SOCIAL DISTANCE AND VIETNAMESE TRADITIONAL ART DECORATION

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Abstract

The goal of this analysis is to apply the Systemic Functional Linguistics theory (SFL) to analyze social distance and visual sign in the context of Vietnamese art decoration. Based on the concept of social semiotics, social distance between interactants in this analysis is analyzed through a register description of tenor system within the context of situation. From a social point of view, this analysis applies the five lines of human thought based on Bogardus divided into motivational relevancies, including (i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) philosophy, (v) religion, and (vi) culture and tradition, to describe the relationship between context of situation and meaning interpretation of Vietnamese traditional art decoration. The findings suggest that social distance generally plays an important role among interactants through Vietnamese traditional art decoration and functional meaning interpretation. The findings further suggest that the tenor system reflects some levels of social distance through a configuration of power, contact, and affective involvement of language usage. As a result, the levels of social distance could be realized by functional and social meaning interpretation, called socio-functional meaning system, through three perspectives: (i) art interpretation and art appreciation, (ii) social beliefs, faiths, and respect, and (iii) features and properties of art decoration. Some benefits of this study can be applied to other fields of human communication such as film, advertising, and art aesthetics.

Keywords: Tenor system/ Social distance / SFL / Social Semiotics / Vietnamese Traditional Art Decoration.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this century, the ways of studying languages have moved beyond linguistic signs. The concept of linguistic theory can be applied to study other modes of signs in many ways of human communication, such as paintings, colors, symbols, especially the mixing modes of signs in terms of multimedia. The mixing of modes of signs in any single text can be termed "multimodal discourse" in other words. Our daily

communications are widely related to multimodal discourse and they have been developed in various ways within modern technologies. Therefore, an effective linguistic theory applied to those new ways of communication should be a discipline or tradition whose explanation or description can cover all potential modes of signs. This is a linguistic study related to multimodal discourse under the concept of language as a meaning resource among social phenomena based on the systemic functional linguistics theory, hereafter called SFL. The SFL theory generally interprets natural languages as one of the meaning signs or meaning resources taken from social and cultural activities. These meaning resources attach both social and cultural meanings to the processes of human communication. In this respect, the mixing modes of signs in terms of potential meaning resources within social phenomena could be called "social semiotics" (Halliday, 1978: p.1-2). Linguistic theory applied to multimodal discourse has raised more challenging topics to explore and develop, because we are living among mixing modes of signs, such as television, advertising, the internet, and smartphones. This is a reason why studies related to social semiotics have become a new trend and, consequently, more research related to multimodal discourse has been taking place since 1990, including the works of Kress and van Leeuwen (1990, 1996), O' Toole (1994, 2011), O'Halloran (2004a, 2004b, 2005), Royce (1998, 1999, 2007), and Ventola et al. (2004). Unfortunately, most of these studies only focused on the Western context, while attention for other contexts, such as the Southeast Asian context, is still waiting for further study. On this point, it is the main rationale of this study to explore traditional art decoration within the Vietnamese context. Importantly, not only visual illustrations are used in this analysis, but also textual explanations related to art interpretation and art appreciation based on the book L' Art à Hue. These textual explanations are used as supplementary data to critique attitude and involvement toward traditional art decoration in the Vietnamese context. According to the SFL theory, both visual illustration and textual explanation taken from the book L' Art à Hue could be a representation of Vietnamese traditional art decoration, which is one type of a register among the genre of Vietnamese arts. Social distance between interactants, the emperor and the commoners, through language usage is thus the result of the configuration of the tenor system in this situation.

2. REVIEW LITERATURE

The systemic functional linguistics theory interprets natural languages as one of the products or resources within social realities and cultural activities that are attached to both potential meaning and social meaning. To establish its potential meaning, different choices of potential meaning resources are taken into account. These potential

meaning resources are arranged like a string of binding choices within a systematic realization. The language system is thus a result of possible choices of total potential sets of meaning resources selected through situation and context, the context of situation, within a convention of the social system: the context of culture. This is the reason why Halliday generally calls this theory "a system of social semiotics" (Halliday, 1978: p.1-2). To understand the concept of social distance under the tenor system, first, this analysis begins with two questions: "What is a genre and what is a register?" and "What is the system of context?" According to Halliday and Hasan, texts are not only a result of grammatical units—words, phrases, clauses, and sentences—but also a result of cohesion, an internal combination of grammatical units that produces a whole unified social meaning, and a coherent, external relationship between a whole unified social meaning and its context of usage. Both genre and register are directly influenced by the social context (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: p.1-2). From this point of view, Martin (1992b) suggests that a genre means: first, the product of members of society that creates functional activities motivated by culture; and second, the things accomplished by a language within its culture. From a linguistic usage point of view, a genre is interpreted as the "cultural purpose" of language, which categorizes a group of the same objective texts by selecting from various texts in society. This taxonomy is used to separate the language usages into a group of a typical text, such as literature, fiction, science, and so on. Martin concludes that a genre is the result of meaning negotiation between a text and its social system. To analyze the contextual values, a genre is thus the first step to define a range of potential meaning resources for making a selection within a language system. In other words, a genre usually gives us an identified characteristic of a particular text in terms of a group of texts which has the same generic identity (as cited in Eggins, 2004: p.54-55). Eggins adds to this point by describing how people commonly use language for activities within a cultural convention. Genre analysis is one of the potential methods for explaining a system of language as a "social activity" that transfers an unconscious social meaning into a conscious social meaning (Eggins, 2004: p.84). This is an overview of the language system taken from an external environment to an internal environment: from the contextual level to the linguistic level. This is important evidence to support the central claim that "language usage is a product of society." The language system is a result of variations motivated by social factors. These significant variations generate different patterns of each type of text called a "system of genre." Thus, a contextual analysis begins with the configuration of these internal variations that directly influence the textual organization. This configuration of internal variations can also be called "context of situation." Halliday realizes that context of situation is a cause of recurrent patterns of language influenced by social factors. These recurrent patterns of language are called a system of register including field, mode, and tenor, which

