

**VIET NAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HA NOI
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**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECHES OF
VIETNAMESE LEADERS AT THE GENERAL DEBATES OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FROM 2011 TO 2020**

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale of the study

In an era marked by globalization, diplomacy and international cooperation have become central to national development. Foreign policy, as a strategic tool, enables states not only to safeguard their sovereignty and promote national interests but also to express their identity and values within a shifting global order. The United Nations (UN), and particularly the UN General Assembly (UNGA), provides a key stage where such expressions take shape through high-level speeches by member state leaders. For Viet Nam, participation in the UN since 1977, especially after the launch of its Doi Moi reforms in 1986, has been a way to assert its growing global role. The decade from 2011 to 2020 marked a significant period in Vietnam's foreign policy evolution, with its leaders actively engaging in UNGA debates to articulate ideological commitments and strategic objectives. This study investigates those speeches using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to uncover how language reflects and constructs the ideologies and changes in Vietnam's foreign policy. Through a close examination of rhetorical strategies, the research aims to show how discourse is used not merely to describe but to shape Vietnam's diplomatic identity and influence in global affairs.

1.2. Aims, objectives and research questions

1.2.1. Aims of the study

The study aims to critically examine how the key ideologies and significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy are conveyed in the speeches of Vietnamese leaders at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) from 2011-2020. Specifically, it seeks to uncover the linguistic strategies used to articulate these ideological and policy shifts and to analyze how they were constructed within the broader discursive and socio-political context.

The study is hopefully expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how language functions as a tool for shaping foreign policy narratives, constructing national identity, projecting diplomatic roles on the global stage and the role of CDA in understanding political discourse.

1.2.2. Objectives of the study

For the overarching aim of the study to be fulfilled, the following objectives need to be accomplished:

- 1) Identifying and interpreting the key ideologies and major shifts in Vietnam's foreign policy as expressed in the UNGA speeches from 2011-2020 and analyzing linguistic features used to represent these ideologies and foreign policy changes.
- 2) Investigating how the identified ideologies and foreign policy changes are socially constructed through discourse, situating them within Vietnam's evolving domestic and international context.

By addressing these objectives, the study highlights the intersection of language, ideology and international diplomacy, offering insights into the role of discourse in shaping Vietnam's foreign policy and its strategic identity in global affairs.

1.2.3. Research Questions

To address these objectives, the study investigates the following questions:

- 1) What ideologies and significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy are conveyed in the speeches by Vietnamese leaders at the General Debates of the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020 and how are they linguistically represented?
- 2) How are these ideologies and foreign policy changes socially constructed in the speeches?

1.3. Scope of the study

This study examines the speeches of Vietnamese leaders at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020 - a period marked by Vietnam's deeper global integration and more assertive foreign policy. Focusing on themes such as peace, sovereignty, sustainable development, multilateralism and rule-based international order, the research applies Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore how linguistic features are employed to construct ideological meaning. Through this lens, the study reveals how Vietnam discursively positions itself as a responsible and principled actor in international affairs.

1.4. Methodology

This study uses an embedded mixed-methods approach to analyze Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the UN General Assembly (2011-2020), drawing from official English translations provided by the Vietnamese delegation. Grounded in a critical pragmatic worldview, the research combines qualitative and quantitative methods to examine how core ideologies and foreign policy shifts are both articulated and socially constructed through discourse. Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework - supported by frequency analysis using AntConc - helps uncover the rhetorical strategies and linguistic patterns that reflect Vietnam's evolving diplomatic identity and global positioning.

1.5. Significance of the study

This study contributes to the growing field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in Vietnam by applying it to the political speeches of Vietnamese leaders at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020. It highlights how language constructs and conveys ideology and foreign policy shifts, thereby offering practical insights for English language learners, linguists, diplomats, policymakers and international relations scholars. By enhancing understanding of political discourse, the study supports both the academic development of CDA and the practical interpretation of international diplomacy.

1.6. Structure of the study

This study is structured into five chapters that collectively explore the critical discourse analysis of Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020. *Chapter 1* introduces the rationale, aims, scope, methodology and significance of the study. *Chapter 2* reviews relevant literature, covering CDA, political discourse, Vietnam's foreign policy since Doi Moi and related studies. *Chapter 3* outlines the mixed-methods research design, using Fairclough's CDA framework and AntConc for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. *Chapter 4* presents and discusses the findings, identifying core ideologies, foreign policy shifts, and their social construction through discourse. *Chapter 5* summarizes the findings, discusses implications, outlines limitations, and offers recommendations for future research. The study concludes with references and appendices to support its analysis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides the theoretical and contextual foundation for the study. It begins by outlining the role of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in examining political discourse, with a focus on its concepts, principles and application to Vietnam's political language and "bamboo diplomacy". It then briefly introduces key CDA frameworks by prominent practitioners and why Fairclough's framework is chosen for the study as both an analytical tool and methodological approach. The chapter also reviews the evolution of Vietnam's foreign policy, particularly from 2011 to 2020, to contextualize the discourse examined. Finally, it surveys related studies to support the study's approach.

2.1. The role of CDA in analyzing political discourse

2.1.1. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views language as a form of social practice deeply embedded in wider political and institutional contexts. It is especially useful for analyzing how political actors use discourse to construct meaning, legitimize policy and express ideological positions. Rather than viewing language as neutral, CDA emphasizes its role in shaping power dynamics and national identity. In this study, CDA is applied to Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the UN General Assembly (2011-2020) to examine how key ideologies - such as peace, sovereignty, multilateralism and development - are linguistically constructed and evolve with foreign policy shifts. Ultimately, CDA enables a deeper understanding of how language shapes Vietnam's global diplomatic identity.

2.1.1.1. Components of CDA

Critical

The "critical" aspect of CDA involves more than just analyzing textual content; it requires researchers to reflect on the socio-political contexts in which discourse occurs. Scholars must maintain a critical distance from the text, acknowledge their own interpretive positions and expose underlying power relations embedded in language. In this study, the critical lens is used to explore how Vietnamese leaders, through their speeches, discursively construct Vietnam's foreign policy positions by prioritizing certain values such as sovereignty, multilateralism and global responsibility. The analysis reveals how these speeches are not neutral but function to legitimize Vietnam's diplomatic identity and strategic objectives.

Discourse

Discourse in CDA is understood as language-in-use shaped by, and shaping social context. It extends beyond spoken or written language to include the ideological, institutional and intertextual frameworks that influence communication. In this context, Vietnam's UNGA speeches are treated as performative acts where the nation asserts its identity, articulates values, and navigates international norms. Discourse is inherently intertextual, drawing upon and reinforcing other texts and meanings - such as references to international law, UN norms and development goals. The study sees discourse not just as linguistic text but as an active practice embedded in Vietnam's international diplomacy.

Analysis

Analysis in CDA involves a layered examination of language across three levels, as proposed by Fairclough:

Textual analysis: examines vocabulary, grammar (e.g., modality, voice), and rhetorical features (e.g., metaphor, repetition, personification) to uncover how ideological meanings are linguistically constructed.

Discursive practice: investigates how the speeches are shaped by institutional norms (e.g., UNGA conventions) and how intertextual references help Vietnam position itself diplomatically.

Social practice: situates the discourse within broader socio-political contexts, such as regional tensions, global diplomatic shifts and domestic policy evolution. The study uses this level to analyze how Vietnam's speeches reflect and respond to external pressures (e.g., maritime disputes) while promoting internal strategic objectives like "bamboo diplomacy".

What is CDA?

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method for studying language as a form of social action that constructs and transforms ideologies and institutional practices. It focuses on how discourse contributes to power dynamics and political positioning. In this study, CDA is used to uncover how Vietnam's leaders deploy language in UNGA speeches to assert values like peace, sovereignty, and cooperation, while strategically navigating global power structures. The method allows the researcher to analyze both overt and implicit ideological moves, situating Vietnam not just as a passive participant but as a norm-entrepreneur within the evolving international order.

