

Prepositional vs. directional coverbs in Vietnamese

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In Vietnamese, there is a class of words that Clark (1978) calls “Coverbs,” which are verbs, prepositions and adverbs. I agree with her mostly but on some points I would like to propose a different syntactic analysis from hers. By coverbs in my study, I mean words which may function as verbs, prepositions and directional verbs.

Ông ấy	ở	Sài gòn	ra	Huế	thứ hai.
he	to located	Saigon	go-out	Hue	Monday
			Cvb(P)		

‘He left Saigon for Hanoi on Monday.’

Thompson (1967: 230)

Mời	ông	vào.
please	you	go in
		Cvb(P)

‘Please come in.’

Thompson (1967: 233)

Many linguists have studied these “coverbs”. Thompson (1967: 230-231), calls coverbs “Sequential Phrases,” treating them as coordinate phrases presenting situations which follow one another. Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1979:xiii) states “The category of direction is expressed by means of postverbs or coverbs, that is to say, verbs which occur following the main verb and play a ‘secondary’ role. They are reduced to the status of morphemes by the mere fact of appearing after full verbs: thus *đi* will mean ‘off, away’ when occurring after such a main verb of motion as *bay đi* ‘to fly off/ away’, *chạy đi* ‘to run away’.” Nguyễn Đăng Liếm (1975: 79) states “A defective directional verb is added to a verb stem to give it a directional meaning. It has the functional meaning of Directional Adverb in English, such as ‘up, down’..., etc. It still preserves its verbal nature because it can have a Location-Direction tagmeme of its own...”

In the following list of coverbs, nos. 1-9 are from Clark, and I have added 10-11.

1. ở be in/ at, reside in
2. qua/ sang cross, get (over), pass, be by
3. lại come, arrive

4.	về	return
5.	ra	go out
6.	vào	enter, go in, come in/ in, into, on at
7.	lên	go up, come up, rise, ascend/ up, upwards
8.	xuống	go down (to)
9.	đến/ tới	arrive, come, arrive at, get to, reach, to, till, until
10.	cho	give
11.	đi	go

These coverbs can all function as the main verb. I would like to further investigate their syntactic properties in the following functions:

- 1) Prepositional coverbs, abbreviated Cvb (P)
- 2) Directional coverbs, abbreviated Cvb (D)

1. Only prepositional coverbs

The following coverbs can function as a main verb or a preposition as in the following examples, but not as a directional coverb.

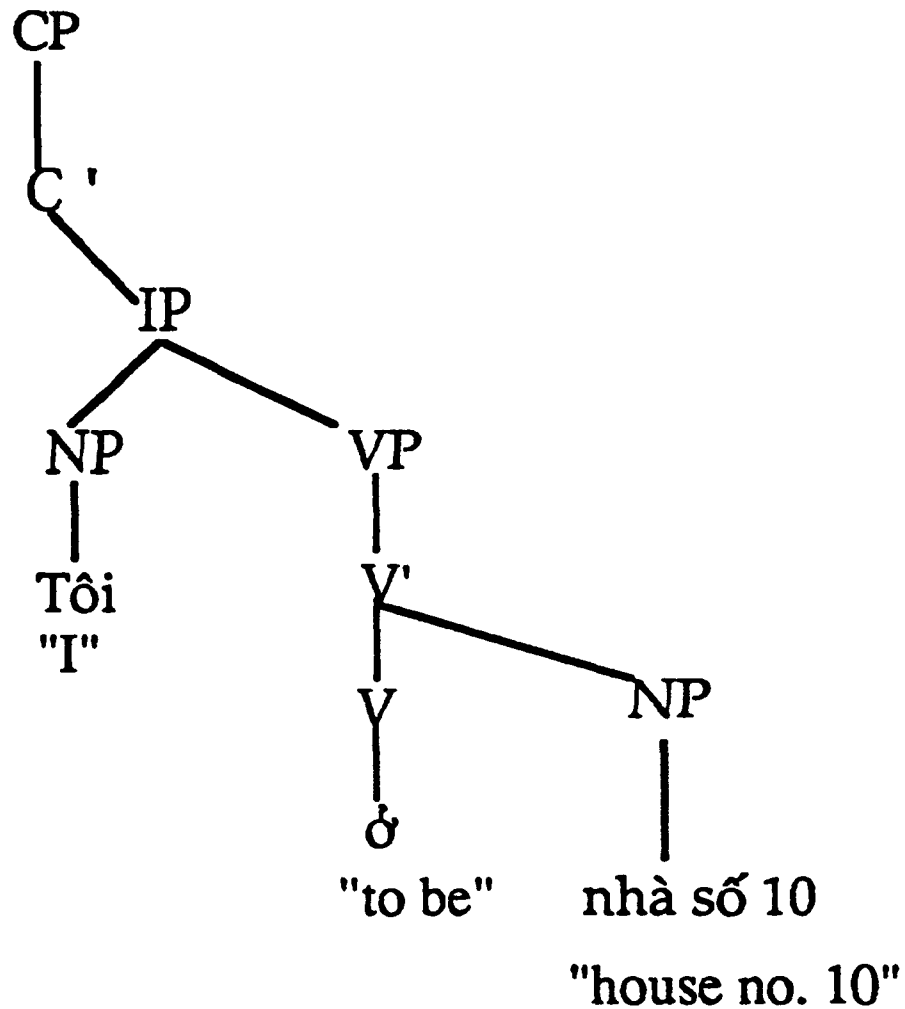
1.1 Ở 'be in/ at, reside in'