further generate a type of genre. A genre is thus the result of a combination of many registers with the same properties (Halliday, 1978: p.145). From this, it is clear that a system of register is also the result of a combination of many texts having the same cultural purpose. To summarize, a system of genre is realized by a system of register, and a system of register is realized by a system of text. Based on Martin (1992b), this is a systematic realization called the language system, as shown in Figure 1.
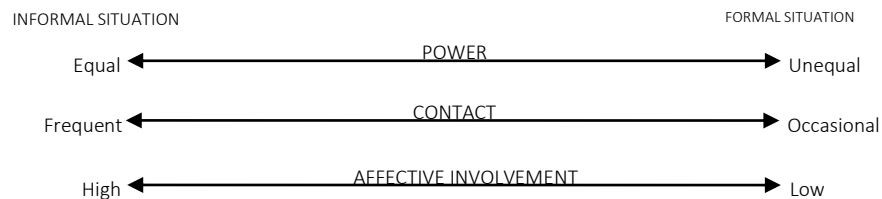
Figure 1: The Realization of Language system (Martin, 1992b)
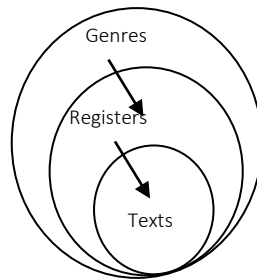
Second, to describe how people use language in a particular context or situation, there are motivating features that directly influence how a certain text within a cultural convention is created; this is called "motivational relevancies." Every mode of communication used under these motivations commonly performs an identical typology of text, referred to as a system of registers (as cited in Hasan, 1996a: p.177). Also, these motivational relevancies complementarily relate to contextual values: field, mode, and tenor. These contextual values are the most important variables which make a particular text different from others. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) suggest that these are three variables that significantly impact the organization of the language system. Language is a system of choices selected from the potential sets of meaning resources within the context of situation. The system of language is therefore a system realized by the configuration of field, mode, and tenor. These three variables can also be called "register variables," and the way to describe a configuration of these three variables is generally called a "register description." The system of genre realizes the system of register in the same way that the system of register realizes the system of language (as cited in Eggins, 2004: p.90). To summarize, the contextual analysis, through the SFL theory, involves the configuration of three internal systems—"field", "mode", and "tenor." These relevant systems establish a characteristic of each typical text in the language system. In short, field is related to the social phenomena in a discourse in terms of "What is being talking about?" Mode is related to the channel of communication in terms of "What type of language is used?" Tenor is related to the social roles between interactants found in a discourse in terms of "What is the social distance between interactants?" However, this study focuses on social distance in

traditional art decoration within the Vietnamese context through the tenor system. The target of this analysis, therefore, explains social distance through the relationship between the tenor system and Vietnamese traditional art decoration. According to Poynton (1985: p.77), the tenor system involves three dimensions of language, namely power, contact, and affective involvement. These three variables realize language usage from an "informal" to a "formal" situation. Eggins introduces the three terms—power, contact, and affective involvement in her research (Eggins, 2004: p.99-101). First, "power" means a situation in which the language used by the interactants is of equal or unequal status. Second, "distance" or "contact", are terms referring to the relationship between the interactants, which may be close or distant. Third, "affect" or "affective involvements," are both terms that refer to a situation of language usage emotionally related to involvement of interactants in language (as cited in Uckaradejdumrong, 2016). From this aspect, Eggins (2004) proposes a continuum of the social roles of relationship to identify the realization of the tenor system as in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Tenor system (Eggins, 2004: p.100)

INFORMAL SITUATION   FORMAL SITUATION

Equal ←————————— POWER —————————→ Unequal

Frequent ←————————— CONTACT —————————→ Occasional

High ←————————— AFFECTIVE INVOLVEMENT —————————→ Low

Third, it should be noted that SFL theory was developed based on social phenomena realized by motivational relevancies. The tenor system from the above point of view, which is a relationship between motivational relevancies and social activities, will be described in this study. According to this analysis, the tenor system in terms of social distance in Vietnamese traditional art decoration within the context of the complex of Hue monuments can be analyzed in two aspects: (i) social semiotics and (ii) social meanings. Therefore, this study, a register description, will apply both the concept of SFL based on Eggins (2004) and the concept of the social theory based on Bogardus (1922) in its analysis. From a social perspective, Bogardus suggested that the social activities were commonly a result of social conventions within cultural and traditional norms which have been developed through time and from one generation to another. There are numerous social motivations that function to reinforce a characteristic of a community and society. These can be summarized into five lines of human thought namely, the universe, philosophy, human life, the natural world, and culture and society. This is a concept used to explain and realize the social meaning of human activities in society (as cited in Bogardus, 1922). Furthermore, Chantaree et al. (2015) extend the five lines of Bogardus's concept into

the five groups of social motivation to study the symbols of art decoration in Luang Prabang, and this study reinterprets Bogardus's (1922) concept into five perspectives : (i) cosmos; (ii) philosophy, religion, and myths; (iii) human life; (iv) the natural world; and (v) culture and society. The analysis in this study prefers to group the cosmos with philosophy and separates myths and religions from each other for a deeper analysis. Previous studies presented only how these social motivations are involved in social activities, but there is no explanation in terms of how these social motivations complement each other to generate a social meaning. For this reason, this study categorizes the five lines of human thought into six motivational relevancies and reorders them as follows: (i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) philosophy, (v) religion, and (vi) culture and tradition, for a deeper explanation in this analysis.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study aims to describe social distance through the tenor system as it relates to traditional art decoration in terms of register description within the context of Vietnam during the Nguyen period (1802-1945). All visual illustrations in the book L' Art à Hue used as examples in this analysis will be analyzed based on the work of Eggins (2004) according to SFL theory and the work of Bogardus (1922) according to social theory. As the source of data for this study, the book entitled L' Art à Hue was originally written in French by Léopold Cadière, first published in 1919 with a 2nd edition in 1930. The 1st edition is rare today, so all the data in this analysis is taken from the 2nd edition of this book. All the contents of the 2nd edition including visual illustrations and textual descriptions remain the same as in the 1st edition. There are 167 pages in total and the book includes 223 visual illustrations of traditional art decoration found in the complex of Hue monuments. Due to its value and authenticness, L' Art à Hue has been translated into the Vietnamese language in various editions and is widely used as a reference for Vietnamese traditional art decoration during the Nguyen period in various fields of study, especially art, architecture, history, and semiology. As noted, all visual illustrations of traditional art decoration in the book L' Art à Hue were drawn by Vietnamese artists who lived during the Nguyen period. This means that all visual illustrations interpersonally represent the various points of view of the artists, who redirected their focus and appreciation from real art decoration to visual illustrations. As for the attitudes of Vietnamese toward art decoration, not only are the visual illustrations of art decoration used in this analysis but also textual explanations, which provide supplementary data to reveal aspects of art interpretation and appreciation of the Vietnamese. The visual illustrations in this context represent an instance of real traditional art decoration in terms of one type of visual register