2.1.1.2. Key concepts in CDA: Ideology and Power

Ideology

Ideology in CDA is viewed as a system of beliefs and meanings that shape how individuals and societies interpret reality, often reinforcing or challenging existing power structures. Drawing from Marx, Gramsci, Althusser and modern discourse scholars like van Dijk and Fairclough, ideology is seen not only as a political or philosophical idea but as embedded in language and reproduced through institutions such as media and diplomacy. In international relations, ideologies underpin national strategies and foreign policies, guiding how states justify their actions and frame global issues. For Vietnam, key ideological themes - such as sovereignty, peace, multilateralism, sustainable development, international law and proactive integration - are linguistically reinforced through such devices as repetition, metaphor and nominalization in its UNGA speeches. These ideologies evolve in tandem with Vietnam's rising international profile, transitioning from developmental concerns to themes of leadership and global responsibility.

Power

Power in CDA is conceptualized as the ability to shape meaning and control discourse rather than direct force. It is exercised subtly through linguistic choices that define what is legitimate, acceptable or normal in institutional settings. In the context of Vietnam's UNGA speeches, power is enacted through authoritative language, such as modal verbs ("must", "should"), declarative mood and alignment with dominant global norms like the UN Charter and SDGs. Viet Nam uses these strategies to project itself as a cooperative yet principled actor, particularly when dealing with sensitive issues like the South China Sea (the East Sea). The use of nominalization and passivation also helps present policies as neutral or consensus-driven, enhancing legitimacy and soft power.

Language, ideology and power in discourse

The interrelationship of language, ideology and power is central to CDA. Language serves as a vehicle through which ideologies become normalized, and power is subtly asserted. Political discourse, especially in high-level diplomatic contexts like the UNGA, uses ideologically loaded terms and rhetorical structures to shape international perception and establish national identity. Vietnam's consistent use of terms like "sovereignty", "peace" and "multilateralism" reflects an effort to embed national priorities within globally accepted values. Over the 2011-2020 period, the country's discourse shifted from cautious expressions of development to more assertive statements of leadership, mirroring Vietnam's evolving role on the world stage. CDA allows researchers to unpack these shifts, revealing how language is employed to legitimize foreign policy and construct Vietnam's image as a responsible, normative actor in global affairs.

2.1.1.3. Principles of critical discourse analysis

CDA treats language as social action that shapes identities and power. Applied to Vietnam's UNGA speeches, CDA uncovers how discourse strategically communicates diplomatic identity and ideological commitments like peace, multilateralism and sovereignty. Drawing on Fairclough and Wodak's eight principles - (1) *CDA addresses socially situated discourse*, (2) *Power relations are discursive*, (3) *Discourse constructs social and political reality*, (4) *Discourse serves ideological functions*, (5) *Discourse is historically and contextually situated*, (6) *The link between text and society is mediated*, (7) *Discourse analysis is both interpretative and explanatory*, (8) *Discourse is a form of social action* - the analysis shows how Viet Nam uses language to navigate global politics.

Complementary perspectives (Wodak & Meyer, Heller, Thompson, Kress) highlight the role of identity, audience, and non-verbal cues in diplomatic discourse. Overall, CDA reveals that Vietnam's speeches are not just ceremonial - they are performative tools of bamboo diplomacy, blending flexibility with principled messaging.

2.1.2. Political communication

2.1.2.1. Political discourse

Political discourse is central to civic engagement, involving the communication of ideologies, opinions, and decisions that shape public understanding and policy outcomes. Rather than a single genre, it encompasses a range of communicative forms such as parliamentary debates, political speeches, party manifestos, and government deliberations (van Dijk, 1997). These forms are contextually and institutionally situated, making political discourse not only about content but also about the purpose and setting in which language is used.

Political discourse is intimately tied to power relations and the exercise of persuasion. It is used strategically to justify policies, mobilize support, and construct national or institutional identities. Wodak and Chilton (2005) note that political discourse relies heavily on rhetorical strategies - framing, metaphor and persuasive language - to reinforce authority and influence public perception. It operates within media and institutional constraints, making it a vital mechanism of both governance and diplomacy.

Political discourse and context

Van Dijk (1997) stresses that political discourse must be distinguished from other discourses with political implications but which arise from different social domains. For example, protest slogans, campaign messages, or personal conversations may be politically motivated but do not qualify as formal political discourse. In contrast, speeches delivered in institutional

settings by political actors aiming to influence decision-making - such as a UNGA address - are quintessential examples of political discourse. Chilton (2004) further argues that political discourse is language directed at resolving collective problems and distributing power or resources. According to Fairclough (2013), its political function is only fully realized when situated within its institutional, situational and ideological context.

Political discourse and ideology

Political discourse serves as a key vehicle for expressing and shaping ideology. It is not merely a reflection of political beliefs but a dynamic arena where ideological positions are contested and legitimized (Fairclough, 2013). Politicians often blend multiple ideologies - nationalism, neoliberalism or globalism - within a single speech to appeal to diverse audiences (van Dijk, 1997). Chilton (2004) describes political discourse as a site of “ideological contestation”, where competing visions for society are articulated and debated. This feature allows for the construction of complex narratives that legitimize political authority and engage both domestic and global audiences.

2.1.2.2. Vietnam’s political discourse and Bamboo diplomacy

This section explores how Vietnam’s political discourse, particularly through its UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020, reflects a deeply rooted yet adaptive diplomatic identity shaped by ideology, history, and global engagement. These speeches are not just diplomatic formalities but ideologically rich texts drawing on Marxist-Leninist foundations, Ho Chi Minh’s foreign policy values, and postcolonial resilience. Central to this discourse is the concept of “bamboo diplomacy” - introduced by Nguyen Phu Trong in 2016 - which symbolizes Vietnam’s strategic balance of principled steadfastness and tactical flexibility. Bamboo diplomacy builds on long-standing norms such as peaceful multilateralism, sovereignty and international law and represents Vietnam’s shift from reactive diplomacy to proactive norm-shaping. The speeches reveal Vietnam’s dual commitment: defending sovereignty while promoting global cooperation and reform, particularly through references to the South China Sea, UN reform and sustainable development goals. Ultimately, Vietnam’s discourse serves not only to project foreign policy but to perform and reinforce its national identity as a principled, resilient and globally engaged actor.

2.1.2.3. Uncovering ideological constructs in political discourse from a CDA perspective

In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to uncover the ideological constructs embedded in Vietnamese leaders’ UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020. CDA enables a deeper examination of how language in political discourse both reflects and shapes power relations and national positioning. The study identifies key ideological themes - such as sovereignty, cooperation and multilateralism - and analyzes how rhetorical strategies and linguistic choices are employed to advance Vietnam’s diplomatic objectives. Rooted in the tradition of bamboo diplomacy, these speeches illustrate how Vietnam discursively asserts its values and adapts its foreign policy narrative to evolving global dynamics, thereby reinforcing its image as a principled and engaged actor in international diplomacy.

2.2. CDA as a conceptual framework and methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) investigates how language shapes and is shaped by power relations and social structures. Among its major contributors, Wodak, van Dijk and Fairclough offer distinct approaches, with Fairclough’s framework selected for this study due

to its systematic integration of text analysis, discourse practice and social context. While Wodak's and van Dijk's models are briefly considered, Fairclough's three-dimensional approach is prioritized for its effectiveness in uncovering ideological and discursive strategies in Vietnamese leaders' UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020.

2.2.1. Wodak's discourse-historical approach

Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) analyzes how discourse is shaped by and helps shape historical, institutional, and socio-political contexts. It focuses on intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and specific strategies such as naming, framing, and argumentation to study identity construction over time. While valuable for examining evolving national narratives, DHA's broader historical scope and interdisciplinary nature make it less suited to this study's focused analysis of ideological strategies in Vietnamese political speeches.

2.2.2. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach highlights the role of social cognition - shared mental representations and ideologies - in mediating between language and societal structures. His model is particularly effective for media discourse and ideological reproduction through tools like the "ideological square". However, its cognitive emphasis makes it less appropriate for analyzing political speeches as strategic discursive practices tied to foreign policy.

