Prepositional vs. directional coverbs in Vietnamese

SOPHANA Srichampa
Mahidol University

In Vietnamese, there is a class of words that Clark (1978) calls “Coverbs,” which are verbs, prepositions and adverbs. I agree with her mostly but on some points I would like to propose a different syntactic analysis from hers. By coverbs in my study, I mean words which may function as verbs, prepositions and directional verbs.

Ông ấy ông Sài Gòn ra Huế thứ hai.
he to located Saigon go-out Hue Monday
Cvb(P)

‘He left Saigon for Hanoi on Monday.’
Thompson (1967: 230)

Mời ông vào.
please you go in
Cvb(P)

‘Please come in.’
Thompson (1967: 233)

Many linguists have studied these “coverbs”. Thompson (1967: 230-231), calls coverbs “Sequential Phrases,” treating them as coordinate phrases presenting situations which follow one another. Nguyễn Đình Hoà (1979:xiii) states “The category of direction is expressed by means of postverbs or coverbs, that is to say, verbs which occur following the main verb and play a ‘secondary’ role. They are reduced to the status of morphemes by the mere fact of appearing after full verbs: thus di will mean ‘off, away’ when occurring after such a main verb of motion as bay di ‘to fly off/away’, chạy di ‘to run away’.” Nguyễn Đăng Liêm (1975: 79) states “A defective directional verb is added to a verb stem to give it a directional meaning. It has the functional meaning of Directional Adverb in English, such as ‘up, down’..., etc. It still preserves its verbal nature because it can have a Location-Direction tagmeme of its own...”.

In the following list of coverbs, nos. 1-9 are from Clark, and I have added 10-11.

1. ô be in/ at, reside in
2. qua/ sang cross, get (over), pass, be by
3. lại come, arrive

MON-KHMER STUDIES 28:63-83
4. về return
5. ra go out
6. vào enter, go in, come in/ in, into, on at
7. lên go up, come up, rise, ascend/ up, upwards
8. xuống go down (to)
9. đến/ tới arrive, come, arrive at, get to, reach, to, till, until
10. cho give
11. đi go

These coverbs can all function as the main verb. I would like to further investigate their syntactic properties in the following functions:

1) Prepositional coverbs, abbreviated Cvb (P)
2) Directional coverbs, abbreviated Cvb (D)

1. Only prepositional coverbs

The following coverbs can function as a main verb or a preposition as in the following examples, but not as a directional coverb.

1.1 ở ‘be in/ at, reside in’

1.1.1 ở can function as a main verb as in examples 1-5.

(1) Tôi ở nhà số 10.
NP V NP
'I am at house number 10.'

The structure of the sentence (1) is schematized as in (2).
(2)

\[ CP \rightarrow C' \rightarrow IP \rightarrow NP \rightarrow VP \rightarrow V' \rightarrow V \rightarrow \text{"to be"} \rightarrow \text{nhaus so} \text{10} \]

\text{"to be" nhaus so 10}

\text{"house no. 10"}

\( \text{Ø} \) 'be at' is claimed to be a verb according to the following criteria.

(a) \( \text{Ø} \) can be preceded by an auxiliary verb, as shown in (3)

(3) \( \text{Tôi sê} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{nhaus so} \text{10.} \)
\( \text{I will be at house num. 10} \)
\( \text{NP AUX V NP} \)
\('I will be at house number 10.'

(b) \( \text{Ø} \) can be negated, as shown in (4).

(4) \( \text{Tôi không} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{nhaus so} \text{10.} \)
\( \text{I not be at house num. 10} \)
\( \text{NP NEG V NP} \)
\('I am not at house number 10.'

(c) \( \text{Ø} \) can be preceded by certain preceding adverbs, as shown in (5)

(5) \( \text{Tôi cũng} \quad \text{Ø} \quad \text{nhaus so} \text{10.} \)
\( \text{I also be at house num. 10} \)
\( \text{NP Adv V NP} \)
\('I am also at house number 10.'

1.1.2 \( \text{Ø} \) can function as a prepositional coverb, as shown in (6).
(6) Lan làm việc ở Khoa tiếng Việt.
Lan do work at Department language Vietnam
NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
‘Lan works at the Vietnamese Department.’

