

A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE DITRANSITIVE VERBS

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ABSTRACT: Being able to figure out the sentence structure with English ditransitive verbs has been considered a challenge for almost all English majors at the Foreign Language Department - Haiphong University. Accordingly, they tend to give wrong answers when asked to identify functions of sentence elements or sentence structures containing ditransitive verbs in terms of sentence elements in their obligatory subject - English Grammar of theory. For example, they tend to label “her” and “a doctor” in the sentence “I’ll call her a doctor” as DIRECT OBJECT and INDIRECT OBJECT instead of INDIRECT and DIRECT. Another illustration is that they cannot figure out the structure of “We take great care of the children” and know nothing about its Vietnamese equivalent either. Definitely, their inability to understand those verbs may prevent the students from gaining their learning objectives. Definitely, it is necessary to look into this type of verbs in both English and Vietnamese as it will help understand the matter completely.

Due to limitation of time and scale, the author would like to compare and contrast English and Vietnamese di-transitive verbs by giving an overview of such verbs in both languages, namely, their definition, classification and objects expressed by noun phrases so that common and different points will be revealed, which helps the students to fulfill their learning tasks in an effective way; then suggest some implications in teaching ditransitive verbs. Hopefully, the paper will be useful for those who are interested in English teaching and learning.

Keywords: English di-transitive verbs, Vietnamese di-transitive verbs, similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese di-transitive verbs

PHÉP PHÂN TÍCH ĐỐI CHIẾU GIỮA NGOẠI ĐỘNG TỪ KÉP TRONG TIẾNG ANH VÀ TIẾNG VIỆT

TÓM TẮT: Có khả năng tìm ra cấu trúc câu có ngoại động từ kép trong tiếng Anh được coi là một thách thức đối với hầu hết sinh viên chuyên ngữ ở khoa Ngoại ngữ - trường Đại học Hải Phòng. Theo đó, các em thường đưa ra câu trả lời sai khi được yêu cầu xác định chức năng của thành tố trong câu có ngoại động từ kép hay cấu trúc câu dựa vào sự có mặt của các thành tố trong câu trong môn học Ngữ pháp tiếng Anh lý thuyết bắt buộc trong chương trình học. Chẳng hạn như, các em có xu hướng gắn “her” và “a doctor” trong câu “I’ll call her a doctor” (Tôi sẽ gọi cô ấy một bác sỹ) là TÂN NGỮ TRỰC TIẾP và TÂN NGỮ GIÁN TIẾP thay vì “GIÁN TIẾP” và “TRỰC TIẾP”. Trong một ví dụ khác, các em không xác định được cấu trúc câu “We take great care of the children” (Chúng tôi chăm sóc tốt bọn trẻ) và cũng không biết cấu trúc tương đương trong tiếng Việt. Chắc chắn, không có khả năng hiểu biết về những động từ đó sẽ cản trở sinh viên dành được mục tiêu học tập của họ. Chắc chắn, việc nghiên cứu loại động từ này ở cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt là rất cần thiết vì điều đó sẽ giúp hiểu rõ vấn đề.

Do giới hạn về mặt thời gian và phạm vi nghiên cứu, tác giả bài báo sẽ so sánh và đối chiếu ngoại động từ kép trong tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt thông qua việc khái quát các loại động từ này ở cả hai ngôn ngữ, cụ thể là đưa ra các định nghĩa, sự phân loại của loại động từ này và tân ngữ là các danh ngữ để thấy sự tương đồng và khác biệt giữa chúng, điều đó giúp sinh viên hoàn thành nhiệm vụ học tập của mình một cách hiệu quả, và tác giả cũng đưa ra một số gợi ý trong giảng dạy ngoại động từ kép và ngoại động từ phức cho sinh viên. Hy vọng rằng bài viết sẽ có ích cho những ai giảng dạy và học tiếng Anh.

