

English sentences beginning with *there* and their Vietnamese counterparts

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Abstract: English sentences beginning with *there*, also called English *there*-constructions, do not constitute only existential sentences; most important among their other uses are presentational *there*-constructions. It is almost impossible to distinguish existential sentences beginning with Empty *there*, which is not stressed and has no lexical meaning, from presentational *there*-constructions beginning with Locative *there*, which is pronounced with some degree of stress and has its denotative meaning as opposite to that of the adverb *here*. Therefore, language users have to care for other sentence components, both obligatory and optional, that follow *there* in the clause in question. Comparing English *there*-constructions and their Vietnamese counterparts helps to identify translated versions of each subtype of English *there*-constructions, both semantically and pragmatically equivalent, irrespective of the fact that Vietnamese has neither the empty subject nor subject-verb inversion – the two phenomena quite easily observed in a Subject-prominent language like English.

Keywords: English *there*-Constructions, Existential Sentences, Presentational *there*-Constructions, Empty *there*, Locative *there*

1. Introduction

Language and culture are twins. To make native speakers of Vietnamese perceive the meaning of the sentence “Tom eats like a horse” in the same way as native speakers of English, the Vietnamese version of the sentence is not “Tom ăn như một con ngựa” but “Tom ăn như lợn”¹, which is closely related to the rice culture in South East Asia. Hopefully, the differences between western and eastern cultures can be bridged if we continue to communicate partially via interlingual translation. English sentences beginning with *there* and their Vietnamese counterparts, which is the focus of this paper, illustrates an effort to meet the demanding requirements of translation practice interlingually and cross-culturally.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Interlingual Translation

“Interlingual translation or translation proper is an

interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.”²

The important role of interlingual translation in teaching a foreign language has been emphasized: it “helps students to understand the connection between languages and explores the potential of both of them. It is a necessary and natural activity, because in many common places foreign words are met and they need to be decoded. Communication accomplishment is a two-way system. Learners need to be able to communicate both ways: into and from the foreign language. In most materials used on lessons they are pressed mostly on the ability of using a foreign language, but little guidance is given on how to transmit it back into the mother tongue.”³

Accordingly, more guidance is of urgent need to bridge the gap between theory of interlingual translation and translation practice as well as between researches in linguistics and those in interlingual translation, as far as the two natural languages called English and Vietnamese are concerned. This is definitely true in Vietnam nowadays, as the so-called

¹which literally means “Tom eats like pig”

²<https://www.google.com.vn/#q=interlingual+translation+definition>

³<http://spswiatki.edu.pl/archiwum/publikacje/translation.pdf>

developing country has been struggling hard to integrate into the world verbally via an international language like English.

This paper proves to be an effort to provide linguistic data for the BA program in English Linguistics and Literature⁴ currently applied at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to facilitate the teaching and learning process there in general and to support the Translation-Interpreting Section in particular.

This paper is also oriented to Vietnamese communities in English-speaking countries throughout the world with the hope of continually nurturing any effort to maintain the mother tongue of generations of the Vietnamese people overseas.

2.2. Studies of English *there*-Constructions and their Counterparts in other Languages

According to Halliday (1994: 38) [1] “Theme⁵ is “the starting-point for the message.” *A halfpenny* is Theme in *a halfpenny is the smallest English coin* (‘I’ll tell you about a halfpenny’) while *the smallest English coin* is Theme in *the smallest English coin is a halfpenny* (‘I’ll tell you about the smallest English coin).

In the same vein, Grzegorek (1984: 144) [2] treats Theme in English as “the left-most constituent of a clause” that is “capable of referential use or at least capable of contextually bound.” Accordingly, “do not count as themes” are “all sentence adverbials in clause-initial position”, including Locative *there*, which is pronounced with some degree of stress, means “in that place” and begins English presentational *there*-constructions; neither does Empty *there*, which is not stressed, has no lexical meaning and begins English existential sentences. In other words, both Empty *there* and Locative *there* mark English clauses in question as “themeless.”

Semantically speaking, Grzegorek [2: 145, 148] distinguishes two main types of English *there*-constructions:

1. English existential sentences – those which are obligatory themeless by virtue of grammar (grammar of English offers no other choice) and whose function is “to assert the existence of the referent the displaced subject NP”:

- (1) There ARE no ghosts.⁶
- (2) There DEVELOPED a serious crisis.
- (3) There ENTERED a strange-looking man.

⁴<http://nva.hcmussh.edu.vn>

⁵which is also called “Topic” in English [1: 38] and “Chủ đề” in Vietnamese

⁶It is necessary to indicate now a number of conventions applied in this paper:

- The optimal Vietnamese equivalent version or versions will be placed right under its or their original English *there*-construction in question;

- The lexical items in round brackets, like “(there)” in (47) and (48), may or may not be verbalized, while those in square brackets are embedded clauses, like “[as if there’S a tap running somewhere]” in (25);

- The three symbols “/”, “*”, and “?” respectively stand for “or,” “unaccepted,” and “possibly accepted”;

- *Adverbials* are in italic;

- English VERBS, either one-word or multiple-word, and their Vietnamese EQUIVALENTS are capitalized.

- (4) There WERE beautiful flowers *all over the place*.
- (5) There IS a difference between the two signs.
- (6) There WAS a rumor that the president was killed.
- (7) *On the platform* there WERE many women who waited for their husband.

2. English presentational *there*-constructions – those which have thematic counterparts, and the choice between thematic and non-thematic construction depends on typical factors such as context and the way the speaker presents a give event and whose function is “to raise the referent of the subject to the addressee’s consciousness”:

- (8) There STEPPED OUT *in front of the car* a small child.
- (9) There CAME *into his view* Irene.
- (10) *All of a sudden* there BURST IN his younger sister Jane.

Accordingly, for every English presentational *there*-construction we have a corresponding thematic sentence:

- (11) A small child STEPPED OUT *in front of the car*.
- (12) Irene CAME *into his view*.
- (13) His younger sister Jane BURST IN *all of a sudden*.

Syntactically speaking, Grzegorek [2: 147] classifies English *there*-constructions according to:

1. Their type of main verb:
 - a. *be*;
 - b. verbs other than *be* but of related meaning (*appear, emerge, occur, develop, remain*);
 - c. some stative verbs describing location (*hang, lie, stand*) and some verbs of directional movement (*step out, burst in, walk into*).
2. The structure of the noun phrase (abbreviated to NP) following the verb:
 - a. without any modifier, like the example numbered (1);
 - b. with a modifier of various types:
 - adjective, like the examples numbered (2), (3) and (4);
 - prepositional phrase (like the example numbered (5));
 - relative clause (like the examples numbered (6) and (7)).

Grzegorek [2: 155-166] then presents counterparts of English *there*-constructions in Polish.

The study reported in this paper obtained with careful selection the results of Grzegorek’s study [2] to search for counterparts of English *there*-constructions in Vietnamese, a natural language whose prominent clause structure is not Subject-Predicate⁷ but Topic-Comment⁸, as mentioned by Hao Xuan Cao (1991) [3].

