PROGRESSION MARKERS IN VIETNAMESE NARRATIVE

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Abstract

This article aims to study the progression markers in six Vietnamese folktales. Progression markers refer to the grammatical devices that characterize any happenings that push the story forward. These markers highlight the temporal sequence of succeeding events, which form the backbone, or storyline of the Vietnamese folktales. They are *rồi* 'already', *xoan* 'finish', *đoạn* 'end, terminate', *thì* 'then', *bèn* 'then, consequence', and *đã* 'have experienced'. The paper begins with the structural description of these progression markers and proceeds to their discourse functions both on the narrative timeline and out of the line. As the default timeframe of the narrative is past time or accomplished time, when these markers occur in past time, they indicate temporal succession and a cause-effect relationship of foregrounded events. In projected time as in quotations, the progression markers *rồi*, *xoan*, *đoạn*, *thì*, *bèn*, and *đã* are compared with the progression markers *lǽːw, sèt, còp, kɔ̂ː, cuŋ, dâːj* in Thai respectively to show that despite the morphological difference, at the level of discourse syntax, their discourse structures are quite common.

Introduction

Certain events in a narrative discourse are given special prominence within that discourse. They are more important to the development of the plot or theme of the narrative than are others. These events are sequenced and chronologically ordered, i.e., the first point mentioned precedes the second in the narrative timeline. Longacre (1996:9) posits the temporal succession or temporal sequence as "a framework of temporal succession in which some of the events or doings are contingent on previous events or doings." The framework of temporal succession characterizes the narrative. The events or situations on the narrative timeline are represented as having already taken place and usually narrated in the simple past or historical present tense.

Dry (1983) mentions that the more important happenings are reported in foreground clauses—clauses in which the action of the narrative takes up and time begins to move forward. The foreground clauses make reference to sequenced temporal points, rather than spans of time, and these points are usually the endpoints of situations. These clauses are on a narrative timeline and constitute the foreground of a narrative.

This paper[2] focuses on the progression

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markers which accompany foreground clauses. The progression markers refer to the grammatical devices that characterize any happenings that push the story forward. These markers highlight suc-ceeding events which form the backbone or storyline of the Vietnamese narrative. They are temporal connectives and the aspectual value of clauses. The paper begins with a structural description of the progression markers and proceeds to their discourse functions both on the narrative timeline[3] and out of the line. The discussion part gives a summary of the findings in comparison with Thai.

The data consist of six Vietnamese folktales drawn from the work "Cohesive devices in Vietnamese folktales" (Suksiri, 2000). These folktales were transcribed into phonetic symbols and translated into English from the original work *Kho Tàng Truyện Cổ Tích Việt Nam* (*A Collection of Vietnamese Folktales*) (Nguyễn Ván Ngọ, Vũ Ngọ Phan, and Trầ Thanh Mại, 1996).

Structural Description

The progression markers which identify sequenced points on the narrative timeline include the words *rồi, xong, đoạn, đã, bèn* and *thì*. Of all progression markers *rồi* occurs with most frequency whereas *đoạn* has the least occurrence, as shown below:

Progression markers	Number of occurrences
rồi	35
thì	25
đã	19
bèn	14
xong	13
đoạn	6

The meanings of these words which are relevant to this study are given in the *Vietnamese-English Dictionary* (Viện Ngôn ng học, 1987) as listed below. The examples are drawn both from the dictionary and Sophana (p.c.).

rồi 1. 'Already, done, over, finished'

e.g., *Tôi   ăn   sáng   rồi.*
I   have   breakfast   already
'I've already had breakfast.'

2. 'Then'

e.g., *Tập thể dục   rồi*
Exercise   already
mới   ăn
just   have
lót dạ.
breakfast
'To do one's morning exercises then have breakfast.'

xong 'Be complete, be finished, be done'

e.g., *Em   làm luán án*
young sibling   do   thesis
xong chưa?
finish   yet
'Have you finished your thesis yet?'

