



# Researching and Applying Linguistics and Vietnamese Language Studies

EDITED BY

MARK J. ALVES, LÂM QUANG ĐÔNG, TRỊNH CẨM LAN,  
TRẦN THỊ HỒNG HẠNH, AND DƯƠNG XUÂN QUANG

Geolinguistic Society of Japan



ISSN 2436-6471

# Researching and Applying Linguistics and Vietnamese Language Studies

EDITED BY  
MARK J. ALVES,  
LÂM QUANG ĐÔNG,  
TRỊNH CẨM LAN,  
TRẦN THỊ HỒNG HẠNH,  
AND DƯƠNG XUÂN QUANG



Geolinguistic Society of Japan  
2023

Studies in Geolinguistics, Monograph series, No. 5  
ISSN 2436-6471

*Researching and Applying Linguistics and Vietnamese Language Studies,*  
edited by Mark J. Alves, Lâm Quang Đông, Trịnh Cẩm Lan, Trần Thị Hồng Hạnh, and  
Dương Xuân Quang, 2023

First published 2023

doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8153483>

© 2023 by Authors. All rights reserved.

Published by: Geolinguistic Society of Japan

Website: <https://geolinguistics.sakura.ne.jp/>

Office address: Room G1305, Aoyama Gakuin University, 4-4-25 Shibuya,  
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

## **PREFACE**

This Proceedings is the collection of papers presented at the International Conference "Research and Application of Linguistics and Vietnamese Linguistics" organized by VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities on November 25, 2022. The Conference aims to encourage mutual exchange of results and experiences of researching and applying linguistics and Vietnamese linguistics between VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities and other domestic and international academic institutes.

There were 35 papers from 6 international scholars and 29 domestic scholars submitted to the conference organizers. After a rigorous peer review process, 25 were accepted to be presented at the conference (including oral presentations and poster presentations).

The main topics of the proceedings are:

1. Research on linguistics and Vietnamese linguistics in which many papers discuss in depth such issues as the history of the Vietnamese language in relation to other regional languages, Vietnamese lexicon and grammar.
2. Application of linguistics and Vietnamese linguistics to teaching, translation, language/dialect mapping, dialect dictionary compilation, etc. in Vietnam and other countries in the region.
3. Application of modern linguistic theories such as cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, the triad of semantics - syntactics – pragmatics, and systemic functional theory to analyses of issues of the Vietnamese language.

Generally, those studies not only expanded in scope and subjects but also dealt with in-depth issues. In particular, the application of linguistics and Vietnamese linguistics in Vietnamese practice was considered in different dimensions in the light of modern linguistic theories.

Thanks to these results, we are very happy to be supported by VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities and allowed to publish this Proceedings in English. This publication is a good opportunity for us to more easily share our scientific interests and new research results with our colleagues worldwide.

We would like to sincerely thank our editors and reviewers, especially Prof. Dr. Endo Mitsuaki (Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan), Dr. Suzuki Hiroyuki (Kyoto University, Japan), Prof. Dr. Mark Alves (University of Montgomery, USA), for contribution and their timeless effort in reviewing and providing constructive feedback to improve our manuscript.

THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mark J. Alves	
Preliminary Etymological Notes on Vietnamese Words for Pottery .....	1
Albert Badosa Roldós	
Progressive lenition of Malieng presyllabic material .....	23
Đào Diệp Hương	
Presentation of Vietnamese modal routines in some Vietnamese language textbooks for foreigners at beginner and intermediate levels from a communicative competence approach .....	39
Đặng Thị Hảo Tâm	
Argument model in Nguyễn Huy Tưởng's <i>Vĩnh Biệt Cửu Trùng Đài</i> (Farewell to the Royal Palace) from a cognitive metaphor perspective .....	58
Đoàn Cảnh Tuấn	
Persuasion in the developing process from ancient Greece to the present .....	72
Đỗ Hồng Dương	
The use and maintenance of Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan: Case study on Japanese Vietnamese mixed-parentage children .....	82
Dương Xuân Quang	
Syntactic Semantics and Pragmatic Semantics .....	99
Mitsuaki Endo	
Geolinguistic Approaches that Display and Interpret Varieties Across Space and Time .....	110
Hoàng Anh Thi	
Japanese cultural concept of "wakimae" and its Vietnamese equivalents .....	119
Hoàng Thị Yến, Võ Thị Minh Hà, & Lâm Thị Hòa Bình	
Grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers .....	136
Lê Thị Thu Hoài	
Semantic Extension of Basic Color Terms in Vietnamese .....	158
Nguyễn Đình Việt & Huỳnh Thị Hồng Hạnh	
Studying the Conceptual Domain of Utensils in Vietnamese through the Object Image Schemas .....	176
Nguyễn Hồng Côn & Đặng Thị Trang Nhung	
The Causative Semantics of Verbs of Body Parts Movement in Vietnamese .....	187

Nguyễn Ngọc Bình	
Structure of Thai rice expressions .....	211
Nguyễn Văn Hiệp	
Functional Discourse Grammar and application for describing Vietnamese syntax .....	229
Trần Kim Phượng	
LẠI 'come/again' in Vietnamese from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic perspectives .....	251
Trần Thị Hồng Hạnh	
A contribution to the discussion on kinship terms in Vietnamese .....	270
Trịnh Cẩm Lan	
Theoretical Background for the Compilation of Dialect Dictionaries in Vietnam .....	290
Trương Nhật Vinh	
Explanation of the Name "Bà Đanh" Pagoda .....	311
Võ Thị Minh Hà	
The head of noun phrase in the Vietnamese language: From the viewpoint of linguists of the Vietnamese language .....	322
Vũ Đức Nghiệu	
Do so-called classifiers in Vietnamese categorize nouns? .....	339
Marc Young	
Experiences in the process of the English translation of a Vietnamese research book: challenges and solutions .....	379





## Preliminary Etymological Notes on Vietnamese Words for Pottery

Mark J. Alves  
(Montgomery College, USA)

**Abstract:** This is an etymological study of Vietnamese words for pottery, with notes on related words for ceramic production. Over 60 monosyllabic words have been assembled, and of these, fewer than half are loanwords or words with undetermined regional sources. Over half are either native Viet-Muong words or words without identifiable outside sources, and thus possible lexical innovations in Vietnamese. I explored relative chronologies of the words based on (a) historical phonological features, (b) historical texts, and (c) archaeohistorical information. While pottery has a several-thousand-year history in the region, besides a Proto-Vietic word *vung* ‘lid of a pot’, the earliest period to which the almost all the words can be safely dated is the early 1st millennium CE. The several early Chinese loanwords related to ceramic production (e.g., *lò* ‘kiln’ and *thó* ‘potter’s clay’) highlight the influence of Chinese ceramic production practices from the Han Dynasty onward. However, the two dozen words of potential native Vietnamese origin may be related to the growth of ceramic production in Vietnam in the 2nd millennium. Many questions remain about the histories of these words, which will require attention from Hán-Nôm researchers, archaeologists and ethnohistorians specializing in Vietnamese ceramics.

**Key words:** etymology, Vietnamese, Southeast Asia, semantic domain, ceramics

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Pottery production in northern Vietnam has a history of several thousand years back to the later part of the Hoabinhian era, followed by a period of Sino-Vietnamese style pottery in the 1st millennium, and a tradition of high-quality ceramics in the past several centuries. Northern Vietnam is the location of centers of pottery production, such as Bát Tràng, Phù Lãng, and Thổ Hà. Correspondingly, Vietnamese has a rich vocabulary in the cultural domain of ceramics. In a study of vocabulary in the field of pottery making in Thổ Hà, Nguyễn Văn An (2010) presents a large lexical system of tools, personnel, materials, products, prices, and decorative motifs. Of the 320 words in that study, 39 percent (125 words, both monosyllabic words and lexical compounds) are pottery vessels and implements.

The goal of this study is to present hypotheses of etymological origins of Vietnamese words for pottery (earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain). This is not a

---

ALVES, Mark J. 2023. Preliminary Etymological Notes on Vietnamese Words for Pottery. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151351>

<sup>1</sup> I must thank Nguyễn Thị Thủy at the Institute of Archaeology in Hanoi for helping me locate Vietnamese-language archaeology publications on ceramics.

conclusive statement about them, and I hope other researchers in various disciplines will check the data to increase understanding of the historical linguistic details.

I have assembled over 60 monosyllabic words for vessels (almost all ceramic, but some words that are sometimes made of non-ceramic materials, such as metal, wood, glass, etc.), and several more related to ceramics (e.g., *thó* ‘potter’s clay’, *lò* ‘kiln’, etc.). Of the 50+ terms for ceramic vessels, about two dozen are probable loanwords, several are Proto-Viet-Muong etyma, and over two dozen other words have no known origin outside of Vietnamese, and so are potentially native lexical innovations. Of the loanwords, 19 are from Chinese (nine Chinese loanwords, eight Sino-Vietnamese character readings, and two later-era loanwords), several are regional words of unknown origins found in multiple language groups (Austroasiatic, Tai, and Chamic), a few are French loanwords, and there is one early Tai loanword. This range of etymological origins reflects past trade and sociocultural contact with neighboring ethnolinguistic groups with respect to ceramics.

Regarding the chronology of the word origins in this study, only hypotheses of general timing can be made. The only word in the list that can be most likely connected to the BCE period is *vung* ‘lid for a pot’ from Proto-Vietic \*k.puəŋ.<sup>2</sup> The Vietnamese word *ché* ‘jar’ is a widespread Austroasiatic word, and it has a tone suggesting a pre-tonogenesis timing, such that it can be connected to the 1st millennium CE, but it could date to an earlier period. This is also the case for *đôi* ‘bowl’ from Tai (Proto-Tai \*thuai<sup>C</sup>), as the tone and vowel suggest a 1st millennium borrowing, if not earlier. But otherwise, the vast majority of words in this study date to the Common Era.

Both lexical and archaeohistorical data show that the influence of Chinese ceramic-production practices in Vietnam spans the 1st to 2nd millennia, including both ceramic items and manufacturing techniques. In some cases, it is not possible to determine dates of Vietnamese words which lack comparable word forms in other languages (e.g., *chóe* ‘ornamental jar’, *kiệu* ‘large jar’, *thông* ‘elongated earthenware vase’, etc.). One possibility is that they date to the 2nd millennium during the expansion of ceramic practices. The large number of Vietnamese words with no identifiable external sources highlights lexical innovation in this semantic domain, and this large quantity of terms can be hypothesized to be related to innovations in this artisanal cultural domain.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Proto-Vietic reconstructions in this article are based on the system of Ferlus’s 2007 reconstructions, located in the SEALANG Mon-Khmer Etymological Dictionary, but I provide my own somewhat modified reconstructions based on additional comparative Vietic data.

The next sections present (a) an ethnohistorical linguistic overview with respect to types of pottery, (b) the methods of lexical data-gathering and analysis for this study, (c) a summary of the categories of those words' etymological sources, and (d) concluding thoughts on the implications of the data and suggestions for future queries.

## 2. History

This paper is firstly a historical linguistic study, so it is focused on analysis of lexical, phonological, and semantic data. However, a brief overview of relevant archaeohistorical information is necessary to provide historical linguistic context. The history of ceramic production in Vietnam is long and complex, so this is necessarily a highly simplified description. I have made efforts to present broadly accepted ideas in current archaeohistorical literature.

The ethnohistory of mainland Southeast Asia involves multiple waves of ethnolinguistic groups, with varying degrees of trade, sociocultural exchange, and language contact. These stages are listed in Table 1. Additional summary and references follow.

Table 1: Timetable of ethnolinguistic groups and pottery practices in mainland northern Vietnam and neighboring areas

<b>Era</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Hoabinhian culture	c. 10,000 BCE to 2000 BCE	Đà Bút culture earthenware production from c. 5000-4000 BCE
Austroasiatic expansion	c. 2000 BCE	Spread of Neolithic agriculturalists throughout mainland Southeast Asia, bringing new earthenware tradition
Han Dynasty expansion through the Tang Dynasty	c. 200 BCE to 900 CE	Chinese influence on pottery practices in northern Vietnam of the Đông Sơn culture; Earliest spread of stoneware production in Southeast Asia
Monic, Khmeric, Chamic, and Tibeto-Burman-speaking polities	from the beginning of the 1st mill. to the mid-2nd mill.	Emergence of Indianized kingdoms; Fine earthenware practices; Possible spread of Chinese stoneware practices to Angkor in the late 1st mill. CE
Tai expansion and kingdoms	from early centuries of the 2nd mill.	Further spread of Chinese-influenced kilns and ceramic production
Vietnamese Dynasties	c. 10th to 19th cent.	Advances in local tradition of pottery production and exports
Colonial era	19th to 20th cent.	The arrival of French cultural practices and accoutrements

In the northern extent of Southeast Asia, evidence of earthenware pottery begins in the Hoabinhian period at least 6,000 years before present (Hoàng 2011: 14; Lim

2019). There is no concrete evidence connecting modern languages to Hoabinhian groups, so there is no clear connection between that period and words in modern languages. In contrast, there is growing evidence that the expansion of Neolithic farmers from southern China throughout Southeast Asia around 2000 BCE is associated with Austroasiatic speakers (e.g., Higham 2017). Genetic, dental, and cranial evidence of such groups in contact with Hoabinhian peoples is found in the Mản Bạc site of northern Vietnam (e.g., Matsumura 2011). These groups brought their own tradition of incised and impressed pottery c. 2000 BCE (Rispoli 2007).

As this is the time and region associated with Phùng Nguyên culture (c. 2000 to 1500 BCE), it would appear the Phùng Nguyên culture is part of that larger Austroasiatic expansion, along with their pottery practices. Hà Văn Tấn (1974) described ways in which the images and shapes of Phùng Nguyên pottery can be connected to the later Đông Sơn culture (c. 800 BCE to 200 CE) of northern Vietnam. This hypothetically provides a continuous ethnolinguistic history from Austroasiatic to Vietic to Vietnamese in northern Vietnam (also see Trần Tri Dõi 2019 and Alves 2021 connecting Vietic to the Đông Sơn culture).

Archaeological studies of the Cỗ Loa site show that, by the Han Dynasty (c. 200 BCE to 200 CE), the Đông Sơn culture likely had a state-level society, highly developed metallurgy, and a developed pottery tradition (Kim 2015). At that time, only earthenware pottery was manufactured in the region. The establishment of administrative control of northern Vietnam and settlement of groups from the north was the beginning of Chinese cultural influence on local ceramic production, including stoneware pottery. High-temperature white-glazed fired ceramics from nearly 2,000 years ago have been excavated in northern Vietnam (Southeast Asian Ceramic Society “A guide to Vietnamese ceramics”). Hoàng (2009:261-265) describes a situation in northern Vietnam in which at first, the Đông Sơn pottery tradition and Han-Chinese style of pottery were separate, but in the first several centuries CE, a blended Sino-Vietnamese style emerged.

In the early 1st millennium, Indianized kingdoms emerged (the Monic, Khmeric, Chamic, and later Tibeto-Burman ethnolinguistic groups) to the west and south of northern Vietnam in mainland Southeast Asia. They also had developed earthenware pottery production practices (e.g., Aussavamas 2011 on Dvaravati pottery, Southeast Asian Ceramic Society on pottery in Cambodia, etc.). While the Chinese-style stoneware pottery began in Vietnam in the Han Dynasty, as noted above, stoneware manufacturing in Cambodia dates to the late 1st millennium (Wong 2014: 9). It is not clear whether the people of Angkor developed such techniques themselves or Chinese

shared them directly, but regardless, there is evidence of Chinese pottery in Cambodia in that period (Ibid.). As for the second half of the 1st millennium CE in Vietnam, there are sites of ceramic production of bricks (Trần and Luu 2021) and sites of kilns where archaeologists have excavated numerous vases, bowls, plates, other stoneware vessels, and ceramic lids (Trần and Đặng 1985).

Hoàng (2009: 303-305) describes how, in the Lý (1009-1225) and Trần (1225-1400) dynasties, northern Vietnam pottery practices saw advances. There was an increase in production and variety of styles, as well as the development of celadon (*đồ gốm men ngọc*) and brown-glazed pottery (*gốm hoa nâu*). The middle of the 2nd millennium was a time of growing maritime trade among the various kingdoms, and Vietnamese pottery was a significant part of this trade (Nguyễn Đình Chiến 2019). Vietnamese ceramic production increased substantially in the Lê Dynasty (1428-1524) after the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644 CE) officially banned Chinese overseas trade, the so-called ‘Ming Gap’ (Witkowski 2013: 281). Significant quantities of Vietnamese products were traded throughout the Indonesian-speaking world (Ibid.).

Again, this is a simplistic overview, but it provides ethnohistorical context for understanding the language contact situations and ways in which words for pottery and ceramic production could have been shared, and possible reasons for lexical innovations in Vietnamese.

### 3. Data and methods

The process of data-collection for this study and evaluation of the data involved three stages: (a) assembling lexical data from as many digital sources as possible, (b) establishing probable cognates and etymological origins based on semantic and phonological patterns, and (c) establishing general chronological information based on historical phonology, textual data, and archaeohistorical descriptions. The words for this study have been entered into a spreadsheet with several columns of data and notes (available to readers that contact the author). I have described regional words for pottery among mainland Southeast Asian languages (Alves 2022b), and several of those regional words are also in Vietnamese. The steps in the process are described below.

#### 3.1 Assembling the data

To locate pottery words and words related to ceramics in Vietnamese, I primarily used the online *SELANG Library Vietnamese Dictionary*. The advantage of this resource is that (a) such a digital database is conveniently searched, (b) it contains lexical content from multiple dictionaries, as described on that page, and (c) searching for words in

English or Vietnamese results in all entries containing a search item, not just a single lexical entry. For example, a search for the word “jar” resulted in 16 entries with that word. This source thus provides a full range of both directly translated terms and many other entries in a similar semantic domain.

The search terms for this study include a wide range of words: bowl, plate, cup, jar, jug, pot, bottle, basin, tub, ceramic, earthenware, stoneware, porcelain, kiln, clay, and others. The focus is on vessels that were originally more likely to be ceramic, not of other materials (e.g., wood, metal, stone, glass, plastic, etc.). However, it is not possible to apply this criterion strictly since, in different times and places, one type of vessel may have been made of material other than clay.

Lastly, only monosyllabic words were assembled in the spreadsheet of data and notes for this study. Bisyllabic compounds necessarily contain separate etyma, which complicates claims about their etymological origins.

### 3.2 Establishing etymological sources

I then determined possible etymological sources for the words. I checked digital dictionaries of other Southeast Asian languages, lexical databases of regional language families, and proto-language reconstructions, as listed in the section below the references of this article. The primary possible etymological sources are Austroasiatic, Vietic or Viet-Muong, Chinese (Old Chinese, Middle Chinese, or later varieties), and French, and secondarily, Tai, Indic, and Malayo-Chamic languages. In many cases, I found no comparable word forms outside Vietnamese. Such words can be considered native Vietnamese lexical innovations until/unless future data shows otherwise. Below are descriptions of the data sources and criteria for determining related forms.

- **Data sources:** From Chinese, there are early loanwords and standard Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary. I have assembled a database of several hundred probable early Chinese loanwords borrowed during the periods of Late Old Chinese and Early Middle Chinese. These were borrowed prior to period of the Sino-Vietnamese readings of Chinese characters connected to Late Middle Chinese pronunciations. Vietnamese words of Late Middle Chinese origin are found in Sino-Vietnamese dictionaries. For Austroasiatic words, the primary source is SEALANG’s *Mon-Khmer Etymological Dictionary* (along with the related but separate *Munda Etymological Dictionary*), with many thousands of words from over 100 languages and proto-language reconstructions of all 13 branches, as well as sub-branches. For Kra-dai languages, there are reconstructions of Proto-Tai (Li 1977 and Pittayaporn 2009), Proto-Hlai (Norquest 2010), Proto-Kam-Sui (Thurgood 1988), and Proto-Kra

(Ostapirat 2000), and other wordlists of Kra-dai languages. For Austronesian, the *Austronesian Comparative Dictionary* has a massive quantity of comparative data and reconstructions of various stages and branches, but in general, these are not related to those in Vietnamese or mainland Southeast Asian languages, except for a few cognates in Malayo-Chamic. For Chamic, I checked Thurgood's Proto-Chamic (Thurgood 1999) and other lexical resources of Malayic and Chamic languages. For Tibeto-Burman, there is the online *Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary*. Finally, I checked digital dictionaries of modern Khmer, Old Khmer, Mon, Thai, Lao, Shan, Burmese and other languages of Southeast Asia in the SEALANG site.

- **Criteria for identifying related forms:** The criteria for selecting related words include semantic and phonological correspondences and general historical linguistic matters (phonology, semantics, etymology, and language contact) in the region. In some cases, the semantic correspondences are direct (e.g., Vietnamese *ché* 'jar' also means 'jar' regularly in many other Austroasiatic languages), while in other cases, the semantics of words have varied (e.g., Vietnamese *ang* 'crock, earthen saucer, basin, tureen' from Chinese 盎 *àng* 'dish, bowl pot', Sino-Vietnamese *áng*). Semantic variation for pottery terms is natural as the semantics of pottery within cultural systems are complex and change over time. Still, the phonological correspondences must be comparable to increase the certainty of shared etymological origins. In general, in the data I have assembled, the onsets, vowels, and codas are reasonably consistent. Of words borrowed in the early period (i.e., the first half of the first millennium CE), tone categories in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Tai are consistent. The details of the identification of all the matters are beyond the scope of this paper, but I have made notes in subsections.
- **Gaps in the data:** Despite the tremendous quantity of data, the claims in this study are constrained by the limits of the data. Lexical documentation, especially from minority languages, is certain to be incomplete. We must keep in mind the aphorism that an absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. Nevertheless, the fact that many of the words in this study can in fact be connected to other languages shows that etymological sources can be identified, and potentially excluded. Thus, when comparable word forms cannot be found in the databases with hundreds of languages and numerous proto-language reconstructions, such lack of evidence is at least informative, and are likely valid instances of the lack of words in other languages in many instances.

### 3.3 Estimating chronologies

To provide chronological information in the spreadsheet, the earliest indications of the words have been identified with general time periods, such as the 1st or 2nd millennium, the 1600s, and so on. The earliest evidence of words is obviously not the precise time of the origins of the words. When words are noted in texts, and even when words are reconstructed to proto-language stages, there is no way to determine how far back a word's history extends. Nevertheless, such dates provide general but still important points of reference to start the process of understanding the chronology of these words.

In this study, chronological information about the words is assessed by (a) historical phonology and the comparative method, (b) status of words as a Proto-Viet-Muong etymon (or earlier stages), (c) textual data, primarily in early Nôm writings and occasionally in Old Khmer textual data, and (d) archaeological and/or historical information, as described in Section 2.

**Considering loanword phonology** to determine chronology can only suggest broad periods and offer relative chronologies. For example, of Chinese loanwords, the early Chinese loanwords are from the first millennium from the Han through Tang Dynasties, while Sino-Vietnamese loanwords are from the early 2nd millennium.

**As for native etyma**, as a working hypothesis, we can consider Proto-Viet-Muong words to have entered usage not later than the 1st millennium CE. Early Chinese loanwords (and Tai loanwords as well) in Vietnamese with the *sắc*, *nặng*, *hỏi*, and *ngã* tones can potentially predate tonogenesis in Viet-Muong, and thus potentially date to the first half of the 1st millennium.

**To find instances of the words in Nôm texts**, I used the website of the *Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation*, which has a *Nôm Lookup Tool* and a database: *Từ Điển Chữ Nôm Dẫn Giải (Nôm Characters with Quotations and Annotations)*. I noted Nôm characters in the database along with approximate dates of citations of Nôm characters in those early texts. These are not always the earliest attestations of those words, and in some cases, no attestations were noted for existing Nôm characters. Therefore, these dates can only be considered tentative notes, and no strong claims of chronology can be made based on these. Regardless, such information can prove that attested words have historical depth. For example, some words do not have evident external origins or cognates in Viet-Muong, but several have attestations in early Nôm texts ranging from the 1400s to the 1800s.

Another important source is the 1651 Vietnamese-Latin-Portuguese dictionary, *Từ Điển Việt-Bồ-La* (I have used to the 1991 publication with Vietnamese translations). This text provides attestations of words nearly five centuries back. In many cases,



attestations of words in that dictionary predate instances in Nôm texts. Also, the SEALANG Old Khmer Dictionary offers approximate years of its texts for related words, as noted in sections below.

Finally, in various cases, I found no data giving chronological perspective. I hope that other researchers can locate instances of these words in historical texts or other relevant historical data to better understand their histories.

#### 4. Overview of etymological sources

The spreadsheet currently has over sixty items: twenty Chinese loanwords of different eras, five non-Chinese regional words (Austroasiatic, Tai, or unknown), three French loanwords, nine Viet-Muong etyma (some possibly from earlier stages in Vietic), and 28 words of no known external origin and thus potential Vietnamese coinages. The various categories and numbers are shown in Table 2. These categories are discussed in following subsections.

Table 2: Numbers of items per etymological origin

<b>Proposed etymological origins</b>	<b>No. of items</b>
Early Chinese loanwords	9
Sino-Vietnamese	8
Later Chinese loanwords	2
Austroasiatic	5
Regional words in Southeast Asia	1
Tai	1
French	3
Vietic	1
Viet-Muong-Cuoi	3
Viet-Muong	6
No known external source	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>67</b>

#### 4.1 Chinese Loanwords

For this study, I consider three layers of Chinese loanwords: (a) early Chinese loanwords from the first millennium, (b) Sino-Vietnamese Chinese character readings from the early 2nd millennium, and (c) later borrowings in the second half of the 2nd millennium.

##### 4.1.1 Early Chinese Loanwords

The etymological category of early Chinese loanwords includes Chinese words borrowed before the establishment of the Sino-Vietnamese Chinese-character pronunciations. This category broadly includes words borrowed from Late Old Chinese

during the Han Dynasty (c. 200 BCE to 200 CE), Early Middle Chinese, and potentially later Middle Chinese through the Tang Dynasty (c. 600s to early 900s), but before Viet-Muong developed tones. Early Chinese loanwords in this cultural domain show language contact regionally in Southeast Asia dating to the early 1st millennium CE, but with the earliest loanwords in northern Vietnam.

There are nine words in this category: six are vessels, and three terms are related to ceramics. These words are indicators of the impact of Chinese cultural contact on ceramic production in northern Vietnam in the early centuries of Sinitic-Vietic contact. Considering archaeological evidence at Cỗ Loa of thousands of Chinese-style roof tiles (Kim 2015: 179-182), the word *ngói* ‘roof tile’ may even date to the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE to 9 CE) (Alves 2016: 287).

Words for pottery objects can be borrowed through trade, which can involve a range of language contact from light to heavy (e.g., via trade versus bilingual communities), while loanwords related to manufacturing (e.g., *lò* ‘kiln/oven’ and *thó* ‘potter’s clay’) are evidence of more intensive language contact. Traditional ceramic production has been described as an “embodied behavior”, learned in a situation of long-term interpersonal interaction and modeling of practices (Lefferts and Cort 2012: 362-363). Thus, in this sort of early Sinitic-Vietic sociocultural contact, we can hypothesize bilingualism and subsequent lexical borrowing. Sharing of Chinese artisanal practices through Sinitic-Vietic bilingualism is also supported by the borrowing of early Chinese loanwords in the domains of architectural elements and household decorations; bedroom and personal objects; garments, jewelry, and grooming; metallurgy and metal implements; among others (Alves 2022a).

These early Chinese loanwords all have later-era Sino-Vietnamese counterparts, instances of lexical doublets. They are distinguished by phonological features of onsets, vowels, codas, and tones, all showing them to be 1st millennium CE loanwords. For example, the words *thó* ‘potter’s clay’, *ngói* ‘roof tile’, *chén* ‘cup/bowl’, and *thống* ‘tub’ all have the *sắc* tone, while their later Sino-Vietnamese counterparts have *hỏi* or *ngã* tones. This is due to the final glottal stop or retention of glottalization in the Chinese words in the early part of the first millennium. The *huyền* tone in *lò* ‘kiln/oven’ and *vò* ‘jar’ is a low-register tone, which is expected in syllables with voiced onsets, while the words’ later counterparts *lô* and *vu* respectively have an upper-register *ngang* tone. An upper-register tone is expected for sonorant onset words in Middle Chinese, \*l and \*w respectively in these cases, in Sino-Vietnamese. Also, for vowels, ‘o’ is found in early Chinese loanwords instead of later Sino-Vietnamese ‘ô’, as in *lò* and *thó*, a recurring pattern in such early Chinese loanwords (Nguyễn Đại Cỗ Việt 2012). There is

insufficient space to explain all the historical phonological details, but the phonological patterns seen in the words in this study are shared by many other early Chinese loanwords in other semantic domains.

The early Chinese loanword *lò* ‘kiln/stove’ is ethnohistorically significant as Chinese-style kilns were important in the spread of new ceramic production techniques throughout Southeast Asia (Hein 2008). The tone and vowel show this word to date to the 1st millennium. Khmer has the word *laa* ‘kiln’, with a vowel comparable to the Vietnamese word, and it is unlike vowels in varieties of Chinese with higher vowels [u] or [o]. It is not impossible that this early Chinese loanword in Vietnamese was shared with Khmer, but more ethnoarchaeological information is needed to support or refute such a scenario.

Other than the terms related to ceramics, the other words specifically for pottery items include a range of types of containers: ‘crock’, ‘cup’, ‘tub’, and ‘jar’. The words *chén* ‘cup’ and *ang* ‘basin’ are attested in several branches of Austroasiatic languages throughout Southeast Asia, as well as in Southwestern Tai, Hlai, and Chamic. Cognates for Vietnamese *chén* ‘cup’ are also found in two dozen Muong dialects (Nguyễn Văn Tài 2005: 192), and that Chinese loanword is attested in Old Khmer texts dating to the 600s. This may be the earliest textually attested Chinese loanwords for pottery in the region.

Table 3: Early Chinese loanwords related to pottery

Việt	Hán-Việt	Gloss	Mường Bi	Chinese (Reconstructions of Schuessler 2009: MC = Middle Chinese, LH = Later Han Chinese, OC = Old Chinese)
lò	lô	kiln, oven	lò	爐 <i>lú</i> ‘stove’, MC *luo, LH *la, OC *râ
thó	thổ	clay for ceramics	NA	土 <i>tǔ</i> ‘earth’, MC thuoB, LH thaB, OC thâ?
ngói	ngõa	tile	ngói	瓦 <i>wǎ</i> ‘roof tile’, MC *ŋwaB, LH *ŋuaiB, OC *ŋrôï?
ang	áng	crock, earthen saucer, basin	ang	盎 <i>àng</i> ‘dish/bowl/pot’, MC *ʔaŋC, LH *ʔaŋC, OC *ʔaŋh
chén	trần	cup, small bowl	chén	盞 <i>zhǎn</i> ‘small cup’, MC *tʂǎnB, LH *tʂɛnB, OC *tʂrên?
chuông	chung	wine cup	NA	盅 <i>zhōng</i> ‘small cup or bowl’, MC tʂuŋ, djuŋ, LH tʂuŋ, djuŋ, OC tʂuŋ, djuŋ
cong	cang	earthenware jug	NA	缸 <i>gāng</i> ‘earthenware jug’, MC NA, LH NA, OC NA
thống	dũng	tub, bath-tub, large porcelain vase	NA	桶 <i>tǒng</i> ‘bucket’, MC *thuŋB, LH *thoŋB, OC *thôn?

vò	vu	jar	wò	盂 yú ‘basin, wide-mouthed pot’, MC *ju, LH *wa, OC *wa
----	----	-----	----	--

#### 4.1.2 Sino-Vietnamese loanwords from Late Middle Chinese

Sino-Vietnamese Chinese character readings are connected to the pronunciation of Late Middle Chinese, which is exemplified by the *Yunjing* / *Vận Kinh* rime tables from 1150 AD. However, when the objects represented by the words came to be used widely in spoken Vietnamese is a separate question and requires other data to determine. I have checked the Nôm Foundation database for early text dates of the words in this study. The 1651 *Từ Điển Việt-Bồ-La* also provides a clear point in time for chronological perspective. The words *bình* ‘vase’, *âu* ‘basin’, and *bát* ‘bowl’ are all listed in the *Từ Điển Việt-Bồ-La*, while *bình* ‘vase’ is also found in the *Quốc Âm Thị Tập* of the 1400s. However, finding the earliest textual evidence will require additional research.

The word *bát* ‘bowl’ is a Sino-Vietnamese reading, but the word has a deeper history in the region, appearing widely among Chinese dialects and many Austroasiatic and Tai languages. The word is from Sanskrit *supatra* and refers to an alms bowl for Buddhist Monks. In Old Khmer texts, which retained the polysyllabic form of the Sanskrit word, it dates to about 1000 CE. It is also found in mid-1st millennium Sui-Tang Dynasty texts in Chinese. Most Muong dialects have a voiceless [p] onset in this word (Nguyễn Văn Tài 2005: 175), so the word was spread in Viet-Muong before changes in Vietnamese onset voicing.

I am tentatively marking *ly* ‘glass’, *phạn* ‘rice basin’ and *tiểu* ‘small earthenware coffin’ as Middle Chinese loanwords since the phonetic forms are precisely those of the Sino-Vietnamese character readings, and the words they represent share semantic features. The word *ly* ‘glass cup’ is, of course, made of glass, which is the original meaning of the word in Chinese; *phạn* means ‘rice basin’, but in Chinese, it means ‘rice’; and *tiểu* means ‘a small coffin’, while in Chinese, the word means ‘small’. These are reasonable instances of semantic extension, but I cannot locate ethnohistorical information to check them or to determine when the semantic developments occurred.

Table 4: Pottery words with Late Middle Chinese pronunciations

Sino-Viet	Gloss	Mường Bi	Chinese
âu	basin; tureen	NA	甌 ōu ‘bowl or drinking vessel’
bát	eating bowl	pát	鉢 bō ‘alms bowl’ (originally, Sanskrit <i>supatra</i> )
bình	vase, pot	bình	瓶 píng ‘vase, pitcher, jar’
bồn	vase, basin, washbasin	pòn	盆 péng ‘basin, tub, pot, bowl’

liễn	pot, rice or soup container; porcelain jar	NA	璣 liễn ‘vessel used to hold grain offerings’
<b>Tentative</b>			
ly	glass cup	NA	璃 lí ‘glass (substance)’
phan	rice basin	NA	飯 fàn ‘cooked rice; food; meal’
tiểu	small earthenware coffin (used in second burial)	tiểu	小 xiǎo ‘small, tiny, insignificant’

### 4.1.3 Later Chinese loanwords

There are two words in this category: *đĩa* ‘plate’ and *caolanh* ‘kaolin clay’ (the only bisyllabic word I include in this study as the word is semantically unanalyzable and thus not a compound).

The word *đĩa* ‘plate’ is neither a Sino-Vietnamese character reading nor an early Chinese loanword. The Chinese character 碟 *dié* ‘small dish, plate’ is a possible source, but this Chinese word is not attested in Chinese texts until the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644 CE), precisely during the banned Chinese overseas traded noted in Section 2. The word is listed in the *Từ Điển Việt-Bồ-La* (1991: 88), so it dates back at least to the early 1600s. It is a *nhập thanh / rusheng* word, meaning it originally had a final stop (like the [p] in the Cantonese pronunciation *dip*<sup>6</sup>), so hypothetically, the Vietnamese form without a final stop may have been borrowed from a Mandarin dialect. Another possible source is another Chinese dialect with a comparable pronunciation, similar to the Taiwanese compound *tih-á* 碟仔 ‘small saucer’; indeed, this bisyllabic pronunciation matches the Vietnamese glottalized *ngã* tone and vowel diphthong (though Taiwanese also has a pronunciation of this character *tiáp* in other bisyllabic compounds). It could be from another variety of Hokkien among communities in Vietnam, but again, this would have to have happened before 1651.

The word *caolanh* ‘kaolin (fine, white clay used in making porcelain)’ is ultimately from Chinese 高嶺 *gāolǐng* ‘a type of clay (from the name of a town in Jingdezhen China)’, but it has been speculated to be a loanword from French *kaolin* (Đặng Thái Minh 2011: 79). The Sino-Vietnamese character reading for 嶺 *lǐng* has a different tone: *lãnh*. Thus, it does appear to be a Chinese loanword possibly via French in the colonial era, unless Nôm texts with the word *cao lãnh* (instead of *lanh*) can show it was borrowed earlier.

### 4.2 Regional words of uncertain origin

Several regional pottery words are found in Vietnamese, other Austroasiatic languages, and/or Tai languages, but are not from Chinese. The Vietnamese word *đọi* ‘bowl’ is

most likely from Tai, as explained below. Otherwise, there is insufficient data to determine the source languages of the words.

Again, the hypotheses must be considered tentative as data can have gaps, and we must be careful when making claims based on limited evidence. Nevertheless, a few Vietnamese words appear to be shared specifically with Khmer and not other languages: *thạp* ‘bronze jar’, *khạp* ‘jar’, and the phonological form of *lò* ‘kiln/stove’ (Note: Khmer also has the word *ʔaŋ ləv* [‘v’ realized as [w]] ‘a kind of Chinese stove made of clay’, also in Lao and Thai, in which *ləv* has the same Chinese source as Khmer *laa* ‘kiln’, Vietnamese *lò*. However, *ləv* has a different vowel, and the word *ʔaŋ ləv* has two syllables, so it appears to be a later-stage Chinese loan in those three languages). Table 5 presents the items, and below it are additional notes and discussion.

Table 5: Regional words for ceramic vessels

Việt	Gloss	Other languages
cốc	mug, glass, cup	Austroasiatic (Monic, Khmeric, Palaungic, and Vietic); various Tai and Hlai languages
ché	small jar	Austroasiatic (Bahnaric, Katuic, Khmeric, Monic, and Vietic); Chamic (Cham)
trã	cooking-pot, deep, wide pan	Austroasiatic (Khmer, Bahnaric, Vietic)
đôi	bowl	Kradai (Proto-Tai, Kam-Sui); Austroasiatic (Bahnaric, Khmuic, Monic, Palaungic, Pearic, Vietic)
lọ	vase, flask, bottle, jar	Thai, Lao
khạp	jar, bottle of wine	Khmer
thạp	cylindrical jar to contain water or rice	Khmer

- **cốc ‘mug, glass, cup’ (Nôm – multiple characters located):** Comparable forms (e.g., [kok]) are in four Austroasiatic branches across a wide geographic range and languages in both the Tai and Hlai branches of Kradai. For such a wide territory, it might have a long history, but I have found no textual data to clarify its chronology.
- **ché ‘small jar’ (Nôm 埴):** Cognates of the word *ché* ‘jar’ are found in five branches of Austroasiatic in mainland Southeast Asian Austroasiatic. In Viet-Muong, it is found in over two dozen Muong dialects (Nguyễn Văn Tài 2005: 192). I have found no attestations of this in Tai or Sino-Tibetan languages. The one exception is Cham *čaiḥ* ‘jarre, pot’, which could be a loanword from Bahnaric (*ceh* in several languages) or Katuic (Proto-Katuic \**ceh*, \**ceɛʔ*). The Vietnamese *sắc* tone and the corresponding final glottal stop of the cognates among some Austroasiatic languages suggests it could date back to the 1st millennium CE, if not earlier.

- **đoi ‘bowl’ (Nôm 碟)**: This word is found in Nôm texts at least back to the 1700s. Mường Bi has the form *tɔi*, and Nguồn Cổ Liêm has *tɔj*<sup>4</sup>, both with a voiceless onset [t], suggesting a deeper history in Viet-Muong. Arem has the form *tuəy*, and Rục has *tuɔj*, but I cannot rule out these being more recent Lao loans (Lao *tʰua:y* ‘bowl’), considering the diphthongs. This word form is also attested in the Kam-Sui branch of the Kra-dai language family, demonstrating that this word most likely predates the spread of Tai languages into Southeast Asia, so in Viet-Muong, the source may be Proto-Tai *\*thuai*<sup>C</sup>. It was borrowed early enough in northern Vietic to have shifted from *\*u* to Vietnamese ‘o’ /ɔ/ (as noted in Section 4.1.1 on early Chinese loanwords). Also, the *nặng* tone matches the C tone of Tai. Regarding the aspirated onset of Proto-Tai versus the unaspirated forms in Vietic, there are many Kra-dai languages in which this form also has unaspirated [t].
- **lọ ‘vase, flask, bottle, jar’ (Nôm 甌)**: Comparable words for this item include Thai *lǎo* ‘jar’ and Lao *lǎo*: ‘glass jar’, and in Austroasiatic, I can find only this form in one Palaungic language (Danaw *lo*<sup>1</sup> ‘jar, waterpot’). I cannot find this word form in other Tai languages, and it has not been reconstructed in Tai. Still, the Vietnamese *nặng* tone and vowel ‘o’ are both reasonable matches for those sounds in Tai, making it a potential loan into Vietnamese (and potentially Danaw). However, there is not enough information to determine the direction of borrowing.
- **khạp ‘jar, bottle of wine’ (Nôm 榼)**: I cannot find it in Muong. Khmer has a comparable form *kʰap* ‘jar’, but I find this in no other languages in the data. As it is only in Vietnamese and Khmer, it could represent a past Vietnamese-Khmer trade route. However, which language innovated it and when it was borrowed cannot yet be determined.
- **thạp ‘cylindrical jar to contain water or rice’ (Nôm 塔)**: For this form, Mường Bi has *thap*, and Khmer has *daap* ‘bottle, jar, pitcher, flask’. The Muong form is clearly connected to the Vietnamese word, but whether it is a Viet-Muong word or a later loan from Vietnamese cannot be determined. As for the Khmer form, the phonological and semantic similarities are of mixed quality (e.g., the voiced unaspirated onset), and it is possible that these are not related. If they are related, being in only Vietnamese and Khmer suggests intergroup trade, like the case of *khạp* ‘jar’.
- **trũ ‘cooking-pot, deep, wide pan’**: The Khmer form *kleah* ‘pottery cooking vessel’ and Proto-Bahnaric *\*glah* ‘cooking pot’ have good phonological correspondences with the Vietnamese word of the onset, vowel, tone, and semantics. The only other Vietic language with a comparable form is the Rục language of the Chứt group: *kle*<sup>1</sup>

‘pot (for cooking rice)’, but it lacks evidence of the tone. I have found record of this in Beháine’s 1773 Vietnamese dictionary, but the Vietnamese tone is evidence of a 1st millennium spread of the word. This could be yet another instance of a Vietnamese-Khmer trade route, but in this case, it spread into Bahnaric. What the ultimate language source is of the word cannot be determined.

### 4.3 French Loanwords

The items in this category are generally not made with ceramic materials (i.e., clay), but as these items are part of the semantic domain of containers, I provide them for completeness. The potential French loanwords were listed in the works of Barker (1969) and Scholvin and Meinschaefer (2018). For *bô* ‘chamber pot’, there is a strong semantic correspondence; *ca-men* ‘meal container’ has a clear phonological correspondence (the other bisyllabic, semantically unanalyzeable loanword in this study); and *tách* ‘cup’ is specifically associated with a European-style cup. While I have no specific textual data, we can expect these to have been borrowed at various times from the second half of the 19th century into the 20th century.

Table 6: French loanwords for vessels

Viet	Gloss	French
bô, pô	chamber pot, bedpan	pot de chambre ‘chamber pot’
ca-men, cà mèn	meal container (metal)	gamelle ‘bowl’
tách	cup	tasse ‘cup’

### 4.4 Viet-Muong Words

This category includes words that are of native origin, either Viet-Muong or an earlier stage in Vietic, such as Viet-Muong-Cuoi or Proto-Vietic (see Sidwell and Alves 2021 on a recent view of Vietic phylogenetics). Nôm texts do not have histories old enough to date these words to the 1st millennium, and available databases show textual attestations of these words only as far back as the 1400s. However, the related Muong words have phonological features showing they are not recent borrowings from Vietnamese, but rather are from an earlier common stage.

In Table 7, some phonological features showing historical depth include a Muong [p] onset for Vietnamese ‘v’ in *vai* ‘earthenware jar’, the [kh] onset versus Vietnamese ‘s’ in *sú* ‘porcelain’, and the final [-l] versus the off-glide [j] in *nôi* ‘pot’. Hypothetically, these could be words that have been in use in Viet-Muong languages at least since the 1st millennium CE, if not earlier. The word *vung* ‘lid of a pot’ has been reconstructed to the Proto-Vietic level with a presyllable. While lids can be made of materials other



than clay, this word still could have been used for a pottery lid in the BCE era (though I have not seen archaeological studies specifically noting ceramic lids).

In the data, I have included the words *sét* ‘clay’, *nung* ‘to bake/cook’, and *sành* ‘glazed terra cotta’, which are not vessels but are in the cultural domain of ceramic production. *Sét* ‘clay’ is the native counterpart to the early Chinese loanword *thó* ‘potter’s clay’, noted in Section 4.1.1. I have found no cognates for these words in other Austroasiatic languages. While *sành* ‘glazed terra cotta’ must have developed after the arrival of Chinese-style stoneware manufacturing, the words *sét* ‘clay’ and *nung* ‘to bake/cook’ (the latter with a hypothesized Viet-Muong-Cuoi reconstruction) hypothetically could have been in use before the Han expansion into northern Vietnam.

Table 7: Viet-Muong words related to pottery

Việt	Gloss	Mường Bi	Notes
nung	cook/heat	đung	Viet-Muong-Cuoi *đũŋ
sét	clay	khét	--
sành	glazed terra cotta, stoneware	rành	--
ấm	kettle, cauldron, pot	ấm	Cuoi Thai Hoa ʔăm <sup>2</sup> ɿiew <sup>32</sup> ‘teapot, kettle’
chum	water jar, pot	chum	Cuoi Thai Hoa cùm <sup>32</sup>
nồi	pot, cauldron	nồi	--
sứ	porcelain, chinaware	khừ	--
vại	cylindrical earthenware jar (for rice, water)	pại	--
vung	lid of a pot	pung	Vietic *k.puəŋ

#### 4.5 Words of Uncertain origin

The remaining words in the spreadsheet (see Table 8) are words for which I cannot locate any external etymological sources. While several of the words are seen in Mường Bi, they are so similar to the Vietnamese forms, including untypical Muong features (e.g., voiced stop onsets, the same tone category as in Vietnamese, etc.), that they are possibly recent loanwords from Vietnamese. For some of the words, the textual attestations date back to the 1400s. However, for most, I can find no early textual attestations. Again, the years indicated in the column with dates attested in Nôm texts are very tentative, and I hope other specialists will check these and find more complete information.

I have found a few instances of likely Vietnamese loanwords in local Tai languages. Comparable words for *chậu* ‘basin, pot’ are found in Red Tai and Tai of Ha Giang. A word form like Vietnamese *chai* ‘bottle’ is seen in Nung. For Vietnamese

*chén* ‘cup, bowl, dish’, the counterparts in Tai languages outside Vietnam tend to have a form with the vowel [a], while inside Vietnam, they tend to have [ɛ], like the Vietnamese form, a clear early Chinese loanword, as discussed in Section 4.1.1. There is no evidence that the minority languages are the sources of these words in Vietnamese, but rather that they have borrowed Vietnamese words, as is the case for many other minority languages in Vietnam.

The words *tô* ‘large bowl’ and *tộ* ‘bowl, basin’ are listed in this section, but both have complications. I originally considered *tộ* ‘bowl, basin’ to be related similar phonological forms in Thai, Lao, and Khmer, but the words in those languages mean ‘jar’, so the semantics are too different to justify a connection. As for *tô* ‘large bowl’, I originally speculated that it might be connected to Chinese 陶 *táo* ‘pottery’, Sino-Vietnamese *đào*, but the semantics and phonological features are too different from expected early Chinese loanwords. Indeed, both syllables have similar segments, and even have somewhat similar semantics. This creates overall uncertainty, so until other clarifying data emerges, the safest hypothesis is that these are Vietnamese lexical innovations with chance partial similarity with words in other languages.

Table 8: Pottery words without apparent external etymological sources

Việt	Gloss	Mường Bi	Dates in Nôm texts
chĩnh	jar (to store rice, salt...)	chĩnh	1400s
niêu	earthenware pot (used to cook rice, etc)	niêu	1500s
chậu	basin, pot	chậu (< Viet?)	1500s
be	vial, small wine bottle	NA	1600s
gốm	pottery, earthenware; potter’s	gốm (< Viet?)	1700s
thau	wash basin	thau (< Viet?)	1700s
ghè	earthenware jug	NA	1800s
hông	earthenware pan in a double boiler	NA	1800s
chai	bottle	chai (< Viet?)	1800s
ca	mug, tankard	NA	NA
chõ	earthenware pan in a double-boiler	NA	NA
chóe	ornamental jar	NA	NA
đôn	porcelain stool	NA	NA
hũ	jar; jarful	NA	NA
kiệu	big jar	NA	NA
lon	earthenware pot; jar (for pounding rice)	lon (< Viet?)	NA
lu	jar	NA	NA
thống	elongated earthen vase	NA	NA

tích	tea-pot, pot	NA	NA
tĩn	jar	NA	NA
vầu	earthenware pan	NA	NA
tô	large bowl	NA	NA
tộ	bowl, basin; bowlful; finger-bowl	NA	NA
men	glaze; inlay with azure blue enamel	NA	NA

Note: As I noted above, in this study, I have tried to focus on ceramic items (i.e., earthenware, stoneware, or porcelain), but some of these may have been made with other materials (e.g., *thau* ‘wash basin’ can be made with metal, *be* ‘vial, wine bottle’ is likely of glass, etc.). I include them regardless to present the total data for consideration.

## 5. Summary

Below are the main findings of this preliminary etymological survey and the main ethnohistorical linguistic implications in this cultural domain.

Most of the words in this study cannot be connected to the period before the Common Era. Only the Proto-Vietic etyma *vung* ‘lid of a pot’ is a Proto-Vietic etyma, while a few others (e.g., *ché* ‘jar’, *đoi* ‘bowl’, etc.) could possibly date to the BC era. Instead, many of the words in this study, whether from Chinese, other Austroasiatic languages, or other languages in the region, specifically date to the 1st millennium. That was a period of growing sociocultural influence of China and of the expansion of multiple centers of sociocultural development elsewhere in Mainland Southeast Asia. Several Vietnamese words are Proto-Viet-Muong etyma and thus also date to before the 2nd millennium, though whether their histories extend to before the Common Era cannot yet be determined.

In the 2nd millennium, there is the layer of Sino-Vietnamese Chinese loanwords / *từ Hán Việt*, but what the earliest textual attestations or historical sources can show about the timing of their spread in daily usage still requires more investigation. As for regional words, there is insufficient data to make claims of chronology of borrowing, though the Tai loan for Vietnamese *đoi* ‘bowl’ may date to the 1st millennium considering its tone (i.e., before the expansion of Southwestern Tai, so only in Vietic, but then again later in other Austroasiatic languages). As for words that are in Vietnamese with no apparent external sources, several are attested in Nôm texts from the 1400s to 1800s, in a period in Vietnam of growth in high-quality ceramic production. It is reasonable to assume that this period of growth in ceramics could have been the

cause of the increased number of lexical innovations in this domain, but the matter is more of an open question.

This data was collected and analyzed largely through linguistic means: the comparative method, historical phonology, and textual attestations. In the end, for many words, I have not found textual attestations, and/or the historical phonological data is not informative, so discovering these words' histories will require more ethnohistorical and/or textual investigation. I referred to archaeological and historical information only in a cursory way. But that data provides some specific periods in which the spread of ceramic practices and trade of ceramics could have occurred.

Again, the analysis here is preliminary, but much more useful ethnohistorical detail could be gained by combining different data sources. This research topic will ideally involve multiple specialists in a cooperative manner, such as specialists in Hán-Nôm texts and archaeologists and ethnologists who specialize in pottery and ceramics in Vietnam and the region.

## References

- Alves, Mark J (2016) Identifying Early Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary via linguistic, historical, archaeological, and ethnological data. *Bulletin of Chinese Linguistics* 9: 264-295. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2405478X-00902007>
- Alves, Mark J (2021) The Đông Sơn Speech Community: Evidence for Vietic. *Crossroads* 19.2: 138-174. <https://doi.org/10.1163/26662523-bja10002>
- Alves, Mark (2022a) Lexical Evidence of the Vietic Household Before and After Language Contact with Sinitic. in *Vietnamese Linguistics: State of the Field*, ed. by Trang Phan, John Phan, and Mark Alves, 15-58. JSEALS Special Publication No. 9. Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/52500>
- Alves, Mark (2022b) Preliminary Etymological Research on Words for Pottery in Mainland Southeast Asian Language History. *Presentation at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistic Society, the University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii*. PowerPoint handout available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16128.10241>. Video lecture <https://www.researchgate.net/deref/https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3D3D388s>
- Aussavamas, Duangkamol (2011) Technology of Dvāravatī pottery: A view from petrographic analysis. *Bulletin of the Indo-Pacific Prehistory Association* 31:4-16. <https://journals.lib.washington.edu/index.php/BIPPA/article/view/12267/11872>
- Barker, Milton (1969) The Phonological Adaptation of French Loanwords in Vietnamese. *Mon-Khmer Studies Journal* 3: 138-147.
- Đặng Thái Minh (2011) *Dictionnaire Vietnamien – français: Les mots vietnamiens d'origine française*. Synergies Pays riverains du Mékong. [https://gerflint.fr/Base/Mekong\\_Dic/mekong\\_dic.html](https://gerflint.fr/Base/Mekong_Dic/mekong_dic.html)
- Hà, Văn Tấn (1974) Từ đồ gốm Phùng Nguyên đến trống đồng [From Phùng Nguyen pottery to bronze drums]. *Khảo Cổ Học (Số Đặc Biệt Trống Đồng)* 13.1 (1974): 39-53.

- Higham, Charles F. W (2017) First farmers in mainland Southeast Asia. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Archaeology* 41 (2017): 13-21. <https://doi.org/10.7152/jipa.v41i0.15014>
- Hoàng, Xuân Chinh (2009) *Các nền văn hóa cổ Việt Nam (Từ thời nguyên thủy đến thế kỷ 19)* [Ancient cultures of Vietnam (from primordial times to the 19th century)]. Văn Hóa Thông Tin Book Publisher.
- Hoàng, Xuân Chinh (2011) *Tiến trình gốm sứ Việt Nam*. Hồng Đức Book Publisher.
- Kim, Nam C (2015) *The Origins of Ancient Vietnam*. Oxford Studies in the Archaeology of Ancient States. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lefferts, Leedom and Louise Allison Cort (2012). Tai Potters across Borders: Tracking Ceramic Technology in Southern Yunnan and Northern Thailand. in *Connecting Empires and States: Selected Papers from the 13th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists*, Vol. 2, ed. by Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz, Andreas Reinecke & Dominik Bonatz, 362-374. NUS Press, National University of Singapore.
- Miksic, John N (2009) Kilns of Southeast Asia. in *Southeast Asian Ceramics: New Light on Old Pottery*, ed. by John Miksic. Singapore: Southeast Asian Ceramic Society, 48-69.
- Li, Fang-Kuei (1977) *A handbook of comparative Tai*. Manoa: University Press of Hawaii.
- Lim, Tse Siang (2019a) Southeast Asian ceramics. *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*, ed. by C. Smith. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1\\_3149-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51726-1_3149-1)
- Matsumura, Hirofumi (2011) Quantitative cranio-morphology at Man Bac. in *Man Bac: The Excavation of a Neolithic Site in Northern Vietnam*, ed. by Marc F. Oxenham, Hirofumi Matsumura, and Nguyen Kim Dung, 21-32. ANU E Press, Australia National University Press. <http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/33693>
- Nguyễn Đại Cổ Việt (2012) Về nguồn gốc của vần O tiếng Việt hiện đại. *Ngôn Ngữ* 8 (2012): 32-45.
- Nguyễn Đình Chiến (2019) *Đồ gốm Đông Nam Á thế kỷ 15*. Bảo tàng Lịch sử Quốc gia. <https://baotanglichsu.vn/vi/Articles/3101/69655/djo-gom-djong-nam-a-the-ky-15.html>
- Nguyễn Văn An (2010) Từ ngữ nghề gốm Thổ Hà Bắc Giang [Vocabulary of pottery Tho Ha Bac Giang]. *Ngôn Ngữ và Đời Sống* 10 (2010): 31-33, 17. <https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/NNDS/article/view/15396/14034>
- Nguyễn, Văn Tài (2005) *Ngữ âm tiếng Mường qua các phương ngôn* [Phonetics of Muong through dialects]. Hà Nội: Nhà xuất bản Từ điển Bách khoa.
- Norquest, Peter. K (2008) *A Phonological Reconstruction of Proto-Hlai*. Dissertation. The University of Arizona.
- Ostapirat, Weera (2000) Proto-Kra. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 23(1): 1-251.
- Pittayaporn, Pittayawat (2009). *The Phonology of Proto-Tai*. Ph.D. Doctoral Dissertation. Cornell University.
- Rhodes, Alexandre de(translated by Thanh Lăng, Hoàng Xuân Việt, Đỗ Quang Chính) (1991 (originally 1651). *Từ điển An Nam - Lusitan - La tinh (Thường gọi là Từ điển Việt - Bồ - La)* [An Annamese-Portuguese-Latin Dictionary]. Viện Khoa học Xã hội tại Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội.
- Rispoli, Fiorella (2007) The Incised & Impressed Pottery Style of Mainland Southeast Asia: Following the Paths of Neolithization. *Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 57, No. 1/4: 235-304. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/29757730>
- Schuessler, Axel (2009) *Minimal Old Chinese and Later Han Chinese: A companion to Grammata Serica Recensa*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press.
- Scholvin, Vera and Judith Meinschaefer (2018) A comprehensive corpus of French loanwords into Vietnamese. Unpublished online. Freie Universität Berlin. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-1023>

- Sidwell, Paul and Mark Alves (2021) The Vietic languages: A phylogenetic analysis. *Journal of Language Relationship*, 19.3: 166-194. [https://www.jolr.ru/files/\(306\)jlr2021-19-3-4\(166-194\).pdf](https://www.jolr.ru/files/(306)jlr2021-19-3-4(166-194).pdf)
- Southeast Asian Ceramic Society (2022) *A guide to Vietnamese ceramics*. Southeast Asian Ceramic Society. <https://www.seaceramic.org.sg/vietnamese-ceramics-4/>
- Thurgood, Graham (1988) Notes on the Reconstruction of Proto-Kam–Sui. In Edmondson, Jerold A.; Solnit, David B. (eds.), *Comparative Kadai: Linguistic Studies Beyond Tai*, 179–218. Summer Institute of Linguistics Publications in Linguistics 86. Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington.
- Thurgood, Graham (1999) *From Ancient Cham to Modern Dialects: Two Thousand Years of Language Contact and Change: With an Appendix of Chamic Reconstructions and Loanwords*. Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Trần Anh Dũng & Đặng Kim Ngọc (1985) Khu lò nung gốm cổ ở Đại Lai (Hà Bắc) [Ancient pottery kilns in Dai Lai (Hebei)]. *Khảo Cổ Học* (1985) 1: 71-79.
- Trần Anh Dũng and Lưu Văn Hùng (2021) Gạch thời đại la thế kỷ (VII - IX) từ hồ G1 đến G3 tại địa điểm vườn hồng số 36 Điện Biên Phủ (Ba Đình, Hà Nội) [Brick of the Dai La era (VII - IX) from pits G1 to G3 at the rose garden site at 36 Dien Bien Phu (Ba Dinh, Hanoi)]. *Khảo Cổ Học* (2021) 1: 74-91.
- Trần Trí Dõi (2019) Ngôn Ngữ Của Cư Dân Văn Hóa Đông Sơn Ở Việt Nam [The language of people of the Dong Son culture in Vietnam]. *Ngôn Ngữ* 8–9 (2019): 66–82.
- Witkowski, Terrence H (2013) Early history and distribution of trade ceramics in Southeast Asia. *Proceedings of the 16th Biennial Conference on Historical Analysis and Research in Marketing*, 276-286. Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Wong, Charmaine (2014) *Reviewing the kilns and stoneware ceramics of Angkor*. Master's thesis. University of Hawai'i, Department of Anthropology. <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/100548>

### Digital Repositories

- Austronesian Comparative Dictionary ([https://www.trussel2.com/ACD/acd-ak\\_a.htm](https://www.trussel2.com/ACD/acd-ak_a.htm))
- Dictionary of Old Khmer (<http://sealang.net/ok/>)
- Nôm Lookup Tool (<http://www.nomfoundation.org/nom-tools/Nom-Lookup-Tool?uiLang=en>)
- SEALANG Library (digital dictionaries of Vietnamese, Thai, Khmer, Mon, Shan, Malay, Burmese, etc.) (<http://www.sealang.net/library/>)
- SEALANG's Mon-Khmer Etymological Dictionary (<http://vietnamtudien.org/hanviet/>)
- Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary (STEDT) (<https://stedt.berkeley.edu/~stedt-cgi/rootcanal.pl>)
- Tự Điển Chữ Nôm Dẫn Giải/Nôm Characters with Quotations and Annotations ([http://www.nomfoundation.org/nom-tools/Tu-Dien-Chu-Nom-Dan\\_Giai?uiLang=en](http://www.nomfoundation.org/nom-tools/Tu-Dien-Chu-Nom-Dan_Giai?uiLang=en))
- Từ Điển Hán Việt Trích Dẫn (<http://vietnamtudien.org/hanviet/>)
- Vietnamese Nôm Preservation Foundation (<http://www.nomfoundation.org/?uiLang=en->)

## **Progressive lenition of Malieng presyllabic material**

Albert Badosa Roldós  
(Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3)

**Abstract:** Today, most Vietic languages still exhibit a sesquisyllabic structure. Moreover, we are able to reconstruct sesquisyllabic structures for Vietic languages that lack them, such as Vietnamese or Muong. However, reconstructing proto-Vietic presyllables is an arduous task due to an advanced loss of presyllabic material and high variation among the Vietic languages. The variation in presyllabic forms in Modern Malieng suggests a volatile phonology of Vietic presyllabic material and calls for more in-depth phonological accounts of Vietic languages if the scientific community is to advance towards a proto-Vietic reconstruction. Using mainly Modern Malieng data from a 2022 fieldwork trip, this preliminary paper evaluates the phenomena that arise when considering the medial consonant spirantisation process in Vietnamese described by Ferlus (1982). The paper then follows to study recent phonological innovations in Malieng affecting its presyllabic system in order to assess the possible phonological phenomena likely to hinder a proto-Vietic presyllabic reconstruction. In order to do that, the 2022 data is put into comparison with the 1991 Malieng available data and other Vietic languages data collected in the 1980s and 1990s by professors Michel Ferlus and Trần Trí Dõi. In the end of this preliminary study, we explore some hints on the nature of the presyllabic material in Modern Malieng. As in-depth and comprehensive phonological analysis of a southern Vietic language are yet to be published, we hypothesise that whilst some presyllables may be remnants of ancient morphology (prefixes or affixes such as the ones found in Maleng Brô by Ferlus 1997), others may just be part of the root.

**Key words:** Malieng, Vietic, presyllables, sesquisyllables, historical phonology

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Introduction to the topic: Vietic presyllables**

Thanks to the exhaustive fieldwork carried out in the 1990s by professor Trần Trí Dõi and professor Michel Ferlus, we can identify a range among Vietic languages from the languages which their roots are the most monosyllabic and the ones which their roots

---

BADOSA ROLDÓS, Albert. 2023. Progressive lenition of Malieng presyllabic material. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151368>

\* Acknowledgements: I would like to thank the Malieng community for hosting me and sharing their language with me, I would also like to thank professors Trần Trí Dõi and Trịnh Cẩm Lan for their exceptional welcome in the Hanoi University of Humanities and Social Sciences and their essential help (and here I would like to include Trần Quang Minh) without which my research fieldwork would have not been possible.

are the most sesquisyllabic in the other end. The table of results can be found in Ferlus (2014), adapted for this paper as follows:

Table 1: Percentage of monosyllabicisation of Vietic languages, adapted from Ferlus 2014

<b>Vietnamese</b>	0% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Mường</b>	0% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Thổ</b>	0% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Toum-Liha</b>	0% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Pong</b>	10% of sesqui-syllabic structures
<b>Thavung</b>	35-40% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Maleng Brô</b>	35-40% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Sách-Rục</b>	35-40% of sesquisyllabic structures
<b>Arem</b>	55-60% of sesquisyllabic structures

We know, then, that ancient sesquisyllables of languages such as Vietnamese or Muong have lost their presyllables and their lexemes have become fully monosyllabic, whereas languages such as Arem and Rục still preserve a vast proportion of sesquisyllabic lexemes (Ferlus 1982:88) (see page 27 for an example of a monosyllabic and a sesquisyllabic cognate).

Malieng is a South-Vietic language with about 1500 speakers spoken in the provinces of Quảng Bình and Hà Tĩnh, Vietnam. In terms of syllabic structure, it is found in a position closer to the languages with a fair amount of sesquisyllabic lexemes, though it seems to have lost some of them over the time. The data collected in a five-month field trip in 2022<sup>1</sup> suggests that a process of presyllabic simplification, if not a process of slow monosyllabicisation, may be currently going on in Malieng.

This hypothetical process may be also accelerated by close and intense contact with Vietnamese, which started inevitably in the 1980s with the sedentarisation of the Malieng ethnic group in a context of vast demographic dominance of the Kinh over the traditionally local ethnic groups in both Quảng Bình and Hà Tĩnh. This contact, attested already in Trần Trí Dõi (1999), has rendered the Malieng fluent in Vietnamese and bilingualized the population in the dominant language.

The process and effects of the loss of presyllables in Vietnamese has been described by Ferlus, but as we will see, there are still some issues to tackle as we are obtaining more data from more phonologically conservative Vietic languages.

Malieng shows a high degree of variation among the production of presyllables, variations within the same speaker and across all villages (which speak a fairly homogeneous Malieng, with no different varieties of the language attested except for

<sup>1</sup> Its outcomes can be found on ELAR: <https://www.elararchive.org/dk0625/>



the Lòm villages in Minh Hoá with a more conservative phonetics but yet to be described).

When trying to provide a detailed phonological account of the Malieng language, some questions arise. Could this variation lead or be leading to the simplification of presyllables? Can we deduce some ancient prefixes or morphology thanks to the current phonological system of presyllables? Given the wide variation range, how do we transcribe the presyllables in Malieng? I.e., what is the phonological underlying form of the presyllables?

At the same time, these questions lead to more generic ones when trying to revise the reconstruction of proto-Vietic, as some phenomena still remain unexplained, as we will explore in this paper. What is the origin of proto-Vietic presyllables? Are there different origins for them? Was there some morphology in proto-Vietic linked to modern presyllables?

Understanding the phonological system of presyllables in Malieng and its evolution may provide some hints on how to reconstruct proto-Vietic presyllables, and maybe even some proto-Vietic morphology.

## 1.2. Hypotheses

We present hereby the hypotheses of this paper:

(1) There are different origins of the presyllables in both Malieng and Vietic languages. Some presyllables have always been part of the lexeme, others were formed by morphological processes.

(2) Studying the variation and behaviour of presyllables in southern Vietic languages may help distinguish the prefixal presyllables from presyllables that are part of the lexeme.

(3) Studying the Malieng language in a diachronic perspective (thanks to the 1991 and 2022 data sets and in-depth phonological accounts of the language) may help understand the evolution of presyllables in Malieng and perhaps expand the results and analysis to other Vietic languages.

In order to evaluate these hypotheses, first we are going to place the Malieng data within the current proto-Vietic reconstructions related to presyllables, that is Ferlus' theory of medial spirantisation (1982). Then, we will use the 1991 Malieng data set, compiled by professor Trần Trí Dõi and professor Michel Ferlus, and the 2022 data set, compiled by the author of the paper with the assistance of professor Trần Trí Dõi and Trần Quang Minh. Other data from other Vietic languages will also be considered when necessary.

As the 2022 data still needs to be properly processed and analysed, we have mainly used fieldwork notes and two targeted elicitation sessions to build up the arguments of this paper. The 1991 data for Malieng, consisting of a 500-item wordlist which has been completely digitised in 2021, and comparative tables of all Vietic languages partially compiled in the 1990s by Ferlus and Dõi both remain unpublished.

## 2. State of the art: Malieng and the Vietnamese medial spirantisation process

In this section we will explain Ferlus' theory (cf. 1982, 1992) of the loss of presyllables in Vietnamese, and see the Malieng-Vietnamese according correspondences that validate the theory. Moreover, we will provide data that points, as Ferlus himself did, to the shortcomings of the theory or unexplained phenomena.

Ferlus' theory is rooted in in the previous work of linguists Maspero (who had the intuition of the existence of presyllabic elements in 1912) and Haudricourt (who suggested the existence of a /r-/ presyllable in 1965:171) (both references quoted in Ferlus 1982).

Haudricourt's analysis, even though representing a crucial step in the historical linguistics research of the Vietic branch, still leaves two unexplained phenomena: the numerous exceptions (almost one in each group) and the tone non-correspondences, both recognised by Ferlus (1982:8).

The origin of the theory is the observation of double correspondences between Vietnamese and the rest of the Vietic languages. This observation was already made by Maspero (1912:13-39, in Ferlus 1982) when only Mường and Vietnamese were known. Maspero observed the following double correspondences:

Table 2: Double correspondences Vietnamese-Mường observed by Maspero in 1912.

Vietnamese ( <i>grapheme</i> )	<i>b</i>	<i>đ</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>k/c/q</i>
Mường	<i>v</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>gi</i>	<i>g/gh</i>
	/p/	/t/	/c/	/k/

One of the two double correspondences in Ferlus 1982 that triggered the study of this phenomenon is the following:

<u>Vietnamese</u>	<u>Mường</u>	<u>Malieng</u>
bú (suck)	pú (breast)	pənú (breast)
vú (breast)		

One other internal example from Vietnamese, also cited in Ferlus 1982, is the semantic pair *giết* ‘kill’ and *chết* ‘die’, the first one to be supposed to have had a causative prefix turned presyllable. As we will see, we will find the same correspondences between Vietnamese and the other Vietic languages other than Mường and Thavung, including Malieng.

Despite these early observations, it was not until 1982 when Michel Ferlus pointed out the historical phonological development that explained the existence of a double correspondence. In this 1982 paper, Ferlus explains how the loss of presyllables in Old Vietnamese affected its initial consonant system development. According to him, the loss of all sesquisyllabic structures, that is, the monosyllabification process due to close contact with Chinese languages, changed some of the medial consonants by spirantising them. Here we understand medials as the initials of the main syllable in a sesquisyllabic structure. In other words, the loss of presyllabic material in Old Vietnamese triggered the spirantisation of the initials of the main syllable (Ferlus 1982:87).

Let’s see an example of a sesquisyllabic-structured word in Malieng and its correspondent in Vietnamese:

<u>Malieng</u>	<u>Vietnamese</u>
uká	gà ‘chicken’

Vietnamese *gà* is a monosyllabic lexeme, whereas its Malieng cognate *uká* is a sesquisyllabic one, formed by the presyllable /u-/ and the main syllable /ká/, where the consonant /k/ would be the medial consonant or, in other words, the initial consonant of the main syllable.

Ferlus used data from Vietnamese, Mường (Khến variety) and Thavung (a Vietic language spoken in Laos). Both Vietnamese and Mường used to be disyllabic languages. According to Ferlus, Vietnamese still was a disyllabic language around a thousand years ago (Ferlus 1982:88). Both languages have completed their monosyllabification process, but in different ways and tempos, whereas Thavung still preserves numerous sesquisyllabic structures.

In the data presented by Ferlus, we observe that the failed correspondences between Vietnamese and Mường can be explained by the presence or absence of a presyllable in Thavung, so the medial consonant spirantisation becomes the (almost) perfect explanation. These newly explained correspondences only occur in a limited number of previously medial consonants of Old Vietnamese, which are the following:

Table 3: Correspondences between proto-Vietic medials and modern Vietnamese former medials, adapted from Ferlus (1982).

Proto-Vietic	Modern Vietnamese former medials (grapheme)
*/p b/	<i>v</i>
*/t d/	<i>d</i>
*/c ʎ/	<i>gi</i>
*/k g/	<i>g/gh</i>
*/s/	<i>r</i>

Ferlus therefore proves the formation of Vietnamese *v*, *d*, *gi*, *g/gh* from occlusives in a medial disyllabic position thanks to the correspondences between the Vietnamese monosyllables with initial *v*, *d*, *gi*, *g/gh* and Thavung sesquisyllables with /p t c k/ in the medial position. Moreover, Vietnamese monosyllables with initial *b*, *đ*, *ch*, *k/c/q* correspond with Thavung monosyllables with initial /p t c k/, as summarised in the following table adapted from Ferlus 1982:88.

Table 4: Correspondences between Vietnamese and Thavung main syllable initials (adapted from Ferlus 1982:88).

Vietnamese	Thavung
Monosyllables with initial <i>v d gi g/gh</i>	Dissyllables with medial /p t c k/
Monosyllables with initial <i>b đ ch k/c/q</i>	Monosyllables with initial /p t c k/

For each correspondence, which Ferlus deduced using data from Modern Vietnamese, Thavung (a Vietic language in Laos and Thailand) and Mường from Khên. See Ferlus 1982 for more information concerning Ferlus' examples, and Ferlus 1992 for complementary information. Hereby, we are going to provide examples from the Malieng language that match these correspondences and validate Ferlus' proto-Vietic reconstruction.

There are some sounds that have not undergone a spirantisation process. Ferlus points out, for instance, the laryngeal occlusive \*/ʔ/, without a written counterpart in *quốc ngữ* (Ferlus 1982:12). Nasals are also not affected. The next 6 sound changes are the only ones for which we have found some examples in Malieng.

### 2.1. \*/p b/ and v

(a) The correspondence Ferlus provides for Vietnamese *v* -Thavung *pɔh<sup>l</sup>* 'to hit' also exists in Malieng, who also say *pɔh<sup>l</sup>* for 'to hit'.

(b) Perhaps a clearer example are the cognates for 'happy, funny': Malieng *tupuj<sup>l</sup>* / *kupuj<sup>l</sup>* and Vietnamese *vui*.

(c) However, most medial /b/ in Malieng correspond to initial /m/ in Vietnamese, such as *kəbanj<sup>1</sup>*, the Malieng cognate of Vietnamese *mǎng* ‘bamboo shoot’ or Malieng *kuboj<sup>1</sup>* and Vietnamese *môi* ‘lips’. Note that this is the correspondence we would expect for initials excluding the presence of presyllables, like cognates such as Malieng *bɔj* and Vietnamese *mói* (or *muói* in Standard Vietnamese) for ‘salt’ demonstrate.

## 2.2. \*/t d/ and d

(a) In Malieng *kəta:w<sup>1</sup>* corresponds to Vietnamese *dao* ‘knife’.

(b) However, this does not occur with Malieng *kətɔw<sup>1</sup>* (‘hurt, to be hurt or sick’), cognate of Vietnamese *đau* ‘to hurt’, in which there is also a vowel difference, nor does it occur with the the Malieng *təta<sup>3</sup>* and Vietnamese *đá* cognates for ‘stone’.

## 2.3. \*/c ɲ/ and gi

We can give two examples of Malieng Vietnamese cognates, for which the tones also correspond:

(a) Malieng *kəcej<sup>3</sup>* and Vietnamese *giáy*

(b) Malieng *kəcuɲ<sup>2</sup>* and Vietnamese *giường*

At the moment, we have not found any exceptions for this correspondence.

## 2.4. \*/k ɣ/ and g/gh

(a) The cognate Ferlus uses to exemplify this proposed reconstruction is also attested in Malieng. Thavung *ckɔɔŋ<sup>2</sup>* and Malieng *ŋkuɲ<sup>2</sup>* both correspond to Vietnamese *gừng* ‘ginger’.

(b) Malieng *ŋka:w<sup>1</sup>* partially corresponds to Vietnamese *gạo* ‘uncooked rice’, as there is no tone correspondence.

(c) A presyllable with a vowel is found in the cognates for ‘hate’, Malieng *təkɛ:t<sup>7</sup>* and Vietnamese *ghét*.

(d) There are, however, exceptions. For instance, the word for ‘sunny’ in Malieng is *kəɣaŋ<sup>3</sup>*, whereas in Vietnamese the form is *nắng*. This example needs further explanation, as in Hòa Bình Mường the cognate is *raŋ<sup>3</sup>*, and *daŋ<sup>3</sup>* in other Mường varieties. Malieng change /r/→/ɣ/ is an innovation from other Vietic languages which retain /r/. Note that this is the correspondence for initials with presyllables out of the equation, as the cognates *da:ʔ<sup>3</sup>* (Malieng) - *nác* (or *nước* in standard Vietnamese) show.

## 2.5. \*/s/ and r

(a) We have only found one example in Malieng for this correspondence in *kaɛaŋ<sup>1</sup>*, cognate to Vietnamese *rang* ‘tooth’. Note that we transcribe the only Malieng sibilant as being palatal /ç/.

(b) However, the Malieng cognate for ‘centipede’ *kəcip*<sup>3</sup> does not correspond to Vietnamese *tít*. Another exception is the word for ‘next, following’, *kəɛɾw*<sup>1</sup> in Malieng and *sau* in Vietnamese.

(c) A counterexample is found in the cognates for ‘wax’, Malieng *kəya:p*<sup>7</sup> and Vietnamese *sáp*. Note the change /r/ > /y/ occurred in modern Malieng (except for the Lòm varieties in Minh Hoá).

## 2.6. \*/č ʃ/ and gi

We have not found any correspondences following this reconstruction of the presumed post-palatals (believed to be represented by /s/ in Thavung).

The Malieng data confirm the sound correspondences explaining Old Vietnamese medial consonant spirantisation, but they also show a non-neglectable amount of exceptions. Ferlus himself admitted two unexplained phenomena in his paper (1982:89): (1) the tone correspondences are not regular, meaning there are other elements into play. One of these elements may be the phonation type, which Vietnamese lacks but both Thavung and Malieng have as a contrast between tense and lax vowels; (2) there are exceptions in most of the correspondences that remain to be explained.

The exceptions could be explained if further research on Vietic presyllables was conducted, following the hypothesis suggested in section 2, that some presyllables would have a morphological nature whereas others would be part of the lexeme. One could also think about different processes of presyllabic material loss.

When the same problems Ferlus detected in his 1982 study arise when using Malieng cognates alongside Thavung cognates to explain the evolution of medial consonants in Vietnamese, it therefore seems that doing an in-depth phonological study of a particular Vietic presyllabic system should be the next logical step if we want to untangle the reconstruction of presyllables and initial consonants in proto-vietic, as well as the particular tonal developments, especially the divide between northern and southern Vietic languages, still with unanswered tonal irregular correspondences.

## 3. Primary evidence for a Malieng morphology explaining non-lexeme sesquisyllabic structures

### 3.1. Traces of the Proto-Vietic \*-rn- infix

Described already in Ferlus (1982, 1997), \*-rn- is a nominalising infix, which in Malieng takes the form /-ən-/:

Proto-Vietic \*-rn- → Modern Malieng /-ən-/

In Malieng there are two attested examples, already noticed by Ferlus (1997) for other Maleng languages:

- a) kɔ<sup>3</sup> ‘to be, to live, to have’ → kənɔ<sup>3</sup> ‘house’
- b) pu<sup>3</sup> ‘suck’ → pənu<sup>3</sup> ‘breast’

In modern Malieng, the infix takes the form /-ən-/, with the vowel occupying the vocalic position of the presyllable and the nasal consonant occupying the onset consonant position of the main syllable.

Proto-Vietic \*r in consonant clusters has been vocalised into /u/ (see example c) or /a/ (see example d) in Malieng. This double correspondence needs further exploration.

- c) \*rka → uka<sup>3</sup> ‘chicken’
- d) \*krsip → kəsip<sup>7</sup> ‘centipede’

### 3.2. Lexicalisation of compound words into a sesquisyllabic structure

Some lexicalisation of compounds may lead to a reduction of the compound and adaptation into a sesquisyllabic structure. The next table show some lexemes used in compound nouns:

Table 5: Malieng lexemes related to time expressions.

ɣɣk <sup>7</sup>	‘next’, equivalent to Vietnamese <i>mai</i>
nde <sup>1</sup>	‘previous’, equivalent to Vietnamese <i>qua</i>
kwo <sup>1</sup>	‘day’
two <sup>1</sup>	‘part of the day’
ɲwop <sup>7</sup>	‘dark’
pəkiən <sup>2</sup>	‘afternoon-evening’
nɣj <sup>3</sup>	‘this’

The next examples are Malieng compound nouns result from the combination of the elements in Table 5:

- a) kuɣɣk<sup>7</sup> ‘tomorrow’, a result of kwo<sup>1</sup> + ɣɣk<sup>7</sup>
- b) tuɲwop<sup>7</sup>~kuɲwop<sup>7</sup> ‘evening’, a result of two<sup>1</sup> + ɲwop<sup>7</sup> and/or kwo<sup>1</sup> + ɲwop<sup>7</sup> ?
- c) təɣɣk<sup>7</sup> ‘morning’, a result of two<sup>1</sup> + ɣɣk<sup>7</sup> would result in \*tuɣɣk<sup>7</sup> <sup>2</sup>
- d) two<sup>1</sup> nɣj<sup>3</sup> ‘now’

<sup>2</sup> In 1991, Ferlus and Dđi attested the form *cayə:k<sup>7</sup>* for ‘morning’. This form has not been heard in 2022, but in case it was a form in use, it would challenge the composition schemes presented above.

- e) kwo<sup>2</sup> nde<sup>1</sup> ‘yesterday’, note the tone change  
 f) pəkiəŋ<sup>2</sup> nde<sup>1</sup> ‘last evening’

Examples a and b have been lexicalised and reduced, and thus taken a sesquisyllabic structure. Examples b, c, d and f still preserve the structure of two compound nouns. Note that these are all time expressions with identifiable lexemes.

Compare example e to example a, which takes the tone assigned de facto for presyllables<sup>3</sup>. This could be an example of a quasi-syllable as proposed in Samarina (2022), an ancient main syllable in transition of becoming a presyllable. Again, further comparison with other Vietic languages would be of great interest.

### 3.3. Prefixation in modern Malieng

There are very few straight-forward prefixes. One of them is the prefix /kə-/ , in which, in this only example found, forms a semantically-related noun.

- a) təŋ<sup>2</sup> ‘path, road’ → kətəŋ<sup>2</sup> ‘walking stick’

There are most likely more examples of prefixation or fossilised prefixation in the data yet to be transcribed and analysed. Example a was caught by the ear during an informal conversation.

### 3.4. A possible prefix: Malieng /ʔu-/

A possible relationship may be established between the words for ‘hay’ and ‘body hair’ in Malieng, in which the latter could be a derivation of the first one through a prefix /u-/:

- a) sɔ:k<sup>7</sup> ‘hay’ → ʔusɔ:k<sup>7</sup> ‘body hair’

In order to verify this hypothesis, the cognates of these Malieng words should be looked into in other Vietic languages.

---

<sup>3</sup> The no-tone assigned de facto to a presyllable, as perceived by the Malieng, is tone 2 or the falling tone. In informal writing and chatting in Malieng, the speakers tend to write the Vietnamese *huyền* tone, for example, write *cà nó* for *kənɔ<sup>3</sup>* ‘house’.



#### 4. Recent and ongoing changes in the Malieng presyllabic system: problems for a proto-Vietic reconstruction

Let us begin with a clear example of how presyllabic simplification hinders proto-Vietic reconstructions. Going back to the opposition found by Ferlus not only in Malieng but also other Vietic languages of cognates for ‘die’ and ‘kill’. The difference in presyllabic material, seen in 1991 Malieng data as *kace:tʔ* ‘die’ *kice:tʔ* ‘kill’ explains the Modern Vietnamese forms *chết* ‘die’ and *giết* ‘kill’. It also makes an argument for the hypothesis that “kill” was formed by a prefix and a lexeme, whereas ‘die’ was a sole lexeme, explaining why ‘kill’ was spirantised in Vietnamese and ‘kill’ was not. However, in 2022 Modern Malieng there is no difference between the two, as both ‘kill’ and ‘die’ take the form *kace:tʔ*.

Here we present some recent and ongoing phonological changes of Modern Malieng that may account for the previous example and other problematic Vietic cognates. Thus, the next presented ongoing changes may show us how ancient Vietic morphology traces have been vanishing throughout time. All of them are some sort of simplification of the presyllabic system, and it should be highlighted that (4.2) and (4.3) seem not to be attested in other sesquisyllabic Vietic languages, so further in-depth research should be carried out on these other Vietic languages.

##### 4.1. Fortition of presyllabic initial /ɛ-/

Normally, presyllabic initial /ɛ-/ is reduced to initial /k-/ and /t-/. We can illustrate the change as ɛ- → k- / t-. Examples:

- (a) ɛəlej<sup>3</sup> → kəlej<sup>3</sup>, təlej<sup>3</sup> ‘corn’
- (b) ɛəŋaj<sup>3</sup> → kəŋaj<sup>3</sup>, təŋaj<sup>3</sup> ‘far’
- (c) ɛəʔu<sup>1</sup> → kəʔu<sup>1</sup> ‘wasp’

While most of the speakers produce (b) *kəŋaj<sup>3</sup>* or *təŋaj<sup>3</sup>*, *ɛəŋaj<sup>3</sup>* is the common production of two elder men in Rào Tre village (both born in Kè village) who also alternate (a) *ɛəlej<sup>3</sup>* or *təlej<sup>3</sup>* in their idiolect. In 1991, Trần and Ferlus attested *təŋaj<sup>3</sup>* but Ferlus attested *səŋəʔaj<sup>4</sup>* in Thavung the same decade.

Compared to other Maleng languages in Lao, we observe how they still preserve more presyllabic initial /s-/, as the following Maleng Brô examples show (Malieng on the left) and Maleng Brô (on the right):

- (d) na:<sup>3</sup> / səna:<sup>3</sup> ‘crossbow’
- (e) kəyɯ:<sup>2</sup> / səru:<sup>2</sup> ‘deep’

- (f) təpu:j<sup>1</sup> / səpu:j<sup>1</sup> ‘happy, funny’

#### 4.2. Free variation between presyllabic initial /k~t/

The variation /k~t/ is important since we do not have any variation indications in any of the available Vietic data. Given the frequency of variation in Malieng, it suggests that other Vietic languages, at least the neighbouring Vietic presyllabic languages of Quang Binh, could be undergoing the same simplification process. The alternations pose some questions on which form of the presyllable is the oldest and how should we reconstruct them. To the following examples, we should also consider (a,b):

- (a) tupu:j<sup>1</sup>~kupu:j<sup>1</sup> ‘happy, funny’  
 (b) tulu:<sup>3</sup>~kulu:<sup>3</sup> ‘egg’  
 (c) tədu:<sup>3</sup>~kədu:<sup>3</sup> ‘to seat’  
 (d) tuboj<sup>1</sup>~kuboj<sup>1</sup> ‘lips’

Another example could be (e), but as we will see it is a result of a lexicalization of a compound word:

- (e) kuŋwuop<sup>3</sup>~tuŋwop<sup>3</sup> ‘evening’

However, there are the invariable lexemes, with no attested alternations:

- (f) kənac<sup>4</sup> ‘cold’  
 (g) təlu<sup>1</sup> ‘banana flower’

The alternation in a-d could be explained by the high frequency of the variable presyllabic words and the low frequency of the non-variable ones. It could also, however, perhaps hide ancient prefixation processes.

These are not the only variation examples. Some others words also present a high degree of variation, which could be explained by the high frequency of use of these words. Consider the next examples, the first one an addition to the possibilities showed already in (b):

- (h) əŋaj<sup>3</sup> → kəŋaj<sup>3</sup>, təŋaj<sup>3</sup>; ŋa:j<sup>3</sup> ‘far’  
 (i) məɣɣw<sup>4</sup>, ŋɣɣw<sup>4</sup> ‘forest’  
 (j) məlɲen<sup>2</sup>, nɲen<sup>2</sup>, nɲen<sup>2</sup>, lɲen<sup>2</sup> ‘person’

Some experiments have been and are being carried out in order to understand the alternations in Malieng. At the moment, no relevant results have been found. The preference for one form or the other may be related to individual idiolects, traces of old morphology or, less probably because of the lack of internal variation in a highly intermixed population, dialectal characteristics.

### 4.3. Vowel harmony

There are indices of some sort of vowel harmony in Malieng, in which the short, atonal vowel of the presyllable matches with the main vowel of the main syllable. While presyllabic vocalic changes can be pointed out in comparison with other Vietic presyllabic languages, these changes toward a vocalic harmony in which the presyllabic vowel assimilates features from the vowel of the main syllable are not systematic and need further exploration.

Below we present some of the examples that may indicate an ongoing vocalic harmony process in Malieng:

a) The form  $təpu:j^1$  ‘happy, funny’ alternates with the more common forms  $tupu:j^1$ ~ $kupu:j^1$ , which is similarly  $təpu:j^1$  in Sáč and Ruc, which takes the form  $səpu:j^1$  in Maleng Brô.

The option  $təpu:j^1$  has also been heard from very young speakers in the Kè village, indicating it could be a recent change.

b) In 1991 the form  $təko:l^3$  ‘mortar’ was recorded, whereas the form for ‘mortar’ recorded in 2022 is  $tuko:n^3$ .

The 2022 data also contains an example for the change  $/-l/$  to  $/-n/$  in final position. In fact, the 1991 recordings feature an older speaker in his sixties, who still pronounced final  $/-l/$ , and a younger speaker in his thirties who already changed to final  $/-n/$ .

In a video<sup>4</sup> recorded by Samarina in 2013 the only different Malieng language variety is featured. It spoken in the Lòm village, close to the border with Laos and quite

---

<sup>4</sup> The video can be found in the *Vietnam Field-Ling* website, the website of Russian-Vietnamese linguistic expeditions (<http://www.field-ling.net/viet/chut/malieng>), and also in Samarina’s personal Youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqMp6pG4dBI>)

far from the other 5 Malieng villages<sup>5</sup>. Lòm villagers still pronounce final /-l/ and have not changed /r/ for /ɣ/ unlike the Malieng spoken in the other 5 villages has.

Other Vietic languages also show a presyllabic vowel /ə/: Maleng Brô *tʰkɔ:lʰ* and Kha Phong *tʰko:lʰ*?

c) The word for the benjamin or ‘youngest son’ is attested as *kaduc*<sup>7</sup> in 1991 and as *kəduc*<sup>7</sup> or *kuduc*<sup>7</sup> in 2022, indicating a possible change towards a vocalic convergence with the vowel of the main syllable. Ferlus and Dõi also attest *kadu:c*<sup>7</sup> in Rục.

d) In 1991, Ferlus and Dõi attest the form *təbo:j*<sup>3</sup> ‘lips’, collected as *kubo:j*<sup>3</sup> in 2022. In both Sách and Rục it takes the form *cəbo:j*<sup>3</sup>.

Example (d) is also valid for the t and k presyllabic confusion observed in section (2). The next example we provide, (e), found in the 1991 Ferlus and Dõi data, seems to be a counterexample for vocalic harmony.

e) 1991 *kənaj*<sup>3</sup> - 2022 *kunaj*<sup>3</sup> ‘mouse’. While in 1991 the form *kənaj*<sup>3</sup> ‘mouse’ is attested, the 2022 corpus only contains the form *kunaj*<sup>3</sup>, which would represent a change countering the tendency toward vowel harmony. The author has nevertheless never heard the form *kənaj*<sup>3</sup> in the 2022 fieldwork, even from older speakers, for this rather common word.

These ongoing phonological phenomena affecting presyllables in Malieng hinder the aims for a proto-Vietic reconstruction of presyllabic material and turn traces of morphology opaquer.

## 5. Conclusions

This preliminary study on Malieng presyllables has used field data collected in 2022 as its base, which has been enriched by data collected by Ferlus and Dõi in the 1990s, not only for Malieng but also for other Vietic languages. Although the 2022 data still needs to

---

<sup>5</sup> These means that there are two varieties of Malieng, the variety spoken in the Lòm village and the variety spoken in the other 5 villages (Kè, Chuôi, Cáo, Cà Xen, Rào Tre), although more studies need to be carried out. The Malieng people who have been in contact with the Lòm people are aware of these slight differences. They characterise the Lòm variety with the /le/, an emphatic particle they are said to use a lot.

be properly processed and analysed, we have managed to follow the hints to understand the nature of Malieng presyllables.

This preliminary analysis of the Malieng data shows that Malieng presyllables can be a result of the following possibilities:

- (1) They are part of the original lexeme
- (2) They are originated in ancient morphology, arguably no longer productive
- (3) They originate from the lexicalization of compound words, as we have seen with many time expressions

While the first hypothesis has been proven and expanded, more studies still need to be carried out in order to evaluate the 2nd and 3rd hypotheses, which nevertheless this paper show to be the path to follow. Studying the origin of the Malieng presyllables should help us determine the imbalanced correspondences that fail to provide a solid historical-phonological account of the evolution of medials in Vietnamese.

If we can prove the loss of presyllables in Vietnamese and other northern Vietic languages in different temporal phases we may find the answer of why some Vietnamese modern lexemes were not spirantised when they have cognates in southern Vietic languages with presyllabic material.

Whereas two experiments on presyllabic variation have been conducted with the same speaker. The results remain inconclusive and have not been added to this paper, as more elicitation sessions should be run with a higher number of speakers in order to find patterns and more relevant conclusions.

As we know that understanding the phonological evolution of presyllables in Malieng may give us some hints on how to reconstruct Vietic presyllables, we should also insist on the fact that studying the phonation type correspondences in Vietic languages may help with the unexplained tone irregular correspondences. Phonation types (and sometimes also tone correspondences, which may relate to phonation types) have been neglected in proto-Vietic reconstructions and its consideration is vital for good reconstruction proposals. They have also been neglected in this paper (as a proper analysis of the Malieng phonological system is still in hold), and they should be included in all phonological transcriptions of Vietic languages with phonation type.

## References

- Ferlus, M. (1982) 'Spirantisation des obstruantes médiales et formation du système consonantique du vietnamien.' *Cahiers de Linguistique, Asie Orientale* n°11.1: 83-106.
- Ferlus, M. (1992) 'Histoire abrégée de l'évolution des consonnes initiales du vietnamien et du sinovietnamien.' in *Mon-Khmer Studies*, n°20: 111-125.
- Ferlus, M. (1996) 'Langues et peuples viet-muong.' *Mon-Khmer Studies* n°26: 7-28.
- Ferlus, M. (1997) 'Le maleng brô et le vietnamien.' *Mon-Khmer Studies* n°27: 55-66.
- Ferlus, M. (2014) 'Arem, a Vietic Language.' *Mon-Khmer Studies* 43.1:1-15 (ICAAL5 special issue)
- Samarina, I. (2022) *Prosodic Features of May Oral Narrative Texts*. Personal communication in the 10th ICAAL conference (1-3 December 2022).
- Trần Trí Đới (1999) *Nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ các dân tộc thiểu số ở Việt Nam*, NXB ĐHQGHN, 1999, 320 tr; Xb lần thứ hai, 2000, 301 tr.

# **Presentation of Vietnamese modal routines in some Vietnamese language textbooks for foreigners at beginner and intermediate levels from a communicative competence approach**

Đào Diệp Hương  
(PhD student, USSH, Vietnam National University Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This research aims to describe the presentation of modal routines in six Vietnamese language textbooks for foreign learners: four at the beginner level and two at the intermediate level, using a communicative competence approach. The study also compares the presentation of modal routines between elementary- and intermediate-level textbooks. The results show that writers have used two methods—implicit context and explicit context—to present Vietnamese modal routines. These two methods are used to varying degrees depending on the proficiency level of learners. Four elementary-level textbooks only use implicit contexts to present modal routines, while two intermediate-level textbooks used both methods.

**Key words:** modal routines; formulaic competence; communicative competence; Vietnamese language textbooks for foreigners; implicit context; explicit context

## **1. Introduction**

Understanding and proficiently using formulaic language (represented by fixed expressions, including modal routines) is considered by many linguistic researchers to be a crucial component in demonstrating the communicative competence of learners and the productive and receptive knowledge of a target language by non-native speakers. To authenticate and support this statement, it is essential to discuss how to teach Vietnamese modal routines (expressions of formulaic language). The terms “routines” and “modal routines” in English are used as translation equivalents to the terms “quán ngữ” and “quán ngữ tình thái”, respectively in Vietnamese, based on the classification of means of expressing formulaic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007). The teaching of Vietnamese modal routines is exemplified by the way these language units are presented in language textbooks. This presentation is an important part of the teaching process. However, this type of linguistic expression has not received adequate attention in the field of teaching. This type of language unit is somewhat context-sensitive; therefore, the method of presenting it in textbooks is also somewhat different

---

ĐÀO, Diệp Hương. 2023. Presentation of Vietnamese modal routines in some Vietnamese language textbooks for foreigners at beginner and intermediate levels from a communicative competence approach. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151392>

compared to the method of presenting some other linguistic materials. Perhaps these linguistic expressions need to be presented and made to appear in an appropriate context that is easily recognized at a certain learner proficiency level. That is to say, in second / foreign language teaching, the curriculum writer should try to “embed” these formulaic expressions into language teaching materials, putting them in actual communication activities of learners. For this embedding to work, it is necessary to have a specific and scientific method of presentation.

Consequently, this article aims to describe the presentation of Vietnamese modal routines, also known as “*quán ngữ tình thái tiếng Việt*,” in four Vietnamese language textbooks for foreign learners at the beginner level and two Vietnamese language textbooks for foreign learners at the intermediate level using a communicative competence approach to answer two research questions:

- 1) *How are Vietnamese modal routines presented in the examined textbooks?*
- 2) *Are Vietnamese modal routines in the examined textbooks presented differently for different proficiency level?*

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Modals and modal routines

A “*quán ngữ*” routine is a linguistic unit that is primarily studied by lexicographers. Therefore, it is more often found in lexical studies than in grammar books. There are various ways of defining this type of language unit. Based on semantic and structural aspects, Nguyễn Văn Tu (1976) provided a relatively simple definition of routines, stating that routines include units that are now called “*thành ngữ*” (*idioms*) and he calls them “*quán ngữ hình tượng*” (*figurative routines*). Đái Xuân Ninh (1978) also discussed idioms, but he believed that they were the subject of folklore studies, hence he did not delve into their study.

From the functional aspect, Nguyễn Thiện Giáp (1985, p. 101), Đỗ Hữu Châu (1996, p. 74) and Vũ Đức Nghiệu (1990, p. 161) all agree that routines are a “*fixed expression used to hedge, emphasize, or connect...*”.

Besides traditional views, routines are seen as “*discourse signals, discourse devices, discourse markers and gambits*” from the pragmatic approach of Ngô Hữu Hoàng (2002, p. 39 & 64) or as language elements that mark language behaviors in Lê Thị Thùy Vinh’s approach (2017). From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, Đoàn Thị Thu Hà has proposed a new interpretation of Vietnamese routines, emphasizing



that “*the semantic content of routines is mainly inferred from context, associated with the mental space of the parties involved in the communication,*” (2015, p. 33).

Based on the objectives and scope of the study, this article adopted the views on Vietnamese routines of scholars such as Nguyễn Thiện Giáp (1985), Đỗ Hữu Châu (1996), Vũ Đức Nghiệu (1990), and like-minded scholars and limited the research subjects to *routines without a figurative feature*. Therefore, the figurative routines mentioned by Nguyễn Văn Tu (1976) in his studies were not discussed in this research.

Adopting the communicative competence approach after studying and summarizing the viewpoints on routines of various scholars, the researchers proposed the following definition of routines:

+ In terms of form, routines are fixed word combinations that are used repeatedly without figurative meaning.

+ In terms of function, routines are used to hedge, connect, or emphasize a certain message and contribute to demonstrating the communicative competence (specifically, the formulaic competence component) of language learners to a certain extent.

From the point of view of lexicographers, it is widely accepted that modal routines share similarities in form and meaning with word combinations called *routines*. Modal routines also have the following characteristics:

+ In terms of form, modal routines are fixed word combinations that are used repeatedly without figurative meaning.

+ In terms of function, modal routines are used to hedge, connect, or emphasize a certain message.

However, the differences between routines and modal routines as well as the role of modal routines lie in the ability to express the modal meanings of sentences. According to Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2019, p. 90), modal meanings can be

*the state of affair expressed in an utterance as a possibility or reality, as an affirmation or negation, indicating the degree of commitment of the speaker to the truth of what is being said, indicating the speaker's evaluation of the action stated in the sentence, indicating the intention, desire, and purpose of the speaker when making an utterance...*

For example, modal routines such as “*có lẽ, nói trộm bóng vía, kể ra, ngoài ra, hơn nữa...*” (*perhaps, touch wood, besides, moreover, furthermore...*) indicate a speaker’s subjective assessment of an event, activity, or state presented in a sentence. Modal routines such as “*nói trộm bóng vía, nói của đảng tôi, hỏi khi không phải...*” (*touch wood, to be honest, I wonder...*) reflect the subjective opinion of a speaker about the incident stated in the sentence.

Most lexicographers consider routines as intermediate word combinations between *free phrases* and *fixed expressions or fixed phrases* (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 1985; Vũ Đức Nghiệu, 1990; Đỗ Hữu Châu, 1996). The researchers agree with this view of linguists, asserting that the “*structural and meaningful constancy of modal routines is variable.*” That is, initially, routines or modal routines may be free phrases—products of individuals. Nevertheless, over time, when the routines or modal routines become accepted and regularly used by the community, they become the common property of the whole society and “*a readily available unit, with a relatively stable and familiar structure.*” However, because the routines or modal routines are products of society, they will also be transformed according to the laws of movement and development. Therefore, this constancy only lasts for a certain period.

Besides, due to their variability, modal routines can take the form of polysyllabic words or compound words, labeled using different parts of speech. For example, they can be: connective devices such as “*Sau đó..., Vì vậy..., Thế thì...*” (*Then..., Therefore..., Thus...*); adverbs such as “*Đáng lẽ..., Đường như...*” (*should..., seem...*); as well as colloquial expressions such as “*May sao..., Nói thực là..., Bác bỏ quá cho..., Biết đâu đấy...*” (*Luckily..., to be honest..., forgive me ..., who knows...*), which perform different syntactic functions (e.g., serving as a sentence adjunct, sentence introducer, etc.). Notably, routines such as “*May sao..., Nói thực là..., Bác bỏ quá cho..., Biết đâu đấy...*” (*Luckily..., to be honest..., forgive me ..., who knows...*) do not belong to any specific parts of speech, and in terms of form, they are similar to free phrases. Perhaps their stable characteristic is due to the fact that the language community uses them as an established unit with a stable meaning. Thus, modal routines are “combinations” that can take the form of polysyllabic words, compound words, or phrases.

Given the research scope and based on knowledge of previous studies and using an analytical and critical mindset while avoiding unresolved debates about modal routines, this article used the following criteria to identify research subjects from a communicative competence approach:

*Modal routines are inherently structured combinations that are relatively stable and are repeatedly used in various discourse types. Modal routines lack figurative meaning and have functions of hedging, emphasizing, or linking. Moreover, modal routines indicate the modal meaning of a sentence and demonstrate the speaker’s level of language proficiency.*

## 2.2. The concept and model of communicative competence

The concept of *communicative competence* is closely associated with Dell Hymes, who was not only a linguist but also an anthropologist. Therefore, apart from language, Hymes was keenly interested in the socio-cultural aspects of language. Chomsky's notion of competence is narrow and only refers to the ideal speaker–listener in a homogeneous language community. Chomsky (1965) compared *language competence* with *language performance*; specifically, one is the learner's understanding of language (language competence) and the other is the actual use of language (language performance) of people. Chomsky's theory of linguistic competence does not seem to address people's ability to use language in a socio-cultural context. Therefore, Hymes (1972) proposed the theory of “communicative competence,” which not only includes the ability to apply knowledge of phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar but also comprises the ability to use appropriate language in specific communicative contexts.

With the knowledge gained from 10 years of research, Celce-Murcia (2007) provided an improved model of communicative competence (Figure 1) based on the synthesis of both Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) and Celce-Murcia's (1995) works.

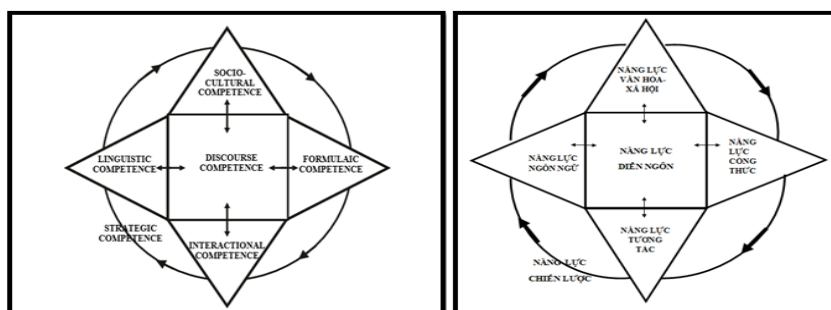


Figure 1: *General model of communication competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p. 47)*

## 2.3. Formulaic competence – a component of communicative competence

Celce-Murcia (2007) asserted that there were certain cognitive gaps in the previous model. Therefore, she provided an improved model of communicative competence which was considered to be advanced and in which formulaic competence was affirmed as having a central role in the communicative competence model (2007, p. 45).

The triangle on the left side (Figure 1) represents *linguistic competence*, which includes knowledge about four aspects: phonemes, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. The triangle on the right side represents *formulaic competence*.

*Linguistic competence* is a counterbalance to *formulaic competence*. Formulaic competence refers to fixed and pre-existing linguistic expressions that speakers use

frequently in everyday interactions. For Vietnamese, the typical type of language unit representing the formulaic competence for non-native learners is fixed expressions (one of the typical subtypes is *Vietnamese modal routines* – the main research subject of this article).

#### 2.4. Explicit and implicit contexts

Based on the communicative competence model of Celce-Murcia (2007), many researchers have provided detailed descriptions of the model's components to study how linguistic methods are used for various purposes, including creating materials for teaching and learning foreign languages.

Following the approach of communicative competence, Finnish scholar Ylisirniö (2012) studied how to present formulaic expressions in two English language teaching textbooks. He found that there were two methods of presenting these expressions: explicit and implicit contexts. English language curriculum developers in Finland are said to have effectively used these two methods to improve formulaic competence as a component of communicative competence. Due to the similarity in terms of approach and research subjects, we have learned from and used Ylisirniö's concept pairs in this study to investigate the presentation and interpretation of Vietnamese modal routines in Vietnamese language teaching textbooks for foreigners at elementary and intermediate levels. According to preliminary observations, the contexts that most clearly show the application of these two methods are the Reading/Dialogue, Grammar, Exercises/Practice, Vocabulary, and Grammar Reference sections in the textbooks.

According to Ylisirniö (2012), explicit context is a method of presenting formulaic language knowledge in a deliberate manner—that is, knowledge is marked by some forms of signal and explained and developed through exercises.

Below is a typical example of the explicit context method used by Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.) in his B-level Vietnamese language textbook. In the book, grammatical structures are clearly indicated, explained, and illustrated using examples.

The modal routine “*Nghe nói + preposition (abbreviated as “P”)*” (*It is said that P*) is a linguistic unit explicitly expressed as follows:

##### ***Nghe nói***

***Nghe nói*** thường đứng đầu câu, có ý nghĩa là “*Tôi nghe người khác nói...*”. Cách nói này được dùng để giảm nhẹ trách nhiệm của người nói đối với lời nói của mình.

*Ví dụ:* - *Nghe nói cô Hoa học giỏi lắm.*

- *Nghe nói ông ấy đã về nước rồi.*

(Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Chủ biên), Thực hành tiếng Việt – trình độ B, tr. 120)

***It is said that***

*It is said that* is usually at the beginning of the sentence, meaning “I heard someone say...”. This way of speaking is used to reduce the responsibility of the speaker for his words.

For example: - *It is said that Ms. Hoa is very smart.*

- *It is said that he has returned to his home country.*

(Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.), Practicing Vietnamese – B level, p. 120)

On the other hand, implicit context is a method in which a formulaic expression is implicitly presented in the context: the expression is presented as an inherent part of the text/context containing it and does not have any special formal marking. In other words, there are no special formalities created by textbook writers for readers to identify the expression, neither are there any exercises to develop it, or if there are, the expression appears only in the title of exercises—not in the content of the exercises themselves: the author does not aim for the expression in those exercises (Ylisirniö, 2012). In implicit context, the identification and interpretation of language knowledge depend almost entirely on the teacher.