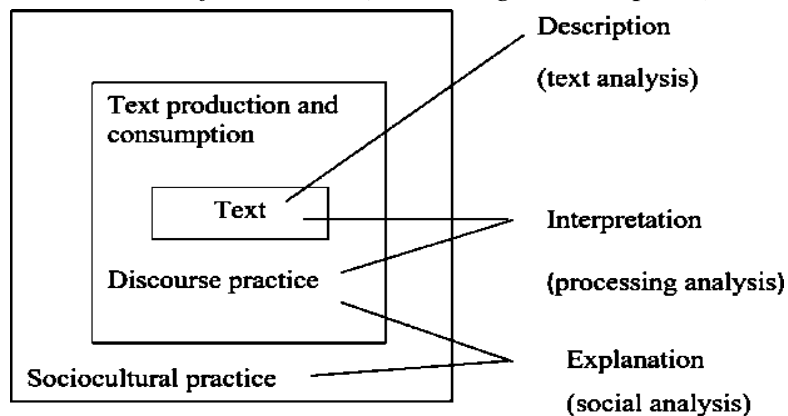
2.2.3. Fairclough's critical approach

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides a three-dimensional framework - textual analysis, discursive practice and social practice - that allows for a comprehensive examination of how language constructs ideology and conveys foreign policy. Influenced by linguistics and sociolinguistics, Fairclough critiques traditional linguistic approaches for overlooking the social shaping of language and emphasizes the need to explore how power relations influence discourse. He views discourse as a form of social action that both reflects and reshapes social structures. His model integrates the production and interpretation of texts within specific social situations, institutions and broader societal contexts. Fairclough also stresses the role of intertextuality in linking texts to their discourse environments. This integrated approach makes Fairclough's CDA particularly well-suited for analyzing political speeches, such as Vietnam's UNGA addresses, where language is used not only to represent policies but also to perform ideological and strategic functions.

In accordance with these three dimensions of discourse is a three-step method of CDA:

Figure 2.2

Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97).



Fairclough's *description* stage of critical discourse analysis examines the formal properties of texts through three components: vocabulary, grammar and textual structure. Vocabulary is analyzed for experiential values (how words construct social reality), relational values (how relationships and power are encoded), and expressive values (the speaker's attitudes), with devices like metaphor and personification playing key ideological roles. Grammar analysis focuses on nominalization, repetition, sentence mode, pronouns, voice and modal verbs which together shape how authority, certainty and obligation are conveyed. Textual structure looks at how sentences are linked and how the speech is organized rhetorically.

In the *interpretation* stage, the focus shifts to how texts are understood in interaction - how meaning is created through both textual cues and the interpreter's background knowledge, referred to as "members' resources" (MR). Interpretation thus arises from the dynamic interplay between the text's features and the interpreter's cognitive and social framework.

Fairclough's *Explanation* stage analyzes how discourse is shaped by and helps shape social structures. It focuses on how broader social forces influence the production and interpretation of discourse and how discourse, in turn, reinforces or transforms those forces. This process is mediated by "members' resources" (MR) - shared knowledge and ideologies - which both reflect and reproduce social norms and power relations.

Fairclough's CDA is used in this study because it provides a comprehensive three-dimensional framework that effectively reveals how language constructs and legitimizes ideology and power. It incorporates intertextuality, hegemony and the relationship between discourse and socio-political context, making it well-suited for analyzing how Vietnamese leaders' UNGA speeches articulate foreign policy goals and national identity. Compared to other CDA models, Fairclough's approach allows deeper examination of both linguistic features and the broader social structures influencing discourse.

2.3. Vietnamese foreign policy

2.3.1. Foreign policy

2.3.1.1. Definitions of "foreign policy"

Foreign policy has been defined in various ways, but scholars generally agree that it refers to the principles, strategies, and actions a country employs to manage its international relations and protect its national interests. Definitions range from viewing it as the art of managing relations with other nations (Noel, 1959) to efforts aimed at influencing the external environment (Zorbibe, 1988). In the Vietnamese context, foreign policy encompasses political, economic, defense, cultural and social strategies used to interact with other states and international organizations. While the plural term "foreign policies" refers to specific decisions or actions, this study adopts the singular "foreign policy" to emphasize Vietnam's overarching strategic approach to global engagement.

2.3.1.2. Factors to be considered in foreign policy formulation of Viet Nam

Vietnam's foreign policy formulation is shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external factors, including national interests, power, political system, mission and geopolitical context, as well as global and regional dynamics. Scholars like Phan (2019) and Duong &

Nguyen (2010) highlight variables such as national unity, economic capacity, culture and the foreign policies of other countries. In the context of global integration, Vietnam's approach emphasizes independence, self-reliance, multilateralism and peaceful cooperation. This strategy has not only contributed to national development and stability but also elevated Vietnam's international role and reputation.

2.3.2. Synopsis of Vietnamese foreign policy since Doi Moi 1986

Since the Doi Moi reforms of 1986, Vietnam's foreign policy has evolved significantly through three major phases. The first phase (1986-1995) focused on breaking international isolation, overcoming economic crisis and normalizing relations with key powers like China and the U.S., leading to ASEAN membership. The second phase (1996-2010) prioritized diversification, multilateralism and international economic integration, including joining major organizations like WTO and APEC. The third phase (2011-present) has been marked by comprehensive international integration and increased global engagement through new-generation trade agreements (CPTPP, EVFTA, RCEP), strategic partnerships and a leadership role in multilateral diplomacy. Vietnam's "bamboo diplomacy" - flexible yet principled - has guided its balanced approach between major powers while maintaining sovereignty. This foreign policy evolution, guided by the Communist Party and grounded in national interests, has elevated Vietnam's global standing, reinforced its developmental goals, and positioned it as an active, responsible actor in global governance.

2.3.3. Vietnam's foreign policy from 2011 to 2020

From 2011 to 2020, Vietnam's foreign policy entered a crucial phase of transformation, shaped by the strategic directions of the 11th and 12th National Party Congresses. These congresses outlined a comprehensive vision for Vietnam's diplomatic engagement in a rapidly evolving international environment, focusing on modernization, sovereignty, international integration and proactive diplomacy.

2.3.3.1. The 11th National Party Congress (2011-2015)

The 11th National Party Congress (2011-2015) marked a turning point by introducing key documents such as the revised Platform for National Construction, the Socio-Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2020 and the Political Report of the 10th Central Committee. These texts refined Vietnam's foreign policy principles and, for the first time, declared that the country's foreign affairs were guided by "the national interest and the people." This signaled a shift from ideology-driven diplomacy to a more pragmatic, people-centered approach that aligned class interests with national development and sovereignty protection. During this period, Vietnam's foreign policy emphasized peace, independence, cooperation and adherence to international law, while expanding beyond economic integration to encompass politics, defense, security and culture. A notable evolution in diplomatic identity occurred as Vietnam transitioned from a country that sought to be "friends with all" to one recognized as a "responsible member of the international community". This development was accompanied by efforts to strengthen defense diplomacy, resolve territorial disputes peacefully and increase engagement with ASEAN and global institutions.

2.3.3.2. *The 12th National Party Congress (2016-2020)*

The 12th National Party Congress (2016-2020) deepened these orientations. It reinforced international integration as essential to national development and emphasized aligning diplomatic actions with contemporary global dynamics. Vietnam's leadership promoted stronger cooperation through multilateral organizations, such as ASEAN and the UN, and focused on enhancing its role in regional security and global governance. The Congress called for safeguarding sovereignty through diplomatic channels and highlighted the importance of equality, mutual benefit and respect for international law. Vietnam expanded its network of strategic partnerships, including with G20 nations and actively engaged in landmark trade agreements such as the CPTPP, EVFTA, and RCEP.

A defining feature of this era was the operationalization of "bamboo diplomacy" - a metaphor for Vietnam's resilient, flexible foreign policy strategy. This approach allowed Vietnam to maintain balanced relations with major powers like the U.S. and China while asserting its independence and promoting multilateralism. Vietnam's global reputation rose, especially during its 2020 ASEAN chairmanship and tenure as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (2020-2021). Through responsible global engagement, diplomatic unity across sectors and strategic coordination, Vietnam projected itself as a constructive, principled actor on the world stage. These developments underscored the enduring value of Vietnam's foreign policy framework: independence, multilateral cooperation and proactive adaptation to a complex international environment.

