

A Contrastive Study of the Semantic Characteristics of Vietnamese đi and Korean 가다 (가다)

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ABSTRACT: This study presents a contrastive semantic analysis of the Vietnamese motion verb đi and the Korean motion verb 가다 (가다). Drawing on cognitive semantics and semantic-level contrastive analysis, it examines their core spatial meanings, semantic extensions, deictic behavior, collocational patterns, goal-directed activity constructions, transportation expressions, and change-of-state meanings. The findings show that both verbs share a prototypical meaning of movement from one location to another and extend metaphorically from the domain of space to those of time, process, state, and social activity. However, Vietnamese đi has a broader collocational scope, combining directly with activities, means of transportation, directional markers, and change-of-state expressions, whereas Korean 가다 (가다) is more strongly constrained by deictic perspective, case marking, purposive constructions, compound motion verbs, and the auxiliary pattern -아/어 가다. These differences help explain frequent learner errors caused by first-language interference and show that 가다 (가다) should not be taught as a simple one-to-one equivalent of đi. The study contributes to Korean–Vietnamese contrastive linguistics and offers implications for Korean language pedagogy and Korean–Vietnamese translation.

KEYWORDS: motion verbs; Vietnamese đi; Korean 가다 (가다); semantic extension; cognitive semantics; contrastive analysis; Korean language teaching

I. INTRODUCTION

Motion verbs are one of the fundamental classes of verbs and occur with high frequency across languages. They not only denote the movement of humans or objects through space but also reflect how speakers conceptualize spatial experience and extend it to more abstract domains, including time, state, change, social activity, and process. Within cognitive semantics, space and motion are regarded as fundamental to the linguistic expression of non-spatial phenomena. Talmy (2000) argues that motion events constitute a central conceptual domain in which languages encode components such as Figure, Ground, Path, Manner, and deictic perspective. From this perspective, Vietnamese and Korean differ in how they distribute path, direction, and manner information across verbs, directional markers, case particles, and compound motion verbs. Likewise, Lakoff and Johnson (1980/2003) emphasize that abstract conceptualization is often structured through embodied and spatial experience.

In Vietnamese, đi is a prototypical motion verb with an exceptionally broad range of uses. Its core meaning denotes movement from one location to another. Through semantic extension, however, đi has developed into a highly polysemous lexeme. In addition to expressing physical motion, as in đi đến trường (“go to school”), đi Hà Nội (“go to Hanoi”), and đi ra ngoài (“go outside”), it also conveys goal-directed activities, as in đi học (“go to school/study”), đi làm (“go to work”), and đi chơi (“go out for leisure”); indicates means of transportation, as in đi xe máy (“go by motorcycle”) and đi ô tô (“go by car”); expresses gradual change or deterioration, as in yếu đi (“become weaker”), mờ đi (“become dimmer”), and xấu đi (“become worse”); and functions in certain contexts as a euphemistic expression for death, as in ông ấy đã đi rồi (“he has passed away”). Nguyen (2013) notes that đi has undergone extensive semantic and grammatical expansion, while Phan (2013) identifies đi as the most polysemous motion verb among the Vietnamese motion verbs examined in her French–Vietnamese contrastive study.

In Korean, 가다 (가다) is likewise a basic motion verb and is typically introduced at the elementary stage of Korean language instruction. Its core meaning denotes the movement of a Figure toward another location, generally away from the speaker or another relevant deictic anchor. For example, 학교에 가다 means “go to school,” 회사에 가다 means “go to work/the company,” and 한국에 가다 means “go to Korea.” Nevertheless, 가다 (가다) also extends beyond physical movement into the domains of time, process, development, change of state, and transmission of effects, as in 시간이 가다 (“time passes”), 늙어 가다 (“grow old gradually”), 변해 가다 (“change gradually”), and 발전해 가다 (“develop gradually”). Jeon (2013) shows that 가다 (가다) and

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oda (오다) are high-frequency Korean motion verbs that emerge early and participate productively in compound verbs such as 나가다, 들어가다, 올라가다, and 내려가다.

