

# ADVERBS EXPRESSING FUTURE TENSE IN NORTH-WESTERN VIETNAM THAI LANGUAGE

Lu, Thi Hong Nham

Issues relating to tense and aspect in studies of Thai in North- West Vietnam is rather new. In an attempt to obtain more understandings of Thai, a language which had been used once as an official language in a big region of Vietnam; and in a wish that findings from this study may assist in gaining more understanding of tense in languages of the same group with Thai language, we have surveyed and researched of grammatical means (addressed here as adverb) that used to express tense in North-western Vietnam Thai Language (here address as Thai for short). Our survey is based on written and spoken Thai texts in North- West Vietnam. Findings from this study shows that there is tense distinguish in Thai, that is future/ non-future distinguish. In the scope of this paper, we will refer only to only adverbs used to express future tense, saving the discussion of adverbs expressing non-future tense for another chance. In dealing with this we put ourself in solving three tasks:

1. Defining a list of adverbs expressing tense in Thai;
2. Describing adverbs expressing tense in Thai;
3. Concluding of adverbs expressing tense in Thai.

## I/ LIST OF ADVERBS EXPRESSING FUTURE TENSE IN THAI

Even though there is almost no study of tense in Thai in north- western Vietnam, there are many studies on tense in languages of the same group with Thai. Findings from these studies are good reference for our study of future tense in Thai.

Inheriting achievement of studies of the same matters in languages in the same group as Thai, together with serveying more than 40 thai texts in both written and oral forms, we realise that, like languages of the same group, Thai use grammatical words to express tense meaning. The common features of them, also the features that we see as criteria for determining an adverbs expressing future tense, are:

- They are all grammartical words
- They express tense meaning

-They always associate with predicative in the sentence and together with the predicative to answer question: *co P da la?* (p+ predicative) (have + V+ed?)

In referring to the above criteria, we exclude from adverbs express future tense:

-Words that containing time meaning like: *mu un* (tomorrow), *ty na* (next week), *ty cai* (last week)...as they tend to be lexical words rather than grammatical words.

-Words that are homonymous with adverb expressing future tense but have other meanings and functions, like: *chi* (intend) in the sentence:

(1) *Ai y Uom nhao au ma mit lap cap mu mot lao, chi phan co anh Nuoï xia hiu hiu*

(Uom's father grasps the knife from the worship sorcerer, intending to cut Mr. Nuoï's throat immediately)

Two adverbs and two combination of adverbs are determined as adverbs expressing future tense in Thai. They are *chi* (will), *ao* (is going), *chi ao* (is about) and *chi/ ao + leu* (will be completed). It is necessary to note that

## II/ DESCRIBE.

### 1/ Chi (will).

*Chi* is used to express future tense in general. It appears in sentence structures like: "S + chi + P" (S= subjective). In normal circumstances, it implies that an action or event will happen in future, no matter a particular point of time is indicated or not. Also, there is no implication of the outcome of the action or even happening. For example:

(2) *Danh tinh buong, mua ni lung chi thu day hoc tan hau cak moi mua (45)*  
(it is estimated that this season, he will harvest six tone of rice each season)

(3) *Pu chau, cu chi mua lak co man ma phac pham xia (15)*  
(Tomorrow Morning, I will drag her here and cut her into pieces)

In (2) even it seems very obvious that the amount of rice the farmer will harvest has been calculated ( six tones), it is still not sure that he will get this amount, as it is just a calculation, it may happen or not happen exactly like that in the future. Again, in (3), the intention of the speaker is very clear, but then no one can assure that tomorrow, the speaker will still remain doing it.

In other words, in both case, the fact that action will happen or not is not indefinite.

Chi is also accompanied by other grammatical words that supplement more particular nuance to it in expressing future tense in Thai. For instance:

(4) *Bau mi y Men hu ban hau e mi na nang sau co chi dak (16)*

(If there is not Men, it (also) will not be easy for our village to gain fame)

(5) *Phu dau khun ngon cok men ngam hen hu e cu sup mau co chi day cu.*

(53)(Who pay the loan on time, if wanting to borrow more, (also) will be approved)

(6) *O, ai lung nhang chi ha det via mau (59)*

(Yes, I will (still) have to work)

(7) *Det bok bua met mua le chi sau de no (23)*

(Lotus flower (then) will decay when the season end)

(8) *Chua dau tup po chia lai, pung lan chang chi det hau ngay. (6)*

(When all documents are sufficient, we will solve the matter immediately).

In (4) & (5), co (also) associated with chi brings the nuance of condition: there should be the contribution of someone/ something to the happening successfully of the future action. In (6), nhang (still/ remain) associated with chi helps to understand that someone has done something, now she/ she is not doing it but will have to do in the future. It means that the action supposed to be happen in the future is the continuant of what have done in the past, even it may be not of exactly the same work. In (7) le besides chi showing that the action supposed to happen in the future is of amongst a range of actions happening: A happens, then B, then C...In (8), chang besides chi indicating condition for the action in the future: if A, then B; If not A, then no B.

It is necessary to realise that *co, nhang, le, chang* do not add time meaning to chi, however, they assist it well in expressing whether the action will happen in the future, conditions for the action to happen...and this bring a feeling of the certainness that the action will or will not happen in the future, or it seems to happen sooner or later in the future

## 2/ Ao (is going/ is about)

Ao is used to express near future: an action or event is going to happen soon in the reference to the point at which the utterance is made, no matter whether a particular point of time is indicated or not.