We cited a typical example of the implicit context method used by Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.) in his textbook “Thực hành tiếng Việt – trình độ B” (Practicing Vietnamese – B level). In this example, the author inserts the modal routine “*Có lẽ P*” (*Perhaps P*) into the conversation and does not indicate the modal routine in the vocabulary section (taken from the previous conversation). The following is an example:

... - *Có lẽ giáo sư mãi làm việc nên quên đấy. Cậu chuẩn bị đi nhé. Sáng sớm mai, 6 giờ 30 tập trung ở đây...*

(Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Chủ biên), Thực hành tiếng Việt – trình độ B, tr. 98)

(-*Perhaps the professor was busy working and forgot it. You should get ready. Meet here at 6.30 a.m tomorrow morning...*)

(Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.), Practicing Vietnamese – B level, p. 98)

### **3. Materials and research methodology**

Data for the study was taken from four elementary-level and two intermediate-level Vietnamese language textbooks for foreigner. Specifically:

1. Textbook 1: Click Tiếng Việt (Trình độ A, Tập 1) [Click Vietnamese (A level, Vol 1)], Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.), Nhà xuất bản Thế giới, 2014.
2. Textbook 2: Click Tiếng Việt (Trình độ A, Tập 2) [Click Vietnamese (A level, Vol 2)], Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.), Nhà xuất bản Thế giới, 2014.
3. Textbook 3: Tiếng Việt cơ sở (Dành cho người nước ngoài) (Quyển 1) [Elementary Vietnamese (Use for non-Vietnamese speakers) (Vol 1)], Nguyễn Việt Hương, Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, 2009.
4. Textbook 4: Tiếng Việt cơ sở (Dành cho người nước ngoài) (Quyển 2) [Elementary Vietnamese (Use for non-Vietnamese speakers) (Vol 2)], Nguyễn Việt Hương, Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, 2009.
5. Textbook 5: Thực hành tiếng Việt (Trình độ B) [Practice Vietnamese (B level)], Đoàn Thiện Thuật (Ed.), Nhà xuất bản Thế giới, 2012.
6. Textbook 6: Tiếng Việt nâng cao (Dành cho người nước ngoài) (Quyển 1) [Intermediate Vietnamese (Use for non-Vietnamese speakers) (Vol 1)], Nguyễn Việt Hương, Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, 2017.

The reason for choosing these textbooks was to find out if there is any difference in the way modal routines are presented in textbooks of the same level and between two groups of textbooks of different levels. The collected data were analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

#### **4. Presentation of Vietnamese modal routines in the examined textbooks**

It can be said that modal routines are not expressed in the same manner across the six surveyed textbooks. This expression is shown by the authors' use of implicit and explicit contexts to present modal routines. The application of these two methods is best demonstrated in the Reading/Dialogue, Grammar, Practice Exercise, and Vocabulary / Grammar Reference sections in the six textbooks. A survey was conducted and statistics related to modal routines appearing in all the above contexts in the selected textbooks were produced to identify the presentation of modal routines.

The survey shows that explicitly presented modal routines are consistently represented through a common cycle (this cycle is further explained in Section 4.2). Thus, these modal routines are classified into the group of modal routines presented in explicit contexts. The remaining modal routines, even if they appear in some stages of the above cycle, are only classified in the group of modal routines presented in implicit contexts.

**Table 1** below provides the number of modal routines represented by implicit and explicit contexts.

Table 1: Presentation of Vietnamese modal routines in the surveyed textbooks

	Textbook	Number of modal routines	Type of context			
			Implicit	Ratio	Explicit	Ratio
1	Textbook 1	4	4/4	100%	0/4	0%
2	Textbook 2	12	12/12	100%	0/12	0%
3	Textbook 3	2	2/2	100%	0/2	0%
4	Textbook 4	9	9/9	100%	0/9	0%
5	Textbook 5	41	30/41	73%	11/41	27%
6	Textbook 6	29	22/29	76%	7/29	24%

*Note: "Implicit" context refers to modal routines that are not explicitly presented, while "Explicit" context refers to modal routines that are presented explicitly. The ratio is calculated by dividing the number of modal routines in each context by the total number of modal routines in the textbook.*

The data presented in Table 1 shows that in 4 elementary-level textbooks (Textbook 1, Textbook 2, Textbook 3, and Textbook 4), 100% of the modal routines found are presented in implicit contexts. However, Textbook 5 and Textbook 6 use a combination of both implicit and explicit contexts to present modal routines but tend to incline towards implicit contexts. This inclination is reflected in the following way: the number of modal routines presented by implicit contexts in these 2 textbooks is higher than the number of modal routines presented in explicit contexts (73% and 76%, respectively). The data also indicates that most modal routines in implicit contexts are not explained in the Grammar section and appear implicitly in the Reading / Dialogue sections or are not the focus of exercises.

The way of presenting the modal routines using implicit and explicit contexts in the textbooks is described in detail in Section 4.1.

#### **4.1. Implicit contexts**

Since all six textbooks have the same implicit presentation method of modal routines, examples from Textbook 2, Textbook 4 and Textbook 5 were chosen to illustrate the use of implicit contexts.

Firstly, modal routines only appear implicitly in the Reading / Dialogue section, which clearly demonstrates the use of implicit contexts to present modal routines. The following examples clarify the nature of these implicit contexts:

- 1) **Có lẽ**, ở đây thời gian chưa phá hủy gì nhiều. [Textbook 2, p. 73]  
**Perhaps** not much has been destroyed here. [Textbook 2, p. 73]
- 2) ...- **Chắc là** kịp giờ đây. [Textbook 4, p. 161]  
 ...**Maybe** we are on time. [Textbook 4, p. 161]

Example 1 was taken from a reading passage, while Example 2 came from a dialogue. These two examples illustrate the nature of implicit methods in Textbook 2 and Textbook 4. Modal routines are presented implicitly mostly in the Reading / Dialogue sections and no attempt is made to explain them in the Grammar section. Therefore, these two marked modal routines (bolded and underlined) in the two examples above are presented in an implicit context.

Clearly, most of the modal routines come from Reading / Dialogue sections because these sections comprise most of the language materials in the curriculum. However, there are also other contexts that contain implicit modal routines, namely the Practice Exercises section. Therefore, modal routines are presented in the exercises but merely appear in the title/content of the exercise: modal routines are not the focus. These modal routines are also not explained in the Grammar section. The following examples illustrate the second implicit pattern of modal routines:

- 3) **Chắc chắn** mình sẽ nhớ. [Textbook 2, p. 72]  
*I will **surely** remember.* [Textbook 2, p. 72]
- 4) **Hình như** trời...có bão, tôi thấy khó chịu quá. [Textbook 4, p. 206]  
*It **seems** like there is...a storm, I feel extremely uncomfortable.* [Textbook 4, p. 206]
- 5) **Có gì** thay đổi mình sẽ gọi điện cho cậu. Chào nhé! [Textbook 5, p. 106]  
**In case** anything changes, I will call you. Goodbye! [Textbook 5, p. 106]
- 6) Nếu gặp ông lúc đó, **có lẽ** mọi người sẽ nghĩ rằng ông đi an dưỡng...không phải đi chữa bệnh. [Textbook 5, p. 142]  
*If they met him then, **perhaps** people would think he went on vacation...not to seek treatment.* [Textbook 5, p. 142]



- 7) Hãy viết những môn học mà bạn đã học ở trường đại học. Bạn thích những môn nào và không thích những môn nào? Vì sao? ***Theo*** bạn, có cần thay đổi gì trong chương trình học đó không? [Textbook 5, p. 62]  
*Write down the courses you have studied at university. Which courses do you like and dislike? Why? ***In your opinion***, are there any changes needed in the curriculum?* [Textbook 5, p. 62]

Example 3 is taken from an exercise requiring learners to complete a given dialogue. Example 4 is taken from an exercise requiring learners to choose words given in advance to fill in the blanks of sentences in Textbook 2. Modal routine “hình như” is not included in the list of given words/phrases. Example 5 is taken from an exercise that requires learners to arrange sentences into a dialogue. Example 6 comes from an exercise that requires learners to listen and fill in the blanks. The common feature of the four examples is that the underlined and bolded modal routines all appear implicitly in the content of the exercise. Example 7 is taken from the title of an exercise that requires learners to answer questions.

As can be seen, all five highlighted modal routines (bolded and underlined) in the above examples are neither the focus of the exercise nor found anywhere else in the Grammar section. This is a typical implicit situation where a modal routine is presented implicitly and has a secondary role in its context, namely, it is not the learning objective of the exercise but the objective is other language units. Cases of modal routines “embedded” in a practice session can make that modal routine seem to have low noticeability since the reader’s attention is clearly directed to other issues (questions, answers, etc.)

## 4.2. Explicit contexts

### 4.2.1. *The common cycle – from implicit to explicit*

In the six examined textbooks, explicit context methods are often represented by a common cycle. This cycle starts with a reading / dialogue text with modal routines “embedded” within it. The cycle is then repeated and explained in the Grammar section, especially in the Practice Exercise section. In the Grammar section, the author explains the modal routines taken from the Reading / Dialogue sections along with definitions, and usage (ability to combine) by putting the modal routines into patterns with examples. In the Practice section, the author provides various exercises, ranging from multiple-choice questions to situational and identification exercises, to help learners consolidate the learned grammar. Thus, this type of exercise is a combination of two

methods using explicit and implicit contexts, but the level of explicitness is higher than the level of implicitness. Finally, modal routines are summarized and provided in the Vocabulary / Grammar Reference sections in the last part of the textbook. The two intermediate-level textbooks (Textbook 5 and Textbook 6) use this type of context to a certain extent but the four elementary-level textbooks do not. The examples below from Textbook 5 and Textbook 6 illustrate this cycle.

- Introduce modal routines in a reading text or dialogue:

8) – *Ừ. Dường như Bell chả thay đổi gì.* [Textbook 6, p. 202]

– *Yeah, it seems like Bell hasn't changed at all.* [Textbook 6, p. 202]

9) – *Không, tớ vừa may cái áo dài này, hơn nữa, ngày mai anh họ của tớ làm lễ ăn hỏi, tớ mặc thử xem có hợp không.* [Textbook 5, p. 87]

– *No, I just had this ao dai made, moreover, my cousin is getting engaged tomorrow, so I'm going to try it on to see if it fits.* [Textbook 5, p. 87]

Examples 8 and 9 are taken from a dialogue between two friends. In this conversation, the two modal routines “*dường như...*” (*seem like*) and “*hơn nữa...*” (*moreover*) (underlined in the above example) are simply embedded in the conversation. That is, no formal indicators (such as underlining, italicizing, etc.) are used to mark or highlight these two modal routines.

Usually, the first step of the process is to introduce modal routines in a reading or dialogue text. These modal routines are attached to reading / dialogue texts and may or may not have formal markings to highlight them. Thus, both explicit and implicit context methods are used in this stage. The two underlined modal routines in examples 8 and 9 are mentioned later in the Grammar and Practice sections.

- Explanation of meaning and usage of modal routines:

The second stage of the cycle involves taking out the modal routines embedded in the Reading or Dialogue section and explaining them in the Grammar section. The second stage is aimed at clarifying modal routines. In the surveyed Vietnamese language textbooks, formulaic knowledge is considered by authors to be grammar knowledge (used to demonstrate grammatical competence). Therefore, modal routines are included in the Grammar section. The explanation of the two modal routines in the two examples below in Textbook 5 and Textbook 6 are presented to illustrate this stage.

### 10) *Dường như/ hình như*

*Từ biểu thị sự phỏng đoán dè dặt, chưa chắc chắn về một sự việc, hiện tượng nào đó. (“Dường như” biểu thị sự phỏng đoán có phần chắc chắn hơn “Hình như”).*

*Ví dụ: - Hình như cô ấy không nhận ra tôi.*

*- Dường như cô ấy không nhận ra tôi.*

[Textbook 6, p. 203]

### *Appear/seem*

*These words indicate a cautious estimation or uncertainty about a certain event or phenomenon. (“Appear” implies a slightly more certain estimation than “seem”).*

*For example: - It appears that she has not recognized me.*

*- It seems that she has not recognized me.*

[Textbook 6, p. 203]

### 11) *A hơn nữa B*

*Kết cấu A hơn nữa B dùng để diễn đạt ý bổ sung của B bên cạnh nội dung A đã nói trước đó.*

*Ví dụ: - Từ đây đến đó rất xa, hơn nữa trời nắng quá, nên tôi không muốn đi.*

*- Tôi không muốn vì xe máy ấy không tốt, hơn nữa giá đắt quá.*

[Textbook 5, p. 89]

### *A, moreover, B*

*The construction A, moreover, B is used to express additional information about B in addition to the previously mentioned information about A.*

*For example: - It's very far from here, besides it is too sunny, so I don't want to go.*

*- I don't like it because that motorbike is not good, moreover, it is too expensive.*

[Textbook 5, p. 89]

- Practice using modal routines:

This stage is presented in a type of exercise called the “Phrase Bank Task,” defined as a task that helps learners reinforce grammatical features that are often taken from previous reading / dialogue texts and explained in the Grammar section. This type of exercise is presented in two intermediate-level Vietnamese language textbooks. This presentation shows that a relatively large part of the textbooks focuses on the modal routines in a clear, explicit, and systematic way. The following examples in Textbook 5 and Textbook 6 are used to illustrate the third stage of the cycle.

**12) Đề bài:** Chuyển các câu sau theo mẫu:

Mẫu: Có lẽ trời sắp mưa.

⇒ Hình như (đường mưa) trời sắp mưa.

[Textbook 6, p. 207]

**12) Task:** Rewrite sentences following the model sentence:

Pattern: Maybe it's going to rain.

⇒ It appears (seems) like it's going to rain.

[Textbook 6, p. 207]

The example above is an exercise that requires learners to apply the modal routine “*hình như/đường như*” (*appear/seem*), explained in the Grammar section, to create sentences according to the model sentence provided by the textbook.

**13) Đề bài:** Thêm từ “*hơn nữa*” vào vị trí thích hợp:

Mẫu: - Tôi phải giúp cô ấy vì cô ấy gặp khó khăn, cô ấy là bạn tôi.

⇒ Tôi phải giúp cô ấy vì cô ấy gặp khó khăn, hơn nữa cô ấy là bạn tôi.

[Textbook 5, p. 207]

**13) Task:** Use the word “*moreover*” in the appropriate position:

Sample: - I have to help her because she is having a hard time, she is my friend.

⇒ I have to help her because she is having a hard time, moreover, she is my friend.

[Textbook 5, p. 207]

The above example is an exercise that requires learners to add the modal routine “*hơn nữa*” (*moreover*) explained in the Grammar section to an appropriate position in the sentence according to the model sentence provided in the textbook.

The linguistic units labeled as modal routines are considered by the authors to be grammatical knowledge. Therefore, the exercises above are used to elicit a speech or to apply modal routines to a specific grammar point to develop grammar competence rather than serving as a specific exercise for developing formulaic language competence.

- Summary in the Vocabulary / Grammar Reference sections at the end of the textbook:

This final stage is considered a summary and systematization of the linguistic knowledge that the authors think learners need to pay attention to. Therefore, learners can rely on this summary to identify which language knowledge they need to

understand and use proficiently. Using these sections, learners can conveniently look up and review linguistic knowledge.

It is noticed that this general cycle appears in two intermediate-level textbooks. However, the clarity in these two textbooks is not identical: the textbooks more or less present different levels of hierarchy. In the next section, the levels of explicitness in the two intermediate-level textbooks are discussed.

#### ***4.2.2. Comparison of levels of explicitness***

Although Textbook 6 has more cases of modal routines represented by implicit context than Textbook 5, the cycle of presenting explicitly modal routines in Textbook 6 is somewhat clearer and more distinct than in Textbook 5. Specifically, Textbook 6 uses formal markings (italics) to highlight the target modal routines (which are explained in the Grammar section and practiced in the Practice Exercise section) in the reading context. In contrast, target modal routines are introduced randomly in both the reading and dialogue contexts in Textbook 5. In other words, no formal markings are used to highlight modal routines in the dialogue and reading context in Textbook 5.

In addition, the author of Textbook 6 has presented very clear and specific information on the grammatical features that are covered in each lesson right from the Table of Contents at the beginning of the book. Therefore, when reading through this section, learners already know that these are important grammatical features they must grasp after studying each lesson. Moreover, in each lesson, the author reiterates the grammatical features that need to be learned right below the main title of the lesson. Learners can identify these grammatical features even without looking at the Table of Contents.

## **5. Discussion**

The results showed that the authors used two methods to teach modal routines: implicit context and explicit context. In our opinion, at the elementary level, editors may not intend to introduce modal routines explicitly and unambiguously. In other words, the focus of learners at the elementary level should probably not be on modal routines but rather on other basic linguistic materials. However, it was found that editors still included some modal routines in the elementary-level textbooks. However, the presentation of these modal routines was only implicit. The modal routine is a type of unit used repeatedly in everyday discourse by native speakers. It is a contributing factor to the naturalness of native speakers' communication. Perhaps, for this reason, the

editors still use some modal routines to ensure the naturalness of the written discourses that appear in textbooks.

At the intermediate level, great quantities of modal routines begin to be introduced explicitly to learners. Such an explicit introduction can also be seen as a sign of hierarchy between elementary and intermediate levels. In addition, the explicit expression of modal routines by a group of intermediate-level textbooks in a common cycle shows a rather systematic and scientific approach to this language unit. Therefore, learners can direct proper attention to them while the position of modal routines is enhanced in discourse. The survey results also show that a large number of modal routines in the group of intermediate-level textbooks overlap with those appearing in the group of elementary-level textbooks. This overlap is entirely reasonable according to the spiral cognitive model because, at the intermediate level, textbooks have to contain both the former language knowledge at the elementary level while introducing new and advanced language knowledge. The repetition of prior linguistic knowledge at the elementary level not only helps learners to remember this knowledge for a long time but also helps them to become familiar with new knowledge readily.

After conducting the survey, we have concluded that it is necessary to find an effective and appropriate method of presenting formulaic language knowledge in order to maximize learners' formulaic competence. If possible, the presentation should satisfy three criteria (if a textbook adopts the communicative competence approach):

1. Explain the meaning and use of modal routines from a communicative competence approach.
2. Provide examples and demonstrate how to use linguistics features effortlessly (through models or formulas).
3. Provide exercises for learners to reinforce their knowledge of that linguistic feature.

Practice exercises play a crucial role in helping learners not only acquire receptive knowledge (knowledge at the reception / understanding level), but also generate productive knowledge (knowledge at the application / production level).

For modal routines, we propose a number of specialized exercises to develop formulaic competence (the typical expression is a modal routine):

(1) Selected response exercise

*Example: Bạn gặp một em bé rất xinh xắn và đáng yêu. Bạn muốn khen em bé ấy. Bạn sẽ nói thế nào?*

*A. Trộm vía, em bé xinh quá!*

*B. Ôi em bé xinh quá!*

*C. Trời ơi! Em bé xinh quá!*

*Example: You meet a very pretty and lovely baby. You want to compliment that baby. What will you say?*

*A. The baby is so pretty, touch wood!*

*B. Oh, the baby is so pretty!*

*C. Oh my gosh! The baby is so pretty!*

In this case, learners should choose “*A. Trộm vía, em bé xinh quá!*” (*The baby is so pretty, touch wood!*), where the modal routine “*Trộm vía*” (touch wood) is the target language unit that learners need to learn.

This type of exercise is also known as “multiple-choice discourse completion.”

(2) Constrained constructed response / written discourse completion / oral discourse completion

*Example: Bạn hãy tìm các quán ngữ tình thái phù hợp để hoàn thiện câu sau:*

*Để giải quyết khủng hoảng, ....., chính phủ phải có kế hoạch hỗ trợ các công ty gặp khó khăn. ...., bản thân các công ty phải chủ động có kế hoạch giảm chi phí và nhân sự để khỏi phá sản.*

*Example: Find the appropriate modal routines to complete the following sentences:*

*In order to deal with the crisis, ....., the government must have a plan to support troubled companies. ...., companies themselves must actively plan to reduce costs and personnel to avoid bankruptcy.*

In this case, learners should use “*một mặt/mặt khác*” (*on the one hand/on the other hand*).

(3) Discourse Role Play Talks

In this type of exercise, a teacher can ask learners to role-play and create a spoken discourse. The teacher can provide topics and require learners to use at least a certain number of target modal routines in order to help the learners understand, know how to use, and remember how to use the target modal routines.

*Example: Anh/chị hãy tạo lập một hội thoại hỏi đường trong đó có sử dụng tối thiểu 03 quán ngữ tình thái đã học.*

*(Create a dialogue asking for directions, and use at least three modal routines that have been learnt.)*

The teacher should explain the meaning and usage of these modal routines to learners before they practice to ensure that learners have enough basic knowledge to create a discourse.

The proposed practice exercises above need to be studied and experimented with to evaluate and identify which type of exercise is appropriate and effective for developing learners' formulaic competence in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

Adopting the communicative competence approach, this study attempted to analyze the presentation of modal routines in six Vietnamese language textbooks—four at the elementary level and two at the intermediate level. The study also compared the presentation of modal routines between elementary-level textbooks and intermediate-level textbooks. The results showed that two methods, implicit context and explicit context, were used by authors to teach modal routines. While the four elementary-level textbooks only used implicit contexts to present modal routines, the two intermediate-level textbooks used both methods. Moreover, both methods were used to varying degrees by the two groups of textbooks.

It is necessary to find an effective and appropriate method of presenting formulaic language knowledge in order to optimize the formulaic competence of learners.

## References

- Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980), *Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing*, *Applied Linguistics* 1(1), 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1>
- Cao, Xuân Hạo & Hoàng, Dũng (2004), *Thuật ngữ ngôn ngữ học Anh - Việt, Việt - Anh [Linguistic terms English - Vietnamese, Vietnamese - English]*, Ministerial-level Research Project, Trường Đại học Sư phạm Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam.
- Celce-Murcia, M. (2007), *Rethinking the role of communicative competence in language teaching*, In E. Alcón-Soler, & M. P. Safont-Jordà (Eds.), *Intercultural language use and language learning*, 41–57. DOI: [10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_3)
- Chomsky, Noam (1965), *Aspects of the theory of syntax*, Cambridge: MIT Press.



Đái, Xuân Ninh (1978), *Hoạt động của từ tiếng Việt* [Activities of Vietnamese words], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội.

Đoàn, Thị Thu Hà (2015), *Quán ngữ tiếng Việt dưới góc độ ngôn ngữ học tri nhận* [Vietnamese habitual collocations from the perspective of cognitive linguistics], Doctoral dissertation, Viện Hàn lâm Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam, Học viện Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội.

Đỗ, Hữu Châu (1996), *Từ vựng ngữ nghĩa tiếng Việt* [Lexicology and Semantics of Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.

Lê, Thị Thùy Vinh (2013), *Nghiên cứu quán ngữ tiếng Việt từ góc độ dụng học* [A study on Vietnamese gambits from a pragmatics perspective], Tạp chí Khoa học, Trường Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội 2, (23), 48-63.

<http://nguvan.hnue.edu.vn/Nghi%C3%AAAn-c%E1%BB%A9u/Ng%C3%B4n-ng%E1%BB%AF/p/nghien-cuu-quan-ngu-tieng-viet-tu-goc-do-dung-hoc-850>

Mai, Ngọc Chừ, Vũ, Đức Nghiệu & Hoàng, Trọng Phiến (1990), *Cơ sở ngôn ngữ học và tiếng Việt* [Foundation of Linguistics and Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Đại học và Trung học chuyên nghiệp, Nhà xuất bản Giáo Dục, Hà Nội, 2014.

Ngô, Hữu Hoàng (2002), *Vai trò của quán ngữ trong việc kiến tạo phát ngôn (trên cứ liệu tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh)* [The role of gambits/discourse devices in constructing utterances (based on Vietnamese and English data)], Doctoral dissertation, Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.

[http://repository.vnu.edu.vn/handle/VNU\\_123/35004](http://repository.vnu.edu.vn/handle/VNU_123/35004)

Nguyễn, Thiện Giáp (1985), *Từ vựng tiếng Việt* [Lexicology of Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Đại học và Trung học chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội.

Nguyễn, Văn Hiệp (2019), *Nghiên cứu quán ngữ tình thái từ cách tiếp cận dị thanh* [Studying modal expressions from the heteroglossic approach], Tạp chí Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam, Hà Nội, số 7, 89-98. <https://vjol.info.vn/index.php/khxhvn/article/view/44521>

Nguyễn, Văn Tu (1976), *Từ và vốn từ tiếng Việt hiện đại* [Word and modern Vietnamese lexicon], Nhà xuất bản Đại học và Trung học chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội.

Ylisirniö, Matti (2012), *A case study of formulaic sequences in Finnish EFL textbooks for upper secondary school*, Master's thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Department of English Languages. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:jyu-201211062866>

## Argument model in Nguyễn Huy Tưởng's *Vĩnh Biệt Cửu Trùng Đài* 'Farewell to the Royal Palace' from a cognitive metaphor perspective

Đặng Thị Hào Tâm  
(Hanoi National University of Education)

**Abstract:** In literary discourse, the aspect of “gaining goals” in argument needs to be understood differently from other normal, everyday discourse types. More specifically, it aims to direct readers to the understanding of the way in which the author conveys his/her artistic knowledge and perspective through who wins and who loses when the characters argue. Looked at this way, a dialogic argument between characters in a play is actually a one-party rational argument on the part of the author. This study applies some of the constituent elements of a one-party rational argument – content, process, structure, strength, and basicness – from Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) model, to describe and evaluate the debate between the characters Đan Thiềm and Vũ Như Tô in the extract named *Vĩnh biệt Cửu Trùng Đài* 'Farewell to the Royal Palace' from the play *Vũ Như Tô* by Nguyễn Huy Tưởng. The results show that Lakoff and Johnson's model of argument analysis is an appropriate framework to study reasoning in a literary work.

**Key words:** conceptual metaphor, cognitive, rational argument, one-party rational argument, argument is war

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual theory of dialogue structure

Describing the structure of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, Lakoff and Johnson raise the problem: if you are engaged in a certain dialogue and you perceive it to be turning into an argument then what would you realize other than yourself being in a conversation? [3, p. 79] The authors believe that: the fundamental difference here is a sense of being in a battle. When we perceive the dimensions of experience relevant to the whole structure of the concept of WAR, we perceive ourselves to be participating in a different kind of experience, that of a debate. For example, we can describe the conversation structure in terms of the elements of war as follows:

---

ĐẶNG, Thị Hào Tâm. 2023. Argument model in Nguyễn Huy Tưởng's *Vĩnh Biệt Cửu Trùng Đài* 'Farewell to the Royal Palace' from a cognitive metaphor perspective. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151402>

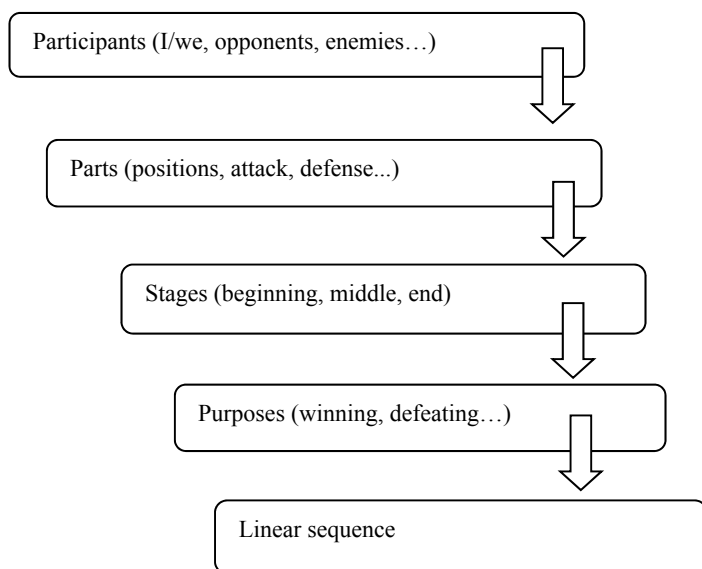


Figure 1: Conversation structure.

By conceptualizing an experience based on the overall structure of the experience system and partly restructuring it in terms of other experiences, we select important aspects of the experience in question to understand and memorize it. This conceptualization is the basis for selecting and creating specialized aspects of a general experience to be utilized in specific situations.

### 1.2. The specificity of concepts in Lakoff and Johnson's view

RATIONAL ARGUMENT is considered a specialized branch of the concept of ARGUMENT. The relationship between the specific concept and its superior concept is evident in the debate process: starting from the content of the debate to outlining the process of argument with military-related strategies such as defending, attacking, counter-attacking, confrontation, etc. RATIONAL ARGUMENT, when further specialized in written form, will entail the realization of a ONE-PARTY RATIONAL ARGUMENT. According to Lakoff and Johnson, in written discourse, “the author addresses himself, not to an actual adversary, but to a set of hypothetical adversaries or to actual adversaries who are not present to defend themselves, counterattack, etc.”, “Since there is no particular adversary present, an idealized adversary must be assumed. If the purpose of victory is to be maintained, it must be victory over an idealized adversary who is not present.” [3, pp. 87-8]. According to the authors, the only way to

achieve this is to let yourself anticipate all possible attacks, rebuttals, etc., and deal with them while developing your argument.

Lakoff and Johnson's analysis of one-party rational argument shows that while they recognize a distinction between argument in spoken discourse and argument in written discourse, the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR is present in both kinds. With arguments in written discourse, however, this metaphor is dominated by the author's argument against a hypothetical opponent. The goal of conversation is not only to win but also to serve a higher purpose - the expression of the author's ideology and perspectives.

In their model, Lakoff and Johnson propose the following eight features of a one-party rational argument as follows [5, p.89]:

(i) Content: You have to have enough supporting evidence and say enough of the right things in order to make your point and overcome any possible objections.

(ii) Progress: You have to start with the generally agreed upon premises and move in a linear fashion toward some conclusion.

(iii) Structure: RATIONAL ARGUMENT requires appropriate logical connections among the various parts.

(iv) Strength: The ability of the argument to withstand assault depends on the weight of the evidence and the tightness of the logical connections.

(v) Basicness: Some claims are more important to maintain and defend than others since subsequent claims will be based upon them.

(vi) Obviousness: In any argument, there will be things which are not obvious. These need to be identified and explored in sufficient detail.

(vii) Directness: The force of an argument can depend on how straightforwardly you move from premises to conclusions.

(viii) Clarity: What you are claiming and the connections between your claims must be sufficiently clear for the reader to understand them.

Lakoff and Johnson suppose that the above eight aspects are parts of a one-party rational argument which do not necessarily appear in the classic dialogic form of daily conversation.

### **1.3. Approaches to dialogue in Nguyen Huy Tuong's plays from the perspective of rational argument**

Drama is characterized by dialogue. The main ideas of a play are communicated to the readers through the dialogue between the play's characters. Dialogue in drama is, in essence, the author's language, where the author borrows characters to express his/her

understanding and reflection on aspects of life. Victory or defeat in arguments on the part of the characters will clarify the artistic intentions that the author wants to convey. This study examines the conversations in an extract named *Vĩnh biệt Cửu Trùng Đài* 'Farewell to the Royal Palace' from the play *Vũ Như Tô* by Nguyễn Huy Tưởng [5] from the conceptual perspective of RATIONAL ARGUMENT to serve as an example for the analysis of discourse in play. We will focus on clarifying the characteristics of the ONE-PARTY RATIONAL ARGUMENT metaphor within the scope of the conversations between two characters, maidservant Đan Thiềm and architect Vũ Như Tô (henceforth, for convenience's sake we will use versions of the names of the characters, the extract, and the play without diacritics) in the context of Dan Thiem advising Vu Nhu To to accept the invitation to build the royal palace Cuu Trung Dai (Act 1, Scene vii). Due to space limitations, we will only focus on the first five elements of ONE-PARTY RATIONAL ARGUMENT, namely: content, process, structure, strength, and basicness (section 1.2). The remaining three factors, obviousness, directness, and clarity, will be subsequently presented in another article.

## **2. Argument model in the debate between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To**

The play *Vu Nhu To* is about the conflict between an artist's dreams of creating profound artwork and the cruelty of power. Vu Nhu To is a talented architect known for his straightforward nature and refusal to bow down to authority. Le Tuong Duc, a notorious tyrant king who only knows how to indulge in pleasure, demands that Vu Nhu To construct Cuu Trung Dai palace as a place of entertainment. Vu Nhu To boldly rejects the king's request, willingly accepting any punishment. Dan Thiem, a maidservant who admires Vu Nhu To's talent, advises him and convinces him that the palace he built would endure and be admired and respected by future generations. Upon hearing Dan Thiem's words, Vu Nhu To agrees to build Cuu Trung Dai, unintentionally causing immense suffering and loss to the people, which fuels their resentment. The people rise up, and both Vu Nhu To and Dan Thiem are captured by the rebels, while Cuu Trung Dai is reduced to ashes.

### **2.1. Content of the debate between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To**

During the conversation extracted here, Dan Thiem has 21 utterance turns, and Vu Nhu To has 20. The linguistic expressions appearing in Dan Thiem's 21 turns refer to two main types of content: the fate of Dan Thiem herself and her praise of Vu Nhu To's talent. Of these expressions, the amount of those praising Vu Nhu To – *tài phải đem dùng* 'talent must be used'; *Ông nên lợi dụng cơ hội đem tài ra thi thố* 'You should take advantage of the opportunity to show your talent'; *tài không nên để mục nát với*

*cây cỏ* ‘talent should not be left to rot with plants’; *không nên bỏ phí tài trời* ‘talent should not be wasted’ – is far greater than the number of expressions about Dan Thiem's life – *số phận tôi* ‘my fate’; *thị nữ hầu hạ vua* ‘the king's maidservant’.

The frequently used linguistic expressions in Vu Nhu To's 20 turns include: *Bà nói như một người đồng bệnh* ‘You speak as if being in my shoes’; *một đời cung oán nhân tiên* ‘a lifetime of resentment’; *cảnh ngộ của tôi không khác cảnh ngộ của bà* ‘my situation was no different from yours’; *bị giải lên kinh* ‘be sent to the imperial city’; *thề là đánh chết chứ không chịu làm gì* ‘swear not to do anything despite being beaten to death’; *Tôi bẩm sinh có khiếu về kiến trúc* ‘I was born with an aptitude for architecture’; *chờ dịp để thi thố tài năng* ‘waiting for the opportunity to compete for talent’; *không thể đem tài năng làm việc ô uế* ‘cannot use talent to do terrible things’.

Based on the number of linguistic expressions focusing on the same topic, it could be seen that Dan Thiem focuses on advising Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Trung Dai, while the remaining content of the debate talks about his life, while her praise of Vu Nhu To's talents plays only a supporting role. On Vu Nhu To's side, the linguistic expressions focus on the resentful mood of a talented artist and the artist's contradiction: the desire to create beauty at the same time as the reluctance to refuse creativity.

## 2.2. Process of the debate between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To

### 2.2.1. Which premise did Dan Thiem use to begin the debate?

Dan Thiem's opening words are: *Trời xui đất khiến cho tôi gặp ông ở chốn này. Thật là duyên kì ngộ* ‘God made me meet you in this place. What a fateful encounter!’. By using the phrase *duyên kì ngộ* ‘fateful encounter’, Dan Thiem removes the barrier between a servant in the palace and one who was under house arrest. Only after clarifying this, when Vu Nhu To confirms *Bà nói như một người đồng bệnh* ‘You speak as if being in my shoes’, does Dan Thiem expand the content of the debate to praising Vu Nhu To's talent as described in the previous section. From these premises, Dan Thiem comes straight to the conclusion, the goal of her argument: *Hãy nghe lời tôi làm cho đất Thăng long này thành nơi kinh kì lộng lẫy nhất thế gian* ‘Listen to me and make Thang Long the most magnificent place in the world’. The progress of Dan Thiem's argument can be visualized as taking place along the following linear axis:

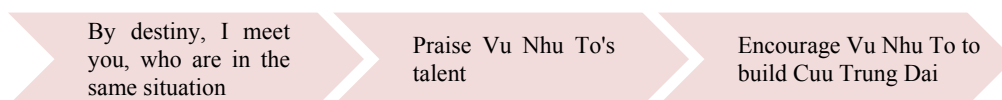


Figure 2: The progress of Dan Thiem's argument.

### 2.2.2. Which premise did Vu Nhu To use to begin the debate?

With the premise that *Tài không được trọng thì đem trả trời đất* ‘If not respected, talent should return to God’, Vu Nhu To confides in Dan Thiem. Out of the total of 20 turns of Vu Nhu To, the turns based on this premise include more sentences than the others. Specifically, the total number of sentences of the three central turns developing the above premise is 27, resulting in an average of nine sentences for each turn. The other turns only have an average of two sentences each. From the content deployed around this premise (see previous section), Vu Nhu To comes to the conclusion that *thề chết không chịu làm gì* ‘I swear not to do anything despite being beaten to death’. The progress of Vu Nhu To's argument can be visualized as going along the following linear axis:

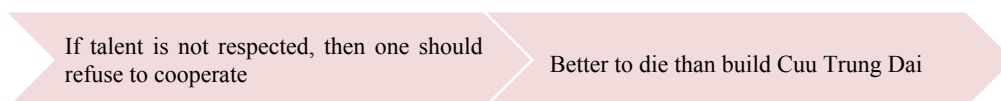


Figure 3: The progress of Vu Nhu To's argument.

### 2.3. Strength and structure of the argument between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To

In Lakoff and Johnson's point of view, the strength of an argument refers to the “tightness of the logical connection, the weight of the evidence” [3, p. 89]. We assume that understanding the strength of a one-party rational argument essentially involves identifying and evaluating the role of arguments, conclusions, and common sense in helping characters achieve their communicative goals, helping characters to “jump straight to conclusions,” says Lakoff and Johnson. Therefore, in this section, we describe the argument structure in Dan Thiem's words to Vu Nhu To, and vice versa.

#### 2.3.1. Dimensions of argument structure in Dan Thiem's turns

##### 2.3.1.1. Aspects of arguments in Dan Thiem's turns

In the conversation in which Dan Thiem persuades Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Trung Dai, we examined 17 arguments, including 15 simple and two complex arguments. The character often provides a number of bases for her arguments, only five of the 17 arguments have only a single basis, and these bases do not follow a fixed linear order. The evidence used in Dan Thiem's argument is very varied in order to make her argument truthful and convincing, including Vu Nhu To's own life story and the morals she draws from her experience: *chấp kinh phải tòng quyền* ‘you keep the rules but need to know how to act according to the concrete situation’, *hữu tài tất hữu dụng* ‘having talent must be useful’ or obvious consequences such as *vạ chu di cứu tộc* ‘nine generations killed’, *ông không có tiền* ‘you have no money’, etc. The positions of

conclusions in Dan Thiem's argument are flexible, two arguments present their conclusions preceding the bases, two arguments include their conclusions in the middle of the bases, nine arguments have conclusions following their bases, and four arguments have only implicit conclusions. We can conclude that Dan Thiem mainly uses inductive arguments with all the bases given before the conclusions.

Four arguments with implicit conclusions included three contents: affirming “being in his shoes” with Vu Nhu To, praising To's talent, and affirming that his talent could not be wasted. These conclusions were not made explicitly, which shows that Dan Thiem is an astute, rational, and strategic person. If she directly praised Vu Nhu To and then convinced him to build Cuu Trung Dai, the debate might fail. The relationship between the bases and the conclusions in these arguments is mainly a uni-directional relationship: all bases come before their conclusions. The only argument that shows the opposite relationship between its conclusion and its basis is *Cảnh ngộ của ông thì đáng thương thực. Nhưng ông nghĩ thế thì không được* ‘Your plight is pitiful. But it is not right that you think so’, which marks the switch in the conversation to the building of Cuu Trung Dai. Dan Thiem's argument model reflects a method of inductive reasoning: many bases appear in partial arguments (lowercase letters in the example that follows) of main arguments (uppercase letters), and the partial conclusions (r’s) to these partial arguments point toward the overall conclusion (R). This analysis exemplifies the argument structure of the character : (1) *Ông biết một mà không biết hai* ‘You know one but not two’ (p1). *Ông có tài* ‘You have talent’ (p1), *tài ấy phải đem cống hiến cho non sông, không nên để mục nát với cỏ cây* ‘which must be devoted to the country rather than let it decay with leaves and grass’ (r1’). *Ông không có tiền* ‘You don’t have money’ (p1’), *ông không có thể dựng nên một tòa đài như ý nguyện* ‘you can’t build a satisfactory palace as you would wish’ (r1’). *Chấp kinh thì phải tòng quyền* ‘You keep the rules but need to know how to act according to the concrete situation’ (p2’). *Đây là lúc ông nên mượn tay vua Hồng Thuận mà thực hành cái mộng lớn của ông* (r1) ‘It is time you took advantage of King Hong Thuan to realize your big dream’ (P)... *Ông khẽ tiếng. Đó là tiểu tiết. Ông cứ xây lấy một tòa đài cao cả* ‘You don’t raise your voice. That’s a small tactic. Just build a tall palace’ (r2) (Q). *Vua Hồng Thuận cùng lũ cung nữ kia rồi mất đi* ‘King Hong Thuan and those concubines will pass away’ (k), *nhưng sự nghiệp của ông còn lại với muôn đời* ‘but your palace remains forever’ (r3) (K). *Dân ta nghìn thu được hãnh diện, không phải thẹn với những cung điện đẹp nước ngoài, thế là đủ* ‘Our folk will be proud for millennia and not be ashamed when your palace is compared with foreign marvelous ones, that’s enough’ (r4) (L). *Hậu thế sẽ xét công cho ông và nhớ ơn ông mãi mãi*. ‘Later generations will



acknowledge your merits and owe you their gratitude forever' (r5) (I). *Ông hãy nghe tôi làm cho đất Thăng Long này thành nơi kinh kì lộng lẫy nhất trần gian* 'Just listen to me and make this Thang Long the most magnificent capital in the world' (R).

### **2.3.1.2. Common sense in Dan Thiem's turns**

Coming now to Nguyen's point of view [4, p. 196], we examined the logic of the character's arguments, and the results are as follows. Out of a total of 17 arguments, arguments based on common sense about humans and their behavior were used five times; the judgment-based common sense of 'pragmatism–hedonism' was used 12 times, and the latter included a number of minor categories: common sense based on the aesthetic judgment of being beautiful – ugly accounts for six of the 12 instances, common sense based on the truth of right – wrong includes four instances, and common sense based on the moral concept of being good – bad accounts for the other two instances. These results clearly demonstrate that Dan Thiem mainly uses common sense in terms of aesthetics and the truth of right and wrong to persuade Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Dung Dai.

### **2.3.2. Dimensions of argument structure in Vu Nhu To's turns**

#### **2.3.2.1. Aspects of arguments in Vu Nhu To's turns**

In the first conversation in which Dan Thiem aims to persuade Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Trung Dai, we examined 17 arguments of Vu Nhu To. Among these, there are 14 simple arguments and three complex arguments. The evidence used in Vu Nhu To's argument mainly revolves around the status of an artist who is in the wrong time, and whose talent is not respected. The position of conclusions in Vu Nhu To's argument is flexible. There is no argument in which the conclusion precedes its bases. Three other arguments have their conclusions in the middle of the bases, eleven arguments have conclusions following their bases, and finally, three arguments have only implicit conclusions. Thus, Vu Nhu To mainly uses inductive reasoning with bases given before conclusions. Three arguments with implicit conclusions include the following: the judgment that Dan Thiem did not understand him, admitting that he did not understand Dan Thiem, and affirming that he can give up his talent. The relationship between bases and conclusions in Vu Nhu To's arguments is a close uni-directional relationship, namely, all bases come before their conclusions. However, if the argument in Dan Thiem's words follows the inductive structure, Vu Nhu To's argument also follows the sum-division-union model, besides the inductive model.

#### **2.3.2.2. Common sense in Vu Nhu To's arguments**

Like Dan Thiem's arguments, judgment-based common sense was most commonly used by Vu Nhu To (13/17 arguments). However, common sense based on good-bad

standards appears at a higher rate than that based on right-wrong judgments and good-bad aesthetic views (7/13 – 4/13 – 2/13, respectively). Later, when Vu Nhu To decides to build Cuu Trung Dai, willing to sacrifice his life to protect the artwork despite being prevented by soldiers, the common sense of good-bad standards tends to be blurred. Instead, common sense about the aesthetic view of being good and bad, and the judgment of being right and wrong is highlighted.

#### **2.4. Basicness of the debate between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To**

Searle's descriptions of performative expressions show that any utterance in any speech is created from a speech act featuring performative verbs [1, p.108]. The effect of words is a characteristic of the speech act. Statements may be similar in content, but they are distinguished from each other by their verbal effect. In terms of communicative power, devices indicating illocutionary force will tell which communicative status the character enjoyed, whether he has succeeded, i.e., has achieved the purpose of communication or not. In [5, p.79], discussing the metaphor of the rational argument, Lakoff and Johnson are interested in statements where expressions such as: (i) *Clearly..., Obviously...* carry the effect of intimidation; (ii) *In your interesting writing...* conveys an effect of flattery; (iii) *If you don't... I will...* has a threatening function. The authors claim such examples are present in rational arguments. In our opinion, from a pragmatic point of view, they represent hedges (examples i & iii), or evaluative words (example ii): in other words, they are devices indicating illocutionary force.

Returning to the connotation of the basicness of rational argument, it is demonstrated by some claims that *some claims are more important to maintain and defend than others*. The research question posed: in a one-party rational argument, corresponding to each part of the argument, what linguistic means will the characters use to *maintain* and *defend* what needs to be *asserted*? We would suppose that pointing out and describing the characteristics of the speech acts in each character's argument will be key here.

##### **2.4.1. Features of speech acts in Dan Thiem's argument**

In the 20 turns of Dan Thiem's dialogue, there are two dominant categories of *illocutionary* speech act (Searle, according to [2]). The representative type of speech act appears 16 times, including affirming, announcing, and rejecting. The directive type was noted nine times, including requesting, advising, and warning, and the expressive four times, including praising, deploring, and blaming.

###### **2.4.1.1. Representative illocutionary acts**

In this category, the subtype of assertive (affirming) appears with the highest frequency

(11 times). The content of this proposition usually revolves around the following claims: affirming Vu Nhu To's talent; informing Vu Nhu To about the real situation that he had to face (big dreams of building but having no money); affirming that the country would be proud of the Cuu Trung Dai palace built by Vu Nhu To. Illocutionary force-indicating devices in these assertive illocutionary acts have the following characteristics:

(a) The character uses repetition to create an affirmative effect in the course of the argument. For example: Ông không có tiền, ông không thể xây dựng được một tòa đài như ý nguyện; không phải thẹn với cung điện nước ngoài 'You do not have money, you cannot build a satisfactory palace as you wish, (you should) not be ashamed when your palace is compared with foreign marvelous ones.' In these statements, the element *không* 'not' has a negative value as incorporated in the verbal expressions *không* 'not', *không thể* 'cannot', *không phải* 'not be'. In terms of syntax, these three expressions were constructed in the form of negation of the predicate of the sentence *có* 'have', *xây dựng* 'build', *thẹn* 'ashamed'. Other syntactic structures can also be used to express negation. For example, the negative form could be placed far from the predicate that it logically negates. For example: Tiền, ông không có, ông (sẽ) xây một tòa đài không như ý nguyện 'Money, you do not have, you (will) build a palace not as you expected'. Alternatively, the speaker could replace a negative meaning with a positive: Dân ta nghìn thu được hãnh diện so với cung điện nước ngoài 'Our folk will be proud for millennia and not be ashamed when your palace is compared with foreign marvellous ones'. Dan Thiem's preference in using the negation article *không* 'not' right next to the predicate it negates instead of other structures shows that her arguments were basically formed on the concept: PROXIMITY IS THE POWER OF IMPACT.

(b) The character uses linguistic expressions expressive of honoring face, promoting talent, fame or valuable contributions of Vu Nhu To to life such as: *muôn đời* 'eternally', *công* 'merit', *nhớ ơn* 'gratitude', *mãi mãi* 'forever' as in *Sự nghiệp của ông còn lại muôn đời; Hậu thế xét công cho ông và nhớ ơn ông mãi mãi* 'Your career remains forever'; 'Descendants will merit, express gratitude to you and remember you forever'. The above linguistic expressions mark the subjective impression of Dan Thiem in her manner of praising Vu Nhu To's talent. Even negative expressions such as *Ông biết một mà không biết hai; không có tiền, không có thể dựng được* 'You know one but don't know two; no money, can't build' also imply Dan Thiem is mocking and warning Vu Nhu To.

#### 2.4.1.2. Directive illocutionary acts

The directive type has six occurrences. The content of their propositions revolves

around Vu Nhu To's wish to build Cuu Trung Dai. For example: *mượn tay vua Hồng Thuận mà thực hiện cái mộng lớn của đời ông* '(you should) borrow King Hong Thuan's hand to make the big dream of your life come true'; *đất Thăng Long thành nơi kinh kì lộng lẫy*; '(you should) make Thang Long the most magnificent capital'. The discourse markers in these directive speech acts show the following characteristics: in terms of structural morphology, a sequence of verbs or phrasal verbs functions as predicate: *đem* 'devote (contribute)', *tòng quyền* 'obey', *mượn* 'borrow', *xây* 'build', and *nghe* 'listen'. In front of the verb phrases are the auxiliary verbs: *phải* 'must', *nên* 'should', *cứ* 'just do it', and *hãy* 'do it' to reinforce the directive effect. The metaphors PROXIMITY IS THE POWER OF IMPACT and THE MORE FORMS, THE MORE CONTENT once again appear in the linguistic expressions mentioned above. This strategy of rational argument helps Dan Thiem to go straight to her goal of advising Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Trung Dai palace, which is clearly shown in her advising statements: *Đây là lúc ông nên mượn tay vua Hồng Thuận* 'This is the time when he should borrow the hand of King Hong Thuan' (showing authority/power); *Chấp kinh thì phải tòng quyền* 'You keep the rules but need to know how to act according to the concrete situation'; *Ông có tài, tài ấy phải đem cống hiến* 'You have talent, that talent must be dedicated' (flattering); *Ông cứ xây lấy một tòa lâu đài cao cả* 'You just build a great palace' (seduction, power); *Ông hãy nghe tôi làm cho đất Thăng Long này thành nơi kinh kì lộng lẫy nhất trần gian*. 'Listen to me and make this Thang Long land the most magnificent place in the world.' (seduction, power).

The force of the words in the above statements shows that from a cognitive perspective even in RATIONAL ARGUMENT there is the presence of WAR. Obviously, Dan Thiem is creating for herself a communicative position to find all kinds of strategies to communicate her intentions and refute Vu Nhu To's arguments. This explains why in the process of debating one-sided arguments, Vu Nhu To only aims to refuse to build Cuu Trung Dai but at the end of the debate with Dan Thiem, he easily surrenders and gives up his original goal.

#### 2.4.2. Features of speech acts in Vu Nhu To's argument

Vu Nhu To's speech acts are mostly devoted to the following argument: *Tài không được trọng thì không hợp tác* 'If talent is not respected, then I refuse to cooperate'. In Vu Nhu To's 21 turns, there are two categories of illocutionary acts that appear with significant frequency: the assertive, appearing 14 times; and the expressive, appearing three times.

### 2.4.2.1. Representative illocutionary acts

In the assertive category, the narrative speech acts accounted for most of the cases. The content of the propositions revolves around the reality of the artist's treatment in general and the plight of Vu Nhu To in particular. The discourse markers in these arguments possess the following characteristics:

(a) The character uses listing and repetition to recount the injustices that artists had to endure under the treatment of the court. For example: *Chế độ thì nghiệt ngã vô lí: nhà không cho làm cao, áo không cho mặc đẹp. Ai xây một kiểu nhà mới khả quan, thì lập tức kết vào tội lộng hành đem chém.* 'The regime is unreasonably cruel: houses are not allowed to be built high; clothes must not be beautiful. Anyone who builds a new type of house that is eye-catching will immediately be charged as excessive and be executed. The element *không* 'not' has a repetitive negative value that repeats itself in the form of a predicate negation of the sentence, *xây cao* 'build high', *đẹp* 'beautiful'. This use of repetition shows that the utterances in Vu Nhu To's speech sequence clarify the metaphor THE MORE FORMS, THE MORE CONTENTS. The theme-rheme structures contribute to highlighting the consequences: artists have to suffer under the treatment of the court, leading to the conclusion *Cách đối đãi như thế, thì nhân tài nhiều sao được, mà ai chịu tập luyện cho thành tài?* 'With such treatment, how can there be so many talents, and who is willing to practice for success?'

(b) In terms of the exclamatory category, linguistic expressions capable of exposing and criticizing the court's regime for talented people are expressed through words such as *khổ nhục* 'suffering', *ngiệt ngã vô lý* 'absurd cruelty', *ao tù* 'prison pond', *vô phúc* 'hopeless', and *nhục* 'humiliation'.

### 2.4.2.2. Expressive illocutionary acts

The three expressive illocutionary speech acts in Vu Nhu To's utterances show the following characteristics: the content of the propositions revolves around the conclusion that *có tài phải chịu nhục nhã* 'talented people must suffer humiliation'. Discourse markers in these cases include: rhetorical questions of an affirmative nature *Cách đối đãi như thế thì nhân tài nhiều sao được, mà ai chịu luyện tập cho thành tài?* 'With such treatment, how can there be so many talents, but who is willing to practice for success?' and correlative conjunction structures such as *thậm chí... còn* 'not only ... but also'; *càng...lại* 'more...more'; *mà* 'yet', both used to emphasize the inevitable conclusion: *không làm khi tài không được trọng* 'do not cooperate when talent is not respected'.

### 3. Modelling the argument between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To

In the conversation between the two characters, Dan Thiem focuses on persuading Vu Nhu To to build Cuu Trung Dai while Vu Nhu To concentrates on expressing the artist's creative aspirations and on the need to refuse to create beauty. When the debate ends, the victory belongs to Dan Thiem, and Vu Nhu To agrees to build Cuu Trung Dai.

Regarding the process of one-party rational argument, we can determine the premises used by each character to come to their conclusions, thereby determining the persuasiveness of the content. In the conversation, Dan Thiem uses the premise of *duyên kì ngộ* 'predestined chance/fateful encounter', while Vu Nhu To uses as his premise the personal view *tài không được trọng thì đem trả trời đất* 'if talent is not respected, return it to God'. Vu Nhu To's answer in this conversation does not come from the premise he has initiated but from the consequences of the previous exchange, so it could be seen that Dan Thiem's rational argument model based on this premise is highly convincing.

Regarding the strength of the argument, Dan Thiem's arguments often include many arguments, much evidence, and various argument structures. She mainly uses a simple argument model that hides the conclusion at the beginning of the argument. When it comes to the goal of praising Vu Nhu To and persuading him to build Cuu Trung Dai, Dan Thiem uses complex arguments with many partial arguments and explicit conclusions as the final counterattack. Vu Nhu To's arguments are mainly responses to Dan Thiem. Despite a large number of complex arguments, the evidence and arguments are mainly about personal circumstances, which are subjective, so his argument is less convincing.

Regarding basicness, we showed the linguistic means employed by the two characters to maintain and defend what they are asserting. In Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To's turns, the illocutionary acts used are mainly of the representative type. Illocutionary force-indicating devices such as repetition and negative expressions are thoroughly deployed by Dan Thiem to refute all arguments from Vu Nhu To. The richness of the means of discourse markers clarifies the metaphor of THE MORE FORMS, THE MORE CONTENTS. The more clearly this metaphor was deployed, the more effective for the purpose of the argument. The above aspects helped to clarify the concept of RATIONAL ARGUMENT in the conversations between Dan Thiem and Vu Nhu To. Based on Dan Thiem's argument, it can be seen that her character rationally applied her arguments, attacked the weak points in Vu Nhu To's argument, brought out the responsibility of the gentleman and the desire of the artist to lure Vu Nhu To with a single purpose: not to let the beauty fade away. Vu Nhu To's initial protest can be

considered an act of resistance to power, but under the guidance of Dan Thiem's argument, Vu Nhu To gradually realizes that artistic hope could survive, even defeat evil. Dan Thiem's victory is the victory of the artist who aspires to dedicate and create beauty.

Examining the conversation from the perspective of cognitive metaphor, this article has tried to clarify the manifestations of ONE-PARTY RATIONAL ARGUMENT, a sub-concept of the metaphorical concept ARGUMENT IS WAR. These research findings can be considered as a suggestion on how to approach dramatic texts from the perspective of cognitive linguistics.

### References

- Đặng, Thị Hào Tâm (2010) Thương lượng nội dung hội thoại và mối quan hệ giữa người nghệ sĩ với quần chúng nhân dân trong trích đoạn ‘Vĩnh biệt Cửu Trùng Đài’ – Nguyễn Huy Tường (Ngữ Văn 11, Nhà xuất bản giáo dục), [Negotiating the content of the dialogue and the relationship between the artist and the people in the excerpt 'Farewell to Cuu Trung Dai' - Nguyen Huy Tuong (Ngu Van 11, Educational Publishing House), *Tap chí Ngôn ngữ* [Journal of Linguistics], Số [Issue] 10, 24–33.
- Đỗ, Hữu Châu (2012) *Đại cương ngôn ngữ học (Tập 2) Ngữ dụng học* [General Linguistics (Volume 2) Pragmatics], Nhà xuất bản Giáo dục, Hà Nội.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Nguyễn, Đức Dân (2000) *Ngữ dụng học (Tập 1)* [Pragmatics, Vol.1], Nhà xuất bản Giáo dục, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn Huy Tường (2015) *Vũ Như Tô*, Nhà xuất bản Kim Đồng, Hà Nội.
- Trần, Văn Cơ (2007) *Ngôn ngữ học tri nhận – Ghi chép và suy nghĩ* [Cognitive linguistics – Notes and thoughts], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Trần, Văn Cơ (2009) *Khảo luận ẩn dụ tri nhận* [Essays on cognitive metaphor], Nhà xuất bản Lao động xã hội, Hà Nội.

# Persuasion in the developing process from ancient Greece to the present

Đoàn Cảnh Tuấn  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** The appearance of studies related to persuasion can be traced back to ancient Greece with the typical representatives like Socrates (470-399 BCE), Plato (427-347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE). Then, this issue has been discussed by several multidisciplinary scholars such as philosophy, psychology, linguistics, pedagogics, politics, etc. During a long history, the approaches on persuasion were mainly through the political and civic contexts. Many scholars considered persuasion as the primary focus on the studies of rhetoric in this period of time. Since the early 1990s, persuasion has been regarded as the important key for the interdisciplinary applied studies which aims to create effective messages and communication strategies in the light of the theories in terms of communications, pragmatics and social psychology.

**Key words:** communications, communicating, persuasion, pragmatics, psychology, strategies

## 1. Introduction

In Vietnam, there has been the appearance of many translations from famous foreign books related to persuasion or persuasive communication in some recent years. This shows the ways to speak, influence and persuade the listeners in communication, which is currently “an extremely hot topic” and brings about the attraction towards the domestic readers. Some of the top ranking translated books on persuasion or persuasive communication in Vietnam can be mentioned today such as *The Magic Power of Emotional Appeal* (Roy Garn, Phan Nguyễn Khánh Đan translated, 2017), *Hypnotic Writing* (Joe Vitale, the same translator, 2017), *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (Robert B. Cialdini, Mai Hạnh translated, 2018), *101 ways to improve your communication skills instantly* (Jo Condrill & Bennie Bough, Bạch Trà translated, 2019), *Words that win* (Don Gabor, Kim Vân translated, 2019), etc. In fact, the above works appeared in the world several decades ago. For instance, Robert B. Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* was present in 1984, *101 ways to improve your communication skills instantly* of Jo Condrill & Bennie Bough or *Words that win* of Don Gabor existed in 1998 and 2003 respectively. In terms of the duration, the



evidence revealed that the research history of persuasion or persuasive communication has originated from ancient Greece period with the ancient Greek philosophers such as Corax (5th Century BCE), Pericles (495-429 BCE), Gorgias (483-375 BCE), Protagoras (490-420 BCE), Aspasia (470-400 BCE), Isocrates (436-338 BCE), Demosthenes (384-322 BC), Socrates (470-399 BCE), Plato (427-347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) (Michael Hogan 2012: 2-4) (John Carruthers 2015: 5).

Thus, it was no doubt that since ancient Greece, people have been interested in how to speak, manipulate, organize and express language so that it could make an impression, influence and persuade others for the purpose of serving their personal motives and goals. They hope to find a way to master their own communication, language ability because of “the supposed ultimate power” of “the words” we use every day. Sigmund Freud (1915) was probably right when claiming that "Words are magical in nature and since ancient times, words have retained this power" (Joe Vitale 2013: 6). In respect to the purposes for usage, words can be used to convey a message, appeal, entice, provoke, ... However, in a certain aspect, its crucial goal is still to convince others. Therefore, persuasion has been concerned and studied during a long historical period from ancient Greece to the present. In order to understand more clearly this development, based on the collected data, the article generalizes the developing process towards the studies of persuasion from the mentioned time above to the present.

## **2. Definition of persuasion**

Many scholars emphasized the role and importance of persuasion in life. Isocrates (337 BC) judged that persuasion was an indispensable part of human life (Perloff 2003). Persuasion is central to how we create community (Spence 2013) how we relate to each other in a free society and how we influence the world around us (Downey 1997). Isocrates and Plato described persuasion as the key to human advancement and civilization. Even the creation of the civilized world is the triumph of violent persuasion (Plato & Whitehead 1933) (John Carruthers 2015: 1-3). So, what exactly is persuasion defined?

There are many different interpretations of persuasion these days. However, some modern concepts of persuasion can be mentioned as follows:

Andersen (1971) defined persuasion as a communication process, whereby “the communicator seeks to elicit a desired response from the receiver” (p. 6). Persuasion is also perceived as human communication behavior designed to influence others through changing their beliefs, values and attitudes (Simons 1976) (Dainton 2005: 104). Conger

and Mason also agreed that persuasion is the ability to present a message in a certain way that leads others to support that message (Conger 1998b: 25). Persuasion is “a communication process in which a source introduces claims, evidence and conclusions with the purpose of inducing a change in the receiver” (Mason 2001:16).

Meanwhile, Smith (1982) described persuasion as the symbolic activity to influence the internalization or voluntary acceptance of new cognitive states or patterns of overt behavior through the exchanges of message (Clair Tranter 2019: 2). Perloff (2003) defined persuasion as “the symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviors regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice” (Perloff 2003: 8). Persuasion is “the use of symbols (sometimes accompanied by images) by one social actor for the purpose of changing or maintaining another social actor’s opinion or behavior (Dillard & Pfau 2002: 8). Similarly, Barden and Petty (2012) stated that “persuasion is the process by which attitudes are changed” (p. 96).

To consider whether a message is persuasive or not, O’Keefe (1990) claimed that factors such as the sender, the means, and the recipient must be taken into account. First, persuasion involves a goal and the intent to achieve that goal on the part of the message sender. Second, communication is the means to achieve that goal. Third, the message recipient must have free will (i.e., threatening physical harm if the recipient does not comply is usually considered force, not persuasion). Accordingly, persuasion is neither accidental nor coercive. It is inherently a communicative activity (Dainton 2004: 104).

### **3. Persuasion from ancient Greece to the late 80s under the influence of traditional rhetoric**

As mentioned above, philosophers from ancient Greece like Corax (5th century BCE), Pericles (495-429 BCE), Gorgias (483-375 BCE), Protagoras (490-420 BCE), Aspasia (470-400 BCE), Isocrates (436-338 BCE), Demosthenes (384-322 BCE), Socrates (470-399 BCE), Plato (427-347 BCE) and Aristotle (384-322 BCE) can be considered as the forebears who enlightened and laid the foundation for the studies of persuasion and persuasive art at that time (Michael Hogan 2012: 2-4) (John Carruthers 2015: 5). They were also the first professors of rhetoric in Greece - the ones who initiated the long tradition of teaching speech and persuasion as one of the educational rights of the citizen. During this period, philosophers identified many basic principles to achieve so-called persuasion and most of them still exist, maintain and are used today.

It is a free state that could engender and sustain a need for persuasion (Downey 1997). In 508 BCE, Cleisthenes revived the Athenian civilization with the traditional democracy by requiring citizens to be able to speak in public. Isocrates (357 BC) called this "the ability to persuade one another". Persuasion and the approaches on it were formed at this time since the ancient Greeks needed to understand the process of creating an effective discourse in influencing the masses. They need to know how to improve their own language skills and use tactics to convince the masses. Besides, the ancient Roman scholars inherited and absorbed the views from the previous scholars, even bringing persuasion to a climax at the later stage (John Carruthers 2015: 5-7). Some typical names can be mentioned as Cicero - politician, philosopher who is considered the greatest orator of Rome and Quintilian - the contemporary famous educator and orator. Especially, it is impossible that a true titan, an illustrious philosopher and rhetorical scholar - Aristotle is not referred. Aristotle stands out not just as one of the first significant thinkers and writers on persuasion but also as a person who pioneered scientific analysis and brought classical traditions together such as sophistry, philosophy and logical reasoning.

In the first edition of *The Persuasion Handbook*, Dillard and Pfau (2002) noted that Aristotle "provided the first comprehensive theory of rhetorical discourse" in the fifth century BCE. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the faculty of "discovering in the particular case... the available means of persuasion" (Cooper 1932: 7), "this power could be used either for good or ill" (Kennedy 1991: 9). For Aristotle, rhetoric was not only a moral but also an architectonic art, encompassing all realms of humanistic and scientific understanding. Persuasion was considered central to the theory of rhetorical discourse, as well as the main focus of rhetorical studies of this period. According to Aristotle, in order to convince the audience, it is necessary to resort to three factors:

**Logos:** Logical reasoning factor. To be persuasive, there must be a reason.

**Pathos:** Emotional factor. Logical reasoning is not enough to convince. Words must arouse feelings and sympathy of the recipient.

**Ethos:** Personality, psychological characteristics, ethnicity, culture of the receiver. Speech must not only be reasonable, emotional and sympathetic, but also suitable to the recipient's preferences, personality or national and cultural traditions (Đỗ Hữu Châu 2001: 164).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, persuasion tended to be personal before the community - one of the concerned chief contents in rhetorical theory in the previous period was not given prominence and appreciated any longer. The beginnings of what Garsten has characterized as the early modern "attack on rhetoric" could be traced to

the rise of political and religious fanaticism (Garsten 2006: 10) and raised fears the effects of demagoguery on public opinion. Instead of considering the everyday opinions of ordinary citizens, philosophers such as Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant relied only on some unitary and authoritative source of public judgment. They asked citizens to distance themselves from their private judgments and to judge from a sovereign, unitary, public standpoint instead (Garsten 2006: 11). This has downplayed the role of persuasion and personal opinion in politics, "aestheticizing" rhetoric and transformed it into a literary enterprise rather than a political one" (Garsten 2006: 11-12).

Then, during the Enlightenment, the scope of rhetoric broadened to include aesthetic and psychological concerns (Michael Hogan 2012: 2). Ethical issues were paid more attention while persuasion was mainly approached through political or civil contexts. Persuasion was increasingly being theorized and widely spread to citizens; however, in fact, it focused and attached much importance to ethical issues in rhetorical education. Philosophers constantly debated the status of rhetoric in philosophy, the best methods of rhetorical education as well as the purpose, scope, power and ethics of rhetoric. For example, Isocrates once remarked. He viewed that rhetoric is a means for educating students to "think and speak noble, virtuous ideas" and "implement them in civic policy" (Kennedy 1991: 11). For Isocrates, the ultimate goal of rhetorical education was not to prepare individuals for success, but to train them for public service and "inspire the political life of the nation with a higher moral creed" (Jaeger 1965: 108). For the Romans, the ideal orator was not merely one with "exceptional gifts of speech," but also a "good man" with "all the excellences of character" (Butler 1969) (Kennedy 1991: 4). They considered the principles of moral conduct an integral part of the rhetorical art. Similarly, according to Cicero, true eloquence or persuasion required that the orator be trained "in all the liberal arts", as well as mastery of the "moral sciences" of "human life and conduct", etc. (Kennedy 1991: 4).

It was the tilting of the rhetorical balance in favor of such ethical standards that led to the widening of the scope in the studies of persuasion. Persuasion was no longer only included in rhetorical theories but it was also in relation to rhetorical educational methods. The role of persuasion in politics and civic life was emphasized. The speaker's moral character and ethical issue of persuasion are of particular interest. The ancient rhetoricians aspired to equip young people with the skills and knowledge they would need to be citizens in a free society. All of them recognized the need for rules of civic persuasion, and at the same time outlined the characteristics of an ideal orator. It is a speaker who embodied civic virtue and a commitment to the "common good." As Garsten (2006) concluded, the ancient rhetorical tradition constituted a "politics of

persuasion” where both leaders and ordinary citizens possessed “a certain moral”. It was served as a check on demagoguery and allowed for “responsible judgement” in civil affairs (Garsten 2006: 146).

This “aestheticization of rhetoric” was more apparent in the belletristic movement of the late 18th century and resonated throughout the nineteenth century. Initiated by Hugh Blair and George Campbell, this movement combined the study of rhetoric and “polite arts” including poetry, drama, and even biography and history into a common discipline, with an emphasis on taste, style, culture, and critical analysis. The belletristic movement also reflected some larger intellectual trends at the time, including “a pervasive enthusiasm for the newly developing empirical method, a commitment to rationalism, a curiosity to understand human nature and man's relationship to God, a preoccupation with the origin and use of language, and an appreciation of the potentialities of persuasion as a force in a democracy and in a Christian society” (Golden & Corbett, 1968) (Kennedy 1991: 4). The belletristic rhetoricians also placed a premium on emotions over reason, distinguishing between “conviction” and “persuasion” and associating the latter to the human passions. Persuasion was approached from a wider variety of contexts, a much broader scope of discourse, with few references to contemporary economic and political problems (Whately 1963: 12).

By the twentieth century, many of these trends became even more evident when they blurred the distinction between text and discourse, broadened the scope of rhetoric, especially treated persuasion as one of many purposes or “ends” of rhetoric. At this time, the study of rhetoric also began to become more interdisciplinary as rhetoric theorists explored the connections between persuasion in particular, rhetoric in general, and literature, religion, history, philosophy and psychology, etc.

#### **4. Studies on persuasion from the 90s to the present**

The emergence of radio and television in the 1920s greatly expanded the approaching scope as well as impact of mass media and technology on people's lives. In particular, since the mid-1930s, when Dale Carnegie first published his best-selling book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, strategies and ways of persuading listeners became a controversial topic and extremely profitable. When the two world wars occurred, the study and understanding of persuasive messages associated with multimedia and persuasive propaganda were even more important in analyzing the political and social changes. Perhaps, hence, since the early 1990s, scholars have tended to consider

persuasion from the perspective of *social psychology* and *communication theory* to aim at explaining these social events. Ross (1908) and Allport (1935) were two typical psychologists who emphasized the role of persuasion when claiming that persuasion is an important key for applied research in many important areas such as education, the criminal justice system, political and economic debate. Meanwhile, on the basis of communication theory, the theoretical system of persuasive communication has begun to be generalized and built by scholars. The research of Dorwin Cartwright (1941-1945), Carl Hovland and colleagues from Yale University (1953), Janis (1954) have gradually completed the foundation for this persuasive communication theory system (Clair Tranter 2019: 2-5).

In the second half of the twentieth century, studies on persuasion not only focused on *communication theory* but also took *pragmatics* as a premise and foundation, on which to apply and build *models, messages* and *tactics of persuasion*. There are many representative researchers on persuasive communication models in this period such as Allyn & Festinger (1961), Cervin, Joyner Spence & Heinz (1961), Kiesler (1969), Andersen (1971), Miller, Maruyama, Beaber, & Valone (1976), Nisbett & Ross (1980), Boster & Mongeau (1985), Chaiken et al (1987, 1989, 1994), Roskos, Ewoldsen & Fazio (1992), Van Schie, Martijn, & Vab der Pligt (1994), Holtgraves & Lasky (1999), etc. According to the above communication theory researchers, in order to achieve the persuasive effect, mastering the factors of the communication process in relation to many relevant variables such as political, economic, social, cultural context, recipient psychology, characteristics of the message, credibility of the source, etc is especially important. Scholars following the second tendency placed research on persuasion in the light of pragmatic theory. Thereby, building effective persuasive messages or communication strategies with such prominent names like Robert B. Cialdini (1984), Petty & Cacioppo (1986), Johnson & Eagly (1989) or Manfredi (1992), etc.

In the 2000s and onwards, studies on persuasion oriented towards interdisciplinary applications. Especially, they paid attention to building effective persuasive strategies. Examples of these included the work of Mason (2001), Perloff (2003), *Maximum Influence: The 12 Universal Laws of Power* of Kurt W. Mortensen (2004), Dillard (2010), Barden & Pretty (2012), *Persuasion and Power – The Art of Strategic Communication* of James P. Farwell (2012), *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* of Randal Marlin (2013), *The Art of Persuasion and the Role of Figurative Language in Management Communication* – John Carruthers (2015). Research was conducted on persuasive messages of the Ministry of Health and health organizations by Shen, Sheer and Li (2015). Thence, applying to build more messages to persuade people to change

some harmful habits such as smoking, eating a lot of sweets and greasy foods, which aims to assist citizens to live healthier and longer. Leippe (2016) studied on persuasion in law. In which, research data on persuasion was taken from three groups of subjects. They are prosecutors, defense attorneys, and jury members. Prosecutors and defense attorneys persuade the jury to give the guilty or innocent for the defendants and the jury members persuade each other in reaching a final verdict for the defendants. Research work on *Persuasive Tactics* of Patrick King (2016) and Doctoral dissertation *Persuasion in context: Understanding the Impact of Communication Modality, Gender, Ethnicity, Cognitive and Linguistic Style* of Claire L. Tranter (2019) etc. also followed in this tendency.

In Vietnam, over the past decade, in-depth studies on persuasion have mainly focused on persuasion as a communication skill from the perspective of media or social psychology, such as Doctoral dissertation *Using the Methods of Mass Mobilization in the Initial Investigation* of Lê Quốc Trân (2010), the Doctoral dissertation *Communication Skills of Bank Transaction Officers* of Phan Thị Tuyết (2010), the Doctoral dissertation *Mobilization work on Catholic compatriots in some Southeast provinces* of Đặng Mạnh Trung (2011), the Doctoral dissertation *Persuasion skills of the Commune Police for the Residents in performing tasks* of Bùi Đức Trọng (2018), etc.

This indicates that the research on persuasion from the 90s to the present have been generally oriented towards applicability. Authors approached persuasion from a variety of discourses such as politics, economics, education, medicine, etc. However, in term of the theory, the studies are all considered in the light of communication theory, social psychology or pragmatics. This has greatly contributed to the consolidation of professional theories and effective application in improving communication skills of various subjects in society. Therefore, it can be recognized that the way of speaking, the ability to use language flexibly and effectively in interpersonal relationships and influence others is always a great concern of mankind and the same not only in the past but up to the present. People are always eager to be able to find strategies to master the "power of language" with the expectation that they can influence and dominate the objects involved in communication for one or more a certain purpose.

## 5. Conclusion

As mentioned above, persuasion is not a new topic in scientific research, especially research in some leading scientific fields such as philosophy, psychology, linguistics,

politics, education, etc. Persuasion was born and developed in a democratic society. Ancient Greek democracy was the birthplace of the first approaches to persuasion. Although over time, political, social, and cultural changes may lead to the narrowing or widening in the research scope of persuasion and the persuasion will exist its own features, it is still always changing through different sub-disciplines and making more and more contributions both in theory and in scientific practice until now. Currently, in Vietnam, there are not several studies on persuasion in the interdisciplinary relationship. This has opened a gap in subsequent persuasion studies for scholars in the nation. In particular, on the basis of studies on persuasion, it is possible to partly give an explanation of the thought, psychological, cultural and linguistic characteristics of the Vietnamese people. Thence, proceed to build persuasive communication messages, effective persuasion strategies in a variety of different fields.

## References

- Andersen, K. (1971) *Persuasion: Theory and practice*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Barden, J. And Petty (2012) Persuasion. In: *Encyclopedia of Human Behaviour* (eds) Ramachandran, 96-102. United States of America: Elsevier Science.
- Bùi, Đức Trọng (2018) *Kỹ năng thuyết phục người dân của công an xã trong thực hiện nhiệm vụ* [*Persuasion Skills of the Commune Police for the Residents in performing tasks*]. Hanoi: Doctoral dissertation, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.
- Cacioppo, J. T., Petty, R.E., Kao, C, F., Rodriguez, R. (1986) Central and peripheral routes to persuasion: An individual difference perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* vol. 51 no. 5, 1032-1043.
- Clair Tranter (2019) *Persuasion in Context: Understanding the Impact of Communication Modality, Gender, Ethnicity, Cognitive and Linguistic Style Vol. 1*. Australia: Doctoral dissertation, University of Westminster.
- Conger (1998b) The necessary art of persuasion. *Harvard Business Review* vol. 76, 84-95. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Cooper, L. (1932) *The rhetoric of Aristotle*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335633509380070>
- Dainton (2005) Explaining theories of persuasion in M. Dainton & E.D. Zellely, *Applying communication theory for professional life: A practical introduction*, 103-131. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Đặng, Manh Trung (2011) *Công tác vận động đồng bào công giáo tại một số tỉnh Đông Nam Bộ* [*Mobilization work on Catholic compatriots in some Southeast provinces*]. Ho Chi Minh: Doctoral dissertation, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.



- Dillard, J. P. & Pfau (2002) *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412976046>
- Dillard & Lijiang Shen (2012) *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218410>
- Downey (1997) *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory (1810) by John Quincy Adams vol. I and II*. New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, Delmar.
- Đỗ, Hữu Châu (2001) *Đại cương ngôn ngữ học vol. 2 [General Linguistics vol. 2]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Garsten, B. (2006) *Saving persuasion: A defense of rhetoric and judgment*. New York: Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.
- Jaeger, W. (1965) The rhetoric of Isocrates and its cultural ideal. In: J. Schwartz & J. A. Rycenga (eds), *The province of rhetoric*. New York: Ronald Press.
- Joe Vitale – Phan Nguyen Khanh Dan translated (2013) *Thôi miên bằng ngôn từ [Hypnotic Writing]*. Hanoi: Communication and Information Press.
- John Carruthers (2015) *The art of persuasion and the role of figurative language in management communication*. Australia: Doctoral dissertation, University of Western.
- Kennedy, G.A. (1991) *Aristotle on rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/295064>
- Lê, Quốc Trân (2010) *Sử dụng biện pháp vận động quần chúng trong điều tra ban đầu [Using the Methods of Mass Mobilization in the Initial Investigation]*. Hanoi: Doctoral dissertation, People's Police Academy.
- Mason, L. (2001) The process of change through persuasion: a commentary. *International Journal of Educational Research* vol. 35 no. 7-8, 715-729.
- Michael Hogan (2012) Persuasion in the Rhetorical Tradition. In: *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice*, 1-17. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452218410.n1>
- Nhữ, Văn Thao (2012) *Kỹ năng giao tiếp của chính trị viên trong Quân đội nhân dân Việt Nam [Communication Skills of Politicians in Vietnam People's Army]*. Hanoi: Doctoral dissertation, National Defense Academy.
- Perloff, R.M. (2003) *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communications and Attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Phan, Thị Tuyết (2010) *Kỹ năng giao tiếp của cán bộ giao dịch ngân hàng [Communication Skills of Bank Transaction Officers]*. Hanoi: Doctoral dissertation, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.
- Robert B. Cialdini (1984) *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. United States of America: Harper Business.
- Spence, S. (2013) *Figuratively Speaking: Rhetoric and Culture from Quintilian to the Twin Towers*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Whately, R. (1963) *Elements of Rhetoric: Comprising an analysis of the laws of moral evidence and of persuasion with rules for argumentative composition and elocution*. In: D. Ehninger, Eds. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

# **The use and maintenance of Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan: Case study on Japanese Vietnamese mixed-parentage children**

Đỗ Hồng Dương

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** The concept of a heritage language is common and familiar in today's world of growing rates of global immigration. As such there are more and more studies on Vietnamese as a heritage language. This article is only one of the research efforts focused on Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan – where many Vietnamese live. This paper looks at the results of a survey of the linguistic characteristics of Japanese-Vietnamese children and will analyze the current situation of using and maintaining Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan.

**Key words:** Vietnamese language, heritage language, mixed children, Japan

## **1. Introduction**

Following my previous studies on Vietnamese as a heritage language, this article will focus on some issues related to the use and maintenance of Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan.

By the end of 2021, there are nearly 450,000 Vietnamese people living in Japan (according to data from the Japanese Ministry of Justice)<sup>1</sup>. The Vietnamese community represented the second largest immigrant group in Japan, after China. The number of Vietnamese in Japan is increasing, which also means that the number of Vietnamese or Japanese-Vietnamese children born in Japan is increasing. With Japanese as the first language, used by children in school and in society, Vietnamese is considered a heritage language used in Vietnamese families and communities.

In this article, we only include the use of Vietnamese by Japanese Vietnamese mixed-parentage children in bilingual families, not in families where both Vietnamese parents immigrate to Japan.

---

Đỗ, Hồng Dương. 2023. The use and maintenance of Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan: Case study on Japanese Vietnamese mixed-parentage children. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151428>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00250011&tstat=000001012480&cycle=7&year=20210&month=0&tclass1=000001012481&tclass2val=0>

We selected the case study method (04 mixed-parentage children in 04 Japanese Vietnamese families) in combination with deep interviews and qualitative descriptions (applied to their parents). The objective of the study is to clarify the linguistic characteristics of heritage language speakers (HLS) according to the existing theoretical frameworks of heritage languages (see Do Hong Duong [2021]), to find out the factors affecting the process of using and maintaining the heritage language of mixed-race children, and proposing further research directions to contribute to maintaining and promoting the preservation of Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japan.

## **2. Heritage language in a bilingual environment**

As mentioned in previous studies, a heritage language is a minority language learned by its speakers at home as children. Heritage language speakers who grew up in an environment where their primary language is different from their heritage language will be more competent in the primary language and will feel more comfortable speaking it<sup>2</sup>.

Under this concept, to some extent, HLSs are bilingual speakers. The bilingual environment is understood as a family and social environment in which the heritage language is the language used in the home environment.

In this study, we focus on studying the heritage language in a bilingual environment at home. For mixed-parentage children, their families are already bilingual, with parents holding two different languages. In this bilingual environment, there are cases where each parent speaks to their child in one language (one parent one language), there are also cases where parents use mixed languages to communicate with their child. Of the two parents' languages, one will be the first language, used not only in the family but also in society; the other is the heritage language. The heritage language is the weaker language for the child because it is communicated only between the child and the father (or mother) and within a small community of heritage language speakers. Thus, unlike children in families with both Vietnamese parents who can use Vietnamese 100% of the time at home, children in multinational and multicultural families only use Vietnamese language about 50% of the time when they are with their family.

---

<sup>2</sup> Valdés, G. (2000) The teaching of heritage languages: an introduction for Slavic-teaching professionals *The learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures*. Olga Kagan and Benjamin Rifkin: 375–403.

According to studies on the universal features of HLSs, every HLS has to go through 3 linguistic processes: 1/Incomplete acquisition in early life, 2/ Frequent language code-switching/mixing with dominant language, 3/ Language lost/consumption in later life period<sup>3</sup>. The cases of children in this study belong to the second phase.

According to Taeschner's comments about children in bilingual environments<sup>4</sup>, children go through three stages during their language acquisition. Each stage includes certain characteristics, the boundaries of the stages are not clear. The ages of children in each stage can be different among different cases. Some children may stay in one stage longer than others, and some characteristics of one stage may occur in another.

In the first stage the child has one lexical system which includes words from both languages. At this time, it is often difficult for children to distinguish pairs of words from different languages that have the same meaning. They often blend words from two different languages into one word for a specific meaning.

In the second stage the child distinguished different lexicons. They use language that is appropriate for the person communicating with them (in the case of father speaking one language, mother speaking another). They know how to separate pairs of words into words of different languages instead of mixing them into one. However, children's language still often represents the grammar of one language. For example, a child says: "That is dish doggie" instead of: "That is doggie's dish"<sup>5</sup>.

In the third stage the child distinguishes different lexicons completely. The child is aware that they have two separate languages and knows how to communicate with people in the appropriate language. During this period, the child also begins to distinguish the two grammatical systems of the two languages. In some cases, the process may develop more slowly.

According to Taeschner's model, the language development stages of heritage language speakers belong to stages 1 and 2. Taeschner's three-stage model is quite useful in observing a child and assessing in what stage of the bilingual acquisition process they are. There are certain advantages in evaluating the use of heritage language

---

<sup>3</sup> Phan, Tran (2019) Vietnamese as a Heritage Language: a Preliminary Study on Linguistic Characteristics of Vietnamese Americans *Vietnamese Studies in Vietnam and Germany: New Contributions to Vietnamese Linguistics* Publisher: Universität Hamburg; Publikationen der Hamburger Vietnamistik: 15–44

<sup>4</sup> Harding, E. & Riley, P. (1986) *The Bilingual Family: A handbook for parents* Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, C. (1995) *A Parent's and Teacher's Guide to Bilingualism* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

by mixed-parentage children, in the context that children use heritage language in parallel with another language that is socially dominant. According to this model, the cases of mixed children of the present study were in section 3.

### 3. Study cases

The participants in the survey include 4 cases of mixed-race children in the Tokyo area of Japan. We record conversations between a child and a parent (holder of the heritage language) over a period of 1 hour at home. In addition, each child is guided by their parents to observe the pictures and tell a short story according to the picture in Vietnamese, the purpose is to give children the opportunity to produce their own language, without a parent leading as in a conversation. The selected story is the Hare and the Tortoise. Having children tell stories by pictures also serves another purpose. It helps to measure the child's speech rate to assess their proficiency in their heritage language (according to the criteria of Polinsky and Kagan<sup>6</sup>). However, one subject, Yuki, refuses to tell stories according to pictures. Another subject, Ken is not interested in telling stories, so he tries to linger, prolonging the time, so that the result is not as good as expected. Therefore, we did not include speech rate in our survey results.

Information about the children participating in the survey is as below:

Yuki (8 years old, male) has a Japanese father working full time in a medical unit. His mother is Vietnamese working part-time in a restaurant. Yuki has a brother 2 years older than himself. Since his birth, his father has spoken with Yuki in Japanese, while his mother has communicated with Yuki in Vietnamese since Yuki was 3 years old. When Yuki entered kindergarten (3 years old), Yuki's Japanese developed well and Yuki began to use Japanese when communicating with his mother. His mother accepted that and sometimes also inserted Japanese when communicating with him. Yuki was taken care of by his mother more so he communicates with her more than the father. Yuki is also close to his brother, so the communication between the two siblings in a day also accounts for a considerable amount of time. During the observation period, his brother spoke to Yuki mostly in Japanese, and sometimes in Vietnamese at the request of his mother (ratio 80:20). Yuki used Vietnamese about 40% of the total communication time at home (according to his mother's calculation). Yuki could understand spoken Vietnamese very well, speak relatively well, and read Vietnamese but not fluently. However, he could not write in Vietnamese. According to our observations, Yuki talked to his mother in Vietnamese quite well but if he could not

---

<sup>6</sup> Polinsky, M.Kagan.O (2007) Heritage languages: In the “wild” and in the classroom *Language and Linguistics compass*. 1(5): 368-395.

describe a picture upon request then he became confused and refused to tell the whole story.

Hiro (9 years old, male) has a Vietnamese father and a Japanese mother. His father was a writer in Vietnam. After going to Japan for the first time, he continued writing books at home in Vietnam. For 2 years preceding the observation period, he has worked as a counselor for immigrant students (coming from Vietnam) in high school. Hiro's mother is a primary school teacher. The father communicates with Hiro only in Vietnamese. Sometimes Hiro uses Japanese to communicate with his father, but his father does not encourage this. Hiro communicates with his mother in Japanese. Hiro uses Japanese when having family discussions with his parents. Hiro has no siblings, so he doesn't have an opportunity to use Vietnamese or Japanese with them. During the day, the father communicates with the child most of the time because the father is responsible for taking care of the child at home. In addition, his father also spent time teaching him Vietnamese and giving him many Vietnamese books. Vietnamese communication in Hiro's house may account for about 70% (according to his father's estimation). Hiro can listen, speak and read Vietnamese well, but his writing ability is below average. According to observation, Hiro can communicate with his father in Vietnamese fluently, tell stories according to pictures relatively confidently and quite well.

Rina (7 years old, female) has a Japanese father and a Vietnamese mother. Rina's father works at a construction company. Rina's mother has a part-time office job. Rina communicates with her father in Japanese and with her mother in Vietnamese. Mother and daughter communicated entirely in Vietnamese until Rina was 4 years old. After going to kindergarten, Rina began to use more Japanese words in her communication with her mother, even though her mother did not encourage it. Rina does not communicate with her siblings because she is an only child. The language used in Rina's family (includes Rina and her parents) is also Japanese. Rina's Vietnamese communication time at home is estimated at about 50% (according to her mother's estimate). According to observations, Rina communicates Vietnamese well with her mother, and can also tell stories according to pictures well.

Ken (9 years old, male) has a Japanese father and a Vietnamese mother. His parents work together in a family shop (selling Vietnamese food). Ken has a younger brother who is 3 years younger. Ken communicates with his father in Japanese, and communicated with his mother entirely in Vietnamese until he was 3 years old. After that, he began often inserting Japanese when communicating with his mother. Ken communicates with his brother mostly in Japanese, sometimes with a few Vietnamese

sentences (ratio 90:10). Ken’s Vietnamese communication time at home is estimated to be about 40%. According to observations, Ken communicates in Vietnamese with his mother relatively well, telling stories slowly.

The above information can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1. Information of cases study

<i>Child</i>	<i>Age (at the survey time)</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>The father’s language</i>	<i>The mother’s language</i>	<i>Language used between mother and father</i>	<i>Language used between siblings</i>
Yuki	8 years old	Male	Japanese	Vietnamese	Japanese	Japanese + Vietnamese
Hiro	9 years old	Male	Vietnamese	Japanese	Japanese	(only child)
Rina	7 years old	Female	Japanese	Vietnamese	Japanese	(only child)
Ken	9 years old	Male	Japanese	Vietnamese	Japanese	Japanese + Vietnamese

In sum, Yuki, Rina, and Ken all have Japanese fathers and a Vietnamese mother. Only Hiro has a Vietnamese father and a Japanese mother. The communication language between father and mother in all these families is Japanese, because the Japanese father (or mother) does not know Vietnamese. So Japanese is also a family language (used when the whole family has discussions). Communication between children in the family is mostly in Japanese, although Vietnamese is encouraged.

According to the Montrul classification (2002)<sup>7</sup>, the people who are exposed to a second language (L2) from age 0 to 7 are called early bilinguals and those who are exposed to second language (L2) from age 8 to 12 are called late bilinguals. All the survey participants are early bilinguals as they are exposed to both Vietnamese and Japanese from the earliest years.

## 4. Study results

### 4.1. Pronunciation

In the 4 cases studied, the 4 children did not make many pronunciation errors, especially no errors in tone and accompaniment. A common pronunciation error is that 4 children

<sup>7</sup> Montrul, S (2002) Incomplete Acquisition and Attrition of Spanish Tense/Aspect Distinctions in Adult Bilinguals *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*. Vol. 5, no. 1: 39-68.

confuse the consonants /l/ and /r/ (cà rốt -> cà lốt). This can be explained by the influence of Japanese pronunciation, as words beginning with /r/ are pronounced /l/. In addition, some other pronunciation errors are listed as follows:

Table 2. Pronunciation errors by HLSs

Error	Yuki	Hiro	Rina	Ken
First consonant	Pronounced /χ/ to /h/ (không-> hông).			Sometimes pronounced /tʰ/ to /t/ (miếng thịt->miếng tịt)
Main vowel	Sometimes pronounced /ɕ/ to /s/ (cận -> cợn) Sometimes pronounced diphthongs to single vowels (/uɪ/ is pronounced to /ui/ (được -> đực)	Sometimes pronounced short /u/ in to long /u:/ (lúc -> lúc)	Sometimes pronounced /ɕ/ to /s/ (bật nhạc->bợt nhạc).	
Last sound				Frequently pronounce the last syllable /u/ to /ɔ/ (rau -> rao, mau -> mao).

The table shows that there are not many pronunciation mistakes during communication. This is completely consistent with theoretical studies on heritage languages. According to Polinsky, heritage languages learners can master up to 90% of the phonological systems of heritage languages. Because children are exposed to the heritage language from early birth, the heritage language is a first language in the first years of life. Early exposure to the heritage language helps children to pronounce similarly to that of monolinguals...

Of the 4 children, Yuki made more mistakes than the rest of the kids. It can be explained by his having had less heritage language exposure time than other children. His mother also inconsistently uses the heritage language to communicate with him. In addition, we noticed that Yuki was strongly influenced by his brother who spoke Japanese to all family members, and he only switched to speak Vietnamese at the request of his mother. Sometimes, the two children changed their pronunciation to



make fun when speaking in Vietnamese. In the long term, this action may affect the ability to pronounce correctly.

The limitation of mixed-parentage children in speaking ability is reflected mostly by the unnatural intonation when compared to monolinguals. Yuki and Rina often raise their voices in questions:

- (1) - Mother: Hôm qua bạn nào bắt nạt con?  
- Yuki: Hôm quá? (*Raise the voice*).  
[- Mother: Who bullied you yesterday?  
- Yuki: Yesterday? (*Raise the voice*)]  
(Rec 1; 12'06'')

- (2) - Mother: Thế hết corona thì con thích ở đâu?  
- Rina: Vì sao? (*Raise the voice*)  
[- Mother: After corona pandemic, where do you want to go?  
- Rina: Why? (*Raise the voice*)]  
(Rec 3; 18'24'')

Hiro often raises his voice when he wants to emphasize affirmation:

- (3) - Father: Chiến thắng thì được cái gì?  
- Hiro: Chiến thắng thì được đồ chơi. (*Raise the voice*).  
[- Father: What do you get if you win?  
- Hiro: If I win I will get toy. (*Raise the voice*)]  
(Rec 2; 3'08'')

- (4) - Father: Salad á?  
- Hiro: Vâng. (*Raise the voice*).  
[- Father: Salad?  
- Hiro: Yes. (*Raise the voice*)]  
(Rec 2; 11'27'')

Ken often lengthens his voice when he wants to show his emotion:

- (5) - Ken: Akari đi rất chậmmmm. (*Lengthen the word*).  
[- Ken: Akari walk so slowlyyyyy. (*Lengthen the word*).]  
(Rec 8; 4'56'')

- (6) - Ken: Thê...(lengthen) mà không đi được đến đó.  
[- Ken: So...(lengthen) cannot go there.]

(Rec 8; 6'21'')

Limited intonation prevents children from speaking Vietnamese naturally. They pronounce words in the way people who learn Vietnamese as a foreign language.

#### 4.2. Vocabulary

There are not many difficulties for children to acquire vocabulary when talking to their parents. Children can learn the words from their parent's spoken language, and there are often suggestions for words for children to follow. Eg:

- (7) - Mother: Rina lấy **truyện** ra đây đi nhanh lên.  
- Rina: **Truyện** gì?  
- Mother: Truyện gì cũng được. Rina thích **truyện tranh** hay truyện chữ?  
- Rina: **Truyện tranh**.  
- Mother:Ừ thế lấy truyện tranh đi. Ở trên bàn ấy. Mà mà tiếng Việt ấy nhé, không phải tiếng Nhật đâu nhé.  
[- Mother: Rina, please bring the **story book** quickly.  
- Rina: Which **story book**?  
- Mother: Any storybook. Rina, do you like **picture- storybook** or word-storybook?  
- Rina: **Picture- storybook**.  
- Mother: So please bring the picture-story book. It is on the table, please bring the book in Vietnamese not in Japanese.]

(Rec 3; 13'45'')

- (8) - Yuki: Không mở được (*Pointing at the cover*).  
- Mother: Cái nắp chặt quá à hay là tay trơn?  
- Yuki: Nắp chặt.  
[- Yuki: Cannot open. (*Pointing at the cover*).  
- Mother: Cover is too tight or your hand is slippery?  
- Yuki: Cover is too tight.]

(Rec 1; 17'14'')

However, if the children are asked to tell the stories or talk about issues in school or elsewhere, or asked to tell stories with pictures, children face many lexical limitations. Typical limitations are:

#### 4.2.1. HLSS cannot remember the words

In some portions of the dialogue, the child appeared to not know (or not remember) the word. Children have two ways to solve this limited vocabulary problem, one is to use Japanese to replace the Vietnamese words they don't know (or can't remember), the other is to explain the meaning in Vietnamese instead of using the correct word in vietnamese. For example:

1/ Language code mix

- (9) - Mother: Thế bạn làm gì?  
- Yuki: Lấy ... **wagutsu**. (*Mix Japanese*)  
- Mother: Lấy cái dép lê của con đúng không?  
- Yuki: ù, lấy hai dép lê. Ném đi.  
[- Mother: *What did your friend do?*  
- Yuki: *Get ... wagutsu. (Mix Japanese)*  
- Mother: *Did your friend get your slippers?*  
- Yuki: *Yes, get 2 slippers. Throw away.*]  
(Rec 1; 13'32'')
- (10) - Mother: Ở sao đoạn này khác khác ấy nhỉ. Mất cái gì ấy nhỉ?  
- Yuki: Mất gì mà đeo... mất **megane**. (*Mix Japanese*)  
- Mother: Mất cái kính à?  
- Yuki: Mất cái kính, mất rồi. Mẹ Nobita làm xong mất nó. Nó không ở mắt.  
[- Mother: *Oh so different. What did she lose?*  
- Yuki: *Lost something to wear... lost megane. (Mix Japanese)*  
- Mother: *Lost glasses?*  
- Yuki: *Lost the glasses, lost already. Nobita's mother lost them. They are not on eyes.*]  
(Rec 1; 24'10'')

2/ Explanation the meaning of word in Vietnamese

- (11) - Father: Xong rồi sao?  
- Hiro: Xong rồi bật cái nước, rồi quay... quay **cái đồ mà làm nước đi ra**.  
- Father: **Cái vòi nước**.

- Hiro: Đúng.
- [- Father: *After that, what happened?*
- Hiro: *After that, get water and turn...turn **the item to get water.***
- Father: **Faucet.**
- Hiro: *Right]*

(Rec 2; 29'56'')

- (12)
- Mother: Có phải mẹ quên không nhớ?
  - Rina: Mẹ mở ô xong rồi rơi cái mà giấy bao bao...
  - Mother: **Cái thùng** á? Đâu, mẹ có làm rơi đâu.
  - [- Mother: *Did I forget something?*
  - Rina: *You opened the umbrella and dropped **the one wrapped...wrapped in the paper** ...*
  - Mother: **The box?** No, I did not drop anything.]

(Rec 3; 8'27'')

We have counted 86 instances of HLSs mixing languages and 21 instances HLSs interpret in order to replace unknown (or unremembered) words. In which, Yuki mixed languages the most (37 times) without explaining the meaning in Japanese even once. Hiro explained the most (12 times). This shows that Yuki's ability to use Vietnamese is lower than that of other children. When communicating, Yuki seems to mix the language more and he has the intention to speak Japanese if the listener can understand Japanese. Interviewing his mother, it is said that he only wants to use Japanese in the Vietnamese community and he speaks Japanese to his brother 90% of the time. Meanwhile, Hiro showed his superior ability in terms of vocabulary compared to other children. As Hiro uses vocabulary in different areas, he encounters more new words than other children and always tries to explain instead of mixing language. It can be seen that Hiro's father plays an important role in developing his vocabulary. He communicates in Vietnamese at home for the longest time among the 4 children, so Hiro has an advantage in maintaining and practicing the language. His father is also very strict with the principle of one language when communicating with him, and develops his language in many forms (communication, reading stories, watching movies...).

#### 4.2.2. HLSs misuse of words

The children used the wrong word in 27 instances and they can correct by themselves (4 times, 15%) or were corrected by a parent (23 times, 85%). For example:

- (13) - Ken: Rùa đến **chỗ cuối**. Rùa đi qua **chỗ cuối**.  
- Mother: Hả?  
- Ken: Về **cuối**, về **đích**. [*Ken corrected by himself*]  
- Mother: (smile) Ừ về **đích** chứ. Mẹ lại tưởng rùa về **cuối** sau thỏ.  
[- Ken: Turtle go to **the end location**. Turtle goes to **the end location**.  
- Mother: What?  
- Ken: **End location**, go to **destination**. [*Ken corrected by himself*]  
- Mother: (smile) Yes, go to destination. I thought the tortoise was last after the hare.]

(Rec 8; 7'41'')

- (14) - Father: Chơi xong mệt quá thì làm thế nào?  
- Hiro: Thì lấy khăn lau **nước** trên người.  
- Father: Lau gì? (smile)  
- Hiro: Lau nước... (smile), lau nước, à... cái gì nhỉ?  
- Father: **Mồ hôi**, nước trên người là mồ hôi. [*Hiro was corrected by his father*]  
- Hiro: (smile) Lau **mồ hôi** cho khô rồi uống nước.  
[- Father: What did you do after playing?  
- Hiro: Got the towel and wiped the **water** off the body.  
- Father: (smile) Wiped what?  
- Hiro: Wiped water... (smile) wiped water, oh... what?  
- Father: **Sweat**, water on the body is sweat. [*Hiro was corrected by his father*]  
- Hiro: (smile) Wiped my **sweat** to dry off then drank water.]

(Rec 2; 5'43'')

- (15) - Mother: Sao lại ấn cái nút mạnh thế. Nhẹ cái tay thôi chứ.  
- Rina: **Không cố gắng** mà. Làm thế này mà nó ù ù ù.  
- Mother: **Không cố ý**. [*Rina was corrected by her mother*]  
[- Mother: Why you press the button so hard? Just do it lightly.  
- Rina: **Not trying**. Do it this way and it buzzes.  
- Mother: **Not intentionally**. [*Rina was corrected by her mother*]]

(Rec 3; 17'29'')

### 4.3. Grammar

Under our observations, mixed-parentage children do not make as many grammatical errors as foreigners learning Vietnamese. Children understand the structure of Vietnamese sentences and have little difficulty in speaking grammar correctly. There are a number of grammatical features shown in children's communication that we noticed during the survey as follows:

a/ Rarely use sentences with a subject.

b/ Using a lot of sentences containing "nó", but actually not correct to use.

(16) - Hiro: Thì cái người đã nói phải để tay lên đầu và chạy, và cái người kia phải chạy sau nó.

*[- Hiro: Someone who already said put hand on head and run and other has to run after it.]*

(Rec 2; 28'03'')

(17) - Ken: Nó bảo nghỉ mà

*[-Ken: It said it will be off]*

\*"It" mentions school.

(Rec 8; 17'31'')

c/ Mistake in using classifier.

Yuki usually doesn't use any classifier before numbers (lấy 2 dép, cắt 3 giấy ra...). He only sometimes uses the classifier "con" for animals, rarely using other classifiers (cái, tờ, tấm...).

Ken has a habit of using the classifier "cái" before most nouns (water, vegetable, toy...). Sometimes he uses redundant classifier:

(18) - Mother: Ken thích ăn thịt gì ở trường?

- Ken: **Miếng** thịt, giống **miếng** thịt mẹ hay nấu.

- Mother: Thịt gà, thịt bò hay thịt lợn?

- Ken: **Miếng** thịt mẹ hay nấu mà.

*[- Mother: What kind of meat do you like to eat at school?]*

- Ken: **Piece** of meat, similar to the **piece** of meat you cooked.

- Mother: Chicken, beef, or pork?

- Ken: **Piece** of meat you often cooked]

(Rec 8, 8'20'')

Rina and Hiro sometimes confuse "cái" with other classifier "tờ": rút một cái giấy (pull out of a paper), "miếng": cắt bánh thành ba cái (cut the cake into 3)...

d/ Sometimes use obscure sentences causing confusion for listeners.

(19) - Hiro: Tên của nó chào bằng tiếng Nhật.

*[-Hiro: His name greeted in Japanese]*

(Rec 2; 25'21'')

(20) - Yuki: Không có cái gì để lấy để ở chỗ ngồi.

*[-Yuki: Nothing to get to put on the seat.]*

(Rec 5; 17'02'')

#### 4.4. Language code mixing and code-switching

Language code mixing and code-switching are 2 common linguistic phenomena in bilingual children. This occurs due to the following reasons: 1/ The child does not know or remember the words in the language being spoken (mentioned in section 4.2.b), 2/ The child is more fluent in the other language and wants to mix codes or code-switch to quickly achieve the communication goal, 3/ The child wants to emphasize important information, 4/ The child thinks the word in the heritage language may be not correct, so he/she wants to mix the code to edit.

Code-mixing phenomena occurred in the communication from all four children, because their Vietnamese parents all knew Japanese. Complete code-switching appeared in the communication from Yuki and Ken, not from Hiro and Rina. This reflects the children's ability to use the heritage language: Yuki and Ken don't use the language of the heritage as fluently as Hiro and Rina.

Below is an example about a complete code-switch phenomenon between Yuki and his mother, while the mother speaks Vietnamese.

(21) - Mother: Ủ ừ chờ mẹ tí, đây.

- Yuki: Máy phút?

- Mother: Đợi mẹ tí, ....., 60 phút.

- Yuki: Ee, ichijikan (*Japanese*)

- Mother: Ủ.

- Yuki: iii.

- Mother: *Đấy, con đi thay quần áo đi!*
- Yuki: *Ee, kaitenai jan. (Japanese)*
- Mother: *Hả?*
- Yuki: *Kaitenai jan. (Japanese)*
- Mother: *Đâu, mẹ hỏi từ nãy đây này, đấy.*
- Yuki: *Saki kara desuyo (Japanese)*
- Mother: *Lúc nãy thì là hỏi bác Phương, bác Phương xem mấy giờ lên, đấy.*
- Yuki: *Haikun kara. (Japanese)*
- Mother: *Con có ra ăn bánh không, có đói không, thay quần áo nhá.*
- Yuki: *Matte. (Japanese)*
- [- Mother: Yes, yes, wait me some minutes.*
- Yuki: How many minutes?*
- Mother: Wait for me, ....., 60 minutes.*
- Yuki: Ee, ichijikan (Japanese: Ee, one hour?).*
- Mother: Yes*
- Yuki: iii.*
- Mother: Oh, change your clothes please.*
- Yuki: Ee, kaitenai jan (Japanese: Ee, you didn't write anything.)*
- Mother: What?*
- Yuki: Kaitenai jan (Japanese: Didn't write anything).*
- Mother: No, I have just asked them ah.*
- Yuki: Saki kara desuyo (Japanese: Have just asked?).*
- Mother: Have just asked Ms Phương to see what time will Ms Phương come?*
- Yuki: Haikun kara (Japanese: Don't understand).*
- Mother: Would you like some cakes, are you hungry? Do you want to change clothes?*
- Yuki: Matte (Japanese: Wait for a while).]*

(1; 32.54)

## 5. Conclusion

Through the survey in four cases of Vietnamese-Japanese mixed-parentage children it is clear that heritage language maintenance in the family largely determines the child's ability to use language. It is very important for parents to create a communicative language environment for their children and the parents must be strict in the principle



of communicating in one language with their children (instead of two languages mixing). The longer parents consistently keep this principle, the better the children have a chance to maintain and develop the heritage language.

In Japan, currently there is no policy yet to support the maintenance of the language of immigrants. So far, there are only Japanese language classes for immigrant parents, not heritage language and culture classes (like Korean) organized by District Support Centers for Children and Family. Therefore, family plays an important and unique role in preserving and developing heritage language ability for children.

This study has clarified some characteristics of using Vietnamese as a heritage language in Japanese Vietnamese mixed-parentage children. This research also shows the relationship between the communication environment in the family and the language characteristics of children. The research results will pave the way for future studies on the influence of dominant languages on heritage languages, on some more specific features (vocabulary, some grammatical phenomena...) in using Vietnamese as a heritage language of mixed-race children in Japan and also some differences in preserving the heritage language in Japan and other countries... We hope that the research can contribute greatly to maintaining and developing Vietnamese as a heritage language for mixed parentage children and children in Vietnamese families in Japan in general.

## References

- Baker, C. (1995) *A Parent's and Teacher's Guide to Bilingualism*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Campbell, Russell N., Judith W. Rosenthal (2000), *Heritage Language. Handbook of Undergraduate Second Language Education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Do, Hong Duong (2021) Ứng dụng Việt ngữ học trong dạy và học tiếng Việt với tư cách là một ngôn ngữ di sản [Applied Vietnamese linguistics in teaching and learning Vietnamese as a heritage language]. *Journal of Linguistics* 11: 104-115.
- Do, Hong Duong (2013) The role of maternal interaction in Vietnamese teaching in South Korean-Vietnamese multi-cultural families. *New Asia Forum*. Seoul: Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies, 147-161.
- Japanese Ministry of Justice (2021) UIR: <https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&toukei=00250011&tstat=000001012480&cycle=7&year=20210&month=0&tclass1=000001012481&tclass2val=0>
- Kelleher, Ann (2010) What is heritage language *Heritage languages in America: Preserving a national resource*. Washington, DC & McHenry, IL: Center for Applied Linguistics & Delta Systems.

