

DECOMPOSING DEFINITENESS IN VIETNAMESE

Trang Phan & Lam Quang Dong
Vietnam National University, Hanoi

trangphan@vnu.edu.vn & lamquangdong@vnu.edu.vn

Abstract

This paper provides a detailed description of how Vietnamese encodes definiteness in the nominal phrase in the context of the crosslinguistic debate about the existence of lexical articles in classifier languages. We first show that so-called lexical determiners in Vietnamese are not genuine articles in the technical sense. We then scrutinize six different referring expressions in Vietnamese including bare nouns, classifier – nouns, numeral – classifier – nouns, plural – classifier – nouns, focus *cái* – classifier – nouns while pointing out how Vietnamese differs from other better-studied classifier languages. Based on this thorough investigation, we posit that Vietnamese systematically differentiates six levels of the givenness hierarchy in the sense of Gundel *et al.* (1993); therefore, Vietnamese contributes to a better understanding of the nature of definiteness and the structure of the nominal phrase.

Keywords: definiteness, plural, classifier, numeral, bare noun, Vietnamese

ISO 639-3 codes: vic

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the on-going controversial issue of whether Vietnamese as a numeral classifier language has lexical articles. On the one hand, there are those researchers who deny the existence of lexical articles in Vietnamese, such as Emeneau (1951), Thompson (1965), Nguyen D. H. (1997), Doan *et al.* (2019), just to name a few. On the other hand, Nguyen T. C. (1975) and Nguyen H. T. (2004) claim that Vietnamese indeed possesses genuine lexical articles, which form an independent paradigm as in (1).

(1) Candidates for lexical articles in Vietnamese

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. một ('one') | [-Plural, -Definite] |
| b. những ('plural') | [+Plural, -Definite] |
| c. các ('plural') | [+Plural, +Definite] |

Our contributions to the existing literature are the following. First, based on a re-examination of the members of the paradigm listed in (1), carefully distinguishing them from one another, we argue that there are no genuine lexical articles in Vietnamese despite some researchers' effort to formally apply this functional category notion in the analysis of Vietnamese nominal structure. Second, we further notice a well reported fact that comes out of this debate but is hardly discussed at any depth, namely, various constructions can be interpreted as definite in Vietnamese including bare nouns, classifier – nouns, numeral – classifier – nouns, plural – classifier – nouns, *cái* – classifier – nouns (Nguyen T. C. 1975, Nguyen P. P. 2002, Nguyen H. T. 2004, Trinh 2011, Tran J. 2011, Le & Schmitt 2016, Phan & Lander 2015, Tran N. N. 2017, Simpson & Ngo 2018, Doan *et al.* 2019).

- (2) a. **Sách** rách rồi
Book torn already
'The book(s) was/were torn.'
- b. **Cuốn** sách rách rồi
CLF book torn already¹
'The book was torn.'
- c. **Hai** cuốn sách rách rồi
two CLF book torn already
'(The) two books were torn.'
- d. **Các** cuốn sách rách rồi
PL CLF book torn already
'The books were torn.'
- e. **Những** cuốn sách (này)² rách rồi
PL CLF book this torn already
'These books were torn.'
- f. **Cái** cuốn sách (này) rách rồi
FOC CLF book this torn already
'This very book was torn.'

The issue worth further investigating, therefore, is whether there are any differences in terms of definiteness interpretation among these constructions.

(3) Types of definite nominal constructions under investigation:

- a. bare nouns
- b. classifier – noun phrases
- c. numeral – classifier – noun phrases
- d. *các* – classifier – noun phrases
- e. *những* – classifier – noun phrases
- f. *cái* – classifiers – noun phrases

In a nutshell, our study centers on two research questions:

(4) Research questions:

- a. Are *những*, *các*, *một* genuine lexical articles?
- b. What are the interpretational differences across different definite constructions?

In order to address the first question, we compare the distribution and interpretation of *những*, *các*, *một* with that of grammaticalized articles like English *the*, and we provide those arguments which go against Nguyen H. T. (2004), and Nguyen T. C. (1975)'s proposal in which these markers are considered as articles in Vietnamese.

In order to tackle the second question, we adopt the givenness hierarchy proposed by Gundel *et al.* (1993) shown in (5) since this hierarchy distinguishes up to six levels of givenness, which is fine-grained enough to account for six different definite nominal constructions in Vietnamese listed in (3).

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper include the following: 1SG: first person singular, 2SG: second person singular, ANT: anterior, AP: adjective phrase, CLF: classifier, DEM: demonstrative, FOC: focus, Mod: modifier, NUM: numeral, PL: plural, PossP: possessive phrase, RC: relative clause.

² Different from the previous examples in (2a-d), noun phrases with *những* and *cái* in (2e-f) prefer to be accompanied by an additional post-nominal modifier *này* (meaning 'this'). The presence of such a modifier is optional since it can be omitted if the contextual information is clear enough. This point will be explained in sections 4.4 and 4.5.

- (5) The givenness hierarchy, adopted from Gundel *et al.* (1993:275):
 in focus > activated > familiar > uniquely identifiable > referential > type identifiable
 {it} $\left[\begin{array}{c} \text{that} \\ \text{this} \\ \text{this N} \end{array} \right]$ {that N} {the N} {indefinite this N} {a N}

According to Gundel *et al.* (1993), referring expressions in natural languages differentiate six cognitive statuses, which can be stated informally as in (6).

- (6) Six levels of givenness:

<i>type identifiable:</i>	I can identify the type of things that the noun describes
<i>referential:</i>	I refer to a particular thing that I have in mind
<i>unique identifiable:</i>	I can identify the unique thing that the noun describes
<i>familiar:</i>	I am familiar with the thing that the noun describes
<i>activated:</i>	I can refer to the thing that the noun describes by retrieving activation from immediate linguistic or extralinguistic context.
<i>in focus:</i>	The thing that the noun describes is the center of attention.

The givenness hierarchy is a continuum from indefinite, referential specificity, unique definiteness, familiar definiteness, activated givenness to focus. One crucial property of the givenness hierarchy is that those six statuses are implicationally related. For instance, if a referring expression is ‘familiar’, it is also ‘unique identifiable’ since if one is familiar with the thing described by the noun, (s)he is also able to identify that thing. In this paper, we will show how the givenness hierarchy sheds light on various aspects of definiteness encoded by different Vietnamese nominal expressions.