Against this background, the present study investigates the semantic characteristics of Vietnamese đi and Korean 가다 (가다). It aims to clarify their core and extended meanings, identify their similarities and differences in semantic scope, deictic perspective, collocational behavior, goal-directed activity constructions, transportation expressions, and change-of-state meanings, and discuss implications for Korean language pedagogy and Korean–Vietnamese translation. The study addresses three research questions: (1) What are the core and extended meanings of Vietnamese đi and Korean 가다 (가다)? (2) In what ways are these two verbs semantically similar and different? (3) How might these differences affect Vietnamese learners of Korean and Korean–Vietnamese translation?

The scope of the study is limited to đi in Vietnamese and 가다 (가다) in Korean as polysemous motion verbs. Related Vietnamese verbs such as đến, về, ra, vào, lên, and xuống, as well as Korean verbs such as oda (오다), 들어가다, 나가다, 올라가다, and 내려가다, are discussed only when necessary to clarify the semantic behavior of the two focal verbs. Methodologically, the study combines description, semantic analysis, and contrastive analysis. The data are drawn from dictionaries, pedagogical materials, representative usage examples, and previous studies.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES AND RESEARCH GAP

Previous research provides a useful foundation for the present study, but it has not fully resolved the contrastive problems raised by Vietnamese đi and Korean 가다 (가다). Nguyen (2019) compares the Korean pair 가다/oda (가다/오다) with the Vietnamese pair đi/đến and identifies important differences in directionality and deictic perspective. This study is valuable because it treats motion verbs in both languages contrastively; however, its primary focus is the broader pairwise system of “go/come” and “go/arrive,” rather than the internal semantic network of đi and 가다 (가다) as individual polysemous lexemes.

Kim (2023) approaches the issue from a pedagogical perspective by examining lexical errors made by beginning Vietnamese learners of Korean in their use of 가다 (가다) and oda (오다). Her findings show that learners are strongly affected by Vietnamese-based transfer, especially when they assume direct equivalence between đi and 가다 (가다). Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) offer a more direct comparison between Vietnamese đi and Korean 가다 (가다), while Phan and Hoang (2021), through their cognitive-semantic comparison of Vietnamese ăn and Korean meokda (먹다), demonstrate the value of analyzing polysemous verbs as networks of motivated meaning extensions. These studies suggest that Korean–Vietnamese lexical comparison should move beyond simple dictionary equivalence.

However, systematic contrastive research focusing exclusively on the semantic networks and cognitive mechanisms of đi and 가다 (가다) remains limited. Previous studies have tended to emphasize usage, translation equivalence, or learner errors, whereas less attention has been paid to the relationship among core meaning, extended meaning, deictic anchoring, collocational behavior, and grammaticalization. The present study therefore seeks to fill this gap by examining how the two verbs share a common proto-scene of spatial motion but diverge in their extension pathways across the domains of time, activity, transportation, purpose, and change of state.

III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. The Concept of Motion Verbs

Motion verbs constitute a class of verbs that denote the change in the spatial location of an entity. A motion event typically consists of such components as the moving entity, the source, the goal, the path, direction, means of movement, and manner of motion. Across languages, these components may be encoded by the main verb, directional markers, adpositions, case markers, or other accompanying linguistic elements. Following Talmy (2000), motion events are particularly useful for contrastive analysis because languages differ in how they distribute Path and Manner across lexical and grammatical resources.

In Vietnamese, motion verbs combine productively with directional markers such as ra (“out”), vào (“in”), lên (“up”), xuống (“down”), qua (“across”), lại (“back”), về (“back/home”), and sang (“across/to another side”) to form expressions such as đi ra, đi vào, đi lên, and đi xuống. In Korean, comparable meanings are often expressed through compound motion verbs such as 나가다 (“go out”), 들어가다 (“go in”), 올라가다 (“go up”), 내려가다 (“go down”), 지나가다 (“go past”), and 돌아가다 (“go back”). Thus, Vietnamese frequently combines a general motion verb with directional markers, whereas Korean often lexicalizes comparable meanings in compound predicates.