2.4. Related studies

This section reviews CDA research on political and foreign policy speeches, identifying a clear gap in studies on Vietnam's diplomatic discourse. While CDA has been widely applied to leaders like Obama, Trump and Mandela - mainly in Western or Chinese contexts - little work focuses on Southeast Asia, and almost none addresses Vietnam's UNGA speeches. This study fills that gap by applying Fairclough's CDA model to Vietnam's UNGA addresses (2011-2020), examining how language constructs ideological identity and foreign policy aims. It highlights "bamboo diplomacy" as a flexible yet principled strategy and contributes to CDA, foreign policy and small-state diplomacy studies.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the overall design of the research methodology including research paradigm, research approach, research design and research methods (database of the study, data analysis procedure, conceptual and analytical frameworks).

3.1. Research paradigm

The research adopts a pragmatic worldview as its overarching paradigm, following Creswell's (2018) classification. This perspective allows for methodological flexibility, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to effectively address the research objectives. At the same time, given the study's reliance on CDA as its primary methodology, which focuses on the relationship between language, power and ideology, the research also aligns with elements of the critical paradigm. This

dual orientation supports a comprehensive exploration of political discourse, emphasizing both practical outcomes and the uncovering of underlying ideological structures.

3.2. Research approach

This study adopts an embedded mixed-methods approach under a critical and pragmatic worldview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to analyze Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020. Specifically, it integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate how Vietnam's foreign policy ideologies and shifts are articulated and constructed in political discourse. This dual approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how Vietnam strategically uses language to express, legitimize and construct its evolving foreign policy identity on the global stage.

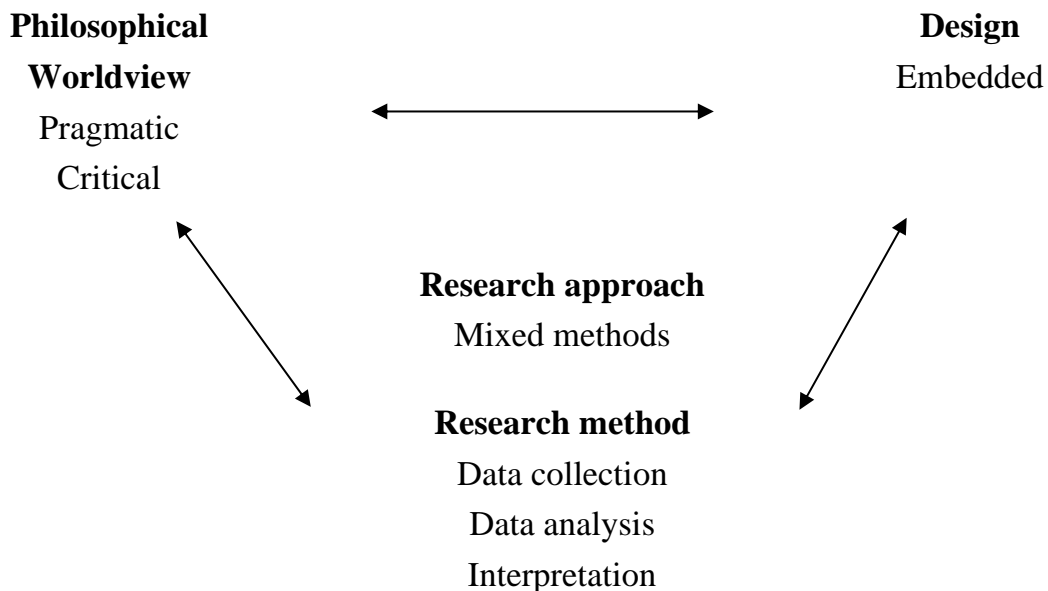
The research is guided by the following questions:

- 1) What ideologies and significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy are conveyed in the speeches by Vietnamese leaders at the General Debates of the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020 and how are they linguistically represented?
- 2) How are these ideologies and foreign policy changes socially constructed in the speeches?

Below is the framework for this research - the interconnection of worldviews (paradigm), design and research method adopted from Creswell & Creswell (2018):

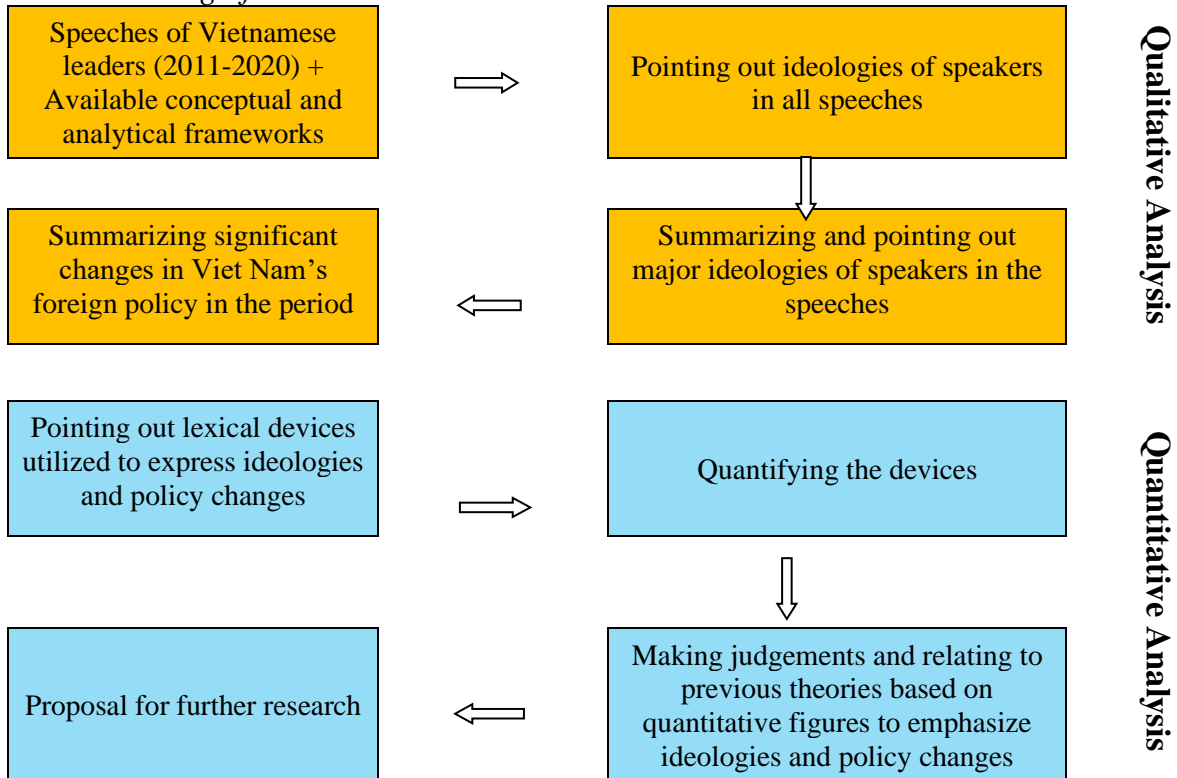
Figure 3.1

The framework of the interconnection of worldview, design and research method adopted from Creswell, W. & Creswell, D. (2018)



3.3. Research design

The research adopts an embedded mixed methods approach, as outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018), which integrates both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Figure 3.2 illustrates this process clearly.

Figure 3.2*Research design for the research*

3.4. Research methods

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), specific research methods involve data collection, data analysis and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies. This section specifies the data of the study and data analysis procedure with the conceptual and analytical frameworks applied.

3.4.1. Data of the study

This study analyzes ten official speeches delivered by Vietnamese leaders at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020, sourced from the UN's official archive. Speeches by Foreign Ministry leaders were in English, while those by top state leaders were translated from Vietnamese by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These authorized translations are treated as legitimate sources of analysis, as they are diplomatically approved, reflect nuanced meanings and are used internationally. Focusing on the 2011-2020 period - a time of significant foreign policy shift - the study examines how Vietnam's diplomatic language reflects its growing international engagement and evolving global role.