- Jeon Hye Kyung, Do Hong Duong (2017), Tiếng Việt với vai trò là ngôn ngữ di sản đối với trẻ em lai Hàn Việt tại Hàn Quốc [Vietnamese as heritage language for Korean-Vietnamese mixed children in South Korea]. *Journal of Language and Life No12*: 22-30.
- Nguyen, Thien Giap (2008) *Những lĩnh vực ứng dụng của Việt ngữ học* [Application fields of Vietnamese linguistics]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Harding, E. & Riley, P. (1986) *The Bilingual Family: A handbook for parents*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Montrul, S. (2002) Incomplete Acquisition and Attrition of Spanish Tense/Aspect Distinctions in Adult Bilinguals *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition. Vol. 5, no. 1*, 39-68
- Phan, Trần (2019) Vietnamese as a Heritage Language: a Preliminary Study on Linguistic Characteristics of Vietnamese Americans *Vietnamese Studies in Vietnam and Germany: New Contributions to Vietnamese Linguistics* Publisher: Universität Hamburg: Publikationen der Hamburger Vietnamistik: 15–44
- Polinsky, Maria, Olga Kagan (2007) Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass 1(5)*, 368-395.
- Shawn, Ford (2001) *Language Mixing among Bilingual Children* URI: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~sford/research/mixing.htm>
- Scontras G, Fuchs Z, Polinsky M (2015) Heritage language and linguistic theory. *Frontiers in psychology* doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01545>
- Valdés, G (2000) The teaching of heritage languages: an introduction for Slavic-teaching professionals. In *The learning and teaching of Slavic languages and cultures*. Olga Kagan and Benjamin Rifkin: 375–403.

# Syntactic Semantics and Pragmatic Semantics

Dương Xuân Quang

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This article aims to delineate two research sub-disciplines of Semantics: Syntactic Semantics and Pragmatic Semantics. The basis of this analysis is a redefinition of the relationship between sentence and utterance based on a classification of semantic content. This paper shows that specific types of semantic content can be considered as belonging to either the meaning of the sentence or the meaning of the utterance. In particular, syntactic semantics focuses on representational and objective modal meanings. On the other hand, pragmatic semantics encompasses different types of meaning, including subjective modal, thematic, communicative intent, and implicit meanings.

**Key words:** Semantics, Syntactic semantics, Pragmatic semantics, Sentence, Utterance

## 1. Introduction

Semantics is a sub-discipline of linguistics that focuses primarily on the content of linguistic expressions. From Michel Bréal's *Essai de Sémantique* (1897), when the term "semantics" was first identified, until the modern days when John Lyons wrote a massive two-volume monographic *Semantics* (1977) to summarize the basic features of this sub-discipline, research focuses of Semantics always aim to discover the nature and characteristics of natural language meanings.

However, if meaning is understood as an abstract mental entity encoded in the content of linguistic signals, it cannot exist in nothingness but always needs to anchor to linguistic expressions or, more specifically, linguistic units. In other words, meaning is the content side that expresses the speaker's intended information by using the formal side of linguistic units. The tradition of semantic research has focused on investigating the meaning of words and has made remarkable achievements. When Functionalism significantly impacted the study of language some 30 years ago, syntactic meaning also started to receive more attention.

However, instead of just referring to syntactic semantics, we have grounds to believe that there should be a more scientific distinction between the meaning of sentences and the meaning of utterances. According to the way of naming the sub-disciplines of semantics, we have a separation between syntactic and pragmatic

semantics because their research objects, scopes, and methods are closely related but still different. This article mainly focuses on defining the study scope of the meaning of utterances.

## **2. Sentence versus Utterance**

There can be no linguistic unit that is not derived from a sentence. Because sentences have an important position in the communication process, understanding sentences is necessary to investigate linguistic systems. Thus, the question of "What is a sentence?" has long been discussed, and we have yet to reach a consensus among linguists. Of course, a complete definition of sentence remains the subject of such a long debate that J. Lyons (1995) suggests that sentences and words should be regarded as postulated linguistic units. With structural and functional features, sentences can be explicitly formulated as the smallest linguistic units capable of conveying a message, but they are also the largest ones made directly from grammatical elements and relations. In lay terms, a sentence is a combination of words and phrases that are combined accordingly to grammatical relations, and its function is to convey the speaker's intended information. However, to comprehensively understand the systematic unit - the sentence, it is impossible not to consider the relationship between the sentence with its corresponding unit in communication activities - the utterance.

Sentences and utterances are not isolated as distinct linguistic units; they are closely related, like "two sides of a sheet of paper." In commenting on the basic points of Abstract Objectivism, whose most representative figure is F. de Saussure, V.N. Voloshinov (1929) wrote: "Acts of speech of individuals, from the linguistic point of view, merely refracts and variations or random distortions of normative self-identified forms." [Voloshinov 1929; 105]. Certainly, utterances are a reflection of sentences in communication activities in reality. In English, the term "utterance" is the noun form of the verb "utter," whose meaning is "to speak, to say." This English term emphasizes a critical feature of the concept of speech, namely a physical phenomenon marked by a continuous airflow from the beginning of the act of speaking to the moment of complete silence. Moreover, it is possible to record and then measure various acoustic properties of the speech. An utterance is a unique, one-time phenomenon compound of a definite time, place, speakers, listeners, and language. V.N. Voloshinov once had a very pictorial statement about utterance: "We will never be able to understand the formation of any utterance (no matter how independent and complete it may seem), without aware that it is but a moment, a drop in the stream of verbal communication..." [Voloshinov 1930; 246].

In comparison, the sentence is an abstract mental phenomenon. Abstract because they are not physically perceptible but a sequence of words (also abstract units) arranged according to grammatical rules in the minds of individuals in the language community. Sentences result from combining abstract units to reflect a fact of the world perceived by the individuals. Because of the need to accurately simulate what the speaker perceives and thinks about in the world, sentences, in their abstract world, always need to be constrained by grammaticality. Grammaticality can be understood figuratively as organizational strings that bind the units of the sentence so that it can be judged by the criteria of logical truth. These binding mechanisms are the basic grammar rules that help the language community have a shared basis for understanding each other's announcements. These rules are so dominant that M. Bakhtin declared: "A sentence is a purely grammatical linguistic unit." [Bakhtin 1986; 74]. Of course, the form in question (sentence) still presents in thought, existing without context in an abstract form in human mentality. Utterance is different from this. With utterance, grammaticality is not a relevant aspect because its primary value lies in its acceptability. Acceptability, firstly advocated by N. Chomsky (1957) with the famous example "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously" [Chomsky 1957; 15], indicates new attention towards the informational content of a message, whose appropriateness is to be decided by participants in the conversation. Due to the need to communicate in specific contexts, where the focus is determined by different pragmatic purposes, the components of the implicit abstract sentence will be organized in such a way as to present the most important content of the message prominently. Utterances can be just a word or a phrase because their corresponding abstract sentences may have been truncated with irrelevant elements carrying unnecessary and old content. The order of the original abstract sentences can also be changed to navigate the listener's attention to the intended information. However, utterances do not exist randomly and arbitrarily. The deep structure of abstract sentences is the basis for the immediate understanding of the formal realizations of all concrete utterances, even though they are not structurally explicit, as in the following example:

(01) Sentence:

Anh ấy đọc sách.

He read book

*'He is reading a book.'*

→ Utterance:

a. Đọc sách. (Anh ấy đang làm gì?)

- Read book (He is doing what)  
*'Reading a book.'* (*What is he doing?*)
- b. Sách, anh ấy đọc. (Còn bài tập, anh ấy chưa làm.)  
 Book, he read (But homework, he yet do)  
*'It is a book that he is reading.'* (*But he is not doing homework*)
- c. Anh ấy. (Ai đọc sách)  
 He. (Who read book?)  
*'He.'* (*Who is reading the book?*)

On the background of the dichotomous opposition "langue" - "parole", the above characteristics of utterances in relation to sentences are parallel with the relationship between other linguistic dualities: phoneme - phone, morpheme - morph, and lexeme – word.

### 3. Syntactic Semantics - The meaning of the sentence

Sentences are abstract structures that outline mental images of a linguistic state of affairs. Therefore, the **representational meaning** component is closely tied to the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Representational meaning, also known as descriptive, expressive, experiential, and propositional<sup>1</sup>, is probably derived from Ch. Bally's concept of "dictum" (1932). Roughly speaking, it is understood as a reflection of an event taking place in the real world. Therefore, the structure of representational meaning is associated with the expressive function of the sentence about the state of affairs. This type of meaning is reflected from the facts in the objective world through the point of view of the individual's perception, which is, in turn, influenced by the social and cultural bases of the communication community. With pioneering conceptions that tried to separate linguistics from logic, L. Tesnière (1959) identified the position of the predicate apex as the sole center of the linguistic state of affairs. All state of affairs has their center of a unique word describing the action of the event. Therefore, the structure of representational meaning is generalized as a structure consisting of a central predicate complemented by mandatory arguments ("actants") to clarify its content and optional arguments ("circumstants"). Based on this basis, Ch. Fillmore (1968) analyzed the arguments and established a system of semantic roles corresponding to each type of argument in his Case Grammar.

---

<sup>1</sup> We use the term "the representational meaning" but not the other terms in order to emphasize its ability in mentally and logically reproducing a fact in the real world.

In the analysis of a sentence, the *modality* is the component closely related to the state of affairs; both jointly establish the complete content of the sentence. The concept of modality has been widely discussed since Ch. Bally's (1968) analysis of its two components: *modus* and *dictum* of sentences. The modality inherits the spirit of the concept "modus" and is further divided into two types: subjective modality and objective modality. The subjective modality puts the speaker's judgments into words, while the objective modality reflects things and phenomena from the perspective of imitation according to personal perception. The objective modality, also known by many other terms such as the logical modality, the situation modality, etc., is essentially a state of simulated perception of the real world with a personal reflection on the content expressed in the sentence. All manifestations of this modal meaning represent the ontological characteristics of the action, state, nature, and relationship of the subject (first argument) with the actual nature of the action, process, state or quality. Such semantic content is clearly expressed as attributes of objective facts. In essence, this relationship is an examination of how the meaning of modality relates to reality, which is formalized through the meaning of tense, aspect, and affirmative/negative characteristics, to name just a few.

#### 4. Pragmatic Semantics – The meaning of the utterance

The utterance is the realization of the abstract sentence. All utterances have the function of connecting the content that the speaker wants to convey to the listener. The following examples show that even though the meaning of the deep sentence is the same, each of its utterances has a completely different focus.

- (02) a. Cô ấy      làm việc      ở      công ty.  
           She        work            at        company  
           '*She works at the company.*'
- b. Cô ấy      làm việc      ở      công ty      ấy      à?  
           She        work            at        company    that    INT.PRT  
           '*Does she work at that company?'*
- c. Cô ấy làm việc            ở      công ty            cơ mà!  
           She work                    at        company            AFF.PRT  
           '*She works at the company! (not other places)'*
- d. Tôi      biết      là      cô ấy      làm việc            ở      công ty.  
           I        know    that    she    work            at        company  
           '*I know she works at the company.*'

- e. Tôi tưởng là cô ấy làm việc ở công ty.  
 I think that she work at company  
*'I thought she works at the company.'*

In examples in (02), the representational meaning of the sentence informs the listener of a defined referent, “cô ấy” [she], with the content of the situation expressing the action of “làm việc” [work] at a referenced place as “công ty” [the company]. However, each utterance has different shades of meaning. Utterance 2a represents an assurance of the confirmed information from the speaker. In utterance 2b, by using “à,” the speaker shows his uncertainty about the situation and the need for checking and re-evaluating the information. With “cơ mà” in utterance 2c, the speaker asserts the contradiction between his old perception and new information, so the speaker waits for an explanation from the listener. While 2d is a statement of established knowledge despite controversies surrounding the issue, 2e signals a timider attitude, making it an exploratory statement. The utterances need certain marking agents so that the transmission value can vary, and the listener receives it in specific directions. So, what content does a semantic analysis of utterance need to consider?

The *subjective modality* is often separated from the state of affairs of the sentence and transferred to the scope of the utterance. If the representational meaning is a sketch of reality, the subjective modality is the component that adds to the utterance the speaker's judgments and opinions about that reality in each specific communication context, as stated by Palmer (1986) about modality, which is the semantic information of a sentence expressing the speaker's attitude or opinion towards what is mentioned in the sentence". With subjective modality, the speaker can express personal judgments such as commitment to the truthfulness of the state of affairs through an evaluation spectrum from possibility to necessity (epistemic modality). They can also express their prohibition, allowance, compulsion, and demand attitudes towards the action (deontic modality) suitable for each purpose the utterance intended to convey. More specifically, the epistemic modality represents the speaker's stance and attitude towards the information being communicated to indicate his/her understanding of what he/she is saying: confirming or guaranteeing the truth. The deontic modality expresses the speaker's assessment of the degree of obligation or responsibility (of the speaker, listener or a third person) related to morality or social norms about some action being performed. These emotional agents must belong to the meaning of the utterance.

It is also necessary to pay attention to the *thematic meaning* of utterances. This type of meaning was pointed out by G. Leech (1974) when considering the elements of



a message in order to find the focus of an utterance. As for Halliday (1985), the category of meaning that reflects the way a sentence is organized as a message is “textual” (one of his three types of meaning, along with ideational and interpersonal meaning). J. Lyons (1995) used the term “thematic meaning,” with the connotation determined by the way the speaker chooses what to say to express what is being said. Conceivably, thematic meaning reflects the main content the utterance plans to convey. However, two types of themes must be distinguished: grammatical and conversational. A grammatical theme, or subject, belongs to each specific utterance chosen by the speaker as a landmark for other contents to be mentioned. For example, three statements “*Cô ấy béo.*”; “*Cô ấy thì béo.*”; “*Cô ấy í à thì béo.*” [She is fat.] all have the same grammatical theme/subject of “*cô ấy*” [she]. Meanwhile, the conversational theme is the theme toward which all utterances in a specific conversation are directed, meaning that it is the thread connecting and giving the utterances cohesion. These two types of themes are usually identical, but there are exceptions. For example, “A: *Trời hôm nay mưa to quá!* B: *Tôi chả sợ mưa.*” [A: It's raining heavily today! B: I'm not afraid of the rain.]. Obviously, defining the thematic meaning is not an easy task. Information structure has been argued to be a useful tool for doing that. Deeply originated in V. Mathesius’s opinion of the Actual Division of the Sentence or the Functional Sentence Perspective, which belongs to the Prague School, thematic meaning is clearly realized and rigorously theorized. Mathesius (1936) tried to distinguish the actual information segmentation of the sentence from its formal segmentation. “On the one hand, formal segmentation divides the sentence structure into its grammatical elements. On the other hand, the segmentation based on the theme of the utterance shows how to put the sentence into context for use in communication. The basic elements of the actual information segmentation are the starting point, what is known or at least easily recognizable by the speaker in the given situation, and the nucleus of the utterance, i.e. the new information, which the speaker informs about the subject of the utterance. Accordingly, an utterance consists of two parts, Theme and Rheme. The theme is what is already known or what is at least easily recognized by the speaker in a given situation, and it is used as the starting point of the utterance. Rheme is the part that brings new information to elaborate on the theme. Inheriting this foundation, S. Dik (1981) divided each utterance at the pragmatic level into two parts: Topic and Focus. The topic is the element whose function is to introduce the entity referred to by the predicate in a specified context, i.e., the thing being talked about, the background information. Focus is the element that represents the most important or prominent information associated with the pragmatic information in the conversation in which the speaker and the listener

are most interested. As for M.A.K. Halliday (1985), clause analysis is based on three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. He considers the psychological subject or theme as the starting point of the message, the element that the speaker chooses as the basis for what is about to be said. This element is the most apparent manifestation of thematic meaning.

The third content that needs to be mentioned in Pragmatic semantics is the **communicative intent meaning**. Language is realized in communication, but communication is not only about conveying the content of the message. The speaker produces utterances, but he/she always wants to convey more than what the surface information content provide. The speaker wants to establish a connection with the listener through interpersonal content. This meaning is always associated with the content of illocutionary acts in the framework of Speech Act Theory that J.L. Austin advanced in *How to Do Things with Words* (1955). In general, the communicative intent meaning, or illocutionary meaning, is the content that causes an effect on the listener, expressing the purpose that the speaker wants the listener to perform after the communication. However, it is necessary to consider various types of intent meaning rather than being limited to three basic types of statement, interrogation, and exclamation. The classification of declarative, interrogative (questions), directive/imperative (requests), and exclamative sentences is the simplest way of looking at the communicative intention of the traditional school of grammar. The examples in Table 1 will help to better distinguish the intention of utterances from their formal appearances as surface sentences. Italicized are utterances whose sentence forms reflect the illocutionary meaning. The other utterances show the diversity of the intended meanings for sentence types. For example, the sentence type is imperative, but its illocutionary meaning can be a statement or an interrogation. Similarly, the communicative intent meaning of the utterance is a declaration, but its formal sentence is a question or a request, and so on.

(03)

Table 1: The difference between Sentence form and Communicative intention

Sentence form (type)	Communicative intention		
	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Interrogation</i>	<i>Requirement</i>
<i>Declarative sentences</i>	<i>Tình yêu Tổ quốc luôn còn mãi.</i> <i>'The love of the Fatherland is forever'</i>	Tôi cần biết câu trả lời về sự lựa chọn tôi hay nó của em. 'I need to know the answer to your choice	Bố mẹ sẽ rất vui nếu con mở cửa ra. 'We will be happy if you open the door.'

		of me or him.’	
<b>Interrogative sentences</b>	Anh không tin tình yêu Tổ quốc luôn còn mãi ư? ‘Do you not believe that the love of the Fatherland is forever?’	<i>Em chọn tôi hay nó?</i>  <i>‘Do you choose me or him?’</i>	Con sẽ mở cửa ra chứ?  ‘Will you open the door?’
<b>Imperative sentences</b>	Đừng quên rằng tình yêu Tổ quốc luôn còn mãi! ‘Don't forget that love for the Fatherland is forever!’	Tôi hay nó, em chọn đi!  ‘Me or him, you choose!’	<i>Mở cửa ra!</i>  <i>‘Open the door!’</i>

Finally, **implicit meaning** is a type of pragmatic semantics closely related to the context and background knowledge of the participants in the communication. Unlike explicit meanings, which can be understood immediately through the surface forms, implicit meanings are understood as contents not provided by the linguistic elements in the utterance but must be obtained by inferring from external factors. Starting from their own experience, the participants analyze new situational conditions and put that data in the old vs. new information association to draw insights for themselves. It means that inference is an important operation to create and perceive implications. Using implication allows the speaker to express ideas without being bound to that content or responsible for the accuracy or existence of that content. O. Ducrot (1980) was right when he saw through the essence of implication as saying something without thus taking responsibility for having said it means that the effect of speech can still be obtained, while being able to have the innocence of silence. The mechanism of creating implicit meaning is that although the speaker knows pragmatic rules (such as reference, speech act, argumentation, and conversational maxims), they deliberately do not follow these rules, aiming at content hidden under the surface of words, the content understood by only the speaker and listener in that specific linguistic situation. Implicit meanings are often realized when: (1) the utterance uses linguistic forms that intentionally misrepresent the reference object; (2) the utterance uses indirect speech acts; (3) the speaker omits arguments or conclusions and lets the listener infer the information by themselves; and (4) the utterance intentionally violates one of the four conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

## 5. Conclusion

The difference between sentences and utterances is the fundamental basis for the article to analyze specific research areas in an attempt to distinguish between Syntactic and Pragmatic semantics. Syntactic semantics is understood as the content component that reflects the state of affairs, aiming to simulate the events of the real world. It includes representational and objective modal meanings. Meanwhile, pragmatic semantics is the content component that tends to convey interpersonal values whose function is to link the speaker's expression with the listener's reception. Subjective modal, thematic, communicative intent, and especially implicit meaning are the semantic aspects that pragmatic semantics takes as its study content. Clearly, this article modestly outlined the differences between the two fields of study of meaning that are sometimes not well-understood. More in-depth studies with more complete data from various languages are called for to provide more thorough analyses./.

### Abbreviations

INT.PRT	interrogative particle
AFF.PRT	affirmative emphatic particle

### References

- Bakhtin, M.M. – A English translation by Vern W. McGee (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Texas: University of Texas Press.
- Cao, Xuân Hạo (1998) *Tiếng Việt - Một vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa [Vietnamese language - some issues about phonetics, grammar, semantics]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Chomsky, Noam (1957) *Syntactic Structures*. New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Ducrot, Oswald (1980) *Analyse de textes et linguistique de l'énonciation*. In : Ducrot, Oswald et al (1980) *Les mots du discours*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 7-56.
- Dương, Xuân Quang (2021) *Biến thể cú pháp của câu tiếng Việt [Syntactic variants of Vietnamese sentence]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Mathesius, Vilém. (1936) On some Problems of the Systematic Analysis of Grammar. *Travaux du Cercle linguistique de Prague* (6): 95-127.
- Lê, Quang Thiêm (2008) *Ngữ nghĩa học [Linguistic Semantics]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Lyons, John (1977) *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nguyễn, Thiện Giáp (2015) *Ngữ nghĩa học Việt ngữ [Vietnamese language's Semantics]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.

- Nguyễn, Văn Hiệp (2009) *Cú pháp tiếng Việt [Vietnamese language's syntax]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Palmer, Frank Robert (1986) *Mood and Modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Saeed, John I. (1997, fourth edition - 2016) *Semantics*. New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Trần, Ngọc Ninh (1973) *Cơ-cấu Việt-ngữ [Vietnamese language structure], Vol. 1*. Saigon: Lửa thiêng Press.
- Voloshinov, V.N (1929) – A Vietnamese translation by Ngô Tự Lập (2014) *Chủ nghĩa Marx và triết học ngôn ngữ [Marxism and the Philosophy of Language]*, Moskva: Lokid Premium Press.
- Voloshinov, V.N. (1930) – A Vietnamese translation by Ngô Tự Lập (2020) *Cấu trúc phát ngôn [The utterance's structure]*. In *Triết học ngôn ngữ Voloshinov – Một số vấn đề học thuật hậu huyền thoại Bakhtin [Voloshinov's Philosophy of Language - Some academic problems of Bakhtin]*. Hanoi: The World Press., pp.244-286.

## Geolinguistic Approaches that Display and Interpret Varieties Across Space and Time

Mitsuaki Endo  
(Aoyama Gakuin University, Japan)

**Abstract:** This paper aims at surveying classic and innovative geolinguistic approaches to display and interpret varieties across space and time. Time-series maps have already developed an approach to show changes over time in geography. Such an approach applies to linguistic maps, displaying real-time and apparent time. Recently, 3D maps came to application in geolinguistics. This approach can show geographical and age differences on one map. Additionally, this representation can resolve the contradictory dichotomy in the historical linguistics of “tree theory” and “wave theory.” Both aspects are present in the real changing process.

**Key words:** geolinguistics, classic linguistic maps, glottogram, time-series maps, 3D maps

### 1. Classic linguistic maps

Classic linguistic maps are drawn in 2D space and intend to show the formation process of geographical distribution. They include a diachronic axis, as it is crucial to select symbols that show diachronic interpretation.

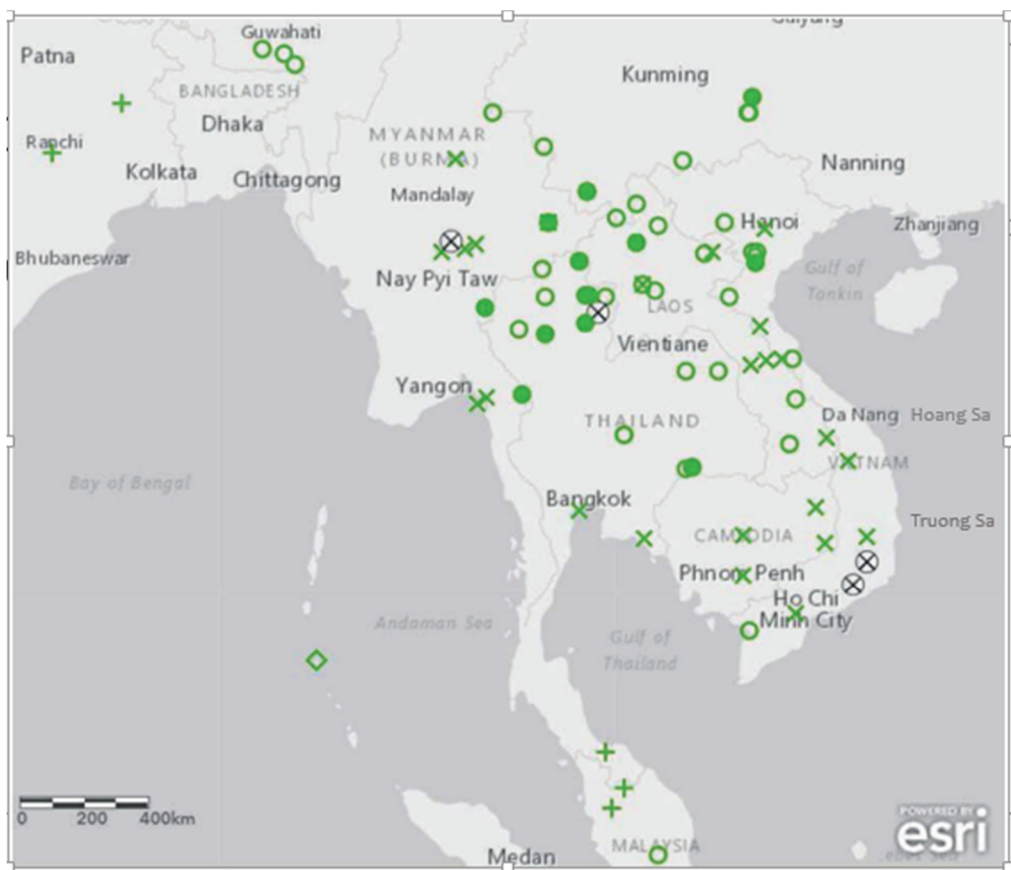
Map 1 is taken from Kondo 2013. This is one of the outcomes from an investigation conducted with Professor Masaaki Shimizu with the cooperation of Professor Trần Trí Dõi in 2011. The map displays the geographical distribution of words meaning “to hold.” “Be” is distributed around Hanoi, while “bong” is distributed in northern Vietnam, except for the area where “be” is distributed, and “am” is distributed in the southern and northernmost areas. When the same word form appears in



Map 1

a peripheral area, it is called “ABA distribution” or “peripheral distribution.” Here “A” stands for “am,” and in the middle of “A,” there are two word forms that constitute “B”—“be” and “bong.” If there is such a distribution, the word form in the peripheral area should be older than the word form(s) in the central area, since new forms emerged from the middle, and the original uniform distribution with “A” became the distribution “ABA,” in which “B” form(s) occupied the central area, unless migration or a “fire leap”- type transmission occurred.

Another example is Shimizu and Minegishi 2021.



A-1.	th-t-d-n type	○
A-2.	(th)-t-d-n type	×
B.	th-t-d-d-n type	⊗
C.	th-t-n type	●
D.	t-d-n type	+
E.	t-n type	◇

Map 2

This is a typological map of a type of laryngeal feature distinction using a dental stop, for example. According to Shimizu and Minegishi, type B is the most conservative, and type C merged voiced to voiceless to compensate for register or tonal contrasts. Types A-1 and A-2 are the most common, where Vietnamese belongs to type A-2.

## 2. Glottogram

A “glottogram” is a chart in which age difference and linear geographical distribution are shown. Table 1 is taken from Qi 2021.

	1 南马坡	2 杨家官 庄	3 王家官 庄	4 李家念 头	5 城阳 街道办 事处	6 庄家围 子村	7 小罗庄	8 汀沟村	9 庄科
70-	○		○	○			○		
60-	○	○		○	○	○	○	○	○
50-		●	○		○				
40-	⊙		⊙			●		●	●
30-	⊙	⊙		●	●			⊙	
20-					⊙	⊙	●		●
10-	⊙			⊙					⊙

Table 1



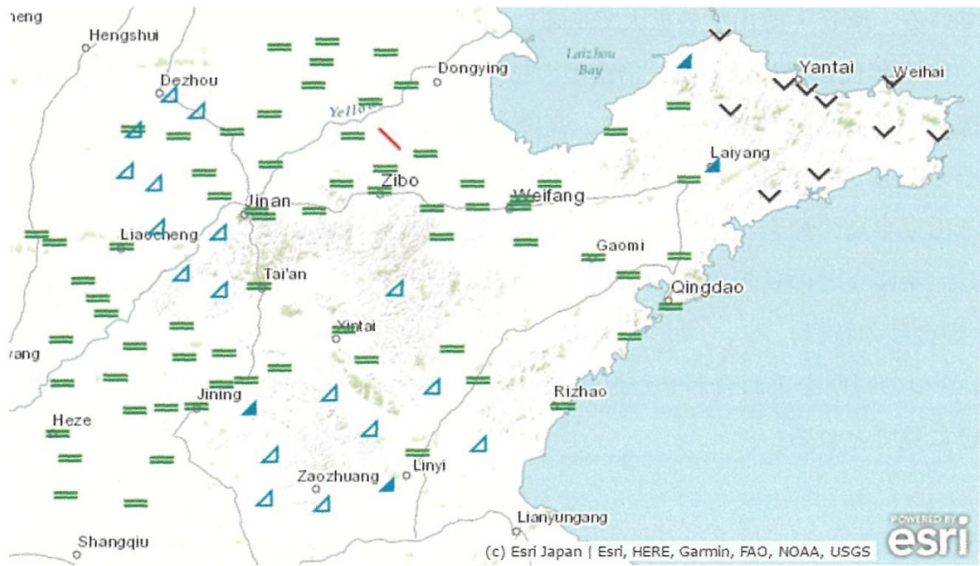
In Table 1, the ○ symbol denotes the type keeping the [tθiɔ] and [tɕiɔ] distinction; the ◐ symbol denotes the type that [tθiɔ] is pronounced as palatalized [tθjiɔ], but still distinct from [tɕiɔ]; and the ● symbol denotes that both types emerged into [tɕiɔ]. The vertical axis denotes the age difference beginning at 10 years old, while the horizontal axis denotes place, from the location 1 to 9. Here we can observe that the palatalized/non-palatalized distinction is kept for speakers over 50 years old in all locations, but the tendency of palatalization and merging is stronger in the places near location 1, and the intermediate stage is observed in locations 2 and 4–9, but in locations 7 and 9, even speakers in their twenties continue to keep the distinction.

### 3. Time-series maps

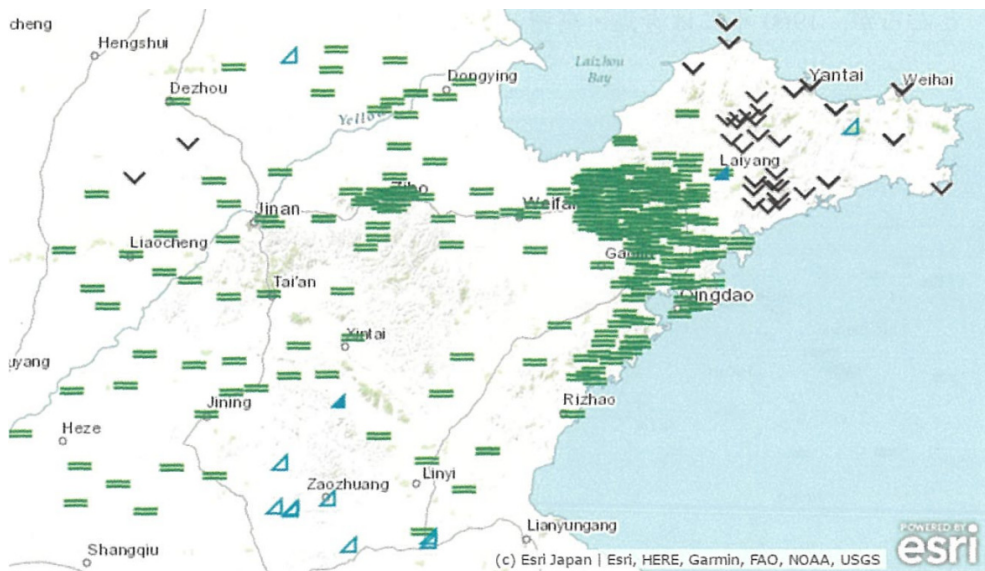
Time-series maps developed as an approach to show changes over time in geography. They display the changing process of a phenomenon using a set of maps of the same area with certain time intervals. The examples were taken from Endo 2018.



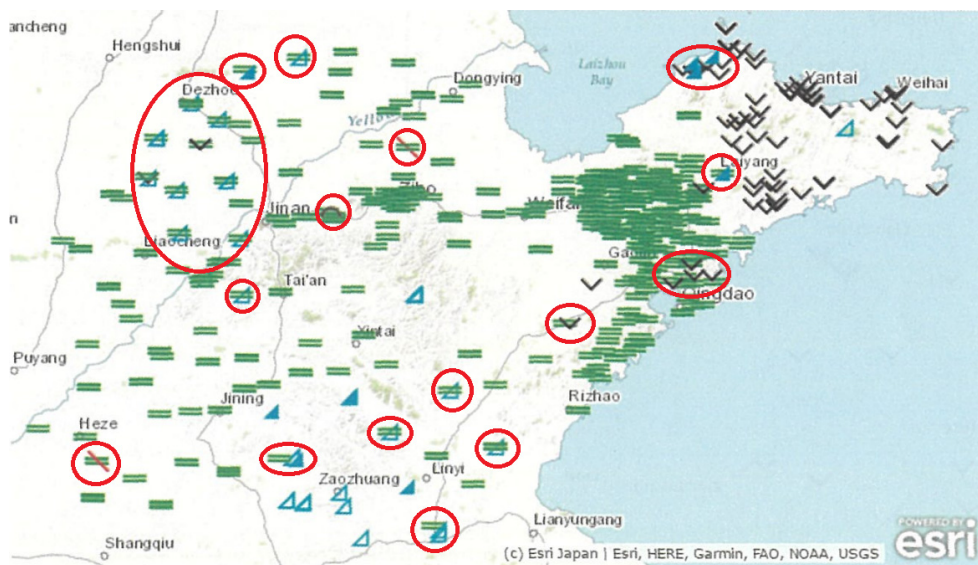
地図 21 Giet (1946) の上声調値  
Map 3



地図 22 山東 (1960) の上声調値  
Map 4



地図 23 1980年代以降の上声調値  
Map 5



地図 24 1946, 60, 80 年代以降の上声調値の重ね合わせ  
Map 6

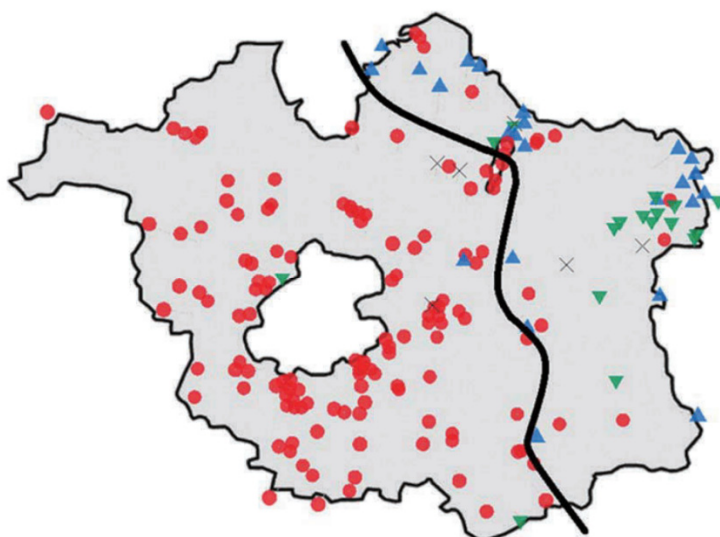
Maps 3, 4, and 5 show the tone values of the Shang tone in the Shandong province. There are three time stages which date back to 1946, 1960, and the 1980s. Map 6 is the synthesis of maps 3, 4, and 5. In each map, the green double horizontal bar “=” indicates a high level tone, the black tick “∨” is low concave, the blue hollow triangle “△” is low rising, the blue full triangle “▲” is high rising, and the red back slash “\” is a high falling tone. Since there are data with missing locations in each map, therefore it is impossible to compare them with each other. However, in some locations or areas, obvious changes are possible to observe. For example, in Qingdao, located in the northeastern coastal area, the low concave “∨” in 1946 was replaced by a high level “=,” meaning the high level “=,” the variety in Shandong, the capital of the province Jinan, spread to Qingdao during this period. Comparison is easily achieved using Map 6. The locations with a red circle are detected double marks, meaning changes occurred. In general, the standardization of the “=” high level Jinan variety is the main tendency in the Shandong province, regardless of the original tone values.

The above examples are of real-time variation. However, this method is applicable to apparent-time variation as well.

#### 4. 3D maps

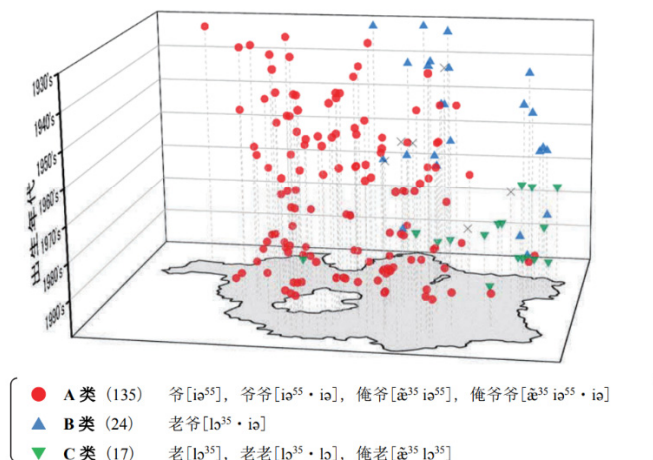
Recently, 3D maps have been employed in geolinguistics. This approach can show geographical and age differences on one map. The examples below are from Hidaka 2021.

Hidaka investigated 345 speakers with age variations in Xuzhou city, China, in 2015 and 2016. The locations are displayed in the 2D map as follows:



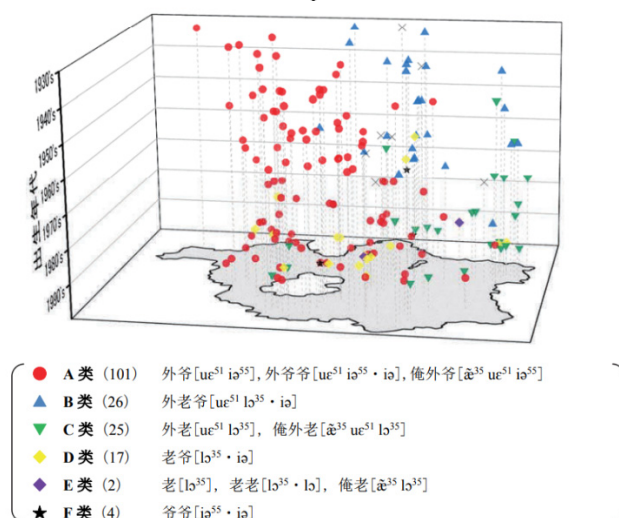
Map 7

The variations of area and age for “paternal grandfather” are as follows:





Map 8



Map 9

In Map 8, the red circle is type A with “iə,” the blue triangle is type B with “lə iə,” and the reversed green triangle is type C with “lə.” The vertical axis indicates the birth year, from 1930s to the 1990s in ten-year intervals. Originally, type A consisted of the address term only and is almost kept intact in the main district of the city, while in the eastern edge, the adjective “lə,” meaning “old,” is added. This form is used for “maternal grandparents” in the standard Chinese. Type C, which is the adjective, is reinterpreted as the stem, emerged in the younger generation born in the southeastern district after the 1980s. This method minutely grasps the exact place and emerging time of the new changes.

Map 9 shows the variation regarding “maternal grandfather.” The major types—A, B, and C—are basically the same as “paternal grandfather,” and “we,” meaning “external,” is added before the word forms for “paternal grandfather.” The difference is the existence of types D, E, and F. The word form of type D is the same as type B for “paternal grandfather.” However, type D is used among the younger generation born after 1980s in the major district. This is the form in the capital of Beijing, so this cohort may have been affected by a national standard. Type E is identical to type C “paternal grandfather” and type F is the same as type A’s “paternal grandfather.” They are exceptional, as they do not distinguish between paternal and maternal terms for “grandfather” and are less frequent.

In type D, a new form in the younger generation is clearly displayed. This is due to the spreading of a prestigious variety, that is, accepting an external form horizontally.

In such a case, the “wave theory” is applicable. If the nature of change is due to an internal reason, new form(s) changed vertically across generations. In that case, the “tree theory” is applicable. Actually, both types change, but since the previous models of change in historical linguistics were too simplistic, only vertical or horizontal dimension is involved, and the two theories appeared to be contradictory. Using a 3D model, it is possible to display and interpret real changes across time and space axes, thereby resolving the dichotomy. Furthermore, this method is also applicable to sociolinguistic varieties, including age, gender, or social class.

### References

- Endo, Mitsuaki. 2018. “Time series linguistic maps of monosyllabic tone in the Shandong dialects,” in: *Keizai Kenkyu*, Aoyama Gakuin University: 10.
- Hidaka, Chiemi. 2021. “Terms of address of paternal and maternal grandparents used by Xuzhou dialect speakers: lexical variation by area and age,” in: Hiroyuki Suzuki and Mitsuaki Endo (eds.) *Papers on geolinguistic studies of the languages in China*, [https://publication.aaken.jp/saag\\_monol\\_papers\\_on\\_geolinguistic\\_studies\\_of\\_the\\_languages\\_in\\_china\\_2021.pdf](https://publication.aaken.jp/saag_monol_papers_on_geolinguistic_studies_of_the_languages_in_china_2021.pdf).
- Kondo, Mika. 2013. *Vietnamese Dialect Maps on Vocabulary*, Asian Geolinguistic Society of Japan, Monograph Series, 1, DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6440811.
- Qi, Haifeng. 2021 “A geolinguistic survey of ‘jianyin’ and ‘tuanyin’ in Rizhao dialect of Chinese,” in: Hiroyuki Suzuki and Mitsuaki Endo (eds.) *Papers on geolinguistic studies of the languages in China*, [https://publication.aaken.jp/saag\\_monol\\_papers\\_on\\_geolinguistic\\_studies\\_of\\_the\\_languages\\_in\\_china\\_2021.pdf](https://publication.aaken.jp/saag_monol_papers_on_geolinguistic_studies_of_the_languages_in_china_2021.pdf).
- Shimizu, Masaaki and Makoto Minegishi. 2021. “Stop Series in Austroasiatic,” in: *Studies in Asian and African Geolinguistics*, 1, [https://publication.aaken.jp/saag1\\_stop\\_series\\_2021.pdf](https://publication.aaken.jp/saag1_stop_series_2021.pdf).

## Japanese cultural concept of "wakimae" and its Vietnamese equivalents

Hoàng Anh Thi

**Abstract:** This article explores the cultural concept of "wakimae" in Japanese and its equivalence in Vietnamese. In Japan, the noun "wakimae" or the verb "wakimaeru" contains cultural meaning elements, which refer to social characteristics, interpersonal awareness of status, and a one-way code of conduct imposed from the bottom up. The paper consists of two parts, the first analyzes the cultural meaning of "wakimae" (wakimaeru) and the other finds a word with an equivalent cultural connotation in Vietnamese to examine the similarities and differences between the two concepts.

**Keywords:** cultural word, wakimae, discernment, equivalence

### 1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a new trend in the field of contrastive analysis, where instead of comparing the structure and system between two languages, many scholars pay attention to the contrast between sociocultural factors hidden within a language. In modern contrastive linguistics, the theories and methodology taken from linguistics are supplemented. These theories, which are derived from sociology, psychology, social psychology, neurobiology, ethnology, anthropology, and related disciplines, are used to analyze pragmatic patterns, perceptual mechanisms, and information (Mahboobeh Joze Tajareh, 2015). We communicate not only with our language but also with our culture, hence the prevalence of this new trend is understandable. Cultural vocabulary, psychological vocabulary, et cetera have become study objects of intercultural comparison. The study of the cultural connotation of the word *fair* in English, *xiào* 孝 (elderly) in Chinese, and *ordnung* (order) in German are typical examples of this direction of research. Each of these words represents its respective language and culture.

Regarding Japanese, a language that is rooted in a culturally distinctive society, the list of cultural lexica will vary among researchers. Anna Wierzbicka has chosen six units, namely "amae" (spoiled), "enryo" (modesty), "wa" (harmony), "on" (grace), "giri" (duty), and "seishin" (mind) (Wierzbicka, 1991), while others might choose "kisoku tadashii" (well-regulated) and "shinsetsu" (kindness), among others. However, an ordinary person's choice of a single word that represents Japanese would be "wa" (Harmony). Regardless of the word choice, the following two tasks are essential:

---

HOÀNG, Anh Thi. 2023. Japanese cultural concept of "wakimae" and its Vietnamese equivalents. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151479>

comparing linguistic characteristics and concurrently comparing cultural characteristics in those linguistic expressions. This process is called intercultural comparison.

Following this approach, our article takes the Japanese word "wakimae/wakimaeru" as the starting point and makes a comparison with its equivalents in Vietnamese. Our choice of "wakimae/wakimaeru" aims to describe the influence of social conceptions and ideology on language and social behavior, including honorifics, in Japanese.

This article consists of two major parts: 1) Identification of the nature and meaning of "wakimae/wakimaeru". 2) Seeking its equivalents in Vietnamese. We follow a systematic approach that involves studying definitions in dictionaries, examining scholars' concepts and research directions, and describing pragmatic features derived from common utterances of the Japanese word "wakimae/wakimaeru". Next, the article discusses the Vietnamese equivalents of "wakimae/wakimaeru" through concept-shaping and concept-verification surveys.

## 2. Concepts of cultural keywords and some key studies

We distinguish between two terms: *cultural lexicon* and *cultural keywords*. A cultural lexicon is a broad concept that includes *specific cultural keywords*, which we consistently refer to in this article as *culture*. However, in the presentation of previous studies, we retain the term *culture keywords* that scholars have used.

### 2.1. Cultural keyword

Academia has used the term *cultural keyword* for the past 20 years. Anna Wierzbicka used this term in some of her studies, for example in the 1997 article "Understanding cultures through their keywords" and the 2017 article "Cultural keyword in discourse" (Helen Bromhead and Zhengdao Ye, 2020, p. 7, p. 9). In the anthology *Meaning, Life and Culture* (2020), which is a collection of studies based on the ideology of Anna Wierzbicka, *cultural keywords* were used as the central concept which the research revolves around. Bert Peeters referred to Goddard and Wierzbicka's concept of cultural keywords by saying: "cultural keywords are words with profound and high cultural connotation", and are often "untranslatable" (cannot be translated into another language). They greatly affect the way we think, act, feel, and speak (Bert Peeters, 2020, p. 61).



In Vietnamese, cultural keywords are also a topic of interest despite the limited number of studies. According to Nguyen Van Chien, cultural keywords "must be basic lexical items in the cultural lexicon of a language," and "...cultural keywords refer to concepts related to certain national cultural characteristics..., always reflecting the uniqueness of a culture when comparing with corresponding lexical symbols in another language" (2004, p. 38, p. 100). Regarding lexical meanings, Le Quang Thiem claimed the spiritual property of lexical meanings represents the meaning of typical keywords: cultural–linguistic words are culturally discriminatory, not only in the nature of their meanings but also in their structures. He also pointed out that the meaning (of a keyword) not only reveals cultural values but also cultural identities (2020, pp. 874–875).

We firmly agree with the above concepts and ideas that cultural keywords are among the most fundamental cultural lexicon of languages and not only represent profound cultural and spiritual values but also embody the language itself.

## 2.2. Studies on cultural keywords

Research on cultural keywords can be categorized into two: monolingual and contrastive. Under these categories, cultural words are studied within a language or compared with other languages; moreover, more than one keyword can be chosen. For example, in the anthology *Meaning, Life and Culture* (2020), scholars conducted monolingual research on the German keyword *gezellig* (Bert Peeters, pp. 61–84), the English word *climb* (Cliff Godgard, p. 13–32), and the royal meaning of *De* in Danish (Casten Levisen, pp. 85–98) to uncover the linguistic–cultural meanings of these words.

Regarding the word *gezellig*, Bert Peeters stated, "The use of *gezellig* with nouns shows the real versatility of the synonyms for nouns of place, nouns of atmosphere, nouns (and adjectives) indicating uproar, nouns (and verbs) of activity, nouns of events, nouns of periods, and nouns of people. This list is not exhaustive but shows the most important and prominent uses of a cultural keyword that has specific impacts on the mind..." (Bert Peeters, 2020, p. 61).

Another study method is interlingual research, which involves comparing cultural keywords between two languages. For example, Felix K. Ameka and Deborah Hill (2020) conducted contrastive studies on the meaning of the verb "Opening" in West African and Oceanian languages. Similarly, Zuzanna Bułat Silva (2020) conducted contrastive studies on the implied meanings of "time" in representative words from Portuguese, Polish, Spanish, and Chinese. In another research, L. M. Shatikova, V. V. Borisova, and O. K. Osakina compared the lexicon-ethic between French and Russian.

The authors of the article argued that placing the cultural keyword of the two languages next to each other allowed them to systematically explain concept-ethical terms. This method also helps scholars comprehensively and objectively describe a semantic structure and identify moral concepts across different cultures. As a result of following the comparison process, scholars claimed that in the state of modern languages, French and Russian have more similarities than differences, proving that there is a long-term relationship between them and similarity in human culture (L. M. Shatikova, V. V. Borisova, O. K. Osakina, 2018).

Recent studies on cultural keywords by Vietnamese scholars have also adopted the contrastive approach, specifically in the works of Le Van Thi Kieu (2014) and Nguyen Lien Huong (2017). The above-mentioned research papers studied the cultural meaning in perception and examined cultural characteristics in symbols.

### **3. "Wakimae" – A Japanese cultural keyword**

Building upon Le Quang Thiem's theory of semantic stratification (2020), we posit that the term "wakimae/wakimaeru" conveys a literal meaning, which is neither figurative nor translatable. Despite its low usage frequency in Japanese communication, "wakimae/wakimaeru" possesses a high cultural significance, which is key to comprehending the Japanese way of thinking, behavior, and the philosophy behind their honorifics and courtesy.

For the above reason, the keyword "wakimae/wakimaeru" was chosen as a representative of Japanese language, and its cultural meaning was analyzed to seek the keyword's equivalents in Vietnamese. The summary of the studies on "wakimae/wakimaeru" was referenced from the dictionary definition, which reflects the perspective of Japanese scholars.

#### **3.1. Analytical methods and corpus**

We extracted the definition of "wakimae/wakimaeru" from the Japanese hermeneutical dictionary, utilizing the academic concept as a reference. After conducting a survey on natural speech, we performed meaning classification and analysis. In parallel with the survey on Japanese, we conducted a survey on Vietnamese people who are proficient in Japanese to gather additional materials to evaluate the similarities between Japanese cultural terms and their Vietnamese equivalents. The materials collected for this survey include:

- 41 utterances containing the word "wakimae/wakimaeru" taken from Japanese forum sites
- 27 questionnaires administered to Japanese students
- 22 questionnaires distributed among Vietnamese who are proficient in Japanese.

### **3.2. Research on dictionary definitions**

Apart from the noun "wakimae", there is the verb "wakimaeru" that works in conjunction with it. Therefore, in this article, these two-word forms were considered together.

The Japanese National Dictionary Kojien 広辞苑 defines the noun "wakimae" as: 1) Perception. 2) Perceiving and distinguishing things clearly. Moreover, in the same dictionary, the verb "wakimaeru" is defined in detail as 1) Understanding things, morals. 2) Compensation/compensation (Kojien, p. 2867). The Shinmeikai 新明解 dictionary defines the verb "wakimaeru" as "From one's position and point of view to clearly realize what should be done and what should not be done" (p. 1509). Other minor dictionaries all use their own definitions. The two major dictionaries share meaning 1 although the expressions employed are different, namely "perceiving, clearly distinguishing things and ethics", and "perceiving what to do and what not to do". However, the dictionary definition carries a broad connotation and does not reveal the cultural connotation in use.

### **3.3. Research by Japanese scholars on the concept of "wakimae"**

Contrary to the broad definition of the two words in dictionaries, studies by different scholars have emphasized and clarified the cultural connotation of "wakimae/wakimaeru".

Ide Sachiko is one scholar who has shown particular interest in "wakimae" and conducted various studies on it. Prior to defining "wakimae", Ide made a statement on the propositional nature of Japanese utterances: unlike English, there can never be a single propositional content in Japanese that is without modal components indexing the speaker's position, attitude, possession, et cetera (Ide Sachiko, 2012).

For example, the English sentence "It is rainy today" has the Japanese equivalent of "Kyou wa ame da 今日は雨だ" or "Kyou wa ame desu 今日は雨です". These statements fully correspond to the meaning of an announcement but can also be expressed differently in the no (English speech) / yes (Japanese speech) modal meaning. In other words, "It is rainy today" is free of politeness, is objective, and is separate from the speaker, addressee, context, et cetera. On the other hand, "Kyou wa ame da / Kyou

wa ame desu" clearly indicates modality: "-da" represents modality and does not signify politeness (no politeness). On the other hand, "-desu" represents modality and has a polite signification (polite +1). "Wakimae" is the determining factor for such a modality and the choice of either "-da" or "-desu," as it contains the perception of superiority and inferiority, the formality of setting, et cetera. Based on the nature of no/yes (state of indexing modality), Ide proposed the classification of different languages into two types, asserting that the Japanese language belongs to the wakimae language type. Ide defined "wakimae" as social norms that dictate how people are expected to behave in order to appear appropriate in their society. Persons are considered polite only when they behave in accordance with established norms in a given setting and sociocultural context (Ide, 2008). Therefore, based on the "wakimae" rule, in Japanese society, in addition to grammatical, lexical, and semantic correctness, an accurate choice in modal components is equally crucial in making a correct utterance in Japanese. Choosing suitable modal components is considered a socio-cultural rule that forces speakers to refrain from acting on their own accord and speaking in their own favor and to instead conform to social norms, interpersonal relationships, and given settings.

Along with Ide, other scholars showed their interest in "wakimae". Hall (1986) argued that "wakimae" "refers to a voluntary recognition of socially agreed rules that apply to both verbal and non-verbal behaviors" (Ide Sachiko, 2008). Similarly, Senko K. Maynard (1997) claimed that "wakimae" refers to the standards expected or desired by society (i.e., social norms) (p. 57).

Fujimoto Izumi (1986) compared two synonyms "kokoroeru" and "wakimaeru" and came to the conclusion that "wakimaeru", unlike "kokoroeru", is an action in which one carefully examines an object (that needs to be judged) and subsequently makes decisions and choices that align with social norms. Simply put, "kokoroeru" is a personal feeling, while "wakimaeru" refers to general rules that are to be followed rationally.

Research conducted by scholars shows that the dictionary definition of "wakimae," which refers to being well-aware and having a clear discrimination about surrounding objects, morals, et cetera, has been narrowed and made concrete and is mainly concerned with person-to-person communication etiquette. In other words, scholars are now devoting their attention to "wakimae's/wakimaeru's" second meaning, which is to behave in a socially-expected/desired manner and bearing an element of cultural connotation. One typical example could be "Kare wa douri wo wakimaeta shuurui no hitoda / 彼は道理をわきまえた種類の人だ: (He's the kind of person who behaves properly).

#### 4. Wakimae – From perception of thought to the manifestation of cognitive action in actual language

##### 4.1. Meaning elements of "wakimae/wakimaeru" in utterance

We analyzed utterances collected from Japanese forums using Bert Peerters' method (2020). The forums we chose are popular sites whose users are mostly Japanese. We made this choice to ensure nativeness. A list of 50 utterances was compiled and condensed into 41 unique expressions that contain "wakimae/wakimaeru." Based on the list of 41 utterances, we identified the different meanings of "wakimae/wakimaeru", ranging from broad to narrow. Utterances are numbered from U1 ("U" is short for "Utterance," which might be categorized into a and b should there be more than one example).

*Clearly distinguish things, events, roles, et cetera.*

**Combination formula: N (thing/event) wo wakimaeru / N1 to N2 wo wakimaeru / N wa wakimaeru**

(N is a noun indicating things, events, et cetera used in conjunction with "wakimaeru")

U1a: Sore wo Tadamori wa wakimaete orunoda. / それを忠盛はわきまえておるのだ。(Tadamori understands that well).

U1b: Daiichi ni wa, monono mikata wo tadashiku shite sono genin to kekka wo yoku wakimaeru / 第一には、ものの見方を正しくしてその原因と結果をよくわきまえる。(First, we must determine your point of view about things and events, then realize its causes and effects based on that point of view).

U1c: Jibun no yakuwari wa mina wakimaeterubeki da. / 自分の役割は皆わきまえてるべきだ。(We all must understand our roles.)

*Understand morality, the purpose of life, and exhibit consistent behavior*

**Combination formula: N (morality/reason of life, politeness, etc.) wo wakimaeru**

U2a: Sumisu-san wa reigi wo wakimaeteiru-node tanohitono warukuchi wa iwanai/ スミスさんは礼儀をわきまえているので他の人の悪口は言わない (Mr. Smith is a decent person, so he will not speak ill of others).

U2b: Roujin-ni seki wo yuzuru towa kare mo reigi wo wakimaeteiru /老人に席を譲るとは彼も礼儀をわきまえている (It is also a sign of understanding that he gives his seat to the elderly).

U2c: Kare wa ayamaru to iu reigi sae mo wakimaete inakatta /彼は謝るという礼儀さえもわきまえていなかった (He does not even know how to apologize).

*Realize the right position, stance, identity, and status*

**Combination formula: N (position/status...) wa/wo wakimaeru**

U3a: Watashi mo tanki dakedo tachiba wa wakimaeru wa/私も短気だけど立場はわかまえるわ (I'm not very insightful either, but I am aware of my position).

U3b: Namaikidana, reigimo wakimaezu/ 生意気だな 礼儀もわきまえず (How impertinent! You are being disrespectful).

U3c: Bureina! Bun wo wakimaeyo! / 無礼な! 分をわきまえよ! (Don't be insolent! You should be aware of your position!)

It can be seen that there are discrepancies in meanings (1), (2), and (3), particularly in their specific connotations. The first meaning of "wakimae/wakimaeru" is broad, encompassing cognitive understanding, clarification of objects, perception, and the relationship among things and people, et cetera. In contrast, the third meaning focuses on the distinction between individuals and interpersonal status, which is also clearly a component of cultural connotation. In addition, the second and third meanings are closely related to each other as they both refer to life, behavior, et cetera. It seems that the second meaning contains the third meaning, or the third meaning is included in the second meaning. Specifically, the third meaning only refers to perception and behavior in relation to superior and inferior positions. This is the element of cultural meaning for which equivalents in Vietnamese are sought.

Survey results on Japanese people show that approximately 50% (depending on respondents' answers) of the utterances have a third meaning or refer to the social position of speakers. There was little variation in choice, as reflected in the difference of one to three votes: the choice of utterances was highly consistent. Another survey on 20 out of 41 utterances proved that all these examples only refer to the "obligation" of *a person in a lower social position* in dealing with *a person in an upper social position*, without considering the reverse scenario, as evidenced in the additional examples below.

U3d: "Tachiba wo wakimaero" tte donarareta no yo/ 「立場をわかまえろ」って 怒鳴られたのよ (I was yelled at and was told to be aware of my position).

U3e: Mibun wo wakimaenasai/身分をわきまえなさい (Know your place and understand your social status).

U3f: Mibun wo wakimaerukoto wo oshiekomanaito/身分をわきまえることを教え込まないと (I have to teach you how to be polite).

U3g: Wareware wa jibun no tachibatte mono wo wakimaete ita ga ne./我々は自分の立場ってものをわきまえていたがね (We are aware of our status).

From the results of this survey, another meaning was added to the N factor in the above formula. It is:

**N (position/status/... of the inferior) wa/wo wakimaeru**

#### 4.2. Meaning elements of arguments associated with wakimae/wakimaeru

In terms of combinations, "wakimae/wakimaeru" has a fairly simple formula as shown above. However, despite the simplicity of its morphological combination formula, when it comes to meanings, "wakimae/wakimaeru", as with other cultural keywords in all languages, proves to be far from being simple: it may be complicated and difficult to clearly comprehend.

From the perspective of semantic grammar, each predicate has certain arguments (which are the elements associated with it). For example, in the sentence "I gave him the book", the predicate "give" has an element, which is the first-person personal pronoun "I", preceding it and acts as the subject of the sentence. The arguments "he" and "book" that follow the predicate "give" act as an indirect complement and a direct complement, respectively. The verb "wakimaeru" is a special predicate that requires a special meaning argument because it covers both linguistic and cultural meanings. The predicate includes nouns combined in the frame structure of "wakimae/wakimaeru" (also the meaning framework of this cultural word), namely "bun", "mibun", "tachiba", and "reigi". That these nouns describe the status and position of subordinates, the cognitive code of ethics, et cetera that are only imposed on people of lower status without reciprocity was confirmed through a survey of 27 Japanese university students. In the questionnaire, the issue raised was "Whether in reality there is a case where utterances (containing the word "wakimaeru") are made by people in a lower position (students, employees, etc.) upper position (teachers, directors, etc.) The results of the survey show that 100% of respondents answered, "This does not happen in reality" (with the excuse that doing so is rude).

Thus, it is clear that the socio-cultural nature of "wakimae/wakimaeru", according to the dictionary, is "from one's position to perceive things", where "one's position" indicates a low social position or inferior status. Therefore, a meaning that

shapes and concretizes the dictionary definition of "wakimae/wakimaeru" has been revealed. "Status awareness" entails being aware of one's own low position (knowing one's own position). It is almost impossible to find equivalents of this element of cultural meaning, specifically the clear illustration of upper–lower status, the "authority" of the superior, and the inferior's expected obedience in languages of horizontal society such as English. As analyzed above, two-thirds of the meanings of "wakimae/wakimaeru" convey specific cultural meanings:

- Self-perception and behavior in accordance with established social norms (noun).
- Appropriate behavior on the part of individuals of low social position relative to their superiors (verb).

## 5. Finding the equivalent cultural word in Vietnamese

### 5.1. Survey

In order to find a corresponding concept in Vietnamese, we conducted a survey using a questionnaire given to 22 Vietnamese people who are fluent in Japanese. The selection of survey participants was meant to ensure an understanding of the correct meaning of "wakimae/wakimaeru," and ultimately to choose the most appropriate Vietnamese equivalent.

*Question 1 - From the marked Japanese utterances in the list, which of the following do you think "wakimae" corresponds with?*

1. Be aware of social norms	2. Be aware of politeness rules	3. Be aware of social status	4. To understand rules	5. Other:
-----------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	-----------

*Question 2 - From the marked Japanese utterances in the table, which of the following do you think the verb "wakimaeru" corresponds to?*

1. To behave in an appropriate manner with a superior and inferior	2. To know your position	3. Be aware of your position/status	4. To understand rules	5. Other:
--	--------------------------	-------------------------------------	------------------------	-----------



*Question 3 - The vocabulary you have chosen to indicate the implicit rule that people must follow:*

1. Both a person in an upper position and a person in a lower position	2. People of equal status	3. People in high positions / superiors	4. People in lower positions / inferiors	5. Other:
--	---------------------------	---	--	-----------

### **5.2. Finding the equivalents from the survey**

The survey results from 22 Vietnamese people who are fluent in Japanese are as follows: In the first survey question regarding the noun "wakimae", the answers varied considerably. Half of the respondents chose the fourth option (to understand the rules) (12/22 votes). Nine out of 22 votes were for the third option (to be aware of one's status). One out of 22 votes was for the fifth option (Other: all answers). This survey has proven the rather rich meaning of "wakimae", and the difficulty in providing a clear explanation or finding exact equivalents. All four options suggested in the questionnaire (be aware of social norms, be aware of politeness rules, be aware of one's position, and to understand the rules) are considered equivalents of "wakimae."

The survey also shows that there is a correspondence between the answers for question 1 (noun "wakimae") and question 2 (verb "wakimaeru"). Specifically, those who chose option 3 for question 1 were likely to go for option 3 for question 2. This is understandable because "wakimae" is inherently a noun, serving as a meaning container. Similarly, "wakimaeru" is the verb form of "wakimae," hence has the same lexical meaning as "wakimaeru."

Remarkably, for question 3, all respondents opted for the fourth answer ("wakimae/wakimaeru" in targeting those of low position). Similarly, wakimae's/wakimaeru's equivalents in Vietnamese mean to impose on people of low position, which is an indispensable feature and one of the meanings of the word under study. We clarify the linguistic-cultural meaning below.

### **5.3. "Phận" - The cultural keyword in Vietnamese**

#### *Proposal*

Theoretically, complete cultural identicalness between languages is almost non-existent. However, this is not the case in Japan and Vietnam. Both countries have been influenced by Chinese culture, which is characterized by a hierarchy in society from which the codes of conduct corresponding to people's social position and age are

derived. Thus, we sought to find a word or phrase in Vietnamese that could be an equivalent of "wakimae/wakimaeru" in terms of cultural meaning.

As stated, we had not set out to translate the term "wakimae/wakimaeru" but rather to establish an equivalent in terms of cultural meaning. Regarding the survey results, we propose that "(thân) phận (fate)" is a word with a cultural connotation that shares the same properties as "wakimae/wakimaeru". It should be noted that although the verb "wakimaeru" was present along with the noun "wakimae", we omitted a proposal for a verb equivalent in Vietnamese. This omission is due to the fact that there is no verb in Vietnamese that contains an equivalent argument with "wakimaeru" (this will be mentioned in the comparison section). After proposing an equivalent word, we re-examined the dictionary definition of "(thân) phận," and finally found and analyzed idioms, proverbs, and idiomatic and colloquial expressions with "(thân) phận."

*Verification from the dictionary*

The Vietnamese great dictionary defines "phận" as 1) fate; 2) position (p. 1327). The dictionary also defines "thân phận" as "the predestined low status and unfortunate circumstances of a person" (p. 1542). Moreover, in this dictionary, there is a definition of "knowing one's own position and fate" as "being aware of one's status, adverse circumstances and abilities, and reacting appropriately to people and things" (p. 162).

The online Soha dictionary provides the following explanations: 1) "phận" is short for "thân phận"; 2) "phận" is a position and the associated duty of a subordinate to their superior.

The above findings suggest a very clear cultural similarity between "(thân) phận" in Vietnamese and "wakimae" in the sense of low status and duties of subordinates to superiors.

*Analysis of idioms, proverbs, and folk songs*

1) People in a low position (generally):

Juniors crave to carry a heavy load

"Straw pillow according to the part of straw pillow.

Where is there low down that jumps up high?"

2) *Women's status and position were considered inferior in older society:*

a. "Here you are, as a girl

Exhausting herself

At small hours

To feed the family

Yet, the money

Through sweat and blood, you earned

It shall be divided, and given to others.

Tell me, how much will be left

For you who suffer **fate** as a girl?"

b. "My career is a mess

No hope for anything either.

What a tragic **fate** I met

All failure and no success!"

c. "My **fate** is anonymous

Just like any tree in the woods

Whose fragrance is unknown"

d. "My **fate** is like a lemon

The fresher on the outside, the sourer on the inside"

e. "The sorrowful **fate** of a woman resembles a miserable and fragile stork"

3) *The position of an inferior (with respect to a superior) in a specific interpersonal relationship (teacher–student relationship):*

"I know that no matter how a teacher behaves, students always face the same fate of obeying and being polite to them. That is just out of the question." (Behind the lecture hall, p. 239).

"But I'm ashamed when I think about my fate." (Children of the colonel, p. 49).

#### *Elements of the meaning of "(thân) phận"*

As can be seen from the examples above, "(thân) phận" signifies persons of low position, be it *juniors* (being young in age), *rural Vietnamese women* (whose frailty is often represented through the metaphor of storks or bitterns and flimsy animals with miserably scraggy figures) in Vietnamese folk songs and proverbs, or *students* (whose status is traditionally deemed inferior to that of teachers in Vietnamese people's thinking and ideology), reflecting a unique cultural connotation. This unidirectional focus of "(thân) phận" is evident in the Vietnamese language. There is "fate (duty) of children" but there is no "fate (duty) of parents," there is "fate (duty) of bees and ants," but there is no "fate (duty) of elephants and tigers"<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, there is no "fate (duty) of masters" but there is "fate (duty) of servants." Furthermore, there is the "fate (duty) of students" to their teachers, but there is no corresponding opposite; there is also "women's fate (duty)" but there is no "men's fate (duty)" (when talking about men, the

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a literal translation. In Vietnamese culture, there is a metaphor of the image "bees and ants" which refers to people who have a low status while the image of "elephants and tigers" refers to those who have a high status.

term "men's will" is commonly used instead), et cetera. "(Thân) phận" belongs to the "class of words denoting things and phenomena, etc.," and "refers to one's self-awareness of their own inferior position" (Nguyen Van Chien, p. 38). People's self-consciousness about their social position is a principle and an obligation in Vietnamese society, hence the polite, sensible, and respectful manner adopted by inferiors to their superiors.

*(Thân) phận in comparison with wakimae/wakimaeru*

The difference between "(thân) phận" and "wakimae/wakimaeru" is reflected in the combination with other words. There is no restriction that "(Thân) phận" must be associated with specific verbs. In other words, a strict (cultural) meaning framework for "(thân) phận" is non-existent. Moreover, its counterpart in Japanese, "wakimaeru," when used as a predicate, is a transitive verb called tadoushi/他動詞 in Japanese and is capable of signifying different connotations associated with cultural connotative arguments such as "bun" (fate), "mibun" (social status), and "tachiba" (position). Vietnamese also contains words with a strict meaning framework that, as with "wakimaeru", can carry different connotations. For example, the words "biếu" (to present) and "thí" (to give alms) both refer to an act of "giving something to someone". However, "biếu" has a positive connotation, indicating presenting something to someone (usually to individuals of higher position than the giver), while "thí" is "biếu's" negative counterpart and is defined as giving something to someone in a rough and disrespectful manner, as if the receiver is beneath the giver. However, this is not the case for "(thân) phận." The combination of "nhận thức" or "biết" (understand / be aware of) with "(thân) phận" (fate) as in "biết thân biết phận," and "nhận thức thân phận" (understand one's fate) convey neither positive, as with "biếu", nor a negative connotation, as with "thí." Furthermore, it is not necessary for "biết" and "nhận thức" to be used specifically with "(thân) phận" to bear the meaning of understanding or being aware of something. For example, "biết" in "biết thân biết phận" (understand one's fate) and "biết Tiếng Anh" (understand English) bear the same meaning.

Apart from the differences discussed above, there is, without a doubt, an uncanny resemblance between "wakimae/wakimaeru" and "(thân) phận" in terms of the meaning of self-consciousness of one's own inferior social position that contributes to the hierarchical order of society inherent in both words. In addition, by default, both "wakimae/wakimaeru" and "(thân) phận" pertain to individuals of low social position. Both words only apply to the inferior and not their superior counterparts. The cultural elements in these two words are highly remarkable and are reflected in the expected sensibility and respect that people of low social positions must pay to their superiors.

As "wakimae" languages as defined by Ide, both Vietnamese and Japanese cannot stand alone and be separated from cultural elements—in this case, the expected social behaviors and manners of the inferior. Cultural elements must be intertwined with the language, while the language itself must convey cultural elements.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article, we chose "wakimae/wakimaeru" as representatives of the Japanese language and conducted comparisons with their equivalents in Vietnamese. The study has gone from studying definitions of the words "wakimae/wakimaeru" in dictionaries to scholars' concepts and research directions to the cultural connotation of these words. Subsequently, we applied this cultural element to the actual language of communication. On the basis of our findings, we propose the Vietnamese word "(thân) phận" as the culturally connotated equivalent of "wakimae/wakimaeru." The elements of meaning of "wakimae/wakimaeru" and "(thân) phận" show clear similarities. They: 1) indicate the hierarchical nature of Japanese and Vietnamese societies 2) imply implicit position perception 3) implicitly convey a one-way, polite code of conduct that is mandatory for individuals in low positions in interpersonal relations.

Every nation is an integral part of this deeply globalized world. It is necessary to conduct a deep examination of each nation's culture and the contrast among cultural keywords of different languages. This examination will foster integration that is not characterized by forced assimilation.

## References

- Ameka, Felix K. and Hill, Deborah (2020) *The comparative semantics of verbs of 'opening': West Africa vs Oceania*. In Bromhead, Helen and Ye, Zhengdao (eds), *Meaning, Life and Culture*. Published by ANU Press The Australian National University.
- 藤本 泉 (Fujimoto, Izumi) (1986) 「こころえる・わきまえる」 特集・類義語の意味論的研究——『日本語研究』, 08, 1–12.
- Godgard, Cliff (2020) Prototypes, polysemy and constructional semantics: The lexicogrammar of the English verb climb. In Helen Bromhead and Zhengdao Ye (eds), *Meaning, Life and Culture*. Published by ANU Press The Australian National University: 13–32.
- 韓惠盛 (Han, Hyesung) (2019) 『待遇表現に関する日本語と韓国語の対照研究』 関西外国語大学大学院 博士学位申請論文.
- 井出祥子 (Ide, Sachiko) (2006) 『わきまへの語用論』 大修館書店

- Ide, Sachiko (2008) On the notion of wakimae: Toward an integrated framework of linguistic politeness, *Mejiro Linguistics Society* (MLS), 298–305.
- Ide, Sachiko (2012). Roots of the wakimae aspect of linguistic politeness – Modal expressions and Japanese sense of self. *Linguistic politeness and Japanese sense of self*: 120–138. doi.org/10.1075/z.170.08ide
- 金田一京助編 (Kindaichi, Kyousuke) (1997)『新明解国語辞典』 (Shinmeikai Kokugojiten), 三省堂
- Le, Van Thi Kieu (2014) *Exploring the cultural conceptualisations of "PHẬN/FATE" in Vietnamese*, Paper presented at The 3rd International Conference on Linguistics, Literature and Culture, Penang, Malaysia.
- Lê, Quang Thiêm (2020) *Việt ngữ học – Nghiên cứu lịch sử từ vựng và sự phát triển nghĩa từ vựng* [Vietnamese linguistics – Studying the history of vocabulary and the development of lexical meaning], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Maynard, Senko K. (1997) *Language and Thought Context*. University of Hawai'i Press.
- Nguyễn, Liên Hương (2017) *Hướng tiếp cận đối chiếu nghĩa từ vựng văn hóa thông qua từ khóa* [An approach to contrasting cultural lexical meanings through keywords], Tạp chí Văn hóa Nghệ thuật số 8 (398), 35–39.
- Nguyễn, Văn Chiến (2004) *Tiến tới xác lập vốn từ vựng văn hóa Việt* [Towards identifying Vietnamese cultural vocabulary], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Như Ý (chủ biên) (1998) *Đại từ điển tiếng Việt* [Great Vietnamese dictionary], Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa thông tin, Hà Nội.
- Peerters, Bert (2020) Gezellig: A Dutch cultural keyword unpacked. In Helen Bromhead and Zhengdao Ye (eds), *Meaning, Life and Culture*. Published by ANU Press The Australian National University, 61–79.
- Shatilova, L.M., Borisova, V.V., Kasatkina, O.A. (2018). Representation of the linguistic and cultural concept "lie" in the French and Russian language picture of the world. *Opción*, Vol 34, No 82–2, 257–276.
- 新村出 (Shinmura, Izuru) (1998)『広辞苑』 (Kojien) 岩波書店
- Silva, Zuzanna Bulat (2020). Time in Portuguese saudade and other words of longing. In Helen Bromhead and Zhengdao Ye (eds), *Meaning, Life and Culture*. Published by ANU Press The Australian National University: 211–228.
- Tajareh, Mahboobeh Joze (2015), *An Overview of Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis*, Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi Fen Fakültesi Fen Bilimleri Dergisi (CFD), Cilt:36, No: 3 Özel Sayı: 1105–1113.
- Wierzbicka, Anna (1991). Japanese key words and core cultural values, *Language Society* Vol 20, No.3: 333–385.

Materials used from:

ja.ichacha.net/japanese/%E3%82%8F%E3%81%8D%E3%81%BE%E3%81%88.html

Nguyễn, Hữu Đạt (1998). *Phía sau giảng đường* [Behind the classes], Nhà xuất bản Văn học Công an Nhân dân, Hà Nội.

Nguyễn, Hữu Đạt (1996). *Các con đại tá* [Colonel's children], Nhà xuất bản Văn học Quân đội Nhân dân, Hà Nội.

Nguyễn, Lâm (2010), *Từ điển thành ngữ, tục ngữ Việt Nam* [Dictionary of Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs], Nhà xuất bản Văn học, Hà Nội.

## **Grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers**

Hoàng Thị Yến

(Faculty of Language and Culture, CMC University)

Võ Thị Minh Hà

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

Lâm Thị Hòa Bình

(Faculty of English, ULIS, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** The Vietnamese classifier is one of the linguistic units showing much diversity and complexity in researchers' viewpoints. In this article, opinions of Vietnamese linguists on six basic grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers are synthesized and analyzed. It shows that in combining with a word class other than nouns, Vietnamese classifiers can create a noun showing an abstract concept. It is the entity significance of nouns and the essence of entities' formal differentiation of classifiers that allow classifiers to function as nouns and represent noun phrases. Unlike unit nouns performing mainly as quantifiers, classifiers' main function is to define categories. Vietnamese classifiers can also function as sentence elements, especially in forming the compound head of a noun phrase. Vietnamese classifiers, which are flexible grammatical units with relative independence and the capacity to express emotions through numeral category, need to be studied systematically in relation to and comparison with other languages.<sup>1</sup>

**Key words:** Vietnamese classifiers, grammatical functions, category identification, noun phrase

### **1. Introduction**

In the World Atlas of language structures, Vietnamese is included in classifier languages like Chinese, Korean, and Japanese,... However, the complexity of Vietnamese classifiers and the way they function in the language have posed lots of problems for learners and researchers. Based on studies of Vietnamese word classes, we share linguists' viewpoint that the most important function of Vietnamese classifiers is to classify nouns, and when their grammatical function changes, their meanings will be more or less faded (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, 1998; Lư Văn Lãng, 2000). In Vietnamese

---

HOÀNG, Thị Yến, VÕ Thị Minh Hà, LÂM Thị Hòa Bình. 2003. Grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151488>

<sup>1</sup> We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Linguistics, USSH-VNU and the organizers of the International Conference of "Research and Application of Linguistics and Vietnamese Linguistics" for giving us the opportunity to have our research presented.

<sup>2</sup> We are also thankful to Geolinguistic Society, Japan for the publication of this work.



language research, this is likely one of the most controversial issues with varied opinions. In order to handle difficulties in teaching and learning Vietnamese as the first language (L1 - mother tongue) and the second language (L2 - foreign language), there should be more systematic and comprehensive studies on the role, position, meaning and function of Vietnamese classifiers.

In our opinion, before implementing comparative studies of Vietnamese classifiers and equivalent units in other languages, it is important to systematize the perspectives of Vietnamese linguists on Vietnamese classifiers. In our recent study (Lâm Thị Hòa Bình, Võ Thị Minh Hà & Hoàng Thị Yến, 2022), we have clarified the position of classifiers in the Vietnamese language and summarized the views of Vietnamese linguists on classifiers' role in Vietnamese noun structures (Trịnh Thị Phương Thảo & Hoàng Thị Yến, 2022). And in this article, we review the grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers and present our understanding of several linguists' viewpoints.

## 2. Methodology

Vietnamese classifiers which are assumed as unit nouns, sub-types of nouns (Vũ Đức Nghiệu, 2021, pp.260-262) possess the following grammatical features:

- Having countable attributes and being able to directly combine with quantifiers

- (1) a. Mua vài cái bút  
Buy several CLF pen  
Buy several pens
- b. Gọt từng quả xoài  
Peel each CLF mango  
Peel one mango after another

- Being marked with either singular or plural quantifiers

(2) Singular

- a. Cái ấy  
CLF that  
That one
- b. Quyển này  
CLF this

This book

c. Từng đũa

Each CLF

One person after another

(2) Plural

d. Vài cái

Several CLF

Several

e. Mấy con

Several CLF

Several

- Rejecting the combination with other unit nouns while functioning as dimensional unit nouns in noun phrases.

(3) a. Một đàn (~~con~~) gà  
 A CLF:flock (CLF:~~one~~) chicken  
 A flock of chickens

b. Một đĩa (~~set~~) bún  
 A CLF:plate (CLF:~~one-plate~~) vermicelli  
 A plate of vermicelli

- Acting the heads in noun phrases, which are grammatically indispensable.

(4) Ăn nửa con gà  
 Eat half CLF chicken  
 Eat half a chicken  
 (NOT: ~~Ăn nửa gà: Eat half chicken~~)

- Presenting as unit nouns in noun phrases, their meanings need to be clarified, and defined by other words.

(5) a. Mua một cân đường  
 Buy a CLF sugar  
 Buy a kilogram of sugar

b. Con này là gà tây

CLF this is turkey  
 This one is a turkey

In order to review Vietnamese classifiers, we study the viewpoints of Vietnamese linguists from their works one by one. We also clarify basic grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers in word formation, substitution, category identification, acting as heads in noun phrases, and showing modality in the numerical category... Materials for the survey are mainly collected from books, articles and other research published in Vietnamese and English including Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1975, 1998), Nguyễn Kim Thân (1963, 1981), Hồ Lê (1983, 2000, 2003), Lưu Văn Lăng (Eds) (1994, 2000), Hoàng Tất Thắng (1996), Trần Đại Nghĩa (1996), Nguyễn Phú Phong (2002), Phạm Thị Thúy Hồng (2012)....; and some notable research in English by Nguyễn Đình Hòa (1957, 1997), Ngô Bình (2012), Daniel Hole & Elisabeth Löbel (2013), Nguyễn Hùng Tường (2004, 2013), Tran, Jennie (2011, 2013), Trần Thị Thanh Hai (2021), etc.,. We hope an overall picture of the grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers will be demonstrated through the multidimensional perspectives of Vietnamese linguists.

### 3. Grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers

The grammatical function of a word is related to its ability to combine with other words in speech (Lê Đình Tư & Vũ Ngọc Cân, 2009). Taking classifiers as sub-types of nouns gives them a definite position among the grammatical elements of a sentence or utterance. From the cognitive perspective, Đỗ Ngọc Phương (2000, pp.210-211) asserts that the main functions of Vietnamese classifiers are the identification and classification of entities. These functions govern other linguistic features of classifiers such as meanings, grammatical characteristics, and rhetorical features... In his studies, Nguyễn Kim Thân (1963, 1981) is consistent with the view that classifiers usually are attached to nouns; they can individualize matters and show their natural units. Additionally, Phan Xuân Thành (1993) mentions the specification and deictic function of classifiers, and Lê Văn Lý (1972) notices their particularization and topicality. According to Trần Đại Nghĩa (2000, pg.173), in a defined context, a classifier can perform four main functions of a noun as subject, direct complement, adnominal and noun constructional element. Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1998, pg.215) maintains that a classifier can combine with a noun to form a compound head (T1 + T2) of a noun phrase.

Phan Ngọc (1988, pg.57) mentions three grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers, namely substitution, demonstrativeness, word-formation; then, he also adds their ability in the construction of isotopic structure (ibid., pg.64). He points out that Vietnamese classifiers possess deictic function while nouns do not. The deixis is considered to be a kind of referent closely related to the speaker's context, usually operating by locating, taking the speaker's position as a landmark to determine the speaker's object, space and time of the matters, events, and phenomena being talked about. They are demonstratives (DEM) because their meanings are “hollow” (for instance, the classifiers *ấy* ‘that’ and *đó* ‘that’ in fact do not denote any particular object). In Vietnamese, the objective demonstratives (*này* ‘this’, *kia* ‘that’) often stand at the end of noun phrases. In case a noun entails a long adnominal phrase included a demonstrative (e.g. *ấy* ‘that’) , the demonstrative will not subordinate the noun’s meaning but the adnominal phrase’s. In his opinion, because classifiers indicate a subjective evaluation, a relationship, it can be used to replace the demonstratives by the end of the sentence.

- (6) Tôi nhớ đến cái bà mẹ không biết gì  
 I remember to DEM CLF mother not know anything  
 đến những khuyết điểm của đứa con trai  
 about plural shortcoming of CLF child son  
 I remember the mother who did not know anything about her son’s shortcomings.
- (7) Tôi nhớ đến bà mẹ không biết gì đến  
 I remember to CLF mother not know anything about  
 những khuyết điểm của đứa con trai ấy  
 plural shortcoming of CLF child son DEM  
 I remember the mother who did not know anything about her son’s  
 shortcomings

(Phan Ngọc, 1988, pg.63)

As we all know, the classifier *cái* in modern Vietnamese has three meanings: i. individualization of objects and events with general meanings (e.g. *cái ăn* ‘CLF-eat’= food, *cái mặc* ‘CLF-wear’= clothing, *cái tốt* ‘CLF-good’ = goodness); ii. Inanimate single unit (e.g. *cái nhà* ‘CLF-house’ = house, *cái bát* ‘CLF-bowl’ = bowl, *cái cặp* ‘CLF-bag’ = bag, etc.); iii. some types of animate individual, usually tiny or personified (e.g. *cái kiến* ‘CLF-ant’ = ant, *cái ve* ‘CLF-cicada’ = cicada, *cái cò* ‘CLF-stork’ = stork, etc.). Besides the classifier *cái*, there is another *cái* in the structure of noun phrases,

which is called deixis CÁI by Vietnamese linguists (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, 1998; Đinh Văn Đức, 1986; Nguyễn Đình Hòa, 1997) or extra CÁI (Nguyễn Phú Phong, 2002). In noun phrase structures in modern Vietnamese, the nouns being able to occupy the head position include unit nouns, classifiers, countable mass nouns, and non-countable mass nouns. The deixis CÁI holds the frontal appendage, to the left, next to the head noun in a noun phrase. In noun phrases, this special position is only for CÁI and no equivalent can replace it on the axis of ideological association. The phenomenon did not exist in the noun phrase structures in the 17th and 18th century<sup>2</sup>. It was not until the 19th century did researchers discover one case in the following sentence in the Tale of Kiều (Nguyễn Du, 1820).

- (8) Cái      điều      bạc mệnh      có      chừa      ai      đâu  
 Deixis   CLF   tragic destiny   has   spare   someone   where  
 The tragic destiny spares no one.

In our opinion, in example (6), Phan Ngọc (1988) mistook the deixis CÁI for a classifier. In his example, *cái bà mẹ* ‘mother’ is the same as *cái điều bạc mệnh* ‘tragic destiny’ in the Tale of Kiều. The head *cái* of the noun phrase in example (6) is a provisional classifier, *điều* ‘CLF:event’ in the example of the Tale of Kiều (Nguyễn Du, pg.458) is a genuine classifier. The presence of *cái* emphasizes the whole noun phrase and implies the speaker's negative evaluation of the entire content of the phrase. In example (7) by Phan Ngọc (1988), the omission of the classifier *cái* in the noun phrase makes a more objective description. That noun phrase structure is completely correct because its precision is guaranteed by the head noun *bà mẹ* ‘mother’. Additionally, *cái* in example (6) is not an alternative to the demonstrative *ấy* in example (7) for in Vietnamese the sentence (9) below is still correct.

- (9) Tôi   nhớ      đến      cái      bà      mẹ      không      biết      gì  
 I      remember   to      DEM      CLF      mother      not      know      anything  
 đến      những      khuyết điểm      của      đứa      con      trai      ấy  
 about      plural      shortcoming      of      CLF      child      son      DEM  
 I remember the mother who did not know anything about her son’s shortcomings

<sup>2</sup> See Võ, Thị Minh Hà (2017). *Vietnamese Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase Structures in Texts of Quoc ngu characters in the 17th century*. Doctoral linguistics dissertation. University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

In case (9), the deixis CÁI marks the noun phrase *bà mẹ* ‘CLF:female-mother’ = mother (as in example (6)); and the deixis *ấy* refers to the adnominal *đứa con trai* ‘-CLF:one-son’ = son (as in example (7)). Thus, the presence of *cái* and *ấy* in the noun phrase is not mutually exclusive, each separately demonstrates one part of the noun phrase. Moreover, in fact in Vietnamese, the deixis CÁI and other demonstratives like *ấy*, *kia*, *đó*, *nọ* ‘that’ often go together, like the example below.

- (10) Tôi thích cái ngôi nhà màu xanh đó từ hồi nhỏ  
 I like DEIX CLF house colour green DEM since time little  
 I liked the green house since I was little.
- (11) Cái sự phiền não ấy tôi cứ để mãi trong lòng  
 DEIX CLF affliction DEM I still keep forever in intestine  
 That affliction is the one I always keep in my heart.
- (12) Cái việc tôi thích anh ấy không liên quan gì đến cô  
 DEIX CLF I like him DEM not relate what to you  
 That I like him is none of your business.

From the above analysis, we tend to consider the deixis beyond classifiers’ grammatical functions. Within this article, we mention six basic functions of classifiers comprising word formation, substitution, categorization, syntactic reference, operating as sentence elements (including the function of becoming the compound head of a noun phrase), showing modality through numerical category.

### 3.1. Word formation function

About classifiers’ functions, Nguyễn Hùng Tường (2004, pg.168) states that the term *event classifiers* can clarify the features of abstract concepts and their usual position is in front of a predicate, an adjective, a gerund or an abstract noun. In most cases, these classifiers involve in nominalization process in such noun phrases as *sự ném bom* ‘CLF:event-bombard’ = bombardment, *sự xuất hiện* ‘CLF:event-appear’ = appearance, *cuộc chiến đấu* ‘CLF:event-battle’ = battle, *trận oanh tạc* ‘CLF:event-strafe’ = strafe, *việc tưởng tượng* ‘CLF:event-imagine’ = imagination, *sự nhẫn nại* ‘CLF:event-patient’ = patience, *lòng quả cảm* ‘CLF:event-brave’ = braveness, *nỗi buồn* ‘CLF:event-sad’ = sadness, *niềm tin* ‘CLF:event-believe’ = belief, *cuộc sống* ‘CLF:event-live’ = life, *cuộc cách mạng* ‘CLF:event-revolutionize’ = revolution, *tính sáng tạo* ‘CLF:event-create’ = creativity, *lòng nhân đạo* ‘CLF:event-humanitive’ = humanity, ... Considering the features of Vietnamese abstract nouns, Phan Ngọc (1988, pp.64-65) believes that

classifiers function in forming abstract nouns by combining with another word class (e.g.: *sự sống* ‘CLF-live’ = life, *cái chết* ‘CLF-die’ = death)... Using analogy method, he defines the relationship between a classifier with abstract nouns as lexico-semantic relation, not subject-predicate relation. However, Lưu Văn Lăng (2000, pg.14) disapproves of the relation and takes *cái* ‘CLF:one’ and *sự* ‘CLF:event’ sub-word elements. He temporarily calls them side elements or subordinate elements. Maintaining the viewpoint, he thinks when the elements do not involve in such a combination, they are unit nouns (unit counters).

About the lexicalization of semantic nuances in languages, Cao Xuân Hạo (2000, pp.51-57) mentions three methods. The first only shows isolated existence (animacy). The second only manifests contents (material and category). And the third shows both isolating forms and attributes. He emphasizes that the nouns acting as classifiers show the most important meanings because they bring these nouns the nominalization – animacy. In such phrases as *cái đẹp* ‘CLF:event-beauty’ = the beauty, *điều lành* ‘CLF:event-good’ = goodness, *sự thật* ‘CLF:event-true’ = truth, the second elements are predicates (adjectives). The classifiers *cái, điều, sự...* bring the phrases the capacity of nominal phrases. In the semantic sphere, it is classifiers that bring into the syntagm the animacy that the element behind is missing to become countable nouns. In his opinion, classifiers are not functional types like prepositions, and connectors, but blank-meaning nouns.

Phan Khôi (2002, pg.91) calls classifiers *tiền danh từ* ‘pre-noun-words’= pre-nouns, and he also says that these pre-nouns can make up collective nouns. He wrote: “*When we want to make up collective nouns, we put another pre-noun in front of collectible objects*”.

(13) Một      bầy              trâu  
A      PRE-NOUN:herd   buffalo  
A herd of buffaloes

(14) Một      đàn                  gà  
A      PRE-NOUN:flock   chicken  
A flock of chicken

(15) Một      chũ                  tơ  
A      PRE-NOUN:roll   silk  
A roll of silk’

(16) Một      bao                  gạo  
A      PRE-NOUN:bag   rice

A bag of rice

In his opinion, there are probably types of collective pre-nouns, analytic pre-nouns, common pre-nouns, and numeral pre-nouns. At the same time, besides counting and demonstrative function, Lê Xuân Thái (2000, pp.112-113) mentions that classifiers can combine with nouns but the meaning of the whole is to show classification, like in the example below.

- (17) Con ong làm mật yêu hoa  
 CLF bee make honey love flower  
 A honey-making-flower-loving bee.

### 3.2. Substitution function

On analyzing the elision of defined nouns leaving only classifiers in noun phrases, Bisang (1999) mentions the anaphora function of classifier. He suggests that there are classifiers in most languages in the world. Particularly, in Asian and Southeast Asian languages, a classifier can combine with a numeral and/or a demonstrative pronoun without the presence of a noun (in case the noun is defined in the context ahead). Besides, Phan Ngọc (1988, pp.61-63) clarifies the subordinate function of Vietnamese classifiers when the defined noun is standing ahead and behind. He argues that because classifiers are “hollow” they can replace nouns. The function can be seen clearly in a well-prepared context.

- (18) Trong các bức tranh này anh thích bức nào?  
 In PLURAL CLF picture this you like CLF which?  
 Among these pictures, which one do you like?

Specifically, classifiers can replace nouns in two contexts. Firstly, in all cases when nouns are demonstrated.

- (19) Ông thích bức tranh nào?  
 You like CLF picture what?  
 Which picture do you like?  
 (20) Tôi thích bức này  
 I like CLF this  
 I like this one.



Secondly, when a noun has a particular content, it should be accompanied by a classifier to be more specific, i.e. when a noun has an attribute behind it, a classifier is needed.

- (21) Tôi trở về phòng. Căn phòng nhỏ bé nhưng thoáng mát.  
 I return back room. CLF room small but ventilated.  
 I return to my room. The room is small but ventilated.

Hồ Lê (2000, pg.97) emphasizes three characteristics of classifiers: i) most of them are single-syllabic words (there are some exceptions, such as *ki-lô* = kilogram, *mét vuông* = meter square, *cây số* = milestone); ii) they stand right behind numerals when the object needs to be counted in single or plural units; iii) they can replace word families in the structure [classifier + noun] in appropriate contexts. According to Lê Xuân Thái (2000, pg.113), a classifier can stand alone to be the subject in contrastive clauses of a compound sentence.

- (22) Đàn bò trong chuồng, con thì đứng, con thì ngồi.  
 CLF cow in shed, CLF is stand, CLF is sit.  
 The herd of cows is in the shed, some are standing, some are sitting

Đình Văn Đức and Đình Kiều Châu (2000, pp.140-141) think that the entity significance of nouns and the essence of entities formal differentiation of classifiers allow the latter to replace nouns and stand for the nouns. Nevertheless, they affirm that right in the case, in terms of syntax and semantics, the noun is still the head of a deep structure. Obviously, according to researchers, the criteria of classifiers to become representatives of noun phrases tend to be more logical than linguistic.

### 3.3. Qualitative function or classification

According to M.B. Emeneau (1951), in Vietnamese, there is a small group of nouns used to classify, which are classifiers (Nguyễn Tài Căn, 1975). The classifying significance of these lexical units presents the number of the items denoted in the noun behind. M.B. Emeneau (1951) also suggests that quantitation is part of categorical significance, and can be seen clearly in the structure [classifier + noun] (without numerals) showing the quantity of the objects indicated by the noun. In our opinion, probably due to the attribute, the term *unit nouns* is sometimes used to refer to classifiers, or assimilated with the concept of classifiers in several languages. For

example, in Korean, in most cases, researchers and linguistic educators use the term *단위 명사* *unit-noun* with little difference to (or even the same with) the term *분류사* *word classification*. M.B Emeneau (1951) points out that to show the unit number of *trâu* ‘buffalo’, Vietnamese use the combination of *con trâu* ‘CLF-buffalo’ = buffalo (for singular noun), and the combination of *bầy trâu* ‘CLF-buffalo’ = a herd of buffalo (for plural noun)... However, it is necessary to distinguish the noun phrases construction of [CLF + noun] (in *con thuyền* ‘CLF-ship’ = ship, *con mắt* ‘CLF-eye’ = eye, *con trâu* ‘CLF-buffalo’ = buffalo with other compounds (e.g.: *con buôn* = smuggler, *con chiên* = sheep, *con người* = people, *con rạ* = child (child born in the second delivery) (Hồ Lê, 2000).

Luu Văn Lãng (2000, pp.15-17) suggests that classifiers’ position is in front of a noun and he called them “pre-noun words”. The combination of a classifying word followed by a noun creates a category, or a defined category, which is called *classifier* due to their usage of classification. He also considers this category has both grammatical and lexical significance for the reason that classifying words are not functional but content words whose meanings are more or less diluted. Classifiers help define the classification and unit nature of the nouns behind them. Different from unit nouns with quantitative function, the main function of classifiers is classification or categorization. Additionally, Trần Đại Nghĩa (2000, pp.176-177) reports that in recent years, researchers usually base on syntactic features to identify word classes. However, their scopes of study are not the same. Some concern about word combination to discover the capability of phrase formation. Others show interest in how word classes including classifiers function in sentences/ utterances. He believes that syntax defined by the significance of word classes is an underlying feature with key values.

### 3.4. Syntactic referentialization

In his study of Vietnamese classifiers, Elizabeth Löbel (2000, pg.296) refers to the syntactic referentialization attached to classification. She suggests that a classifier only shows up and accompanies a noun when the latter has a referent. Without the referent, the classifier is neither used nor present in the noun phrase. In the examples:

- (23) Trong nhà hát      kia      có      17      ghế  
 In      theater      that      have      17      chairs  
 There are 17 chairs in that theater
- (24) Trong nhà hát      kia      có      17      [cái]      ghế      làm      bằng  
 In      theater      that      have      17      [CLF]      chairs      made      by

cây      tốt  
 good    wood

There are 17 chairs in that theater made of good wood.

she states that the classifier *cái* only shows up when the noun *ghế* ‘chair’ is defined by the referent *làm bằng cây tốt* ‘made of good wood’.

We think the classifier *cái* in Löbel’s example is used for emphatic meaning rather than decide the presence of a syntactic referent behind it. The classifier *cái* in the sentence is perceived to be grammatically correct by native Vietnamese speakers in both cases. Though we do not disagree with the idea that the usage of classifiers is not restricted by any lexis or nouns of any essential attributes (Löbel, 2000, pg.296), the choice and use of classifiers depend on their contexts and pragmatic meanings. The excessive quantity (too many or too few) of the objects denoted in the noun behind in a concrete context can be recognized as anomalous. In such cases, classifiers are used to emphasize the reason shown in the referent. Therefore, example (23) can be an anomalous sentence/utterance due to the small number of chairs in comparison with the ordinary number in theatres. In example (24), the classifier *cái* does not necessarily show up and readers/ listener still find no obstacles in communication.

Additionally, in terms of syntactic referentialization, it is necessary to consider the classifier *những* ‘CLF:plural’ in such sentences in the example:

(25) Chúng tôi biết về những cung đường (mà) họ  
 We know about CLF:plural road (that) they  
 đã đi qua.  
 did go pass.  
 We know the roads they passed

(26) Chúng tôi hiểu những điều (mà) anh vừa nói.  
 We understand CLF:plural thing (that) you just say.  
 We understand what you have just said.

It can be seen that the presence of the classifiers *những* denoting plurality in the above examples definitely requires syntactic referential structures for the nouns behind them.

### 3.5. Sentence elements

Vũ Đức Nghiệu (2021, pp.257-258) maintains that “*the words called classifiers actually have essential features of nouns*” and “*despite being confined in*

conditions, they (classifiers) are capable of taking the role of noun phrases". He denotes classifiers' capability of being sentence elements (restricted under some circumstances). First, they can be thematic phrases in a pair of contrastive themes.

- (27) Mái tóc chòm thưa, chòm lốm đốm.  
 Hair CLF:bunch sparse, CLF:bunch mottled  
 The hair is spare, mottled.  
 Hàm răng chiếc rụng, chiếc lung lay  
 Teeth CLF:one lost, CLF:one loosen  
 Some teeth are lost, some are loosened

or function as complements for such verbs as *có* 'have', *thành* 'become', *tính* 'count', *đếm* 'calculate', etc.

- (28) **có** điều là họ không muốn **thé**  
 the CLF:thing is they don't want that  
 the thing is they don't want that  
 (29) cắt **thành** lát cho dễ ăn  
 cut into slices for easy eat.  
 cut into slices to make it easy to eat  
 (30) Cua bể **bán** cân chứ không **bán**<sup>3</sup> con  
 Crabs sea sell kilogram, but not sell apiece  
 Sea crabs are sold in weight, not sold apiece.

Second, they can access different attributes of nouns, such as

i. defined attributes

- (31) cái cày  
 CLF:one plow  
 A plow  
 cục sắt  
 CLF:piece iron  
 A piece of iron  
 chiếc đép  
 CLF:one slipper

---

<sup>3</sup> The verbs are in bold type to be highlighted

A slipper

ii. descriptive attributes

- (32) Lấy cái dài  
 Take CLF:thing long  
 Take the long one.  
 Đừng lấy cái ngắn  
 Don't take CLF:thing short  
 Don't take the short one.  
 Vớ phải hai quả sấu  
 Take two CLF:fruit worm  
 Carelessly take two rotten fruits.

iii. attributes as deictic pronouns

- (33) Mày cầm cái này cho thằng kia  
 You keep CLF:thing this for CLF:guy that  
 You keep this for that guy.  
 Cái nào cũng được  
 CLF which also ok  
 Whichever is ok.  
 Bức trong cùng kia ai vẽ?  
 CLF:thing innermost that who draw?  
 Who draws the innermost picture?

iv. Attributes as sub-sentence units

- (34) Cái tôi muốn không phải là cái anh nghĩ đâu  
 CLF I want not be CLF:thing you think not  
 What I want is not what you think.

In his early research, Phan Ngọc (1988) noticed classifiers' ability in functioning as compound heads in noun phrases. The appearance of a classifier can define the whole subject of a noun phrase serving as a complement in the sentence. Accordingly, the

appearance of classifiers will determine the co-subjectivity of the subsequent noun phrases. For instance:

- (35) Nó   đọc   quyển   tiểu thuyết,   tác phẩm   của   Tônxtôi.  
 He   read   CLF   novel,   work        of   Tolstoy  
 He reads the novel, the work of Tolstoi's

In the example above, the appearance of *quyển* in the first noun phrase is determined that the second shares the same verb with the former. Both noun phrases become the sentence's complements, i.e. the subject *nó* 'he' (reads one novel of Tolstoy's). If a classifier does not show up in any noun phrase, there will be two separate subjects (see example (36))

- (36) Nó   đọc   tiểu thuyết,   tác phẩm   của   Tônxtôi.  
 He   read   novel,        work        of   Tolstoy  
 He reads novels, the work of Tolstoy's

In example (36), there are two subjects: one is (*nó*) *đọc tiểu thuyết* (he reads novels), and the second is (*nó*) *đọc tác phẩm của Tônxtôi* (he reads Tolstoy's work). About classifiers' ability, Phan Ngọc (1988, pg.63) explains "*When there is a classifier, they (native speakers) know that it is a noun with another as appositive. Without the classifier, they are coordinate nouns.*" He shows the difference in an ordinary communication context when making the introduction of delegates at meetings. Without a classifier in the second noun phrase, the latter will be an attribute of the first noun phrase (see example 37).

- (37) Xin    giới thiệu,   ông    chủ tịch,   bí thư  
 Please introduce,   CLF   president,   secretary  
 Let me introduce the president, secretary

In example (37), the noun phrase *ông chủ tịch* 'president' has the attribute *bí thư* 'secretary'. Meanwhile, in example (38) there are two separate noun phrases *ông chủ tịch* (president) and *ông bí thư* (secretary).

- (38) Xin    giới thiệu,   ông    chủ tịch,   ông    bí thư  
 Please introduce,   CLF   president,   CLF   secretary

Let me introduce the president and the secretary

Observably, without the presence of classifiers in the second noun phrases in examples (36) and (38), they (the second noun phrases) will be subordinators for the noun phrases preceded by classifiers. Meanwhile, the presence of classifiers in the examples (35) and (37) brings the noun phrases the role of coordinates and become apposition construction.

In many cases, Nguyễn Tài Căn (1998: 215-216) tends to form a compound head (T1+T2) in Vietnamese noun phrases by combining a noun with more than one preceded classifier. In the noun phrase, the classifier T1 shows the general category, it is the head showing measurement taking the position of unit nouns. The noun T2 denotes a concrete measurable object. In his opinion, in connection with reality, T2 as a lexical head has a more important role, but in terms of linguistic rules, T1 as a grammatical head is more important. For instance, in the word group:

(38) một    anh            sinh viên   khoa    Văn  
       one    CLF:male   student    faculty    literature  
       a student from the faculty of literature

the element *anh* ‘CLF’ is T1, *sinh viên* ‘student’ is T2. It can be seen that the combination *một anh khoa Văn* differs from *một sinh viên khoa Văn* in some nuances of meaning and usage scopes. *Một anh khoa Văn* brings a close, familiar feeling of a junior student toward a male, senior student in the literature department. Nguyễn Tài Căn (1998, pp.225-229) thinks the choice of the noun in combination with a certain classifier emphasizes specific features of the object to subordinate the main significance. This depends on two elements; one is the meaning of the noun (in T2), and the other is the objective view of the speaker. The presence of T1 and T2 may form 3 types of head of Vietnamese noun phrases: i. the complete type with the presence of both T1 and T2 in the structure [T1+T2] (e.g.: *con mèo này* ‘CLF-cat-this’ = this cat; ii. There is only T2 in the structure [ $\pm$ T2] (e.g.: *mèo này* ‘cat-this’ = this cat) showing the sense of object; iii. There is only T1 in the structure [T1 $\pm$ ] (e.g.: *con này* ‘CLF-this’ = this one) showing the unit meaning.

According to Hồ Lê (2000, pp.99-100), in the combination of [classifiers+classified noun], both elements are considered the head of the noun phrase, for example, *con trâu* ‘CLF-buffalo’ = buffalo is the head of the noun phrases: *con trâu béo* ‘CLF-buffalo-fat’ = a fat buffalo, *con trâu ấy* ‘CLF-buffalo-this’ = this buffalo, etc. In his

opinion, the notion is correct and reasonable when referring to the mental recognition of the native speakers and analyzing the grammatic-semantic relation. The reason is that with the question: *What is fat? What is that?* Vietnamese tend to use the word group *Con trâu* ‘CLF-buffalo’ to answer, but never use *con* ‘CLF’ and rarely use *trâu* ‘buffalo’. Moreover, with the combination *Hai con trâu béo ấy* ‘Two-CLF-buffalo-fat-that’ = Those two fat buffaloes, the numerator *hai* ‘two’ is attached to *con* ‘CLF’ to form another combination of *hai con* ‘two-CLF’, *béo* ‘fat’ and *ấy* ‘that’ both subordinate the meaning for the whole cluster *con trâu*...

### 3.6. Modality manifestation through numeral category

The function of categorization and individualization of classifiers is one of the grammatical functions accepted by most Vietnamese linguists. Some researchers explain that classifiers are of “hollow” or “faded” meaning. On reviewing previous studies, it is noticeable that Vietnamese linguists have acknowledged and roughly mentioned classifiers’ ability in expressing emotion and modality, though these expressions are accessed as phenomena rather than grammatical functions. The reason is probably the emotional nuance is so subtle that sometimes only native speakers can realize it. In the numeral category, Vietnamese classifiers are divided into two groups: i. the units indicating plural meaning, for example, *đám* in *đám trẻ* ‘CLF: PLURAL-child’ = children, *bọn* in *bọn nó* ‘CLF:PLURAL-they’ = they, *bầy* in *bầy chim* ‘CLF:PLURAL-bird’ = birds, *đàn* in *đàn trâu* ‘CLF:PLURAL-buffalo’ = buffaloes...; ii. Other units which do not combine with plural numerators are certainly considered to denote singular meaning, for example: *đứa* in *đứa trẻ* ‘CLF:SINGULAR-child’ = a child, *con* in *con trâu* ‘CLF-SINGULAR-buffalo’ = a buffalo, *cái* in *cái áo* ‘CLF:SINGULAR-shirt’ = a shirt...

