

**GRAMMATICALIZATION OF THE VERB ‘TO
ACQUIRE’ INTO MODALITY:
A CASE STUDY IN VIETNAMESE***

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ABSTRACT

The verbs meaning ‘to acquire’ are known to be highly polyfunctional words in Southeast Asian languages. They have many syntactic functions and many grammatical meanings. One of the important grammatical meanings expressed by the verbs meaning ‘to acquire’ across languages is modality. This study aims to investigate the grammaticalization of the verb ‘to acquire’ in Vietnamese, namely, *được*, into a grammatical marker of many types of modality. It is found that *được* can indicate three types of modality, i.e. ability/capacity modality, circumstantial possibility, and permission. It has not developed into a full-fledged epistemic modal yet. It is argued that the grammaticalization of *được* into different types of modality is primarily driven by metonymic processes.

Key words: grammaticalization, modality, verb ‘to acquire’, Vietnamese

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that the verbs meaning ‘to acquire’ are among the most polyfunctional words in Southeast Asian languages (van der Auwera; Kehayov and Vittrant 2007; Enfield 2003). Syntactically, the form with this meaning in a given language can function as a lexical verb, a preverbal auxiliary and a postverbal auxiliary. Semantically, in addition to the lexical meaning ‘to acquire’, this form conveys various grammatical meanings such as the simple past, perfective aspect, and deontic and epistemic modalities. Most of the previous research works on the verbs glossed as ‘to acquire’ across languages examine grammatical meanings of these verbs and their relationships to one another. In this paper, we will focus on the grammaticalization of the verb meaning ‘to acquire’ in Vietnamese, namely, *được*, into various types of modality. To be specific, this paper aims to investigate the types of modality expressed by the grammaticalized *được* and account for them in terms of the principles of grammaticalization and semantic change advanced by Traugott (1989), Traugott and König (1991) and Traugott and Dasher (2002). In arguing for the grammaticalization of *được* into different types of modality, we adopt the internal semantic reconstruction approach postulated by Traugott (1986), which refers to the study of synchronic senses of a lexical item in order to hypothesize the historical order in which these senses arose. In addition, this paper adopts Hopper and Traugott’s (1993) principle of metonymic inferencing in accounting for the grammaticalization of the verb *được* into modality.

A brief typological background of Vietnamese is provided as follows. Vietnamese is a Mon-Khmer language in the Austroasiatic family, which is considered to be one of the prominent language families found in mainland Southeast Asia. Typologically, Vietnamese is an isolating, tonal, topic-prominent, serializing and verb-rich language with the SVO sentential word order. It also exhibits the head-modifier constituent order. The phenomena of grammaticalization, polyfunctionality and compounding are found to be prevalent in the language.

This paper is divided into six sections. Section one introduces the paper. Section two presents the definitions and classifications of modality in general. Section three presents findings from previous

studies on *đƯỢC*. Section four discusses theoretical approaches and methodology used in this study. Section five explores types of modality denoted by *đƯỢC*. Section six concludes the paper.

2. DEFINITIONS AND CLASSIFICATIONS OF MODALITY

It is harder to define the term “modality” than its semantically related terms, namely, tense and aspect. Lyons (1977:452) defines the term modality as the speaker’s “opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes.” Bybee (1985:191-196), who discusses at length the grammaticalization of verbs into different types of auxiliaries, suggests that modality is best viewed as a set of diachronically related functions. According to Palmer (2001), modality is a cross-linguistic grammatical category which, along with tense and aspect, is concerned with the event or situation reported by an utterance. However, unlike tense and aspect which are associated with the nature of the event itself, modality is concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the event. Palmer defines modality in a specific way as the grammaticalization of speakers’ (subjective) attitudes and opinions. In this paper, we adopt the fairly traditional type of definition of modality, i.e. a linguistic category referring to the truth or falsity of a proposition. In work on logic, modality refers to those semantic domains that involve possibility and necessity.

Different classifications of the notion of modality have been postulated based on data both in single languages and across languages. The classifications of modality are reviewed below according to its chronological order (Narrog 2005).

2.1 Three-Way Classification of Modality

Palmer (1979) proposes a three-way classification of modality based on the meanings of English modals, i.e. deontic, epistemic, and dynamic modalities. Epistemic modality is concerned with judgements about the possibility that something is or is not the case. It is the modality of

propositions rather than of actions, states and events. The epistemic modality is normally subjective, i.e. the epistemic judgement resides in the speaker. In English, the two basic degrees of possibility and necessity are marked by *may* and *must*, respectively, as exemplified below.

- (1) *He may be qualified to be recognized as a teacher of French or of German or of something like that.* (Palmer 1979:41)
- (2) *This must be one of the finest views of the whole processional route.* (Palmer 1979:41)

Deontic modality consists essentially in the giving of permission, making a promise or threat or laying an obligation. In English, a permission is expressed by the modal *may* and *can*, a promise or threat by *shall*, and an obligation by *must*. The examples below exemplify different types of deontic modality in English.

Permission

- (3) *If you want to recall the doctor, you may do so.* (Palmer 1979:59)
- (4) *Of course you can inspect the nurseries. You have, of course, a Search Warrant from the Home Office.* (Palmer 1979:60)

Promise

- (5) *You shall have it tomorrow.* (Palmer 1979:62)

Obligation

- (6) *You must keep everything to yourself, be discreet.* (Palmer 1979: 62)

Dynamic modality, which is the third type of modality postulated by Palmer (1979), suggests that there are circumstances in the real world which make possible or necessary the coming into reality of a conceptual

state of affairs. Dynamic modality is divided into neutral (or circumstantial) and subject-oriented modalities. With neutral dynamic modality, there are circumstances in general which make possible or necessary the realization of a state of affairs, whereas with subject-oriented modality it is ascription of a capacity to the subject-participant of the clause. The four examples below illustrate the two subtypes of dynamic modality.