In (6) ở functions as a preposition which is the head of the PP: P: ở + NP: Khoa tiếng Việt. This PP is the adjunct of the VP. The structure of (6) is schematized as in (7).

(7)

\[ \text{CP} \]
\[ \text{C} \]
\[ \text{IP} \]
\[ \text{NP} \]
\[ \text{N'} \]
\[ \text{N} \]
Lan
‘Lan'

\[ \text{VP} \]
\[ \text{V'} \]
\[ \text{V''} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]
\[ \text{P'} \]
\[ \text{NP} \]

ở
"at"

việc
"work"

Khoa tiếng Việt
"Vietnamese Dept"

\[ \text{N'} \]

"to do"

lần

\( \hat{o} \) is claimed to be a prepositional coverb by the following criteria:

a) Its following NP cannot be promoted by itself to the initial position of the sentence as in (8).

(8) *Khoa tiếng Việt, tôi làm việc ở [NP e i].
Dept. language Vietnam I do work at
NP NP V NP Cvb (P)
‘The Vietnamese Department, I work at.’
b) The whole PP cannot usually be preposed as in (9), but it can if the sentence is modified by an adverb of time as in (10).

(9) *Ô Khoa tiếng Việt, Lan làm việc.  
    at Dept language Vietnam Lan do work.  
    Cvb(P) NP NP V NP  
    ‘At the Vietnamese Department, Lan works.’

(10) Ô Khoa tiếng Việt, Lan làm việc 3 năm.  
    at Dept language Vietnam Lan do work 3 year  
    Cvb(P) NP V NP AdvP  
    ‘At the Vietnamese Department, Lan worked for three years.’

c) It cannot be preceded by an auxiliary verb as in (11).

(11) *Lan làm việc sẽ ở Khoa tiếng Việt.  
    Lan do work will at Department language Vietnam  
    NP V NP Aux Cvb(P) NP  

d) It cannot be preceded by the negator ‘không’.

(12) *Lan làm việc không ở Khoa tiếng Việt.  
    Lan do work not at Department language Vietnam  
    NP V NP NEG Cvb(P) NP  

e) However, when the negator không phải [lit: not right] precedes the preposition, the sentence is grammatical, as shown in (13).

(13) Lan làm việc không phải ở  
    Lan do work not right at  
    NP V NP Aux Cvb(P)  
    Khoa tiếng Việt.  
    Department language Vietnam  
    NP  
    ‘Lan is working but not at the Vietnamese Department.’

f) It cannot be preceded by an adverb as in (14).

(14) *Lan làm việc còn ở Khoa tiếng Việt.  
    Lan do work still at Department language Vietnam  
    NP V NP Adv Cvb(P) NP  

The prepositional use of ở as exemplified above parallels the non-coverbal prepositions such as tại ‘at’ and bằng ‘by’ as shown below (15, 16).

(15) Hội nghị họp tại Hà nội 3 ngày.  
    conference hold at Hanoi 3 day  
    NP V P NP NP  
    ‘The conference was held at Hanoi for three days.’
(16) Tôi đi sang Trung Quốc bằng thuyền.
I go cross China by boat.
NP V Post V NP P NP
'I have been to China by boat.'

In sentences (15) and (16) 'at' and 'bằng 'by' are prepositions. They are heads of the PPs which are followed by NPs. The structure and the function of these sentences are the same as in sentence (6). In sentences (15) and (16), the preposing of the PPs is possible, but it rarely occurs except when the speaker wants to focus on the PP as follows:

(15a) Tại Hà Nội hội nghị đã họp 3 ngày.
at Hanoi conference already hold ba day
P NP NP AUX V Adv
'At Hanoi, the conference had already been held for three days.'

(16a) Bằng thuyền tôi đi sang Trung Quốc.
by boat I go cross China
P NP NP V Post V NP
'By boat, I have been to China.'

In (15a) and (16a) some other temporal or locative is also in the predicate.

Tại 'at' meets similar criteria to test the preposition as mentioned for ở 'at'. One additional criterion is that the negator không phải [lit: not right] can precede the preposition as in (15b) and (16b), but another negator không 'not' cannot precede the preposition:

(15b) Hội nghị họp không phải tại Hà Nội 3 ngày.
conference hold not right at Hanoi three day
NP V NEG P NP NP
"It's not correct that the conference was held at Hanoi for three days."