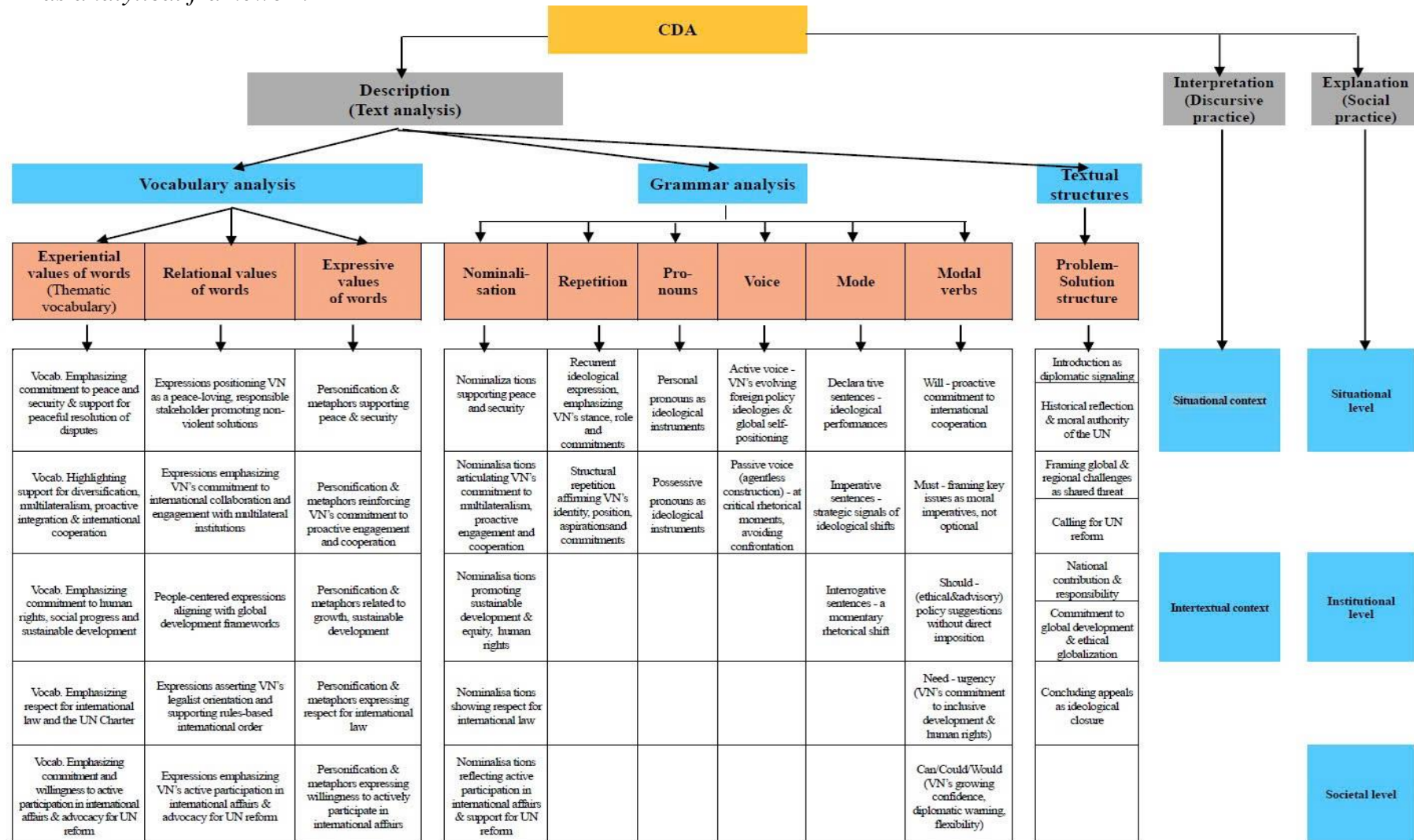
3.4.2. Data analysis procedure

The data analysis in this study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the research objectives. Qualitatively, it applies Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework to examine linguistic and functional elements in the speeches. Quantitatively, it uses AntConc, a corpus analysis tool, to identify word frequencies, clusters, and patterns that reflect ideological content and policy shifts. This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive investigation into how Vietnamese leaders construct and convey foreign policy ideologies through language.

3.4.3. Analytical framework

The analytical framework applied in the research is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 3.3
CDA as analytical framework



3.5. Trustworthiness, reliability and validity

This section outlines how the study ensures rigor and credibility through attention to trustworthiness, reliability and validity. In the qualitative component, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - are applied through the application of CDA and quantitative tools like AntConc. Rich contextual descriptions aid transferability and transparency in analysis supports dependability and confirmability. For the quantitative side, AntConc ensures replicable frequency analysis and analytical validity is maintained by grounding interpretations in Fairclough's CDA. Overall, the integration of methods under a critical-pragmatic paradigm ensures robust, evidence-based findings on how Vietnamese leaders' UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 reflect ideological shifts and foreign policy changes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents an analysis of Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the UN General Assembly from 2011 to 2020, revealing how these texts reflect the country's evolving foreign policy and diplomatic ideologies. The speeches consistently affirm Vietnam's commitment to multilateralism, peaceful conflict resolution, sustainable development, sovereignty and international law. This chapter examines the key ideological themes expressed in the speeches, showing how they support both national interests and global responsibilities. It also identifies significant policy shifts and demonstrates how Viet Nam adapted its diplomatic strategies in response to global challenges. Because ideologies and thematic content are closely interwoven, the analysis integrates both dimensions to provide a comprehensive understanding of Vietnam's international discourse during this period.

4.1. Ideologies and significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy conveyed in the speeches of Vietnamese leaders at the UNGA from 2011-2020 and how they are linguistically represented (Textual analysis)

This section analyzes how Vietnamese leaders' UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 express five core foreign policy ideologies: peace and security, multilateralism and cooperation, sustainable development and human rights, respect for international law and active participation in international affairs including UN reform. It also highlights major foreign policy shifts during this period, including Vietnam's move from reactive to proactive diplomacy, expanded global partnerships and greater international visibility. Using Fairclough's CDA model, the study explores how these ideologies and transformations are linguistically constructed through vocabulary (experiential, relational and expressive values), grammar (nominalization, repetition, voice, modes,...), and textual structures. The analysis reveals how language reinforces ideological commitments and positions Vietnam as a confident, engaged and principled actor on the global stage.

4.1.1. Vocabulary analysis

The vocabulary analysis examines the experiential, relational and expressive values of words (represented by thematic vocabulary, relational expressions, personification and metaphors) to support the identification and interpretation of each core ideology. The analysis reveals a consistent and ideologically charged vocabulary that reflects both continuity and evolution in foreign policy. Lexical choices construct Vietnam as a peace-oriented, multilateralist, development-focused and law-abiding actor, while expressive strategies such as

personification and metaphor project moral authority and emotional resonance. These discursive patterns support the five core ideologies underpinning Vietnam's diplomacy: peace and security, multilateralism and integration, sustainable development and human rights, respect for international law, and active participation in global governance. Over the decade, the increasingly confident, nuanced and values-driven language also signals a shift from reactive diplomacy to strategic, proactive engagement - capturing the essence of bamboo diplomacy: firm in principle, flexible in approach and resilient in navigating a complex international order.

1. Commitment to peace, security and peaceful resolution of disputes

Vietnam's UNGA speeches from 2011-2020 consistently framed the country as a peace-driven, law-abiding actor. Through repeated references to peace, conflict prevention, and legal resolution, especially in maritime contexts, Viet Nam projected an image of principled restraint, using emotive language, personification and metaphor to humanize peace and assert moral leadership.

2. Support for diversification, multilateralism, proactive integration and international cooperation

Viet Nam emphasized multilateral cooperation and diversified partnerships as key foreign policy strategies. It positioned itself as a responsible, engaged actor aligned with global norms and regional stability, using language that personified institutions and portrayed multilateralism as both ethical and strategic.

3. Commitment and dedication to human rights, social progress and sustainable development

Viet Nam evolved from aligning with global development goals to actively promoting a rights-based, people-centered diplomatic identity. Through consistent references to sustainability, equity and inclusion, along with personification and metaphor, it framed development as a shared moral journey, positioning itself as a principled advocate for human rights, social justice, and global solidarity.

4. Respect for international law and the UN Charter

Viet Nam consistently framed international law as central to its identity and diplomacy. Legal terms like "UNCLOS" and "sovereign rights" were used not just descriptively but ideologically, reflecting its concern over regional tensions and defense of multilateral norms. Personification and metaphors further elevated law as a civilizational pillar and protective structure for global order.

5. Commitment and willingness to active participation in international affairs and Advocacy for UN Reform

Vietnam's UNGA speeches emphasized its shift from observer to active global contributor. It promoted inclusive multilateralism and strongly supported UN reform, using collaborative and aspirational rhetoric. Metaphors and personification portrayed the UN as a living entity needing renewal, reinforcing Vietnam's identity as a reform-minded, responsible actor shaping a fairer international system.

