

The English adverbial of time vs. the Vietnamese range topic of time

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Abstract. Differences between the function of the *adverbial of time* and that of the *range topic of time* may lead language users who are Vietnamese to the risk of mistakenly translating the English clause with the *A of Time*. A research has been carried on the basis of the theory of Topic-Comment presented by Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) to search for (i) dissimilarity with regard to word order when translating into Vietnamese the English clause with one or more adverbials including the *adverbial of time*, (ii) possible cases when native speakers apply the fronting of the *adverbial of time* in the English clause, and (iii) any potential change in the meaning they would like to convey with such fronting.

Key words: word order, fronting (movement), point of time, extent in time, sequence of events, adverbial, range topic, principle of end-weight, perceptions through feeling, Topic, Comment, topic emphasis.

Introduction

Somebody has translated from English to Vietnamese the commercial note “Have you had a Coke *today*?” by maintaining the word order in English, resulting in “Bạn đã uống Coca-Cola *hôm nay* chưa?” in which *hôm nay* can also be considered as an adjectival to be the *post-nominal modifier* of *Coca-Cola*. In order to avoid such syntactic ambiguity, the Vietnamese version “*Hôm nay* bạn đã uống Coca-Cola chưa?” is recommended. This realisation indicates that the *adverbial of Time* (abbreviated to *A of Time*) at the end of the

English clause in question should be converted into *the range topic of Time*¹ at the beginning of its Vietnamese equivalent. The above-mentioned example shows that differences in the role of the *A of Time* and that of *the range topic of Time* may lead language users who are Vietnamese to the risk of mistakenly translating the English clause with the *A of Time*. This is definitely the focus of this paper.

1. Aim and theoretical background of research

The research done for and reported in this paper has been carried on the basis of the theory

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¹called “Khung đề thời gian” in Vietnamese

of Topic-Comment presented by Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) [1]. The research aims at looking for (i) dissimilarity with regard to word order when translating into Vietnamese the English clause with one or more adverbials including the *A of Time*, (ii) possible cases when native speakers apply the “fronting” (Dyvik, 1984, p. 10) [2] of the *A of Time* in the English clause, and (iii) any potential change in the meaning they would like to convey with such fronting.

2. Scope and procedure of research

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the research is carried out under the following procedure:

First comes the search for examples of the *A of Time* either standing as the only modifier or occurring together with another adverbial, of the same or different type, at the end of the English clause, which in turn either exists as a simple sentence or is embedded as part of a complex sentence of one type or another.

Secondly, an American colleague proofreads with great generosity all the examples selected to guarantee that they are those that native speakers of English would normally say.

Then, the researcher tries her best to translate the selected examples into Vietnamese, grouping them into a number of categories as presented in the paper.

Finally, up to ten native speakers are requested to read for double check that the paper’s selected examples are normal to them and answer one or more of the following questions:

- When applying the fronting of the *A of Time* as in (29)a or (34)a in the paper, do native speakers of English mean something different? Respectively, how do (2)a and (35)a differ in meaning from (29)a and (34)a?

- How different is the meaning conveyed by (35)a from that of (36)a in the paper?

Following the view by Hurford and Heasley (1984, p. 15-16) [3] that sentences are “ideal” whereas utterances are “particular”, the research starts with the English clause containing the *A of Time* which occurs in the form of a simple sentence and part of a complex sentence; it then shifts to observe utterances in tokens of simple sentences² in a number of dialogues. Also, within the scope of the research is the *A of Time* in the form of (1) a close-class adverb like *tonight, sometimes,...*; (2) an adverb phrase basically with close-class adverb as head like *(just) then, (right) now,...*; (3) a noun phrase (abbreviated to NP) like *last time, every day,...*; (4) a prepositional phrase (abbreviated to PP) like *in two days, from tomorrow,...*; thus excluding all of other realisations (Quirk *et al.*, 1985, p. 489, 592) [4].

3. Result of Research

Presented in this paper³ is the result of the research in the form of four main sections: the first two present the obligatory or optional fronting movement of the English *A of Time* during the process of English-Vietnamese translation; the third covers some tips to translate the English clause with the *A of Time*; the last section reveals some native speakers’ perceptions through feeling on possible change

²as compared to utterances of non-sentences, eg. short phrases or single words

³Conventions applied in this paper are:

- Original English clauses selected as illustration are numbered, marked *a* and followed by the Vietnamese translated version(s), marked either *b*, or both *b* and *c*, etc.;
- The lexical items in round brackets, like “(lại)” in (3)b-c, may or may not be verbalized while those in square brackets, like “[what’s on TV *tonight*]” in (10)a, are embedded clauses;
- The three symbols “/”, “*”, and “?” respectively stand for “or”, “unaccepted” and “possibly accepted.”

of meaning when the fronting of the English A of Time is applied.