Neutral dynamic modality

- (7) *You can get quite lost in that, I think, you see.* (Palmer 1979:72)
(8) *The only way you can learn is to think logically.* (Palmer 1979:72)

Subject-oriented dynamic modality

- (9) *They can't speak a word of English, of course, not a word, but, you know, they can say what they like.* (Palmer 1979:73)
(10) *I feel that.....my destiny's very much in my control and that I can make or break my life and myself.* (Palmer 1979:73)

Another model of three-way classification has been recently proposed by van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) as follows.

- Participant-internal modality
- Participant-external modality
- Epistemic modality

Participant-internal modality refers to a kind of possibility internal to a participant engaged in the state of affairs. Participant-external modality refers to circumstances that are external to the participant engaged in the state of affairs and that make the state of affairs possible or necessary. Epistemic modality refers to the speaker's judgement about the degree of certainty or probability for an event to be realized. In this model, deontic modality becomes a subdomain of participant-external modality.

2.2 Two-Way Classification of Modality

After proposing the two-way classification of modality in 1979, Palmer later excludes volition and ability from the modality domain and puts neutral dynamic modality in the deontic type. Therefore, only two types of modality are postulated in Palmer (2001), i.e. epistemic and deontic modalities. Other scholars propose a new term for the deontic modality, i.e. root modality (Coates 1983; Sweetser 1990), and agent-oriented modality (Bybee and Pagliuca 1985; Heine 1995). The definition of epistemic modality postulated in Palmer (2001) is a little bit broader than that proposed in Palmer (1979) in that it involves not only the notions of possibility and necessity but also the degree of commitment by the speaker to what he says. It also includes evidentiality such as hearsay and report (Palmer 2001). On the other hand, deontic modality as defined by Palmer (2001) is also used in a wide sense; it refers to all types of modality which contain an element of will. According to Palmer (2001), epistemic modality is concerned with belief, knowledge, and truth in relation to proposition, whereas deontic modality is concerned with action, by others and by the speaker himself/herself. The term “root modality” postulated by Coates (1983) refers to non-epistemic modality, which encompasses deontic and dynamic modality. The term “agent-oriented” modality is postulated in Bybee and Pagliuca (1985). It covers all modalities in which conditions are predicated internal or external conditions on a willful agent, such as obligation, desire, ability, permission, and root possibility.

Palmer (2001) replaces the terms epistemic and deontic modality with propositional and event modality. The former is defined as the speaker’s judgement about the factual status of a proposition. The latter refers to events that are not actualized or events that have not taken place but are merely potential. Event modality encompasses (a) deontic modality, which is defined as the speaker’s expression of conditioning factors that are external to an individual such as obligation and permission, and (b) dynamic modality, which is defined as the speaker’s expression of conditioning factors that are internal to an individual such as ability and willingness.

Narrog (2005) proposes a two-dimensioned two-way classification of modality. One dimension is the distinction between volitive and non-volitive modality. The other dimension is that between speaker-oriented and event-oriented modality. The volitive modality, which involves the element of will, encompasses deontic and boulomaic modality, whereas the non-volitive modality, which lacks the element of will, encompasses epistemic, evidential and dynamic (ability) modality.

2.3 Four-Way Classification of Modality

Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994) propose a four-way classification as follows.

- Agent-oriented modality
- Speaker-oriented modality
- Epistemic modality
- Subordinating moods

As mentioned above, the agent-oriented modality reports the existence of internal and external conditions on an agent with respect to the completion of the action expressed by the main verb. It incorporates obligation, necessity, ability and desires. Speaker-oriented modality allows the speaker to impose some course of action on an agent and indicate that it should be carried out. It includes directives such as commands, demands, requests, entreaties, warnings, exhortations and recommendations (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994:179). Epistemic modality is defined in the same way as other scholars define it. Subordinating moods refer to verb forms which express speaker-oriented and epistemic modalities in certain types of subordinating moods.

3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Duffield (2001) examines the modal *được* in Vietnamese from a formal perspective and postulates three types of modal *được*, i.e. (i) the deontic *được* occurring preverbally as in (11), (ii) the aspectual *được* indicating accomplishment or achievement occurring immediately

postverbally as in (12), and (iii) the alethic or epistemic modal indicating possibility occurring in the post-VP position as in (13).

- (11) Ông Quang được mua cái nhà
 Mr. Quang can buy CLS¹ house
 ‘Quang was allowed to buy a house.’ (Deontic)

- (12) Ông Quang mua được cái nhà
 Mr. Quang buy can CLS house
 ‘Quang bought a house.’ (Accomplishment)

- (13) Ông Quang mua cái nhà được
 Mr. Quang buy CLS house can
 ‘Quang can buy a house.’ (Epistemic/Abilitative)
 (Duffield 2001:102-103)

The second meaning of *được* postulated by Duffield (2001) is apparently not a modal meaning. Rather, it is a resultative meaning which implies success of the performance of an action.

Nguyễn (2003) investigates the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of five modals in Vietnamese including *được*. This research work is based on three articles on the five modals previously published (Nguyễn 1999, 2001, 2002). According to the data analyzed in Nguyễn (2003), it is found that there are 1,355 sentences containing *được*. Nguyễn(2003) found that *được* in his corpus has the following distribution

- *Được* appears immediately in front of a noun. (12.7% of the corpus)
- *Được* appears immediately in front of an adjective. (2.2% of the corpus)
- *Được* co-occurs with a verb.
- *Được* appears immediately in front of action verbs. (8.6% of the corpus)

¹ CLS stands for a classifier.

- *Được* appears immediately in front of feeling verbs. (22.6% of the corpus)
- *Được* which is a passive marker appears in front of a main verb. (53.9% of the corpus)

This research work categorizes *được* in the five positions above as a modal verb because it co-occurs with a lexical verb. However, Thuận's (2003) work differs from the present study in that the *được* which is regarded by Nguyễn (2003) as a modal appears in front of a lexical verb, whereas that in the present study appears after a lexical verb. Unlike Nguyễn (2003), the present study categorizes the *được* in the schema [*được* + verb] as (1) a lexical verb in a serial verb construction, which means 'to have a chance to perform an action', and (2) a passive marker, which implies that the sentential subject benefits from an action performed by another person. In contrast with the present study, Nguyễn (2003) does not include the *được* in the schema [verb + *được*] in his corpus of modal *được*.