Up to now there have been a number of studies done in Vietnam and based on the theory of the Topic-Comment structure in the Vietnamese language supported by Hao Xuan Cao [3]; however, nothing has been done to compare and contrast English *there*-constructions and their counterparts in Vietnamese.

⁷called “cấu trúc Chủ-Vị” in Vietnamese

⁸called “cấu trúc Đề-Thuyết” in Vietnamese

3. Aims of the Study

“Translation is like a woman. If it is beautiful, it is not faithful. If it is faithful, it is most certainly not beautiful.”⁹ If interlingual translation undoubtedly involves something “missing” then the aim of the study reported in this paper is to minimize such missing things, as far as English *there*-constructions and their Vietnamese counterparts are concerned. More specifically, this study aims to discuss *there*-constructions in the English language and to compare them with their Vietnamese counterparts in order to identify translated versions of each subtype of English *there*-constructions. This comparison is considered to be important, given the fact that Vietnamese has neither the empty subject nor subject-verb inversion – the two phenomena quite easily observed in a Subject-prominent language¹⁰ like English.

To meet the above-mentioned aims, in addition to Introduction, Literature Review, Aims of the Study and Conclusion, this paper is structured into three main sections: English *there*-constructions, Counterparts of English *there*-constructions in Vietnamese, and Discussion and Findings.

4. English *there*-Constructions

Some preliminary notes are necessary before the close look at different types of English *there*-constructions.

4.1. Some Preliminary Notes

4.1.1. Adverbials vs. Adjectivals

Stageberg and Oaks (2000) [4] distinguish adverbials from adjectivals. Adverbials [4: 263-269] are single words or word groups that occupy the adverb positions and perform the adverb functions. Common adverbial positions are:

Initial position:

Really, you should know better.

Now it is time to go.

Medial position:

Mary *in her own way* was a darling.

He is *always/ at any event* happy.

She would *seldom* make effort.

Final position:

He drove *recklessly/ with abandon*.

She is *outside*.

Hoskins will play football *tomorrow*.

Adjectivals [4: 259-263] are single words or word groups that occupy the adjective positions and perform the adjective functions. Adjectivals occupy certain characteristic sentence positions:

Between the determiner and the noun:

That *joyful/ college/ laughing/ recommended* freshman is bright.

Right after the noun:

The fellow *waving* drives a convertible.

Right after an intensive verb:

He always remains *quiet*.

Right after the direct object of a complex transitive verb:

The management considered him *competent*.

Right before the noun:

Angry and upset, the applicant slammed the door.

4.1.2. Locatives as One of the Two Most Common Type of Adverbials in English *there*-Constructions

Locatives – the *adverbials of place* – constitute the most common types of adverbials in English *there*-constructions, as illustrated in the above-mentioned examples numbered (4), (7), (8), and (9). Below are two more; the former proves that an adverbial expansion with *Locative there* is quite accepted:

(14) There ‘S a wheelbarrow *down there*. (Biber *et al*, 1999) [5]

(15) *Under the desk* there IS a woven wastepaper basket.

The second common type of adverbials in English *there*-constructions is the *temporal* – the *adverbials of time*:

(16) There WASn’t any rule against discrimination *then*.

(17) There WAS, *once upon a time*, another book from which this kind of scientific certainty was derived. (Longman Exams Dictionary, 2006) [6]

(18) There *now* FOLLOWS a party political broadcast. (Eastwood, 1994) [7]

“The adverbial is sometimes understood in the context: *You know this party we’re going to. Will there be any food (at the party)?*” [7: 58]

4.1.3. Distinction between Empty *there* and *Locative there*

Empty *there* is not stressed and is often spoken in its weak form, like *the*. In other words, Empty *there*, which has no lexical meaning, is not the same as *Locative there* meaning “in that place.” The adverbial is pronounced in its strong form, like *their*, with some identifiable stress:

(19) There WAS a van *there*, *outside the house*. [7]

Locative there is the antonym of the adverb *here*, meaning “in this place”:

(20) “There’ S a cat *here under the casket*,” she called to her brother. [5]

4.2. Bare Existential Sentences

Sentences with *there* in the initial position, called English *there*-constructions in this paper, do not constitute a homogeneous class. For the sake of translation practice as well as adequate proof for the following discussion and findings, from this section each example in English is followed by its Vietnamese translation(s).

Frame 1: There + VERB + indefinite subject NP

Bare existential sentences, i.e. those in which the subject NP, with or without postmodification, is not followed by any adverbial, are always themeless. The speaker has no other choice, except to choose a different verb, like *exist* in (24):

(21) There ARE no ghosts.

Không CÓ ma.

(22) *No ghosts ARE.

*Không ma CÓ.

*Không ma THÌ.

(23) *Ghosts ARE NOT.

⁹<http://grammar.about.com/od/tz/g/translationterm.htm>

¹⁰called “một ngôn ngữ thiên Chủ ngữ” in Vietnamese

*Ma THÌ không.

(24) Ghosts DO NOT EXIST.

Không CÓ ma.

*Không TỒN TẠI ma.

?Ma THÌ không CÓ.

?Ma THÌ không TỒN TẠI.

Generally, bare existential sentences assert the existence or non-existence of some entity with some property described by the modification of the subject NP, prenominal or postnominal. Being the focus, the subject NP has a higher degree of communicative dynamism (abbreviated to C.D.) than its preceding verb. Textually, (21) and (23) are not equivalent. In (24) the NP *ghosts* is anaphoric, probably mentioned in the context or co-situation; therefore, *ghosts* in (24) carries a lower C.D. degree than its following verb, i.e. it is not the focus of information conveyed by (24). Its verb is.

It is accepted for a bare existential sentence to be embedded in another clause:

(25) It sounds to me [as if there'S a tap running somewhere].

Tôi nghe [như thể CÓ tiếng vòi nước chảy đâu đây].

“We can use *there + be* without an adverbial. This happens with nouns expressing a situation or event: *I'm afraid there's a problem.* (A problem exists.); *There has been an accident.* (An accident has happened.)” [7: 58]

“Minimal existential clauses, i.e. clauses which lacks both averbial expansions and subjects with postmodification, are most common in conversation...” [5: 949]

4.3. True Existential Sentences

It is the occurrence of the adverbial that distinguishes true existential sentences from bare existential sentences. Since “place adverbials are the most common type of adverbial expansion” [5: 949], the two subtypes of true-existential sentences respectively named *Frame 2a* and *Frame 2b* below are collectively called “locative-existential sentences” by Grzegorek [2: 149-154, 157-160].

“Final position for adverbials is by far the most common choice in clauses that have a notional subject without postmodification ... Where the notional subject has postmodification, preferences are less clear. Most often, however, the adverbial is placed towards the end of the clause, either in final position, or in initial-end position” [5: 949].

Frame 2a:

There + VERB + indefinite subject NP + *adverbial(s)*

Frame 2b:

Adverbial(s) + there + VERB + indefinite subject NP

True existential sentences in *Frame 2a* and *Frame 2b* present two problems:

1 What is the relationship between *Frame 2a*-true existential sentences and sentences in which the subject NP is in thematic position, i.e. what is the relationship of (26) and (27)?