according to SFL theory. Some attitudes, involvement, interpretation, and appreciation of the Vietnamese toward this visual register have been supplementarily described in textual explanations by the author, Léopold Cadière, in his role as "observer" among traditional art decoration and the Vietnamese. It should be noted that this analysis focuses on the tenor system, which is only one of the three internal systems of the context of situation consisting of field, mode, and tenor. Significantly, the objective of this study is to analyze social distance between Vietnamese traditional art decoration in the complex of Hue monuments and interactants. According to this analysis, social distance will be analyzed from the perspective of the tenor system, and importantly both the field and the mode systems are put beyond the scope of this analysis. Therefore, some personal techniques, art compositions, and styles of the Vietnamese artists of the visual illustrations in this book will not be included in this analysis. There are in total seventeen compounds around the Imperial City of Hue called "the complex of Hue monuments," hereafter called the CHM. According to Le et al. (2004), the CHM was registered as world cultural heritage site in December 1993. It consists of seventeen compounds in Hue, the capital city of Vietnam during the Nguyen period from 1802 to 1945. In his book, L' Art à Hue, Léopold Cadière, categorized the Vietnamese traditional art decoration found in the CHM into seven chapters: (i) geometry, (ii) characters, (iii) objects, (iv) flowers and fruits, (v) animals, (vi) stone carving, and (vii) natural scenes. As a result, that configuration of the tenor system in terms of social distance, which comprises the dimensions of power, contact, and affective involvement, was analyzed through the relationships between the visual illustrations and the six motivational relevancies in the context of the CHM.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From Figure 1, the system of register in terms of context of situation is laid above the system of text but below the system of genre in terms of context of culture, according to the SFL theory. From Figure 2, it should be noted that the tenor system can be established varyingly, from informal to formal situations of language usage (as cited in Eggins, 2004). From this perspective, from context to text, the typical characteristic of text depends on the configuration value of power, contact, and affective involvement. Explaining the characteristics of any text should begin by understanding the relationship between context of situation and language through social meaning interpretation and contextual environment. Chantaree et al. (2015) realized that traditional art decoration of Luangprabang was mainly influenced by Indian culture through Khmer, Chinese, Lanna, and Siamese art decoration and were created using various abstract symbols represented in some local materials and natural resources such as plants, flowers, and animals to

express their social meanings in the art patterns. However, the work of Chantaree et al. (2015) tends to be limited to an explanation of art compositions and art components, and the organization of art patterns and social meaning interpretation. This is an explanation from the below to the above point of view according to SFL theory. In this study, the analysis opts to explain the relationship between art decoration and the six motivational relevancies through their social meaning interpretation from the above to below point of view: context of situation to text. Second, this analysis neither answers "how many types?" nor "what types?" of art decoration, but rather it aims to describe "the relationship between social distance and meaning interpretation of art decoration" through the tenor system. This analysis is thus from the above to below dimension in other words. According to the data, all visual illustrations in the book L' Art à Hue are categorized into seven categories, including (i) geometry, (ii) characters, (iii) objects, (iv) flowers and fruits, (v) animals, (vi) stone carving, and (vii) natural scenes. It is clear that these visual illustrations (in the book L' Art à Hue) can be represented as a single type of visual register in the context of Vietnamese traditional art decoration. Most of the visual illustrations are drawn from real art decoration and art patterns by the Vietnamese artists in the CHM. The artists normally chose the most suitable angle for each decoration to depict their visual illustration as close to the original art as possible. Therefore, all visual data from the book L' Art à Hue in terms of a single type of visual register can definitely represent the typical characteristics of Vietnamese art decoration in the CHM, and they are influenced by the six motivational relevancies : (i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) philosophy, (v) religion, and (vi) culture and tradition. Social distance in this context is thus realized by the tenor system, which interpersonally negotiates different levels of social meaning interpretation through power, contact, and affect involvement.

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Power

This is a situation that refers to a negotiation between interactants in terms of equal and unequal power of language usage (as cited in Eggins, 2004: p.100). Based on Bogardus (1922), the concept of the cosmos can be reinterpreted as the entire universe in Asian philosophy. As far as the context of the book L' Art à Hue is concerned, most of visual illustrations were drawn from various types of art decoration found in seventeen compounds that constitute the CHM. The emperor enjoyed the highest social status in Vietnamese society during the Nguyen period, and it is clear that the emperor's residence, which also represents the highest political power and authority, is the most important place in the kingdom. For this reason, many symbols of the supernatural, such as angels, supernatural creatures, immortal beings, and heavenly treasures, were purposely selected and incorporated into art patterns in the CHM

to represent idealism of heaven and power according to ancient Chinese philosophy. It should be noted that traditional Vietnamese architecture is also mainly influenced by astrology and geomancy concepts, which have been continuously developed by mixing and blending aspects of Confucianism, Taoism, and Mahayana Buddhism within the Vietnamese context (as cited in Srichampa, 2006). The landscape surrounding CHM, for instance, is a symbolic interpretation of the natural world and human life in terms of feng shui, which is functionally concerned with the harmonization of earth and universe according to the philosophy of geomancy (William, 2006: p. 187). The architecture of CHM has been carefully placed within the natural environmentof the region based on the balancing of the power of wind; feng, and the power of water, shui. As for social meaning interpretation, the landscape of CHM functions to manifest the perfect power of the universe on earth that establishes harmony between the natural world and human life. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, the ideal universe is composed of: (i) the five main points — center, west, east, north, and south; (ii) the five elements — earth, metal, wood, water, and fire; and (iii) the five colors — yellow, white, blue, black, and red (Complex of Hué Monuments, n.d.). From the mythological stand point, these elements represent the origin of powers in the universe, which signifies the supernatural powers of heaven conceptualized in the philosophy and mythology that informs the landscape design. Moreover, the eight treasures with ribbons or fillets are also generally found in Vietnamese traditional art patterns. These eight treasures include pearls, coins, lozenges, mirrors, stone chimes, books, rhino horns, and artemisia leaves, as shown in Figures 3, 4, and 5. According to the book Chinese Symbolism and Art Motifs, the ribbons or fillets attached to the eight treasures is usually likened to the halo, constituting godness. These eight heavenly treasures are traditionally called babao (William, 2006: p. 168-169) and symbolize the ideal powers linked to supernatural forces from heaven. They further signify different levels of social meaning in architecture through symbolic art decoration, especially the hierarchy inherent in the feudal system of Vietnamese culture.

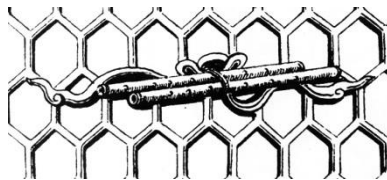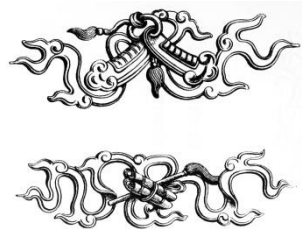**Figure 3: Treillis en hexagone (Cadière, 1930, Planche IV)**

Figure 4: Les deux cercles (Cadière, 1930, Planche XVI)

Figure 5: Les huit joyaux (Cadière, 1930, Planche LXX)

From this point of view, power is reinforced by the six motivational relevancies. According to Vietnamese culture and tradition, the highest power is represented by the supreme social status of the king/emperor as the "son of heaven" following ancient Chinese philosophy. However, it seems to be very difficult to separate religion, philosophy, and mythology as well as human life, the natural world, culture and tradition from each other because these motivational relevancies are complementary to each other, as Patai explains:

"Myth is a traditional religious charter, which operates by validating laws, customs, rites, institutions and beliefs, or explaining sociocultural situations and natural phenomena, and taking the form of stories, believed to be true, about divine beings and heroes. Myths are dramatic stories that form a sacred charter either authorizing the continuance of ancient institutions, customs, rites and beliefs in the area where they are current, or approving alterations."

