1. Introduction. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the relationships between the relative clause in Vietnamese and certain constructions structurally ambiguous with it may be described in terms of their underlying or deep structure. A secondary purpose is to show that these subordinate constructions can be profitably described in terms of the transformational-generative method of embedding. 1

Both Liêm (1966) and Cadière (1958) refer to Vietnamese as being governed by certain "laws". In his preface, Liêm states (1966:xvi):

Vietnamese is an uninflectional and, at least phonologically speaking, monosyllabic language. That means that there are only two syntactic and morphological devices in Vietnamese: the use of word order, and the use of function words.

This limited number of grammatical devices in Vietnamese is closely related to and characteristic of the Vietnamese
linguistic behaviour, which would seem to be governed by two behavioural laws: the law of indeterminacy; and the law of simplicity.

Liêm's reference to the "law of indeterminacy" and his subsequent illustration of it are reminiscent of what Cadière also affirmed as the "loi d'indétermination" for Vietnamese. Liêm cites (1966: xvii) as an example of this law the fact that the sentence, nó về tôi về + falling intonation, "can be understood in different ways according to the larger linguistic matrices." It could be understood to mean variously:

If he goes home, I'll go home too.  
When he goes home, I'll go home too.  
Every time he goes home, I go home too.  
Because he is going home, I am going home too.  
Because he went home, I went home too.  
Since he might be going home, I am going home now, etc.

The term "law of indeterminacy" suggests imprecision and raises the question whether the syntactic patterns of Vietnamese can be described in a formal way, particularly in areas where ambiguity exists. We wish to show in this paper that by distinguishing underlying from surface structure following Chomsky (1965), it can be shown how various ambiguous readings relate to each other in terms of their unambiguous underlying structures. It can also be shown how these unambiguous underlying structures converge to become ambiguous through the application of certain transformations.

Liêm observes that Vietnamese employs only word order and function words to indicate its grammatical patterns. What makes this situation of particular interest is the fact that the function words may frequently be deleted and the word order changed with a resulting structural ambiguity. Transformational theory affirms that a native hearer, however, understands an utterance because he is able to relate the utterance to its proper underlying representation. In other words, he is able in terms of the context to replace the deleted grammatical function words and make adjustments of word order.

It should be noted that a hearer is usually unaware that ambiguity exists since he understands only the meaning which the context suggests. Or, he may not realize that some sentences are ambiguous because one of the possible readings is false or anomalous.

Another law which is said to govern Vietnamese is called by Liêm the "law of simplicity" and by Cadière the "loi de succession". "The Vietnamese language," Liêm states (1966:xviii), "is said to be
governed by the law of simplicity in the sense it tends to use simple constructions, and compound constructions, rather than to use complex constructions."

In illustration of this, sentence 1) below is said by Liêm to be composed of two coordinate parts joined loosely by an "Independent Clause Coordinator," thì.

1) Nơ vè nhà thì (nơ) gặp một người khách
    he return house he meet one person visitor
    (When he returned home, he met a visitor.)

In contrast to this, sentence 2) would be said to be complex because the first phrase is introduced by an "Extra Dependent Introducer," khi.

2) Khi nơ vè nhà thì (nơ) gặp một người khách
    when he return house he meet one person visitor
    (When he returned home, he met a visitor.)

Several problems are apparent in this treatment. First, if thì is an "Independent Clause Coordinator," its presence in the second sentence is anomalous. Second, as the translations given for the two sentences indicate, the meaning of the sentences is identical. That is, whatever relationship exists between the two parts in the second sentence also exists in the first. Third, the first sentence could be ambiguously understood to mean also 'If he returns (returned ...); 'Since he returns (returned) ...'; 'Because he returns (returned) ...'; etc. So that it would seem to be helpful to be able to treat both sentences in the same way and to speak of the first as having the introducer deleted. It is the purpose of this paper to show that treating these subordinate constructions as embedded sentences in underlying structure results in a more satisfactory description of their relationship to the main clause or matrix sentence.

2. Base Component. This section will present rules for generating sentences in Vietnamese. The rules are not complete in that they will not generate all possible sentences in Vietnamese. They are, however, the rules necessary to produce the kinds of sentences discussed in this paper. Following them, some subcategories of grammatical classes will be noted.

1-- #S#  \[\rightarrow\] NP + PP

The sentence (#S#) in Vietnamese is said to be composed of an obligatory noun phrase (NP) and an obligatory predicate phrase (PP). The noun phrase subject very frequently is deleted in surface structure, but it is always present in underlying structure.\(^2\)

2-- PP  \[\rightarrow\] (Cond) (Caus) (tins) VP (T) (L)\(^3\)

The predicate phrase (PP) consists of the verb phrase (VP) and
those optional elements which, although they seem to be in some way related to the verb, do not subcategorize the verb in any way. These elements are condition (Cond), cause (Caus), tense (tns), time (T), and location (L). An example of sentences containing all elements of the predicate phrase is: Nếu mà chứng tôi hết bánh mì
if we all gone bread
tôi sẽ mua ở bên chợ ngày mai bởi vì có khách đến. 'If we are out of bread, I will buy some at the market tomorrow because have company come.
morrow because company is coming.'

