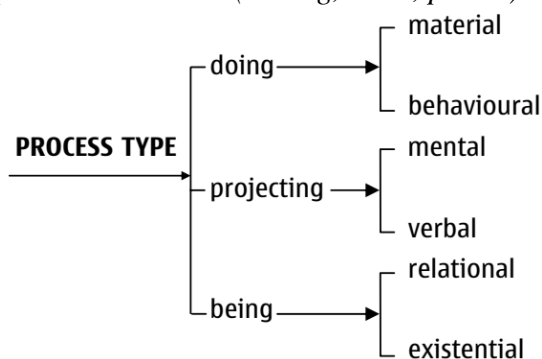
with basic concepts and delves into doing processes, projecting processes and being processes in Vietnam according to Hoang’s classification. Also in this part, types of circumstances are explored with illustrative examples. The final part titled “Coda” consists of a summary of the findings and proposes future research directions. Additionally, readers will find useful concluding remarks from chapters two to nine, as well as the index of proper names, index of subjects, and three appendices.

According to Hoang (2012), the experiential meaning is realized through transitivity system, a system of processes, participants and circumstances. The process refers to the action or event that is being represented, while the participants refer to the entities involved in the process, including the actor, the goal, and the recipient. The circumstances refer to the various aspects of the context in which the process is taking place, such as time, location, and manner.

Hoang (2012) formalized process types of Vietnamese clauses in the following figure.

Figure 1

The System of Process Types in Vietnamese (Hoang, 2012, p. 214)



Material process, the process of “doing and happening”, is represented with the structure **Actor^Process: material^other Participants**. The participants in this process can include one, two or even three (actor, goal and receiver). Let us look at the following examples extracted from the story, using Hoang’s (2012) model of analysis.

Chúng ta đã lần lượt điếm qua các thức quà rong ở Hà Nội (p. 95)

<i>Chúng ta</i>	<i>đã</i>	<i>lần lượt</i>	<i>điếm</i>	<i>qua</i>	<i>các thức quà rong</i>	<i>ở Hà Nội</i>
we	past time	one by one	reviewed	in passing	foods	in Hanoi
Actor		Circumstance 1	Process: material	Circumstance 2	Goal	Circumstance 3

(We have reviewed the street food in Hanoi in turn.)

One note pointed out by Hoang (2012) is that in the process of material in Vietnamese clauses, some material verbs often come with verb of direction, which is called co-verbs of directions such as “lên”, “ra”, “xuống”. In addition, in English, the passive and active voice is distinguished by the different structures; however, in Vietnamese, two words “bị” or “được” are used to differentiate such two voices. Nevertheless, two words above are not only used for passive voice. They also carry different meanings in different cases which will be shown in the later analysis of the story.

Mental process, the process of sensing, is manifested with the general structure: **Senser^Process: mental^Phenomenon**. Like English, Hoang (2012) probed four primary choices including perceptive, cognitive, desiderative and emotive in Vietnamese clauses. Like in the following example, the mental verb falls into emotive subtype.

Ót thì thích ớt rất cay. (p. 95)

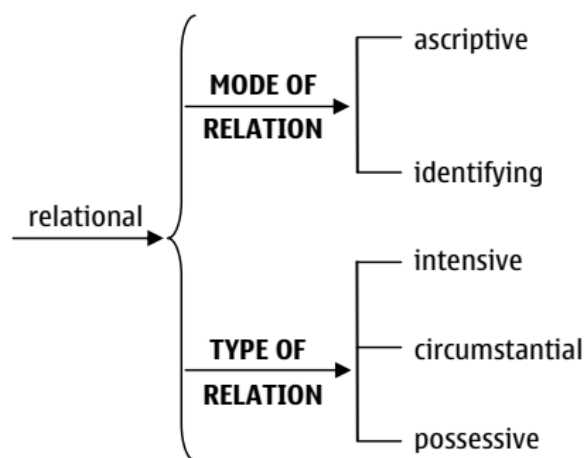
<i>Ót</i>	<i>thì thích</i>	<i>ớt rất cay</i>
Chilly	like	spicy chilly
Phenomenon	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(Speaking of chilly, Hanoian people like spicy chilly.)

Relational process is the process of being (intensive), having (possessive) and being at (circumstantial). Hoang (2012) divides relational process into three subtypes, which can be grouped into two modes: ascriptive and identifying. As can be inferred from its name, in the ascriptive mode, the entity (carrier) is assigned some attribute that is realized in an adjective or nominal group. On the other hand, in the identifying mode, the entity (identified) is defined or displays its identity through another entity (identifier). Figure 2 illustrates the system of relational process in Vietnamese.