Từ khoá: Ngoại động từ kép trong tiếng Anh, Động từ chuyển tác có hai tân ngữ trong tiếng Việt, sự tương đồng và khác biệt giữa ngoại động từ kép trong tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the compulsory subjects the English majors at the Department of Foreign Languages - Haiphong University (HPU) are supposed to learn is Theory of English Grammar. Accordingly, they have to take 5 credits within two terms, which are English Grammar of theory 1 and 2. In grammar 1, which contains two credits, the students are required to learn all phrases such as noun phrase, verb phrase, adjective phrase, adverb phrase and prepositional phrase while in Grammar 2, they are provided with all kinds of clauses and sentences.

In the educational objectives, an emphasis on the students' knowledge of grammar has been made as it is really crucial in the learning process or their future jobs. Specifically, their grasp of the subject can help them to do well in the translation subject or teaching job to-be. It is considered a key to their success in mastering the English language. However, things are not as good as expected. As for many students, they have difficulty acquiring knowledge of grammar.

The verb is regarded as one of the most difficult barriers faced by the students at my department. During the

process of learning, they may be confused about the ditransitive verb. Likewise, they seem not to be accurate enough in terms of syntactics when identifying the expressions of the sentence element and the structure "SVOO". In order to help them to deal with this, the author would like to have a study on the subject by making a contrast between English and Vietnamese di-transitive verbs.

2. BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

2.1. English Di-transitive complementation

Ditransitive complementation in its basic form employs two objects that are not in a co-referential, intensive relationship, according to Quirk, R et al. (1972:843). He indicates that an indirect object (normally animate), which is positioned first and direct object (usually concrete). Take the following as example:

[1] He gave the girl a doll. (SVOO)
(Quirk, R et al., 1985:1209)

Accordingly, the indirect object in [1], "the girl" is animate and different from the direct object, which is concrete - (a doll)

2.1.1. Objects

One of the five units called elements in a sentence is Object (O),

which refers to a person or thing affected by the action of the verb either directly or indirectly (A S Horn, 2004).

Quirk (1973: 13) divides objects into two types such as direct object and Indirect object. The former can be used in clauses with transitive verbs (mono-transitive, di-transitive and complex transitive) whereas the latter can be found only in clauses with ditransitive verbs, which is the author's focus. Let's consider the following sentences:

[2] He gave me the book

[3] He reminded me of the invitation.

(Mohamed, A. O article_166906_en.html)

From those, it is clear that ditransitive complementation is involved. The two objects in [2] and [3] (me - the book// me - the invitation) are not in co-referential intensive relation. Mohamed, A.O (article_166906_en.html) put such complementation into four types. The first type is "S V Oi Od" (both objects are expressed by noun phrases), which usually occurs to the verbs like "give" or "buy"

[4] He bought her a white dress.

[5] She gave her child a doll.

Accordingly, both [4] and [5] can be transformed into ditransitive

prepositional verbs, which is illustrated as the following:

[6] He bought a white dress for her.

[7] She gave a doll to her daughter.

The second is S V Od Prepositional O, which is subdivided into minor two groups: **(1)** S V inanimate Od and animate prepositional O as in:

[8] They explained the problems to the boss.

(Mohamed, A. O article_166906_en.html)

or **(2)** S V animate Od and a prepositional O as in:

[9] We reminded her of the agreement.

(Mohamed, A. O article_166906_en.html)

As for Mohamed (article_166906_en.html), the third type is "S V Oi, which is expressed by a noun phrase and Od by finite nominal clause". It is exemplified in these sentences:

[10] Ali convinced me he was right.

[11] Ali didn't ask me whether John was coming.

(Quirk, et al 1985:1208-1216)

Finally, "S V preposition "To" Oi and Od- finite nominal That clause "usually occurs to the verbs like "admit, mention and state"

[12] John mentioned to me that she was sick.

2.1.2. Ditransitive verbs:

In terms of composition, ditransitive verbs can be classified into three subdivisions such as simple, prepositional and phrasal (or idiomatic). The first type consists of one word (root morpheme) like buy, bring, make, lend, find, or pay.