(26) There'S a strange-looking woman *in the house*.

CÓ một người phụ nữ lạ mặt ở *trong nhà*.

(27) A strange-looking woman IS *in the house*.

Một người phụ nữ lạ mặt THÌ ở *trong nhà*.

2 What is the relationship between *Frame 2b*-true existential sentences and sentences with a *preposed locative adverbial* without *there*, i.e. what is the relationship of (28) and (29)?

(28) *In the house* there'S a strange-looking woman.

Ở *trong nhà* CÓ một người phụ nữ lạ mặt.

(29) *In the house* IS a strange-looking woman.

Ở *trong nhà* LÀ một người phụ nữ lạ mặt.

In the same veins with Grzegorek [2], we argue here that the given example of *Type a*-sentences:

A strange looking woman IS *in the house*.

Indefinite NP – BE – *Locative*

is not existential and hence is not cognitively synonymous to the given example of *Frame 2a*-true existential sentences:

There's a strange looking woman *in the house*.

There – BE – indefinite NP – *Locative*

because only the *Frame 2a*-true existential sentence asserts the existence of the referent of the NP, and in fact this assertion is the main purpose of uttering such sentences. In the *Type a*-sentence, the purpose of the speaker is to assert not the existence but the location of the referent of the NP.

Observed by Breivik [8], as quoted in Grzegorek [2: 150-151], for *Type a*-sentences to be acceptable, there are two requirements:

- *The locative adverbial* must be [+ deictic], i.e. must refer to some well-defined, usually small area, known to the addressee: only then the spatial relationship between the referent of the subject and the location is clearly defined and hence the referent of the subject is identified. Since the requirement that the referent of the subject identified to the hearer does not hold¹¹ in the case of *Frame 2a*-true existential sentences, they are acceptable in the following examples; *Type a*-sentences are not accepted because they fail to meet such requirement:

(30) a. *A book IS *on the table*.

*Một quyển sách THÌ ở *trên bàn*.

b. There IS a book *on the table*.

CÓ một quyển sách ở *trên bàn*.

(31) a. *A famous cathedral IS *in Guildford*.

*Một nhà thờ rất nổi tiếng THÌ ở *Guildford*.

b. There IS a famous cathedral *in Guildford*.

CÓ một nhà thờ rất nổi tiếng ở *Guildford*.

(32) a. *Lions ARE *in Africa*.

?Sư tử THÌ ở *Châu Phi*.¹²

b. There ARE lions *in Africa*.

CÓ sư tử ở *Châu Phi*.

- The NP subject must be capable of referential use, i.e. it must be specific rather abstract. There is no such condition for *there*-constructions:

¹¹You do not have to identify the object if your purpose is merely to assert its existence.

¹²Quite probably, the generic state of the NP “sư tử”, meaning “lions” (or “the lion”), in thematic position makes this Vietnamese version acceptable. For further information, read “Generic sentences in Vietnamese and English” (Thanh Minh To, 2011) [19].

(33)a. *Space IS *in the manger*.
*Khoảng không THÌ ở trong cái máng đựng thức ăn cho gia súc.

b. Corn IS *in the manger*.

Bắp THÌ ở trong cái máng đựng thức ăn cho gia súc.

(34)a. There IS space IS *in the manger*.

CÓ khoảng không ở trong cái máng đựng thức ăn cho gia súc.

b. There IS corn *in the manger*.

CÓ bắp ở trong cái máng đựng thức ăn cho gia súc.

(35)a. *Nothing IS *in the house*.

*Không cái gì THÌ ở trong căn nhà này.

b. *No sign of life IS *in the house*.

*Không dấu hiệu của sự sống nào THÌ ở trong căn nhà này.

(36)a. There IS nothing *in the house*.

Không CÓ cái gì ở trong căn nhà này.

b. There IS no sign of life *in the house*.

Không CÓ dấu hiệu của sự sống nào ở trong căn nhà này.

Only *there*-constructions, the subject NP of which is post-modified by a participial phrase, always have accepted counterparts with indefinite NPs in thematic position. These counterparts cannot be considered as existential, though:

(37)a. A demonstrator WAS KILLED by a policeman in Oakland.

Một người tham gia biểu tình đã BỊ cảnh sát GIẾT CHẾT ở Oakland.

b. There WAS a demonstrator KILLED by a policeman in Oakland.

Đã CÓ một người tham gia biểu tình BỊ cảnh sát GIẾT CHẾT ở Oakland.

(38)a. A girl IS PLAYING in the roof of your house.

Một bé gái đang CHƠI trên mái nhà của anh.

b. There IS a girl PLAYING on the roof of your house.

CÓ một bé gái đang CHƠI trên mái nhà của anh.

The relationship of *Type b*-sentences, those with a *preposed locative adverbial* without *there*, and *Frame 2b*-true existential sentences is not clear. With the same reason concerning *Type a*-sentences, we again argue that the given example of *Type b*-sentences:

On the table WAS a book.

Locative – BE – indefinite NP

is not existential and hence is not cognitively synonymous to the given example of *Frame 2b*-true existential sentences:

On the table there WAS a book.

Locative – there – BE – indefinite NP

Observed by Breivik [8], as quoted in Grzegorek [2: 153-154], for *Type b*-sentences, which are inverted sentences, to be accepted, there is one requirement: *Locative* must be specific enough:

(39) **In the house* WAS no sign of life.

**Trong căn nhà* LÀ không dấu hiệu nào của sự sống.

(40) **In Africa* ARE lions.

**Ở Châu Phi* LÀ sư tử.

(41) *Under the desk* IS a woven wastepaper basket.

Dưới cái gầm bàn ấy LÀ một cái giỏ rác đan bằng mây tre.

(42) *To the east of the pier* WERE miles of sandy beaches.

Về phía đông của cái cầu tàu LÀ những bãi cát dài hàng dặm.

Quite probably, *Locative* is made specific by the preceding sentence of *Type b*-sentences, not by themselves [9: 220]:

(43) Alan walked along Elmdate Avenue and found *number sixteen* without difficulty.

Outside the house WAS a furniture van. [7]

Alan đi bộ dọc theo Đại lộ Elmdate và tìm ra *căn nhà số 16* không khó khăn gì.

Bên ngoài căn nhà ấy CÓ một chiếc xe chở hàng nội thất.

(44) The room contains *a table* and four chairs. *On the table* LAY a newspaper. [7]

Căn phòng có một cái bàn và bốn cái ghế. *Nằm trên bàn* LÀ một tờ báo.