4.1.2. Grammar analysis

This section explores the grammatical features employed in Vietnamese leaders' speeches at the United Nations General Assembly from 2011 to 2020, with a focus on *nominalizations, repetition, pronouns, voice, modes and modal verbs*. These elements are not only structural

components of language but also powerful tools through which speakers project identity, assert agency and shape diplomatic tone. Analyzing grammar in political discourse reveals how Viet Nam constructs its national voice, frames its international commitments and calls for global solidarity.

1. Nominalizations

From 2011 to 2020, Vietnam's UNGA speeches used nominalizations to promote key foreign policy ideologies such as peace, multilateralism, sustainable development, and international law. Terms like *peaceful settlement*, *integration*, and *cooperation* abstract agency, framing these goals as shared international values. This aligns with Vietnam's bamboo diplomacy - firm in principle, flexible in language - especially in sensitive contexts like the South China Sea (the East Sea). Post-2015, nominalizations such as *development*, *resilience*, and *equity* reflect Vietnam's shift from aid recipient to development partner. Legal terms like *compliance* and *rule of law* support a rules-based identity without direct confrontation. Increasing references to *participation* and *reform* highlight Vietnam's growing role as an active and reform-oriented global actor.

2. Repetition

Repetition in Vietnam's UNGA speeches (2011-2020) strategically reinforces core foreign policy ideologies such as peace, sovereignty, multilateralism and respect for international law. Key terms like "peace" "cooperation" and "UN Charter" recur across speeches, projecting consistency, moral clarity and principled diplomacy. This lexical and structural repetition reflects the ethos of bamboo diplomacy - resilient yet flexible - and supports Vietnam's image as a norm-abiding, peace-seeking actor. Over time, repeated references to development themes like "sustainable development" and "inclusive growth" also signal a shift toward proactive leadership in global governance and development agendas.

3. Pronouns

Table 4.1

Rate of occurrence and frequency of pronouns in the speeches

Pronouns (Personal & Possessive)		Speech									
		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
First-person	I	3 (4.92%)	3 (7.89%)	7 (11.48%)	2 (4.76%)	2 (3.33%)	5 (9.26%)	6 (10.34%)	13 (18.30%)	6 (10.71%)	4 (9.52%)
	My	2 (3.28%)	1 (2.63%)	2 (3.28%)	2 (4.76%)	1 (1.67%)	1 (1.85%)	3 (5.17%)	6 (8.45%)	1 (1.78%)	2 (4.76%)
	We	24 (39.34%)	14 (36.84%)	15 (24.59%)	12 (28.57%)	14 (23.33%)	15 (27.78%)	24 (41.38%)	18 (25.35%)	18 (32.14%)	13 (30.95%)
	Our	7 (11.48%)	2 (5.26%)	16 (26.23%)	4 (9.52%)	17 (28.33%)	16 (29.63%)	10 (17.24%)	9 (12.68%)	8 (14.29%)	12 (28.57%)
Second-person	You	3 (4.92%)	1 (2.63%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.38%)
	Your	2 (3.28%)	2 (5.26%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (16.67%)
Third-person	They	1 (1.64%)	0 (0%)	3 (4.92%)	2 (4.76%)	1 (1.67%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.45%)	1 (1.41%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Their	5 (8.20%)	4 (10.53%)	1 (1.64%)	3 (7.14%)	4 (6.67%)	3 (5.56%)	4 (6.90%)	3 (4.23%)	3 (5.36%)	0 (0%)
	He	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.67%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.72%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.79%)	0 (0%)
	His	3	0	4	2	2	6	5	2	3	1

Pronouns (Personal & Possessive)	Speech									
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	(4.92%)	(0%)	(6.56%)	(4.76%)	(3.33%)	(11.11%)	(8.62%)	(2.82%)	(5.36%)	(2.38%)
	She	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2.82%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Her	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.64%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (3.57%)	0 (0%)
	It	4 (6.56%)	4 (10.53%)	9 (14.75%)	7 (16.67%)	6 (10%)	2 (3.70%)	4 (6.90%)	5 (7.14%)	4 (7.14%)
	Its	7 (11.48%)	7 (18.42%)	3 (4.92%)	10 (23.81%)	12 (20%)	6 (11.11%)	9 (15.52%)	12 (12.90%)	10 (17.86%)
Total	61 (100%)	38 (100%)	61 (100%)	42 (100%)	60 (100%)	54 (100%)	58 (100%)	71 (100%)	56 (100%)	42 (100%)

In Vietnam's UNGA speeches (2011-2020), the use of pronouns like "we" and "our" serves as a strategic tool for constructing a collective and assertive diplomatic identity. These pronouns express solidarity, support for multilateralism and Vietnam's shift from a passive participant to an active, norm-promoting actor in global affairs. When paired with modal verbs, they convey urgency and commitment to global challenges. "Our" links national goals to shared international values like sustainable development and international law. Overall, this evolving usage reflects Vietnam's growing confidence and ideological alignment with cooperative, principled diplomacy.

4. Voice

Table 4.2

Percentage of active and passive sentences in the speeches

Speech	Active	Passive
2011	68/72 (94.44 %)	4/72 (5.56 %)
2012	43/45 (95.56 %)	2/ 45 (4.44 %)
2013	61/73 (83.56 %)	12/73 (16.44 %)
2014	50/52 (96.15 %)	2/52 (3.85 %)
2015	58/62 (93.55 %)	4/62 (6.45 %)
2016	61/63 (96.83 %)	2/63 (3.17 %)
2017	61/67 (91.04 %)	6/67 (8.96 %)
2018	65/69 (94.20 %)	4/69 (5.80 %)
2019	65/76 (85.53 %)	11/76 (14.47 %)
2020	38/41 (92.68 %)	3/41 (7.32 %)

Vietnam's UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 show a strong preference for active voice (83%-97%), signaling clarity, confidence and growing foreign policy agency. This syntactic

choice reflects Vietnam's shift from cautious alignment to proactive leadership, especially in promoting peace, multilateralism, sustainable development and respect for international law. Active constructions, often paired with modals like "must" and "will", highlight Vietnam's role as a norm entrepreneur and responsible global actor. Examples include its leadership in peacebuilding, climate action and health during COVID-19. Meanwhile, selective use of passive voice allows for strategic ambiguity and diplomatic tact, especially when addressing global failures or promoting equity. Overall, the dominant use of active voice linguistically affirms Vietnam's evolving ideological stance and assertive global positioning.

5. Modes

Table 4.3

Percentage of declarative, imperative and interrogative sentences in the speeches

Speech	Declarative	Imperative	Interrogative
2011	71/72 (98.61%)	1/72 (1.39%)	0/72 (0%)
2012	44/45 (97.78%)	1/45 (2.22%)	0/45 (0%)
2013	66/73 (90.41%)	4/73 (5.48%)	3/73 (4.11%)
2014	51/52 (98.08%)	1/52 (1.92%)	0/52 (0%)
2015	59/62 (95.16%)	3/62 (4.84%)	0/62 (0%)
2016	61/63 (96.83%)	2/63 (3.17%)	0/63 (0%)
2017	63/67 (94.03%)	4/67 (5.97%)	0/67 (0%)
2018	67/69 (97.10%)	2/69 (2.90%)	0/69 (0%)
2019	74/76 (97.37%)	2/76 (2.63%)	0/76 (0%)
2020	36/41 (87.80%)	5/41 (12.20%)	0/41 (0%)

Vietnam's speeches mainly use declarative sentences (up to 98.1%) to assert clear positions on peace, sovereignty and development, reflecting a confident, principled stance. Imperatives, though fewer, increase over time - peaking in 2020 - signaling Vietnam's shift toward leadership and global advocacy, especially during crises like COVID-19. Interrogatives are rare, showing Vietnam's preference for assertive over dialogic diplomacy. This shift in sentence types mirrors Vietnam's transformation from a cautious actor to a proactive, norm-shaping global voice.

