

# Contrastive Linguistics

Online Lecture

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# Three big questions: what, why, how

- ▶ What is it?
- ▶ Why is it necessary?
- ▶ How do we do it (contrast languages or pairs of languages)?

# What?

## Reality

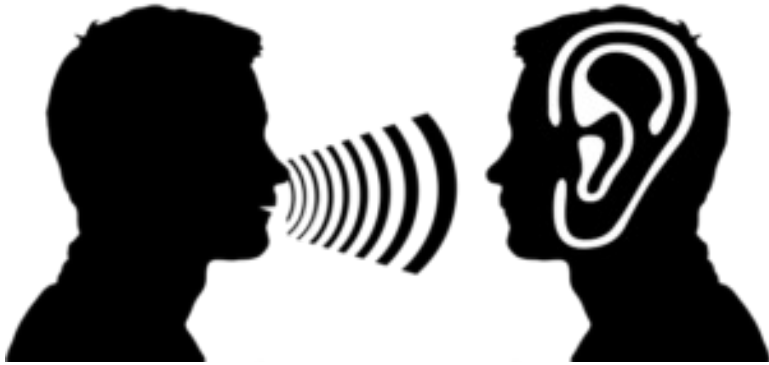
- ▶ Reality is defined as the world or the state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them. The house where I am living is a reality, but the house that I wish to build for my family is not.
- ▶ There are three aspects of reality: physical, social and psychological. The river you swim in is a reality. It is **physical**: the strong current in the floody season can carry you away. It is **social** because the conceptualization of what a river is is public: you cannot by yourself call any body of water a river. What is a river is a social consensus. (Any of you from the North or the Central who happens to be in the Mekong river will be surprised to know that the Southern word for *shrimp* is *tép*, not *tôm*.) It is **psychological** in that your conception/experience/consciousness of the river may be different from that of others.

# The reality of language: physical, social and psychological

- Language is a reality: It is **physical** as indicated by the auditory-vocal mode of verbal communication; it is **social** in that it is created, acquired and used in the human society; and it is **psychological** (mind-brain issues) as evidenced by findings in language acquisition and pathology: aphasia patients due to brain damage are unable to understand and express themselves verbally.

# The physical aspect of language

The auditory-vocal mode of verbal communication



# The psychological aspect of language



Language acquisition

Language production and interpretation



# The social aspect of language

Naming: arbitrary  
(social convention)

*tree, arbre, baum*



Conversational strategies:  
Socio-culturally  
determined.



# What?

## Contrastive Linguistics (CL)/ Contrastive Analysis (CA)

- ▶ Linguistics: the scientific study of language in its physical, social and psychological manifestation.
- ▶ Contrastive Linguistics (CL)/Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a branch of linguistics that involves in the study two or more languages synchronically to discover their differences and similarities, the primary aim of which is to apply these findings to practical language-related disciplines such as foreign language teaching, translation...



# A French tour guide introduces himself in English

*If ze zhentlemans will to me make ze grande honneur to me in rattain in hees serveece, I shall show to him everysing zat is magnifique to look upon in ze beautiful Paree. I speaky ze Angleesh parfaitmaw.*

- ▶ Mark Twain, The Innocents Abroad 1869

# Main assumptions of CL /CA (König & Gast 2009)

- ▶ First language acquisition and foreign language learning differ fundamentally, especially in those cases where the foreign language is learnt later than a mother tongue and on the basis of the full mastery of that mother tongue.
- ▶ Every language has its own specific structure. Similarities between the two languages will cause no difficulties ('positive transfer'), but differences will, due to 'negative transfer' (or 'interference').
- ▶ The student's learning task can therefore roughly be defined as the sum of the differences between the two languages.

# Main assumptions of CL/CA (König & Gast 2009)

- ▶ A systematic comparison between mother tongue and foreign language to be learnt will reveal both similarities and contrasts.
- ▶ On the basis of such a comparison it will be possible to predict or even rank learning difficulties and to develop strategies (teaching materials, teaching techniques, etc.) for making foreign language teaching more efficient.

# From Interference to Transfer: The Psychological Basis of Contrastive Analysis

- ▶ The notion of **interference** in learning theories is related to **transfer**, a basic concept in psychology.
- ▶ Given that contrastive analysis is motivated by the need to account for L2 learning issues, and that learning is a psychological matter, **transfer** as a psychological component is hypothesized as an explanation to L2 learning problems.
- ▶ Basically, **the transfer hypothesis** holds that the learning of task A will affect the subsequent learning of task B. For instance, a person who knows how ride a bicycle will find it easier to learn how ride a motor cycle than the person who doesn't know how to ride a bicycle.