(9)

- Ha, kheo mung lot hong met da nhinh?
- Hong met lo ne, bau mi xang lo, -nhang chep mau.
- Khoi chang va ao hot chap met lo khay nay.
- Ao mo met da, cha mu dau lo.
- (- Granmom, are your teeth all fallen?
- Yes, and are painful.
- I think it is about to your turn (to die).
- Yes, it is about our turn. Just do not know when)

(10) Y Chinh ao au phua

(Ms. Chinh is about to married)

(11). Cheng pi mau ao hot da

(New year holiday is comming)

In all above examples, fact/ action mentioned is about to happen: an old person is about to die in the future, a girl is going to get married, new year is comming. Even though the point at which a fact or an action supposed to happen is not indicated, and that the notion of a near future" is very much depends on the speaker's point of view, there is always an implication that action/ event will happen soon.

## 3. Chi ao (is going, to be about)

Chi ao is used to express the near future tense. However, this particular future tense seems to be nearer than the near future implied by *ao*. Let's compare these two sentences:

(12). Nhang men y, *ao* hot da (walk fast, it is about to get to (the place))

(13) Nhang men y, *chi ao* hot da (walk fast, it is (almost) about get to (the place)).

In (12), ao imply near future in general. The time feeling it brings is that the action will happen soon, after sometime in the reference to the speaking point of time. In (13), however, chi ao indicates that the action almost happen at the time of speaking. This future is much nearer than those *ao* indicates.

It is necessary to understand that in the combination of *chi ao*, *chi* is not a compulsory factor. In (13), for example, *chi* can be excluded from the combination and the future meaning still be remained, be expressed by *ao*. However, *chi* well assists *ao* in emphasising the near future. Through our survey, it is noted that this type of adverb- combination can be found mostly in everyday conversation or in literature works.

#### 4/ Chi/ ao + P + leu/ da (leu/ da= adverb of past tense)

*Chi + P + leu/ da* is used to express future perfect tense: an action or event will be completed in the future in general. *Ao + P + leu/ da* on the other hand, indicates that action/ event will be completed in the near future in general and finally, *chi ao + P + leu/ da* expresses an even nearer future than that of *ao + P + leu/ da*. Study:

(14) Cho ni mu un, khoi *chi* mua hot huon *leu/ da*  
(By this time tomorrow, I will get at home)

(15) Cho ni mu un, khoi *ao* hot huon *leu/ da*.  
(By this time tomorrow, I will be about to get home)

(16) Cho ni mu un, khoi *chi ao* hot huon *leu/ da*  
(By this time tomorrow, I will (almost) be about to get home)

In (14), *chi...leu/ da* indicates that the action will be completed in the future. There is no implication of exact time at which the action will be completed. In (15), future tense indicated here is a near future in general whereas in (16), it appears the feeling that the point of time at which the action will happen is very near the speaking point of time.

### III/ Conclusion.

It appears from our survey and analysing that in North Western Vietnam Thai, *the use of adverbs to express future tense is compulsory*, because if one wishes to express an action happening in the future, he/ she will have to use one of the adverbs mentioned. He cannot say:

(17) Khoi pay cho (I go to the market) and argue that this is to say he will go to market, because here, there is no implication of future time. This action may happen in the past or in the present only. To put this action in the future, he will have to say:

(18) *khôi chi* pay cho (I will go to the market)  
or (19) *khôi ao* pay cho (I am going to the market)

Or (20) *khôi chi ao* pay cho (I am going/ about to go to the market)

Or (21) *khôi chil/ aol/ chi ao* pay cho *leol/ da* (I will/ be going/ be about to the market).

It is also clear in Thai that *there exist distinguish in using each adverb of future tense in Thai: chi can be used to express both far future and near future in general whereas ao is used to express only near future in general; chi ao is used to express the very near future and chil/ aol/ chi ao + P + leol/ da can express future perfect tense. This distinguish is rather subtle however, is a rather strict rule for ones who wish to use Thai language correctly and artistically.*

***Hanoi, 25/ 05/ 00***

*LU, Thi Hong Nham, 31 Han Thuyen St., Hanoi, Vietnam.*

*Tel.: 84 4 9716 228; Fax: 84 4 9716 801; Email: Thuongthao@fpt.vn*

## REFERENCE

- Nguyen Tai Can, *Vietnamese Grammar*, Social Science Press House, Hanoi, 1985
- Le Can, Phan Thieu, Diep Quang Ban, Nguyen Van Thung, *Vietnamese Grammar*, Volume II, Education Press House, Hanoi, 1983.
- Nguyen Ba Hung, Le Huong, *Initial Survey of Thai Tone System*, Linguistics Magazine, Hanoi, 1982, No. II.
- Hoang Tran Nghich, Tong Kim An, *Thai Dictionary*, Social Science Publish House, Hanoi, 1991.
- Nguyen Van Thanh, *Tense and Aspect Indicator System and Grammatical Categories of Tense and Aspect of Vietnamese Verbs*, Linguistic Magazine, Hanoi, 1992, No. II
- Nguyen Minh Thuyet, *Pre-verbs Indicating Tense and Aspect in Vietnamese*, Linguistics Magazine, Hanoi, 1995, No. II
- Vietnamese Social Science Association, Linguistic Institution, *Issues in ethnical languages in Vietnam and South East Asia*, Social Science Publish House, Hanoi, 1988.
- A. N. Morev, *Comparative Grammar of Thai Language Group*, Moscow, 1991