(16b) Tôi đi sang Trung Quốc không phải bằng thuyền.
I go cross China not right by boat
NP V Post V NP NEG P NP
"It's not correct that I have been to China by boat."

1.2 Qua 'cross, get (over), pass, be by'

1.2.1 Qua can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(17) Tôi sắp qua cầu.
I almost cross bridge
NP AUX V NP
Agt Path
'I almost crossed the bridge.'
(18)  Việc đã qua.  
work already pass  
NP   AUX   V  
'The work finished.'

*Qua* can function either as a transitive verb as in (17), which has *câu* 'bridge' as the complement, or as an intransitive verb as in (18). The verb *qua* in (17) can be preceded by the adverb *sắp* 'almost', and the verb in (18) can be preceded by an auxiliary *đã* 'already'.

1.2.2 *Qua* can function as a prepositional coverb, as shown in the following examples:

(19)  Tôi nhìn qua cửa kính.  
I look through window glass  
NP  V  Cvb (P)  NP  
Agt  Path  
'I look through the glass window.'

*Qua* in (19) is a preposition which is the head of the PP: *P qua* + NP *cửa kính* in (19). This PP cannot be preposed as in (19a) because there is an intransitive verb in the sentence.

(19a)  *Qua* cửa kính, tôi nhìn [PP e i].  
through window glass I look  
Cvb (P)  NP  NP  V  
'Through the window, I look.'

A prepositional phrase can be preposed grammatically when the verb is transitive, as in (20).

(20)  Qua cửa kính, tôi nhìn đường phố.  
through window glass I look road  
Cvb (P)  NP  NP  NP  
'Through the window, I look at the road.'

In (20), the NP which is underlined is a complement of the verb. So the preposed prepositional phrase is grammatical. Moreover, a temporal or locative can be added to the transitive verbs. This additional constituent does not affect the preposed PP as in the following example:

(20a)  Qua cửa kính, tôi nhìn đường phố một thoáng.  
through window glass I look road a moment  
Cvb (P)  NP  NP  V  NP  AdvP  
'Through the window, I look at the road a moment.'

1.3 *Cho* 'give/ for'

1.3.1 *Cho* can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:
(21) Anh đã cho tôi chiếc đồng hồ.
you already give I clf watch
NP AUX V NP NP
Agt Rec Pat
‘You gave me a watch.’

(22) Thầy còn cho thời gian để chuẩn bị.
teacher still give time for prepare
NP Adv V NP P VP
Agt Pat Ben
‘The (male) teacher gives time for preparation.’

In sentences (21) and (22), cho ‘to give’ is a transitive verb, which can be modified by an auxiliary verb as in (21) or an adverb as in (22).

1.3.2 Cho can also function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following sentences.

(23) Lan biểu một số tiền cho câu lạc bộ.
Lan give 1 number money for club
NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
Agt Pat Ben
‘Lan gave an amount of money to the club.’

(24) Anh ấy có khó khăn gì cho cam.
he have difficulties what for suffer
NP V NP Q Cvb(P) V
Agt Pat Man
‘What are the difficulties that cause him trouble.’

(25) Người ta cười cho đầy.
people laugh for part
NP V Cvb(P) part
‘The people laughed at (you).’

Cho in (23) functions as a preposition which is the head of the PP. In (24) cho is an intransitive preposition, which conveys the purpose of the verb, whereas in (25) it conveys the result of the verb. A prepositional Cho cannot be modified by negation, an auxiliary or an adverb, as in (23a), (24a), (25a, b).

(23a) *Lan biểu một số tiền không cho câu lạc bộ.
Lan give 1 number money not for club
NP V NP NEG Cvb(P) NP
Agt Pat Ben

However, in (23a) although it is ungrammatical to use the negator không ‘not’, it is grammatical to use không phải ‘not correct’ (23b).
(23b) Lan  biểu  một số tiền
Lan  give  1 number money
Agt  Pat

không phải  cho cảu lạc bồ.
not correct  for club
NEG  Cvb(P) NP
Ben

‘Lan gave some money, but not to the club.’

(24a) *Anh ấy có khó khăn gì không/ không phải
he have difficulties what not not correct
NP  V  NP  Q  NEG  NEG
Agt  Pat
cho cảm.
for suffer
Cvb(P)  V
Man

In (24a), the negators không phải ‘not correct’ and không ‘not’ cannot be used preceding the preposition because it is an intransitive preposition. If the preposition is followed by a NP then the negator không phải can be used (23b).