3. VP → \( \{ V (\text{cho}) \text{NP} \} \) (Man) \{ Purp Vb Comp \} \{ là + NP \}

One kind of verb phrase consists of an obligatory verb (V) with all other elements optional. These optional elements include a noun phrase indirect object which may or may not be preceded by cho, a noun phrase direct object, manner (Man), and either purpose (Purp) or verbal complement (Vb Comp). The other kind of verb phrase, which is equational in nature, consists of là plus a noun phrase. The following sentences illustrate the verb phrase first with purpose, then with verbal complement, then with là plus noun phrase:

Tôi sẽ sẵn lòng đưa con cái áo để mà con đi học không trễ. 'I will willingly give you your dress so you won't be late to school.'

Tôi hân hạnh để mà thấy ông. 'I am happy to see you.'

Ông ấy là bác sĩ. 'That man is a doctor.'

4. Cond → nếu mà + #S#

5. Caus → bởi vì + #S#

Condition (Cond) is composed of nếu mà plus a sentence and Cause (Caus) of bởi vì plus a sentence.

Nếu mà anh tôi đi lính (thì) mẹ tôi sẽ khóc. 'If my older brother goes into the army, my mother will cry.'

Bởi vì người ta nói không thật (thì) tôi không tin. 'Because they don't tell the truth, I don't believe them.'
6-- NP \rightarrow \{ \begin{array}{l} \text{pro} \\ \#S\# \end{array} \}

The noun phrase consists, in one form, of an obligatory noun preceded by an optional numeral (Nu) and/or classifier (Cl) followed by an optional demonstrative (dem) and/or sentence. It may, in other forms, be composed of a pronoun (pro) or a sentence in factive construction.

Những người cảnh sát đó người mà đã giúp tôi giúp tôi.

(ghi) siêng làm. hardworking very 'Those policemen who helped me are very hardworking.'

Nó cũng ăn xoài. They also eat mangos. 'They also eat mangos.'

Ông ấy thương con {là thi} dể hiểu. That man loves his child is easy to understand.

The major categories in Vietnamese, that is, nouns and verbs, may be said to comprise smaller subcategories. Nouns are subcategorized according to the classifiers they accept or by their refusal to accept classifiers (see Hòa 1957).

Verbs are subcategorized in a number of ways. They may be subcategorized as to those which take an object (such as mua 'to buy'); those which do not take an object (such as ngủ 'to sleep'); and those which may either accept or refuse an object (such as làm 'to make, to work'). Those which take an object are further subcategorized as to those which may take an indirect object (such as dùng 'to give'); and those which may not take an indirect object (such as thấy 'to see').

In addition to their ability to occur with direct and indirect objects, verbs are subcategorized by the other elements within the verb phrase. There are those which take verbal complement but not purpose (such as ngạc nhiên 'to be surprised'); those which take purpose but not verbal complement (such as cho 'to give'); and a few which may take either purpose or verbal complement (such as tệ 'to be late'). They are also subcategorized according to whether they can take manner (as, for example, đi 'to go'); or cannot take manner (as, for example, vui 'to be happy'). Of those which do not take manner, some may take a factive construction (such as tốt 'to be good') while others may not (such as đẹp 'to be beautiful').
3. Relative Clause Ambiguity. The relative clause in Vietnamese may be defined as a sentence embedded within the noun phrase. That is, its presence is manifested in deep structure by the inclusion of the optional element (\#S\#) in the rule NP \rightarrow (Nu) (Cl) N (dem) (\#S\#). Embedding may occur in any position where the NP may occur (i.e., subject, direct object, indirect object, etc.). The only condition required for embedding is that a noun in the matrix sentence be held in common with a noun in the embedded sentence.

To illustrate the way in which relative clause formation is accounted for here, we will give a representation of the deep structures of sentences 1) and 2) below and will use these deep structures to illustrate various possibilities for the embedding of the relative clause.

1) Đứa con khóc. 'The child is crying.'

2) Đứa con trẻ. 'The child is late.'

Underlying Tree A: Sentence 1)

```
NP
  ↑
  |  PP
  |  ↑
  |  VP
  |  →  V
  |  →  V
  |  ↑
  |  N
  |  →  con
  |  #
  |  ↑
  |  Cl
  |  →  Đứa
  |  #
  ↑
Cl

'The child is crying.'
```

Underlying Tree B: Sentence 2)

```
NP
  ↑
  |  PP
  |  ↑
  |  VP
  |  →  V
  |  →  V
  |  ↑
  |  N
  |  →  con
  |  #
  |  ↑
  |  Cl
  |  →  Đứa
  |  #
  ↑
Cl

'The child is late.'
```
Underlying Tree C: Embedding of 2) into 1)

'SThe child who is late is crying.'

Underlying Tree D: Embedding of 1) into 2)

'SThe child who is crying is late.'
The preceding trees illustrate how two sentences can be embedded when the noun subject of the intransitive verb sentence is shared by the noun subject of the stative verb sentence. The same operation may also be performed with other types of sentences in which shared nouns are not in subject position. Example 3) below has a subject noun which is identical to the indirect object noun of example 4). Trees G and H below indicate how each of these sentences may be embedded as a relative clause within the other.

3) Đứa con là người học sinh. 'The child is a student.'

4) Tôi sẽ cho đứa con một cái áo. 'I will give the child a dress.'

Underlying Tree E: Sentence 3)
Underlying Tree F: Sentence 4)

'I will give the child a dress.'