3.1. Cases of obligatory fronting

During the process of English-Vietnamese translation, the A of Time is **obligatorily** fronted usually from the end of an English clause to the beginning of its Vietnamese equivalent to perform a new function there: **the range topic of Time** – “the first part of a clause that clearly indicates the conditions constituting the frame of circumstance, time and space in which what is stated in the second part of the clause, the Comment, holds true” (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991, p. 82) [1]. The rule is applied under certain circumstances:

3.1.1. The English clause in the form of a simple sentence

3.1.1.1. With an A of Time in the final position:

- (1)a. I'll call you tonight.
 b. Tối nay tôi sẽ gọi cho chị.
 c. ?Tôi sẽ gọi cho chị tối nay.
 (2)a. What's on TV tonight?
 b. Tối nay TV có gì?
 c. ?TV có gì tối nay?
 (3)a. Why were you absent last time?
 b. Tại sao lần trước anh (lại) vắng mặt?
 c. ?Tại sao anh (lại) vắng mặt lần trước?
 (4)a. I'll pay you in two days.
 b. Hai ngày nữa (thì) tôi sẽ trả tiền cho chị.
 c. ?Tôi sẽ trả tiền cho chị hai ngày nữa.

Though it is not quite unaccepted, (1-4)c sound more or less unnatural to native speakers of Vietnamese. Thus, (1-4)b are much preferred. Sentence-finally, the English A of Time appears in the form of an NP, as in (1-3)a, or a PP, as in (4)a, whereas the Vietnamese A of

Time should be in the form of a PP, more strictly obeying “the principle of end-weight: the tendency for long and complex elements to be placed towards the end of a clause” (Biber *et al*, 1999, p. 898) [5], resulting in (1-4)d:

- (1)d. Tôi sẽ gọi cho chị vào tối nay.
 (2)d. TV có gì trong chương trình của tối hôm nay?
 (3)d. Tại sao anh (lại) vắng mặt trong lần họp trước?
 (4)d. Tôi sẽ trả tiền cho chị trong hai ngày nữa.

To native speakers of Vietnamese, (5-6)c sound unnatural. The preferred translated versions are undoubtedly (5-6)b, like (1-4)b, those that clearly follow the Topic-Comment structure (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1991, p. 23, 28) [1] prominently observed in the Vietnamese clause **the range topic of Time** of which is not in the form of a PP.

- (5)a. I had no driver's license/ did not have a driver's license before.
 b. Trước đây tôi không có bằng lái xe.
 c. *Tôi không có bằng lái xe trước đây.⁴
 d. Tôi không có bằng lái xe trong thời gian trước đây.
 (6)a. Why did Tom ignore us just now?
 b. Tại sao vừa rồi/mới đây Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình?
 c. *Tại sao Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình vừa rồi/ mới đây?
 d. *Tại sao Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình trong vừa rồi/ vào mới đây?

Since neither vừa rồi nor mới đây is an NP, no PP is formed as the result of the insertion of

⁴Trước đây, meaning “before”, can also be considered as an adjectival to be the *post-nominal modifier* of the NP bằng lái xe, meaning “driver's license.” Another reason why (6)c is not recommended is that it may lead to syntactic ambiguity.

trong or vào; consequently, (6)d is not as grammatical as (5)d.

3.1.1.2. With an A of Time included somewhere rather than in the final position:

(7)a. I now pronounce you man and wife.

b. Bây giờ đây cha tuyên bố hai con là vợ chồng.

c.?Cha bây giờ đây tuyên bố hai con là vợ chồng.

d.*Cha tuyên bố hai con là vợ chồng bây giờ đây.

e.*Cha tuyên bố hai con là vợ chồng trong/ vào bây giờ đây.

The preferred translated version of the vicar's declaration in the wedding ceremony held in a church is no doubt (7)b. With correct pauses applied in speech, though there is no explicit mark for the pauses in writing, (7)c might also be accepted; it is obvious that the insertion of a time expression in the form of an NP somewhere within the Vietnamese clause rather than in the initial position is far from common. Again, (7)d is unaccepted, for the Vietnamese A of Time can hardly take the form of an NP sentence-finally, as was already mentioned in 3.1.1.1., while (7)e is incorrect because of the same reason as (6)d.