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[3] The narrative time-line is defined as a chronological theme-line along which narrative develops. The timeframe of the narrative is usually in the past. Time refers to "all the days of the past, present, and future" (Hornby et al, 1962:1057).

đoạn 1. (rare)

a. 'Finish, just finish'

e.g.,   *Chúng ta*   *gặt hái*
       We   harvest
       vừa   **đoạn.**
       just   finish
       'We've just finished the harvest.'

b. 'Cut off, break off, terminate'

e.g.,   *Tôi*   **đoạn**   *tình*   *với*
       I   break off   love   with
       Lan   *rồi.*
       Lan   already
       'I've already broken off the love affair with Lan.'

     2. 'Then'

e.g.,   *Chúng tôi*   *nói*   *chuyện*
       We   speak   story
       đến   *khuya,*   **đoạn**
       until   late at night   then
       chia tay   *nhau*
       say good-bye   each other
       'We talked until midnight and then separated.'

dã   'Already'

e.g.,   *Anh*   *ban*   **dã**
       elder sibling   friend   already
       đến   *rồi.*
       arrive   already
       'Our friend has arrived.'

e.g.,   *Tháng*   *này*   *sang*   *năm*
       month   this   next   year
       cuốn   *từ điển*   **dã**
       CLF.   dictionary   already
       soạn   *xong.*
       compile   finish
       'This month next year, the dictionary will have been finished.'

Bèn   'Then'

e.g.,   *Thấy*   *không khí*
       see   atmosphere
       nặng nề   *quá*   *anh ta*
       strained   too   he
       bèn *nói đùa*   *một*   *câu.*
       then joke   1   sentence
       'As he noticed that the atmosphere was quite strained, he then cracked a joke.'

Thì   1. 'Then'

e.g.,   *Khát*   *nước*   **thì**   *uống*
       thirsty   then   drink
       nước   *nguồn.*
       water   source
       'If one is thirsty, then one can drink water from the source.'

     2. 'As for'

e.g.,   *Cơm*   **thì**   *hẩm,*
       rice   as for   mouldy
       cà   **thì**   *mốc*
       egg-plant   as for   mouldy
       'As for the rice, it is rotted, as for the egg-plant, it is mouldy.'

Based on their occurrences in the above examples and the folktales, the syntactic structure of the words *rồi, xong, đoạn* is postverbal; *dã, bèn* are preverbal[4]; and *thì* is a sentence conjunctive and topic marker. The progression markers *rồi, xong, đoạn, thì* and *bèn* usually occur in a series of clauses whereas *dã* usually

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[4] Sophana (p.c.) notes that *ñaõ* also occurs after a clause as an adverb meaning 'first of all' as in the following example:
Nghî   *một*   *cái*   **dã.**
rest   a while   first of all
'Let's take a rest first.'

occurs in a single clause as illustrated by the examples below:[5]

rồi   [NP+VP+*rồi*]CL1 [(NP)+VP]CL2

(1) *Lạc Long Quân đóng một*
     Lac Long Quan build one

    chiếc thuyền thật
    CLF boat real

    chắc và thật lớn,
    strong and real big

    rèn một khối sắt có
    forge one CLF iron have

    nhiều cạnh sắc nung
    many sharp edge burn

    *cho thật đỏ **rồi***
    to real red COMP.MK

    đem khối sắt
    carry CLF iron

    xuống thuyền chèo
    down boat row

    thẳng đến Ngư Tinh.
    straight to Ngu Tinh

    'Lac Long Quan built a big and strong boat, forged a block of iron that was full of the sharp points, heated it until it was red and brought it along to the evil fish's cave.'

xong   [NP+VP+*xong*]CL1[(NP)+VP]CL2

(2) *Lý Thông nghe **xong**,*
     Ly Thong listen COMP.MK

    nẩy ra một mưu
    bounce out one trick

    Thâm độc
    wicked

    'After Ly Thong had listened, he tried a trick to intimidate Thach Sanh.'

