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ENGLISH MISSION STATEMENTS OF VIETNAMESE TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: AN ANALYSIS OF LOGICAL MEANING

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Abstract: A mission statement serves as an organisation’s guiding declaration, defining its core purpose and the fundamental reasons for its existence (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 1998). By addressing the questions “What are we going to do?” “How?” and “For whom?”, a tertiary education institution’s mission statement communicates its core roles and functions to stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students and their families, industries, and the general public. Generally, mission statements are often concise and typically constructed with clauses linked by specific logical dependency relations, which indicate whether clauses are presented as equally important or if one depends on another, and logico-semantic relations, which demonstrate how the clauses are semantically connected. In this study, the English mission statements of 106 two-cycle accredited tertiary education institutions in Vietnam were investigated. The analytical framework was based on Systemic Functional Linguistics, with the focus on the logical meaning and the systems to realise it. The findings showed the dominance of parataxis and expansion, especially extension. The analysis of the multilayer of meaning in the mission statements revealed intriguing insights into how tertiary education institutions in Vietnam showcase their roles, functions, identity and status to the stakeholders, and revealed how certain tasks and objectives might be prioritised through the use of clause complexing strategies.

Keywords: Systemic Functional Linguistics, logical meaning, logical dependency relations, logico-semantic relations, mission statement

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TUYÊN BỐ SỨ MẠNG BẰNG TIẾNG ANH CỦA CÁC CƠ SỞ GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM: PHÂN TÍCH VỀ LOGIC NGỮ NGHĨA

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Tóm tắt: Tuyên bố sứ mạng của mỗi một tổ chức có vai trò định hướng, xác định mục tiêu cốt lõi và lý do tổ chức đó tồn tại (Komives, Lucas & McMahon, 1998). Qua việc trả lời các câu hỏi: “Chúng tôi sẽ làm gì?”, “Chúng tôi hoạt động như thế nào?”, và “Chúng tôi hoạt động cho ai?”, tuyên bố sứ mạng của một cơ sở giáo dục đại học truyền tải thông tin về vai trò và chức năng cốt lõi của cơ sở đó tới các bên liên quan, gồm: giảng viên, nhân viên, người học và gia đình họ, các nhà tuyển dụng và toàn xã hội. Nhìn chung, tuyên bố sứ mạng thường ngắn gọn, hình thành từ những cú (clauses) được kết nối logic. Sự kết nối này cho thấy mức độ ngang bằng về tầm quan trọng giữa nội dung các cú và sự gắn kết của các nội dung này về mặt logic ngữ nghĩa. Trong nghiên cứu này, các tuyên bố sứ mạng bằng tiếng Anh của 106 cơ sở giáo dục đại học được kiểm định 2 chu kỳ tại Việt Nam đã được thu thập và phân tích dựa trên Khung lý thuyết Ngôn ngữ học chức năng hệ thống của Halliday, tập trung vào nghĩa logic và hệ thống thể hiện nghĩa. Kết quả phân tích logic ngữ nghĩa của các tuyên bố sứ mạng đem lại những hiểu biết sâu sắc về cách các cơ sở giáo dục đại học tại Việt Nam tuyên bố vai trò, chức năng, bản sắc và vị thế của mình tới các bên liên quan, đồng thời cũng cho thấy được, thông qua cách cấu trúc tuyên bố sứ mạng, các cơ sở này đặt ưu tiên cho một số nhiệm vụ và mục tiêu nhất định ra sao.

Từ khóa: ngôn ngữ học chức năng hệ thống, logic ngữ nghĩa, mối quan hệ thứ bậc, mối quan hệ logic ngữ nghĩa, tuyên bố sứ mạng

1. Introduction

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is an approach to language that views it as a multi-functional system. As an organic system, language units typically serve multiple functions simultaneously, meaning different types of meaning are made at the same time. SFL, as a macro-level theory of language, proposes that language use is shaped by the roles which language plays in human interactions. Specifically, a speaker or writer's choice of words and clause structures is influenced by these roles. This can be understood by analysing language from the perspective of three distinct yet simultaneous macro-functions, or “metafunctions”, as defined by Halliday (1985, 1994): textual, interpersonal, and ideational (which includes both experiential and logical metafunctions).

Halliday (1985, 1994), in his *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, also introduced the concept of the “clause complex”, which refers to multiple clauses linked through specific logico-semantic relations. This paper aims to explore how the logical meaning of the English mission statements of Vietnamese tertiary education institutions could convey the different levels of priority that the universities set for their different functions, and how the meaning of each clause adds to the meaning of one another and contributes to the overall meaning of the whole complex. The research question to be answered is: “How could the logical meaning of

tertiary education institutions' mission statements contribute to the communication of the roles, functions, identity and status of the institutions to the stakeholders?". The paper starts with a review of the concept of clause complexes and then elaborates on the nature of logico-semantic relations within these complexes, and a summary of what has been found in the previous studies on mission statements of organisations and tertiary education institutions. The selection and collection process of mission statements as data for this study is then explained. The paper concludes with a summary of findings on how logical dependency and logico-semantic relations are utilised in these statements and discusses how these relations may reflect the connection between the tertiary education institution's stated roles and functions and the varying levels of importance assigned to these roles and functions.

2. Logical Metafunction in SFL

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) views language not as a fixed set of structures but as a dynamic network of systems—interrelated sets of options for making meaning (Halliday, 1994, p. 15). Within this framework, language is understood as a multi-functional system, as instances of language in use typically serve multiple functions simultaneously. Each instance of language use produces various kinds of meaning concurrently, all contributing equally to the overall message. Halliday (1994) identifies these layers of meaning through three metafunctions of language: interpersonal, ideational, and textual.

The interpersonal metafunction refers to the way language is used to enact social relationships, express attitudes, and convey the speaker's stance toward what is being communicated. Realised through the systems of MOOD and MODALITY, this metafunction focuses on the interaction between interlocutors in a communicative event. Through their interactions, the interlocutors use interpersonal resources to define their roles, assert or challenge the roles of others, and adjust the tone and relational dynamics of the conversation. In other words, the analysis of interpersonal meaning may provide insights into how language constructs and negotiates social relationships.

The ideational metafunction focuses on ideation—how language conveys ideas about the world and our experiences within these worlds, or how language captures and organises human experience. The lexicogrammatical system that serves this function is TRANSITIVITY, which is structured around three core components including processes, participants, and circumstances. Each experience is represented through an individual clause; the meaning generated from the transitivity elements of a clause is its representational meaning. But experiences are often interconnected, and this interconnection between clauses could be captured through combinations of clauses. What combines experiences represented in the constituent clauses is called logical metafunction of logical meaning.