3.1.1.3. With a sequence of two adverbials of Time in the final position:

(8)a. John had thirteen friends to tea on his birthday yesterday.

b.*Hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc vào ngày sinh nhật của John.

c.*Vào ngày sinh nhật của John có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc hôm qua.

d.?Hôm qua vào ngày sinh nhật của John có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc.

e.*Vào ngày sinh nhật của John hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc.

f.*Có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc vào ngày sinh nhật của John hôm qua.

g.*Có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc hôm qua vào ngày sinh nhật của John.

h. Hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc sinh nhật của John.

Even when it has the range topic of Time in the form of an NP and the remaining A of Time in the form of a PP, which is long and complicated enough to satisfy the principle of end-weight, (8)b is unaccepted, like (8)c, because the co-occurrence of the range topic of Time at the beginning and an A of Time at the end of the Vietnamese clause is impossible. This recommends the act of translating the remaining A of Time into the post-nominal adjectival modifier of tiệc, the noun meaning “tea” – a large meal in the early evening, in (8)h. This only approved Vietnamese version is also supported by the fact that the sequence of two time expressions is not highly appreciated both sentence-finally and sentence-initially in the Vietnamese clause, as shown in (8)e-g. Possibly accepted is (8)d, in which the range topic of Time in the form of an NP precedes that in the form of a PP, at least the “double topic” (Dyvik, 1984, p. 3) [2] avoiding the violation of the principle of end-weight.

3.1.1.4. With a final sequence of an A of Time followed by an adverbial of another type, of Condition (abbreviated to A of Condition), for example:

(9)a. You look lovely today in your new dress.

b. Hôm nay cô trông rất xinh trong bộ váy áo mới này.

c.*Trong bộ váy áo mới này cô trông rất xinh hôm nay.

d.?Hôm nay trong bộ váy áo mới này cô trông rất xinh.

e.*Trong bộ váy áo mới này hôm nay cô trông rất xinh.

f.*Cô trông rất xinh hôm nay trong bộ váy áo mới này.

g.*Cô trông rất xinh trong bộ váy áo mới này hôm nay.

Unlike (8)b, (9)b is fine because the co-occurrence of the range topic of Time at the beginning and an A of Condition at the end of the Vietnamese clause is approved. Again, the double topic of Time-plus-Condition in (9)d makes it possibly accepted, like the above (8)d. Not accepted is the opposite of Condition-plus-Time in (9)e, which is worsened by the flouting of the principle of end-weight. This may explain why (9)c is also unapproved. Still again, the final sequence of two adverbials, one of Time and the other of another type, is not quite accepted in the Vietnamese clause, as shown in (9)f-g.

3.1.1.5. With the translated A of Time being fronted even in utterances as part of the three following dialogues the first two illustrate the range topic of Time, which can be marked by *thì*, while the last one exemplifies the Topic⁵, “the starting-point for the message” (Halliday, 1994, p. 38) [6] being marked by là:

Dialogue 1:

Minister of Education: I resign.

Bộ trưởng Bộ Giáo dục: Tôi xin từ chức.

Prime Minister: You'll be free *from tomorrow*.

Thủ tướng: Kể từ ngày mai (thì) anh/ chị được tự do.

Dialogue 2:

Wife: Can you help me set the table?

Vợ: Anh giúp em bày bàn ăn được không?

Husband: I'm busy *right now*.

Chồng: Ngay bây giờ (thì) anh bận.

Dialogue 3:

George: How about dinner out?

George: Tối nay (thì) mình đi ăn tiệm chứ?

Beth: Thanks, but my essay is due *tomorrow morning*.

Beth: Xin cảm ơn, nhưng sáng mai là đến hạn nộp bài luận của em.

3.1.2. The English clause as part of a complex sentence

The above-mentioned explanations hold true here when the English clause is embedded in a complex sentence as it occurs as a simple sentence in 3.1.1.

3.1.2.1. With an A of Time at the end of the English embedded clause:

(10)a. Can you tell me [what's on TV tonight]?

b. Cho mình biết [tối nay TV có gì].

c. Cho mình biết ?[TV có gì tối nay].

d. Cho mình biết [TV có gì trong chương trình của tối hôm nay].

(11)a. I wonder [why Tom ignored us just now].

b. Tôi tự hỏi [tại sao vừa rồi/ mới đây Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình].

c. Tôi tự hỏi *[tại sao Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình vừa rồi/ mới đây].

d. Tôi tự hỏi *[tại sao Tom (lại) phớt lờ bọn mình trong vừa rồi/ vào mới đây].

3.1.2.2. With a sequence of two adverbials of Time at the end of the English embedded clause:

(12)a. His mother said [that John had thirteen friends to tea on his birthday yesterday].