# Two types of transfer: Negative and Positive

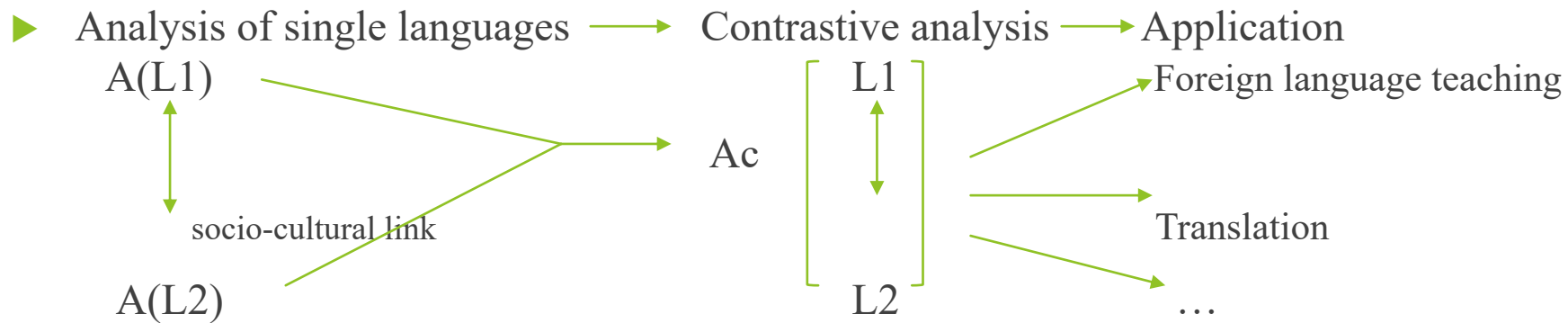
- ▶ In language learning **transfer** refers to the **effect of one language on the learning of another**, as pointed out by Robert Lado (1915–1995): “individuals tend to transfer **the forms and meanings and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture** to *the foreign language and culture*” (1957: 2).
- ▶ There are two types of language transfer positive transfer and negative transfer.

# Two types of transfer: Negative and Positive

- ▶ Positive transfer is what happens when the mastery of the native language helps or facilitates the learning of the target language, namely when both the native language and the target language have the same form.
- ▶ Negative transfer, or interference, is what happens when the mastery of the native language interferes with the learning of the target language.
- ▶ Negative transfer, to be specific, refers to the use of a native language pattern or rule that leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language.

# How to do contrastive analysis?

- ▶ The method of contrastive linguistics can be represented as in the diagram below, where 'A(Ln)' stands for the analysis of a language Ln and 'Ac(L1 ↔ L2)' for the contrastive analysis of two languages L1 and L2.



# Contrastive analysis of the physical aspect, social, and psychological aspects of languages

- ❖ Contrastive Linguistics (CL) concerns itself either with the physical aspect of the two languages or with their social, psychological aspect.
- ❖ That is, CL can be code-oriented, investigating the form of the languages, realized by the subfields of linguistics: phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax.
- ❖ CL can also look at languages from a higher perspective, examining issues related to language use through the subfields: pragmatics and discourse analysis. These subfields consider the social, psychological aspects of language as their main concern.



# Quiz: Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. Reality, or the world as it is, manifests itself in three dimensions: physical, social, and psychological.
2. We are unable to observe language because it is psychological.
3. Naming is a conventional act, so it is possible to explain the relationship between a word and the object it refers to.
4. To do Contrastive Linguistics or Contrastive Analysis we need to study the history of language.
5. Research in Contrastive Linguistics or Contrastive Analysis is applicable to the study of first language acquisition.
6. When the mastery of the first language facilitates the learning of a second language it is called positive transfer.
7. If your competence in the first language causes difficulties in your learning of another language, then you are facing negative transfer in your learning.
8. Contrastive Linguistics or Contrastive Analysis does not concern with the physical aspect of language.