The textual metafunction focuses on the creation of coherent text. This metafunction allows speakers and writers to produce "texts"—connected sequences of language that are contextually relevant—and helps listeners or readers distinguish meaningful text from a random collection of sentences. Textual meanings are realised lexicogrammatically through the system of THEME, which provides resources for establishing a local context for each clause by selecting a starting point for the flow of information. These thematic choices determine the orientation or perspective on the interpersonal and ideational elements of the clause.

As mentioned, the logical metafunction or logical meaning is what connects ideas in the combinations of clauses. Thanks to this connection, clauses are chained together in the way that one clause functions as an add-on of another clause. The notion of clause complex and the

relations between clauses in the clause complex are discussed in the next section.

3. The Notion of Clause Complex

3.1. The Clause Complex is at the Same Rank as the Clause

In the light of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the clause is regarded as the highest grammatical unit and a multifunctional construct, which is capable of performing all three language metafunctions (Halliday 1994). This ability of a clause to realise all the three metafunctions can be illustrated through Figure 1 below, which is an analysis taken from Nguyễn Thị Minh Tâm (2013b).

Figure 1

The Three Lines of Meaning in Clauses

1a: Three Lines of Meanings in a Clause – 1

The professor	was	analysing	the functions that a clause can perform.	<i>MEANING</i>
Theme	Rheme			<i>Textual</i>
Mood	Residue			<i>Interpersonal</i>
Actor	Process (material)	Goal		<i>Ideational</i>

1b: Three Lines of Meanings in a Clause - 2

Jim	wondered		how the analysis would help.	<i>CLAUSE MEANING</i>
	did	wonder		
Theme	Rheme			<i>Textual</i>
Mood (Jim + did)	Residue (wonder + how the analysis would help)			<i>Interpersonal</i>
senser	Process (mental)	Phenomenon		<i>Ideational</i>

As can be seen in Figure 1, a clause serves as a unit of information, or a message, composed of two main elements: Theme and Rheme. The Theme marks the starting point or “departure” of the message, while the Rheme forms the remainder (Halliday, 1994). In finite clauses, the Theme is explicit, while in non-finite clauses, it is implicit and can only be inferred from context.

In interactions between a speaker or writer and their audience, a clause acts as an exchange, or a move. This function is realised through the Mood structure of the clause, which includes elements like Subject, Finite, and Modality (Halliday, 1994). The chosen Mood structure determines the role the speaker or writer adopts and assigns a corresponding role to the listener or reader.

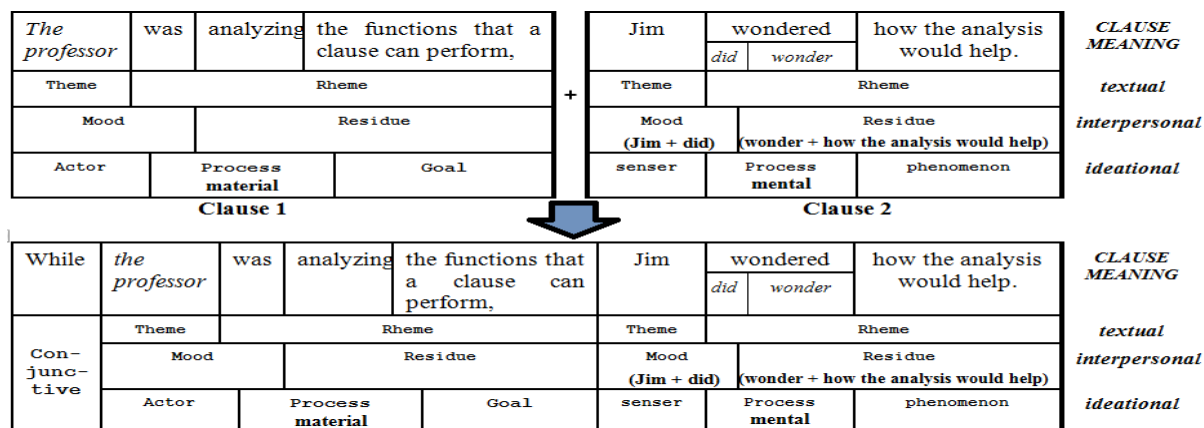
A clause also acts as a figure or construal of experiences, reflecting both external reality and internal thoughts. In SFL, clauses express human experiences by engaging with both outer reality and inner thought, encapsulated in what Halliday describes as “reality is made up of processes” (p.106). This function is realised through the transitivity elements, with the process being the central element which defines the adjacent participants, and which is further supported by surrounding circumstances.

The clause, therefore, can manifest all the three metafunctions of the language. Through the system of TRANSITIVITY, the clause performs its ideational function by linguistically construing the world. Through the system of MOOD, the clause performs its interpersonal function by enacting social roles. Through the system of THEME, the clause performs its

textual function by presenting information in a specific order of constituents. Consequently, there appears to be no need for any additional function to be expressed by a grammatical unit beyond the clause. When clauses combine to form larger stretches, this process does not elevate them to a higher rank on the paradigmatic axis. Instead, it represents the multiplication of clauses into a chain, with clauses connected sequentially along the syntagmatic axis, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Combining Clauses Into a Clause Complex (Nguyễn Thị Minh Tâm, 2013b)



The clause complex comprises multiple clauses combined in meaningful ways. When a new clause is chained to an initial clause - a clause simplex, a new mood structure is added, a new transitivity system is added, and a new thematic structure is added, integrating a new exchange, a new representation, and a new message into the initial exchange, representations, and message. Although it consists of multiple clauses, the clause complex performs the same functions on the same grammatical level as a clause simplex, emphasising its role as a semantic unit at the same grammatical ranking as a clause.

3.2. The Clause Complex as a Univariate Structure

A syntactic structure can be classified as either univariate or multivariate. A univariate structure involves relationships between elements of the same type, which is referred to as endocentric allowing for indefinite chaining of similar elements. Elements in a univariate structure are repetitions of the same variable, which support linear recursion, where each recursive step occurs at the same rank. An example is the nominal group “some *coffee and tea*” in which both elements are nouns, which is an expansion of “some *coffee*” and might be expanded as “some *juice, coffee, and tea*” - a nominal group with three nouns linearly chained to one another. No matter how many chains there are in the nominal group, the function of this group in the clause stays unchanged.

Eg. We ordered some coffee.

We ordered some coffee and tea.

We ordered some juice, coffee and tea.

A multivariate structure involves multiple distinct variables, each appearing uniquely within the structure. This type of structure forms a unified whole composed of functionally distinct components and is referred to as exocentric. Multivariate structures are not inherently recursive; any recursion that occurs is cyclical and only introduced through a process called

rank-shift. Rank-shift involves embedding a unit within another unit of a higher rank, creating an additional layer in the syntagmatic sequence. An example is a clause which is made up of distinct elements, each of these contributes a unique function to the overall clause meaning.