1.1.1 Ở can function as a main verb as in examples 1-5.

(1)	Tôi	ở	nhà	số	10.
	I	be at	house	number	10
	NP	V	NP		
	'I am at house number 10.'				

The structure of the sentence (1) is schematized as in (2).

(2)



ở 'be at' is claimed to be a verb according to the following criteria.

(a) ở can be preceded by an auxiliary verb, as shown in (3)

(3)	Tôi	sẽ	ở	nhà	số	10.
	I	will	be at	house	num.	10
	NP	AUX	V	NP		
	'I will be at house number 10.'					

(b) ở can be negated, as shown in (4).

(4)	Tôi	không	ở	nhà	số	10.
	I	not	be at	house	num.	10
	NP	NEG	V	NP		
	'I am not at house number 10.'					

(c) ở can be preceded by certain preceding adverbs, as shown in (5)

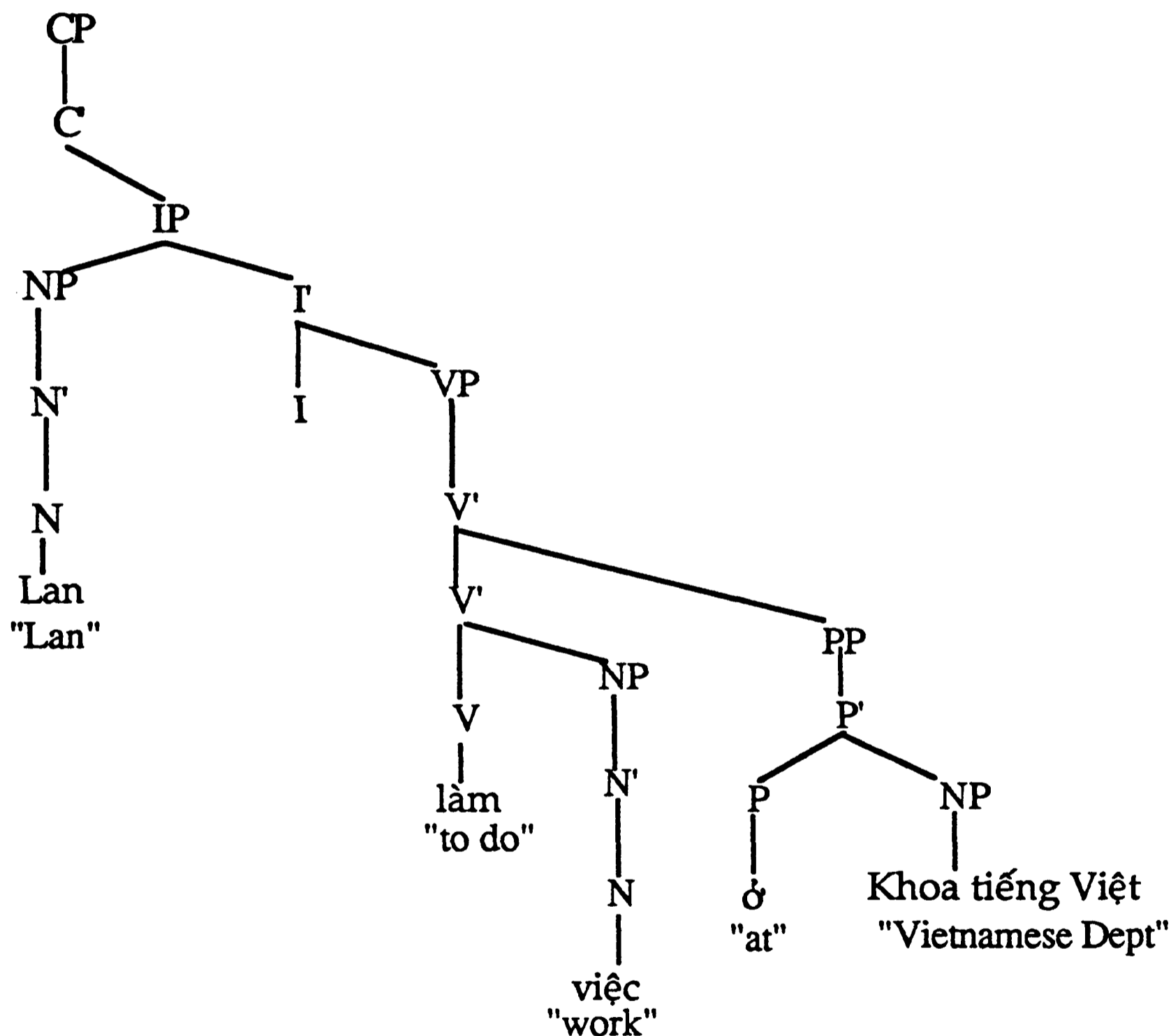
(5)	Tôi	cũng	ở	nhà	số	10.
	I	also	be at	house	num.	10
	NP	Adv	V	NP		
	"I am also at house number 10."					