[13] I have paid George the whole sum.

(Quirk, R. & Greenbaum, S. 1973:119)

Additionally, Quirk (1973: 371) states that ditransitive prepositional verbs are those whose direct objects must be introduced by a preposition. Similarly, common verbs of this type are: inform of, compare to, provide with, remind of, congratulate on, convince of, deprive of, sentence to, or inform of. (Quirk, 1973: 370).

[14] She accused him of lying

(Ashby et al, 2004:9)

Frequently, the construction of the form: accuse X of Y, where with most of the verbs X is a person and Y is a thing. However, noticeable exceptions such as “explain X to Y (X would be normally a thing and Y a person. The third type is phrasal ditransitive verbs, which is idiomatic expression consisting of verb,

noun phrase and preposition (Quirk, 1973: 372). These are illustrations : catch sight of, make allowance for, put a stop to, give place to, make fun of, set fire to, take account of, keep pace with,

[15] They had made good use of the house.

(Quirk et al, 1973: 372).

Finally, “S V preposition “To” Oi and finite nominal That clause “usually occurs to the verbs like “admit, mention and state”

[16] John mentioned to me that she was sick.

Among the four types, only the first (S VO_i O_d) and the second one (S V O_d Prepositional O) will be compared between English and Vietnamese in the paper. Therefore, it is necessary to have a look at ditransitive verbs in Vietnamese.

2.2. Vietnamese Ditransitive complementation

2.2.1. Objects

The term for “object” in Vietnamese is “BỘ NGỮ ĐỐI TƯỢNG”, which designates the relationship between entities and the verb or central adjectives. These are often expressed by a Noun phrase or finite That-clause (yтуong.net/bo-ngu-la-gi/). It is reported that there are two types of “BỘ NGỮ ĐỐI

TUỢNG” called “TÂN NGỮ - OBJECT” by Ban (2014) such as direct and indirect. These are different from each other. While the former is affected by the verb, the latter seems to benefit from the action. They are used after ditransitive verbs.

2.2.2. Vietnamese Di-transitive verbs

One of the two kinds of verbs in Vietnamese is ditransitive. It is said that transitivity is related to the combination of actions denoted by verbs and some other entities in the sentence. In *Ngữ Pháp tiếng Việt* (2004; 498), Ban indicates that actions may affect entities in different ways, therefore, the entity influenced by the action is called goal (đích thể) usually functioning as an object. If the verb influences only entity, it is involved in mono-transitive like “They make a canal (Họ đào mương). Additionally, some other transitive verbs may act on both entities at the same time, one of which is “goal” and the other is “recipient. These verbs tend to employ three participants in the action process. This happens to such verbs as give (cho), offer (tặng), present (biếu). If the two entities are used after the lexical verb, the “goal” functions as direct object and the recipient as indirect object regardless of their order. (Diep Quang Ban: 2014: 499).

[17] Giap presented Ti a bicycle
(Giap biếu Ti chiếc xe đạp)

[18] Giap presented a bicycle to Ti
(Giap biếu chiếc xe đạp cho Ti)

(Ban, Quang Diep: 2014)

3. A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH DITRANSITIVE VERBS AND VIETNAMESE

The notion of di-transitive complementation is quite a difficult issue. It is believed that it would be complicated if English ditransitive verbs were compared to Vietnamese ones in a large scale. Nevertheless, within this paper, only a analysis between the two will be discussed in terms of syntax because it is observed that they are often big problems for almost all students when getting to know how to use them due to the negative transfer or interference (Hoffman ; 1991). As for him, “negative transfer occurs when the performance on the first language inhibits or detracts from performance in the second language”

3.1. A contrastive analysis of English simple ditransitive verbs:

In general, both English and Vietnamese simple ditransitive verbs share the same structure, which is “S V O_i O_d “. Let's consider the examples below:

English	Vietnamese
[19.a] Giap offered Ti a bicycle. S V O _i O _d	[19.b] Giap biếu Tị chiếc xe đạp CN VT TNGT TNTT
[20.a.] Giap offered a bicycle to Ti S V O _d prep O _d	[20.b]. Giap biếu chiếc xe đạp cho Ti CN VT TNTT GT TNGT

(Ban, Quang Diep: 2014)
Undoubtedly, there is no difference in the order of the two objects expressed by noun phrases. That is, they are all used after the verb and the indirect object is followed by the direct object.