⁵called “Chủ đề” in Vietnamese

b. Mẹ của John nói *[rằng hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc vào ngày sinh nhật của John].

c. Mẹ của John nói *[rằng vào ngày sinh nhật của John có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc hôm qua].

d. Mẹ của John nói ?[rằng hôm qua vào ngày sinh nhật của John có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc].

e. Mẹ của John nói *[rằng vào ngày sinh nhật của John hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc].

f. Mẹ của John nói *[rằng có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc vào ngày sinh nhật của John hôm qua].

g. Mẹ của John nói *[rằng có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc hôm qua vào ngày sinh nhật của John].

h. Mẹ của John nói [rằng hôm qua có 13 bạn đến dự tiệc sinh nhật của John].

3.2. Cases of optional fronting

During the process of English-Vietnamese translation, the A of Time is **optionally** fronted from the end of an English clause to the beginning of its Vietnamese equivalent to perform a new function there – **the range topic of Time**. The rule is applied under certain circumstances:

3.2.1. When the English clause ends with a sequence of an adverbial of Space (abbreviated to A of Space) before an A of Time:

(13)a. I heard that on the radio yesterday, too.

b. Anh cũng nghe điều đó trên radio hôm qua rồi.

c. ?Anh cũng nghe điều đó hôm qua trên radio rồi.

d. Hôm qua anh cũng nghe điều đó trên radio rồi.

e. *Trên radio anh cũng nghe điều đó hôm qua rồi.

f. ?Hôm qua trên radio anh cũng nghe điều đó rồi.

g. *Trên radio hôm qua anh cũng nghe điều đó rồi.

(14)a. Did you go to the movies last night?

b. Mày đi xem phim đêm hôm qua hả?⁶

c. *Mày đi đêm hôm qua xem phim hả?

d. Đêm hôm qua mày đi xem phim hả?

e. ?Đến rạp chiếu phim mày đi đêm hôm qua hả?

f. *Đêm hôm qua đến rạp chiếu phim/ xem phim mày đi hả?

g. *Đến rạp chiếu phim/ Xem phim đêm hôm qua mày đi hả?

Sentence-finally, the sequence of an A of Time after an adverbial of another type, especially an A of Space, is quite common in both English and Vietnamese, preventing (13-14)b from being rare; the sequence of a time expression before another adverbial is more marked, as proved by the less common (13)c and the unaccepted (14)c. Recommended to be the first version selected for translation are (13-14)d, with **the range topic of Time** and a final adverbial of another type; the opposite (13-14)e sound really strange because the order of **the range topic of Space** and a final A of Time is rare in the Vietnamese clause. The double topic of **Time-plus-Space** makes (13)f less rare while that of **Space-plus-Time** makes (13-14)g too unnatural to be approved. While the degree of acceptability is not always easy to determine in comparing (13)f with (14)f, the feeling of naturalness can be strengthened if the A of Time in (13)a-b, for example, turns to be a bit longer and more complicated in structure to meet the principle of end-weight, resulting in (15)a-b:

(15)a. I heard that on the radio yesterday morning, too.

⁶The word-by-word translated version (16)b' does not convey the real meaning of (16)a, failing to make native speakers of Vietnamese understand in the same way as native speakers of English do:

(16)b'. Mày đi đến rạp chiếu phim đêm hôm qua hả?

Did you go to the building where films are shown last night?

b. Anh cũng nghe điều đó trên radio vào sáng ngày hôm qua rồi.

3.2.2. When the English clause which ends with a sequence of an A of Space before an A of Time, either finite as in (16)a or non-finite as in (17)a, is embedded in a complex sentence:

(16)a. I wonder [why Tom ignored us on the street just now].

b. Tôi tự hỏi ?[tại sao Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình ngoài phố vừa rồi].

c. Tôi tự hỏi *[tại sao Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình vừa rồi ngoài phố].

d. Tôi tự hỏi [tại sao vừa rồi Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình ngoài phố].

e. Tôi tự hỏi *[tại sao ngoài phố Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình vừa rồi].

f. Tôi tự hỏi ?[tại sao vừa rồi ngoài phố Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình].

e. Tôi tự hỏi *[tại sao ngoài phố vừa rồi Tom đã phớt lờ bọn mình].

(17)a. He regrets [losing his temper at work this morning].

b. Ông hối tiếc [đã nổi cáu ở chỗ làm sáng nay].

c. Ông hối tiếc ?[đã nổi cáu sáng nay ở chỗ làm].

d. Ông hối tiếc [sáng nay đã nổi cáu ở chỗ làm].

e. Ông hối tiếc *[ở chỗ làm đã nổi cáu sáng nay].

f. Ông hối tiếc *[sáng nay ở chỗ làm đã nổi cáu].

g. Ông hối tiếc *[ở chỗ làm sáng nay đã nổi cáu].