Eg. We didn't order any coffee.

In the clause above, the four elements “we”, “didn't”, “order” and “some coffee” are four distinct variables which function as Subject, Finite, Predicator, and Complement respectively.

In clause complexes, the combination of clauses is the process of pluralising one variable - the clause - into a chain of clauses. As shown in Figure 2, when a speaker or writer wishes to expand an argument beyond a single clause, the initiating clause can be combined with continuing clauses to create a sequence of ideas. In this structure, the main clause remains the central focus, while coordinating or subordinating clauses provide supplementary information to enhance and elaborate on the argument. Just as a single clause depicts a situation, a combination of multiple clauses, known as a clause complex, conveys a more complex idea.

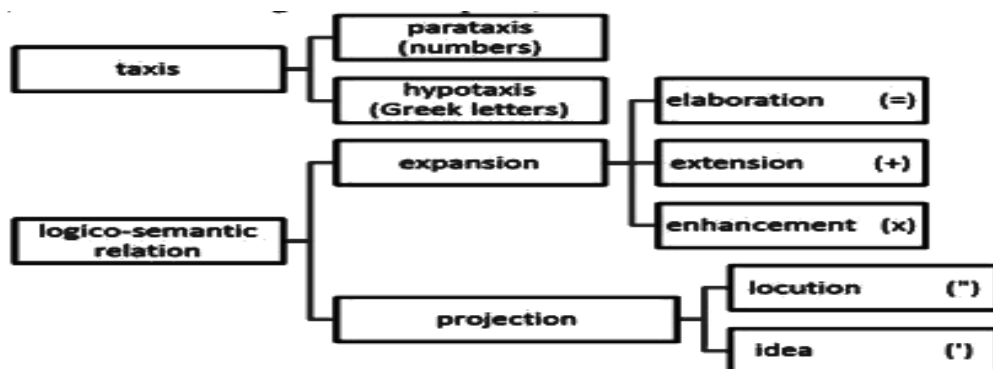
As a univariate structure, the clause complex acts as a logical combination of clauses—a logico-semantic unit above the individual clause level (Nguyễn Thị Minh Tâm, 2013a). A study of clause complexes, therefore, could not shed light on how a new structure at a higher rank on the paradigmatic axis is formed, but explore how meaning of the complex is construed from the semantic connection between constituent clauses, which can only be discerned through a close examination of the meaning conveyed by each clause, and how the contents represented in the clauses are prioritised. In the next section, the logical dependency and logico-semantic relations in the clause complex are presented.

4. The Logical Dependency and Logico-Semantic Relations in the Clause Complex

The relationship between constituent clauses in clause complexes can be understood through the logical components of the linguistic system, specifically the functional-semantic relations that form the foundation of the logic in natural language (Halliday, 1994). There are two systemic dimensions in the organisation of the clause complex: one is in the syntactic dimension - the system of interdependency, or *taxis* system, which is general to all complexes, and the other is the semantic dimension – the *logico-semantic* system, specifically an inter-clausal relationship. The system network of taxis and logico-semantic relations could be summarised by Gerot and Wignell (1994) as follows:

Figure 3

The System Network of Taxis and Logico-Semantic Relation (Gerot & Wignell, 1994, p. 93)



The taxis system is realised through the interdependency relations between element clauses in the clause complexes, which can be categorised as independency (paratactic) and dependency (hypotactic). Parataxis relations in clause complex is the linking of clauses of equal status. Both the initiating and the continuing clauses could stand as a functioning whole. The clauses in paratactic relations are therefore coded as 1, 2, 3, etc. Hypotactic relation is the binding of clauses of unequal status, the dominant clause is free, but the dependent clause is not. The distribution of logical dependency relations could therefore demonstrate the degree of importance that the text producers assign to different experiential contents. The clauses in hypotactic relations are coded as α , β , λ for the hierarchical levels. According to Thompson (2014), non-finite clauses are typically hypotactic.

The system of logico-semantic relations defines the type of logical connections between constituent clauses. The primary distinction in these relations within a clause complex is between two types: expansion and projection, each operating in distinct ways (Halliday, 1994). In the case of projection, language is used to talk about language itself, which represents a unique set of phenomena, including propositions and proposals. In projection, we are not directly representing non-linguistic experiences but, instead, offering a representation of a linguistic representation—essentially “a report of what someone else said or thought at a different time,” or a “double layer of (linguistic) representation” (Thompson, 2014, p. 201). The two modes of projection are quoting (where the projected clauses are placed within quotation marks) and reporting (where projected clauses are not marked by quotation marks). Meanwhile, the expansion system enables the speaker or writer to develop the experiential meaning of a clause in three main ways: elaboration (coded as =), extension (coded as +), and enhancement (coded as x). In elaboration, one clause expands on another by providing exposition, clarification, or examples. In extension, one clause adds new information to the original, offering alternatives or exceptions. In enhancement, clauses introduce circumstantial elements such as time, place, cause, condition or concession to expand the meaning of the primary clause. Both these types of relationship can be construed between equal and unequal clauses, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Examples of Logico-Semantic Relations in Paratactic and Hypotactic Clause Complexes

Taxis	Expanding		Projecting	
Paratactic	He ordered some juice, I ordered a cup of tea.		Ben said: “I want some juice.”	
	1	+2	1	“2
Hypotactic	If you start trouble, we’ll finish it.		I believe that he will finish it.	
	x β	α	α	β

The roles of projection and expansion in a clause complex are different in that projection is an essential part of the meaning of the projected clause and therefore the meaning of the projected clause will change radically if the projection is taken away, whereas typically an expanded clause would not change its meaning radically if the expansion were taken away. Taking complexes in Table 1 as examples, the two clauses in the paratactic complex “*He ordered some juice, || I ordered a cup of tea*” are about two equal-status events / ideations / experiences, coded 1 and 2 to signal the same rank, are chained together. These two events / ideations / experiences could still be preserved in the meaning of the two clauses when they are separated into two clause simplexes. Even in the hypotactic complex “*If you start trouble, | we’ll finish it*”, where the meaning of the continuing clause, coded as β for lower rank, is

dependent on the initiating clause, coded as α for higher rank, in the sense that the interpretation of “it” in the continuing clause requires the reference to “trouble” in the initiating clause. However, if these two clauses are separated into two consecutive simplexes in the same text, the reference to “trouble” in the previous simplex in order to interpret the meaning of “it” in the following simplex is almost effortless, which means the removal of expansion does not influence much on the clause meaning. In the clause complex “Ben said: || “I want some juice.”, however, the clause “I want some juice” is understood as Ben’s expression of need because it goes with the projection process. If projection is removed and the clause stands alone as a simplex, it will be interpreted as the expression of need of the interlocutor himself / herself, which is a complete change in meaning. Therefore, expansion is a macrophenomenon and projection is a meta-phenomenon (Halliday, 1994).