1.1.2 ở can function as a prepositional coverb, as shown in (6).

- (6) Lan làm việc ở Khoa tiếng Việt.
 Lan do work at Department language Vietnam
 NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
 'Lan works at the Vietnamese Department.'

In (6) ở functions as a preposition which is the head of the PP: P: ở + NP: Khoa tiếng Việt. This PP is the adjunct of the VP. The structure of (6) is schematized as in (7).

(7)



Ở is claimed to be a prepositional coverb by the following criteria:

a) Its following NP cannot be promoted by itself to the initial position of the sentence as in (8).

- (8) *Khoa tiếng Việt_i, tôi làm việc ở [NP e_i].
 Dept. language Vietnam I do work at
 NP NP V NP Cvb (P)
 'The Vietnamese Department, I work at.'

b) The whole PP cannot usually be preposed as in (9), but it can if the sentence is modified by an adverb of time as in (10).

(9) *Ở Khoa tiếng Việt, Lan làm việc.
 at Dept language Vietnam Lan do work.
 Cvb(P) NP NP V NP
 'At the Vietnamese Department, Lan works.'

(10) Ở Khoa tiếng Việt, Lan làm việc 3 năm.
 at Dept language Vietnam Lan do work 3 year
 Cvb(P) NP NP V NP AdvP
 'At the Vietnamese Department, Lan worked for three years.'

c) It cannot be preceded by an auxiliary verb as in (11).

(11) *Lan làm việc sẽ ở Khoa tiếng Việt.
 Lan do work will at Department language Vietnam
 NP V NP Aux Cvb(P) NP

d) It cannot be preceded by the negator 'không'.

(12) *Lan làm việc không ở Khoa tiếng Việt.
 Lan do work not at Department language Vietnam
 NP V NP NEG Cvb(P) NP

e) However, when the negator *không phải* [lit: not right] precedes the preposition, the sentence is grammatical, as shown in (13).

(13) Lan làm việc không phải ở
 Lan do work not right at
 NP V NP Aux Cvb(P)

Khoa tiếng Việt.
 Department language Vietnam
 NP

'Lan is working but not at the Vietnamese Department.'

f) It cannot be preceded by an adverb as in (14).

(14) *Lan làm việc còn ở Khoa tiếng Việt.
 Lan do work still at Department language Vietnam
 NP V NP Adv Cvb(P) NP

The prepositional use of *ở* as exemplified above parallels the non-verbal prepositions such as *tại* 'at' and *bằng* 'by' as shown below (15, 16).

(15) Hội nghị họp tại Hà nội 3 ngày.
 conference hold at Hanoi 3 day
 NP V P NP NP
 'The conference was held at Hanoi for three days.'

- (16) Tôi đi sang Trung Quốc bằng thuyền.
 I go cross China by boat
 NP V PostV NP P NP
 'I have been to China by boat.'

In sentences (15) and (16) *tại* 'at' and *bằng* 'by' are prepositions. They are heads of the PPs which are followed by NPs. The structure and the function of these sentences are the same as in sentence (6). In sentences (15) and (16), the preposing of the PPs is possible, but it rarely occurs except when the speaker wants to focus on the PP as follows:

- (15a) Tại Hà Nội hội nghị đã họp 3 ngày.
 at Hanoi conference already hold ba day
 P NP NP AUX V Adv
 'At Hanoi, the conference had already been held for three days.'

- (16a) Bằng thuyền tôi đi sang Trung Quốc.
 by boat I go cross China
 P NP NP V PostV NP
 'By boat, I have been to China.'

