

PREFACE

SPECIAL ISSUE: FURTHER ADVANCES IN VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS

Guest Editors

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INTRODUCTION

The articles featured in this special edition have evolved from presentations delivered at ISVL 3 (the third annual workshop of the International Scholars of Vietnamese Linguistics), hosted by Nigel Duffield at Konan University in March 2023. We extend our deep gratitude to the editors of the Taiwan Journal of Linguistics for granting us another special issue this year.¹

¹ We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the reviewers for their invaluable feedback and constructive criticism, and to the authors for their excellent collaboration throughout the process. The research and the ISVL-3 workshop were supported by a “KAKEN” grant (21K00538, ‘Progress in Vietnamese Linguistics’) from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), awarded to the second editor, Nigel Duffield. For academic purposes, Trang Phan is credited with the first half of this introduction, while Nigel Duffield is credited with the second half.

Similarly to previous ISVL publications—in the Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (2022) and Taiwan Journal of Linguistics (2024)—all papers in this issue have undergone extensive revisions from their original presentations. Each article has been subject to double-blind peer review by external experts and subsequent revisions, in accordance with the journal’s regular, rigorous standards.

The five papers encompass diverse perspectives in terms of approach—synchronic vs. diachronic—and level of analysis, including phonetic, phonological, lexical, syntactic, and semantic inquiries. We briefly summarize each contribution, as follows.

While previous scholars (Shimizu 1996; Nguyễn T.C. 2008; Gong 2017; Phan 2020) have noted the presence of sesquisyllabic traces in Nôm materials, the debate concerning whether the syllable structure during the creation of Nôm orthography remained sesquisyllabic or transitioned entirely to monosyllabic remains to be fully explored. **Masaaki Shimizu**'s study reanalyzes 133 cases of two-character morphemes in the Sino-Vietnamese version of *Phật thuyết đại báo phụ mẫu ân trọng kinh* 佛說大報父母恩重經: this reanalysis reveals at least 10 cases which strongly support the hypothesis that sesquisyllabic structures existed at the time when the Nôm characters in the material were created.

Vietnamese, an isolating language with rich compounding, lacks morphosyntactic, phonotactic, or phonological evidence suggesting a linguistic level between syllables and phrases. Using a Random Forest Classifier, **Sandrien Van Ommen et al.** model an artificial listener to explore phonetic distinctions between compounds and phrases, following Nguyen and Ingram (2007). This Machine Learning approach assesses phonetic differences and their importance in distinguishing the two classes. Results reveal that only maximal contrast circumstances allow phonetic separation, primarily achieved through juncture marking. Additionally, the article indicates that perfect separation is unattainable even with maximal contrast, as was found with human listeners in Nguyen and Ingram’s (2007) study; it also shows that a compound bias emerges from phonetic data despite training on maximal contrast data.

Trần Phan and Barbara Meisterernst pursue the idea that post-verbal *được* serves as a modal element exclusively for dynamic readings. If not interpreted as dynamic, *được* functions as an aspectual telicity marker, an evaluative predicate, or a pragmatic marker. The authors propose that post-verbal *được* heads VP-internal functional projections when encoding either Aktionsart or dynamic modal meanings. In sentences with refutatory intent, sentence-final *được* acts as a pragmatic marker of public commitment (Krifka 2015, 2023; Wiltschko and Heim 2016), expressing speaker disbelief and a commitment to the truth of the opposite of a prior proposition.

Irene Liao and Jonah Lin present an alternative semantic interpretation of the roles played by two quantificational elements in Vietnamese, *đều* and *cũng*: the authors' interpretation contrasts with that of Tran (2008, 2009). Inspired by Giannakidou & Cheng's (2006) and Xiang's (2008) analyses of Mandarin *dou*, the authors argue that *đều* 'all' functions as a maximality operator, rather than as a distributor (Tran 2008). Additionally, it is suggested that the additive particle *cũng* 'also' solely carries an additive meaning. The universal interpretation of the *wh*-element emerges when paired with *cũng* due to its unique capacity to presuppose an open alternative set. Associating *cũng* with a non-specific noun (a *wh*-indefinite) results in a universal reading by encompassing all possible individuals within the presupposed alternative set. In contrast to Tran's (2009) analysis, *cũng* itself is not a universal quantifier. The analysis of syntactic positions proposes that both *đều* and *cũng* adjoin to T', preceding tense markers and freely accommodating temporal adverbs before or after them.

Tue Trinh highlights some distribution differences between (weak) NPIs in English and their Vietnamese equivalents. In English, NPIs are licensed under ONLY, EVERY's NP argument, adversative predicates like REGRET, and IF-clauses. This is argued to contrast with Vietnamese, where these licensors are absent. English NPIs also are licensed under negation, FEW, and AT MOST, whereas Vietnamese NPIs are only licensed by the first two of these: i.e. negation and FEW, but not AT MOST. A preliminary outline of an approach is also offered towards the end of the article.

Although these papers provide only snapshots of some of the ongoing research in Vietnamese linguistics, they nevertheless highlight the increasing global interest in the field. With each iteration of this workshop, we look forward to witnessing further advances in the field.

SHORT BIO OF THE EDITORS

Trang Phan is an Assistant Professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She obtained her PhD from University of Sheffield (England) in 2013 on the structure and acquisition of Vietnamese verbal aspect, under Professor Nigel Duffield's supervision. Subsequently, she was a postdoc researcher of the Cartographic Syntax project at Ghent University (Belgium), working on various aspects of Vietnamese clausal structure in a cross-linguistic perspective. From 2020 to 2021, Phan was a visiting scholar at Harvard Yenching Institute (USA), working on how Vietnamese nominals update our current understanding of classifier languages. Phan is the author of the monograph *The Syntax of Vietnamese Tense, Aspect, and Negation*, published by Routledge (2023). She is also the co-editor and contributor of the book *Studies in Vietnamese Historical Linguistics: East and Southeast Asian contexts*, published by Springer Nature (2024).

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Nigel Duffield received his PhD in Linguistics from the University of Southern California in 1991. Since then, he has held university positions in Germany, Canada (McGill University), The Netherlands, England (University of Sheffield), and Japan, where he has been a Professor in the Department of English at Konan University (Kobe), since 2012. Duffield's research ranges across topics in theoretical generative syntax, as well as in psycholinguistics (first and second language acquisition, and adult language processing); he is the author of two monographs—*Particles and Projections in Irish Syntax* (Kluwer 1995), and *Raiding the Inarticulate: Reflections on Psycholinguistic Theories* (Cambridge University Press 2018)—as well as numerous journal

articles and book chapters. Nigel Duffield's theoretical work on Vietnamese spans more than 25 years, much of which—since 2009—has been written in close collaboration with Trang Phan.

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