In brief, not considered as existential are *Type a*-sentences and *Type b*-sentences, with (i) the indefinite NP playing the semantic role of *Carrier* (called *Đương thể* in Vietnamese [9: 136-143, 214-217]) and (ii) the verb *be* translated into Vietnamese typically as *là*, as in the Vietnamese version of (41) and (42), when *Locative* preceding the indefinite NP in *Type b*-sentences; or optionally as *thì*, as in (33)b, when *Locative* following the indefinite NP in *Type a*-sentences. True existential sentences in *Frame 2a* and *Frame 2b* are “variants of the same existential proposition” [2: 154], with (i) the indefinite NP playing the semantic role of *Existent* (called *Hữu thể* in Vietnamese [9: 157-158]) and (ii) the verb *be* or verbs other than *be* but of related meaning typically translated into Vietnamese as *có*:

There WAS a book *on the table*.

There – BE – indefinite NP – *Locative* (*Frame 2a*)

On the table there WAS a book.

Locative – there – BE – indefinite NP (*Frame 2b*)

In comparison to *Frame 2a*-true existential sentences, *Frame 2b*-true existential sentences are more marked because the S-V-O order of English clauses does not treat the adverbial in the left-most position as normal; on the contrary, *Type a*-sentences, with a number of strict restrictions presented previously in the paper, are much less common and thus far more marked than *Type b*-sentences, those quite often being employed rhetorically in academic writing.

Though *Locative* and *Temporal* form the two most common types of adverbials in *Frame 2b*-true existential sentences, others are adverbials of condition, as in (45), and of cause or reason, as in (46):

(45) *If the police hadn't reacted quickly*, there COULD HAVE BEEN a bad accident.

Nếu cảnh sát không phản ứng kịp thời thì có thể đã CÓ một tai nạn thảm khốc.

(46) *Because natural gas is an environmentally clean fuel*, there IS great interest on the part of many scientists

and policy makers to assess its availability. [5]

Do khí thiên nhiên là một thứ nhiên liệu sạch xét từ góc độ môi trường nên CÓ sự quan tâm lớn từ nhiều nhà khoa học và chuyên gia hoạch định chính sách nhằm đánh giá trữ lượng của nó.

Frame 2a-true existential sentences are used “when we want to:

- announce or report events: *There’ll a meeting tomorrow;*
- set a scene for story-telling: *There had been no rain for months. The earth was bare.*” (Alexander, 1990: 146) [10]

Frame 2b-true existential sentences can be easily identified thanks to the tag question though *there* may be optionally omitted from the clause preceding the tag:

- (47) *On the wall* (there) IS a Picasso painting, isn’t there?
Trên tường CÓ một bức tranh của Picasso, phải không?
- (48) *All around* (there) WAS a thick hedge, wasn’t there?
Xung quanh CÓ một bụi cây rậm rạp, phải không?

However complex it is, a true existential sentence can easily play the role of an embedded clause, as in (49).

- (49) It is obvious [that *in my first poems* there EXISTS kind-heartedness of a young man who has learned to love the poor and the miserable]. [9]
 Rõ ràng [là *trong thơ tôi buổi đầu* CÓ tấm lòng của con người trẻ tuổi biết yêu thương những thân phận nghèo khổ đoạ đày].

4.4. *There-Constructions as ‘Lists’*

Frame 3:

(Adverbial +) *there* + VERB + definite/indefinite subject NP
 “On context where it is appropriate to focus on the existence of something is at the beginning of a story. The fairly-tale opening is well-known” [5: 951]:

- (50) *Once upon a time* there WAS a wicked step-mother.
Ngày xưa ngày xưa CÓ một bà mẹ kế độc ác.

In *there*-constructions as ‘lists’, the subject NP can be either indefinite or definite. When the subject NP is definite, i.e. encoded by a definite noun phrase or a proper noun, the effect of Empty *there* is “to bring something already known back to mind rather than asserting that it exists” [5: 953]. Below are two other examples with *there*-constructions as ‘lists’ being part of the dialogues given by Grzegorek [2]:

- Dialogue 1 A: How could we get there?
 Làm sao bọn mình đến đó?
 B: There ’S the trolley ...
 CÓ xe điện ...
- Dialogue 2 C: What’s worth visiting here?
 Có gì đáng tham quan nơi đây?
 D: There ’S the park, a very nice restaurant,
 and the library.
 CÓ công viên, một nhà hàng rất đẹp, và thư viện.

Even if the subject NP is definite, still the general condition of *there*-constructions is met because this NP is non-anaphoric. Rando and Napoli (1978: 300) [11], as quoted in Grzegorek [2: 154], explain this fact as follows:

‘Existential’ *there*-sentences typically allow only indefinite

NP arrangements, while ‘list’ *there*-sentences accept both definites and indefinites. The reason for this difference is that the argument of an existential *there*-sentence is the NP itself; but the argument of a list *there*-sentence is the list, not the individual members comprising that list.

In other words, it is the list, i.e. the choice of the items, is the new information irrespective of the fact that all the items of the list are anaphoric. It is acceptable that the list consists of only one member, as in *There ’S the trolley ...*, because “list *there*-sentences do not assert existence. They can be paraphrased as ‘one could mention ...’ i.e. only bring the referent of the focus NP to the addressee’s consciousness” [2: 154]¹³.

The term “list” is quite useful in describing as well as distinguishing *there*-constructions as ‘lists’ from ‘true’ existential *there*-sentences. Biber *et al* [5: 947] also imply such a list: “Existential *there*-constructions with a definite notional subject tend to occur when a series of elements is introduced, often marked explicitly by a conjunction or a linking adverbial (e.g. *first*) or additive adverbial (e.g. *too*).”

- (51) *There’S Raymond and his wife and his wife Sherry’s*, I think, brother *and* his wife. [5]
 CÓ Raymond và vợ của ông, và tôi nghĩ rằng, người anh em trai của vợ ông và vợ của anh ấy.
- (52) *First* there ’S the scandal of Fergie romping with John Bryan. [5]
 Trước hết CÓ tai tiếng rằng Fergie tâng tịu với John Bryan.

The definite subject NP may contain the demonstrative determiner *this* or *these*, “often found in joke-telling” [5: 947].

- (53) *Dad*, there WAS this alien. He had enormous hands and silver eyes and he was really ugly. [5]
 Ba à, CÓ người ngoài hành tinh này nè. Hắn có đôi tay to, đôi mắt màu bạc và trông hắn thì thật là xấu xí.

“The notional subject is occasionally a definite noun phrase or a proper noun. Examples are found in all registers ... these constructions occur primarily in conversation (about 50 instances per millions of words) and occasionally in fiction” [5: 947].

4.5. *Presentational There-Constructions*

Frame 4a:

There + VERB + *adverbial* + indefinite subject NP

- (54) *There LIVES next door to me* a blind woman.
Cạnh nhà tôi SỐNG LẶNG LẼ một người phụ nữ mù.
 SỐNG LẶNG LẼ¹⁴ *cạnh nhà tôi LÀ* một người phụ nữ mù.
- (55) *There FOLLOWED after weeks of intense fighting* a

¹³Eastwood [7: 58] similarly states that the referent of the focus NP can be something specific: “We can use *the* in this pattern when we remind someone of the existence of something specific: *What can I stand on to reach that bulb?* ~ *Well, there’s the stepladder.*”

¹⁴In this example, the verb *sống*, which means “lives”, cannot occur alone but must be accompanied by the adverb of manner *lặng lẽ*, which means “silently.”

brief period of calm.