In this beginning section, we have first introduced the problems that we find worth further investigating, then we narrowed down to two research questions, as well as sketched out how we handle these questions. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The second section outlines the panorama of Vietnamese nominal phrases. Section 3 addresses the first research question; in particular, we show that the paradigm listed in (1) fails to capture several crucial facts of Vietnamese nominal phrases, thus strictly speaking, Vietnamese has no genuine lexical articles, similar to many other classifier languages. However, Vietnamese does distinguish different subtle shades of definiteness, which are investigated thoroughly in Section 4 by addressing the second research question. Section 5 discusses some intra-linguistic and cross-linguistic implications of the study before ending the paper.

2. Panorama of Vietnamese nominal phrase

An extended nominal phrase in Vietnamese consists of both pre-nominal and post-nominal elements, which are arranged in the template in (7) and (8).

- (7) $Q_{\text{universal}} - \text{PL/Num} - \text{Cái} - \text{CLF} - \text{Noun} - \text{AP} - \text{PossP} - \text{RC} - \text{Dem}$

- (8)

<i>Tất-cả</i>	<i>các / ba</i>	<i>cái</i>	<i>cuốn</i>	<i>sách</i>	<i>AP[cũ]</i>	<i>PossP[của tôi]</i>
all	PL / three	FOC	CLF	book	old	of 1SG
<i>RC[mà]</i>	<i>anh</i>	<i>mới</i>	<i>mượn</i>	<i>hôm-qua]</i>	<i>đó</i>	
RC	2SG	just	borrow	yesterday	that	

 ‘All those (three) old books of mine that you just borrowed yesterday’

The pre-nominal elements serve to categorize the noun, and importantly, they must obey a fixed order in which universal quantifiers must be followed by plural markers or numerals, which in turn are followed by the pre-classifier *cái* and classifiers, as in (9a), illustrated in (9b). For instance, the raising of the classifier across the pre-classifier *cái* as in (9c), or across the numeral/the plural as in (9d) or across the universal quantifier as in (9e), as well as the displacement of the numeral/the plural across the universal quantifier as in (9f) all result in ungrammaticality.

- (9) a. $Q_{\text{universal}} < \text{PL/Num} < \text{Cái} < \text{CLF} < \text{Noun}$
- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| b. | <i>Tất-cả</i> | <i>ba/các</i> | <i>cái</i> | <i>cuốn</i> | <i>sách</i> |
| | All | three/ PL | FOC | CLF | book |
| c. | * <i>Tất-cả</i> | <i>ba/các</i> | <i>cuốn</i> | <i>cái</i> | <i>sách</i> |
| | All | three/ PL | CLF | FOC | book |
| d. | * <i>Tất-cả</i> | <i>cuốn</i> | <i>ba/các</i> | <i>cái</i> | <i>sách</i> |
| | All | CLF | three/ PL | FOC | book |
| e. | * <i>Cuốn</i> | <i>tất-cả</i> | <i>ba/các</i> | <i>cái</i> | <i>sách</i> |
| | CLF | all | three/ PL | FOC | book |
| f. | * <i>Ba/các</i> | <i>tất-cả</i> | <i>cuốn</i> | <i>cái</i> | <i>sách</i> |
| | Three/ PL | all | CLF | FOC | book |
- Intended meaning: ‘All the (three) books’

The post-nominal elements, on the other hand, serve to modify the noun, and notably, they exhibit a less strict ordering effect, as shown in (10).

- (10) **Noun** < AP < PossP /RC/ Dem

The only restriction is that adjectives must be the closest modifier attached to the noun as in (11a). The intervention of other modifiers between the adjective and the noun as in (11b), (11c), (11d) are all unacceptable:

- (11) a. *Cuốn sách* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* *đó*
 CLF book old of 1SG RC 2SG just borrow yesterday that
- b. **Cuốn sách* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{AP[\mathbf{cũ}]_{RC[mà\ anh]}}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* *đó*
 CLF book of 1SG old RC 2SG just borrow yesterday that
- c. **Cuốn sách* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]$ *đó*
 CLF book of 1SG RC 2SG just borrow yesterday old that
- d. **Cuốn sách* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* *đó* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]$
 CLF book of 1SG RC 2SG just borrow yesterday that old
- Intended meaning: ‘That old book of mine that you just borrowed yesterday’

The order of adjectives, possessive phrases, relative clauses, and demonstratives³, however, is quite flexible, as shown in (12).

- (12) a. *Cuốn sách* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* *đó*
 CLF book old of 1SG RC 2SG just borrow yesterday that
- b. *Cuốn sách* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}$ *đó*
 CLF book old RC 2SG just borrow yesterday of 1SG that
- c. *Cuốn sách* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]$ *đó* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]*
 CLF book old that of 1SG RC 2SG just borrow yesterday
- d. *Cuốn sách* $AP[\mathbf{cũ}]$ *đó* $_{RC[mà\ anh]}$ *mới* *mượn* *hôm-qua]* $_{\text{PossP}[của\ tôi]}$
 CLF book old that RC 2SG just borrow yesterday of 1SG
- Intended meaning: ‘That old book of mine that you just borrowed yesterday’

In this paper, we only take into account those pre-nominal elements which are significant for the definite interpretation of the noun phrases, in particular, on the six types of nominal constructions as listed in (3). The rationale for this choice will become clear at the end of the next section.

³ Unlike what is commonly assumed in the literature, Hoang & Nguyen (2004), Phan & Tsai (2018) argue that demonstratives are not the final boundary of Vietnamese nominal phrase. Interested readers are referred to Phan & Tsai (2018) for further details.

3. Are the definiteness markers genuine lexical articles in Vietnamese?

This section deals with the first research question of whether *những*, *các*, *một* truly form a paradigm of genuine lexical articles as proposed by Nguyen T. C. (1975), and Nguyen H. T. (2004) in (1).

In this section, we propose three objections to the paradigm in (1). First, we argue that *những/các* are different from the English definite article *the* in terms of their optionality and their incompatibility with numerals. Second, in the line with Phan & Lander (2015) and Le & Schmitt (2016), we show that the distinction between *những* and *các* as indefinite and definite articles respectively in the paradigm in (1) fails to capture the fact that similar to *các*, *những* can also appear in strongly definite contexts. Then we provide the third argument to challenge the paradigm, namely, the categorization of *những* and *một* under the same label of ‘indefinite articles’ fails to capture the crucial distributional differences between *những* and *một*. On a final note, we make some comments with respect to Nguyen H. T. (2004: 42)’s claim that ‘there is no way to use a determiner to unambiguously mark [+singular; +definite] in Vietnamese.’ Based on these considerations, we conclude that Vietnamese has no genuine lexical definite articles.