Underlying Tree G: Embedding of 4) into 3)

'The child to whom I will give a dress is a student.'
Underlying Tree H: Embedding of 3) into 4)

Only two transformations are obligatory to convert trees G and H to the surface structure required by the phonology. The first transformation removes the second occurrence of the shared noun and replaces it with the word mà. Mà is a grammatical marker of many uses as will be seen in the following section, and it is not readily translatable into English. Perhaps for these reasons Emeneau (1951:206) called it "probably the hardest word in the language to describe accurately." The condition necessary for the application of transformation (l) is that a noun of the matrix sentence and a noun of the embedded sentence with accompanying numeral and demonstratives, if such are present, must be identical. It is not necessary that the two classifiers be identical since there is to a small degree a selection of classifiers used with the same noun.

In this transformation and those following, the symbols Q, U, W, X, Y, Z are variables. That is, they represent segments which are not directly pertinent to the transformation or they may be null. The segments in the transformations are numbered in such a way as to make it more readily apparent to the reader what elements have been deleted or added or changed in order. The symbol ø is to be
read zero. The material on the left side of the arrow gives the structural description of segments to which the transformation may apply. The structural change is given on the right side of the arrow.

**Transformation (1), Obligatory:** Replacement of second N with mà.

```
#S#
# Q (Nu) (Cl) N (dem) [X (Nu) (Cl) N (dem) Y] Z #
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

1 2 3 4 5 6 ø 8 + mà ø 11
```

Condition: 2 = 7, 4 = 9, 5 = 10; #S# is not dominated by Cond, Caus, Purp.

Transformation (2) takes classifier + mà and, where they are not already next to the shared noun of the matrix sentence, moves them to that position. This transformation will apply to sentences in which the shared N within the embedded sentence is in some position other than subject (see Tree G). It also removes cho where it occurs within the indirect object construction.

**Transformation (2), Obligatory:** Extraposition of (Cl) N

```
NP
# Q [W N (dem) [X (cho) (Cl) mà Y] Z #
1 2 3 4 5

1 ø 4 + 2 5
```

Condition: X contains a verb

The application of these rules to the preceding underlying trees will produce the following grammatically acceptable sentences in Vietnamese:

5) Đứa con đều mà khóc trễ.
   Cít child CI cry late
   'The child who is crying is late.'

6) Đứa con đều mà trễ khóc.
   Cít child CI late cry
   'The child who is late is crying.'
7) Đứa con òa mà tôi sẽ cho một cái áo là học sinh.  
Student  
'The child to whom I'm going to give a dress is a student.'

8) Tôi sẽ cho òa mà là học sinh một cái áo.  
Fut  Child  Student  One  Dress  
'I'm going to give the child who is a student a dress.'

In addition to the obligatory transformations already given, there are other transformations which are optional. These transformations are freely chosen to apply or not to apply to sentences which fulfill the conditions of their descriptions.

Transformation (3) optionally inserts the word thì before the predicate phrase of a matrix sentence or any non-embedded sentence or following condition, cause, or time, where these are sentence initial. It need not apply, but its non-application results in the occurrence of certain ambiguities as will be seen later.

Transformation (3) Optional: Insertion of thì.

\[
\begin{align*}
\{ & \text{T} \} \quad \{ & \text{Cond} \} \quad \{ & \text{Caus} \} \quad \{ & \text{Cond + Caus} \} \quad \{ & \text{X} \} \quad \{ & \text# \} \\
\{ & \text{PP} \} \quad \{ & \text Y \}
\end{align*}
\]

Condition: #S# is not a constituent of another node.

This transformation, if chosen to apply to the preceding trees, would produce sentences such as the following:

9) Đứa con thì khóc.  
'Very  
'The child is crying.'

10) Đứa con thì là học sinh.  
'Very  
'The child is a student.'

11) Đứa con òa mà trễ thì khóc.  
Child  Late  Very  
'The child who is late is crying.'

12) Đứa con òa mà tôi sẽ cho một cái áo thì là học sinh.  
Child  Very  Fut  One  Dress  
'The child to whom I will give a dress is a student.'
Transformation (4) optionally deletes Cl or mà or both from an embedded sentence where they occur.

**Transformation (4) Optional: Deletion of Cl and/or mà.**

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{NP} & \text{S} & \text{Cl} \\
\text{Q} & \text{U} & \text{mà} \\
1 & 2 & 3 \\
\rightarrow & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\
\end{array}
\]

The application of this transformation produces sentences such as:

13) Đứa con (đều) (mà) khóc (thì) trê.
   \(\text{Cl} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{cry} \quad \text{late} \)
   'The child who is crying is late.'

14) Tôi (thì) sê cho đêu con (đều) (mà) là học sinh
   \(\text{I} \quad \text{fut} \quad \text{give} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{is} \quad \text{student} \)
   một cái áo.
   \(\text{one} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{dress} \)
   'I will give the child who is a student a dress.'

15) Đứa con (đều) (mà) trê (thì) khóc.
   \(\text{Cl} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{late} \quad \text{cry} \)
   'The child who is late is crying.'

Transformation (5) optionally moves the relative clause to the end of the sentence.

**Transformation (5) Optional: Extraposition of relative clause.**

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{NP} & \text{S} & \text{Cl} \\
\text{Q} & \text{W} & \text{X} \\
1 & 2 & 3 \\
\rightarrow & 1 & 3 + 2 & 4 \\
\end{array}
\]

This transformation, if applied, would take sentences 13), 14), and 15) above and make them read:

16) Đứa con (thì) trê (đều) (mà) khóc.
   \(\text{Cl} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{late} \quad \text{cry} \)
   'The child is late who is crying.'