From the above quotation, social meaning interpretations are the result of these motivational relevancies which directly relate to the natural world and human life. Humans relate natural phenomena to their life, customs, rites, and beliefs and create the characteristics of superhero and supernatural powers through their narratives and wisdom in the forms of myth, religion, and philosophy passed down from generation to generation. The CHM, for instance, is the result of these motivational relevancies, which were used to signify the solidarity of political power, the highest institution in society, and the institutional power of the emperor during the Nguyen period. These are social beliefs and myths which traditionally address the social status of the emperor in terms of the person who comes with power from heaven. From sheer size, ornamental decoration, and valuable materials of each element of the art decoration, the perception of interactants appreciating the

significance of the place is functionally negotiated such that the CHM is represented as the center of the universe which includes both the centralized and unified power of the kingdom. The imperial city— also called Hoàng Thành meaning the city of heaven— is the place where the emperor, as the son of heaven, resides. The scale and grandeur of the materials and decoration signify higher power and higher social status in this context. The power of the emperor makes him the highest authority in the kingdom. From a mythological point of view, the supernatural powers from heaven are represented by the four supernatural animals namely, dragon, unicorn, tortoise, and phoenix, called long ly quy phung, as shown in Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9. They appear frequently in Vietnamese traditional art decoration both inside and outside the CHM. Due to the long period of Chinese domination, Vietnamese culture was influenced by ancient Chinese philosophy: Confucianism, Taoism, and Mahayana Buddhism, and these are the three main sources of wisdom that have been profoundly extended and blended into Vietnamese society and traditions through religion, mythology, and social life. According to Tho (2015), the symbol of the dragon was commonly used to indicate a hierarchy of social meaning of power during the Nguyen period. The four-clawed dragon symbol is often represented as an energetic action with a mysterious and powerful appearance. Normally, this powerful four-clawed dragon symbolized the supernatural power of the protector as guardian and can be seen in most shrines and ancestor halls in Vietnam and China. According to Williams (2006), the symbol of the five-clawed dragon is reserved for the emperor and princes of the first and second rank only, as shown in Figure 11. The five-clawed symbol, called Ngu trao, signifies the highest power of the kingdom (as cited in Cadière, 1930). This evidence suggests that a symbol of the five-clawed dragon is the significant mark of the dragon which traditionally represents the highest level and power in Vietnamese society. From a religious perspective, the dragon symbol, with its social meaning interpretation as a power of the protector, is usually decorated in various places of the temple such as gate, roof, and wall to protect all treasures inside (as cited in Tho, 2015). Moreover, the twin four-clawed dragons chasing fire moon called lưỡng long chầu nguyệt, shown in Figure 10, is a symbol found in decorations adorning royal temples, courts, and halls around the CHM, and also in some general temples and shrines outside the CHM. Twin dragons chasing the fire moon traditionally symbolizes the balancing of the sun and the moon in terms of yin and yang, which directly establishes a harmonization of seasons. From the social meaning of the dragon, it should be noted that a significant mark of the dragon is its claws that is also used to identify a hierarchy of power through social status under the Vietnamese feudal system.

Figure 6: Le dragon (Cadière, 1930, Planche CXIX)

Figure 7: La licorne (Cadière, 1930, Planche CLV)

Figure 8: La tortue (Cadière, 1930, Planche CLXXVI)

Figure 9: Le phenix (Cadière, 1930, Planche CLXIV)

Figure 10: Les deux dragons rendant homage a la lune (Cadière, 1930, Planche CXXI)

Figure 11: Colonnes en bronze (Cadière, 1930, Planche CXXIII)

Next, power can be seen in the name of the compounds around the CHM. Thai Hoa Palace, for instance, is a part of the imperial city, Hoàng Thành, located in the southern area of the CHM. The name Thai Hoa Palace, Dien Thai Hoa, 太和殿, is taken from the I-Ching, the classic of ancient Chinese philosophy. The word Hoa means beautiful things and harmonization. Thus, Thai Hoa means the balance of power in which yin and yang complement and harmonize with each other. The Thai Hoa Palace functioned as a throne hall of the emperor under the Nguyen dynasty. This social function denotes that this was a place for the emperor to rule and ensure the harmonization of yin and yang by using a supernatural power to control climate, geographical conditions and especially political power. Therefore, if the emperor wanted to archieve a balancing between the earth and heaven, it was necessary to maintain harmony between yin and yang to bring about good fortune for the kingdom (Chien, 2018). From the superanatural forces perspective, moreover, it should be noted that Vietnamese culture and traditions have been continuously developed in the context of Southeast Asian

climate and agriculture as well as ancient Chinese philosophies: Confucianism, Taoism, and Mahayana Buddhism. Social beliefs in Vietnamese agricultural society have also been developed based on the doctrine of Lao Tzu and as a result, Vietnamese culture believes that a harmonization in life can be generated by the aspect of duality of life and spirit. Power concerned with this aspect, life and spirit, can be applied to the harmonization of life according to Vietnamese philosophy. According to Srichampa (2006), the Vietnamese believe that both life and spirit are functionally represented as supernatural powers supporting a better life for family. In Vietnamese culture, the power of life and spirit consists of the three souls of humanity called linh hon: life, intelligence, and perception. Numerous symbols are used to represent linh hon such as plants, flowers, books, painting brushes, lotus, and treasure. These symbols are commonly found on the art decoration of general temples, ancestors, and residences. In social meaning interpretation, they believe that these three souls of humanity can be generated through the power of linh hon which is another supernatural power to support human life. Moreover, the Vietnamese believe that this supernatural power generally resides in worship and ancestral altars to protect their family, residence, village, city, and also the kingdom (as cited in Srichampa, 2006). As mentioned, these are evidences to inform that power between interactants is realized in the ways of social meaning interpretation of art decoration reinforced by philosophy, religion, mythology, human life, the natural world, culture and traditions.

4.1.2 Contact

This refers to roles among interactants in terms of frequent or infrequent contact with each other during comminication (as cited in Eggins, 2004: p.100). First, contact is significantly related to size of art decoration and spatial landscape of the architecture around the CHM. Traditionally, the larger size of construction is generally more important, and also more beautiful is more significant. Within the aspect of boundary between heaven and earth, the high and long walls of the Citadel, Kinh Thành, and the Imperial City, Hoàng Thành, are functionally used to indicate that there are separate royal areas for the emperor and general areas for the people. From social meaning interpretation, the high and long wall can be used as a military fort to protect the imperial city from the enemy. This social function of the wall suggests that this is the most important part of the kingdom. The imperial city is a significant symbol of the highest political authority and power of the emperor. The wall is thus a symbol of social distance between the emperor and his people. The high and long wall as spatial decoration establishes social distance between interactants in terms of the most infrequent contact in this context. Second, from the mythological, human, and the natural world perspectives, it should be noted that many animals are reimaginized to represent the supernatural creatures from heaven such

