

## PROGRESS IN VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS\*

Nigel Duffield  
*Konan University*

Trang Phan  
*Ca' Foscari University of Venice*

### INTRODUCTION

The papers published in this special issue are developed versions of presentations given at an online workshop hosted by Nigel Duffield at Konan University (Kobe, Japan) in March 2022. The presenters at this workshop are a diverse collection of international scholars united by their interest in Vietnamese linguistics: hence, the acronym ‘ISVL’. The “2” in the title indicates that this is the second in a series having its origin in a workshop – also online – organized from Harvard-Yenching Institute in April 2021, titled “Vietnamese Linguistics, Typology and Language Universals.” (ISVL-3 will take place as a hybrid online/in-person workshop in March 2023; it is our hope that the series will continue in future years).

Whilst this is a “proceedings issue” – like its predecessor volume (which was published in 2022 in *Journal of the Southeast Asian*

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\* Corresponding editor: Trang Phan [thihuyentrang.phan@unive.it]. We wish to express our gratitude to all of the reviewers for their valuable feedback and helpful constructive criticism, and to the authors themselves, for working so well with us through the process. This research, as well as the workshop ISVL-2 was funded by a *KAKEN* grant (*Progress in Vietnamese Linguistics*) from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) [to the first editor, Nigel Duffield]. For academic purposes, Nigel Duffield is responsible for the first half of the introduction and Trang Phan is responsible for the second half.

Linguistics Society) – it should be noted that all of the papers in this issue are extensively revised versions of the original presentations.\* each article was subject to double-blind peer review by external reviewers, and subsequent revision, and was treated in every other respect as an open submission in terms of the standards of the journal.

The papers span a wide range of approaches and subject areas: diachronic and synchronic; phonological, lexical, syntactic, (sentential) semantic; and – this year, for the first time – theoretical and applied perspectives.

**Alves** investigates the transformation of bisyllabic Proto-Vietic words into monosyllabic words and the development of voiced fricative onsets in Vietnamese. Previous studies hypothesized that stops \*p/t/c/k and \*b/d/ɟ/g spirantized in intervocalic positions and presyllables were lost, resulting in Vietnamese onsets ‘v’ [v], ‘d’ [z], ‘gi’ [z], and ‘g/gh’ [ɣ] in monosyllabic words. The study compared relevant Proto-Vietic and Old Chinese lexical reconstructions and found that the changes involve classes of sounds, rather than specific consonants, with some notable exceptions. Evidence suggests that these features in modern Vietnamese developed many centuries later than in Sinitic.

**Shimizu's** paper analyzes the grammaticalization of the progressive marker *đang* in Vietnamese. Originating from the Chinese word 當 *dāng*, meaning 'be at', the term is usually followed by a modified time phrase. In 15th-century Sino-Vietnamese Nôm texts, *dāng* was translated into *đang/đuong* five times, *hầu* once, and *hợp* four times. 17th-century Romanized texts often featured *đang* in subordinate clauses such as *đang* NP (Time phrase), *đang khi* NP+VP, and *khi* (NP) *đang* VP. It is proposed that the progression from (Chinese) 當 +NP+VP+(SUB)+NP<sub>temp</sub> to (Chinese) NP+ 當 +VP+(SUB)+NP<sub>temp</sub> to (Vietnamese) \*NP+*đang*+VP+*khi* to (Vietnamese) *khi*+NP+*đang*+VP led to the reanalysis of the *đang*+VP unit and the creation of the progressive marker *đang*.

**Trinh, Phan & Vu** discuss polar questions in Vietnamese, which typically involve an affirmative sentence followed by a negation particle. While modern Vietnamese has three negation particles, only two of them

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\* Not all of the ISVL presenters chose to submit papers to the volume, for a variety of reasons.

can be used in the polar question context. To explain this gap, the authors suggest an analysis of questions as sets of alternatives, and draw on evidence of diachronic change from historical texts.

The acquisition of numeral classifiers and their associated syntactic structures in East and Southeast Asian languages by typically-developing (TD) children has been extensively studied. However, little research has focused on how classifiers are acquired by children with developmental language disorder (DLD). To address this gap, **Pham & Simpson** examine and compare the development of numeral classifier patterns in a group of Vietnamese speakers, including TD and DLD children, over a three-year period from kindergarten to second grade. The study reveals differences in the performance of TD and DLD children and identifies areas of classifier use that are most challenging. Specifically, DLD children exhibited more errors of classifier omission in kindergarten, showed random alternations in representational forms, and experienced delays in the development of three-element classifier structures.

**Liao & Lin** provide an alternative syntactic explanation for VP-*không* questions in Vietnamese, addressing issues with Duffield's (2013) predicate-raising analysis. The authors outline three problems with Duffield's analysis: (1) it fails to explain how raising the predicate to the left of the negator turns a declarative sentence into a question; (2) it fails to account for the appearance of TP-level adverbs between the subject and the predicate; (3) it claims incorrectly that the topic marker *thì* cannot be used with VP-*không* questions. To address these issues, the authors propose an alternative explanation, involving Neg-to-C movement and the raising of a remnant TP.

**Phan & Tsai** investigate Vietnamese flip-flop sentences and their connection to verb raising and cross-linguistic patterns of covert modality. The study suggests that verb movement in flip-flop constructions is present in both matrix and embedded environments when modality is present. The research also provides evidence to support the idea that sentences with the 'flip alternative' have a bi-clausal structure and that adjunction in V-to-M movement occurs to the right. Comparative data from Thai is used to support the arguments presented in the study.

Finally, in his study, **Phan** provides a rough chronology of the development of the dynamic modal marker *được* and discusses the

syntactic-semantic changes that have led to the formation of the two instances of *đi*ợc. The study proposes that the post-verbal *đi*ợc is derived from a resultative marker, while pre-verbal *đi*ợc with a pure opportunity reading existed in the past, and was later reanalyzed as having a benefactive interpretation.

Though they may only give a snapshot of current research on Vietnamese linguistics, these papers – and the references contained therein – nevertheless provide clear evidence of how much interest has been stimulated in Vietnamese linguistics outside Vietnam in recent years, as researchers begin to probe subtle yet crucial contrasts among different East Asian and Mainland Southeast Asian varieties; conversely, to apply theoretical analyses based on other languages to Vietnamese data. With every iteration of this workshop, we hope to make progress, across the board.

#### **SHORT BIO OF THE EDITORS**

**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), *Raiding the Inarticulate: Reflections on Psycholinguistic Theories* (CUP 2018), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters. Duffield's theoretical work on Vietnamese spans more than 20 years, much of which – since 2009 – has been written in close collaboration with Trang Phan.

ORCID: [orcid.org/0000-0002-4797-9282](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4797-9282)

**Trang Phan** has been an Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian and North African Studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice since 2023. 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. From 2014 to 2016, 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. Subsequently, she worked as a lecturer of Vietnamese language and linguistics at Vietnamese National University Hanoi and she also served as the principal investigator of the government-funded project on the Nanosyntax of Vietnamese tense and aspect, sponsored by Vietnam National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED). 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).

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3008-9590>