Research on logical dependency and logico-semantic relations across various text types has predominantly focused on written texts. Ngongo (2018), using descriptive qualitative analysis, examined taxis in students’ writing and found a preference for explaining interpretations through unequal statuses in hypotactic nexuses to clarify ideas. Parataxis was less frequently utilised. Additionally, students favoured expansion (elaboration, extension, and enhancement) over projection (locution and idea).

Yuniar (2018) analysed the logico-semantic relations in analytical exposition texts by third-semester students, revealing a strong dominance of expansion over projection. Among expansion types, enhancement was the most commonly used, followed by elaboration and extension. Kurniawan, Luardini and Karani (2021) explored the clause complexes of analytical exposition texts written by English teachers and concluded that the good variation in taxis and logico-semantic relations in the clause complexes produced by the teachers could demonstrate their good language proficiency and their ability to deliver lectures and seminars via English. Novianti and Gunawan (2023) compared the use of logical dependency and logico-semantic relations in students’ writing versus experts’ formal texts. They observed that experts employed more clause complexes and a greater variety of relations, while students showed a clear preference towards hypotaxis over parataxis and a preference towards expansion over projection. Interestingly, students often created longer clause complexes (with more than three constituent clauses) than experts, suggesting lower conciseness in their writing.

Noviandari and Yuwono (2020) investigated logico-semantic relations in CNN news, a semi-formal text type which belongs to the media genre and found expansion to be more prevalent than projection. Within expansion, elaboration clauses dominated, followed by enhancement and extension. Being published on the websites of the institution, mission statements could also be categorised as a subcategory of media genre. However, the logical dependency and logico-semantic relations have not been explored in the corpus of mission statements of tertiary education institutions.

5. Mission Statements of Universities

Mission statements, which provide the key information regarding the purposes, the goals, and the values of organisations, are believed to be the critical starting point for almost every major strategic initiative (Bart, Bontis & Taggar, 2001). The mission statements also communicate the fundamental reasons for the existence of the organisations. The mission statements are articulated to provide a simple declaration of why the organisation exists and a publicised clarification of the functions that the organisations are planned to perform. Ideally, the mission statements strategically guide the organisations in all their decision making and

behaviour and define the identity and the significance of the organisation to stakeholders (Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997). “Mission statements are supposed to answer some fairly simple yet critically fundamental questions for every organisation, such as: why do we exist; what is our purpose; what are we trying to accomplish” (Bart et al., 2001, p. 19). Mission statements have become must-have elements of many types of businesses and corporations. For over 20 years, the mission statement has been ranked in the top ten management tools in Bain and Company’s (2013) annual survey of business executives (Bhavesh et al., 2015).

Mission statements originated in the business community long before they were a part of tertiary education. Despite being mostly non-profit organisations, universities also need to construct their public images through mission statements, which are expected to be the reference point for all their decision-making processes, ensuring that all the decisions align with the core values and the strategic direction of the institutions, providing a framework for envisioning the future, setting goals, and prioritising the resources for each goal to be achieved. As cited in Lopez and Martin (2018), the tertiary education institution’s mission statements often serve two purposes: (1) to provide the foundation upon which the objectives and strategic plans will be built (Pearce & Robinson, 1991) and (2) to unify the organisation behind a core purpose and direction to influence decision making (Ireland & Hirc, 1992). According to Hall (2020), university mission statements reflect institutional priorities, and are usually constructed around some foundational topics of students, service, and culture. Some other topics to be included are diversity, transfer of knowledge, free exchange of ideas and knowledge preservation. Publicised on the official documents and websites of the institution, the mission statements have to serve both the explanatory function and the promotional function, which means that the contents of these statements have to be both informative and captivating.

In Vietnam, the objectives of higher education institutions have to be approved by the board of trustees and must align with the Law on Education. The objectives of higher education are stated in Article 39 of the Law on Education 2019, translated into English as follows:

1. Higher education aims to train skilled professionals, elevate intellectual standards, and nurture talents. It supports scientific and technological research to generate new knowledge and products, contributing to economic and social development while ensuring national defence, security, and international integration.
2. Higher education fosters well-rounded growth of learners. Graduates are expected to accumulate knowledge, skills, and a sense of professional responsibility; adapt to scientific and technological advancements; demonstrate self-learning, creativity, and adaptability in the workplace; and embrace an entrepreneurial mindset and a commitment to serving the community.

(National Assembly XIV, 2019)

According to this description of higher education objectives, any tertiary education institution is a multitasking body, taking different roles and performing different functions simultaneously. The mission statements of tertiary education institutions in Vietnam, therefore, are expected to be consistent with these objectives, which means the mission statements should explicitly state their roles in training learners to become talented experts, fostering learners’ comprehensive development, contributing to research and technology transfer and serving the community in areas related to the institution’s disciplines and expertise.

As regards the studies on mission statements, Davis, Ruhe, Lee, and Rajadhyaksha (2007) examined the ethical aspects and impacts of university mission statements on the character and ethical orientation of its students. The findings revealed that schools that

explicitly state ethical content in their mission statements are more likely to influence student ethical orientation than those schools that do not. Lopez and Martin (2018) studied the relationship between university mission statements and sustainability practices by 347 higher education institutions and found that the greater number of specific terms in the mission statements, the more likely that the universities have higher ratings. Despite the breadth of these studies, mission statements have not been analysed in terms of logical meaning.

In this study, the logical meaning of mission statements was analysed with the assumption that the inclusion and organisation of different experiential contents in the statement could allow the tertiary education institution to strategically communicate its core roles and functions to stakeholders. The mission statements published in the websites are one of the official channels via which different objectives and values of universities could be officially announced. The presentation of clauses in different logical dependency and logico-semantic relations might reveal the importance and priority that the institutions set for their different functions and goals, and the connection between them.

6. Methodology

This study investigates the logical meaning of the mission statements in English of Vietnamese universities. According to Vietnam Education Quality Management Agency, by April 2024, there were 193 accredited tertiary education institutions in Vietnam, 106 of them went through accreditation cycle 2¹. The websites of these 106 institutions were scanned for the mission statements, and all mission statements written in English were collected. Since the purpose of this study is to investigate the logical meaning of mission statements in English of Vietnamese universities, the data could not be collected in the following two cases. First, the institutions did not publicise their mission statements in English because they have no English websites. Second, the institutions had their mission stated in English, but those statements consisted of clause simplexes only. Therefore, even though the websites of 106 universities were scanned, the total sum of the English mission statements in which there existed at least one clause complex was 72. Therefore, the corpus of this study was compiled from the 72 mission statements in English, which were publicised in the websites of Vietnamese tertiary education institutions.