First of all, the distributional properties of *những* and *các* clearly set them apart from genuine definite articles. In particular, unlike English *the*, Vietnamese plural markers are not obligatory for definiteness interpretation of the nominal phrase. Examples in (13) below indicate that the nominals in both sentences can be interpreted as definite either with *các* as in (13a) or without *các* as in (13b). That is to say, the presence of *các* crucially contributes to the sentence the plural reading, not the definite reading.

- (13) a. *Cuốn sách rất cũ*
 CLF book very old
 ‘The book is very old.’
 b. *Các cuốn sách rất cũ*
 PL CLF book very old
 ‘The books are very old.’

In fact, the element which is necessarily present for the definiteness as well as the well-formedness of the sentence is the classifier *cuốn* instead.

- (14) a. *Các cuốn sách rất cũ*
 PL CLF book very old
 b. **Các sách rất cũ*
 PL book very old
 Intended meaning: ‘The books are very old’

The minimal contrast between (14a) and (14b) suggests that the counterpart of the definite article in Vietnamese is the classifier, not the plural marker.

In addition to the non-optionality property, *những* and *các* are also differentiated from English *the* with respect to their co-occurrence restriction with numerals. In English, there is no such incompatibility between the article *the* and the numerals as shown in (15a) whereas in Vietnamese plural *những* and *các* cannot precede the numerals as in (15b).

- (15) a. **The three** books
 b. **Các ba cuốn sách*
 PL three CLF book
 Intended meaning: ‘The three books’

Những and *các* not only compete with numerals distributionally, but also interpretationally. Let us consider a context in which the hearer is supposed to meet the speaker in order to return the three books that (s)he borrowed from the speaker. When they meet each other, the speaker can either use *các* or *three* in the question as in (16a) and (16b) respectively, but not both.

- (16) a. **Các** cuốn sách đâu?
 PL CLF book where
 ‘Where are the books?’
- b. **Ba** cuốn sách đâu?
 Three CLF book where
 ‘Where are the three books?’
- c. ***Các ba** cuốn sách đâu?⁴
 PL three CLF book where
 Intended: ‘Where are the three books?’

It is obvious from (16b) that the presence of the numeral is compatible with a definiteness interpretation. Alternatively, the pre-classifier *cái* can be inserted right after the numeral with the companion of a post-nominal modifier.

- (16) d. **Ba cái** cuốn sách đó đâu?
 Three FOC CLF book that where
 ‘Where are those three books?’

In other words, without the plural markers, the nominal phrase can still be interpreted as definite. Other elements including the numeral and the pre-classifier *cái* can also serve the same function. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the distribution of *những* and *các* is truly different from that of genuine definite articles.

Second, in contrast to Nguyen’s (2004) description, we posit that there is no inherent contrast between *những* as [-Definite] and *các* as [+Definite]. In fact, similar to *các*, *những* is perfectly fine in those contexts which require strong definite readings including noun phrases with demonstratives and superlatives as in (17a-b).

- (17) a. **Những/Các** cuốn sách ấy
 PL / PL CLF book that
 ‘Those books’
- b. **Những/Các** cuốn sách cũ nhất
 PL / PL CLF book old most
 ‘The oldest books’

Third, *những* is sharply distinguished from the indefinite *một* for *một* is totally excluded from those strong definite contexts as in (18a-b).

- (18) a. ***Một** cuốn sách ấy
 One CLF book that
- b. ***Một** cuốn sách cũ nhất
 One CLF book old most

These examples suggest that the grouping of *những* and *một* as indefinite articles on the one hand and *các* as a definite article on the other hand as proposed by Nguyen H. T. (2004) is misleading. Instead, *những* and *các* are both compatible with a definiteness interpretation, and only *một* can be characterized as an indefinite marker.

Finally, the paradigm in (1) is indeed not a complete one, since it misses out the element which is characterized as [+Singular +Definite] in Vietnamese. Although it is understandable for Nguyen H. T. (2004) to deny the existence of such an article, nevertheless, the presence of a classifier in Vietnamese nominal phrase clearly forces such a reading.

⁴ The fact that (16c) is an ill-formed translation of the English sentence ‘Where are the three books?’ clearly highlights the difference between Vietnamese *các* and English *the*: the former is a quantity word whereas the latter is not. We thank Mark Alves for pointing this out.

- (19) a. *Sách cũ*
book old
'Old books'
- b. ***Cuốn sách cũ***
CLF book old
'The old book'

From the above discussion, two points can be drawn. First, although Vietnamese possesses certain lexical items which express the definiteness of the nominal phrases, they are not articles in a strictly technical sense. To this extent, Vietnamese is no different from other classifier languages.

However, it does not mean that Vietnamese is unable to mark fine-grained distinctions with respect to different facets of definiteness. As briefly seen above, not only *các*, but also *những*, numerals, the pre-classifier *cái* and classifiers can also independently contribute to the definite interpretation of Vietnamese nominal phrases. Therefore, in the next section we will scrutinize those definite constructions which involve these elements, as listed in (3) in order to point out which aspect of definiteness each of the constructions highlight as well as to what extent Vietnamese is different from other classifier languages.

4. What are the interpretational differences across different definite constructions?

This section addresses the second research question, namely, what the interpretational differences among a bare noun, a CLF – N phrase, a Numeral – CLF – N phrase and a PL – CLF – N phrase, a *cái* – CLF – N phrase are when it comes to expressing definiteness. Let us look at each of the constructions in turn.

4.1. Bare nouns

The definite reading of Vietnamese bare nouns obtains in both subject and object positions, as in (20) and (21) respectively.

- (20) a. ***Sách rách rồi***
book torn already
'The book(s) was/were torn.'
- b. ***Sách là bạn tri-kỷ của tôi***
Book COP friend soul of 1SG
'Books are my soul-mate'.
- (21) a. *Tôi làm rách sách rồi*
1SG make torn book already
'I made the book(s) torn.'
- b. *Tôi muốn mua sách*
1SG want buy book
'I want to buy a book/ books.'