17) Tôi (thì) sê cho đêu con một cái áo (đều)
   \(\text{I} \quad \text{fut} \quad \text{give} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{child} \quad \text{one} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{dress} \quad \text{Cl} \)
   'I will give the child a dress.'
Two types of ambiguity may result from the application of the preceding transformations. The first type is ambiguity of embedding. If one were to select Underlying Tree C and apply to it transformations 1) and 4), the resulting sentence would be:  Đủa con khóc trẻ.

meaning 'The child who is crying is late.' If, on the other hand, one should select Underlying Tree D and apply to it transformations 1), 4), and 5), the resulting sentence would also be Đủa con khóc trẻ.

but meaning this time 'The child is crying who is late.' So that, given the form Đủa con khóc trẻ in isolation, it is impossible to say which of sentences 1) and 2) was the matrix sentence and which the embedded. And although the total information in both cases is the same, the emphasis is quite different.

The second type of ambiguity, which more strongly affects the meaning of a sentence, was mentioned in the introduction. It is ambiguity of antecedent. This is illustrated below.

Underlying Tree I
Underlying Tree J

S

NP  PP

VP

NP

S

NP  PP

VP

NP

ı nı

V

Cl

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4.1 Verbal Complement.

Underlying Tree K

\[
S \\
NP \quad PP \\
\quad VP \\
\quad \text{Vb Comp} \\
\quad S \\
\quad NP \quad PP \\
\quad VP \\
\quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{Cl} \quad \text{N} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{N}
\]

\[
\frac{\text{dùa}}{\text{Cl}} \quad \text{con} \quad \frac{\text{vui}}{\text{child}} \quad \frac{\text{để}}{\text{happy}} \quad \frac{\text{dùa}}{\text{Cl}} \quad \text{con} \quad \frac{\text{thấy}}{\text{child}} \quad \frac{\text{cô}}{\text{see}} \quad \frac{\text{# #}}{\text{aunt}}
\]

'The child is happy to see his aunt.'

To the underlying tree above, obligatory transformation (1) presented with the Relative Clause will apply to replace the shared noun in the embedded sentence with mà. This produces the combination (Cl) mà. For the verbal complement construction, however, it is also necessary to delete Cl, should this be present. Obligatory transformation (6) does this.

**Transformation (6) Obligatory:** Deletion of Cl.

\[
\frac{\text{NP}}{\text{X \text{để} \text{Cl mà Y}}} \quad Z \quad \rightarrow \quad 1 \quad \emptyset \quad 3
\]

The application of transformation (1) and transformation (6) to Tree K above will produce the following sentence:
19)  Đứa con vui  dễ mà thấy cô.  
Child happy  see aunt
'The child is happy to see his aunt.'

Transformations (9) and (10) are optional and may be applied to delete mà whenever it occurs with.neu or dễ and to delete dễ when it precedes an embedded sentence. These transformations are numbered to apply after the transformations presented in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

Transformation (9) Optional: Deletion of mà with neu or dễ.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
# \ X \\
\quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c}
\quad \text{neu} \\
\quad \text{dễ}\end{array} \right. \\
\quad \text{mà} \\
\quad \text{Y} \\
\quad \text{Z} \\
\rightarrow 1 \ \emptyset \ 3
\end{array}
\]

Transformation (10) Optional: Deletion of neu, dễ, bồi vĩ, khi.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
# \ W \\
\quad \left\{ \begin{array}{c}
\quad \text{neu} \\
\quad \text{dễ} \\
\quad \text{bồi vĩ} \\
\quad \text{khi}
\end{array} \right. \\
\quad \text{(mà)} \\
\quad \text{Z} \\
\quad \text{Z} \\
\rightarrow 1 \ \emptyset \ 3
\end{array}
\]

Condition: When 2 is dominated by T, Cond, or Caus, Z may not be null.

After the application of transformations (9) and (10), sentence 19) above may have either dễ or mà deleted or both as shown below:

20)  Đứa con vui  (dễ) (mà) thấy cô.  
Child happy  see aunt
'The child is happy to see his aunt.'

In its minimal form, that is with all optional elements deleted, Underlying Tree K with a verbal complement construction becomes ambiguous with the relative clause construction. The sentence  Đứa con vui thấy cô., Child happy see aunt (sentence 20), could also be understood as having been derived from the embedding of the sentence  Đứa con vui.  
Child happy  The child is happy.  into the sentence  Đứa con thấy cô.  
Child see aunt  (The child sees his aunt.)  and the application of transformations (1) and (4). If the sentence were derived in this way, it would mean  'The child who is happy sees his aunt.'  It could also be understood as having been derived from the embed-
The transformation of the sentence دُها con thấy cô. into the sentence دُها con vui.

Cl child see aunt ('The child sees his aunt.') and the application of transformations (1), (4), and (5). In this case it would mean 'The child who sees his aunt is happy.'

4.2 Purpose. The purpose construction has an underlying structure very similar to that of the verbal complement except that for it Purp is chosen from the rule expanding the verb phrase (see base rule 3) instead of Vb Comp.

Underlying Tree L:

No transformations are obligatory to this construction. Of the transformations already presented, transformation (3) may apply to the above tree to insert thì before the predicate phrase. So the sentence دُها con (thì) khóc để mà dûa con ăn keo

Cl child cry V N

Cl child eat candy is a
grammatically acceptable sentence.