Notably, despite any group that classifiers are used, their modality should be mentioned because numeral classifiers often express various nuances. For instance, in the classifiers showing plurality, i. *đoàn* showing a big number, often used for people who are organized.; ii. *đám*: showing a big number, often used for people with loose connections (there may be a sense of humiliation); iii. *bọn*: a big number, often used for people (with disdain connotation); iv. *Đàn* and *bầy*: showing a big number, used for a group of animals but the usage scopes may lead to more or less differences. *Đàn* and *bầy* can be used with birds to show the cluster of *đàn chim*, *bầy chim* ‘CLF-bird’ = flock of bird, but Vietnamese often use *đàn trâu* ‘herd-buffalo’, *đàn bò* ‘herd of cow’ but seldom (or never) use the cluster *bầy trâu*, *bầy bò*... Therefore, the choice and usage of classifiers showing plurality demonstrate the speaker’s attitude, especially when they



are used for people. Let's compare the examples *một đoàn người* 'a line of people' and *một đám người* 'a crowd of people' and *một bọn người* 'a pack of people'... It can be seen that the three clusters show the same connotation of plurality but they differ from one another in the degrees of respect. Making a comparison of the four clusters *một bọn người*, *một lũ người* and *một đàn người*, *một bầy người*...it is obvious that besides the plurality and low degree of respect, they are different in the speaker's humiliating attitude to the described objects/ agents who might still be people but of no good or as low as animals.

Similarly, singular classifiers also show the attitudes and emotions of the speaker. For example, the clusters *vị vua*, *ông vua* 'CLF:SINGULAR-king' = 'king' are used to show respect ... while the clusters *lão vua*, *thằng vua* 'CLF:SINGULAR-king' = 'king' are used to show hatred and despise. Besides, in many cases, the choice of numeral classifiers show various association of the speaker in the form and display of things, such as *bộ ấm chén* 'CLF:set-pot-cup' = teapot, *dàn loa* 'CLF:set-speaker' = speaker, *hàng cây* 'CLF:range-tree' = tree, *ngọn đèn* 'CLF:point-lamp' = lamp, *cây nến* 'CLF:tree-candle' = candle...

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

Generally, the studies on the grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers show that they are flexible units. They are relatively independent and have strong nominalization capacity to the word classes they combine. The features enable Vietnamese classifiers' function in linking the meanings between the elements within the noun phrase and beyond, including those outside the sentence/utterance. Vietnamese classifiers show their dynamism and flexibility in the organization of noun phrases. The presence of Vietnamese classifiers is not decided by any specific formal structure, even if they are used to combine with the adjacent elements in front or after. They show up when the nouns or utterances require the addition of information or clarification of contents. They are used to specify a word class, or show some meaning association with other units in the utterance. Andrew Simpson & Ngô Bình (2018, pg.243) described Vietnamese classifiers as having unpredictable nature which is said to be a typical feature of nouns.

Obviously, classifiers' flexibility and independence are shown through their functions and their various operation areas. Classifiers have the capability of nominalization and can form abstract nouns by combining themselves with other word

classes. They can represent noun phrases based on the entities' meanings of nouns and the segregation of entities' forms of the classifiers themselves. Besides the main function of categorization in distinction with the quantification function of unit nouns, classifiers' syntactic reference function is closely related to the classification in which some classifiers can be accompanied by a noun when the noun has a referent. The independence of classifiers is reflected in their operation as sentence elements, especially the ability in forming a compound head of a noun phrase in the role of a grammatical head.

The complication in the grammatical functions of Vietnamese classifiers (with at least six sub-types analyzed above) may result from their relation with other elements in the noun phrase, including the ones directly combined with them (classifiers) and those standing further. In terms of semantic impact, classifiers can replace nouns in noun phrases, acting as independent sub-nouns in sentences if they are referred to the mentioned or going-to-be mentioned elements. In the case of neither being able to be independent nor meeting the above conditions, it may become an obstacle to communication (including verbal and written communication).

It is said that the combination of elements in a Vietnamese sentence/ utterance is different from other agglutinative languages (like Korean) in a way that it creates meaning association and alteration other than a simple sequential connection earned by the deformation of adjacent elements. The linguistic association in the language does not come from two units standing next to each other and deciding each other but from a systematic anaphoric and cataphoric connection within the noun phrase, or between sentences in a speech sequence. Classifiers' expression of emotion and modality through numeral category also contributes to creating various associations in the linkage. For a better resolution to the issue, there should be further studies to compare Vietnamese classifiers with equivalent units in other agglutinative languages as well as with other types of language.

### **Abbreviations**

CLF: classifier

DEM: demonstrative

DEIX: deixis

## References

- Andrew Simpson, Ngô Bình (2018) Classifier syntax in Vietnamese, *J East Asian Linguist*, 27, 211–246. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10831-018-9181-5>.
- Bisang, Walter (1999) Classifiers in East and Southeast Asian Languages: Counting and Beyond, In Gvozdanovic, J. (Ed.) (1999) *Numeral types and changes worldwide*, Mouton De Gruyter, 113–186.
- Cao, Xuân Hạo (2000) *Nghĩa của “loại từ”* [Meanings of “classifiers”], In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (2000) *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Classifiers in Vietnamese languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 32-87.
- Đinh, Văn Đức (1986) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Từ loại*. [Vietnamese Grammar – Word classes], Nxb Đại học và Trung học chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội.
- Đinh, Văn Đức & Đinh, Kiều Châu (2000) Góp thêm đôi điều vào việc nghiên cứu danh ngữ tiếng Việt [Opinions on the studies of noun phrases in Vietnamese]. In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (1994) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt hiện đại* [Some Issues in Modern Vietnamese Grammar], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 129-145.
- Đỗ, Ngọc Phương (2000) “Loại”? [“Class?”]. In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (2000). *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Classifiers in Vietnamese languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Emeneau, M.B (1951) *Studies in Vietnamese grammar*, University of California.
- Hồ, Lê (1983) Một số vấn đề xung quanh vị trí bắt buộc và vị trí tùy ý trong danh ngữ tiếng Việt hiện đại [Some issues about the essential and random positions in modern Vietnamese noun phrases], Tạp chí *Ngôn ngữ* [Journal of Linguistics], Số 1, 1983, Hà Nội.
- Hồ, Lê (2000) Cần tháo gỡ những điều rắc rối về loại từ [In need to solve problems about classifiers], In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (2000) *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam*. [Classifiers in Vietnamese languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Hồ, Lê (2003) *Ngữ pháp và ngữ nghĩa của loại từ* [Classifiers’ Grammar and Semantics], Tạp chí *Ngôn ngữ* [Journal of Linguistics], Số 11, Hà Nội.
- Hoàng, Tất Thắng (1996) *Hoạt động của loại từ tiếng Việt trong các phong cách ngôn ngữ* [Operation of Vietnamese Classifiers in Linguistic Styles], Luận án phó tiến sĩ, Viện Ngôn ngữ học, [PhD dissertation, Institute of Linguistics], Hà Nội.
- Hole, Daniel & Löbel, Elizabeth (Eds.) (2013) *Linguistics of Vietnamese – An International Survey*. De Gruyter Mouton, 87-123.
- Lâm, Thị Hòa Bình, Võ, Thị Minh Hà & Hoàng, Thị Yến (2022) Vị trí của loại từ trong hệ thống từ loại tiếng Việt [The role of classifiers in Vietnamese part of speech system], Hội thảo quốc gia Ngữ học toàn quốc lần thứ 22: *Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng trong xu hướng hội nhập quốc tế*. Hội Ngôn ngữ học Việt Nam và ĐH Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch, ĐH Công nghiệp, Hà Nội [In the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of Languages Studies: *Applied linguistics in the trend of international integration*. Organized by the Vietnam Linguistics Association, University of Languages and International Studies – VNU, University of Foreign Languages - Tourism, University of Industries Hanoi], Hà Nội.
- Lê, Đình Tư & Vũ, Ngọc Cân (2009) *Nhập môn ngôn ngữ học* [Introduction to Linguistics], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.

- Lê, Văn Lý (1972) *Sơ thảo ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese Grammar in Brief], Nhà xuất bản Bộ Giáo dục, Sài Gòn.
- Lê, Xuân Thái (2000) Loại từ trong tiếng Việt và trong tiếng Hán - đồng nhất và khác biệt [Classifiers in Vietnamese and Chinese – uniformity and difference], In Luru, Vân Lãng (Ed.) (2000) *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Classifiers in Vietnamese languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 107- 116.
- Löbel, Elizabeth (2000) Classifiers versus Genders and Noun Classes: A Case Study in Vietnamese, In Unterbeck, B., Rissanen, M., Nevalainen, T., & Saari, M. Berlin (Eds.) (2000) *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 259–320.
- Luru, Vân Lãng (2000) Một số vấn đề về loại từ trong tiếng Việt [Some issues in Vietnamese classifiers], In Luru, Vân Lãng (Ed.) (2000) *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Classifiers in Vietnamese languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 9-31.
- Luru, Vân Lãng (Ed.) (1994) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt hiện đại* [Some Grammar Issues in Modern Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Ngô, Bình (2012) *Vietnamese Classifiers: (Non-)specificity*, MA thesis, Northeastern Illinois University.
- Nguyễn, Du (1820) *Truyện Kiều* [Tale of Kiều], Nhà xuất bản Văn học, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Phú Phong (2002) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Loại từ và chỉ thị từ* [Issues in Vietnamese grammar – Classifiers and indicators], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Đình Hòa (1957) Classifiers in Vietnamese, *Word*, 13:1, 124-152. DOI: 10.1080/00437956.1957.11659631.
- Nguyễn, Đình Hòa (1997) *Vietnamese*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia.
- Nguyễn, Hùng Tường (2004) *The structure of the Vietnamese Noun Phrase*, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, USA.
- Nguyễn, Hùng Tường (2013) The Vietnamese noun phrases, In Hole, Daniel & Löbel, Elisabeth (Eds.), *Linguistics of Vietnamese - An International Survey*, De Gruyter Mouton, 57-87.
- Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1963) *Nghiên cứu về ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Research on Vietnamese Grammar], Tập 1, Nhà xuất bản Khoa học, Việt Nam.
- Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1981) *Cơ sở ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese Grammar Foundation], Nhà xuất bản tổng hợp thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1998) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese Grammar], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1975) *Từ loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại* [The Word Class of Nouns in modern Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Phạm, Thị Thúy Hồng (2012) *Khảo sát loại từ tiếng Việt và các phương thức chuyển dịch sang tiếng Indonesia* [A Survey of Vietnamese classifiers and their translation methods into Indonesian], Luận án tiến sĩ, Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội [Doctoral dissertation, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi], Hà Nội.

- Phan, Khôi (2002) *Việt ngữ nghiên cứu* [Vietnamese Study], Nhà xuất bản Thế giới, Hà Nội.
- Phan, Ngọc (1988) *Thử trở lại câu chuyện loại từ* [Try returning to the tale of classifiers], In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (1988) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Issues in Vietnamese grammar], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 54-65.
- Phan, Xuân Thành (1993) *Loại từ tiếng Lào* [Laotian classifiers], Luận án tiến sĩ ngữ văn [Doctoral dissertation of Philology], Hà Nội.
- Trần, Đại Nghĩa (1996) *Sự tổ hợp loại từ với danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại* [The combination of classifiers and nouns in modern Vietnamese], Luận án tiến sĩ, Viện Ngôn ngữ [Doctoral dissertation, Institute of Linguistics], Hà Nội.
- Trần, Đại Nghĩa (2000) Một cách xác định loại từ trong tiếng Việt [A way to identify classifiers in Vietnamese], In Lư, Vân Lăng (Ed.) (2000). *Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Classifiers in Vietnamese Languages], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội, 168-199.
- Tran, Jennie (2011) *The Acquisition of Vietnamese Classifiers*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, USA.
- Tran, Jennie (2013) Vietnamese classifier phrases from the perspective of how children acquire them. In Hole, Daniel; Löbel, Elisabeth (Eds.), *Linguistics of Vietnamese - An International Survey*, De Gruyter Mouton, 87-123.
- Trần, Thị Thanh Hai (2021) *A Corpus-based Study of Inanimate Classifiers in Vietnamese*, A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies, The University of Manitoba, Canada.
- Trịnh, Thị Phương Thảo, & Hoàng, Thị Yến (2022) Vai trò của loại từ trong danh ngữ tiếng Việt (theo quan điểm của các nhà Việt ngữ) [Roles of classifiers in Vietnamese noun phrases (from Vietnamese linguists' view points)], In Hội thảo quốc gia Ngữ học toàn quốc lần thứ 22: *Ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng trong xu hướng hội nhập quốc tế*, Hội Ngôn ngữ học VN và ĐH Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch, ĐH Công nghiệp Hà Nội [In the 22<sup>nd</sup> National Conference of Languages Studies: *Applied linguistics in the trend of international integration*, Vietnam Linguistics Association, University of Languages and International Studies-VNU, University of Foreign Languages-Tourism, University of Industries Hanoi], Hà Nội.
- Võ, Thị Minh Hà (2017) *Cấu trúc danh ngữ, động ngữ tiếng Việt trong các văn bản chữ Quốc ngữ thế kỉ XVII* [Vietnamese Noun Phrase and Verb Phrase Structures in Texts of Quoc ngu characters in the 17<sup>th</sup> century], Luận án tiến sĩ Ngôn ngữ học, Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội [Doctoral linguistics dissertation, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi], Hà Nội.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2021) Bước ngoặt trong tư tưởng Nguyễn Tài Cẩn về thành tố trung tâm danh ngữ [Turning point in Nguyễn Tài Cẩn's thought about the central element in noun phrases], In *Nguyễn Tài Cẩn tư tưởng, tác phẩm... và kỷ niệm* [Nguyễn Tài Cẩn – Thoughts, Works... and Memories], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.

## Semantic Extension of Basic Color Terms in Vietnamese

Lê Thị Thu Hoài  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This study focuses on the process and mechanism of expanding the meaning of the seven basic color terms in Vietnamese: white, black, red, yellow, blue, brown, and purple. These are seven colors spread across stages in the universal color evolution sequence of Berlin and Kay (1969). Materials for this study were collected from Vietnamese dictionaries and in real-life use in communication by native speakers. This study explores the extended meanings developed from the seven basic color terms in Vietnamese, thereby showing how these color terms extend their semantic functions from the original meaning to the modern meaning through metonymy and metaphorical mechanisms, based on similar or opposite relations and pragmatic inferences. The results of this study provide empirical evidence supporting Wierzbicka's view that color meanings have evolved based on certain universals.

**Key words:** color terms, extension meaning, metonymy, metaphor, pragmatic inferences

### 1. Introduction

Color is inherited in every aspect of human life and the perception of color is regarded as one of our most fundamental cognitive abilities. A color term can be used actively for conceptualizing subjective experiences and denoting abstract concepts. Studies of color terms can be found in many fields such as: linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and neurophysiology. From a linguistics perspective, color words are considered the basic lexical class in each language. Studying color terms will show us the cultural characteristics and ways of perceiving the world reflected in the language of a nation. An influential study on the issue of color terms in languages is *Basic color terms: their universality and evolution* by Berlin and Kay (1969). Through the review and analysis of more than 80 different languages of the world, these authors have shown the universality in the existence and evolution of the group of basic color terms in languages.

To explain the universality of basic color terms in languages, two lines of opinion stand out. One is led by Kay and McDaniel (1978), who claim that the semantics of basic color terms in languages are the result of a set of

---

LÊ, Thị Thu Hoài. 2023. Semantic Extension of Basic Color Terms in Vietnamese. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151635>

neurophysiological processes in which differences in wavelength of light reaching the eye are converted to differential responses in the optic nerve; A second line of opinion, led by Wierzbicka (1996), claim that the semantics of basic color terms in languages are based on common human experiences, things that are intuitive and environment such as day, night, fire, the sun, vegetation, the sky, and the ground. Thus, the same phenomenon has been recognized and explained by two camps from completely different angles: on the one side from a neurophysiological perspective, on the other from a cognitive perspective. Each side has its own arguments to oppose the other's position: one argues that the other has an artificial connection between language and neural response; while the other argues that one has observation unsupported by empirical evidence. Without the support of further studies on the semantics of color term, it seems difficult for either side to agree with the other.

Therefore, our study will examine the extended meanings of basic color terms in Vietnamese to show how these color terms extend their semantic function from their original meanings to their modern meaning. The results of this study will provide empirical evidence supporting the view that color meanings have been developed based on certain universal human experiences. The paper organizes the discussion as follows: section 2 introduces the working mechanism of metonymy and conceptual metaphor, the two main mechanisms in expanding the meaning of words indicating colors; section 3 examines and analyzes the process of expanding the meaning of some basic color terms in Vietnamese; section 4 summarizes and discusses some issues related to the research results.

## 2. Metaphor and metonymy

The advent of cognitive linguistics has made metaphor no longer just a matter of language but a matter of thinking. The contemporary metaphor theory represented by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) considers metaphor to be part of a concept that is already present in human thought and language. Accordingly, our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, and metaphor plays an important role in defining our physical experience. In other words, the essence of metaphor is “*understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another*”. With the help of conceptual metaphor, we can understand complex and abstract things by referring to some simple and concrete concepts. Thus, the term metaphor means “*conceptual mapping from source domain to target domain*” (Lakoff, 1993) with the generalized model TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN. A prime example of Lakoff (1980) is LOVE IS A JOURNEY; where the abstract domain (LOVE) is understood through the concrete

domain (JOURNEY). In this case, 'love' is known as the target domain and 'journey' is known as the source domain. The common knowledge about the source domain is mapped onto the target domain. In general, cognition is embodied and conceptual metaphors exist because of human bodily and social experiences. In other words, all conventional metaphors are based on our experience and contain specific experiential bases.

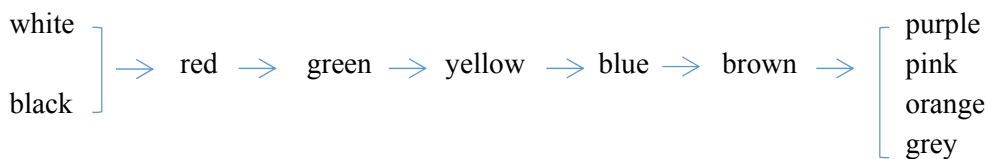
Metonymy is regarded as another basic cognitive instrument for humans to conceptualize the world and it underlie much of our everyday thinking. In cognitive linguistics, metonymy is defined as “*a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity provides a mental access to another conceptual entity within the same idealized cognitive model*” (Kövecses, 2002). Contrary to the mechanism of metaphor, “*metonymic mapping occurs within a single domain matrix, not across domains*” (cited in Dirven and Porings, 2002). In other words, a metonymic mapping is an intra-domain mapping. There is only one mapping in metonymy, one that takes the listener from the source entity to the target entity in the same domain. Therefore, metonymy is only formed based on two types of mapping: First, the WHOLE STANDS FOR PART or PART STANDS FOR WHOLE; second, PART STANDS FOR ANOTHER PART.

Our research object is color terms in Vietnamese. The original meaning of these terms is visual color. Their meaning extensions will mostly follow metonymy or metaphorical mechanisms. If metonymy, the conceptual entities will come from the source domain which is the visual color and the target domain which is the entity in the same domain. If the extended meaning is based on a metaphorical mechanism, it is the result of mapping from the source domain of visual color to another target domain. But we can see that those metaphorical mapping processes are all based on a general conceptual metaphor: ABSTRACT QUALITY IS PHYSICAL QUALITY (Goatly, 2011).

### 3. Vietnamese basic color terms

In the study of Berlin and Kay (1969), Vietnamese is one of 80 linguistic corpus mentioned by these two authors. However, they did note the basic Vietnamese color terms as a special case: “*Finally, Vietnamese must be mentioned in that it appears to lack a term for 'blue' but has basic terms for black, white, red, green, yellow, pink, purple, brown, and gray*” [1:28]. Vietnamese is still classified as a language with the development of basic color terms in the final stage (stage VII). The stages of color evolution are shown by Berlin and Kay as follows:





According to Berlin and Kay, Vietnamese is missing the “blue” stage of development. Indeed, in Vietnamese, there is only one word for the basic color “xanh”, then to distinguish different shades of “xanh” Vietnamese people use visual objects associated with the term “xanh” to distinguish two colors “xanh lá (cây)” (color of leaves) and “xanh (da) trời” (skin color of the sky). While in other languages like English there are two different terms for the colors respectively “green” and “blue”. In everyday spoken language, when referring to color words, Vietnamese people often use a sequence of words: xanh, đỏ, tím, vàng, nâu, đen, trắng (green-red-purple-yellow-brown-black-white). While not following the sequence of color development outlined by Berlin and Kay, these seven color terms are spread across the evolutionary stages these authors refer to. Therefore, we choose these seven basic color terms of Vietnamese to investigate the process of their modern meaning expansion.

For each color term, two types of meanings are identified: the original meaning and the extended meaning which is extended through metaphor, metonymy or other cognitive means. These seven basic color terms will be examined in turn in the sequence of evolutionary stages that Berlin and Kay indicate.

### 3.1. Color term “trắng” (white)

“Trắng” (white) and “đen” (black) are two color terms that are at the first stage in the evolutionary chain. They are the two colors that have the longest history among color terms in all languages in the world, because they are the most contrastive and easily identified colors. This is probably also the reason why the Vietnamese “trắng” (white) conveys a wide range of meanings as we have surveyed below:

Original meaning: “white color”

Example: mây trắng (white clouds), vải trắng (white cloth), tuyết trắng (white snow)

Extended meaning: sạch (clean), sáng (bright), không màu/trong suốt (colorless/transparent), sợ hãi/đe dọa (fearful/threatening), trong sạch/tinh khiết (tinh cách) (pure (character)) rõ ràng (clear), trống rỗng/không có gì (empty/nothing), hoàn toàn (không) (completely (no)), đúng/lẽ phải (right).

Example:

1. trắng tinh, trắng bốp, trắng bong → white and clean
2. trắng loá (dazzling white), sáng trắng (bright white), đêm trắng (white night) → “trắng” (white) means bright or very bright emphasis.
3. nước trắng (white water), kính trắng (white glass), rượu trắng (white wine) → “trắng” (white) refers to something colorless, transparent.
4. trắng bệch, trắng ớn, trắng dã → “trắng” (white) causes a feeling of fear and intimidation.
5. trong trắng (clear white), trinh trắng/trinh bạch (pure white) → “trắng” (white) represents chastity, purity in terms of quality, soul
6. nói trắng (white/frankly speaking), tuyên bố trắng (white/frankly statement), trắng mắt (white/clear eye) → “trắng” (white) indicates clear, not concealed
7. giấy trắng (white/empty paper), đĩa (CD) trắng (white/empty disc), trắng tay (white/empty hand), trắng án (white/empty judgment) → “trắng” (white) indicates emptiness, nothing.
8. mất trắng (lose white/all), thức trắng (awake white/complete), thua trắng (lose white/all) → “trắng” (white) indicates complete emptiness.
9. nói cho rõ trắng đen (speak clearly in white and black – speak clearly in right and wrong), đổi trắng thay đen (chang white to black – chang right to wrong) → “trắng” (white) represents what is right.

The first three extended meanings of “trắng” (white) are formed based on the metonymy mechanism, which is a metonymy mapping WHOLE STANDS FOR PART. Clean, bright is always considered the outstanding feature of "trắng" (white). So when talking about "trắng" (white), Vietnamese people will often associate its clean and bright characteristics. The attribute "colorless, transparent" exists by a more complex way of perception, which is “trắng” (white) in addition to the opposite of “đen” (black) often used by Vietnamese people in contrast to other colors or dark color things. In addition, “trắng” (white) is often considered a lacks hues color, easily associated with something transparent, colorless. So “nước trắng” (white water), “kính trắng” (white glass) or “rượu trắng” (white wine) are used to distinguish them from other colored things. In addition to creating new meanings and concepts, these metonymic meanings also act as an intermediate step to expand the meaning of "trắng" (white) but are based on a different mechanism, the conceptual metaphor mechanism.

The following extended meanings of “trắng” (white) are formed by metaphorical mappings whose source domain is color and target domain is other abstract concepts such as emotional domain (fear, threat); domain of nature/personality (purity, purity of qualities, soul); social domain (clarity, emptiness, or right)... The formation of extended meanings in the emotional domain indicating fear/threat of “trắng” (white) is based on human experiences or body characteristics. “trắng bệch”, “trắng dã”, “trắng ớn” are adjectives assigned to describe body parts such as face, eyes, teeth. Under the physiological effect or contrast the colors of these body parts have formed the meaning of the corresponding emotions associated with the color “trắng” (white). Meanwhile, the formation of meaning extending to the domain of nature/personality of “trắng” (white) indicating chastity, purity is based on the result of the metonymy process from "white" to "clean". Accordingly, something "trắng" (white) will be clean, unstained. Being physically untainted has been shifted to the concept of being mentally untainted based on psychological similarity. From there the meaning of chastity, purity in terms of quality, soul, is formed

For the social target domain, “trắng” (white) is used to extend the meaning the most. The first is the extended meaning "clear" of “trắng” (white). This meaning is formed based on the result of the metonymy process of “trắng” (white) to "bright". Accordingly, what's "white" means it's "bright", but when it is "bright", everything will be seen "clearly". So “nói trắng” (white/frankly speaking), “tuyên bố trắng” (white/frank statement) is to say, to announce everything clearly, without concealment; “trắng mắt” (white/clear eye) is also the state of the eye seeing clearly, the whole truth. The second extended meaning in the social domain of “trắng” (white) is "emptiness/nothing". This metaphorical mapping process takes place directly from the color domain to the social domain. Since “trắng” (white) is considered a color without hue, it gives us the visual impression of being colorless and empty. Therefore, “trắng” (white) extends meaning to the concept of "nothing inside – empty/blank" and creates word combinations such as: *giấy trắng* (white/blank paper), *đĩa (CD) trắng* (white/blank disc), *trắng tay* (white/empty hand), *trắng án* (white/empty judgment). This metaphorical meaning of "empty/nothing" is also pushed up to the point of creating an impression of emphasizing the feeling of "completely nothing" to form the meaning of words such as: “mất trắng” (losing everything, nothing left), “thức trắng” (wake up all night, didn't sleep at all), “thua trắng” (completely lost, didn't score any goals). Finally, “trắng” (white) in Vietnamese is also extended to the concept corresponding to "rightness". The mechanism of this meaning of “trắng” (white) comes from the visual experiences of

day and night forming the contrasting pair of bright-dark and the pair of color terms white-black. Based on psychological similarity, a physical spatial feature has been converted to a feature in the moral and social domain, forming a right - wrong pair corresponding to the white - black pair such as: “nói cho rõ trắng đen” (say white and black/say right and wrong), “đổi trắng thay đen” (changing white and black/ change right and wrong).

### 3.2. Color term “đen” (black)

Along with “trắng” (white), “đen” (black) is the color formed in the first stage of the evolutionary chain of color. Therefore, the number of extended meanings of “đen” (black) in Vietnamese is as many as “trắng” (white).

Original meaning: "black color"

For example: đen như than (black as coal), đen như mực (black as ink)...

Extended meaning: *tối (màu)* (dark (color)), *xấu/bẩn* (ugly/dirty), *quá đông/quá nhiều* (overcrowded/too much), *sợ hãi* (scared), *xấu xa (tính chất)* (evil (characteristic)), *không may mắn* (unlucky), *bí mật/bất hợp pháp* (secret/illegal), *đẹp (chỉ một số bộ phận con người)* (beautiful - some parts of a person)

For example:

1. giấy này hơi đen (this paper is a bit black) , mây đen (black/dark clouds)  
→ “đen” (black) means dark, distinguishing from light-colored ones, opposite to “trắng” (white).
2. đen sì, đen thui, đen trũi, đen đúa, đen nhẻm → “đen” (black) added means bad, dirty (in terms of form)
3. đen đặc, đen nghịt, xúm đen → “đen” (black) means crowded, too many, no gaps, creating a dark space.
4. đen ngòm → “đen” (black) creates a feeling of horror, not knowing what is inside.
5. đen tối (black dark – gloomy/evil), đen bạc (black faded – ungrateful/traachery), tim đen (black heart - evil and secret intentions)  
→ “đen” (black) represents evil, bad (in terms of nature, spirit)
6. số đen (black/unlucky destiny), vận đen (black/bad fortune), giải đen (relieves black/bad luck), đen đui (black – unlucky) → “đen” (black) means bad luck.
7. quỹ đen (black/illegal fund), chợ đen (black/illegal market), sổ đen (black/secret book), xã hội đen (black social – mafia) → “đen” (black) means secret, illegal.

8. nói cho rõ trắng đen (speak clearly in white and black – speak clearly in right and wrong), đổi trắng thay đen (change white to black – change right to wrong) → “đen” (black) represents the wrong things.
9. đen nhánh, đen láy, đen giòn, đen (nhưng) nhúc → “đen” (black) represents beauty (in some parts of the human body according to the Vietnamese cultural concept)

Like “trắng” (white), most of the extended meanings of “đen” (black) are based on two mechanisms of conceptual metonymy or metaphor. The extended meanings (1), (2), (3) of “đen” (black) are metonymic meanings. In the extended meaning (1), coming from the opposition of "bright white" - "dark black", “đen” (black) is extended to mean dark to distinguish it from what is bright. Similarly, in the same way of translating the meaning from “trắng” (white) to "clean", in the opposition of “trắng” (white) - “đen” (black), the Vietnamese also form the corresponding opposite concept of clean - dirty. And what is "dirty" is of course "bad". Therefore, “đen” (black) is expanded to accompany the concept of "dirty/bad" in terms of external appearance. For the extended meaning (3), which comes from the visual image, when the number of individuals is too much concentrated in a certain space, it creates a dark space corresponding to the similarity of "black color". Therefore, the Vietnamese expand the conceptual meaning of “đen” (black) to indicate the status quo of "crowded/too many".

The metaphorical extensions meanings of “đen” (black) in Vietnamese are quite diverse because many abstract properties of the target domain can be conceptualized through association with black, such as the emotional domain (fear), the nature/spirit domain (evil/bad) or the social domain (unlucky, illegal, wrong). Expanded meaning (4) formed by the human feeling when seeing some black space, making it impossible to see anything inside, we will feel "frightened" because we do not know what exist in it. Not seeing, not knowing easily makes people develop their imagination. Therefore, "đen ngòm" has been added to express the meaning of feeling of horror. From the metonymic "bad/dirty" in terms of external appearance, “đen” (black) extends to the concept of "evil/bad" in terms of temperament, inner characteristics of a person (the meaning 5) and the concept of "illegal" in relation to the outward behavior of people (the meaning 7). Besides, “đen” (black) is also connected by Vietnamese with the concept of "unlucky" (the meaning 6), forming an opposite pair with "red" indicating "luck". This meaning is formed in such a way that when people encounter something with bad results corresponding to the color "black", the person who does it is considered "unlucky". The meaning (8) has been explained in the extension of the

meaning of “trắng” (white) (2.1) by the concept of "true - false" corresponding to the pair of opposite colors “trắng” (white) - “đen” (black).

The final extended meaning of “đen” (black) (the meaning 9) is formed not based on metaphorical or metonymy mechanisms but based on pragmatic inferences related to cultural characteristics or viewpoints of Vietnamese people. Due to racial characteristics, working conditions and customs, some parts such as hair, eyes, skin, teeth that are "black" or dark in color are considered "beautiful" or standard of beauty. This is the basis for expanding the meaning of the beauty of the adjectives “đen nhánh”, “đen láy”, “đen giòn”, “đen (nhưng) nhưc”.

### 3.3. Color term “đỏ” (red)

The third color term, belonging to the second evolutionary stage in the color evolution of Berlin and Kay, is “đỏ” (red). In Vietnamese, the color “đỏ” (red) is largely extended to the emotional domain related to the color variation on the body, and the extended range of “đỏ” (red) is also less than “trắng” (white) and “đen” (black).

Original meaning: "red color"

For example: máu đỏ (red blood), cờ đỏ (red flag), khăn quàng đỏ (red scarf)...

Extended meaning: *chỉ trạng thái cháy của lửa* (indicates the burning state of fire), *xấu hổ* (shame), *tức giận* (anger), *trông ngóng* (anticipation), *khỏe mạnh* (healthy), *non nớt* (immaturity), *may mắn* (luck), *cách mạng* (revolution).

For example:

1. đỏ lửa (red fire – (stove) on fire), đỏ đèn (red lights – lights is on) → “đỏ” (red) indicates the state of fire
2. đỏ mặt (red face – shame), đỏ như, đỏ lựng, đỏ bùng (very red (face)) → “đỏ” (red) indicates shame or embarrassment.
3. đỏ mặt tía tai (red face red ears - anger), mắt đỏ ngầu lên (red/bloodshot eyes - anger) → “đỏ” (red) represents anger.
4. đỏ mắt ngóng trông (red eyes waiting for - waiting too long) → “đỏ mắt” (red eyes) signifies waiting too long.
5. Đỏ da thắm thịt (red skin red flesh – look healthy), cháu nào trông cũng đỏ đần (every child looks red – every child look healthy) → “đỏ” (red) (skin) signifies a good health.
6. Mẹ bỏ nó từ khi nó còn đỏ hỏn (Mom abandoned him when he was still red - Mom abandoned him when he was very young) → “đỏ hỏn” (red) signifies immaturity, very young age.

7. số đỏ (red/lucky fate), vận đỏ (red/luck fortune) → “đỏ” (red) indicates good luck.
8. Công hội đỏ (red/revolutionary guild), đội tự vệ đỏ (red/revolutionary self-defense team), nhạc đỏ (red/revolutionary music) → “đỏ” (red) means revolution, has proletarian ideology.

“Đỏ” (red) in Vietnamese has only one meaning extended through metonymy, which is meaning (1). “Đỏ” (red) is a visual color used to indicate the burning state of fire. RED STANDS FOR FIRE, i.e. PART STANDS FOR WHOLE is the metonymy mechanism of this extended meaning. The meanings (2), (3), (4) are extended through the metaphorical mapping of “đỏ” (red) onto the emotional target domain. According to scientific explanation, when people are in a state of excitement or nervousness, their body will release the hormone Adrenaline. Adrenaline causes the blood vessels in their bodies to dilate, allowing blood and oxygen to be transported more quickly inside the body. More blood flows through the veins on the face, causing the face to turn red. This natural response of the body is languageized through a metaphorical mechanism, so the color “đỏ” (red) is used by Vietnamese people to denote concepts in the emotional domain as shame or anger. The meaning (4), is also the color change to "red" of a body part is "eyes", but it is not an immediate response of the body, but rather the way to form the metaphorical meaning is more complicated. When waiting for someone for too long, people often don't sleep much leading to red eyes. Since then, the image of “red eyes” emphasizes the expectation for a long time.

If the emotional domain is usually expressed through the color change of the facial skin, the extended meanings of the attribute domain of “đỏ” (red) are through the expression of the body skin. For an adult, when "flesh skin" is "red" that person is healthy, as opposed to the pale or white skin of sick people. For children in particular or animals in general, the whole body will be red at birth, so the characteristic “đỏ” (red) will indicate immaturity, new born. It is from the expression of red color on the skin of the body that the word “đỏ” (red) is extended in meaning to refer to the characteristic properties associated with a state of health or immaturity as in the meaning (5), (6). The extended meaning (7) "lucky" of “đỏ” (red) is formed creating the opposite pair of "unlucky" of "đen" (black). However, if the color "đen" (black) gives us the extended meaning "bad" is an intermediate stepping stone to form the meaning "unlucky", then the color red in Vietnamese has no extended meaning related to success or nice. There are only two explanations for this expansion of the meaning of “đỏ” (red): first, Vietnam is influenced by Chinese culture and perception. In Chinese the color "hóng" (red) is metaphorically extended to the concept of

"success" or "joyful" events such as "wedding"; second, in the Vietnamese concept of the "đỏ" (red) color is often connected with the revolutionary image and the success of the revolution; happy events are often decorated in red, corresponding to the colors of the country's flag and the Communist Party's flag; creating the impression of success and joy. The "lucky" metaphor of "đỏ" (red) can form in such a way.

As for the last sense expressing the revolutionary concept of "đỏ" (red) (the meaning 8), as Itten (1961) said: *"Red is the color of revolution, because it is associated with political fervor and bloodshed"* [4:52]. However, the color red in ancient times had no political significance. It was not until modern times that red was especially associated with socialists and with the policy of armed struggle to win the revolution. The reason for forming such a metaphorical relationship is because "đỏ" (red) has long been considered the color of blood. The experience of our ancestors gives us the impression that sacrifice and blood are inevitable when fighting in a revolution. Thus, in the modern era, "đỏ" (red) is frequently used to symbolize revolutions involving blood and sacrifice.

### 3.4. Color term "vàng" (yellow)

The color "yellow" in Vietnamese has a limited range of meanings; most of the later expanded meanings are based on the rare property of a metal with a "vàng" (yellow) color. In Vietnamese, that metal is also called "vàng" (gold).

Original meaning: "yellow color"

For example: lá vàng (yellow leaves), vàng như nghệ (yellow like turmeric)

Expanded meaning: gọi tên một kim loại quý (naming a precious metal), quý giá (precious), sắt son/bền vững (loyalty/sustainable), rực rỡ/phát triển (brilliant/growing), ốm yếu/bệnh tật (ailing/sick), buồn/tiêu cực (sad/negative).

For example:

1. Nhẫn vàng (gold ring), dây chuyền vàng (gold chain), quý như vàng (precious as gold) → "vàng" (yellow) is used to name a rare metal with a yellow color (gold)
2. Tấm lòng vàng (a gold/great heart), ông bạn vàng (a gold/precious friend), thì giờ là vàng ngọc (time is gold/precious) → "vàng" (gold) signifies preciousness, worth.
3. Vàng mã, hoá vàng, vàng hoa, vàng hồ (votive offering) → "vàng" (gold) to refer to items made of paper to burn as offerings to the dead.
4. Vàng đá, đá vàng (gold and stone – loyalty/sustainable) → "vàng" (gold) combined with stone indicates constant and sustainability.



5. Vàng son (yellow red - brilliant/splendid) son son thếp vàng (miniature with gold - brilliant/splendid) → “vàng” (yellow) combined with red denotes splendor, brilliance.
6. Vàng vờ, vàng vọt → “vàng” (yellow) is used to refer to skin color, signifying sickness and disease.
7. Nhạc vàng (yellow/sad music), công đoàn vàng (yellow/negative union) → “vàng” (yellow) is a symbol of sadness and negativity.

The extended meaning (1) of "vàng" (yellow/gold) is a metonymy. Based on the color characteristics, people use it to name a precious metal. This is a PART STANDS FOR WHOLE mapping. The meanings (2), (3), (4), (5) are formed from that gold metal or its rare properties are mapped onto feature domains or other application domains. The meaning (6) is another demonstration of the use of color variation on the body to represent the corresponding state of the property. Vietnamese people believe that skin color reflects the state of health, if a person has a red, rosy skin he is a healthy person, while blue-white skin indicates a weak state, and yellow skin indicates illness. Therefore, the adjectives “vàng vờ”, “vàng vọt” “vàng ệch” are often used to describe the skin, in addition to the function of color it also has an extended meaning to indicate illness and disease.

The meaning (7) is a rather difficult one to interpret because it doesn't seem to be related to any of the other meanings of “vàng” (yellow) discussed here. According to our understanding, “công đoàn vàng” (yellow union) is a reformist union that stands for the owners, against the interests of workers (Vietnamese Dictionary, 2000) originating from France (1899). *When the union formed by the employers obstructed the strike, they were attacked and stoned by the workers while meeting in a cafe. The shop's glass door was later repaired with yellow oil papers. The name "yellow union" begins there, to refer to the unions impersonating of the owners* (rfa.org). Thus this expanded concept of “vàng” (yellow) is purely borrowed. As for the word “nhạc vàng” (yellow music), there is also an opinion that it has borrowed origins, from China, because in Chinese, yellow music (黃色音樂, Sino-Vietnamese: hoàng sắc âm nhạc (yellow color music)) is understood as trendy love music of the 1930s. This music is popular in Shanghai. *"Yellow music" is therefore considered "music that is romantically pessimistic or sexually suggestive and the lower desires of the flesh"* (vi.wikipedia.org). In Vietnam, the “nhạc vàng” (yellow music) line is also considered a "cheesy" music and was once banned from circulation. It can be seen that the expanded meaning of “vàng” (yellow) to the concept of negativity and

sadness is formed by borrowing from the process of exposure of Vietnamese language to different languages.

### 3.5. Color term “xanh” (green)

The color "green" is a special color in Vietnamese. As Berlin and Kay pointed out, Vietnamese only has "green" but lacks "blue". Indeed, Vietnamese has only one word “xanh” and to distinguish “green” and “blue” Vietnamese people have used visual images to “simulate” them as “xanh lá (cây)” (color of leaves - green) and “xanh (da) trời” (color of sky - sky blue). The lack of "blue" color is also reflected in the aspect, all extended meanings of "xanh" are derived from the color "green"; while the color "blue" only appears in pure terms naming the color or indicating the color levels related to "blue" such as: *xanh da trời* (sky blue), *xanh lam* (blue), *xanh nước biển* (navy blue), *xanh hoà bình* (peaceful blue) (according to the colors on the peace flag). Therefore, the extended meanings of "xanh" that we present below are extensions of the color term "green".

Original meaning: “green color”

For example: *luỹ tre xanh* (green bamboo), *non xanh nước biếc* (green mountain and blue water)

Expanded meaning: *chưa chín (hoa quả)* (unripe (fruit)), *non nớt thiếu trải nghiệm (con người)* (immature inexperienced (human)), *(người) trẻ* (young (person)), *căn cứ kháng chiến (trên rừng núi)* (resistance base (in the mountains)), *chết đã lâu* (long dead), *sợ hãi* (fear), *yếu ớt/bệnh tật* (weakness/sickness), *thiên nhiên/hữu cơ* (nature/organic)

For example:

1. Chuối xanh (green/unripe banana), quả này vẫn còn xanh (this fruit is still green/ unripe), cậu còn xanh lắm (you are still green/inexperienced) → “xanh” (green) indicates unripe (about fruit), immature, inexperienced (about people).
2. Tuổi xanh (green/young age), mái đầu xanh (green hair – young person), nhạc xanh (green music – music for young people) → “xanh” (green) means youth, young people.
3. Thoát li lên xanh (escape to green/base) → “xanh” (green) indicates the resistance base area located in the mountains and forests.
4. Anh về được thì tôi đã xanh cỏ (When you come back, I'm already green grass/death for long) → “xanh cỏ” (green grass) is an image that represents someone who has been dead for a long time.
5. Xanh mắt (green eyes – fear) → "xanh" (green) expression fear.

6. Xanh rớt (very green), xanh xao (haggard), xanh mét (pale) → “xanh” (green) refers to the color of the skin of a person who is in an unwell or sick state.
7. Thực phẩm xanh (green/nature/organic food), sống xanh (green/nature living) → “xanh” (green) represents the concept of nature, organic.

In the above seven extended meanings of “xanh” (green) only means (3) formed by metonymy mechanism. Use the color green, a feature of the resistance bases in the mountains and forests, to refer to those bases. This meaning was only commonly used during the war, it is no longer used today. “Xanh” (green) is often extended to mean something young. This way of interpreting is completely understandable because the life cycle, the growth of plants goes through stages where each part of the tree will have regular expression states. People observe and experience these processes to form conceptual metaphors based on psychological similarity. For the leaf part, its cycle is in turn when it starts to sprout, it will be green, then gradually turn yellow, red and fall off; As well as the journey of human existence, there are stages of youth, middle age, and old age. From that correspondence, “xanh” (green) is extended by the Vietnamese to mean "youth" (the meaning 2), age full of life. As for the fruit part, similarly, the newly set fruit will be green, gradually over time, along with the growth in size, the fruit turns yellow, red is the stage that can be picked and eaten. If you don't pick it, it will fall off. Since then, “xanh” (green) has been extended to mean the domain of properties to refer to fruits in an unripe state, not yet edible and to refer to immature, uninformed people (the meaning 1).

The meaning (4) of “xanh” (green) is also formed based on intuitive observations, when the grass grave has grown tall, the person lying in the grave must have been dead for a long time. Therefore, the image of “xanh cỏ” (green grass) is metaphorically referring to the state that someone has passed away long enough for the grass to grow like that. The meanings (5) and (6) of “xanh” (green) are similar to the extended meanings of some of the colors we mentioned above. An anemic, sick person will have white-green facial skin; a person is afraid his pupils will dilate, paleness of the face are expressions that serve as the basis for an extension to the sickly or fearful meaning of “xanh” (green). The meaning (7) is considered a newly formed modern meaning and has been used in recent times. Its formation mechanism is also quite easy to understand "green" is the color of natural plants and trees, anything natural (not artificial, industrial) with its original value is considered good and clean. Therefore, “sống xanh” (green living) or “thực phẩm xanh” (green food) was formed to refer to the products of nature, or life associated with nature.

### 3.6. Color term “nâu” (brown)

The later stages of the evolutionary chain, the narrower the possibility of extending the meaning of color terms. The color "brown" is in stage 6 and its number of extended meanings has shrunk considerably.

Original meaning: “brown color” - a word for an intermediate color between black and red or between yellow and dark red.

Example: áo nâu (brown shirt), mắt nâu (brown eyes)

Extended meaning: *một loại cà phê* (a type of coffee), *giản dị/than bản* (simple/poor)

Example:

1. Cho tôi một cốc nâu nóng (Give me a cup of hot brown - Give me a hot milk coffee) / Tôi thích cà phê nâu (I like brown coffee - I like milk coffee) → “nâu” (brown) refers to a type of coffee, coffee with milk.
2. Quần áo nâu sồng (brown clothes - simple clothes for those who follow the path of monasticism.)/ Mùi thiền ăn mặc đã ưa nâu sồng (the smell of meditation has liked dark brown clothes - people who are used to the frugal and simple monastic life) / Áo nâu cùng với áo xanh, nông thôn cùng với thị thành đứng lên (brown shirt and blue shirt, rural areas and cities stand up - farmers and soldiers, people in rural areas and people in cities fight together) → “nâu” (brown) signifies simplicity, frugal (in clothes), represents the monastic or the farmer, who lives in the countryside.

It can be seen that “nâu” (brown) has not been expanded and created many new meanings. In addition to metonymy meaning based on the visual color of a type of coffee mixed with milk; “nâu” (brown) only developed a metaphorical meaning "nâu sồng" indicating the simplicity and poverty of a certain object through the clothes they wear, but mostly used to refer to the monastic or the people in the countryside. In general, this meaning is also very limited in scope of use.

### 3.7. Color term “tím” (purple)

“Tím” (purple) is the last of the seven colors discussed in this paper. Similar to the color “nâu” (brown) “tím” (purple) has a limited other semantic function.

Original meaning: “purple color” - a color made up of blue and red, like the color of an eggplant.

Example: cà tím (eggplant), mực tím (purple ink)

Expanded meaning: *vết bầm (trên da thịt)* (bruise (on the skin)), *tức giận* (anger)

Example:

1. Ngã tím đầu gối (fell out and knees were purple) / Chị ấy bị chồng đánh tím hết người (She was beaten by her husband and her body was purple). → “tím” (purple) refers to a bruise caused by the accumulation of blood, causing pain.
2. Anh ta giận tím gan/tím mặt (He's angry purple liver/purple face - He is very angry) → “tím” (purple) denotes pent-up anger.

The semantic function of “tím” (purple) can be summarized and diagrammed as follows:

- a. Purple color => purple marks on the body are often caused by external forces => bruises indicate injury.
- b. Purple color => imaginary purple color will appear on the face or in the liver due to some strong psychological impact that makes them hurt, angry (similar to the impact of external forces to create bruises on the body) => anger must be suppressed.

We have discussed the semantic functions of seven color terms in Vietnamese and the process of forming their extended meanings. Our analysis shows that most of the extended meanings of the seven color terms in Vietnamese are derived from their original meaning and most of them are formed based on human perception about basic color terms and their earthly experiences. Metaphor and metonymy are the two main mechanisms of expanding the meaning of color terms in Vietnamese. Some extended meanings are formed through pragmatic inference or other cognitive measures such as sense of similarity or opposite relations. Very little extended meaning is obtained through accidental borrowing. In addition, we also find that colors in the early stages of the evolutionary chain have developed more semantic functions than the color terms of later stages. The color terms “trắng” (white) and “đen” (black) have the widest range of meanings, followed by “đỏ” (red) and “vàng” (yellow) colors; Later, the colors “xanh” (green), “nâu” (brown), “tím” (purple), the number of extended meanings is decreasing.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study explores the semantic functions of seven basic color terms in Vietnamese. We focus on the process and ways of developing different semantic functions of those color terms. The analysis results show that language idiosyncratic functions of color terms are not accidental phenomena, but rather systematically developed based on the existing semantic functions of those color terms.

This study also shows that the semantic extension of color terms follows a non-linear path. That is, an original meaning can simultaneously develop into several extended meanings, and an extended meaning can also serve as a basis for development into several more abstract extensions. In addition, we also found that all the extended meanings of the term color in Vietnamese can be divided into two categories: positive or negative. This should not be a surprise since it is consistent with our understanding of the cognition between language and the physical world. Apparently, the natural human response is to associate a descriptive language symbol (e.g. white) to something in the physical world (e.g. cotton) and then to express an opinion about the described object in the world (e.g. white cotton is clean). Because cotton is universally white and "white cotton" is universally believed to be "clean", the color "white" inevitably extends its color meaning to the "clean" meaning, which then automatically entails either a positive or a negative connotation.

The above analysis has identified several of mechanisms used in the development of the meanings of color terms, which are metaphor, metonymy, sense of similar or opposite relation, and pragmatic inferences. Some previous studies (e.g. Traugott and Dasher, 2002) claim that semantic change is generally pragmatic because it is always context dependent. The evidence from this study seems to support that claim in a generalized sense, but also indicate that the four meaning expansion mechanisms differ in terms of the degree of association with pragmatics. We find that meanings construed through metaphor or metonymy (e.g. “đen” (black) => “tối” (dark); “trắng” (white) => “rõ ràng” (clear)) are less dependent on the context and speakers’ subjective interpretation than the meanings construed through sense relations and pragmatic inference (e.g. “trắng” (white) => “trống rỗng” (empty) or “lẽ phải” (right)).

All the aforementioned observations lead us to the conclusion that the development of color terms' extended meanings has been consistently and undeniably triggered by the human perception of the physical world. This supports Wierzbicka's view that *"Color concepts are anchored in certain universals of human experiences"*.

## References

- Berlin, Brent and Kay, Paul (1969) *Basic color terms: their universality and evolution*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press.
- Dirven, René. and Porings, Ralf (2003) Metaphor and metonymy in comparison and contrast. Volume 20 in series *Cognitive Linguistics Research* [CLR].

- Goatly, Andrew (2011) *The Language of Metaphors*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. USA: Routledge.
- Itten, Johannes (1997) *The art of color: The subjective experience and objective rationale of color*. New York: John Willey & Sons.
- Kay, Paul. and McDaniel, K.Chad (1978) The linguistic significance of the meanings of basic color terms. *Language* 54: 611-646.
- Kövecses, Zoltan (2002) *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Lakoff, George (1993) The contemporary theory of metaphor. In A. Ortony (Ed.) *Metaphor and Thought*, pp. 202-251. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [second edition]
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Traugott, Elizabeth and Richard, Dasher (2002) *Regularity in Semantic Change*. (Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 97.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wierzbicka, Anna (1990) The meaning of color terms: semantic, culture and cognition. *Cognitive Linguistics* 1: 99-150.
- Wierzbicka, Anna (1996) *Semantics: Primes and Universals*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Vietnam Institute of Linguistics (Hoàng Phê editor in chief) (2000) *Từ điển tiếng Việt [Vietnamese Dictionary]*. Danang: Đà Nẵng Publishing House.
- [https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in\\_depth/yello-union-who-are-you-11052018121419.html](https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/yello-union-who-are-you-11052018121419.html)
- [https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nh%E1%BA%A1c\\_v%C3%A0ng#:~:text=theo%20nguy%C3%AAn%20g%E1%BB%91c.-,T%C3%AAn%20g%E1%BB%8Di,ph%E1%BB%95%20bi%E1%BA%BFn%20%E1%BB%9F%20Th%C6%B0%E1%BB%A3ng%20H%E1%BA%A3i](https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nh%E1%BA%A1c_v%C3%A0ng#:~:text=theo%20nguy%C3%AAn%20g%E1%BB%91c.-,T%C3%AAn%20g%E1%BB%8Di,ph%E1%BB%95%20bi%E1%BA%BFn%20%E1%BB%9F%20Th%C6%B0%E1%BB%A3ng%20H%E1%BA%A3i)

## Studying the Conceptual Domain of Utensils in Vietnamese through the Object Image Schemas

Nguyễn Đình Việt  
Huỳnh Thị Hồng Hạnh  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Ho Chi Minh City)

**Abstract:** Image schemas are considered pre-concept structures, having their basis based directly on embodied experience. It has attracted the attention of many scholars in Cognitive Linguistics. Research on image schemas mainly focuses on analyzing and describing the role of image schemas in the conceptualization process, especially with the formation of conceptual metaphors. In this article, we apply the OBJECT image schemas model to delve deeper into the concept of utensils in Vietnamese. Obviously, utensils are typical objects. Therefore, understanding the utensils domain in Vietnamese through the OBJECT image schemas model is an effective approach to seeing how Vietnamese people visualize utensils. The article's results show that the OBJECT image schemas clearly show the embodied experience. It plays an important role in the formation of conceptual metaphorical structures of the utensil domain.

**Keywords:** cognitive linguistics, image schema, conceptual metaphor, utensil, object schema

### 1. Introduction

Since it was first suggested in 1987 in *The Body in The Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* by Johnson and *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* by Lakoff, *image schema* has become one of the most fascinating subjects of Cognitive Linguistics, attracting the attention of many researchers.

Cognitive models are derived from *mental spaces* and structural models of those spaces, in which *image schema* is considered the most basic or specific. *Image schema* has a particularly important role in the conceptualization process: "One of the foundations of the conceptualizing capacity is the image schema, in which spatial structure is mapped into conceptual structure" (Mandler, 1992, p.591). Therefore,

---

NGUYỄN Đình Việt & HUỖNH Thị Hồng Hạnh. 2023. Studying the Conceptual Domain of Utensils in Vietnamese through the Object Image Schemas. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151645>



research on *image schema* mainly focuses on analyzing and describing the role of *image schema* in the conceptualization process, especially with the formation of conceptual metaphors. In this article, we use the OBJECT *image schema* model to delve deeper into the conceptual domain of utensils in Vietnamese to answer two questions: (i) How is the OBJECT *image schema* represented in the conceptual domain of utensils? and (ii) What is the role of this *image schema* in the process of conceptualizing the conceptual domain of utensils in Vietnamese people's minds? To answer these questions, we will review the theory of *image schema*, then analyze and describe the manifestation of OBJECT *image schema* in the conceptual domain of utensils.

## 2. An overview of image schema theory

Since the early 1980s, the Cognitive Science community has acknowledged the subject of mental images in the studies of Kosslyn (1980) and Shepard and Cooper (1982). However, images in image metaphors or in conceptual metaphors are distinguished from the mental images of cognitive psychologists (see Lakoff, 1987b). For example, when we are asked to look at an *hourglass* and then describe it in words or draw an image of it, the *hourglass* image that exists in our minds is a mental image. Same *hourglass*, but when associated with a woman, for example, *She owns an hourglass figure*, now the *hourglass* image has been mapped/projected onto the woman's image. However, these two images are not exactly the same. The *hourglass* image evokes the ideal figure of a woman. Meaning the *hourglass* has become a metaphor.

Cognitive Linguistics researchers have introduced the notion and main features of *image schema* in turn, and accordingly, they have also established a series of different *image schemas*. In this article, we only introduce some typical, foundational works, specifically:

Lakoff (1987a, p.154) argues that "In the conceptual system, there are four types of cognitive models: propositional, image-schematic, metaphoric, and metonymic. Propositional and image-schematic models characterize structure; metaphoric and metonymic models characterize mappings that make use of structural models". In other words, the *image schema* is one of two structural models used for mapping in conceptual metaphors. He further emphasizes that "kinesthetic image-schematic structure: Image schemas are relatively simple structures that constantly recur in our everyday bodily experience: CONTAINERS, PATHS, LINKS, FORCES, BALANCE, and in various orientations and relations: UP-DOWN, FRONT- BACK, PART-WHOLE, CENTER-PERIPHERY, etc. These structures are directly meaningful, first,

because they are directly and repeatedly experienced because of the nature of the body and its mode of functioning in our environment" (1987a, pp.267-268).

Johnson (1987, p.xiv) also has a similar view: "An image schema is a recurring, dynamic pattern of our perceptual interactions and motor programs that gives coherence and structure to our experience". The author has also established many different *image schemas*, such as CONTAINER, BLOCKAGE, ENABLEMENT, PATH, CYCLE, PART-WHOLE, PART-WHOLE), FULL-EMPTY...

Hampe (2005, pp.1-2) summarizes the features of *image schema*, including (i) Image schemas are directly meaningful ("experiential"/ "embodied"), preconceptual structures, which arise from or are grounded in, human recurrent bodily movements through space, perceptual interactions, and ways of manipulating objects. (ii) Image schemas are highly schematic gestalts that capture the structural contours of sensory-motor experience, integrating information from multiple modalities. (iii) Image schemas exist as continuous and analog patterns beneath conscious awareness, prior to and independent from other concepts. (iv) As gestalts, image schemas are both internally structured, i.e., made up of very few related parts, and highly flexible. This flexibility becomes manifested in the numerous transformations they undergo in various experiential contexts, all of which are closely related to perceptual (gestalt) principles.

Evans (2019, p.239) more succinctly states "Image schemas have a number of key characteristics: they are pre-conceptual in origin; they give rise to more specific concepts; they derive from interaction with and observation of the world; they are inherently meaningful; they are analog in nature; they are multimodal; they are subject to transformations; they occur in clusters; they underlie linguistic meaning; and they give rise to abstract thought".

Thus, *image schema* is the basic cognitive structure formed based on the body's interaction with the world. They are embodied and can be metaphorically projected from the physical domain to more abstract domains in the conceptual metaphor model. Or more importantly, as Benedek and Nyíri (2019, p.38) observe, "the lay theory of the mind is organized by image-schema-based metaphors".

Researchers have also established hundreds of *image schemas* (see Cienki 1997; Hampe 2005), which play an important role in understanding and interpreting cognitive phenomena taking place in the human brain. This article applies the theory of *image schema* in Cognitive Linguistics, specifically the OBJECT *image schema* to analyze and describe some linguistic expressions in Vietnamese. Thereby, the article will explain more clearly the role of *image schema* in the process of conceptualization

taking place in the brain on the basis of the embodied as well as suggestions for the application/exploration of other image schemas to study Vietnamese.

### 3. The OBJECT schema in the conceptual domain of utensils

The OBJECT image schema is not described in detail in the studies of Lakoff (1987a), Johnson (1987), and Hampe (2005), although it is included in the list of common image schemas that Johnson established. Conspicuously, we always live in the world of OBJECTS (houses, tables, chairs, land, water, rivers, mountains, rocks, metals, plants, and animals...). These OBJECTS exist in space and are perceived by human senses. There is constant interaction between people and OBJECTS. For example, we use knives to cut cakes, chopsticks to pick up food, hammers to drive nails, needles to sew clothes, scissors to cut threads... It is this experience base that gives rise to the OBJECT image schemas.

Santibáñez (2002) has done a lot of research on OBJECT image schemas. The author defines: "The OBJECT schema is experientially grounded in our everyday interaction with our own bodies and with other discrete entities" (p.183) and "We can move and manipulate objects in different ways, which may modify their properties as well as their relations with other entities; Objects are typically perceived as unified wholes which, on closer inspection, may be mentally divided into parts in order to reason about their physical arrangement and functionality; As expounded below, loss of integrity may result in the destruction of the object" (p.185).

From there, the author analyzes the OBJECT image schema into specific forms such as *put together*, *fall to pieces*, *came apart*, *grouping and reification*, *connection and breaking*... These concrete forms/properties are easily mapped to more abstract concepts to form conceptual metaphor models. This is the direct theoretical basis for us to learn the concept of OBJECTS in Vietnamese. However, we group them into two big forms: (i) *put together* (put together + connections), which means objects/ parts of objects are combined together into a certain structure, and (ii) *came apart* (came apart + fall to pieces + breaking) means an object/part of an object is separated, broken or changed from its original form.

According to epistemology, people use material elements, objects, and materials (utensils, foods, plants, animals, etc.) to understand abstract and difficult-to-imagine concepts (love, social relations, argument, etc.). This is the basis for establishing and explaining conceptual metaphors such as LOVE IS OBJECT, SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP IS OBJECT, ARGUMENT IS OBJECT, MOOD IS OBJECT... Let's

see the linguistic expressions like: *Tình yêu của chúng ta đủ lớn để vượt qua mọi khó khăn; Hãy giữ lấy tình yêu; Trao yêu thương để nhận lại yêu thương; Đừng phá vỡ những mối quan hệ trong xã hội; Chúng ta cần đập tan luận điệu xuyên tạc của các thế lực thù địch; Bóp méo sự thật; Tâm trạng nặng trĩu; Chạm vào nỗi nhớ; Ôm mãi nỗi đau...* Obviously, from experiences in the process of interacting with objects such as perception of size (big/small); we can hold, give, receive, break, smash... we can use it for more abstract concepts like love, mood, relationship, argument...

According to the *Vietnamese Dictionary* (Hoang, 2016), utensils are "daily objects", such as *bát, đĩa, nôi, niêu, mâm, thúng, dao, thớt, áo, quần...* They have the shape, colors, materials, and functions... specifically, and are used frequently by people in daily life, labor, and production. Therefore, utensils are typical and familiar objects. We further emphasize Lakoff' (1987a, p.270) idea that "most basic human man-made tools are constructed so that our bodies can interact optimally. Chairs, tables, houses, books, lamps, coats, cars, etc. are constructed with our basic-level interactional abilities and purposes in mind".

### 3.1. The put together image schema

Observing the expressions of Vietnamese folk songs, proverbs, and idioms, we find that Vietnamese people have a very deep impression of *the put together image schema*, which is clearly expressed through objects that create diverse, vivid, and rich images of pairs (*cặp đôi*) (can be people - people, people - natural/artificial objects, natural objects - objects nature, parts – objects...), for example: *Đôi ta thương mãi nhớ lâu/ Như sông nhớ nước như ngành dâu nhớ tầm; Đôi tay nâng lấy coi trầu/ Miếng trầu không là vợ miếng cau là chồng; Bao giờ cho hương bén hoa/ Khăn đào bén túi, cho ta bén mình; Thuyền không đậu bến Giang Đình/ Ta không, ta quyết lấy mình làm đôi; Đôi ta như thể đôi chim/ Ngày ăn tí tẩn tối tìm cội cây; Đôi ta như nước một chum/ Như hoa một chùm như đĩa một mâm...* Those are pairs like *đôi ta, sông – nước, dâu – tầm, đôi tay, trầu – cau, vợ – chồng, hương – hoa, khăn – túi, thuyền – bến, mình – ta, hoa một chùm, đĩa một mâm...* Please be aware that, with pairs such as the example, some researchers have approached using the word *cặp – đôi* (Tran, 2011, pp.56-57) or *sóng đôi* (Tran, 2015, p.90). According to the *Vietnamese Dictionary*, "đôi" is "a set of two objects of the same type, two individuals corresponding to each other and forming a unit in terms of functions, uses or activities" (Hoang, 2016, p.336); "cặp" is "a collection of two things, two individuals of the same type going together into a unified whole" (Hoang, 2016, p.119). Here, we use the word *cặp – đôi* (pair) to analyze a form of representation of the object schema: *put together*.

Moreover, we think that these pairs are not just a collection of two entities that go together but have become interesting ideas, placed as a whole, containing a certain message or meaning, reflecting the different ways of thinking of Vietnamese people. Exploring the concept of utensils, we also see many images of utensils that often appear together with the same folk expressions, proverbs, and idioms. These can be pairs that simply go together and it is difficult to determine the harmony or opposition between them, such as *cờ - trống, thúng - nia, chày - thớt, lược - gương, khăn - túi, yếm thắm - trôn kim*: *Cờ giông, trống giục; Đá thúng đựng nia; Đầu chày dứt thớt; Cầm lược lại nhớ tới gương/ Cầm khăn nhớ túi, nằm giường nhớ nhau; Dễ lừa yếm thắm, khôn lòn trôn kim...* and there are pairs that show the compatibility, harmony of values and uses such as *mâm đồng - bát bát, mâm son - bát đàn, quần lụa - áo tơ, quần nâu - áo vải, mâm - chiếu, giường - chiếu, gối - chăn*: *Mâm đồng, bát bát; Mâm son, bát đàn; Cứ gì quần lụa áo tơ/ Quần nâu áo vải thom tho được rồi; Cùng ăn một mâm, cùng nằm một chiếu; Giường cao chiếu sạch; Gối chiếc, chăn đơn; Ăn bát Đại Thanh, nằm chiếu miến; Ăn bát mẻ, nằm chiếu manh; Com ba bát, áo ba manh...*

What is unique is the combined image of some utensils that Vietnamese people associate with harmony and connection between people and people. At that time, the pair of utensils was a human pair, a man and a woman, a husband and wife: *Đôi ta là bạn thong dong/ Như đôi đũa ngọc nằm trong mâm vàng; Người ta như đũa có đôi/ Còn anh đi lẻ về loi một mình; Nồi đồng lại úp vung đồng; Nồi tròn vung méo úp sao cho vừa; Yêu nhau bốc bãi gàu sàng/ Ghét nhau đũa ngọc mâm vàng chớ thây; Đàn ông đóng khó đuôi lươn/ Đàn bà yếm thắm hở lườn mới xinh; Đàn ông như giỏ, đàn bà như hom; Trai có vợ như giỏ có hom; Chồng là cái giỏ, vợ là cái hom; Gặp nhau mừng lấm nàng ơi/ Như kim gặp chỉ, một đời bên nhau; Đôi ta như cúc với khuy/ Như kim với chỉ may đi cho rồi; Đất Bụt mà ném chim trời/ Ông Tơ bà Nguyệt xe dây nhợ nửa vời ra đầu/ Cho nên cá chẳng bén câu/ Lược chẳng bén đầu, chỉ chẳng bén kim...*

Analyzing further, the *put together* form is also specifically envisioned by Vietnamese people about: (1) image/shape (*Có vợ có chồng như đũa có đôi; Bây giờ chồng thấp vợ cao/ Như đôi đũa lệch so sao cho bằng; Vợ dại không hại bằng đũa vênh...*); (2) material/status/value (*Chén ngọc đũa ngà; Đôi ta là bạn thong dong/ Như đôi đũa ngọc nằm trong mâm vàng; Nồi đồng cối đá; Sờ nồi không gạo, sờ gáo không nước...*); (3) part – whole (*Nồi đồng lại úp vung đồng; Nồi nào, vung ấy; Chồng là cái giỏ, vợ là cái hom...*). Below, we only illustrate with the *put together* through the form of (1) images/shapes:

For example, the case of “**đôi đũa**”: balanced (**đũa có đôi**), unbalanced (**đũa vênh, đũa lệch**)

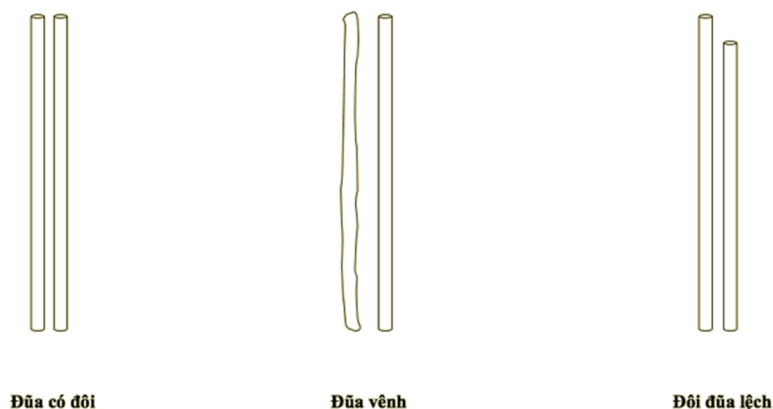


Figure 3.1. The object image schema in the form of put together

### 3.2. The came apart image schema

Images *đứt, gãy, rơi, vỡ, rách...* of utensils are associated by Vietnamese people with specific human status/activities, such as: *Chi tở **đứt** mỗi thỉnh linh/ Vì nghèo nên phải xa mình tha phương; Chi tở **đứt** mỗi thỉnh linh/ Thương chưa phi dạ, mà tình đứt xa; Công anh thàng đợi năm chờ/ Sao em **đứt** chỉ lia tở cho đành; Anh ơi âm tích **vỡ** rồi/ Chén Tàu **lỡ bộ**, anh ngồi chờ ai?; Có bát sứ, tình phụ bát đàn/ Nàng niu bát sứ **vỡ tan** có ngày; Đánh chuột làm **vỡ** bình sứ; Gương **vỡ** lại **lành**; Lành làm gáo, **vỡ** làm muôi; Lành làm thúng, **rách** làm mê; Lành làm thúng, **thủng** làm mê; Oang oang như lệnh **vỡ**; Tay chiêu đập **niêu** không vỡ; Ba năm quế gãy còn cành/ Bình hương **tan nát**, miếng sành còn thơm; Hay đâu đòn gánh **gãy** giữa đường/ Phát phơ đôi gióng, cảm thấy thương nhiều bề; Khi không **gãy** gánh giữa đường chẳng hay; Trâm **gãy**, bình **rơi**; Thôi thôi bình tích **bể** rồi/ Chén chung **lỡ bộ**, bạn ngồi với ai?; Ai làm bát **bể** com rơi/ Dĩa nghiêng cá đổ rã rời đời ta...* This evidence can be generalized into OBJECT image schema in more detailed forms: *fall to pieces, came apart, breaking...* It is also emphasized that, at first, image schema were considered pre-conceptual structures derived from human interaction and experience with the world (here, the world of utensils), but later it is these pre-conceptual structures that will be the direct basis for the conceptualization process taking place in the human mind, helping people organize and form new perceptions. For example, *đứt, gãy, rơi, vỡ...* of utensils is visualized by Vietnamese people about the break, break, and separation of people/human emotions: *Chi tở **đứt** mỗi thỉnh linh/ Thương chưa phi dạ, mà tình đứt xa; Trâm **gãy**, bình **rơi**;*

*Khi không gãy gánh giữa đường chẳng hay...* From these image schema illustrations, we can completely generalize into the conceptual metaphor model: THE BREAK/BREAK OF UTENSILS IS THE SEPARATION OF HUMAN EMOTIONS.

From the analysis and description above, we propose to illustrate the OBJECT image schema based on the most general visualizations: image calculation (square/circle/distortion is just an illustration, here we choose a circle), can exist independently (1), can be separated (2), can be connected to each other (3), of course, there is always spatial positioning as mentioned above, see figure down here:

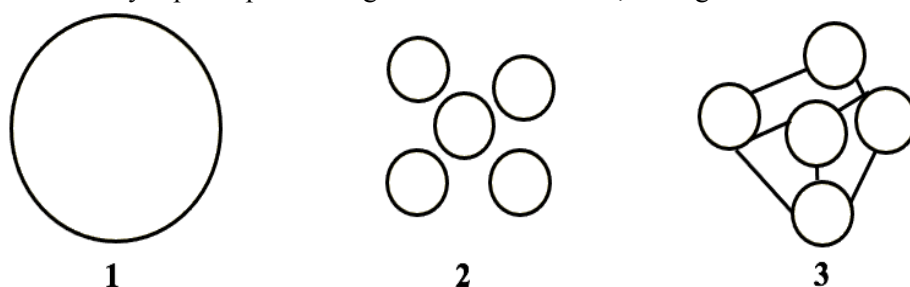


Figure 3.2. Several forms exist of the OBJECT image schema

(See also Santibáñez, 2002)

### 3.3. The relationship of the object image schema with some other image schemas

During the research, we also discovered that the image schemas have interference and connection with each other rather than independent existence. Considering the case of the OBJECT image schema, we find that: the put together schema is related to the LINK image schema, for example *Gặp nhau mừng lắm nàng ơi/ Như kim gặp chỉ, một đời bên nhau; Đôi ta như cúc với khuy/ Như kim với chỉ may đi cho rồi; Đất Bụt mà ném chim trời/ Ông Tư bà Nguyệt xe dây nợ nửa vời ra đâu/ Cho nên cá chẳng bén câu/ Lược chẳng bén đầu, chỉ chẳng bén kim...* Kim – chỉ are just independent objects, however in these expressions they are LINKED to each other, moreover, Kim – chỉ is only associated with the emotional LINK of male-female/ husband and wife; the came apart schema is related to the PART-WHOLE schema, for example: *Anh ơi ám tích vỡ rồi/ Chén Tàu lỗ bộp, anh ngồi chờ ai?; Gương vỡ lại lành; Trâm gãy, bình rơi; Thôi thôi bình tích bể rồi/ Chén chung lỗ bộp, bạn ngồi với ai?; Ai làm bát bể com rơi/ Dĩa nghiêng cá đổ rã rời đời ta...* The image of *ám tích bị vỡ, gương bị vỡ, bình tích bị bể...* also means that the WHOLE has been broken into discrete PARTS, not intact and is also visualized by Vietnamese people as a lost village, broken love...

Utensils (whole) are composed of parts/items. This combination of parts/utensils may or may not be appropriate. If appropriate, they will create a utensil – a unified, harmonious whole; if unfit, it will create a deviation, opposing each other (the case of *đôi đũa lệch*). For example: *Dao vàng thì cán phải vàng/ Dao vàng cán bạc, lỡ làng duyên em; Giỏ nhà ai quai nhà nấy; Nồi tròn úp vung tròn, nồi méo úp vung méo; Nồi đồng lại úp vung đồng...* there is a suitable and proportionate material (dao vàng – cán vàng, dao vàng – cán bạc, nồi đồng – vung đồng), in shape (nồi tròn – vung tròn, nồi méo – vung méo), about the relationship of parts - whole (giỏ - quai)... is considered by the Vietnamese as the appropriateness and compatibility of people (situation, status, shape...). We can easily generalize into a conceptual metaphor THE SUITABILITY OF THE PERSON/THE HUMAN SITUATION IS THE SUITABILITY OF THE IMAGE/MATERIAL. On the contrary, THE HUMAN MISMATCH/HUMAN SITUATION/ HUMAN CIRCUMSTANCE IS THE IMAGE MISMATCH: *Bây giờ chồng thấp vợ cao/ Như đôi đũa lệch so sao cho bằng; Chồng thấp vợ cao như đôi đũa lệch biết bao giờ bằng; Nồi tròn vung méo úp sao cho vừa...* It also means that the OBJECT image schema is closely related to the MATCHING image schema.

The OBJECT image schema is also related to the FORCE image schema. We often act on objects or are affected by objects in the world. From there, imagine the impact on utensils like *bẻ đũa chẳng bẻ được cả nắm; đũa đũa ghét nắm đũa tấm ghét mưới; mài dao đánh kéo gọt đầu đi tu...* From interacting with utensils through force, we have different visualizations of human interactions in society such as *bát đũa xô nhau, ăn cháo đá bát; giận cá chém thớt...* Not hard to see, they have become conceptual metaphorical expressions.

It is also added that images of utensils/objects are inherently intuitive, so they can be easily utilized to form conceptual metaphors such as OBJECT IS HUMAN, UTENSIL IS HUMAN. For example, Vietnamese people often associate *bé bằng cái tấm, bụng to như cái thúng* (size), *trọc đầu lông lóc bình vôi; cổ cày vai bừa; bụng thúng cái, lưng cánh phàn* (shape)...

#### 4. Conclusion

Image schema is one of the most fundamental subjects in Cognitive Linguistics. It is important for understanding cognitive models, especially with conceptual metaphors. Through the application of object image schemas, we have deeply explored the conceptual domain of utensils on the basis of analyzing and describing a number of linguistic expressions containing different images of objects. Addressing the research questions, we assert: (i) The object image schema shows clearly and specifically in the



conceptual domain of utensils with forms such as put together, came apart. (ii) Utensils, as familiar objects, rich in human experience, should be easily used to understand abstract concepts and form conceptual metaphor models through their specific form. Therefore, learning the object images schema helps us more accurately interpret metaphorical expressions, metaphorical models based on Vietnamese people's interaction, and visualization of utensils (or embodiment with the utensil). Moreover, the article also shows the relationship of image schemas to each other. Obviously, the image schemas do not exist independently and separately but they are always correlated and interact with each other. This is a suggestion for further research, such as considering the relationship between the image schemas to find out which relationship is more important and frequent; Which image schema is universal and has the function of connecting or depending on other image schemas... In this article, we have only explored the conceptual domain of utensils to see a part of the way Vietnamese people visualize. It is just a piece of the cognitive picture of Vietnamese people and of course, exploring other conceptual domains is necessary and promising.

### References

- Benedek, A., & Nyíri, K. (2019). *Image and Metaphor in the New Century*. Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences/ Budapest University of Technology and Economics.
- Cienki, A. (1997). Some properties and groupings of image schemas. In *Lexical and Syntactical Constructions and the Construction of Meaning*, (pp.3-15). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Evans, V. (2019). *Cognitive Linguistics: A Complete Guide* (Edition: 2). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hampe, B. (2005). Image Schemas in Cognitive Linguistics: Introduction. In *From Perception to Meaning*, (pp.1-14). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hoang, P. (2016). *Vietnamese Dictionary*. Hanoi: Hong Duc Publishing House.
- Johnson, M. (1987). *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnson, M. (2017). *Embodied Mind, Meaning, and Reason: How Our Bodies Give Rise to Understanding*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1987a). *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G. (1987b). Image Metaphors. *Metaphor and Symbolic Activity*, 2(3), 219–222.
- Mandler, J. (1992). How to Build a Baby II. Conceptual Primitives. *Psychological Review*, 99, 567–604.

- Santibáñez, F. (2002). The Object Image-Schema and Other Dependent Schemas. *Atlantis*, 183-201.
- Tran, N. T. (2011). *Vietnam Cultural Foundation*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Tran, V. S. (2015). Descriptive Variants of Aesthetic Signals (Case Studies on Parallel Aesthetic Signals in Folksongs). *Journal of Sciences, Humanities & Education*, Volume 5, No. 4A (2015), 89-95.

# The Causative Semantics of Verbs of Body Parts Movement in Vietnamese

Nguyễn Hồng Côn

Đặng Thị Trang Nhung

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This article explores the causative semantics of verbs of body parts movement (VBM) in Vietnamese. It highlights that, as labile verbs, VBM are utilized in the causative alternation as predicate verbs (V) in the N1-V-N2 structure, where N1 denotes a person or animal, and N2 refers to a body part. The causative meaning conveyed by these VBM differs from that of typical transitive causative verbs. Additionally, the article offers a comprehensive analysis of the causative semantics of VBM, taking into account their relationship with the semantic characteristics of their arguments.

**Key words:** causative verb, verbs of body part movement, labile verb, causative in Vietnamese

## 1. Introduction

In Vietnamese, there is a group of verbs that refer to actions involving body parts of people or animals, such as *gật* (đầu) ‘nod (head)’, *co* (tay) ‘bend (arm)’, *nháy* (mắt) ‘blink (eye)’, *duỗi* (chân) ‘stretch (leg)’, etc. These verbs are commonly known as verbs of body parts movement (VBM) and can function as the predicate (V) in two structures, as shown in (1) and (2).

(1) N1 - V - N2	(2) N2 - (N1) - V
Nó co tay	Tay (nó) co
He <sup>1</sup> bend arm	arm (he) bend
‘He bends his arm.’	‘His arm bends.’

Nguyễn Kim Thân was the first person to mention this group of verbs and their related syntactic structures. In “Động từ trong tiếng Việt” (1977: 156-157), he

---

NGUYỄN, Hồng Côn & ĐẶNG, Thị Trang Nhung. 2023. The Causative Semantics of Verbs of Body Parts Movement in Vietnamese. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151647>

\* I would like to thank Prof. Mark Alves (from Montgomery College, USA) for his constructive comments and useful suggestions on the manuscript of this article.

<sup>1</sup> The third person singular pronoun *nó* in Vietnamese can be translated into English as ‘he’, ‘she’, or ‘it’, depending on the context. For simplicity, in the examples of this article we will choose the word by word translation equivalent *nó* - ‘he’.

identified these verbs as neutral verbs, meaning they have both transitive and intransitive qualities. As a transitive verb, they act as the predicate in the structure (1), “indicating the action caused by the agent and directed to the body parts”. As an intransitive verb, they act as the predicate in the structure (2), indicating the state of the body parts.

While agreeing with Nguyễn Kim Thân’s opinion that V in structure (2) is an intransitive verb, Diệp Quang Ban (1998) expressed doubts about V in the structure (1). According to him, to determine whether V in (1) is a transitive or intransitive verb, it is necessary to rely on specific context (Diệp Quang Ban 1998: 136). Lê Kính Thắng (2016) also examined this group of verbs, which the author referred to as postural verbs, from the perspective of the change of the verb’s valence. According to him, in the structure (1), these verbs are used as less typical transitive verbs expressing posture, and in the structure (2), they lack an agent and become intransitive verbs indicating state.

In summary, although there are differences in details, the authors agree that VBM can function both as transitive (1) and intransitive (2) verbs grammatically. However, no author has thoroughly investigated the semantics of these verbs, especially when they are used as accusative verbs.

In this paper, based on the theory of verb lability and the typology of causatives, we will demonstrate that Vietnamese VBM are labile verbs, meaning they have two semantic alternations: causative and inchoative. At the same time, we will analyze in depth these verbs in their causative alternation.

## 2. The semantics of VBM in Vietnamese

### 2.1 VBM in Vietnamese

According to Nguyễn Kim Thân (1977), VBM are verbs that indicate actions caused by the animate agent (a person or an animal) and transmitted to a specific body part, expressed by the N1-V-N2 structure. Thus, the V in the N1-V-N2 structure is a VBM when N1 is an animate agent (human or animal), and N2 can only be a noun denoting a specific body part, such as *đầu* ‘head’, *tóc* ‘hair’, *vai* ‘neck’, *mắt* ‘eyes’, *mặt* ‘face’, and so on. However, our analysis shows that these semantic conditions of N1 and N2 are not sufficient to assert that V in the N1-V-N2 structure is a VBM. Consider the following examples:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(3) Nó <i>rửa</i> tay.<br/>         he wash hands<br/>         ‘He washes his hands.’</p> | <p>(4) Nó <i>sung</i> tay<br/>         he swell hands<br/>         ‘His hands are swollen.’</p> |
|--|---|

In the above sentences, N1 (nó ‘he’) represents the living subject, N2 (tay ‘hand’) represents the body part affected, but the verb (V) in both sentences is not a VBM indicating “the action caused by the agent and transmitted to the body part”. In (3), the verb is a typical transitive verb, and N2 is the typical object in the same type of transitive sentences, like *Nó rửa rau*. ‘He washes vegetables.’, *Nó rửa bát*. ‘He washes dishes.’. In (4), the verb indicates the state of the body part represented by N2, but N2 is not the patient object of the verb, but the subject of a stative verb, similar to the stative verbs in the sentences *Nó đau tay*. (he - hurt - hand) ‘His hand hurts’, *Nó mỏi chân*. (he - tired - legs) ‘His legs are tired.’.

Therefore, relying solely on the semantics of N1 and N2 to assert that V is a VBM is not sufficient. That is only a sufficient condition to realize the meaning of the verb. The necessary condition is the semantic feature [+causative] of VBM. The [+causative] characteristic of these verbs is that the action caused by the agent, expressed by N1 as in (5a) and (6a), brings changes in the position or state of the body part, expressed by N2 as in (5b) and (6b).

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| N1 - V - N2   | N2 - (N1) - V   |
| <p>(5) a. Hộ <i>trợn</i> mắt lên.<br/>         Hộ roll eyes up<br/>         ‘Hộ rolls his eyes up.’</p>                     | <p>b. Mắt Hộ <i>trợn</i> lên.<br/>         eyes Hộ roll up<br/>         ‘Hộ’s eyes roll up’</p>                     |
| <p>(6) a. Bà Phán <i>ngẩng</i> đầu lên.<br/>         Mrs Phán raise head up<br/>         ‘Mrs Phán raises her head up.’</p> | <p>b. Đầu bà Phán <i>ngẩng</i> lên.<br/>         head Mrs Phán lift up<br/>         ‘Mrs Phán’s head raises up’</p> |

The verbs (V) in the sentences (5a) and (6a), not the verbs in (5b) and (6b), represent the actions of N1, which are the causes that change the state and position of N2. They are causative verbs, more precisely causative VBM. Thus, the V in the N1-V-N2 structure is a VBM only when it is used in causative meaning, such as the verbs *trợn* ‘roll up’, *ngẩng* ‘raise up’ in the examples (5a) and (6a). The verbs like *rửa* ‘wash’ in (3) and *sung* ‘swell’ (4) are not VBM, although they appear in the N1-V-N2 structure, with N1 being an animal/human and N2 being a body part. In summary, the V in the N1-V-N2 structure is a VBM only if it satisfies the following semantic criteria:

- a) N1: [+animal/person]
- b) N2: [+body parts of N1]

c) V: [+causative]

Based on the above criteria, we have compiled a list of 192 VBM in Vietnamese<sup>2</sup> as the research data of this article. Below, the semantics of these VBM will be analyzed from the perspective of lability of verbs.

## 2.2 The semantic lability of VBM in Vietnamese

The concept of verb lability, and its related labile verbs proposed by Nichols (1986) and used by many authors thereafter (Kulikov, 2003, 2014; Letuchiy, 2009, 2015...), refers to verbs that can appear in both transitive and intransitive structures without any morphological changes. However, some other authors, such as Haspelmath (1993) and Ljutikova (2002), use the concept of verb lability in a narrower sense, to refer specifically to verbs that can be used in both causative and inchoative structures, as in (7).

- (7) a. (inchoative)     The stick broke.  
       b. (causative)     The girl broke the stick.

(Haspelmath 1993)

To explain the relationship between the opposition of causative/inchoative and transitive/intransitive, Haspelmath argues that generally, causative verbs are transitive verbs and inchoative verbs are intransitive verbs, but the opposition of causative/inchoative is narrower than the opposition of transitive/intransitive. For example, the pair of German verbs *beweinen* ‘to weep for someone/something’, which is transitive, and *weinen* ‘to weep’, which is intransitive, are not causative/inchoative verbs. However, according to Haspelmath, not all causative/inchoative verbs are labile verbs. A causative/inchoative verb is a labile verb only if it can be used in both causative and inchoative senses without any morphological change, meaning “the same verb is used both in the inchoative and in the causative sense”, as illustrated in examples (7a) and (7b) above. So, it is a verb to be considered labile when:

- a) It can be used with both causative and inchoative meanings.  
 b) There is no morphological change that marks the difference in meaning.

Based on the above criteria of labile verbs, it can be seen that VBM in Vietnamese are labile verbs because they can be used with both a causative and an inchoative meaning without any change in form: These verbs have an causative meaning when they function as Vs in the N1-V-N2 structure, as in examples (1), (5a), and (6a), and an inchoative meaning when they function as a V in the N2-(N1)-V structure, as in

<sup>2</sup> From *Từ điển tiếng Việt* of Institute of Linguistics (Đà Nẵng Publisher, 2000) and *Từ điển Việt – Anh* of Bùi Phụng (Thế Giới Publisher, 1998).

examples (2), (5b), and (6b). Therefore, to understand the semantics of VBM in Vietnamese, it is necessary to delve deeper into the characteristics of both of their semantic alternations as well as the relationship between them. However, due to the limitations of this article, we will only focus on examining the causative semantics of VBM, hereafter referred to as the causative VBM. Analysis of their inchoative semantics will be presented

### 3. The causative semantics of VBM in Vietnamese

#### 3.1. The concept of causative

In grammar, the concept of causatives is often used to refer to the meaning of verbs or syntactic structures that indicate the impact of one entity (the Causer) on another entity (the Causee) to cause a change in its state. Studies on the typology of causatives (Shibatani 1976, Comrie 1981/89, Song 1996, Dixon 2000, Song 2021) showed 3 types of causatives that differ in morphosyntactic characteristics in languages:

- Morphological causatives: These causatives are expressed through morphological change (e.g., adding affixes) of an intransitive verb. For example, in Turkish, the intransitive verb *öl-dü* in *Hasan öl-dü* ‘Hasan died.’ can be transformed into a causative verb by adding the affix *-dür* with the meaning of causing after the *öl*: *Ali Hasan’ı öl-dür-dü*. ‘Ali đã làm/giết chết Hasan.’ (Comrie 1989: 1967, 1975).
- Lexical causatives: These causatives are expressed through a lexical unit, which is a transitive verb. For example, the English verbs such as *kill* and *break* in the sentences *John killed Bill* and *I have broken the cup* are transitive verbs with causative senses.
- Syntactic causatives: These causatives are expressed through a construction with two verbs, in which the first verb indicates the action of causing, and the second verb indicates the result of the causation. For example, the sentence *I caused John to go* is a syntactic causative in English (Comrie 1989: 167).

In Vietnamese, as words do not undergo morphological changes, there is no morphological causative type as in inflectional languages. Instead, Vietnamese has lexical causatives, expressed through causative verbs such as *đóng* ‘close’, *mở* ‘open’, *tắt* ‘turn off’, *dừng* ‘stop’ and syntactic causatives, expressed through causative verbs such as *làm (cho)* ‘make (for)’, *khởi* ‘cause’, *mang* ‘bring’, and so on. (See Nguyễn Hoàng Trung 2014, Nguyễn Hồng Cồn 2021).

### 3.2. Identifying the causative semantics of VBM in Vietnamese

As mentioned in section 2.2, Vietnamese VBM are used as causatives verb (V) in the N1-V-N2 structure. When acting as Vs in this structure, VBM express the action of the Causer (N1), which affects the Causee (N2), resulting in a change in the state of N2, similar to causative verbs which are typical transitive verbs, such as *mở (cửa)*- ‘open (door)’, *đóng (cửa)* ‘close (door)’, *tắt (đèn)* ‘turn off (lights)’, *dừng (xe)* ‘stop (car)’. For example, compare the sentences in (8) and (9):

- |                       |       |      |   |                    |       |
|-----------------------|-------|------|---|--------------------|-------|
| (8) Nó                | đóng  | cửa. | → | Cửa                | đóng. |
| he                    | close | door |   | door               | close |
| ‘He closes the door.’ |       |      |   | ‘The door closed.’ |       |
| (9) Nó                | nhắm  | mắt. | → | Mắt nó             | nhắm. |
| He                    | close | eyes |   | eyes he            | close |
| ‘He closes his eyes.’ |       |      |   | ‘His eyes closed.’ |       |

In the causative structure with a typical transitive verb (8), the action “close the door” of the causer N1 (nó) is the cause of the state “closed” of N2 (cửa). Similarly, in the structure with a causative VBM (9), the action “close the eyes” of the causer N1 (nó) is also the cause of the state “closed” of N2 (mắt).

However, there is a difference in meaning between the groups of these causative verbs, which is shown through the ability to transform the passive structure of N1-V-N2. The causative structure with a typical transitive verb can easily be transformed into a corresponding passive structure:

- |                           |          |       |   |                           |      |          |
|---------------------------|----------|-------|---|---------------------------|------|----------|
| (10) Nó                   | đóng     | cửa.  | → | Cửa                       | được | đóng.    |
| he                        | close    | door  |   | door                      | PASS | close    |
| ‘He closes the door.’     |          |       |   | ‘The door is closed.’     |      |          |
| (11) Nó                   | tắt      | đèn.  | → | Đèn                       | được | tắt.     |
| He                        | turn off | light |   | lamp                      | PASS | turn off |
| ‘He turns off the light.’ |          |       |   | ‘The lamp is turned off.’ |      |          |

Even if N1 is a living subject and N2 is a body part as in examples (12) and (13) below, typical transitive structures do not change this characteristic.

- |                        |      |       |   |                                      |      |      |      |
|------------------------|------|-------|---|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|
| (12) Nó                | rửa  | tay.  | → | Tay                                  | được | (nó) | rửa. |
| he                     | wash | hands |   | hands                                | PASS | (he) | wash |
| ‘He washes his hands.’ |      |       |   | ‘His hands are washed (by himself).’ |      |      |      |
| (13) Nó                | gội  | đầu.  | → | Đầu                                  | được | (nó) | gội. |
| he                     | wash | head  |   | head he                              | PASS | (he) | wash |
| ‘He washes his hair.’  |      |       |   | ‘His hair is washed (by himself).’   |      |      |      |



In contrast, the structure with a causative VBM can not be passivized to become an acceptable passive structure, as in (14) to (16).

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| (14) Nó <i>co</i> tay.<br>he bend arm<br>'He bends his arm.'      | → | * Tay <i>được</i> (nó) <i>co</i> . <sup>3</sup><br>arm PASS (he) fold<br>? 'His arm is bent (by himself).' |
| (15) Nó <i>trùng</i> mắt.<br>he roll eyes<br>'He rolls his eyes.' | → | * Mắt <i>được/bị</i> (nó) <i>trùng</i> .<br>eyes PASS (he) roll<br>? 'His eyes are rolled (by himself).'   |
| (16) Nó <i>vẫy</i> tay.<br>he wave hand<br>'He waves his hand.'   | → | * Tay <i>được/bị</i> (nó) <i>vẫy</i> .<br>hand PASS (he) way<br>? 'His hand is waved (by himself).'        |

Thus, if the ability to undergo passivization is considered as one of the important characteristics of typical transitive verbs (Givón 1990, Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009), the causative VBM in Vietnamese are not typical transitive verbs.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to distinguish between VBM and verbs that denote states of body parts such as *sung* 'swell', *tái* 'be pale', *đau* 'hurt' (*intr.*), *nhức* 'be in pain', etc., as shown in examples (3) and (4) above and the following examples:

- (17) Ông Diễm *tái* mặt.  
Mr Diễm pale face  
'Mr. Diễm 's face turned pale.'
- (18) U mà *đau* bụng.  
Mother you pain stomach  
'Your mother has stomachache.'

Although they also function as Vs in the structure with N1 as a person or animal and N2 as the body part, stative verbs such as *sung* 'swell', *tái* 'be pale', *đau* 'hurt', *nhức* 'be in pain', and so on, do not have the semantic characteristics [+ intentional] and [+ causative] like causative VBM (e.g., *co* 'bend', *trùng* 'roll', *vẫy* 'wave', *duỗi* 'stretch', *gật* 'nod'). The evidence is that structures with stative verbs, as in (17) and (18) cannot function as objects for imperative constructions (see examples 21 & 22) like those with VBM, as in (19) and (20).

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| (19) Nó <i>trùng</i> mắt.<br>he roll eyes<br>'He rolls his eyes' | → | Mày bảo nó đừng <i>trùng</i> mắt lên!<br>you tell he not roll eyes up<br>'Tell him not to roll his eyes!' |
|--|---|---|

<sup>3</sup> The mark (\*) indicates an unacceptable sentence, while the mark (?) indicates a sentence that is doubtful or questionable in acceptability

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>(20) Nó <i>vẫy</i> tay.<br/>         he wave hands<br/>         ‘He waves his hands.’</p>                        | → | <p>Mày bảo nó đừng <i>vẫy</i> tay!<br/>         you tell he not wave hands<br/>         ‘Tell him not to wave his hands!’</p>                        |
| <p>(21) Ông Diêu <i>tái</i> mặt.<br/>         mr Diêu pale face<br/>         ‘Mr. Diêu ‘s face turned pale.’</p>    | → | <p>*Mày bảo ông Diêu đừng <i>tái</i> mặt!<br/>         you tell mr. Diêu not pale face<br/>         ‘Tell mr. Diêu not pale face’</p>                |
| <p>(22) U mày <i>đau</i> bụng.<br/>         mother you pain stomach<br/>         ‘Your mother has stomachache.’</p> | → | <p>*Mày bảo u mày đừng <i>đau</i> bụng!<br/>         you tell mother you not stomachache<br/>         ‘Tell your mother not to has stomachache!’</p> |

In summary, the BVMs in Vietnamese are causative verbs, but they are not typical transitive verbs.

#### 4. Semantic characteristics of the causative VBM in Vietnamese

In order to clearly see the causative semantics of the VBM in Vietnamese, we will analyze the semantic characteristics of the VBM as the V in the causative N1-V-N2 structure according to semantic properties of the Causer (N1) and Causee (N2), and the effect of the Causer (N1) on the Causee (N2).

##### 4.1. Causative semantics of VBM in relation to features of the Causer

According to the semantic features [+ person] or [+ animal] of the Causer (N1), the causative VBM can be divided into 3 groups (see Appendix B):

###### 4.1.1. VBM with a human or animal Causer

This group consists of verbs such as *bành* (*cằm, hàm*<sup>4</sup>) ‘broaden (chin, jaw)’, *bước* (*chân*) ‘step (feet)’, *châu* (*đầu*) ‘put together (head)’, *chớp* (*mắt*) ‘blink (eyes)’, *co* (*tay, chân*) ‘fold (hands, feet)’, *cúi* (*đầu*) ‘bend (head)’, *dạng* *chân* ‘spread out (legs)’, ect. The common semantic feature of these VBM is that Causer includes both human and animal, as the verb *cúi* (*đầu*) ‘bend down (head)’ in the following examples:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>(23) a. Ông <i>cúi đầu</i> bước đi.<br/>         he bow head step go<br/>         ‘He bows his head, walks away.’</p> | <p>b. Con ngựa <i>cúi đầu</i> bước đi.<br/>         horse bow head step go<br/>         ‘The horse bows his head, walks away.’</p> |
|--|--|

<sup>4</sup> The words in brackets are examples of body parts that may appear as the Causee (N2) of the VBM.

#### 4.1.2. VBM with a human Causer

Belonging to this group are verbs which's Causer is only personal, not animal, such as *ấn* (*tay*) 'press (hand)', *bấm* (*môi, miệng*) 'close (lips, mouth)', *cau* (*mày, mắt*) 'frown (face, eyebrow)', *gác* (*tay, chân*) 'put on (hand, leg)', *gật* (*đầu*) 'nod (head)', *héch* (*mắt, mặt*) 'raise (eyes, face)', *mím* (*môi*) 'close (lips)', ect. For example, the verb *mím* (*môi*) which used for person in (24a) is not easy to acceptable for animal in (24b):

(24) a. *Hắn mím môi lại.*  
 he close lips  
 'He close his lips.'

? b. *Con chó mím môi lại.*  
 dog close lips  
 ? 'The dog close his lips.'

#### 4.1.3. Causative VBM with an animal Causer

This group consists of only 10 verbs denoting the activity or states of the tail and ears of animals such as *cụp* (*đuôi*) 'drop (tail)', *dỏng* (*tai*) 'prick up (ears)', *ngúc ngoắc* (*đuôi, đầu*) 'move (tail, head)', *ve vẩy* (*đuôi, tai*) 'wag (tail, ear)', ect. These verbs are not used for the person Causer.

### 4.2. Causative semantics of VBM, in terms of the property of the Causee (N2)

In N1-V-N2 structure, the Causee (N2) is a body part of the person or animal, such as *đầu* 'head', *mặt* 'face', *mắt* 'eyes', *mũi* 'nose', *tai* 'ears', *miệng* 'mouth', *lưỡi* 'tongue', *răng* 'teeth', *má* 'cheek', *cổ* 'neck', *vai* 'shoulder', *tay* 'hand', *ngực* 'chest', *bụng* 'belly', *lưng* 'back', *chân* 'leg', *gối* 'knee', *mông* 'butt', ect. According to number and properties of the body part as the Causee, the causative VBM are divided into two groups (see Appendix C).

#### 4.2.1. VBM with the Causee consisting of various body parts

Belonging to this group are verbs denoting the movement of various body parts, such as *co, duỗi, gập, hạ, nâng, thu, thẳng* (+ *chân* 'leg', *tay* 'hand', *người* 'body'); *chụm, đưa, gác, giơ, nhấc, rút, thò* (+ *chân* 'leg', *tay* 'hand', *đầu* 'head'); *ngiên, ngửa, ngoảnh, quay* (+ *đầu* 'head', *mặt* 'face', *ngực* 'chest', *người* 'body', ect); *cắm, ngoái, ngẩng, ngoẹo* (+ *đầu* 'head', *cổ* 'neck'); *mở* (+ *mắt* 'eyes', *mồm* 'mouth', *miệng* 'mouth'), *nhún* (+ *chân* 'leg', *vai* 'shouder', *người* 'body'); *phưỡn* (+ *bụng* 'belly', *ngực* 'chest'), *vẫy* (+ *tay* 'hand', *tai* 'ears', *đuôi* 'tail'), *wờn* (+ *bụng* 'belly', *ngực* 'chest', *người* 'body'), *vươn* (+ *vai* 'shouder', *người* 'body'), etc.

#### 4.2.2. VBM with the Causee which is only one body part

Different to above VBM, these VBM denotes the movement of only one body part . They are verbs such as *chúi, gật, gục, lắc, ngóc* (+ *đầu* ‘head’); *cau, chau, nhăn, khoằm, sa sầm, sầm, vênh* (+ *mặt* ‘face’ ), *chớp, háp háy, hé, he hé, hếch, lừ, léc, lim dim, máy, nháy, nhắm, nheo, nhú, nhấp nháy, trố, tròng, trợn* (+ *mắt* ‘eyes’); *há, ngậm, nhoẻn, ngoạc, ngoác, nhệch, quạc* (+ *miệng/mồm* ‘mouth’); *cắn, nhe, nghiến* (+ *răng* ‘teeth’); *chặc, lè, thè, tặc, tặc* (+ *lưỡi* ‘tounge’); *buông, bỏ, chĩa, nắm, khoanh, vớ, chống, vỗ, xua, xoè* (+ *tay* ‘hand, arm’), *giậm, kiễng, nhón, xoạc* (+ *chân* ‘leg, foot’ ); *chồm, nhồm, nhòai, rướn* (+ *người* ‘body’ ), etc.

#### 4.3. Causative semantics of VBM in relation to the effect of Causer on Causee

As a V in N1-V-N2 structure, VBM indicate a change of state, position or direction of body parts as Causee (N2). According to the affect of Causer on Causee, VBM are classified in to 3 groups (see Appendix D).

##### 4.3.1. VBM bring about a change in the state of the Causee

In this group are VBM in which Causee (N2) undergoes a change of state caused by the Causer (N1) as in the following example:

- (25) Nó *cau* *mày*.  
       he frown eyebrows  
       ‘He frowned.’

Specifically, under the impact of the Causer, the Causee can undergo changes of state in various ways:

- From a static state to a dynamic state: *bĩu (môi)* ‘curl (lips)’, *cau (mày)* ‘frown (eyebrown)’, *chớp (mắt)* ‘blink (eyes)’, *chép (miệng)* ‘smack (mouth)’, *khịt mũi* ‘sniff (nose)’, *huơ (tay)* ‘wave (hands)’, *lắc (đầu)* ‘shake (head)’, *ngoáy đuôi* ‘wag (tail)’, etc.
- From a dynamic state to a static state: *ngậm (miệng)* ‘close’ (mouth)’, *bậm (môi)* ‘close (lips)’, *mím (môi)* ‘close (lips)’, *cắn (răng)* ‘bite (teeth)’, *dừng (tay, chân)* ‘stop (hands, feet)’, *khoanh (tay, chân)* ‘cross (hands, legs)’, ect.
- From a static state to another one: *co (tay)* ‘bend (hand)’, *dang (tay, chân)* ‘spread (hands, legs)’, *giương (mắt)* ‘raise (eyes)’, *há (mồm)* ‘open (mouth)’, *lè (lưỡi)* ‘stick out (tongue)’, *mở (mắt)* ‘open (eyes)’, *nhắm (mắt)* ‘close (eyes), etc.

#### 4.3.2. VBM bring about a change in the position of the Causee

Belonging to this group are verbs such as *bước (chân)* ‘step (feet)’, *chống (tay)* ‘lean (hands)’, *dụi (đầu)* ‘rub (head)’, *dựa (lưng, người)* ‘lean (back, oneself)’, *đặt (tay, chân)* ‘place (hands, feet)’, *gác (tay, chân)* ‘put (hands, feet)’, *ngả (người, đầu)* ‘tilt (body, head)’, ect. The common semantic feature of this VBM is that the Causee changes its position due to the effect of the Causer. The change in position of the Causee may happen in two ways:

- Causer makes Causee move to a new position:

(26) Nam *đặt* tay *lên* vai *tôi*.

Nam put hand on shoulder my

‘Nam puts his hand on my shoulder.’

(27) Nó *đặt* chân *lên* bàn *đạp*.

he put foot on pedal

‘He puts his foot on the pedal.’

- Causer makes Causee move from the original position:

(28) Nam *buông* tay *khỏi* vai *tôi*.

Nam take hand off shoulder my

‘Nam took his hand off my shoulder’

(29) Nó *bỏ* chân *khỏi* bàn *đạp*.

He take foot off pedal

‘He took his foot off the pedal.’

In this causative structure, in addition Causer and Causee, V has Goal or Source as a third argument. This argument is determined by the semantics of V, so it is relevant for the semantic structure of the sentence and cannot be omitted, as in (30) and (31):

(30) Nó *đặt* chân *lên* bàn *đạp*. → \* Nó *đặt* chân *lên*... → \* Nó *đặt* chân...

‘He put his foot on the pedal’

(31) Nó *bỏ* chân *khỏi* bàn *đạp*. → \* Nó *bỏ* chân *khỏi*... → \* Nó *bỏ* chân...

‘He took his foot off the pedal’

It may be omitted only in imperative utterances, as in the following sentences:

(32) *Đặt* chân *lên* (bàn *đạp*)!

‘Put your foot on the pedal!’

(33) *Bỏ* chân *ra* (khỏi bàn *đạp*)!

‘Take your foot off the pedal!’

### 4.3.3. VBM bring a change in the direction of the Causee

Belonging to this group are VBM such as *ấn (tay)* ‘press (hand)’, *bành (má)* ‘broaden (chin, jaw)’, *cúi (đầu)* ‘bend down (head, body)’, *cụp (đuôi)* ‘drop (tail, ears)’, *chống (tay)* ‘lean (hands)’, *dỗng (tai)* ‘prick up (ears)’, *gục (đầu)* ‘lower (head, neck)’, *giơ (tay)* ‘raise (hands, head)’, *ngheń (cổ)* ‘raise (neck)’, etc. The common semantic feature of these verbs is the Causer does not make the Causee change its original position, but the direction of its positioning or activity. In semantic structure of these VBM, in addition to the Causer and Causee, V often has the third argument as a Direction, for example:

(34) Trầng *ngửa mặt lên trời*. (Direction)

Trầng turn face to sky

‘Trầng turns up his face to the sky.’

(35) Nó *cúi gầm mặt xuống đất*. (Direction)

he bend face to ground

‘He bends down his face on the ground.’

However, unlike the Causer and Causee that are arguments of V, the Direction is not an argument, but just a satellite (optional). The proof is that it can be removed from the semantic structure of the sentence:

(36) Trầng *ngửa mặt lên trời*. → Trầng *ngửa mặt* (...)

‘Trầng turns up his face to the sky.’

‘Trầng faces up.’

(37) Nó *cúi gầm mặt xuống đất*. → Nó *cúi gầm mặt* (...)

‘He bends down his face to the ground.’

‘He faces down.’

And, even in many sentences, the semantic role Direction is not present, for example:

(38) Trầng *quay đầu lại*.

‘Trầng turns his head back.’

(39) Nó *ngước mắt lên*.

‘He raises his eyes up.’

## 5. Conclusion

The above analysis shows that the VMB in Vietnamese are semantically labile verbs, meaning they can be used in two alternative semantic types: causative alternation (as a causative V in the N1-V-N2 structure) and inchoative alternation (as inchoative V in the N2-(N1)-V structure). In the causative alternation, the VMB require two arguments, namely, the Causer (either a person or an animal) and the Causee (a body part of person

or animal), but they are not typical transitive verbs. The meaning of causative VBM differ according to the semantics of arguments and the effects of causation. According to the semantics of arguments, causative VBM are classified semantically based on the semantic properties of the Causer (being human, animal, or both) and the Causee (one or more body parts). According to the effect of the Causer on the Causee, causative VBM verbs are classified semantically based on change of state, position, or direction of the Causee.