In terms of interpretation, Vietnamese bare nouns can be interpreted as definite (as in 20a, 21a) or generic (as in 20b) or indefinite (as in 21b), with either singular or plural readings. The wide range of interpretations and distribution of bare nouns in Vietnamese is shared by other classifier languages such as Thai and different varieties of Chinese (see Cheng & Sybesma 1999, 2005, Simpson 2005, among others).

What is crucial here is that the definiteness interpretation of the noun seems to be conditioned by the aspectuality of the predicate, not by the position of the noun in the sentence.⁵ Specifically, the predicate in (21a) is resultative, the bare noun obtains a definite reading, whereas the predicate in (21b) is episodic, the bare noun is interpreted as indefinite. Again, a similar correlation is also observed in different dialects of Chinese (Cheng & Sybesma 2005). That is to say, with respect to the ability to license a definite bare noun, Vietnamese is not an exception. However, Vietnamese does exhibit certain language-specific characteristics

⁵ It is well-documented that cross-linguistically definiteness can be expressed by a variety of means including articles, structural position, verbal aspect, Case, etc. (Cheng & Sybesma 2005, Simpson 2005, among others). In this paper, we are mainly concerned with the first factor.

when other elements including classifiers, numerals, plural markers, and the pre-classifier *cái* are brought into the picture.

4.2. Classifier-Noun

Definite reading of a nominal phrase containing a classifier and a noun can be obtained regardless of the position of the noun phrases as the subjects or the objects of the sentences, as in (22) and (23).

- (22) a. **Cuốn sách rách rồi**
 CLF book torn already
 ‘The book was torn.’
- b. **Cuốn sách là người bạn tri-kỷ của tôi**⁶
 CLF book COP CLF friend soul of 1SG
 ‘The book is my soul-mate’.
- (23) a. **Tôi làm rách cuốn sách rồi**
 1SG make torn CLF book already
 ‘I made the book torn.’
- b. **Tôi muốn mua cuốn sách**
 1SG want buy CLF book
 ‘I want to buy the/a book.’

The presence of the classifier *cuốn* forces a singular definite reading unless the default definite reading is overridden by the context⁷. This property puts Vietnamese closer to Cantonese than to Mandarin Chinese, since CLF-N tends to be definite in Cantonese, not in Mandarin (Cheng & Sybesma 1999, Simpson, Soh & Nomoto 2011, Jenks 2018).

Since a bare noun can be also possibly interpreted with a definite singular reading, as shown in (20a) and (21a), a question arises whether there are any differences in terms of definiteness interpretation between a definite bare noun and a definite classified noun.

Interestingly, it is found that there are contexts that are compatible with both a bare noun and a classified noun as in (24), but there are also other contexts which only tolerate classified nouns as in (25).

- (24) a. Context A: The hearer is supposed to meet the speaker today in order to return the book that (s)he borrowed from the speaker. When they meet each other, the speaker asks:
(Cuốn) sách đâu?
 CLF book where
 ‘Where is the book?’

⁶ Note that there are those contexts in which the combination between a classifier and a bare noun can be interpreted as generic:

Con chó thích ăn thịt. Con mèo thích ăn cá
 CLF dog like eat meat CLF cat like eat fish
 ‘Dogs love to eat meat. Cats love to eat fish.’

Con trâu là bạn của nhà nông bao đời nay
 CLF buffalo COP friend of CLF farmer many generation now
 ‘(The) buffaloes have been (the) farmers’ friends for many generations.’

Here we witness a difference between Cantonese and Vietnamese: CL-NPs in Cantonese cannot have a generic interpretation (Cheng & Sybesma 1999:533). What factors license such a generic reading is clearly worth further investigation. However, in this paper, we only focus on the definite interpretation of the relevant construction, so the generic interpretation is left for future research.

⁷ According to Sudo & Trinh (2009), Vietnamese CLF-N can only be indefinite in object positions, i.e., under the scope of Existential closure at the VP level, as in (23b).

b. Context B:

Mẹ *mới* *mua* *một* *cuốn* *sách* *cho* *tôi.*

mum just buy one CLF book for me

‘Mum has just bought a book for me.’

Cuốn sách *vẫn còn* *thơm* *mùi* *giấy* *mới.*⁸

CLF book still good smell paper fresh

‘The book still has the good smell of freshly-printed paper.’

c. Context C:

Mẹ *mới* *mua* *một* *cuốn* *sách* *và* *một* *cây* *bút* *cho* *tôi.*

mum just buy one CLF book and one CLF pen for me

‘Mum has just bought a book and a pen for me.’

Sách *thì* *còn* *mới,* *nhưng* *bút* *thì* *hết* *mực* *rồi.*

book TOP still new but pen TOP out.of ink already

‘The book is still new, whereas the pens already run out of ink’.

- (25) Context: The speaker borrowed a book from the hearer. When they meet each other, the speaker says:

Tớ *rất* *thích* **(cuốn)sách* *mà* *cậu* *cho* *tớ* *mượn*

1SG very like CLF book that 2SG let 1SG borrow

‘I really like the book that you lent me.’

From (24a), it can be seen that both a bare noun and a classified noun can refer to situationally unique referents. From (24b) and (24c), it is suggested that both a bare noun and a classified noun can also refer to discourse-familiar referents (note that bare nouns are interpreted contrastively in (24c)).

Crucially, the subtle difference between (24a) and (25) lies in the optionality of the classifier *cuốn* in (24a) versus the obligatoriness of the classifier *cuốn* in (25). (25) tells us that the presence of the classifier is required when we add a post-nominal modifier (in the form of a relative clause in this case). In other words, CLF-N is needed in the activation of immediate linguistic context.

This seems to suggest that in Vietnamese, both bare and CLF-N phrases can express unique definiteness and familiar definiteness, whereas CLF-N phrases can additionally encode activated givenness.⁹ That is to say, Vietnamese data provide additional empirical support for recent research findings on definiteness that languages differentiate different levels of definiteness (Heim 1982, 2011, Li 1999, Jiang 2012, Simpson and Biswas 2016, Jenks 2018, among others).

⁸ Note that there is a certain kind of nouns which does not require classifiers even in anaphoric contexts:

Sinh-viên *và* *giáo-viên* *đều* *đến* *dự* *tiệc.* *Sinh-viên* *thì*

Student and teacher both come attend party Student TOP

say *bí-tí,* *giáo-viên* *thì* *còn* *tỉnh-táo.*

drunk DEG teacher TOP still awake.

‘Students and teachers both came to the party. The students were very drunk, the teachers were still awake.’