B. Core Meaning and Extended Meanings

The core meaning of a lexeme refers to its primary and most direct sense. The core meaning of Vietnamese đi may be defined as self-propelled, typically pedestrian, motion from a deictic origin toward a distinct spatial destination. Drawing on Từ điển tiếng Việt edited by Hoang Phe, Nguyen (2013) notes that đi encompasses 18 dictionary senses and appears in more than 40 “đi + X”

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constructions. This high degree of polysemy indicates that đi functions as a primary lexeme in the Vietnamese motion-verb system.

Motion verbs frequently develop extended meanings through metaphor, metonymy, and conventionalized patterns of use. Vietnamese expressions such as thời gian trôi đi (“time passes”), cơ hội qua đi (“an opportunity passes”), and yếu đi (“become weaker”) exemplify metaphorical extension from SPACE to TIME and from MOTION to CHANGE OF STATE. Similarly, Korean expressions such as 시간이 가다 (“time passes”), 늙어 가다 (“grow old gradually”), and 변해 가다 (“change gradually”) show that gada (가다) also extends from spatial motion to temporal and aspectual meanings. These cases can be interpreted through conceptual metaphors such as TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT and CHANGE OF STATE IS MOTION.

C. Contrastive Analysis at the Semantic Level

Contrastive analysis at the semantic level aims to identify similarities, differences, and cases of non-equivalence between lexical units across languages. In the present study, đi and gada (가다) are not treated as fully equivalent lexemes, but as motion verbs that share a common semantic core while differing in their distribution, collocational patterns, and extended meanings. Therefore, the analysis considers not only what the two verbs mean in isolation but also how they combine with other linguistic expressions and how they are used in specific communicative contexts.

In her contrastive study of polysemous motion verbs in French and Vietnamese, Phan (2013) emphasizes that the contrastive analysis of polysemous lexical units should take into account both linguistic and cultural factors, since polysemy is not merely a matter of lexical definition but also reflects speakers’ cognitive and communicative habits. This view is relevant to the present study because many uses of đi and gada (가다) cannot be explained through simple one-to-one translation equivalence.

D. A Cognitive Semantic Approach

The cognitive semantic approach views lexical meaning as a structured network rather than as an arbitrary list of unrelated senses. In this study, đi and gada (가다) are analyzed as radial semantic networks. Their shared proto-scene involves a Figure moving from a source or deictic origin toward a goal. From this central scene, each verb develops extension pathways into temporal progression, goal-directed activity, change of state, disappearance, and processual meaning. Although the two verbs share this general proto-scene, their pathways of extension differ because each language conventionalizes motion, directionality, and aspectual change in different lexical and grammatical patterns.

From this perspective, the study does not merely enumerate the senses of đi and gada (가다). It examines the cognitive mechanisms underlying their semantic extensions, their collocational behavior, and the contexts in which they are used. For example, Vietnamese xấu đi (“become worse”) and Korean 나빠지다 or 나빠져 가다 (“become/be gradually becoming worse”) both express change of state, but they do so through different grammatical resources. Such differences are pedagogically significant because they often lead to transfer-based errors among Vietnamese learners of Korean.

IV. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Data Sources

The data for this study were compiled from three main sources: dictionary data, pedagogical data, and representative usage data. Vietnamese examples include common expressions such as đi học, đi làm, đi chợ, đi chơi, đi xe máy, đi ô tô, yếu đi, and xấu đi. Korean examples include 학교에 가다, 회사에 가다, 한국에 가다, 영화를 보러 가다, 버스를 타고 가다, 시간이 가다, 늙어 가다, 변해 가다, and 약해져 가다. Selected examples are presented with interlinear glosses when grammatical structure is central to the analysis.

In addition, the study selectively draws upon previous research on đi, gada/oda (가다/오다), and Korean–Vietnamese contrastive linguistics. In particular, Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) provide a direct point of reference for the semantic comparison between đi and gada (가다), while Nguyen (2019) and Kim (2023) provide relevant insights into deictic perspective and learner errors.

B. Research Methods

This study employs three principal research methods. First, the descriptive method is used to describe the semantic and collocational patterns of đi in Vietnamese and gada (가다) in Korean. Second, semantic analysis is employed to identify core meanings, extended meanings, and semantic relations among different uses of each verb. Third, contrastive analysis is used to identify similarities, differences, and cases of non-direct equivalence between the two verbs.