đoạn   [(NP)+VP+*đoạn*]CL1[(NP)+VP]CL2

(3) *Nói **đoạn**, hai mẹ*
     speak COMP.MK two mother

    con quần áo xúng xính
    child clothes beautiful

    lên đường
    up way

    'After that was said, Cam and her mother went to the festival in their new dresses.'

thì   [NP +VP]CL1 *thì* [(NP)+VP]CL2

(4) *Sanh bình tĩnh, hóa phép*
     Sanh calm, use magic

    Đánh nhau với
    fight together with

    *trăn tinh, hồi lâu **thì***
    python, long while then

    yêu quái bị
    evil spirits PASS.MK

    giết chết, hóa ra một
    kill die, change out one

    con trăn lớn.
    CLF python big

    'Thach Sanh stayed calm and fought it with his magical powers, then the evil spirit was killed and changed into a big snake.'

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[5] The abbreviations used in this paper are:

CL	clause
CLF	classifier
COMP.MK	completive marker
1stPER	first person pronoun
FUT.MK	future marker
NP	noun phrase
PASS.MK	passive marker
3rdPER	third person pronoun
TOP.MK	topic marker
VP	verb phrase
YO.SIS	younger sister

bèn   [NP+VP]_{CL1} [(NP)+*bèn*+VP]_{CL2}

(5)   *Thấy   có   quán   nước*
       see   have   shop   water

       bên   đường   sạch sẽ,
       beside way   clean

       bèn *ghé   vào.*
       then   drop   in

       'He saw a clean teashop at the side of the path, so he stopped at that shop.'

dã   [NP+*dã*+VP]_{CL}

(6)   *Chỉ   trong   chớp mắt,*
       only   in   a wink

       *Lạc Long Quân   **đã***
       Lac long Quan   COMP.MK

       về
       return

       'In an instant, Lac Long Quan appeared.'

The progression markers may co-occur. *Rồi* occurs with all other progression markers. *Thì* also co-occurs with most of the progression markers except *xong*.[6] And *dã* can occur with *xong*. The following examples illustrate some of the co-occurrences:

dã   +   *rồi*
đoạn   +   *rồi*

(7)   *Tấm   vừa   bước   ra*
       Tam   just   step   out

       đã   *cầm   lấy   chổi*
       COMP.MK   hold   take   broom

       quét dọn   nhà cửa   sạch sẽ,
       clean up   house   clean

       rồi   *đi   vo gạ*
       COMP.MK   go   wash the rice

thổi cơm,   hái   rau
cook a meal   pluck vegetable

ở   vườn   nấu   canh
at   garden cook   soup

giúp   bà   hàng
help   old woman   shop

*nước   **đoạn***   *Tấm*
water   COMP.MK   Tam

lại   thu   hình
again   get back   body

*bé nhỏ   như cũ   **rồi***
little   as old   COMP.MK

chui   vào   vỏ   quả
creep   into   peel   CLF

thị.
persimmon tree

'As soon as Tam stepped out, she held a broom cleaning the house and cooking for the old woman. And then she returned into the fruit.'

xong   +   *rồi*

(8)   *Vua   Thủy Tề   mừng lắm,*
       king   king of ocean   glad   very,

       tặng   Thạch Sanh   vô số
       present Thach Sanh   countless

       vàng   bạc   châu báu,
       gold   silver   jewel valuable

       nhưng   chàng   đều   từ chối
       but   the lad   all   refuse

       không   nhận,   chỉ   lấy
       not   receive   only   take

       một   cây   đàn.
       one   CLF   string instrument

       Xong   rồi   *từ giã*
       COMP.MK   COMP.MK   say goodbye

       vua   và   Thái tử,
       king   and   Crown Prince,

       lên   trần gian   về
       up   earth   return

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[6] The non-co-occurrence of *thì* and *xong* may be due to the limitation of data.

chốn   cū   ở
place   old   at

gốc   đa
base of tree   banyan tree

'The king was very glad. He gave Thach Sanh countless gold, silver and jewels but Thach Sanh did not accept anything except a stringed instrument. Afterwards Thach Sanh said goodbye to the king and the Crown Prince and returned home.'