See Simpson & Ngo (2018), Phan (2019) for detailed discussion. In these cases, we assume that those seemingly bare nouns in fact are not so bare, structurally they contain within themselves a classifying element which enables them to stand alone in anaphoric contexts as well as to combine directly with numerals and the plural markers, as seen in footnote (10) and footnote (13).

⁹ We are grateful to Michal Starke for pointing out this crucial contrast to us and for helping us to sharpen the empirical data in (24) and (25).

4.3. Numeral – Classifier – Noun

Similar to other numeral classifier languages, Vietnamese requires the presence of the classifier between the numeral and the bare noun in counting contexts, as in (26).¹⁰

- (26) a. *Ba cuốn sách*
 Three CLF book
 b. **Ba sách*
 Three book
 ‘(The) three books.’

A numeral – CLF – N phrase can naturally be interpreted as definite in both subject or object positions, as in (27) and (28) respectively.

- (27) a. *Hai cuốn sách rách rồi*
 two CLF book torn already
 ‘(The) two books were torn.’
 b. *Hai cuốn sách là những người bạn tri-kỷ của tôi*
 Book CLF book COP PL CLF friend soul of 1SG
 ‘The two books are my soul-mates.’
- (28) a. *Tôi làm rách hai cuốn sách rồi*
 1SG make torn two CLF book already
 ‘I made (the) two books torn.’
 b. *Tôi muốn mua hai cuốn sách*
 1SG want buy two CLF book
 ‘I want to buy two books.’

The fact that Vietnamese Numeral – CLF – N phrases can have definite reading¹¹ and can naturally occur in the subject position clearly differentiates them from Mandarin and Cantonese counterparts which are indefinite and can only be the sentence’s subjects in limited contexts (Li 1999, Cheng & Sybesma 1999, 2005, Sio & Song 2015, Jiang 2012, among others). In particular, in Mandarin Chinese, a numeral – CLF – N phrase can only be the sentence’s subject if we add *you* (‘have’) to the left of the numeral – CLF – N phrase or *dou* (‘all’) to the right of the numeral – CLF – N phrase, as in (29).

- (29) a. **[San ge xuesheng] zai xuexiao shoushang le*
 three CLF student at school hurt LE
 ‘Three students were hurt at school.’
 b. *You [san ge xuesheng] zai xuexiao shoushang le*
 have three CLF student at school hurt LE
 ‘There are three students hurt at school.’

¹⁰ As noted in footnote (8), those nouns which do not need classifiers in anaphoric contexts also do not need classifiers in numeral contexts: *hai sinh viên* (two students), *hai giáo trình* (two textbooks), *một trăm nhà* (one hundred houses), *một trăm vận động viên* (one hundred athletes), etc. See Phan (2019), Simpson & Ngo (2018) for detailed discussion.

¹¹ This generalization does not apply to the numeral *một* (‘one’), which is uncontroversially indefinite in both subject and object positions:

- (i) a. *Một cuốn sách rách rồi*
 One CLF book torn already
 ‘A book was torn.’
 b. *Tôi làm rách một cuốn sách rồi*
 1SG make torn one CLF book already
 ‘I made a book torn.’

- c. [San ge xeusheng] dou lai zhe li le
 Three CLF student all come this place LE
 ‘Three students all came here. (Examples cited from Sio & Song 2015:180-181)

Since the CLF-N construction is also definite as shown in the previous section, we can ask a further question of whether there exist any differences in terms of definiteness interpretation between a CLF-N phrase and a Numeral-CLF-N phrase.

Similar to a CLF-N construction, a Numeral-CLF-N construction can designate both unique definiteness as in (30), and familiar definiteness as in (31).

- (30) Context: The hearer is supposed to meet the speaker today in order to return the ten books that (s)he borrowed from the speaker. When they meet each other, the speaker asks:

Mười cuốn sách đâu?

Ten CLF book where

‘Where are the ten books?’

Tôi mới mua hai cuốn sách và mười cây bút.

1SG just buy two CLF book and ten CLF pen

‘I have just bought two books and ten pens.’

Hai cuốn sách và mười cây bút vẫn còn thơm mùi

two CLF book and ten CLF pen still have good smell

gỗ mới

wood fresh

‘The two books and the ten pens still have the good smell of freshly-cut wood.’

However, there are contexts in which CLF-N is not sufficient, and a numeral must be added, as in (32).

- (32) *Tôi đã mua *(hai) cuốn sách rất hay*
 1SG ANT buy two CLF book very good
 ‘I have bought those two books which are very good.’

It is shown from (32) that only Numeral-CLF-N, but not CLF-N phrases, can serve as the object controller of a secondary predicate,¹² which is assumed to be referential specific (i.e., known by the speaker, not by the hearer). In other words, in addition to being unique definite and familiar definite, Numeral-CLF-N phrases can be referential specific. That is to say, compared to bare nouns and CLF-N constructions, Numeral-CLF-N constructions cover a wider range of the givenness hierarchy (Gundel *et al.* 1993).

4.4. Các/những-Classifier-Noun

Apart from numerals, there are two plural markers which can be added to the left of the CLF-N sequence resulting in a definite PL-CLF-N phrase. Similar to numerals, the presence of a classifier is also obligatory for the plurals, as in (33).¹³

- (33) a. *Những/Các cuốn sách*
 PL/ PL CLF book
 b. **Những/Các sách*
 PL/ PL book
 ‘The books.’

¹² A similar phenomenon is also observed in Chinese (Cheng & Sybesma 1999, Li & Bisang 2012).

¹³ As noted in footnote (8) above, those nouns which do not need classifiers in numeral contexts also do not need classifiers in plural contexts: *những/các sinh viên* (the students), *những/các vận động viên* (the athletes), etc.

Furthermore, as already shown above, *những* and *các* are in complementary distribution with numerals.

- (34) **Những* / **Các* *ba cuốn sách*¹⁴
 PL/PL three CLF book
 Intended meaning: ‘The three books’

PL-CLF-N phrases can be definite either in the subjects or the objects positions, as in (35) to (36).

- (35) a. *Các cuốn sách rách rồi*
 PL CLF book torn already
 ‘The books were torn.’
 b. *Các cuốn sách là những người bạn tri-kỷ của tôi*
 PL CLF book COP PL CLF friend soul of 1SG
 ‘The books are my soul-mates’.
- (36) a. *Tôi làm rách các cuốn sách rồi*
 1SG make torn PL CLF book already
 ‘I made the books torn.’
 b. *Tôi muốn mua các cuốn sách*
 1SG want buy PL CLF book
 ‘I want to buy the books.’