as dragon long; the powerful flying snake, kirin ly; the hybrid unicorn and dragon, turtle quy; the turtoise from heaven, and phoenix phung; the firebird, as well as the eight heavenly treasures. These symbols are normally used to symbolize activities, treasure, and property, comprising royal temples, royal palaces, and royal tombs. Moreover, these symbols are normally depicted on the décor of royal households such as ceramics, partitions, furniture - especially the symbol of the five-clawed dragon, which marks the property of the emperor and crown prince. From a social meaning perspective, this suggests that these decorative symbols relate to supernatural forces and sacred powers from heaven and also indicate royal activities and royal ceremonies. According to Dien (1987), ancient Chinese philosophy holds that the afterlife begins after passing away. If one is from higher society and enjoyed political and status, in the afterlife they would also be higher and nearer to the Lord on High, Shang Di, in the next world (as cited in Wolff, 2007). As a result, the royal tomb of the emperor was constructed and decorated in line with the concept of idealism of heaven for the emperor in the afterlife. The social meaning of symbols depicted on the royal properties suggests a certain unreachability for the common people. This typical art decoration reflects the higher and greater social distance between interactants in other words. According to Vietnamese tradition, these symbols are not used for decorations the living places of common people such as house, shop, and other dwellings because, during the feudal period, they were traditionally used only by those of high social status in society. It was believed that the emperor held the highest social status and originated from heaven, so such treasures should be possessed by only the emperor. To sum up, the spatial landscape of the Imperial City and the royal tombs within a concept of heaven is further evidence of social distance in terms of infrequent contact between interactants. Traditionally, the CHM consists of many important buildings and monuments, located both inside and outside the walls of city. The imperial city located on the inner area represents the center of the universe, in contrast to the outside area which represents the earth. Within the context of the CHM, the private residence of the emperor is officially called the Purple Forbidden City, Tử Cấm Thành, and is located in the southern of inner area of the imperial city, which was based on the philosophical underpinnings of the Forbidden City in Beijing. Significantly, this means that it was the exclusive domain of the emperor and the higher royal family. This social meaning signifies another aspect of social distance between the highest social levels and the other levels within Vietnamese society. Its forbiddenness means it is the place of the most infrequent contacts between interactants. Not only the inner area of the imperial city is important, but also the outer area. There are other sites for royal activities located around imperial city, for example, the Temple of Literature, Văn Miếu, which is a place of learning; Nam Giao Esplanade which is a place for paying respects to gods, ancestors, and for annual ceremonies; Imperial Arena, Hổ Quyền, a place for relaxing,

and Thiên Mụ Temple, Chùa Thiên Mụ, which is a place for religious activities. It should be noted that social meaning and its function of place can be identified by the types of symbols that decorate each place. For instance, the Temple of Literature, which functions as place for learning, discussing, and testing Confucianism, is generally decorated with symbols of books, brushes, and rolls of paper as art decoration to represent knowledge and intelligence. This social meaning suggests that this place is used by scholars and people of high social status for study. In this situation, the evidence suggests that social distance is realized by the functional use and art decoration of the place. Moreover, both dragons and phoenixes are usually found adorning furniture i.e. tables, chairs, beds, and cabinets, as well as the clothes of the emperor and the empress. The dragon and phoenix symbols imply that these households are used by people of the highest social status in society. According to the philosophy of Yin and Yang, the dragon functionally represents male power Yin, while the phoenix functionally represents female power Yang (as cited in Cadière, 1930). The balancing of Yin and Yang is the key to harmonizing human life and family, which further signifies the harmonization of society and kingdom. In this situation, social distance is also realized by the social meaning of the symbols of dragon and phoenix on royal households. It can be seen, then, that social meaning interpretation of Vietnamese traditional art decoration is reinforced by the six motivational relevancies consisting of human life, the natural world, philosophy, religion, mythology, and culture and tradition. This in turn signifies the infrequent contact in terms of higher and more social distance between interactants.

4.1.3 Affective involvement

According to Eggins (2004: p.100), this is an emotion between interactants involving into text during communication. In this regard, first, the spatial landscape of the CHM can be described through both mythology and philosophy in the Vietnamese context. All compounds in the CHM were planned and constructed according to the philosophy of geomancy, applying the physical and natural conditions of the local geography of Hue. The forms of rivers and mountains, for example, typically symbolize harmonization through a depiction of multiple natural resources. This harmonization is the origin of wind power, feng, and water power, shui (William, 2006: p. 187). In social meaning interpretation, hills represent a protective screen in front of the CHM according to geomancy concepts. A green dragon is on the left hand side and a white tiger is on the right, which conveys an image of guards securing the main gate to deter evil spirits (Complex of Hué Monuments, n.d.). Moreover, it should be noted that most of the art decoration found in this context consisted of wooden carvings, with high-quality materials used for each part of the construction. The highly valuable and quality materials included teakwood, oil paint, pearls, gold leaf, and stone carvings used to express prosperity, wealth, and longevity of the

kingdom during the Nguyen period. According to Cadière (1930), most art patterns found on the valuable wooden erections such as gates, windows, pillars, façades, and other structures were designed and carved by famous Vietnamese craftsmen. Within Vietnamese tradition during the feudal period, they could not build private houses or private residences similar to the CHM because these were royal properties which needed to be both authentic and unique to represent the highest social status of the emperor as well as the prosperity, wealth, and the unity of the kingdom. As a result, this art decoration is very authentic and precious. It also means that such prized materials were traditionally prohibited for use in everyday constructions. Thus, the social distance between emperor and the common people through an emotional involvement in social meaning interpretation of the constructions, can be observed in this situation. Second, the names of art patterns are generally associated with values. For example, the word kim means "gold", as in kim quy "golden tortoise," and kim tien "golden coin," as well as the word tho, which means longevity, as in song tho "double longevity." These names of art patterns are generally concerned with prosperity, wealth, and longevity, which are emotionally used to respect the emperor and kingdom through their social meaning interpretation and appreciation. Another example of affective involvement concerning with human life and the natural world is the Nam Giao Esplanade. The emperors in the Nguyen dynasty often regarded themselves as thien tu, "sons of god." To pay their respects to Father God and to protect their life and kingdom, Nam Giao Esplanade became the place where they regularly held annual ceremonies. This is another aspect of the concept of affective involvement of life and spirit traditionally called linh hon, which emotionally symbolized the morality and unity of the kingdom through protection by supernatural powers. Third, most visual illustrations in the book L' Art à Hue were drawn by Vietnamese artists who lived during the Nguyen period. Affective involvement can be seen by observing the angles —top or down and left or right— of the artists. All visual illustrations in the book L' Art à Hue were generally selected by the artists to offer a viewpoint of art decoration in terms of details of traditional art decoration in the CHM. Applying Royce (1999) to this analysis, the front angle, which aims to give information on "how it works," "how many elements," and "details of the pattern," is found most often in this context. The top and down angle illustrations are also used to give information about "where these patterns are located." In other words, the artists selected or forced their viewpoints onto the observer in terms of representations of affective involvement of the Vietnamese. The most frequent selection of mood of visual illustrations taken from L' Art à Hue is thus a subjective visual. The front angle is thus a visual selection to express the "maximum or minimum involvement", as in Figures 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. This angle might be called an "actional orientation" in the sense of "how it works," "how you use it," and "how you do it" (as cited in Royce, 1999: p.83). This is a reason

why the front angle, which aims to give as much dimensional information as possible, is found most often in this context. This angle forces the viewer involved to engage with the art decoration.