6. Modal verbs

Table 4.4

Frequency of modal verbs used in the speeches

	Can	could	would	will	should	need	must
Speech							
2011	1	1	1	4	7	2	5
2012	0	0	1	5	2	0	7
2013	4	1	2	5	2	1	9
2014	1	0	0	5	3	0	5
2015	4	1	2	4	0	1	6
2016	6	0	0	6	2	0	8
2017	5	1	0	9	3	1	5
2018	4	0	5	4	6	1	4
2019	7	1	1	7	2	2	3
2020	2	0	2	3	4	2	5

The modal verbs used in the leaders' UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 are not random grammatical features but strategic linguistic choices that reflect evolving ideologies and foreign policy objectives. The dominance of “will” and “must” underscores Vietnam's proactive and principled stance, while “can” and “should” project possibility and advisory tone. The use of “could” and “would” allows for diplomatic nuance, critical in a multilateral forum. Ultimately, the speeches' modality choices reflect the country's transition from norm follower to norm promoter, from defensive rhetoric to constructive global engagement and from regional actor to an emerging middle power with discursive influence.

4.1.3. Textual structures

The macro-structure of Vietnam's UNGA speeches (2011-2020) reveals a carefully crafted rhetorical strategy that supports its evolving foreign policy and ideological identity. These speeches follow a consistent structure: formal greetings, reflections on the UN's role, analysis of global and regional challenges, advocacy for multilateralism and UN reform, presentation of Vietnam's contributions, alignment with development goals, and a forward-looking conclusion. This structure promotes Vietnam as a principled, proactive and responsible actor in global affairs. Over time, the content becomes more assertive, reflecting a shift from norm follower to norm promoter. This strategic organization embodies the spirit of “bamboo diplomacy” - combining resilience with adaptability - and reinforces Vietnam's commitment to peace, sovereignty, sustainable development and inclusive global governance.

4.2. Social construction of the ideologies and significant changes in Vietnam's foreign policy in the speeches of Vietnamese leaders at the UNGA from 2011-2020

This section explores how the ideologies and significant shifts in Vietnam's foreign policy are not only expressed but socially constructed through the discourse of Vietnamese leaders at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) from 2011 to 2020. Drawing on Fairclough's (1992, 2003) critical discourse framework, this part integrates analysis of both Discursive Practice (Interpretation) and Social Practice (Explanation). This analysis moves beyond textual and discursive features to examine how foreign policy discourse interacts with broader socio-political, institutional and cultural structures.

4.2.1. Discursive practice

Situational context

Between 2011 and 2020, Vietnam's speeches at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) evolved from cautious affirmations of international norms to confident, ideologically rich expressions of proactive diplomacy. This period marked a transformation in Vietnam's global positioning, influenced by both domestic reforms and external challenges, including great power competition and global crises like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vietnam's rhetorical strategy reflects its emerging doctrine of "bamboo diplomacy" - a flexible but principled approach grounded in independence, sovereignty, multilateralism and peaceful cooperation. Although the term was only formalized in 2016, its principles were already evident in earlier speeches through consistent metaphors (e.g., peace as something to "cultivate" or "nurture"), repetition of key ideological themes (e.g., sovereignty, partnership, international law), and carefully crafted linguistic choices (e.g., personification, metaphor and passive voice to emphasize principle over confrontation).

The speeches illustrate five interwoven ideological pillars: commitment to peace and security; support for multilateralism and international cooperation; dedication to sustainable development and human rights; respect for international law and the UN Charter; and proactive engagement in global governance. These were articulated through increasingly assertive and normative language - framing Viet Nam not just as a norm-follower, but as a norm-shaper in global diplomacy.

Vietnam's language also reflects strategic restraint: avoiding direct confrontation with major powers, it invokes legal norms and shared values to assert its stance, particularly on sensitive issues like the South China Sea. References to "UNCLOS", "peaceful settlement" and "rules-based order" serve to universalize Vietnam's interests and reinforce its image as a responsible, principled actor.

The speeches are deeply rooted in domestic policy documents like the 2011 Political Report, the 2013 Resolution on international integration, and the 2019 Defence White Paper. These align Vietnam's external discourse with internal goals of sovereignty, development, and international respect. Vietnam's discursive approach - anchored in strategic metaphor, lexical cohesion and ideological repetition - thus emerges as a form of soft power: a diplomatic identity that is resilient, morally grounded and globally engaged.

Intertextual context

Vietnam's UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 are rich in intertextual references that strategically connect Vietnam's historical legacy, international legal norms, UN development agendas and domestic policies. This intertextuality is an ideological strategy that projects Viet Nam as a sovereign, principled and reform-oriented actor in global diplomacy.

Historical references are used to legitimize Vietnam's moral authority in advocating peace and sovereignty. By invoking its past struggles - colonization, war and reconstruction - Viet Nam positions its current diplomatic stance as rooted in national resilience and ethical commitment, linking its revolutionary legacy with its modern role in multilateralism.

Alignment with global development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, reinforces Vietnam's image as a cooperative and progressive partner. The speeches show a shift from being a development aid recipient to a contributor in shaping global policy, especially in the areas of sustainability and post-crisis recovery.

Legal intertextuality - particularly references to the UN Charter and UNCLOS 1982 - enables Viet Nam to assert sovereignty and maritime claims (e.g., in the South China Sea) while avoiding direct confrontation. These legal frameworks provide discursive legitimacy for Vietnam's rule-based diplomacy and support its broader aim of strategic autonomy.

Institutional memory is also emphasized, as Vietnam reflects on its four-decade UN membership and its evolving role within bodies like the UN Security Council. These references establish Viet Nam as a consistent, credible player in global governance and a proponent of reform.

South-South solidarity further deepens Vietnam's ideological message. By aligning with developing nations and advocating for equity in global economic and technological access, Viet Nam strengthens its moral and political standing as a voice for justice, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In sum, Vietnam's intertextual discourse strategy transforms its UNGA speeches into platforms for soft power projection, diplomatic coalition-building and norm entrepreneurship. It exemplifies bamboo diplomacy - rooted in sovereignty and history, yet flexible and forward-looking - enabling Viet Nam to reposition itself from a post-war observer to a proactive, reformist voice in international politics.

4.2.2. Social practice

This section analyzes Vietnamese UNGA speeches (2011-2020) through the lens of social practice in Fairclough's CDA model, emphasizing their role as socially embedded texts that reflect and shape Vietnam's evolving foreign policy. These speeches express a strategic identity that balances ideological consistency with pragmatic adaptation amid global and domestic change. Central to this discourse are five evolving ideological commitments: peace and security, multilateralism, sustainable development and human rights, international law and active global governance, including UN reform.

Situational level

Between 2011 and 2020, global instability - from the decline of liberal order and the rise of populism to COVID-19 - along with regional tensions like the South China Sea (the East Sea) disputes and China's assertiveness, shaped Vietnam's strategic discourse. Domestically, economic growth and deeper global integration demanded a more forward-looking diplomacy. In this volatile setting, Vietnam's UNGA speeches conveyed strategic resilience. References to international law and peaceful dispute resolution showcased bamboo diplomacy - a blend of firmness and flexibility. By 2020, Vietnam's discourse evolved to portray itself as a moral leader in global recovery, emphasizing human-centered, sustainable development in response to the pandemic.

Institutional level

At the institutional level, Vietnam's discourse positions the UN as both a platform for collaboration and a venue to challenge inequities. UNGA speeches balance commitment to multilateral norms with advocacy for reform, especially of the UN Security Council. The use of terms like "democratic" and "representative" signals a principled stance on inclusive governance. Vietnam's Security Council membership (2020-2021) and ASEAN Chairmanship are framed as milestones that elevate its role from norm-follower to norm-shaper. Compared to other CDA studies focused on symbolic or domestic rhetoric, Vietnam's

discourse is distinctively reformist, modest and legally grounded - pushing for equitable global governance aligned with “bamboo diplomacy”.

Societal level

Vietnam’s UNGA speeches are deeply rooted in national history and ideology. They invoke the legacy of Ho Chi Minh and the country’s revolutionary past to legitimize current foreign policy as a continuation of a principled, anti-colonial ethos. This intertextual strategy reinforces regime legitimacy domestically while presenting Vietnam as a moral advocate for the Global South. Recurring themes of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and peaceful development reflect postcolonial self-reliance and socialist values. Vietnam’s support for SDGs and calls for assistance to developing nations align with its historical trajectory and identity. This societal discourse reflects a flexible yet principled foreign policy shaped by cultural memory and ideological coherence.