(25a) *Người ta cười không/ không phải cho đây.
people laugh not not correct for part
NP  VP  NEG  NEG  Cvb(P) part

In (25a) cho cannot be negated by không or không phải ‘not correct’ either, because it is an intransitive preposition.

A negative, an adverb or an auxiliary verb can precede a main verb (25c) but cannot precede a prepositional coverb (25b).

(25b) Ngươi ta không sẽ còn cười cho đây.
people not will still laugh for part
NP  NEG  AUX  Adv  V  Cvb(P) part

“The people will not laugh at (you).”

1.4 Đề̃n/tói ‘arrive at’

1.4.1 Đề̃n/tói can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(26) Họ đã đi thưởng.
they already arrive already
NP  AUX  V  AdvP

“They have already arrived.”
(27) Chuyển tôi tai họ.
story arrive ear they
NP V NP
“The story reached their ears.”

Đến in (26) and tôi in (27) is a verb, which can be premodified by an auxiliary verb as in (26).

1.4.2 Đến/tôi can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples.

(28) Đờng hồ chăm đến nửa giờ.
watch slow until half hour
NP V Cvb(P) A NP
“The watch is half an hour slow.”

(29) Chờ tôi nửa đêm.
wait until half night
V Cvb(P) NP
“Wait until midnight.”

1.5 Xuống ‘go down, descend, step down, get down, down to’

1.5.1 Xuống can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(30) Tôi xuống núi.
I descend mountain
NP V NP
Agt Dir
“I descend the mountain.”

(31) Nước thủy triều đã xuống.
tide already descend
NP AUX V
Agt
“The tide had already descended.”

Xuống in (30) and (31) is a main verb. It can be preceded by a negative, an auxiliary or an adverb.

1.5.2 Xuống can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following example:

(32) Họ nhảy xuống sông.
they jump into river
NP V Cvb(P) NP
Agt Dir
“They jumped into the river.”
Xử dụng in (32) functions as a preposition followed by a NP.

1.6 Sang ‘cross, get (over), pass, be by’

1.6.1 Sang can function as a main verb, as in the following example:

(33) Lan sang Thái Lan hôm qua.
     Lan pass Thailand yesterday
     NP V NP AdvP
     “Lan came to Thailand yesterday.”

1.6.2 Sang can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples:

(34) Anh ấy chạy sang nhà tôi.
     he run pass house I
     NP V Cvb(P) NP
     “He ran past my house.”

(35) Chỉ ấy nhìn sang bên cạnh.
     she look pass beside
     NP V Cvb(P) NP
     “She looked beside her.”

In (34)-(35) sang is a preposition preceding a NP.

2. Only directional coverbs

Hoà (1996:144) mentions that “The category of direction is expressed by means of postverbs or coverbs that is to say, verbs which occur following the main verb and play a ‘secondary’ role i.e. đi ‘off, away’ when occurring after such a main verb of motion as bay ‘to fly’ or chạy ‘to run’. The verb ra, which ordinarily indicates a movement ‘from the interior to the exterior, from one state to another, from a void to existence’ i.e.

cởi ra ‘to untie, take off (clothes)’
dem ra ‘to bring out’
dem vào ‘to bring in’

There are some examples which are composed of a main verb and a directional verb, such as:

chạy ra ‘to run out’
di ra ‘to go out’
nhảy ra ‘to jump out’
butóc ra ‘to step out’
làm ra ‘to make’
nghĩ ra ‘to think it out’
tìm ra ‘to find out’
dep ra/lên ‘be more beautiful than before’
béo ra/lên ‘to get fatter’
bay đi ‘to fly off/away’
chay đi ‘to run away’
bỏ đi ‘to abandon, leave out, discard’ etc.”

Goral (1986: 375-376) states that “the directional verbs, i.e. nghe ra [listen-exit] ‘to understand’, nghe không ra [listen-not-exit] ‘cannot understand’, không nghe ra [not-listen-exit] ‘did not understand (what was being said)’ are ‘serial verbs’.