In (15a) and (16a) some other temporal or locative is also in the predicate.

Tại 'at' meets similar criteria to test the preposition as mentioned for *ở* 'at'. One additional criterion is that the negator *không phải* [lit: not right] can precede the preposition as in (15b) and (16b), but another negator *không* 'not' cannot precede the preposition:

- (15b) Hội nghị họp không phải tại Hà Nội 3 ngày.
 conference hold not right at Hanoi three day
 NP V NEG P NP NP
 "It's not correct that the conference was held at Hanoi for three days."

- (16b) Tôi đi sang Trung Quốc không phải bằng thuyền.
 I go cross China not right by boat
 NP V Post V NP NEG P NP
 "It's not correct that I have been to China by boat."

1.2 Qua 'cross, get (over), pass, be by'

1.2.1 Qua can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (17) Tôi sắp qua cầu.
 I almost cross bridge
 NP AUX V NP
 Agt Path
 'I almost crossed the bridge.'

- (18) Việc đã qua.
 work already pass
 NP AUX V
 ‘The work finished.’

Qua can function either as a transitive verb as in (17), which has *cầu* ‘bridge’ as the complement, or as an intransitive verb as in (18). The verb *qua* in (17) can be preceded by the adverb *sắp* ‘almost’, and the verb in (18) can be preceded by an auxiliary *đã* ‘already’.

1.2.2 *Qua* can function as a prepositional coverb, as shown in the following examples:

- (19) Tôi nhìn qua cửa kính.
 I look through window glass
 NP V Cvb (P) NP
 Agt Path
 ‘I look through the glass window.’

Qua in (19) is a preposition which is the head of the PP: P *qua* + NP *cửa kính* in (19). This PP cannot be preposed as in (19a) because there is an intransitive verb in the sentence.

- (19a) *Qua cửa kính, tôi nhìn [PP e_i].
 through window glass I look
 Cvb (P) NP NP V
 ‘Through the window, I look.’

A prepositional phrase can be preposed grammatically when the verb is transitive, as in (20).

- (20) Qua cửa kính, tôi nhìn đường phố.
 through window glass I look road
 Cvb (P) NP NP NP
 ‘Through the window, I look at the road.’

In (20), the NP which is underlined is a complement of the verb. So the preposed prepositional phrase is grammatical. Moreover, a temporal or locative can be added to the transitive verbs. This additional constituent does not affect the preposed PP as in the following example:

- (20a) Qua cửa kính, tôi nhìn đường phố một thoáng.
 through window glass I look road a moment
 Cvb (P) NP NP V NP AdvP
 ‘Through the window, I look at the road a moment.’

1.3 *Cho* ‘give/ for’

1.3.1 *Cho* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (21) Anh đã cho tôi chiếc đồng hồ.
 you already give I clf watch
 NP AUX V NP NP
 Agt Rec Pat
 'You gave me a watch.'
- (22) Thầy còn cho thời gian để chuẩn bị.
 teacher still give time for prepare
 NP Adv V NP P VP
 Agt Pat Ben
 'The (male) teacher gives time for preparation.'

In sentences (21) and (22), *cho* 'to give' is a transitive verb, which can be modified by an auxiliary verb as in (21) or an adverb as in (22).

1.3.2 *Cho* can also function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following sentences.

- (23) Lan biểu một số tiền cho câu lạc bộ.
 Lan give 1 number money for club
 NP V NP NP Cvb(P) NP
 Agt Pat Ben
 'Lan gave an amount of money to the club.'
- (24) Anh ấy có khó khăn gì cho cam.
 he have difficulties what for suffer
 NP V NP Q Cvb(P) V
 Agt Pat Man
 'What are the difficulties that cause him trouble.'
- (25) Người ta cười cho đấy.
 people laugh for part
 NP V Cvb(P) part
 'The people laughed at (you).'

Cho in (23) functions as a preposition which is the head of the PP. In (24) *cho* is an intransitive preposition, which conveys the purpose of the verb, whereas in (25) it conveys the result of the verb. A prepositional *Cho* cannot be modified by negation, an auxiliary or an adverb, as in (23a), (24a), (25a, b).

- (23a) *Lan biểu một số tiền không cho câu lạc bộ.
 Lan give 1 number money not for club
 NP V NP NEG Cvb(P) NP
 Agt Pat Ben

However, in (23a) although it is ungrammatical to use the negator *không* 'not', it is grammatical to use *không phải* 'not correct' (23b).

(23b)	Lan	biếu	một	số	tiền
	Lan	give	1	number	money
	NP	V	NP		
	Agt		Pat		

<i>không</i>	<i>phải</i>	<u>cho</u>	câu lạc bộ.
not	correct	for	club
	NEG	Cvb(P)	NP
		Ben	

‘Lan gave some money, but not to the club.’