The study does not aim to quantify the absolute frequency of every usage pattern. Instead, it focuses on representative cases that are especially relevant to contrastive analysis and that are likely to present difficulties for Vietnamese learners of Korean. Accordingly, the examples were selected on the basis of semantic relevance, structural representativeness, and pedagogical significance.

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C. Analytical Criteria

The analysis is based on the following criteria: (1) the core motion meaning; (2) goal and direction of motion; (3) deictic perspective; (4) compatibility with location nouns, transportation nouns, and activity predicates; (5) semantic extension into time, state, process, disappearance, and change; and (6) the degree of direct or indirect translation equivalence between Vietnamese and Korean.

V. SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VIETNAMESE MOTION VERB *ĐI*

A. The Core Motion Meaning

In its core sense, *đi* denotes the movement of an entity from one location to another. The subject of the action denoted by *đi* is typically human, although in certain contexts it may also be a personified object or phenomenon. Sentences such as *Tôi đi đến trường* (“I go to school”), *Anh ấy đi ra ngoài* (“He goes outside”), and *Chúng tôi đi Hà Nội* (“We go to Hanoi”) illustrate the basic motion meaning of the verb.

(1) Vietnamese

Tôi đi học.

1SG go study/school

‘I go to school / I go to study.’

A noteworthy characteristic is that Vietnamese readily allows *đi* to combine directly with directional markers such as *ra*, *vào*, *lên*, *xuống*, *qua*, *lại*, and *về*. These combinations specify direction or the spatial orientation of the movement. For instance, *đi ra* denotes movement toward the outside, *đi vào* denotes movement toward the inside, and *đi lên* denotes upward movement. This pattern shows that *đi* functions as a general motion verb that can be specified by additional directional markers.

B. The Meaning of Goal-Directed Activities

A distinctive characteristic of *đi* in Vietnamese is its ability to express goal-directed activities. Expressions such as *đi học* (“go to school/study”), *đi làm* (“go to work”), *đi chợ* (“go to the market”), *đi chơi* (“go out for leisure”), *đi khám bệnh* (“go for a medical check-up”), *đi họp* (“attend a meeting”), and *đi thi* (“take an examination”) involve not only physical movement but also participation in a socially recognized activity.

For example, *đi học* may be interpreted either as going to school or as engaging in the activity of studying. Likewise, *đi làm* (“go to work”) refers not only to traveling to the workplace but also to performing one’s occupational duties within a socially defined time frame. Similarly, *đi chợ* refers to shopping for food or household goods at a market, not merely to physically moving toward a market.

C. The Meaning of Means and Manner of Motion

In Vietnamese, *đi* can combine directly with nouns denoting means of transportation to express the manner or means of movement, as in *đi xe đạp* (“go by bicycle”), *đi xe máy* (“go by motorcycle”), *đi ô tô* (“go by car”), *đi tàu* (“go by train”), and *đi máy bay* (“go by plane”). This pattern shows that Vietnamese permits the general motion verb *đi* to introduce transportation expressions without requiring an additional verb equivalent to “ride” or “take.”

This is an important difference from Korean. In Korean, the meaning of traveling by a means of transportation is usually not expressed by placing a transportation noun directly before *가다* (가다). Instead, Korean typically uses the construction “means of transportation + 을/를 타고 가다,” as in *버스를 타고 가다* (“go by bus”), *지하철을 타고 가다* (“go by subway”), and *오토바이를 타고 가다* (“go by motorcycle”).

D. The Extended Meanings of *đi*

From its basic spatial motion meaning, *đi* has developed a wide range of extended meanings. First, it may denote the passage of time, as in *năm tháng đi qua* (“the years pass by”) and *tuổi trẻ đã đi qua* (“youth has passed”). Second, it may express disappearance or loss, as in *cơ hội qua đi* (“an opportunity has passed”) and *tiền mất đi* (“money is lost”). Third, it may express a change of state, especially deterioration, reduction, or weakening, as in *yếu đi* (“become weaker”), *xấu đi* (“become worse”), *mờ đi* (“become dimmer”), and *nhạt đi* (“fade”).