Sau nhiều tuần giao tranh ác liệt LÀ một khoảnh khắc yên bình.

Frame 4b:

Adverbial + there + VERB + indefinite subject NP

(56) *On top of the hill* there STANDS an ancient church tower. [7]

Trên đỉnh đồi ĐỨNG SỪNG SỬNG một tháp chuông nhà thờ cổ.

SỪNG SỬNG¹⁵ trên đỉnh đồi LÀ một tháp chuông nhà thờ cổ.

(57) *On the wall* there HANGS a landscape.

Trên tường TREO một bức tranh phong cảnh.

TREO trên tường LÀ một bức tranh phong cảnh.

This type of *there*-constructions can also be identified thanks to the tag question though *there* may be optionally omitted from the clause preceding the tag:

(58) *On the wall* HANGS a landscape, doesn't there?

Trên tường TREO một bức tranh phong cảnh, phải không?

The choice between the presentational *there*-construction (59), which is non-thematic, and its thematic counterpart (60) depends typically on the way the speaker wants to present things: the referent of the subject NP seen from the speaker's view as "coming into the perceptual field of the speaker," Kimball (1973: 265) [12], as quoted in Grzegorek [2: 154]:

(59) There STEPPED OUT *in front of the car* a little girl. [2]

Ngay trước mũi xe BUỐC RA một cô bé.

BUỐC RA ngay trước mũi xe một cô bé.

(60) A little girl STEPPED OUT *in front of the car*.

Một cô bé BUỐC RA ngay trước mũi xe.

"A little girl is the last element in the picture perceived by the speaker. It could not be put in the thematic position because it was not 'available' when the speaker starts his message." [2: 155] That's why (59) is preferred to (60). That's also why only a specific group of verbs allows the presentational orders: active verbs indicating the appearance on the scene such as *run out, burst in, step in*, etc. and stative verbs describing location such as *hang, lie, sit, stand, live*, etc. Also it is clear why (61) is preferred to (62):

(61) *All of a sudden* there BURST IN his younger sister Jane. [2]

Đột nhiên/ Bất thành linh em gái của anh, Jane, XÔNG VÀO.

?Đột nhiên/ Bất thành linh XÔNG VÀO em gái của anh, Jane.

(62) His younger sister Jane BURST IN *all of a sudden*.

Đột nhiên/ Bất thành linh em gái của anh, Jane, XÔNG VÀO.

?Em gái của anh, Jane, đột nhiên/ bất thành linh XÔNG VÀO.

*Em gái của anh, Jane, XÔNG VÀO đột nhiên/ bất thành linh.

¹⁵The fact that the verb *đứng*, which means "stand", cannot occur alone and that the adverb of manner *sừng sững*, which means "bulkily", can temporarily replace the verb *đứng*, proves how important the adverb is to make the meaning of the Vietnamese sentence in question complete. This requires further consideration which is in fact out of the scope of the very paper.

5. Counterparts of English *There*-Constructions in Vietnamese

5.1. Some Preliminary Notes

There-constructions constitute the third type [9: 217-223] of *subject-verb inversion* or *full inversion*¹⁶ – "where the subject is preceded by the entire verb phrase" [5: 911]. This phenomenon is easily observed in English, as mentioned by Eastwood [7: 55]:

The subject often comes at the beginning of a statement, but not always. We sometimes put another phrase in front position before the subject. We do this to emphasize the phrase or to contrast it with phrases in another sentence. The phrase in front position is more prominent than in its normal position.

- The empty subject¹⁷

To obey the basic word order of English sentences, which is SV(O), Empty *there* – a lexically empty formative functioning as a slot filler – is introduced in *there*-constructions. While no English *there*-constructions begin with a finite verb, their Vietnamese counterparts may: the Vietnamese verb is shifted to the initial position and no slot filler is necessary; in other words, there is no empty subject in Vietnamese in any counterpart of any type of English *there*-constructions quite probably because (i) SV(O) is not the basic word order in Vietnamese and (ii) the function of word order in English is to signal syntactic functions of lexical items while in Vietnamese to signal the communicative function of the lexical items (*old* versus *new* information).

In the beginning, Vietnamese learners of English may find it uneasy to deal with Empty *there* because they are not used to the fact that "in a Subject-prominent language a subject may be needed whether or not it plays a semantic role" (Li and Thompson, 1976: 467) [13].

Also, Vietnamese learners of English may find it even more difficult to distinguish Empty *there* in various types of *there*-constructions that have been discussed up to now in this paper from Locative *there* in what Biber *et al* [5: 954-956] call "Locative inversion," which looks just like what we name in this paper *Type b*-sentences, as in (63-65):

(63) *There'S* my father.

Kia LÀ cha của tôi.

(64) *There* GOES William!

Kìa, William ĐI ở đằng kia!

(65) *Behind the sundial* there WERE a few trees, some of them in flower: a small path led into their deceptive shallow depths, and [*there*, in a hollow a few yards from a high brick wall that bordered the garden, STOOD a sculpture]. [5]

Đằng sau cái đồng hồ mặt trời CÓ dăm ba cây xanh, một số đang trở hoa: một con đường mòn dẫn đến những vũng nước có vẻ cạn, và [ở đó, trong một cái hồ cách vài mét là đến bờ tường cao xây bằng gạch

¹⁶called "cấu trúc đảo" in Vietnamese

¹⁷called "chủ ngữ rỗng (nghĩa)" or "chủ ngữ giả" in Vietnamese

bao bọc khu vườn, ĐÚNG SỪNG SỬNG một tác phẩm điêu khắc].

Unlike Empty *there*, Locative *there*, enclosed in the square brackets in the English sentence numbered (65)¹⁸, must be spoken with stress, as previously mentioned.

- The definiteness of the English subject NP in ‘list’ *there*-constructions

There are two rules concerning the statement that definiteness and Topic status of the Subject will very often coincide (Dik, 1978) [14]: backshifting indefinite subjects, as in the above-mentioned (30)b, and fronting definite subjects, as in the following (30)c:

(30)c. The book IS *on the table*.

Quyển sách đó thì ở trên bàn.

(30)d.*There IS the book *on the table*.

?CÓ quyển sách đó ở trên bàn.

- The word order in *there*-constructions

The verb precedes the NP in both English *there*-constructions and their Vietnamese counterparts. This follows the principle of arranging lexical items according to the increasing C.D. degree. This order is unmarked in the two languages: it is not motivated by contextual factors but rather by the inherent semantic feature of verbs of *being* – those that always have a lower C.D. degree than any noun accompanying them.

5.2. Counterparts of Bare Existential Sentences¹⁹

English: There + VERB + NP

Vietnamese: VERB + NP

The most common existential verb in Vietnamese is *có*; next comes *còn (lại)*. It is worth noticing that no signal of the simple past of *be* in (67)a is necessary because it is already conveyed in that of *was killed*, resulting in *đã bị giết*; this partly helps to prove that redundancy is not characteristic of the Vietnamese language:

(66)a. There’S a gentleman in black waiting outside.

b. CÓ một quý ông mặc toàn đồ đen đang đợi (ở) bên ngoài.