(24a)	*Anh ấy	có	khó khăn	gì	<i>không/ không phải</i>
	he	have	difficulties	what	not not correct
	NP	V	NP	Q	NEG NEG
	Agt		Pat		
	cho	cam.			
	for	suffer			
	Cvb(P)	V			
	Man				

In (24a), the negators *không phải* ‘not correct’ and *không* ‘not’ cannot be used preceding the preposition because it is an intransitive preposition. If the preposition is followed by a NP then the negator *không phải* can be used (23b).

(25a)	*Người ta	cười	<i>không/</i>	<i>không phải</i>	<u>cho</u>	đấy.
	people	laugh	not	not correct	for	part
	NP	VP	NEG	NEG	Cvb(P)	part

In (25a) *cho* cannot be negated by *không* or *không phải* ‘not correct’ either, because it is an intransitive preposition.

A negative, an adverb or an auxiliary verb can precede a main verb (25c) but cannot precede a prepositional coverb (25b).

(25b)	Người ta	<i>không</i>	<i>sẽ</i>	còn	cười	<u>cho</u>	đấy.
	people	not	will	still	laugh	for	part
	NP	NEG	AUX	Adv	V	Cvb(P)	part
	“The people will not laugh at (you).”						

1.4 Đến/tới ‘arrive at’

1.4.1 *Đến/tới* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(26)	Họ	đã	đến	rồi.
	they	already	arrive	already
	NP	AUX	V	AdvP
	“They have already arrived.”			

- (27) Chuyện tới tai họ.
 story arrive ear they
 NP V NP
 “The story reached their ears.”

Đến in (26) and *tới* in (27) is a verb, which can be premodified by an auxiliary verb as in (26).

1.4.2 *Đến/tới* can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples.

- (28) Đồng hồ chậm đến nửa giờ.
 watch slow until half hour
 NP V Cvb(P) A NP
 “The watch is half an hour slow.”

- (29) Chờ tới nửa đêm.
 wait until half night
 V Cvb(P) NP
 “Wait until midnight.”

1.5 *Xuống* ‘go down, descend, step down, get down, down to’

1.5.1 *Xuống* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (30) Tôi xuống núi.
 I descend mountain
 NP V NP
 Agt Dir
 “I descend the mountain.”

- (31) Nước thủy triều đã xuống.
 tide already descend
 NP AUX V
 Agt
 “The tide had already descended.”

Xuống in (30) and (31) is a main verb. It can be preceded by a negative, an auxiliary or an adverb.

1.5.2 *Xuống* can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following example:

- (32) Họ nhảy xuống sông.
 they jump into river
 NP V Cvb(P) NP
 Agt Dir
 “They jumped into the river.”

Xuống in (32) functions as a preposition followed by a NP.

1.6 *Sang* ‘cross, get (over), pass, be by’

1.6.1 *Sang* can function as a main verb, as in the following example:

- (33) Lan **sang** Tháilan hôm qua.
 Lan pass Thailand yesterday
 NP V NP AdvP
 “Lan came to Thailand yesterday.”

1.6.2 *Sang* can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples:

- (34) Anh ấy **chạy** sang nhà tôi.
 he run pass house I
 NP V Cvb(P) NP
 “He ran past my house.”

- (35) Chị ấy **nhìn** sang bên cạnh.
 she look pass beside
 NP V Cvb(P) NP
 “She looked beside her.”

In (34)-(35) *sang* is a preposition preceding a NP.

2. Only directional coverbs

Hoà (1996:144) mentions that “The category of direction is expressed by means of postverbs or coverbs that is to say, verbs which occur following the main verb and play a ‘secondary’ role i.e. *đi* ‘off, away’ when occurring after such a main verb of motion as *bay* ‘to fly’ or *chạy* ‘to run’. The verb *ra*, which ordinarily indicates a movement ‘from the interior to the exterior, from one state to another, from a void to existence’ i.e.

- cởi ra* ‘to untie, take off (clothes)’
đem ra ‘to bring out’
đem vào ‘to bring in’

There are some examples which are composed of a main verb and a directional verb, such as:

- chạy ra* ‘to run out’
đi ra ‘to go out’
nhảy ra ‘to jump out’
bước ra ‘to step out’
làm ra ‘to make’

nghĩ ra	‘to think it out’	
tìm ra	‘to find out’	
đẹp ra/lên	‘be more beautiful than before’	
béo ra/lên	‘to get fatter’	
bay đi	‘to fly off/ away’	
chạy đi	‘to run away’	
bỏ đi	‘to abandon, leave out, discard’	etc.”