thì   +   bèn

(9)   Kịp   cho đến   khi
       in time   until   time

Thạch Sanh   bị
Thach Sanh   PASS.MK

bắt   giao   Cho
catch   assign   to

Lý Thông
Ly Thong

xét xử,
consider and pass a verdict on,

thì   Lý Thông   **bèn**
then   Ly Thong   then

định tâm   giết   đi cho
plan   kill   go in order to

khỏi   longại   về sau.
get rid of   worry   later on

'Thach Sanh now was in jail waiting for Ly Thong's judgement. Ly Thong planned to kill him in order to get rid of his worry.'

Functions of Progression Markers on the Narrative Timeline

There are a number of events in the Vietnamese folktales which are highlighted as important by use of the progression markers mentioned above. Therefore, such events, when taken together as a group, represent a high-level abstraction of the folktales, in which only the most important events are mentioned.

The general function of the progression markers is therefore to highlight and mark thematic events which are temporally sequenced. The meanings of progression markers drawn from the *Vietnamese-English Dictionary* (1987) above either indicate perfective (completive) aspect[7] or temporal succession.

The postverbal *rồi, xong,* and *đoạn* make reference to the endpoint of a situation. That is, they imply the completion of an action or event. When they tag clauses, they signal the completion of happenings in the clauses which will be built upon by the next happening in subsequent clauses as seen in examples (1-3) above. These three words are used in a similar manner and it is difficult to figure out when to use each word. However, it is more likely that *xong* is used with an accomplishment verb[8] and *đoạn* is used to terminate a happening whereas *rồi* has a wider usage with various kinds of verbs indicating the completion of a happening.

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[7] Perfective or completive aspect denotes a complete situation, with beginning, middle, and end. The semantic element of perfective is the termination of the situation; that is, the situation is viewed as a single complete whole (Comrie, 1981).

[8] Dry (1983) defines accomplishment as a situation of some duration, having a natural endpoint, outcome, or result state, e.g., building a house, running a mile, singing a song.

The sentence conjunctive *thì* and the preverbal *bèn* introduce a succeeding event which builds upon the preceding event usually encoded by an adverbial clause. It can be seen that these two words have the same function. The difference is their syntactic structure: *thì* occurs between clauses and *bèn* before a verb as seen in example (9). Besides the structural difference, *bèn* has a slightly different use than *thì* in that *bèn* implies a consequence of the previous event. It should be noted also that *bèn* is no longer used in everyday conversation. It appears only in old texts. The sentence conjunctive *thì* seems to play a more important role in the discourse.

The following example presents a chain of events marked by *bèn* and *rồi*, each one of which in turn is built upon.

(10) a. *Tin   là   thật,   Tấm*
       believe   be   real   Tam
       'Tam believed her sister's words.'

   b. ***bèn***   *xuống   ao   lội*
       then   down   pond   swim
       ra   chỗ   sâu   tắm rửa
       out   place   deep   wash
       'Then she went down to the pond and washed her hair.'

   c. *Cám   thừa   dịp*
       Cam   take the opportunity
       trút   hết   tép   của
       pour   finish   tiny shrimp   of
       Tấm   vào   giỏ   của
       Tam   into   basket of
       Mình   ***rồi***
       oneself   already
       'Cam transferred the tiny shrimp from Tam's basket to hers.'

   d. *ba chân bốn cẳng   về*
       run at full speed   return
       trước
       before
       'She ran home hurriedly.'

   e. *Lúc   Tấm   bước   lên*
       time   Tam   step   up
       chỉ   còn   giỏ   không
       only   still   basket   not
       'When Tam came back and saw her empty basket,'

   f. ***bèn***   *ngồi   xuống   bưng mặt*
       then   sit   down   blind eyes
       khóc hu hu
       weep noisily
       'then she sat down and wept noisily.'

