Lexical Domain (vP) as Sentence Focus Domain
Key words: Focus Phrase, Topic Phrase, Wh-phrase

In this paper we provide an account for the contrast illustrated in (1) where the subject can surface either in the TopP domain (1a) or vP domain (1b). Specifically, we focus on the role of the element, glossed as CO. Duffield (2005) proposes that this element is head of an Assertion Phrase and that '… assertion, especially emphatic assertion is only generally felicitous if what is being asserted has already taken place, therefore, asserted events are understood as past events.' This assumption is not attested given that (1b) can be construed as imposing a future event. For example, (1b) is uttered in a context where people are not certain about who will meet Lan and the speaker, based on his/her knowledge, strongly confirms that Tan will meet Lan.

(1)   a. [TopP Tân đã [FocP có [vP gặp   Lan]]].
              Tan ASP   CO   meet Lan
              'Tan met Lan.'
        b. [TopP Đã [FocP có [vP Tân gặp   Lan]]].
              ASP   CO   Tan meet Lan
              '(Don't worry) Tan will meet Lan.'

The future interpretation is completely reinforced if we replace the aspect marker DA with the future marker SE as in (2).

(2)   [TopP Sẽ   [FocP có   [vP Tân gặp   Lan]]].
              FUT   CO   Tan meet Lan
              'Tan will meet Lan.'

In addition, Duffield's analysis fails to explain why the non-interrogative wh-phrase *ai* 'who', interpreted as an indefinite NP, cannot precede the element CO as in (3) while the proper name (or definite NP) subject can as in (1a).

(3)   [TopP Ai   đã [FocP có [vP   gặp   Lan]].
              who ASP   CO   meet   Lan
          *'Someone met Lan.'
          'Who met Lan?'

We propose that Diesing's (1992) Mapping Hypothesis fares better than Duffield's (2005) analysis in that the former can account for the data above. Diesing (1992) proposes that the material from the VP (vP) is mapped into the nuclear scope, while the material in the IP (TP) is mapped into a restrictive clause and that '...the presuppositions induced by the quantifier are somehow incorporated into the restrictive clause.' To be specific, on our analysis, the vP domain is the domain of the Sentence Focus and a sentence can surface either as a projection of a Topic Phrase or as a projection of a Focus Phrase, where the element CO is head of the Focus Phrase that takes the vP domain as its complement. Given that movement on Checking Theory (Chomsky 1995) is triggered by feature checking, it is plausible to predict that a language with poor morphology like Vietnamese would require no movement at all. This is born out as illustrated in (1b) and (4), where the subject stays in the base-generated domain, namely the vP domain.

(4) [TopP Đã [FocP có [vP ai gặp Lan]]].
      ASP   CO   who meet Lan
      'Someone met Lan.'

The contrast in (1a) and (1b) results from the movement of the subject out of the vP domain. This movement, on our analysis, is to evade the scope of the focus domain. The moved element will be in the Topic Phrase. Therefore, only definite NPs (or proper names in the data) are allowed to undergo movement to Spec, TopP, indefinite NPs are not. This is because a topic must be presupposed, and introduces old or familiar entities. An indefinite NP, by contrast, introduces a new entity into the discourse (Heim 1982); hence, it cannot function as a topic.

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