Due to length limitations, this article does not address the inchoative alternation of VBM (i.e., inchoative V in the N2-(N1)-V structure) or the relationship between the causative and inchoative alternations of the VBM in Vietnamese. These issues will be addressed in another article.

### References

- Comrie, B. (1989) *Language Universal and Linguistic Typology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Diệp, Quang Ban (1998) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [Vietnamese Grammar]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Dixon, R. W. (2000) “A Typology of Causatives: Form, Syntax and Meaning”. In Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds) *Changing Valency: Case Studies in Transitivity*. New York: Cambridge University Press., 1-28.
- Givón, T. (1990) *Syntax: a functional-typological introduction, volume II*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Haspelmath, M. (1993) More on the typology of anticausative/causative verb alternations. In Kulikov, L. & Lavidas, N. (eds, 2014) *Typology of labile verbs: Focus on diachrony. Linguistics 52.4 (Special issue): 871-877*.
- Letuchiy, Alexander. (2009) Towards a typology of labile verbs: Lability vs. derivation. In Alexandre Arkhipov & Patience Epps (eds.), *New challenges in typology: Transcending the borders and refining the distinctions*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 223–244
- Lê, Kính Thắng (2016). Phạm trù nội động/ngoại động trong tiếng Việt [Intransitive/transitive categories in Vietnamese]. Hue: Hue University Press.
- Ljutikova, E.A. (2002). *Russkije labil'nyje glagoly v tipologicheskoy perspektive*. Paper given on the “Lomonosov reagings”. Moscow.
- Nguyễn, Hoàng Trung (2014) Vài nét về kết cấu gây khiến trong tiếng Việt [Some remarks on the causative construction in Vietnamese]. *Ho Chi Minh City University of Education Journal of Science* 63: 15-27.
- Nguyễn, Hồng Cồn (2020) Vietnamese causative syntactic structures from a typological perspective. *International Journal of Languages and Linguistics* Vol 7, No 2: 51-57

Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1977) *Động từ trong tiếng Việt [Verbs in Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.

Nguyễn, Văn Hiệp (2009) *Cú pháp tiếng Việt [Vietnamese Syntax]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.

Nichols J. (1986) On form and content in typology. *Language typology* 1985: 141-162.

Song, J.J. (1996) *Causatives and causation: A universal-typological perspective*. London and New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Song, J.J. (2001). *Linguistic typology: Morphology and Syntax*. Harlow and London: Pearson Education.

## Appendix

### A. Verbs of body part movement (VBM) in Vietnamese

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	ấn (tay, chân)	press (hand, feet)	2.	bành (cằm, hàm)	broaden (chin...)
3.	bắt (chéo chân)	cross (legs)	4.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)
5.	bắm (chân, tay)	grip (feet, hands)	6.	bậm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)
7.	bật (người)	spring (oneself)	8.	bíu (tay)	hold (hand)
9.	bĩu (môi)	curl (lips)	10.	bóp (tay)	squeeze (hands)
11.	bùm (miệng...)	cover (mouth)	12.	búng (tay)	snap (finger)
13.	buông (tay, chân)	go of (hands, feet)	14.	bước (chân)	step (feet)
15.	cau (mày...)	frown (eyebrown)	16.	cằm (đầu...)	bow down (head)
17.	cắn (môi, răng)	bite (lips, teeth)	18.	chành (môi...)	widen (lips)
19.	chau (mày...)	frown (eyebrown)	20.	chặc (lưỡi)	cluck (tongue)
21.	chấp (tay)	clasp (hands)	22.	châu (đầu)	put together (heads),
23.	chầu (môi, mỏ)	purse (lips)	24.	chép (miệng, môi)	smack (lips, mouth)
25.	chia (tay)	hold/turn (hands)	26.	chĩa (mồm, mỏ)	direct (mouth)
27.	choài (người)	move forward (oneself)	28.	choãi (chân...)	spread (feet...)
29.	chồm (người)	jump up (body)	30.	chổng (tay, đầu)	Lean (hand/head)
31.	chổng (chân)	point upward (feet)	32.	chớp (mắt)	blink (eyes)
33.	chúi (đầu, mũi)	bury (head, nose),	34.	chúm (môi, miệng)	round (lips, mouth)
35.	chụm (đầu, chân)	put together(heads)	36.	chun (mũi)	wrinkle (nose)
37.	co (tay, chân)	fold (hands, feet)	38.	co dúm (người)	draw (oneself)
39.	co quắp (người)	roll up (body)	40.	cong (người)	bend (oneself)



41.	cúi (đầu)	bend down (head,	42.	cụng (đầu)	hit/knock (head)
43.	cụp (đuôi)	drop (tail)	44.	cụp (đuôi, tai)	drop (tail, ears)
45.	dang (tay)	spread out (hands)	46.	dạng (chân)	spread out (legs)
47.	day (mặt, chân)	turn (face, feet)	48.	đíp (mắt)	close (eyes)
49.	đít (mắt)	close (eyes)	50.	dòng (tai)	prick up (ears)
51.	doãi (chân, tay)	spread (legs, hands)	52.	doạng (chân, cẳng)	widen out (legs)
53.	đôi (mắt)	keep on (eyes)	54.	đúi (đầu)	press (head)
55.	duì (đầu)	rub (head)	56.	đuỗi (chân)	stretch out (legs)
57.	dựa (người..)	lean (oneself)	58.	dừng (tay, chân)	stop (hands, feet)
59.	đá (chân)	kick (feet)	60.	đào (mắt)	roll (eyes)
61.	đạp (chân)	kick (foot)	62.	đấm (tay)	punch (hand)
63.	đặt (tay, đầu)	hit (hand, head)	64.	đút (tay, chân)	raise (hands, legs)
65.	gác (tay, chân)	put on (hands..)	66.	gân (cổ)	harden (neck)
67.	gật (đầu)	nod (head)	68.	gập (tay, người)	fold (hands, body)
69.	ghé (tai, đầu)	lean (ear, head)	70.	giãy (người)	jump up (oneself)
71.	giậm (chân)	stamp (feet)	72.	giơ (tay, đầu)	raise (hands, head)
73.	giương (mắt, cổ)	raise (eyes, neck)	74.	gồng (người)	strain (oneself)
75.	gục (đầu, cổ)	lower (head, neck)	76.	há (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)
77.	hạ (người, chân)	lower (body, feet)	78.	háy (mắt)	scowl (eyes)
79.	hấp háy (mắt)	blink (eyes)	80.	hất (đầu, tóc)	toss (head, hair)
81.	hé (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	82.	hếch (mắt, mặt)	raise up (eyes...)
83.	hệch (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)	84.	hích (vai, người)	push (shoulder...)
85.	hoa (mắt)	dazzle (eye)	86.	hóp ( má)	hollow (cheeks)
87.	húc (đầu, người)	butt (head, oneself)	88.	huơ (tay)	wave (hands)
89.	kiễng (chân, người)	stand on (feet)	90.	khép (người, chân)	close (oneself...)
91.	khoanh (tay, chân)	cross (hands, legs)	92.	khoằm (mặt)	frown (face)
93.	khịt (mũi)	sniff (noise)	94.	khom (lưng)	bend (back)
95.	khua (tay, chân)	wave (hands, legs)	96.	khum (người)	hunch (onself)
97.	khụy (chân, gối)	fall on (legs, knee)	98.	khuyết (tay, chân)	bend (hands, legs)
99.	lắc (đầu, người)	shake (head...)	100.	lè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)
101.	liếc (mắt)	glance (eye)	102.	lim dim (mắt)	close (eye)
103.	lú (lưỡi)	be stuck (tongue)	104.	ló (đầu, mặt)	reveal (head, face)
105.	lừ (mắt)	roll (eyes)	106.	máy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
107.	mắm (môi)	close (lips)	108.	mím (môi)	close (lips)
109.	mở (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	110.	múa (tay, chân)	dance (hands, legs)

111.	nắm (tay)	hold (hands)	112.	nâng (tay, người)	raise (hands...)
113.	nháy (mắt)	blink (eyes)	114.	nhăn (mặt)	wince (face)
115.	nhắm (mắt)	close (eyes)	116.	nhấc (tay, đầu)	lift (hand, head)
117.	nhe (răng)	grind (teeth)	118.	nheo (mắt)	squint (eyes)
119.	nhếch (mồm)	wince (mouth)	120.	nhếch (mép)	smirk (lips)
121.	nhú (mày)	furrow (brow)	122.	nhoài (người)	lean (body)
123.	nhón (chân)	tiptoe (foot)	124.	nhoèn (miệng)	grin (mouth)
125.	nhô (đầu, người)	raise (head, body)	126.	nhôm (người)	hunch (body)
127.	nhún (người, chân)	bounce (body, leg)	128.	ngả (người, đầu)	tilt (body, head)
129.	ngâm (mồm, miệng)	clench (mouth)	130.	ngẩng (đầu, cổ)	raise (head, neck)
131.	ngheń (cổ)	arch (neck)	132.	ngheńg (người...)	lean over (oneself)
133.	ngheń (răng)	gnash (teeth)	134.	ngoác (mồm...)	open (mouth)
135.	ngoạc (mồm, miệng)	widen (mouth)	136.	ngoái (đầu, người)	turn (head, body)
137.	ngóc (đầu)	raise (head)	138.	ngoánh (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)
139.	ngoáy (đầu, đuôi)	wag (head, tail)	140.	ngoe nguẩy (đuôi)	twitch (tail)
141.	ngoạo (đầu, cổ)	twist (head, neck)	142.	ngúc ngoác (đuôi)	move (tail, head)
143.	nguồn (đầu, đuôi)	jerk (head, tail)	144.	ngửa (mặt, người)	turn up (face)
145.	ngước (mắt, mặt)	look up (eye, face)	146.	oản (người)	crouch (body)
147.	phồng (má, mồm)	blow out (cheeks)	148.	phồng (mũi)	inflate (nose)
149.	phùng (má, mồm)	puff out (cheeks)	150.	phưỡn (bụng)	bulge (stomach)
151.	quạc (mồm, miệng)	open wide (mouth)	152.	quay (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)
153.	quàng (tay)	cross (arms)	154.	quắc (mắt)	glare (eyes)
155.	quặp (đuôi)	curl (tail)	156.	quặp (đuôi)	clasp (tail)
157.	quỳ (gối, chân)	kneel (down)	158.	rap (người, mình)	huddle (oneself)
159.	rút (tay, chân)	draw in (hand, leg)	160.	rún (người)	crouch (oneself)
161.	sa sẫm (mặt)	darken (face)	162.	sẫm (mặt)	darken (face)
163.	so (vai)	hunch (shoulder)	164.	tặc (lưỡi)	click (tongue)
165.	tì (tay, vai)	tap (hand, shoulder)	166.	tựa (ung)	lean (back)
167.	thè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)	168.	thò (đầu, tay)	stick out (head...)
169.	thu (người, tay)	shrink (oneself...)	170.	trề (môi)	pout (lips)
171.	trố (mắt)	stare (eyes)	172.	trợn (mắt)	roll up (eyes)
173.	trùng (mắt)	roll (eyes)	174.	úp (mặt)	bury (face)
175.	ưỡn (người)	sprawl (oneself)	176.	vắt (tay, chân)	cross (arms, legs)
177.	vẫy (tay, đuôi)	wave (hand, tail)	178.	vỗ (tay)	clap (hand)
179.	ve vẫy (đuôi, tai)	wag (tail, ear)	180.	vênh (mặt)	pout (face)

181.	vênh (tai, râu)	perk (ear, beard)	182.	vươn (người)	stretch (oneself)
183.	với (tay)	stretch (âm)	184.	vục (tay, mặt)	swing (hand, leg)
185.	vùi (tay, người)	bury (hand, oneself)	186.	vung (tay, chân)	swing (hand, leg)
187.	vung vẩy (tay, chân)	swing (hands, legs)	188.	xoạc (chân)	spread wide (legs)
189.	xoay (người, mặt)	turn (oneself, face)	190.	xõa (tóc)	loosen (hair)
191.	xòe (tay)	spread (arms)	192.	xù (tóc, lông)	ruffle (hair)

## B. Classification of VBM according to semantic features of Causer (N1)

### a) VBM with the person and animal Causer

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	bành (cằm, hàm)	broaden (chin, jaw)	2.	bật (người)	spring (oneself)
3.	bước (chân)	step (feet)	4.	cằm (đầu, mặt)	bow down (head...)
5.	châu (đầu)	put together (heads)	6.	chia (tay, môi)	hold/turn (hands...)
7.	choài (người)	move forward (oneself)	8.	choãi (chân)	spread (legs)
9.	chồm (người)	jump up (oneself)	10.	chông (chân)	point upward (feet)
11.	chớp (mắt)	blink (eyes)	12.	chúi (đầu, mũi)	bury (head, nose),
13.	chụm (đầu)	put together (heads)	14.	co (tay, chân)	fold (hands, feet)
15.	co dúm (người)	draw (oneself)	16.	co quắp (người)	roll up (oneself)
17.	cong (người)	bend (oneself)	18.	cúi (đầu, người)	bend down (body)
19.	cụng (đầu)	hit/knock (head)	20.	dang (tay, cánh)	spread out (hands...)
21.	dạng (chân, háng)	spread out (legs...)	22.	doãi (tay, chân)	spread out (hands...)
23.	doạng (chân)	widen out (legs)	24.	đúi (đầu)	press (head)
25.	duì (đầu)	rub (head)	26.	đuỗi (chân)	stretch out
27.	đạp (chân)	kick (foot)	28.	giãy (người)	jump up (oneself)
29.	gục (đầu, cổ)	lower (head, neck)	30.	há (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)
31.	hé (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	32.	khép (người, chân)	close (oneself, feet)
33.	khua (tay, chân)	wave (hands, legs)	34.	khụy (chân, gối)	fall on (legs, knee)
35.	lắc (đầu, người)	shake (head...)	36.	lè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)
37.	lim dim (mắt)	close (eyes)	38.	ló (đầu, mặt)	reveal (head, face)
39.	mở (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	40.	nhắm (mắt)	close (eyes)
41.	nhe (răng)	grind (teeth)	42.	nhoài (người)	lean (body)
43.	nhôm (người)	hunch (body)	44.	ngẩng (đầu, cổ)	raise (head, neck)
45.	ngoác (mồm)	open (mouth)	46.	ngoạc (mồm)	widen (mouth)
47.	ngoái (đầu, người)	turn (head, body)	48.	ngóc (đầu)	raise (head)
49.	ngoảnh (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)	50.	ngửa (mặt, người)	turn up (face, body)
51.	quay (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)	52.	quỳ (gối, chân)	kneel (down)
53.	rap (người, mình)	huddle (oneself)	54.	rút (tay, chân)	draw in (hand, leg)
55.	thè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)	56.	thò (đầu, tay)	stick out (head...)
57.	thu (người)	shrink (oneself)	58.	vẩy (tay, đuôi)	wave (hand, tail)
59.	vênh (tai, râu)	perk (ear, beard)	60.	vươn (người)	stretch (oneself)
61.	xoay (người, mặt)	turn (oneself, face)	62.	xù (lông, tóc)	ruffle (hair)

**b) VBM with only the personal Causer**

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	ấn (tay)	press (hand)	2.	bắt (chéo chân)	cross (legs)
3.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)	4.	bấm (tay, chân)	rip (feet, hands)
5.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)	6.	bíu (tay)	hold (hand)
7.	bĩu (môi)	curl (lips)	8.	bóp (tay)	squeeze (hands)
9.	bùm (miệng, tay)	cover (mouth...)	10.	búng (tay)	snap (finger)
11.	buông (tay, chân)	go of (hands, feet)	12.	cau (mày)	frown (eyebrown)
13.	cắn (môi, răng)	bite (lips, teeth)	14.	chành (miệng)	widen (mouth)
15.	chau (mày, mắt)	frown (eyebrown...)	16.	chặc (lưỡi)	cluck (tongue)
17.	chấp (tay)	clasp (hands)	18.	chầu (môi, mồm)	purse (lips)
19.	chép (miệng)	smack (lips, mouth)	20.	chĩa (mồm, mồm)	direct (mouth)
21.	chổng (tay, đầu)	lean (hand/head)	22.	chúm (môi)	round (lips)
23.	chun (mũi)	wrinkle (noise)	24.	day (mặt, chân)	turn (face, feet)
25.	díp (mắt)	close (eyes)	26.	điu (mắt)	close (eyes)
27.	dông (tai)	prick up (ears)	28.	đôi (mắt)	keep on (eyes)
29.	dựa (người, vai)	lean (oneself...)	30.	dừng (tay, chân)	stop (hands, feet)
31.	đá (chân)	kick (feet)	32.	đảo (mắt)	roll (eyes)
33.	đấm (tay)	punch (hand)	34.	đặt (tay, đầu)	hit (hand, head)
35.	đút (tay, chân)	raise (hands, legs)	36.	gác (tay, chân)	put on (hands, legs)
37.	gân (cổ)	harden (neck)	38.	gật (đầu)	nod (head)
39.	gập (tay, người)	fold (hands, body)	40.	ghé (tai, đầu)	lean (ear, head)
41.	giậm (chân)	stamp (feet)	42.	giơ (tay, đầu)	raise (hands, head)
43.	giương (mắt, cổ)	raise (eyes, neck)	44.	gồng (người)	strain (oneself)
45.	hạ (người, chân)	lower (body, feet)	46.	háy (mắt)	scowl (eyes)
47.	hấp háy	blink (eyes)	48.	hất (đầu, tóc)	toss (head, hair)
49.	hếch (mắt, mặt)	raise up (eyes, face)	50.	hệch (mồm)	open (mouth)
51.	hích (vai, người)	push (shoulde...)	52.	hoa (mắt)	dazzle (eye)
53.	hóp (má)	hollow (cheeks)	54.	huơ (tay)	wave (hands)
55.	kiềng (chân)	stand on (feet)	56.	khoanh (tay, chân)	cross (hands, legs)
57.	khoằm (mặt)	frown (face)	58.	khịt (mũi)	sniff (noise)
59.	khum (người)	bend (oneself)	60.	khum (người, tay)	hunch (back, hands)
61.	khuỳnh (tay, chân)	bend (hands, legs)	62.	liếc (mắt)	glance (eyes)
63.	lίου (lưỡi)	be stuck (tongue)	64.	lừ (mắt)	roll (eyes)
65.	mắm (môi)	close (lips)	66.	mím (môi)	close (lips)
67.	múa (tay, chân)	dance (hands, legs)	68.	nắm (tay)	hold (hands)
69.	nâng (người, tay)	raise (oneself...)	70.	nháy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
71.	nhần (mặt)	wince (face)	72.	nhấc (tay, chân)	lift (hand, head)
73.	nheo (mắt)	squint (eyes)	74.	nhếch (mồm)	wince (mouth)
75.	nhếch (mép)	smirk (lips)	76.	nhíu (mày)	furrow (brow)
77.	nhón (chân)	tiptoe (foot)	78.	nhớn (miệng)	grin (mouth)
79.	nhô (đầu, người)	raise (head, body)	80.	nhún (chân)	bounce (eg)
81.	ngả (người, đầu)	tilt (body, head)	82.	ngậm (mồm)	clench (mouth)
83.	ngهن (cổ)	arch (neck)	84.	ngiên (người)	Lean over (oneself)
85.	nghiến (răng)	gnash (teeth)	86.	ngoẹo (đầu, cổ)	twist (head, neck)
87.	ngước (mắt, mặt)	look up (eyes, face)	88.	oăn (người)	crouch (body)

89.	phồng (má, mồm)	blow out (cheeks...)	90.	phồng (mũi)	inflate (nose)
91.	phùng (má, mồm)	puff out (cheeks...)	92.	phưỡn (bụng)	bulge (stomach)
93.	quạc (mồm...)	open wide (mouth)	94.	quàng (tay)	cross (tay)
95.	quắc (mắt)	glare (eyes)	96.	ruồn (người)	crouch (oneself)
97.	sa sầm (mặt)	darken (face)	98.	sầm (mặt)	darken (face)
99.	so (vai, đầu)	hunch (shoulders...)	100.	tặc (lưỡi)	click (tongue)
101.	tì (tay, vai)	tap (hand, shoulder)	102.	tựa (vai, lưng)	lean (shoulder...)
103.	trề (môi)	pout (lips)	104.	trồ (mắt)	stare (eyes)
105.	trợn (mắt)	roll up (eyes)	106.	trùng (mắt)	glare (eyes)
107.	úp (mặt)	bury (face)	108.	ưỡn (người)	sprawl (oneself)
109.	vất (tay, chân)	cross (arms, legs)	110.	vỗ (tay)	clap (hand)
111.	vênh (mặt)	pout (face)	112.	vươn (người, tay)	stretch (oneself...)
113.	vói (tay)	stretch (arm)	114.	vục (tay, mặt)	swing (hand, leg)
115.	vùi (người, tay)	bury (oneself...)	116.	vung (tay, chân)	swing (hand, leg)
117.	vung vẩy (tay...)	swing (hands...)	118.	xoạc (chân)	spread wide (legs)
119.	xõa (tóc)	loosen (hair)	120.	xòe (tay)	spread (arms)

*c) VBM with only the animal Causee*

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	cụp (đuôi)	drop (tail)	2.	cụp (đuôi, tai)	drop (tail, ears)
3.	dông (tai)	prick up (ears)	4.	húc (đầu)	butt (head, oneself)
5.	ngoáy (đầu, đuôi)	wag (head, tail)	6.	ngoe nguẩy (đuôi)	twitch (tail)
7.	ngúc ngoắc (đuôi)	move (tail, head)	8.	nguẩy (đầu, đuôi)	jerk (head, tail)
9.	quặp (đuôi)	clasp (tail)	10.	quắp (đuôi)	curl (tail)
11.	ve vẩy (đuôi, tai)	wag (tail, ear)	12.		

**C. Classification of VBM according to semantic features of Causee (N2)**

*a) VBM with the Causee consisting of various body parts*

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	ấn (tay, chân)	press (hand, leg)	2.	bành (cằm, hàm)	broaden (chin...)
3.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)	4.	bậm (tay, chân)	grip (feet, hands)
5.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)	6.	bùm (miệng, tay)	cover (mouth...)
7.	buông (tay, chân)	go of (hands, feet)	8.	cau (mày, mặt)	frown (eyebrown)
9.	cằm (đầu, mặt)	bow dow (head...)	10.	cắn (môi, răng)	bite (lips, teeth)
11.	chành (môi...)	widen (lips...)	12.	chau (mày...)	frown (eyebrown)
12.	chầu (môi, mồm)	purse (lips)	13.	chép (miệng)	smack (mouth)
14.	chìa (tay, môi)	hold (hands...)	15.	chĩa (mồm, mồm)	direct (mouth)
16.	choãi (người)	spread (oneself)	17.	chổng (tay, đầu)	lean (hands, head)
18.	chổng (chân)	point upward(feet)	19.	chúi (đầu, mũi)	bury (head, nose)
20.	chúm (môi)	round (lips...)	21.	chụm (đầu)	put together(heads)
22.	co (tay, chân)	fold (hands, feet)	23.	co quắp (người)	roll up (oneself)
24.	cúi (đầu)	bend down (head)	25.	cụp (đuôi, tai)	drop (tail, ears)

26.	dang (tay...)	spread out (hands)	27.	dạng (chân,)	spread out (legs)
28.	day (mặt, chân)	turn (face, feet)	29.	doãi (chân,)	spread out (legs)
30.	doạng (chân)	widen out (legs)	31.	dựa (người, vai)	lean (oneself...)
32.	dùng (tay, chân)	ttop (hands, feet)	33.	đặt (tay, đầu)	hit (hand, head)
34.	đút (tay, chân)	raise (hands, legs)	35.	gác (tay, chân)	put on (hands...)
36.	gấp (tay, người)	fold (hands, body)	37.	ghê (tai, đầu)	lean (ear, head)
38.	giãy (người)	jump up (oneself)	39.	giơ (tay, đầu)	raise (hands, head)
40.	giương (mắt, cổ)	raise (eyes, neck)	41.	gục (đầu, cổ)	lower (head, neck)
42.	hạ (người, chân)	lower (body, det)	43.	hất (đầu, tóc)	tos (head, hair)
44.	hé (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes...)	45.	hếch (mắt, mặt)	raise (eyes, face)
46.	hích (người)	push (shoulder)	47.	húc (đầu, người)	butt (head, oneself)
48.	kiễng (chân)	stand on (feet)	49.	khép (người)	close (oneself)
50.	khoanh (tay, chân)	cross (hands, legs)	51.	khua (tay, chân)	wave (hands, legs)
52.	khum (người)	hunch (oneself)	53.	khuyu (chân, gối)	fall on (legs, knee)
54.	ló (đầu, mặt)	reveal (head, face)	55.	mở (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)
56.	múa (tay, chân)	dace (hands, legs)	57.	nâng (tay, người)	raise (hands...)
58.	nhấc (tay, đầu)	lift (hand, head)	59.	nhô (đầu, người)	raise (head, body)
60.	nhún (người)	bounce (ónelf)	61.	ngả (người, đầu)	tilt (body, head)
62.	ngẩng (đầu, cổ)	raise (head, neck)	63.	nghiêng (người)	lean over (oneself)
64.	ngoái (đầu, người)	turn (head, body)	65.	ngoảnh (mặt)	turn (head, face)
66.	ngoáy (đầu, đuôi)	wag (head, tail)	67.	ngoẹo (đầu, cổ)	twist (head, neck)
68.	ngúc ngoắc (đuôi)	move (tail)	69.	ngủay (đầu, đuôi)	jerk (head, tail)
70.	ngửa (mặt, người)	turn up (face...)	71.	ngước (mắt, mặt)	look up (eyes...)
72.	phồng (má, mồm)	blow out (cheek...)	73.	phùng (má, mồm)	puf out (cheek...)
74.	quay (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)	75.	quỳ (gối, chân)	kneel (down)
76.	rút (tay, chân)	draw in (hand..)	77.	so (vai)	hunch (shoulders)
78.	tì (tay, vai)	tap (hand...)	79.	tựa (vai, lưng)	lean (shoulder...)
80.	thò (đầu, tay)	stick out (head...)	81.	thu (tay, người)	shrink (hand...)
82.	vắt (tay, chân)	cross (arms, legs)	83.	vẫy (tay, đuôi)	wave (hand, tail)
84.	ve vẩy (đuôi, tai)	wag (tail, ear)	85.	vênh (tai, râu)	perk (ear, beard)
86.	vươn (người)	stretch (oneself)	87.	vục (tay, mặt)	scoop (hand, face)
88.	vùi (tay, người)	bury (hand...)	89.	vung (tay, chân)	swing (hand, leg)
90.	vung vẩy (tay)	swing (hands)	91.	xoay (người, mặt)	turn (oneself, face)
92.	xù (tóc, lông)	ruffle (hair)	93.		

**b) VBM with the Causee consisting of only one of body part**

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
13.	bắt (chéo chân)	cross (legs)	14.	bật (người)	speing (oneself)

15.	bíu (tay)	hold (hand)	16.	bĩu (môi)	curl (lips)
17.	bóp (tay)	squeeze (hands)	18.	búng (tay)	snap (fingers)
19.	bước (chân)	step (feet)	20.	chặc (lưỡi)	cluck (tongue)
21.	chấp (tay)	clasp (hands)	22.	châu (đầu)	put together (heads)
23.	choài (người)	move forward (oneself)	24.	chồm (người)	jump up (body)
25.	chớp (mắt)	blink (eyes)	26.	chun (mũi)	wrinkle (nose)
27.	co dím (người)	draw (oneself)	28.	cong (người)	bend (oneself)
29.	cụng (đầu)	hit/ knock (head)	30.	cúp (đuôi)	drop (tail)
31.	díp (mắt)	close (eyes)	32.	điu (mắt)	close (eyes)
33.	dông (tai)	prick up (ears)	34.	đôi (mắt)	keep on (eyes)
35.	đui (đầu)	press (head)	36.	đui (đầu)	rub (head)
37.	đuỗi (chân)	stretch out (legs)	38.	đá (chân)	kick (feet)
39.	đào (mắt)	roll (eyes)	40.	đạp (chân)	kick (foot)
41.	đấm (tay)	punch (hand)	42.	gân (cổ)	harden (neck)
43.	gật (đầu)	nod (head)	44.	giậm (chân)	stamp (feet)
45.	gồng (mình)	strain (oneself)	46.	há (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)
47.	háy (mắt)	scowl (eyes)	48.	hấp háy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
49.	hếch (mồm)	open (mouth)	50.	hoa (mắt)	dazzle (eyes)
51.	hóp (má)	hollow (cheeks)	52.	huơ (tay)	wave (hands)
53.	khoặm (mặt)	frown (face)	54.	khịt (mũi)	sniff (noise)
55.	khom (lưng)	bend (oneself)	56.	lè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)
57.	liếc (mắt)	glance (eyes)	58.	lim dim (mắt)	close (eyes)
59.	lúu (lưỡi)	be stuck (tongue)	60.	lừ (mắt)	roll (eyes)
61.	máy (mắt)	blick (eyes)	62.	mắm (môi)	close (lips)
63.	mím (môi)	close (lips)	64.	nắm (tay)	hold (hands)
65.	nháy (mắt)	blink (eyes)	66.	nhăn (mặt)	wince (face)
67.	nhắm (mắt)	close (eyes)	68.	nhe (răng)	grind (teeth)
69.	nheo (mắt)	squint (eyes)	70.	nhếch (mồm)	wince (mouth)
71.	nhếch (mép)	smirk (lips)	72.	nhíu (mày)	furrow (brow)
73.	nhòai (người)	lean (body)	74.	nhón (chân)	tiptoe (foot)
75.	nhòen (miệng)	grin (mouth)	76.	nhồm (người)	hunch 9body)
77.	ngậm (mồm, m	clench (mouth)	78.	ngheñ (cổ)	arch (neck)
79.	nghiến (răng)	gnash (teeth)	80.	ngoác (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)
81.	ngoạc (mồm)	widen (mouth)	82.	ngóc (đầu)	raise (head)
83.	ngoe nguảy (đuôi)	twitch (tail)	84.	oãn (người)	crouch (body)
85.	phồng (mũi)	inflate (nose)	86.	phưỡn (bụng)	bulge (stomach)
87.	quạc (mồm)	open wide (mouth)	88.	quàng (tay)	cross (ams)
89.	quắc (mắt)	glare (eyes)	90.	quắp (đuôi)	curl (tail)
91.	quắp (đuôi)	clasp (tail)	92.	rạp (người, mình)	huddle (oneself)
93.	ruón (người)	crouch (oneself)	94.	sa sầm (mặt)	darken (face)
95.	sầm (mặt)	darken (face)	96.	tặc (lưỡi)	click (tongue)
97.	thè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)	98.	trề (môi)	pout (lips)
99.	trồ (mắt)	stare (eyes)	100.	trợn (mắt)	roll up (eyes)
101.	trùng (mắt)	glare (eyes)	102.	úp (mặt)	bury (face)
103.	ưỡn (người)	sprawl (oneself)	104.	vỗ (tay)	clap (hands)
105.	vênh (mặt)	pout (face)	106.	vớ (tay)	stretch (arm)

107.	xoạc (chân)	spread wide (legs)	108.	xõa (tóc)	loosen (hair)
109.	xòe (tay)	spread (arms)	110.		

**D. Classification of VBM according to the effect of the Causer (N1) on the Causee (N2).**
**a) VBM bring about a change in the state of the Causee**

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	bành (cằm, hàm)	broaden (chin, jaw)	2.	bặm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)
3.	bậm (môi, miệng)	close (lips, mouth)	4.	bĩu (môi)	curl (lips)
5.	bóp (tay)	squeeze (hands)	6.	búng (tay)	snap (fingers)
7.	cau (mày, mắt)	frown (eyebrown...)	8.	cắn (môi, răng)	bite (lips, teeth)
9.	chành (môi, miệng)	widen (lips, mouth)	10.	chau (mày, mắt)	frown (eyebrown)
11.	chặc (lưỡi)	cluck (tongue)	12.	chầu (môi, mồm)	purse (lips)
13.	chép (miệng, môi)	smack (lips, mouth)	14.	chia (môi)	turn (lips)
15.	chĩa (mồm, mồm)	direct (mouth)	16.	chớp (mắt)	blink (eyes)
17.	chúm (môi)	round (lips, mouth)	18.	chun (mũi)	wrinkle (nose)
19.	co dúm (người)	draw (oneself)	20.	co quắp (người)	roll up (oneself)
21.	cong (người)	bend (oneself)	22.	dang (tay, cánh)	spread out (hands...)
23.	dạng (chân)	spread out (legs)	24.	day (mặt, chân)	turn (face, feet)
25.	díp (mắt)	close (eyes)	26.	điu (mắt)	close (eyes)
27.	đông (tai)	prick up (ears)	28.	dừng (tay, chân)	stop (hands, feet)
29.	gân (cổ)	harden (neck)	30.	giương (mắt, cổ)	raise (eyes, neck)
31.	gồng (mình)	strain (oneself)	32.	há (mồm, miệng)	open (mouth)
33.	háy (mắt)	scowl (eyes)	34.	hấp háy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
35.	hé (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	36.	hếch (mắt, mặt)	raise up (eyes, face)
37.	hệch (mồm)	open (mouth)	38.	hoa (mắt)	dazzle (eyes)
39.	hóp (má)	hollow (cheeks)	40.	huơ (tay)	wave (hands)
41.	khép (người, chân)	close (oneself, feet)	42.	khoanh (tay, chân)	cross (hands, legs)
43.	khoặm (mặt)	frown (face)	44.	khịt (mũi)	sniff (nose)
45.	khua (tay, chân)	wave (hands, legs)	46.	khum (người, tay)	hunch (back, hands)
47.	khuyển (tay, chân)	bend (hands, legs)	48.	lắc (đầu, người)	shake (head...)
49.	lè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)	50.	liếc (mắt)	glance (eye)
51.	lim dim (mắt)	close (eye)	52.	liu (lưỡi)	be stuck (tongue)
53.	lừ (mắt)	roll (eyes)	54.	máy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
55.	mắm (môi)	close (lips)	56.	mím (môi)	close (lips)
57.	mở (mắt, miệng)	open (eyes, mouth)	58.	múa (tay, chân)	dance (hands, legs)
59.	nắm (tay)	hold (hands)	60.	nháy (mắt)	blink (eyes)
61.	nhăn (mặt)	wince (face)	62.	nhắm (mắt)	close (eyes)
63.	nhe (răng)	frind (teeth)	64.	nheo (mắt)	squint (eyes)
65.	nhếch (mồm)	wince (mouth)	66.	nhếch (mép)	smirk (lips)
67.	nhíu (mày)	furrow (brow)	68.	nhoèn (miệng)	grin (mouth)
69.	ngậm (mồm)	clench (mouth)	70.	ngهن (cổ)	arch (neck)
71.	nghiêng (người)	Lean over (oneself)	72.	nghiến (răng)	gnash (teeth)
73.	ngoác (mồm)	open (mouth)	74.	ngoạc (mồm)	widen (mouth)
75.	ngoáy (đầu, đuôi)	wag (head, tail)	76.	ngoe nguẩy (đuôi)	twitch (tail)
77.	ngoẹo (đầu, cổ)	twist (head, neck)	78.	ngúc ngoắc (đuôi)	move (tail, head)



79.	ngủay (đầu, đuôi)	jerk (head, tail)	80.	oằn (người)	crouch (body)
81.	phồng (má, mồm)	blow out (cheek...)	82.	phồng (mũi)	Inflate (nose)
83.	phồng (má, mồm)	puff out (cheeks...)	84.	phưỡn (bụng)	bulge (stomach)
85.	quạc (mồm)	open wide (mouth)	86.	quắc (mắt)	glare (eyes)
87.	quặp (đuôi)	curl (tail)	88.	quặp (đuôi)	clasp (tail)
89.	sa sẫm (mặt)	darken (face)	90.	sẫm (mặt)	darken (face)
91.	so (đầu, vai)	hunch (head...)	92.	tặc (lưỡi)	click (tongue)
93.	thè (lưỡi)	stick out (tongue)	94.	trề (môi)	pout (lips)
95.	trố (mắt)	stare (eyes)	96.	trợn (mắt)	roll up (eyes)
97.	trùng (mắt)	glare (eyes)	98.	ưỡn (người)	sprawl (oneself)
99.	vắt (tay, chân)	cross (arms, legs)	100.	vẫy (tay, chân)	wave (hand, tail)
101.	vỗ (tay)	clap (hands)	102.	ve vẩy (đuôi, tai)	wag (tail, ear)
103.	vênh (mặt)	pout (face)	104.	vênh (tai, râu)	perk (ear, beard)
105.	vung vẩy (tay...)	swing (hands, legs)	106.	xoạc (chân)	spread wide (legs)
107.	xõa (tóc)	loosen (hair)	108.	xõa (tay)	spread (arms)
109.	xù (tóc, lông)	ruffle (hair)	110.		

**b) VBM bring a change in the position of the Causee**

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	ấn (tay)	press (hand)	2.	bám (chân, tay)	grip (feet, hands)
3.	bíu (tay)	hold (hand)	4.	bùm (miệng, tay)	cover (mouth...)
5.	bước (chân)	step (feet)	6.	choài (người)	move forward (oneself)
7.	chổng (tay, đầu)	lean (hands, head)	8.	co (chân)	fold (feet)
9.	cụng (đầu)	hit /knock (head)	10.	dụi (đầu)	rub (head)
11.	dựa (người, vai)	lean (oneself...)	12.	đá (chân)	kick (feet)
13.	đạp (chân)	kick (foot)	14.	đấm (tay)	punch (hand)
15.	đặt (tay, đầu)	hit (hand, head)	16.	đút (tay, chân)	raise (hands, legs)
17.	gác (tay, chân)	put on (hands, legs)	18.	ghé (tai, đầu)	lean (ear, head)
19.	hích (vai, người)	push (shoulder...)	20.	húc (đầu, người)	butt (head, oneself)
21.	nhón (chân)	tiptoe (foot)	22.	ngả (người, đầu)	tilt (body, head)
23.	tì (tay, vai)	tap (hand, shoulder)	24.	tựa (vai, lưng)	lean (shoulder...)
25.	thò (đầu, tay)	stick out (head...)	26.	úp (mặt)	bury (face)
27.	vói (tay)	stretch (arm)	28.	vục (tay, mặt)	scoop (hand, face)
29.	vùi (tay, người)	bury (hand, oneself)	30.		

**c) VBM bring a change in the direction of the Causee**

No	Vietnamese	Meaning	No	Vietnamese	Meaning
1.	bắt (chéo chân)	cross (legs)	2.	buông (tay, chân)	go of (hands, feet)
3.	cắm (đầu, mặt)	bow down (head...)	4.	bật (người)	spring (oneself)
5.	chấp (tay)	clasp (lips, mouth)	6.	chia (tay)	hold (hands)
7.	choãi (người)	spread (oneself)	8.	chồm (người)	jump up (oneself)
9.	chổng (chân)	point upward (feet)	10.	chúi (đầu, mũi)	bury (head, nose)
11.	chụm (đầu...)	put together (heads)	12.	co (tay, chân)	fold (hands, feet)

13.	cúi (đầu, người)	bend down (head...)	14.	cúp (đuôi)	drop (tail)
15.	cụp (đuôi, tai)	drop (tail, ears)	16.	doãi (chân, tay)	spread out (legs...)
17.	doang (chân, cẳng)	widen out (legs)	18.	dúi (đầu)	press (head)
19.	duỗi (chân)	stretch out	20.	đảo (mắt)	roll (eyes)
21.	gật (đầu)	nod (head)	22.	gập (tay, người)	fold (hands, body)
23.	giãy (người, chân)	jump up (oneself)	24.	giậm (chân)	stamp (feet)
25.	giơ (tay, đầu)	raise (hands, head)	26.	gục (đầu, cổ)	lower (head, neck)
27.	hạ (người, chân)	lower (body, feet)	28.	hất (đầu, tóc)	toss (head, hair)
29.	kiễng (chân...)	stand on (feet)	30.	khom (người..)	bend (oneself)
31.	khụy (chân, gối)	fall on (legs, knee)	32.	ló (đầu, mặt)	reveal (head, face)
33.	nâng (người, tay)	raise (oneself...)	34.	nhấc (tay, đầu)	lift (hand, head)
35.	nhoài (người)	lean (body)	36.	nhô (đầu, người)	raise (head, body)
37.	nhôm (người)	hunch (body)	38.	nhún (người, chân)	bounce (body, leg)
39.	ngâng (đầu, cổ)	raise (head, neck)	40.	ngoái (đầu, người)	turn (head, body)
41.	ngóc (đầu)	raise (head)	42.	ngoảnh (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)
43.	ngửa (mặt, người)	turn up (face, body)	44.	ngước (mắt, mặt)	look up (eyes, face)
45.	quay (đầu, mặt)	turn (head, face)	46.	quàng (tay)	cross (arms)
47.	quỳ (gối, chân)	kneel d(down)	48.	rạp (người, mình)	huddle (oneself)
49.	rút (tay, chân)	draw in (hand, leg)	50.	rướn (người)	crouch (oneself)
51.	thu ( người)	shrink (oneself)	52.	vươn (người)	stretch (oneself)
53.	vung (tay, chân)	swing (hand, leg)	54.	xoay (người, mặt)	turn (oneself, face)

## **Structure of Thai rice expressions**

Nguyễn Ngọc Bình  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This article studies the structures of Thai rice expressions through approaches in grammar as suggested by Crystal (1992), and it analyzes the structures of Thai rice expressions through 129 collected items. The data in this study show that in term of structures, Thai rice expressions include the rhyming, which can be grouped into internal rhyming and external rhyming. Regarding morphosyntax, this study analyzes the syntactic structures of Thai rice expressions. In regard to syntactic structure, Thai rice expressions include phrases which can be grouped into noun phrase and verb phrase; clauses which can be grouped into declarative clause, negative clause, and imperative clauses; sentences which can be grouped into simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences; and syntactic parallelism at the phrase and clause levels.

**Key words:** Thai, structure, rice expression, metrical structure, morphosyntactic structure

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. Purpose**

This article focuses on the idioms, proverbs and aphorism which mentioned to the terms used to represent the rice and its derived terms (seeds, plants, polished, cooked, etc.) meanwhile this is not a study of the rice expressions which involved scientific name of rice since the purposes of this kind of naming is not related to cultural elements that this study referred to.

#### **1.2. Theoretical Orientation**

This article based on the main approach on Grammar, suggested by David Crystal (1992).

#### **1.3. Methodology**

The procedure of this study included three categories:

##### **1.3.1. Data Preparation**

Data of this study will be prepared as follows:

*1.3.1.1.* Study articles, journals, textbooks, theses which are relevant to Thai expressions.

1.3.1.2. Collecting rice expressions from dictionaries, books, theses, articles and the internet from Thailand. Thai rice expressions also were collected by field trip and the field site is Nakhon Pathom province since it is famous place in term of cultivation in the central part of Thailand.

1.3.1.3. Understanding rice expressions also carried out by deep interviews with informants, especially the experts, scholars, and folklorists in Thailand.

### 1.3.2. Data Collection

Data of this study is collected from 23 Thai books and dictionaries which were published during 1996 to date. These given books and dictionaries are considered best documentaries in community.

### 1.3.3. Data Analysis

Expected data will be analyzed, contrasted and classified into different types and groups. Based on its structures, data will then be categorized and further sub-divided into different types. The total Thai expressions are 129. The Thai transcription system is based on Kalaya Tingsabadh (1982).

## 2. Content

Grammar is the body of rules that describe the structures of expressions in Thai. Grammar can be defined as follows:

‘A level of structural organization which can be studied independently of phonology and semantics, generally divided into the branches of syntax and morphology. It is the study of the way in which words, and their component parts, combine to form phrases, clauses, sentences, and other units (Crystal, 1992: 160). This part of study will study the Metrical Structure and Morphosyntactic Structure of Thai rice expressions.

Due to the fact that Thai idioms are similar to Thai proverbs so that a contrastive pattern of Thai idioms and Thai proverb can be presented as follows:

Thai idiom				Thai proverb				
อู่	ข้าว	อู่	น้ำ	อย่า	คำ	ข้าวสาร	กรอก	หม้อ
cradle	rice	cradle	water	Imp.	puncture	husked rice	fill	pot
‘Cradle of rice and cradle of water’				‘Do not puncture milled rice for filling pot’				
(The abundant lands)				(Should not do something by random)				

Since both of denotational and figurative meanings are important parts in understand the all-sided meanings, cultures, and social perspectives of Thai expressions, so that the denotational and figurative meanings of each example will be given. The



\* Yorked-word rhyming O O O, refers to two words comprising of the same vowels which have another word with a different vowel separating them. Due to the fact that there is no specific rule fixing about words but the yorke-word rhyming often found between the second and fourth words of the idioms.

(3)

ฝาก	ข้าว	ไว้	กับ	ไก่
		└──────────┘		
keep	rice	put	Prep.	chicken
ฝาก	ผลไม้	ไว้	กับ	ลิง
keep	fruit	put	Prep.	monkey

‘To keep rice for chicken; to keep fruit for monkey’ (Someone gives something to someone who loves that thing and it is so dangerous to lose it).

Example (3) shows the yorke-word rhyming in which the rime of the word ‘ไว้’ rhymes with the rime of the word ‘ไก่’. These two words were separated by the word ‘กับ’ with a different vowel in the middle.

(4)

เงิน	ทอง	เป็น	ของ	มายา	ข้าว	ปลา	เป็น	ของ	จริง
	└──────────┘								

money gold be thing illusion rice fish be thing real  
 ‘Money and gold are illusion things but rice and fish are real things’ (Money is not as important as foods).

Example (4) shows the yorke-word rhyming in which the rime of the word ‘ทอง’ rhymes with the rime of the word ‘ของ’. These two words were separated by the word ‘เป็น’ with a different vowel in the middle.

*(b) Alliteration*

Alliteration is the repetition of the beginning sounds of words, as in ‘Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers’, ‘long-lived’, ‘short shrift’, and ‘the fickle finger of fate’ (New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, 2005).

\* Continuous Alliteration O O, refers to words with the same consonant appearing in a row from two words on up, and having no other consonants intervening.

(5)

กิน	น้ำตา	ต่าง	ข้าว
	└──────────┘		
eat	tear	replace	cooked rice

‘To eat the tear instead of the rice’ (Someone who cries and be sad all time).









**2.2.1. Syntactic structure**

‘In general linguistics, the syntactic component contains rules for the generation of syntactic structures. These structures are analyzable into sequences of syntactic categories or syntactic classes, established on the basis of the formal relationships that linguistic items have with each other’ (Crystal, 1992: 379).

The syntactic structures of Thai rice expressions can be divided as follows:

**2.2.1.1. Phrase**

Phrase is a group of words, included one or more than one morpheme combined with together. The name of phrase based on head word of the phrase, e.g. Noun phrase has the noun is the head word of phrase; verb phrase has the verb is the head word of phrase (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 98). Thai has 2 kinds of phrase:

*(a) Noun phrase*

Noun phrase has the noun is the head word of phrase and may have the extending part before the head noun (pre-modifiers) and/or after the head noun (post-modifiers) (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 98)

\* The Noun phrase structure is composed of juxtaposed head noun and modified noun without any verb in between.

(15)	ข้าว	พระ
	HN	N
	cooked rice	monk

‘Rice of monk’ (The food which is used to worship the Buddha).

Example (15) shows a noun phrases in which ข้าว is a noun and พระ is also a noun.

\* The Noun phrase structure is composed of three head nouns juxtapose together without any verb in between.

(16)	ข้าว	ปลา	อาหาร
	N	N	N
	cooked rice	fish	food

‘Rice, fish and food’ (Food or thing used for eating, normally to mention to the main meal).

Example (16) shows three noun phrases, ข้าว, ปลา, อาหาร. These structures are composed of three juxtaposed head nouns together without any verb in between respectively.

\* The Noun phrase structure is composed of four juxtaposed head nouns together without any verb in between.

(17)	เงิน	ทอง	ข้าว	ของ
	N	N	N	N

money                      gold                      rice                      thing  
 ‘Money, gold, rice and thing’ (The rich person).

Example (17) shows four noun phrases, เงิน, ทอง, ข้าว, and ของ. These structures are composed of four head nouns juxtapose together without any verb in between respectively.

(18)	ข้าว	ปลา	นา	เกลือ
	N	N	N	N
	rice	fish	field	salt

‘Rice, fish, field and salt’ (The place which is used for making the living).

Example (18) shows four noun phrases, ข้าว, ปลา, นา, and เกลือ. These structures are composed of four head nouns juxtapose together without any verb in between respectively.

(19)	ชาย	ข้าวเปลือก	หญิง	ข้าวสาร
	N	N	N	N
	male	unhusked rice	female	milled rice

‘Man is unmilled rice, woman is milled rice’ (Men are as similar as the unmilled rice which can grow up everywhere whereas women have to depend on others as milled rice).

Example (19) shows four noun phrases, ชาย, ข้าวเปลือก, หญิง, ข้าวสาร. These structures are composed of four head nouns juxtapose together without any verb in between respectively.

*(b) Verb phrase*

Verb phrase has the verb is the head word of phrase (HV) and may have the extending part before the head verb and/or after the head verb (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 100-101)

\* The Verb phrase structure is composed of transitive verb and followed by noun phrases

(20)	กิน	ข้าว	ก้น	บาตร
	V	N	N	N
	eat	cooked rice	bottom	monk’s bowl

‘To eat the rice from the bottom of monk’s bowl’ (Persons who earn their living in the temple).

Example (20) shows one verb phrases with the head verb ‘กิน’, and followed by three head nouns ข้าว, ก้น, บาตร.

\* Two verb phrases juxtapose without any conjunction.

(21)	อด	ข้าว	อด	น้ำ
------	----	------	----	-----

V	N	V	N
starve	cooked rice	starve	water

‘Starve the rice and starve the water’ (The starvation).

Example (21) shows two verb phrases juxtapose without any conjunction, ‘อดข้าว’ and ‘อดน้ำ’ with two head verbs ‘อด’ respectively.

### 2.2.1.2. Clause

Clause can be defined as ‘A type of grammatical construction intermediate between a sentence and a phrase, containing such major functional elements as subject and verb. It may be equivalent to a sentence (e.g. I saw a cow), but it need not be (when I looked over the wall). Clauses have been classified in many ways, but most distinguish between independent (main) and dependent (subordinate) kinds’ (Crystal, 1992: 65). This study cannot find any of subordinate clauses and the main clause can be divided into:

#### (a) Declarative clause

Declarative clause is a clause with ‘a ‘declaration’ that something is or is not the case’ (Crystal, 1992:95).

Declarative clause is divided into 3 sub-types as follows:

#### \* Intransitive clause

Intransitive clause is a clause included main verb which unable to take an object (intransitive verb) and it may or may not have the extending parts (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 144). This study found these clauses as following:

#### + One intransitive clause

(22)	ข้าว	ใหม่
	rice	new

‘Rice is new’ (The lovers who have just known and loved each other).

Example (22) shows one intransitive clause with the verb ‘ใหม่’.

#### + Two intransitive clauses juxtapose without any conjunction.

(23)	ข้าว	ใหม่	ปลา	มัน
	rice	new	fish	oily

‘Rice is new, fish is oily’ (A new couple who has just married).

Example (23) shows two intransitive clauses juxtapose without any conjunction, ‘ข้าวใหม่’ and ‘ปลามัน’.

#### + Three intransitive clauses juxtapose without any conjunction.

(24)	ส้มโอ	หวาน	ข้าวสาร	ขาว	ลูกสาว	สวย
	pomelo	sweet	husked rice	white	daughter	beautiful



‘The bottom of rice pot is not black yet’ (Husband and wife live with together in a short time and later they are divorced).

Example (28) shows a negative clause with the negative word ‘ไม่’ (not).

\* Two negative clauses juxtapose without any conjunction

(29)

มี	ข้าว	ไม่	มี	คน	กิน
have	cooked rice	Neg.	have	people	eat
มี	เรือน	ไม่	มี	คน	อยู่
have	house	Neg.	have	people	stay

‘There are rice without no ones eat it; there are houses without no ones stay’ (No man gets the usefulness of Dhamma).

Example (29) shows two negative clauses juxtapose without any conjunction, ‘มีข้าวไม่มีคนกิน’ and ‘มีเรือนไม่มีคนอยู่’ with two negative words ‘ไม่’ respectively.

(c) Imperative clauses

Imperative clause is the clause that related to the request, commendation, and order (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 174). This study found imperative clauses in rice expressions as follows:

\* One imperative clause

(30) 

อย่า	ตำ	ข้าวสาร	กรอก	หม้อ
Imp.	pound	husked rice	fill	pot

‘Do not pound the milled rice for filling the pot’ (Should not do something by random).

Example (30) shows one imperative clause with the words ‘อย่า’ (should not).

(31) 

จง	นึก	ถึง	บุญ	ข้าว	แดง	แกง	ร้อน
must	remember	Prep.	favor	cooked rice	red	curry	hot

‘Have to remember of favor of red rice and hot curry’ (Must remember the merit of someone who helps us).

Example (31) shows one imperative clause with the words ‘จง’ (must).

\* Two imperative clauses juxtapose without any conjunction.

(32)

ปูน	อย่า	ให้	ขาด	เต้า
lime	Imp.	let	lack	tank
ข้าว	อย่า	ให้	ขาด	โอง
husked rice	Imp.	let	lack	jar

‘Do not let the tank lack of lime; do not let the earthen jar lack of rice’ (Necessary things must be well-prepared).

Example (32) shows two imperative clauses juxtapose without any conjunction and having the two words ‘อย่า’ (should not).

**2.2.1.3. Sentence**

Sentence is ‘the largest structural unit in term of which the grammar of a language is organized. ... Most analyses recognize a classification into simple vs. complex and compound sentence types, in terms of the number a kind of subject-predicate constructions they contain’ (Crystal, 1992: 349).

The structure of Thai sentence included Subject-Verb-Object and divided into 3 sub-types as follows:

*(a) Simple sentence*

‘Simple sentence consists of one main clause which includes a subject and predicate as cores of sentence, and may or may not have extending parts’ (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 194).

(33)      ข้าว                      คอย                      ฝน  
                  rice seedling              wait                      rain

‘Rice is waiting the rain’ (The waiting of someone).

Example (33) shows a simple sentence with a main clause included subject, predicate and object.

*(b) Compound sentence*

‘Compound sentence consists at least two juxtaposed or conjoined clauses and each of clauses is independent and does not depend on each other’ (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 196). This study found juxtaposed sentence as follows:

\* Juxtaposed sentence

‘Juxtaposed sentence is a string of at least two simple sentences without any conjunction’ (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 196).

(34)  
           ข้า                      นอก                      เจ้า                      ข้าว                      นอก                      หม้อ  
           servant                      outside                      lord                      cooked rice                      outside                      pot

‘Servant who don’t follow his lord, rice is outside the pot’ (Doing or behaves breakout from directives or doctrines).

Example (34) shows a juxtaposed sentence included two simple sentences, ‘ข้านอกเจ้า’ and ‘ข้าวนอกหม้อ’ without any conjunction.

(35)  
           ข้าว                      ฟุ้ง                      นา                      ปลา                      ฟุ้ง                      น้ำ

rice tree      depend      field      fish      depend      water

‘Rice depend on field and fish depend on water’ (The mutual dependences in together).

Example (35) shows a juxtaposed sentence with two simple sentences ‘ข้าวพึ่งนา’ and ‘ปลาพึ่งน้ำ’ without any conjunction.

(c) *Complex sentence*

‘Complex sentence consists of a main clause and one subordinate clause’ (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 205).

In this study, we found 3 sub-types of complex sentence as follows:

\* Cause and result sentence

(36)

แก่      เพราะ      กิน      ข้าว      เต่า      เพราะ      อยู่      นาน  
old      because      eat      cooked rice      old      because      stay      long

‘Man is old because he eats rice; he is old because he stays long’ (The old person, who becomes aging, causes some problems like weak health, less energy and cannot work like before).

Example (36) shows a cause and result sentence with the conjunctions เพราะ.

(37)

นา	ดี	ถาม	หา	ข้าวปลูก	
field	good	ask	find	paddy	
ลูก	ดี	ถาม	หา	พ่อ	แม่
children	good	ask	find	father	mother

‘Having good field, ask the unmilled rice; having good children, ask their parents’ (Being instructed by parents is so important for children).

Example (37) shows two cause and result sentences juxtaposed without conjunctions, ‘นาดี’ and ‘ลูกดี’ are causes and ‘ถามหาข้าวปลูก’ and ‘ถามหาพ่อแม่’ are results.

\* Relative clause

Relative clause is subordinate clause which begins with relative pronouns ที่, ซึ่ง, and อัน in order to extend the noun phrase and this noun phrase are subject and/or object of the main clause (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 212).

(38)

รวง	ข้าว	ที่	หนัก	ยอม	ทอด	ลง	ต่ำ
paddy	rice tree	Prep.	heavy	Conj.	will	lie	down



‘Paddy rice is heavy, it will lie down’ (The person, who has much knowledge, does not talk out or show off).

Example (38) shows a relative clause with relative pronoun *ที่*.

\* Serial verb construction

Serial verb construction is the sentence that having a string of over one verb (Sophana Srichampa, 2002: 216).

(39)

ใบไม้		ร่วง		จะ		ออก		ช่อ
leaf		fall		will		out		bunch
ข้าว	รัด	กอ		จะ		ออก		รวง
rice tree	tight	clump		will		out		paddy-ears

‘Falling down leaves made blooming; clumping rice made paddy to be in ears’ (If the leaf falls, the tree will have new bunch, as same as the rice).

Example (39) shows serial verb construction with verbs *ร่วง*, *ออกช่อ*, *รัด* and *ออกรวง*.

#### 2.2.1.4. Syntactic Parallelism

Syntactic Parallelism is defined as ‘the repetition of a syntactic construction in successive sentences for rhetorical effect’ (Collins English Dictionary, 2003). Syntactic parallelism can ‘happen at the word, phrase, or clause level’ (Dana Lynn Driscoll, 2010). This study found syntactic parallelism in the phrase and clause levels as following examples:

(40)

อู่	ข้าว	อู่	น้ำ
cradle	rice	cradle	water

‘Cradle of rice and cradle of water’ (The abundant lands).

Example (40) shows a syntactic parallelism which there is a syntactic construction ‘อู่ + Noun’ in the given phrases.

(41)

ให้	ข้าว	ให้	เกลือ	ให้	เรือ	ให้	พาย
give	rice	give	salt	give	boat	give	paddle

‘To give the rice, salt, ship and paddle’ (To be helpful and is supported by many businesses).

Example (41) shows a syntactic parallelism which there is a syntactic construction ‘ให้ + Noun’ in the given phrases.

(42)

ข้า	นอก	เจ้า	ข้า	นอก	หม้อ
-----	-----	------	-----	-----	------

servant      outside      lord      cooked rice      outside      pot

‘Servant who does not follow his lord; rice is outside the pot’ (Doing or behaves breakout from directives or doctrines).

Example (42) shows a syntactic parallelism which there is a syntactic construction ‘*นอน* + Noun’ in the given clauses.

### 3. Conclusion

This article analyzes the structures of Thai rice expressions through 129 collected expressions totally. The result from the study shows that in term of structures, Thai rice expressions included the rhyming which can be grouped into the internal rhyming and external rhyming. Regarding to the morphosyntax, this study analyzes the syntactic structures of Thai rice expressions. In regard to syntactic structure, Thai rice expressions included phrases which can be grouped into noun phrase and verb phrase; clause which can be grouped into declarative clause, negative clause, and imperative clause; sentence which can be grouped into simple sentence, compound sentence, and complex sentence; and syntactic parallelism in the phrase and clause levels.

#### Abbreviations

Conj.	Conjunction
HN	Head Noun
Imp.	Imperative
N	Noun
Neg.	Negative
Prep.	Preposition
V	Verb

## References

- Arthit-Uthai Anon (2010). Thai Idioms, Idioms, Phrases, Bangkok: Saeng Dao. URI: <https://autolib.rmutr.ac.th/catalog/BibItem.aspx?BibID=b00060424> (in Thai).
- Boonphan Jindarat (2004). *The comparative meaning of animals in Thai idioms*. Master's Degree in Linguistics, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. URI: [https://digital.library.tu.ac.th/tu\\_dc/frontend/Info/item/dc:114776](https://digital.library.tu.ac.th/tu_dc/frontend/Info/item/dc:114776) (in Thai).
- David Crystal (1992). *An encyclopedic dictionary of language and languages*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Department of Academic Textbooks (2009). *Proverbs, Idioms and Aphorisms*. Nakhon Ratchasima: Panda Learning Book. URI: [https://www.2ebook.com/new/library/book\\_detail/nlt/02001764](https://www.2ebook.com/new/library/book_detail/nlt/02001764) (in Thai).
- Eugene A. Nida (1975). *A Componential Analysis of Meaning*. De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110828696>
- Fred Lerdahl (1992). *Cognitive Constraints on Compositional Systems*. Contemporary Music Review 6 (2): 97–121. DOI: [10.1080/07494469200640161](https://doi.org/10.1080/07494469200640161)
- Iwasaki Shoichi & Ingkaphirom Preeya (2005). *A Reference Grammar of Thai*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. URI: [https://assets.cambridge.org/97805216/50854/frontmatter/9780521650854\\_frontmatter.pdf](https://assets.cambridge.org/97805216/50854/frontmatter/9780521650854_frontmatter.pdf)
- Ketprathum Wichian (1993). Thai Idioms. Bangkok: Development Studies.
- Khuaphanitikul Kong (2010). *Dictionary of Thai proverbs*. Bangkok: Aksorn Wattana (manuscript). URI: <https://www.car.chula.ac.th/display7.php?bib=b1864002> (in Thai).
- Klaisuban Pratuang (1985). *Thai idioms (8th edition)*. Bangkok: Sutthisarn Printing House. URI: <http://opac.mbu.ac.th/Record/297> (in Thai).
- Lamduan Somchai (1983). Thai grammar. Bangkok: Peerapatana (in Thai).
- Lehrer Adrienne (1972). *Cooking Vocabularies and the Culinary Triangle of Lévi-Strauss*. Anthropological Linguistics 14(5): 155–71. URI: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30029315>
- Liamprawat Suwattana (1983). *Reduplication of Lana (Northern Thai Dialect)*. M.A. Thesis. Mahidol University.
- Nawigamune Wanna (2003). *The Spritual Side of Rice: A Survey on Art and Culture Inspired by and Related to Rice in Asia, Focusing on the Central Region of Thailand*. Bangkok. URI: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=13d340bf8026b260bce6600457eb1970d2d01e71>
- Ngamdee Yingluck (1993). Proverbs, aphorisms and Thai idioms. Bangkok: Aksaraphiphat Company Limited. URI: <https://library.vajiravudh.ac.th/book-detail/5946> (in Thai).
- Pantumetha Nawawan (1982). *Thai grammar*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Printing House. URI: <https://www.car.chula.ac.th/display7.php?bib=b2035837> (in Thai).
- Pumyoo Watit (2004). *An Ethnosemantic study of rice terms and the conceptual system of rice in Southeast Asian Languages*. M.A. Thesis. Chulalongkorn University.

- Raksamanee Kusuma et al. (2010). *Thai idioms (2nd edition)*. Bangkok: Office of Academic and Standards. URI: [http://library.christian.ac.th/opac/showsearch\\_bk.php?pointer=T016352](http://library.christian.ac.th/opac/showsearch_bk.php?pointer=T016352) (in Thai).
- Srichampa Sophana (2001). Worldviews of Vietnamese people from Proverbs. Indochina Studies Project, Research Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University. URI: [http://syllabus.swu.ac.th/1\\_2555/OLS203B01.html](http://syllabus.swu.ac.th/1_2555/OLS203B01.html) (in Thai).
- Srichampa Sophana (2002). *Vietnamese Grammar*. Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University, Bangkok (in Thai).
- Srichampa Sophana (2006). *Thai and Vietnamese proverbs and common expressions: The Influence of Buddhist and local beliefs*. Mon-Khmer Studies, 103-120. DOI:10.15144/MKSJ-36.103
- Suwanpetch Boonsiri (1987). *A lexicon on the use of Thai idioms*. Bangkok: Odeon Store Publishing House. URI: <https://www.car.chula.ac.th/display7.php?bib=b1660729> (in Thai).
- Suwanpetch Boonsiri (1998). *Explaining Thai idioms, proverbs and aphorisms*. Bangkok: Duangkamol. URI: <http://mahalib.msu.ac.th/svit/index.php/dublin.php?ID=7427#.ZEeYAXZBzIU> (in Thai).
- Thongdee Iam (1994). *Rice Culture: Ritual concerning Rice and Rice Growing*. Bangkok: SahaDhammika Limited (in Thai).
- Thongdee Iam (1995). *Rice: Culture and Change*. Bangkok: Matichon Publishing House. URI: <https://search-library.parliament.go.th/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=2630%20thumbnail-shelfbrowser> (in Thai).
- Tingsaphat Kanlaya (M.R.W. 1982). “Unit 15: Languages and Sub-Languages in Thailand” *Teaching document in Thai Language Series 3*. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University. Bangkok, pages 359-418. URI: <https://www.arts.chula.ac.th/~ling/kalaya.htm> (in Thai).
- Udomporn Ekarat (2004). *2,000 Thai proverbs*. Bangkok: Development Studies Publishing House. URI: <https://webopac.lib.buu.ac.th/catalog/BibItem.aspx?BibID=b00310010> (in Thai).
- Wattanasoontorn Phenkhoe (1985). *Values in Thai Idioms (3rd edition)*. Bangkok: Odeon Store. URI: <https://library.coj.go.th/en/book/9667/book-9667.html> (in Thai),
- Weerawong Seela (1942). *Vientiane Thai poetry style*. P.L.A.
- Wetphada Yaowanuch (1998). *Rice...culture of life*. Bangkok: Plain Motive Publishing. URI: <http://opac.surat.psu.ac.th/BibDetail.aspx?bibno=131225> (in Thai).

# **Functional Discourse Grammar and application for describing Vietnamese syntax**

Nguyễn Văn Hiệp  
(Hanoi University of Industry, School of Language and Tourism)

**Abstract:** The article outlines the framework of the Functional discourse grammar and makes some adjustments to apply to the syntactic description of Vietnamese sentences. We believe that analyzing using 7 levels and labeling grammar components that we suggest indicate the spirit of Functional discourse grammar, also considering unique traits of Vietnamese, a non-inflectional language, that many authors have the tendency to categorize as a Topic-Prominent language.

**Key words:** Functional Discourse Grammar, Semantic Functions, Syntactic Functions, Pragmatic Functions, Vietnamese syntax, Topic-Prominent language

## **1. Introduction to Functional Discourse Grammar**

The name of Discourse Functional Grammar (shortened as FDG) was proposed by Kees Hengeveld at the ninth International Conference of Functional Grammar (ICF9), held in Madrid in September of 2000. This is considered to be a modified version of Functional Grammar, based on the work by S.Dik and his coworkers (Dik 1989, 1997).

Dik's Functional grammar is based on two set of principles: "(i) the rules which govern the constitution of linguistic expressions (semantic, syntactic, morphological, and phonological rules), (ii) the rules which govern the patterns of verbal interaction in which these linguistic expressions are used (pragmatic rules)". The first system of rule (i) is viewed as the tool for the purpose of the second system of rule (ii): "the basic requirement of the functional paradigm is that linguistic expressions should be described and explained in terms of the general framework provided by the pragmatic system of verbal interaction" (Dik 1997: 3-4). The result is the relationship between pragmatics, semantics and syntactics, is viewed in such a way that "pragmatics is seen as the all-encompassing framework within which semantics and syntax must be studied. Semantics is regarded as instrumental with respect to pragmatics, and syntax as instrumental with respect to semantics. In this view there is no room for something like an "autonomous" syntax" (Dik 1997: 7-8).

The functional grammar that Dik proposed is a theory that integrates aspects of pragmatics, semantics and syntactics. The three-level distinction is explained through

Semantic Functions, Syntactic Functions, Pragmatic Functions. Specifically, Dik explains:

- Semantic function: Agent, Goal, Recipient etc...
- Syntactic function: Subject and Object
- Pragmatic function: Theme, Topic, Focus etc...

The three functions can be identified as follows:

Semantic function indicates the roles that *referent* of related terms plays within the state of affairs designated by the predication in which these terms occur.

Syntactic functions specify the perspective from which a state of affairs is presented in a linguistic expression.

Pragmatic functions indicate the information status of a constituent in a broader interactive scenario, in which it appears (that is, in relation to the pragmatic information of the speaker S and the listener A hears at the moment of use) (Dik 1989: 24).

Dik proposed a descriptive frame with 4 levels of structure, from pragmatic function to predicate of clause, with variables in every layer, as followed:

Structural Unit	Designation	Variable
Clause	Speech act	E
Proposition	Possible Fact	X
Predication	State of Affairs	e
Predicate	Property/Relation	f

(Dik 1997: 55)

Returning to the topic of adding modification “discourse” to the name of functional grammar (changing from Functional Grammar to Discourse Functional Grammar), we believe that this change is to highlight the role of discourse in language form (syntactic structure of sentence). The nature of Discourse Functional Grammar, therefore, in which pragmatics determines semantics, and in return, pragmatics and semantics determine syntactics, is claimed by Hengevld K. and Mackenzia through the four-level of grammar analysis (Hengevld K. and Mackenzia J.L 2008) as following:

- The interpersonal level;
- The representational level;
- The morphosyntactic level;
- The phonological level;

In a recent work titled « Functional Discourse Grammar », Evelien Keizer applies these 4 levels to describe English. The author states “Each of the four levels that make

up the Grammatical Component consists of a number of hierarchically organized layers, representing the linguistic units relevant at each level” (Keizer 2015: 40)

## **2. Applying Functional discourse grammar in analyzing and describing syntax of Vietnamese**

Discourse functional grammar, much like Halliday’s Systemic functional grammar, cannot be directly applied to Vietnamese, because Vietnamese is not inflectional, and therefore does not have phonological level (according to Discourse functional grammar) or mode structure (according to Systemic functional grammar). From the perspective of many authors that support Discourse functional grammar, we highlight the opinion of Nguyen Hong Con: “It is necessary to distinguish in Vietnamese two types of syntactic structures that are structurally and functionally different: The subject - predicate structure belongs to clause, that has the basic function of expressing events, connected to the representative function of language. Meanwhile, the theme-rheme is the structure of a sentence, which serves its purpose to communicate messages, connected to the communication function of language. These two structures complement each other without eradicating them in the Vietnamese’s syntax system. With this approach, the syntactic parsing in Vietnamese meets the adequacy in both typology and language universal” (Nguyễn Hồng Côn 2009). His opinion retains the concept of subject-predicate, while also utilizing the concept of theme-rheme, making it suitable to describe a topic-prominent language such as Vietnamese (according to Li and Thompson’s classification in 1976).

In the spirit of Functional discourse grammar, with modification (we add a message structure level), in analyzing Vietnamese’s sentence, from a previous research (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2008), we suggest an analytic and descriptive frame with 5 levels, ranging from low to high level as follow:

- Nuclear level of the sentence
- Core level of the sentence
- Indicator for modality level of the sentence
- Illocutionary force level of the sentence
- Message level of the sentence

The analysis is further expanded with two additional levels, relating to the structure under and below the sentence. They are the level of subjectivity, emphasis, evaluation, and connection level in discourse (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2008, 2009). Here, we further explain levels in this frame as followed:

## 2.1. The nuclear level of the sentence

From a descriptive meaning side, each sentence is considered to be a reflection of an event or state of affairs that are acknowledged by the speaker. Therefore, each event or state of affairs has a head predicate and surrounds by semantic roles, in which there are essential, must-have semantic roles, enforced by the nature of meaning from head predicate, and optional roles. Starting from Tesnière, the widely accepted argument is that from a formal perspective, essential semantic roles are expressed by actant, while optional semantic roles are expressed by circonstant (circumstance). The central predicate, the only peak of the sentence, is viewed as predicator.

It is important to notice that the concept of predicate has to be understood in the spirit of modern linguists and grammar. A predicate is a word that can serve as the predicator in a sentence. Here, the predicate is identified by the contrast to referring expressions in a sentence: predicate is the remaining element in a sentence after removing referring expression, or predicate is the primary element that carries descriptive meaning after removing referring expression (for more information, read Hurford & Heasley 1983). In this description, words that serve as predicate can be noun, verb, number, pronoun and even preposition, this is a vital difference compared to common understanding (predicate can only be a verb or adjective). In certain cases, the predicate can be a phrase, such as: “Nó hai mươi tuổi” (He- twenty-age) (He is twenty years old), “Đồng hồ này ba kim” (This clock-three- coopers) (This clock has three coopers).

The actants are further labeled, with distinction between Subject and Object. We believe, in the case where a sentence has an actant, the actant serves as the Subject, regardless of its position to the predicate word. As for a language of SVO order such as Vietnamese, in a case where a sentence has more than one actant, we suggest the actant that stands before the predicate serves as Subject, the remaining actant is Object (read Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009).

This method of analyzing can be applied to existential sentences, sentences that have unique meaning, grammar and syntax. For example, the sentence:

(1) Trên tường treo một bức tranh

On-the wall-hang-a-painting

On the wall hangs a painting

will be analyzed in semantic aspect as followed:

On the wall/hangs/a painting

#Location/existing predicate/existing subject:

Or in a syntactic aspect:



Trên tường/ treo/ một bức tranh

On the wall/hangs/a painting

Subject/ predicate / Object

We can also label the structure of the above sentence in a different way, which is:

Trên tường/ treo/ một bức tranh

On the wall/hangs/a painting

Object / predicate / Subject

Both of these way of labeling have a thing in common, which is acknowledging « Trên tường » (On the wall) and “một bức tranh » (a painting) as actants, serving as a required syntactic component to the central predicate (treo/hangs). The difference is: if assumed that this is a sentence where the Subject (“một bức tranh”) (a painting) stands after the predicate “treo” (hangs), we have to consider this as an inverted order, a sentence that has an irregular order, marked, different than common thinking, and since this is a common sentence, not only in Vietnamese but also other languages, widely known as existential sentence. Researchers agree that an existential sentence is used to introduce an entity appearing for the first time in discourse.

This way of analyzing helps to eradicate certain prejudices in grammar analysis, in which the role of location has to be the adverbial of the sentence. This is a mix-up between semantics (location) and syntactics (status of adverbial). To popular language in Europe, location phrases hardly can serve as subject in a sentence (Dik, 1989), however a similar grammar constraint cannot be applied to Vietnamese, an isolating language, non- inflected, which many authors request to be classified as a topic-prominent language (Dyvid 1984, Cao Xuân Hạo 1991).

However, based on native speaker’s perception, there would be issues with sentences that have NP1+bị/được+ (NP2)+V<sup>2</sup>, in which V is action predicate, for example:

(2) Nam bị (Tuấn) đánh.

Nam-suffer-(Tuấn)-beat

Nam is beaten up by Tuan

To this type of sentence, which element serves as the central predicate and also the predicator of the sentence?

Answering this question relates to an ongoing debate about whether passive sentences exist in Vietnamese or not. Many authors refuse to acknowledge their existence, consider được/bị in examined sentences as content word. However, to native

---

<sup>2</sup> We use NP to indicate to noun phrase, V to indicate predicate

speakers, there is an obvious correspondence between “Tuấn đánh Nam” (Tuan-beat-Nam) (Tuan beats Nam up)” and “Nam bị Tuấn đánh” (Nam-suffer-(Tuấn)-beat) (Nam is beaten up by Tuan). These two sentences are each other’s paraphrases, speaking on the same state of affairs, specifically on the same action “beat” with Tuan as the agent and Nam as the patient. If consider « bị » as the central predicate of the second sentence than we have to see this sentence as an expression of a different state of affairs, analyzed in a separated way:

Nam/ bị /Tuấn đánh  
 Experiencer/state predicate/source

This way of analyzing is contrasting to native speaker’s perception, who view the two above sentences as corresponding, expressing the same state of affairs. Furthermore, if passive sentences are disowned, then được/ bị in the sentence above can still be seen as content word but will face with challenges in classifying state of affairs. If classified sentence such as "Nam bị Tuấn đánh” (Nam-suffer-(Tuấn)-beat) (Nam is beaten up by Tuan) as a state event then it would contrast to common perception, while classifying as an action event, we will face an exception dilemma : in this case, SoA typology is based on subordination clause (clause as object of the sentence, “ Tuấn đánh”<sup>3</sup> and not based on the proposition in the main clause.

Therefore, we argue that in Vietnamese, aside from “được/bị” which are considered to be content word (like “Nó được nhà” (He-take-the house) (He took the house), “Nó bị đạn” (He-suffer-the bullet) (He was shot), “Nó bị gãy tay” (He-suffer-broken-arm) (His arm is broken) etc.), there are also two function words “được/bị” (take/suffer) used to formulized passive sentence. In reality, these function words carry the meaning of its original form (“được” has a positive associative meaning, “bị” has a negative associative meaning), which can be explained by grammaticalization principle (Hopper 1991), verified by many other languages. Such dynamic view, which has many room for development, is further supported by the increasingly common way of

---

<sup>3</sup> In a previous monograph (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009), we argue that in sentences such as “ I am afraid that she is divorced”, “I think she is unhappy”, the SoA typology is based on subordinate clause objects . However, the difference, in these cases, “I am afraid...”, “I think...” are considered as markers for modality. having grammaticalization at a high level. In English, we have similar cases: to the same type of sentence (I think that P). tag question aims at subject in object clause and not at subject in main clause as usual. This is the reason why researchers see “I think” as grammaticalization, used as a modality phrase (on this subject, read Tallerman 1999, Traugott and Heine 1991). Halliday calls these cases “grammatical metaphors (Halliday 1985, 1994, 2004).

speaking like : “Chương trình này được tài trợ bởi Samsung” (This program-take-sponsor-by-Samsung) (This program is sponsored by Samsung), “Dự án này được thực hiện bởi một nhóm họa sĩ trẻ tuổi” (This project-get-carry out-by- a group- young artists) (This project is done by a group of young artists), etc. This way of analysis also fits in with cognitive linguistic view, in which, choosing “Tuấn đánh Nam” (Tuan beats Nam) or “Nam bị Tuấn đánh” (Nam is beaten up by Tuan) can be explained through the concept of construal, where one scenario can be interpreted differently, leading to various syntax structures being formed, suiting to the concept of profiling or foregrounding, in which an element is more focused upon when being interpreted (Radden G and Dirven R 2007).

## 2.2. Core level of the sentence

On this level, the core of the sentence is supplemented with circumstantial semantic roles (semantic roles that indicate location, time, reasoning, purpose, manner...). These roles are optional, which means they are not constrained by the predicator in a syntactic aspect, and can be commonly grouped as adverbials.

While identifying the element in this level of analysis, we need to re-examine the idea of secondary predicate in a sentence, which is a frequently discussed topic in many Vietnamese’s syntax research (Nguyễn Minh Thuyết 1981, Panfilov 1993). For example:

(3) Bước lên sàn điếm, lý trưởng quăng toẹt cuốn sổ xuống chiếu.

Stepp- on- the floor- the village’s chief- throw- the notebook- down

Stepping on the floor, the village’s chief throws the notebook down

From the aspect of differentiating foregrounding/backgrounding SoA, the phrase “Bước lên sàn điếm...” (Stepping on the floor) indicates an SoA that has been pushed to the background, no longer viewed as the main event, and only serves as a circumstantial role for another SoA. Therefore, we consider this to be a type of adverbial.

## 2.3. Indicator for modality level of the sentence

As we all know, the idea of modality is highly complex, can be understood in different ways, at different levels (semantically or pragmatically) (read Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2008, Chapter 3: “Modality meaning”). Here, we choose an understanding that is suitable for working and fits with our description. We believe that modality in a sentence should be examined in the frame of semantics, showing its commitment, subjectively reviewed

by the speaker with the state of affairs expressed in the sentence. The commitment and subjective review are examined through the aspect of Epistemic or Deontic. Components for “stance meaning” on numbers, in species..., from our perspective previously, do not belong in structure level analysis (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009), but rather in below sentence level analysis. However, after recent considerations, we think it is possible to put these components for “stance meaning” in the domain of structure level analysis, as an element that can impact the meaning of the sentence, which means it is a modality, always attached to the content of the sentence. They are analyzed at a subjective level, helping to actualize the sentence.

While the indicators for modality level vary, they can be classified into two devices, which are modal expression and modal verb. For example

(4) Gì thì gì, mai cũng mưa.

What-then-what- tomorrow-also-rain

No matter what, it will rain tomorrow.

(5) Làm như thể cô ta giàu có lắm.

Do-as if-she-rich-much

As if she is really rich.

(6) May ra nó về kịp.

Luckily-he-return-in time

Luckily he got back in time.

(7) Nó không nỡ bỏ cô ấy ở lại

He-not-have the heart to-leave-she-stay

He cannot bring himself to leave her behind.

(8) Nó dám cãi lại bố lắm.

He-dare-argue-against-father-much

He is willing to argue against his father

Modal expressions are usually placed at the start of the sentence, however they can also be seen at the position after the subject. The status of them as sentence components has been acknowledged by many authors (Cao Xuân Hạo 1991, Nguyễn Minh Thuyết và Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 1998, etc.) and need not to be frequently discussed. We consider them as sentence modification.

However, the issue is not so straightforward with modal verbs. In English, an inflectional language, researchers remain unagreed on their nature: whether they are grammar device or lexical device, content word or function word (Lyons 1977, Huleddston 1984, Palmer 1986), etc. However, researchers have stated some of their

unique traits, helping to distinguish them among regular verbs<sup>4</sup>. The situation remains the same for inflectional languages, but for an isolating language such as Vietnamese, regarding appearance, it is hard to distinguish the difference between the verb “muốn/want” in these two sentences:

(9) *Thằng bé muốn vào vườn.*

The boy-want-enter-the garden

The boy wants to enter the garden.

(10) *Cái ghế muốn gãy.*

The chair-want-be broken

The chair seems to be broken

The difference can only be seen from a meaning perspective: In the sentence “*Thằng bé muốn vào vườn*” (The boy wants to enter the garden), the most common understanding is that: “muốn” indicate a state of the boy’s mentality and therefore its content belong to descriptive information, belonging to the state of affair being expressed. Meanwhile, in the sentence “*Cái ghế muốn gãy*” (The chair seems to be broken), the “muốn” does not reflect any state of mentality, since the chair is a physical object that does not have emotion (unless in context, the chair is personalized and has the ability to think, carrying human status). Therefore, the “muốn” here indicates the speaker’s projection on the probability that the chair will break, which means it expresses an epistemic content, qualification for SoA being expressed. The second sentence can be paraphrased as: I predict/ I think the chair will break.

In traditional grammar, during a phase where modality discussion was not developed, the role of “muốn” in these two sentences were the same because “muốn” served as a predicate in both. However, under the lens of syntactic analysis based on meaning and function, and based on modern modality research, we have a different approach: only “muốn” in the first sentence, in the case of expressing a state of mentality of the Subject, functions as a predicate. In the second sentence, “muốn” serves as the sentence modification, expressing a modality content. This approach can be unified for sentences that have modal verbs behind Subject of sentence that does not have consciousness, such as:

(11) *Trời muốn mưa.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Huleddston calls the distinguisher N.I.C.E, shortened for Negation, Inversion, Code and Emphatic affirmation. They are unique traits to modal verbs that regular verbs do not have. They are modal verbs that can directly appear in negative form, inverted, coded and used to emphasize.

The sky-want-rain

The sky seems to rain

(12) Cái đồng hồ này đáng giá hơn 3 triệu.

This clock-dare- worth- more than- 3 millions

This clock is worth more than 3 millions.

However, returning to example (9), when the Subject of a sentence is an entity with consciousness, then it creates an ambiguous modal. The sentence “Thằng bé muốn vào vườn” is ambiguous, meaning it can be understood in two ways, depending on how we understand the concept of “muốn”.

The first reading: “muốn” expresses the boy's state of mentality. Therefore, the content of “muốn” belongs to information being expressed and “muốn” serves as the sentence's predicate.

The second reading: “muốn” indicates a projection of the speaker (based on signs, proofs, such as the speaker sees the boy look over the lock, or attempting to climb over the hedge...) of the probability that the boy will enter the garden. From the perspective of this theory, “muốn” functions as the sentence modification.

A couple transformative syntax procedures can be used to express different syntactic behavior with the word “muốn” in these two readings. For instance, by adding function words, just from the view of the first reading, we can say:

- Thằng bé không muốn vào vườn.

The boy-not-want-enter-the garden

The boy does not want to enter the garden

- Thằng bé chưa muốn vào vườn.

The boy-not yet-want-enter-the garden

The boy has not yet want to enter the garden

- Thằng bé sẽ muốn vào vườn.

The boy-will-want-enter-the garden

The boy will want to enter the garden

With the second reading to “muốn”, we cannot say:

\* Thằng bé không muốn vào vườn.

\* Thằng bé chưa muốn vào vườn.

\* Thằng bé sẽ muốn vào vườn...

Similar to the case of “muốn” being the speaker prediction on a probability of something happen, we cannot say:

\* Cái ghế không muốn gãy.

\* Cái ghế chưa muốn gãy.

\* Cái ghế sẽ muốn gãy.

With this approach, we suggest that in the sentence “Nó nữ bỏ cô ấy ở lại một mình” (He -have the heart to-leave-she-stay) (He can bring himself to leave her behind), “nữ” serves as the sentence modification (since it expresses an information that belong to the speaker’s attitude, with a qualitative function, belonging to deontic modality, for the SoA) while in the sentence “Nó không nữ bỏ cô ấy ở lại một mình” (He-not-have the heart to-leave-she-stay) (He cannot bring himself to leave her behind), “nữ” is the predicate (since it indicates the mental information about the Subject mentioned in the sentence, which is “nó”). Therefore, our way of analyzing syntax is based on semantic interpretation: only when there is a way of understanding semantic interpretation would there be a corresponding way to parsing syntax. The interesting thing is that this is similar to the way homophones are handled in Chinese script: the meaning of a word is identified first, before figuring out how it can be written.

#### **2.4. Level of indicators for illocutionary force of the sentence**

The question “How many Illocutionary forces?” or “How many speech acts?” in language usage generally or in Vietnamese communication specifically (as well as other languages around the world) is an unanswerable question (Lyons 1995). A sentence can only have illocutionary force when being actualized in a specific communicative scenario (to the speaker, the listener, communication intention specifically). Additionally, illocutionary force is a quantity that does not only rely on the language form but also other peripheral factors such as the intention of the speaker and the ability to interpret from the listeners (Siewierska 1991). Therefore, in the frame of grammar description, whether is discourse functional grammar, which often linked to discourse and communication, we can only have a fair understanding on “indicators for illocutionary force of the sentence”, in a sense that syntactic structure in a sentence has potential positions that can actualize these indicators.

This notion shows a more general view, in order to simplify sentence structure models, in the spirit of S.Dik, that Functional grammar cannot replace pragmatics, but have to be compatible with it (Dik 1989).

Specifically, applying in describing syntax structure in Vietnamese, we suggest the position at the end of a sentence should be reserved for modal particles (à, ư, nữ, nhé, thôi, chăng, đăy, đă, etc.) and modality idioms (là cùng, là may, thì phải, thì chết, nữ là, cũng nên, húng là, etc.) as a prioritized position, for indicators of illocutionary

force of the sentence. Language elements appearing in this position should be commonly known as special indicators for illocutionary force.

The second position should be reserved for indicators of illocutionary force is the position of predicate that has the meaning of demanding something such as *hãy, đừng, chớ* standing before action predicate serving as the predicator of sentence. We also call this special indicators for illocutionary force.

Due to its mixed nature (a modality device can simultaneously express different modal contents) there should be an argument for cases that have modal expression at the beginning of the sentence (or standing behind the Subject of sentence). In a way of understanding, modal expression can also be viewed as indicators for illocutionary force of the sentence. For example, in the sentence "Hình như nó vừa về/It seems like he just got home", the modal expression "hình như" (It seems) expresses a non-factive meaning (which belong to epistemic modality), also can be seen as indicator for a confirmation (indicators for illocutionary force).

We believe that the first function of these modal expression is to express degree of commitment (on the possible actuality of the SoA, see from the view of epistemic modality) and attitude of the speaker to the action mentioned in the sentence (judging the action mentioned in the sentence, from the view of deontic modality). Their roles in indicating illocutionary force is just a corollary drawn from modality compatibility, for example, a non-factive modality content, indicating a level of uncertainty can be used as a basis for a prediction; a modality content expressing a necessary can be used as basis for an order, for example: “Gì thì gì mà cũng không được bán mảnh đất ấy” (No matter what you will never sell that land). Furthermore, when examining the scope of modality impact, the position of special indicators for illocutionary force (at the end of sentence) is always the dictating position. Comparing

-Đằng nào thì nó cũng phải cưới cô ấy.

What way-then-he-also-have to- marry-her

No matter what he has to marry her (Confirmation)

-Đằng nào thì nó cũng phải cưới cô ấy à?

What way-then-he-also-have to- marry-her-ah

No matter what he has to marry her? (Question)

For the above reasons, in the lens of sentence analysis that we suggest, the position of modal expression at the beginning of sentence is not considered to be the position for indicators for illocutionary force of the sentence.



## 2.5. Message level of the sentence

To communicate a message, from the perspective of the speaker, the medium device of that message must have at least two elements: a) topic or limited scope of the message; and b) information about the topic or information that has value within the limited scope of the topic. There have been many terms for these two elements that are common, the most being the concept of Theme/ Rheme.

According to Halliday, in the case the Subject also serves as the Theme, we have an unmarked Theme. In cases that the Themes of the sentence is not taken care of by the Subject, we have a marked Theme. For example, these very familiar sentences (frequently mentioned in many research on Vietnamese grammar), all have a marked Theme:

(13) Việc này, tôi xin tùy hai ông.

This work-I- ask for-be up- to-two-you

This case, I leave it to you two gentlemen.

(14) Trẻ con, phải giữ cho chúng cái ngực, cái cổ.

Children- have to- keep- their chests- their necks

Children, got to keep their necks, their heads.

(15) Nhà, bà ấy có hàng dẫy ở phố; ruộng, bà ấy có hàng mẫu ở quê.

Houses-she- have- rows- on- the street; rice fields- she have- acres- in- the country

Houses, she has rows on the street; rice fields, she has acres in the country.

(16) Thuốc, ông ấy không hút.

Cigarettes-he -not- smoke

Cigarettes, he does not smoke.

(17) Giàu thì tôi cũng giàu rồi.

Rich- then I -also-rich- already

Rich then I would be rich too.

In Vietnamese, Theme-marked phrase are called Sentence Introducer (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009). We believe that Sentence Introducers are products of “promotion”: an element of the sentence structure is promoted to the front (fronting), while getting certain grammar priorities and thus becoming Sentence Introducer. Important grammar priorities of Sentence Introducer are the priority to remove synonyms, priority to control reflexive pronouns (for more information, read Li and Thompson 1976, Dyvik 1984, Cao Xuân Hạo 1991, etc.)

We need to argue about the proposal of Sentence Introducers, which we believe belong in a sentence structure. In other words, we need to answer the question: what

does this idea bring to Vietnamese's syntax analysis? We have discussed this before, but feel the need to bring this up again, due to its importance.

In the last 30 years, a few authors, most notably Cao Xuân Hạo, from a functional viewpoint, suggest that the basic and true syntactic structure of Vietnamese' sentence is the Theme-Rheme structure. He has proven that Theme-Rheme structure is the most effective way to express a proposition. If we use Subject- Predicate, an expansive structure, it only fits with inflectional languages, which is more suitable for European's grammars and not Vietnamese. According to Cao Xuân Hạo, Theme includes Subject as well as phrases that we call Sentence Introducers.

However, in a previous research (Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2009) we argue that using Subject-Object structure, adding elements such as Sentence Introducers would be beneficial to Vietnamese's syntax analysis. We argue that there are many reasons to enforce this point of view:

First of all, the syntactic relation between Theme and Rheme is a wide relationship, which encompasses many relationships. In the predicate - participants structure of the sentence, any semantic role can serve as the Theme, while only a few semantic roles can serve as the Subject and they are arranged in a prioritized order: agent > experiencer > patient... (Givón 1989, Dik 1989). We argue that, using the subject-predicate structure as a basic syntax structure to describe Vietnamese sentence, therefore proposing elements (labels) such as Subject, Predicate, Complements, Adverbs appear to be more in line with the predicate – participants structure, therefore syntax analysis will be more natural and easier to have similarity with SoA structure of sentence (predicate - participants structure).

Secondly, there exists the so-called Dummy Subject in Vietnamese, which furthermore proves why it is reasonable to use Subject-Predicate structure in sentence analysis, especially in spoken language. In spoken language, we often see sentence such as (more familiar examples):

(18) Trên xí nghiệp nó tuyển người rồi.

On- the enterprise-it - hired someone-already

They already hired someone for the enterprise.

(19) Cái chai này nó có một vết nứt ở đáy.

This bottle-it-have- a crack- at the bottom

This bottle has a crack at the bottom

(20) Người Huế họ rất lịch sự.

People from Hue-they-very-polite



However, it creates another issue: in the case where an adverb stands at the beginning of the sentence, it will express the Theme of the sentence and therefore has all the exclusive grammar priorities of a Theme, would it be considered to be a Sentence Introducer?

We believe that, for adverbials that stand at the beginning, there is no case of promotion: the position at the beginning of the sentence for the adverbials is one of its 3 unique position (before the core, after the core and between the Subject and Predicate), as a syntax element that belongs to the sentence frame. The promotion only occurs to syntax elements that do have the position at the beginning of the sentence, that are Complements, Predicate and some sub elements in the sentence, therefore there is no promotion to the adverbials.

Proposing the idea of Sentence Introducer, an element specializes in expressing the Theme of the sentence, our solution align with the ideas of Nguyễn Hồng Côn (2009a, 2009b), in which there is a distinguish between subject - predicate as a syntax structure of clause, with its basic function to express state of affairs, linked to the representative function of language, while the Theme-Rheme structure is a syntax structure of the sentence, serving its function to express a message, connected with communication function of language (Nguyễn Hồng Côn 2009a, 2009b).

## **2.6. Subjective level, aiding to actualize the sentence**

The idea of subjectivity relates to the role of the speaker in communication. If not accounting for subjectivity in using deictic terms in a sentence (such as the role of the speakers when talking about location, time, social statuses between communicators, for example “now” can be the time of speaking, can be this week, this month, this year or a couple of recent years), or subjectivity in construal in terms of cognitive linguistic, only focusing on subjectivity in the content being expressed, in evaluative and emotional elements, then the definition of subjectivity in a sentence is also varied and can be expressed in different ways. There are subjectivity elements that can be analyzed at a sentence level, in which specific expressive devices are categorized according to sentence components (such as sentence modification, special indicators for illocutionary force...) There is also a possibility to analyze subjectivity elements at a level below the sentence, in which the expressive devices are function words, modal auxiliary that are not labeled as sentence components. Devices that indicate subjectivity below the level of the sentence can be listed as:

(1) Using function words that indicate tense, aspect with implication of evaluation, fused with tense, aspect meanings. As everyone knows, function words in Vietnamese have two layers of meaning: one layer with objectivity (indicating tense, aspect meaning, linked with the state of affairs), one layer with subjectivity, indicating evaluation and the “stance” of the speaker. For example, they both are used to mark “resultative aspect” but “mất” carries a negative notion, while “được” carries a positive notion. Compare:

- Hôm qua mình đợi xe buýt mất cả tiếng.

Yesterday-I-wait for-the bus-loose- for an hour

Yesterday I waited the bus for an hour

- Hôm qua mình tiêu được 500 nghìn tiền lẻ đó rồi.

Yesterday- I spent-have- 500.000 vietnamese dong in change

Yesterday I spent 500.000 vietnamese dong in change

Similarly, we see "béo ra/getting fat", "trắng ra/getting white" is different than “gầy đi/ getting skinny”, "đen đi/ getting black" because they carry a positive notion and is desirable, rather than carrying a negative notion and being undesirable.

The above examples can be seen as using a “2 in 1”, which means it expresses the content being described, as well as evaluation, or it expresses information regarding tense, aspect objectively, as well as evaluation.

(2) By using auxiliary words, a layer specializes in evaluation. There are auxiliary words such as: những, mỗi, ngay, cả, nào... nào, mới, đến, tận, chỉ, lại, etc.. For example:

- Chúng tôi tha hồ chạy nhảy, rồi nào bơi nào lặn, đến tận những tối mới về.

We- have the freedom-jump-then-swim-dive-until-late- at night-go home

We have the freedom to jump, to swim, to dive, until late at night.

- Đang lúc gia đình gặp khó khăn về kinh tế, thằng út lại muốn lấy vợ.

While-the family-suffer- a financial crisis- the youngest son- suddenly- want-to marry

When the family has a financial crisis, the youngest son suddenly wants to get married.

(3) Using words interspersed with modality meaning: đéch, mẹ, quái, cha, cóc, chó, khi khô, etc.. For example

- “Chẳng còn khi khô gì cả” (Ma Văn Kháng)

Nothing-monkey-dried-at all

There is nothing here

- Không yêu iếc gì ở tuổi này cả, lo mà học đi!

No love-at-this age-concern-just-to study

No time for love at this age, getting carried on with school!

Due to its specialized nature in expressing appraisal contents, auxiliary words have an important position at the level of analyzing subjective elements (that belong to modality), helping to actualize the sentence. In Vietnamese, words interspersed with modality meaning express evaluation of common modality in the style of colloquialism, and can be seen as a typical sign of this style.

## 2.7. Level of connection indicators between texts

In a sentence, there are elements that indicate the connection between the sentence that contains it and prior sentences, these elements are usually placed at the beginning of the sentence. For example:

Connection in a contrasting relationship: *nhưng, tuy nhiên, có điều, song, trái lại, etc.* (but, however, meanwhile, on the other hand, etc.)

Connection in a similar relationship: *ngoài ra, thêm vào đó, vả lại, mặt khác, etc.* (furthermore, additionally, in another way, etc.)

Connection that relates to time: *thế rồi, rồi, rồi thì, etc.* (then, after that, etc.)

Connection that relates to listed order: *thoạt tiên, trước tiên, kể đó, cuối cùng, rốt cuộc, etc.* (firstly, secondly, finally, after all...)

Connection indicators between texts can be understood in a broad meaning, not only linking sentences in a paragraph, but also connecting paragraphs in a document. If they are placed at the beginning of the sentence, they work with the purpose of linking the paragraph with the previous ones.

We suggest that these elements are analyzed at the level of connection indicators between texts.

In Vietnamese, there are cases where an element can change its position, functioning in a different way than usual (please read Nguyễn Văn Hiệp 2021, Chapter 3: The issue of order in Vietnamese sentences, from a traditional standpoint, functional grammar, and cognitive linguistics). For example, the operator for Theme-Rheme boundary can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. We believe that these are words that have the function to indicate the connection between sentence and the scenario and place them in the level of connection indicators between texts. For example :

- "Thì ông đi ngồi tù, cho chúng mày đi ăn mày cả lượt" (Tô Hoài)

Then-I-go-to jail-let-you-go-beggar-in turn

Then I will go to jail, and all of you will be homeless.

- Là tôi nói đùa thể thôi, chưa chi đã giận!

Be-I-say-a joke- not yet-what-already-angry

It was just a joke, no reason to get upset!

Based on the information structure theory sentences that start with “thì”, “là” is the type of sentence that has only news (according to Givens-News structure).

### 3. Conclusion

Functional discourse grammar, similar to other functional approaches, is a kind of grammar aiming at explanatory adequacy. Keizer, an iconic figure of this movement, has said “In the course of the twentieth century, however, linguists increasingly felt the need not only to describe what was and was not acceptable in a particular language, but also to reveal the rules and principles underlying the construction of linguistic expressions. This meant the description of languages was no longer seen as the ultimate aim of linguistic research, but as a basis for tackling such questions as why languages are organized the way they are, how they are acquired, and why and how they change. In other words, the linguist’s aim was now to discover the system behind language and the general principles underlying this system (Keizer 2015: 3).

Applying modern grammar in Vietnamese is not a copy-paste job and must have modifications. In this article, we have applied, modified, Functional discourse grammar into analyzing Vietnamese’s sentence. We believe that analyzing using 7 levels and labeling grammar components that we suggest indicate the spirit of Functional discourse grammar, also considering unique traits of Vietnamese, a non-inflectional language, that many authors have the tendency to categorize as a Topic-Prominent language (Li và Thompson 1976, Dyvik 1984, Cao Xuân Hạo 1991).

### References

- Bolkestein A.M, de Groot C, Mackenzie J.L (eds) (1985) *Predicates and Terms in Functional Grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1991) *Tiếng Việt- Sơ thảo ngữ pháp chức năng, tập 1. [Vietnamese - An outline of Functional grammar, volume 1]* Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1998) *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa. [Vietnamese - some issues on phonetics, grammar, and semantics]* Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

- Diệp Quang Ban (1980) *Một số vấn đề về câu tồn tại trong tiếng Việt ngày nay [Some problems with existential sentences in Vietnamese today]* (PhD. thesis). Hanoi: Hanoi National University of Education.
- Diệp Quang Ban (1981) Bàn về vấn đề khởi ngữ (hay chủ đề) trong tiếng Việt [On the subject (or topic) in Vietnamese]. In Nguyễn Tài Căn (ed.) *Một số vấn đề về ngôn ngữ học Việt Nam [Some problems about Vietnamese linguistics]*. Hanoi: University and College Publishing House, pp. 48- 60.
- Diệp Quang Ban (1987) *Câu đơn tiếng Việt [Vietnamese simple sentence5]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Dik S. – edited by Kees Hengeveld (1997) *The theory of functional grammar. Part. I. The structure of the clause*. Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyete
- Dik S. (1989) *The Theory of Functional Grammar, Part 1: The Structure of the Clause*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dik, S. (ed) (1983) *Advances in Functional Grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Dik S. (1978) *Functional Grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Đình Văn Đức (1986) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt: Từ loại [Vietnamese grammar: parts of speech ]*. Hanoi: Education.
- Dyvik H.J.J (1984) *Subject or Topic in Vietnamese?* Bergen: University of Bergen.
- Halliday M.A.K. (1985) *An introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Arnold.
- Halliday M.A.K. (2004) *An introduction to Functional Grammar (Revised by Matthiessen)*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Hengeveld K. and Mackenzie J.L. (2008) *Functional Discourse Grammar- A typologically-based theory of language structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoàng Trọng Phiên (1980) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Câu [Vietnamese grammar: Sentence]*. Hanoi: University and College Publishing House.
- Hopper P.J (1991) On some principles of grammaticization. In E.C Traugott and B. Heine (eds) *Approaches to grammaticization, Volume I*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins publishing company.
- Huleddston R. (1984) *Introduction to the Grammar of English*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hurford J.R and Heasley B. (1983) *Semantics: a coursebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keenan (1976) Towards a Universal Definition of "Subject. In Li (ed) *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 303-334.
- Keizer E. (2015) *A Functional Discourse Grammar for English*. Oxrord: Oxford University Press.
- Lê Văn Lý (1968) *Sơ thảo Ngữ pháp Việt Nam. [An outline of Vietnamese grammar]*. Saigon: Learning Resource Center of the Ministry of Education Press.
- Lê Xuân Thái (1995) *Câu chủ vị trong tiếng Việt [Subject-predicate sentence in Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.



- Li Ch.N. và Thompson S.A. (1976) Subject and Topic: a new typology of language. In Li (ed): *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press, pp. 445- 455.
- Lyons J. (1977) *Semantics*, Two volumes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lyons J. (1995) *Linguistic Semantics - An introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nguyễn Hồng Côn (2009) Syntactic Structure of Vietnamese Sentences: Subject – Predicate of Theme – Rheme. *Review of Social Sciences 2*.
- Nguyễn Hồng Côn (2009) Vietnamese passive sentences from a typological perspective. *Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics 2*.
- Nguyễn Kim Thân (1964) *Nghiên cứu về ngữ pháp tiếng Việt, tập 2 [Research on Vietnamese grammar, volume 2]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Nguyễn Minh Thuyết (1981) *Chủ ngữ trong tiếng Việt [Subject in Vietnamese]* (PhD. thesis). Leningrad: Leningrad State University
- Nguyễn Minh Thuyết (1988) Cách xác định thành phần câu tiếng Việt [Identifying Vietnamese sentence components]. In *Tiếng Việt và các ngôn ngữ Đông Nam Á*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, pp. 207- 212.
- Nguyễn Minh Thuyết, Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1994) Về khái niệm nòng cốt câu [On the core of the sentence]. *Journal of Linguistics 4*, pp.51- 57.
- Nguyễn Minh Thuyết, Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1998) *Thành phần câu tiếng Việt [Vietnamese sentence components]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1991) Một quang cảnh về các thành phần phụ câu tiếng Việt [A view of secondary components of Vietnamese sentence]. *Hanoi University Journal of Science 6*, pp.39-46.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1992) *Các thành phần phụ của câu tiếng Việt [Secondary components of Vietnamese sentence]* (PhD. Thesis) Hanoi: Hanoi University.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1994) Tình thái ngữ trong hệ thống thành phần phụ của câu tiếng Việt [Modal component in the system of secondary components of Vietnamese sentences]. *Hanoi University Journal of Science 5*, pp.41-44.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (1997) Khởi ngữ và vấn đề nghiên cứu thành phần câu tiếng Việt [Theme-words in the study of Vietnamese sentence components]. *Vietnam National University Journal of Science 1*, pp.39-47.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2002) Vài nét về lịch sử nghiên cứu cú pháp tiếng Việt [ On the history of syntactic research of Vietnamese]. *Journal of Linguistics 10*, pp.16- 35.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2003) Cấu trúc câu tiếng Việt nhìn từ góc độ ngữ nghĩa [Vietnamese sentence structure from a semantic perspective]. *Journal of Linguistics 2*.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2006) Nghĩa chủ đề và những cách tiếp cận về nghĩa chủ đề [Thematic meaning and approaches to thematic meanings]. *Journal of Linguistics 11*.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2008) *Cơ sở ngữ nghĩa phân tích cú pháp [Semantic basis of syntactic parsing]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Nguyễn Văn Hiệp (2009) *Cú pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese syntax]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.

- Nguyễn Văn Lộc, Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2016) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Palmer F.R (1986) *Mood and Modality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panfilov (1993) – Nguyễn Thủy Minh translate into Vietnamese (2008) *Cơ cấu ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [ Vietnamese grammar structure]*. Hanoi: Education Publishing House.
- Radden G and Dirven R (2007) *Cognitive English grammar*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Siewierska A. (1991) *Functional Grammar*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tallerman M. (1999) *Understanding Syntax*. London: Arnold Publisher.
- Tesnière L. (1959) *Elements de syntaxe structurale*. Paris: Klincksiek.
- Trương Văn Chỉnh và Nguyễn Hiến Lê, (1963) *Khảo luận về ngữ pháp Việt Nam [Essays on Vietnamese grammar]*. Hue: Hue University Press.
- Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences (1983) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Van Valin & Lappola (1997) *Syntax: Structure, Meaning and Function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **LAI ‘come/again’ in Vietnamese from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic perspectives**

Trần Kim Phượng  
(Hanoi National University of Education)

**Abstract:** *Lai* ‘come; again’ is a word with a high frequency of occurrence in Vietnamese. It is flexible in terms of word class, and can be either a content word or a function word with a range of uses. As a content word, it is a verb of motion while as a function word, it can be an adverb, a modal particle or a connector, and can co-occur with verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, etc.,. Semantically, the verb functions as predicator in the sentence’s representational structure, while pragmatically, its presence yields numerous interesting presuppositions and implications, and helps shorten utterances. However, no comprehensive description of the lexeme exists, and in various course-books or monographs, it is normally considered an adverb that precedes a verb. Our paper investigates the word *lại* from syntactic, semantic and pragmatic perspectives to give a fuller picture of its syntactic behavior, meaning and use in Vietnamese.

**Key words:** *lại* (come/again), verb, syntax, semantics, pragmatics

### **1. *Lại* from syntactic perspective**

In books on Vietnamese syntax, the word *lại* is acknowledged as having two main roles: as a verb and as an adverb. But in our opinion, *lại* can also play the role of a modal particle and a connector. Even as an adverb, the word *lại* also has 2 different positions with a variety of meanings. In addition, *lại* can be combined with another word, forming pairs or forming collocations of modality.