The reason the data of this study was collected from the two-cycle accredited institutions was to ensure that the mission statements had been carefully articulated and reviewed after the first quality assessment, since one of the criteria for quality assessment and accreditation of Vietnamese higher education institutions is that the institution articulates its missions to well match its educational philosophy, and the missions are periodically reviewed and improved to meet the stakeholder's needs.

The reason why only English versions of the mission statements was chosen as data for this study is that in Vietnamese, the term “mission statements” might be translated as “sứ mạng”, “sứ mệnh”, “định hướng phát triển”, “mục tiêu phát triển”, “chức năng nhiệm vụ”, etc., it is sometimes hard to identify the mission statements in the Vietnamese version of the websites. The English versions of mission statements on the websites were chosen to avoid any misinterpretation of the wording and overgeneralisation of the Vietnamese texts.

¹<https://vqa.moet.gov.vn/vi/thong-bao-quan-ly-bao-dam/thong-bao/danh-sach-cac-co-so-giao-duc-chuong-trinh-dao-tao-giao-duc-dai-hoc-va-cao-dang-su-pham-hoan-thanh-bao-cao-tu-danh-gia-va-duoc-danh-gia-cong-nhan-dat-tieu-chuan-chat-luong-giao-duc-cap-nhat-den-ngay-30-4-2024-44.html>

All the clause complexes were then retrieved from the corpus for further analysis of logical dependency relations and logico-semantic relations. Since English is neither the native nor the official language of Vietnam, some minor linguistic flaws appeared in these English mission statements, potentially leading to misinterpretation or misanalysis. To address this, the Vietnamese versions of the statements were consulted to verify the content, and paraphrasing was applied before conducting the logical meaning analysis.

The analysis focused on the missions only, so all the lead-in clauses introducing the institution are not taken as data. As regards the logical dependency relations, the clause complexes were chunked into clause nexuses, which were then categorised as either paratactic or hypotactic. The numerical codes of were used for the clauses in paratactic nexuses, with 1 for the initiating clause and 2 for the continuing clause, while the Greek-based alphabetical codes were used for the clauses with different hierarchical levels in hypotactic nexuses, with α for the dominant / main clause and β for the dependent / subordinate clause. The clause complexes were then analysed based on the SFL framework of logico-semantic relations. The analytical framework is as follows:

Table 2

The Analytical Framework of Logico-Semantic Relations

Relation	Sub-type	Description	Code
Projection	quoting	projecting verb ^ “projected clause.”	"
Projection	reporting	projecting verb ^ projected clause	‘
Expansion	elaboration	clarifying or exemplifying (viz, i.e., e.g.)	=
Expansion	extension	adding new information (alternative or an exception)	+
Expansion	enhancement	contributing to the circumstantial features (place, time, condition, purpose, etc.)	x

The meanings of the expanded and projected clauses were qualitatively analysed to assist the classification of projection and expansion subtypes. The occurrences of projection and expansion subtypes were calculated and compared to the total number of clause nexuses so that the general patterns in logical dependency and logico-semantic relations in the data can be seen. The number of occurrences were then coded into percentages using the following formula:

$$X = F/S * 100\%$$

X: the percentage of each type

F: the frequency / the number of occurrences of each type

S: the total number of clause nexuses

The data analysis procedure was conducted four times by the researcher, the analyses were two to three weeks separated and then cross-checked by a colleague with an expertise in SFL in order to avoid inaccuracies as much as possible.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1. Findings

The longest mission statement was 16 clauses long, and the shortest was 2 clauses long. The number of clause complexes to be analysed was 87, but the number of constituent clauses was 316 connected within 223 clause nexuses. Thus, the average length of the clause complexes was 2.56 nexuses. The number of paratactic clause nexuses was 134 and the number of hypotactic clause nexuses was 89. The logico-semantic relation analysis results can be summarised as follows:

Table 3

Distribution of the Logico-Semantic Relations in the Mission Statements

Logico-semantic relations	Occurrences	Percentage
Projection	0	0.00%
Expansion: Elaboration	40	17.94%
Expansion: Extension	138	61.88%
Expansion: Enhancement	45	20.18%
Total number of clause nexuses	223	
Total number of clause complexes	87	
Total number of constituent clauses	316	

As seen in Table 3, no projection is employed in the mission statements. Among expansion subtypes, extension is the most popular subcategory of expansion to be employed in the mission statements, accounting for 61.88%. The dominance of extension seems to demonstrate a tendency of using expanding clauses to add new information to the expanded clause, so that things are listed out in a row. The popular pattern is that the expanded clause represents one function that the tertiary education institution performs, or one goal of the institution. Each of the expanding clause adds one function or goal of the universities, like what is demonstrated in Figure 4 below:

Figure 4

A Clause Complex with Extension

University X provides high quality human resources for society through the pursuit of education and training at the national level of excellence;	delivers teacher training and continuing professional development;	and functions as a leading center for educational, applied and basic research and technological transfer in the Northern Central Vietnam as well as nationwide.
expanded clause	1st expanding clause	2nd expanding clause
1	+2	+3

In the clause complex above, both expanding clauses function as the extension of the expanded clauses, which means they add new ideations to the chain. Since there are 3 clauses in the complex in Figure 4, it could be interpreted that X University wants to demonstrate the 3 key functions that the university performs. Since all the clauses are in paratactic relations, these 3 functions are presented as of equal importance, though, logically, the first clause tends to be the function that X University wants to highlight most.

Elaboration and enhancement are less popularly employed, with the proportion of 17.94% and 20.18% respectively. The elaborating clauses are used to clarify the content of the expanded clauses, which means the readers of the mission statements have chances to understand in greater detail what the functions or the values stated mean.

Figure 5

A Clause Complex With Elaboration

University Y provides high-quality education,	equipping students with a solid knowledge foundation, innovative capabilities, and adaptability to the global work environment;	instills a sense of responsibility toward oneself, family, community, society, and humanity;	and contributes to a prosperous Vietnam	while preserving our rich national identity
expanded	1st expanding	2nd expanding	3rd expanding	4th expanding
	1	+ 2	+3	
α	$=\beta$		α	$\times\beta$

The clause complex presented in Figure 5 is the first part of a mission statement consisting of 3 clause complexes. Among the 5 clauses in this clause complex, there are 4 expanding clauses following the initiating clause, which is the expanded one. The first expanding clause is an elaborating one coded as $1 = \beta$, meaning that it hypotactically explicates the content of the expanded clause. The second and third clauses are extending ones coded as +2 and +3, meaning that they are in paratactic relationship with the expanded clause and directly add more contents to the change. The 4th is the hypotactic enhancement of the third expanding clause, so it is coded as $3 \times \beta$. University Y further explains the mission of providing high-quality education via the elaborated clause $1 = \beta$, while the other two missions (stated in the second and third expanding clauses) are without any further explanations, which might reveal a priority of the first mission over the other two.