# Physical aspect: Sounds

## Phonetics vs. Phonology

- ▶ The distinction between Phonetics and Phonology is the distinction between Type and Token, where Type is the abstract description of a concept, and Token is the physical instantiation of the concept. It is the American logician-philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce who made this distinction.
- ▶ In linguistics, **type** is a class of linguistic elements: phonemes, words, sentences; **token** is an example or a physical instance of a class. For example, the sentence ‘Mary and John used the same textbook’ is ambiguous. On one reading, it means they used the same type of textbook written by a particular author. On this reading, each of them had a textbook.
- ▶ On the other reading, the type reading, the interpretation is that they used the same instance of a textbook type. In this case, both of them used one single book.

# Type vs. Token

## ‘They used the same textbook’



Token: they both share  
one single book



Type: Each of them has a  
book of the same author.

# Physical aspect: Sounds

## Phonetics vs. Phonology

- Phonetics studies human speech sounds, how speech sounds are produced and perceived, the type of speech sounds, while phonology studies specific speech sounds as employed in different languages, how speech sounds are structured to create meaning.

Waves of human sounds

*ju:kənju:zmɪpɛn*

*'You can use my pen.'*



# Phonemes=Segments



di:n

When someone talks, he/she makes continuous sound waves, but we perceive these sound waves as discrete. We perceive them as segments, psychological units. A person utters the word *dean* within our hearing, and what we hear is a sound that gradually changes its shape through time, but what we perceive is a sequence of three discrete segments: *d-i:-n*. Thanks to this ability we can distinguish *mean* from *dean*, *don* from *dean*, and *deal* from *dean*...

# Physical aspect: Sounds

## Phonetics vs. Phonology

### Segments/Phonemes

- ▶ Each segment in *dean*, /d/, /i:/, /n/, is called a phoneme. Phonemes are abstract entities postulated to account for the fact that speakers of languages like English perceive the vowels in *dean* and *din* as different. This perception derives from the contrast between the two vowels.
- ▶ A phoneme is by definition a sound that can distinguish one word from another.
- ▶ So, we have the same number of phonemes in *dean* and *din*, and we have two identical phonemes, two consonants, /d/ and /n/. What helps distinguish the two words is the vowels: /i/ in *dean*, and /I/ in *din*.

# Phonemes and allophones

While a phoneme is an abstract entity, a type, its physical manifestation is allophones, tokens.

For illustration, consider the phoneme /k/. Different English speakers, even the same English speaker produces different instances of /k/ in different utterances. Yet, these different instances of the phoneme are perceived as being identical by native speakers. This fact is referred to as **free variation**.

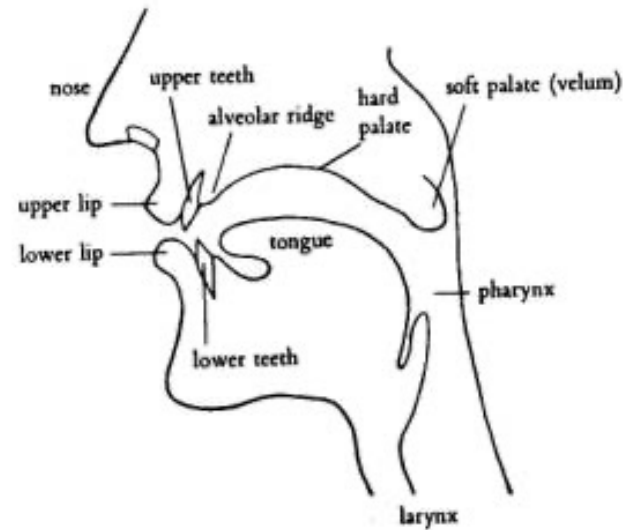
Allophones can result from the position of the phoneme in a word. For instance, /k/ is realized phonetically as aspirated [k<sup>h</sup>] when occurring word initially as *kin*, but unaspirated [k], following a consonant as in *skin*. This fact is called **allophonic variation**.

Note: Phonemes are conventionally placed between slashes in transcription, whereas speech sounds (phones) are placed between square brackets.

# Consonant phonemes

Consonant phonemes are described in terms of physical dimensions, as follows.