The above explanations hold basically true here when the English clause is embedded in a complex sentence as it occurs as a simple sentence in 3.2.1. However, that (17)b is quite accepted considers the fronting of the A of Time

in (17)d as optional; that (16)b is possibly accepted casts doubt on the obligatory fronting in (16)d. It is recommended to translate the embedded clause from non-finite in English to a finite form in Vietnamese, i.e. the subject ông should be overt:

(17)d'. Ông hối tiếc [là/ rằng sáng nay ông đã nổi cáu ở chỗ làm].

f'. Ông hối tiếc [là/ rằng sáng nay ở chỗ làm ông đã nổi cáu].

3.2.3. When the English clause embodies a modal expression together with a final sequence of an A of Space followed by an A of Time:

(18)a. I am supposed to go to Hanoi this weekend.

b. Lẽ ra cuối tuần này tôi phải đi Hà Nội.

c. ?Lẽ ra tôi phải đi Hà Nội cuối tuần này.

d. Lẽ ra tôi phải đi Hà Nội vào cuối tuần này.

There are two acts of fronting during the process of translation: the A of Time becomes the range topic of Time while the modal expression *am supposed to* turns into a combination of the range topic of Modality *lẽ ra* and the modal verb *phải*, resulting in the double topic typical of the Vietnamese clause in (18)b. It is the sequence of an A of Space before an A of Time that makes (18)a common in English and (18)b accepted in Vietnamese, considering the existence of the range topic of Modality sentence-initially. At the end of the Vietnamese clause should be the A of Time in the form of a PP, as in (18)d, however.

3.2.4. When the English clause ends with a sequence of two adverbials of Time, "the superordinate adjunct (the one denoting the more extended period)" (Quirk et al, 1985, p. 533) [4] optionally being fronted:

(19)a. We'll meet tonight after the show.

b. Mình sẽ gặp nhau đêm nay, sau buổi biểu diễn.

c. Đêm nay mình sẽ gặp nhau, sau buổi biểu diễn.

This holds true even when there is an A of Space before those of Time:

(20)a. I was in New York last year before the first snow fell.

b. Tôi ở New York hồi năm ngoái, trước khi những bông tuyết đầu tiên rơi.

c. Năm ngoái tôi ở New York, trước khi những bông tuyết đầu tiên rơi.

3.2.5. When the English embedded clause is finite and has its adverbial of Sequence of Events (abbreviated to A of Sequence) (Tô Minh Thanh, 2011, p. 262) [7] fronted, i.e. converted into the range topic of Time, while the A of Time kept in the final position to meet the principle of end-weight, there exists a change in form during the process of translation from an NP, like *last night* in (21)a, quoted from Cook (1989, p. 7) [8], to a PP, like vào đêm hôm qua in (21)b-c. That (21)c may also be accepted shows how flexible the syntactic-semantic function of sau đó is in the Vietnamese clause: the range topic of Time in (21)b or the A of Sequence in (21)c:

(21)a. I thought it was right to come to a decision [when I next met them last night].

b. Tôi nghĩ đã đến lúc đưa ra quyết định [khi sau đó tôi gặp họ vào đêm hôm qua].

c. Tôi nghĩ đã đến lúc đưa ra quyết định ?[khi tôi sau đó gặp họ vào đêm hôm qua].

3.2.6. When the English clause has at least two Vietnamese equivalent versions the range topic of Time of the first can be marked by thì, like (22-23)b, whereas the alternative expression exists without thì, like (22-23)c:

(22)a. I can't answer your question right now.

b. Ngay bây giờ (thì) tôi không thể trả lời câu hỏi của chị được.

c. Tôi không thể trả lời câu hỏi của chị ngay bây giờ được.

(23)a. What do you usually do in your free time?

b. Lúc rảnh rồi/ Khi rảnh rồi/ Những khi rảnh rồi (thì) anh thường làm gì?

c. Anh thường làm gì lúc rảnh rồi/ khi rảnh rồi/ những khi rảnh rồi/ vào thời gian rảnh?

Such alternative use can also be observed in the following dialogues:

Dialogue 4:

Wife: Who is picking up the children today?

Vợ: Hôm nay (thì) ai sẽ đón con?

Husband: I've got a meeting at 3.30.