In this example, the first event (a)—believing her sister's words—is built upon by the second—(b) going down to the pond and washing her hair—which is introduced by the preverbal *bèn*. This in turn is built on by event (c)—transferring the tiny shrimp from Tam's basket to Cam's basket—which is marked by the postverbal *rồi*. The postverbal *rồi* signals the completion of event (c) and introduces event (d) which builds upon event (c). Event (e) expressed in the adverbial clause is a background event which is followed by the foreground event (f) marked by *bèn*.

It can be seen that *rồi, xong, and đoạn* have a perfective or completive aspect whereas *thì* and *bèn* mark the beginning of a successive event. Besides *rồi, xong,* and *đoạn, đã* also has aspectual value. It has a perfective aspect since it refers to the action or event in its entirety. A clause on the narrative timeline which has the preverbal *đã* makes reference to its beginning and ending points so it has

perfective aspect. The preverbal *đã* is not a past tense marker since Vietnamese has no grammatical forms marking tenses. The timeframe of the narrative is usually in the past; therefore, the narrative is represented as having already taken place. So the clause having *đã* has the perfective aspect in the past timeframe. The example in the previous section — *Thắng này sang năm cuốn từ điển đã soạn xong* 'This month next year, the dictionary will have been finished' serves as a good example to support the fact that *đã* is not a tense marker since it also occurs in future time. Consider the following example from the folktales having *đã* with perfective aspect.

(11)   *Ngựa phóng một chốc **đã***
     horse run   an instant COMP.MK
     đến   kinh đô.
     arrive capital
     'Soon she arrived at the capital.'

This sentence refers to an action which has been completed on the past timeframe of the narrative. It is viewed as a whole and makes reference to its beginning and ending points.

Functions of Progression Markers out of Narrative Timeline

The progression markers which occur on the narrative timeframe function to introduce a new happening which occurs after the completion of the previous one. However it has also been found that these markers may occur out of the narrative timeline such as in quotations and flashback.

Grimes (1975) notes that a quotation gives collateral information which is defined as possible events with reference to projected time[9]. An act of speaking is an event itself but what is said usually is not. Quotations in the Vietnamese folktales have the form of prediction. They have an event sequence which is displaced forward in time as exemplified in example (12).

(12)   *Tấm   chỉ   vào*
     Tam   only   come in
     cái   thùng   thua:
     CLF   basket   speak
     'Tam only put her head in the basket and said:
     Dì   con   bắt   phải
     stepmother child force   must
     nhặt   thóc   ra
     pick up unhusked rice   out
     thóc,   gạo   ra   gạo,
     unhusked rice   out   rice
     rồi   *mới   được*
     COMP.MK so   get
     đi   xem   hội
     go   watch   festival
     "My stepmother forced me to sort the rice. If I finish this work, I can go and join the festival.
     *Lúc nhặt   **xong**   thì*
     time pick up COMP.MK TOP.MK
     *hội   **đã**   tan*
     festival COMP.MK   be over
     rồi   *còn   gì*
     COMP.MK   still   what
     nữa   mà   xem.
     further   in order to watch
     By that time, the festival will be finished."'

In the above example, the progression markers *rồi, xong,* and *đã* mark a se-

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[9] Projected time refers to the time when a situation or action is contemplated, enjoined or anticipated but not realized.

quence of events that might result later from the main action. This sequence of events is foreshadowing, which is said before the events are actually asserted to have taken place. These markers in a quotation do not function to propel or develop narrative time so they do not mark the storyline.

Flashback is events or activities which are displaced backward in time. Flashback information is usually marked by the progression marker *đã* as in example (13).