1. Place of articulation
2. Manner of articulation
3. Voicing

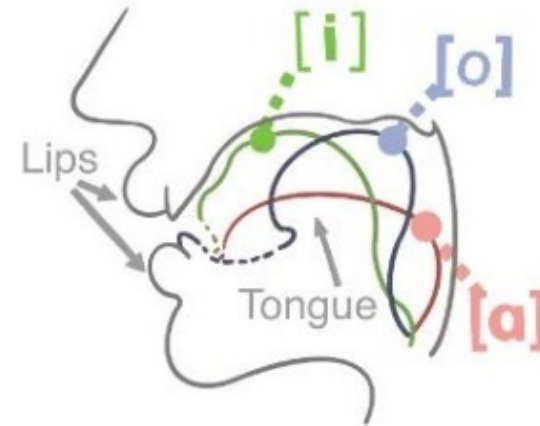
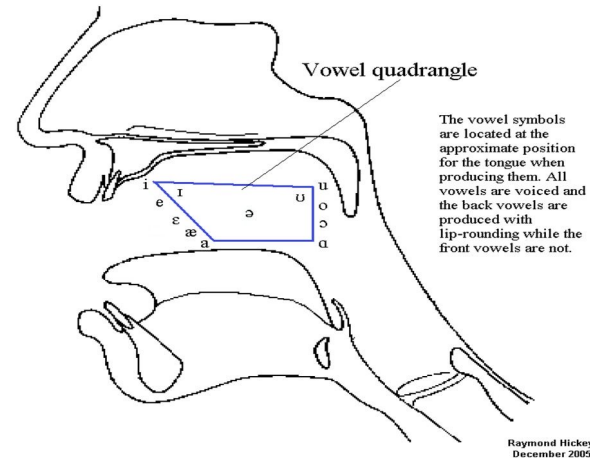
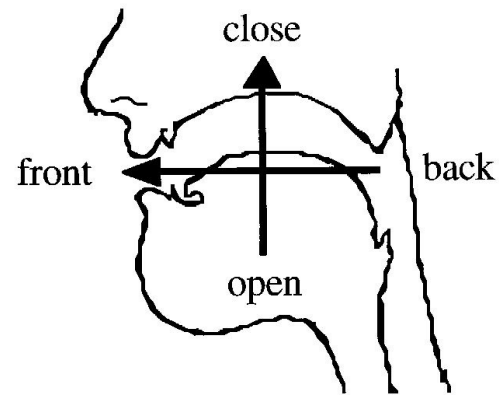




# Vowel phonemes

Vowel phonemes are described in terms of the following physical dimensions:

1. Tongue height
2. Frontness
3. Lip rounding
4. Tenseness



# CA Physical aspect → Form Phonetics

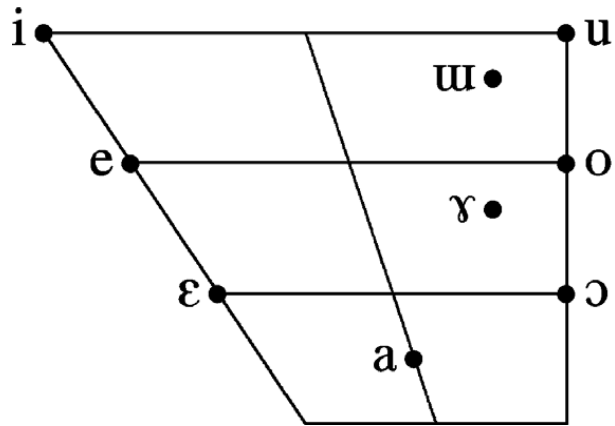
Vietnamese consonants

	Labial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	b		t t <sup>h</sup>	d	tɕ	k	ʔ
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	ŋ	
Fricative		f v		s z		x ɣ	h
Approximant/ Glide	w						
Lateral Approximant/ Liquid			l				