Enfield (2003) provides a detailed synchronic analysis of the semantics, pragmatics, and grammar of a grammatical pattern involving a word meaning 'acquire' in five languages of mainland Southeast Asia, namely, Lao, Khmer, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Kmhmu Cwang, along with some supplementary data from about a dozen languages of this area. The relevant part of this work is the postverbal functions of *được* in Vietnamese. Enfield argues that the postverbal *được* in (11) is ambiguous in that it can express permission, ability and possibility. Enfield's notion of possibility corresponds to circumstantial possibility in the present study.

- (14) *Tôi nói tiếng Việt (không) được*
I speak language Vietnamese (neg) can
'I can(not) speak Vietnamese.'
(Enfield 2003:195)

Enfield argues that providing an appropriate context can help disambiguate the three modal meanings mentioned above. Notice that the epistemic modality is not one of the modality meanings of the postverbal *được* listed by Enfield (2003). In addition, Enfield postulates many likely historical paths of the verbs for 'acquire' in the main sample

languages. The postulated historical paths are argued to provide a basic account of the grammaticalization path of the verbs for ‘acquire’ which all the main sample languages are likely to have followed. The historical path of the postverbal *đuɔc* starts from the lexical verb *đuɔc* functioning as a resultative V2 in the serial verb construction which extends to a new generalized meaning ‘succeed’, in which the original meaning of ‘acquire’ still survives. The meaning ‘succeed’ then extends to the modality meaning. The historical path below is adapted from Enfield’s figure 9.5 (Enfield 2003:357).

(15) ‘acquire’_{resultative v2} → ‘succeed’_{resultative v2} → ‘can’_{v2 modal}

Since Enfield (2003) focuses on a synchronic analysis of the verbs for ‘acquire’ in the five languages under investigation, he does not provide a detailed account regarding the mechanism or process which gives rise to each extended meaning.

The study which is the most relevant to the present one is the article entitled “acquisitive modals” by van der Auwera, Kehayov and Vittrant (2009). According to this study, an acquisitive modal refers to “an expression of modality that goes back to a predicate meaning ‘acquire, get’ (van der Auwera, Kehayov and Vittrant 2009:271). They argue that the verb meaning ‘get’ lends itself easily to expressing possibility and permission. Focusing on two areas of acquisitive modality, namely, Northern Europe and Southeast Asia, van der Auwera, Kehayov and Vittrant (2009) explore the consequences of the acquisitive modality for the geometry of the semantic map presented in van der Auwera and Plungian (1988). They argue that a part of the map needs to be redrawn. The semantic map of modality postulated in van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) confirms the universalist hypothesis in Bybee et al. (1994) that the directionality of modality goes from participant-internal to participant-external. They argue in this study that it is likely that the directionality goes from participant-external to participant-internal in Southeast Asian languages.

4. THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND METHODOLOGY

In this section, we will present some important theoretical approaches and methodology used in this study. The first subsection discusses the synchronic approach to the study of polyfunctionality and grammaticalization. The second subsection presents the role of metonymy in grammaticalization. The third subsection discusses the data source and data collection process.

4.1 The Synchronic Approach

This study uses the synchronic approach to analyze the various types of modality of *được* in Vietnamese as used at present. The word *được* is still used as a lexical verb in Vietnamese. However, it has developed many grammatical functions including that of modality. This study will limit its scope to examining only the grammatical function of modality of *được*. It is thus obvious that *được* is a polyfunctional word. Specifically, this study will examine the semantic extension of *được* by focusing on the synchronic relatedness between the lexical source meaning and various modality meanings of *được*. In order to fully understand the notion of extension as used in this paper, we will review the ways in which the term extension is used in the literature as presented by Enfield (2003).

Enfield (2003) claims that there are four ways in which the term “extension” is applied in the literature to create and understand new meanings. Enfield argues that these four types of extension are often confused with each other in work on semantics and semantic change. However, they exist in different dimensions. These four types of extension according to Enfield (2003) are described below.

Type I. Ontogenetic extension

The ontogenetic extension refers to the development of new linguistic concepts on the basis of existing ones, especially in early childhood.

Type II. Online extension

The online extension refers to a novel use of a linguistic expression by means of metaphor and metonymy. The online extension results in an interpretation not entailed by the semantics of an expression alone.

Type III. Attributed “extension”, perceived (synchronic)

The attributed extension refers to a judgement about language by speakers that two established meanings are related. Unlike Type II, online extension, the perceived conceptual relationship between meanings is not the result of a creative act of extending meaning and not always or necessarily consciously recognized by speakers.

Type IV. Diachronic extension

The diachronic extension refers to an observable motivated change of a meaning which has occurred over a period of longer than one speaker’s lifetime. It does not occur in any single coherent linguistic system. It can be gleaned from historical records or inferred from comparison of related languages. According to Enfield, Type IV extension is an outcome of Type II extension and may often be reflected in Type III extension.

It is argued by Enfield that both Type II and Type III are synchronic extension. The distinction between them is significant and qualitative but not often observed. Type II online extension is what goes on in the speaker’s head when he/she speaks. It constantly creates a new usage. Enfield argues that Type II online extension corresponds with Langacker’s extension, which refers to linguistic creativity and problem-solving activity on the part of the speaker (Langacker 1987:73). An example given by Langacker to illustrate the extension process is to call someone an ostrich because of his peculiar figure and the funny way he walks. The word *ostrich* used in describing such a person is a novel figurative use sanctioned by the lexical noun *ostrich* used in its literal sense to refer to a type of bird. The semantic structures of the two uses of *ostrich* are incompatible to a certain degree. This incompatibility results in some conceptual strain which leads to a figurative interpretation of this word used to describe a person with a peculiar figure and a funny

way of walking. This kind of extension which results in an innovative use of language is considered active extension because it requires mental creativity on the part of the speaker while speaking.

On the other hand, Type III extension does not create a new usage. Enfield claims that Type III extensions are apparent relationships between conventionalized meanings, which may or may not reflect erstwhile Type II extensions. Sometimes formerly active Type II extensions are lost, changed or retained. Unlike Type II extension, Type III extension is often not recognized at all. An example given by Enfield (2003:27) is *It's in the back of the cupboard*. When we hear this sentence with the word *back*, we may not be aware of the body part at all. This is an instance of what we usually call a “dead metaphor”, which refers to a metaphor which has lost its imagery because of its popular and repetitive usage. Dead metaphors have a conventional meaning which differs from the original, literal one. Therefore, they can be understood without knowing the original, literal meanings at all. It is apparent that Enfield's Type III extension corresponds to dead metaphor.

Our position differs from that of Enfield with regard to the distinction between Type II and Type III extensions. We argue that the distinction between Type II and Type III extensions is not clear-cut but a matter of degree. We argue that there may not be a distinction between Type II and Type III extensions. We want to collapse Type II and Type III into one type and label it “synchronic extension” as opposed to Type I ontogenetic or developmental extension and Type IV diachronic extension. To analyze the synchronic extension of a word is tantamount to analyzing the relatedness between various senses of a polysemous word. Among various meanings of a polysemous word, some connections or relatedness may be apparent, whereas some others may be more obscured. The obscured connections between fairly conventionalized and established meanings are cases of dead metaphor, in which the speakers have used the word in question in extended figurative usage so frequently that they are not aware of the figurative extension from the source meaning. The connections or relatedness between meanings may be so obscured that the word in question appears to be homophonous rather than polysemous unless those apparently unrelated meanings are analyzed closely and deeply enough. This case

corresponds to Enfield's Type III attributed extension. In some other cases, the connections or relatedness between meanings may be apparent such as in the ostrich example given by Langacker mentioned above. In these cases, the figurative and creative extension of the new meanings from the old ones is easily perceived and plausibly reflects what goes on in the speaker's mind while speaking. These cases correspond to Enfield's Type II online extension. In short, our position is that Enfield's Type II online extension corresponds to our case of obvious and easily perceived connections between meanings, whereas Enfield's Type III attributed extension corresponds to our case of more obscured connections between meanings. The difference between the two cases is a matter of degree.

This paper aims to synchronically analyze the various modality meanings extended from the source meaning of the verb *được* 'acquire' in Vietnamese. The analysis is done within the cognitive linguistic approach. One of the basic assumptions of cognitive linguistics is that language reflects patterns of thought or conceptualizations. Language provides a window into a cognitive function, the structure and organization of thoughts (Evans and Green 2006). Adopting this assumption of cognitive linguistics in synchronically analyzing various modality meanings of *được*, we hope to uncover the structure and patterns of conceptualization of Vietnamese speakers, especially the conceptual extension of a lexical meaning. However, since the speaker's judgement of semantic relatedness is subjective to a certain degree and since there is no empirical evidence that can rigorously support the patterns of conceptualization reflected in language, we would cautiously say that such analyzed patterns of thoughts are merely plausible and hypothesized processes of what goes on in the speaker's mind.

Most previous studies on modality meanings and on the polyfunctionality of *được* make explicit various extended meanings of the lexical item in question. The present study diverges from those previous studies in analyzing the cognitive mechanism which gives rise to the extended modality meanings. The theory used in analyzing the cognitive mechanism is expounded in section 4.2

A crucial question is how the synchronic analysis of extended meanings of a lexical item relates to the grammaticalization process,

which is typically diachronic. As mentioned briefly in section 1, this paper adopts the internal semantic reconstruction approach postulated by Traugott (1986), which refers to the study of synchronic senses of a lexical item in order to hypothesize the historical order in which those senses arose. It is widely assumed that there is a relationship between semantic/pragmatic variation in synchrony and semantic change in diachrony and that diachronic change is motivated. Sweetser (1990:9) claims that “by studying the historical development of groups of related words, it should be possible to see what sorts of systematic structure our cognitive system tends to give the relevant domains.” She also points out that a word cannot change in meaning without an intervening stage of polysemy. By analyzing how various meanings of a polyseme are conceptually related with the assumption that diachronic change is cognitively motivated, we can hypothesize how the meanings of a polyseme develop historically. However, since the object of this study is data from modern texts, not from old texts, we can put forward a merely plausible hypothesis about the historical development of a lexical item based on plausible patterns of conceptualization in the speaker’s mind.

4.2 The Role of Metonymy in Grammaticalization

Sweetser (1990) proposes that the synchronic semantic relationship between root/obligation and epistemic modality can be accounted for in terms of metaphorical mapping of image-schemata. This metaphorical mapping is built on aspects of Talmy’s (1988) theory of force dynamics. According to the force-dynamics metaphor, Sweetser argues that the *may* of permission, as in *Kim may leave, I allow it*, expresses “an absent potential barrier in the sociophysical world,” and the epistemic *may*, as in *Kim may be there*, “is the force-dynamically parallel case in the world of reasoning” (Sweetser 1990:59). Root *must*, as in *You must go*, indicates a real-world force that compels the subject to act. Epistemic *must* as in *You must be tired*, indicates that “an epistemic force applied by somebody of premises” compels the speaker to “reach the conclusion embodied in the sentence” (Sweetser 1990:64). Sweetser argues that the metaphorical mapping between modals are unidirectional from content > reasoning meanings.

Although Sweetser's analysis in terms of the force-dynamic metaphor seems attractive, Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that there are reasons to doubt that the forces and barriers metaphor is a key to the semantic development of deontic and epistemic modality. According to Traugott and Dasher (2002:111), the first reason is that the lexical sources of the modals show little evidence of the semantics of forces and barriers. The second reason is that metaphorical processes do not seem to be crucial to an understanding of the processes behind semantic changes as revealed by textual evidence. Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that this development is best understood in terms of the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change, which makes an extensive use of metonymic processes rather than metaphorical ones.

Many arguments have been recently advanced, especially by Traugott and her associates, that grammaticalization is primarily motivated by metonymic, rather than metaphorical, processes. Since this paper adopts Traugott and her associates' argument that metonymy and pragmatic inferencing play a central role in semantic extension of a lexical item, we will review their theory as below before applying it to analyzing how the various modality meanings are derived in the next section.

It is generally known that all utterances have both semantic and pragmatic meanings. Pragmatic meanings are derived by a pragmatic mode of inference called "abduction" (Givón 1989), which involves analogical reasoning and postulating hypotheses on the basis of guesswork and intuition by taking contexts into consideration. Abduction is thus pragmatic, context-dependent and based on similarity and relevance. According to Givón (1989), abduction is required in order to fully understand the meaning of an utterance made by the speaker in a certain context. Abduction is closely associated with metonymic inferencing. Antilla (1972) suggests that there are two types of semantic transfer which result in semantic changes, namely, metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor is semantic transfer through a similarity of sense perception, whereas metonymy is semantic transfer through contiguity. Metonymy points to covert meanings of a linguistic expression and syntagmatically operates across linguistic constituents. On the other hand, metaphor involves specifying a thing usually in an abstract domain

in terms of another in a more concrete domain, which is not present in the context. In short, metonymic change involves specifying one meaning of an expression in terms of another that is present, but covert, in the context, whereas metaphoric change involves specifying one meaning of an expression in terms of another that is not present in the context. In communication, it is abduction and metonymic inferencing which give rise to conversational implicatures, which are pragmatically associated with an utterance and are inferred in context. These pragmatic inferences are contiguous to the conventional meanings of an utterance. At early stages of grammaticalization of a lexical word, the conversational implicatures associated with an utterance containing that word become conventionalized by frequent use. This is referred to by Traugott as “pragmatic strengthening.” That means metonymic processes or pragmatic strengthening in Traugott’s terms plays a crucial role in motivating meaning changes at early stages of grammaticalization. An example which illustrates the role of metonymic processes in deriving grammaticalized morphemes is the development of grammaticalized connectives in English such as *while*, *since* and *rather than* (Traugott and König 1991). We will apply Traugott and associates’ theory reviewed in this section in analyzing the emergence of modality meanings of *được* in section 5.

4.3 Data Sources and Collection

The data used in this study was drawn from three sources, i.e. (1) a Vietnamese corpus belonging to the Vietnamese Institute of Lexicography and Encyclopedia, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, (2) some Vietnamese language websites, and (3) Vietnamese textbooks. The number of corpus citations containing *được* total 1,500. The corpus citations were translated into Thai and were checked by a Vietnamese who has a good writing knowledge of Thai.

5. TYPES OF MODALITY DENOTED BY ĐƯỢC

As can be seen in section 2, there are many ways to define and classify modality. It is not possible to say which definition and which classification are correct. Since this paper aims to analyze the grammaticalization of *được* into various types of modality, it is necessary that we make a choice of whose classification of modality we will use so that we will have a terminology to employ in the analysis. The classification of modality chosen for this study is that proposed by Narrog (2005). To recapitulate, Narrog proposes a model with two dimensions, one of volitivity and one of event-orientation vs. speaker-orientation. In the dimension of volitivity, modality is divided into volitive and non-volitive modalities. The two types of modality are distinguished by the element of will. In the other dimension, the speaker-oriented modality refers to “the speaker’s own modal judgement at the time of speech in the given speech situation, potentially including the hearer” (Narrog 2005:685). In contrast, event-oriented modality is concerned with the described situation and conditions on the participants of the event, independent of the speaker and the present speech situation. According to Narrog, participant-internal modalities postulated by van der Auwera and Plungian (1998) would be typical event-oriented modality, whereas participant-external modality would be more speaker-oriented. Narrog (2005) discusses the synchronic meanings and the diachronic change of the modality meanings of *can* in English. He claims that *can* synchronically expresses the following modality meanings: ability, circumstantial possibility, permission, and epistemic possibility. We will use this terminology in accounting for the modality meanings expressed by *được* in Vietnamese.

Previous research works claim that the diachronic change of modal meanings is unidirectional regardless of the terminology of modality they use. Some unidirectional changes of modality include: from deontic to epistemic, from agent-oriented to epistemic, from agent-oriented to speaker-oriented, and from participant-internal to participant-external. Narrog (2005) proposes a more comprehensive directionality of change, i.e. from event-oriented to speaker-oriented modality. This new directionality of change is arguably the overarching tendency of

semantic change in modality. This is why Narrog's classification is adopted in this study.

In this section, we will examine the types of modality denoted by *đurɔc* based on the terminology used by Narrog (2005) and analyze the cognitive mechanism by which each modality meaning emerges. As mentioned in section 4.1, the approach used in the analysis of various modality types denoted by *đurɔc* is synchronic. Moreover, the various modality types of *đurɔc* result from semantic extension primarily driven by metonymic processes which rely heavily on pragmatic inferencing. As mentioned above, this paper adopts Traugott's (1986) internal semantic reconstruction approach, which aims at studying the synchronic senses of a lexical item in order to hypothesize the historical order in which those senses arose. The hypothesized historical order of the emergence of various senses of the lexical item under investigation can be considered a hypothesized grammaticalization path of that lexical item. It should be kept in mind that the word "grammaticalization" is used in this meaning in this paper.

Ruangmanee (2010) found that the verb *đurɔc*, which can function as a transitive verb and intransitive verb, exhibits five lexical meanings as follows.

- to acquire something, to come into possession of something
- to have sex with someone
- to succeed, to prevail, to win
- to be fine, acceptable
- to obtain an opportunity to do something

The lexical meanings which are relevant to the derivation of various types of modality from this verb are the first meaning, namely, 'to acquire something' and the third meaning, namely, 'to succeed, to prevail, to win'. Sentences (16a) and (16b) illustrate the first lexical meaning and sentences (17) and (18) the third one.

- (16) a. *Chúng tôi được ba cuốn sách*
 We acquire 3 CLS book
 ‘We got three books.’
 b. *Tôi (học) được thứ ba trong lớp*
 I study acquire third rank in class
 ‘I (studied) got the third place in class.’
- (17) *Anh chờ một chút nhé, tôi nói*
 You(m.) wait a moment PRT² I start
máy cho anh đây. được
 give you this, PRT succeed
rồi đấy, xin mời anh
 already PRT please invite you
 ‘You just wait for a moment; I go start an engine for you. It is done already, please come.’
- (18) Q: *Thai và Việt Nam đá bóng, ai được*
 Thai and Vietnam kick football who win
 ‘Thai and Vietnamese people played football. Who won the match?’
 A: *Thai được, Việt Nam thua*
 Thai win Vietnam lose
 ‘Thailand won. Vietnam lost.’