Figure 2

Relational Process in Vietnamese (Hoang, 2012, p. 238)



Two following examples are two different modes of relational process extracted from the story.

In the first example, the carrier described is “*cà cuống*” with the attribute realized in the epithet “*rất hăng*”.

Cà cuống thì rất hăng. (p. 95)

<i>cà cuống</i>	<i>thì rất</i>	<i>hăng</i>
lethocerus indicus	very	pungent
Carrier	Circumstance	Process: relational

(Lethocerus indicus is very pungent.)

In the second example, the entity “*gói quà phong giấy*” is compared with “*phong thuốc Lào*.”

Gói quà phong giấy tựa như phong thuốc lào. (p. 96)

<i>Gói quà phong giấy</i>	<i>tựa như</i>	<i>phong thuốc lào</i>
The gift wrapped in paper	like	the package of tobacco
Identified (Token)	Process: relational	Identifier (Value)

(The gift wrapped in paper is like the package of tobacco.)

It should be noted that when an attribute is expressed using an adjective in English, the use of "to be" or a linking verb is usually required. However, in Vietnamese, the presence of this element (là) normally is not obligatory (for detail see Hoang 2012).

Three other processes which are the borderlines between main processes (material, mental and relational process).

Behavioural process is the process of physiological and psychological behaviour with one participant. The general structure is: **Behaver^Process: behavioural^Range/Phenomenon.**

Còn cả nhà thì nổi lên cười. (p. 96)

<i>còn cả nhà</i>	<i>thì nổi lên cười</i>
All family members	burst into laughter
Behaver	Process: behavioural

(All family members burst into laughter.)

Verbal process is the process of saying or includes any kind of symbolic change (Hoang, 2005) with the structure: **Sayer^Process: Verbal(^Receiver') (^Verbiage')**.

Khoe với mẹ. (p. 96)

khoe	với mẹ
Show off	to mother
Process: verbal	Target

(Showing off to my mother.)

The last one is the process of existing named existential process with one participant: **Process: existential^Existent.** Hoang (2012) also proposed some common existential verbs on Vietnamese with equivalent verbs in English (*treo – hang, ngồi – sit, mọc – grow,*).

Nhưng cái tục lệ đẹp ấy nay mất dần đi. (p. 96)

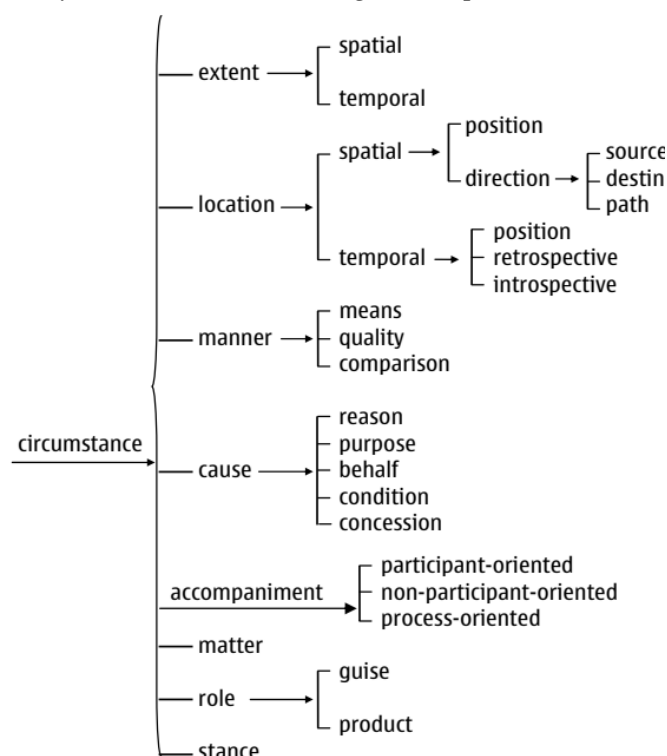
Nhưng cái tục lệ đẹp để ấy	nay	mất	dần đi
But the beautiful custom	today	lose	gradually
Existent	Circumstance 1	Process: existential	Circumstance 2

(But the beautiful custom is slowly fading away.)

In addition to the essential functions such as Agent and Action, additional elements that explain the material process in relation to place, time, method, etc., are not obligatory in process category. Hoang (2012) suggested eight types of such explanatory elements, which include scope, position, method, reason, co-occurrence, material, function and attitude.