#### **1.1. “*Lại*” as a verb**

*Lại* is mentioned in the group of verbs indicating directional motion verbs in Vietnamese. According to Nguyen Kim Than (1977), this group includes 10 words: *ra, vào, lên, xuống, đến, tới, sang, qua, lại, về* (p.101). Dinh Van Duc (1985, 2001) wrote: *There is a group of motion verbs with rather special meanings. Those are motion verbs that include the direction of movement: ra, vào, lên, xuống, sang, qua, lại, tới, đến, về,...* (p.142). Le Bien (1996) also shared Dinh Van Duc's opinions (p.84). Nguyen Lai, however, named this group *Words indicating directional motion in Vietnamese* and assumed that this particular group consists of 11 words, adding the word *đi* to the list.

Thus, the first meaning of *lại* is to indicate movement, but this meaning is also not quite the same as that of other words in the same group. For example:

*Em hãy lại đây với anh*  
 you IMP come here with me

‘Come here to me, please!’

*Mời bác lại nhà.*  
 invite you come home

Goodbye!

*Bóng cây thấp, cây cao đan vào nhau khi có đèn xe lại gần... (Vo Thu Hương)*

‘The shadow of low and high trees intertwine when car lights come near’

*Chiều nay còn mưa, sao em không lại (Trịnh Công Sơn)*

‘Why don't you come while it is still raining this afternoon?’

### 1.1.1. General syntactic meaning

The verb *lại* refers to movement: to be more specific, to move within what is considered close, to one's own place, or to those of close acquaintances. At this point, *lại* is somewhat similar to the word *qua*. With large ranges of movement, speakers will tend to use the words such as *đi, đến, tới, ...* instead. Compare these sentences:

*Lúc nào rảnh, lại nhà tôi chơi.*

‘Whenever you're free, *come* to my house.’

*Lúc nào rảnh, qua nhà tôi chơi.*

‘Whenever you're free, please *drop by* my house.’

*Tôi sẽ đi/ đến/ tới Huế.*

‘I will *come* to Hue.’

\**Tôi sẽ lại Huế.*

‘I will *come* to Hue.’

As can be seen from the above sentences, *nhà tôi* is considered by the speaker to be close, so both *lại* and *qua* are acceptable. Nevertheless, Hue is considered to be far away, so *lại* cannot be used here. If the utterance *Tôi sẽ qua Huế* is acceptable, then Hue will be considered close or a convenient and easy place to travel.

### 1.1.2. Cohesion

Verbs of motion are often combined with people and animals; and the complements are proper nouns (*Hà Nội, Huế, Hạ Long, ...*) or common nouns (*chợ* ‘market’, *thư viện*

‘library’, *rạp chiếu phim* ‘cinema’,...) indicating places. Verbs in this group are often interchangeable. For example:

*Tôi đi/ ra/ đến/ lên/ xuống... Phú Thọ.*

‘I come to Phu Tho.’

*Tôi đi/ ra/ đến/ lên/ xuống... chợ.*

‘I come to the market.’

However, the verb *lại* shows some differences. It can go with people or animals but its complements are not proper or common nouns indicating places as the previous examples.

We cannot say: *Tôi lại Phú Thọ. Tôi lại chợ.* (-)

*Lại* can go with a few nouns like *nhà, rạp chiếu phim,...*

*Tôi lại nhà bố mẹ.*

‘I come to my parents' house.’

*Tôi qua/ đến/ sang/ tới, ... nhà bố mẹ.*

‘I come to my parents' house.’

In other cases, *lại* is often paired with demonstrative pronouns *đây* or in the combination of *đằng*, *chỗ* with demonstrative pronouns such as *đằng kia* (*overthere*), *đằng này* (*over here*).

*Mang cho mẹ cái cốc lại đây.*

‘Bring me the cup *here*.’

*Lại đằng kia đi!*

‘Go over there!’

*Mai tôi sẽ lại anh chơi<sup>1</sup>.*

‘I'll come to your house tomorrow.’

*Lại* also has the meaning of being able to deal with or dealing with something effectively: *Tao đánh không lại nó* ‘I cannot defeat him/her’; or the meaning of returning to the normal state before any changes (similar to *hồi phục* ‘recover’): *ăn cho lại sức* ‘eat to recover’, *vẫn chưa lại người* ‘hasn't recovered’.

Besides being a single word, *lại* can be regarded as one of the elements forming a series of compound words, such as *trở lại* (with the meaning of *quay về nơi bắt đầu* ‘returning to the previous place’), *qua lại* ‘going back and forth’, *đi lại* meaning ‘to go from one place to another’, or using a combination *đi đi lại lại* ‘going back and forth many times over a short distance’. In addition, *lại* appears in verbs: *lại gạo* ‘return to

<sup>1</sup> This special case can be considered a short way to say: *lại chỗ anh chơi/ lại nhà anh chơi*.

dry as if uncooked rice’, *lại mặt* ‘to return to visit the bride's family after bringing the bride home’, *lại quả* ‘leaving part of the offering for the bride’s family’, Thus, its general meaning is still to return to the same state as before the transformation. [Vietnamese Dictionary – Hoang Phe (ed.), p708].

### 1.1.3. Lại and its grammatical functions

*Lại*, as a verb, can undeniably take the basic role of a predicate in a sentence. Moreover, it can also be used as a complement. However, our collected data do not support *lại* as a subject or an adjunct. We believe that *lại*, despite the fact that it belongs to the group of independent verbs, always requires a complement. For example:

*Tôi lại vắng này một tí.*

‘I will be gone for a while.’

In this specific example, *lại* is the core of the predicate, but the first complement *đằng này* (over here) cannot be omitted.

Another example is the use of *lại* as a complement in a sentence. Nevertheless, it cannot stand alone and must be combined with another word to form a verb phrase as a complement.

*Mang cho mẹ cái cốc lại đây.*

‘Bring me the cup over here.’

## 1.2. Lại as an adverb [1]

As an auxiliary adverb modifying a predicator, *lại* has two positions: before (pre-adverb) or after the predicator (post-adverb).

### 1.2.1. Lại as a pre-adverb

When followed by a predicator, *lại* is one of the adverbs that indicate unified continuity, along with *cũng* ‘also’, *còn* ‘still’, *cứ* ‘still’, *vẫn* ‘still’, *đều* ‘even’. To be more specific, *lại* complements the verbs/adjectives which indicate recurrence, continuity, and the repetition of action/state/property, and so on. For example:

+ *lại* when standing before the action predicator indicates a repetition of the action which has happened before:

*Tôi lại về quê mẹ nuôi xưa. (Tố Hữu)*

‘I returned to the land where she had raised me.’

*Biển lại hát tình ca, biển kể chuyện quê hương (Hồng Đăng)*

‘The sea sings the love songs again and tells the story of homeland.’

*Anh về với em rồi mai lại đi. (Trần Thiện Thanh)*

‘I come back to you only to leave again tomorrow.’

+ *lại* when standing before the state of being predicator indicates a repetition of the state which has happened before:

*Tôi lại yêu anh ấy như ngày nào.*

‘I fell in love with him again like before’

+ *lại* when standing before feature predicators indicates the repetition of features which have existed before:

*Cắt tóc xong, lại đẹp giai như thường.*

‘When this cut is done, you will look good again.’

+ *lại* when standing before a noun indicates the continuous repetition of a situation. This can be seen as a special feature of *lại* since normally, as an adverb, it can only support verbs or adjectives.

*Lại một tiếng nữa trôi qua.*

‘Here comes another hour.’

*(Chị ấy sinh lần thứ 2.) Lại con gái.*

‘(She’s given the second birth.) ‘It’s a girl, again.’

*Lại một lần nữa, vận may đã không mỉm cười với nước Anh.*

‘Once again, luck was not on England’s side.’

In general, the meaning of the pre-adverb *lại* is relatively consistent and stable, regardless of the predicate it goes with. However, the combination of *lại* with feature predicators is somewhat more constrained when compared to other types of mentioned predicators.

### 1.2.2. Lại as a post-adverb

When following a predicator, *lại* possesses a number of different meanings. Normally it would express the repetition and recurrence of an action/state/property, etc., which is deemed necessary for some reasons.

a. *lại* indicates the repetition of the action which has happened before: *hôn lại* ‘kiss back’, *làm lại* ‘redo’, *trồng lại* ‘replant’, *đan lại* ‘reknit’, ...

*Đã hôn rồi hôn lại, hôn mãi đến muôn đời (Xuân Diệu)*

‘I have kissed you but again I want to do it, do it forever.’

*Chỉ vài tiếng sau khi trồng lại, bông cúc đã hé nở, khoe hương (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘Only a few hours after being replanted, the daisy has bloomed, spreading its fragrance.’

*Bài này làm sai rồi. Làm lại đi!*

‘This one is wrong. Do it again!’

*Cái áo này đan không đẹp, tớ đang gỡ ra đan lại.*

‘This one wasn’t well-knitted, so I’m taking it apart to knit it again.’

The context of these given examples suggests that *lại* in these specific cases represent the activeness and recurrence of the same actions due to some particular requests, motives, and purposes,.. mostly in order to do something better.

b. *lại* can refer to opposite nature of an action or a state concerning what has already passed: *lùi lại, sửa lại, gửi lại, bán lại cái xe, trả lại tiền thừa, cãi lại cha mẹ, tiến lại gần, dừng lại, bỏ ra nhiều mà thu lại chả được mấy, ... (back, fix, send back, sell the car, return the change, argue with parents, approach, stop, spend a lot but get little back,...)*

*Tôi sửa lại cái nhà.*

‘I repaired my house.’

The *repairing* action is now being conducted with implicit comparison to the *building* action previously, not a repeated one.

*Xe lùi lại một quãng.*

‘The car moved back a bit.’

The *moving back* action is now being carried out with comparison to the *moving forward* action previously.

*Yêu nhau đứng ở đằng xa/ Con mắt liếc lại bằng ba đứng gần. (Ca dao)*

‘In love, even though we’re at a distance, our *gaze back* at each other means more than when we’re close.’

*Mùa thu đã đi qua còn gửi lại Một ít vàng trong nắng trong cây. (Tế Hanh)*

‘Autumn has already gone but still it’s left a little yellow in the sunshine on the tree.’

*Ánh mắt cô bé chợt dừng lại ở hướng hai cây dù. (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘Her eyes suddenly stopped at the two umbrellas...’

- *Giờ ra chơi hôm ấy, các bạn nhỏ quay lại gốc bàng. (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘During the break time that day, the children returned to the *terminalia catappa* tree.’

*Lại* when used after the predicator *ở* ‘stay / be’ marks some interesting points. Looking at these examples:

*Mùa xuân vẫn còn đang ở lại. (Thanh Tùng)*



‘Spring is still here.’

*Em ơi, em ở lại nhà. (Nguyễn Bình)*

‘Darling, please stay.’

The use of *lại* as an adverb enhances the independence of the linking verb "at", which often requires the complement. For instance:

\**Mùa xuân vẫn còn đang ở.*

‘Spring is still here.’

*Em ơi, em ở lại.*

‘Darling, please stay.’

c. *lại* indicates the direction of the actions in order to gather them or narrow the scope of the action or process: *xích lại gần nhau, dồn lại thành một đống, nằm co người lại*, ‘to get close to each other, to gather in a pile, to lie down, to curl up’,...

d. *lại* indicates the direction of actions in order to hold them back or to keep them from expanding, moving, and developing: *gói quần áo lại, níu lại không cho đi, giữ lại, để lại giấy tờ, mím môi lại, cắn chặt răng lại*, ‘pack clothes, hold back, don't let go, keep, leave papers, purse your lips, grit your teeth’,...

*Những cái môi bé xinh hơi mím lại (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘Those pretty little lips slightly pursed.’

e. *lại* when following feature predicators indicate the opposite nature of a feature in contrast to what has happened or the original in the past:

*Hàng cây trồng trước ngõ*

*Rụng lá mùa mưa qua*

*Bỗng nhiên xanh thắm lại /*

*Nghe rì rào nở hoa (Thanh Quế)*

‘From the trees in front of the lane

Leaves are falling when it rains

Suddenly there's green again

Then comes the whisper from the blooming flowers.’

This can be understood as: The trees used to be green but they're no longer recently; but at the speaking time, the “green” feature of the trees has returned.

*Thịt cũng sứt lại thành vết sẹo. (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘The flesh finally turns into a scar.’

*Có phải duyên nhau thì thắm lại. (Hồ Xuân Hương)*

‘If we still have feelings for each other, our love will rise again.’

The meaning of *lại* that represents “what has already passed” has limited the combination of this verb with a number of certain predicators. Investigating these instances:

*Người như trẻ lại.*

‘I feel like becoming young again.’

*\*Người như già lại.*

\*I feel like becoming old again

It is impossible to say that ‘I feel like becoming old again’ because a person's growth progresses from young to old, so if we go back in time, we have to be “young again”, and towards the future it has to be “getting older”.

*Lại* when combined with predicators indicating features like *xám lại, tối lại, đen lại, quắt lại* ‘gray, darken, blacken, shriveled’ often carries the negative meanings, suggesting the shrink of characteristics and states. *Đôi mắt nó tối lại; Người nó đen lại/ quắt lại vì nắng cháy.* ‘His eyes are dark; his body is black/shrink from the sun's heat’ These combinations are dynamic, unlike *xám* ‘gray’, *tối* ‘dark’, *đen* ‘black’, *quắt* ‘shriveled’,.....’ which are static.

Thus, compared with the words in the adverbial group indicating the uniform continuity (also, still, on, again, still, even), it can be seen that *lại* has both positions before and after the predicate, while the rest of the words have only 1 position: before the predicate. However, *lại* is only capable of being a posterior subjunctive for certain predicates, but not all predicates. When it comes before or after a predicate, *lại* changes the meaning. And when going with certain predicates, *lại* has a certain meaning. Compare:

*a. Nó bỏ lại gia đình.*

‘He left the family behind.’

*a'. Nó lại bỏ gia đình. (Nó đã từng bỏ gia đình, ít nhất 1 lần)*

‘He left his family again.’ ‘He left his family at least once in the past’

*b. Nó lại ở Hà Nội. (Nó đã từng ở HN)*

‘He's in Hanoi again.’ ‘He used to be in Hanoi.’

*b'. Nó ở lại Hà Nội. (Nó chưa chắc đã ở Hà Nội trước đó).*

‘He stayed in Hanoi.’ ‘He may not have been in Hanoi before’.

*c. Nó lại ngủ ở nhà cô ấy (Trước đó, nó đã từng ngủ ở nhà cô ấy).*

‘He slept at her house again.’ ‘He used to sleep at her house before’.

*c'. Nó ngủ lại nhà cô ấy.*

'He slept at her house.' ('He may not have slept at her house before.')

*c''. Nó ngủ lại sau khi mẹ gọi. (Trước khi mẹ gọi, nó đã ngủ.)*

'He went back to sleep after his mother called.' ('Before his mom called, he had already slept.')

Let's take a closer look at some examples. Compare:

*Nó lại đếm tiền.*

'He counted money again.'

*Nó đếm lại tiền.*

'He counted the money another time to check.'

The action of "counting money" is the same in both sentences, but in the first example, the "counting" action repeats whereas "money" could be any amount. In the second example, what is repeated is the "money" - or in other words, it is still the same amount of money- not the "counting" action. Similarly, the word *lại* in the following two cases also has significant differences:

*Nó lại bán xe.*

'He sold his car again.'

*Nó bán lại xe.*

'He sold his old car.'

The action of "selling cars" appears in both cases. However, in *Nó lại bán xe* the speaker wants to focus on the repetition of the "selling" action, implying that this is not the first time "he" has conducted this action (presupposition: He used to sell his car before), whereas *Nó bán lại xe* states that this may be the first time he sells his car (he has never done it before). The speaker in *Nó bán lại xe* emphasizes the opposite situation of buying it then selling it (the fundamental meaning here is collating, not repeating).

*Lại* can go with a wide range of predicators but often in the preceding position. If this verb comes after the predicators, its ability to collaborate with such predicators is more limited. Compare:

**Table 1: Compare *lại* before and after the predicator**

<i>lại</i> precedes the predicator	<i>lại</i> follows the predicator	Note
<i>lại khóc</i> ‘cry again’	khóc lại*	Acceptable in limited context: + (Trên phim trường) Khóc lại nào! (when shooting a movie) ‘Cry again!’ + Hôm nay cười người ta, mai người ta cười lại. ‘You laugh at others today; they will laugh back at you tomorrow.’
<i>lại cười</i> ‘laugh again’	cười lại*	
<i>lại nhớ</i> ‘remember again’	nhớ lại	
<i>lại quên</i> ‘forgot again’	quên lại*	
<i>lại ngủ</i> ‘sleep again’	ngủ lại	
<i>lại thức</i> ‘wake up again’	thức lại*	
<i>lại sống</i> ‘live again’	sống lại	
<i>lại chết</i> ‘die again’	chết lại*	
<i>lại yêu</i> ‘love again’	yêu lại	
<i>lại ghét</i> ‘hate again’	ghét lại*	

We will take the pair of *nhớ* ‘remember’ and *quên* ‘forget’ to go into further explanation. There are two reasons why the post-adverb *lại* can only collocate with *nhớ* rather than *quên*. First of all, as stated previously, when people want to do something, it is often their active intention and wish to improve the situation. Taking that into account, *nhớ* in general will have rather more positive meaning than *quên*. Hence, while *nhớ* intends to indicate what has already passed, *quên* does not possess that particular meaning. As a result, the phrase *quên lại* is unacceptable. (Similarly, *chết lại* ‘die again’ is illogical due to the common sense of human’s lifespan. We were born, then continue to live until we die, so if we want to mention what has gone, it must be *sống lại* ‘live again’, and *chết đi* ‘to die’ can only happen if we look further into the future.

### 1.3 *Lại* as a modal particle

#### 1.3.1 *Lại* as a single word

If *lại* comes before the predicator, it will play the role of an adverb. Nonetheless, if it is an adverb, *lại* mainly refers to a uniform continuation. Meanwhile, in many cases, *lại* also has the meaning of evaluation, belonging to an objective state. Thus, *lại* can be considered a modal particle. *lại* usually appears in many sentences in order to express opposite ideas. For example:

*Vì sao khi con kéo đàn, bà lại khóc vậy mẹ? (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘Why does grandma cry when I play the violin, mom?’

*Vậy hà có chi mình lại tước đi cái quyền ấy của bố mẹ?*

‘Then why would you take away your parents' rights?’

*Đời nào mà mẹ lại ghét con?*

‘How on Earth can I hate you?’

*Tôi làm gì mà cậu lại sùng sộ thế?*

‘What did I do to receive such an aggressive attitude from you?’

*Anh thích thế này, tôi lại thích thế kia.*

‘You like this, but I like that.’

Obviously the above sentences are written not to indicate repetition, but rather an implicit contrast, emphasizing the abnormalities of the actions and events. In other words, *lại* denotes something that is out of common sense and that is different from the speaker's expectations. It can be analyzed as follows:

**Table 2: Modal particle of “*lại*”**

	Examples	Modal particle
1	<i>Sao cô lại khóc?</i> ‘Why are you crying now?’	Normally she wouldn't cry. => It is unusual for her to cry.
2	<i>Sao hôm nay cậu lại ăn mặc đẹp thế?</i> ‘Why are you dressing so gorgeously today?’	Every day, he dresses normally. => It is unusual for him to dress gorgeously today.
3	<i>Dù ghét cô ấy nhưng tôi lại không thể quên cô ấy.</i> ‘Despite the fact that I hate her, I cannot forget her.’	Normally I should forget her. => It's unusual for me when I cannot forget her.

### 1.3.2. Lại in combination with other words

Lại often collocates with đi. For example:

*Và người phải nghe đi nghe lại những điều ấy là Tuấn Phương (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘And the one who has to hear those things over and over again is Tuan Phương’

*Cuộc tìm kiếm bị hoãn đi hoãn lại nhiều lần, (Nguyễn Ngọc Tư)*

‘The search is postponed over and over again’

The combination “X goes X over and over” means emphasizing that an activity is done many times: doing it over and over again, reading it over and over again, asking again and again, etc. Sometimes it has variations in the split form. 2 morphemes of a verb, ‘rethinking over and over again’, or combining opposite verbs: ‘dying and coming back to life’, ‘buying and selling again’, etc. These combinations are partly similar to expressions containing the combination “up... down...”: cry up cry down, raise up and put down, etc. In these combinations, the meaning of repetition is still clearly expressed, but at the same time, "again" has an additional emphatic connotation.

In addition, lại can go in such collocations as: lại còn ‘also’, lại thêm..., đã... lại..., mà lại, vừa... lại vừa, sao... lại... For example:

*Những cánh hoa vươn dài như tia nắng. Lại còn có bướm vàng, bướm trắng nhỏ nhắn từ đâu bay về vờn quanh. (Võ Thu Hương)*

‘The flowers are rising like sunshine. There also come yellow and little white butterflies flirting around.’

*Người đâu mà lại “lì xì” đến thế là cùng! (Vũ Bằng)*

‘Who could have “given” us like that!’

*(Cậu ta tiêu xài sang thế!) Con nhà giàu mà lại.*

‘(He spends money like water!)’ ‘Come on, he is the child of a well-off family.’

*Có người chủ trương cần phải có thứ nước mắm tốt, lại có người quả quyết rằng muốn có nước dùng ngọt, không thể thoát được món cua đồng. (Vũ Bằng)*

‘Some claim that there must be good fish sauce, but others assert that it is impossible not to use freshwater crabs if we want to have good broth.’

### 1.4. Lại as a connector

As analyzed above, lại has the effect of emphasizing contrast. It is this function that accounts for the fact that some transitional word/connectors containing lại also have contrasting connotations. For example: ngược lại, trái lại, mà lại ‘on the contrary’

*Nó giàu mà lại kiết. (The contrastive meaning is in the sentence)*

‘He is rich but stingy.’

*Ngược lại/trái lại, anh ta rất chăm chỉ.* (The contrastive meaning is expressed in the relationship between this sentence and the sentence that precedes it.)

‘However, he is very hard-working.’

Moreover, the collocation *và lại* means *thêm vào đó, hơn nữa* ‘to add to st’. For example:

*Tôi mệt nên không tham gia. Và lại đợt này tôi cũng bận quá.*

‘I am tired so I cannot join this time. Furthermore, I have been busy recently.’

Another way of saying it, which is also quite familiar to Vietnamese people, is using *lại* both to link and to show listing and continuation, such as in these collocations: *lại nói về/lại bàn về, ...*

*Lại nói về cây cọ quê tôi* ‘Talking about the palms in my homeland again’.

Note: The following combinations can be considered word relations pairs, or modal pairs... For example:

*Nói đi thì phải nói lại*

‘Reconsidering it, ....’

*Có đi thì phải có lại*

‘Giving deserves returning ~ One good turn deserves another.’

*Hòn bác ném đi, hòn chì ném lại*

‘Bad words become worse when returned.’

*Hễ trời mưa là tôi lại không muốn đi học*

‘Whenever it rains, I don’t want to go to school’.

These statements both express the reciprocal-emphatic relationship, and can also express the condition-result relationship.

## 2. *Lại* from a semantic perspective

As a verb, *lại* can have a descriptive function. As a modal particle or an adverb, *lại* can contribute to showing modality.

### 2.1. “*Lại*” in representational structures

In representational structures, *lại*, as a verb, can either be a participant or a predicator. On the other hand, when it functions as an adverb, a connector or a modal particle, it will cease operating in any such lexical roles.

The model in which *lại* is a verb is as follows:

**Table 3: Representational structures of “lại”, example 1**

<i>Em</i> She	<i>lại</i> comes	<i>đây</i> here	<i>với anh</i> with me
Participant	Predicator	Participant	Circumstance
Agent	Motion verb	Goal	Companion
Event (action) [+dynamic, +control]			

**Table 4: Representational structures of “lại”, example 2**

	<i>Mời</i> 'Invite'/ Please'	<i>bác</i> you	<i>lại nhà</i> comeback home
Participant (Implicit)	Predicator	Participant	Participant
Agent	Verb of request	Recipient	Content
Event (request) [+dynamic, +control]			

We can see that *lại* can be a predicator in an event [+dynamic, +control], or it can be a participant - content - in an imperative state.

## 2.2. Modal meaning of *lại*

In general, when *lại* functions as a modal particle, an adverb, or a connector, it will indicate modality aspect of either action or speech.

### 2.2.1. *Lại* denoting modality of the act of saying

*Lại* theoretically can appear in 4 types of sentences as classified by their purpose: declarative, interrogative, imperative and exclamative sentences. However, *lại* can only aid in the recognition of interrogative and exclamative utterances; in other words, *lại* makes it possible to determine whether the utterance is interrogative or exclamative.

Combined with the interrogative adjunct *sao* and the question mark at the end of the sentence, *lại* forms interrogative sentences with such structures as ‘Why do/does/did P X?’, or ‘Why X again?’. For example:

*Sao anh ta lại không đến?*

‘Why didn’t he come?’

*Sao lại khóc?*



‘Why are you crying?’

Sometimes, this structure can express the purpose of the modality utterance indirectly:

*Sao tôi lại khổ thế này?*

‘Why am I so miserable?’

This sentence is an interrogative sentence, but its actual implicit purpose is to exclaim, in this case, a lament. This purpose is determined through the combination of *lại* + *khổ* ‘miserable’ – a negative adjective.

### 2.2.2. *Lại* denoting modality of utterances

As previously noted, as a verb *lại* not only indicates the act of moving but *lại* also reveals the speaker’s attitude or judgment about the distance – whether it’s near or convenient. This is also subjective modality. For example: *Tí nữa tôi sẽ lại nhà anh.* ‘I will come to your house later’ – this can be understood as: to me, it is very convenient to come over to your house, because ‘your house’ is near my house.

When *lại* is a modal particle or an adverb, it also expresses subjective modality with emphasis on the speaker’s attitude towards the state of affairs. For example: *Sao cậu lại biết chuyện này?* ‘How come did you know this?’ shows a higher level of surprise than *Sao cậu biết chuyện này?* ‘How did you know this?’; *Sao cậu lại làm thế?* ‘Why the hell did you do that?’ expresses a stronger criticism than *Sao cậu làm thế?* ‘Why did you do that?’; *Sao anh ta lại không đến?* ‘Why didn’t he come again? – He should have come’ also shows a stronger criticism than *Sao anh ta không đến?* ‘Why didn’t he come?’, which mostly demonstrates simple inquisitiveness.

*Cậu mà lại là người như thế à?*

‘You are that kind of person?’

*Món ăn ngon thế này mà lại chê à?*

‘This food is so good, so it’s incomprehensible that you are complaining?’

*Em không ngờ anh lại có thể nói những lời ấy với em...*

‘I didn’t think even you could say those words to me...’

Several other collocations following the structure of *vừa A lại vừa B, đã A lại còn B* ‘not only A but also B’ emphasizes the escalation. For example:

*Quyển từ điển này vừa bổ ích lại vừa tiện lợi.*

‘This dictionary is not only helpful but also convenient’

*Bài tập hôm nay đã khó lại còn nhiều.*

‘Today’s homework is not only difficult, but it also takes a lot of time to finish.’

*lại* is used to emphasize the degree of escalation, which will provide further information for a certain situation or a state:

*Ăn như thế mà lại gia thêm thịt luộc ba chỉ, ... ăn cứ tỉnh cả người ra. (Vũ Bằng)*

‘The food is so delicious, and even more if added with pork belly ... feeling refreshed after eating it’.

*Nó đã phải trả tiền, lại phải mất công đưa đi đón về.*

‘He not only had to pay but also had to pick her up all the time.’

### 3. *Lại* from a pragmatic perspective

#### 3.1. Presupposition and implication of utterances containing “*lại*”

When used in certain sentences or contexts, *lại* will contribute to clarify the implication of the sentences. It is also an indicator to determine presupposition. For example:

*Anh lại đến à?*

‘You come here, again?’

Explicit meaning: You came.

Presupposition: You came here before.

Implication: I don’t want you to come. Your coming is beyond my expectation.

Another example is:

*Mưa to thế mà lại ra ngoài à?*

‘You are going out in this downfall?’

Explicit meaning: You are still going out even when it’s raining heavily.

Presupposition: People usually stay at home when it’s raining heavily.

Implication: It’s not logical to go outside when it’s raining heavily. This sentence actually means to prevent the other person from going outside when it’s raining heavily.

*Cắt tóc xong, lại đẹp giai như thường.*

‘You have become handsome again after having a haircut.’

Presupposition: You do not look handsome before the haircut. / You used to look handsome.

*Xe dừng lại.*

‘The car stops.’

Presupposition: The car was moving before.

*Nó đứng lại.*

‘It stops.’

Presupposition: It was moving before.

### 3.2. Information structure of *lại*

According to the theory of information structure, a sentence can be divided into 2 parts: the given, the part which possesses the known information, and the new, the part which possesses new information. In the new part, the most emphasized element in the content of the information is the information focus.

Generally, when *lại* is a verb, it usually functions as the new part. When it is an adverb or a modal verb, it is more complicated to deliver the new depending on each specific context. For example:

*Mưa to thế mà lại ra đường à?*

‘You are going outside in this downfall?’

The new lies primarily in *ra đường* ‘going out’. *mưa to thế* ‘in this downfall’ functions as background knowledge. Obviously, in these situations, background knowledge is extremely important because it determines the contrast between ‘downfall’ and ‘going out’, therefore highlighting the information in the part ‘going out’. *mà lại* signals the new part.

Similarly, the ‘not only A but also B’ structure also emphasizes the intensity, with the B part as the information focus.

For sentences such as *Anh lại đến à?* ‘You come here, again?’, besides the fact that the news lie in the word *đến* ‘come’, the information which is brought forth by *lại* is of equal import: it puts a focus on the fact that the action of the recipient is not within the speaker’s expectation. This is related to the previously analysed matter of implication: the implication is usually the information focus; in addition, it becomes the most prominent piece of information some time, even more prominent than the explicit meaning of the sentence.

## 4. Conclusion

*Lại* syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically can be understood as follows:

(1) Syntactically, *lại* can be a content word (verb) or a function word (adverb, modal verb, relative verb). When it’s a pre-adverb, the common meaning of *lại* denotes simultaneous actions. When it’s post-adverb, *lại* has more meanings but the main

meaning shows the contrast between things. *lại* is considered to be opposite in meaning with *đi* ‘go’; it is usually combined with “go” in various forms.

(2) In terms of the representational meaning, the verb *lại* can be the predicator. It normally occurs with two-place predicates requiring two core participants “actor” and “location”. Also, it can act as “content” in events expressed by causative predicates.

(3) In terms of modality of the act of saying, *lại* can denote interrogative or exclamative sentences, but it needs to be combined with other markers, especially the interrogative pronoun *sao* ‘why’. In terms of modality of the sentences, *lại* can denote deontic or subjective modality, which mainly emphasizes different attitudes and emotions of the speaker.

(4) In terms of implication, the adverb *lại* can determine the presupposition. In general, it can also demonstrate the implication depending on the context.

(5) In terms information, *lại* usually marks the new information: the rest of the sentence that follows *lại* is oftentimes the new information or the information focus.

## References

- Cao, Xuân Hạo (1991) *Tiếng Việt – Sơ thảo ngữ pháp chức năng*, (Vietnamese – Introducing Functional Grammar), Vol 1. Hanoi: Social Sciences.
- Diệp, Quang Ban & Hoàng, Văn Thung (2013), *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt (Vietnamese Grammar)*, Vol 1. Hanoi Vietnam Education Publishing House
- Đinh, Văn Đức, *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Từ loại (Vietnamese Grammar - Word classes)*. Hanoi: Vietnamese National University Press.
- Hoàng, Trọng Phiến (2003) *Cách dùng hư từ tiếng Việt*, (How to use Vietnamese empty words). Nghe An: Nghe An Press.
- Lê, Biên (1996) *Từ loại tiếng Việt hiện đại*, (Word classes in modern Vietnamese). Hanoi: Vietnamese National University Press.
- Nguyễn, Lai (1990) *Nhóm từ chỉ hướng vận động trong tiếng Việt*, (Words indicating directional motion in Vietnamese), Hanoi University Press.
- Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1977) *Động từ trong tiếng Việt*, (Verbs in Vietnamese). Hanoi: Social Sciences.

## Data sources

- Vu, Bằng (2006) *Món ngon Hà Nội*. Hanoi: Literature Publishing
- Vo, Thu Huong (2022) *Điều kì diệu dưới gốc anh đào*. Hanoi: Literature Publishing
- Nguyen, Ngọc Tu (2019) *Đào*, Ho Chi Minh City: Tre Publishing House

**Poems:** Ho, Xuan Huong (*Mời trâu*); Nguyen, Binh (*Lỡ bước sang ngang*); Xuân, Diệu (*Biển*); Te, Hanh (*Bài Thơ tình ở Hàng Châu*); To, Huu (*Mẹ Tom*)

**Songs:** Hong, Dang (*Biển hát chiều nay*); Trinh, Cong Son (*Biển nhớ*); Tran, Thien Thanh (*Không bao giờ ngăn cách*); Thanh, Tung (*Lời tỏ tình của mùa xuân*).

## **A contribution to the discussion on kinship terms in Vietnamese**

Trần Thị Hồng Hạnh  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This paper is an investigation of kinship terms in Vietnamese, including varieties used nation-wide and those preserved in dialects. With an approach based mainly on language databases, especially the Mon-Khmer Etymological Database, combined with cultural and historical knowledge, this study aims to discuss and provide additional evidence with respect to the development of the kinship term system in the Vietnamese language. Historical linguistic evidence supplemented by anthropological information supports the Austroasiatic origin of some terms designated after-ego generations. The study also proposes some hypotheses to explain the diversity of the female kinship terms among Vietnamese dialects, in which terms referring to mothers can be assumed less likely to be the consequence of any language contact and therefore unlikely to be borrowed. Meanwhile, the origin of terms referring to fathers cannot be determined with certainty, so further research should be done to investigate those terms.

**Key words:** kinship term, Vietnamese, dialect, historical linguistics, language contact

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1. An overview**

When studying the human social system, there appears to be widespread agreement that kinship is one significant social relationship, in which the relationships of the members are determined through ties of blood and/or marriage. In other words, kinship relationships are the core and dominant relationships for the organisational structure of human society. Consequently, systems of kinship terms or kinship terminology and systems used in languages to refer to persons to whom an individual is related through kinship are considered as fundamental vocabulary of every language. According to the argument that some categories of words that can be considered truly fundamental such as body parts, natural and animal phenomena, basic behaviours/activities and aspects of human existence, kinship terms or kinship terminology can be considered as one of the basic lexical classes in all languages (M. Alves, 2008, pg. 189). These terms have

---

TRẦN, Thị Hồng Hạnh. 2023. A contribution to the discussion on kinship terms in Vietnamese. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8151798>

the function of identifying kinship relationships and can also be used as terms of address in communication among people who are or are not even related to each other through kinship. Therefore, kinship terms have attracted scholarly attention for a long time. According to Allen (1989), ‘Kinship terminologies lend themselves better than most lexical domains to the analysis of semantic structure, but the problem is complicated by the links between terminology and other social phenomena’ (Allen, 1989, pg.173). Since the late nineteenth century, kinship terms have been studied by cultural anthropologists and considered as linguistic units used to encode social structure, containing indicators for social changes in historical periods. Recent works such as those by Gaby (2017), Passmore & Jordan (2020), Kronenfeld (2022) still point out that they have still drawn the attention of many researchers. In linguistic literature, many works are found on kinship terms in languages, but very little is found on the study of Vietnamese kinship terms written in foreign languages. They are primarily domestic studies published in Vietnam.

## **1.2. The relevant literature in Vietnam**

As mentioned above, there has been a large volume of published studies on Vietnamese kinship terms for more than 70 years. Those previous studies have prioritised structural and semantic aspects, and much attention has been paid to the basic meaning and use of these terms as personal pronouns and terms of address in social daily communication. Some early works on the study of kinship such as M.B. Emeneau (1951), L.C. Thompson (1965), Joseph Cooke (1965) and recent studies by Lê Thanh Kim (2002), Trương Thị Diễm (2002), Nguyễn Văn Khang (2014), Lý Tùng Hiếu (2015), Võ Minh Phát (2016), and others have discussed kinship terms in Vietnamese from different perspectives. M.B. Emeneau (1951) and L.C. Thompson (1965) aimed to identify terms of address in Vietnamese. They divided the terms used to address into two broad types called ‘genuine pronouns’ and ‘temporary pronouns’. According to Vo Minh Phat (2016), temporary pronouns as they determined include kinship terms (Vo Minh Phat, 2016, pg.9). In a study on pronominal reference in Thai, Burmese and Vietnamese, Cooke (1965) also mentioned kin terms in Vietnamese. He wrote: ‘There are nouns, most of which have a primary meaning denoting blood kin. One or two denote affinal kin, and one – the word *thầy* ‘master’- is a non-kin form which has been largely assimilated into the kinship system as a term of ten used in place of one of the words for ‘father’. Kin terms are used prominently with reference to both blood kin and affinal kin, and most forms also have a displaced usage denoting non-kin. One of the most aspects of displaced pronominal usage of kin terms is the custom of attributing increased

status to one's addressees (Cooke, 1965, pg.210). There have been some other foreign studies about Vietnamese kinship terms, those of Hy Van Luong (1984) and Mark Alves (2017). The study of Hy Van Luong (1984) discussed only two words “brother” and “uncle”, while Alves (2017) paid attention to some kinship terms among but he did not mention some kinship terms in dialects.

To date, there has been much agreement on the richness in the number and functions of kinship terms in Vietnamese. Vietnamese has a very specific way of addressing kinship relationships by using those kinship terms as terms of address and personal pronouns widely in social interaction among non-kin. In particular, the use of kinship terms to address others in communication is a significant way to mark the communicator's role, social role and social characteristics. In short, the previous works all have in common the idea that kinship terms are associated with the interest of their semantic and pragmatic functions in daily interactions.

In addition, there have also been many contrastive studies of kinship terms which have compared those terms in Vietnamese and other languages: Bulgarian (Le Quang Thiem, 1989), Chinese (Pham Ngoc Ham, 2004), Korean (Dao Hoai Thu, 2011), English (Duong Thi Nu, 2007), French (Nguyen Van Dung, 2005), among others. These studies have shown similarities and differences in structural, semantic, pragmatic, and cultural features between Vietnamese and those languages. It is also worth mentioning a number of domestic works which have investigated kinship terms in the languages of ethnic minorities such as Stieng, Jrai, Ede, Khmer, Mnong and Thai in comparison with Vietnamese.

Generally, it can be said that a considerable amount of research has shown the main functions of Vietnamese kinship terms as nouns and the “temporary but popular function” of them as terms of address/pronouns. There is a consensus among researchers that kinship terms also reflect the Vietnamese people’s concept of family and social structure, making an important contribution to reflecting ethnic cultural characteristics.

## **2. Research question and data description**

**2.1.** As mentioned above, previous studies of Vietnamese kinship terms have mostly not taken into account kinship terms in dialects where many vestiges of linguistic and cultural history can be found. For instance, somewhere in Northern Vietnam, *bá* is the term for an elder aunt (parents' elder sister or elder sister-in-law). With regard to this term, M. Alves (2020) identified it as a loanword from Tai language from the Proto-Vietic period. Based on historical phonological evidence, Alves pointed out that *\*bá:ʔ*



in Proto-Vietic which means "daughter-in-law" is derived from Tai *\*bəuC* (result of Li Fang-kuei), while mother's wife/father or sister is *\*pa:ʔ* in Proto-Vietic and *bá* in modern dialects also derived from Thai *\*paC* (according to Li Fang-kuei's reconstruction, too). This reflects situations and times of language contact between the Vietic groups in the North, unlike those in southern Vietnam (Alves, 2020). In a previous study (Tran, 2021), I also tried to investigate two kinship terms: *bủ* (grandmother/grandfather) and *bằm* (mother) in the Phu Tho sub-dialect which belongs to the Northern dialect area. The findings suggested the explanation of the origin of these two terms. Specifically, *bủ* may be a trace of the language contact between Vietic and Tai-Kadai language, while *bằm* may be a nominative word for mother associated with "woman's function", and this word, therefore, can be considered as a trace of phonetic changes in Vietnamese history. These results provide further support for this historical approach to the study of kinship terms in Vietnamese dialects, which aims to enhance understanding of language contact in the past.

**2.2.** The data for this study consists of 53 kinship terms. Those data were collected from various sources. Some are from documentary sources such as dictionaries of idioms and proverbs, dialect dictionaries. Others were gathered from questionnaires distributed to people in different localities. The rest were acquired during fieldwork surveys through participant observations. By critically discussing and analysing the data, the objectives of this research are to provide additional evidence to trace the origins and historical changes of those terms. The reconstructions of Proto-Vietic (PV), Proto Mon-Khmer (PMK) and other reconstructions used in the article are all from the reconstructions of reliable commonly cited sources such as the "Mon-Khmer Etymological Dictionary" (MKED) and the Tai reconstructions of Li Fang Kuei (Li Fang Kuei, 1977) and Pittayaporn (Pittayaporn, 2009). The results of this article are also expected to contribute to the understanding of history of the Vietnamese language as well as the community's perception of the relationships among individuals in families, clans and society in history.

**2.3.** According to Ly Tung Hieu (2015), Buu Lich (1970) was the first to classify nouns of kinship in the Vietnamese language into: *danh từ thân tộc trực xưng* (kinship nouns to address directly) and *danh từ thân tộc gián xưng* (kinship nouns to address indirectly). Kinship nouns to directly address are nouns used when addressing directly to one of our relatives. In terms of form, kinship nouns to address directly are simple nouns that the ego uses to address directly in first or second person with people who they have

kinship relationship with, for example, *cố/cụ* (great-grandfather/great-grandmother/great-grandparent), *ông* (grandfather), *bà* (grandmother), *nội* (paternal), *ngoại* (maternal), *cha* (father), *mẹ* (mother), *bố* (father), *u* (mother), etc. A term to address indirectly is a noun used to refer to a relative when talking to another person. The use of this is to introduce a specific kinship relationship between the ego and a certain role to a third person, and is sometimes also used to address, for example, *bố cu* (father of my son), *mẹ đĩ* (mother of my son), *ba con Hồng* (Hồng's father) and *má thằng Hưng* (mother of Hưng) (Lý Tùng Hiếu, 2015, 34). Nguyen Van Khang (2014) divided Vietnamese kinship terms into three types: (i) *thuật ngữ thân tộc cơ bản* (basic kinship term), that is, single words with independent meanings and which cannot be separated into separate meanings; (ii) *thuật ngữ thân tộc ghép* (compound kinship term) which is composed of one basic term combined with another term functioning as an attribute noun in order to modify the basic term, for example, *em dâu* (sister-in-law), *anh rể* (brother-in-law), *mẹ chồng* (mother-in-law), etc; (iii) *thuật ngữ miêu thuật* (descriptive kinship term), which is composed of two or more basic terms put together, for example, *bố của bố đẻ* (biological father's father), *mẹ của mẹ ruột* (biological mother's mother) (=grandmother), and *con của chú* (the younger uncle's child) (=cousin) [Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2014, pg.40-41].

In our investigation, kinship terms can be identified as equivalent to kinship nouns to address directly (according to Buu Lich's classification) or the basic term of kinship stated by Nguyen Van Khang. This research focuses on monosyllable terms used to identify a certain kinship relationship, for example, *anh* (elder brother), *ả* (elder sister), *chị* (elder sister), *dì* (aunt), *chú* (uncle), *du* (daughter-in-law), *nội* (paternal), *ngoại* (maternal), etc. and put aside cases such as *bà bác* (elder aunt), *anh họ* (elder cousin), *em rể* (younger-brother-in-law), *cụ nội* (paternal great-grandfather), etc.

**2.4.** Although different opinions in dialect identification still exist, this research is in agreement with Hoàng Thị Châu's (2004) ways of identifying three major dialect regions within Vietnam: Northern dialects, Central dialects, and Southern dialects. In each dialect, based on the differences of phonetic, lexical and grammatical features, it is possible to identify dialect islands or sub-dialects further. On that basis, the data can be classified into 4 groups: terms used nation-wide, terms in Northern dialects, in Central dialects and Southern dialects. It is necessary to note that this way of determination appears to be not strict enough because there might be terms which are verified in a dialect, but in fact it is used only in a sub-dialect instead of a main dialect. For example, the term *bầm* (mother) is identified as a term in Northern dialect but is

only commonly used around Vinh Phuc and Phu Tho provinces, not the whole Northern region.

In summary, defining the object and scope of the study as mentioned above, the data collected can be presented as follows.

Table 1: Kinship terms in Vietnamese

Kinship term	Terms used nation-wide	Terms in Northern dialects	Terms in Central dialects	Terms in Southern dialects
mother	mẹ	u, bu, bù, bằm, đê, me, mẹ, mợ, cái	mạ, mẽ, mụ nạ	má
father	bố, cha	thầy, cậu	ba, bọ, cha	tía, cha, ba
son/daughter/child	con			
grandchild	cháu			
grandfather	ông		ung/uung/ôn	
grandmother	bà	vãi, già	mệ, mụ	
husband	chồng			
wife	vợ			
son/male-in law	rể			
daughter/female-in law	đâu		đu	
younger sibling	em			
elder brother	anh		eng	
elder sister	chị	chị	ả	chị
father's younger sister	cô	cô	o	o
father's younger brother	chú			

TRẦN: A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ON KINSHIP TERMS IN VIETNAMESE

father's elder brother	bác			
father's elder sister	bác	bá		
mother's younger sister	đì	cô/đì	đì	đì
mother's elder sister	bác	già	đì	đì
mother's younger brother	cậu		cậu/cụ	cậu/cụ
mother's elder brother	bác		cậu/cụ	cậu/cụ
husband of father's younger sister	chú	chú/đượng/trượng	đượng/trượng	
husband of mother's younger sister	bác	chú/đượng/trượng	đượng/trượng	
wife of mother's younger brother	mợ		mự/mợ	
wife of mother's elder brother	bác		mự/mợ	
husband of mother's elder sister	bác		đượng	
wife of father's younger brother	thím	cô	mự/mợ	
wife of father's elder brother	bác	bá		
husband of father's elder sister	bác			
greatfather/great mother	cụ	bù	cụ/cố	cố
greatchild	chắt			

father/mother of great father or great mother	ky	sơ (ông sơ/bà sơ)
relatives of father/paternal	nội	
relatives of mother/maternal	ngoại	

There are terms which are used in all dialects. For example, some terms are used to refer to (a) the next generation of ego: *con* (child/children), *cháu* (grandchildren), *chắt* (great-grandchildren), *chít* (great-great-grandchildren), *chít* (great-great-great-grandchildren) and (b) people who are of the same generation but younger than ego: *em* (younger sibling). There is no term for the fifth generation before the ego, while there are terms for the fifth and sixth generation after the ego. The term to refer to ‘mother’ has the largest number of variations in the dialects. Thirdly, female kinship terms have more variations than male kinship terms. What follows is a more detailed description and focuses on the sources of some terms for which evidence is sufficient enough to make statements or hypotheses.

### 3. Discussion

**3.1.** In this section, five terms are firstly examined: *con*, *cháu*, *chắt*, *chít* and *chít*, which are commonly used and have no variation in dialects, as mentioned earlier. Regarding these terms, Lý Tùng Hiếu (2015) once identified the asymmetry of the modern Vietnamese kinship terms, which has terms for the fourth and fifth generations after *ego* but no terms for fifth generations before *ego*. He also stated that this asymmetry can only properly be explained by accurately tracing the origin of these terms (Lý Tùng Hiếu, 2015, 37). However, the conclusions that were drawn from his findings need to be further discussed. Comparing the Vietnamese kinship terms with those in the Brū language, he claimed that all terms referring to 5 generations after the *ego* and the term *em* (younger sibling) are of Mon-Khmer origin. With regard to terms to assign 5 generations before the *ego* and the terms *anh* (brother) and *chị* (sister), the similarity between Vietnamese and Brū decreases, giving way to similarities between Vietnam and the Chinese kinship terms... In particular, the kinship term system in the Vietnamese language does not have a term for the fifth generation before *ego* like the Brū language, which has a smaller number of generations before the *ego* to only four, very similar to the Sinitic kinship terms, and causes a very asymmetry of the

Vietnamese kinship system. Thus, this could possibly be explained as due to the spread of Sinitic culture and customs, which changed the name and behaviour to assign generations before the *ego*, known as "elder". This may have caused the Mon-Khmer terms to be dropped and replaced by Sinitic terms (Lý Tùng Hiếu, 2015, pg.37). The statement that the Vietnamese kinship term system has been influenced by the borrowing of Sinitic terms seems to be quite reasonable.

This has also been mentioned by many studies. For examples, Alves (2017) analysed and pointed out in quite detail that some kinship terms in Vietnamese were borrowed from the early period of Sino-Vietnamese language contact (*tiền Hán Việt* - early Sino Vietnamese): *thím* (Sino-Vietnamese: *thâm*, 嬪 shěn), *mợ* (Sino-Vietnamese: *mỗ*, 姆 mǔ), *chú* (Sino-Vietnamese: *thúc*, 叔 shū), *cậu* (Sino-Vietnamese: *cữu*, 舅 jiǔ), *bác* (Sino-Vietnamese: *bá*, 伯伯 bó), *chị* (Sino-Vietnamese: *ti*, 姊 jiě). Meanwhile, others were borrowed in the Sino-Vietnamese period: *di* (姨 yí), *bà* (婆 pó), *ông* (翁 wēng), *cô* (姑 gū). Regarding the terms *con*, *cháu* and *chắt*, Alves (2017, 2020) noted that *con* in Proto Vietic (PV) is *\*kɔ:n* and in Proto Austroasiatic is *\*kuun*; *cháu* in PV: *\*cu:ʔ*, in Proto Austroasiatic: *\*cuuʔ*; *chắt* in PV: *\*cat* and in Proto Austroasiatic *\*ceʔ*. It is therefore reasonable to confirm that *con*, *cháu* và *chắt* are originally Mon-Khmer terms.

However, Ly Tung Hieu's claim that *em*, *chút*, *chít* are also of Mon-Khmer origin needs to be discussed further. Alves emphasised that the reconstruction data and comparative data with languages originally related to some Vietnamese kinship terms are insufficient, so no statement can be made. Giving account of reconstructed form of *em*, he pointed out that *em* in PV is as *\*ʔe:m*, the equivalent term in the Katu languages is *\*ʔaʔeem*, so it is also possible to think of the possibility that *em* might have the source of Austroasiatic. But the equivalent term found only in Vietic and Katuic, not in other Austroasiatic languages, which may also suggest borrowing between neighboring languages. There is another possibility that this term has no deep history in Austroasiatic. Meanwhile, the evidence that there was a correspondence between *chút* (in Vietnamese) and *chât* (in Brū), *chít* (in Vietnamese) and *chīt* (in Brū) that Ly Tung Hieu (2015) gave appears to be not strongly convincing enough to confirm their origin. In historical linguistics, the phenomenon of "false/fake cognates" or "look-alikes" which are random phonological or semantic similarity, which is a prominent problem in Southeast Asia linguistics' (Alves, 2008). Thus, according to him, it is necessary to compare earlier reconstructed periods of language groups, not just the two languages in their modern form. Obtaining cognates with phonemic correspondences in many different languages, including those that are geographically distant (thus reducing the

possibility of borrowing), can further strengthen the argument of their source. Without this kind of evidence, the arguments would be less convincing (Alves, 2008, pg.190). Based on this argument, it can be seen that the term of the fourth generation after *ego* (great great grandchild) is only found in a few Mon Khmer languages, including Pacoh (Katuic branch): *ʔa.ɕe:t*; Khmu (Khmuic branch): *ʃɛʔ*; Nyah Kur (Monic branch): *céec*, *cíh*. Therefore, the correspondence that Ly Tung Hieu pointed out cannot be considered as strong evidence. There is a possibility that they are a local innovation in Vietic and Bahnaric and they could be chance look-alikes.

In this study, *chút* and *chít* are hypothesised to be Austroasiatic originated terms but not original kinship terms. In other words, their initial meaning was 'little', and then they gradually functioned as terms to refer to the fourth and fifth generation after *ego*. In modern Vietnamese, *chút* is now still a noun that is used with two different meanings: 'great-great-grandchild, great-grandson's son' and 'very small amount, very little, almost insignificant', *chít* is only used to mean 'the sixth-generation child, child of great-great-grandchild'. Back to the Vietnamese language of the seventeenth century, in The Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum (The Vietnamese - Portuguese - Latin dictionary) (A.de Rhodes, 1651), the entry for *chắt*, *cháu chắt* are properly explained with the same meaning as the comparable modern Vietnamese to refer to the fourth generation after *ego*. But the entry *chít*, *nhỏ chít* means 'a child', and the entry *chắt chút chít* means 'the grandchild of the fourth generation', while the entry *chút chít*, *cháu chắt chút chít* is defined as 'grandchildren in general'. It can be seen that just *chắt*, *cháu chắt*, *chắt chút chít* have the same semantic feature related to 'generation', and this feature is not found in the two entries *chít*, *nhỏ chít* and *chút chít*, *cháu chắt chút chít*.

In the MKED, *\*kdiit*, *\*kdít*, *\*kdîət* are results of PMK reconstruction for 'small, few, little' and are identified as reconstructed source forms of *ít* 'the youngest', *ít* 'small, few, little', *nít* in *con nít* 'children', *nhất* in *chuọt nhất* 'little rat, house mouse'. The correspondence between *\*kdiit*, *\*kdít*, and *\*kdîət* and *chút/ chít* suggests that the original meaning of *chút/chít* may be 'small, few, little'. Then gradually, they came to function as nouns to refer to the fifth and sixth generation, the smallest ones in a family.

There may be another reason for this change: reduplication is so common in Vietnamese to form new words or to act as a grammatical manner of expressing plural grammatical meaning. And it should be noted that the Vietnamese style of *từ lấy* 'reduplication' is found in all Austroasiatic languages, not only Vietnamese. It is a broader Austroasiatic process that may have functioned in Vietnamese, Vietic languages, and other Austroasiatic branches, such as Bahnaric, among others. In this

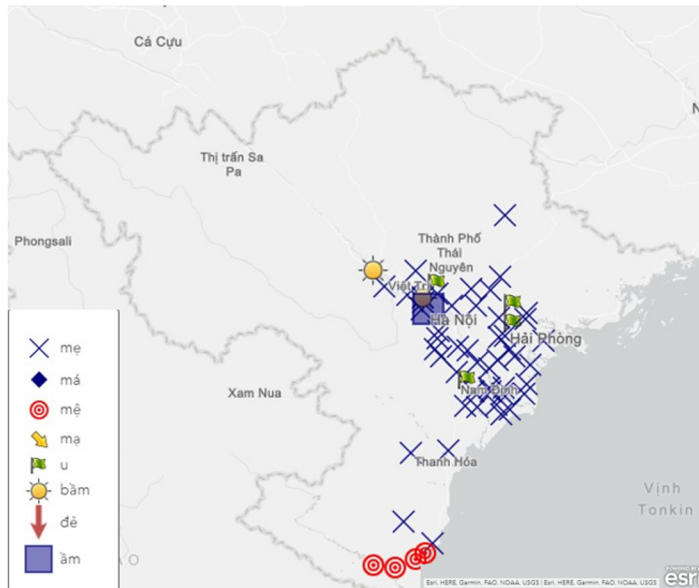
case, reduplication is used to add a new semantic feature 'plural', creating a sense of a big family with many generations. In daily life, Vietnamese speakers still colloquially use the reduplicant word *út út ọt ọt* to emphasise affectionately that a baby is extremely small, the smallest in the family, and *chút chút chụt chụt* to emphasise that a big family has too many children and grandchildren to count. This assumption can be further strengthened by the cultural and social argument, specifically the developmental stages of family size. Accordingly, at first, the clan commune - the basic social organisation of early society consisted of only a few dozen families, with three to four generations sharing the same bloodline (Luong Ninh, 2009, pg. 17-18). Given this family size, the original system of kinship terms probably didn't have many terms to refer to fourth or fifth generations. Some arguments also are that in the early period of the clan commune, the form of family relations went through several stages of development: promiscuous intercourse, consanguine family and punaluan family (Luong Ninh, 2009, pg. 18-19). Therefore, it was not easy to determine the generation, especially the later generations. Later, the increase in life expectancy along with the shaping of family culture changed the behaviour of kinship identification, which had *chút* and *chít* employed to refer to generations while maintaining the meaning 'small' of *chút*.

In our opinion, the asymmetry in which there is a term *chít* for the fifth generation after the *ego* but there is no term for the fifth generation before the *ego* could be explained as a true reflection of the customary tradition of *ngũ đại mai thân chủ* 'to bury the tablets with names and titles of the dead, left at the altar after five generations'. According to this custom, Vietnamese people only perform the death anniversary worship of four generations and the ancestral tablets are only to be worshipped for four generations or less. The tablet of the fifth generation is buried and worshipped together as the ancestor, but no longer worshipping separately. And so there's no need for terms to identify the fifth generation anymore. In general, therefore, it can be suggested that five terms: *con*, *cháu*, *chắt*, *chút* and *chít* are all words of Austroasiatic origin. However, among them, *chút* and *chít* are probably not original kinship terms.

**3.2.** Next, we discuss the terms referring to mother in Vietnamese dialects. There are various terms to refer to mother, the woman who gives birth to children, among Vietnamese dialects. The data is divided into two groups. The first includes terms which are all open syllables starting with the first consonant /m/: *mẹ*, *me*, *mạ*, *mợ*, *mệ*, *mụ*, and *má*. Some of these specifically and primarily mean "mother": *mẹ*, *me*, *mạ*, *má*. Others have multiple meanings that refer to female relatives, not necessarily mother, such as *mụ*, *mệ* and *mợ*. These terms are not equal terms meaning only 'mother'. In other



languages, words starting with the consonant /m/ to refer to mother are very common. Therefore, the fact that there are many different terms that all start with the consonant /m/ are quite reasonable. The second group includes terms which do not have /m/ as first consonant: *bằm*, *bu*, *u*, *vú*, *đẻ*, *cái*, and *nạ*. In modern Vietnamese, *bằm*, *bu*, *u* only means 'mother' while *vú* is also now used as a noun to refer to female breasts or a nanny, *đẻ* can function as a verb meaning 'to give birth'. In the case of *cái*, this term have homonyms. Among those homonyms, *cái* could be a noun to refer to 'mother' or an adjective meaning 'female', 'king-sized, main'.



Map 1. Distribution of the mother term in Northern Vietnam

Before discussing the origin and diversity of these terms, it should be stated that the term for mother is probably the first basic term in the kinship system of all languages. When discussing the universality of the kinship terminology system of languages, cultural anthropologists have also pointed out that the universality of the kinship terminology system in languages is due to the universal experiences brought by the human process of socialisation. Accordingly, terms for ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are likely to be the two most basic terms of all kinship terminology systems, but the mother-child relationship remains the most fundamental term in this system. “The core of kinship has been identified as the reproductive mother-child relationship and only secondarily the mating husband-wife relationship (Foley, 2001, pg.148). Shorto (2006)

's reconstruction of *vợ* 'wife' is *\*[ʔ]boʔ* which means 'mother' in PMK can be considered to support this argument.

Returning to the issue of various terms which designate 'mother' in Vietnamese dialects, it is now possible to note previous studies have dealt with some terms. Alves (2017) posited that *mợ* (can be used to refer to wife of mother's younger brother) is an Early Sino-Vietnamese loanword. If his claim is valid, it can be asserted that *mợ* is borrowed to refer a non-blood relationship of maternal side. However, Alves did not mention to *mợ* as a term for mother. A possible explanation for using *mợ* to refer to mother (which could be found in literary works published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century before 1946 and it is still used in some families in Northern Vietnam) might be stated as follows. At this time, in urban middle class families, those with status or petty bourgeois families, the term *mợ* was used to refer to 'the master's wife' and then the family's children also called their mother *mợ* as a variation marking the 'role of power', 'the social role' of the participants in communication under the influence of the social context at that time.

Two other terms, *mẹ* and *má*, have also been investigated by Alves (2017), and he pointed out that there are similar forms in the Austroasiatic and Tai-Kadai languages. But it can be seen that *mẹ* is a Proto-Austroasiatic etymon, because in PMK there are 3 reconstructed forms of *mẹ*: *\*meeʔ*, *\*maʔ*, *\*ʔmeeʔ*. In other PMK and Mon-Khmer languages, there are also similar forms, such as Proto West-Bahnaric: *\*meeʔ*; Proto South-Bahnaric: *\*me:*; Proto Central-Bahnaric: *\*me:ʔ*; Bahnaric: *maa*, *mɛʔ*; Mnông: *maj*; ancient Khmer: *me*, *'me*, *ame*; Khmer: *mae* 𑄓; Proto Khmuic: *\*maʔ*; Khmú: *maʔ*, *maʔ*; Stieng: *me:*; Kuy (*ʔa:*)*mɛʔ*; Chrau: *me:*. The present study provides additional evidence with respect to two other terms *mệ*, *mạ* which are likely to be both of Austroasiatic origin, too. It can be seen that, in terms of form, these two terms have phonetic forms related to those mentioned above. Meanwhile, in terms of geographical distribution, *mệ* and *mạ* are still used quite popular in Central dialects, which preserve many of the ancient elements of the Vietnamese language. In modern Vietnamese, *mệ* (and also *mụ*, which will be analysed next) has extended the meaning 'grandmother' or is used to refer to elderly women. Regarding the similarity of these word forms in Vietnamese and Tai languages, in Proto Tai, the reconstructed form of mother is *\*me:<sup>B</sup>*, and in some other Tai dialects, *mɛ:<sup>B2</sup>*, *mɛ:<sup>B2</sup>*, and *mɛ:<sup>B2</sup>* [26], which are very close to *mẹ* in Vietnamese (and this is probably the reason why Ly Tung Hieu (2015) asserted that both *mẹ* and *bó* are originated from one of Tai languages ('Tày' language as he wrote). But with the above arguments, we still maintain the opinion that mother is a Proto-

Austroasiatic etymon. Taken together, the present study contributes additional evidence that suggests *mẹ*, *mạ*, and *mệ* are Mon-Khmer originated terms.

Regarding the case of *mụ*, the reconstructed form could be found in the Proto Vietic is *\*mu:ʔ* which means "woman". There is another form meaning "woman" in Proto Vietic: *\*-ke:ʔ* which is identified to be the reconstructed form of *gái*, *cái* (girl, woman, female) and *cáy*, *gáy* in Central dialect. There might be attempt to explain that *mụ* is a Sino loanword because *mụ* is the direct Sino - Vietnamese reading of 媼 and this character are referred to "woman", too. It thus can be argued that, when borrowing 媼 into Vietnamese, *mụ* which might have existed in Vietnamese were an good way of reading chosen to maintain the meaning "woman" of this character. Likewise, the same process may have occurred for the case of the *cái*. In Proto-Vietic, it means "female, woman, girl" then gradually developed a new function to refer to mother. The meaning of 'mother' for *cái* is now only preserved in idioms such as *Con dại cái mang* (*child – foolish – mother - carry*) 'The mother is responsible for the foolishness of her child'. In summary, it is likely that *mụ* and *cái* are two terms originated from Proto Vietic language, but in modern Vietnamese and dialects, they are semantically narrowed to refer to mother.

Unlike the above cases, *nạ* is a case which needs more evidence to draw any conclusion. In the modern Vietnamese language, *nạ* is not an independent word. There is only one word *nạ dòng* which means 'a woman who has children and is old (with connotation of contempt)'. *Nạ* with the meaning "mother" is now only preserved in idioms and proverbs: *Con có nạ, thiên hạ có vua* (The child has mother like people have a king); *Đòng đòng theo nạ, quạ theo gà con* (A flock of small fish follows mother, the crow follows the chick); *Quen việc nhà nạ, lạ việc nhà chồng* (To be familiar with housework in mother's house but unfamiliar with housework in husband's); *Lấy con xem nạ, lấy gái góa xem đời chồng xưa* (If you marry a girl, see what her mother is like, if you marry a widow, see what her husband's life was like)... In the *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum*, there is an entry *áng*, *áng nà* which is explained as 'father and mother', but there is not any entry for *ná*, *nạ* so it is difficult to conclude whether *ná* has the semantic feature of 'mother'. According to the MKED, in some languages related but 'distantly related' to Vietnamese, there are forms which are similar phonetically to *nạ*. For instance, in Kensiu, Tonga languages of Aslian branch, there is *naʔ* meaning 'mother'; in the Thavung language, there is *nạ:* to refer to mother's younger sibling. However, this evidence appears not to be strong enough to propose a convincing explanatory for the origin of *ná*. What is interesting in our data is that in Proto-Tai reconstructed by Pittayaporn (2009), mother's younger sibling is *\*na.<sup>C</sup>* This

form is found in Tai dialects in Thailand, Bảo Yên (Cao Bằng province, Vietnam). So there is also a possibility that Vietnamese borrowed this word from Tai languages, or even Proto Tai, like the case of *bá* (parent's elder sister) that Alves (2017) pointed out. .

Although in agreement with Alves's (2017) explanatory for *bá*, this study is not completely convinced by his arguments regarding *má*. The source of *má* (and *mẹ*) was left open by Alves but he noted that there were comparable forms in both Austroasiatic and Tai-Kadai. Nevertheless, the distribution of this term seems to provide further support for the hypothesis that *má* is from the result of the Sino-Vietnamese language contact. In terms of geography, *má* in the pair of *ba má*, *tía má* (father and mother) only appear in the Southern dialect. In the Southern Vietnam, there are a number of speakers of Chinese dialects such as Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese who have migrated to this region since 17<sup>th</sup> century. In Cantonese, mother 妈妈 is pronounced as /ma<sup>21</sup> ma<sup>35</sup>/. In Teochew dialect, mother is 阿嫲 /a<sup>33</sup> ma<sup>35</sup>/, father is 阿爹 /a tia<sup>33</sup>/. Thus, there may be a possibility that *tía*, *má* in Southern dialects is influenced by these dialects. However, in order to make this hypothesis more convincing, further evidence is needed in the future. Therefore, in the future, it is necessary to seek more evidence to be able to make any definite statements about the source of *tía*, *má*, *mẹ* and *sơ* as well.

Regarding another term for mother *me*, although its form is very close to the reconstructed form of PMK. The word *me* was only popular in the early decades of the twentieth century during the French colonial period, so *me* might be the result of borrowing French *mère* 'mother'. As with *má*, this is just a weak assumption that needs more evidence to support.

Finally, in our previous study (Tran Thi Hong Hanh, 2021), the group of words *bằm*, *bu*, *u*, *vú*, and *đẻ* were analysed and shown that they might have Mon-Khmer sources. They all have in common that the meaning of their ancient forms relate to the function of mother, a woman who gives birth/breastfeeds a child.

Table 2: Terms of 'mother' in Proto-Austroasiatic/Austroasiatic words

Terms	Proto-Austroasiatic/Austroasiatic words		Meaning
u	Proto Mon Khmer	/*ʔbuuʔ/	to suck
bu	Proto Vietic	/ʔu:ʔ/ ; /bu:ʔ/	
	Khơ mú	/buʔ/	
bằm	Khmer	/bɣm/ 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫	to suck
	Ba Na	/məm/ mǎm	
	Kui	/mòm/ ; /mòm/	
đẻ	Proto Vietic	*tɛh	to give birth
	Proto Mon-Khmer	*dɛh	
	Proto Pong	*tɛ: <sup>3</sup>	

In brief, giving account of kinship terms for mother, this study has pointed out that *mẹ*, *mạ*, and *mệ* are three terms with a Mon-Khmer source; *mụ* and *cái* which were "woman" in Proto Vietic then were semantically narrowed down to 'mother'; *bằm*, *bu*, *u*, *vú*, and *đẻ* also have Mon-Khmer sources and were semantically narrowed down to 'mother' and distinguish 'mother' as 'one who gives birth/breastfeeds'; the remaining cases, including *nạ*, *má*, and *me*, are cases where there is some remarkable evidence but still need to be discussed.

**3.3.** The third issue raised in this study is the fact that there are more female terms than male ones: 'elder sister' *chị* and *ả*; 'mother's sister' *dì*, *già*, *cô*, and *bá*; 'father's sister' *o*, *cô*, and *bá*; 'mother's mother' *vãi* and *già*. Consider these reconstruction results:

Table 3: Female terms in Proto-Austroasiatic/Austroasiatic forms related

Terms	Proto-Austroasiatic/Austroasiatic forms related	Meaning
<i>già</i> 'mother's elder sister' or 'mother's mother'	Proto Mon Khmer: <i>yaʔ</i> ; * <i>yaay</i> ; * <i>jaʔ</i> ; * <i>jaaj</i>	<i>bà</i> (grandmother)
	Chứt: <i>ja</i> . <sup>3</sup>	father or mother's elder sister
<i>o</i> 'father's sister'	Proto Mon-Khmer: *ʔoh (PMK);	younger sibling
	Proto Mon-Khmer: *ʔ[o]ʔ (PMK); * <i>waaj</i> (PMK);	elder sibling
	Proto Vietic: *ʔo: Chứt: ʔo: <sup>1</sup>	father's younger sister
<i>ả</i> 'sister'	Chứt, Arem: ʔa:	father's elder brother's wife, father or mother's elder sister:
	Mảng: ʔa: <sup>3</sup>	to give birth
<i>vãi</i> 'mother's mother'	Proto Mon Khmer: * <i>waaj</i>	elder sibling

These forms cannot be considered as highly convincing evidence, but at least, they all have similar phonetic forms with *già*, *o*, *vãi*, and *ả*. An implication of this is the possibility that in PV or even before PV, *già*, *o*, *ả*, *vãi* were the original terms to refer to those kin. But then, when influenced by Sinitic, new terms were borrowed, and therefore, the original terms could have been replaced, and the originals were only preserved in dialects. Particularly in the case of *ả*, there is also a correspondence with \*ʔa:<sup>A</sup> in Proto-Tai, so there may be a possibility that *ả* could also have source of Tai-Kadai languages like *bá* and *bủ*.

Considering evidence beyond language, it might be that matriarchal clans were the first stage of development of the clan commune, the primary state of all societies. As mentioned above, cultural anthropology has shown that all systems of kinship in the world have the universal point the core reproductive relationship of mother and child can be considered as the central kinship relationship. In Vietnam, matriarchal and matriarchal culture have still been a prominent feature and have far-reaching effects in today's daily life. Therefore, the fact that the kin terms that refer to aunt, grandmother and sister are all Sino-Vietnamese loanwords as shown by Alves (2017) has thrown up a question in need of further investigation: Before the earliest time of Sino-Vietnamese language contact, did Vietnamese have terms to refer to these kinship terms? This is a question that needs further discussion in future studies.

**3.4.** Cultural anthropologists also state that ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are the two most basic kinship terms in human kinship. Thus, the term ‘father’ can also be considered a very basic kinship term after ‘mother’. In Vietnamese dialects, there are terms to refer to ‘father’: *ba*, *bố*, *bọ*, *cha*, *tía*, *thầy*, and *cậu*. In PMK, the reconstruction of *của* father is *\*ʔbaaʔ*, and in PV, there are *\*bo:ʔ* and *\*po:ʔ*. The form of *\*po:ʔ* in PV is quite similar to Proto-Tai reconstructed by Pittayaporn (2009) *\*bo:<sup>B</sup>*. Due only to these pieces of evidence, it is possible to initially offer an explanation that *ba* is of Mon Khmer source, *bọ* is of Vietic source (which is supported by the distribution of *bọ* only in the Central dialect), and *bố* may be Vietic source but could also have been borrowed from Tai-Kadai languages. The case of *tía*, as mentioned above, is now pointed out by previous studies to be borrowed during the contact with Southern Chinese dialects in the Southern of Vietnam. As for *cha* and *thầy* (and the remaining terms already in the data but have not been mentioned in this paper), the evidence is still not enough to offer arguments and can only be considered as suggestions for more evidence in future studies.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on historical linguistic evidence combined with historical - cultural knowledge, this paper offered discussions to provide more understanding of the source of some kinship terms in Vietnamese dialects. In some cases, the evidence is rich enough to point out their sources, such as *con*, *em*, *cháu*, *chắt*, *chút*, and *chít*. There are also cases that both language reconstruction evidence and cultural and geographical knowledge could provide support for the hypothesis of their sources: *mệ*, *mạ*, *mẹ*, *mụ*, *nạ*, *cái*, *ả*, *o*,

*vãi, già, bằm, bu, u, vú, and đẽ*. However, in other cases, the evidence is still weak or to date little evidence has been found. Several questions remain unanswered at present. Therefore, further research should be done.

## References

- Allen, N.J. (1989) *The evolution of kinship terminologies*, *Lingua* 77 (1989), North Holland, 173-185.
- Alves, Mark (2008) *Khái quát các nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ học về nguồn gốc của tiếng Việt* [Overview of linguistic studies on the origin of Vietnamese language], *Tạp chí Khoa học Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn* 24 (2008) [Journal of Science, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Social Sciences and Humanities 24 (2008)], 187-202.
- Alves, Mark (2017) *Chinese Loanwords in Vietnamese Pronouns and Terms of Address and Reference*, Proceedings of the 29th North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL-29), Volume 1, Edited by Lan Zhang, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, pg.286-303.
- Alves, Mark (2020) *Historical ethnolinguistics notes on Proto Austroasiatic and Proto Vietic vocabulary in Vietnamese*, *Journal of Southeast Asian Linguistics Society* 13.2 (2020): xiii-xxv, University of Hawai'i Press, DOI: <http://hdl.handle.net/10524/52472>
- Dương, Thị Nụ (2007) *Ngữ nghĩa nhóm từ chỉ quan hệ thân tộc trong tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt* [Semantics of kinship terms in English and Vietnamese], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Đào, Hoài Thu (2011) *Phân tích đối chiếu từ chỉ quan hệ họ hàng trong tiếng Hàn và tiếng Việt, Luận văn thạc sĩ* [Comparative analysis of kinship words in Korean and Vietnamese, Master's Thesis], Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Foley, William (2001), *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Beijing.
- Gaby, A. (2017) *Kinship semantics: Culture in the lexicon*, In F. Sharifian (Ed.), *Advances in Cultural Linguistics (Cultural Linguistics)*. Springer, 173-188.
- Hoàng, Thị Châu (2004) *Phương ngữ học tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese dialectology], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Hồ, Trần Ngọc Oanh (2015) *Một vài suy nghĩ về cách xưng hô của người Việt từ bài nghiên cứu "Đại từ chỉ quyền lực và thân hữu" của R.Brown & A.Gilman* [Some thoughts on the Vietnamese way of addressing people from the research paper "Pronouns for power and friendship" by R.Brown & A. Gilman], *Tạp chí Khoa học Xã hội, Nhân văn & Giáo dục*, Tập 5, số 4A(2015), Đại học Đà Nẵng, Đà Nẵng, tr. 83-88.
- Kronenfeld, David B. (2022) *Types of Kinship Terminological Systems and How to Analyze Them - New Insights from the Application of Sidney H. Gould's Analytic System*, In Series: Brill Research Perspectives in Humanities and Social Sciences • Brill Research Perspectives in Linguistics

- Lê, Quang Thiêm (1989) *Nghiên cứu đối chiếu các ngôn ngữ* [Constrative study of languages], Nhà xuất bản Đại học và giáo dục chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội.
- Lê, Thanh Kim (2002) *Từ xưng hô và cách xưng hô trong các phương ngữ tiếng Việt, Luận án tiến sĩ Ngữ văn, Viện Ngôn ngữ học* [Addressing terms and ways of addressing in Vietnamese dialects, PhD thesis in Philology, Institute of Linguistics), Hà Nội.
- Li, Fang Kuei (1977) *A Handbook of Comparative Tai*, Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications, no. 15 (1977): i-389. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20006684>.
- Luong, V.H. (1984) “Brother” and “uncle: An analysis of rules, structural contradictions, and meaning in Vietnamese kinship”, *Anthropologist* 86(2) NS: pg.290-315. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1984.86.2.02a00050>
- Luong, Ninh (chủ biên) (2009) *Lịch sử thế giới cổ đại* [History of the Ancient World], Nhà xuất bản Giáo dục, Hà Nội.
- Lý, Tùng Hiếu (2015) Từ xưng hô tiếng Việt - Tiếp cận từ góc nhìn dân tộc - ngôn ngữ học, *Tạp chí Ngôn ngữ* [Vietnamese address terms – An approach from the perspective of ethnolinguistics, Journal of Linguistics], Số 6, 30-42.
- Nguyễn, Văn Khang (2014) *Giao tiếp xưng hô tiếng Việt bằng từ thân tộc và việc sử dụng chúng trong giao tiếp công quyền, Tạp chí Ngôn ngữ & Đời sống* [Vietnamese kinship terms in communication and their use in public communication, Journal of Language & Life], Số 10 (228), 39-47.
- Nguyễn, Văn Dung (2005) *So sánh hệ thống từ xưng hô trong tiếng Việt và trong tiếng Pháp, Tạp chí Khoa học Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội* [Comparing the system of address terms in Vietnamese and in French, Journal of Science, Vietnam National University Hanoi], Số 21(4), 63-73.
- Passmore, S. & Jordan, F.M. (2020) *No universals in the cultural evolution of kinship terminology*, *Evolutionary Human Sciences*, 2, e42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/ehs.2020.41> Published online by Cambridge University Press.
- Phạm, Ngọc Hàm (2004) *Đặc điểm và cách sử dụng của lớp từ ngữ xưng hô tiếng Hán trong sự so sánh với tiếng Việt, Luận án Tiến sĩ Ngôn ngữ học* [Characteristics and usage of the class of Chinese pronouns in comparison with Vietnamese, PhD Thesis in Linguistics], Trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội.
- Pittayaporn (2009) *The Phonology of Proto-Tai (Doctoral dissertation)*, Department of Linguistics, Cornell University.
- Rhodes, Alexandre de (1651) *Từ điển Annam – Lusitan – Latinh (Từ điển Việt - Bồ - La)* [The Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum (The Vietnamese - Portuguese - Latin dictionary)], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Toan, Ánh (2005) *Nếp cũ - Tín ngưỡng Việt Nam (Quyển thượng)* [Old Traditions - Vietnamese Beliefs (Volume 1)], Nhà xuất bản Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.
- Trần, Thị Hồng Hạnh (2021) *Về hai từ bủ, bầm trong thổ ngữ Phú Thọ, Kỷ yếu Hội thảo khoa học quốc tế “Nguyễn Tài Cẩn - Tư tưởng, tác phẩm và kỷ niệm”* [About two words bủ and bầm in Phu Tho dialect, Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Nguyen Tai Can - Thoughts, works and memories"], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Hà Nội, 133-144.



Trương, Thị Diễm (2002) *Từ xưng hô có nguồn gốc danh từ thân tộc trong giao tiếp tiếng Việt*, Luận án Tiến sĩ Ngôn ngữ học [Address terms derived from kinship nouns in Vietnamese communication, PhD Thesis in Linguistics], Đại học Vinh, Nghệ An.

Võ, Minh Phát (2016) *Đặc điểm ngôn ngữ của từ ngữ xưng hô trong Phật giáo Việt Nam*, Luận án Tiến sĩ Ngôn ngữ học [Linguistic features of address terms in Vietnamese Buddhism, PhD Thesis in Linguistics], Trường Đại học Khoa học, Đại học Huế, Huế.

The Mon-Khmer Etymological Dictionary (The MKED):  
<http://www.sealang.net/monkhmer/dictionary/>

## **Theoretical Background for the Compilation of Dialect Dictionaries in Vietnam**

Trịnh Cẩm Lan  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This paper presents preliminary research results on the theoretical foundations for the compilation of dialect dictionaries in Vietnam. The theoretical basis includes the theory of lexicography (macrostructure, microstructure, definition models) and the theory of Vietnamese characteristics that are supposed to predominate the compilation of dictionaries.

**Key words:** dialect dictionary, macrostructure, microstructure, entries, definition models

### **Introduction**

In a recent paper, Trịnh addressed the significance of the compilation of dialect dictionaries in general and in Vietnam in particular, in addition to introducing some notable dialect dictionaries nationally and internationally and offering some suggestions for compilation of dialect dictionaries covering all Vietnam with the prospective aid of digital technology (Trịnh Cẩm Lan, 2022).

Dialect dictionaries have importance for many research questions. They serve as a valuable source for studying the history of the Vietnamese language and as evidence of its dialect diversity; They can serve a source of additional data for standard language dictionaries, a source of encyclopedic knowledge about localities; In addition, they help with the preservation of geographical information of language variations (Trịnh Cẩm Lan, 2022). Dialect dictionaries in Vietnam have seen some initial achievements; however, those who study dialectology and Vietnamese language history still expect a larger dictionary in which variations of the Vietnamese language in every region of Vietnam are attested. For the two aforementioned reasons, in the near future, it is worth thinking of the compilation of a systematic and methodical Vietnamese dialect dictionary on the basis of past works. In order to undertake this methodically sensitive task, some specific steps may be required, such as (1) thoroughly studying the theoretical background and methods of compiling dialect dictionaries, (2) making detailed plans for activities (human resources preparation, training, structuring, design

of survey tools, training for analyzing the results, etc.), and (3) designing the macrostructure and microstructure of the dictionary, among other matters.

This paper presents a few results of the first part: studying the theoretical background for the compilation of dialect dictionaries. Within the scope of a sole article, this should provide some basic results. To this end, the research should be conducted thoroughly, and the results need to be presented in more detail. The main contents of the article are (1) outlines of Vietnamese dialect data in dictionaries and the compilation of dialect dictionaries in Vietnam, (2) theoretical foundations of the compilation of dialect dictionaries in Vietnam, and (3) methods of investigation and compilation of dialect dictionaries.

## **1. Characteristics of contemporary Vietnamese dialects in dictionaries and dialect dictionaries in Vietnam**

### **1.1. Vietnamese dialect data in dictionaries**

In early works, some differences of the Vietnamese linguists were recorded to some degree in the *Việt - Bồ - La dictionary* (Rhodes, A. de., 1651), *Tự vị An Nam - Latin* (Pigneaux de Behaine, 1772) and *Nam Việt Dương hiệp tự vị* (Taberd, 1838) with some dialect words in the entries.

Although the *Việt - Bồ - La dictionary* was created in 1651, it has been highly appreciated for its quality. Besides the quality of phonetic detail (e.g., recording ancient Vietnamese sounds such as *bl, tl, ml, mnh*, etc), the quality of the semantic detail (e.g., reflecting phenomena of polysemantics, homophones, synonyms, etc.), this dictionary is also highly appreciated thanks to the presence of special classes of words such as ancient words, historical words, occupational words, local words, etc., through which the history of the Vietnamese language can be studied, and the expression of Vietnamese dialects at that time can be known. Even if it is not noted, later generations can recognize the frequency of local pronunciations (e.g., *ánh gờng, bợ lẽ, blời, búi bẻ, đàn trâu, đàng, thǎóc, kánh...*) and local expressions (e.g., *bao mlón, bao cao, làm chi, hư...*) in the Central and Southern regions as shown in the dictionaries.

In the *Tự vị An Nam - Latin* and *Nam Việt Dương hiệp tự vị*, a series of words belong to two modern major dialects, namely, the Central region dialect (e.g., *ả, mô, rúa, chi, nhời, chươi, ngái, chừ...*) and Southern region dialect (e.g., *ghe, đui, cây sâu đâu, giùm, mắc, heo...*). In particular, *Nam Việt Dương hiệp tự vị*, part III is an appendix with nearly 50 pages recording the names of herbs of the Đàng Trong region (Taberd, 1838: 621-660). These words name the plants, fruits, and vegetables in Đàng Trong

and are presented in microstructure of this dictionary, including (1) Han-Nom characters, (2) Quoc Ngu script, and (3) nomenclature of plants. It is notable that it is one of the first attempts of a Vietnamese dialect dictionary, and perhaps also of a nomenclature dictionary in Vietnam.

Thus, in the first three dictionaries above, dialects and local pronunciations have been reflected even though they have not been annotated. Real interest in local words stems firstly from *Đại Nam Quốc Âm tự vị* (1895, 1896) from Huỳnh Tịnh Paulus Của. In this dictionary, the author has certain concerns about the diversity in the pronunciations of some Vietnamese words in different regions. These are pairs of words such as *chánh - chính, nhất - nhứt, phúc - phước, thực - thật - thiệt*, and so on. Each word is recorded in a separate entry and explanation, even though they are similar. That means the existence of these local pronunciation variations has been acknowledged and taken into consideration by lexicographers in the past.

In Hoang Phe's Vietnamese dictionary, local words have been annotated as a main part in the word entry structure, for example, *bấp. d. [ph] ngô. chè bấp. "Nè, tôi nường bấp cho anh ăn nghen? (Lê Văn Thảo: 8)"* (Hoàng Phê, 2015: 75). In this regard, [ph] means "dialectal". Although there has not been a more specific annotation of the geographical information of the words (the locality where a word is used), this annotation indicates unusual words and possible dialect words as opposed to other entries which are implicitly considered as common words.

## 1.2. Characteristics of contemporary dialect dictionaries in Vietnam

Two major categories of Vietnamese dialect dictionaries have been compiled and published.

The first type of dialect dictionary covers all the local regions in Vietnam. Examples include *Từ điển đối chiếu: từ địa phương* 1999 by Đặng Ngọc Lê và Phan Xuân Thành, *Từ điển phương ngữ tiếng Việt*, 2005 by Đặng Thanh Hoà, *Từ điển phương ngữ tiếng Việt*, 2009 edited by Phạm Văn Hào.

The second type of dialect dictionary focuses on a defined geographical space. These might cover regions, such as *Sổ tay phương ngữ Nam Bộ* 1987 by Nguyễn Văn Ái or *Từ điển từ ngữ Nam Bộ* 2007 by Huỳnh Công Tín. They can also cover smaller regions or provinces, such as *Từ điển tiếng Nghệ* 1998 by Trần Hữu Thung & Thái Kim Đình, *Từ điển tiếng địa phương Nghệ Tĩnh* 1999 by Nguyễn Nhã Bản, *Từ điển tiếng Huế* 2004 by Bùi Minh Đức, and *Từ điển phương ngữ Quảng Nam* 2017 by Phạm Văn Hào...). Some key features of the above-mentioned dictionaries are as follows.

In terms of capacity, dictionaries covering the entire country tend to have a larger number of entries due to the collection of more dialect regions. For example, *Từ điển phương ngữ tiếng Việt* by Phạm Văn Hào includes 14.000 entries, and *Từ điển từ ngữ Nam Bộ* by Huỳnh Công Tín consists of 20.000 entries. Dictionaries that cover only one region or one province often have fewer entries. *Từ điển tiếng địa phương Nghệ - Tĩnh* by Nguyễn Nhã Bản includes 6.000 entries, while *Từ điển tiếng Nghệ* by the authors Trần Hữu Thung and Thái Kim Đĩnh encompasses just 3.000 entries. In comparison with dialect dictionaries of other countries (e.g., *English Dialect Dictionary*: 80.000 entries, over 1.700 maps; *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*: 60.000 entries, approximately 3.000 maps), the number of entries above is quite modest.

In term of macrostructure, dictionaries mainly choose dialects that are variations of form or content of words in the common language, excluding verbal expressions such as slang, idioms, euphemisms even though such expressions are strongly local (Pham Van Hao, 2009: 8-9). To put it another way, the macrostructure of a dictionary might include (a) local words that are phonetic variations of words in a cultural language, (b) local words that are semantic variations of words in a cultural language, and/or (c) product names that are only available locally (Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 6-7).

I have also surveyed entries in the *Từ điển từ ngữ Nam Bộ* and discovered that along with some words with strong features of the Southern area such as *bá cháy* (great), *chà bá* (huge), *ghe bầu* (elected boat), *giờn mặt* (despise), *mắt kiếng* (glasses), *quá xá* (too)..., there exist words such as *ẵm* (carry), *gió nam* (south wind), *hàng xịn* (good stock), *lạ hoắc* (strange), *màu mỡ* (fertile), *ông nội* (grandpa), *bà nội* (grandma), *pho mai* (cheese)... (Huỳnh Công Tín, 2009) which are not from the Southern dialect. Some dictionaries can still contain some words that were previously considered "local" but have long joined the common vocabulary such as *ăn dè*, *ăn chực*, *cào* (Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999). It is likely that with an even more careful and elaborate survey, this number would be much larger.

Regarding the microstructure, the information contained in this structure consists of 4 or 5 parts: head words, information about part of speech, and explanations and examples (Phạm Văn Hào, 2009: 10). These sections are arranged in a consistent order; however, many entries do not have examples but they are explained by common words rather than referring to another annotation (entries explained by another annotation are not usually provided with examples). Entries also include the following section: head words, information about parts of speech, explanations, geographical information (if

any) and examples (very few) (Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 8). All entries have the same first 3 or 4 parts, the last 1 or 2 parts may or may not be the same.

In terms of word explanation (definition model), these dictionaries often employ 4 definition models at the same time:

(1) Words with equivalence in common words: they are defined by equivalent common words (according to Phạm Văn Hảo) or defined by the contrastive method (according to Nguyễn Nhã Bản

(2) Words that are only found in a certain dialect: they are defined by interpretation (according to Phạm Văn Hảo) or description (according to Nguyễn Nhã Bản);

(3) Words that are used with distinct meanings of each region: they are defined by stating different meanings right in the definition, or noted in parentheses with subsequent provision of basic equivalent words.

(4) Words with synonyms, near-synonyms: are defined by referring to another annotation.

Regarding the display of geographical information, dictionaries published in Vietnam mainly display geographic information by noting regions such as North (B), Central (T), South (N), Thanh Hóa (THóa), Phú Thọ (PThọ) (Phạm Văn Hảo, 2009) or region 1 (V1), region 8 (V8) (Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999) after the headword or at the end of the entry. The lack of geographic information is a limitation of Vietnamese dialect dictionaries.

Considering the limitations discussed, it is desirable to compile a dialect dictionary which covers local words in all regions with the support of information technology. However, to achieve the best results, one of the very first concerns is to thoroughly study the theoretical background and the compiling method of dialect dictionaries. The next second presents the result of theoretical study of compiling dialect dictionaries by investigating microstructure, macrostructure, and definition models of some dictionaries. Then, we will make generalizations that aim to establish a suitable basis for the compilation of dialect dictionaries in Vietnam.

## **2. Theoretical background of the compilation of dialect dictionary**

### **2.1. Theoretical background of a dialect dictionary**

#### **2.1.1. Macrostructure of a dialect dictionary**

The macrostructure of a dictionary, also known as the glossary structure, comprises all entries which include word units selected according to the purpose and arranged in a certain order (Hoàng Phê, 1993).

Vocabularies in dialect dictionaries differ from those in national language dictionaries in three main features: (1) They are collected based on local field research; (2) They are word-of-mouth products expressed in written texts; and (3) The geographical features (e.g., Where are they used? In what region are they used?) of this variation must be presented (Keymeulen, J. V., 2018: 47). The difference reveals the perspectives of both macrostructure and microstructure of the dialect dictionary. Accordingly, dialect dictionaries usually focus on words that do not exist in the standard language, the meanings of which are not the same as the standard ones, or the variants of which do not resemble the standard ones. The lexical scope determines a common type of macrostructure which is evidently characterized in well-known dialect dictionaries in Vietnam and in the world (Barbato, M. & Varvaro, A., 2004; Adam, M., 2011; Keymeulen, J. V., 2018; Markus, M., 2021; Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999; Phạm Văn Hào, 2009...).

In order to collect the data, the preliminary survey of the macrostructure of four dialect dictionaries, including two influential English and American dictionaries (English dialect dictionary and American English dialect dictionary) was conducted. In addition, we investigated two Vietnamese dialect dictionaries, one of which covered all Vietnamese dialects (a Vietnamese dialect dictionary); the other dictionary represented regional dialects (a Nghe Tinh dialect dictionary).

The preliminary results are as follows:

(1) The English Dialect Dictionary – EDD

This is the most comprehensive dictionary of English dialects compiled by the linguist Joseph Wright and published from 1898 to 1905. The printed version of the dictionary consists of approximately 4.600 pages, densely printed into two columns. The investigated list of dialect regions includes England and Wales (58 regions), Scotland (43 regions), Ireland (40 regions) (Joseph Wright, 1898: XX). The glossary of this dictionary encompasses 80.000 entries collected through fieldwork across all English-speaking regions. These words were used between 1700 and 1904, many of which have etymological origins in Old and Middle English, dating from approximately 1.000 years ago (Markus, M., 2021).

The macrostructure of the dictionary included: (1) English dialects (non-existent in literary language) in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales; (2) Words that exist in the literary language yet have a particular local meaning; (3) English dialects of America and colonies that are used in Great Britain and Ireland, or that can be found in books or dialect

glossaries (Wright, J., 1898: V); (4) English colloquial, slang, English “technical” words of occupational groups such as farmers, miners, etc. (Markus, M., 2021)<sup>1</sup>.

(2) The Dictionary of American Regional English – DARE

This is a huge dictionary of American English dialects used in the United States from its inception to the present. The dictionary includes 5 volumes with 5.544 pages, over 60.000 entries, and nearly 3.000 maps (Greenbaum, S., 2009). The dictionary did not record the standard language; instead, it recorded words in the folk speech in regions and different pronunciations across regions that people learned from family and friends, not from schools and textbooks (Adam, 2011).

The macro structure of the dictionary includes: (1) words whose form (pronunciation or spelling) or meaning is not commonly used across the country, yet restricted by region or by social group; (2) Words that are used according to folk and word-of-mouth usage collected from local communities, not from schools, books, or mass media; (3) Historical words that are no longer used (but they are functioned in local communication) (Greenbaum, S., 2009).

The digital version of DARE offers local/regional options. Users can click a state on the DARE map or choose a region in the 41 regions in the pull-down menu (e.g., the Appalachians, the Desert Southwest, the Gulf States, the North Central region, the South Atlantic) to access to all the entries in that state or region. The digital version of DARE also provides more than 5.000 audio clips from the interviews included in the entries. Users can click the audio icon to listen to conversations recorded between 1965 and 1970 with speakers of all over America (Sidney Greenbaum, 2009).

(3) The Vietnamese Dialect Dictionary (edited by Phạm Văn Hảo)

The glossary in this dictionary contains about 14.000 entries. Accordingly, local words are defined as *variant entries of the common language used in dialects, in relation to related units in other dialects or common languages*. (p.8).

According to the author's description, the units of local variation in different dialects may be varied in form, such as phonetic shells of words or scripts, or in content, such as differences in meaning compared with widespread usage. Additionally, the author presents some notable cases. On this basis, the macrostructure of dictionary includes: (1) Local words that are variations in form with phonetic shells of words or script differences unlike standard usage, only collecting typical variations for dialects, often recorded in writing, also called phonetic-lexical variations such as *bệnh/ bịnh, chính/ chánh, tỉnh/ tánh*..., excluding the variations such as the confusion of l/n as in

---

<sup>1</sup> The fourth type (d) is not described in Wright's Preface but is outlined by Manfred Markus in the digitized EDD.



*nón/ lón, long lanh/ nong nanh...* in the Northern dialect or *ăn/ ăng, mặt/ mặc...* in the Southern dialect; (2) Local words in which the meaning is somewhat different from the common language (regardless of whether the dialects use the original or modified meaning) such as *dì* (used to address in the Southern dialect), *bôi mặt* (make-up)...; (3) Words that are used locally but theoretically are not originated from a local region (according to the author's viewpoint) such as *nhút, chèo, lòn bon, nóp...* (Phạm Văn Hào, 2009: 8-9).

(4) The Nghệ Tĩnh dialect dictionary (edited by Nguyễn Nhã Bản)

The local vocabulary is viewed as a vocabulary range which is used in a particular local region, which differs in cultural linguistic register or differs from other regions in terms of phonetics and semantics (Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 6). On this basis, the author has specifically explained the range of selected dialects which reveal the macro structure of dictionary including (1) Local words are phonetic variations of words in a cultural language, Nguyễn Nhã Bản calls them phonetic words such as *khải - gãi, ló - lóa, gáy, ghi - gái, gục, cộc, côc - gốc...*; (2) Local words are semantic variations of words in cultural language which are called semantic words such as: *gáy, ghi* meaning either *gái* or *vợ*; or *bù*, variation of *bầu* meaning *bầu* or *bí đồ* (*bù rợ - bí đồ*)...; (3) Local words are names of local products only available in the region (*nhút, toi, xà lì...*).

With the foregoing macrostructure types, notice that there are some common features among all dictionaries and some distinguishable differences. These features are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Macrostructure of dialectal dictionaries

Criteria	Dictionaries	(1) <sup>2</sup>	(2)	(3)	(4)
Spoken only, non-existent in the standard language		+	+	+	+
Words with phonetic differences from the standard language		-	+	+	+
Words with semantic differences from the standard language		+	-	+	+
Derived from other dialects		+	-	-	-
Local words only attested in that region		+	-	+	+
Words of a specialized social group (e.g., slang, occupational words, etc.)		+	-	-	-

<sup>2</sup> Order of surveyed dictionaries:

- (1) The English Dialect Dictionary – EDD
- (2) The Dictionary of American Regional English - DARE
- (3) Từ điển Phương ngữ tiếng Việt (Editor-in-Chief Phạm Văn Hào)
- (4) Từ điển tiếng địa phương Nghệ Tĩnh (Editor-in-Chief Nguyễn Nhã Bản)

If the results are relativized to draw a common type of macrostructure, it is possible to filter the criteria that have been reflected in at least three-quarters of a dictionary. In this regard, there exist 4 categories in a macrostructure as follows:

- (1) Dialects are spoken forms and non-existent in the standard language (four out of four criteria);
- (2) Dialectal words have phonetic variations of the standard language (three out of four criteria)
- (3) Dialectal words have semantic variations of the standard language (three out of four criteria)
- (4) Dialectal words only attested locally (three out of four criteria)

### 2.1.2. Microstructure of dialectal dictionaries

The microstructure of a dictionary is the structure of its entries. The entry structure of any dictionary includes information such as headwords, parts of speech, pronunciations, phrases, example sentences, etymologies, or other labels, if any (Keymeulen, J, V., 2018: 46). The peculiarity of the microstructure of a dialect dictionary lies mainly in the manipulation of headword forms, pronunciations, and geographical information of words. Some authors put forward dialectal orthographic forms based on standard language spellings with some adjustments and supplements (usually extra diacritic symbols) to indicate dialect pronunciations and include this format as a header instead of adding it in the microstructure (Keymeulen, J, V., 2018: 46). Some Vietnamese dialect dictionaries also employ this method, such as *Từ điển từ ngữ Nam Bộ 2007* by Huỳnh Công Tín, *Từ điển tiếng Nghệ 1998* by Trần Hữu Thung & Thái Kim Đình, and *Từ điển tiếng địa phương Nghệ Tĩnh 1999* by Nguyễn Nhã Bản.

The results of microstructure survey in some dialect dictionaries show that:

*The English Dialect Dictionary* has a microstructure with 8 types of information: (1) headwords, (2) geographical information; (3) part of speech; (4) pronunciation transcription; (5) etymology; (6) word definition; (7) examples/citation sources; (8) comments/cross-reference (Markus, M., 2006: 6).

*The Dictionary of American Regional English* has a microstructure with 7 types of information:

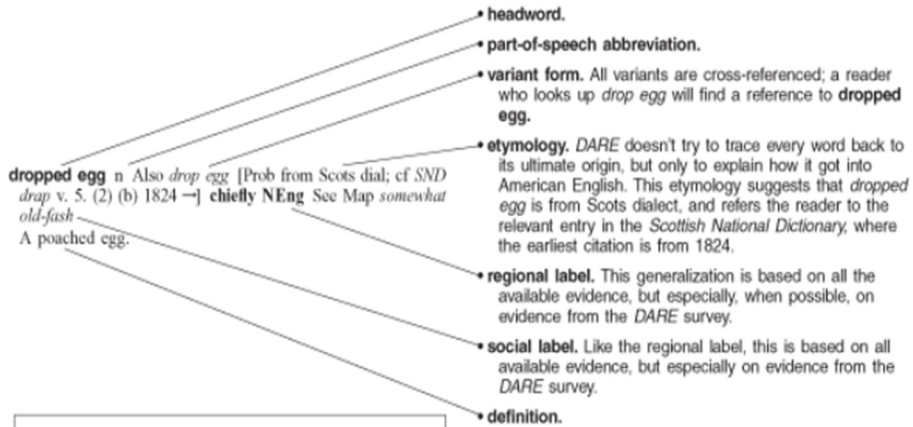


Figure 1: Structure of glossary in DARE

(Source: DARE sample entry and map (<https://dare.news.wisc.edu/dare-sample-entry-and-map>))

The *Vietnamese Dialect Dictionary* (edited by Phạm Văn Hảo) includes 5 types of information: (1) headwords, (2) geographical information; (3) part of speech; (4) word definition; (5) examples.

The *Nghệ Tĩnh dialect dictionary* (edited by Nguyễn Nhã Bản) microstructure has the following information: (1) headwords, (2) part of speech; (3) word definition; (4) geographical information (if the words are used only in some small areas such as communes or districts).

Table 2 demonstrates possible information in an entry in a dialect dictionary.

Table 2: Microstructure of dialectal dictionaries

Microstructure	Dialectal Dictionaries	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Headword		+	+	+	+
Geographical information		+	+	+	+
Part of speech		+	+	+	+
Pronunciation transcription		+	+	+	+
Etymology		+	+	-	-
Definition		+	+	+	+
Examples/citation sources		+	-	+/-	-
Comments/cross-references		+	-	-	-
Variant types		-	+	-	-
Encyclopedic information (e.g., social / cultural / historical / local anecdotes)		-	+	-	-

As previously stated, in comparison with explanation of dictionaries in the standard language, the specific features of a microstructure in dialect dictionaries are mainly revealed in the manipulation of some pieces of information:

*Regarding the manipulation of headwords*, there are two methods: the first one involves dialect variations as a headword, and the second one uses the standard language form for the headword and dialect variations, including phonetic, lexical, grammatical variations under each entry. The first form is quite common and present in English, American and Vietnamese dictionaries (as mentioned). The latter form can be found in Hirayama's Japanese dialect dictionary (Fukushima, 2017b: 78). The first method is more appropriate and scientific than the second one because the first method enables us to apply a common definition model in all dialect dictionaries which provide the definition by using equivalent words in the standard language. As for the second form, not every local word has variations in the standard language. In fact, there exist dialects with no equivalent in the standard language. If we consider a word in the standard language as a root and local dialect variations as sub-entries in the 2-level structure of a main entry (which is the word in the common language), then it will be challenging to deal consistently with local words that identify specific things, actions or status of that region due to the lack of equivalent words in the standard language, and thus, descriptions and/or illustrations must be added.

*Regarding the presentation of geographic information*, there are two ways to annotate geographical information, namely: an annotation of the geographical area name (common in all dialect dictionaries) and an annotation based on the distribution on the map (available in some English, American, German, Italian, Japanese dictionaries...). The first method concerning the annotation of geographical area names needs special attention to the strict and precise convention of space.

For example:

**dao phát** (B.) *d. x. dao quắm.*

**dao quắm** (T.) *d. Knife with a long, large blade, with a curved tip towards the blade, used to cut trees and bushes.*

(Phạm Văn Hào, 2009: 142)

When the dictionary annotates that **dao phát** belongs to the Northern dialect (B.) and transfers **dao phát** into **dao quắm** (Knife with a long, large blade, with a curved tip towards the blade, used to cut trees and bushes), it can be inferred that **dao phát** in this sense is used throughout the Northern dialect region, while **dao quắm** with the same meaning is used specifically in Central (T.) dialect. This means that **dao quắm** is called **dao phát** by Northerners. However, Northerners commonly know and use the

word **dao quắm** with this meaning, while **dao phát** is used to refer to another type of knife that does not have “the tip curved towards the blade”, but its only function is to “cut the trees and bushes”. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the region where **dao phát** and **dao quắm** are used.

*The presentation of etymological information* needs to be taken into consideration: by etymology, this includes not only the origin of the word, but also its evolution over time. Etymological information usually includes when a word first appeared, what it means, how it is spelled, and the origin of loanwords, among others. Therefore, etymology provides clues about its relationship with other words, including clues about the history of language and culture (William J. Frawley 2003: 7). Therefore, annotating etymological information is very important and should also be taken with great care because it must be fully understood. A dictionary editor should be aware of the fact that etymological information contributes to the scientific quality and depth of a dictionary. Hence, it is essential to display this piece of information. Not every entry needs etymological information. For instance, entries including compound words or phrases typically do not have etymological information (Frederic G. Cassidy 1991).

For example:

BLUE-COCK, sb. Hrt. A young salmon.

Hrf. The blue-cock comes up from the sea very late in the season, and is in condition in late autumn. It is so called from its bluish head and shoulders. The name is in *gen. use a long the Wye* (H.C.M.). [The form *blue-cap*, given as a w.Cy. word in Ray’s *Correspondence* (1677) 127, ed. 1848, is not known to our correspondents.]

(Wright, J. 1898: 312)

Even though the focus of the majority of dialectal dictionaries is the word class of word-of-mouth language characterized by its geographical distribution, it can additionally sometimes display encyclopedic knowledge.

For example:

BLUE-COCK, sb. Hrt. A young salmon.

Hrf. The blue-cock comes up from the sea very late in the season, and is in condition in late autumn. It is so called from its bluish head and shoulders. The name is in *gen. use a long the Wye* (H.C.M.). [The form *blue-cap*, given as a w.Cy. word in Ray’s *Correspondence* (1677) 127, ed. 1848, is not known to our correspondents.]

(Wright, J. 1898: 312)

The above example illustrates the entry “blue-cock” in the *English dialect dictionary*. The information in the entry includes: the part of speech (sb-substantive: thể từ), the geographical region (Hrt.: Hertfordshire), the definition (A young salmon), and then the annotation of encyclopedic knowledge and other types of information.

There may exist social information such as age, gender, education level, occupation, and ethnicity (Keymeulen, J. V. 2018: 42). This is the case in *American Regional English* (Figure 2: The “dropped egg” entry structure in DARE is an illustrative example of social information displayed in the entry structure – *old fashion*).

### 2.1.3. Definition models

In our investigation of the 4 dictionaries, we collected 5 popular definition models. Each model is suitable for a type of entry.

- For the entry with equivalence in the standard language, the common model is the definition of an equivalent word in the standard language (Wright, J. 1898; Frederic G. Cassidy 1991; Phạm Văn Hào 2009), in other words, definition by comparison (Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999).

For example:

ANEAN, prep. Lin. [snia'n.] Beneath. (Wright, J. 1898: 55)

**cây nước** (*T., N.*) *d.* Vòi rồng. (Phạm Văn Hào, 2009: 88)

**Bòn đg.** 1. Mót. *Bòn vài hột ló* (mót vài hột lúa)

2. Tằn tiện. “*Bòn đâu bị cuối khấn*” (*hgNT*)

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999: 42)

- For an entry indicating things, actions, or specific states which are found only in a certain geographical area, they are defined by description, explanation (Wright, J. 1898; Frederic G. Cassidy 1991; Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999) or interpretation (Phạm Văn Hào 2009).

For example:

**Cang t.** Chỉ tính chất, sự khô cứng, sần cứng lại do nắng quá lâu của đất.

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999: 67)

**CATCHY**, sb. Nhb. [ka'tʃi.] A child's game, in which one catches another.

Nhb. A player who is 'it' chases the others until he catches one. This one becomes 'it' and gives chase in his turn (R.O.H); Nhb.

(Wright, J. 1898: 541)

The entry “catchy” is defined by the description as “A child's game, in which one catches another” (Trò chơi của trẻ em, trong đó đứa trẻ này bắt đứa khác). The dictionary also provides a brief note on how to play this game (because this game is

available in certain regions, it is not common in all the regions) as encyclopedic knowledge of a special “product” that not everyone knows.

- For the entry that uses distinct meanings of each region, the word is defined by stating the meanings in the definition, then basic equivalent words can be provided (Wright, J. 1898; Frederic G. Cassidy 1991; Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999).

For example:

- Gậy d.** 1. Gái. “*Thân em con gậy/ Giự việc tơ tằm*”  
2. Vợ. “*Thiên hạ cày cấy, gậy ngồi gậy la*”

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999: 165)

- For an entry with synonyms and near-synonyms, the word is defined by referring to another annotation (Wright, J. 1898; Frederic G. Cassidy 1991; Phạm Văn Hào 2009, Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999).

For example:

BRANDERI, BRANDERY, BRANDHERD, see Brandreth.

BRANDICE, see Brandis.

BRANDIED, see Branded.

BRANDING-DAY, sb. Nhp. A day for branding or marking horses and cattle; hence the day set apart for opening the freemen’s commons at Northampton.

BRANDIRE, see Brand, Brander.

BRAND-IRON, sb. n.Lin. Shr. A branding-iron for branding cattle or farming stock.