Transformation (7), however, will optionally delete the second occurrence of a particular noun phrase within a sentence or replace it with a pronoun.

Transformation (7) Optional: Deletion of shared NP or replacement with pro

\[ [X \text{ NP} \quad Y \text{ NP} \quad Z] \rightarrow 1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad \{ \emptyset \} \quad 5 \]

\text{Condition: } 2 + 4

Should the noun phrase subject of the embedded sentence not be shared by that of the matrix sentence, transformation (7) will not delete it but allow it to remain, as in the sentence:

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & \text{khoc} & \text{để} & \text{mà} & \text{me} & \text{cho} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{cry} & \text{mother} & \text{give} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

'The child is crying so that his mother will give him candy.'

Optional transformations (9) and (10) may apply to delete để or mà or both, so the possible sentences generated with purpose will include:

21) \[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & (thì) & \text{khoc} & (để)(mà)(đứa con) & \text{ăn} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{cry} & \text{mother} & \text{give} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

'The child is crying to eat candy.'

22) \[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & (thì) & \text{khoc} & (để)(mà)(mình) & \text{ăn} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{cry} & \text{self} & \text{eat} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

'The child is crying to eat candy.'

23) \[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & (thì) & \text{khoc} & (để)(mà) & \text{me} & \text{cho} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{cry} & \text{mother} & \text{give} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

'The child is crying so that his mother will give him candy.'

Of these sentences, several possible combinations are structurally ambiguous with the relative clause. The form,

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & (thì) & \text{khoc} & (mà) & \text{ăn} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{cry} & \text{eat} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

of sentence 21) and 22) could also be derived from the embedding of the sentence

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{Đứa} & \text{con} & \text{ăn} & \text{kẹo}.\\
\text{Cl} & \text{child} & \text{eat} & \text{candy}
\end{array}
\]

'The child is eating candy.' The form,
Đứa con khóc ăn kẹo of sentences 21) and 22) might also be derived from the same embedding or from the reverse embedding. So that it might mean 'The child is crying to eat candy,' 'The child who is eating candy is crying,' or 'The child is eating candy who is crying.'

Sentence 23) could be produced in minimal form by embedding Mẹ cho đứa con kẹo 'The mother gave the child candy' into Đứa con khóc 'The child is crying' with the resultant meaning 'The crying child is the one to whom the mother gave candy.'

Structural ambiguity between the verbal complement construction and the purpose construction is limited to the occurrence of the small subcategory of verbs which may occur with both purpose and verbal complement as noted in section 2. Within this small subcategory of verbs which may occur with both constructions structural ambiguity seems almost always to exist. Trees M and N illustrate this.

Tree M might pass through all the transformations relevant to it and come out in surface structure Đứa con trẻ (đê)(mà) đi bộ 'The child was late so as to walk.' That is, he came late on purpose so that he could walk. If the optional (mà) were deleted, the above sentence would be identical with the sentence produced by Tree N after it had passed through all the transformations pertinent to it. Only in this case the meaning would be 'The child was late in walking.' That is, he learned to walk later than most children. In its minimal form, the above sentence could also be derived from a relative clause construction so that it could mean either, 'The child who is late is walking,' or 'The child who is walking is late.'
Underlying Tree M: Purpose

The child was late so as to walk.

Underlying Tree N: Verbal complement

The child was late in walking.
4.3 Condition.

Underlying Tree O

```
S
   |   |   |
NP PP VP
   |   |   |
  # dưa con # nẻu mà dưa con trễ # khóc #
  Cl N Cl  N  V  V
  child if child late cry
```

'If the child is late he will cry.'

No transformations are obligatory in converting Tree O to surface structure. So, the sentence dưa con nẻu mà dưa con trễ khóc 'If the child is late he will cry.' is grammatically acceptable in Vietnamese. There are, however, several optional transformations which may apply to produce sentences which are more commonly used. Transformation (3) may apply to insert thì before the predicate phrase of the matrix sentence. Transformation (7) will optionally delete the second occurrence of dưa con or replace it with a pronoun. A shared noun will not always be present, however as in the sentence dưa con nẻu mà mẹ đánh em thì khóc 'If his mother spanks his younger-brother the child will cry.' Transformation (8) will optionally move the part of the sentence dominated by condition, cause, or both to either the beginning or the end of the sentence.

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Transformation (8) Optional: Extraposition of Cond, Caus, or Cond + Caus

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Cond} \\
\text{Caus} \\
\text{Cond + Caus}
\end{array}
\rightarrow
\begin{array}{c}
1 + 3 \\
2 \emptyset \\
4 5
\end{array}
\]

If transformation (8) has operated to move Cond, Caus, or Cond + Caus to the front of the sentence, transformation (3) may optionally insert  thì following it. If transformation (8) has operated to move Cond, Caus, or Cond + Caus to the end of the sentence, transformation (10), which deletes grammatical markers such as  nú, will not allow these to be deleted in this position.  mà however, may be deleted by transformation (9) in whatever position the construction occurs.

The following sentences are illustrative of those containing condition:

24)  Đứa con (nứ)(mà) thê (thì) (nó) khóc.
    C1 child if late he cry
    'If the child is late he will cry.'