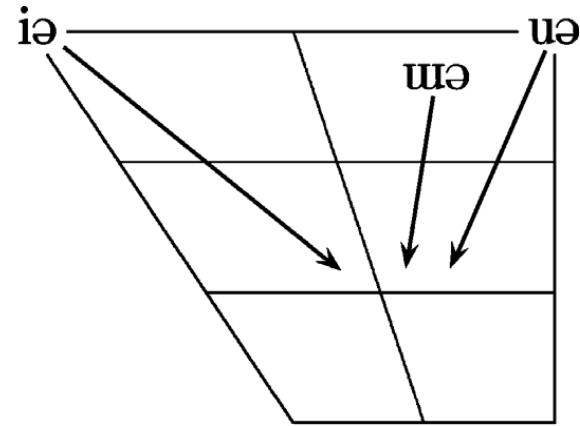
# CA Physical aspect Form Phonetics

Vietnamese vowels

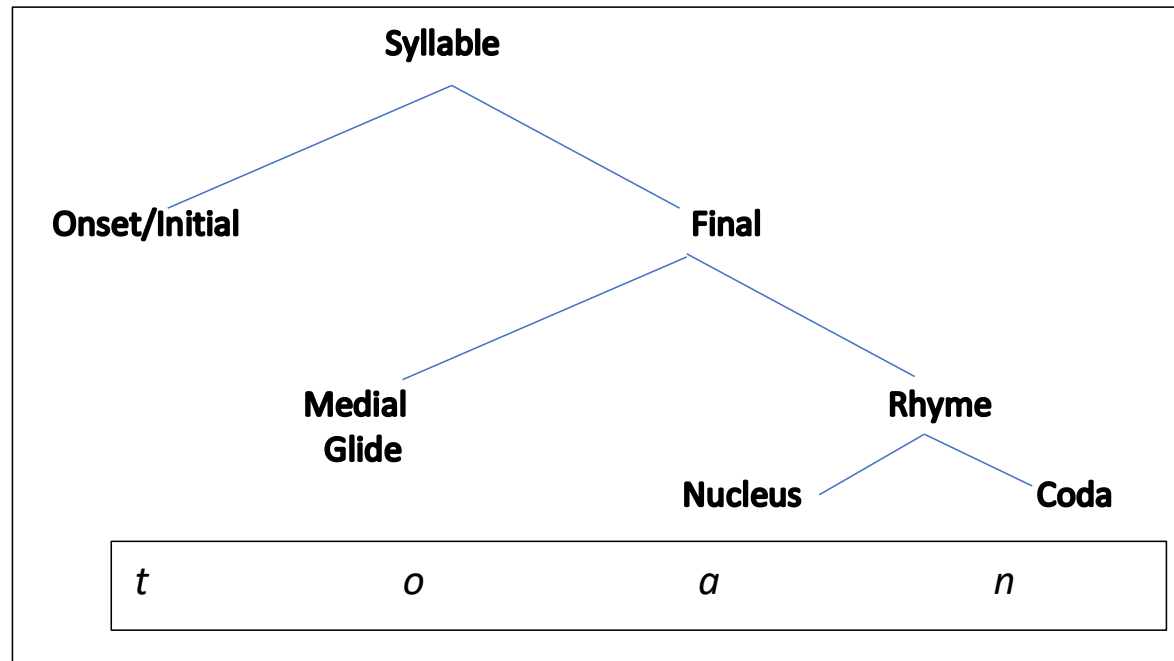
Monophthongs



Diphthongs



# An initial-final modal of Vietnamese syllable structure



# CA Physical aspect Form Phonetics

## English Consonant Chart

CONSONANTS  
(PULMONIC)

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d				k g			ʔ
Nasal	m			n				ŋ			
Trill											
Tap or Flap				r							
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ						h
Lateral fricative											
Approximant				ɹ			j				
Lateral approximant				l							

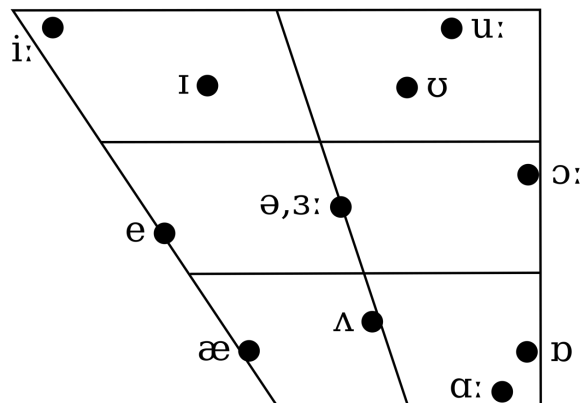
Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