PL-CLF-N phrases can be interpreted as either definite (as in 35a, 36a) or generic (as in 35b), but cannot be indefinite as in (36b).

Two comments are in order. First, the behavior of *các* in the contexts in (35) to (36) parallels with that of classifiers in as much as their presence both renders a definite reading. The only distinction is that *các* forces a plural interpretation, whereas the classifier results in a singular interpretation. Second, the fact that *các*-CLF-N phrases are unambiguously definite even in indefinite-oriented contexts such as (36b) makes them apparently different from Numeral-CLF-N phrases which are naturally interpreted as indefinite in such contexts as shown in (28b).

It is easily seen that the examples in (35) to (36) above only concentrate on *các*, therefore the next question arises as to what distinguishes between the two plural markers *các* and *những*.

Both *các* and *những* must be added in order to refer to plural previously mentioned referents, as in (37).

- (37) *Tôi mới mua hai cuốn sách và mười cây bút*
 1SG just buy two CLF book and ten CLF pen
 ‘I have just bought two books and ten pens.’
Các cuốn sách và những cây bút vẫn còn thơm mùi gỗ mới
 PL CLF book and PL CLF pen still have good smell wood fresh
 ‘The books and the pens still have the good smell of freshly-cut wood.’

In the above discourse-anaphoric context, *những* and *các* seem to behave in the same manner. However, there are other contexts which tease apart the two plural markers. Specifically, only *những*-CLF-N but not *các*-CLF-N can appear as the object controller of a secondary predicate suggesting that though both can be familiar definite (as in 37), only *những* can be referential specific (as in 38b).

- (38) a. **Tôi đã mua các cuốn sách rất hay*
 1SG ANT buy PL CLF book very good
 ‘?I have bought the books which are very good.’
 b. *Tôi đã mua những cuốn sách rất hay*
 1SG ANT buy PL CLF book very good
 ‘I have bought those books which are very good.’

¹⁴ *Những ba cuốn sách* is only acceptable under the abundance reading of *những*, meaning ‘as many as three books’, which is outside the scope of this paper.

Furthermore, *các* is more preferable in unique-based definite.

(39) Context: The hearer is supposed to meet the speaker today in order to return the ten books that (s)he borrowed from the speaker. When they meet each other, the speaker asks:

- a. **Các** cuốn sách đâu?¹⁵
 PL CLF book where
 ‘Where are the books?’
- b. ?**Những** cuốn sách đâu?
 PL CLF book where
 ‘Where are the books?’

The felicitousness of *những* in this context is greatly improved if a post-nominal modifier such as a demonstrative or a relative clause is added.

(40) Context: The hearer is supposed to meet the speaker today in order to return the ten books that (s)he borrowed from the speaker. When they meet each other, the speaker asks:

- a. **Những** cuốn sách **đó** đâu?
 PL CLF book that where
 ‘Where are those books?’
- b. **Những** cuốn sách **mà anh mượn tôi** đâu?
 PL CLF book RC 2SG borrow 1SG where
 ‘Where are the books that you borrowed from me?’

This observation is shared by many other researchers including Bui, M. H. (2000), Le & Schmitt (2016). See Le & Schmitt (2016) for an account of why *những* but not *các* requires post-nominal modification. To this, we add a further note that the post-nominal modifiers can also be added to *các*-CLF-N phrases, therefore the subtle difference is that *những* requires their presence in this context, whereas *các* can but does not need to co-occur with them.

- (41) **Các** cuốn sách (**đó/ mà anh mượn tôi**) đâu?
 PL CLF book that/ RC 2SG borrow 1SG where
 ‘Where are those books? / Where are the books that you borrowed from me?’

To recap, *các* can encode unique definiteness and familiar definiteness, whereas *những* not only encodes unique definiteness and familiar definiteness but also referential specificity. To this extent, *các*-CL-NP patterns with bare nouns, whereas *những*-CL-NP patterns with numeral-CL-NP.

At this point, we must ask ourselves the question what really distinguishes *những*-CL-NP from numeral-CL-NP since both constructions can express unique definiteness, familiar definiteness, and referential specificity. As seen above, the fact that *những* requires post-nominal modification not only sets *những* apart from *các*, but also from numerals. That is to say, *những* is able to express a wider range of givenness distinction than numerals, namely only *những* requires activation from immediate linguistic contexts including demonstratives, relative clauses, as well as other kinds of post-nominal modifiers. To put it differently, only *những* can encode activated givenness of the givenness hierarchy (Gundel *et al.* 1993).

4.5. *Cái* – Classifier – Noun

Apart from classifiers, numerals, plural markers, there is an additional pre-nominal position, which hosts the so-called the extra *cái* as in Nguyen P. P. (2002), Simpson & Ngo (2018).

¹⁵ Note that in this unique-based definite context, the presence of the plural *các* and the classifier *cuốn* is optional, the bare form of the noun is the preferred option.

- (42) *Tất-cả ba/những cái cuốn sách này*
 All three/ PL FOC CLF book this
 ‘All these three books.’

This pre-classifier usage of *cái* must be distinguished from the general classifier usage of *cái*. Whereas in the classifier position, *cái* requires the accompanying noun to be non-animate, in the pre-classifier position, *cái* has no such restriction.

- (43) a. **Con** chó
 CLF_{+ANIMATE} dog
 ‘the dog’
 b. ***Cái** chó
 CLF_{-ANIMATE} dog
 c. **Cái con** chó
 FOC CLF_{+ANIMATE} dog
 ‘this one particular dog’

Only in the pre-classifier position, can *cái* can co-occur with other classifiers.

- (44) a. **Cái con** chó
 FOC CLF dog
 ‘this one particular dog’
 b. **Cái cuốn sách**
 FOC CLF book
 ‘this one particular book’
 c. **Cái cây bút**
 FOC CLF pen
 ‘this one particular pen’

Furthermore, the two usages of *cái* also differ with regard to stress patterns. As previously mentioned (see Nguyen T. C. 1975, Nguyen H. T. 2004), in the pre-classifier position, *cái* is always stressed while in the classifier position, *cái* is by default unstressed (the stress is indicated by capital letters).