Chồng: Lúc 3 giờ rưỡi (thì) anh có một cuộc họp./ Anh có một cuộc họp vào lúc 3 giờ rưỡi.

Dialogue 5:

Tourist: Do you expect a lot of rain this month?

Du khách: Tháng này (thì) trời có nhiều mưa không?

Tour guide: It hardly ever rains in March.

Hướng dẫn viên: Tháng ba (thì) trời hầu như chưa mưa./ Trời hầu như chưa mưa vào tháng ba.

The above-mentioned explanations hold true here even when the English clause occurs not as a simple sentence but as part of a complex sentence:

(24)a. I'm afraid [that I can't answer your question right now].

b. Tôi e [rằng ngay bây giờ (thì) tôi không thể trả lời câu hỏi của chị được].

c. Tôi e [rằng tôi không thể trả lời câu hỏi của chị ngay bây giờ được].

3.2.7. When the English embedded clause is non-finite and has two Vietnamese equivalents which can both be marked by là, as in (25)b-c:

(25)a. I regret [drinking so much last night].

b. Tôi hối tiếc [(là) đêm hôm qua đã uống quá nhiều].

c. Tôi hối tiếc [(là) đã uống quá nhiều (vào) đêm hôm qua].

3.2.8. When the English clause has its A of Time referring to Extent in Time, not Point of Time⁷ (Tô Minh Thanh, 2011, p. 49-50, 105-106) [7]:

(26)a. John's sister has been in the hospital for a week.

b. Chị/ Em gái của John đã nằm bệnh viện một tuần rồi.

c. *Một tuần rồi (thì) chị/em gái của John đã nằm bệnh viện.

(27)a. They waited until the last minute.

b. Họ đã đợi đến phút cuối cùng.

c. *Đến phút cuối cùng (thì) họ đã đợi.

(28)a. Can I talk to you for a while?

b. Tôi nói chuyện với chị một lát được không?

c. *Một lát (thì) tôi nói chuyện với chị được không?

In summary, what has been presented in the first two sections helps to prove that:

As for both English and Vietnamese, the final sequence of an A of Time after an adverbial of another type, especially an A of Space, is quite common; also common is the A of Time of an English sentence being fronted to

function as the range topic of Time in its translated version.

As for the Vietnamese clause exclusively, (1) the range topic of Time is undoubtedly prominent, (2) the double topic is more common than the dual final adverbials, (3) Time-plus-Space is approved in the double topic while Space-plus-Time is more accepted in the dual final adverbial, and (4) the range topic of Time plus a final adverbial of another type, especially of Space, not the range topic of Space plus a final A of Time, is recommended.

The above-mentioned assertions hold basically true even when the English clause and its translated version occur not only as a simple sentence but also as part of a complex sentence.

3.3. Tips for translating the English A of Time

The analysis in the paper's first two sections supports the following tips to deal with the A of Time during the process of English-Vietnamese translation:

Tip 1: Apply frequently in the Vietnamese clause the range topic of Time as well as the double topic, the first member being Time; pay attention to the Vietnamese final sequence of two adverbials, the last member being Time.

Tip 2: Do not change the Topic-Comment structure when translating from English to Vietnamese, as in (29-32)a-b, if there is no compelling reason:

(29)a. Tonight I'll call you.

b. Tối nay tôi sẽ gọi cho chị.

(30)a. After summer comes autumn.

b. Hết hè thì thu tới.

(31)a. After a storm comes a calm.

b. Sau cơn dông là lúc trời yên, biển lặng.

(32)a. I like to sleep until noon, and sometimes I sleep later.

⁷Respectively, Point of Time (Thời điểm) and Extent in Time (Thời đoạn) are referred to as "Time position" and "Time duration" by Quirk *et al* (1985, p. 487) [4].

b. Tôi thích ngủ đến tận 12 giờ trưa, và đôi khi tôi còn ngủ trễ hơn.

This tip works even when there are two or more adverbials, including an A of Time, in the English clause in which the co-occurrence of an adverbial of Frequency (abbreviated to A of Frequency) (Quirk *et al*, 1985, p. 482) [4] and an A of Time is observed in (33)a-b:

(33)a. *In the United States* there is usually no school *on weekends*.

b. *Ở Mỹ* thường không có lớp học vào ngày *nghỉ cuối tuần*.

Tip 3: Try to distinguish the role of the A of Time from that of the range topic of Time, which may lead language users who are Vietnamese to the risk of mistakenly translating the English clause with the A of Time. According to Dyvik (1984, p. 10) [2], since “fronting of constituents is a way of topicalization” in the English language, *every day*, as the range topic of Time in (34)a, brings to the sentence a meaning that is quite different from that of (35)a with *every day* playing the role of the A of Frequency at the end of the clause in question:

(34)a. Every day five thousand people pass through that door.

b. Mỗi ngày năm ngàn người đi qua cánh cửa đó.