Figure 3

Circumstantial Transitivity in Vietnamese (Hoang, 2012, p.320)



The following example presents the usage of circumstance of manner (comparison) to clarify the attribute which describes the taste of food.

Cả quà ngọt như đường mía (p. 95)

cả quà	ngọt	như đường mía
Food	sweet	like sugar cane
Carrier	Process: relational	Circumstance of manner (comparison)

(All the food is as sweet as sugarcane.)

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Thạch Lam and the Story “Quà...tức là người”

Thạch Lam was a key member of a literary association called Tự Lực Văn Đoàn, also known as the Self-Reliant Literary Group. This group was established during the time of French colonial rule with the aim of enhancing the literary heritage of our nation.

The anthology titled “Hà Nội Băm Sáu Phố Phường” (*The 36 Streets of Hanoi*) compiles a collection of Thạch Lam’s newspaper articles which were published posthumously. The book consists of 22 chapters, with 16 of them dedicated to exploring the culinary delights of Hanoi. However, Thạch Lam’s writings went beyond mere descriptions of food. Through the dishes, he depicted the inner beauty of those who prepared the food, the vendors, and even the people who enjoyed the meal.

The story “*Quà...tức là người*” extracted from the anthology “*The 36 streets of Hanoi*” describes the street foods of Hanoi and the changes over time. The author meticulously portrays the taste, colors, and the way people enjoy them. In addition to “*bún ốc*” (snail noodle soup) and red jellyfish meat, the author also shares a childhood memory associated with “*bánh bột cùi*” (laughing cake). However, gradually, the way the Hanoian enjoy these snacks has also changed with the emergence of colorful candies and pastries, which lacks exquisiteness. The writer Dang Tuong Nhu (2021) praised the collection as a treasure in the following words:

Và bút kí “Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường” là một phần châu báu rất sẵn trong kho tàng tâm hồn Thạch Lam, một đóng góp vô giá cho văn sản Hà Nội-Việt Nam.

(And the anthology “*The 36 streets of Hanoi*” is a precious gem readily available in Thạch Lam’s treasure trove of the soul, an invaluable contribution to the literary heritage of Hanoi-Vietnam.)

3.2. Unit of Analysis

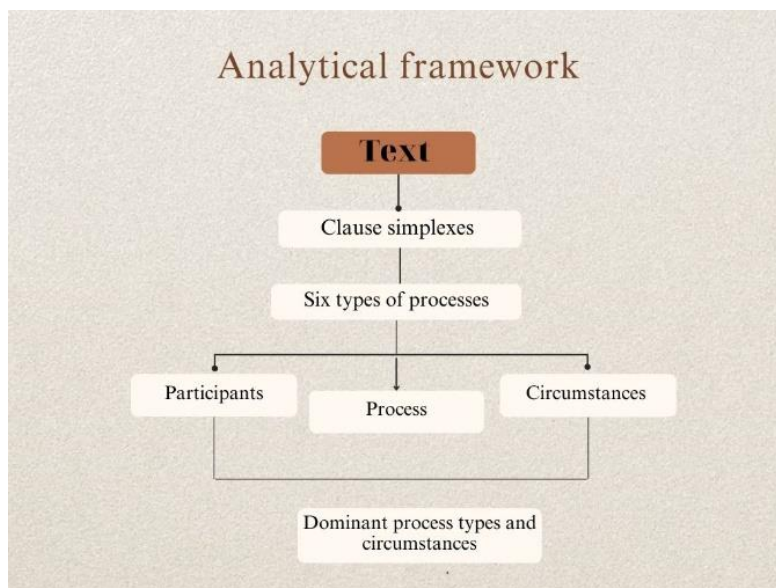
As aforementioned in the previous pages, the study focuses on exploring the component of experiential meaning in the story; hence, clause simplexes are chosen as the unit of analysis for the study. The clause simplex is composed of a subject, a finite verb, and sometimes, additional elements that constitute the predicate. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) suggest that the clause simplex is seen as the highest unit in grammatical rank for it carries all three metafunctions of language. Similarly, in Vietnamese, the clause on the lexicogrammatical level is the highest unit of grammar analysis (Hoang, 2012). In addition, the clause simplex provides the distinct line of structures associated with different metafunctions. In relation to the logical component, it is concerned with the way information is structured and linked within clauses and between clauses to convey the intended meaning clearly and coherently (clause complexes), which is not the scope of the study. To prevent confusion when dividing clauses within a clause complex, it is essential to remember that the clause complex represents a logical combination of clauses. There are two primary types of relationships between clauses in a clause complex: paratactic or hypotactic. In the paratactic relationship, a core clause combines with coordinate clauses, while in the hypotactic relationship, it combines with subordinate clauses.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

