

## The realization of Inner Aspect in Vietnamese

### Abstracts

The main focus of the paper is on an integrated semantic and syntactic analysis of post-verbal aspectual morphemes in Vietnamese, which have largely been ignored by previous studies. The syntactic behaviours of these elements evidentially show that Inner Aspect is projected within the VP shell - a structural proposal originally advanced by Travis (2000) on the basis of evidence from Western Malayo-Polynesian languages (see Travis in press; Ramchand 2003).

The first form of argument comes from the evidence of a VP-intermediate object position. Vietnamese data reveals that the language makes use of two different object positions. Object can either precede or follow a certain type of particles in verb-particle constructions, as in (1); or can either appear before or after the secondary predicate in causative constructions, as in (2). Thoroughly considered, the choice of the object position in Vietnamese is to a great extent determined by different factors, namely aspectual class of the main predicate, the specificity as well as the news value of the DP object. Interactions of the object with adverbs and negators indicate that the object must move to the left of VP (*cf.* Pollock 1989). Furthermore, it still appears to the right of the primary verb, making this sort of object shift remaining within the VP shell.

Secondly, this VP-intermediate object position is linked to a group of post-verbal aspectual particles giving us morphological evidence to determine where exactly the object moves to. The presence of these particles turns an atelic event into a telic event, as can be seen in the contrast between (a) and b in example (3). Especially, the multifunctional ‘modal’ morpheme *được* has a purely aspectual reading just in this syntactic position, as in example (4).

Putting these observations together, the paper argues that Inner aspect is syntactically encoded in Vietnamese. Also, a comparison between Vietnamese and Cantonese aspectual markers is provided in the end of the paper. While Cantonese markers of aspect all follow the verb (Matthews, S. & Yip, V. (1994)), Vietnamese employs two domains, pre-verbal and post-verbal, to express aspect. What is more, Vietnamese and Cantonese aspects interact differently with negators and adverbs. In particular, unlike Vietnamese, Cantonese aspectual morphemes are incompatible with negation markers. This is the locality of cross-linguistic differences and thus the basics on which we will make predictions regarding L1 transfer in L2 acquisition.

**Examples:** All the aspectual particles are bold-faced.

- |     |    |  |                               |
|-----|----|--|-------------------------------|
| (1) | a. | Nó đã nướng bánh <b>xong</b><br><i>Prn perf bake cake finish</i><br>‘She finished baking cakes’. | Verb-Object- <b>Particle</b>  |
|     | b. | Nó đã nướng <b>xong</b> (cái) bánh.<br><i>Prn perf bake finish (cls) cake</i>                    | Verb- <b>Particle</b> -Object |

- ‘She finished baking the cake’.
- (2) a. Tôi làm gãy cái que V1-V2-Object  
*I make break cls stick*  
 ‘I broke the stick’
- b. (?)Tôi làm cái que gãy V1-Object-V2  
*I make cls stick break*  
 ‘I broke the stick.’  
 (Duffield 2009)
- (3) a. Nó tìm câu trả lời. Activity  
*Prn search clc answer*  
 ‘He looked for the answer’.
- b. Nó tìm **ra** câu trả lời. Achievement  
*Prn search out cls answer*  
 ‘He found the answer’.
- (4) Cô ấy đã kiếm **được** người yêu.  
*Prn dem perf search can cls love*  
 ‘She has found her love’.

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