Figure 12: Caractere de la longevite (Cadière, 1930, Planche XLII)

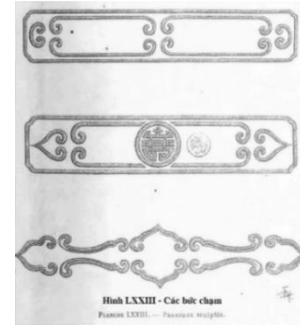**Figure 13: Plantes et fleurs (Cadière, 1930, Planche XCV)**

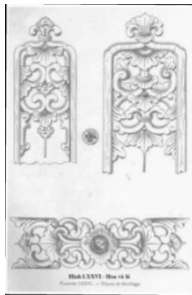**Figure 14: Panneaux sculptes (Cadière, 1930, Planche LXXIII)**

Figure 15: Fleurs et feuillage (Cadière, 1930, Planche LXXVI)
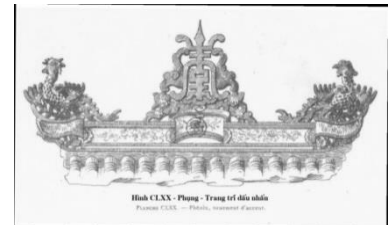

Figure 16: Treillis en losange (Cadière, 1930, Planche I)

Figure 17: Phenix, ornament d accent (Cadière, 1930, Planche CLXX)

Figure 18: Poisson, ornament d'accent (Cadière, 1930, Planche CCIV)
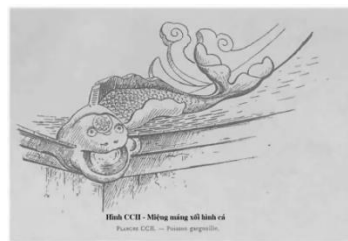

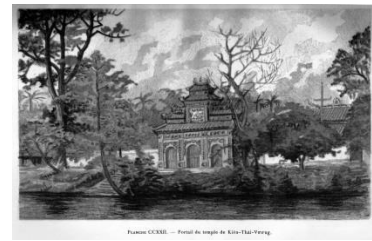**Figure 19: Poisson stylise (Cadière, 1930, Planche CCV)**

Figure 20: Poisson stylise (Cadière, 1930, Planche CCV)

Moreover, the top view puts the viewer in a higher position. This situation suggests that the art decoration is less involved than the viewer. In contrast, the lower view indicates greater involvement of the art decoration than the viewer. Visually, the images are depicted from three distances: "medium close," "very close," and "long shot." There is social meaning interpretation through the degree of attention paid by the viewer to the depicted images (Royce, 1999: p.76). According to Royce (1999), the interpersonal involvement can be commonly

described as: medium close, to represent the sense that the viewer is part of the depicted image (Figures 12, 13, 14, and 17); very close to represent a sense of intimacy between the image and viewer (Figures 15, 16, 18, and 19); and long shot, which evokes a more public and impersonal relationship between the image and viewer (Figure 20). From a visual involvement point of view, the artists chose to use "medium close" and "very close" to encourage the viewer to become a part of the depicted image as a "participant" in this context. The artists drew the visual illustrations by using proximity and angle to convey subjective viewpoints so that they could control the perspectives of the depicted images. Besides this, the artists used "long shot" (Figure 20) to take an objective viewpoint and to foster public interaction between the viewer and the depicted image. This is a situation in which the viewer tends to negotiate a role for themselves as "observer" rather than as "participant." Furthermore, from a linguistic point of view, the book L' Art à Hue is mostly written in declarative clauses, which are generally found in reference and academic texts to give factual information. In this case, text is used for unidirectional communication to the reader from the author, Léopold Cadiere, who was a Vietnamese traditional art specialist and a French priest during the Nguyen period. It should be noted that Cadiere specifically described Vietnamese art decoration from his position as observer, therefore interactants as both reader and viewer of the context of this book mostly use the information as references, and can neither respond nor question. They can only involve themselves in individual argumentation and acceptance according to the book's explanations and the visual illustrations. However, this analysis is a study that only focuses on the tenor system of visual signs. The individual argumentation of the reader and viewer is beyond the scope of this study.

4.2 Discussion

This study provides a realization of the tenor system in terms of register description within the context of Vietnamese traditional art decoration. Based on the SFL theory, language as social semiotics goes beyond the scope of linguistic signs. Social semiotics may include both verbal and non-verbal signs. The data suggest that both types of signs can complementarily generate typical characteristics of text in terms of multimodal discourse. However, each multimodal discourse has a different characteristic of text depending on its context of situation. Context of situation based on the SFL theory is realized by three internal systems, consisting of field, mode, and tenor. From this analysis, the tenor system in terms of social distance is thus the result of configuration of power, contact, and affective involvement. This configuration relates to how multimodal discourse interpersonally negotiates with the interactants. In this context of situation, the book, L' Art à Hue, is a decorative art reference book that contains both linguistic and visual signs. The reader or viewer can involve themselves in the

orientation, depending on the situation of usage. The reader who is interested in art decoration may focus on the visual orientation and use the linguistic signs as a complement. On the other hand, those who are interested in the art descriptions may focus on the linguistic orientation and the use of the visual signs as a complement. This is a situation where both visual and linguistic signs complement each other to generate a piece of multimodal discourse termed "intersemiotic complementary" (as cited in Royce, 1999). In this context, the tenor system reflects social distance between the emperor and the people through the visual illustrations of art decoration shown in the book together with written explanations by the author. Eggins (2004) suggests that social distance is directly revealed to both social role and social status of interactants in the context of situation. The tenor system is thus the result of a realization of interpersonal engagement that occurrs in any textual register, and this interpersonal engagement is reinforced by other social variable factors called "motivational relevancies." In this analysis, these motivational relevancies can be applied using the five lines of human thought concept of Bogardus (1922) and reinterpreted into the six social variable factors, namely (i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) philosophy, (v) religion, and (vi) culture and tradition. The data analysis suggests that all traditional art decoration in the CHM depicted in the book L' Art à Hue interpersonally transfer social meanings and social distance between the emperor and the people through the visual illustrations of the Vietnamese traditional art decoration. The information provided by the visual illustrations taken from this book alone is insufficient and is supplemented by textual explanations. On the levels of functional linguistics, this context of situation is called the system of registers, which realizes the context of culture in terms of the system of genres according to SFL theory. This is analogous to the levels of social purposes of discourse. On the levels of social function, the motivational relevancies, which are the same level of register description, realize social meaning interpretations in the context of the CHM. From data analysis, social distance between the emperor and the people is the result of the tenor system of the art decoration realized by motivational relevancies as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Levels of functional linguistics and social functions in the Vietnamese context

In Figure 20, the highlighted part represents the context of this analysis. Based on SFL theory, it should be noted that the upper levels of language will be realized by the lower levels. Genre is realized by a set of registers and a register is realized by a set of texts. The book, L' Art à Hue, is used to represent one type of text. Motivational relevancies in terms of social functions also play important fuctions at the same level of register description. According to Martin (1992b), a system of registers is a system of context of situations, which consists of the three internal systems: field, mode, and tenor. While the tenor system is realized by a configuration of power, contact, and affective involvement, the social distance between the interactants through the art decoration is also the result of social meaning interpretation of functions of the art decoration, reinforced by the six motivational relevancies, (i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) religion, (v) philosophy, and (vi) culture and tradition. In short, these six motivational relevancies realize social meaning interpretation of the art decoration. As regards social meaning interpretation, Lenski noted that humans naturally differ from other animals because humans can immediately adapt their lives and communication based on their environment in order to survive. Language and meaning are thus one of the unique tools for communication within society, as this quote suggests:

"Closely linked to learning and the societal mode of life are the complex and efficient systems of communication that distinguish mammals in general, and primates in particular, from most other species."