# CA Physical aspect Form

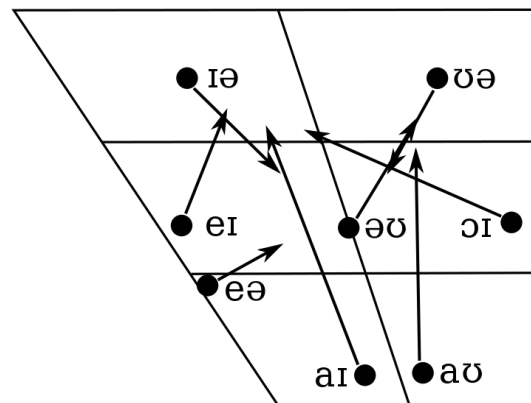
## Phonetics

English vowels

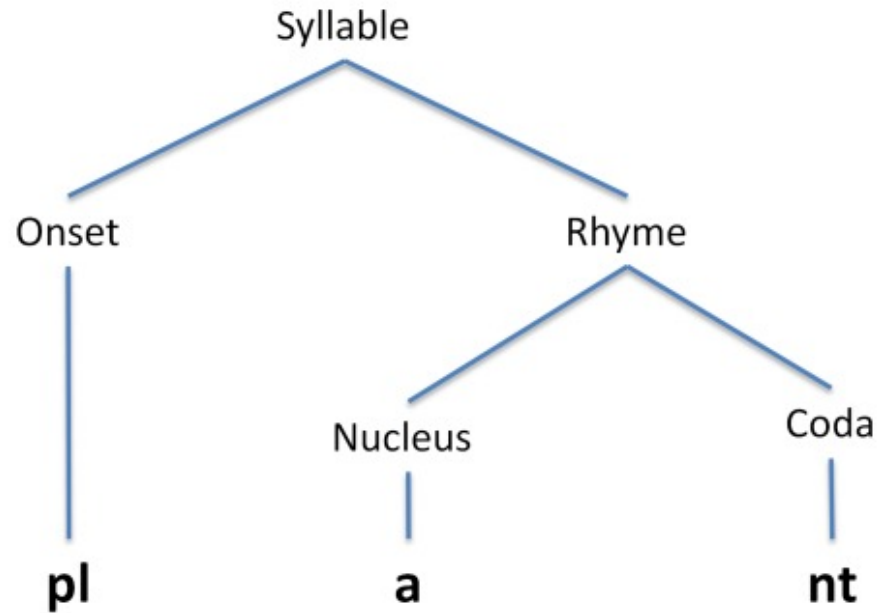
Monophthongs



Diphthongs



# English syllable structure



# Quiz: Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. The sounds of a language represent the physical aspect of that language.
2. A phoneme is a token, and its realization in reality is its type.
3. A phoneme is a psychological entity, and its realization in reality is a physical entity, an allophone.
4. It is normal that the same phoneme may be uttered differently by the same speaker.
5. Vietnamese consonants are identical to English consonants.
6. A sentence formed in the speaker's mind is an example of type, and the utterance of this sentence is an example of token.
7. A Vietnamese syllable can be without the initial/onset, but an English one cannot.
8. Allophonic variation is predictable because it is rule-governed while free variation is not.
9. English has more diphthongs than Vietnamese.
10. English and Vietnamese syllable structures are similar.



# Interference

## Consonant clusters

English consonant clusters include two consonant clusters: *pr, tr, fr, gr, dr, kr, θr, br, sr, st, sp, sm, sk, sn, sf, sl, pl, kl, bl, fl, gl, dw, kw, tw, sw, hw*, and three consonant clusters: *str, skr, spr, spl, skw*

Vietnamese does not have consonant cluster if the combination Cw is not counted: The glide /w/ following any consonant except /f/ : /kw/ *qua*, /tw/ *toa*, /hw/ *hoa*...

Vietnamese learners of English would find it difficult to produce and perceive English consonant clusters. For instance, the initial consonant cluster /skr-/ in *scream* may be produced without the /k/ as *sream* [srim], or with the weak /ə/ being inserted to form a syllable with the initial consonant [sə], and turning the three consonant cluster into a two consonant cluster [kr]. So, *scream* would be pronounced as a two-syllable word [səkrim] instead of [skrim] .

Finally, a consonant cluster such as /kt/ in the word-final position as in *walked* /wɔ:kt/ may be deleted and produced as walk [wɔ:k].

# Interference

Allophonic problems arise when one sound is phonemic in one language but allophonic in the other.

Difficulties arise when one sound (consonants & vowels) is allophonic in one language and phonemic in the other. For instance, the two vowels short /ɪ/ and long /i:/ in English are phonemic, but in Vietnamese they are allophonic.

There is a phonetic rule in Vietnamese, according to which a vowel becomes short if it is followed by /t/, /p/, /n/, /ɲ/, /m/.

Hence, the vowel /i/ in *ti* is longer than that in *tin*. The long [i] and the short [ɪ] are two allophones of a phoneme in Vietnamese.

However, in English the long /i:/ and the short /ɪ/ are two phonemes.