I agree with him only with a specific set of verbs (perception verbs). According to my study (1997:137-144) ‘Serial verb constructions in Vietnamese’ is “a sequence of verbs occurring together with a non-overt subject and/or a non-overt object. The sentence with the non-overt subject is claimed to be an infinitival clause. The non-overt subject of infinitivals will be represented as PRO whereas the non-overt object will be represented as pro, which is non-referential.”

The directional verbs function as the postverbs of the main verbs, they bleach the meanings by conveying direction, expansion, dismantling, separation etc. The perception verbs, i.e. nhìn ra ‘to recognise’, nghe ra ‘to understand’, kiểm ra ‘to understand’ can be negated as Goral mentions, but with the motion verbs, i.e. chày ra ‘to run out’, đi ra ‘to go out’, nhảy ra ‘to jump out’, bước ra ‘to step out’ the ra cannot be negated.

In this part, the words which can function as a main verb and a directional coverb are grouped in this topic.

2.1 Ra ‘go out (to)’

2.1.1 Ra can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(36) Mồ hôi ra như tấm.
    sweat go out like take a bath
    NP V Adv V
    ‘The sweat comes out like taking a bath.’

(37) Ra đi!
    go out go
    V Imp Mark
    ‘Go out!’

(38) Vườn trà đăng ra búp.
    garden tea Prog go out bud
    NP AUX V NP
    ‘The tea garden’s plants are budding.’
Ra in (36)-(38) is a verb. In (36) and (37) ra is an intransitive verb. In (37) ra is used in an imperative sentence. The meaning of this sentence varies according to the intonation of the speaker, which may convey command, persuasion or invitation. The imperative sentence may be ended by the imperative marker đi. In (38) ra is a transitive verb which is followed by the NP complement bưp ‘bud’.

2.1.2 Ra can function as a postverbal directional verb. It can have a comparative function as in (39).

(39) Trong anh béo ra.
look at you fat out
V NP V Cvb(D)
Pat
‘You look fatter.’

In (39), the significant meaning of béo is ‘fat’ whereas ra ‘out’ is a secondary verb or postverbal directional verb. ra cannot be negated as a main verb can, but the whole VP béo ra can be modified by an adverb as in (40).

(40) Trong anh béo ra nhiêu.
look at you fat out much
V NP V Cvb(D)Adv
Pat
‘You look much fatter.’

The motion verbs which take coverbs may be followed by either the source, or the direction, or the destination of the action, as in the following examples:

(41) Tôi đi ra ngoài.
I go out outside
NP V Cvb(D) P
Agt Dir
‘I go outside.’

(42) Lan bước ra khỏi nhà.
Lan step out from house
NP V Cvb(D)P NP
Agt Scr
‘Lan steps out from the house.’

(43) Tôi nhảy ra khỏi chỗ này.
I jump out from place this
NP V Cvb(D)P NP DemP
Agt Scr
‘I jumped out from this place.’

In (41)-(43) the ra is a postverbal directional coverb. It can be followed by another preposition as in (41), or by prepositional phrases as in (42), (43).
2.2 \textbf{Di} ‘to go’

2.2.1 \textbf{Di} can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(44) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Tối & đã & đi \text{Hà Nội}.
\hline
I & already & go \text{Hanoi}
\hline
NP & AUX & V & NP
\hline
I have been to Hanoi.
\end{tabular}

\textit{Di} in (44) is the main verb of the sentence.

2.2.2 \textbf{Di} can function as a postverbal directional verb, as in the following examples.

(45) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Anh ấy & xấu & đi.
\hline
he & ugly & go
\hline
NP & V & \text{Cvb(D)}
\hline
“He is more ugly (than before).”
\end{tabular}

(46) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Anh ấy & gầy & đi.
\hline
he & thin & go
\hline
NP & V & \text{Cvb(D)}
\hline
“He is thinner (than before).”
\end{tabular}

\textit{Di} in (45) and (46) is a postverbal directional verb which conveys a comparative meaning.

(47) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Lan & chạy & đi.
\hline
Lan & run & go
\hline
NP & V & \text{Cvb(D)}
\hline
“Lan ran away.”
\end{tabular}

\textit{Di} in (47) is a postverbal directional verb, which denotes the direction of the motion verb from the starting point but does not give the destination. It occurs sentence-final without a following NP.