If the elaboration relation as analysed in Figure 5 helps the university to specify one mission, enhancement can help frame the mission statements in certain contexts. In the clause complex analysed in Figure 6a, the context is framed into a certain purpose (belonging to circumstance of cause), while in Figure 6b, the context is framed in terms of time.

Figure 6

A Clause Complex With Enhancement

6a. Enhancement of Cause

It (University Z) is committed to continuous innovation and creativity	offering high quality human resources and scientific products to the fields of vocational education, science and technology	to meet the demands of the socio-economic development of the country
Expanded clause	1st expanding clause	2nd expanding clause: circumstance of cause
α	$+\beta$	$\times\lambda$

6b. Enhancement of Time

University U enhances quality of education,	elevates knowledge acquisition,	and breeds young talents in the age of globalization and integration,	while pioneering in innovation and public services
expanded clause	1st expanding clause	2nd expanding clause	3rd expanding clause: circumstance of time
1	α	+3	$\times\beta$
	+2		

Although there could be different types of enhancement including time, place, cause, condition and concession (Halliday, 1994; Thompson, 2014), 40 out of 45 (88.89%) of enhancement clauses in the data were about causes, only 3 (6.67%) enhancement clauses were about time and 2 (4.44%) about condition.

7.2. Discussion

7.2.1. The multilayer of meaning in the mission statements

The average length of 2.56-nexus of clause complexes in the data means that the complexity of the experiential content is quite high. This complexity is coherent with the assumption that mission statements are where all the core purposes, primary objectives and even core values and the strategic direction of the institutions should be well captured. Such a complexity is appropriate with the fact that mission statements are usually found in the officially issued document stating the institution's strategic plan of development, or the official website of the institution. The fact that mission statements are officially presented in such documents and places ensures that they have been thoughtfully and strategically articulated, and that they could be carefully read, and every layer of meaning could be thoroughly explored. The mission statements are therefore where different experiential contents are condensed and connected in logical dependency and logico-semantic relation. Figure 7 is an example of a densely populated clause complex.

Figure 7

A Mission Statement as a Densely Populated Clause Complex

The screenshot shows a university website with a navigation bar and a mission statement. Below the mission statement is a table that breaks down the sentence into its constituent clauses and their expansion relations.

TV University provides multi-disciplinary, multi-level training with pathways for credit transfer,	meeting the diverse needs of learners, scientific research,	developing applications, technology transfer, serving society,	making an essential contribution to increasing employment opportunities,	promoting a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship	improving the quality of life of the community	and boosting the socio-economic development of the locality and the whole country.
expanded clause	1st expanding	2nd expanding	3rd expanding	4th expanding	5th expanding	6th expanding
α	$+\beta 1$	$+\beta 2$	$+\beta 3$	$+\beta 4$	$+\beta 5$	$+\beta 6$

Figure 7 illustrates TV university’s mission statement made up from just one clause complex (or, sentence in traditional grammar terminology), also a long clause complex. All the contents of the mission statement are condensed in 7 constituent clauses, all combined in expansion relations. All the expanding clauses are non-finite, which means they are dependent on the expanded clause, and the relation between the expanded clause and all expanding clauses is hypotaxis. However, all the 6 expanding clauses are of equal status, so they are all in paratactic nexuses. Combined in such a way, the experiential content of the expanded clauses is expanded 6 times with the 6 expanding clauses. Such a 7-clause sentence is not popular and could normally be too long to read and remember. But as the statement is officially placed on the website of TV university, the length and the multilayer meaning of this statement could pose no problem to the stakeholders who need to carefully read the contents and understand what the missions of TV university are.

7.2.2. The dominance of parataxis and expansion

As regards the logical dependency relations, parataxis was chosen 134 times in comparison with 89 times for hypotaxis. Such a distribution shows that most of the contents

provided in the statements are perceived to be of equal importance, the priority for some certain contents could only be sometimes seen through the clarification or enhancement in terms of time, cause, and condition provided in the hypotactic clauses. The interpretation of this preference for parataxis could be that the institutions do not want to set any mission as a subordinate of another, and they want and are required to accomplish various objectives at the same time rather than setting priority to just a few tasks in their strategic development plan.

As regards the logico-semantic relations, there is no projection in the data. This absence of projection in the mission statement seems to be quite understandable since the mission statements often include the key information in just one or a few sentences, and there is usually very limited space in the issued documents and websites for the core missions to be briefly stated. A quote or report of the locutions or ideas from other people or sources added in the contents might make the mission statement unnecessarily long. All the clause nexuses are in expansion relations, which is quite similar to the strong dominance of expansion over projection Yuniar’s (2018) and Noviandari and Yuwono’s (2020) findings. This overdominance of expansion means that the focus of the mission statements is mostly showcasing as much as possible the key roles that the institutions perform and the common areas / activities in which the institutions operate. This finding resonates Cortés-Sánchez’s (2017) assertion that one of the reasons why the universities worldwide develop their mission statement is to define the organisation’s scope of business operations/activities. The employment of expansion allows the mission statements to be concise but still informative.

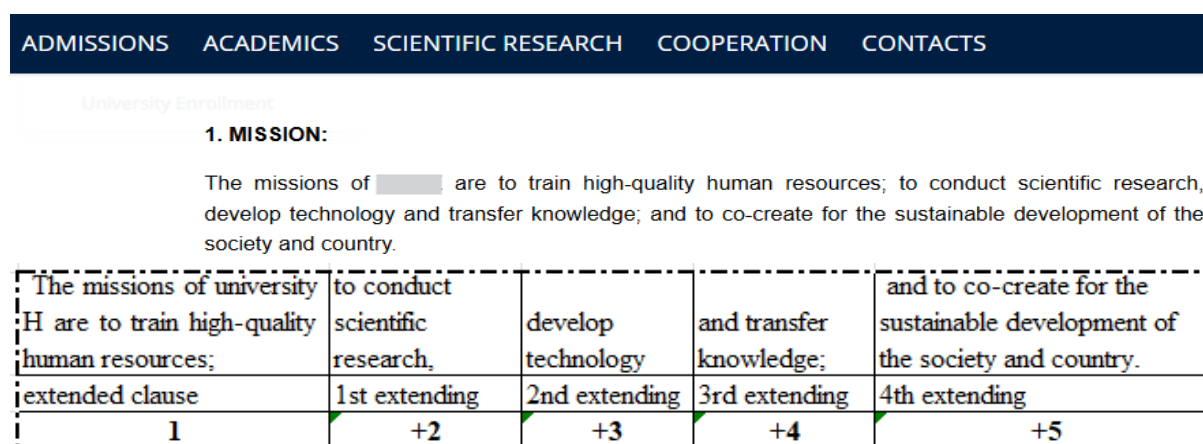
7.2.3. The popularity of extension

As seen in Table 3, among the three categories of expansion, extension was the most popular, accounting for 61.43% of the data. Another noticeable fact is that almost all clause nexuses with extension are paratactic. Meanwhile, almost all clause nexuses with elaboration and enhancement are hypotactic, which means the details added as enhancement and elaboration are considered less important.