(13)
Chàng	*hồi nhớ*	*lại*		*những*
3rd PER	recall	again		some
ngày	*xa xăm,*	*cái*		*ngày*
day	very far	CLF		day
chàng	*lỡ*	*tay*		*ném*
3rdPER	miss	hand		throw
đá	*vào*	*đầu*	*em,*	
stone	in	head	YO.SIS	
tưởng	*em*		*chết*	
think	YO.SIS		die	
nên	**đã**		*đi*	
so	COMP.MK		go	
lang thang	*không*	*dám*	*trởvề*	
roam	not	dare	return	
nhà,	*rồi*		*được*	
house	COMP.MK		get	
một	*người*	*buôn*		
one	person	sell		
thuốc bắc				
Chinese tradition medicine				
đem	*về*	*nhà*	*nuôi*	
carry	return	house	bring up	
ở	*Trùng Khánh,*		*thuộc*	
at	Trung Khanh		belong to	
tỉnh		*Cao Bằng.*		
province		Cao Bang		

'He recalled his past. It began when he had thrown a stone and hit his younger sister. He thought

that she had died so he had run away. One day, he had met a herbal seller who brought him up at Trung Khanh, Cao Bang province.'

In this example the event—running away-- has taken place in a previous part of the story. The preverbal *đã* indicates that the event was completed in the distant past as seen in example (14). The postverbal *rồi* is also used to mark a sequence of events which is displaced backward in time.

(14)
Tô Văn	*thấy*	*thế*	
To Van	see	like this	
sợ	*quá,*	*chạy*	*thẳng*
afraid	very	run	straight in
một	*mạch*	*ra*	*dường*
one	breath	out	way
không	*còn*	*dám*	
no more		dare	
ngoái cổ			*lại.*
Turn one's head around			again

'To Van was very frightened. He immediately ran away from home without turning back even one time.'

The occurrences of progression markers out of the narrative timeline reveal that they bear a notion of completion which is neutral, i.e., not limited to any specific time, and can be displayed in present, past, and future. The context and pragmatic knowledge enable the reader to know the time which those markers display.

Besides indicating the temporal sequence of events, the sentence conjunctive *thì* is also used to mark a topic, as in example

(12) above and to indicate a condition in a quotation as in example (14) below.

(15) Hễ   có   tai biến   gì
      if   have   disaster   what
      thì cứ   gọi
      then   keep on call
      ta,   ta   sẽ
      1ˢᵗPER 1ˢᵗPER   FUT.MK
      về   ngay!
      return immediately
      'If any problem occurs, call me. I will be back immediately.'

Discussion

The progression markers *rồi, xong, đoạn, thì, bèn,* and *đã* play a very important role in the folktales. An abstract of the folktales can be extracted by listing all the clauses having these markers. As progression markers, these words mark temporal sequences of events either in the narrative timeline or in projected time.

As the default timeframe of the narrative is past time or accomplished time, when these markers occur in past time, they indicate temporal succession and a cause-effect relationship of foregrounded events. The postverbal *rồi, xong,* and *đoạn* signal the completion of the previous events and introduce a new event which is chronologically tied to the previous one. The sentence connective *thì* and the preverbal *bèn* introduce the sentences which move the story forward and thus propel time. These two words have a similar function but different syntactic structure. The word *bèn* is always preverbal whereas *thì* occurs between two clauses. The preverbal *bèn* is rare and occurs only in texts whereas *thì* is normally used in everyday conversation. The preverbal *đã*

which occurs with non-stative verbs indicates the thematic status of the following verb. Besides signaling foregrounded happenings, the preverbal *đã* may also occur in flashback, which is information displaced backward in time. It indicates that an event has taken place in the previous part of the story.

In projected time as in a quotation, the progression markers mark the temporal sequence and a cause-effect relationship of events which have not occurred. Besides a progression marker, the temporal connector *thì* is also used as a topic marker and a conditional connector.

Based on their occurrences both in past time and projected time, it can be concluded that the progression markers *rồi, xong, đoạn,* and *đã* have a perfective or completive aspect which is neutral in reference to time. That is, they may be displayed in present, past, and future. The word *đã* is thus not a past tense marker but it implies past tense because of its perfective aspect value. Therefore, on the narrative timeline, *đã* will be equivalent to past tense in English and to past perfect when it is off the narrative timeline such as in flashback. The progression markers *thì* and *bèn* mark temporal succession which is also not limited to any specific time. The time settings in the narrative, such as temporal words, phrases and clauses or the context, will give a clue as to specific time.