In the first step, the story was taken from the hard cover book “*Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường*” (*The 36 Streets of Hanoi*) by Thạch Lam, which was published by Nha Nam Publishers in 2014. After that, the writer read the story carefully to comprehend the main content before identifying clause simplexes in the story. The writer used two vertical strokes (/) to separate clause simplexes and then classify them into six types of processes in transitivity system: material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential. Simultaneously, the types and number of circumstances were also taken for analysis. To facilitate the readers’ reading, each illustrative example is given a number put in square brackets: [1], [2], [3], and so on. In the next step, the process types were counted and illustrated in the chart. The collected findings enabled the writer to analyze and draw conclusions about experiential meaning realized through the transitivity patterns in the story. The analytical framework is shown in the following figure.

Figure 4

Analytical Framework



The analysis for gathering initial data is concerned with tallying the number of words and the number of clause simplexes in the story. The total number of words in the story is 560 while the number of clause simplexes collected is 51.

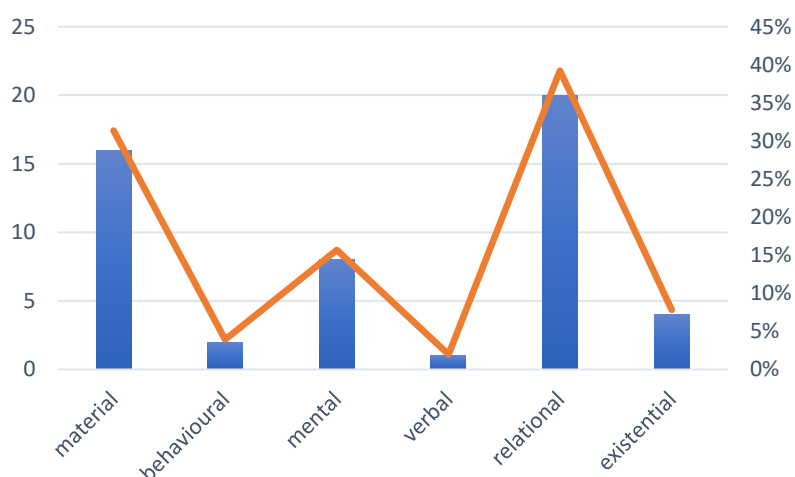
4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Process Types

The following chart presents the percentage of process types collected from the text in the story by Thach Lam.

Figure 5

Percentage of Process Types in the Story “Quà...tức là người”



The results from the figure above indicate that the **relational process** type is predominantly used in short stories with 20 instances, accounting for 38%. Three subtypes are found including: (i) intensive ascriptive (17/20); (ii) intensive identifying (2/20); and (iii)

circumstantial ascriptive (1/20).

In 17 intensive ascriptive clauses found in the story, 16 of the attributes are realized through epithets such as *ngọt* (sweet), *mặn* (salty), *té nhị* (delicate), *hăng* (intense), *thẳng thắn* (straightforward), *phức tạp* (complex), *đáng yêu* (lovely), *mộc mạc và giản dị* (simple and humble), *lượng thiện* (benevolent), *nhỏ* (small), etc. Because the attributes are adjectives, the inclusion of verbs is optional (Hoang, 2012). It is the reason why in these 16 clauses, there is no presence of relational verbs. It can be observed that these 16 intensive ascriptive clauses with attributes as adjectives fall into four groups: (i) describing the taste and flavor of street food; (ii) depicting the images of the sellers and diners; (iii) giving comments on the prices of street food; and (iv) the way people enjoy food. The following examples clearly illustrate the aforementioned points.

[1] cả quà ngọt như đường mía.

<i>Cả quà</i>	<i>ngọt</i>	<i>như</i>	<i>mía đường</i>
Food	sweet	like	sugar cane
Carrier	Proc: relational		Circumstance

(All the food is as sweet as sugar cane)

The relational process in the example above describes the taste of food (*ngọt* -sweet) along with the circumstance of manner (*như đường mía* – like sugar cane) to help readers vividly imagine that taste. In another example, the author does not characterize the taste of food but describe it in general with the adjective “*lượng thiện*”.

[2] Những món quà lượng thiện.

<i>những món quà</i>	<i>lượng thiện</i>
Dishes	kind
Carrier	Process: relational (attribute)

(Dishes are kind.)

The image of the seller is also depicted through two intensive ascriptive clauses with two epithets “*sắc*”, “*tươi*”.