In certain contexts, *đi* also functions as a euphemistic expression, as in *ông ấy đã đi rồi* (“he has passed away”) and *cụ đã ra đi thanh thản* (“the elderly person passed away peacefully”). In such cases, *đi* no longer denotes ordinary physical motion but instead refers metaphorically to departure from life. This semantic extension illustrates how a motion verb can be used to conceptualize abstract or culturally sensitive events.

VI. SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KOREAN MOTION VERB *GADA* (가다)

A. The Core Motion Meaning

Gada (가다) is a basic Korean motion verb that denotes the movement of a Figure toward another location. Its prototypical construction is “N 에 가다,” where N denotes the destination and 에 is a locative case marker indicating direction or goal.

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Examples include 학교에 가다 (“go to school”), 회사에 가다 (“go to work/the company”), 한국에 가다 (“go to Korea”), and 친구 집에 가다 (“go to a friend’s house”).

(2) Korean

학교-에 가-다

school-LOC go-DECL

‘go to school’

However, 가다 (가다) is more explicitly associated with deictic perspective than Vietnamese đi. In principle, 가다 (가다) denotes motion directed away from the speaker’s location or from another deictic anchor. Consequently, the choice between 가다 (가다) and 오다 (오다) depends not only on physical direction but also on the speaker’s adopted perspective.

B. The Semantic Relationship Between 가다 (가다) and 오다 (오다)

The semantic relationship between 가다 (가다) and 오다 (오다) is central to Korean motion expressions. While 가다 (가다) typically encodes motion away from a deictic anchor, 오다 (오다) encodes motion toward that anchor. For example, 내가 학교에 간다 means “I go to school,” whereas 친구가 우리 집에 온다 means “My friend comes to my house.” This contrast differs from Vietnamese, where đi and đến are also related to direction but are often used more flexibly depending on discourse context.

This deictic distinction frequently causes difficulty for Vietnamese learners. A learner may translate Thầy đến nhà em as 선생님이 우리 집에 갑니다, but the natural Korean expression is 선생님께서 저희 집에 오십니다 because the movement is toward the speaker’s location. Such examples show that 가다 (가다) must be taught in relation to 오다 (오다) and to deictic anchoring, rather than as a simple equivalent of Vietnamese đi.

C. The Purposive Construction V-(으)러 가다

In Korean, movement with a purpose is commonly expressed by the construction V-(으)러 가다. This construction indicates that the subject goes somewhere in order to perform the action denoted by the preceding verb. For example, 영화를 보러 가다 means “go to see a movie,” 친구를 만나러 가다 means “go to meet a friend,” and 커피를 마시러 가다 means “go to drink coffee.”

(3) Korean

영화-를 보-러 가-다

movie-ACC see-PURP go-DECL

‘go to see a movie’

This structure corresponds in many cases to Vietnamese “đi + activity,” as in đi xem phim, đi gặp bạn, and đi uống cà phê. However, unlike Vietnamese, Korean normally marks the purpose relation overtly with -(으)러. Therefore, a literal form such as *영화를 가다 is ungrammatical or unnatural when the intended meaning is “go to see a movie.”

D. 가다 (가다) in Compound Motion Verbs

Another important feature of Korean is the productive formation of compound motion verbs containing 가다 (가다). Examples include 들어가다 (“go in”), 나가다 (“go out”), 올라가다 (“go up”), 내려가다 (“go down”), 돌아가다 (“go back”), 지나가다 (“go past”), 다가가다 (“approach”), and 가져가다 (“take/carry away”). These compound verbs encode more specific paths, directions, and manners of movement than the simple verb 가다 (가다).

In Vietnamese, comparable meanings are often expressed by combining đi with directional markers, as in đi vào, đi ra, đi lên, đi xuống, đi qua, and đi về. This contrast suggests that the two languages distribute motion information differently: Vietnamese often keeps đi as the general motion verb and adds directional markers, whereas Korean frequently incorporates direction or path into compound verbs.