Hence, Vietnamese learners of English would find it difficult to distinguish 'heat' and 'hit'.

# Resyllabification: consonant to vowel linking in English and its problems to Vietnamese learners

- ▶ Syllable-linking is a phenomenon characteristic of non-monosyllabic languages, where the final consonant of a word or morpheme is attached to the initial vowel of the following word or morpheme. For instance, the noun phrase *an egg* would not be pronounced separately as /ən/ /ɛg/, but as /ə.nɛg/ where the first syllable is a vowel [ə] and the second is [nɛg]. A three word expression *book on eggs* would be produced as /bʊ.kɒ.nɛgz/.
- ▶ Because Vietnamese final consonants are unreleased, there is no resyllabification in Vietnamese, so learners normally fail to make this consonant linking in their production and would find it difficult to understand spoken English.

# Interference

- ▶ In Vietnamese the unaspirated /k/ and the aspirated variety / k<sup>h</sup>/ are phonemic (they are two different phonemes): *cô* [ko] ≠ *khô* [k<sup>h</sup>o], but they are allophonic in English (two allophones of a phoneme). An aspiration rule in English states that a voiceless stop consonant becomes aspirated if occurring initially: /k/ is aspirated in *kill*, unaspirated in *skill*.
- ▶ Vietnamese /t/ and the English /t/ are voiceless dental stops. However, in English, the aspirated [t<sup>h</sup>] is an allophonone of /t/ while in Vietnamese the aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/ is phonemic. So, in Vietnamese: *thai* /t<sup>h</sup>ai/ differs from *tai* /tai/, but in English *time* can be pronounced either [taim] or [t<sup>h</sup>aim].
- ▶ Hence, English learners of Vietnamese would find it difficult to learn the distinction between *thai* and *tai* in Vietnamese, and Vietnamese learners are not aware of the aspiration rule in English.

# Interference

## Distributional problems

Consider the labials in Vietnamese and English. While the two languages have the same number of labials, the distribution of these phonemes is not the same. Hence, it is predicted to present troublesome conflicts.

Distribution of labials	Vietnamese	-p	b-	f-	v-
	English	-p-	-b-	-f-	-v-

Given that Vietnamese labials occur initially, except /p/ which appears only in final position, while its English equivalents occur freely in all positions. Vietnamese learners of English will fail to pronounce and recognize the final ending in English: The two words ‘*lab*’ /lab/ and ‘*lap*’ /lap/ may sound the same to the Vietnamese learners, that is [lap]. It is also predicted that Vietnamese learners tend to pronounce ‘lab’ as [lap].

By contrast, English learners of Vietnamese will have difficulty pronouncing words like *ngon*, since the phoneme /ŋ/ occurs only finally in English, but in initial and final positions in Vietnamese.

# Segmentals

## Suprasegmentals

There are two classes of sound units or speech features: segments and suprasegmentals, where the former refer to individual sounds such as vowels, consonants, semi-vowels, and the latter include prosodies, or prosodic features, namely aspects of phonetic structure above the level of individual sounds: tempo, stress, pitch, and juncture.

The preceding discussion is on segments, segmental contrasts in Vietnamese and English. Now we look at suprasegmental contrasts, focusing on pitch. Pitch refers to the relative height of speech sounds as perceived by a listener. In suprasegmental phonology, there are two significant elements of pitch: tone and intonation.

# Suprasegmental contrast

## Vietnamese: a tone language

- Tone refers to the height of pitch and a unit of change of pitch which is associated with the pronunciation of syllables or words and which affects the meaning of the word.

In Vietnamese, a tone language, pitch is a distinctive feature distinguishing lexical meaning. In other words, tonal contrasts in Vietnamese are phonemic.

Ma	‘ghost’
Mà	‘yet, but’
Má	‘mother, cheek’
Mã	‘horse’ (Chinese-Vietnamese)
Mả	‘grave’
Mạ	‘rice seedling’

# Suprasegmental contrast

## English: an intonation language

English is an intonation language in that intonation or pitch movement is used to convey grammatical or attitudinal information, not lexical difference, which is opposed to tone. English intonation is a suprasegmental device used to adjust or affect the meaning and function of an utterance in discourse.