- (45) **CÁI** cuốn sách này
 FOC CLF book this
 ‘This one particular book’ / ‘This very book’

- (46) a. cái bàn
 CLF table
 b. ***CÁI** bàn
 CLF table
 ‘The table’

Having acknowledged the special status of *cái* in the pre-classifier position, Vietnamese linguists seem to reach a consensus regarding its function. It has been claimed in the literature that the presence of *cái* in the pre-classifier position serves to single out a particular individual and therefore *cái* is reasonably identified as a focus marker in the nominal domain (Nguyen T. C. 1975, Nguyen P. P. 2002, Nguyen H. T. 2004, Simpson & Ngo 2018, among others). This is the reason why throughout this paper, we gloss *cái* as FOC. At this point, we leave the question of how the two usages of *cái* (the focus *cái* and the classifier *cái*) are related to each other for future research.

Another distributional restriction of the focus *cái*, which is well noted in the literature, is that it prefers to be accompanied by a post-nominal modifier (Nguyen T. C. 1975, Nguyen P. P. 2002, Doan *et al.* 2019). As shown above, this property is also shared by *những*.

- (47) *Cái cuốn sách *(đó/ mà tôi mới mượn)*
 FOC CLF book that/RC 1SG just borrow
 ‘This very book/The very book that I just borrowed’

Having set out the interpretation and distribution of the focus *cái*, let us now look at how this element fits into the givenness hierarchy. As a nominal focus marker, *cái* expresses the highest level of givenness: signaling in-focus referents. The question arises as to whether *cái* also designates other lower levels in the hierarchy. *Cái* is infelicitous in referential specific context as shown below.

- (48) **Tôi đã mua cái cuốn sách rất hay*
 1SG ANT buy FOC CLF book very good
 Intended: ‘I’ve bought this one particular book which is very good’.

Cái is appropriate in unique definite and familiar definite contexts as long as it is accompanied by a post-nominal modifier.

- (49) a. *Cái cuốn sách đó/ mà anh mượn tôi đâu*
 FOC CLF book that/ RC 2SG borrow 1SG where
 ‘Where is that particular book? / Where is this particular book that you borrowed from me?’
 b. *Tôi mới mua một cuốn sách cũ do Lê Lưu viết. Cái cuốn sách đó làm tôi đọc mê mẩn cả ngày*
 1SG just buy one CLF book old by Le Luu write FOC CLF book that make 1SG read passionate
 all day
 ‘I’ve just bought an old book written by Le Luu. That particular book made me read passionately all day’.

That is to say, *cái* can refer to unique, familiar, activated given, and in focus referents but cannot refer to referential specific referents.

5. Discussion

We have now addressed both of the research questions raised in the introduction. The answer to the first research question is that so-called determiners in Vietnamese including *những*, *các* and *một* are not strictly lexical articles. Distributionally, they are optional and are incompatible with numerals. Interpretationally, in addition to definiteness, they contain other features including plurality, specificity, discourse activation. This answer not only addresses the question of whether Vietnamese has definite articles, but also sheds light on the issue of whether Vietnamese has obligatory number. As seen elsewhere, the presence of *những* and *các* is not necessarily required for the definiteness as well as for the plurality reading of the sentence. Indeed, Vietnamese nouns can be interpreted as plural without the plural markers.

- (50) *Sinh viên ngôn ngữ rất chăm chỉ*
 student linguistics very hardworking
 ‘Linguistics students are hard working.’

Bošković’s (2009) proposes that there is a structural connection between the lack of definite articles and the non-obligatory of number morphology in a given language. Vietnamese therefore provides an empirical support for a connection between definiteness and number. To this extent, Vietnamese patterns with other NP languages including Serbo-Croatian, Warlpiri, Chinese, and Japanese, among others.

In answering the second question, we have come to the remark that although there are no inherent definite articles in Vietnamese, a number of constructions including bare nouns, CLF-N phrases, Numeral-CLF-N phrases and *những/các*-CLF-N phrases, *cái*-CLF-N phrases correspond to different spans of the givenness hierarchy in the sense of Gundel *et al.* (1993).

(51) The givenness hierarchy in Vietnamese nominal phrase:¹⁶

- in focus* > *activated* > *familiar* > *uniquely identifiable* > *referential*
- a. {*in focus* > *activated* > *familiar* > *uniquely identifiable*}
= CÁI-CLF-N
- b. {*activated* > *familiar* > *uniquely identifiable* > *referential*}
= NHỮNG-CLF-N
- c. {*familiar* > *uniquely identifiable*}
= CÁC-CLF-N
- d. {*familiar* > *uniquely identifiable* > *referential*}
= NUMERAL-CLF-N
- e. {*activated* > *familiar* > *uniquely identifiable*}
= CLF-N for singular
- f. {*familiar* > *uniquely identifiable*}
= BARE NOUN

Those spans suggest that these different levels of givenness are implicationaly related in Vietnamese, just as in many other languages. In particular, bare nouns tend to mark unique definiteness and familiar definiteness in Vietnamese as in (51f). Compared to bare nouns, CLF-N phrases can mark both unique definiteness, familiar definiteness, and activated givenness as in (51e). Compared to CLF-N phrases, Numeral-CLF-N phrases can refer to referential specificity in addition to unique definiteness and familiar definiteness, as in (51d). Among the two plural markers, *các*-CLF-N phrases can only encode unique definiteness and familiar definiteness, (as in 51c), whereas *những*-CLF-N expression can additionally encode activated givenness and referential specificity, as in (51b). Compared to *những*-CLF-N phrases, *cái*-CLF-N phrases can additionally refer to in-focus referents, but *cái*-CLF-N phrases cannot refer to referential specific referents, as in (51a). Gundel *et al.* (1993) have looked at the representations of the givenness hierarchy in Mandarin Chinese, English, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Vietnamese therefore provides an additional empirical support for such a hierarchy.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that there are no elements which qualify as genuine grammaticalized definite articles in Vietnamese, but as a highly analytic language, Vietnamese possesses a number of article-like elements which express various facets of definiteness. We have provided a systematic way of looking at different Vietnamese nominal constructions which contain these elements in light of the givenness hierarchy proposed by Gundel *et al.* (1993). For each construction, we have pointed out where Vietnamese patterns with as well as differs from other better-studied classifier languages including Cantonese and Mandarin Chinese. We have also shown that Vietnamese nominal phrases underlyingly reflect the universal ‘givenness hierarchy’. That is to say, Vietnamese nominals, though subtly different from other classifier languages, still behave as expected universally.