E. The Extended Meanings of 가다 (가다)

Like đi, 가다 (가다) has developed a range of extended meanings. First, it may denote the passage of time, as in 시간이 가다 (“time passes”), 세월이 가다 (“the years go by”), and 하루가 가다 (“a day passes”). Second, in the auxiliary construction -아/어 가다, 가다 (가다) expresses an ongoing process or gradual change, as in 살아가다 (“continue living”), 늙어 가다 (“grow old gradually”), 변해 가다 (“change gradually”), 발전해 가다 (“develop gradually”), and 익숙해져 가다 (“become gradually accustomed”).

In addition, 가다 (가다) can express the transmission of information or the extension of influence, as illustrated by 연락이 가다 (“contact is made/reaches someone”), 소식이 가다 (“news reaches someone”), and 영향이 가다 (“have an effect on”). These extended meanings show that 가다 (가다) is not merely a verb of physical movement but also participates in metaphorical extensions from SPACE to TIME, PROCESS, and EFFECT.

VII. A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ĐI AND GADA (가다)

A. Similarities

The most fundamental similarity between đi and gada (가다) lies in their shared core meaning of movement from one location to another. In many contexts, the two verbs correspond relatively directly: đi đến trường – 학교에 가다, đi công ty – 회사에 가다, and đi Hàn Quốc – 한국에 가다. Both verbs also extend from spatial motion to temporal and processual meanings, as seen in thời gian trôi đi and 시간이 가다 (“time passes”), as well as in Vietnamese yếu đi and Korean 약해져 가다 (“become gradually weaker”).

From a cognitive perspective, these similarities arise from shared human experience of movement. The experience of an entity leaving one location and moving toward another provides a conceptual basis for understanding time, change of state, and process. Thus, both verbs participate in metaphorical extensions from physical motion to abstract domains.

B. Differences in Semantic Scope

The most significant difference between the two verbs lies in their semantic scope and collocational behavior. Vietnamese đi has a remarkably broad range of uses. It combines directly with nouns denoting locations, activities, means of transportation, social activities, and with adjectives or verbs indicating changes of state. Korean gada (가다), by contrast, does not cover all of these functions by itself. Many Vietnamese expressions containing đi must instead be rendered in Korean by more specific lexical verbs or alternative grammatical constructions.

TABLE I. SELECTED CASES IN WHICH VIETNAMESE đi CANNOT BE MECHANICALLY TRANSLATED AS KOREAN gada (가다)

Vietnamese construction	Error-prone rendering	literal	Natural Korean equivalent	Grammatical/Semantic category
đi xe máy	오토바이를 가다		오토바이를 타고 가다	Means of transportation
đi giày	신발을 가다		신발을 신다	Attire/footwear wearing
đi xem phim	영화를 가다		영화를 보러 가다	Purposive construction (-러 가다)
đi làm	일에 가다		출근하다 / 회사에 가다	Work/commuting expression
yếu đi	약하게 가다		약해지다 / 약해져 가다	Change of state

C. Differences in Deictic Perspective

In Korean, the choice between gada (가다) and oda (오다) is determined largely by deictic perspective. When movement is directed toward the speaker’s location or another established deictic anchor, oda (오다) is generally used. Conversely, when movement is directed away from that anchor, gada (가다) is normally selected. In Vietnamese, although đi and đến are also related to directionality, speakers may use other motion expressions such as qua, lại, về, and sang depending on the discourse context and intended nuance.

For example, the Vietnamese sentence Thầy đến nhà em should be expressed in Korean as 선생님께서 저희 집에 오십니다 because the movement is directed toward the speaker’s location. In contrast, Em đến nhà thầy may be expressed as 제가 선생님 댁에 가겠습니다 because the movement is directed away from the speaker’s location toward another destination. This deictic contrast is a major source of difficulty for Vietnamese learners of Korean.

D. Differences in the Expression of Means of Transportation

Vietnamese readily employs the construction “đi + means of transportation,” as in đi xe đạp (“go by bicycle”), đi xe máy (“go by motorcycle”), đi ô tô (“go by car”), đi tàu (“go by train”), and đi máy bay (“go by plane”). Korean, by contrast, generally uses the construction “means of transportation + 을/를 타고 가다.” This difference indicates that đi has undergone a high degree of semantic generalization with respect to transportation, whereas gada (가다) normally requires the additional verb 타다 (“ride/take”).