2.3 \textbf{Lai} ‘come, arrive (back)’

2.3.1 \textbf{Lai} can function as a main verb, as in the following examples:

(48) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Mai & tối & sẽ & lại & anh & chơi.
\hline
tomorrow & I & will & come back & you & play
\hline
Adv & NP & AUX & V & NP & V
\hline
Agt & Des & Pur
\hline
‘Tomorrow I’ll come back to play at your house.’
\end{tabular}

(49) \begin{tabular}{p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}p{3cm}}
Con & lại & đây & với & mẹ.
\hline
child & come back & here & with & mother
\hline
NP & V & NP & P & NP
\hline
‘The child came back here with the mother.’
\end{tabular}
In (48)-(49) lai functions as the main verb, which can be preceded by the auxiliary verb sê ‘will’ as in (48). In (49) lai can be preceded by a negative or by an auxiliary verb or adverb, as in (49a).

(49a) Con không/ sê/ cũng lai đây với mẹ.
     child not will also come back here with mother
NP   Neg  AUX  Adv  V    NP  P   NP
     ‘The child did not come/ will come/ also came back here with the mother.’

2.3.2 Lai can function as a preposition, as in the following example:

(50) Tôi mang túi lai đây.
     I bring bag back here
NP   VP  NP  Cvb(P)  NP
Agt  Pat  Des
     ‘I brought a bag back here.’

In (50), lai is a postverbal directional verb.

3. Prepositional and directional coverbs

The words which can function as a main verb, a prepositional coverb and a directional coverb are grouped in this part.

3.1 Về ‘return to’

Về can have three functions, which are:

3.1.1. As a main verb, as in the following examples:

(51) Tôi về nhà.
     I return home
NP   V     NP
Agt  Des
     ‘I return home.’

Về in (51) is a verb, which can be preceded by a negative, an auxiliary or an adverb, like the other previous arguments of the verbs mentioned above in (51a).

(51a) Tôi sê/ không/ cũng về nhà.
     I will not also return home
NP   AUX  NEG  Adv  V    NP
Agt  Des
     ‘I will return/ did not return/ also return home.’

3.1.2 Về can function as a prepositional coverb, as in the following examples.
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(52) Họ còn có nhiều ý kiến về chuyện đó.
they still have many opinion about story that
NP Adv V A NP Cvb (P) NP
Agt Pat Gol
'They still have many opinions about that story.'

Về in (52) is a preposition, which is the head of the PP. The PP về chuyện đó is the adjunct of the NP ý kiến 'opinion'.

The PP can be preposed to the front of the sentences, as in (53).

(53) Về chuyện đó, họ còn có nhiều ý kiến [PP e i]
about story that they still have many opinion
Cvb(P) NP NP Adv V A NP
'About that story, they still have many opinions.'

3.1.3 Về can function as a directional coverb, as in the following example:

(54) Khi nào anh ấy sẽ trở về?
when he will return be back
AdvP NP AUX V Cvb(D)
'When will he return?'

Về in (54) is a postverbal directional verb. It conveys the destination where the interlocutors are. In this sentence there is no noun phrase following the postverb.

3.2 Vào 'enter, go in, come in/ in, into, on, at'

The verb vào has three properties:

3.2.1 As a main verb, as in the following examples

(55) Tôi vào nhà.
I enter house
NP V NP
Agt Dir
'I enter the house.'

(56) Từ Hanoi, tôi vào Huế.
from Hanoi I enter Hue
P NP NP V NP
Scr Agt ' Des
'From Hanoi, I went to Hue.'

Vào in (55) and (56) is a main verb, which can be modified by a negative, an auxiliary verb or an adverb, as mentioned previously.
3.2.2 As a preposition, as in the following example:

(57) Con quay mặt vào tường.
    child turn face into wall
    Agt Pat Dir

'The child turned his face to the wall.'

In (57) vào is a preposition preceding the NP.

3.2.3 As a postverbal directional coverb, as in the following example:

(58) Tôi nhìn vào trong nhà.
    I look into in house
    P V Cvb(D) P NP
    Agt Dir
    "I looked into the house."

In (58), vào is a postverbal directional coverb. It is followed by a prepositional phrase. The postverbal directional verb cannot either be preposed or negated, as in the following examples:

(58a) *Trong nhà tôi nhìn vào.
    in house I look into
    P NP NP V Cvb(D)

(58a) is unacceptable because of the contradiction between 'in' and 'into'.

