

Remarks on the Vietnamese pronoun system

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SPAGAD Speech Acts
in Grammar and Discourse

Workshop on Vietnamese Linguistics
Harvard Yenching Institute, 16/04/2021

Outline

1 Some context

- Syntax and semantics
- Logic and grammar

2 Vietnamese pronouns

- Current project
- Syntactic representation of speech acts
- Social meanings and grammar
- Typology

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Syntax and semantics

- Objective: to explain our intuitions about sentences from
 - the meaning of basic units
 - the rules by which complex units are built and interpreted
- Intuitions
 - what does the sentence mean? (truth condition)
 - how does the sentence feel? (well-formedness)

Well-formedness

- (1) a. I know who John talked to wh_{θ} before he called Sue
b. *I know who John talked to Sue after he called wh_{θ}
(Ross 1967, Huang 1982, Chomsky 1986)
- (2) a. He₂ thinks John₁ is intelligent
b. *He₁ thinks John₁ is intelligent
(Chomsky 1981, Reinhart 1983a)

→ Trinh (2009, 2010, 2019a) on topicalization, Trinh (2017) on expletive negation

Truth conditions

- (3) a. John didn't talk to Mary or Sue $\Leftrightarrow \neg(m \vee s)$
 b. John talked to Mary or Sue, or both $\Leftrightarrow (m \vee s) \vee (m \wedge s)$
 c. John talked to Mary or Sue $\not\Leftrightarrow (m \vee s)$
 (Chierchia et al. 2012)
- (4) a. John has 3 children $\Leftrightarrow 3 \wedge \neg 4$
 b. John has more than 3 children $\not\Leftrightarrow \text{more than } 3 \wedge \neg \text{more than } 4$
 (Fox and Hackl 2006)

→ Trinh and Haida (2015), Trinh (2018, 2019b) on implicatures, Haida and Trinh (2021) on non-integers

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Well-formedness and truth condition: Contradiction

- (5) a. everyone who's not John came to the party
b. everyone **but** John came to the party
- (6) a. someone who's not John came to the party
b. *someone **but** John came to the party
- (7) a. (5b) \Leftrightarrow everyone who's not John came to the party &
 \neg everyone came to the party
b. (6b) \Leftrightarrow someone who's not John came to the party &
 \neg someone came to the party

von Stechow (1993): (6b) is ill-formed because it is contradictory

→ Trinh (2020) on NPIs in Vietnamese

Well-formedness and truth condition: Tautology

- (8) a. **there** is **a** new student
b. ***there** is **every** new student
- (9) a. (8a) \Leftrightarrow $\llbracket \text{new student} \rrbracket \cap \llbracket \text{there} \rrbracket \neq \emptyset$
b. (8b) \Leftrightarrow $\llbracket \text{new student} \rrbracket \subseteq \llbracket \text{there} \rrbracket$

Barwise and Cooper (1981): (8b) is ill-formed because it is tautological

→ Haida and Trinh (2020) on modified numerals

Wittgenstein (1921) on trivialities

4.466 Einer bestimmten logischen Verbindung von Zeichen entspricht eine bestimmte logische Verbindung ihrer Bedeutungen; *jede beliebige* Verbindung entspricht nur den unverbundenen Zeichen

Das heißt, Sätze, die für jede Sachlage wahr sind, können überhaupt keine Zeichenverbindung sein, denn sonst können ihnen nur bestimmte Verbindungen von Gegenständen entsprechen.

(Und keiner logischen Verbindung entspricht *keine* Verbindung der Gegenstände.)

Tautologie und Kontradiktion sind die Grenzfälle der Zeichenverbindung, nämlich ihre Auflösung.

To a definite logical combination of signs corresponds a definite logical combination of their meanings; *every arbitrary* combination only corresponds to the unconnected signs.

That is, propositions which are true for every state of affairs cannot be combinations of signs at all, for otherwise there could only correspond to them definite combinations of objects.

(And to no logical combination corresponds *no* combination of objects.)

Tautology and contradiction are the limiting cases of the combination of symbols, namely their dissolution.

