

Negative/interrogative markers in Vietnamese: present and past

Vũ Đức Nghiệu¹, Phan Thị Huyền Trang², Trịnh Hữu Tuệ³

¹VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities

²VNU University of Languages and International Studies

³Leibniz-ZAS Berlin

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- 1 Questions
- 2 Polar questions in Vietnamese
- 3 Explaining a gap in colloquial Saigonese
- 4 Explaining a gap in standard Vietnamese
- 5 Conclusion

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Asking a question

- To ask a question is to request the hearer to choose one proposition from a set of propositions (Searle, 1969)
- A question represents a set of sentences, namely those that count as its answers (cf. Hamblin, 1958; Karttunen, 1977; Groenendijk and Stokhof, 1984)

(1) $\llbracket \text{who likes John} \rrbracket =$
 $\{ \text{Mary likes John, Sue likes John, Anne likes John, ...} \}$

Answers as focus alternatives

- The set of answers to a question is a set of “focus alternatives” (Rooth, 1992)
- (2) Definition (Rooth, 1992; Fox and Katzir, 2011)
- S_1 is a focus alternative of S_2 iff S_1 is derivable from S_2 by replacement of a focused constituent with an expression of the same type

Subject alternatives

- (3) Lan_F thích Nam
- a. Lan thích Nam
 - b. My thích Nam
- (4) a. Ai thích Nam?
b. *Nam thích ai?
- (5) Lan thích Nam hay My thích Nam?

S_1 hay S_2

- **hay** maps two propositions p and q to the question $\{p, q\}$

$$(6) \quad \llbracket \text{hay} \rrbracket = \lambda p. \lambda q. \{p, q\}$$

$$(7) \quad \left[\left[\begin{array}{c} \alpha \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ S_1 \quad \text{hay} \quad S_2 \end{array} \right] \right] = \{S_1, S_2\}$$

Object alternatives

- (8) Nam thích Lan_F
- a. Nam thích Lan
 - b. Nam thích My
- (9) a. Nam thích ai?
b. *Ai thích Nam?
- (10) Nam thích Lan hay Nam thích My?

VP alternatives

(11) Nam [thích Lan]_F

a. Nam thích Lan

b. Nam muốn đi ngủ

(12) Nam thích Lan hay Nam muốn đi ngủ?

General point

- The set of answers determines the form of the question

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Description

- We take “polar questions” to be those exemplified by (13a) and (13b)

- (13) a. Nam có đọc sách không?
 b. Nam đã đọc sách chưa?

- (14) Subject $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{có} \\ \text{đã} \end{array} \right\}$ VP $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{không} \\ \text{chưa} \end{array} \right\}$

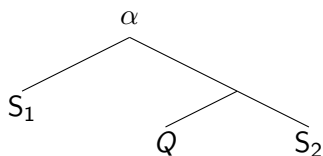
Second position alternatives

- (15) a. Nam **được** đọc sách
b. Nam **phải** đọc sách
- (16) a. Nam **sẽ** không đọc sách
b. Nam **đã** không đọc sách

Proposal

- Vietnamese polar questions are headed by a silent Q
- Q has the same semantics as **hay** plus the presupposition that its arguments are negation of each other (cf. Guerzoni and Sharvit, 2014; Biberauer et al., 2014)

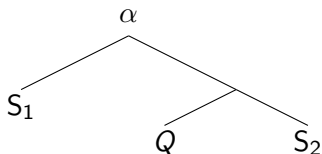
(17)



- (18) a. $\llbracket Q \rrbracket = \lambda p. \lambda q: p = \neg q. \{p, q\}$
 b. $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket = \{S_1, S_2\}$ if $S_1 = \neg S_2$
 $=$ undefined otherwise

Syntactic conditions imposed by Q

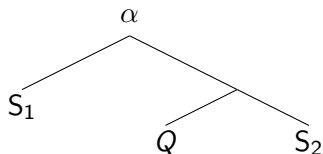
(19)



- (20) a. S_1 and S_2 are SPAs
b. S_1 has positive polarity

Phonological conditions imposed by Q

(21)



- (22) a. Pronounce S_1 normally!
 b. Delete everything in S_2 except the focus!

Subj có VP không

(23) Nam có đọc sách không?

(24) Nam có đọc sách
 ~~Nam~~ không đọc sách

Subj đã VP chưa

(25) Nam đã đọc sách chưa?

(26) Nam đã đọc sách
Nam chưa đọc sách

*Subj sẽ VP không

- It is not possible to formulate future polar questions (cf. Trinh, 2005; Duffield, 2007, 2013; Phan and Duffield, 2019)

(27) *Nam sẽ đọc sách không?

(28) Nam sẽ đọc sách
 Nam sẽ không đọc sách

Problem: S_1 and S_2 are not SPAs

*Subj đã VP không

- It is not possible to formulate preterite polar questions (cf. Trinh, 2005; Duffield, 2007, 2013; Phan and Duffield, 2019)

(29) *Nam đã đọc sách không?

(30) Nam đã đọc sách
 Nam đã không đọc sách

Problem: S_1 and S_2 are not SPAs

*Subj được VP phải

(31) *Nam được đọc sách phải?

(32) Nam được đọc sách
~~Nam~~ phải đọc sách

Problem: $S_1 \neq \neg S_2$

Why second position?