25)  (Nứ)(mà) đứa con thê (thì) (đứa con) khóc.
    if C1 child late C1 child cry
    'If the child is late he will cry.'

26)  Đứa con khóc nứ (mà)(nó) thê.
    C1 child cry if he late
    'If the child is late he will cry.'

27)  (Nứ)(mà) mẹ đánh em (thì) đứa con khóc.
    if mother spank younger-brother C1 child cry
    'If his mother spanks his younger brother, the child will cry.'

28)  Đứa con khóc nứ (mà) mẹ đánh em.
    C1 child cry if mother spank younger-brother
    'If his mother spanks his younger brother, the child will cry.'

Sentence 24) above illustrates a number of possible ambiguities. If, from that sentence, nứ and nó are omitted leaving thì and either taking or leaving mà, the sentence could be understood as being derived from Tree D by the application of transformations (1), (3), and (4). Its meaning would be 'The child who is late is crying.' If all deletable items are omitted from sentence 24), it could be understood as being derived from Tree D by the application of transformations (1) and (4) with the same meaning as was just noted. Or it could be understood as being derived from Tree C by the application of transformations (1), (4) and (5) with the meaning 'The child is late
who is crying'; from Tree M (if đi bộ is replaced by khóc) by the application of transformations (7), (9), and (10) with the meaning 'The child is late (on purpose) so as to cry'; or from Tree N (also with đi bộ replaced by khóc) by the application of transformations (1), (6), (7), and (10) with the meaning 'The child is late in crying."

4.4 Cause.

Underlying Tree P

```
S
  | NP
  | PP
  |   | Caus
  |   | S
  |   | NP | PP
  |   |   | VP
  | Cl | N  | Cl | N  | V | V
  |    |.child|    | because|    |.child| late|    | cry
  | #   | #    | #   | #    | #    | #    |
  | đưa | con  | bòi | vì  | đưa | con | trễ | #   | khóc |
  | Cl  | child| because| | Cl | child| late| cry|

'The child is crying because he's late.'
```

A sentence containing cause is very similar in underlying structure to the conditional sentence. It is also similar to the conditional sentence in the transformations which it may undergo. Like the conditional sentence, the causal sentence requires no transformations to convert it to surface structure. The sentence Bỏa con bòi vì ella con trễ khóc 'The child is crying because he's late' is grammatically acceptable.

To underlying tree P, however, several optional transformations may apply. Transformation (7) may delete the shared noun phrase or replace it with a pronoun. Transformation (7) will not apply, however, where no shared noun is present as, for example in the sentence Bỏa con bòi vì con chó chét khóc 'The child is crying because the dog died.' Transformation (10) will optionally delete bòi vì if transformation (8) has not moved Caus to the end of
the sentence. If transformation (8) has moved Caus to the beginning of the sentence, transformation (3) may optionally insert thì to follow Caus. It may, in any case, insert thì before the predicate of the matrix sentence.

The following sentences, then, may be generated from the underlying tree containing cause:

29) \((\text{Bôí vì}) \quad \text{áúá con} \quad \text{trê (thì)} \quad (\text{áúá con}) \quad \text{khóc.}\)
\[\text{Because } \text{Cl child late Cl child cry}\]
' The child is crying because he is late.'

30) \((\text{Bôí vì}) \quad \text{áúá con} \quad \text{trê (áúá con) (thì)} \quad \text{khóc.}\)
\[\text{Because } \text{Cl child late Cl child cry}\]
' The child is crying because he is late.'

31) \(\text{áúá con (bôí vì) (áúá con) trê (thì) kHzc.}\)
\[\text{Cl child because Cl child late cry}\]
' The child is crying because he is late.'

32) \(\text{áúá con (thì) kHzc Bôí vì (áúá con) trê.}\)
\[\text{Cl child cry because Cl child late}\]
' The child is crying because he is late.'

33) \((\text{Bôí vì}) \quad \text{con chó chét (thì)} \quad \text{áúá con kHzc.}\)
\[\text{Because Cl dog die Cl child cry}\]
' The child is crying because the dog died.'

34) \(\text{áúá con (thì) kHzc Bôí Vì con chó chét.}\)
\[\text{Cl child cry because Cl dog die}\]
' The child is crying because the dog died.'

It can easily be seen that when the causal particle, Bôí vì, is deleted, the causal sentence is identical with the conditional sentence when its particle, nëu mà, is deleted and is thus ambiguous with it. In its minimal form in sentences 29), 30), and 31), with all optional items deleted, the causal may be ambiguous with relative clause, condition, purpose, and verbal complement. This was demonstrated for this particular sentence in Sec. 4.3. The vocabulary in the illustrative sentences has been restricted for ease in reading and presentation, but the same results could also be shown from other sentences.

4.5 Condition + Cause. As may be noted in the phrase structure rules, it is possible in Vietnamese to have a sentence containing both condition and cause. This might be demonstrated by the following underlying tree.
Underlying Tree Q

The transformations given in the preceding discussion of condition and cause will also apply to this construction to optionally delete the second occurrence of bánh mì, to add thì, to move Cond + Caus to the beginning or end of the sentence, and to delete the condition and cause markers. Transformation (II) gives further possibilities for ordering of this double construction.