Integrating scholarly contexts

While Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely used to examine political rhetoric, much of the existing literature focuses on major powers like the U.S. and Europe, often prioritizing domestic or symbolic discourse over sustained foreign policy communication. Studies on Obama and Trump, for example, analyze campaign rhetoric or ideological positions but rarely address institutional critique or long-term diplomatic strategies. In Southeast Asia, CDA research remains limited and often externally framed, with few studies engaging deeply with Vietnam’s own diplomatic discourse. This thesis addresses that gap by applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional CDA framework to Vietnamese UNGA speeches from 2011 to 2020 - a period marked by global crises and shifting power dynamics. Rather than isolating speeches, the study traces Vietnam’s ideological evolution across five key foreign policy domains: peace and security, multilateralism, sustainable development and human rights, respect for international law and active global engagement. Through detailed analysis of rhetorical strategies such as metaphor, personification and repetition, the thesis shows how Vietnam constructs “bamboo diplomacy” not as a slogan but as a flexible, principled strategy of resilience and reform. Ultimately, the study reveals how Vietnamese leaders use discourse not merely to reflect but to shape foreign policy, projecting national identity, moral authority and strategic agency in global governance. It contributes to CDA and foreign policy scholarship by illustrating how language serves as a vital tool of small-state influence and norm construction in a contested international order.

Summary of the analysis

The critical discourse analysis of Vietnam’s UNGA speeches (2011-2020) reveals how language serves not only as a rhetorical tool but as a strategic means of constructing ideological positions and projecting foreign policy identity. Using Fairclough’s three-dimensional CDA model, the study uncovers how lexical choices, grammatical structures, and rhetorical devices such as metaphor, personification and repetition reflect Vietnam’s evolving diplomatic narrative, particularly through the lens of “bamboo diplomacy”. The speeches consistently emphasize peace, sovereignty, cooperation and international law, portraying Viet Nam as a responsible, proactive and morally principled actor. At the interpretive level, intertextual references and discursive strategies highlight a shift from postcolonial reactivity to norm entrepreneurship, blending socialist values with pragmatic internationalism. The social practice dimension situates this discourse within turbulent global

contexts - like U.S.-China rivalry and the COVID-19 pandemic - and shows how Viet Nam uses legalistic and inclusive language to balance sovereignty and cooperation. Institutionally, Viet Nam positions itself as a reformist voice in multilateral governance, advocating for UN reform while aligning with Global South priorities. Societally, historical references and solidarity with developing nations reinforce national identity rooted in independence and ethical leadership. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that Vietnam's foreign policy is discursively constructed through a blend of ideological continuity and adaptive engagement, using language to assert agency, legitimacy and reformist intent on the global stage.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1. Recapitulations

The critical discourse analysis of ten Vietnamese UNGA speeches (2011–2020) reveals how language functions as a strategic tool for articulating Vietnam's foreign policy ideologies and shaping its diplomatic identity. These speeches reflect a shift from a postcolonial, developmental narrative to a more assertive and norm-shaping role as a middle power. Through consistent use of thematic vocabulary (e.g., “peace”, “cooperation”, “sovereignty”), modal verbs and rhetorical devices like metaphor and personification, Viet Nam projects itself as a principled yet adaptive actor committed to multilateralism, international law and global cooperation. Grammatical strategies such as nominalization and collective pronouns reinforce ideological continuity and solidarity with the Global South. Structured problem-solution formats and repeated references to the UN Charter and SDGs highlight Vietnam's constructive global engagement. Over the decade, the evolution from cautious diplomacy to proactive leadership is evident, especially in speeches addressing regional tensions and global crises. This transformation aligns with Vietnam's doctrine of “bamboo diplomacy”, which balances strategic flexibility with firm principles, ultimately positioning the country as a credible contributor to global governance and a co-constructor of international norms.

5.2. Implications

The analysis of Vietnam's UNGA speeches (2011-2020) presents several implications for future research. Scholars are encouraged to examine how specific rhetorical and linguistic choices reflect broader diplomatic strategies and shifts in Vietnam's foreign policy priorities over time. Further investigation into ideological evolution could reveal how domestic politics and international pressures shape Vietnam's global stance. The study also highlights the potential of exploring “bamboo diplomacy” in greater depth, including its effectiveness and adaptability in various geopolitical contexts. Comparative analyses with other nations' speeches could illuminate Vietnam's distinct diplomatic style and its narrative strategies on shared global issues. Additionally, assessing the actual impact of Vietnam's rhetoric on international relations and global perception would provide insight into the practical outcomes of its discourse. This research also offers value for interdisciplinary studies across international law, political science and communication, emphasizing how structured political discourse shapes both domestic identity and global positioning. Lastly, situating these speeches within historical and geopolitical developments and analyzing their reception within Viet Nam can enrich understanding of how national identity, public opinion, and foreign policy intersect through language.

5.3. Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into Vietnam's diplomatic rhetoric at the UN General Assembly, it acknowledges several limitations. Primarily, the analysis does not fully integrate the historical and geopolitical contexts that shaped each speech, which may obscure deeper motivations behind rhetorical choices. The exclusive focus on UNGA speeches may also limit the scope, omitting Vietnam's broader diplomatic engagements across other key forums such as ASEAN or bilateral platforms. Additionally, the study does not systematically examine how shifting international relations or domestic political dynamics influenced rhetorical strategies over time. Without incorporating complementary data sources - such as policy documents or media discourse - the findings may lack a more dynamic understanding of discourse evolution. Finally, while analytical rigor was maintained, interpretation of rhetoric is inherently subjective, and different analysts may draw varied conclusions. Recognizing these limitations opens space for future interdisciplinary and comparative research to enrich and deepen the analysis.

5.4. Recommendations

To build on this study's findings, future research should expand the scope and methodological depth of analysis. One key recommendation is to contextualize each speech within its specific historical and geopolitical background, which would help uncover the motivations behind Vietnam's rhetorical decisions. Researchers should also explore Vietnam's diplomatic communication across various international platforms - including ASEAN, APEC, and bilateral settings - to form a more comprehensive picture of its foreign policy articulation. Longitudinal studies that extend beyond the 2011-2020 timeframe could better trace ideological and rhetorical shifts over time. Integrating quantitative methods such as frequency analysis of key terms would provide systematic insight into discursive trends. Additionally, examining how these speeches were received by both domestic audiences and international media would clarify their practical impact on public perception and diplomatic effectiveness. Comparative studies involving speeches by leaders of other nations could further situate Vietnam's diplomatic language within global patterns. Together, these approaches would significantly enhance the depth and relevance of future discourse research on Vietnam's foreign policy.

5.5. Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the dual role of the researcher - as both a lecturer and diplomat - positions them uniquely to bridge academic insight and practical diplomatic application. The study of Vietnamese leaders' UNGA speeches not only contributes to scholarly understanding of discourse and ideology in diplomacy but also has real-world relevance in shaping foreign policy engagement. Looking ahead, it is vital for the researcher to continue leveraging these findings in diplomatic contexts to support strategic decision-making in international forums. By combining analytical rigor with diplomatic adaptability, the researcher can help ensure that Vietnam's discourse remains both principled and effective on the global stage, enhancing its international standing and influence.

LIST OF PUBLISHED PAPERS

1. **Pham Thi Quyen** (2022). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Hillary Clinton's speech "Women's rights are human rights". *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 38 (5), pp.147-166.
2. **Pham Thi Quyen** (2023). *A synopsis of the three most influential approaches of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Proceedings of 2023 International Graduate Research Symposium (IGRS), pp.501-511. Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.
3. **Pham Thi Quyen**, Nguyen Ngoc Khanh An, Nguyen Duc Kien, Nguyeen Thai Ha Anh (2024). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Rishi Sunak's first speech as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 40 (1), pp.148-165.
4. **Pham Thi Quyen** (2024). *Review of major research traditions and methodologies in applied linguistics*. Proceedings of 2024 International Graduate Research Symposium (IGRS), pp.689-705. Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.
5. **Pham Thi Quyen** (2025). Book review: "Language and Power" (Norman Fairclough, second edition). *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, 41 (1), pp.192-194.