[3] mắt sắc

[4] và miệng tươi.

<i>Mắt</i>	<i>sắc</i>
eyes	sharp
Carrier	Process: relational (attribute)
<i>và miệng</i>	<i>tươi</i>
and mouth	bright
Carrier	Process: relational (attribute)

(Her eyes are sharp and her smile is bright.)

In addition to the 16 intensive ascriptive clauses with attributes of adjectives, there is one intensive ascriptive clause that is realized through verb “*chứng tỏ*” (prove) with the attribute as a nominal group “*cái thay đổi lắ màu của sự thưởng thức của người Hà Nội, cái*

phong phú và cái tế nhị vô cùng” (the diverse and modest changes in the taste of Hanoi’s people).

[5] Tất cả những thứ quà đó chứng tỏ cái thay đổi lắ màu của sự thưởng thức của người Hà Nội, cái phong phú và cái tế nhị vô cùng.

<i>Tất cả những thứ quà đó</i>	<i>chứng tỏ</i>	<i>cái thay đổi ...tế nhị vô cùng</i>
All the dishes	prove	the diverse changes in the taste of the Hanoian, the richness and the sophistication.
Carrier	Process: relational (attribute)	Attribute

(All the dishes demonstrate the diverse and refined changes in the taste of Hanoi people, both in richness and sophistication.)

Besides the high frequency of relational intensive ascriptive process, another subtype of relational process found in the story is intensive identifying with two instances. As for the intensive identifying, this process established the “defining” or “identifying” relationship (Hoang, 2012), which is different from the intensive ascriptive with “an inclusion” or “classifying” relationship (Hoang, 2012). In this text, the structure of this subtype is: **Identified^Process: relational^Identifier** with two verbs “là” (be) and “tựa như” (be like).

[6] Gói quà phong giấy tựa như phong thuốc lầ.

<i>Gói quà phong giấy</i>	<i>tựa như</i>	<i>phong thuốc lầ</i>
The gift wrapped in paper	like	the package of tobacco
Identified	Process: relational (identifying)	Identifier

(The gift wrapped in paper is like the package of tobacco.)

[7] Kẽ bán hàng là một người có tuổi.

<i>Kẽ bán hàng</i>	<i>là</i>	<i>một người có tuổi</i>
The seller	is	an old person
Identified	Process: relational (identifying)	Identifier

(The seller is an old person.)

Two instances of intensive identifying continue to contributing to the account of the seller and the shape of a food package.

The only circumstantial ascriptive clause in the story expresses “be + measure of price”.

[8] có một xu hai phong.

<i>có</i>	<i>một xu</i>	<i>hai phong</i>
there	one penny	two packages
Circumstantial	Carrier	Attribute

(Two packages cost one penny)

However, as can be seen that the encoded verb is omitted in this clause, which should be “*có giá một xu hai phong.*”

The high proportion of relational process in the story is predictable as the main content of the story involves different kinds of street food in the past and now. Therefore, such elements as the taste and flavor of food, the price, the images of seller, or the way of enjoying food are indispensable.

The process type of **material process** comes in second place with 17 instances, representing 33%. This type represents the action of inviting of the street vendors, the diners enjoying, the process of selling – buying and other activities revolving the street food, which are realized through verbs such as *ăn* (eat), *đánh lừa* (cheat), *thưởng thức* (enjoy), *mời chào* (invite), *xin* (beg), *ra mua* (buy), *đem về* (bring), *mở ra* (open), ...

Two noticeable points in material clauses represented in the story are the combination of material verbs with verbs of direction and the presence of two particles “*bị*” and “*được*”. In Vietnamese, a number of material verbs often coordinate with verbs of direction (*lên, xuống, ra* – up, down, out) (Hoang, 2012). This is clearly illustrated in some of material processes in the story.

[9] *đem về*.

<i>Đem</i>	<i>về</i>
Bring	back
Process: material	Verb of direction

(Bring back.)

Additionally, the words “*bị*” and “*được*” are normally used to indicate the passive voice. However, “*bị*” or “*được*” are not always used in passive sentences as they can sometimes convey a sense of “*desirable*” or “*undesirable*” in Vietnamese (see Nguyen, 185; Hoang, 2012). Examples of this can be seen in the following clauses.

[10]. *đã được thưởng thức một thứ quà rong đặc biệt gọi là bánh bặt cười*.

<i>đã</i>	<i>được</i>	<i>thưởng thức</i>	<i>một thứ quà rong đặc biệt</i>	<i>gọi là bánh bặt cười</i>
		enjoy	a special street food	called laughing cake
Aspectual particle	particle	Process: material	Goal	embedded clause

(Enjoyed a special street food called laughing cake.)