(35)a. Five thousand people pass through that door every day.

b. Năm ngàn người đi qua cánh cửa đó mỗi ngày.

In Dyvik’s explanation, (34)a simply indicates the number of persons who pass through that door every day without implying, like (35)a, that the act of passing through that door is performed by the same five thousand people. This is because, as the range topic of Time, *every day* does not mark *five thousand*

people in (34)a as “the given information.” Thus in Dyvik’s belief, the English language, like the Vietnamese language, does distinguish the range topic of Time in (34)a from the A of Time in (35)a, due to their different functions to convey meaning. Unfortunately, Dyvik’s assertion is still far from convincing: Are (35)a and the following (36)a synonymous (Tô Minh Thanh, 2011, p. 285-286) [7]?

(36)a. The same five thousand people pass through that door every day.

b. Cùng năm ngàn người ấy đi qua cánh cửa đó mỗi ngày.

3.4. Cases of fronting the English A of Time and their potential change in meaning

In order to find out satisfactory answers to the issue regarding the fronting of the English A of Time, as in (29)a and (34)a, and the difference in meaning that the two sentences may have as compared respectively to that of (2)a and (35)a, I have tried my best to contact a number of friends and colleagues⁸ whose mother tongue is English to ask for their personal opinions on which the following generalisation is based:

3.4.1. *In general, the unmarked position for the time expression is at the end; therefore, the fronting of the A of Time would be rather less common. The main difference would depend on topic emphasis. For example, each of the following pairs of sentences conveys basically the same message, but maybe there is a subtle shade of difference in meaning when the fronting of the A of Time is applied:*

The emphasis in (29)a is on *when the call will be made*; as for (2)a, the emphasis is on *the action of calling* as well as *who will be calling*;

The emphasis in (35)a is on *the number of people*, as for (34)a, the emphasis is on *the*

⁸who wish to remain anonymous in this paper

repetitive or ongoing nature of the activity. Such different shades of meaning are still correct in (37-38)a, with the existence of another time reference since then what is stated in the main clause holds true:

(37)a. *Every day since the building opened in 2002 five thousand people have passed through that door.*

b. **Mỗi ngày** từ khi tòa nhà đi vào hoạt động năm 2002 năm ngàn người đi qua cánh cửa đó.

(38)a. *Five thousand people have passed through that door every day since the building opened in 2002.*

b. Năm ngàn người đi qua cánh cửa đó mỗi ngày từ khi tòa nhà đi vào hoạt động năm 2002.

3.4.2. *More specifically, sentences beginning with the time expression would be used in formal situations and thus are not very common; they have much more impact than those with an A of Time at the end. An example is the famous message sent to American paratroopers on the eve of D-Day⁹: **Tonight** is the night of nights.' This is part of an announcement made to an audience, to add emphasis and importance to the time being mentioned and to the announcement itself. In everyday speech, the sentences beginning with the time expression might also be used to place emphasis on the time so that it is not forgotten:*

Dialogue 6:

Jack: We're going fishing on Wednesday and hunting on Thursday, right?

Jack: Bọn mình sẽ đi câu vào thứ Tư và đi săn vào thứ Năm, đúng không?

Kevin: No, Wednesday is hunting and Thursday is fishing.

Kevin: Không, thứ Tư (thì) đi săn còn thứ Năm (mới) đi câu.

But this is a flexible rule: it is just as acceptable for Kevin to say 'No, hunting is on Wednesday and fishing is on Thursday.' And this is a fairly common use of the item.

3.4.3. *As for when native speakers of English apply the fronting of the A of Time, it is more common to use fronting with the A of Frequency (every day, each morning, sometimes, most Saturdays, etc.), whereas fronting with the A of Point of Time or A of Extent in Time (tonight, tomorrow, yesterday, on Saturday, etc.) seems a bit less common. Therefore, (34)a sounds completely natural to native speakers of English, whereas the speakers would not use (29)a unless they really emphasized when they were going to call, or wanted to make a contrast (e.g. 'I usually forget to call, but tonight I'll (definitely) call you', or 'Most nights I call Sandra, but tonight I'll call you').*

3.4.4. *It is interesting to come up with the fact that native speakers' perceptions through feeling on possible change of meaning when the fronting of the English A of Time is applied are not exactly the same. Below is a personal opinion:*

“There is a full semantic range in syntax as well as lexicography to be considered in order to distinguish the meanings of the three sentences numbered (34-36)a: (35)a does not exclude the possibility of referring to the same group of people carrying out the daily habitual action; it is more suggestive of the situation described in (36)a than (34)a is, but is by no means confined to it; likewise, while (34)a is less suggestive of the situation in (36)a than (35)a, neither is it exclusive of it.