Acknowledgements

We are GRATEFUL to Michal Starke, Mark Alves, the audience of the workshop on *Comparative Syntax in East and Southeast Asia* held at Sogang University, Seoul, on 14-15 December 2019 and of the Nanolab webinar held on 30 October 2020, and the two anonymous reviewers for comments and suggestions. All errors are ours. This research has been completed under the sponsorship of the VNU University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS), Vietnam National University - Hanoi, under the Project No.N.18.07.

References

Bošković, Željko. 2009. More on the no-DP analysis of article-less languages. *Studia Linguistica* 2:187–204.

¹⁶ For simplicity, we exclude ‘type identifiable’ in the original hierarchy. This is expressed by bare nouns and the uncontroversially indefinite *một* in Vietnamese.

- Bùi, Mạnh Hùng. 2000. Về một số đặc trưng ngữ nghĩa—ngữ pháp của những và các [Some semantico-syntactic characteristics of những and các]. *Ngôn ngữ* 3:16–26.
- Cheng, Lisa & Rint Sybesma. 1999. Bare and not-so-bare nouns and the structure of NP. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30.4:509–542.
- Cheng, Lisa & Rint Sybesma. 2005. Classifiers in four varieties of Chinese. In Guglielmo Cinque & Richard Kayne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*, 259–292. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Đoàn, Thị Quý Ngọc, Martin B.H. Everaert & Eric J. Reuland. 2019. (In)definiteness of Vietnamese noun phrases. In Nigel Duffield, Trang Phan and Tue Trinh (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vietnamese Linguistics. Studies in Language Companion Series 211*:155–180. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Emeneau, Murray B. 1951. *Studies in Vietnamese (Annamese) grammar*. University of California Publications in Linguistics No. 8, Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Gundel, Jeanette, Nancy Hedberg & Ron Zacharski. 1993. Cognitive status and the form of referring expressions in discourse. *Language* 69:274–307.
- Heim, Irene. 1982. *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, PhD dissertation.
- Heim, Irene. 2011. Definiteness. In: Claudia Maienborn, Klaus von Stechow & Paul Portner (eds.), *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*, Vol. I:996–1025. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Hoang, Dung & Nguyen, Thi Ly Kha. 2004. Về các thành tố phụ sau của cấu trúc danh ngữ trong tiếng Việt [On post-nominal modifications in Vietnamese noun phrase]. *Ngôn ngữ* 4:24–34.
- Jenks, Peter. 2018. Articulated definiteness without articles. *Linguistic Inquiry* 49.3:501–536.
- Jiang, Li Julie. 2012. *Nominal Arguments and Language Variation*. PhD dissertation, Harvard University.
- Lê, Ni La & Cristina Schmitt. 2016. Plurality in classifier languages: A view from Vietnamese pluralizers. In Emily Clem, Virginia Dawson, Alice Shen, Amalia Horan Skilton, Geoff Bacon, Andrew Cheng, Erik Hans Maier (eds.), *Proceedings of the Forty-second annual meeting of the Berkeley linguistics society*, 153–174. Berkeley: Berkeley Linguistics Society.
- Li, XuPing & Walter Bisang. 2012. Classifiers in Sinitic languages: From individuation to definiteness marking. *Lingua* 122:335–355.
- Nguyễn, Đình Hoà. 1997. *Vietnamese: Tiếng Việt không sơn phấn* [Vietnamese without veneer]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Nguyễn, Tài Cẩn. 1975. *Từ loại Danh từ trong tiếng Việt hiện đại* [Nouns in modern Vietnamese]. Hanoi: Nhà xuất bản Khoa học Xã hội.
- Nguyễn, Phú Phong. 2002. *Những vấn đề ngữ pháp tiếng Việt. Loại từ và Chỉ thị từ* [Aspects of Vietnamese Grammar: Classifiers and Demonstratives]. Hanoi: Vietnam National University Press.
- Nguyen, Hung Tuong. 2004. *The structure of the Vietnamese Noun Phrase*. Boston: Boston University dissertation.
- Phan, Trang & Eric Lander. 2015. Vietnamese and the NP-DP parameter. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics* 60.3:391–415.
- Phan, Trang & Dylan Tsai. 2018. Some observations on Vietnamese demonstratives. *Proceedings of the 5th NAFOSTED Conference on Information and Computer Science (NICS)*, 128–131. Ho Chi Minh city: IEEE. DOI: <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8606856>.
- Phan, Trang. 2019. The absence of classifiers in numeral classifier constructions in Vietnamese. In Metin Bağrıaçık, Anne Breitbarth & Karen De Clercq (eds.), *Mapping Linguistic Data. Essays in Honour of Liliane Haegeman*. WebFestschrift, 208–213. Ghent: Ghent University.
- Sio, Joanna Ut-Seong, & Song, Sanghoun. 2015. Divergence in Expressing Definiteness between Mandarin and Cantonese. In Muller, Stefan (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar*, Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, 177–194. Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

- Simpson, Andrew. 2005. Classifiers and DP structure in southeast Asian languages. In Guglielmo Cinque & Richard Kayne (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Syntax*, 806–838. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Simpson, Andrew, Hooi Ling Soh & Hiroki Nomoto. 2011. Bare classifiers and definiteness: a cross-linguistic investigation. *Studies in Language* 35:168-93.
- Simpson, Andrew & Priyanka Biswas. 2016. Bare nominals, classifiers, and the representation of definiteness in Bangla. *Linguistic Analysis* 40.3–4:167–198.
- Simpson, Andrew & Binh Ngo. 2018. Classifier syntax in Vietnamese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 29: 211-246.
- Sudo, Yasutada & Trinh, Tue. 2009. The indefiniteness effect in Mandarin and Vietnamese. Talk, UCLA, 31 January 2009.
- Thompson, Laurence C. 1967. *A Vietnamese Grammar*. Seattle & London: University of Washington Press.
- Tran, Jennie. 2011. The Acquisition of Vietnamese Classifiers. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Hawaii at Manoa.
- Trần, Ngọc Ninh. 2017. *Ngữ pháp Việt Nam* [Vietnamese Grammar]. California: Institute of Vietnamese Studies.
- Trinh, Tue. 2011. Nominal reference in two classifier languages. *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung* 15: 629–644.

Reviewed: Received 19 July 2020, revised text accepted 27 October 2020, published 1 February 2021

Editors: Editor-In-Chief Dr Mark Alves | Managing Eds. Dr Paul Sidwell, Dr Nathan Hill, Dr Sigrid Lew