If there is a NP following the postverb vào as in (59b), it is acceptable.

(58b) Trong nhà tôi nhìn vào bức tranh.
    in house I look into clf picture
    P NP NP V Cvb(P) NP
    ‘In the house, I looked at a picture.’

In (58b), vào functions as a preposition followed by a NP.

(58c) *Vào trong nhà tôi nhìn.
    into in house I look
    Cvb(D) P NP NP V

In (58c), the postverbal preposition is ungrammatical. In Vietnamese the topicalised sentence as in (58c) is not used. This is ungrammatical because the verb nhìn should be followed by a NP or a PP.

(58d) Tôi nhìn không vào trong nhà.
    I look not into in house
    NP V NEG Cvb(D) P NP
    Agt Dir

In (58d), the postverbal directional vào cannot be negated.
(59) Làn nhanh vào.
do fast into
V Adv Cvb (D)
‘Do it quicker!’

In (59) vào is a postverbal directional verb functioning as an intransitive preposition. It bleaches its meaning to convey the degree of the action. There is no need to be followed by any constituent.

3.3 Lên ‘go up, come up, rise, ascend/ up, upwards’

Lên has three functions, which are:

3.3.1 Lên can function as a main verb, as in the following example:

(60) Mật trời đã lên cao.
sun already rise high
NP AUX VP Adv
“The sun already rose highly.”

In (60) lên functions as the verb preceded by an auxiliary verb.

3.3.2 Lên can function as a preposition, as in the following example:

(61) Tôi treo bức tranh lên tường.
I hang clf picture on wall
NP V NP Cvb(P) NP
Agt Pat Loc
“I hung the picture on the wall.”

In (61), lên functions as a preposition followed by the NP tường ‘the wall’. Neither (61) nor (62) can preposed lên, as in the following examples:

(61a) *Lên tường tôi treo bức tranh.
on wall I hang clf picture
Cvb(d) NP NP V NP
Loc Agt Pat

(62) Đặt lọ hoa lên trên bàn.
put vase flower on on table
V NP Cvb(D) P NP
Pat Loc
“Put the vase on the table.”

In (62) lên is a postverbal directional coverb, which denotes the direction of the predicate.
3.3.3 *Lên trên bàn đặt lọ hoa.

on on table put vase flower
PostV P NP VP NP
Loc Pat

In (63) lên is a postverbal directional coverb, which functions as an intransitive preposition, without any following NP.

4. Summary

The words which are called ‘coverbs’ are divided into three functions. The first function is the verb and all of the words mentioned at the beginning of this part can function as the main verb. The criteria used in testing for verbs are:

1. They can be negated by the negator không ‘not’.

2. They can be modified by some preceding adverbs: còn ‘still’, cũng ‘also’, etc.

3. They can be preceded by any auxiliary verb: sẽ ‘will’, đã ‘already’.

The second function is the prepositional coverb. I would like to claim that the words can function as prepositions provided that they precede the NP. The criteria used to test the verbs mentioned above cannot be used with prepositions, except the negator không phải ‘not correct’. It can negate preceding the prepositional phrases (P+NP). The prepositional words are ở, về, cho, qua, đến, vào, lên, xuống and sang.

The third function is the postverbal directional coverb which has two functions:

1. The postverbal directional coverbs can function as intransitive prepositions which can denote a comparative construction, (39)

2. The postverbal directional verbs can be secondary verbs, bleaching their function and meaning to denote only the direction of the main verb. They can occur sentence-finallly or preceding a preposition or a prepositional phrase (41), (42).
There is a certain set of perceptional verbs, i.e. *nhìn ra* ‘to recognize’ or *nghe ra* ‘to understand’, which can be negated before *ra*. Goral calls them ‘serial verbs’, although I agree on this for only certain verbs. But the postverbal directional coverbs following motion verbs cannot be negated, and I do not consider them “serial verbs”.

The following chart is the summary of the coverbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Main verb</th>
<th>Prepositional coverbs</th>
<th>Postverbal directional coverbs</th>
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<tr>
<td>ṣ</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>qua</td>
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<tr>
<td>sang</td>
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The following chart is the summary of Clark’s coverbs

<table>
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<th>Preposition</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
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REFERENCES


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Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development
Mahidol University at Salaya
Nakhon Pathom 73170