**Transformation (II) Optional: Extraposition of Cond + Caus**

\[
S \quad \begin{array}{c} \\
\left\{ \begin{array}{c}
X \quad \text{Cond} \quad \text{Caus} \quad Y \\
1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 4 \quad 5 \quad 6
\end{array} \right. \\
\end{array} \quad \rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c} \\
\left\{ \begin{array}{c}
1 \quad 0 \quad 3 \quad 2 \quad 0 \quad 5 \quad 4 \quad 6 \\
1 \quad 2 \quad 3 \quad 0 \quad 5 \quad 4 \quad 6
\end{array} \right. \\
\end{array}
\]

The following sentences will serve to illustrate this construction:

35) (Nếu) (mà) khách đến (bởi vì) họ sẽ muốn bánh mì
\[
\text{If company come because they fut} \quad \text{want} \quad \text{bread}
\]

tôi sẽ mua (bánh mì).
\[
\text{I fut} \quad \text{buy} \quad \text{bread}
\]
36) Tôi (nếu)(mà) khách đến sẽ mua bánh mì bởi vì họ sẽ muốn (bánh mì).

37) (Nếu)(mà) khách đến tôi sẽ mua bánh mì bởi vì họ sẽ muốn (bánh mì).

38) Tôi sẽ mua bánh mì nếu mà khách đến bởi vì họ sẽ muốn (bánh mì).

'It is possible for the two sentences embedded in the condition and cause nodes to be identical as in trees R and S. And it is in this case that structural ambiguity with the relative clause is likely to arise.

Underlying Tree R

'It if the child is late he will cry because he is late.'
Underlying Tree S

The transformations noted for tree Q will also apply to trees R and S. If, however, the condition and cause constructions are not separated from each other by transformations (8) or (11), transformation (12) will obligatorily delete the second occurrence of the shared sentence.

Transformation (12) Obligatory: Deletion of shared S

Cond      Caus
#  X [S] bội vĩ [S] Y #       1 0 3 4 5
1  2  3  4  5

Condition: 2 = 4

The application of this transformation would result in the following sentences:

39) Đưa con (nếu)(mà)(bội vĩ) (eua con) trọ (thì) khóc.
   Cl child if because Cl child late cry

'If the child is late he will cry because he is late.'
40) (Nếu)(ma)(boi vi) dua con tre (thi)(dua con) khoc.
If because Cl child late Cl child cry
‘If the child is late he will cry because he is late.’

41) dua con (thi) khoc neu ma boi vi (dua con) tre.
Cl child cry if because Cl child late
‘If the child is late he will cry because he is late.’

42) (Nếu)(ma)(boi vi) nguoi do nghet (thi) toi se cho
If because person dem poor (thi) I fut give
(nguoi do) cai ao.
person that Cl shirt
‘If that person is poor I will give her a dress because she is poor.’

Since, according to my informant, the grammatical markers
nếu mà and boi vi in this construction may be deleted (see transfor-
mations (9) and (10)), the range of ambiguities for this construction
with tree R would be the same as that given for trees O and P (Sec.
4.3). That is, it could become ambiguous in its minimal form with
relative clause, purpose, verbal complement, simple condition, or
simple cause. Tree S could be ambiguous with all of these except
verbal complement since the verb nghet does not occur with verbal
complement.

4.6 Factive.

Underlying Tree T

```
  S
   /\  
  PP NP
   |   |
  |   |
  VP NP
   |   |
  |   |
  N   N
  |   |
  Cl  N
   |
  dua con
   |
  Cl
   |
  child
```

‘The fact that the child is a student is good.’

The factive construction is limited in that it may occur with only
a small number of verbs such as тот ‘good,’ xau ‘bad,’ kho ‘dif-
ficult, or dễ 'easy' plus a verbal complement, etc. No restrictions, however, have been noted concerning the sentence occurring as the representation of NP except that imperatives or question are disallowed.

No transformations are required to convert underlying tree T to surface structure. The sentence, Đối con là học sinh tốt, is grammatically acceptable. Transformation (3) may be applied to place thì before the verb tốt.

In some instances the sentence manifesting the noun phrase subject of the matrix sentence might undergo obligatory transformations. The equational sentence occurring here as the noun phrase undergoes no obligatory transformations, but it may have là deleted by optional transformation (13).

**Transformation (13) Optional: Deletion of là**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>là</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Condition: 2 and 4 may not contain #.

In surface structure, tree T should produce the sentence:

43) Đối con là học sinh (thì) tốt.

'The fact that the child is a student is good.'

This sentence, in its complete form is ambiguous with a sentence containing relative clause in which the Cl and mà have been deleted ('The child who is a student is good'). It is also ambiguous with a sentence containing condition ('If the child is a student he is good'); cause ('Because the child is a student he is good'); condition plus cause ('If the child is a student he is good because he is a student'); or purpose ('The child is a student so that he will be good').

Should thì be omitted from sentence 43), three possible relative clause constructions could be understood: 1) 'The child who is a student is good.' 2) 'The child is a good student.' (literally 'a student which is good') 3) 'The child who is good is a student.'

4.7 Time. A sentence containing a time construction may also be ambiguous with several of the constructions already presented.
Underlying Tree U

```
S
  NP
    Cl # ðûa
    N child con
  PP
    V # khôc
    Cl khi 
    T cl # ðûa
    N con
    V trê 
  T
    NP
    VP
```

'The child cries when he is late.'

No obligatory transformations apply to tree U, so the sentence

\[
\text{ðûa con khôc khi ðûa con trê } \quad \text{The child cries when he is late}
\]

is permitted in surface structure. Transformation (14)
allows the time construction to occur in other positions within the sentence.