Comparing the progression markers in Vietnamese to Thai, it has been found that these markers have a similar function to the progression markers in Thai.[10]

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[10] See further discussion of the progression markers in Thai in Somsonge (1991, 1992)

Vietnamese Thai
rồi *lǽːw* 'already'
xong *sèt* 'finish'
đoạn *còp* 'end, terminate'
thì *kɔ̂ː* 'then'
bèn *cuŋ* 'then, consequently'
đã *dâːj* 'have experienced'

In Thai the words *lǽːw* 'already', *sèt* 'finish' *còp* 'end, terminate' and *dâːj* 'have experienced' have perfective or completive aspect with no reference to specific time. The first three words indicate a completion of the preceding event and introduce a new event which is normally thematic. Compare example (16) showing the occurrence of *lǽːw* in a Thai narrative with the use of *rồi* in example (10).

(16) *lǎŋcàːk* *khâː* *sǔːa* *tua*
      after   kill   tiger   CLS
      nán *taːj* *lǽːw* *naːjphraːn*
      that   die   already hunter
      kɔ̂ː *klàp* *bâːn* *lǽːw* *kɔ̂ː*
      then   return house   and   then
      paj *fâw* *phráraːchaː*
      go   meet   king
      'After (the hunter) had (already) killed the tiger, the hunter then returned home, and went to see the king.'
      (Somsonge, 1991: 108)

The preverbal *kɔ̂ː* and *cuŋ* have a similar function to *thì* and *bèn* respectively. The preverbal *cuŋ* behaves in a similar way to *kɔ̂ː*, but it also implies a consequence of the previous event in the same way as *bèn*. The preverbal *kɔ̂ː* is used very frequently in narrative in the same manner as *thì* and it is regarded as equivalent to

kɔ̂ː in Thai[11]. However, their syntactic structure is different in that *kɔ̂ː* is always preverbal as seen in example (15) whereas *thì* occurs between two clauses. If the second clause has the same subject as the first one, it is usually omitted and the structure becomes the same as *kɔ̂ː* as illustrated below.

Thai $[NP + VP]_{CL1}$
      $[(omitted\ NP) +$
      $kɔ̂ː{:}+VP]_{CL2}$
Vietnamese $[NP + VP]_{CL1} + thì +$
      $[(omitted\ NP) +VP]_{CL2}$

Besides signaling the temporal sequence, *kɔ̂ː* also functions as a conditional connector[12] just as *thì* as illustrated below.

(17) *thâː* *dèkdèk* *tham*
      if   children   do
      kaːnbâːn *sèt*
      homework   finish
      kɔ̂ː *cà* *dâːj*
      then   will   have a chance
      duː *thoːrathát*
      watch television
      'If the children finish their homework, they can watch television.'

In the same way as *đã*, the preverbal *dâːj* is not a tense marker but implies past tense because it has perfective aspect value. It conveys a meaning that someone has experienced something either in the past or future time. It also has the same function as *đã* in flashback. Compare example (18) in Thai with examples (13-14) in Vietnamese.

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[11] Compare the use of *thì* and *kɔ̂ː* in examples (4) and (16).
[12] See detailed discussion of multi-functions of the word *kɔ̂ː* in Yajaj (1985).

(18)   *khǔn sǎn   khɔ̌ːŋ raw*
title   San   of   our
nań pen khon
that be   person
mæ̂npɯːn   dâːj
skillful shooting have
experienced
hàt hâj cha:w ba:ŋracan
train let people Bangrajan
jiŋpɯːn
shoot
'Our San was skillful in shooting. (He) had trained Bangrajan villagers to shoot.'
(Somsonge, 1991: 92)

The comparison of progression markers in Vietnamese and Thai shows that despite the morphological difference, at the level of discourse syntax, their discourse structures are quite common. It is therefore worth studying discourse structures of other Southeast Asian languages to explore the universal characteristics of discourse features.

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