[11]. *Xin mãi mới được đồng xu mới*.

<i>Xin</i>	<i>mãi</i>	<i>mới được</i>	<i>đồng xu mới</i>
Ask	persistently		new coin
Process: material	Cir	particle	Goal

(Ask persistently for a new coin.)

Thus, it can be seen that the word “*được*” in the above clauses does not represent the passive voice but rather reflects the subject achieving something positive, such as a desired outcome.

In reference to **mental process** which accounts for 15% with three subtypes: emotive, cognitive and perceptive, three subtypes found in the text include emotive, cognitive and

perceptive. The verbs that realize this process include: emotive (*thích, ưa, nhớ* - like, adore - remember), cognitive (*biết, hình dung, tưởng* – know, imagine, think), perceptive (*trông thấy, thấy* - see). This type of process is employed to describe the Hanoian’s preference of street food and the author’s memory of the seller when he was small. Like in Q7 and Q9, the author portrays the Hanoian’s preference for *ớt* (chilly) and *chanh* (lemon).

[12] *Ớt thì thích ớt rất cay.*

<i>Ớt</i>	<i>thì thích</i>	<i>ớt rất cay</i>
Chilly	like	very spicy chilly
Phenomenon	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(Speaking of chilly, Hanoian people like spicy chilly.)

[13] *Chanh thì ưa thứ chanh non cóm.*

<i>chanh</i>	<i>thì ưa</i>	<i>thứ chanh non cóm</i>
lemon	prefer	young lemon
Phenomenon	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(Speaking of lemon, they prefer young lemon.)

One noteworthy point in this process is the projection following the process. Among 8 instances of mental process, there are two cases of projection. In the first case, the mental perceptive process takes Macrophenomenon.

[14] *thì chỉ thấy bay ra hai con ruồi.*

<i>thì chỉ</i>	<i>thấy</i>	<i>bay ra</i>	<i>hai con ruồi</i>
only	see	fly outward	two flies
Circumstance of manner	Process: mental	Macrophenomenon: Act	

(Only see two flies fly away.)

And in the second case, the mental cognitive process projects an idea.

[15] *Những tưởng mất một xu.*

<i>Những</i>	<i>tưởng</i>	<i>mất một xu</i>
	imagine	losing one coin
	Process: mental	Metaphenomenal

(Thought of losing one coin.)

For the mental cognitive process, it can be added with the conjunctive “*rằng*” (that) between verb and metaphenomenon.

[16] *Những tưởng rằng mất một xu.*

<i>Những</i>	<i>tưởng</i>	<i>rằng</i>	<i>mất một xu</i>
	imagine	<i>that</i>	losing one coin
	Process: mental		Metaphenomenal

In terms of **existential clauses** which are realized with existential verbs like “*có*”, “*mất*” in Q5, Q6, Q46 and Q49. Normally, if the verb “*có*” is used in a clause, the existent will appear after the process. However, with the verb “*mất*”, the existent can appear before the process, as in the following example. The existential process contributes to the description of the existence of a street food and the practice of the Hanoian’s enjoying street food.

[17] Nhưng cái tục lệ đẹp đẽ ấy nay mất dần đi.

<i>Nhưng cái tục lệ đẹp đẽ ấy</i>	<i>nay</i>	<i>mất</i>	<i>dần đi</i>
But the beautiful custom	today	lose	gradually
Existent	Circumstance of temporal	Process: existential	Circumstance of manner

(But the beautiful custom is slowly fading away.)