Grammatical vs ungrammatical trivialities

- (10) a. *someone but John came to the party
b. someone who's not John came to the party and no one came to the party
- (11) a. *at least zero students came to the party
b. zero or more students came to the party
(Haida and Trinh 2020)

(Gajewski 2003, Abrusán 2007, Chierchia 2013, Sauerland 2014, Del Pinal 2019, Pistoia-Reda and Sauerland 2021)

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SPAGAD

- Speech Acts in Grammar and Discourse
 - ERC-2007-ADG 787929
 - Manfred Krifka
 - Leiniz-Zentrum Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft
- Investigate linguistic phenomena whose explanation involves reference to the context of speech and/or the communicative agents
 - syntactic representation of speech acts
 - social meanings and grammar
 - typological study

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PPR

- (12) The Participant-Pronoun Restriction (PPR)
Discourse participants must be referred to by pronouns
(Reinhart 1983b)
- (13) Context: John₁ is talking to Mary₂
- I₁ love you₂
 - *John₁ loves Mary₂

PPR

(14) Observation

The PPR is inoperative in Vietnamese

(Trinh and Truckenbrodt 2018, Trinh 2019c)

(15) Context: Nam is talking to My

a. anh yêu em

I love you

b. Nam yêu My

Nam love My

A mystery

(16) Condition C

* $\lambda x_i[\dots x_i \dots]$ if x_i is not a pronoun

First ingredient: parameterization of Rule I

(17) Rule I

Use binding instead of co-reference when the choice makes no semantic difference!

(Reinhart 1983a, Grodzinsky and Reinhart 1993)

(18) Parameterization

The candidate set of Rule I for English is $\{\alpha, \beta, \gamma\}$ while the candidate set of Rule I for Vietnamese is $\{\beta, \gamma\}$

- | | | |
|----|--|-------------|
| a. | $[\alpha \text{ XP}_i \dots \text{name}_i]$ | coreference |
| b. | $[\beta \text{ XP}_i \dots \text{pronoun}_i]$ | coreference |
| c. | $[\gamma \text{ XP}_i \lambda x_k \dots \text{pronoun}_k]$ | binding |
- (Trinh 2019c)

Second ingredient: representation of speech acts

(19) Hypothesis

A sentence “*S*” spoken by *a* and addressed to *b* has the logical form
 [*a* MAKES *b* KNOW [*S*]]

(Frege 1879, Stenius 1967, Ross 1970, Lakoff 1970, Sadock 1974, Gazdar 1979, Cinque 1999, Krifka 2001, Gärtner 2002, Gunlogson 2003, Hacquard 2006, Trinh and Crnic 2011, Krifka 2015, Sauerland and Yatsushiro 2017)

(20) Context: John₇ is speaking to Mary₈

- | | | |
|----|--|-------|
| a. | [John ₇ MAKES Mary ₈ KNOW [John ₇ loves Mary ₈]] | *E/V |
| b. | [John ₇ MAKES Mary ₈ KNOW [pro ₇ loves pro ₈]] | *E/*V |
| c. | [John ₇ λ _{x3} MAKES Mary ₈ λ _{x4} KNOW [pro ₃ loves pro ₄]] | E/V |

Prediction: circumvention of Condition C

- (21) a. John told Mary that he loved her
b. *John told Mary that John loved Mary
- (22) a. Nam bảo My rằng anh yêu cô
Nam told My that he loved her
b. Nam bảo My rằng Nam yêu My
Nam told My that Nam loved My

Prediction: no mixing

(23) **Context: Nam₇ is speaking to My₈**

- a. Nam₇ nghĩ rằng Nam₇ sẽ sống ở đây
Nam think that Nam will live here
- b. *Nam₇ nghĩ rằng anh₇ sẽ sống ở đây
Nam thinks that I will live here
- c. *Anh₇ nghĩ rằng Nam₇ sẽ sống ở đây
I think that Nam will live here

Prediction: vocatives

(24) Hypothesis

- a. PERFORMATIVE PREFIX vocative! sentence.
- b. vocative! PERFORMATIVE PREFIX sentence.

- ### (25)
- a. Hey you₇! Your₇ book is here.
 - b. Hey John₇! Your₇ book is here.

(26) **Context: My₄ is speaking to Nam₈**

- a. Nam₈ ơi! Sách của anh₈ đây.
- b. Nam₈ ơi! Sách của Nam₈ đây.
- c. Anh₈ ơi! Sách của anh₈ đây.
- d. *Anh₈ ơi! Sách của Nam₈ đây.

Against illeism

(27) Boardwalk Empire

Remus: “Remus₇ owns the trucks, which hijack his₇ own liquor.”

Capone: “Who’d want to be in business with him₇.”

(28) Hamlet – Act 1, Scene 5

Hamlet₈: “[...] And what so poor a man as Hamlet₈ is | May do, to express his₈ love and friending to you [...]”