(67)a. There WAS a rumor that the president was killed.

b. CÓ tin đồn rằng tổng thống đã bị giết.

The negative form of *có* is *không có*, *không còn*, or *hết*. Again, no signal of the simple past of *be* in (68)a is necessary because the Vietnamese word *đã* refers to the perfect aspect rather than the past tense; native speakers of Vietnamese identify the simple past via some clue from context instead of verb conjugation. And the combination of ‘s, *no* and *left* in (69)a and that of *remains* and *no* in (70)a both result in *không còn* or *hết*; while *không có* in (68)b is equivalent to *was no*. This indicates that no word-by-word translation is treated as appropriate, irrespective of our effort to present the meaning of

individual words, if possible.

(68)a. There WAS nobody.

b. Không CÓ ai.

(69)a. There ’S no money left.

b. Không CÒN tiền.

c. HẾT tiền.

(70)a. There REMAINS nothing more to be done.

b. Không CÒN cái gì để làm nữa.

c. ?HẾT việc.

The fact that the sentence (71)c²⁰ is typically found in a Topic-prominent language²¹ like Vietnamese illustrates another way to express the meaning conveyed by (71)a. Most less accepted is (71)d the word order of which strictly follows that of (71)a – the original English sentence.

(71)a. There ARE only a few pieces of candy left.

b. Chỉ CÒN (LẠI) mấy cái kẹo thôi.

c. Kẹo chỉ CÒN (LẠI) mấy cái/ mấy chiếc thôi.

d.?Chỉ CÓ vài cái kẹo còn để lại/ được để lại.

Together with (71)a-d, (72)a-c again help to prove that word-by-word translation fails.

(72)a. There’S nothing wrong with your car.

b. Cái xe của anh CÓ làm sao đâu.

c. Cái xe của anh không (bị làm) sao hết.

5.3. Counterparts of Frame 2a-True Existential Sentences

English: There + VERB + NP + *adverbial(s)*

Vietnamese: EE *adverbial(s)* + VERB + NP

VERB + NP + *adverbial(s)*

The grammatical properties of the Equivalent to the English *adverbial*²² commonly placed at the beginning of the Vietnamese clause, which is abbreviated to EE *adverbial*, makes this case definitely unmarked; therefore, “during the process of English-Vietnamese translation, the *adverbial of time* is almost obligatorily fronted usually from the end of an English clause to the beginning of its Vietnamese version, following the Topic-Comment structure prominently observed in the Vietnamese clause. Such fronting is not obligatory but optional in a number of cases:

- When the translated version has its final *adverbial of time* in the form of not an NP but a PP so that the principle of end-weight²³ may be obeyed strictly;
- When there exists a final sequence of an *adverbial of space* before an *adverbial of time*, which is quite common in the two languages in question;
- When the English clause has its final *adverbial of time* referring to *extent in time*.” (Thanh Minh To, 2014: 353) [15]

(73)a. There HAVE BEEN several break-ins *this year*.

b. Năm nay đã CÓ nhiều vụ đột nhập giữa ban ngày.

d. Trong năm nay đã CÓ nhiều vụ đột nhập giữa ban

¹⁸i.e. [there, in a hollow a few yards from a high brick wall that bordered the garden, STOOD a sculpture]

¹⁹For direct naming and thus quicker retrieving, it is necessary to confirm one more convention applied in this paper from now on, in addition to the other five presented right at the beginning of the paper: each of the original English constructions selected as illustrations is numbered, marked *a* and followed its the Vietnamese translated version(s), marked either *b*, or both *b* and *c*, etc.

²⁰A stricter English version of which is the following (71)c’:

(71)c’. As for candy, there ARE only a few pieces left.

²¹called “một ngôn ngữ thiên Chủ đề” in Vietnamese

²²For further information, read “The English adverbial of time vs. The Vietnamese range topic of time” [15].

²³“the tendency for long and complex elements to be placed towards the end of a clause” [5: 898]

ngày.

c.*Đã CÓ nhiều vụ đột nhập giữa ban ngày *năm nay*.

d.?Đã CÓ nhiều vụ đột nhập giữa ban ngày *trong năm nay*.

(74)a. There WERE several people sick *after the party*.

b. *Sau bữa tiệc* CÓ nhiều người bị bệnh/ đổ bệnh.

c.*CÓ nhiều người bị bệnh/ đổ bệnh *sau bữa tiệc*.

(75)a. There IS snow *on high ground every winter*.

b. Mỗi mùa đông đều CÓ tuyết *trên vùng cao*.

c. *Trên vùng cao* đều CÓ tuyết *mỗi mùa đông*.

d. CÓ tuyết *trên vùng cao* *mỗi mùa đông*.

e. Mùa đông nào cũng CÓ tuyết *trên vùng cao*.

Fronting is also recommended in the case of the final adverbial of space as in (76-77)a. The combination of *is* and *still* in (77)a result in *vẫn còn*, while *còn* is the Vietnamese equivalent of *exists* in (78)a whose Vietnamese version, which is (78)b, is its thematic variant; like (71)c, (72)b-c, (75)e, and (77)d-e:

(76)a. There WAS no beer left *in the fridge*.

b. *Trong tủ lạnh* không CÒN bia.

c. Không CÒN bia *trong tủ lạnh*.

(77)a. There IS still some money *in the pocket*.

b. *Trong túi* vẫn CÒN tiền.

c. Vẫn CÒN tiền *trong túi*.

d. Túi vẫn CÒN tiền.

e.?Túi đang CÒN một số tiền. (Vietnam Committee of Social Sciences, 1983) [16]

(78)a. There EXISTS a king *in Sweden*.

b. Thụy Điển CÒN vua.

Since there is no verb conjugation in Vietnamese, the simple past, which is a grammatical means in English, is replaced by the Vietnamese lexical item *lúc ấy* meaning “at that time”:

(79)a. There WAS nobody *home*.

b. *Lúc ấy* không CÓ ai ở nhà.

c. *Lúc ấy* ở nhà không CÓ ai.

d. Không CÓ ai ở nhà *lúc ấy*.

e.*Không CÓ ai *lúc ấy* ở nhà.

f.*Ở nhà *lúc ấy* không CÓ ai.

The optional fronting of the final adverbial of space during the Vietnamese-English process of translation holds true even when the Vietnamese equivalent version of (80)a, which is (80)b, is only an embedded clause.

(80)a. There IS SAID TO BE a mismatch between the mother tongue and the target language *at these points*.

b. Người ta NÓI [rằng ở *những điểm này* CÓ một sự thiếu tương xứng giữa tiếng mẹ đẻ và ngôn ngữ đích].

c. Người ta NÓI [rằng CÓ một sự thiếu tương xứng giữa tiếng mẹ đẻ và ngôn ngữ đích ở *những điểm này*].

5.4. Counterparts of Frame 2b-True Existential Sentences

English: *Adverbial* + there + VERB + NP

Vietnamese: EE *adverbial* + VERB + NP

The adverbial is usually at the end of the English clause;

however, clause initial placement is also possible.