The transitive verb *được* in (16a) and (16b) denotes the basic meaning, which is ‘to acquire’ or ‘to come into possession of something’. The intransitive *được* in (17) and (18) meaning ‘to succeed’, ‘to prevail’, ‘to win’ is argued to derive or extend from the first lexical meaning expressed by the transitive *được*. Among all of the five meanings listed above, the meaning ‘to acquire’ is arguably the most basic one since it is the most semantically neutral and the first meaning which comes to mind and which requires minimal contexts. The basic meaning has a privileged status because it corresponds to the most concrete event, which is readily accessible to intuition and which has the highest degree

² PRT stands for a final particle.

of entrenchment and cognitive salience in Langacker's (1987) sense. Accounting for the derivation of the extended meaning from the basic one in terms of metonymy requires that we adopt the Cognitive Grammar approach to lexical semantics postulated by Langacker (1987). According to Langacker, most lexical items have a considerable array of related meanings, which are represented in network form. The meaning of a lexical item, which is called the semantic structure, must be equated with the entire network. The semantic structure of a lexical item is characterized relative to a "cognitive domain", which refers to cognitive entities such as mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes (Langacker 1987:147). Linguistic semantics in the Cognitive Grammar approach is encyclopedic and open-ended in nature. In light of the Cognitive Grammar approach, the cognitive domain of the meaning of 'acquiring something', which is the basic meaning of *đƯỢC*, consists of an infinite number of cognitive entities or semantic traits.

It is argued that *đƯỢC* grammaticalizes into ability, circumstantial possibility, and permission in a unidirectional way. To be specific, the changes in meaning are as follows.

- to succeed, to win > ability
- ability > circumstantial possibility
- circumstantial possibility > permission

The three types of modality above, i.e. ability, possibility and permission, are called "enabling modalities" in Radden and Dirven's (2007) terms. Enabling modalities "involve the unimpeded potential of a force; they comprise abilities, intrinsic possibilities, permissions and epistemic possibilities" (Radden and Dirven 2007:253). Enabling modalities are defined as opposed to "compelling modalities", which "involve a compelling force; they comprise obligations, prohibitions and intrinsic and epistemic necessities" (Radden and Dirven 2007:247).

In order for *đƯỢC* to be grammaticalized into enabling modalities, it must appear in one of the two syntactic schemas, i.e. [NP V (NP) *đƯỢC*] and [NP *đƯỢC* V (NP)]. The first semantic extension or change which is argued to take place is that from the third lexical meaning of *đƯỢC*, namely, to succeed and to win, to ability, which corresponds to Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca's (1994) agent-oriented modality. The modal *đƯỢC* expressing ability appears in the structural schema [NP V (NP) *đƯỢC*].

Ability means a person's internal enabling conditions or potential which can cause an event to be realized. If it is used with a thing, it can be called capacity or disposition. Therefore, the word "ability" in this study is used in a broad sense which encompasses a person's internal potential, and a thing's capacity or disposition. The *được* which indicates ability in this sense appears in the schema [NP V (NP) *được*] as exemplified below.

- (19) *Anh ấy nói tiếng Việt được*
 he speak language Vietnamese ability
 'He can (has the ability to) speak Vietnamese.'

- (20) *Anh ấy nói tiếng Việt không được*
 he speak language Vietnamese not ability
 'He cannot (does not have the ability to) speak Vietnamese.'

- (21) *cái ghế này ngồi ba người được*
 CL chair this sit three person capacity
nhưng mà ngồi bốn người không được
 but sit four person person not capacity
 'This chair can seat three people, not four people.'

Example (19) is affirmative, whereas (20) is negative. Notice that the negative word *không* appears immediately before the modal *được* indicating ability. The subject noun phrases in both (19) and (20) are human, whereas that in (21) is non-human. Sentence (21) expresses an inherent property of *cái ghế này* 'this chair' which enables it to seat or accommodate three people. This inherent property of the chair is actually the internal capacity of the chair to seat three people. In some circumstances, there may not be anybody sitting on the chair at all. However, if there is a circumstance in which somebody sits on the chair, the full capacity for the chair to accommodate seated people is three. Therefore, capacity or disposition is thus a non-human's ability; it is an "ability" of an entity, which is in this case, the chair. It is argued that the ability meaning of *được* is grammaticalized from the second lexical meaning of *được*, namely, 'to succeed, to win', by means of metonymy.

Metonymy is semantic transfer through contiguity. A metonymic change involves specifying meaning of an expression in terms of another that is present, but is usually covert, in the context. A covert meaning contiguous with 'to succeed, to prevail, to win' of *được* is to be able to perform an action. This covert meaning is pragmatically inferred from the second meaning of *được*. The inference or pragmatic meaning derived from the second meaning of *được* has become semanticized, which results in becoming the conventionalized meaning of *được*. This process is called pragmatic strengthening in Traugott's sense.

The next extension or grammaticalization chain is from ability to circumstantial possibility. Circumstantial possibility reports on general external conditions, such as social or physical conditions, not the agent's internal conditions, which enable the agent to perform an action. It is concerned with potentialities arising from intrinsic qualities of a thing or circumstances, which are agent-external. The modal *được* which expresses circumstantial possibility appears in the same structural schema as the one expressing ability described above, i.e. [NP V (NP) *được*]. The examples below illustrate the circumstantial possibility meaning of *được*.

- (22) *Giá bàây không bị ốm thì chiều này*
 if aunt not get sick then afternoon this
bàáy đichơi được
 she go out cir.poss.
 'If auntie had not been sick, she could have been able to go out.'

- (23) *Giá ôngấy nói chậm thì tôi*
 If he speak slow then I
ghi được
 write down cir.poss.
 'If he had spoken slowly, I could have been able to write down his words.'