(Wright, J. 1898: 376)

This definition model is common in language dictionaries in general and also especially dense in dialect dictionaries. The above image illustrates 6 consecutive entries in Wright, J. (1898), in which 4 entries are defined by referring to another annotation with “see...”, the other two are defined by their description.

- For the entries that indicate things specifically available in a certain geographical region: they can be defined by illustrations (Wright, J. 1898; Frederic G. Cassidy 1991). However, this model is also used selectively, not for all entries with this property.

Table 3: Definition model of dictionaries

<b>Definition model</b>	<b>Dictionaries</b>	<b>(1)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(4)</b>
Definition by equivalence in common language/by comparison		+	+	+	+
Definition by description, explanation, interpretation		+	+	+	+
Definition by stating meanings, or by annotating in parentheses		+	+	+	-
Definition by referring to another annotation		+	+	+	+
Definition by illustrations		+/-	+/-	-	-

## 2.2. Characteristics of the Vietnamese language and its influence on the compilation of dialect dictionaries

### 2.2.1. Typological features of the Vietnamese language

World languages are divided into 4 morphological typological classifications, namely, agglutinating (chấp dính), isolating (đơn lập), inflecting (biến hình), and polysynthetic (đa tổng hợp) (Stankevich, 1982). Based on morphological characteristics, the Vietnamese language is categorized as isolating language. Vietnamese is also known as a non-morphological, non-inflected, monosyllabic characterized by words with unchanged morphology. As a typical analytic language, in Vietnamese, grammatical meaning exists outside words and is expressed by various means such as empty words (hư từ), word order (trật tự từ), and intonation (ngữ điệu).

The basic feature of Vietnamese, as an isolating language, is its monosyllabicity – each syllable equals a ‘word’. The traditional Vietnamese view is that each morpheme is a syllable. Thus, the syllable becomes the basic unit of Vietnamese word-formation. The syllable as the basic grammatical unit (together with the other grammatical elements) is one of the most important features of the Vietnamese language.

### 2.2.2. The features of the Vietnamese syllable

In grammar, a morpheme is the smallest and simplest unit in terms of organization, and it carries grammatical value. Two specific features, “simple in organization” and “grammatically valuable”, must accompany each other. When a morpheme is identified, attention must be paid to both aspects at the same time (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, 1998: 11).

In Vietnamese, a syllable is an obvious unit. It is pronounced in one breath, heard as a sound (phonetics), and written in a single block (orthography). The salience of syllables in both sound and sight makes it possible for Vietnamese speakers to easily identify syllables. Although there are controversies regarding this basic unit in Vietnamese grammar tradition, in general, the widely accepted view is that a syllable



is a morpheme because it satisfies two criteria: “simplest in organization” and “grammatically valuable”.

After much debate, Vietnamese linguists generally agree that “each syllable is a word”, of course not without exceptions (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1999:209). Such exceptional cases in comparison with syllable-as-word only account for a small proportion. As a result, syllables such as *má, già, pheo, xống, sá* in *chó má* (dog), *cỏ già* (grass), *tre pheo* (bamboo), *áo xống* (shirt), *đường sá* (road)..., or *lẽo, lè, đắ* in *lạnh lẽo* (cold), *xanh lè* (green), *đỏ đắ* (red)..., and *bù, nhìn, mồ, hôi, bồ, hóng* in *bù nhìn* (scarecrow), *mồ hôi* (sweat), *bồ hóng* (soot)... are still assigned a “meaning” and include a grammatical boundary between combinations containing them.

In this way, Vietnamese linguists grant syllables a special “linguistic status”: a syllable is both a morpheme and a word (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1999: 209). The syllable is the basic unit of the Vietnamese language in terms of phonetic, lexical-semantic and grammatical aspects.

### **2.2.3. The characteristics of Vietnamese regarding the compilation of dialect dictionaries.**

In essence, a dialectal dictionary is a kind of monolingual dictionary. Its glossary structure resembles a national language dictionary, apart from some differences in the foregoing analysis. Therefore, the compilation of a Vietnamese dialectal dictionary is also subject to the same rules in terms of language-specific characteristics as when compiling a standard language dictionary.

a. Due to typological characteristics, Vietnamese words have no affixational morphology. Non-morphological features require the dictionary compiler to consider how to deal with a range of problems related to vocabulary, semantics, and the grammar of words in the dictionary.

a1. Distinguishing parts of speech: Due to the lack of affixational morphology, for homonyms of different parts of speech, the identification of the part of speech must be based on the syntactic context. In the entry structure, the information about the part of speech must be annotated first, and examples are provided later to demonstrate how a word works in its syntactic context. Thus, attention should be paid to the appropriateness between the part of speech and the word’s semantic function in a clausal or phrasal context.

a2. Homonyms: There are two types of homonyms: random homonyms and origin-meaning interrelated homonyms. Random homonyms are treated separately in different entries, as in these examples.

**Dằm** *t.* Many

**Dằm** *đg.* Spread

**Dằm** *d.* A piece of bamboo stabbed into the skin

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 114-115)

In this case, it is appropriate to explain the three homonyms of the form “dằm” in three different entries.

However, should origin-meaning interrelated homonyms be treated as homonyms or as meanings of polysemy? If they are treated as homonyms, they should be located in different entries and have a homologous relationship. If they are treated as meanings of polysemy, they should all belong to one entry but in a certain hierarchical relation. This issue should be discussed further. In our opinion, either way is possible. However, consistency must be maintained among all groups. It is noted that in a monosyllabic language like Vietnamese, homonymy is very common.

Further references: The 1997 version of Hoang Phe’s Vietnamese dictionary treats random homonyms as different entries, while origin-meaning interrelated homonyms are arranged in one entry according to the hierarchy of meaning relations (Hoang Phe, 1997). The 2015 edition of the same dictionary, also edited by Hoang phe, puts all homonyms into one entry and distinguishes them by symbols: random homonyms are denoted by “■”, while origin-meaning interrelated homonyms are denoted by roman numbers “I, II, III...” (Hoàng Phê, 2015: VI-VII). Other Vietnamese dialect dictionaries, such as Nguyễn Nhã Bản 1999, Phạm Văn Hảo 2009 or Huỳnh Công Tín 2009, treat all homonym units in separate entries.

a3. Polysemy: although there are not many cases of polysemy in dialectology, it is necessary to reach agreement on a suitable convention.

Monosyllabic units are more likely to have multiple meanings than polysyllabic units. The treatment for polysemy seems simpler and easier to reach consensus than the one for homonymy. Current Vietnamese dictionaries including both language and dialect dictionaries all place each polysemy units in one entry. The meanings of polysemous units are ranked in order from basic meanings to derivative meanings according to systematic semantic relations and to single derivation meanings which are numbered from 1 to the last item.

However, it is important to interpret meanings of polysemous words to ensure the accuracy and compatibility with illustrative sentences, as in this example.

For example:

**Dang** *đg.* 1. People in either side of the line. *Đứng dang ra.*

2. Stay away to one side. *Hạ dang ra hai bên ni.*

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 113)

In the above example, in the second meaning, the interpretation and the illustration are not compatible.

b. Due to the monosyllabic situation, it is necessary to take the following cases into consideration:

b1. With entries of the same structural elements (the same first syllable, should we consider it one entry with 2 levels or two different entries?

For example, on page 207, in the *Nghệ Tĩnh dialect dictionary*, [**Lái** d. Lưới] is presented in one entry, followed by 17 other entries that begin with “Lái” (*lái bén, lái bọc, lái chân...*) to refer to 17 different types of nets. The Vietnamese dialect dictionary by Phạm Văn Hào shares the same features. “Lái” does not exist in the *Nghệ Tĩnh dictionary* by Trần Hữu Thung and Thái Kim Đĩnh; however, for several similar units, the dictionary treats single-syllable words as a headword in a 2-level entry structure, whereas the remaining polysyllabic words are the combination of a headword and another element, which are viewed as smaller entries, level 2, belonging to the main entry. This solution is the similar to that of Pigneaux de Behaine (1772) and Taberd J. L. (1838) in the *Dictionarium Anamitico - Latinum* with headwords as a syllable-grapheme.

b2. The precise manipulation of the role and function of the different elements ensures an accurate and consistent interpretation.

For example:

<b>Group 1:</b>	Meanwhile
<b>Lộ</b> d. Lỗ	<b>Group 2:</b>
<b>Lộ môm</b> d. Môm	<b>Lộ</b> d. Chỗ
<b>Lộ mũi</b> d. Mũi	<b>Lộ mô</b> d. Chỗ nào
<b>Lộ tai</b> d. Tai	<b>Lộ ni</b> d. Chỗ này
<b>Lộ túm</b> d. Dúm (Thạch Hà)	<b>Lộ nớ</b> d. Chỗ ấy

(Nguyễn Nhã Bản, 1999: 223)

In the above example, *lộ* meaning *lỗ* and *chỗ* is the main element in its combination with the latter one, but it is interpreted with different functions in the two groups. The explanations in group 1 do not reflect properly the function of the main element, and are thereby inconsistent with the true meaning of the naming units. Such elements like *mũi* in *lỗ mũi*, *tai* in *lỗ tai*, *môm* in *lỗ môm* are all complementary elements which are unable to replace or represent the main element. All entries in group 1 should be interpreted as those in group 2 with *chỗ* as the main element; meanwhile, it is consistent

and satisfactory that *nào, này, ấy* should merely function as complementary elements which supplement semantic features.

In conclusion, in order to compile a national or regional dialect dictionary, it is worth conducting a thorough study of the theoretical background related to the dictionary and the compilation process of the dictionary, such as a basic structure including macrostructure, microstructure and definition structures. In this regard, along with inheriting the theoretical achievements for dictionary compilation in general, it is necessary to identify and further study the characteristic elements of dialectal dictionaries (different from common language dictionaries) in both the macro and micro structures, and especially the definition structure. Additionally, the design of survey tools, program development, plans for field surveys, collaborator selections, and so on, are among the specific tasks in the study of dialects in general and compilation of dialectal dictionaries in particular. These tasks are considered as follow-up activities that need to be undertaken after theoretical research in this article.

## References

- Adam, M., (2011) *Words of America: A Field Guide*, Humanity, Volume 32, Number 5.
- Barbato, M. and Varvaro, A. (2004) *Dialect dictionaries*, International Journal of Lexicography, 17(4):429-439, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijl/17.4.429>.
- Behaine, Pigneaux de (1772) *Dictionarium Anamitico - Latinum*, Bibliothèque nationale de France.
- Cao, Xuân Hạo (1999) *Tiếng Việt: mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ nghĩa, ngữ pháp* [Vietnamese: some issues with phonetics, semantics, grammar], Nhà xuất bản Giáo Dục, Hà Nội.
- Cassidy, Frederic G. (Chief Editor) (1991) *Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Đặng, Ngọc Lệ and Phan, Xuân Thành (1999), *Từ điển đối chiếu: từ địa phương* [Contrastive dictionary: local word], Nxb Giáo Dục, Hà Nội.
- Đặng, Thanh Hòa (2005) *Từ điển phương ngữ tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese dialect dictionary], Nhà xuất bản Đà Nẵng, Trung tâm Từ điển học, Đà Nẵng.
- Frawley, William J. (2003) *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, Vol 2, Oxford University Press.
- Fukushima, C. (2017a) *Dialect lexicography in Japan*, Dialectologia. Special issue, IV (2013), 77-90.
- Fukushima, C. (2017b) *Dialect dictionary in Japan: Comparison with alcover's dictionary*, Dialectologia. Special issue, VII (2017), 73-81.

- Greenbaum, S., (2009) *Review of Dictionary of American Regional English*, Journal of American Studies, Volume 20, Issue 03, December 1986, pp 462 - 464 DOI: 10.1017/S0021875800012792, Published online: 16 January 2009.
- Hoàng, Phê (1993) *Một số vấn đề từ điển học (qua việc biên soạn cuốn Từ điển tiếng Việt)* [Some lexicographical issues (through the compilation of the Vietnamese Dictionary)], *Tc Ngôn ngữ*, Số 4. 1993.
- Hoàng, Phê (2015) *Từ điển tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese Dictionary], Nxb Đà Nẵng, Trung tâm Từ điển học.
- Huỳnh, Công Tín (2009) *Từ điển từ ngữ Nam Bộ* [Southern Vocabulary Dictionary], Nxb Chính trị Quốc gia, Hà Nội.
- Huỳnh, Tịnh Paulus Của (1895) *Đại Nam Quốc Âm tự vị*, Saigon, Emprimerie REY, CURION Cie.
- Keymeulen, J. V (2018) *The Dialect Dictionary*, in “Handbook of Dialectology”, Blackwell, 2018, 39-56.
- Markus, M. (2006), Joseph Wright’s English Dialect Dictionary (1898-1905) Computerised: architecture and retrieval routine, *Digital Historical Corpora*, 3-10 Dec.
- Markus, M. (2021), *Joseph Wright’s sources in the English Dialect Dictionary: evidence of spoken English from EDD Online*, *Journal Dialectologia Geolinguistica*, <https://doi.org/10.1515/dialect-2021-0005>
- Markus, M. (2021), *English Dialect Dictionary Online: A New Departure*, *English Dialectology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press* (computerised version of Wright’s *English Dialect Dictionary*).
- Moulin, C., (2010), *Dialect dictionaries - traditional and modern*, in *Language and Space: An International Handbook of Linguistic Variation*, Volume 1, Edited by Peter Auer and Jürgen Erich Schmidt, De Gruyter Mouton.
- Nguyễn, Nhã Bản (chủ biên) (1999) *Từ điển tiếng địa phương Nghệ Tĩnh* [Nghệ Tĩnh dialect dictionary], Nxb Văn hoá thông tin, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1998) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese Grammar], Nhà xuất bản Đại học Quốc gia, Hà Nội.
- Phạm, Văn Hào (chủ biên) (2009) *Từ điển phương ngữ tiếng Việt* [Vietnamese dialect dictionary], Nxb Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Rhodes, A. de (1651, phiên bản 2021), *Từ điển Việt - Bồ - La và các cứ liệu liên quan* [Vietnamese - Portuguese - Latin dictionary and related documents], Bản dịch Việt ngữ: Đỗ Quang Chính, Hoàng Xuân Việt, Thanh Lăng, Bùi Thị Minh Thuý, Nxb Tôn giáo, TP. HCM
- Stankevich, N.V (1982) *Loại hình các ngôn ngữ* [Typology of languages], NXB Đại học và Trung học chuyên nghiệp, Hà Nội.
- Taberd J. L. (1838, 2004), *Dictionarium Anamitico - Latinum*, Nxb Văn học, Hà Nội.
- Trần, Hữu Thung và Thái, Kim Đĩnh (1997) *Từ điển tiếng Nghệ* [Nghệ Dialect Dictionary], Nhà xuất bản Nghệ An, Nghệ An.
- Trịnh, Cẩm Lan (2022) *Vài nét về từ điển phương ngữ và việc biên soạn từ điển phương ngữ ở Việt Nam* [Some aspects of dialect dictionaries and the compilation of dialect dictionaries

in Vietnam], Tạp chí Từ điển học và Bách khoa thư, Số 6 (80), 11.2022, ISSN: 1859-3135, 18-27.

Wright, J., (1898), *The English Dialect Dictionary* (EDD), Oxford University Press.

*Dictionary of American Regional English (DARE)*, <https://dare.news.wisc.edu/>.

## **Explanation of the Name "Bà Đanh" Pagoda**

Trương Nhật Vinh  
(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, Vietnam National University Hanoi)

**Abstract:** The Red River Delta in general and Thăng Long in Hà Nội in particular have been the political, economic, and cultural center of Vietnam for the past thousand years. This has led to an extremely complex agglomeration of different population groups across the region. Apart from the local residents who speak Austroasiatic languages, there have been other residents who historically used Austronesian, Tai-Kadai, and Sino-Tibetan languages in this area. Through an interdisciplinary approach with a focus on historical linguistics, this article aims to explain the origins and meaning of “Bà Đanh,” the name of a famous pagoda in Northern Vietnam. The findings indicate that “Bà Đanh” emerged from the phonetic Vietnamization of the name of “Po Yang Dari” goddess. This is proof that the Cham people, while coexisting with the Vietnamese in the Red River Delta, not only preserved their cultural identity but also established distinct characteristics that endure to this day.

**Key words:** Red River Delta, Cham - Vietnamese language contact, culture contact, historical linguistics, Bà Đanh

### **1. Introduction**

Red River Delta is a vast region in Northern Vietnam, with the Red River serving as the main lifeline for human habitation. This region presently consists of 10 provinces and cities, including the capital of Vietnam—Hanoi. From a historical perspective dating back to ancient times, the Red River Delta is considered the “cradle” of Vietnamese civilization. Throughout history, the Red River Delta has been chosen as the political, economic, and cultural center of Giao Chỉ, Đại Việt, and now Vietnam. Consequently, many researchers have claimed that the Red River Delta culture is the most ancient and representative traditional culture of Vietnam (Ngô Đức Thịnh 2016, pg.661).

When referring to the concept of a cultural area or cultural space, various theories have been proposed, such as “diffusionism” and the “center–periphery theory.” The common point between these theories is the interrelationship between the center and periphery of a cultural area. Each cultural area always has central and peripheral sections. The interaction between these two sections is two-way. The key feature of the peripheral section is that it accumulates and develops values from the center. From the

---

TRƯƠNG, Nhật Vinh. 2023. Explanation of the Name "Bà Đanh" Pagoda. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8153120>

examination of the theories above and historical practices, it is apparent that the Red River Delta has been the cultural center of Vietnam. This is proven by the presence of communities organized in the forms of villages, the religious life of the region as well as traditional songs and poems.

This article aims to specify articulate the origins and meaning of the “Bà Đanh,” a term that which may hold traces of language and cultural transformation in the Red River Delta. All Vietnamese people are all familiar with this fact, which is reflected in through the idiom: “Vắng như chùa Bà Đanh” (As quiet as the Bà Đanh pagoda). Multiple In fact, there are more than one temple whichs are called “Bà Đanh.” According to our data, there are at least three<sup>3</sup> temples in the region with this appellat ioncalled Bà Đanh. The first temple is in Thụy Khuê streetStreet, Tây Hồ districtDistrict, Hanoi (Sino name: Châu Lâm Tự). The second one is in Ngọc Sơn, Kim Bông districtDistrict, Hà Nam Pprovince (Sino name: Bảo Sơn Tự). And tThe third temple is in Thụy Hương, Kiến Thụy, Hải Phòng city City (Sino name: Thiên Phúc Tự). Aside from the templesones above, there is one more temple temple in the North- Central Coast region that is also got referred to as Bà Đanh. It is which in is now in Xuân Hòa, Nam Đàn district, Nghệ An province.

## 2. Literature review

In explaining the idiom, “Vắng như chùa Bà Đanh,” Nguyễn Lân said that Bà Đanh temple in Thụy Khuê village, Hanoi, also referred to as Phúc Lâm temple, was built by a woman named Bà Đanh in the Lê Dynasty. But after changes through time, fewer people came to worship, so it became solitary (Nguyễn Lân, 2008, pg. 337). However, in some recent research, Đinh Hồng Hải has proven the lack of basis in Nguyễn Lân’s statement. Also, he agreed with Tạ Chí Đại Trường’s early opinion referred in some of his research about the development of the people’s religious beliefs in Vietnam.

According to Tạ Chí Đại Trường, the Vietnamese religious system is similar to a picture that reflects the interaction and contact of Đại Việt / Vietnamese culture with some near cultures. Therefore, besides indigenous gods, the Vietnamese “accept” exotic gods, one of which is a spirit that originated from the Champa (nation) or Cham people (ethnicity). Tạ stated that Bà Đanh worship (evidenced by the existence of temples named “Bà Đanh” in the Red River Delta) is basically traditional fertility beliefs that are quite common in the world as well as in Vietnam. Moreover, the Vietnamese goddess “Bà Đanh” is the Po Yang Dari (or Po Yan Dari) —the goddess of procreation in Cham culture (Tạ Chí Đại Trường 2014).



In a similar vein to Tạ Chí Đại Trường, Đinh Hồng Hải approached the concept of Bà Đanh in Vietnamese culture by drawing parallels with the concept of “Shakti” in many cultures. Đinh compared the Bà Đanh image in Vietnamese culture with the goddess Lajja Gauri in Indian culture. Drawing upon traditional fertility belief activities and focusing mostly on the basic motif of sculptures, the author came to the conclusion that Bà Đanh is a goddess who only exists in culture and art (she’s not a real figure) and her origin came from Cham culture (Po Yang Dari). Furthermore, Hai said that both Bà Đanh and the Po Yang Dari goddess were influenced by the goddess Lajja Gauri in Indian culture (Đinh Hồng Hải 2018).

In the three explanations above, Nguyễn Lân’s elucidation is completely based on traditional studies; therefore, it has failed to convince researchers. Nevertheless, his explanation can serve as a useful source of information. The other two explanations have proven to be reliable when they are based on not only specific evidence but also on a comparison with other goddesses in related cultures. However, due to a dependence on historical and cultural studies, authors have ignored the linguistic aspects regarding the connection between Po Yang Dari and Bà Đanh. Addressing this gap is the object of this article.

### 3. Discussion

Based on linguistic evidence supported by historical and cultural and geographical proof, it is possible to hypothesize that the term “Bà Đanh” originated from the Cham language and underwent Vietnamization by the inhabitants of the Red River Delta. The following sections provide a discussion of this hypothesis.

#### 3.1. Historical documentary evidence

The relationship between Vietnamese and Cham communities was written in “Đại Việt sử kí toàn thư” (大越史記全書 – Complete Annals of Đại Việt) under the title “Chiêm Thành people.” This record systematically documents their presence in Southern Đại Việt. According to our statistics, “Đại Việt sử kí toàn thư” (ĐVSKTT) has mentioned the term “Chiêm Thành” 320 times. According to ĐVSKTT, the first significant presence of the Cham people was first recorded in the late 10th century. After a conflict with Chiêm Thành, Lê Đại Hành captured Cham warriors and courtesans as prisoners. However, ĐVSKTT does not explain how Lê Đại Hành treated these prisoners. It was only in 1044, during the reign of Lý Thái Tông, that the exact numbers and position of the Cham population in the Red River Delta were clearly recorded. Lý Thái Tông

captured 5000 prisoners and resettled them from Vĩnh Khang town to Đăng Châu, put incense in imitation of the old name of Chiêm Thành (Ngô Sĩ Liên 2010, pg. 165). Over 400 years later, in 1471, a great wave of Cham immigration occurred once again when Lê Thánh Tông led Cham prisoners back to Thăng Long. These two immigrations (with some minor ones as a result of prolonged wars between Đại Việt and Chiêm Thành) led to the establishment of the Cham community alongside the Vietnamese people in Red River Delta and the North–Central Coast region.

As mentioned above, the presence of the Cham community can be traced back for a thousand years. During this period, the Cham people spread their language and culture, assimilating it with that of the Vietnamese. ĐVSKTT mentions many times Đại Việt’s attitudes and policies towards this community. For example, in 1471, Cham prisoners had to go to Châu Lâm viện for registration. In 1472, regulations stipulated changes to Cham-origin names in administrative records, and officials and peasants were forbidden from hiding Cham individuals. In 1499, marriage between Vietnamese males and Cham females was banned (Ngô Sĩ Liên 2010).

It is interesting to note that Cham culture’s effect on Vietnamese culture was not explicitly recorded by scribes. However, the policies above can provide some insights into the lively energy of Cham culture as it integrated with Vietnamese culture in the Red River Delta. Furthermore, these policies provide clear proof of a stable, enduring Cham community in the delta.

### 3.2. Geographical locations of the temples

The first temple, known as Bà Đanh Temple, is in Hanoi. Its Sino-Vietnamese name is “Châu Lâm Tự.” The temple was originally built in the area that included Châu Lâm Institute (northwest of the Citadel and next to West Lake). Emperor Lê Thánh Tông used this temple to check prisoners (mostly Cham) before moving them elsewhere (Ngô Sĩ Liên, 2010, pg. 472). This area is now occupied by Chu Văn An High School in Thụy Khuê, Tây Hồ District). The temple was moved to Alley 199 Thụy Khuê Street in 1908 when the French Government took over to build Thành Chung Bảo Hộ School (the predecessor of Chu Văn An High School). Nguyễn Huy Lượng mentioned the temple in the following lines in “Tụng Tây Hồ phú” written in the early 19th century (1801):

“瓠布丐募印吃府  
境埜釘花唾翹廚”

Translation in Vietnamese:

“Dầu Bó Cái rêu in nền phủ

Cảnh Bà Đanh hoa khép cửa chùa.”



Map 1. Distribution of Bà Đanh Temple in Northern Vietnam

Hence, the information regarding Bà Đanh Temple in West Lake is fairly accurate. Moreover, not far from Bà Đanh Temple (approximately 4 km away), there is Thiên Niên Temple in Trích Sài Village which also has Cham culture. Inside the temple, there is a figure worshipping. The figure is called Phan Thị Ngọc Đô (a Cham maid who later became Emperor Lê Thánh Tông’s concubine). Phan is considered the female founder of “Dệt Lĩnh” in Trích Sài Village, formerly Kê Bưởi (Bùi Văn Nguyên, Vũ Tuấn Sán, 1975). To this day, on the 5th of January, people in Trích Sài Village hold a festival to remember her. In the vicinity, there is also Đa Gia Li / Phú Gia Village, a formal Cham settlement (Trương Nhật Vinh 2020). Combining these traditional cultural and historical documents with the existence of Đa Gia Li / Phú Gia mentioned above, it can be inferred that there was a formal Cham settlement around West Lake, near Thăng Long Citadel.

Bà Đanh Temple in Hà Nam is located in a historical area that is believed to have had a Cham settlement. Geographically, Hà Nam is in the South of Thăng Long Citadel, which is also a river region. Therefore, all Đại Việt conflicts with southern nations, especially naval battles, must have occurred in this area. According to ĐVSKTT, in 1044, on the way back from Chiêm Thành, Emperor Lý Thái Tông stopped at Ly Nhân to rest. The emperor wanted the Cham emperor’s concubine named My Ê to serve him. However, to preserve her pride, My Ê committed suicide by jumping into the river. To

pay his respects to My, Lý Thái Tông made her “Hự Thiện phu nhân” and built a temple in her memory (Ngô Sĩ Liên 2010, pg. 165). This figure and the related story have also been recounted in “Việt điện u linh” written by Lý Tế Xuyên.

Nowadays, Hà Nam has 15 worship sites straggled around Lý Nhân and Thanh Liêm districts in Phủ Lý City. Furthermore, archaeological findings in some sites in Hà Nam, such as Đọi Temple and Sùng Điện Diên Linh Tower also reveal traces of Cham culture. These sites contain many Kinari statues, bricks with Apsara dancer details, and Champa tympanums, which reflect Cham’s architectural influence in these sites (Nguyễn Minh San 2015). The evidence above shows that Hà Nam used to be a Cham settlement, which explains the existence of spiritual constructions related to Champa, including the Bà Đanh temple in this area.

Regarding Bà Đanh Temple in Nghệ An Province, the historical writings in ĐVSKTT provide a reasonable basis to confirm the presence of a Cham settlement in this area and explain that Emperor Lý Thái Tông settled Cham prisoners in the region: “từ trấn Vĩnh Khang đến Đăng Châu, đặt hương ấp phỏng tên gọi cũ của Chiêm Thành” (Ngô Sĩ Liên 2010, pg. 165). “Trấn Vĩnh Khang” in the Lê Dynasty corresponds to Nghệ An Province, while “Đăng Châu” corresponds to Lào Cai and Yên Bái. Archaeology findings also support this information. In 2010, the Institute of Archaeology announced the discovery of some Cham artifacts in Quỳnh Hợp District, Nghệ An Province.

Based on historical, cultural, and archaeological information in Hanoi, Hà Nam, and Nghệ An District, it can be concluded that the theory of all Bà Đanh Temple locations inside Cham settlements is reliable. However, for the Bà Đanh Temple in Hải Phòng, we have not gathered evidence to support the presence of a Cham settlement there.

### **3.3. Spiritual cultural evidence**

All the temples mentioned above do not house any Bà Đanh statues. This absence poses a challenge in proving the similarity between the Bà Đanh in Vietnamese culture and the Po Yang Dari goddess in Cham culture.

However, other sites have provided valuable information. Two ancient village communal houses in the Red River Delta region are Tây Đằng (built during the Mạc dynasty in the 16th century is one of the oldest village communal houses in Vietnam) and Yên Bò (built in the 17th century). According to architectural researchers, these communal houses, located in Ba Vì District, Hanoi, still preserve Cham-style carvings that depict Bà Đanh as a symbol of fertility. Moreover, the Bà Đanh statue in Yên Bò

is positioned in an upper place in front of Thành Hoàng Làng's tablet. At this village communal house, a ceremony is performed for infertile families. The ceremony commences with the couple, under the guidance of a custodian, placing offerings on the main altar. After the ceremony, the husband holds a "hì" stick and pokes 3 times at the "khe linh" inside the Bà Đanh Statue (Long, 2016). There are currently inhabitants in the Red River Delta who hand down the story of Trạng Quỳnh in the form of a poem about the Bà Đanh Statue:

“Khen ai đẽo đá tạc nên thầy!  
 Khéo đứng ru mà đứng mãi đây?  
 Trên cổ đếm đeo dăm chuỗi hạt.  
 Dưới chân đứng chéo một đôi giày,  
 Ấy đã phất cờ trâu gheo tiểu,  
 Hay là bốc gạo thử thanh thầy?  
 Có ngựa gằn đây nhiều gốc dứa,  
 Phô phang chi ở đám quân này.”

Bà Đanh (Banh) has appeared not only in folk culture but also in an “official” literary work—the Nôm script poem written by Emperor Lê Thánh Tông:

“Chôn long cung cảnh giới này,  
 Uầy, ai đứng đây lờ lỏ thay!  
 Miệng cười hơn hơn hoa in nhụy.  
 Má đỏ hồng hồng tóc vén mây.  
 Ấy rắp phất cờ trâu gheo tiểu,  
 Hay toan bốc gạo thử thung thầy.  
 Chẳng lên bảo điện ngời thông thà,  
 Khéo đứng ru mà đứng mãi đây?”

These poems identify Bà Đanh with fertility characteristics. However, both versions use “Bà Banh” instead of “Bà Đanh”. The phonetic difference between “Bà Đanh” and “Bà Banh” can basically be explained through the principle of historical phonetics. In Bà Đanh, the first consonant is /d/, while in Bà Banh, it is /b/. In modern Vietnamese, these two consonants have different articulation positions, /b/ is bilabial while /d/ is alveolar. However, the consonants share the same stop and voiced method of articulation. According to historical phonetics, the change process of both phonemics mentioned has many parallel points (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn 1995, pg.41). Specifically, these sounds used to be voiceless sounds \*p and \*t. The process of changing from voiceless to voiced sounds—from \*p to /b/ and from \*t to /d/—maybe have occurred before the 17th century. Besides, in contemporary Vietnamese, there are instances where /b/ and

/d/ can be used interchangeably, such as in the verb “đậu/bậu”; for example: “Con ruồi đậu trên đĩa / con ruồi bậu trên đĩa”. In short, from a linguistic perspective, the names Bà Đanh and Bà Banh may be considered variations of the same appellation.

From descriptions in architectural carvings, poetry and worship, we can clearly see that people’s desire for fertility proliferates through Bà Đanh. Therefore, the idea that Bà Đanh is a Vietnamese representation of the Po Yang Dari goddess, as previously stated by authoritative authors, is proven to be culturally substantiated.

### 3.4. Linguistic evidence

As far as we know, the similarities between the name Po Yang Dari, the goddess of the Cham, and the Vietnamese pagoda, Bà Đanh, are not only supported by other evidence but also by the phonetic correspondence of these two toponyms. It is plausible to argue that “Bà Đanh” is a result of the Vietnamization process of Cham’s original name “Po Yang Dari.” In Cham culture, all names of gods, such as “Po Yang Ino Nagar” (the Mother of the World), “Po Yang Cek” (the God of the Mountain), and “Po Yang Tathik” (the God of the Sea), all have the same feature: they have a structure consisting of three parts. To be clear, “Po” (or “Poh” or “Ppo”) means Lord, while “Yang” means God and “Ino Naga,” “Cek,” “Tathik,” or “Dari” are their specific names (the order of “Po” and “Yang” can be reversed). Additionally, we compare the Cham god name “Po Yang Dari” with the corresponding names of gods in some languages that belong to the Austronesian Dispersal and which are related to Cham languages:

Cham language	Po/ Ppo	Yang	Dari
Ede language	Pô	Yang	Êra
Jrai language	Pô	Yang	Dra
Indonesian language	Pakanira	Batara (goddess)	Dara
Vietnamese (meaning)	Ngài/ đấng	Thần	-

There are clear correspondences between the phonetics of Po/Ppo and Yang in Cham and other related languages. However, the correspondences between the phonetics and meaning of “Dari” in Cham and similar words in other related languages are complicated, and they need to be explained.

In contemporary usage, the Cham word “dara” has an exact or close phonetics and meaning with corresponding words in Indonesian, Ede, and Jrai, all of which refer to a girl. Historically, words such as “dara/êra/dra” in Austronesian languages trace their origin to the word “dara,” which means wife or woman in Sanskrit, a language that has ancient origins connected to Austronesian languages. However, over time, the meaning of these words in Cham, Ede, and Jrai languages started to change from wife to girl in

general. Sanskrit has had a category of sexes, and the word “dara” belonged to the female category. However, Cham language took a different path in its approach to sexes. In addition to denoting a girl, “dari” in Cham is also used to describe the Goddess of Lust or to talk about prostitutes. “Dari” is the result of the phonetic change from /a/ to /i/ to make the female category clear (there are other examples of phonetic changes to make a category clear in Cham and especially in the Indonesian language). After going through the original meaning of “dara” and all the cultural aspects and categories of sexuality conveyed through the word “dari,” we can confirm that the word “Dari” refers to the Goddess of Lust.

Based on the evidence of god appellations in the aforementioned languages and the phonetic description of “Bà Đanh,” we assumed that “Bà Đanh” is the result of the Vietnamization of “Po Yang Dari” in Cham. However, this Vietnamization process can hardly create changes between the sound P/Ppo and Bà due to some reasons.

Phonetically, both /o/ and /a/ are back vowels. However, they differ in terms of being close-mid and open vowels, respectively. Vietnamese phonetic history does not record any phonetic conversion rules between /o/ and /a/ or have exceptions with similar conversions in related languages. In Nha Trang, there is currently a famous Cham Towers complex in the center of the city. This complex was dedicated to the worship of the Yang Po Inur Nagar goddess (often called Yang Pô Ana Gar). However, locals usually call it the Bà Tower or Pô Nagar Tower instead of Bà Nagar Tower. This shows that there is hardly a phonetic conversion between the sound “po” in Cham and “bà” in Vietnamese. In addition, in the Red River Delta region, there are many goddesses whose names begin with the term “Bà,” for instance “Bà Chúa Kho,” “Bà Chúa Liễu,” and “Bà Chúa Thượng Ngàn.” Therefore, the appellation “Bà Đanh” could also have been affected by this trend.

In our opinion, if there was a process of Vietnamization in the name Bà Đanh/Banh, it would most likely involve the disappearance of the first syllable as can be observed in the phonetic correspondence between Đanh/Banh in Vietnamese and Dari/Dara in Cham. In the present-day Central Vietnam region, there are many sites of Cham origin. These sites were usually “left out” / there was a change in the final sounds during the Vietnamization process. For example:

Table 1. Correspondence of Cham name and Vietnamized name

Cham name	Vietnamized name	Type	Location
Parik	Phan Rí	region (town)	Bình Thuận
Panrang/ Pandarang	Phan Rang	region (city)	Ninh Thuận
Kanak	Cà Ná	region (village)	Ninh Thuận
Caduk	Cà Đu/ Cà Đú	mountains	Ninh Thuận
Cok Cabbang	Chà Bang	mountains	Ninh Thuận

Based on the phonetic characteristics of “Dari/Dara” and the relation of the word “Đanh” in the quote above to Vietnamized Cham-origin sites, it can be clearly seen that the sound “Đanh” has an almost identical correspondence of its first and main sounds with “Dari/Dara.” The disappearance of the ending “ri/ra” is understandable on account of the trend of the Vietnamization of Cham sites. Besides, an article by Trương Nhật Vinh (2020) mentioned the change process of a Cham-origin village in Hanoi. According to the article, there is a Cham village in Hanoi that was called “duo ia li/lich” (indicating the location) but underwent Sino-Vietnamization to “Đa Gia Li / Phú Gia” and Vietnamization to “Bà Già.” During this process, the last sound has disappeared, leaving behind only two syllables in order to fit in with the Vietnamese naming convention of sites. In short, it is highly reasonable to state that the name “Bà Đanh” was a result of the Vietnamization process of the Cham name “Po Yang Dari.”

#### 4. Conclusion

Many authors have researched and provided explanations about Vietnamized Cham sites. However, there is a clear lack of in-depth exploration of appellations. If the name “Bà Đanh” is really a result of the Vietnamization process of “Po Yang Dari” in Cham, it would serve as additional evidence demonstrating that the Cham people, while cohabiting with the Vietnamese in the Red River Delta region, did not lose their cultural identity. Cham lifestyle and spirituality have been maintained and fused with Vietnamese elements within the context of the Red River Delta. These findings further affirm the complexity and diversity of the inhabitants of the Red River Delta region.

#### References

Bùi, Văn Nguyên, Vũ Tuấn Sán (1975) *Truyện thuyết ven Hồ Tây* [Legend of West Lake], Hội Văn nghệ dân gian, Hà Nội.



- Đình, Hồng Hải (2018) *Tìm hiểu thần lực nữ tính (Shakti) qua biểu tượng Lajja Gauri trong văn hóa Ấn Độ và Bà Đanh trong văn hóa Việt Nam* [Learn about the feminine force (Shakti) through the symbol Lajja Gauri in Indian culture and Ba Danh in Vietnamese culture], Tạp chí Nghiên cứu văn học (2), 44-54.
- Đức, Ninh, Nguyễn Huy Hồng, Phạm Xuân Vị, Việt Linh (1991) *Từ điển Inđônêxia – Việt* [Indonesian - Vietnamese Dictionary], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Ngô, Sĩ Liên (2010) *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư: bản in nội các quan bản mộc bản khắc năm Chính Hòa thứ 18 (1697)* [Complete Annals of Đại Việt: printed version of the cabinet of the mandarin woodblock engraved in the 18th year of Chinh Hoa (1697)], Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội, Hà Nội.
- Nguyễn, Địch Long (2016) *Đình Tây Đằng: Một di sản văn hóa kiến trúc vĩnh tuyệt* [Tay Dang communal house: An eternal architectural cultural heritage]. <https://www.tapchikientruc.com.vn/chuyen-muc/dinh-tay-dang-mot-di-san-van-hoa-kien-truc-vingh-tuyet.html>
- Nguyễn, Lân (2008) *Từ điển thành ngữ và tục ngữ Việt Nam* [Dictionary of Vietnamese Idioms and Proverbs], Nhà xuất bản Tổng hợp Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1995) *Giáo trình lịch sử ngữ âm tiếng Việt (sơ thảo)* [Textbook of Vietnamese phonetic history (preliminary)], Nhà xuất bản Giáo dục, Hà Nội.
- Trần, Trí Dồi (2015) *Bàn thêm về vấn đề địa danh học ở Việt Nam* [To discuss more about the issue of toponymys in Vietnam], Tạp chí Ngôn ngữ, Số 04 (311), 3-17.

## The head of noun phrase in the Vietnamese language: From the viewpoint of linguists of the Vietnamese language

Võ Thị Minh Hà

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** Linguists of the Vietnamese language have agreed that the head of noun phrases must be nouns. Depending on each researcher's opinion, the position of the head of noun phrase may or may not include classifiers, along with nouns, due to the disagreement about the part of speech of classifiers. This paper will review domestic and foreign researchers' opinions on the head of noun phrases in the Vietnamese language. By determining the part of speech of classifiers, we can easily determine the head noun. Then, we can agree on the position of every unit in the structure of Vietnamese noun phrases. The result of this paper can aid in the studying and teaching of the Vietnamese language as a first language or a second/foreign language.

**Key words:** classifier, unit noun, head of noun phrase, countable mass noun, uncountable mass noun

### 1. Introduction

Noun phrases have been a research topic of grammar starting in the Renaissance period and continuing throughout the structuralism eras. Since the period of phrase grammar and generative linguistics until now, noun phrases have become the basic unit of syntax. In general, it is understood that a noun phrase: “traditionally thought of as consisting minimally of a head noun, together with any number of noun- phrase modifiers. Typical noun- phrase modifiers are determiners, quantifiers and quantifier phrases, adjectives and adjective phrases, nouns and noun phrases, adpositions and adpositional phrases and clauses” (Brown Keith (ed.), 2008, p. 714).

According to the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching & Applied Linguistics* (1992), a noun phrase (in structural linguistics, generative grammar, and related linguistic theories) is a group of words including a noun or a pronoun as the main element (head). A noun phrase can be simple and include only one word (for example, *Gina* in *Gina arrived yesterday*); or it can be long and complicated (for example, every word before *must* in: *The students who enrolled late and who have not*

---

VÕ, Thị Minh Hà. 2023. The head of noun phrase in the Vietnamese language: From the viewpoint of linguists of the Vietnamese language. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8153127>

*yet filled in their cards must do so by Friday*). (Jack C. Richards and Richard Schmidt, 1992, p. 336).

In the *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, a noun phrase is explained as: “grammatical category (or phrase) which normally contains a noun (*fruit, happiness, Phil*) or a pronoun (*I, someone, one*) as its head and can be modified (= specified) in many ways (...). Noun phrases can function in a sentence as subjects or objects or can appear as part of a prepositional phrase which itself functions as an object or an adverbial.” (Hadumod Bussman et al., 1998, p.816)

According to the theories listed above, the head of a noun phrase must be a noun. In more detail, a noun phrase is a headed construction and is one of the core constituents of a sentence. In a noun phrase, the head is always a noun. The head – which is a noun – can influence the other constituents that aid in the more detailed description of the head. Besides the connection to the other constituents in a noun phrase, the head is the only constituent that can represent the noun phrase to connect with other sentence elements outside of the noun phrase.

Many linguists of the Vietnamese language have had different interpretations of the main element of a noun phrase. The majority believe that the head of a noun phrase is the noun that follows the classifier. Many researchers, including M.B. Emeneau, L.C. Thompson, Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, Nguyễn Đình Hòa, Đinh Văn Đức, etc., have directly written about this theory. Others, such as Trần Trọng Kim, Phan Khôi, Lê Văn Lý, Nguyễn Phú Phong, Nguyễn Kim Thản, etc., indirectly mention it in their publications. Along with that, there are many more researchers that follow the eclectic direction, believing that the main element of a noun phrase consists of two constituents, a classifier and a noun, with the classifier being the main grammatical element and the noun being the main lexical element. This is called the compounded head model and is notated as T1 + T2. There are two linguists, Nguyễn Tài Cẩn and Diệp Quang Ban, who represent this preference. The third model of noun phrases was not well approved at first but there have been more and more researchers who have agreed afterward. In this model, the classifier is considered as a sub-constituent or even as a functional word that always functions as a determiner for the head whenever referring to counting. This third model considers T1 as the head of a noun phrase. At the beginning of his research, Nguyễn Tài Cẩn considered T2 as the head, but he later formed a different opinion and began to use the compounded head model T1 + T2. However, he ultimately concluded that T1 is the head of a noun phrase<sup>1</sup>. This third position receives approval by many in

---

<sup>1</sup> This issue has been explained thoroughly in Vũ Đức Nghiệu’s paper, named “Bước ngoặt trong tư tưởng Nguyễn Tài Cẩn về thành tố trung tâm danh ngữ” (Vũ Đức Nghiệu, 2021).

the subsequent generation of researchers, such as Cao Xuân Hạo, Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, Vũ Đức Nghiệu, etc.

In reality, due to many different interpretations of different researchers, there is no agreement on which element is the head of a noun phrase in Vietnamese. This lack of agreement leads to many issues in the acquisition of Vietnamese as a first, second, or foreign language. Solving this problem will benefit both instructors and students in teaching and learning Vietnamese.

## **2. Research Methodology**

One of the reasons why many researchers hesitate to choose T1 as the head of the noun phrase is that they believe classifiers do not belong to the category of parts of speech that are lexical words. Many even classify the classifier as a functional word. Therefore, by determining the characteristic of classifiers, we will be able to solve the issue of the main element in the structure of Vietnamese noun phrases. Along with that, determining which types of nouns can function as the head of a noun phrase is another issue this paper must solve.

To solve the two issues mentioned above, we collected information from 17 journal papers and books in Vietnamese and 5 English books that discuss noun phrases and Vietnamese noun classifications. From there, we can group different perspectives and their solutions for the issues around the head of a noun phrase. Along with that, we approached the topic of noun phrases from the perspective of general linguistics, which provides a basis to approach more specific aspects of the noun phrase in Vietnamese. More perspectives from other researchers inside and outside of Vietnam about the characteristics of the head of a noun phrase are also used as the basis to consider and examine other related issues.

This paper groups nouns by the criteria of [ $\pm$  countable] and [ $\pm$  unit] to have a basic classification to determine the characteristics of the head of a noun phrase. Besides that, other issues revolving around the characteristics of the part of speech of the classifier have been observed and explained to assess the noun characteristics of classifiers. On that basis, the writer has explained the model of the noun phrase in Vietnamese in which not only [ $\pm$  countable] or [ $\pm$  unit] nouns can function as the head but also classifiers.

## **3. The research literature**

In the early period, scholarly work related to Vietnamese grammar only went as far as the descriptions of parts of speech (in the introduction of the dictionaries by A. de

Rhodes, J. L. Taberd). Therefore, there were only descriptions of the noun in Vietnamese and some basic explanations of the combination between nouns and other parts of speech (due to elements of Eurocentrism). In the *Grammaire de la langue annamite* published in 1883, Trương Vĩnh Ký started with the special characteristics of Vietnamese to investigate the language and created a list of numerative nouns, general nouns, and specific nouns used with abstract verbs (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1998, pp. 345-346).

More detailed descriptions of nouns as a part of speech (constituents, syntagmatics, grammatical functions, etc.) were shown in the work of Trần Trọng Kim (1941). The topics of nouns and Vietnamese noun structure received much attention from researchers domestically and internationally. M.B. Emeneau mentioned these topics in his work and was the first person to propose the noun phrase model in Vietnamese that he called “schema of the enumerated constructions” (M.B. Emeneau, 1951, p. 85). Laurence C. Thompson’s (1965) research in Vietnamese linguistics does not mention the model but it describes somewhat carefully two sub-elements for a “substantival phrase”, plural markers and demonstrative markers. Lê Văn Lý (1972) divided the category of self group (nhóm tự ngữ) into single self group (nhóm tự ngữ đơn) and complex self group (nhóm tự ngữ phức tạp).

The topic of noun phrases in Vietnamese has been solved at the basic level since the publication of *Từ loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại* by Nguyễn Tài Căn (completed in 1960 and officially published in Vietnam in 1975). Later, many researchers applied this model in their own research and publications. For a period of time, the model with two heads (using both T1 and T2) proposed by Nguyễn Tài Căn was taught at the high school level. However, in the second appendix of that work, Nguyễn Tài Căn leaned toward the model that uses T1 (which are familiarly called “classifiers”) as the true head of a noun phrase (Nguyễn Tài Căn, 1975, pp. 292-293). He later reasserted this proposition in a work published in Russian in 1976 (Нгуэн ТайКан, 1976).

Besides the issues of the head of a noun phrase, the topics of the pre-head and the post-head of a noun phrase have been explained in detail in many works by Nguyễn Tài Căn (1975, 1976, 1996), Đinh Văn Đức (1986, 2001), Diệp Quang Ban (1998, 2008), etc. In those works, the determination of the pre- and post-head is dependent on the determination of the head of the noun phrase; therefore, the location and number of pre- and post-heads of noun phrases may vary between authors. However, there are always three possible locations for a pre-head of a Vietnamese noun phrase (counting leftward from the head): position 1 (extra cái - từ chỉ xuất cái), position 2 (numerative phrase - lượng ngữ chỉ số lượng), and position 3 (overall numerative phrase - lượng

ngữ chỉ toàn thể). There are also three locations for a post-head (counting rightward from the head), which are position 1' (restrictive adjunct - định ngữ hạn định), position 2' (descriptive adjunct - định ngữ miêu tả), and position 3' (locative adjunct - định ngữ chỉ vị trí)<sup>2</sup>.

A number of domestic and international dissertations apply the theory of the structure of noun phrases to investigate Vietnamese noun phrases, including the dissertations of Trần Đại Nghĩa (1996), Nguyễn Hùng Tường (2004), Trần Thuần (2009), Võ Thị Minh Hà (2017), etc.

#### 4. Research results

##### 4.1. Characteristics of the head of noun phrase

One of the most recognizable characteristics of a phrase is its more complicated organization. A phrase consists of more meanings than the head of the noun phrase by itself. In *Understanding Syntax* (2005), Maggie Tallerman listed seven characteristics of a head of a phrase: “(1) The head bears the most important semantic information in the phrase. (2) The word class of the head determines the word class of the entire phrase. (3) Heads are normally obligatory. (4) The head has the same distribution as the entire phrase, the head plus the dependents. (5) Heads select dependent phrases of a particular word class; these phrases are sometimes obligatory. (6) Heads often require their dependents to agree with some or all of the grammatical features of the head. (7) Heads may require their dependent NPs to occur in a particular grammatical case.” (Tallerman, 2005, p. 98).

The last two conditions (heads often require their dependents to agree with some or all of the grammatical features of the head and may require their dependent NPs to occur in a particular grammatical case) cannot be applied in Vietnamese because it is an isolating and analytic language. In Vietnamese, any noun that fulfills the other five conditions listed above can be a head of a noun phrase.

<sup>2</sup> The positions of constituents in the pre-head and post-head can be seen in a diagram as follows:

Pre- head			Head		Post-head		
3	2	1			1'	2'	3'
overall numera- tive phrase	numera- tive phrase	extra <i>cái</i>	T1	T2	restrictive adjunct	describe adjunct	location adjunct

In the fifth edition of her work (2020), Tallerman has modified the conditions of the head of a phrase into the following six conditions: “(1) The head bears the central semantic information in the phrase. (2) The word class of the head determines the word class of the entire phrase. (3) Heads are normally obligatory, while other material in a phrase may be optional. (4) Heads select dependent phrases of a particular word class; these phrases are sometimes obligatory and are known as COMPLEMENTS. (5) Heads often require their dependents to agree with some or all of the grammatical features of the head, such as gender or number. (6) Heads may require their dependent NPs to occur in a particular grammatical case. This is one form of a relationship traditionally known as GOVERNMENT: a head is said to govern the case of its dependent.” (Tallerman, 2020, pp. 120-121)

Tallerman made some changes in the conditions for the head unit: the most important information is semantic, not grammatical (condition 1). She added that the other material in a phrase may be optional (condition 3). She removed the former condition 4 that stated “The head has the same distribution as the entire phrase, the head plus the dependent constituents.” She added some details for conditions 5 and 6 from 2005, which are conditions 4 and 5 in the 2020 edition, and more clearly the final condition (i.e. condition 7 in the 2005 edition and condition 6 in the 2020 edition). Among the conditions from the 2020 publication, condition 5 is not suitable for Vietnamese because it is not an inflectional language. Therefore, it does not have a condition for the dependents to agree with some or all of the grammatical features of the head. Also, the condition 6 is suitable for a verb phrase. Hence, in this paper, conditions from 1 to 4 will be applied to explore the head of Vietnamese noun phrases.

Besides the model of the noun phrase in Vietnamese and the solutions for the pre- and post-heads of a noun phrase, Nguyễn Tài Cẩn proposed conditions for a phrase’s head: (1) the head of a phrase is the most important part of the phrase. (2) The head of the phrase is the only unit that has direct contact with other units in the phrase via syntax. (3) The head of the phrase controls the nature and function of the phrase. (4) The head of the phrase controls all inner constructions of a phrase. (5) The meaning of the head can have a relationship with the phrase’s structure. (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, 1999, pp. 152-154).

There are similarities between the conditions proposed by Tallerman (2005 and 2020) and Nguyễn Tài Cẩn: the head of a phrase is the most important unit (Tallerman: 1, 3; Nguyễn Tài Cẩn: 1, 3); the part of speech of the head determines the whole phrase’s part of speech (Tallerman: 2; Nguyễn Tài Cẩn: 3); the head of a phrase is the constituent that controls the whole phrase’s syntax (Tallerman: 5; Nguyễn Tài Cẩn: 4);

the first condition from Tallerman 2020 is similar to the fifth condition of Nguyễn Tài Căn.

We can conclude: a noun phrase is a phrase that includes a noun or a pronoun as the head and other constituents function as the head's sub-elements. In the combination of the opinions of the researchers listed above, the head of a noun phrase must fulfill the following: (1) The head is a mandatory constituent, while the other constituents may appear or not. (2) The part of speech of the head determines the part of speech of the entire phrase. (3) The head is the only constituent that has direct syntactic relationships with other elements that are outside of the phrase. (4) The head selects dependent constituents of a particular part of speech; these phrases are sometimes obligatory and are known as COMPLEMENTS.

#### 4.2 Issues about classifiers

In English, the term for “loại từ” is classifier; in French, it is *classificateur*. Classifiers can also be called *nom générique*, *pronominal*, *spécificatif*, and *article générique* (by Nguyễn Phú Phong, 2002, p. 9). Classifier are also called *phó danh từ* (1963) or *danh từ phụ thuộc* (1981) by Nguyễn Kim Thân, *numéral* by Trương Vĩnh Kí, or *danh từ loại thể* by UBKHXH (UBKHXH, 1983), etc. However, “classifier” is still the most common name.

In the structure of a noun phrase, this unit is usually located behind the numerators and/or the index (*cái*). Depending on each researcher's opinion, this unit might or might not be considered as a noun.

A group of researchers believe that the classifier is a dependent unit of the head of a noun phrase. However, Bùi Đức Tịnh proposes that “all classifiers originated from nouns” (Bùi Đức Tịnh, 2002, p. 61) but “grammatically, the combination of classifier and noun can be considered as a noun” (Bùi Đức Tịnh, 2002, p. 63). Lư Văn Lãng also concludes that “originally, the classifier was a unit noun but in cases when it precedes another noun, its lexical meaning will change, with some degree of reduction” (Lư Văn Lãng, 2000, p. 11). Other researchers do not mention the origin of the classifier but some classify it by using its auxiliary function: Trần Trọng Kim and colleagues call it a *loại từ* (1940), Nguyễn Kim Thân (1963) calls it a *phó danh từ* (quasi-noun), Lê Văn Lý (1972) believes they are words that have the function of testing the noun properties of Type A words, and Lư Văn Lãng (1970) calls them *hạn từ*. Not only showing the characteristics (noun) of this unit, Nguyễn Tài Căn also points out that “classifiers carry the characteristics of functional words that talk about natural units” (Nguyễn Tài Căn, 1975, p. 40) and is a group that “does not have obvious lexical



meaning and is used to count individual nouns by natural units of things and also serves to classify things into kinds” (Nguyễn Tài Căn, 1975, p. 123).

Researchers who acknowledge the noun nature of classifiers all believe that this is a subgroup of nouns in Vietnamese. M.B. Emeneau (1951) calls them non-classified nouns, having the functions of organizing into types; Nguyễn Kim Thân (1981) calls them danh từ phụ thuộc; researchers of the Social Sciences Committee (UBKHXH) (1983) call them danh từ loại thể; while Đinh Văn Đức (2015) claims classifiers are a subgroup of nouns. Cao Xuân Hạo believes that “a classifier is one of the semantic functions that a noun can have but it is not a part of speech and it is not a tool to classify nouns (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1998, p. 340).

Recognizing the part of speech essence of classifiers is not the same as acknowledging the head position of this unit in noun phrases. Most researchers think that classifiers have no noun nature, even as functional words, assuming that the position of the head belongs to the noun (T2) and that the classifier (T1) is just a unit that supplements the meaning of T2. However, some researchers in this group think that the head of a noun phrase is a combination of T1 and T2, such as Nguyen Tai Can (1975) and Diep Quang Ban (2008), or even considered this combination as the only noun, such as Bui Duc Tinh (2005). Researchers who acknowledge the noun nature of a classifier also acknowledge it as the head of a noun phrase, including Nguyen Tai Can (1975, 1976), Phan Ngoc (1998), Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha (2004). Researchers such as Dinh Van Duc (1986, 2015) and the researchers of the Committee of Social Sciences (1983), etc., assume that it is only a dependent unit, so the head of a noun phrase must be T2.

In the structure of noun phrases, there are unit nouns that stand in the same location as classifiers. Along with the exact realism unit nouns (ĐĐV thực hữu chính xác) such as kilograms, meters, liters, etc., and estimated realism unit nouns (ĐĐV thực hữu ước chừng) such as a handful, a wisp, a scoop, etc., there are also temporary unit nouns (ĐĐV lâm thời) such as bowl, mug, glass, etc. Temporary unit nouns usually have characteristics of approximately in measuring and was originated from realistic nouns. In the usages, they are usually used for temporary measuring; therefore, in the noun phrase structure, they can have two different positions depending on the intended meaning of the speaker.

Example:

hai	bát	gạo	≠	hai	cái	bát	ăn	com
two	bowl	pre-cooked rice		two	classifier	bowl	eat	cooked rice
		[+unit]				[+mass]		

(two bowls' quantity of pre-cooked rice)      (two bowls used for eating)

Many researchers split classifiers and unit nouns into two separate groups. During the early period of research about classifiers, 1957, Lưu Văn Lăng categorized classifiers into a small group of words that show the kind (từ chỉ loại) along with the group unit words (từ chỉ đơn vị) into a larger group that includes words that show kinds and units (từ chỉ loại và đơn vị) that belongs to the large category of nouns. However, later, he “separated classifiers out of unit nouns and put classifiers into a subgroup in hạn từ that are subordinate words (phụ từ) that revolve around the head, which can be called nominal, according to the theory of core hierarchy” (Lưu Văn Lăng, 2000, p. 10). L.C. Thompson (1965, p. 193); believed that “classifiers are categoricals which do not occur as single- word descriptive complements”; therefore, the quantity of classifiers in his system is low. Next, Phan Ngọc (1998) divided classifiers into true classifiers and pseudo-classifiers.

In the paper “Danh từ và các tiểu loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt” (Nouns and sub-categories of nouns in the Vietnamese language), Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha (2008) depend on the conditions [ $\pm$  unit] and [ $\pm$  countable] to list classifiers among unit nouns. It could be said that the main function of a classifier is to classify. Besides that, the countable and unit characteristics are the main characteristics of this unit. With the ability to count, measure, and show the kind, classifiers carry the essence of nouns; they are nouns that often do not contain lexical meaning. Put another way, a “classifier” is just a type of noun in Vietnamese. Different names for it, such as loại từ, loại tự, danh từ đơn thể or unit noun, or phó danh từ, do not change the characteristics of this type of noun.

Examined with respect to the position of this group of words, Nguyễn Tài Căn and the two researchers Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha (2008) have classified them as sub-categories of the group of unit nouns. However, unlike the subgroup of unit nouns, with a clear meaning of measurement, calculation, or counting, the subgroup of classifiers, besides being somewhat “empty” of lexical meaning, also carries implicit evaluative meanings, and sometimes their meanings are very subtle such that only native speakers can understand them. For example, *cái đèn, cây đèn, ngọn đèn; quả tim, trái tim, con tim; bộ lòng, cỗ lòng, côi long, tấm lòng*, etc. The modal meaning of classifiers is also evident when a [+countable] mass noun is [ $\pm$ ] combined with a classifier. For example: *giáo sư, hai vị giáo sư, hai ông giáo sư*. It is these modal meanings that suggest a solution to the independence of this classifier group from the unit nouns.

From the explanations above, it can be said that the classifier is a subtype of the nouns and it shares the same position with the unit noun in the noun phrase structure.

### **4.3. The head of noun phrase in the Vietnamese Language**

The head of a noun phrase must be a noun. The head is the representation of the syntactic ability for the whole noun phrase as a unit. The head of a noun phrase holds the role of controlling the relationships between all the elements within the noun phrase and being a core element in syntactic relation with other elements in a sentence. However, nouns in Vietnamese is a class of words that include subtypes with different characteristics of meaning and grammar that are not the same. Therefore, there are two different questions we need to answer. First, how many subtypes of nouns are there in Vietnamese? Second, do all subtypes of nouns have the same or different ability to be the head of a noun phrase?

The identification and classification of noun in Vietnamese was carried out in the earlier research by A. de Rhodes, A.J.L Taberd, Truong Vinh Kí, M.B. Emeneau, etc., with criteria such as: criteria [ $\pm$  general]; criteria [ $\pm$  classified]; criteria [ $\pm$  abstract]; criteria [ $\pm$  countable] and criteria [ $\pm$  unit]. However, among those classification criteria, the [ $\pm$  units] criterion will produce two types of nouns in the first classification: countable nouns and uncountable nouns. The countable nouns continue to be classified according to the criteria [ $\pm$  units] into: unit noun and mass noun. Mass nouns are again classified in the second order, using the criterion [ $\pm$  countable], with the results including: mass noun [+ countable] and mass noun [- countable]. These two classifications do not differ in the final result. They both give a table dividing the subtypes of nouns in Vietnamese including: unit noun, mass noun [+ countable], mass noun [- countable].

This paper used the method of classification based on the condition [ $\pm$  unit] at the first step. In the second step, we continue to classify nouns into two sub-groups: [-unit] and mass noun [ $\pm$  countable]. This classification method is close to the method of classifying into classified nouns and synthesis noun (well-known among syntactic researchers).

With the conditions of the head along with the results of the classification of noun in Vietnamese, we will discuss the subtypes of noun that has the ability to act as the center unit of noun in Vietnamese.

#### **4.3.1 A mass noun acts as head of a Vietnamese noun phrase**

Mass nouns are understood as “nouns that signified are set of attributes that make things denoted distinct from things represented by other mass nouns. Those are the

nouns refer to the kind or substance of things, not directly to things as entities with isolated forms of existence”. (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1998, p. 334)<sup>3</sup>.

Due to such characteristics, the vast majority of mass nouns cannot be divided but still can combine words that indicate quantity without numerical connotations. Based on the criteria of [ $\pm$  countable], mass noun is also divided into two subgroups: mass noun [+ countable] and mass noun [- countable].

“The mass noun [+countable] is a type of mass noun that is capable of individualizing or quantifying with words indicating numerical meanings and is capable of dominating all types of identifiers” (Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, 2008, p. 275)<sup>4</sup> so this type of noun completely satisfies the criteria for a head of a noun phrase. Besides, with the ability to indicate the type or material of things, mass noun [+ countable] also takes on the function of defining determiners for unit noun. This duality of mass noun [+countable] makes it an intermediate noun subtype between unit noun and mass noun [- countable]. In other words, the [+ countable] subcategory turns this type of noun to be closer to the nature of unit noun; and the mass characteristic (or the characteristic of [-unit] makes it closer to mass nouns that has characteristic of [-countable]. The most common Vietnamese mass noun [+countable] are polysyllabic nouns of Sino-Vietnamese origin: *công trình, thế giới, châu lục*, etc ((*project, the world, continent, etc.*)); especially nouns for people: *học sinh, giáo sư, vận động viên, thi sĩ, etc.* (*student, teacher, athlete, poet, etc.*)

Even though mass noun [-countable] cannot be individualized or quantified like mass noun [+ countable] and unit noun, due to the semantic characteristics of being a word that indicates a type, it can still be combined with words for a quantity that do not denote function meaning. This trait makes mass noun [-countable] less likely to be the head of a noun phrase than the other two noun subtypes. Moreover, due to the characteristics of categories and/ or abstract concepts and [ $\pm$  material] so mass noun [-countable] in Vietnamese has a variety of origins (both pure Vietnamese and loaned words): *nước, gạo, sách, pin, bản đồ, kinh tế, âm nhạc, giáo dục, etc* (*water, rice, book, battery, map, economy, music, education, etc.*)

---

<sup>3</sup> DK được hiểu là “những danh từ mà sở biểu là một tập hợp những thuộc tính khiến sự vật được biểu thị phân biệt với các sự vật được biểu thị bằng những DK khác. Đó là những danh từ chỉ chủng loại hoặc chất liệu của sự vật, chứ không trực tiếp chỉ sự vật với tính cách là những thực thể có hình thức tồn tại phân lập”. (Cao Xuân Hạo, 1998, tr. 334).

<sup>4</sup> “DK [+ đếm được] là loại DK có khả năng cá thể hóa hoặc lượng hóa bằng từ chỉ lượng hàm nghĩa số và có khả năng chi phối mọi loại định ngữ” (Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, 2001b, tr. 75).

Therefore, unit nouns, mass nouns [+countable], and especially mass nouns that are [-countable] can hold a position as a head of a noun phrase when necessary conditions are set up.

#### 4.3.2 Unit nouns and classifiers function as the head of noun phrase

The unit noun is understood as “ nouns that do not denote the type of thing but indicate a loose object, of some size, and at the same time can be isolated in form, can be divided (into pieces)” (Vũ Đức Nghiệu, 2016, p. 368)<sup>5</sup>. Due to these characteristics, unit noun not only describes a meaning for counting but can be used with quantifying words and quantifying phrases. Regarding grammatical ability, unit noun can work with the pre and post head in noun phrase. For the pre-head of noun phrase, unit noun might require the numerative constituents or question about inclusiveness: Bao nhiêu?/Mấy? (*How many* or *How much* depending on the number of things that need to be asked for?). A unit noun always requires another noun on the right of it for its own restriction. Moreover, unit noun has the ability to allow the existence/nonexistence of a describe determiner, index determiner, deictic determiner. Therefore, the following is the most complete definition: “Unit noun is a type of noun that represents the existence of an entity or describes things which are treated by language as an isolated entity, has a defined size, can be quantified, use to show entity’s unit, specializes in performing the function of the main constituent in the structure of noun phrase”. (Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, 2008, p.232)<sup>6</sup>.

When discussing classifiers, researchers consider that the function of classifier is to classify nouns that stay right after it in noun phrase structure. They even listed classifiers into the group of các functional words. However, as described the noun nature of classifiers in 4.2, the ability to represent the whole noun phrase of a classifier is clearly shown. Like unit noun, classifier can work with quantification words, and quantification phrases. Classifier can also require pre or post head of a noun phrase for a clearer meaning of the word. Besides, classifier is the unit of the whole noun phrase after doing the reduction. For example: “Can you get me the shirt? Which one? The red one” (Anh lấy giúp tôi cái áo. Cái nào? Cái đỏ).

<sup>5</sup> ĐĐV được hiểu là “những danh từ không biểu thị chủng loại sự vật, mà chỉ ra một vật rời, có kích thước nào đó, đồng thời được phân lập về hình thức, có thể phân lượng hoá (chia phần ra) được” (Vũ Đức Nghiệu, 2016, tr. 368)

<sup>6</sup> “ĐĐV là loại danh từ biểu thị hình thức tồn tại của thực thể hoặc biểu thị những sự vật được ngôn ngữ đối xử như những thực thể phân lập, có kích thước xác định, có thể phân lượng hoá được, dùng để chỉ đơn vị của thực thể, chuyên đảm đương chức năng thành tố chính trong cấu trúc danh ngữ” (Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, 2008, tr. 232).

The role of classifier and unit noun as the head of the noun phrase can be investigated from the perspective of general linguistics through the underlying structure of NP and simplification universal. Noun phrase in Vietnamese depends on the model of simplification universal model 4b (William Croft, 2003, p. 123). The underlying structure of noun phrase always includes three modifiers: quality, quantity and locative (J. Rijkhoff, 2002, pp 213 - 238). Therefore, the noun unit that satisfies the condition of the underlying structure of a noun phrase will be the head of noun. Moreover, unit nouns and classifiers in Vietnamese can totally satisfy the conditions about the characteristics of the head of a phrase that M. Tallerman proposed in 2005 and 2020 and also the five conditions of the head of a phrase by Nguyễn Tài Căn.

### 4.3.3 The current model of Vietnamese noun phrases

The noun phrase in Vietnamese has been modernized by many modeled researchers. Until now, there are these models:

Table 1: M.B. Emeneau's noun phrase structure

Numera tor	Classifier	Classified noun	±Attribute(s)	Demonstrative numerator
	Non-classified noun			

(M. B Emeneau, 1951, p. 85)

Table 2: Nguyễn Tài Căn's noun phrase structure

tất cả	những	cái	con	người	bạc ác	ấy
4	3	2	1	0	1'	2'

(Nguyễn Tài Căn, 1975, p. 40)

Table 3: Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha's noun phrase structure

Pre head			Head	Post head		
overall numeration phrase	numeration phrase	extra cái	unit noun	restrictive adjunct	descriptive adjunct	location adjunct

(Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, 2004)

Based on these models, we can see that in modern Vietnamese, the overall numerative phrase is always the pre head, furthest away from the left of the center of

noun phrase. Next to that is the position for the numerative phrase. (In the model by Emeneau, these two is merged into one: numerator). The stable position of overall numerator in Vietnamese nowadays is the ground for the simple and unified model of noun phrase in modern Vietnamese. Besides, the model of noun phrase now includes the extra - cái. Based on that, the pre head of noun phrase (from the left) is the position for: the overall numerative phrase, numerative phrase, extra cái in order. After that, depending on each researcher's opinion, the next position belongs to classifier or the head of noun phrase, resulting in different structures of the noun phrase. In M.B. Emeneau, with classified noun, the location of the center of noun will include classifier and classified noun (similar to the later model of T1 + T2 by Nguyễn Tài Cẩn), for example: *hai con cá sặc sỡ kia* (the two showy fish); with classified nouns, the center of noun phrase will be determined by non-classified nouns, for example: *hai sinh viên mặc áo xanh da trời ấy* (the two students in blue shirts). In the model by Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha, the head of noun phrase is the unit noun, for example: *hai con cá sặc sỡ kia* (the two showy fish).

It is clear that the model by M.B. Emeneau can include all the cases that noun [ $\pm$  countable] acts as the head of noun phrase whereas the models by Nguyễn Tài Cẩn and Hoàng Dũng and Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha cannot.

## 5. Discussions and Conclusions

From the analysis above, the unit that we use to call classifiers are not functional words. Although their material meaning is not concrete as in mass nouns, the general meaning, the category meaning of the class and kind is very clear. Since the meaning of things is emptier in classifier than the meaning of things in mass noun so classifier itself cannot perform the main functions of nouns, such as: being subjects, predicates, objects and attributes in sentences. However, classifier can perform grammatical functions: substituting, pointing, constructing non-syntactic words. They also show the characteristics of nouns through competence combined with quantitative elements. Phan Ngọc also confirmed: "in the Vietnamese language, we have a rule: which word has more general meaning will come first in combining two nouns that do not have an attribution to each other" (Phan Ngọc, 1998, p. 60). Combinations of such as: *boat, life, meeting, joy...* (*con thuyền, sự sống, cuộc họp, niềm vui...*) shows that the first factor is more important because it determines the whole type of word.

Therefore, it can be seen that classifiers have the nature of nouns and they are real nouns in the Vietnamese part of the speech division system. From this perspective, it

can be concluded that basically, the structure of modern Vietnamese nouns consists of three parts, including: the head, the pre head and the post head.

A preliminary noun scheme can be visualized as follows:

Schema 1: Modern Vietnamese noun phrase scheme

Pre head	Head	Post head
- Extra <i>cái</i>	- Unit noun	- restrictive adjunct
- Numerative phrase	- Classifier	- describe adjunct
- Overall numerative phrase	- mass noun [+countable]	- location adjunct
	- mass noun [-countable]	- clause adjunct

Identifying the head of noun phrase including constituents such as: unit noun, classifier, countable mass noun and uncountable mass noun will bring a unified model to the Vietnamese noun phrase structure. In a structure with a unit noun or classifier, those mass noun that followed are all attributes. Those mass nouns [+countable] which can be head, of course, the appearance of the classifier is not necessary and the following determiners will include restrictive adjunct, describe adjunct and/or adjunct that is a clause. However, if there is an appearance of classifier, the structure will be sentimental, and may even express distinguishing meanings, which are very subtle.

The mass noun [+countable] also has the capacity to combine with the quotification phrases in front, to the left of the head. The mass noun [-countable] is never directly combined with the quotification words. When being a head of a noun phrase, neither mass noun [+countable] nor mass noun [-countable] necessarily have a restrictive adjunct.

When acting as a head, all of the above noun subtypes can be combined with descriptive adjuncts and adjuncts that end the noun phrase. This paper hopes to contribute to clarifying the problem of the head of noun phrase in the Vietnamese language so that there can be reasonable solutions for teaching Vietnamese grammar to Vietnamese people and teaching Vietnamese to foreigners.

## References

- Cao, Xuân Hạo (1998) *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa*. [Vietnamese Language - Some Issues about Phonology, Grammar, Meaning]. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Croft, William (2003) *Typology and Universals* (second edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- Bùi, Đức Tịnh (2002) *Ngữ pháp Việt Nam giản dị và thực dụng* (tái bản lần 2 có sửa chữa và bổ sung) [*Practical and Simple Vietnamese Grammar. Second edition with corrections and additions*]. Hanoi: Culture and Information Publishing House.
- Bùi, Đức Tịnh (1948) *Những nhận xét về văn phạm Việt Nam* [*Some Remarks about Vietnamese Grammar*]. Saigon: Đại Chúng Publisher.
- Đinh, Văn Đức (2015) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Từ loại I & II* [*Vietnamese Grammar - Wordclass I & II*]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Emeneau, Murray B (1951) *Studies in Vietnamese (Annamese) Grammar*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hadumond, Bussmann (1998) *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hoàng, Dũng, Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha (2004) Về các thành tố phụ sau trung tâm trong danh ngữ tiếng Việt. [About Determiners in the Post Head of Vietnamese Noun Phrase]. *Language Journal* 4: 24-34.
- Hoàng, Dũng, Nguyễn, Thị Ly Kha (2008). Danh từ và các tiểu loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt [Nouns and Subnouns in Vietnamese Language]. In *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt – Những vấn đề lí luận* [*Vietnamese Grammar - Theory Issues*]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 213 - 296.
- Jack C. Richards, Richard Schmidt, Hendricks and Youngkyu Kim (1992) *Dictionary of Language teaching & Applied linguistics*. China: Longman.
- Keith, Brown (ed.) (2005). *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Elsevier Ltd.
- Laurence, C. Thompson (1965) *A Vietnamese Grammar*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Lê, Văn Lý (1972) *Sơ-thảo ngữ-pháp Việt-Nam* [*Sketch about Vietnamese Grammar*]. Saigon: Learning Resource Center, Education Ministry.
- Luu, Văn Lãng (1970) Nghiên cứu ngữ pháp tiếng Việt trên quan điểm ngữ đoạn tầng bậc có hạt nhân. [Study Vietnamese Grammar in the point of view of hierarchical phrases with nuclear]. *Language Journal* 3: 49- 62.
- Luu, Văn Lãng (1998) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* [*Issues about Modern Vietnamese Language Grammar*]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 54-65
- Luu, Văn Lãng (2000) *Một số vấn đề về loại từ trong tiếng Việt, Loại từ trong các ngôn ngữ ở Việt Nam*. [Some issues about classifiers in Vietnamese, Classifiers in Languages in Vietnam]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 9- 31.
- Luu, Văn Lãng (2008) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt hiện đại* [*Issues about Modern Vietnamese Language Grammar*]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Maggie Tallerman (2005) *Understanding syntax (2th edition)*. London and New Yourk: Routledg.
- Maggie Tallerman (2020) *Understanding syntax (5th edition)*. London and New Yourk: Routledge.
- Nguyễn, Đình Hòa (1997) *Tiếng Việt không son phấn* [*Vietnamese Tiếng Việt Không Son Phấn*]. Amsterdam: Jonh Benjamins.
- Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1963). *Nghiên cứu về ngữ pháp tiếng Việt. Tập 1*. [Study about Vietnamese Grammar. Volume 1]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Nguyễn, Phú Phong (2002) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Loại từ và chỉ thị từ* [*Issues about Vietnamese Language Grammar- Classifiers and directive words*]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1975) *Từ loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại*. [The Wordclass of Noun in Modern Vietnamese]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.

- Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1996) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt (Tiếng - Từ ghép - Đoàn ngữ)* (in lần thứ ba). [*Vietnamese Grammar (Tieng- Compound- Phrase)*]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Phan, Khôi (2020) *Việt ngữ nghiên cứu* (tái bản theo bản in năm 1955). [*Study about Vietnamese Language*] (Republish according to the print in 1955). Hanoi: World Publisher.
- Trần, Trọng Kim, Phạm, Duy Khiêm, Bùi, Ki (1940) *Việt Nam văn phạm*. [*Vietnamese Grammar*]. Hanoi: Lê Thăng Press.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2020) *Ngữ pháp lịch sử tiếng Việt- Từ và ngữ đoạn*. [*Historical Vietnamese Grammar – Words and Phrases*]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2021) *Bước ngoặt trong tư tưởng Nguyễn Tài Cẩn về thành tố trung tâm danh ngữ*, [*The Turning Point in Nguyen Tai Can's Thought on the Central Element of the Noun Phrase*]. In *Nguyen Tai Can – Thoughts, Works and Memories*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press, 252 – 267.

## Do so-called classifiers in Vietnamese categorize nouns?

Vũ Đức Nghiệu

(Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the question of the function of so-called “classifiers” in Vietnamese. In the European linguistic literature, it has been observed that Vietnamese classifiers categorize nouns according to intrinsic properties of their referents, such as “inanimate”, “non-human”, “fruit”. Following examination of Old Vietnamese and later documents, we conclude that what have been called classifiers do not in fact classify their associated nouns according to semantic subclasses. Instead we propose that they are simply unit nouns.

**Key words:** classifier, categorize, nominal classification, unit noun

### Introduction

While in most European languages - and in most inflectional languages - nouns are classified by gender, in the so-called isolating languages of Southeast and East Asia - including Vietnamese - nouns are often said to be categorized by classifiers which reflect the inherent properties of the referents of those nouns. Such properties include specificity, animacy, inanimacy, physical attributes such as shape, size, and material, function, and social status (Benjamin K. T'sou 1976, Allan K. 1977, 1980; Aikhenval A.Y. 2000, 2006; Löbel E. 2000, Vittrant A. & Tang M. 2021).

The term ‘classifier’ can be used as a cover term (Aikhenvald 2000 & 2006: 463-71) for e.g., noun classifiers, genitive classifiers, verbal classifiers, locative classifiers, and deitic classifiers. Classifiers function to individuate nouns, making them countable (T'sou 1976, Krupa V. 1978, Alves M. 2007, 2022, Bisang W. 1999 among numerous studies on the topic in and outside Vietnam).

In most earlier studies on Vietnamese, the term “classifier” has been narrowly defined as including only sortal classifiers that categorize nouns according to their referents as, for example: a) classifiers denote animals or plants or things, like *con gà* ‘CLF + animate’, with *gà* ‘chicken’; *con chó* ‘CLF + animate’, with *chó* ‘dog’; *cây tre* ‘CLF + tree’, with *tre* ‘bamboo’; *quả cam* ‘CLF + fruit’, with *cam* ‘orange’; *cái mũ* ‘CLF + thing’, with *mũ* ‘hat’; *chiếc dép* ‘CLF + thing’, with *dép* ‘slippers’. And b) person classifiers that denote human beings as, for example *đứa con trai* ‘CLF + male

---

Vũ, Đức Nghiệu. 2023. Do so-called classifiers in Vietnamese categorize nouns? doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8153134>

or female person, non-honorific’, with *con trai* ‘a son’; *anh phi công* ‘CLF + male person, respectful, polite’, with *phi công* ‘pilot’. Some people, such as Nguyen Dinh Hoa (1957) regard nouns that indicate quantity also to be classifiers. For example:

một	bát	cơm
one	bowl	cooked rice
‘a bowl of cooked rice’		
hai	chén	trà
two	cup	tea
‘two cups of tea’		
ba	cân	thịt bò
three	kilogram	beef
‘three kilograms of beef’		

He classified words such as *bát*, *chén*, *cân* in such cases as nouns indicating “units of measurement or ‘contents’, not instruments of measurement or ‘containers’ in which case they would require the general classifier *cái*: *một cái cân* ‘a balance’.” (p. 127-28).

In this paper, I will analyze data to give answers to the following two questions: i) How is the term ‘classifier’ defined and used in Vietnamese linguistic studies? And ii), do ‘classifiers’ in Vietnamese actually have the function of categorizing nouns that combine with them?

The documents used in this study date from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the time of the Nom translation *Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* ‘The Buddha’s preaching on repaying debt to parents’ (abbreviated as *Phật thuyết* or *Pth.*)<sup>1</sup> to the present consist of books, letters and some dictionaries. The full titles of these sources

<sup>1</sup> The date of this text was predicted to be around the 11<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> centuries (Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, 2010: *Chữ Nôm đã hiện diện vào thời kỳ quốc đô dời ra Thăng Long* ‘Nom writing was present during the move of the capital to Thang Long’, *Văn hóa Nghệ An*, No.172 - 173; Nguyễn Quang Hồng, 2008: *Khái luận văn tự học chữ Nôm* ‘Introduction to Nôm graphology’, Hanoi: Publishing House Giáo Dục; Trần Trọng Dương, 2011: *Phật thuyết có phải là dịch phẩm Nôm của thế kỉ XII ?* ‘Is book “Phật thuyết” the Nom translation of the 12<sup>th</sup> century?, *Ngôn ngữ* No. 4, p. 31-47); or later (Hoàng Thị Ngọc, 2002: *Chữ Nôm và tiếng Việt qua bản giải âm Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* ‘Nom writing and Vietnamese in the translation “Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh”, Hà Nội: Publishing House Social Sciences; Shimizu Masaaki, 2015: *A Reconstruction of Ancient Vietnamese Initials Using Chữ Nôm (Nom script) Materials*, NINJAL Research Papers, National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics, pp. 135-158). Regardless of the years predicted here, they are all subject to the stage of ancient Vietnamese.

and their abbreviations such as Pth. for ‘Phật thuyết’, Qatt. for ‘Quốc âm thi tập’ are listed at the end of this paper.

## 1. ‘Classifier’ in the analysis and description of Vietnamese

**1.1** Before 1940, the term ‘classifier’ was unknown to linguists in and outside Vietnam as they analyzed and described the language (except Bouchet A. in 1908 in his book titled *Cours Elementaire D’Annamite* in which the term *classificateurs* was used (pages 39-72) without being widely adopted).<sup>2</sup>

Words that are nowadays termed ‘classifier’ used to be labeled *pronomine* (Taberd J.L. 1838: xiii, xiv, xv; Theurel J.S. 1887: vii - viii), *pronominal* (Chodzko E. C. 1932), *noms numeriques* ‘numeral nouns’ (Truong Vinh Ky, 1883: 30 - 55), *numéraux* ‘numeral’ (Bon M M. and Dronet 1889: 261 - 268), *numeral* (Truong Vinh Tong, 1932), *article* (Theurel 1887: vii - viii, Diguët E. 1892: 41, Vallot P. G. 1897: 38), *nom génériques* ‘generic noun’ (Diguët 1892: 45-50), *noms de générique* ‘generic noun’ (Bouchet 1908: 39, 72), *mot générique* ‘generic word’ (Aubaret G. 1864: 16, 1867: 16), *numéral* ‘numeral’ (Cheon A. 1901: 70, Chodzko E. C. 1932), *substantif générique* ‘generic substantive’ (Cheon 1901), *article generique* ‘generic article’ (R. Bulteau 1950), *префикс единичности* ‘prefix of singleness’ (Shuskij Ju.K. (Щуцкий Ю.К), 1934: 99, 104 - 108). Until 1943, even in the work *Studies on Vietnamese* by Trà Ngân, the term classifier was still not used.

**1.2** From the mid-twentieth century to the present, the term classifier has been widespread in studies on Vietnamese. However, the term has not been used consistently in those studies. Usage may provisionally be divided into three groups, as follows.

**1.2.1** Group 1: ‘Classifiers’ are considered to be words that accompany nouns, categorize nouns and modify their meaning. This is the common idea in the studies of most linguists in and outside Vietnam up to this date.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the authors of the

<sup>2</sup> He classified words such as: *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *chiếc* ‘Inani. individuator’, *bức* ‘sheet’, *đám* ‘flock’, *miếng* ‘slide’ as *génériques* or *classificateur*.

<sup>3</sup> Trần Trọng Kim, Bùi Kỳ, Phạm Duy Khiêm (1943), Emeneau M.B. (1951), Nguyen Dinh Hoa (1957), Solnsev V.M. (Солнцев В.М. 1999), Solnsev V.M., Lekomsev Ju.K., Mkhitarjan T.T., Glebova I.I. (Солнцев, В.М. Лекомцев Ю.К. Мхитарян ТТ. Глебова И.И., 1960), Hanoi University of Education (1962), Thompson L. (1965), Trương Văn Chỉnh – Nguyễn Hiến Lê (1963), Lê Văn Lý (1968), Bystrov I.S. - Nguyen Tai Can – Stankevich N.V. (Быстров И.С., Нгуен Тай Кан, Станкевич Н.В: 1975), Nguyễn Tài Căn (1975 a, 1975 b), Dyvik Helge J.J (1983), Panphilov V.C. (Панфилов В.С. 1993), Lê Cận - Phan Thiệu (1983), Nguyễn Phú Phong (2002), Diệp Quang Ban (1991, 2005), Lưu Văn Lăng (1997), Lý Toàn

book *Việt nam văn phạm* (A Vietnamese Grammar, 1940), Trần Trọng Kim, Bùi Kỳ and Phạm Duy Khiêm, stated that their way of classifying word classes was in line with Western methodologies (page VI). They proposed the term *loại từ* ‘classifier’<sup>4</sup>, which they defined as “a word that precedes nouns in order to attribute them to a particular category.” (page 43). For instance, “the classifier *con* ‘Ani. individuator’ is used to refer to all the animals” (page 43); “the classifier *cái* (Inani. individuator) is used to refer to things.” (page 44).

As these authors explain: Every species is associated with a classifier preceding a noun whose referent is specified for that species. “We use the word *người* ‘human/person’ as a classifier when talking about humans, such as: *người thợ mộc* ‘CLF [person] thợ mộc: a carpenter’, *người lái đò* ‘CLF [person] lái đò: a ferryman” (page 44). “The word *chim* ‘bird’ is used as a classifier in referring to all kinds of birds, such as: *chim hoàng anh* ‘CLF [bird] hoàng anh: an oriole’, *chim bồ câu* ‘CLF [bird] bồ câu: a pigeon’, *chim họa mi* ‘CLF [bird] họa mi: a nightingale.” (page 45).

In practice, the authors equate *loại từ* ‘classifiers’ such as *con* [ngựa] ‘horse’, *con* [đường] ‘road’, *cái* [nhà] ‘house’, *cây* [cam] ‘orange’, *quả* [chuối] ‘banana’ with generic nouns such as *cá* [rô] ‘perch’, *chim* [hoàng anh] ‘prince’, *hoa* [sen] ‘lotus’ (pages 43 - 46).

Trương Văn Chỉnh and Nguyễn Hiến Lê - the authors of the book *Khảo luận về ngữ pháp Việt Nam* ‘Essays on Vietnamese Grammar’ (1963) - determine that “Classifiers are words preceding nouns, which tell us what categories, species that the referents of nouns refer to, since a classifier is properly selected based on what categories/species that the referents of nouns are subject to.” (page 281). According to these two authors, words such as: *người* [person] thợ: ‘a worker’, *con* [Ani. individuator] thú: ‘an animal’, *cái* [Inani. individuator] nhà: ‘house’, *sự/việc* [event] học ‘study’, *loài/ loại* [class] người: ‘human’, *giống* [breed] thú: ‘animal’, *hạng* [sort] người hèn hạ: ‘vile class of people’, and *thứ* [sort] vải xấu: ‘a sort of bad fabric’ are classifiers which are divided into two sub-classes, i.e.: common classifiers and specialized classifiers (pages 281-286).

Lê Văn Lý, the author of the book *Sơ thảo ngữ pháp Việt Nam* ‘Sketch of Vietnamese grammar’ (1972) (the first edition, 1968) labelled nouns as *word class A*

---

Thắng (1997), Trần Đại Nghĩa (1998, 2005), Löbel E. (2000), Alves M. (2007, 2022), Đinh Văn Đức (2001, 2010), Simpson A. (2005), Simpson A., Bình Ngo (2018), Walter Bisang & Kim Ngọc Quang (2020) and many others.

<sup>4</sup> The term *loại từ* was initially used in this book; subsequently, when the book was reprinted, the term *loại từ* was used.

‘tự loại A’ and gave the following definition: “Classifiers are the indicators of *word class A*; they allow us to determine which words are categorized into word class A, and–simultaneously attribute them into a particular class. Vietnamese has dedicated classifiers for nouns denoting humans, animals and things.” (page 50). He distinguished “classifiers” based on their function and categorized them into three sub-classes: classifiers for humans, classifiers for animals and classifiers for furniture or motionless things (pages 50 - 63).

Luu Văn Lãng (1997: 29) regards classifiers as “auxiliaries that crucially restrict the nuclear noun of noun phrases”. According to him, “relying on the construction of noun phrases, groups of classifiers can be determined as follows: classifiers for things (I<sub>1</sub>) including *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *chiếc* ‘Inani. individuator’, *bức* ‘sheet’, *tấm* ‘tablet/sheet’, *dãy* ‘row’; classifiers for humans (I<sub>2</sub>): *vị* ‘highly respected person’, *đức* ‘highly respected person’, *đũa* ‘non-respected male or female person’, *thằng* ‘non-respected male person’, *tên* ‘non-respected male or female person’, *bọn* ‘non-respected group of people’; classifiers for animals (I<sub>3</sub>): *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *đàn* ‘flock’, *bầy* ‘flock’; classifiers for plants (I<sub>4</sub>): *bụi* ‘bush’, *khóm* ‘cluster’, *đóa* ‘a flower’; classifiers for materials (I<sub>5</sub>): *cục* ‘lump’, *hòn* ‘round piece’, *miếng* ‘slice’; classifiers for natural phenomena (I<sub>7</sub>): *tia* ‘flash’, *tiếng* ‘sound’, *trận* ‘match’; classifiers for abstract notions (I<sub>7</sub>): *sự* ‘event’, *cuộc* ‘bout/event’, *nỗi* ‘CLF for (negative) feelings’, *niềm* ‘CLF for (positive) feelings’, *mối* ‘CLF for (negative) feelings’, *nền* ‘CLF for abstract nouns such as culture, economics’.”

Diệp Quang Ban (2005) puts forward another definition of classifier yet he also claims the function of nominal classification of ‘classifiers’. According to him, “classifiers are understood as words that have an effect on attributing their associated nouns to a general class and distributing them into different subclasses.” (page 487). He also states that “classifiers are categorized on the basis of their ability to encode the entity to which the associated nouns refer. Shapeless things are expressed by using the classifier *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’ (as in *Cái gì đằng kia thế nhỉ?* ‘What thing is there?’). Shaped things are classified as human, animal, or plant. Multiple-shaped things are classified according to their state of matter, e.g., solid, liquid, or gas. Examples are: *cục* ‘lump’, *quyển* ‘CLF for book’, *sợi* ‘thread’, *tấm* ‘tablet/sheet’, *tờ* ‘page’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *dòng* ‘flow’; or *luồng* ‘passage’, *cột* (khói) ‘column (of smoke)’. Or sounds such as: *tiếng* (sấm) ‘clap (thunder)’; lights such as *tia* (chớp) ‘flash (of lightning)’. There are classifiers referring to weather phenomena, such as *con* (mưa) ‘shower (of rain)’; activities such as *cuộc* ‘bout/event’, *sự* ‘event’,

*việc* ‘event’; psychological phenomena such as *nỗi* ‘(negative) feeling’, *niềm* ‘(positive) feeling’.” (page 487).

**1.2.2.** The second group of ideas also employs the term classifier, but directly or indirectly considers classifiers a sub-class of nouns, as shown in the works of M.B. Emeneau (1951), Nguyen Đình Hoa (1957), Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1975 a, 1975 b),<sup>5</sup> Phan Ngọc (1988), Lê Biên (1999), Diệp Quang Ban (2005), Nguyễn Phú Phong (2002, 2005), Panfilov V.S. (Панфилов В.С. 1993), and Nguyễn Văn Lộc & Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2017). These researchers emphasize that classifiers are modifiers of nouns that categorize nouns; but they also note that classifiers denote a person, a thing, or a single object which are referents of nouns.

Nguyen Dinh Hoa (1957) suggests that “each subclass of classified nouns requires its own classifier or classifiers.” (page 127) and that the meanings of nouns are modified in association with classifiers. He illustrates this for nouns such as *đào* ‘peach’, *báo* ‘article’ which are modified when combined with different classifiers, as follows (page 127):

đào ‘peach’:	cây	đào
	CLF (tree)	peach
	‘peach tree’	
<hr/>		
	hoa	đào
	CLF (blossom/flower)	peach
	‘peach blossom’	
<hr/>		
	quả	đào
	CLF (fruit)	peach
	‘peach (the fruit)’	
<hr/>		
báo ‘newspaper’:	bài	báo
	CLF (article)	newspaper
	‘newspaper article’	
<hr/>		
	cột	báo

<sup>5</sup> The study (1975a) was completed in 1960 and published in 1975. Nguyễn Tài Cẩn establishes that “classifiers are words denoting individuator”. He also considers classifiers as a sub-class of nouns referring to natural units of things (e.g. *người* ‘person’, *thằng* ‘non-respected male person’, *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *chiếc* ‘Inani. individuator’, *cuốn* ‘roll’, *cây* ‘stick/tree’, etc.), co-existing with nouns of conventional units such as *thước* ‘Vietnamese metre’, *cân* ‘pound’ (1975 a: 125). Until writing the book *Vietnamese Grammar* (1975b), he still used the term classifier, but subsumes words of natural units and words of conventional units into the class of words of units (page 209), which led to his claim in 1976 that classifiers are nouns denoting “units of measurement”.



CLF (column)	newspaper
‘column in newspaper’	
trang	báo
CLF (page)	newspaper
‘page in newspaper’	

According to Nguyen Dinh Hoa, in the nominal phrases cited above it is only when classifiers such as *cây* ‘tree’, *hoa* ‘blossom’ or *quả* ‘fruit’ combine with the noun *đào* ‘peach’ that the noun *đào* ‘peach’ is identified as being subject to a category or denoting a specific entity. The same holds for the two nouns *chè* ‘tea’ and *báo* ‘article’.

D. Helge (1983) and Löbel (2000) have a somewhat different perspective on classifiers. These authors suggest that the basic functions of classifiers is one of classification and individuation, and notes especially that they classify the referents of nouns, not the nouns themselves (Helge 1983: 4); simultaneously, they also claim that the function of classifiers is a syntactic function (Helge 1983: 9; Löbel, 2000: 314-315). Following Löbel, “the very notion of classifier for a system such as Vietnamese is not tied to a morphological unit, but to a syntactic slot. There is always more than one classifier, i.e., more than one noun in the classifier slot which serves to particularize a given noun.” (2000: 314). More remarkably, the author posits that “The classifier constitutes a syntactic function for particularizing nouns denoting structured concepts and/or categorizing objects conceptualized as being structured.” (2000: 315). In the following data provided by Helge or by Löbel, the classifier position of *cây* ‘tree/stick’, *quả* ‘fruit’, *lá* ‘leaf’, *rau* ‘vegetable’, *củ* ‘root’ contributes to determining the referents of nouns such as *cam* ‘orange’ and *cần* ‘celery’ and specifying them.

một	<i>cây</i>	cam
one	CLF-for-trees	orange
‘an orange tree’		
một	<i>quả</i>	cam
one	CLF-for-fruits	orange
‘an orange’		
một	<i>lá</i>	cam
one	CLF-for-leaves	orange
‘an orange leaf’		

(Helge D. 1983: 5)

<i>rau</i>	cần
<i>vegetable</i>	celery
‘celery plant’	
<i>cây</i>	cần
<i>plant</i>	celery
‘celery stick’	
<i>lá</i>	cần
<i>leaf</i>	celery
‘celery leaf’	
<i>củ</i>	cần
<i>bulb</i>	celery
‘celery bulb’	

(Löbel E. 2000: 313 - 14)

In fact, the syntactic and semantic relations in the noun phrases above show that the classifiers therein do not classify or specify the referents of the associated nouns; but rather, it is the other way round, the nouns themselves make explicit and specify the classifiers semantically.

With respect to the function of individualizing the units of human/animals/things, previously, Thompson L.C. (1965) and Nguyen Tai Can (1975 a) discovered that when a classifier is not preceded by a numeral, the classifier is interpreted as a unit. Later on, Nguyen Phu Phong (2002) put it more explicitly that classifiers are words that quantify (quantifibialisation; page 12) the associated nouns as units of one. He asserts the role of representing a unit of the classifier as follows: “Words denoting a discrete notion and being countable can be used as classifiers.” “Classifiers are one part of speech that determines a unit, not a mathematic unit but a unit with semantic properties. In a nutshell, classifiers are operators used to determine units.” (2002: 13).

**1.2.3.** For a third group of linguists, the term classifier is not used at all. In this group, Truong Vinh Ky (1883:29-30) should be mentioned first. He termed classifiers as *appellatif, noms génériques* (generic nouns) or *numéraux/ noms numériques* (numerals). Smalley W.A. and Nguyễn Văn Vạn in their book *Tiếng Việt cho các giáo sĩ ‘Vietnamese for Missionaries’*<sup>6</sup> edited in Da Lat in 1954, argued that “nouns that can directly follow the numeral *one* (or any other numeral from *one* to *nine*) in a

<sup>6</sup> *Vietnamese for Missionaries. A course in the spoken and written language of Central Vietnam.* Trial Edition. Dalat, Vietnam: Imprimerie Evangelique. Nguyen Dinh Hoa wrote a review in Word 12.1 (1956).

discrete noun phrase including two related words” are nouns of units or countable nouns (citing in Nguyen Dinh Hoa 1957: 126). Later, Nguyễn Kim Thản (1963, 1969) called classifiers *sub-nouns*, while Phan Ngọc (1988: 56) argued that classifiers are a class of nouns (that are semantically null). Diệp Quang Ban (1991) termed classifiers *sortal nouns*, but following the example of *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* ‘A Vietnamese Grammar’ (2005: 474 - 489), he re-named them *classifiers* and placed them in a sub-class of nouns. Nguyễn Hữu Quỳnh (1994) also called classifiers *sortal nouns*. Nguyễn Văn Lộc and Nguyễn Mạnh Tiến (2017: 91) called them *nouns of natural units*, considering them to be a group of unit nouns (page 90). Some other researchers did not discuss classifiers much but mentioned some representative words based on their unique semantic and syntactic properties.

The author Trà Ngân in the book *Khảo cứu về tiếng Việt-Nam* ‘Research on Vietnamese’ (1939, printed in 1943) considered the two words which we now consider to be typical classifiers *con* (chó) ‘CLF [Ani. individuator] dog: a dog’ and *cái* (nhà) ‘CLF [Inani. individuator] house: a house’ to be nouns like any other noun (page 55).

Bùi Đức Tịnh, in *Văn phạm Việt Nam* ‘A Vietnamese Grammar’ (1954, 1996) regarded words such as *con*, *hoa*, *quyển*, *sắc*, *vẻ*, *tia*, *niềm*, *cô*, *anh*, and *lũ* to be modifiers referring to shape, and did not mention the term *classifiers*. Thus: *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *hoa* ‘flower’, *quyển* ‘volume/ CLF for books’, *sắc* ‘colour’, *vẻ* ‘appearance’, *tia* ‘ray’, *niềm* ‘feeling’ in combinations such as *con gà* ‘a chicken’, *hoa sen* ‘a lotus flower’, *quyển sách* ‘a book’, *sắc đẹp* ‘the beauty’, *vẻ đẹp* ‘the beauty’, *niềm hy vọng* ‘a hope’, *tia hy vọng* ‘a ray of hope’ (page 221); the words *cô* ‘aunt’, *anh* ‘older brother’, *lũ* ‘gang’ in the compound nouns *cô lái đò* ‘female ferryman’, *anh thợ đóng giày* ‘male shoemaker’, *lũ sâu dân một nước* ‘a gang harming people and destroying the country’ (page 224).

Phan Khôi (1955) conducted research on the four words *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cây* ‘stick’, *cục* ‘lump’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, calling them ‘prenominals’ (pages 77-78). He divided them into two groups (page 84): common prenominals (e.g. *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cây* ‘tree/stick’, *cục* ‘lump’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *dãy* ‘row’, *bầy* ‘flock’, *đàn* ‘flock’, *bao* ‘bag’); and numeral prenominals (e.g. *mẫu* ‘unit for measuring area equal to 3,600 square meters’, *sào* ‘one tenth of a *mẫu*’, *thùng* ‘bin’, *đầu* ‘peck’, *tạ* ‘unit of 100 kg’, *cân* ‘pound’, *lít* ‘liter’, *chai* ‘bottle’, *duộc* ‘dipper’, *cút* ‘flask’).

Cadiere L., in *Syntaxe de la Langue Vietnamienne* (1958: 3-9) indicates that words that are to date called classifiers such as: *cái* [Inani. individuator] *bàn* ‘a table’,

*con* [Ani. individuator] trâu ‘a buffalo’, *cây* [tree] chuối ‘a banana tree’, *củ* [root] khoai ‘a sweet potato’, *chiếc* [Inani. individuator] giày ‘a shoe’, *bộ* [set] cờ ‘chess set’, *đôi* [pair] đũa ‘pair of chopsticks’, *bức* [sheet] tranh ‘a painting’, *đám* [bunch] học trò ‘group of pupils’, *đứa* [non-respected male/female person] trẻ con ‘a child’, *khẩu* [mouth] súng ‘a gun’, *súc* [log] gỗ ‘a log’, *tấm* [sheet] vải ‘a cloth’, *viên* [tablet] thuốc ‘a pill/ capsule’, etc. are sortal nouns (substantif de categorie).

In *Giáo trình về Việt ngữ* ‘Vietnamese Linguistics Textbook’ issued by Hanoi University of Education (in the early 1960s), the term *classifier* is not used. But there are two words mentioned: *con* ‘Ani. individuator’ and *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’ (represented as *l*) as having the structure [a + l + noun], with only the properties of animate and inanimate.

Remarkable is the work *Учебник Аннамского Языка* (*A Textbook to Study the Vietnamese Language*, published in St. Peterburg, 1934) written by Shuskji Ju.K. (Щуцкий Ю.К.). The author regards ‘classifiers’ as prefixes expressing singularity (*префикс единичности*) and distinguishes the following three functions: a) denoting singularity and specificity of entities that are named by nouns; b) denoting classes of nouns (i.e. categorize nouns according to their referents); and c) taking the role of units to calculate/measure referents of the nouns.<sup>7</sup>

In this third group of ideas, Nguyễn Tài Căn (Нгуен Тай Кан 1976: 163-170) claims that *classifiers* are nouns expressing units of measurement (*существительное со значением единицы измерения*) - which means *unit nouns*. Since 1980, Cao Xuan Hao (1980, 1986, 1988, 1998, 1999) and some other researchers such as Hoàng Dũng, Nguyễn Thị Ly Kha (2008), and Vũ Đức Nghiệu (2006, 2017, 2020) have all determined classifiers to be *unit nouns* and used this term in their related studies, distinguishing these words from a sub-class of nouns, namely *mass noun* (see Doetjes J.S. 2012; Allan 1980, 2014; Chierchia G. 2010; Pelletier F.J. 1979).

**1.3.** For most researchers in and outside Vietnam, there is a tendency to regard the function of classifiers to be classifying their associated nouns; and in a noun phrase of the structure [classifier + noun], classifiers are the modifiers, nouns are heads. However, an argument for this notion and the semantic and syntactic analysis to back it up have never been provided. The use of classifiers by native speakers in actual

---

<sup>7</sup> a) Выражение конкретной и единичной определенности предмета - это основная функция префиксов единичности в Аннамском языке (page 104). б) И их вторая, не менее важная функция - это сигнализировать отношение данного слова к той или иной категории слов - обозначении той или иной категории предметов (page 104-105). с) Отсюда их третья функция - это выполнять роль показателей единицчисляемых предметов (page 106).

practice has not been sufficiently explored. As a result, the number of *classifiers*, their sub-classes and their listing differ among researchers.

Previously, Trương Vĩnh Ký (1883: 29 - 55) had established a list of 212 *numeral nouns*, Bon and Dronet (1889: 261 - 268) had listed 164 *numerals*, Diguet (1892: 41, 45 - 50) termed the two words: *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *con* ‘Ani. individuator’ *articles* and 20 other words *generic nouns*. Shusjki (Щуцкий, 1934: 106 - 108) listed 20 essential prefixes expressing singularity of the referent of nouns; Emeneau (1951: 93) made a list of 121 classifiers; Nguyen Đình Hoa (1957) listed 169 classifiers; Lê Văn Lý (1972: 50 - 63) proposed a list of 75; and Nguyễn Phú Phong (2002) found 195 classifiers.

Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1975a: 47) categorized *classifiers* into three groups: (1) classifiers referring to humans, such as: *người* ‘human/person’, *thằng* ‘non-respected male person’, *con* ‘non-respected female person’; (2) classifiers referring to things: *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’ *chiếc* ‘Inani. individuator’, *cuốn* ‘CLF for books’; and (3), classifiers referring to animals and plants, such as *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cây* ‘tree’.

Lê Văn Lý (1972) also classified the *classifiers* into three groups: classifiers referring to humans, such as *đức* ‘very highly respected person’, *đáng* ‘very highly respected status’, *thầy* ‘teacher or a person who is considered a teacher’, *thằng* ‘non-respected male person’, *con* ‘non-respected female person’, *cụ* ‘old’, *ông* ‘grandfather’, *bà* ‘grandmother’, *bác* ‘uncle’, *chú* ‘uncle’, *cậu* ‘uncle’, *thím* ‘aunt’, *cô* ‘aunt’, *anh* ‘older brother’, and *chị* ‘older sister’; classifiers referring to animals, such as *con* ‘Ani. individuator’; and classifiers referring to things, such as *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’ along with 56 additional classifiers. Trương Văn Chính and Nguyễn Hiến Lê (1963) divided classifiers into two classes: common classifiers (eg. *người* [person] *thợ* ‘a worker’, *con* [Ani. individuator] *thú* ‘an animal’, etc.); and specialized classifiers (eg. *bà* [old woman] *mẹ* ‘a mother’, *chim* [bird] *sẻ* ‘a sparrow’, *cá* [fish] *chép* ‘a carp’ and, *cây* [tree] *na* ‘custart apple’, etc).

At present, these researchers agree that classifiers encode the meaning ‘an individuator (of human/animals/things)’. It is this meaning of classifiers that is the cause for them to be used as unit nouns denoting ‘natural units’ (of human/ animals/ things) in order to measure and quantify the referents of quantitative noun phrases.

## 2. Do classifiers classify nouns associating with them or not?

Categorizing a thing, an animal, or a person, we separate it from the other things and then enlarge its scope to include things having the same properties. This process may be called *categorization*, *categorical attribution* or *classification*. To answer the

question: Do classifiers classify nouns associating with them or not? I present the following five pieces of evidence.