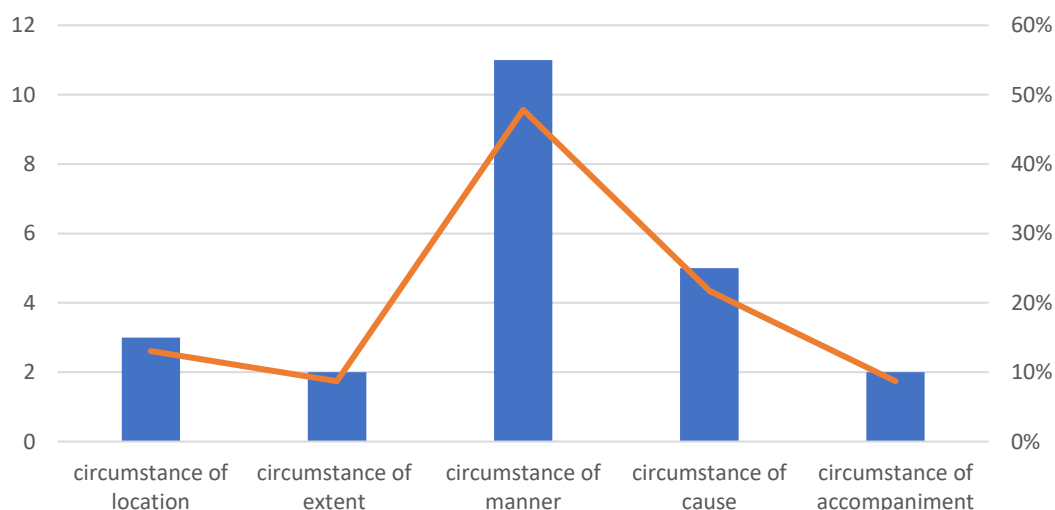
Behavioural processes only constitute 4%, which are represented with two verbs “*khóc*” (cry) and “*cười*” (laugh). The process of verbal occurs only once, comprising 2% through verb “*khoe*” (flaunt). The two process types add to the description of the author’s childhood memoir of buying street food.

4.2. Circumstances

Another aspect of transitivity system that is taken into consideration is circumstance. Five types of the circumstances are employed in the text: circumstance of location, extent, manner, cause, and accompaniment. They are provided in Figure 6 below:

Figure 6

Percentage of circumstantial types in the story “Quà...tức là người”



As can be seen from Figure 6, the circumstance of manner is the most frequently used type which accounts for 48%. This type of circumstance falls into three subtypes including: means, quality and comparison, of which the subtype of comparison is realized through nominal phrases: *như đường mía* (like sugarcane), *như muối Trương Lãm* (like Trương Lam salt), *như quà mộc mạc và giản dị* (like simple and humble gifts). The appearance of this subtype in the

text aims at clarifying the flavor characteristics of the street foods described through the relational process.

[18] *Cả quà ngọt như đường mía.*

<i>cả quà</i>	<i>ngọt</i>	<i>như đường mía</i>
Food	sweet	like sugar cane
Carrier	Process: relational (attribute)	Circumstance of manner (comparison)

(All the food is sweet as sugarcane.)

In addition, the second subtype of circumstance of manner named “quality” is used to depict the way the seller invites her guest as well as the buyer (the author as the child) buying his favorite street food. This subtype is presented in phrases: *đơn đả* (affable), *vội vàng và hí hửng* (hurriedly and cheerfully), *dần đi* (gradually)...The subtype is employed in material clauses to answer the question “how the process takes place” (Hoang, 2012). In the example below, the circumstance of manner shows how the seller invites people to buy their food.

[19] *đơn đả mời chào các cậu bé ở trường về hay thơ thẩn chơi ở vệ hè.*

<i>đơn đả</i>	<i>mời chào</i>	<i>các cậu bé ở trường về</i>	<i>hay thơ thẩn chơi ở vệ hè</i>
affable	invite	boys coming back from school	or wandering on the pavement
Circumstance of manner	Process: material	Goal	

(The seller affably invited the boys coming back from school or wandering on the pavement.)

There is no instance of circumstance of manner named means is found in the text.

Ranking the second is circumstance of cause which makes up 22% (five instances). This subtype not only displays reason but “purpose”, “behalf”, “condition” and “concession” (Hoang, 2012). Three subtypes of circumstance of cause are found in the story including: reason, concession and condition. In the story, the circumstances of reason, concession and condition are realized through prepositional phrases with prepositions *vì* (because), *tuy* (though) and *trong* (in case), relatively. For example, in Q17, the circumstance of reason explains why the entity is assigned the attribute “*đáng yêu*” (lovely).

[20] *đáng yêu hơn cũng vì chỗ ấy.*

<i>đáng yêu hơn</i>	<i>cũng vì chỗ ấy</i>
more lovely	because of that
Process: relational (attribute)	Circumstance of reason: cause

(more lovely because of that.)

The circumstance in the example below specifies the condition in which the process takes place.

[21] *Trong cái chua dầm dút của nước bún ốc, trong cái béo ngậy ngọt của thịt lợn, trong cái vị khai nồng của sứa đỏ, biết đón hưởng cái thú mình làm ghê mình*

<i>Trong cái chua dầm dỉt của nước bún ốc, trong cái béo ngậy ngọt của thịt lươn, trong cái vị khai nồng của sứa đỏ,</i>	<i>biết</i>	<i>đón hưởng cái thú mình làm ghê mình</i>
In the sourness of the snail vermicelli broth, in the rich sweetness of the eel meat, in the intense flavor of the red jellyfish	know	how to enjoy the pleasure of amazing oneself.
Circumstance of cause: condition	Process: mental	Phenomenon

(In the sourness of the snail vermicelli broth, in the rich sweetness of the eel meat, in the intense flavor of the red jellyfish, Hanoian people know how to enjoy the pleasure of amazing themselves.)