Goral (1986: 375-376) states that “the directional verbs, i.e. *nghe ra* [listen-exit] ‘to understand’, *nghe không ra* [listen-not-exit] ‘cannot understand’, *không nghe ra* [not-listen-exit] ‘did not understand (what was being said)’ are ‘serial verbs’.

I agree with him only with a specific set of verbs (perception verbs). According to my study (1997:137-144) ‘Serial verb constructions in Vietnamese’ is “a sequence of verbs occurring together with a non-overt subject and/or a non-overt object. The sentence with the non-overt subject is claimed to be an infinitival clause. The non-overt subject of infinitivals will be represented as PRO whereas the non-overt object will be represented as *pro*, which is non-referential.”

The directional verbs function as the postverbs of the main verbs, they bleach the meanings by conveying direction, expansion, dismantling, separation etc. The perception verbs, i.e. *nhin ra* ‘to recognise’, *nghe ra* ‘to understand’, *kiểm ra* ‘to understand’ can be negated as Goral mentions, but with the motion verbs, i.e. *chạy ra* ‘to run out’, *đi ra* ‘to go out’, *nhảy ra* ‘to jump out’, *bước ra* ‘to step out’ the *ra* cannot be negated.

In this part, the words which can function as a main verb and a directional coverb are grouped in this topic.

2.1 *Ra* ‘go out (to)’

2.1.1 *Ra* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (36) Mồ hôi ra như tắm.
 sweat go out like take a bath
 NP V Adv V
 ‘The sweat comes out like taking a bath.’

- (37) Ra đi!
 go out go
 V Imp Mark
 ‘Go out!’

- (38) Vườn trà đang ra búp.
 garden tea Prog go out bud
 NP AUX V NP
 ‘The tea garden’s plants are budding.’

Ra in (36)-(38) is a verb. In (36) and (37) *ra* is an intransitive verb. In (37) *ra* is used in an imperative sentence. The meaning of this sentence varies according to the intonation of the speaker, which may convey command, persuasion or invitation. The imperative sentence may be ended by the imperative marker *đi*. In (38) *ra* is a transitive verb which is followed by the NP complement *búp* 'bud'.

2.1.2 *Ra* can function as a postverbal directional verb. It can have a comparative function as in (39).

- (39)

Trông	anh	béo	<u>ra</u> .
look at	you	fat	out
V	NP	V	Cvb(D)
	Pat		

 'You look fatter.'

In (39), the significant meaning of *béo* is 'fat' whereas *ra* 'out' is a secondary verb or postverbal directional verb. *ra* cannot be negated as a main verb can, but the whole VP *béo ra* can be modified by an adverb as in (40).

- (40)

Trông	anh	béo	<u>ra</u>	<i>nhiều</i> .
look at	you	fat	out	much
V	NP	V	Cvb(D)	Adv
	Pat			

 'You look much fatter.'

The motion verbs which take coverbs may be followed by either the source, or the direction, or the destination of the action, as in the following examples:

- (41)

Tôi	đi	<u>ra</u>	ngoài.
I	go	out	outside
NP	V	Cvb(D)	P
Agt			Dir

 'I go outside.'
- (42)

Lan	bước	<u>ra</u>	khỏi	nhà.
Lan	step	out	from	house
NP	V	Cvb(D)	P	NP
Agt			Scr	

 'Lan steps out from the house.'
- (43)

Tôi	nhảy	<u>ra</u>	khỏi	chỗ	này.
I	jump	out	from	place	this
NP	V	Cvb(D)	P	NP	DemP
Agt			Scr		

 'I jumped out from this place.'

In (41)-(43) the *ra* is a postverbal directional coverb. It can be followed by another preposition as in (41), or by prepositional phrases as in (42), (43).

2.2 *Đi* 'to go'

2.2.1 *Đi* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (44) Tôi đã đi Hà Nội.
 I already go Hanoi
 NP AUX V NP
 'I have been to Hanoi.'

Đi in (44) is the main verb of the sentence.

2.2.2 *Đi* can function as a postverbal directional verb, as in the following examples.

- (45) Anh ấy xấu đi.
 he ugly go
 NP V Cvb(D)
 "He is more ugly (than before)."

- (46) Anh ấy gầy đi.
 he thin go
 NP V Cvb(D)
 "He is thinner (than before)."

Đi in (45) and (46) is a postverbal directional verb which conveys a comparative meaning.

- (47) Lan chạy đi.
 Lan run go
 NP V Cvb(D)
 "Lan ran away."

Đi in (47) is a postverbal directional verb, which denotes the direction of the motion verb from the starting point but does not give the destination. It occurs sentence-final without a following NP.