As mentioned, extension may add new information to the original content, offering alternatives or exceptions. The majority of extending clauses in the data of this study add new information to the contents of the extended clause.

Figure 8

A Mission Statement With All Extension Nexuses

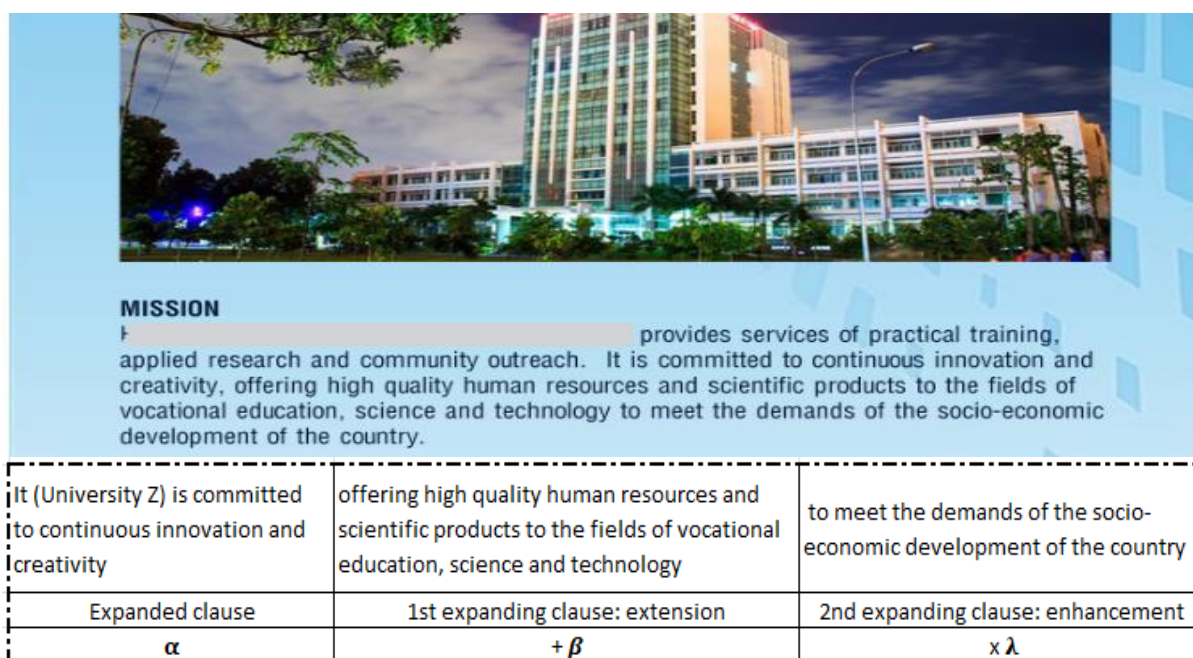


As shown in Figure 8, the mission statement of university H consists of only one complex, and the total number of expanded clauses and the expanding clause in the complex is

equal to the number of roles and functions that the institution wants to present to the stakeholders. All the clauses are connected paratactically through extension relations, signifying that university H assigns equal importance to processes such as training, conducting research, developing technological advancements, transferring knowledge, and co-creating new knowledge and services. By addressing all these tasks, university H makes influential contributions across various social dimensions. Adding these tasks paratactically one by one creates an impression of connecting isolated dots to form a complete and cohesive representation of the institution. By framing its mission in this manner, University H appears to focus primarily on answering the question “What are we going to do?” - one of the three questions that mission statements typically address, as outlined by Komives, Lucas, and McMahan (1998). In contrast, the questions of “How?” and “For whom?” receive comparatively less emphasis.

Figure 9

A Mission Statement With Hypotactic Extension



Clause complexes employing hypotactic extension could not demonstrate an even distribution of weight on the various missions of the institutions but could still provide the answers to the question “What are we going to do?”. The mission statement of university Z, as presented in Figure 8, includes a clause simplex and a clause complex. The clause complex is made up from 3 clauses combined in 2 hypotactic nexuses in which the initiated clause is extended and enhanced by the continuing clauses. The content of extending clause $+\beta$ is a supplement to the content of the initiating clause α , which means that offering high quality human resources and scientific produce is just second to being an institution of “continuous innovation and creativity”.

Although tertiary education institutions often have multiple key missions, achieving optimal functional efficiency and establishing a clear identity may require prioritising one mission over others. The mission statement serves as a platform to communicate this priority. In this statement, it can be inferred that University Z aims to position itself as an innovation-focused university rather than a research-centric one. This identity being highlighted might

follow the recently emerged discussion^{2, 3} in Vietnam about the role of tertiary education in innovation and technology transfer.

7.2.4. The realisation of elaboration

As classified by Halliday (1994), elaboration can bring the meaning of exposition, clarification or exemplification. The elaborating clauses are therefore not used to present the functions or goals of the universities, but just to “additives” to certain contents of the mission statements.

Elaboration can take one of two forms: paratactic elaboration, where the elaboration mirrors the original content by restating it in a similar way, or hypotactic elaboration, where the elaboration offers more detailed and specific information, making the meaning clearer and more comprehensive. In the data, all the 41 clause nexuses of elaboration are hypotactic, which means all elaborating clauses were used to add more specific supporting details to certain contents, improving the understanding of the content. None of the elaborating clauses was used to paraphrase the previously mentioned information.

Figure 10

A Mission Statement With Hypotactic Elaborating Clauses

ABOUT US ACADEMICS RESEARCH COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Home / Mission-vision

Mission and Objective

Người đăng: admin Mission-vision 16 Month 10, 2024 69

Mission: [redacted] University of [redacted] is the leading public university for training legal professionals nationwide, providing high-quality human resources at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It serves as a center for scientific research, focusing on legal science, contributing to the country's development and international integration.