(81)a. *Near the park* there WERE no more trees, just rock and grass. [5]

b. *Gần công viên* không CÒN cây nữa, chỉ toàn là đá và cỏ.

(82)a. *Inside the hall* there WAS PILED a large assortment of packages and parcels and small articles of furniture. *On every item* there WAS a label tied. [5]

b. *Bên trong cái hành lang* CÓ một đống lớn gồm các thùng và gói hàng và đồ dùng trong nhà thuộc loại nhỏ. *Trên từng mỗi thứ* CÓ một cái nhãn được cột vào.

The ordering is conditioned by the same factors that affect the placement of time and place adverbials in general. In (81-82)a, which are two fiction examples, the adverbial are tied to the preceding text and the clause ends with the indefinite NP, which contains new information. The ordering is therefore in agreement with the information principle.

5.5. Counterparts of There-Constructions as ‘Lists’

English: (*Adverbial* +) there + VERB + NP

Vietnamese: (EE *adverbial* +) VERB + NP

(83)a. *Once upon a time* there WERE three bears: Mama bear, Papa bear and Baby bear. [5]

b. *Ngày xưa ngày xưa* CÓ ba con gấu: Gấu mẹ, Gấu cha và Gấu con.

(84)a. There IS also the group of non-benzenoid aromatic compounds. [5]

b. Cũng CÓ hỗn hợp gồm nhiều hợp chất không chứa benzene và có mùi thơm đặc trưng.

(85)a. There 'S the school bell – I must go *now*.

b. CÓ chuông trường rồi – *bây giờ* tôi phải đi đây.

It seems like no adverbial is needed sentence-initially when the NP is encoded by a definite noun phrase; as previously mentioned, the effect of Empty *there* in this case is just to bring something already known back to the addressee’s mind, not asserting that it exists.

5.6. Counterparts of Presentational There-Constructions

- With a stative verb describing location such as *lie, hang, sit, stand*, etc.:

English: There + VERB + *adverbial* + NP

Vietnamese: EE *adverbial* + VERB + NP

VERB + *adverbial* + LÀ + NP

(86)a. There HANGS *on the wall* a picture of the President.

b. *Trên tường* TREO một bức tranh của Tổng thống.

c. TREO *trên tường* LÀ một bức tranh của Tổng thống.

(87)a. There STAND *in the corner of the room* a file cabinet.

b. *Trong góc phòng* ĐỨNG VUÔNG VẮN²⁴ một cái

²⁴In this example, the verb *đứng*, which means “stand,” cannot occur alone but must be accompanied by the adverb *vuông vắn*, which means “neatly” or “tidily.” Also see the above-mentioned sentences numbered (54).

tủ đựng hồ sơ.

c. ĐÚNG VUÔNG VẪN *trong góc phòng* LÀ một cái tủ đựng hồ sơ.

It deserves noticing the second translated version of each of the examples given above in which *là* is placed right before the NP as a “pure” Vietnamese expression.

- With an active verb of directional movement such as *burst in, jump out, step out, run through, walk into, enter, etc.* or a stative verb denoting existence or occurrence such as *appear, arise, come, emerge, exist, develop, follow, live, loom, remain, occur, etc.*:

English: There + VERB + adverbial + NP

Vietnamese: EE adverbial + VERB + NP

VERB + adverbial + NP

(88)a. There OCCURRED²⁵ *the next day* a strange incident. [7]

b. Ngày hôm sau đã XẢY RA một việc lạ lùng.

c. Đã XẢY RA *trong ngày hôm sau* một việc lạ lùng.

(89)a. There EXISTS *in all such relations* a set of mutual obligations. [5]

b. Trong tất cả các mối quan hệ như vậy TỒN TẠI một loạt những trách nhiệm qua lại.

c. Vẫn TỒN TẠI *trong tất cả các mối quan hệ như vậy* một loạt những trách nhiệm qua lại.

To deal with presentational *there*-constructions beginning with an adverbial, i.e. those following *Frame 4b*, apply “Tip 2: Do not change the Topic-Comment structure when translating from English to Vietnamese, if there is no compelling reason.” [15: 353]

The pre-verbal adverb of time *once* is shifted to the left-most position in (90)b, filling the slot of the first adverbial; next comes *Locative*. This obeys the preferred order of a successive of two EE adverbials sentence-initially in the Vietnamese clause: *time – space*, following “Tip 1: Apply frequently in the Vietnamese clause *the range topic of time* as well as the double topic²⁶, the first member being *time*; pay attention to the Vietnamese final sequence of *two adverbials*, the last member being *time*.” [15: 353]

(90)a. *In a small town in Germany* there once LIVED a rich merchant who had a beautiful daughter.

b. Thuở xưa *trong một thị trấn nhỏ ở nước Đức* CÓ một thương gia giàu có sống với cô con gái xinh đẹp.

c. **Trong một thị trấn nhỏ ở nước Đức thuở xưa* CÓ một thương gia giàu có sống với cô con gái xinh đẹp.

The double topic *time – space* can also be observed in (91)b – one of the two translated versions recommended for (91)a:

(91)a. Then there RAN *out of the bushes* a grizzly bear.

b. Rồi thì *từ trong bụi rậm* CHẠY RA một con gấu

to lớn và hung dữ.

c. Rồi thì CHẠY RA *từ trong bụi rậm* một con gấu to lớn và hung dữ.

In addition to *Locative* in (90)a and *Temporal* in (91)a, an *adverbial of manner* is clearly seen sentence-initially in (92)a as well as in the above-mentioned (61):

(92)a. Suddenly there ENTERED a strange figure dressed all in black.

b. Bỗng BƯỚC VÀO một người lạ mặt mặc toàn đồ đen.

This is true even when *Locative* already exists in a presentational *there*-construction like (93)a:

(93)a. Suddenly there JUMPED *out of the hole* a rabbit.

b. *Từ trong cái lỗ bỗng* NHẢY RA một con thỏ.

c. Bỗng NHẢY RA *từ trong cái lỗ* một con thỏ.

The adverb *chợt*, which also means “suddenly”, almost obligatorily occurs in the translated version (94)c, to make it sound more like Vietnamese, even when the original English sentence (94)a does not actually include it:

(94)a. There AROSE *somewhere deep inside her* a desperate hope that he would embrace her.

b. Ở đâu đó sâu thẳm *trong cô* TRÔI DẬY một niềm hy vọng mong manh rằng anh ấy sẽ ôm ghì lấy cô.

c. Chợt TRÔI DẬY ở đâu đó *trong sâu thẳm lòng cô* một niềm hy vọng mong manh rằng anh ấy sẽ ôm ghì lấy cô.