2.3 *Lại* 'come, arrive (back)'

2.3.1 *Lại* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (48) Mai tôi sẽ lại anh chơi.
 tomorrow I will come back you play
 Adv NP AUX V NP V
 Agt Des Pur
 'Tomorrow I'll come back to play at your house.'

- (49) Con lại đây với mẹ.
 child come back here with mother
 NP V NP P NP
 'The child came back here with the mother.'

In (48)-(49) *lại* functions as the main verb, which can be preceded by the auxiliary verb *sẽ* 'will' as in (48). In (49) *lại* can be preceded by a negative or by an auxiliary verb or adverb, as in (49a).

- (49a) Con *không/ sẽ/ cũng* lại đây với mẹ.
 child not will also come back here with mother
 NP Neg AUX Adv V NP P NP
 'The child did not come/ will come/ also came back here with the mother.'

2.3.2 *Lại* can function as a preposition, as in the following example:

- (50) Tôi mang túi lại đây.
 I bring bag back here
 NP VP NP Cvb(P) NP
 Agt Pat Des
 'I brought a bag back here.'

In (50), *lại* is a postverbal directional verb.

3. Prepositional and directional coverbs

The words which can function as a main verb, a prepositional coverb and a directional coverb are grouped in this part.

3.1 *Về* 'return to'

Về can have three functions, which are:

3.1.1. As a main verb, as in the following examples:

- (51) Tôi về nhà.
 I return home
 NP V NP
 Agt Des
 'I return home.'

Về in (51) is a verb, which can be preceded by a negative, an auxiliary or an adverb, like the other previous arguments of the verbs mentioned above in (51a).

- (51a) Tôi *sẽ/ không/ cũng* về nhà.
 I will not also return home
 NP AUX NEG Adv V NP
 Agt Des
 'I will return/ did not return/ also return home.'

3.1.2 *Về* can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples.

- (52) Họ còn có nhiều ý kiến về chuyện đó.
 they still have many opinion about story that
 NP Adv V A NP Cvb (P) NP
 Agt Pat Gol
 ‘They still have many opinions about that story.’

Về in (52) is a preposition, which is the head of the PP. The PP *về chuyện đó* is the adjunct of the NP *ý kiến* ‘opinion’.

The PP can be preposed to the front of the sentences, as in (53).

- (53) Về chuyện đó, họ còn có nhiều ý kiến [PP e i]
 about story that they still have many opinion
 Cvb(P) NP NP Adv V A NP
 ‘About that story, they still have many opinions.’

3.1.3 *Về* can function as a directional coverb, as in the following example:

- (54) Khi nào anh ấy sẽ trở về?
 when he will return be back
 AdvP NP AUX V Cvb(D)
 ‘When will he return?’

Về in (54) is a postverbal directional verb. It conveys the destination where the interlocutors are. In this sentence there is no noun phrase following the postverb.

3.2 *Vào* ‘enter, go in, come in/ in, into, on, at’

The verb *vào* has three properties:

3.2.1 As a main verb, as in the following examples

- (55) Tôi vào nhà.
 I enter house
 NP V NP
 Agt Dir
 ‘I enter the house.’

- (56) Từ Hà Nội, tôi vào Huế.
 from Hanoi I enter Hue
 P NP NP V NP
 Scr Agt ‘ Des
 ‘From Hanoi, I went to Hue.’

Vào in (55) and (56) is a main verb, which can be modified by a negative, an auxiliary verb or an adverb, as mentioned previously.

3.2.2 As a preposition, as in the following example:

- (57) Con quay mặt vào tường.
 child turn face into wall
 NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
 Agt Pat Dir
 ‘The child turned his face to the wall.’

In (57) *vào* is a preposition preceding the NP.

3.2.3 As a postverbal directional coverb, as in the following example:

- (58) Tôi nhìn vào trong nhà.
 I look into in house
 P V Cvb(D) P NP
 Agt Dir
 ‘I looked into the house.’

In (58), *vào* is a postverbal directional coverb. It is followed by a prepositional phrase. The postverbal directional verb cannot either be preposed or negated, as in the following examples:

- (58a) *Trong nhà tôi nhìn vào.
 in house I look into
 P NP NP V Cvb(D)

(58a) is unacceptable because of the contradiction between ‘in’ and ‘into’. If there is a NP following the postverb *vào* as in (59b), it is acceptable.

- (58b) Trong nhà tôi nhìn vào bức tranh.
 in house I look into clf picture
 P NP NP V Cvb(P) NP
 ‘In the house, I looked at a picture.’

In (58b), *vào* functions as a preposition followed by a NP.