In addition, when the direct object is placed before the indirect one, a preposition must be added “to or for / cho” between them (in both languages). More illustrations can be seen in the following:

English	Vietnamese
[21.a] She sent him a letter S V O _i O _d	[21.b] Cô ấy gửi anh ta một bức thư. CN VT TNGT TNTT
[22.a.] She sent a letter <u>to</u> him S V O _d prep O _i	[22.b]. Cô ấy gửi một bức thư <u>cho</u> anh ta. CN VT TNTT GT TNGT
[23.a] I paid John the money S V O _i O _d	[23.b] Tôi trả John số tiền. CN VT TNGTT TNTT
[24.a.] I paid the money <u>to</u> John. S V O _d prep O _i	[24.b]. Tôi trả số tiền <u>cho</u> John CN VT TNTT GT TNGT

3.2. A contrastive analyses of English prepositional ditransitive verbs:

It is stated by Quirk (1973: 372) that this type consists of the verb, an X showing a person and preposition with

Y of a thing, which can be found in almost all verbs like charge X with Y, congratulate X on Y, remind X of Y or inform X of Y except for “explain X to Y, where X is usually a thing and Y a person.

English	Vietnamese
25.a. We reminded him of the agreement S V Oi prep Od	25.b. Chúng tôi nhắc anh ta về bản hợp đồng CN VT TNGT GT TNTT

(Quirk et al, 1973: 371).

Like the English simple ditransitive verbs, the Vietnamese ones employ a similar syntactic pattern to designate the same thought with prepositional ditransitive verbs. In other words, the subject- CHỦ NGŨ (We - Chúng tôi) and the verb - VỊ TỐ (reminded - nhắc) are followed by an indirect object of a person - TÂN NGŨ GIÁN TIẾP (him - anh ấy), a preposition - GIỚI TỪ (of - về) and a direct object of

a thing - TÂN NGŨ TRỰC TIẾP chỉ sự việc (the agreement - bản hợp đồng). To be more specific, both languages have the structure “S V Oi preposition - Od” - “CN VT TNGT - GT - TNTT. Nevertheless, different prepositions are used in the English di-transitive verbs while only one Vietnamese preposition “VỀ” is put in. Here are more examples of the prepositional di-transitive verb constructions with their Vietnamese equivalents:

English	Vietnamese
[26.a] She blamed John for the damage. S V Oi prep Od	[26.b] Cô ấy đổ lỗi John về sự thiệt hại. CN VT TNGT GT TNTT
[27.a] We informed her of that news. S V Oi prep Od	[27.b] Chúng tôi báo cô ta về tin đó. CN ĐT TNGT GT TNTT

(Quirk et al, 1973: 372).

3.3. A contrastive analysis of English phrasal ditransitive verbs:

According to Quirk (1973: 372), the “verb, a noun phrase plus a

preposition refers to idiomatic expressions. That is, some verbs form an idiomatic unit when combined with certain noun phrases followed by certain prepositions and in this respect resemble

may prepositional verbs, which makes it difficult for students to realize the structure of the sentence and Vietnamese meaning.