L University is the leading public university for training legal professionals nationwide,	providing high-quality human resources at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.	
elaborated clause	elaborating clause	
α	$= \beta$	
It (L University) serves as a center for scientific research, //	focusing on legal science,	contributing to the country's development and international integration.
elaborated clause	elaborating clause	elaborating clause
α	$= \beta 1$	$= \beta + 2$

As seen in Figure 10, the elaborating clauses are more thorough explanations for the missions described in the elaborated clauses. The most typical contents of elaborated clauses are such graduate attributes as *being creative, being visionary, well-rounded graduates* or *innovative capabilities*, the status and rank of the institution such as *being an exceptional centre, a centre for scientific research, a leading public university*, or the less conventional mission like *developing a “new generation” university*. The need for elaboration may arise because these contents, being somewhat abstract, can be interpreted differently by various stakeholders

² <https://dantri.com.vn/giao-duc/dai-hoc-dinh-huong-doi-moi-sang-tao-thach-thuc-va-goi-y-cho-viet-nam-20211126073108972.htm>

³ <https://baohinhphu.vn/xay-dung-chien-luoc-phat-trien-dai-hoc-doi-moi-sang-tao-102240516150715578.htm>

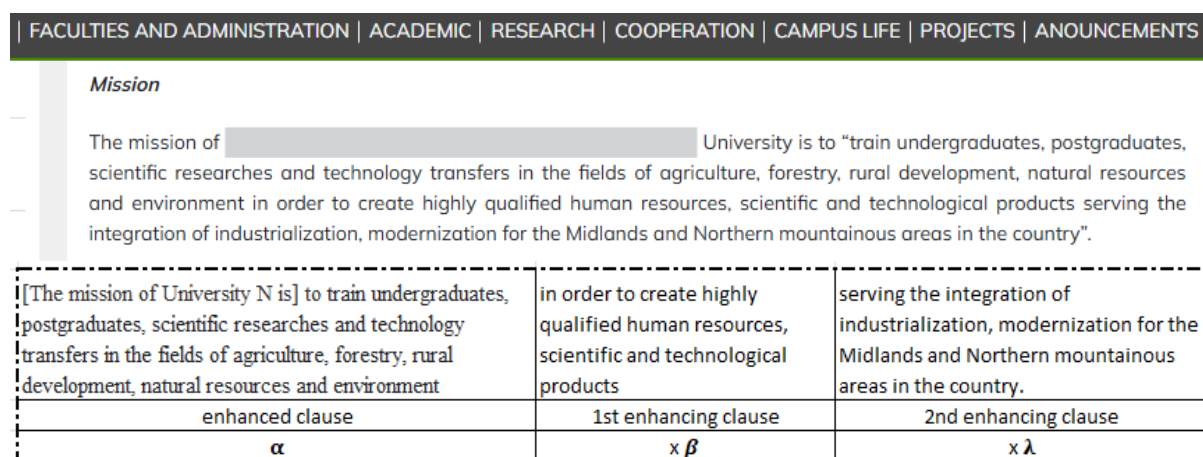
across fields and sectors. By specifying these attributes within the context of the institution’s particular field and sector, the elaboration clarifies meaning for stakeholders and enhances their understanding. Additionally, this process not only clarifies but also emphasises the elaborated clauses, making their contents more distinctive and polished. Such hypotactic elaboration can, therefore, direct the stakeholders’ attention towards the identity and the significance of the institution in some specific respects (Leuthesser & Kohli, 1997). In other words, hypotactic elaboration may highlight particular "selling points" of the institution, enabling mission statements to effectively serve both informational and promotional purposes.

7.2.5. The realisation of enhancement

With the purposes of providing the circumstantial features of place, time, cause, or concession, the enhancing clauses are not used to present the functions or goals of the universities, but just to scope the statement down to certain specific contexts. In the data of this study, most enhancing clauses embellished the enhanced clauses with features about cause (88.89%); enhancing clauses about place and concession were not found.

Figure 11

A Mission Statement With Enhancing Clauses



Hypotactic enhancing clauses in Figure 11 are both in the category of cause, which are used to explain why the mission stated in the enhanced clause is necessary. Such a pattern of enhancement is very popular in the data of this study. This is understandable since, in order to ensure that the stakeholders understand the necessity of a less conventional mission or some specific tasks, the institution sometimes needs to frame the whole statements or certain contents to particular circumstances, so that no misinterpretation should occur.

Despite their small proportion in the data, enhancing clauses of time all denoted same-time circumstances (with conjunctions *while* or *meanwhile*), no different-time conjunctions (such as *after*, *before*, *since* etc.) were used. This highlights the multitasking nature of tertiary education institutions, where diverse functions are executed across multiple domains. It also underscores the institutions’ commitment to aligning with the requirements outlined in the Law on Education and adhering to their strategic plans for development across various dimensions.

8. Conclusions

In this study, the mission statements of 106 tertiary education institutions were investigated, and 87 clause complexes were collected from these statements. It is observed from

the data of this study that in the mission statements of tertiary education institutions, clause complexes are used quite frequently, 72 out of 106 institutions use clause complexes to articulate their mission statements. In terms of logical dependency relations, parataxis is more widely used than hypotaxis. As regards logico-semantic relations, projection rarely occurs, since the mission statements are usually brief and are written in a straightforward and concise manner. The logico-semantic relation of expansion seems to dominate in almost all nexuses in the mission statements collected as data of this study.

Within the subcategories of expansion, extension emerges as the most prominent logico-semantic relation, suggesting a potential preference in university mission statements to emphasise answering the question, “*What are we going to do?*”, while the questions of “How?” and “For whom?” receive comparatively less emphasis. Clause nexuses in extension are frequently paratactic, signalling to stakeholders that the stated functions, goals, or values are viewed as equally significant. However, the combination of extended and extending clauses in hypotaxis may imply that although tertiary education institutions often have multiple key missions, achieving optimal functional efficiency and establishing a clear identity may require prioritising one mission over others. The choice of hypotaxis allows the mission statement to serve as a platform to communicate the various degrees of priority set to each mission or specific task.

However, when elaboration and enhancement are employed, the complexes tend to be hypotactic, demonstrating different highlights that the universities want to create to different contents of the mission statements. Certain missions or tasks may be further supported with hypotactic elaborating clauses, which may highlight particular “selling points” of the institution, enabling mission statements to effectively serve both informational and promotional purposes. Hypotactic enhancing clauses were used when the institution needed to frame the whole statements or certain contents to particular circumstances, so that no misinterpretation of the mission statement contents should occur. Enhancing clauses of same-time meaning could also reflect the multitasking nature of tertiary education institutions, where various functions are carried out across multiple domains.

An analysis of the logical meanings in the English mission statements of Vietnamese tertiary education institutions disclosed the institutions' dedication to meeting the requirements set forth in the Law on Education and aligning with their strategic development plans across multiple dimensions. The findings on the logical meaning of the mission statements could also reveal intriguing insights into how these institutions present their roles and functions to stakeholders, prioritise specific objectives and tasks, and emphasise particular “selling points” or the status and identity that the institutions wish to highlight. However, it is important to acknowledge that this interpretation reflects the researcher's perspective, and the institutions may intend to convey additional implications or subtle messages through the construction of their mission statements.

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