Transformation (14) Optional: Extraposition of T

```
# X VP T Y #
1 2 3 4 5 6
\{ 1 + 4 2 3 \empty 5 6 \}
```

Transformation (7) may optionally delete the second occurrence
of ðûa con or replace it with a pronoun. Transformation (10)
may remove khi if time is in any position other than sentence final.
Transformation (3) may insert thi to follow the time construction
where it is sentence initial.

The following sentences are among those generated by tree U:

44) (Khi) ðûa con trê (thî) (ðûa con) khôc.
    When Cl child late Cl child cry

'When the child is late he cries.'
45) **Dùa con khóc khi (dùa con) trễ.**

'It when the child is late he cries.'

It should be apparent from sentence 44) that when the time marker is deleted, the resulting sentence could be derived from a conditional or causal sentence or the combination of condition and cause. Since a noun in the embedded sentence is shared by a noun in the matrix sentence, the sentence is also ambiguous with the relative clause. And because the verb trễ 'late' may occur with both purpose and verbal complement, as has already been demonstrated, the sentence is also ambiguous with these two constructions.

5. **Summary.** To show the range of possible ambiguity within the relative clause, all the sentences generated from tree D by the application of relevant transformations are here presented. And it is noted with what other constructions each sentence is ambiguous. Since a given underlying tree has one unambiguous meaning, and since these sentences may all be derived from tree D, they may all have the meaning, 'The child who is late is crying.' But, because they may also be traced back to other underlying tree structures, they may have other possible meanings as follows:

Rel **Cl (reverse embedding) 'The child who is crying is late.'**

Vb Comp **'The child is late in crying.'**

Purp **'The child is late so that he can cry.'**

Cond **'If the child is late he will cry.'**

Caus **'Because the child is late he is crying.'**

Cond + Caus **'If the child is late he will cry because he is late.'**

Time **'When the child is late he cries.'**

In its most fully expanded form, the derived form of tree D:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Dùa con (dùa)(mà) trễ (thì) khóc} \\
\text{Cl child Cl late Cl cry}
\end{array}
\]

is unambiguous.

with mà deleted, it is unambiguous

with mà and thì deleted is ambiguous with Vb Comp

with thì deleted is ambiguous with Vb Comp

with dùa deleted is ambiguous with Cond

Cond + Caus

Purp

with dùa and thì deleted is ambiguous with Cond

Cond + Caus

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with ạùa and mà deleted

with ạùa, mà, and tì deleted

with Rel Cl sentence final,
Đủa con (tì) khúc (ạùa)(mà) trẻ
with tì deleted
with tì and ạùa deleted

with tì, mà, and ạùa deleted

with ạùa deleted

with ạùa and mà deleted

with mà deleted

with tì and mà deleted

is ambiguous with Vb Comp
Cond
Caus
Cond + Caus
Time
is ambiguous with Vb Comp
Purp
Cond
Caus
Cond + Caus
Time
Rel Cl (reverse embedding)
is unambiguous

is unambiguous

is ambiguous with Purp
Cond
Cond + Caus
is ambiguous with Purp
Cond
Caus
Cond + Caus
Time
Rel Cl (reverse embedding)
is ambiguous with Purp

is ambiguous with Time
is unambiguous
FOOTNOTES:

1. I wish to express appreciation to E. Austin Hale for his help in the organization and writing of this paper, and to acknowledge the help of Richard S. Pittman. Nguyễn Đăng Liễm checked over all the Vietnamese illustrations used in the paper and gave other helpful advice. The paper is based on the author's field observations, and particularly on the speech of Miss Trần Thùy Vân, formerly of Hải Phòng, now of Sài Gòn.

2. The verb có 'to have' in its use as 'there are...' is said by Liễm (p. 243) to be subjectless. An alternate treatment would be to consider có in this use as an intransitive verb whose subject must be postposed by an obligatory transformation. For example, in the underlying form Hai người có the absence of an object marks có as being intransitive. So an obligatory transformation would change the order of the elements to the surface structure form Có hai người there are two people.

3. Although tense is here said to be optional, it might possibly be considered as always present in deep structure and frequently deleted in surface structure as is the NP subject in rule 1.

4. The copula là may be deleted in surface structure everywhere except where it occurs within the VP of a matrix sentence (i.e. a sentence within which another sentence has been embedded).

5. Additional information about verbs and verb constructions may be found in the articles by Thomas and by Gage and Jackson already mentioned.

6. Sentences in surface structure are those to which the phonological rules may apply so that they may be spoken and would be recognized by a native Vietnamese speaker as being grammatical sentences in Vietnamese. All the numbered Vietnamese sentences in this paper are surface structure. That is, all their possible readings have been said to be grammatically correct by native Vietnamese speakers. This does not, however, mean that all possible readings of these sentences are found in normal or natural speech. Some of them, though grammatical, are awkward or unusual forms.

7. e.g. \( \text{đứa} \) \( \frac{người}{CV} \) con \( \text{clai} \) \( \frac{con}{CV} \) dao child \( \text{knife} \)

8. The verbal complement construction in Vietnamese seems to be distinct from the nominal construction in that the nominal may not occur with đẻ mà. Furthermore, the noun subject of the verbal complement construction is always shared by the noun subject of the matrix sentence, the noun subject of the factitive construction may or may not be.
REFERENCES:


