

Bachelor thesis review

Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc

Name of Student: *Thu Phuong Ngoová*

Thesis title: *Comparison of Expression of Verbal Tense and Aspect in English and Vietnamese*

Supervisor: *Jeffrey Keith Parrott, Ph.D.*

Reviewer: *Jeffrey Keith Parrott, Ph.D.*

Scoring: 0 = unacceptable, 1 = poor, 2 = acceptable, 3 = average, 4 = good, 5 = excellent

Body

1. Originality of the paper and its contribution. Quality of the topic.

As the title indicates, the thesis is a comparison of verbal tense and aspect in Vietnamese and English. Evidently this is a very general but still potentially interesting topic. Unfortunately, however, there is no hypothesis or research question, nor does the thesis present the comparative material in a systematic or coherent way, nor is there any empirical component to the thesis (i.e. "data collected from native speakers", as promised during consultations and in the proposal on p51). Thus the topic's potential is not realized, and the thesis contains much filler and more quotes. This was not corrected in the final thesis because it was completed and submitted before consultation (see below). Still, the information about Vietnamese that is actually provided is certainly welcome in a thesis.

3

2. The review of previous literature on the topic. Extent and quality of the review, critical appraisal.

There is no literature review as such and certainly no critical appraisal of the literature. Instead there are haphazard direct quotes from a few sources, throughout the thesis, on almost every page. Several sections start with quotes (e.g. 5.1, p24) – indeed, Ch6 (p28) begins with a quote. The thesis relies mostly on descriptive grammars of English (e.g. Leech 2004), including one that is quite out of date (Palmer 1966), along with descriptive grammars of Vietnamese (e.g. Nguyen 1997). Comrie's typological work on tense (1993) and aspect (1995) is quoted and cited but not discussed.

2

3. Research goals and questions. Formulation of hypotheses.

As noted, there are no research questions or hypotheses per se; the goals of the thesis is comparative. That alone is acceptable, but the thesis would have been improved with a more well defined question or stricter focus, or an empirical component (e.g. fieldwork).

2

4. Methodology. Its description and adequacy for addressing the research questions.

The thesis uses a standard comparative grammar methodology, as there are no research questions to address. This method is in principle adequate for the comparative goals of the thesis. However, the thesis would have been improved by a more organized presentation of the data at hand.

2

5. Analysis of data, description of results, and their interpretation.

The comparative data is not presented systematically or coherently. There are frequent digressions into irrelevant material – for example Ch2, which is moreover inaccurate about both English (e.g. it has "only eight inflections" including possessive "case marking on nouns") and Vietnamese (e.g. its "monosyllabic nature" with "no affixation whatsoever"). The Vietnamese data (nor the English data for that matter) is not consistently glossed or given in a table or list; instead it is sometimes placed in the body of the text (e.g. p18) and

sometimes as numbered examples, with translation equivalents are overemphasized at the expense of glossing. Some potentially interesting claims are dropped into the text with no further discussion (e.g. that “word order...makes distinction between the past or future reference”, p23, see also questions below).

2

6. Discussion of how the results relate to the research questions.

Since there are no research questions, only a general comparative statement is made (or quoted) several times to the effect that ‘English has affixes, Vietnamese uses time adverbials’. Although this is true on a surface level, the thesis would have been improved by much more discussion of the interesting questions raised, such as time reference (tense?) potentially expressed syntactically in Vietnamese, or the (non?) affixal status of the Vietnamese time “words/particles/adverb(ials)”.

2

7. Formal aspects. Quality of language (grammatical, lexical, and stylistic adequacy), formatting, referencing, and length of the paper.

The English and style are mostly good, although there are some minor formatting and other errors in the text body. The citations and quoting seem to be in order, although there are far too many quotes, quotes used instead of explanation or presentation of data, and quotes used to begin chapters and sections (you cannot do that). Attribution of example sentences needs to be made explicit – are they from adjacent cited sources or made up or collected from native speakers or corpora, etc. The reference section is incorrectly formatted with first line instead of hanging indent.

3

For the supervisor:

Evaluation of the collaboration between student and supervisor:

Ms. Ngoová consulted with me a few times. We discussed the general comparative goals of the thesis and she promised to carry out fieldwork with native speakers of Vietnamese. She presented me with a draft of a first chapter in April. Then, without further notice or consultation, she completed the remaining 9 chapters, submitted the hardcopy of the thesis to the FF on June 23, and emailed me a PDF copy of the thesis on July 12. Had I seen a draft of any further chapters, even chapter 2, perhaps some of the problems with the thesis could have been corrected before submission.

2

Supervisor’s statement about plagiarism:

Neither the analysis of this thesis by the online system Theses.cz nor any other kind of examination of the text revealed a degree of correspondence with other works that would give rise to the suspicion of plagiarism or violation of copyright.

Supervisor: Jeffrey Keith Parrott, Ph.D.

Overall evaluation of the paper:

This thesis is adequate but it could have been much improved by more systematic presentation of the data.

Note: The overall evaluation **CANNOT be computed simply as the average** of the scores awarded on the basis of the individual criteria above.

2

Other comments:

I am evaluating the thesis as is at a 2 (=D). However, if the presentation and defense is good, the final grade could be improved. Moreover, if Ms. Ngoová decides to pursue a higher degree, some of the issues in comparative grammar raised in the thesis could be avenues for further research.

Questions for the author to be discussed at the defense:

1. *(First, apologies for the incorrect Vietnamese orthography, I would have liked a Word copy of the thesis.) Why do you say that “duoc” forms a compound with the verb (p37)? Why would you not say it is an aspect affix? What about “thay” or “ra”? For Vietnamese, what is the difference between a compound and an affix? For English, what is the difference between an auxiliary and an affix?*
2. *Could you please elaborate on the claim that word order (that is, syntax!) expresses time reference in Vietnamese (p23). Is this claim supported by any sources in the literature? Does this mean that Vietnamese does have grammatical means to express verbal tense and aspect?*
3. *Could you please elaborate on the claim that “se” is an auxiliary, possibly equivalent to English will (p18)? What properties do they share and which do they not? Again, does this mean that Vietnamese does have grammatical means to express verbal tense and aspect?*

Final evaluation

I recommend ~~do not recommend~~ the thesis for the defense

Proposed grade: *C - D*

Date: 29/08/2016

Signature: Jeffrey Keith Parrott, Ph.D.