### 2.1. The syntax and semantics of ‘classifiers’ in noun phrases [CLF + N]

How do classifiers function in phrases of the form [CLF + N]? Grammatically, first of all, classifiers are nouns as they exhibit all of the properties of nouns (Cao Xuân Hạo 1980, 1988; Vũ Đức Nghiệu 2006, 2017, 2020):

- Classifiers can be the head of a noun phrase, as illustrated in (1):

- (1) *cái* này  
 CLF this  
 ‘this one’

- Classifiers can be combined with different modifiers like any other noun (2):

- (2) a. *cầm* *chiếc* *dép*  
 hold CLF slipper  
 ‘hold the slipper’
- b. *lấy* *cái* (áo) mới cho nó  
 get CLF (shirt) new for 3sg  
 ‘give the new shirt to him/her’
- c. *cầm lấy* *cái* này  
 take away CLF this  
 ‘take this one’
- d. *cái* tôi cho nó  
 CLF 1sg give 3sg  
 ‘the one I gave him/her’

- Classifiers can be part of a sentence or utterance. Specifically, they can serve as subject, topic (when “given” or “pre-determined”), complement, or determiner, as in (3):

- (3) a. (Hàm răng) *chiếc* rụng, *chiếc* lung lay  
 (teeth) CLF loose CLF unsteady, wonky  
 ‘(teeth) one loose, the other is unsteady’
- b. Dưa hấu bán *quả* [không bán cân]  
 watermelon sell CLF [NEG sell weigh]  
 ‘watermelon is sold whole, not according to weight’

- c. mua            thuốc            viên  
 buy            medicine        CLF  
 ‘buy pills’

- Classifiers can be the head of a noun phrase, as in (4):

- (4) Q: Anh    nuôi    mấy            con    chó ?  
 You    raise    how many    CLF    dog  
 ‘How many dogs do you do you have ?’  
 A: Hai    con  
 two    CLF  
 ‘Two’

Furthermore, classifiers can be unit nouns (Vũ Đức Nghiệu 2022). They are countable, as in (5);

- (5) ba            con            chó            này  
 three        CLF            dog            DEM  
 ‘these three dogs’

Their referents express units so that they could be identifiable and countable. In noun phrases, classifiers do not combine with any other unit nouns. See (6):

- (6) a. một        cân            ~~hạt~~        muối  
 one        unit noun    CLF        salt  
 ‘one kilo of salt’  
 b. một        ~~cân~~        hạt            muối  
 one        unit noun    CLF        salt  
 ‘a grain of salt’

To determine which is the head and which is the modifier in phrases of the form [CLF + N], we may examine answers to interrogative sentences. The constituent given in the answer to the *wh*-phrase *gì* ‘what’ or *nào* ‘which’ is the modifier. The head of noun phrases does not possess this feature. (Jakhontov S.E. [Яхонтов С.Е.] 1971, Nguyen Tai Can [Нгуен Тай Кан] 1976).

We may use interrogative sentences to examine the noun phrases that Nguyen Dinh Hoa (1957) proposed. These were: *người* [*person*] thợ mộc: ‘a carpenter’, *chim* [*bird*] bồ câu: ‘pigeon’, *cá* [*fish*] thu: ‘mackerel’, *cây* [*tree*] cam: ‘orange tree’, *hoa* [*flower*] sen ‘lotus flower’, *quả* [*fruit*] chuối ‘banana’, *cây* [*tree*] đào: ‘peach tree’, *cành* [*branch*] đào: ‘peach branch’, *hoa* [*flower*] đào: ‘peach blossom’, *quả* [*fruit*] đào: ‘peach fruit’, *cây* [*tree*] chè: ‘tea tree’, *lá* [*leaf*] chè: ‘tea leaf’, *nụ* [*bud*] chè: ‘tea bud’, *búp* [*unfolded leaf*] chè: ‘unfolded tea leaf’, *hạt* [*bud*] chè: ‘tea bud’, *nuong* [*grove*] chè: ‘tea grove’, *bã* [*dregs*] chè: ‘tea dregs’, *ấm* [*pot*] chè: ‘tea pot’, *bình* [*pot*] chè: ‘a tea pot’, *nước* [*water*] chè: ‘tea [beverage]’, *số* [*issue, number, copy*] báo: ‘issue, number, copy of newspaper’, *trang* [*page*] báo: ‘a page in newspaper’, *mặt* [*page*] báo: ‘a page in newspaper’, *cột* [*column*] báo: ‘column in newspaper’, *bài* [*article*] báo: ‘newspaper article’. We will find that nouns such as *thợ mộc* ‘carpenter’, *bồ câu* ‘pigeon’, *thu* ‘mackerel’, *cam* ‘orange’, *sen* ‘lotus’, *chuối* ‘banana’, *chè* ‘tea’, *báo* ‘newspaper’ modify classifiers such as *người* ‘human/person’, *chim* ‘bird’, *cá* ‘fish’, *cây* ‘tree’, *hoa* ‘flower’, *quả* ‘fruit’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *trang* ‘page’, not the other way around. Those noun phrases are all descriptive and have a descriptive complement following the head that is described.

Among the related studies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the views of the author Trà Ngân in 1939 is to be noted. The author did not use the term classifier or an equivalent, but with respect to the two words *con* ‘Ani. individuator’ and *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, he argued that both words were “nouns like any other nouns.” (1943: 55). More notably, when discussing noun phrases like *con chó* ‘CLF dog’, *cái nhà* ‘CLF house, he indicated that: “The words *chó* ‘dog’ và *nhà* ‘house’ modify the preceding words *con* and *cái*.” (page 55). Afterwards, remarking on *Việt Nam văn phạm* ‘Vietnamese Grammar’, Phan Khôi (1955) rejected the classifying role as well as the function of nominal classification of classifiers (which he called *premininals*). The book *Văn phạm Việt Nam* ‘Vietnamese Grammar’, written by Bùi Đức Tịnh (1954), does not mention classifiers at all.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Later on, Luu Văn Lãng (1997: 28) distinguished classifiers from unit nouns, but he claimed that: “classifiers necessarily precede nouns... For instance: *cái bàn* ‘CLF table’, *cái nhà* ‘CLF house’, *cái Hoa* ‘CLF Hoa’, *con mèo* ‘CLF cat’, *con dao* ‘CLF knife’, *con chị* ‘CLF older sister’. In most cases, if a so-called classifier is not followed by a noun, it is not a classifier, but a unit noun. For instance: *cái ăn* ‘CLF eat (eating)’, *cái đẹp* ‘CLF beautiful (beauty)’, *cái lớn* ‘CLF big (the big)’, *con bé* ‘CLF little (young girl)’, *con quay* ‘CLF rotate (humming-top)’, *quả lắc* ‘CLF shake (pendulum)’, *sự sống* ‘CLF live (life)’, *cuộc vui* ‘CLF happy (fun event)’, *nỗi nhớ* ‘CLF miss (nostalgia)’, *niềm tin* ‘CLF believe (belief)’, *cái tôi* ‘CLF ego’, *vài con* ‘several CLF (several Ani. individuator)’, *cả con* ‘the whole CLF (whole Ani. individuator)’, *những cái tát* ‘PI CLF slap (laps)’, *cú đấm* ‘CLF punch (a punch)’, *tên*



Semantically, it is the descriptive complements (or the modifiers) that have the function of categorizing the preceding constituents. They restrict the scope of the referents of the preceding constituents and make them more specific. As such, the nouns: *thợ mộc* ‘carpenter’, *bồ câu* ‘pigeon’, *thu* ‘mackerel’, *cam* ‘orange’, *sen* ‘lotus’, *chuối* ‘banana’, *chè* ‘tea’, *báo* ‘article’ help to categorize the ‘classifiers’ such as *người* ‘human/person’, *chim* ‘bird’, *cá* ‘fish’, *cây* ‘tree’, *hoa* ‘flower’, *quả* ‘fruit’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *trang* ‘page’ that precede them. The same holds true for the other cases, as shown in (7):

(7) a.	[CLF] người	→ a’	người thợ mộc	‘a carpenter’
	‘person’	a’’	người lái đò	‘ferryman’
b.	[CLF] chim	→ b’	chim bồ câu	‘pigeon’
	‘bird’	b’’	chim sẻ	‘sparrow’
c.	[CLF] cành	→ c’	cành đào	‘peach branch’
	‘branch’	c’’	cành cam	‘orange branch’
d.	[CLF] trang	→ d’	trang báo	‘a page in newspaper’
	‘page’	d’’	trang sách	‘book page’

Furthermore, we can also examine the classifying function of classifiers in noun phrases [CLF + N] by reversing the order of the constituents [CLF + N] → [N + CLF], and then using the interrogative test to observe the answers. See (8) and (9):

(8) a.	<i>viên</i>	<i>thuốc</i>	→ a’.	<i>thuốc</i>	<i>viên</i>
	CLF	medicine		medicine	CLF
	‘pill’			‘tablets’	

cướp ‘CLF rob (a thief)’, *buổi học* ‘CLF study (lesson)’, *giờ nghỉ* ‘CLF rest (break)’, *giấc ngủ* ‘CLF sleep (a sleep)’, *trận đánh* ‘CLF fight (battle)’, *chuyến đi* ‘CLF go (journey)’, *chở ba chuyến* ‘carry three CLF (carry three trips)’, *bắn một phát* ‘shoot one CLF (shoot one shoot)’, *tát một cái* ‘beat one CLF (slap a slap)’, *dừng một lát* ‘stop one CLF (stop for a moment)’, *chốc nữa* ‘CLF nữa (more in a moment)’.”

According to him, if a classifier does not precede a noun then it is not a classifier, due to the fact that the classifier has no nouns associated with it to classify. If so, the question arises whether in Vietnamese the words like *con* and *cái* preceding nouns are homophonous with the same two words *con* and *cái* not combination with nouns. The further question is: How to can one demonstrate that the word *con* in the noun phrase *con trâu* ‘CLF buffalo [a buffalo]’ is different from the word *con* in *con nào* ‘Which CLF [Which animal]?’; or the word *cái* in the noun phrase *cái nhà* ‘CLF house [a house]’ is different from the word *cái* in *cái gì* ‘What CLF [What thing]?’

b.	<i>hạt</i> CLF 'corn seed'	<i>ngô</i> corn	→	b'. <i>ngô</i> corn	<i>hạt</i> CLF 'seed corn'
c.	<i>điếu</i> CLF 'a cigarette' (a stick of cigarette)	<i>thuốc lá</i> cigarette	→	c'. <i>thuốc lá</i> cigarette (tobacco rolled into a cigarette)	<i>điếu</i> CLF 'cigarette'
d.	<i>cành</i> CLF 'peach branch'	<i>đào</i> peach	→	d'. <i>đào</i> peach 'branch peach'	<i>cành</i> <sup>9</sup> CLF

In (8a) - (8d), the classifiers represent individual entities. In (8a') - (8d'), the classifiers following the nouns and modifying them are the constituents that have the function of nominal classification, denoting the meaning of class/ category of the nouns. See the examples below:

(9) a.	Q: <i>Viên</i> CLF (pill) 'What pill?'	<i>gì?</i> what?	a'.	Q: <i>Thuốc</i> medicine 'What medicine?'	<i>gì?</i> what?
	A: <i>Viên</i> CLF 'A pill.'	<i>thuốc.</i> medicine		A: <i>Thuốc</i> medicine 'Tablets'	<i>viên.</i> CLF
b.	Q: <i>Hạt</i> CLF (seed) 'What seed?'	<i>gì?</i> what?	b'.	Q: <i>Ngô</i> corn 'What corn?'	<i>gì?</i> 'What?'
	A: <i>Hạt</i> CLF (seed) 'Corn seed.'	<i>ngô</i> corn		A: <i>Ngô</i> corn 'Seed corn'	<i>hạt</i> CLF
c.	Q: <i>Điếu</i> CLF (a stick) 'What a stick (of cigarette)?'	<i>gì?</i> what?	c'.	Q: <i>Thuốc lá</i> cigarette 'What cigarette?'	<i>gì?</i> what?
	A: <i>Điếu</i> <i>thuốc lá</i>	<i>thuốc lá</i>		A: <i>Thuốc lá</i> <i>điếu</i>	<i>điếu</i>

<sup>9</sup> Vietnamese welcome the new year with peach blossom and yellow apricot blossom. If the whole peach tree is grown in a pot, it would be called *đào cây* 'peach tree'. On the other hand, if there is only a branch of the peach tree or a small plant without the root arranged in a vase, it is called *đào cành* 'peach branch'.

CLF	cigarette	cigarette	CLF
‘A cigarette’		‘cigarette’, ‘tobacco	
‘Stick of cigarette’		rolled into a cigarette’	
d. Q: Cành	gì ?	d’. Q: Đào	gì ?
CLF (branch)	what ?	peach	what ?
‘What branch ?’		‘What kind of peach ?’	
A: Cành	đào	A: Đào	cành
CLF	peach	peach	[CLF]
‘A peach branch.’		‘Peach branch.’	

The categorizing and sorting functions of the constituents in noun phrases mentioned above are no different from the categorizing and sorting functions of those in noun phrases with the structure  $[N_1 + N_2]$ :

(10) $[N_1 + N_2]$		$[N_2 + N_1]$
a. lợn	thịt	a’. thịt
pig	meat	meat
‘porker’, ‘pigs raised for meat’		‘pork’, ‘pig meat’
b. giếng	nước	b’. nước
well	water	water
‘well (for water)’		‘well water’, ‘water of well’
c. bò	sữa	c’. sữa
cow	milk	milk
‘dairy cow’		‘cow’s milk’
d. ong	mật	d’. mật
bee	honey	honey
‘honeybee’		‘honey’

In the noun phrases in (8) (9) (10), the following constituents contribute to categorizing and sorting the referents of the preceding constituents. What, then, are the classificatory properties of classifiers and what is the function of classifiers such as: *viên* ‘pill’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *điếu* ‘stick’, *cành* ‘branch’? In fact, classifiers can only classify nouns with which they play a role as following modifiers. The semantics and syntax of the classifiers in (8) - (9), *viên* ‘pill/tablets’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *điếu* ‘stick’, *cành* ‘branch’, are simply the semantics and syntax of the nouns.

From the cognitive perspective, in the noun phrases just mentioned, the referents of the classifiers *người* ‘human/person’, *chim* ‘bird’, *cành* ‘branch’, *trang* ‘page’, *viên* ‘pill’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *điều* ‘stick’ are people, things, animals or plants that need to be compared and contrasted in order to specify their classes. Nouns such as *thợ mộc* ‘carpenter’, *bồ câu* ‘pigeon’, *đào* ‘peach’, *báo* ‘article’, *thuốc* ‘medicine’, *ngô* ‘corn’, *thuốc lá* ‘cigarette’ are words that serve to contrast and specify the class of *người* ‘human’, *chim* ‘bird’, *cành* ‘branch’, *trang* ‘page’, *viên* ‘pill’, *hạt* ‘seed’, and *điều* ‘stick’, respectively. Accordingly, the two nouns *thợ mộc* ‘carpenter’ and *lái đò* ‘ferryman’ determine two subclasses ‘carpenter’ or ‘ferryman’ of the class human ‘người’. The noun *đào* ‘peach’ determines the class for ‘classifiers’ such as *cây* ‘tree’, *cành* ‘branch’, *hoa* ‘flower/blossom’, *quả* ‘fruit’, which belong to a particular species of peach (*cây đào* ‘peach tree’, *cành đào* ‘peach branch’, *hoa đào* ‘peach blossom’, ‘*quả đào* ‘peach (fruit)’), distinct from *cây mận* ‘plum tree’, *cành mận* ‘plum branch’, *hoa mận* ‘plum blossom/flower’, *quả mận* ‘plum (fruit)’ (of the plum category/species), or *cây cam* ‘orange tree’, *cành cam* ‘orange branch’, *quả cam* ‘orange (fruit)’ (of the orange category/species).

When associated with the classifiers *người* ‘human/person’, *chim* ‘bird’, *cành* ‘branch’, *trang* ‘page’, *viên* ‘pill’, *hạt* ‘seed’, *điều* ‘stick’, the meaning of the nouns *thợ mộc* ‘carpenter’, *bồ câu* ‘pigeon’, *đào* ‘peach’, *báo* ‘article’, *thuốc* ‘medicine’, *ngô* ‘corn’, *thuốc lá* ‘cigarette’ remains the same. In other words, the classifiers preceding the noun do not modify its meaning. The role of the noun in the related noun phrases is that of “complement”, specifying the category/ class/ species of the preceding ‘classifier’. In Vietnamese noun phrases, the direction of categorization for the head of a noun phrase is oriented backward, which means it classifies the categories from the wider to the narrower. The degree of definiteness and specificity of the head of the noun phrase increases with the number of following modifiers. See example (11):

(11) CÁ ‘fish’

+ đuôi	→	cá đuôi
‘stingray’		‘stingray’
+ nước ngọt	→	cá đuôi nước ngọt
‘fresh water’		‘stingray living in fresh water’
+ sông Mekong	→	cá đuôi nước ngọt sông Mêkông
‘Mekong river’		‘stingray living in the Mekong river’

## 2.2. The possibility of different ‘classifiers’ combining with the same noun

If classifiers actually classified their associated noun(s), there would be no reason to account for the innumerable noun phrases in which different classifiers may combine with the same noun. This is the case in contemporary Vietnamese. See (12) and (13):

(12) Vietnamese at present:

	“Classifiers”	+ Nouns
1.	con, cái, chiếc, cánh	+ diều ‘kite’,
2.	chiếc, con, cây	+ sào ‘pole’
3.	chiếc, con	+ nhận ‘swallow’
4.	chiếc, cái, cỗ	+ xe tăng ‘tank’
5.	quả, trái	+ chuối ‘banana’, cam ‘orange’, ôỉ ‘guava’, đào ‘peach’
6.	thằng, đứa, chú, cậu, cô, ông, bà, con	+ em ‘younger brother/ sister’
7.	cái, cây	+ bút ‘pen’, gậy ‘stick’, cờ ‘flag’, đàn ‘guitar’, thước ‘ruler’
8.	cái, chiếc, tấm	+ bánh ‘cake’
9.	khẩu, cây	+ súng ‘gun’
10.	khẩu, cỗ	+ đại bác ‘cannon’
11.	con, trận	+ gió ‘wind’, bão ‘storm’, mưa ‘rain’, đau bụng ‘stomach-ache’
12.	cái, con	+ xe ‘vehicle’, ngõ ‘alley’, dao ‘knife’
13.	cục, viên, hòn, mẩu	+ phấn ‘chalk’, gạch ‘bricks’, đá ‘stone’
14.	lá, bức, cánh	+ thư ‘letter’
15.	tấm, cái, bức	+ ảnh ‘picture’, bản đồ ‘map’
16.	bức, tờ	+ tranh ‘painting’
17.	ngôi, tòa, túp, nóc, cái	+ nhà ‘house’
18.	ngọn, cây, cái	+ roi ‘whip’, đèn ‘lamp’, cờ ‘flag’
19.	hòn, viên	+ bi ‘mable’, đá ‘stone’, gạch ‘bricks’, ngói ‘roofing tile’, đạn ‘bullet’
	.....	... ..

(13) In data from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the present:

<b>Glossary</b>	<b>CLF</b>	<b>Noun</b>	<b>Source</b>
a hut	con	lều	Qắt. Mạn thuật 2
a hut	cái	lều	Modern Vietnamese
a hut	chiếc	lều	Modern Vietnamese
a hut	túp	lều	Modern Vietnamese
a star	cái	sao	Phg. p.30
a star	ngôi	sao	Phgi. p.20; Thur18. let.15; Modern Vietnamese
a book	phiển	sách	Qắt. Ngôn chí 17
a book	cuốn	sách	Dic.1651.co.143; Modern Vietnamese
a book	quy(i)ển	sách	Dic.1651. co.628; Sss. p.63; Modern Vietnamese
a book	pho	sách	Dic.1651. co.601; Sss. p.418; Modern Vietnamese
a book	con	sách	Sss. p.4; Phgi. p.258; TvK. p.26
a calendar	con	lịch	Sss. p.559
a calendar	quyển	lịch	Modern Vietnamese
a river	giòng	sông	tTĐa. p.143; Modern Vietnamese
a river	con	sông	tTĐa. p.93; Modern Vietnamese
a river	cái	sông	Gram.TvK p.27
a ship	con	tàu	tTĐa. p.225; Modern Vietnamese
a ship	chiếc	tàu	tTĐa. p.225; Modern Vietnamese
a parrot	cái	vẹt	Qắt. Bảo kính cảnh giới
a parrot	con	vẹt	Modern Vietnamese
a swallow	chiếc	nhạn	TkMl. v.4. p.43b; Cô tô. <sup>10</sup> p.121
a swallow	cái	nhạn	TkMl. v.1. p.71a
a swallow	con	nhạn	Modern Vietnamese
a horse	chiếc	ngựa	Tt.khuc. sen. 441
a horse	con	ngựa	TkMl. v.2. p.11a; Sss. p.24; Modern Vietnamese
an orang-utan	cái	đười ươi	ChN. p.177
an orang-utan	con	đười ươi	Nhđtđ. p.415; Modern Vietnamese
.....	...	.....	.....

<sup>10</sup> *Cô Tô*. Nguyễn Tuân: *Ký* (1965). Literature Publishing House, Hanoi, 1986.

If ‘classifiers’ actually classify the noun associated with them, how do the four classifiers *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, *chiếc* ‘Inani. individuator’, *cánh* ‘wing’ in (12) 1. classify the noun *diều* ‘kite’ and its referent? What classes are there? Similarly, how do the classifiers in (12) 2. - (12) 19. classify the nouns? And what classes are there? There is no evidence to support the notion that classifiers classify the noun following, though superficially, it seems that might be the case.

However, semantically, it is the noun that determines the referents’ category of the classifier, whether the referents are real or imagined. Nevertheless, classifiers may denote interpersonal relations and pragmatic features such as: social status, age, gender, career, respect or lack of it, and politeness of speaker towards hearer.<sup>11</sup> They can also represent expressive semantic features such as metaphor, metonymy, cognitive processes, even dialectal factors. The selection of classifiers is part of linguistic performance.<sup>12</sup> See (14):

(14) a.	CLF. ông, chú, cậu, thằng, đứa	+	<u><i>em</i> (younger brother/sister)</u> ‘a younger brother’
	CLF. bà, cô, con, đứa	+	<u><i>em</i> (younger brother /sister)</u> ‘a younger sister’
b.	CLF. anh, thằng, tên, chú	+	<u><i>lính</i> (soldier)</u> ‘a soldier’
	CLF. tốp, đoàn, toán, bọn, tụi, lũ	+	<u><i>lính</i> (soldier)</u> ‘a group/branch of soldiers’
c.	CLF. vừng ‘disc’, mảnh ‘piece’,		_____

<sup>11</sup> Since 1940s, the authors of *Việt Nam văn phạm* ‘A Vietnamese Grammar’ recognized these points and provided details on pages 46-47. Lê Văn Lý (1972: 51) also recognized classifiers denoting respect such as: *đức* ‘highly respected person’, *đáng* ‘very highly respected status’, *thầy* ‘teacher or a person who is considered a teacher’; classifiers denoting non-respect such as: *thằng* ‘non-respected male person’; and classifiers denoting both respect and intimacy such as: *cụ* ‘old’, *ông* ‘grandfather’, *bà* ‘grandmother’, *bác/chú/cậu* ‘uncle’, *thím/ cô* ‘aunt’, *anh* ‘older brother’, *chị* ‘older sister’.

<sup>12</sup> Aikhenvald (2006) suggests that in many classifier languages the use of the classifiers denoting human is conditioned by the similar social factors and interpersonal relations. Đinh Văn Đức, Đinh Kiều Châu (2021: 3-10) also analyzed the characteristics of modality and pragmatics of Vietnamese classifiers. Dyvik Helge (1983: 5) analyzed the semantic effects that classifiers produce when there is more than one classifier in combination with the same noun allowing the speaker to select one of these classifiers for their use. For instance, *một đám người* ‘a bunch of people’, *một đàn người* ‘a swarm of people’.

---

ông ‘Mr.’, con ‘ani. individuator’	+	<u>trăng (moon)</u>
<u>‘the moon’</u>		

---

In poetic language, these points can be exhibited more clearly. If classifiers categorize the noun associating with them, there would never have existed the following expression in the composition *Tự tình khúc* (Tt.khuc) by Cao Ba Nha (in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century):<sup>13</sup>

- (15) *chiếc*                      ngựa      trắng      đi về      góc      bể  
 inanimate CLF   horse      white      go to      corner      sea  
 ‘The white horse goes to the corner of the sea’;

or in the composition by Ho Xuan Huong (in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century - early 19<sup>th</sup> century):<sup>14</sup>

- (16) một *trái*                      trăng      thu              chín mồm mồm  
 one fruit CLF   moon      autumn      fully ripe  
 ‘The autumn moon has been fully ripe’.

### 2.3. The possibility of two contrasting classifiers combining with the same noun

If classifiers do have the function of classifying the nouns associated with them, we need to investigate how the two typical classifiers (*cái* and *con*, or *chiếc* and *con*), which contrast with each other in most contexts, may nevertheless combine with the same noun. Written documents (from the present all the way back to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries) attest that to be the case.

a) Examples where the classifiers *cái* and *con* combine with the same noun can be found in various texts or in the a single text. Let’s take a look at the data, as shown in the tables below.

Table 1: The classifiers *cái* and *con* combine with the same noun, as recorded in various texts

<sup>13</sup> Chiếc ngựa trắng đi về góc bể; Đàn chó xanh lẻ tẻ bên trời. ‘The white horse goes to the corner of the sea, The herd of blue dogs are sporadic on one side of the sky’ (*Đông Dương Tạp chí [Indochina Magazine]*. Date 13<sup>th</sup> February 1916, p.463).

<sup>14</sup> *Thơ Hồ Xuân Hương*. Lữ Huy Nguyên tuyển chọn và giới thiệu; Nxb. Văn học. Hà Nội, 2005. (*Ho Xuan Huong’s poetry*. Lữ Huy Nguyên selected and introduced. Van Hoc Publishing House. Hanoi, 2005).



VŨ: DO SO-CALLED CLASSIFIERS IN VIETNAMESE CATEGORIZE NOUNS?

<b>Glossary</b>	<b>CÁI + N</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>CON + N</b>	<b>Source</b>
a turtle	cái ba ba	ChN. p.183	con ba ba	Dic.1772; ĐNqatv
a small crab	cái cáy	ChN. p.184	con cáy	Dic.1772
a bird	cái chim	KhL. p.24a,Qatt. Bảo kính. po.23	con chim	tTĐa.p.98. Gram.TvK.1883
a mouse	cái chuột	TkM. v.3. p.65b	con chuột	Nhdtđ. p.413
a toad	cái cóc	Nhdtđ. p.421	con cóc	ĐnQng.
a firefly	cái đóm nháng	KhL. p.46b	con đóm	tTĐa. p.124
an orang-utan	cái đười ươi	ChN. p.177	con đười ươi	Nhdtđ. p.415
a ant	cái kiến	Nhdtđ. p.420	con kiến	Dic.1887
a bee	cái ong	Nhdtđ. p.420	con ong	ĐnQng.
a snail	cái ốc	Nhdtđ. p.418	con ốc	ĐnQng.
a snake	cái rắn	TkMl. v.2. p.34aT; LsA. p.176; ThNam. sen.2936	con rắn	Dic.1887
a blackbirrd	cái sáo	Sss. p.566	con sáo	tTĐa. p.90
a squirrel	cái sóc	ĐnQng.	con sóc	Nhdtđ. p.415
a silkworm	cái tằm	Nhdtđ. p.353	con tằm	ĐnQng.
a duck	cái vịt	ChN.p.133; Sss. p.135; TkMl.v.1. p.40a;	con vịt	Sss.p469
a harrow	cái bừa	Nhdtđ. p.373	con bừa	TkMl. v.1.p.4b
a humming-top	cái quay	CoN.	con quay	Sss; Dic.1838; tTĐa; ĐNqatv; VnTđ; TđVn
a bar made (turned) of wood	cái tiện	Nhdtđ. p.379	con tiện	ChN. p.124

Table 2: The classifiers *cái* and *con* combine with the same noun as recorded in a single text

<b>Source</b>	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>CÁI + N</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>CON + N</b>	<b>Page</b>
ChN.	a wasp	cái tò vò	p.213	con vò vò	p.186
TkMl.	a rabbit	cái thỏ	v.3, p.38a	con thỏ	v.3, p.63
ThNam.	a fox	cái cáo	sen.7392	con cáo	sen.7233
Sss.	a duck	cái vịt	p.135	con vịt	p.469
Dic. 1887	an ant	cái kiến	p.vii	con kiến	p.vii
	a snake	con rắn	p.vii	cái rắn	p.vii
	a worm	cái sâu	p.viii	con sâu	p.viii

Gram. TvK. 1883	a knife	cái dao	p.27	con dao	p.25
	a river	cái sông	p.27	con sông	p.26
	a bird	cái chim	p.27	con chim	p.23
ĐNqatv. 1895	an ant	cái kiến	p.186	con kiến	p.186
Gramm. 1897	a snake	cái rắn	p.39	con rắn	p.39
	a termite	cái mối	p.39	con mối	p.39
	a worm	cái sâu	p.39	con sâu	p.39
	a toad	cái cóc	p.39	con cóc	p.39
	an ant	cái kiến	p.39	con kiến	p.39
	a cockroach	con gián	p.39	cái gián	p.39
ĐNQn. 1899	a toad	cái cóc	p.323	con cóc	p.333
	a chicken	cái gà	p.296	con gà	p.289
	a maggots	cái giòi	p.332	con giòi	p.334
	a moths	cái ngài	p.140	con ngài	p.140
	a bee	cái ong	p.326	con ong	p.158
	a snail	cái ốc	p.322	con ốc	p.323
	a worm	cái sâu	p.331	con sâu	p.334
	a squirrel	cái sóc	p.305	con sóc	p.304
	a silkworm	cái tằm	p.140	con tằm	p.325
tTĐa. 1912-1915	an oriole	cái oanh	p.159	con oanh	p.124
	a crane	cái hạc	p.129	con hạc	p.105
	a swallow	cái én	p.235	con én	p.82

b) The three classifiers *chiếc*, *cái*, and *con* may also associate with the same noun. For instance: (I provide here only the sources of several texts for the sake of illustration).

Table 3: The classifiers *chiếc* and *con* or *chiếc*, *cái*, *con* combine with the same noun, either all in a single text or in several texts

Glossary	CLF + N		Source
a hut	chiếc	lều	Modern Vietnamese
a hut	con	lều	Qatt. Mạn thuật 2
a hut	cái	lều	Modern Vietnamese
a boat	chiếc	thuyền	tTĐa. p.85; NHdn.p.37

a boat	con	thuyền	tTĐa. p.139; Modern Vietnamese
a swallow	chiếc	nhạn	TkMl. v.4. p.44b; Côtô. 121
a swallow	con	nhạn	Modern Vietnamese
a swallow	cái	nhạn	TkMl. v.1. p.71a
a horse	chiếc	ngựa	Tt.khúc
a horse	con	ngựa	TkMl. v.2. p.11a
a pole	chiếc	sào	ChN. p.132
a pole	con	sào	Côtô. p.121
a ship	chiếc	tàu	tTĐa. p.225
a ship	con	tàu	tTĐa. p.225
a kite	chiếc	diều	Modern Vietnamese
a kite	con	diều	Modern Vietnamese
a kite	cái	diều	Modern Vietnamese
a kite	cánh	diều	modern Vietnamese
a chopsticks	chiếc	đũa	Sss.p.427; Modern Vietnamese
a chopsticks	cái	đũa	Modern Vietnamese

Up to the present day, it has been common for two or three different classifiers to combine with a single noun. The question arises: *How do such classifiers categorize a noun?*

#### 2.4. Noun phrases: ‘*cái* + N [+ Animate]’ and ‘*con* + N [- Animate]’

If the function of classifiers is to classify the noun associated with them, a number of noun phrases with the classifier *cái* combining with nouns for animals (N [+ Animate]), and a number of noun phrases with the classifier *con* combining with nouns for inanimate things (N [- Animate]) cannot be explained. There are plenty of noun phrases having the above mentioned paradigm that are recorded in the texts, from *Từ điển tiếng Việt* (2010) ‘Vietnamese Dictionary’ to *Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* (around the 11<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> centuries). They do not support the notion that classifiers function to classify nominals.

Table 4: The number<sup>15</sup> of noun phrases with *cái* + N [+ Animate] and the number with *con* + N [- Animate]

<sup>15</sup> The statistics in this table do not count repeated noun phrases in the various data sources. In every text, we only enumerate different noun phrases with the relevant paradigm. A noun phrase occurring many times is counted as just one noun phrase. The paradigm of noun phrase **con** + N [- Animate], includes even those noun phrases that name things metaphorically, such as: *con trụ* ‘CLF pillar’, *con tiện* ‘CLF [turn]: window bars made (turned) of wood’, *con dọi*

No.	Sources of Data	Abbr.	Date	cái + N [+ Ani]	con + N [- Ani]
1	Phật thuyết	Pth	11-12 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
2	Cư trần lạc đạo phú	Cưtrần	13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
3	Đắc thú lâm tuyền	Đthú	13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	0
4	Vịnh Hoa Yên tự phú	HYên	13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	0
5	Khóa hư lục	KhL	? 14 <sup>th</sup> cent.	6	1
6	Nam dược quốc ngữ	NdQp	? 14 <sup>th</sup> cent.	13	1
7	Thập giới cô hồn	Thgiới	15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
8	Quốc âm thi tập	Qât	15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	4	6
9	Hồng Đức quốc âm <sup>16</sup>	HĐqâ	15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	5	3
10	Chi Nam ngọc âm	ChN	16-17 <sup>th</sup> cent	58	9
11	Cổ Châu hạnh	CồChH	late 16 <sup>th</sup> - early 17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
12	Cổ Châu lục	CồChL	late 16 <sup>th</sup> - early 17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
13	Truyền kỳ mạn lục	TkMl	late 16 <sup>th</sup> - early 17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	19	4
14	Phép giảng tám ngày	Phgi	1651	4	2
15	Lịch sử nước Annam	LsAn	1659	3	0
16	Dictionarivm A. Latinvm <sup>17</sup>	Dic.1651	1651	32	7

‘CLF [plumb] plumb’, *con cùc* ‘CLF cùc (handle of paddle)’, *con toán* ‘CLF [calculate] abacus’, *con đen* ‘CLF [black] naive lowly person’, *con cờ* ‘CLF chess’, *con nước* ‘CLF [water] tide’, *con quay* ‘CLF [rotate] with humming-top’, and: *con dao* ‘CLF knife’, *con sông* ‘CLF river’, *con mắt* ‘CLF eye’. However, noun phrases with the paradigm **con** + **N** [+ Animate] that name a thing which is interpreted metaphorically, such as *con cò* ‘CLF [stork] ‘a trigger’, *con chuột* ‘CLF [mouse] ‘muscle of the arm’, *con bướm* ‘CLF [butterfly] ‘[coat] hanger’ are not included. Noun phrases such as *con ruộng* ‘CLF ruộng [field] people who farm, farmers’ (in the work *HĐqâ.*, Thiên địa môn, po.24 ‘HĐqâ., ‘Topics about Sky and the Earth, poem 24’), *con chèo* ‘CLF chèo [row] boatman’ (ChN. p.129) are common noun phrases similar to: *con ở* ‘CLF ở [live] servant’ (ChN. p.93), *con hát* ‘CLF hát [sing] (female) singer’ (Dic.1651), *con bả* ‘CLF bả [prostitute/lascivious] a prostitute/ a lascivious woman’ (ChN. p.93), *con bộm* ‘CLF bộm [cheater] a swindler’ (ChN. p.93), *con chơi* ‘CLF chơi [skittish/ lascivious] a lascivious concubine/girl’ (ChN. p.93), etc. (implying non-respect) are also not counted.

<sup>16</sup> The source of these data is the collection of poems from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but recent studies have shown that there are also some poems from the time of Lê Kings and Trịnh Lords that occurred later. Nevertheless, we still incorporate this source of data for the sake of completeness.

<sup>17</sup> Regarding statistic form this source, see: Vũ Đức Nghiệu (2020: 225).

VŨ: DO SO-CALLED CLASSIFIERS IN VIETNAMESE CATEGORIZE NOUNS?

17	Thư thế kỷ XVII	Thu17	17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	0
18	Thư thế kỷ XVIII	Thu18	18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
19	Chinh phụ ngâm khúc	ChpN	18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	0
20	Cung oán ngâm khúc	CoN	18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	1	3
21	Thiên Nam ngữ lục	ThNa	late 17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	7	4
22	Hộ pháp luận	HpL	18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	1	0
23	Đại Nam Quốc sử diễn ca	ĐNQs	19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	1
24	Dictionarium An. Latinum	Dic.1772	1772-73	0	13
25	Truyện Kiều	TK	18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	1	1
26	Sách sổ sang chép các việc	Sss	1822	10	8
27	Nhật dụng thường đàm	Nhdtđ	1821-1827	32	0
28	Dictionarium An. Latinum <sup>18</sup>	Dic.1838	1838	0	18
29	Vocabulaire F. Annamite	Vo.Auba	1861	0	8
30	Tự tình khúc	Tt.khuc	circa 1862	1	2
31	Chuyến đi Bắc Kỳ 1876	ChđiBk	1876	0	0
32	Grammaire ... Annamite	Gram.TVK	1883	6	52
33	Dictionarium An.- La.	Dic.1877	1877	3	17
34	Thấy Lazaro Phiền	LPhiền	1887	0	4
35	Sách dẫn đàng	SDđ	1889	1	3
36	Đại Nam quốc âm...	ĐNqatv	1895	1	16
37	Grammaire An. ... Tonkin	Gram.PGV	1897	6	16
38	Dictionaire An. Francais	Dic.1898	1898	0	12
39	Đại Nam quốc ngữ	ĐNQn	1899	81	6
40	Nam Hải dị nhân	NHdn	1912	0	4

<sup>18</sup> In the book *Ngữ pháp lịch sử tiếng Việt* ‘The historical Grammar of Vietnamese: Words and Phrases’ (Vũ Đức Nghiệu: 2020), I only listed the introductory sessions on Vietnamese by Taberd (1838) and Theurel (1877) in the Vietnamese translation in the book *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt của Taberd 1838* ‘Taberd’s Vietnamese Grammar, 1838’; Author: Nguyen Khac Xuyen; Publisher: The Thời Đại (in USA) 1994); and provided the statistics in Table 3.1., page 225 as follows:

Source of data	Time	cái + N [+ An]	con + N [- An]
Ngữ pháp Taberd ‘Grammar by Taberd’	19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	0	11
Ngữ pháp Theurel ‘Grammar by Theurel’	19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	3	0

At this point, I listed the related noun phrases of the two dictionaries (Dic.1838 and Dic.1877) and supplement some other noun phrases from their introductory sessions on Vietnamese to produce these statistics.

41	Thơ Tân Đà	tTĐa	1912 - 1915	5	9
42	Tổ Tâm	Tâm	1922	0	4
43	Việt Nam tự điển	VnTđ	1931	4	7
44	Từ điển Việt Nam	TđVn	1958	0	8
45	Từ điển tiếng Việt	TđVhP	2010	0	21

In a nutshell, both the classifiers *cái* and *con* used to be able to associate with either animate nouns or with inanimate nouns. For instance, in the four-volume collection of stories “*Truyện kỳ mạn lục*”, I found the following noun phrases with the paradigm *con* + N [+ Animate]:

(17)	Gloss	NP	Source
	a swallow	con én	v.1. p.24a
	a pig	con lợn	v.1. p.32b
	an animal	con muông	v.1. p.32b
	a horse	con ngựa	v.2. p.11a
	a crow	con ác	v.3. p.50a
	a rabbit	con thỏ	v.3. p.63a
	a rhino	con tê	v.3. p.63b
	an elephant	con tượng	v.3. p.63b
	a fox	con cáo	v.3. p.65a
	a fox	con hồ	v.3. p.65a
	a wildcat	con li	v.3. p.65a
	a bee	con ong	v.4. p.31a
	a mule	con la	v.4. p.41b
	a swallow	con tử yến	v.4. p.43a

But there are also noun phrases with the paradigm *con* + N [- Animate]:

(18)	Gloss	NP	Source
	a harrow	con bừa	v.1. p.4b
	an eye	con mắt	v.1. p.22b
	a short spear	con bác	v.2. p.13b
	a pupil	con ngườ	v.2. p.43a
	a letter	con thư	v.3. p.11a.

This text includes noun phrases with the paradigm *cái* + N [- Animate]:

(19)	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>Source</b>
	a lance	cái mâu	v.1. p.4b
	a guitar	cái đàn	v.1. p.22b
	a small ceramic bottle	cái nậm	v.1. p.22b
	a coffin	cái quan	v.1. p.41a
	a shoe	cái hài	v.1. p.36b
	a hair	cái tóc	v.1. p.52b
	a wooden box	cái tráp	v.1. p.69a
	a parasol	cái sấp	v.1. p.76b

But there are also noun phrases with the paradigm *cái* + N [+ Animate]:

(20)	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>NP</b>	<b>Source</b>
	a coot	cái từ qui	v.1. p.36b
	a lovebird	cái uyên	v.1. p.40a
	a duck	cái vịt	v.1. p.40a
	a swallow	cái nhạn	v.1. p.71a
	an oriole	cái oanh	v.1. p.76b
	a butterfly	cái điệp	v.1. p.76b
	a snake	cái rắn	v.2. p.34aT
	a bird	cái chim	v.2. p.62a
	a rabbit	cái thỏ	v.3. p.38a
	a fox	cái cáo	v.3. p.60a
	a mouse	cái chuột	v.3. p.65b
	a butterfly	cái bướm	v.4. p.3b
	a crane	cái hạc	v.3. p.32a
	a firefly	cái đóm	v.4. p.44a.
	a turtle	cái rùa	v.3. p.10b
	a (old) gibbon	cái vượn (già)	v.3. p.60a
	an oriole	cái hoàng oanh	v.4. p.43b
	a legendary big animal in the water	cái ngoan	v.4. p.10b
	a legendary big animal in the water	cái đà	v.4. p.10b

### 2.5. The etymon of the “classifiers” *cái*, *chiếc*

In column 79 in Rhodes’s *Dictionarium Annamiticum Lusitanum et Latinum* (1651) recorded: “*Cái* này esta cousa: hoc. *cá* này *idem*.” (*cái* này is the same as *cá* này). This suggests that in this dictionary, *cái* and *cá* are synonymous. This dictionary and the two texts *Cổ Châu lục* (CoChL) and *Truyền kỳ mạn lục* (TkML.) took into account the following noun phrases:

Glossary	NP	Source
(yellow) brocade	cái gấm (vàng)	CổChL. sen.204
silk	cái lụa	TkML. v.3 p.57b
unbleached linen	cái bố	Dic.1651. co.48
brocade	cái (bóc [vóc])	Dic.1651. co.71
silk, shantung	cái đũi [đũi]	Dic.1651. co.242
sort of silk/cloth	cái lĩnh [lĩnh]	Dic.1651. co.410
silk	cái lụa	Dic.1651. co.428
crepe	cái nhiễu [nhiễu]	Dic.1651. co.550
sort of silk/cloth	cái phảng	Dic.1651. co.595
sort of silk/cloth	cái rè	Dic.1651. co.644
sort of silk/cloth	cái the	Dic.1651. co.753

Etymologically, *cá* is a Sino-Vietnamese word borrowed from Middle Chinese (個). In Vietnamese, *cá* is related to *cái* (see more: Alves, 2007, 2022; Nguyễn Cung Thông, 2019), as the older form as it has features from Old Chinese \*kʰa[r]-s (Baxter W.H. and Sagart L.: 2014). In modern Chinese linguistics, the word 個 (its modern Chinese pronunciation: gè) is called a quantifier.<sup>19</sup>

The nouns *gấm* ‘brocade’, *lụa* ‘silk’, *bố* ‘unbleached linen’, *đũi* ‘silk, shantung’, *lĩnh* ‘sort of silk’, *nhiễu* ‘crepe’, *phảng* ‘sort of silk’, *rè* ‘sort of silk’, *the* ‘sort of silk’, *vóc* ‘brocade’ in the noun phrases above are all mass nouns [- countable], that

<sup>19</sup> Previously, in the Sino-Vietnamese translations, especially the translation of poems, the classifier *cái* is frequently used to translate the Sino-Vietnamese *cá* (個) ‘individual’. In many cases the texts are translated word for word. Bài *Tuyệt cú* ‘Quatrain’ (the Tang Dynasty poem composed by Do Phu) for example, has the following sentence: 兩個黃鸝鳴翠柳 ‘Two CLF orioles sing in the green willows’, which is translated by the Vietnamese poet Tan Da as:

Hai *cái* oanh vàng kêu liễu biếc  
 two CLF oriole yellow sing willow green  
 ‘Two CLF orioles are singing in the green willows’



constitute names of kinds of cloth and silk. Here the word *cái* plays a role in representing measurable units, just like words: *tấm* ‘tablet/sheet’, *cây* ‘tree/stick’, *vuông* ‘square’, or other nowadays nouns such as: *thứ* ‘sort’, *loại* ‘sort’, but not in classifying or specifying the class of nouns.

With respect to the word *chiếc*, in studies of Vietnamese linguistics, *chiếc* has been determined to be a Vietnamized Sino-Vietnamese word (come from Sino-Vietnamese form *chích* 隻).

The Middle Chinese reconstruction of 隻 (*chích*) from Baxter and Sagart (2014) is \**tsyek* (*tsy-* + *-jek D*), but the Old Chinese reconstruction of this word from these two authors is \**tek*.

Old Chinese	Middle Chinese	Modern Chinese
* tek	→ (tsy- + -jek D) 隻	→ zhī (隻)
<i>chiếc</i>	Sino-Vietnamese <i>chích</i> (隻)	

In Vietnamese, the word *chích* related to *chiếc* as the older form as it has features from Old Chinese \**tek*. In Chinese linguistics, *zhī* 隻 is termed as *quantifier*, indicating a unit of animals ‘*an animal*’, a unit of things ‘*a thing*’ etc. For instance, 一隻雞 (one CLF chicken ‘a chicken’), 一隻耳環 (one CLF earring ‘an earring’). *Cái*, *chiếc* and *con* have often been regarded as the most typical classifiers in Vietnamese (*cái* and *chiếc* with inanimate nouns, *con* with animate nouns). If these and the other classifiers function to classify their associated nouns, there cannot be any overlap between the function and the combining domain as presented above. This evidence along with the etymon of the words *cái* and *chiếc* demonstrate that *cái* and *chiếc* are not words used for classification. They are unit nouns denoting the meaning *a natural unit (or an individuator) of things/animals* which are determined by the noun following them. Therefore, the so-called the classificatory function of the ‘classifiers’ *cái* and *chiếc* in particular, as well as ‘classifiers’ in general needs to be revised.

The semantic features [+ unit/individual], [± animal] of the classifiers *cái* and *con* and the formulation of the combining possibilities [*cái* + N] and [*con* + N] have been gradually formed in the historical development of Vietnamese. However, that is a lexical combination rather than a morphological formulation or formulation of nominal classification. Consequently, Vietnamese only has the possibilities of lexical combination to establish noun phrases such as: *quả chanh* ‘CLF lemon’, *con bò* ‘CLF cow’, *cái xe* ‘CLF vehicle’, *miếng thịt* ‘CLF meat’, *kẻ trộm* ‘CLF thief’, *cục đá* ‘CLF

rock’, *chiếc lá* ‘CLF leaf’, *cái lá* ‘CLF leaf’. Noun phrases such as *\*cái chanh* ‘CLF lemon’ *\*cái ổi* ‘CLF guava’, *\*đứa xe* ‘CLF vehicle’, *\*đức trộm* ‘CLF thief’, *\*sự đá* ‘CLF rock’, *\*con lá* ‘CLF leaf’, *\*mảnh chó* ‘CLF dog’, *\*kẻ bò* ‘CLF cow’ are excluded.

### 3. Conclusion

The issue of ‘classifiers’ is of great importance to the analysis of Vietnamese grammar and is often controversial. The arguments above lead us to the following conclusions.

**3.1.** In research on Vietnamese linguistics from the 1940s to the present, studies of so-called classifiers have taken widely different approaches, some of which even contradict each other.

The fact that many languages classify nouns by gender may have made it seem reasonable to think that Vietnamese classified nouns by means of classifiers. However, nominal classification in Vietnamese is not based on the syntactic features of nouns themselves, but on the properties of their referents. In terms of grammar, the second element in phrases [CLF + N] is a descriptive modifier or a determiner with respect to the preceding element. Additionally, in terms of semantics, it is the following constituent that classifies and specifies the category/class of the preceding one.

In investigating the issue of ‘classifiers’, Vietnamese researchers in Vietnam have also been strongly influenced by traditional analysis based on opposition between *thực từ* (lit. ‘full’ - ‘word’) ‘content words’ and *hư từ* (lit. ‘empty’ - ‘word’) ‘function words’. This makes it difficult and complicated to analyze syntactic constituents and syntactic relations in [CLF + N] phrases and in noun phrases in general.

The notion of treating ‘classifiers’ as a sub-class of nouns has, in modern studies, become more prevalent. Some Vietnamese linguists have modified or completely changed their opinions about ‘classifiers’. But the tendency to view them as a means of classifying nominals remains widespread in grammatical studies both in Vietnam and abroad.

**3.2.** The analyses and descriptions of ‘classifiers’ as well as the syntactic and semantic relations between ‘classifiers’ and nouns based on modern Vietnamese data do not indicate that classifiers classify the nouns that appear in the same phrase.

Historical Vietnamese data that have been gathered and presented in this paper do not suggest that classifiers function to classify nominals. Such data should not be

ignored if we aim to obtain a multiple-dimensional and more complete perspective on so-called ‘classifiers’.

If a system of nominal classifying devices (or ‘classifiers’) is very large and complicated (in number of words, in overlapping and shifting subclasses) and does not meet the requirement of being systematic and objective (it cannot be tested by objective means, researchers cannot agree on the numbers, etc.) then that system needs to be strictly evaluated and examined again, for the treatment of the so-called classifiers determines the identification of structure of Vietnamese phrases.

**3.3.** Nouns such as *người* ‘human/person’, *cây* ‘tree/stick’, *con* ‘Ani. individuator’, *cái* ‘Inani. individuator’, appear to be classifiers but they do not qualify. The semantic features [+ unit/individual], [± human], [± plants], [± animals] are part of their lexical meanings. Which ‘classifier’ is selected to combine with a particular noun depends on the semantics (the lexical meaning), and the syntactic properties of both ‘classifier’ and noun. This selection is similar to the selection of other kinds of elements on the paradigmatic axis. Furthermore, there are other important considerations, such as: speakers’ perception of things, metaphorical extensions, metonymy, representation of modality, politeness, manifestation of interpersonal relations between the speaker and the hearer and the object in question.

**3.4.** Words termed “classifiers” in Vietnamese have and will continue to draw the attention of the Vietnamese researchers. There may be different approaches to ‘classifiers’ in Vietnamese, but no matter what the approach, it should reflect current usage. On the other hand, consistency of analysis and description needs to be assured. In order to determine the semantic, syntactic and pragmatic properties of so-called ‘classifiers’ correctly and more completely, further far-reaching analyses and in-depth descriptions are required. This issue has not only been raised in Vietnamese but it also extends to South Asian languages, East Asian languages, Southeast Asian languages and isolating languages in general.

### Abbreviations

CLF	classifier	DEM	demonstrative
Ani.	animate	Inani.	inanimate
v.	volume	p.	page
co.	column	sen.	sentence
po.	poem	let.	letter
Q:	question	A:	answer
N	noun		

## References

- Alves M.J (2007) Categories of grammatical Sino-Vietnamese vocabulary. *MKS Journal*, vol. 37, 217-237.
- Alves M.J. (2022) Vietic and Early Chinese Grammatical Vocabulary in Vietnamese: Native Vietic and Austroasiatic Etyma versus Early Chinese Loanwords. In: *Papers from the 30th meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (2021)*, ed. by Mark J. Alves and Paul Sidwell, 1-24. JSEALS Special Publication No. 8. University of Hawaii Press.
- Aikhenvald A.Y. (2000) *Classifiers: A Typology of Noun Categorization Devices*. Oxford University Press Inc., NY.
- Aikhenvald A.Y. (2006) Classifiers and Noun Classes: Semantics. In: Keith Brown (Editor-in-chief) *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, Volume 2, 463-471.
- Alice Vittrant, Marc Tang (2021) Classifiers in Southeast Asian languages. In: Paul Sidwell and Jenny Mathias (eds) *The Languages and Linguistics of Mainland Southeast Asia: A comprehensive guide*, 733-772.
- Alan B., Coon J. (2014) Classifiers are for numerals, not for nouns: Consequences for the mass/count distinction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45: 695-707.
- Allan K. (1977) Classifiers. *Language*. 53 (2): 285-311.
- Allan K. (1980) Nouns and Countability. *Lang*. 56. No.3: 541-557.
- Aubaret G (1864) *Grammaire de la langue Annamite*. Paris. Imprimerie Imperiale.
- Aubaret G (1867) *Grammaire Annamite suivie d'un vocabulaire Francais - Annamite et Annamite – Francais*. Paris. Imprimerie Imperiale.
- Baxter William H., Sagart L. (2014) *Old Chinese reconstruction*, version 1.1 (20 September 2014).  
<https://ocbaxtersagart.lsa.umich.edu/BaxterSagartOCbyMandarinMC2014-09-20.pdf>.
- Benjamin K. T'sou (1976) The structure of nominal classifier systems. In: *Austroasiatic Studies. Part II. (Oceanic Linguistics Special Publication No.13)*. The University Press of Hawaii, 1215-1247.
- Bisang, Walter (1999) Classifiers in East and Southeast Asian Languages: Counting and Beyond. In: J. Gvozdanovic (ed) *Numeral types and changes worldwide*. Munchen: Mouton de Gruyter, 113 - 186.
- Bisang W., Kim Ngoc Quang (2020) (In)definiteness and Vietnamese classifiers. In: Kata Balogh, Anja Latrouite & Robert D. Van Valin, Jr. (eds.), *Nominal anchoring: Specificity, definiteness and article systems across languages*. Berlin: Language Science Press, 15 - 49. DOI:10.5281/zenodo.4049679.
- Bon M.M. (Cố Bản), Dronet (Cố Ân) (1889) *Manuel de conversation Franco - Tonkinois (Sách dẫn dắt nói truyện bằng tiếng Phalangsa và tiếng Annam)*. Kê Sở Press.
- Bouchet A. (1908) *Cours Elementaire D'Annamite*. Hanoi-Haiphong, Imprimerie d'Extreme-Orient.
- Bùi Đức Tịnh (1996 – 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1954) *Văn phạm Việt Nam [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Văn Hóa Publishing House.
- Bultheau R. (1950) *Cours d'Annamite*. Paris: Larose.
- Cadiere L. (1958) *Syntaxe de la Langue Vietnamienne*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extreme - Orient. Volume XLII.

- Cao Xuân Hạo (1980) Hai loại danh từ của tiếng Việt [Two types of Vietnamese nouns]. In: *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa [The Vietnamese language: Some semantic, grammatical, phonetic questions]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House, 1998, 265-304.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1986) Một số biểu hiện của cách nhìn Âu châu đối với cấu trúc tiếng Việt [Some European linguistics points of view towards structure of the Vietnamese language]. In: *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa [The Vietnamese language: Some semantic, grammatical, phonetic questions]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House, 1998, 225-264.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1988) Sự phân biệt đơn vị/khối trong tiếng Việt và khái niệm “loại từ” [Distinction between unit and mass in Vietnamese and concept of classifier]. In: *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa [The Vietnamese language: Some semantic, grammatical, phonetic questions]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House, 1998, 305-328.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1998) Về cấu trúc của danh ngữ trong tiếng Việt [On the structure of Vietnamese noun phrases]. In: *Tiếng Việt - mấy vấn đề ngữ âm, ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa [The Vietnamese language: Some semantic, grammatical, phonetic questions]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House, 1998, p.329-346.
- Cao Xuân Hạo (1999) Nghĩa của loại từ [Meaning of Classifiers]. *Ngôn ngữ* 2: 1-16 & 3: 9-23.
- Chéron A. (1901, 1904) *Cours de Langue Annamite*. Hanoi, F.H. Schneider Imprimeur-Editeur, 1901.
- Chodzko E.C. (1932) *Introduction à l' Étude de la Langue Annamite*. Haiphong.
- Chierchia G. (2010) Mass Nouns, Vagueness and Semantic Variation. *Synthese* 174 (1): 99-149.
- Diệp Quang Ban (2005) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese Grammar]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Diệp Quang Ban - Hoàng Văn Thung (1991) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt, tập I [A Vietnamese Grammar. Volume 1]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Diguet E. (1892) *Eléments de Grammaire Annamite*. Paris: Imprimerie National En vente à la librairie challamel, 17, Rue Jacob, MDCCCCIV.
- Đình Văn Đức (2001) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt (Từ loại) [A Vietnamese grammar: Word classes]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Đình Văn Đức (2010) *Các bài giảng về từ pháp học tiếng Việt [Lectures on Vietnamese Morphology]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Đình Văn Đức, Đinh Kiều Châu (2021) Thử tìm một tham chiếu đa chiều trong phân tích nhóm loại từ tiếng Việt [Try to find a multidimension reference to analyse Vietnamese classifiers]. *Ngôn ngữ* 6: 3-10.
- Doetjes, Jenny S. (2012) Count/Mass Distinctions across Languages. In: *Semantics: an international handbook of natural language meaning, part III*. C. Maienborn, K. von Stechow, Portner (eds). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2559 – 2580.
- Dyvik, Helge J.J. (1983) *Categories and functions in Vietnamese classifier constructions*. University of Bergen, Department of Linguistics and Phonetics.
- Emeneau M.B. (1951) *Studies in Vietnamese (Annamese) Grammar*. University of California.
- Hoàng Dũng, Nguyễn Thị Li Kha (2004) Về các thành tố phụ sau trung tâm trong danh ngữ tiếng Việt [On postmodifiers of Vietnamese noun phrases]. *Ngôn ngữ* 4: 24-34.
- Hoàng Dũng, Nguyễn Thị Li Kha (2008) Danh từ và các tiểu loại danh từ tiếng Việt. [Vietnamese nouns and their subclasses]. In: *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt - Những vấn đề lí luận*

- [*Vietnamese grammar: Theoretical issues*]. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House, 213-296.
- Krupa V. (1978) Classifiers in the languages of Southeast Asia. Evolution of a lexico-syntactic category. *Asian and African studies*, XIV: 119-124.
- Lê, Biên (1999) *Từ loại tiếng Việt hiện đại [Word classes of contemporary Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Lê, Cận - Phan Thiệu (1983) *Giáo trình ngữ pháp tiếng Việt tập 1 [A Textbook for Vietnamese grammar. Volume 1]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Lê, Văn Lý (1972 - 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1968) *Sơ thảo ngữ pháp Việt Nam [Sketch of Vietnamese grammar]*. Saigon: Learning Resource Center, Education Ministry.
- Löbel, E. (2000) *Classifiers versus Genders and Noun Classes: A Case Study in Vietnamese*. In: *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*. B. Unterbeck, M. Rissanen, T. Nevalainen, and M. Saari (eds.). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 259–320.
- Luru, Vân Lăng (1997) Một số vấn đề về loại từ trong tiếng Việt [Some problems on classifiers of Vietnamese]. *Ngôn ngữ 2*: 23-32.
- Lý, Toàn Thắng (1997) Loại từ và các tiểu loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt [Classifiers and noun subclasses of Vietnamese]. *Ngôn ngữ 2*: 1-13.
- Nguyễn, Cung Thông (2019) Tiếng Việt thời LM de Rhodes - cách dùng con và cái [Vietnamese in A. De Rhodes' time: Usages of words *con* or *cái*]. [www.daophatngaynay.com/.../28119-tieng-viet-thoi-lm-de-rhodes-cach-dung-con-va-cai-phan-14.html](http://www.daophatngaynay.com/.../28119-tieng-viet-thoi-lm-de-rhodes-cach-dung-con-va-cai-phan-14.html) . (Last accessed 27.2.2019).
- Nguyen, Dinh Hoa (1957) Classifiers in Vietnamese. *WORD*, Vol 13, Iss. 1: 124-152.
- Nguyễn, Hữu Quỳnh (1994) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Encyclopedic dictionary Publishing House.
- Nguyễn Khắc Xuyên (1994) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt của Taberd 1838 [Taberd's Vietnamese grammar, 1838]*. Thời Điem Publishing House.
- Nguyễn, Kim Thân (1963-1964) *Nghiên cứu về ngữ pháp tiếng Việt, tập 1-2 [Research on Vietnamese Grammar. Volume 1, 2]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Nguyen, Kim Than (1969) An outline of Vietnamese Grammar. *Vietnamese Studies 40 - Linguistic Essays*, 148-217.
- Nguyễn, Phú Phong (2002) *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt: loại từ và chỉ thị từ [Issues of Vietnamese Grammar: Classifiers and Demonstratives]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Nguyễn, Phú Phong (2005) Con cái, cái con, con và cái danh từ, loại từ và quán từ [Noun phrases *con cái, cái con, con* và *cái* danh từ, loại từ và quán từ]. *Ngôn ngữ 10*: 12-24.
- Nguyễn Tài Cẩn (1975) *Từ loại danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại [Noun in contemporary Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn (1975) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt (Tiếng - từ ghép - đoản ngữ) [A Vietnamese grammar: Morphosyllabeme - Compound words - Phrases]*. Hanoi: University and College Publishing House
- Nguyễn, Văn Lộc (ed.) Nguyễn, Mạnh Tiến (2017) *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Pelletier F.J. (1979) *Mass terms: Some philosophical Problems*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- Phan, Khôi (1955) *Việt ngữ nghiên cứu [Studies on Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Văn nghệ Press.
- Phan, Ngọc (1988) Thử trở lại câu chuyện loại từ [Try going back to the classifier story]. In: *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt [Vietnamese grammar: Theoretical issues]*. Hanoi: Social Sciences Publishing House.

- Simpson A. (2005) Classifiers and DP structure in Southeast Asia. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*. G. Cinque and R. Kayne (eds). New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 806-38.
- Simpson A., Binh Ngo. (2018) *Classifier syntax in Vietnamese*. *J East Asian Linguist* 27: 211-246 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10831-018-9181-5>.
- Taberd A.J.L. (1838) *Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum*. Fredericnagori Vulgo Serampore.
- Theurel J.S. (1887) *Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum*. Ninh Phú.
- Thompson L.C. (1965) *A Vietnamese Grammar*. Seattle, London. University of Washington Press.
- Trà Ngân (1943) *Khảo cứu về tiếng Việt Nam [Research on Vietnamese]*. Hanoi: Công lực Press.
- Trần, Đại Nghĩa (1998) Một cách xác định loại từ trong tiếng Việt [A way to identify Vietnamese classifiers]. *Ngôn ngữ* 4: 34 - 49.
- Trần, Đại Nghĩa (2005) Phân loại các tổ hợp loại từ - danh từ trong tiếng Việt [Classification of Vietnamese combinations of classifier and noun]. *Ngôn ngữ* 5: 77-80.
- Trần, Trọng Kim - Bùi, Kỳ - Phạm, Duy Khiêm (1940) *Việt nam văn phạm [A Vietnamese grammar]*. Hanoi: Lê Thăng Press.
- Trương, Văn Chính - Nguyễn Hiến Lê (1963) *Khảo luận về ngữ pháp Việt Nam [Research into Vietnamese grammar]*. Hue: Huế University Press.
- Truong, Vinh Ky (1883) *Grammaire de la Langue Annamite*. Saigon: Guiland and Martinon.
- Truong, Vinh Tong (1932) *Grammaire de la langue Annamite*. Saigon: Imprimerie Đức - Lưu - Phương.
- Trường Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội (1962) *Giáo trình về Việt ngữ. Tập 1*.
- Vallot. .G. (1897) *Grammaire Annamite à l'usage Des Francaise de l'Annam et du Tonkin*. Hanoi.
- Vittrant A., Tang M. (2021). Classifiers in Southeast Asian languages. In: P. Sidwell and J. Mathias. *The Languages and Linguistics of Mainland Southeast Asia: A comprehensive guide*, pp.733-772.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2006) Góp thêm ý kiến về ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa của hai kiểu danh ngữ: hạt dưa..., một hạt dưa... [Some more about grammar and semantic of two types of noun phrases *hạt dưa* (watermelon seed) ..., *một hạt dưa* (a watermelon seed) ...] In: *Những vấn đề ngôn ngữ học [Linguistic Issues]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press, 106-119.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2017) Sự kết hợp của danh từ đơn vị CÁI, CON khi làm trung tâm danh ngữ với định ngữ hạn định là danh từ động vật/ bất động vật từ thời tiếng Việt cổ đến đầu thế kỷ XX [Combinations of unit noun head *cái* or *con* with animal or inanimal noun restrictive adjuncts in noun phrases recorded in document from old Vietnamese to early 20<sup>th</sup> century]. *Ngôn ngữ* 12: 3-12 & 1 (2018): 3-14.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2019) Nhìn lại từ **cái** chỉ xuất trong danh ngữ tiếng Việt qua ngữ liệu từ thời tiếng Việt cổ đến nay [A Retrospective view of the emphatic word *cái* in Vietnamese noun phrases recorded in document from old Vietnamese up to now]. *Ngôn ngữ* 1: 3-23.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2020) *Ngữ pháp lịch sử tiếng Việt: Từ và ngữ đoạn [A Historical Vietnamese grammar: Word and Phrase]*. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Vũ, Đức Nghiệu (2022) The Unit Noun Status of Vietnamese Classifiers. (Unpublished). Paper presented at The 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Vietnamese and Taiwanese Studies. National Cheng Kung University (Tainan, Taiwan), November 19-20.

- Bystrov I.S., Nguyen Tai Can, Stankevich N.V. [Быстров И.С., Нгуен Тай Кан, Станкевич Н.В.] (1975) *Грамматика Вьетнамского языка*. [A Vietnamese Grammar]. Ленинград: Изд. Ленинградского университета.
- Nguyen Tai Can [Нгуен Тай Кан] (1976) *О конструкциях типа “существительное со значением единицы измерения + существительное”* [On The Structure of “Unit noun + Noun”]; in: Вьетнамский лингвистический сборник. [A collection of Vietnamese Linguistics Studies]; p.163-170. Москва: Изд. Наука.
- Panphilov V.S. [Панфилов В.С.] (1993) *Грамматический строй Вьетнамского языка*. [Vietnamese Grammatical Structure]. Санкт-Петербургский Государственный Университет. Восточный Факультет. Санкт-Петербург.
- Solnsev V.M. [Солнцев В.М.] (1999) *Вьетнамский язык*. [The Vietnamese Language]. Институт языкознания, Русская Академия Наук.
- Solnsev V.M., Lekomsev Ju.K., Mkhitarjan T.T., Glebova I.I. [Солнцев В.М., Лекомцев Ю.К., Мхитарян Т.Т., Глебова И.И.] (1960) *Вьетнамский язык*. [The Vietnamese Language]. Изд. Восточной литературы.
- Shuskij Ju.K. [Щуцкий Ю.К.] (1934) *Учебник Аннамского Языка*. [A Textbook to Study the Vietnamese Language]. Научно - Исследовательская Ассоциация при Ленинградском Восточном Институте им. А.С. Енукидзе. Ленинград: Направления рукописи No.12.
- Jakhontov S.E. [Яхонтов С.Е.] (1971) *Языки Китая и Юго-Восточной Азии - проблемы синтаксиса*. [Syntactic Problems of Chinese and SouthEast Asian Languages], 244 -258. Москва: Изд. Наука.

### The Abbreviations and Full Tittles of Sources of Data

(In Alphabetical oder of Abbreviations)

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 1. ChđiBk. | <i>Chuyến đi Bắc Kỳ năm Ất Hợi 1876</i> . Trương Vĩnh Ký. “ <a href="http://vi.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Chuyến_đi_Bắc_Kỳ_năm_Ất_Hợi_1876&amp;oldid=29918">http://vi.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=Chuyến_đi_Bắc_Kỳ_năm_Ất_Hợi_1876&amp;oldid=29918</a> ” |
| 2. ChN.    | <i>Chỉ Nam ngọc âm giải nghĩa</i> . Hoàng Thị Ngọc phiên âm, chú giải; In: Từ điển song ngữ Hán Việt <i>Chỉ Nam ngọc âm giải nghĩa</i> . Hà Nội: Văn học, 2016.   |
| 3. ChpN.   | <i>Chinh phụ ngâm khúc</i> . Tổng tập văn học Việt Nam, tập 13B. Hà Nội: Khoa học Xã hội, 1997.   |
| 4. CoN.    | <i>Cung oán ngâm khúc</i> . Nguyễn Gia Thiều. (Nguyễn Lộc khảo đính, giới thiệu). Hà Nội: Văn học, 1986.  |
| 5. CỏchH.  | <i>Cổ châu Phật bản hạnh</i> . (Gọi tắt: <i>Cổ châu hạnh</i> ). In: Di văn chùa Dầu (Nguyễn Quang Hồng chủ biên. Khoa học Xã hội, 1997).  |
| 6. CỏchL.  | <i>Cổ Châu Pháp Vân Phật bản hạnh ngữ lục</i> . ( <i>Cổ châu lục</i> ). In: Di văn chùa Dầu. Nguyễn Quang Hồng chủ biên. Hà Nội: Khoa học Xã hội, 1997.   |
| 7. Cutrần. | <i>Cư trần lạc đạo phú</i> . In: <i>Thiền tông bản hạnh</i> . (Hoàng Thị Ngọc khảo cứu, phiên âm, chú giải). Hà Nội: Văn học, 2009.   |



8. Dic.1651 *Dictionarivm Annamiticvm Lvsitanvm, et Lainvm.* A.de. Rhodes.
9. Dic.1772 *Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum.* Pigneau de Behaine. Archive des Missions Etrangères de Paris, 2001.
10. Dic.1838 *Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum.* A.J.L.Taberd; Fredericnagori Vulgo Serampore, 1838.
11. Dic.1877 *Dictionarium Anamitico Latinum.* Theurel; Ninh Phú, 1877.
12. Dic.1898 *Dictionaire Annamite - Francais.* J.F.M. Genibrel; Saigon,1898.
13. ĐNqatv. *Đại Nam quốc âm tự vị.* Huỳnh Tịnh Paulus Của. Saigon Imprimerie REY, CURIOL & Cie, 4, rue d' Adran, 4. 1895-1896.
14. ĐNQn. *Đại Nam quốc ngữ.* Nguyễn Văn San. (Lã Thị Minh Hằng khảo, phiên, dịch, chú. Hà Nội, 2013).
15. ĐNQs. *Đại Nam quốc sử diễn ca.* Lê Ngô Cát, Phạm Đình Toái. Bản phiên âm chữ Quốc ngữ, theo <http://www.thanhvinh.net/quantrou/?p=574>
16. Đthú. *Đắc thú lâm tuyền thành đạo ca.* In: *Thiền tông bản hạnh.* (Hoàng Thị Ngọc khảo cứu, phiên âm, chú giải). Hà Nội: Văn học, 2009.
17. Gram.PGV *Grammaire Annamite à l'usage des Francais de l'Annam et du Tonkin.* P.-G.V. Hà Nội, 1897.
18. Gram.TvK *Grammaire de la Langue Annamite.* Saigon - Guiland and Martinon. 1883.
19. HĐqâ. *Hồng Đức quốc âm thi tập.* Ký hiệu AB.292; Thư viện Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, Hà Nội.
20. HpLuan. *Hộ Pháp luận.* Ký hiệu AB.381; Thư viện Viện nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, Hà Nội.
21. HYên. *Vịnh Hoa yên tự phú.* In: *Thiền tông bản hạnh.* (Hoàng Thị Ngọc khảo cứu, phiên âm, chú giải). Hà Nội: Văn học, 2009.
22. KhL. *Khoá hư lục* (Thiền tông khóa hư ngữ lục). Trần Trọng Dương khảo cứu, phiên chú. Hà Nội: Văn học, 2009.
23. LPhiên. *Thầy Lazaro Phiên.* Nguyễn Trọng Quản. 1887. (Bản PDF của Nguyễn Văn Trung, Montréal, tháng 1, 1999). <https://cvdvn.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/thay-lazaro-phen.pdf>
24. LsAn. *Lịch sử nước Annam* (B. Thiện). In: *Lịch sử chữ quốc ngữ 1620 -1659;* Đỗ Quang Chính. Tôn giáo, 2008.
25. NdQp. *Nam dược quốc ngữ phú.* In: *Hồng nhĩ giác tư y thư.* Ký hiệu A.162; Thư viện Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, Hà Nội.
26. NHdn. *Nam hải dị nhân.* Phan Kế Bính. 1912. (Trê, 1988)
27. Nhdtđ. *Nhật dụng thường đàm.* (In: Trần Trọng Dương: *Khảo cứu từ điển song ngữ Nhật dụng thường đàm* của Phạm Đình Hồ. Hà Nội: Văn học, 2016).
28. Phgi. *Phép giảng tám ngày cho kẻ muốn chịu phép rửa tội mà vào đạo thánh đức chúa blời.* A. de Rhodes. Tủ sách Đại kết, 1993.
29. Pth. *Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh.* (Hoàng Thị Ngọc phiên

- âm, chú giải; In: *Chữ Nôm và tiếng Việt qua bản giải âm Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh*. Hà Nội: Khoa học Xã hội, 2002).
- 
30. Qât. *Quốc âm thi tập*. Nguyễn Trãi. In: Nguyễn Trãi: *Quốc âm từ điển*. Trần Trọng Dương. Từ điển Bách khoa, 2014.
- 
31. SDđ. *Sách dẫn đàng nói truyện bằng tiếng Phalangsa và tiếng Annam* (Manuel de conversation Franco - Tonkinois). Par M M. Bon (Cổ Bản) et Dronet (Cổ Ân); Kẻ Sở, 1889.
- 
32. Sss. *Sách sổ sang chép các việc*. Philipê Binh. Viện Đại học Đà Lạt, 1968.
- 
33. TđVn. *Từ điển Việt Nam*. Thanh Nghị. Saigon: Thời thế, 1958.
- 
34. TđVhP. *Từ điển tiếng Việt*. Hoàng Phê chủ biên. Đnanang: Trung tâm Từ điển học, 2010.
- 
35. Thgiới. *Thập giới cô hồn quốc ngữ văn*. In: *Thiên Nam dư hạ tập*. Ký hiệu A.334; Thư viện Viện Nghiên cứu Hán Nôm, Hà Nội.
- 
36. ThNam. *Thiên Nam ngữ lục*. Nguyễn Thị Lâm khảo cứu và biên soạn. Hà Nội: Văn học, 2001.
- 
37. Thu17. *Thư thế kỷ XVII*. ‘17<sup>th</sup> century letters’ including: 1 letter by Igesico Văn Tín, 1 letter by Bentô Thiện (Đỗ Quang Chính: *Lịch sử chữ quốc ngữ 1620 -1659* ‘History of Quốc ngữ Writing from 1620 to 1659’); Ppublishing House Tôn giáo; Hà Nội, 2008). 5 letters numbered from 1 to 5 (Đoàn Thiện Thuật. Hà Nội: Giáo Dục, 2008).
- 
38. Thu18. *Thư thế kỷ XVIII*. ‘18<sup>th</sup> century letters’ including 35 letters and requeststs numbered from 6 to 40 (Đoàn Thiện Thuật: *Chữ Quốc ngữ thế kỷ XVIII* ‘Quốc ngữ Writing in 18<sup>th</sup> century’; Hà Nội: Giáo Dục, 2008).
- 
39. TK. *Truyện Kiều*. In: *Tư liệu Truyện Kiều: Thử tìm hiểu bản sơ thảo Đoạn trường tân thanh*. Nguyễn Tài Cẩn. Hà Nội: Giáo Dục, 2008.
- 
40. TkMI. *Truyền kỳ mạn lục giải âm*. Nguyễn Quang Hồng phiên chú. Hà Nội: Khoa học Xã hội, 2001.
- 
41. Ttâm. *Tố Tâm*. Hoàng Ngọc Phách (1922). Ho chi Minh City: Văn Nghệ, 1988.
- 
42. tTĐa. *Thơ Tản Đà* (Tuyển tập Tản Đà; .65-252). Hà Nội: Văn học, 1986.
- 
43. Tt.khuc *Tự tình khúc*. Đông Dương Tạp chí (Date: 13. 2. 1916, No.463)
- 
44. VnTđ. *Việt Nam tự điển*. Khai Trí Tiến Đức. Hà Nội: Imprimerie Trung Bắc Tân văn. Mặc Lâm xuất bản, 1931.
- 
45. Vo.Auba. *Vocabulaire Francais - Annamite et Annamite - Francais*. DEM. Aubaret. Bangkok, 1861.
-

## Experiences in the process of the English translation of a Vietnamese research book: challenges and solutions

Marc Young

(Center of Applied Linguistics and Vietnamese,  
Faculty of Linguistics, USSH, VNU Hanoi)

**Abstract:** This paper is based on our experiences participating in the translation of the research book *Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam (Discovering the Identity of Vietnamese Culture)* into English, especially the proofreading and editing of previous groups' work on the project. (We also draw on our experiences with other translations and written texts in Vietnam, as well as discerning linguistic causes.) We discovered many difficulties in the process that had reduced the quality of the work, requiring us to develop and implement a series of proofreading and editing steps to improve its quality. We conclude in this paper that translations of important works (especially academic works) from English to Vietnamese or vice versa must be done through the substantial, interactive involvement of at least one native speaker from each language who is also proficient at the other language. We also conclude that a much more detailed set of proofreading steps should be followed. Finally, we propose a specific set of eight steps to be used for the process of translation, editing, and proofreading to ensure high quality of the finished translation.

**Key words:** translation, academic works, proofreading, editing, quality assurance

### 1. Introduction

In the process of working in Vietnam and especially in the process of book translation, we have found many problems related to translation from Vietnamese to English and English to Vietnamese. In our opinion, some of the problems relate to the work of other people and are therefore out of our control, some relate to our own work and are therefore within our control, and some are due to contextual factors – the result of all those things being that the work of translation does not achieve the ideal result. However, drawing from our experiences as a whole team doing a translation work, we

---

YOUNG, Marc. 2023. Experiences in the process of the English translation of a Vietnamese research book: challenges and solutions. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8153144>

\* Acknowledgements: This paper could not have been completed without the sincere and rigorous assistance of Võ Thị Minh Hà, Ph.D. The author would like to take this opportunity to genuinely thank her as a colleague in the writing of this article and in the book-translation project mentioned herein. The author would also like to thank Amalia Gnanadesikan, Ph.D. (retired from the University of Maryland, United States), for her very helpful discussion of linguistics issues relating to several key points in this article.

were able to develop a process that ensures the quality of a translated text. This paper will describe solutions that we used to improve the translation we worked on and will propose process steps that can be used to improve the quality of translations in general.

There are many problems and difficulties in the process of translation from English to Vietnamese and Vietnamese to English. Therefore, in our experience, the quality of translations in either direction often does not achieve adequate quality. This affects the message that the source document hopes to express as well as the level of benefit to the reader. If the translation quality is low, many readers will be deterred and not want to read the translation, or if they do read it then they will not receive the full, correct meaning of the original document.

The problems and difficulties referred to above result in part from structural problems in the habits and methods of approaching the issues during the translation process. As will be described below, translation from either English to Vietnamese or Vietnamese to English is already very, very difficult due to several linguistic issues, which are impossible to overcome without a number of specific, detailed steps in the translation process that are typically not practiced by translators in Vietnam today. However, great improvements can be made if we change our habits and methods.

In our experiences editing textbooks and various other activities, the lack of checking and quality evaluation that is currently typical leads to unusable output or ineffective results in a large portion of our work (academic work, foreign companies, NGOs, etc.) – which is a great waste of our time and expenses. The problem is especially significant in written documents (even those written directly, as opposed to being translated from other documents), translating, and interpreting. In the opinion of the author of this paper, it is having a large negative impact on almost any kind of work that foreigners are doing in Vietnam. In the academic realm, it is undoubtedly limiting the ability of Vietnamese scholars to benefit as much as they could from the materials they need for their work and to impact the international community through their research published in (or translated into) English.

## **2. General challenges in translating English to Vietnamese or Vietnamese to English that are very difficult to overcome**

The author of this paper and his team recently completed the translation and editing process for the English translation of a systematic-typological research book about Vietnamese culture called *Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam* (in English, called

*Discovering the Identity of Vietnamese Culture*) by Professor Trần Ngọc Thêm, and published it through Thế Giới Publishers in December 2021.

It took our team more than four years (about 5000 man-hours) to fix the translation draft that probably took the original translator about 1000 hours to complete. It took us that long even though 1) the original translator did a better-than-average job on her draft, 2) others had already done significant editing to the draft before we received it, saving us many hundreds of hours of work, and 3) we had to reduce some of our checking and editing steps to increase our rate of progress, compromising quality, in order to finish by the publisher's strict deadline.

That experience and many others have made clear what almost anyone who has done translation work would agree with: doing a proper, accurate translation is far more difficult than it looks! For example, just because the author of this paper had read something in one of Professor Thêm's books and understood its content well enough to pass a university test, he discovered that his understanding was still not nearly at a high enough level to translate it properly, or even to edit an existing translation draft properly. Similarly, just because a non-native speaker can speak or read English or Vietnamese well enough to function, that does not prove that their language ability is good enough to translate documents well, especially if they work alone (see below).<sup>1</sup>

International standards of proofreading are very high for any type of published work, especially for materials in English. Now that the academic system in Vietnam is attempting to publish more internationally, we hope that what we learned from our experiences will be beneficial for the processes of publishing both within Vietnam and internationally.

The challenge of meeting those high international standards for translated materials is greatly compounded and complicated by two unfortunate linguistic realities.

The first reality is the enormous linguistic distance between Vietnamese and English. Put in non-specialist's terms, Vietnamese and English are so incredibly different from each other. The difference is vastly greater than the differences between English and any other European language (even the few European languages that are not of the Indo-European language family) or between Vietnamese and East Asian languages like Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

Five fundamental linguistic factors begin to illustrate the degree of the problem. Vietnamese and English have:

---

<sup>1</sup> Trần Ngọc Thêm (translation and editing by Marc Young, Võ Thị Minh Hà, et al. 2021) Translators' and editors' preface. *Discovering the identity of Vietnamese culture*. Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, p. 19.

- (1) highly different ancestral languages
- (2) different language typologies (Vietnamese is isolating and analytic while English is inflected and synthetic)
- (3) different cultural typologies
- (4) different intuitive logic, culturally and grammatically
- (5) extremely abundant vocabularies with high meaning flexibility of words according to context

As if those five issues did not create enough language-learning difficulties in themselves, they combine to create another problem, one that is usually insurmountable. For a native-English speaker to learn Vietnamese or a native-Vietnamese speaker to learn English, there is not just a difference of degree in the difficulty to learn (i.e., the *quantity* of study required to reach a high ability level), compared with the difficulty for, say, an American to learn German or a Vietnamese to learn Chinese. It is a difference of *quality* in how the language would have to be studied, *which can never be fully overcome*, no matter how much we might study. To reach a high level of ability, the “other” language must be studied differently from the way we are used to because of the qualitative differences, but we are inescapably limited by our native cultural and linguistic frameworks in the ability to study in that different way – because of each of the issues described above, and much more so by the combination of all of them.<sup>2</sup>

The second unfortunate linguistic reality is that for both Vietnamese and English, each is such a complex language in and of itself, even without considering the linguistic distance between them. It is very significant that modern Vietnamese is the hybrid result of root languages from three or four different language families (languages from the Austroasiatic, Kra-Dai, Sino-Tibetan, and possibly Austronesian language families) and English is a hybrid of languages from two different main branches of a language family (languages from the Italic and Germanic main branches of the Indo-European language family; also having significant influences from languages from the Celtic and Hellenic main branches of the Indo-European family). That hybridization from different language families or different main branches, respectively, makes both languages much more complex and difficult to learn. It is the main cause of the complicated and extremely irregular spelling, grammar, and morphology of English that are nearly impossible for native Vietnamese speakers to master. It is also one of the main reasons that both Vietnamese and English have such extremely large

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

vocabularies, creating many difficulties for learners. (See Appendix B for a more detailed description of language hybridization in Vietnamese and English.)

Moreover, Vietnamese and English speech and writing are full of idioms, expressions, figures of speech, terminology words, jargon, and high-level vocabulary, and the languages are constantly evolving to add many new words and phrases in all of those categories. Even Vietnamese with very good English ability will not be familiar with a large percentage of these words and phrases in the current version of English, and they will be unable to fully keep up with the constant emergence of new examples of such English words and phrases – and vice versa for native-English speakers with very good Vietnamese ability.

These linguistic-distance and complexity factors, taken individually, are not uncommon differences between languages that create challenges for native speakers of one language when they learn another. However, it is less common for any pair of languages to have a combination of so many such factors. All those factors, in addition to the insurmountable qualitative learning issue described above, make it extremely difficult for any native-English speaker to ever learn Vietnamese, or vice versa, well enough to do high-quality translation work. Westerners, especially, are often unaware of that problem because they only have prior experience with native speakers of various European languages learning other European languages to a high-enough level to translate them well – which is so much easier to do than with Vietnamese and English.

It is likely that these two unfortunate linguistic realities are so severe that they could only be overcome by a very gifted language learner (perhaps one person in five hundred or one in a thousand) or a child starting serious language study well before the end of the critical period in language acquisition. Most likely, they simply cannot be overcome by non-gifted native-English speakers learning Vietnamese or native-Vietnamese speakers learning English, if they begin serious study near the end of the critical period or later, no matter how much they study.

In addition to the language differences and complexities just mentioned, there is an additional problem when translating that relates to “implicit meaning”. There are many elements of meaning in one’s own native language and culture that are “obvious” to native speakers even without using words to express them. They are so “obvious” that a native speaker often does not even realize that people from a different native language could not possibly see that meaning without extra explanation, sometimes a lot of it, even in a text translated into their own language. (As just one of innumerable examples that could be given, we had to include two long translator’s footnotes in our book translation to describe the very significant differences between the meanings of

the words “thành phố” and “city” – which most people studying Vietnamese or English believe have exactly the same meaning.) Conversely, a non-native speaker will often have no idea that a sentence that seems to only require a straight-forward literal translation into his or her language actually contains critical implied meaning or culturally “figurative” meaning, unless that meaning is pointed out by a native speaker. This phenomenon seems to be especially common in Vietnamese and English, which is possibly one of the major causes the author of this paper has seen of the generally very low quality of translations from English to Vietnamese and vice versa. As difficult as it is to identify such issues, if Vietnamese experts partner closely with native-English speakers in a translation into English, many of the issues will be stumbled upon “accidentally” during the course of discussion, and many will be identified when one side or the other at least realizes that something must be “missing” from the logic being expressed. Then the Vietnamese experts can explain the “missing” (to native-English speakers) logic, for that to be written explicitly into the English text. (A translation from English to Vietnamese would, of course, require the same kind of partnership with the roles reversed.) Only through that kind of partnership can such issues be identified and adequately detailed descriptions be provided so that those who are not native speakers of the source document’s language can have any hope of understanding the translated meaning fully and correctly. (We provided those things in our book translation via text translations with “extra” wording when necessary and many translator’s notes and footnotes throughout the book.)<sup>3</sup>

Because of all these issues, it would be very rare for a native-English speaker who starts learning Vietnamese as an adult to learn it well enough to do proper translating without help from a native Vietnamese speaker, and vice versa, even if they do very careful proofreading or have many people of their own native language proofread their work.

Therefore, translation of academic or more precise content from Vietnamese to English and vice versa simply cannot be done accurately by a single person (a mistake that is so commonly made in translation work in Vietnam). It must be done by a team of people that includes native speakers from both languages, who work together very carefully to check each other’s understanding and work results. (Note that having one person do a translation of important materials is not a standard practice internationally; the standard procedure is to have one or more other people check such materials before

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 20.



they are considered completed,<sup>4</sup> ideally including at least one person from the “other” native language.) That means an immense amount of time must be spent in the proofreading and editing process: time for discussion, asking and answering questions, and multiple steps of carefully proofreading each other’s work. The amount of time spent on proper checking and editing will be several times greater than the time spent to do the first draft of the translation!<sup>5</sup>

### 3. A case study of translation work: problems and solutions

We will now return to our experience in the translation process of *Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam (Discovering the Identity of Vietnamese Culture)* by Professor Trần Ngọc Thêm. We will describe some of the challenges we faced in raising the translation quality to an adequate level, our approach to addressing those challenges in the limited time frame that we had, and a proposed system of self-checking for future translation work (it, or something similar to it, can and should be applied to any writing and publishing done in Vietnam) to raise its quality significantly.

The initial translator of *Tìm về bản sắc văn hóa Việt Nam* did the first draft of the translation into English in 2001. Her strengths as a translator:

- (1) Her draft was highly readable, stylistically interesting, and in many places provided clever solutions for difficult-to-translate passages that were better than anything the author of this paper, as a native-English speaker, would have come up with himself.
- (2) Compared with typical Vietnamese-to-English translations the author of this paper has seen, she had better-than-average English grammar, vocabulary, and usage of English idioms and expressions.

Her weaknesses:

---

<sup>4</sup> Translation Services 24 (2017, August 16) *Quality control in the translation process*, Translation Services 24. URI: <https://www.translationservices24.com/quality-control-translation-process>, section “Edit”. Note that the entire article is an illuminating description of the quality principles and proofreading steps of a Western professional translation service.

<sup>5</sup> Trần Ngọc Thêm (translation and editing by Marc Young, Võ Thị Minh Hà, et al. 2021), p. 21.

- (1) The greatest problem was she apparently did not check her work carefully to ensure that she translated all the contents in the original book. Her “final” version of the draft was missing as much as 10% of the original book’s contents.
- (2) Despite her better-than-average English grammar, vocabulary, and usage of English idioms and expressions, there were still many thousands of mistakes with respect to such issues in her draft. Because of the difficulties of learning English mentioned above, that is to be expected and accepted, but surely she would have at least found and corrected some portion of those kinds of mistakes if she had done the checking mentioned in point #1.
- (3) For Vietnamese translations of quotations that were originally translated from English to Vietnamese in Professor Thê’s book, she translated them back into English from the Vietnamese instead of finding the original English quotations and using those in her draft. The resulting “quotations” were very often different from the original ones, sometimes with significantly different meaning. Similarly, for Vietnamese translations in the book of quotations from French, Chinese, Russian, and German source documents, she translated them into English from the Vietnamese instead of finding the quotations in published translations made from the original languages directly into English.

After the initial translator finished her draft, three different groups did various work to edit the draft, complete the translation of some incomplete sections, and format it for publication. They corrected many, many mistakes (although just a small percentage of the total), filled in many of the large parts of the translation that the first translator had missed, completed translating almost all the texts from figures and tables that had not yet been translated, and set up good visual formatting for the entire book so that our team did not have to do so ourselves. Their efforts certainly saved our team many hundreds of hours of work. However, their corrections and gap-filling were mostly “here and there” rather than systematic, so they were only a small percentage of the total that needed to be done, and many of their corrections or attempted improvements to the text were actually incorrect or were stylistically worse than the initial draft.

Finally, our team began editing the translation in 2017. Our group’s primary philosophy followed the principles of faithful translation with occasional elements of communicative translation. We sometimes also used expansive translations, in-text translator’s notes, and translator’s footnotes to try to capture or explain meaning elements that would be found with idiomatic translation and adaptation translation. Our

standards for quality of the translation were to 1) find and translate as many remaining non-translated text portions (which were mostly shorter ones) as possible; 2) correct all mistakes of grammar and wording; 3) maintain the logic, style, and expressions of the author wherever possible as long as the result did not conflict with “natural” English; 4) otherwise modify the language and style of the text as necessary so that they would be indistinguishable from those of a native speaker of American English; and 5) improve the accuracy of quotations (as described below) and the completeness of citation information.

The following is a description of our editing and proofreading methodology and how we solved certain problems in the translation draft as we received it.

At the beginning of our involvement in the project, we carefully checked the translation draft word-for-word and idea-for-idea against the original Vietnamese and made corrections as we went, completing about 50 pages that way. The result of that methodology was very good, but it was too meticulous to allow an adequate rate of progress to meet the publisher’s publication deadline. Therefore, we evolved our approach to a second methodology containing seven steps:

- (1) Two native-Vietnamese speakers with good English, who were university graduates but not specialists, systematically compared the translation draft with the original Vietnamese and added English content that the first translator and previous editors missed, fixed formatting problems, and helped unify terminologies throughout the draft.
- (2) A native-English speaker with low-advanced Vietnamese checked the new English content supplied through step 1 (comparing with the Vietnamese text) and read the entire English text (without comparing with the Vietnamese text) to make initial corrections to grammar and wording (this helped the detailed checking of step 3 to go faster).
- (3) The author of this paper, a native-English speaker with high-advanced Vietnamese, checked the changes made in steps 1 and 2 (comparing the English changes with the Vietnamese text) and read the entire English text (when there was an obvious problem with the English text’s meaning, it was checked against the Vietnamese text) to correct meaning and to continue correcting grammar and wording.
- (4) In the process of doing step 3, the author of this paper had many, many questions about meaning that he could not resolve on his own, even with the use of dictionaries. Those details were discussed one-on-one with various Vietnamese

university instructors who were part of our team, who explained the meanings of those details.

- (5) Steps 3 and 4 (except for the part about checking the changes of steps 1 and 2) were repeated twice more by the author of this paper and the Vietnamese university instructors, in order to prepare the text for two final native-English proofreaders.
- (6) For any remaining questions about the Vietnamese text's meaning that could not be resolved by the Vietnamese university instructors, the author of this paper and one of the instructors contacted Professor Thê to ask him to explain further.
- (7) Two final native-English proofreaders, who were university graduates but not specialists, carefully read the English draft and gave feedback about suggested corrections and improvements to wording (those were reviewed by the author of this paper before being incorporated into the draft) – but by this point the draft quality was already fairly good, and they had relatively few changes to suggest.

(Please note that another important proofreading step was added later, to check and correct the final version of the book just prior to its full printing for publication. This was necessary because the publisher's editing and conversion of the electronic version of the translation into their publishing software's format unintentionally created many new errors in the text and some of the book's figures.)

The rate of progress through this seven-step process was much, much faster than our previous checking process, but we believed that the resulting quality was still adequate.

We also took a number of other steps to improve the translation quality, most notably:

- We created a list of English terms for Vietnamese words in the original book, based on dictionary definitions, research, and discussions between the author of this paper and the university instructors. There were eventually two lists: a broad list (developed during the earlier phase of our work) of many Vietnamese words used in the book, whether they were “terminology” or not, and a narrower list just for terminologies that was developed during our 7-step phase. These lists saved time in correcting the translation draft and helped ensure much better unification of terminologies throughout the book.

- We searched for the original source documents for many quotations from non-Vietnamese sources used in Professor Thễm's original Vietnamese book, especially those originally in English or French. We used the original English quotations from English source documents in the translation, replacing what the previous groups had done (i.e., translating the quotations back into English from their Vietnamese versions in Professor Thễm's book). For quotations from French source documents, we translated them directly from French to English, rather than translating them from Professor Thễm's Vietnamese text into English as the previous groups had done.
- For quotations from Chinese, German, and Russian source documents, we searched for published translations of those works that were made directly from their original languages into English. We then quoted the appropriate texts of those translations, rather than translating the quotations from Professor Thễm's Vietnamese text as the previous groups had done, undoubtedly greatly increasing the translation accuracy. We were able to find published translations for 80-90% of the Chinese source documents, nearly all the German source documents, and a small portion of the Russian documents.
- We added many in-text translator notes and translator footnotes to clarify the translation and explain detailed issues arising from the differences in culture or meanings of words in Vietnamese and English.

Please note that our detailed checking and editing process could not have been done properly without the involvement of multiple native-English speakers. However, even if we had just done the steps of systematic checking for and translating text portions that had not been translated, finding the original quotations from English source documents, and quoting from published translations directly to English from Chinese, German, and Russian source documents, the result would have been a huge improvement to the translation draft's quality. Those are simple steps that even non-native English speakers can and should do.

To generalize our process into a system that can be used more broadly, we propose the following process containing eight steps (note: these steps have some small differences from the seven-step process described above) and several other suggestions, as a specific strategy for greatly improving the quality of translated materials. Some of the steps can also be used for improving the quality of any written documents, as indicated. These steps and suggestions are just one example of a process that could be

used; it is certainly possible that different steps or additional steps could be used as appropriate (see Appendix A for the eight steps translated into Vietnamese):

#### Suggested Quality Improvement Steps

- (1) Translation projects: Think what content in the source document might be problematic/difficult for the translator (e.g. idioms, expressions, figures of speech, terminology words, jargon, and high-level vocabulary) and explain those in advance. Consider re-writing some portions of documents before translation, to simplify them and to decrease such issues.
- (2) All documents: Instruct/ask the writer or the translator to pro-actively ask questions or check anything that is unclear or not fully understood. (In translation projects, if a native-Vietnamese translator asked no questions about the English, then they have just **GUESSED!**)
- (3) Translation projects: For quotations in the source document that were originally in other languages, instead of translating them from the source document's language into the target language, use the original quotations from their original writings or their translated versions in published translations made directly from their original languages into the target language.
- (4) Translation projects: Instruct the translator to check word for word and idea for idea to confirm that all contents were actually translated. (In doing so, they will also find ways to make other corrections and improvements.)
- (5) All documents: Instruct the writer or translator to re-read their entire final version of the document to correct typos, other errors, unclear things, poor style in the target language, and any lack in the unity of terms used throughout the document. (This step should be done at least 2-3 times.)
- (6) Translation projects: Presumably, the translator is a native speaker of either Vietnamese or English. Whichever it is, have a native speaker of the OTHER language check the translation carefully against the original document, because some things were probably misunderstood by the translator.
- (7) All documents: Have one final check, by someone whose native language is the language of the final document – but not someone who participated in steps #1-6 (it should be an independent person). This person should be from the same culture and education level as the target audience of the document, or should understand the target audience well. Not only should he/she check for the kinds of problems listed in step #5, but should also suggest ways to make the

document more suitable for the education level, style, and culture of the target audience.

(Note: In steps #6-7, the person checking should not correct the document him/herself, but should discuss any problems or ideas for improvement with the writer or translator.)

- (8) All documents: The author or translator (the person most familiar with the document) should very carefully check a sample print of the final version of the document file that is printed from the actual computer, printer, and software that will be used for the main print run. Look for and correct:
- visual-format problems
  - things that looked fine on the computer screen but don't when printed
  - strange changes automatically made by the word-processing software (especially a problem when the document file is converted to a new file format, used with a new word-processing software, or even when transferred to a new computer that has a different operating system or a different version of the same word-processing software) and/or by the printing software
  - incorrect changes made by the editing and design processes, etc.

Additional suggestions:

- (1) It is important to look for and encourage more native-English speakers with good Vietnamese to participate in translation projects, whether from Vietnamese to English or English to Vietnamese.
- (2) Evaluate and consider whether to provide extra training for those involved in the process, about the issues and proper methods for proofreading and editing, followed by checking the quality of their implementation.
- (3) Translation and proofreading teams consisting of native speakers from both languages must have a great deal of interactive communication, questions for each other, and checking each other's work during the process.
- (4) Those who request, oversee, or provide funding for translation projects or who ask for funding to do translation projects should adjust their expectations for schedule and budget – that is to say, a proper translation project will take much longer and require more funding than has often been expected in the past.

Through these steps and suggestions, or others like them, we probably cannot fully overcome the quality problems that are inevitable in translations between two complex, highly distant languages, but we can greatly reduce them.

#### 4. Conclusion

This article describes many reasons why it is so difficult for native-English speakers to learn Vietnamese to a high level and for native-Vietnamese speakers to learn English to a high level. For those reasons, no translation from Vietnamese to English, or vice versa, of important works (such as academic works) can be of high quality unless it has the substantial, interactive involvement of at least one native speaker from each language who is also good at the other language. Translation quality would also greatly improve by using a detailed process of many proofreading steps. Those who organize translation projects between the two languages should be more aware of these issues and be willing to provide more resources (time, funding, manpower, detailed instructions) for both the translation phase and the proofreading and editing phase of the projects, in order to address the problems and ensure higher-quality results.

#### Appendix A: The suggested eight-step quality improvement process in Vietnamese

Đề xuất một số bước để cải thiện chất lượng:

- (1) Đối với dự án dịch thuật: Hãy nghĩ ra những điều có thể là vấn đề / khó khăn cho người biên dịch và giải thích những điều đó trước khi họ dịch (ví dụ: thành ngữ, ẩn dụ, chơi chữ, thuật ngữ, biệt ngữ và từ chuyên ngành). Cân nhắc việc viết lại hoặc đơn giản hóa một số phần trong tài liệu sẽ được biên dịch để giảm bớt những vấn đề nêu trên.
- (2) Đối với tất cả các tài liệu: Hãy hướng dẫn / yêu cầu người viết hay người biên dịch phải chủ động đặt câu hỏi hoặc kiểm tra nếu có gì chưa hiểu chắc chắn, rõ ràng. (Trong các dự án dịch thuật, nếu người dịch không hỏi gì về những khó khăn trong bản tiếng Anh thì có nghĩa là họ đã **chỉ ĐOÁN thôi!**)
- (3) Đối với dự án dịch thuật: Về trích dẫn trong bản gốc lấy từ tài liệu bằng ngôn ngữ khác, thay vì dịch từ bản gốc sang ngôn ngữ đích, hãy sử dụng trích dẫn trực tiếp từ tài liệu được trích dẫn hoặc từ tài liệu ấy được người chuyên nghiệp dịch sang ngôn ngữ đích.



- (4) Đối với dự án dịch thuật: Cần phải hướng dẫn người dịch kiểm tra kỹ lưỡng từng từ và từng ý để đảm bảo mọi chi tiết đều được dịch. (Khi làm như vậy, họ cũng sẽ tìm ra một số điều khác cần phải chỉnh sửa và cải thiện trong bản dịch.)
- (5) Đối với tất cả các tài liệu: Cần phải yêu cầu người viết hoặc người dịch đọc lại cẩn thận toàn bộ tài liệu ở bản cuối để làm những việc sau: sửa lỗi chính tả cũng như các lỗi khác, sửa những phần chưa rõ ràng hoặc chưa tốt về văn phong trong ngôn ngữ của bản dịch, kiểm tra tính thống nhất của cả tài liệu. (Bước này, nên làm ít nhất hai đến ba lần.)
- (6) Đối với dự án dịch thuật: Nếu người Việt đã dịch tài liệu từ ngôn ngữ khác sang tiếng Việt hoặc từ tiếng Việt sang ngôn ngữ khác thì hãy tìm người bản ngữ giỏi tiếng Việt của ngôn ngữ ấy để kiểm tra và đối chiếu thật cẩn thận bản dịch với bản gốc, vì có thể một số điều trong tài liệu đã bị người dịch hiểu sai ý nghĩa. Nếu người bản ngữ khác đã dịch thì hãy tìm người Việt (giỏi ngôn ngữ ấy) để kiểm tra.
- (7) Đối với tất cả các tài liệu: Cần có một người kiểm tra độc lập. Người ấy là người bản ngữ của ngôn ngữ cuối cùng của tài liệu nhưng không phải là người đã tham gia trong các bước từ 1 đến 6. Người này phải là người ở cùng văn hóa và tương đương với trình độ của người sẽ dùng tài liệu mà chúng ta viết / dịch, hoặc là người phải có hiểu biết về đối tượng sẽ dùng tài liệu. Không những người này nên kiểm tra các loại vấn đề đã được liệt kê trong bước 5 trên mà còn góp ý sửa tài liệu cho phù hợp với trình độ, văn phong, văn hóa của người dùng tài liệu ấy.

(Chú ý: Trong bước từ 6-7, người kiểm tra không tự sửa tài liệu, mà phải thảo luận với người viết / người dịch về các vấn đề họ thấy được và nêu ra các ý kiến cho bản thảo tốt hơn.)

- (8) Đối với tất cả các tài liệu: Người quen thuộc nhất với tài liệu (tác giả hoặc người biên dịch) nên thật cẩn thận kiểm tra bản bông của bản thảo cuối trước khi nhân bản hàng loạt. Bản bông này nên được in từ chính máy tính, máy in và phần mềm sẽ được dùng để in tài liệu chính thức. Hãy kiểm tra để sửa các vấn đề như:
  - các lỗi về hình thức (phông chữ, cỡ chữ, khoảng cách...)
  - nhiều chỗ trong bản mềm đã rõ và đẹp nhưng lại không còn rõ và đẹp nữa khi in ra bản giấy
  - những phần mềm đánh văn bản khác nhau gây ra những thay đổi một cách tự động (vấn đề này dễ xảy ra khi tài liệu bị chuyển sang cách định dạng tệp

khác với loại định dạng ở tệp gốc, khi sử dụng tệp với một phần mềm đánh máy khác, thậm chí khi chuyển tệp sang máy vi tính khác chạy hệ điều hành khác năm / khác nhau hay một phiên bản khác của cùng phần mềm đánh máy) hoặc do phần mềm in ấn tự động gây ra

- lỗi trong những thay đổi do quá trình biên tập và thiết kế gây ra, v.v.

## **Appendix B: Language hybridization details of English and Vietnamese**

English: A historical series of mixing and hybridizations involving languages from different main branches of the Indo-European family of languages (four of the 10 main branches are involved). Multiple languages of the Celtic main branch of the Indo-European family in what is now southern Britain hybridized with Latin from the Italic main branch (Romance sub-branch) of the same family during the Roman colonization and after that – the result is called Romano-British. Then the Anglo-Frisian languages, of the West Germanic sub-branch of the Germanic main branch, came in during the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Britain and mostly pushed Romano-British aside (i.e., this step was not a hybridization), but they had some borrowing of vocabulary and continuity of place names from Romano-British – the result is called Old English. Old English then hybridized with Scandinavian languages of the North Germanic sub-branch of the Germanic main branch (i.e., the same main branch as the Anglo-Frisian languages) during the Viking invasions and settlements (affecting vocabulary and especially morphology and grammar) – resulting in Later Old English. Then Later Old English hybridized with Old French (Anglo-Norman dialect) and Norman French of the Italic main branch (Romance sub-branch) after the Norman Conquest, bringing about Middle English. Later, and continuing until today, there has been an extensive overlay of technical vocabulary from Greco-Latin (the “Greco” portion of which is from the Hellenic main branch). Therefore, modern English is a result of the hybridization of languages from two different main branches of the Indo-European language family, the Italic and Germanic main branches, with additional significant influences from languages from the Celtic and Hellenic main branches.

Vietnamese: Proto-Viet-Muong of the Vietic sub-branch of the Austroasiatic family of languages had multiple hybridizations with languages in the region in and near modern-day Vietnam, including one or more languages of the Tai (or Zhuang-Tai) branch of the Kra-Dai language family and various historical stages of Chinese of the Sinitic branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. There was also mixing with and borrowing from languages of the Austronesian family, but to our knowledge the research is not

yet conclusive enough to determine whether that reached a high-enough level to be called hybridization of the languages. There was also a great amount of mixing with and borrowing from other local languages of the Sino-Tibetan and Kra-Dai families and multiple languages from the Vietic sub-branch of the Austroasiatic family. Therefore, modern Vietnamese is a result of the hybridization of languages from three different language families, the Austroasiatic, Kra-Dai, and Sino-Tibetan families, with additional significant influences from even more languages from those families, and possibly hybridization with (or at least significant influences from) languages of a fourth language family (Austronesian).

Although all or nearly all languages are the product of hybridizations from two or more root languages, usually most of the root languages involved were part of the same sub-branch or sub-sub-branch of one language family. In such cases, the increased complexity created by the hybridization is usually minor. However, in cases where the hybridization is of root languages from different language families or from different main branches of a language family, there is large potential for major complications to result in the new hybrid language that will make it much more difficult for people of other native languages to learn. Examples of such complications are English's complicated and extremely irregular spelling, grammar, and morphology, which are nearly impossible for native Vietnamese speakers to master, and which clearly resulted in large part from the hybridization between languages from different main branches (i.e., Germanic and Italic) of the Indo-European family. The extremely extensive vocabularies of Vietnamese and English are also due in large part to their being hybrids of languages from different language families or different main branches of a language family, respectively.

The author of this paper would speculate that if English has so much complexity and irregularity because it is a hybrid of languages from merely two main branches of a single language family, how much more complexity must Vietnamese have acquired because it is the hybrid of languages from three or four different language families? To our knowledge, this question has not yet been researched in detail, but it would make an interesting and useful area for future linguistics research.

## References

- Birdsong, David (2006) Age and second language acquisition and processing. *Language learning: a selective overview* 56(1), pp. 9-49.

- Mallick, Sri Ashutosh (2017) Translation study – similarity & dissimilarity of translation. *IOSR journal of humanities and social science*. e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845. Volume 1, pp. 22-23.
- Translation Services 24 (2017) *Quality control in the translation process*. Translation Services 24. URI: <https://www.translationservices24.com/quality-control-translation-process>
- Trần Ngọc Thêm (translation and editing by Marc Young, Võ Thị Minh Hà, et al. 2021) Translators' and editors' preface. *Discovering the identity of Vietnamese culture*. Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers.
- Wikipedia contributor TheLeopard et al. (2022) *Sinitic languages*. Wikipedia. URI: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinitic\\_languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinitic_languages)
- Wikipedia IP user 81.135.232.232 et al. (2022) *Norman conquest*. Wikipedia. URI: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman\\_Conquest#Language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Conquest#Language)
- Wikipedia IP user 83.248.87.72 et al. (2022) *List of Indo-European languages*. Wikipedia. URI: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Indo-European\\_languages#Germanic\\_languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Indo-European_languages#Germanic_languages)
- Wikipedia IP user 204.48.134.109 et al. (2022) *Tai languages*. Wikipedia. URI: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tai\\_languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tai_languages)