- (24) *Vì thời thết tốt nên tôi đi bộ ngắm*
 Because weather good so I go walk watch
phong cảnh được
 scenery cir.poss.
 ‘Because the weather is good, I can walk and watch the scenery around.’

- (25) *Chị Loan bị ốm nên chiều này*
 miss Loan got sick so afternoon this
chị ấy không đi học được
 miss she not go study cir.poss.
 ‘Miss Loan got sick so she cannot go to study this afternoon.’

- (26) *Vì không có xe, nên tôi không*
 because not have car so I not
đi đón nó được
 go pick him cir.poss.
 ‘Because I don’t have a car, I can’t go to pick him up.’

Notice that the instances of *được* claimed to express circumstantial possibility in (22)–(26) appear in complex sentences. The other clause which co-occurs with the one containing *được* in each example above functions as a circumstantial context which gives rise to the interpretation of *được* as circumstantial possibility. For example, in (23), the possibility for “me” to write down his words depended on “his” speaking slowly. Because “he” did not speak slowly, “I” could not write down his words. In (26), the possibility of “me” going to pick him up depends on “me” having a car. Now we can analyze the mechanism which gives rise to the emergence of circumstantial possibility. Again, we argue that circumstantial possibility is derived from ability by means of metonymy. The notion of ability suggests that mental enabling conditions exist in the agent for the situation denoted by the main predicate to be completed. It is likely that most activities which require mental ability for them to be realized also require physical ability.

A pragmatic aspect which is associative to and can be inferred from the notion of ability is that some conditions exist somewhere which

enable an event to be realized. The enabling conditions do not necessarily exist in the agent but can exist in circumstances external to the agent. This pragmatic aspect is then strengthened and becomes semanticized as circumstantial possibility.

Now we will look into the emergence of the permission modality. Permission is concerned with the speaker's directive attitude towards the hearer's potential action, which he enables to occur by relinquishing his power to prevent it (Radden and Dirven 2007:257). The permission modality does not report the existence of conditions on the agent, but rather allows the speaker to impose such conditions on the addressee. It is typically based on the speaker's authority. Permission is called by other scholars "deontic modality". The examples below illustrate the use of *được* as a modal indicating permission. Notice that the permission *được* appears preverbally in the schema [NP *được* V (NP)].

- (27) *Món ăn này anh (không) được ăn*
 food this you (not) permission eat
 'This food, you can (cannot) eat.'

- (28) *Chị Lan được vào phòng*
 Miss Lan permission enter room
 'Miss Lan can enter the room.'

- (29) *cái ghế này anh ấy không được*
 CL chair this he not permission
ngồi, nhưng chị ấy được ngồi
 sit but she permission sit
 'He cannot sit on this chair, but she can'

It is again argued here that the permission modality is grammaticalized from the circumstantial modality by means of metonymy. As mentioned above, the enabling conditions expressed by the circumstantial modality cover those that are external to the agent such as physical and social conditions. The permission modality is simply the presence of the social enabling conditions. A type of social enabling conditions present in the permission modality is the

authoritative speaker's directive attitude towards an action to be carried out. The speaker's directive attitude is pragmatically inferred from the notion of social enabling conditions. This inference is later pragmatically strengthened and became semanticized, which results in the permission modality.

Another piece of syntactic evidence which supports the close semantic relationship, which is in this case semantic extension or a grammaticalization relationship, between the circumstantial modality and permission is the position of the negative marker *không* in sentences containing the circumstantial and permissive modal *được*. In negative sentences with the lexical verb and the ability modal *được*, the negative marker *không* appears immediately before *được* and has the scope of negation over the lexical verb and the ability modal *được* as in (30) and (31) below.

- (30) *Anh ấy thi không được thứ nhất*
 he take exam not acquire rank first
trong lớp
 in class
 'He took the exam but did not get the first rank in class.' (lexical verb use)

- (31) *Anh ấy nói tiếng Việt không được*
 he speak language Vietnamese not ABILITY
 'He cannot (is not able to) speak Vietnamese.' (ability modality)

Therefore, the lexical verb and the ability modal *được* co-occurring with the negative marker *không* appear in the schema below.

- (32) Lexical verb and ability modal *được*: [V (NP) *không được*]³

³ According to Lord (1993), certain verbs in serial verb constructions have undergone historical reanalysis as prepositions, adverbs, auxiliaries, conjunctions, complementizers and adverbial subordinators. In the case of *được* expressing ability, the erstwhile serial verb *được* has been grammaticalized into a modal auxiliary, which is a kind of grammatical word. However, since grammaticalization is a continuous process, grammaticalized words at a certain point in time may not be fully grammatical and still

On the other hand, in negative sentences with the circumstantial and permission modal *được*, the negative marker *không* appears at the beginning of verb phrases as shown in the schemas below.

(33) Permission modal *được*: [không *được* V (NP)]

(34) Circumstantial possibility modal *được*: [không V (NP) *được*]

The negative marker *không* in (33) and (34) has the scope of negation over the whole verb phrase containing the permission and the circumstantial possibility *được*. Sentences (26) and (29) repeated here for convenience as (35) and (36) exemplify *được* expressing permission and circumstantial possibility modalities.

(35) *Vì không có xe, nên tôi không đi*
 because neg. have car so I not go
đón nó được
 pick him cir.poss.
 'Because I do not have a car, I cannot go to pick him up.'
 (circumstantial possibility)

(36) *cái ghế này anh ấy không được ngồi*
 CL chair this he not permission sit
nhưng chị ấy được ngồi
 but she permission sit
 'He cannot sit on this chair, but she can.' (permission modality)

The fact that the negative constructions with the lexical verb *được* and the ability modal *được*, which have the same structural schema, have a close semantic relationship or are "semantically contiguous" with each other as argued above, supports the iconicity principle, which claims the conceived similarity between a form of language and its meaning. We can also see the iconicity principle in operation in the negative

retain some lexical properties. In the case of the modal *được* expressing ability, it still retains some verbal properties, which explains why it can be negated.

constructions with the circumstantial modality *được* and the permission *được*.