(29) Context: John₁ is speaking to Mary₂

a. John₁ nghi John₁ nen goi me cua John₁
 John₁ think John₁ should call mother of John₁

b. *John₁ nghi John₁ nen goi me cua no₁
 John₁ think John₁ should call mother of him₁

Against names as restricted pronouns

- (30) John₁ [EVP yeu me John₁] va Mary₂ cung the
 John₁ love mother John₁ and Mary₂ does too
 'John₁ loves his₁ mother and Mary₂ does (love his₂ mother) too'

EVP \neq $[\lambda x : x = \text{John} . x \text{ loves mother of } x]$ (Fox 2000)

- (31) Không ai tên John [VP yêu John]
 no one named John loves John
 "no one named *John* loves John" / *"no one named *John* loves himself"

VP \neq $[\lambda x : x \text{ is named } \textit{John} . x \text{ loves } x]$

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Pronouns and presuppositions

(32) he₇ talked to her₈

- a. assertion: $g(7)$ talked to $g(8)$
- b. presuppositions:
 - (i) $g(7)$ is +male, –speaker, –hearer
 - (ii) $g(8)$ is –male, –speaker, –hearer

(33) I₇ talked to you₈

- a. assertion: $g(7)$ talked to $g(8)$
- b. presuppositions:
 - (i) $g(7)$ is +speaker, –hearer
 - (ii) $g(8)$ is –speaker, +hearer

(Heim and Kratzer 1998)

Pronouns and presuppositions

(34) It's not the case that he_7 talked to her_8
= it's not the case that $g(7)$ talked to $g(8)$
 \neq it's not the case that $g(7)$ is +male

- Each language has infinitely many pronouns (Montague 1973)
- Languages differ as to the presuppositions of pronouns
- The phonology of pronouns is exclusively presuppositional
 - pronouns that have no presuppositional content are silent

Contradiction and well-formedness

- (35) a. he₇ loves her₈ mother
b. he₇ loves his₈ mother
c. *he₇ loves her₇ mother
 (i) assertion: $g(7)$ loves $g(7)$'s mother
 (ii) presupposition: $g(7)$ is +male & $g(7)$ is –male
- (36) a. he loves himself
b. *he loves herself
- (37) a. this man is female
b. this triangle has four sides

Vietnamese vs English

- In English, every pronoun is specified for \pm speaker, \pm hearer
- In Vietnamese, **not** every pronoun is specified for \pm speaker, \pm hearer

(38) Chi₇ yêu em₈

- assertion: $g(7)$ loves $g(8)$
- presuppositions:
 - $g(7)$ is older than $g(8)$
 - $g(7)$ is female

(39) A₇: Chi₇ yêu em₈.

B₇: Em₈ yêu chi₇ hơn.

(40) A₇: I₇ love you₈.

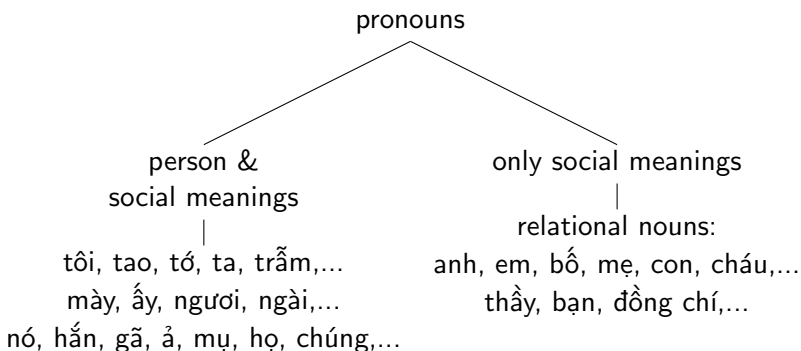
B₈: I₈ love you₇ more.

(41) A₇: tao₇ yêu mà₈.

B₈: tao₈ yêu mà₇ hơn.

A possible division within Vietnamese

(42)



Observation: there seems to be no pronoun in Vietnamese which expresses no social meaning

Register conflict

Can a conflict in social meanings lead to ungrammaticality?

(43) Context: A₇ is telling B₈ that A₇ will help B₈

- a. tô₇ sẽ giúp ngài₈
- b. tao₇ sẽ giúp mày₈
- c. *tao₇ sẽ giúp ngài₈
- d. *tô₇ sẽ giúp mày₈

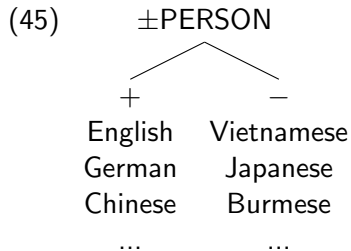
(44) tô₇ nghĩ ngài₈ là một thằng ngu
I think you are an idiot

Outline

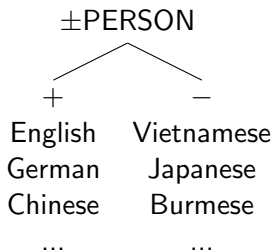
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A possible parameter

Suppose \pm PERSON is a parameter which distinguishes between languages where every pronoun is specified for \pm speaker and \pm hearer and languages where that is not the case



Questions for future research



- what properties are predicted from +PERSON and –PERSON?
- what is the range of possible (grammatical) social meanings?
- what is the range of possible pronominal systems?
- how do children/people learn pronouns?

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