English	Vietnamese
[28a.] We take great care of the children. S V O _d O _i	[28b] Chúng tôi chăm sóc bọn trẻ. CN VT TNTT

(Quirk, R et al. 1972:848)

As can be seen from [28a], it may be mistaken for mono-transitive complementation. Specifically, it is wrongly thought to have the structure S (We), V (take great care) and O (of the children), which explains my students' errors when asked to identify the structure of the sentence in terms of

sentence elements. They tend to label this SVO instead of SVOO. Furthermore, it is not like that in Vietnamese, which is CHỦ NGỮ (S) + VỊ TỐ (V) + TÂN NGỮ TRỰC TIẾP (O_d) . Undoubtedly, phrasal ditransitive verbs of English cannot be found in the Vietnamese language.

English	Vietnamese
[29a] They made good use of the house	[29b] Họ tận dụng ngôi nhà
[30a] He always takes notice of pretty girls	[30b] Anh ta luôn quan tâm đến các cô gái đẹp

(Quirk et al, 1973: 372).

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

It is clear that some similarities and differences in di-transitive verbs between English and Vietnamese mainly due to the structure are discussed in the paper.

On the one hand, several common points between the two are revealed.

For one, sentence elements are placed in the same order. In case of simple ditransitive verbs, both English and Vietnamese use “S V O_i O_d or S V O_d plus a preposition (to/ for) O_i when the two objects are expressed by noun phrases. It is believed to facilitate the students' learning process. However,

in this situation, my students are not sure of what types of object they are. They appear to mistake indirect object for direct object due to the proximity to the verb in the sentence.

For prepositional ditransitive verbs, they also share an identical construction such as S V Oi preposition Od despite various prepositions in English to express the same thing with only one Vietnamese preposition “VỀ”. Therefore, it is certain that the students usually to employ “ABOUT” in all verbs of this type. To make the matter worse, they often think the sentence in this kind is S V O A because of prepositional phrases used in the last part.

A part from general features, there is a big difference in the syntactic structure between the two languages when taking phrasal ditransitive verbs into consideration. Likewise, this type looks like S V O in Vietnamese. Obviously, it does not exist in our own language. Consequently, the students often make mistakes when dealing with the task, which is labelling the structure of the sentence. They tend to name these kinds S V O (due to similarity to Vietnamese sentence types).

Thus, it is suggested that teachers be very accurate when providing them with

knowledge of English di-transitive verbs. In other words, they should show their students different kinds of ditransitive verbs, and its structures in which the position and expressions of the two objects are clearly explained. For instance, in the sentence: **He bought Jane a present** (Quirk et al, 1990:121),” bought” is a simple ditransitive verb needing an animate indirect “Jane” and an inanimate direct object “a present”. It is possible that their positions are changed, then an appropriate preposition is added between them. One more example is that the prepositional di-transitive verb “accused” in the sentence “**They accused Helen of stealing the gold bullion**” (Quirk et al, 1900: 121) must be shown with Helen as indirect object and “of stealing the gold bullion” as direct object. Most important, teachers and students work with each other so that they will be able to achieve their aims

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the di-transitive verb is a hard category in English grammar which the students may cope with. Similarly, they are usually confused when identifying the structure of the sentence containing ditransitive verbs because of difference between English and Vietnamese structurally, especially phrasal ditransitive verbs. Consequently, they often make mistakes in their learning task. In other words, they cannot figure out the structure

S V O_d O_i and identify which is direct or indirect object or find their Vietnamese equivalents when coming across the phrasal ditransitive verbs.

A contrastive analysis of ditransitive verbs, which often causes more trouble to students than other types, is necessary.

After having contrasted them, it can be clearly seen that English ditransitive verbs are more complex than those in Vietnamese.

Apart from several similarities such as positions and expression of the double objects in sentences with di-transitive verbs, various prepositions between the two entities are used in English whereas only one “VỀ” appears in its counterpart with prepositional di-transitive. The most striking feature is that sentences employing phrasal di-transitive verbs cannot be found in Vietnamese as in “We could make better use of our resource” (Ashby, M et al, 2004: 1432).

It is hoped that this paper will be a piece of useful referent material for those who are interested in teaching and learning English language

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