From a pedagogical perspective, this pattern is a common source of learner errors. Under the influence of Vietnamese, learners may produce sentences such as *저는 오토바이를 학교에 가요. The natural Korean expression is 저는 오토바이를 타고 학교에 가요 (“I go to school by motorcycle”). Therefore, instruction on gada (가다) should include collocational patterns such as 걸어서 가다 (“go on foot”), 버스를 타고 가다 (“go by bus”), and 지하철을 타고 가다 (“go by subway”), rather than limiting instruction to the lexical gloss “go.”

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E. Differences in the Expression of Goal-Directed Activities

In Vietnamese, the construction “*đi* + activity” is highly productive, as illustrated by *đi ăn* (“go out to eat”), *đi uống cà phê* (“go out for coffee”), *đi xem phim* (“go to the movies”), *đi gặp bạn* (“go to meet a friend”), and *đi mua sắm* (“go shopping”). In Korean, however, the purpose of motion is generally marked explicitly by V-(으)러 가다, as in *밥을 먹으러 가다*, *커피를 마시러 가다*, *영화를 보러 가다*, *친구를 만나러 가다*, and *쇼핑하러 가다*. Therefore, the difference between the two languages lies not only in lexical choice but also in the syntactic expression of purpose.

Furthermore, certain Vietnamese “*đi* + N/V” constructions correspond to more specific Korean verbs. For example, *đi làm* may be translated as *출근하다* when referring to commuting to work according to a regular schedule. Likewise, *đi học* may correspond to *학교에 가다* when emphasizing motion toward school, but to *학교에 다니다* when referring to being enrolled in or attending a school. These examples demonstrate that contrastive analysis must be grounded in communicative context and that word-for-word translation is often inadequate.

F. Differences in Extended Meanings and Grammaticalization

In Vietnamese, *đi* exhibits a clear tendency toward grammaticalization when it follows adjectives or verbs to indicate a change of state, especially deterioration, reduction, or increasing distance, as in *xấu đi* (“become worse”), *yếu đi* (“become weaker”), *ít đi* (“become less”), *mờ đi* (“become blurred”), and *xa đi* (“become more distant”). In Korean, these meanings are generally expressed by -아/어지다 or -아/어 가다, for example, *나빠지다*, *약해지다*, *적어지다*, *흐려지다*, *멀어지다*, *점점 약해져 가다*, and *기억이 희미해져 가다*.

Conversely, *gada* (가다) plays a prominent role in the auxiliary construction -아/어 가다, which denotes a process continuing from the present toward the future or a gradual change over time. Depending on context, these meanings are commonly rendered in Vietnamese by expressions such as *dần* (“gradually”), *ngày càng* (“increasingly”), *tiếp tục* (“continue to”), or *đang... dần* (“be gradually becoming”). Therefore, although both *đi* and *gada* (가다) possess extended meanings associated with process and change, their mechanisms of expression and degrees of grammaticalization are not identical.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study has compared the semantic characteristics of Vietnamese *đi* and Korean *gada* (가다) as two prototypical motion verbs. The analysis shows that both verbs share a core meaning of spatial motion and extend metaphorically into abstract domains such as time, process, state, and change. However, their semantic networks do not overlap completely. Vietnamese *đi* is highly flexible in collocational behavior and can combine directly with location nouns, activity expressions, transportation nouns, and change-of-state predicates. Korean *gada* (가다), by contrast, is more strongly constrained by deictic perspective and frequently requires specialized constructions such as V-(으)러 가다 for purpose, N을/를 타고 가다 for transportation, and -아/어지다 or -아/어 가다 for change and process.

These findings suggest that the teaching of *gada* (가다) to Vietnamese learners should move beyond the simple equivalence “*gada* = *đi*.” Instead, instruction should present the verb through semantic categories, collocational patterns, deictic contrasts with *oda* (오다), and common non-equivalence cases. The results are also relevant to Korean–Vietnamese translation, where literal rendering often produces unnatural or incorrect Korean expressions. Future research may expand the analysis to learner corpora or compare a broader set of Korean and Vietnamese motion verbs in order to test the pedagogical implications proposed in this study.

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