(Lenski, 2005: p.37)

According to this quote, human communication is a human social activity. Such social activities also functionally reinforce and shape the structure and organization of groups into communities and societies.

Language and meaning interpretation are thus significant tools for human communication used for sharing and shaping cultural innovations, beliefs, values, and ideologies (as cited in Elwell, 2015). In the context of this study, it is clear that such social meanings of the visual illustrations of art decoration in the book L' Art à Hue, which is one type of tool for human communication, are directly revelant to motivational relevancies. For this aspect, this analysis prefers to use the term "description of social distance" to reprepresent the realization of social distance between interactants through visual signs. From Figure 20, it can be concluded that, while the system of texts is described by the metafunctions according to the concept of SFL theory, the description of social distance can be also expressed through the system of context of situations and social meaning interpretations according to this study. Bogardus (1922) and Chantaree et al. (2015) only discussed the relationships among the five lines of human thought and social activities. Their studies did not present an ordering and an internal system of these relationships. From this analysis, there are two vertical perspectives of realization. First, the functional linguistics perspective; this is a realization of the language system according to SFL theory. Second, concerning the social functional perspective, this study prefers to generalize the term as socio-functional meaning system. The motivational relevancies within the socio-functional meaning system can be generalized to describe the ordering and internal processes at the level of context of situations in the following steps. First, human life and the natural world are in a primary relationship to create a basic tool for communicating the social meanings of elements of human life and survival. Second, the ways of thinking related to nature and living in society have been solidified and potentially developed through local wisdom to be shared and realized in the community based on local mythology, religion, and philosophy. Next, these ways of thinking for living and surviving have been further functionally developed through time over generations to become aspects of culture and tradition within society. As noted, these are the motivational relevancies which could be regarded as the context of situation according to SFL theory. The book, L' Art à Hue, is thus one type of register reinforced by these motivational relevancies through social meaning interpretation of traditional art decoration in the Vietnamese context. As a result, both visual illustrations and linguistic explanations are a set of meaning resources representing a multimodal discourse with social purpose. This is a significant point to inform a principle of "social semiotics" and "language is a product of society" according to SFL theory. The results in this analysis show that social distance between interactants in terms of the tenor system is a configuration of power, contact, and affective involvement and these three variations are directly related to social meaning interpretation and motivational relevancies. In this context, social distance between interactants has been incoporated into the art decoration to produce both functional and social meanings, called socio-

functional meaning system. From this point of view, it could be described as a realization between tenor system and motivational relevancies through socio-functional meaning system of traditional art decoration in the context of the CHM, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The socio-functional meaning system of traditional art decoration in this context and its realizations

	Power	Contact	Affective involvement
Human life	Emperor	Forbidden area	Prospority of life/Size
Natural world	Natural disasters	Uncontrollable power	Sacrificial ceremonies
Mythology	*Long Ly Quy Phung*	Heaven creatures	Purity and enlightenment
Philosophy	*Feng Shui*	Son of heaven	*Linh hon*
Religion	Royal temple	Holiness	Faiths and beliefs
Culture and Tradition	Authority/Seal	Customs and norms	Interpretation and appreciation

According to the data, social distance in this context can be realized by the three perspectives as follows. First, within art interpretation and art appreciation, the CHM was the most important place used to present social functions associated with the political constitution, social solidarity, and prosperity of the kingdom, as well as the social status of the emperor during the Nguyen dynasty. It should be noted that this tenor system, in terms of social distance, is negotiated with interactants through various social meaning interpretations of art patterns and decoration in the CHM. From Table 1, for example, the primary motivational relevancies are both human life and the natural world. Power in society can be represented through the differentiation of social roles, with the emperor being the person with the highest political ranking, infrequent contact, and social status compared to commoners. Next, symbols of the natural world, such as natural disasters, are also used to represent supernatural forces from heaven. To harmonize these natural powers, sacrificial ceremonies served an important function for the emperor. Furthermore, supernatural forces were also designated by heavenly treasures, heavenly animals, and local superheros based on mythology, philosophy, and religion. These have social functions related to meaning interpretation and appreciation concerning with appearance, meaning, criticism, and belief of symbols, which are traditionally generalized into local narratives, legends, and traditional art decoration found in the community. These processes are transferred from generation to generation over time and finally become a part of the culture and traditions of society through conventions, customs, norms, and beliefs such as Yin-Yang, Linh Hon, and Feng Shui. From a culture and tradition stand point, socio- functional meaning interpretation of art decoration is also used to realize a hierarchy of a political power and authority vested in the emperor. The five-clawed dragon, for instance, represents the authority of emperor who was the person with the highest social status in Vietnamese society during the

Nguyen period. The symbol of the five-clawed dragon is generally depicted on the seals, thrones, and the clothes of the emperor. Moreover, the five-clawed dragon traditionally possesses supernatural powers because the dragon is the most powerful of supernatural creatures, deriving from heaven and sent to protect the world. Significantly, there are many types of dragons according to ancient Chinese philosophy, but only the five-clawed dragon is used to signify the highest social status of the emperor and his power from heaven as a perfect god and "son of heaven." Beyond the confines of the CHM, by contrast, the four clawed dragon symbolized "guardian" and "protector", and the dragon symbol in general signifies the male power Yin according to the general context of the Vietnamese.

