

KIM BUI, ed. **A Contrastive Analysis of English and Vietnamese Verb Forms and Verb Classes with Teaching Suggestions**. California State University Dominguez Hills, 2002. Pp. viii, 65.

The book under review is a successfully executed attempt to describe and parse the differences between English (E) and Vietnamese (V) structures in syntax, specifically the subjects of verb use, verb forms, and verb clauses. The main focus of this significant work is to highlight, through challenging analyses, E verb structures that are problematic for V learners of E, viz. subject-verb agreement, tense and aspect, and marginal verbs such as the copula verb “be”, the auxiliary verbs “do” and “have”. In addition, one of the most substantial contributions presented is the comparison of case relations and corresponding verb classes. Each language has its own phonological, morphological and syntactical features that could present difficulties for V-speaking learners. To help overcome specific teaching and learning predicaments, the edition has a definite pedagogical value with its presentation of effective teaching strategies.

Vietnamese has three major dialects – Northern (N), Southern (S) and Central (C). Based upon B's use of “thô” (letter) (4) (“thô” indicates either the S or C dialect), ñau (sick) (47) (C), öa (31) (prefer) (C or S), it can be concluded that in addition to the accents of Central Vietnam, B also addresses those of the Southern and Northern Vietnamese dialects.

The introduction (1-2) instantly captures the reader's interest in the uniqueness of V by mentioning that verb forms in V lack subject-verb agreement, tense markers, and conjugations in verbs such as the copula “be”, and the auxiliary verbs “do” and “have”. Turning to a traditional contrastive analysis of V and E syntactic features of verb forms, the pertinent points of B's research and the examples she provides succinctly clarify the disparities between the two languages. One of the most intricate challenges in learning any language is that of determining the differences and similarities of tenses and aspects (12-15). In a discussion of marginal verbs (that can function both as primary verbs and secondary verbs, B gives examples using quite typical marginal verbs, accordingly in E and V, viz. “be, do, have”. I was impressed with B's examples of some stereotypically marginal English verbs such as “have”, that definitely cannot be found in

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Vietnamese. It is this significant difference between the two languages that presents a certain amount of confusion for English-speaking learners of Vietnamese as well as Vietnamese learners of English. In the case of B's interesting analyses of the E verb "have" in relation to the V "còu", it may have been more illuminating if she had revealed more details about "have" in terms of the aspectual use (although other uses are described adequately) (16-19). The aspectual "have" in E is also an important special case usage in present perfect, while in V only the temporal marker "ñãõ" is used for the past tense and present perfect tense.

Directing our attention to the subject of passive voice, we encounter a most intrinsic but also most intricate grammatical point that I know often perplexes language learners. B mentions the important distinction between E and V transitive verbs. She reports that, unlike V transitive verbs, E transitive verbs must be either active (A) or passive (P) (28). This is a particularly pertinent point that I believe B may not have discussed sufficiently. V passive occurs far less frequently than E passive. Although Vietnamese utilizes a large number of V transitive verbs, it is my observation that many of these would sound odd if stated in P. B asserts that there is no distinction of voice in Vietnamese. I agree with B that it is difficult to recognize Vietnamese A or P voice in the sense that "bò, ñõõic, do" are mandatory in Vietnamese P; moreover, these words are also used in a typical A voice. B mentions this issue but does not differentiate between the two. In my view, voice in Vietnamese is still recognizable by determining who is the agent or who is the receiver. In the case of "bò" (P), for instance, an action being "unfavorable" to the speaker is indicated, and "bò" (A) has a negative meaning; while in the case of "ñõõic" (P), an action being "favorable" to the speaker is indicated and "ñõõic" (A) has a positive meaning; with "do", the person who creates the action is emphasized. We can determine the A or P by checking whether the subject is the agent who creates the action (A), or the receiver (P), or the one who is affected by the agent (P); for example, "Jim boû bãin" (Jim leaves his friend) "boû" is the (A) and Jim is the agent, while in the case of "Jim bò bãin boû" (Jim is abandoned by his friend) (P), Jim is the receiver of the

abandonment of his friend. I examine the case of "ñöôic": "ñöôic" in the sentence "Toâi ñöôic ñi bieân" (I have a chance to go to the beach), (A) indicates opportunity, while "ñöôic" in "Toâi ñöôic ñöa ñi bieân" (I am taken to the beach), (P) indicates the action of being taken to the beach.

The word order of P and A in both E and V is remarkably important, a point which, surprisingly, is not mentioned in the book. In E passive, the sentence structure follows the pattern S (receiver) + be + PP + by + O (agent), while in Vietnamese passive, the structure follows S (receiver) + bô/ñöôic/do +O (agent) +V.

B has successfully proposed techniques to help bridge many of the enigmas in Vietnamese-speakers learning English and English-speakers learning Vietnamese. Regarding teaching methods, I am interested in B's suggestion of making posters outlining the concepts that were taught and placing them in the classroom where learners can refer to them on a daily basis. Additionally, she suggests that students report on the pertinent points of their groupwork and discuss with each other specific subjects focusing on the third person singular (40-47). This work is particularly significant for those studying as well as teaching the language.

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