- (33) The Extended Projection Principle (Chomsky, 1986)
Sentences must have a subject

- (34) $OP_n \dots OP_1 [S \text{ XP Verb YP }]$ deep structure
 $\text{XP } OP_n \dots OP_1 [S \text{ ~~XP~~ Verb YP }]$ surface structure

- Because of the EPP, the position of the highest, i.e. main, operator becomes the second position

Tomorrow

A more in-depth analysis will be presented tomorrow!

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Two negations, one question particle

- There are two negations in colloquial Saigonese. However, only one of these negations can appear as clause-final polar question particle

(35) a. Nam hông đọc sách
 b. Nam hông² đọc sách

(36) a. Nam có đọc sách hông?
 b. *Nam có đọc sách hông²?

(37) Google search results
 a. “có thích hông” = 8900
 b. “có thích hông²” = 4

How phonology obscures syntax

- It turns out that there is a syntactically complex way of expressing negation

(38) a. Nam hông có đọc sách
 b. Nam hổng có đọc sách

- We propose the following morphophonemic rules

(39) a. NEG → hông
 b. NEG có → $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hông có} \\ \text{hổng có} \\ \text{hổng} \end{array} \right.$

Explaining the gap

- (40) a. NEG → hông
 b. NEG có → $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hông có} \\ \text{hông}^2 \text{ có} \\ \text{hông}^2 \end{array} \right.$

(41) *Nam có đọc sách hông?

(42) Nam có đọc sách
~~Nam~~ NEG có đọc sách

Problem: S_1 and S_2 are not SPAs

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Two negations, one question particle

- There are two negations in standard Vietnamese. However, only one of these negations can appear as clause-final polar question particle

(43) a. Nam không đọc sách
 b. Nam chẳng đọc sách

(44) a. Nam có đọc sách không?
 b. *Nam có đọc sách chẳng?

Diachrony of negation

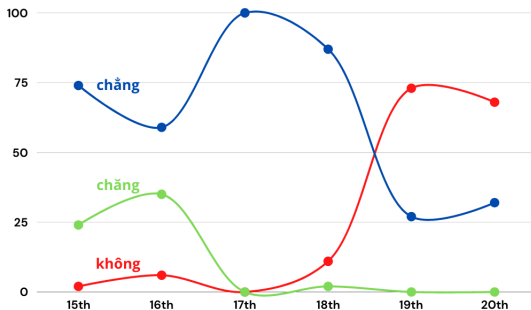
- We look at negation in the following texts (cf. Vũ, 1986)
 - 15th century:
 - *Quốc âm thi tập* (Nguyễn Trãi)
 - *Hồng Đức quốc âm thi tập* (Hội Tao Đàn)
 - 16th century: *Thơ Nôm* (Nguyễn Bình Khiêm)
 - 17th century: *Phép giảng tám ngày* (Alexandre de Rhodes)
 - 18th century: *Truyện Kiều* (Nguyễn Du)
 - 19th century: *Thầy Lazaro Phiền* (Nguyễn Trọng Quản)
 - 20th century: *Đôi mắt* (Nam Cao)

Diachrony of negation

(45)

century	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
không	7	7	0	14	87	59
chăng	73	42	0	3	0	0
chặ̉ng	231	72	691	107	32	28

(46) Probabilities



Diachrony of negation

(47) Past rules

NEG → chǎng

NEG có → $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{chǎng có} \\ \text{chǎng có} \\ \text{chǎng có} \end{array} \right.$

(48) Present rules

NEG → ~~chǎng~~ không

NEG có → $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{chǎng có} \\ \text{chǎng có} \\ \text{chǎng có} \end{array} \right.$

- We do find instances of **chǎng có** and **chǎng có** in historical texts but more systematic work has to be done

Explaining the gap

(49) Past rules

NEG → chẳng

$$\text{NEG có} \rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{chẳng có} \\ \text{chẳng có} \\ \text{chẳng} \end{cases}$$

(50) Present rules

NEG → ~~chẳng~~ không
$$\text{NEG có} \rightarrow \begin{cases} \text{chẳng có} \\ \text{chẳng có} \\ \text{chẳng} \end{cases}$$

(51) *Nam có đọc sách chẳng

(52) Nam có đọc sách

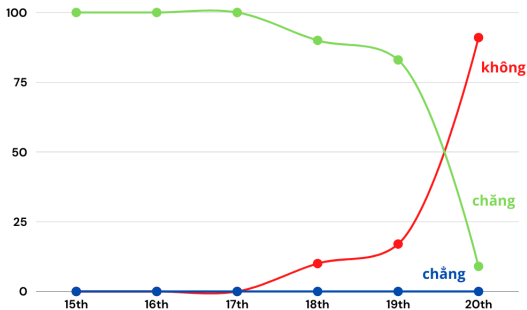
~~Nam~~ NEG có đọc sáchProblem: S_1 and S_2 are not SPAs

Predictions about interrogative use

(53)

	15th	16th	17th	18th	19th	20th
không	0	0	0	2	2	10
chẳng	7	3	32	19	10	1
chẳng	0	0	0	0	0	0

(54) Probabilities



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Conclusion

- We approach the syntax of polar questions as many works have approached the syntax of wh-question: as a representation of a set of focus alternatives
- We apply our analysis to explain a gap in colloquial Saigonese
- We extend that explanation to a another gap in standard Vietnamese, using historical arguments

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