The circumstances of location, extent and accompaniment are employed with a humble number. Three instances of circumstance of location belong to the subtype of temporal which refers to the time the process happens. The phrases realize this type of circumstance are: *ngày xưa* (in the past), *ngày trước* (before), *nay* (now). The circumstance of extent emphasizes the times the process occurs (*hai lần* – two times, *lần lượt* – one by one). Noticeably, the accompaniment circumstance helps readers vividly imagine what the food is served with.

[22] như ăn chua với gừng, khế dầm với nước mắm.

<i>như</i>	<i>ăn chua</i>	<i>với gừng,</i>	<i>khế...nước mắm</i>
like	eat sour food	with ginger	starfruit with fish sauce
Process: material	Circumstance of accompaniment	Circumstance of accompaniment	

(like eating sour food with ginger, starfruit with fish sauce.)

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper is concerned with exploring experiential meaning in the story “*Quà...tức là người*” taken from the anthology “*Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường*” (*The 36 Streets of Hanoi*) by Thạch Lam. The analytical framework employed for analysis is SFG as developed by Hoang (2012). It is found that Thạch Lam has employed all six types of process to describe different types of street food in Hanoi in the past and now. Specifically, he employed

- a high frequency of relational clauses with three subtypes (intensive ascriptive, intensive identifying, circumstantial ascriptive) was used to: (i) describe the taste and flavor of street foods; (ii) depict the images of sellers and guests); (iii) give comments on the prices of food; and (iv) portray the way Hanoian people enjoy food
- a high frequency of material clauses was also employed, which focused on describing the activities of the street vendors and buyers and some other activities. In this type of process, readers witness the combination of material verbs with co-direction verbs and the usage of two particles “*bị*” and “*được*” with the meaning of desirable and undesirable.
- a relatively high number of mental clauses was used to convey the Hanoian’s love for street food as well as reminding the author’s memory about the street food in Hanoi as a child.

Apart from the process types, Thach Lam employed five types of circumstances mostly found in relational processes to specify the taste and flavor of the food in Hanoi in the past and now: location, extent, manner, cause, accompaniment.

6. Limitation and Suggestion for Further Study

The paper is limited to exploring the use of experiential meaning of the story “*Hà Nội băm sáu phố phường*” written by a famous Vietnamese writer – Thach Lam. The unit of analysis is clause simplex; the categories explored are different types of process and different types of circumstances. This study has delved into only types of process and types of circumstance in the clauses. To have a full picture of how experiential meaning is employed in the text, types of participants should be included. Further, as this study is concerned only with experiential meaning within the clause simplex, a discussion of the use of clause complexes might also form another research.

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PHÂN TÍCH NGHĨA KINH NGHIỆM TRONG TRUYỆN NGẮN “QUÀ...TỨC LÀ NGƯỜI” CỦA THẠCH LAM

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Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này tập trung khám phá nghĩa kinh nghiệm được thể hiện thông qua hệ thống chuyển tác trong truyện ngắn "Quà...tức là người" của Thạch Lam. Khung lí thuyết được áp dụng trong nghiên cứu là ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống (SFG). Các kết quả cho thấy trong quá trình sáng tác truyện, tác giả đã sử dụng quá trình quan hệ, vật chất, tinh thần với tần suất cao và quá trình tồn tại, hành vi và tạo lời với tần suất thấp. Đáng chú ý, các mệnh đề quan hệ được sử dụng để mô tả hương vị và vị của đồ ăn đường phố và cách người Hà Nội thưởng thức những món ăn đó. Tác giả ngụ ý rằng sự lựa chọn cũng như cách thưởng thức đồ ăn, một phần nào đó có thể tiết lộ tính cách của con người. Điều này giải thích vì sao truyện được đặt tên là "Quà...tức là người". Ngoài ra, truyện cũng có số lượng lớn chu cảnh, đặc biệt là chu cảnh cách thức. Chu cảnh cách thức thường được sử dụng trong các mệnh đề quan hệ để mô tả rõ hơn hương vị và vị của đồ ăn đường phố.

Từ khóa: ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống, nghĩa kinh nghiệm, chuyển tác, Thạch Lam