- (58c) *Vào trong nhà tôi nhìn.
 into in house I look
 Cvb(D) P NP NP V

In (58c), the postverbal preposition is ungrammatical. In Vietnamese the topicalised sentence as in (58c) is not used. This is ungrammatical because the verb *nhìn* should be followed by a NP or a PP.

- (58d) *Tôi nhìn không vào trong nhà.
 I look not into in house
 NP V NEG Cvb(D) P NP
 Agt Dir

In (58d), the postverbal directional *vào* cannot be negated.

- (59) **Làm** nhanh vào.
do fast into
V Adv Cvb (D)
'Do it quicker!'

In (59) *vào* is a postverbal directional verb functioning as an intransitive preposition. It bleaches its meaning to convey the degree of the action. There is no need to be followed by any constituent.

3.3 *Lên* 'go up, come up, rise, ascend/ up, upwards'

Lên has three functions, which are:

3.3.1 *Lên* can function as a main verb, as in the following example:

- (60) Mặt trời đã *lên* cao.
sun already rise high
NP AUX VP Adv
"The sun already rose highly."

In (60) *lên* functions as the verb preceded by an auxiliary verb.

3.3.2 *Lên* can function as a preposition, as in the following example:

- (61) Tôi treo bức tranh lên tường.
I hang clf picture on wall
NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
Agt Pat Loc
"I hung the picture on the wall."

In (61), *lên* functions as a preposition followed by the NP *tường* 'the wall'. Neither (61) nor (62) can preposed *lên*, as in the following examples:

- (61a) *Lên tường tôi treo bức tranh.
on wall I hang clf picture
Cvb(D) NP NP V NP
Loc Agt Pat

- (62) Đặt lọ hoa lên trên bàn.
put vase flower on on table
V NP Cvb(D) P NP
Pat Loc

"Put the vase on the table."

In (62) *lên* is a postverbal directional coverb, which denotes the direction of the predicate.

(62a)	* <u>Lên</u>	trên	bàn	<u>đặt</u>	lọ	hoa.
	on	on	table	put	vase	flower
	PostV	P	NP	VP	NP	
		Loc			Pat	

3.3.3 *Lên* can also function as a postverbal directional verb, as in the following example:

(63)	Các	con	lớn	<u>lên.</u>
	pl	child	grow	on
	NP		VP	PostV
	“The children have grown up.”			

In (63) *lên* is a postverbal directional coverb, which functions as an intransitive preposition, without any following NP.

4. Summary

The words which are called ‘coverbs’ are divided into three functions. The first function is the verb and all of the words mentioned at the beginning of this part can function as the main verb. The criteria used in testing for verbs are:

1. They can be negated by the negator *không* ‘not’.
2. They can be modified by some preceding adverbs: *còn* ‘still’, *cũng* ‘also’, etc.
3. They can be preceded by any auxiliary verb: *sẽ* ‘will’, *đã* ‘already’.

The second function is the prepositional coverb. I would like to claim that the words can function as prepositions provided that they precede *the NP*. The criteria used to test the verbs mentioned above cannot be used with prepositions, except the negator *không phải* ‘not correct’. It can negate preceding the prepositional phrases (P+NP). The prepositional words are *ở, về, cho, qua, đến, vào, lên, xuống* and *sang*.

The third function is the postverbal directional coverb which has two functions:

1. The postverbal directional coverbs can function as intransitive prepositions which can denote a comparative construction, (39)
2. The postverbal directional verbs can be secondary verbs, bleaching their function and meaning to denote only the direction of the main verb. They can occur sentence-finally or preceding a preposition or a prepositional phrase (41), (42).

There is a certain set of perceptual verbs, i.e. *nhìn ra* ‘to recognize’ or *nghe ra* ‘to understand’, which can be negated before *ra*. Goral calls them ‘serial verbs’, although I agree on this for only certain verbs. But the postverbal directional coverbs following motion verbs cannot be negated, and I do not consider them “serial verbs”.

The following chart is the summary of the coverbs:

	Main verb	Prepositional coverbs	Postverbal directional coverbs
ở	X	X	-
qua	X	X	-
về	X	X	X
cho	X	X	-
đến/tới	X	X	-
ra	X	-	X
vào	X	X	X
lên	X	X	X
xuống	X	X	-
lại	X	-	X
đi	X	-	X
sang	X	X	-

The following chart is the summary of Clark’s coverbs

	Main verb	Preposition	Direction	Adverb
ở	X	X	-	-
sang	X	X	-	-
lại	X	X	-	X
về	X	X	-	-
ra	X	X	-	X
vào	X	X	-	X
lên	X	X	-	X
xuống	X	X	-	-
đến	X	X	-	-
đi	-	-	X	X

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