6. Discussion and Findings

- English constructions with Empty *there* and their Vietnamese counterparts indicate the existence or occurrence of something (including the non-existence or non-occurrence of something). The use of Empty *there* in *there*-constructions “is in agreement with the information principle, as it serves to delay, and prepared the ground for, new information later in the clause” [5: 951]. Also, *there* is to bring something already known back to mind, rather than asserting that it exists. This is the case of *there*-constructions as ‘lists’ in which definite subject NPs may be employed to refer to known entities or phenomena, whose existence is not at issue.
- Their sound forms may help to distinguish Empty *there* from *Locative there*, the latter being stressed and frequently used as an adverbial in presentational *there*-constructions. Below are examples given by Thomson and Martinet [17: 120]:

(95)a. There’S a man I want to see. (He is standing by the door.)

b. Kia LÀ một người đàn ông mà tôi muốn gặp. (Anh ấy đang đứng gần cánh cửa.)

(96)a. There’S a man I want to see. (This man exists.)

b. CÓ một người đàn ông mà tôi muốn gặp. (Anh ấy tồn tại.)

We also find another pair of *there*-constructions that appropriately tells a presentational *there*-construction like (97)a from a *Frame 2a*-true

²⁵Which verbs other than *be* can occur in English existential sentences cannot be determined on a purely semantic basis. The matter remains a mystery. There is no explanation why *begin* can occur in *there*-constructions and its synonymy *start* is less acceptable [2: 167]:

There BEGAN a riot.

?? There STARTED a riot.

The same phenomenon can be observed between the two so-called synonyms *occur* and *happen*:

(88)a’. ??There HAPPENED *the next day* a strange incident.

²⁶ which is called “*đề kép*” in Vietnamese

existential sentence like (98)a:

(97) a. There'S my father.

b. *Kia LÀ* cha của tôi.

(98) a. There'S your father *on the phone*.

b. *CÓ* cha của chị (*đang chờ để nói chuyện*) trên điện thoại.

Such a distinction is a bit harder but necessary within one and the same sentence, given as example by Murphy [18: 166]:

(99) a. When we arrived at the party, there WERE already a lot of people *there* (= *at the party*).

b. Khi chúng tôi đến bữa tiệc, đã *CÓ* nhiều người ở đó (= *ở tại bữa tiệc*).

- As far as the adverbial in *there*-constructions is concerned, “in English a contextually bound locative phrase may occur in the clause initial position (marked construction) or in the clause final position (neutral word order)” [2: 159]. In Vietnamese, the adverbial in true existential sentences occurs almost always in the initial position as *the range topic*: more frequently of time and/ or of space and less frequently of condition, of cause (or reason), or of manner. When there is the double topic in Vietnamese translated versions, the first member should be *time*; in case of a sequence of two final adverbials in the Vietnamese clause, the last member should be *time*.
- The most common verbs in Vietnamese existential sentences are *CÓ*, *CÒN*, *HẾT* and their elaborate variants such as *hiện CÓ*, *đã CÓ*, *không CÓ*, *thật ra là CÓ*, *hiện CÒN*, *vẫn CÒN*, *đang CÒN*, *không CÒN*, *CÒN LẠI*, *đã HẾT*, etc. Roughly speaking, these are the Vietnamese equivalents of various affirmative and negative forms the English verb *be* conjugated in a number of different tenses. Among others are:
 - (i) Verbs other than *be* but of the related meaning of existence or occurrence: *CÒN* (*remain*), *XUẤT HIỆN* or *HIỆN RA* (*occur*, *appear*, *arise*, *come*, *loom* or *emerge*), *TỒN TẠI* (*exist*), *PHÁT TRIỂN* (*develop* or *grow*), *TIẾP THEO* (*follow*), *SỐNG* (*live*), etc.
 - (ii) Active verbs temporarily used as stative verbs describing location: *ĐỨNG* (*stand*), *NGỒI* (*sit*), *NẪM* (*lie*), *ĐU* (*hang*), *TREO* (*hang*), etc.;
 - (iii) Active verbs of directional movement: *BUỐC VÀO* (*step in*, *walk into*, or *enter*), *XÔNG VÀO* (*burst in*), *BUỐC RA* (*step out*), etc.
- It is not only the lexical meaning of the English verbs but also the syntactic meaning of the whole clause in question that sometimes determines a more appropriate equivalent translated version in Vietnamese: *follow* means *tiếp theo LÀ* in (100)b; the verb is simply translated as *LÀ* in (101)b. This partially proves that word-by-word translation is in danger of being a complete failure in the case of English *there*-constructions:

(100) a. There FOLLOWED an uncomfortable silence.

b. *Tiếp theo LÀ* một sự im lặng không mấy dễ chịu.

(101) a. *After weeks of intense fighting* there FOLLOWED

a brief period of calm.

b. *Sau nhiều tuần giao tranh ác liệt LÀ* một khoảnh khắc bình yên.

- Though there exists the distinction between definiteness and indefiniteness applied to the NP in English *there*-constructions and their Vietnamese counterparts, ways to indicate such a distinction are unfortunately not the same, considering as an example the fact that the zero article²⁷ is [+definite, +singular] in Vietnamese [19: 28, 33], as in (102)b, while it is [-definite, +plural] in English, as in (102)a.

(102) a. There ARE lions *in Africa*.

b. *CÓ* sư tử ở *Châu Phi*.

c. **CÓ* những con sư tử ở *Châu Phi*.

- Not much has been done to discuss explicitly the role of the adjectival in the English subject NP; but this does not mean that it has been ignored. Instead, its significance is gradually exposed via hundreds of translated versions in Vietnamese employed as illustrations in the paper. The very role deserves further consideration which is out of the scope of this paper.
- Presentational *there*-constructions are characteristic of having their thematic counterparts and employing only two subtypes of verbs: active verbs of directional movement and stative verbs describing location. The group of verbs other than *be* denoting existence or occurrence is the overlap, as far as the employment of the verb is concerned, between presentational *there*-constructions and various types of existential sentences in English. Undoubtedly, *be* is the “privilege” of English existential sentences, both bare and true, just like *có* in their Vietnamese counterparts. The vital role of *be* in English *there*-constructions is undeniable, seemingly simple but in fact too complicated for generations of learners of the English language, both native and non-native, to toss and turn.

7. Conclusion

Breakdowns in communication in any way, either by accident or on purpose, are somewhat odd. Any efforts to avoid such breakdowns is worth trying in our changing world. Interlingual translation has been contributing to these efforts: results of researches in linguistics are continually applied to translation practice, as far English and Vietnamese are concerned, as well as to teaching and learning the two natural languages. Hopefully, a correct type of English *there*-constructions is used to translate “*LỖ MỜ HIỆN RA từ trong làn sương mỏng một dáng hình kỳ lạ*” to “*Out of the mist there LOOMED a strange figure.*” And the two following Vietnamese versions can be identified for (103)a.

(103) a. There ROSE *to her lips* always some exclamation of triumph over life. [5]

b. Luôn TRÀO DĂNG *lên đầu môi/ ra cửa miệng của cô* những cảm nhận về thành tựu trong cuộc

²⁷i.e. the absence of any article, which called “quán từ zero” in Vietnamese

sống.
 c. Ở đầu môi/ cửa miệng của cô luôn LÀ những cảm
 nhận về thành tựu trong cuộc sống.

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