It is noted that the postverbal modal *được* which appears in some affirmative sentences can be ambiguous if those sentences do not contain any clue or context which might lead to any specific kind of interpretation. This point is exemplified by sentence (37).

- (37) Ông Quang mua cái nhà được
 Mr. Quang buy CLS house modality
 ‘Mr.Quang can buy a house.’ (Duffield 2001:103)

The modal *được* in (37) without context can be interpreted as a marker of ability, circumstantial possibility, and also epistemic possibility. Epistemic modalities concerned with the speaker’s assessment of the potential reality of a state of affairs. The marker *được* as an epistemic modal expresses the speaker’s assessment that there are some chances that a proposition may possibly be true or that there are some chances that an event may take place. The epistemic modality is external to the proposition of the clause and has the whole proposition in its scope.

It is found that it is very hard to find an unambiguous epistemic modal *được* in the collected data. There is only one sentence containing *được* that is found to be semantically closest to epistemic modality as below.

- (38) nếu thiếu vắng lời ca tiếng nhạc quen thuộc ấy
 if lack music familiar indef. pron.⁴
 thì buồn chết được!
 then be bored die possible
 ‘If there is no familiar music, one may be bored to death.’

Notice that there is no specific nor definite subject of the main clause with *được* in (38). Sentence (38) can be interpreted as ‘if there is no familiar music, it can be assessed that one may be bored to death.’ The

⁴ “Indef. pron.” stands for an indefinite pronoun.

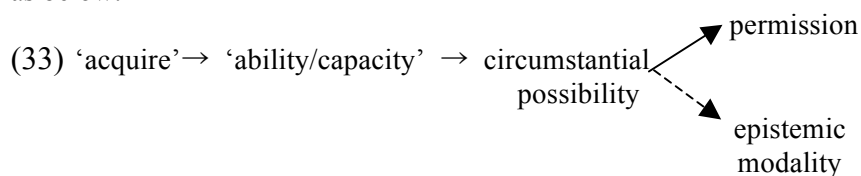
lack of specific and definite subject of the main clause can give rise to the epistemic interpretation.

Given the facts that it is very hard to find clear cases of the epistemic *được* in our corpus and that epistemic modality is generally at an advanced stage of the grammaticalization path according to many research works on modality (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998; Traugott and Dasher 2002), we argue that *được* has not developed into a full-fledged epistemic modal yet. This claim is also supported by Traugott and Dasher's (2002) findings that not all languages have (partially) grammaticalized epistemic modal verbs that are derived from non-epistemic ones. Moreover, van der Auwera, Keyahov and Vittrant. (2009) found that the modal *can* in modern English is used to express participant-internal and participant-external possibility (both deontic and non-deontic), but not to express epistemic possibility. Coates (1995:62-64) argues that the epistemic meaning of *can* in British English is not really developed. The epistemic meaning of *can* is only possible in questions and with negation. *Can* in English and *được* in Vietnamese are comparable words because both of them express the same types of modality, i.e. ability, circumstantial possibility and permission. However, if epistemic modality is to be derived from non-epistemic modality, it is argued in many research works that it is developed from root possibility (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994) or participant-external possibility (van der Auwera and Plungian 1998), which are in our terms circumstantial possibility. This fact suggests that an epistemic modal is highly grammaticalized because it appears relatively late on the grammaticalization path.

We would like to give an account of how an epistemic modal is derived from a circumstantial possibility modal even though *được* has not been fully developed into an epistemic modal yet. If a circumstantial possibility modal reports on the existence of some external enabling conditions for an agent to perform an action, it can be pragmatically inferred by the speaker that that action has a possibility to take place. The speaker's assessment that there is a possibility for an event to take place, which is originally a pragmatic inference from a construction with a circumstantial possibility modal, has become semanticized, which

results in an epistemic modal. This change is driven by a metonymic process.

To sum up, the grammaticalization path of *đượ* can be schematized as below.



Notice that the arrow headed line from circumstantial possibility to epistemic modality is dotted, which means that the epistemic modal *đượ* is not fully developed in Vietnamese yet. The unidirectionality of the changes on the grammaticalization path presented above is in accord with that of the diachronic changes of various types of modality postulated in previous studies (Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca 1994; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998; Traugott and Dasher 2002). The unidirectional change of the lexical verb *đượ* to different types of modality results in the loss of non-logical semantic content and the enrichment and strengthening of former non-referential pragmatic inferences. Furthermore, the change also results in the scope increase in both syntactic and semantic aspects. Notice that there are certain areas of modality that are synchronically vague in certain contexts. The vagueness results from the fuzzy boundary between different types of modality.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has presented different types of modality originally grammaticalized from the lexical verb *đượ* meaning ‘to acquire’ in Vietnamese. The approach used in the study is internal semantic reconstruction postulated by (Traugott 1986). Although this study is a synchronic analysis, a further diachronic study of *đượ* should be done to confirm the results yielded by the synchronic analysis. As mentioned in section 1, the verbs meaning ‘to acquire’ are among the most

polyfunctional words in Southeast Asian languages. Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the grammaticalization and/or functional extension of the counterpart verbs in other Southeast Asian languages to find out whether they grammaticalize into different kinds of modals in the same manner as *đượ* or not. It is found in this paper that *đượ* has not been fully grammaticalized into an epistemic modal yet and that epistemic modality seems to be at an advanced stage of the grammaticalization of the lexical verb *đượ* into modality. It would be interesting theoretically to examine the counterpart verbs across languages to see if this hypothesis could be confirmed cross-linguistically or not.

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表示「取得」的動詞轉換為情狀助動詞：以越南文為例

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在多種東南亞語言中，表示「取得」的動詞被認定為多功能語素。該動詞擁有有許多句法功能及語法意義，其中一個重要的語法意義顯示為該動詞可轉換為情狀助動詞。本研究主要探討越南文中表示「取得」的動詞「đủc」可轉換為助動詞用以標示多種情狀，包含「能力」、「可能性」與「許可」。研究成果發現該動詞尚未完整發展為有機可循的模組，並且提出「đủc」在轉換為情狀助動詞時，主要受到借喻的影響。

關鍵字：語法化、情狀助動詞、動詞「取得」、越南文