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The Verb of Acquiring in Vietnamese: A Corpus-based Cognitive Semantic Study

A linguistic phenomenon in Mainland Southeast Asian languages which has been extensively investigated across languages are the grammaticalization and the poly-functionality of the verb of acquiring. The verb of acquiring is one of the verbs that are the most commonly used, the most highly grammaticalized and the most polysemous in Mainland Southeast Asian languages. Some examples of research works on this topic include Enfield (2003), Onkthiemsak (2001) and Takahashi (2003). The present study is different from the previous one in that it will examine the verb *đạt* 'to acquire' in Vietnamese by using the combination of two approaches, i.e. the theoretical framework of cognitive semantics (Reimer 2005, Taylor 1996, and Tyler and Evans 2003) and the corpus-driven approach (Gries 2006). It is generally known that the verb of acquiring across languages has both lexical and grammatical functions. It is found by Enfield (2003) that this verb can be syntactically categorized as follows: (i) a lexical verb, (ii) a preverbal modal/ aspectual marker (typically 'get to', or 'have to'), (iii) a postverbal modal/aspectual marker (typically 'potential' or 'completive'), (iv) a marker of complex descriptive complement constructions such as resultative, adverbial and potential expressions. This study limits its scope of study to the lexical verb category of the verb of acquiring only. As a lexical verb, it is found that the meanings of *đạt* are: (i) acquire, come to have, (ii) win, succeed, (iii) have got husband of wife, (iv) attaining rank, (v) know-and-have-ability-for, and (vi) okay, fine. It is argued in this study that the above lexical meanings of *đạt* are interrelated and are extended from the basic meaning by means of metonymic processes. The various meanings of *đạt* will be represented in this study in the form of a semantic network. Regarding the corpus linguistic aspect of this study, all occurrences of the verb *đạt* are collected from the corpus of actual language used in Vietnamese. The corpus linguistic approach can provide empirical evidence to some claims argued for from a cognitive linguistic perspective, such as the identification of the prototypical category and the form of a postulated semantic network.

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