Second, social distance is a product of societal and religious beliefs, which are commonly expressed through symbolic art decoration and often sourced in myth and philosophy. Visual illustrations of the four sacred animals, dragon, kirin, tortoise, phoenix—long ly quy phung—for instance, regularly appear in Chinese and Vietnamese mythical narratives while the supporting power is emotionally motivated by faith and respect based on religion, social beliefs, and local philosophy in terms of affective involvement. According to Vietnamese culture, supernatural forces are presented in various forms, including natural resources such as flowers and trees, humans, animals, and even household appliances. Local narratives, religious, and sacred activities support this belief such that aspects of the supernatural forces are ultimately integrated into artistic composition and decoration. The symbol of the lotus, for example, is used to represent enlightenment, purity, self-regeneration, and rebirth according to Buddhism (as cited in Tho, 2019). However, it should be noted that the deeper and wider social meaning could be further potentially expressed depending on how the art is interpreted and appreciated. Interpretation and social meaning depend on the particular context, as mentioned, mythology, philosophy, and religion directly inform human life and the natural world, and vice versa. These motivational relevancies have been further developed into a frame of customs and norms within the culture and traditions of the society and the evolution of customs and norms are an important justification for governing and controlling the people of that society. From social meaning interpretation, it means that the leaders of Vietnamese society during the Nguyen dynasty would control and govern their people to preserve customs and norms through the exercise of heavenly power and authority vested in the emperor. As a result, the people shared a respect for and solidarity with god and heaven by virtue of the power wielded under the emperor's authority. Social distance and respect are often inextricably intertwined when considering social status, education, carreer, and also social responsibilities.

Third, social distance can be manifested in features and properties of art decoration such as sizes, characteristics, colors, and also valuable materials. The five-clawed dragon, for example, signifies the highest power in the kingdom. This symbol is generally used to represent the authority of the emperor in the emperor's seal, throne, clothes, and so on. Traditionally, the five-clawed dragon symbol was used to establish social distance and indicate social status in the context of the CHM. As for frequency and ease of contact, valuable materials used for art decoration, larger buildings and higher walls interpersonally indicate the importance of the place and have specific social meaning. These factors further imply social distance among interactants with less frequent contact between inside and outside areas of the CHM. For instance, while the imperial city located inside the CHM represents the center of the universe, the outside area of the CHM represents the realm of the emperor. This makes social distance between participants who lives in the internal and the external areas of the CHM quite different. The inner area is close to the center of the universe where is more important and the more decorative it is, the more important also. It is clear that the higher status, the more social and political power. The inside is for the residences of those of higher social status, whereas, the outside area is for commoners and those of lower social status. In fact, both inside and outside area of the CHM are constructed by humans, but concepts of ideology and geomancy within Asian philosophy offer social and functional meanings that support the authority and power of the emperor as the leader from heaven. This social distance correlates with the context of less frequent contact between interactants. As concerns materials, the Vietnamese traditionally believe that the social and functional meaning of happiness related to life and spirit can generate the three souls of humanity linh hon which carry virtue and good fortune into the household. This is a concept that can be applied to traditional art decoration in general and is not only used for the CHM but also found in a broader the Vietnamese context in which these three souls of humanity are believed to invite good life and good spirits. To protect themselves from evil and bring about a more virtuous and better life, high quality, valuable materials and elegant art decorations are used in the construction of building in line with Vietnamese architecture and style. For this reason, many exquisite materials such as gold, pearl, and precious wood etc. were used in decorating the CHM to express their involvement and respect for linh hon, especially for the royal tomb, the Temple of Literature, and sacred sites.

5. CONCLUSION

From this analysis, it seems to be very difficult to identify the boundaries of the internal configuration of the tenor system because power, contact, and affective involvement complement each other. This is the

reason why Eggins (2004) preferred to use a scale of realization with the system of field, mode, and tenor. According to SFL theory, this is a systematic process for describing the social semiotics in the context of situation which can be called a register description in terms of the system of field, mode, and tenor. According to aim of this analysis, this study focuses on the tenor system, which centres on three internal systems, namely power, contact, and affective involvement and is reinforced by the six motivational relevancies :(i) human life, (ii) the natural world, (iii) mythology, (iv) philosophy, (v) religion, and (vi) culture and tradition in the context of Vietnamese traditional art decoration during the Nguyen period. From the results, these six motivational relevancies complementarily incorporate with both social function and meaning interpretation of traditional art decoration in the CHM. In other words, social distance between the emperor and the people is the result of both social function and meaning interpretation reinforced by the six motivational relevancies, called socio-funtional meaning system. From a SFL theory perspective, a register description is also influenced by motivational relevancies, which further generate a typical characteristic of text through the system of field, mode, and tenor. The Table 1 shows some of the social meanings of traditional art decoration in the CHM. The findings in this analysis further suggest that social and functional meaning of traditional art decoration in this context can be generalized into three ways of meaning interpretation, including (i) art interpretation and art appreciation, (ii) social beliefs, faith, and respect, and (iii) features and properties of art decoration. The results in this analysis show that the concept of social semiotics can be applied to this analysis, and the six motivational relevancies functionally shape the tenor system through both the social function and social meaning interpretation of art decoration. Therefore, social distance between interactants in this context can also be identified by the configuration of power, contact, and affective involvement of interactants toward the art decoration. Social distance in this context of situation—the emperor and people—is thus the relationship of the tenor system reinforced by six motivational relevancies through social function and meaning interpretation of Vietnamese traditional art decoration. Social distance through the tenor system in this analysis can be generalized and presented as in Figure 21.

Figure 21: Social distance of interactants through tenor system in this context
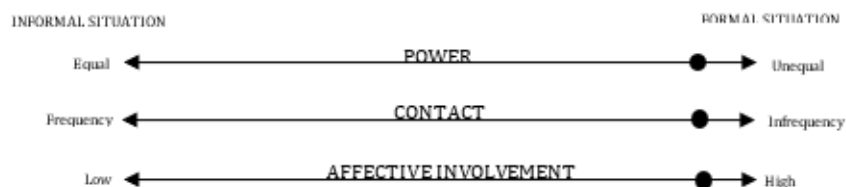
According to the findings in this analysis, social function and social meaning interpretation of art decoration depend on both context of situation and context of culture. This is why SFL theory generally uses the terms "metafunctions" to cover all varying functions of language at the level of discourse. Within this context, it is clear that the visual illustrations in the book L' Art à Hue are one type of visual register represented in one type of Vietnamese traditional art decoration. Based on SFL theory, all visual illustrations are meaning resources in terms of social semiotics. In this study, the context is the CHM and Vietnamese culture. Although these visual illustrations are drawn from real art decoration in the CHM, social distance between interactants can be also transferred by those visual illustrations through the viewpoints of the Vietnamese artists themselves and by the textual explanations provided by the French author as an observer in this context. While the visual illustrations spotlight the emperor's social status, the textual explanations also expose and describe to the Vietnamese social hierarchy. Both visual illustrations and textual explanations accompanied by their functional and social meanings complement each other to produce a type of text vis-a-vis multimodal discourse. As a result, a realization between social function and social meaning interpretation in relation to Vietnamese traditional art decoration can be analogously generalized as "X is used/interpreted for Y, and Y realizes to Z," where X represents traditional art decoration, Y represents social function and social meaning interpretation, and Z represents the context of situation. There are numerous social functions and social meanings (Y) of traditional art decoration (X) under context of situation (Z). This is called the system of visual register. Context of situation (Z) is realized by these social functions and social meanings (Y) and they, context of situation (Z), can futher realize context of culture in terms of the system of visual genre. This analysis, however, focuses on the tenor system in the matter of social distance between interactants, the emperor and the people, in the context of the CHM. Other systems—including field and mode—would be a case for further study and broader analysis.

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