This semantic range is useful to summarize analogy with other situations (as if the topic

⁹This was June 6, 1944 when during World War II, the allies landed in France to begin the spread of their forces through Europe, under the command of General Eisenhower to liberate Europe from the atrocities of Hitler.

were about other doors or what the group of people do everyday) if applicable, or to accommodate any ambiguity on the part of the writer/speaker, but the grammatical tools are not required and **native speakers of English can use (34)a and (35)a in free variation**. Only (36)a is bound to the 500 people being identical as opposed to a different set of 500 people on any given day.”

And here is another personal opinion, stating that neither (35)a is more nor (34)a is less suggestive of the situation described in (36)a and that while it is possible for (35)a not to exclude the possibility of referring to the same group of people carrying out the daily habitual action, it is certainly not clear that the speaker is mentioning the same five thousand people.

It's time to come to the conclusion that, unlike Vietnamese, English does not distinguish ***the range topic of Time*** from the *A of Time*, for **(34)a and (35)a are synonymous** to the native speakers of English who have been involved in this paper, expressing their disagreement with Dyvik's belief. Also to all of them, (36)a is more specific than the other two because of the word “same.”

Conclusion

There are few situations where English sentences would begin with the time expression, i.e. the fronting of the *A of Time* is marked in the English clause. It is **topic emphasis** that determines the choice concerning the position of the *A of Time*: at the beginning of the English clause if the focus is *the time being mentioned*; at the end of the English clause if the interlocutor would like to focus on *the action itself* and/or *the person(s) who do(es) it*. Since the unmarked position for

the time expression is at the end, English sentences beginning with a time expression would be used in formal situations and thus are not very common. In everyday speech, however, native speakers of English may flexibly apply the fronting of the *A of Time* or not because both are just acceptable, with basically the same message added by a subtle shade of difference in the meaning being conveyed.

The range topic of Time is so common at the beginning of the Vietnamese clause that this case is definitely unmarked in Vietnamese. That is the reason why during the process of English-Vietnamese translation, the *A of Time* is **almost obligatorily** fronted usually from the end of an English clause to the beginning of its Vietnamese version, following the Topic-Comment structure prominently observed in the Vietnamese clause. Such fronting is not obligatory but **optional** in a number of cases:

+ When the translated version has its final *A of Time* in the form of not an NP but a PP so that the principle of end-weight may be obeyed strictly;

+ When there exists a final sequence of an *A of Space* before an *A of Time*, which is quite common in the two languages in question;

+ When the English clause has its final *A of Time* referring to *Extent in Time*.

Hopefully, what has been presented draws attention of those who are involved in English-Vietnamese translation to such a delicate choice of either maintaining the *A of Time* at the end or converting it into ***the range topic of Time*** at the beginning of the translated version. There is no doubt that such a choice, however small it is, plays a meaningful role in language learning in general, in the practice of translation in particular.

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Trạng ngữ thời gian trong tiếng Anh và khung đề thời gian trong tiếng Việt

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Việc không ý thức đến sự khác biệt về chức năng của *trạng ngữ chỉ thời gian* và *khung đề thời gian* có khả năng dẫn đến tình trạng người Việt dịch sai các câu tiếng Anh có chứa *trạng ngữ chỉ thời gian*. Dựa trên lý thuyết về Đề-Thuyết đã được trình bày trong công trình của Cao Xuân Hạo (1991), nghiên cứu này tập trung tìm hiểu (i) sự không tương thích về trật tự từ có thể xảy ra khi dịch sang tiếng Việt câu tiếng Anh có một hay hơn một trạng ngữ trong đó có *trạng ngữ chỉ thời gian*, (ii) những trường hợp người bản ngữ dùng *trạng ngữ chỉ thời gian* ở đầu câu tiếng Anh, và (iii) những thay đổi tiềm ẩn về nghĩa biểu đạt do sự thay đổi vị trí này tạo nên.

Từ khóa: trật tự từ ngữ, sự dịch chuyển về phía trước hoặc lên đầu câu, thời điểm, thời đoạn, chuỗi sự kiện, trạng ngữ, khung đề, nguyên tắc trọng hậu, cảm thức, Chủ đề, Thuyết, việc nhấn mạnh chủ đề.