To be specific, it is employed to

- (1) **realize grammatical function**, for example to indicate whether an utterance is a statement or a question. The sentence 'Mary is a student' is a statement if uttered with a falling intonation, but is a question with a rising intonation.
- (2) **provide discourse related information**. For example, the utterance '(No, ) I BOUGHT it' with high pitch on the verb 'bought' serves as a correction of the preceding 'You borrowed the book'.
- (3) **express modality**, indicating speakers's attitude to the matter under discussion or to the listener. For example, a speaker, unhappy with his/her advice being ignored, resulting in an accident, utters 'I TOLD you, but...' with high pitch on the verb.



# Negative transfer

- ▶ Given that suprasegmental contrasts serve at different levels in the two languages: lexical in Vietnamese, but grammatical and discoursal in English it is predicted that English learners of Vietnamese and Vietnamese learners of English face negative transfers.
- ▶ However, it may be the case that Vietnamese learners of English will find it easier to overcome the negative transfer because they can rely on the context to tackle grammatical and discoursal issues.
- ▶ It would take more time for English learners of Vietnamese to master the tone since it is more difficult to disambiguate based on contexts. For instance, the utterance ‘*nó mua nhiều quà*’ can be interpreted by an English learner of Vietnamese as ‘he/she dances a lot’ or ‘he/she bought too many (things)’ or ‘he /she bought many gifts’, ‘he/she bought many fruits’, ‘he/she bought many crows’. A shopping context may leave out the ‘dance’ meaning, but not the rest.

# Activity: English phonology

Consider the following forms:

cloth /klɒθ/

clothing /kloðɪŋ/

north /nɔːθ/

northern /nɔːðərn/

south /saʊθ/

southern /sʌðərn/

bath /bæθ/

bathing /beðɪŋ/

- a. In what environment does /θ/ show up as /ð/?
- b. What type of phonological process accounts for this change?

# Activity: Vietnamese phonology

The table below shows how borrowed French words are pronounced in Vietnamese. What phonological process accounts for this behavior?

Clusters	French	Vietnamese	Gloss
/bʁ/	/brɔde/	/bode/	‘embroider’
/fʁ/	/frẽ/	/fɛŋ/	‘brake’
/tʁ/	/tʁãsfo/	/tãŋfo/	‘ballast resistor’
/gʁ/	/gʁam/	/ɣam/	‘gram’
/kʁ/	/kʁavat/	/kavat/	‘tie’

# Quiz: Decide whether following is true or false.

1. Tone and intonation are two different means used for the same purpose: to adjust, change the meaning of an utterance.
2. Pitch is not a production, speaker-related issue, but a perception, hearer-related issue.
3. In resyllabification, the final vowel of the word is attached to the initial consonant of the following word.
4. Vietnamese learners tend to drop the final consonant of an English word because final consonants in Vietnamese are not always pronounced.
5. Vietnamese learners have the tendency to turn one syllable words with consonant clusters into two syllable words.
6. It is easier for English learners of Vietnamese to overcome suprasegmental contrasts than Vietnamese learners of English.
7. English speakers use intonation as a means to express their emotion.
8. Vietnamese learners of English tend to delete the consonant cluster in words like 'box'.
9. Vietnamese learners of English find it difficult to make a distinction between 'test' and 'text'.
10. The long [i] and the short [I] in Vietnamese display a case of allophonic variation.

# Physical aspect: Form

## Lexicon/Vocabulary

Lexicology: the study of the lexical items or vocabulary items of a language.

Lexicology comprises two sections:

1. Lexical morphology/Morphology is the study of the form and form changes of vocabulary items, and is divided into two branches: Derivational morphology and inflectional morphology.
2. Lexical semantics is the study of the meanings and changes in the meanings of the vocabulary through time and the study of the sense relations of the vocabulary items.

# De-Russify? What the heck?

From the war conducted by Russia in Ukraine, we have a new word: de-Russify.

What does it mean? To get its meaning, we need to examine how it is constructed. The word is composed of three elements:

1. De-: (added to a verb) removing, reversing: de-frost
2. Russia: a country in northern Asia and eastern Europe, official language is Russian
3. -fy: forming verbs denoting making or producing

Just for fun: Work out the meaning of the word below

## antidisestablishmentarianism

This word is composed of six elements.

- (1) anti-
- (2) dis-
- (3) establish
- (4) -ment
- (5) -tarian
- (6) -ism

Can you translate it into Vietnamese?

# Physical aspect: Form

## Morpheme

- ▶ Morphemes: the smallest meaningful units. For instance, the word *scream* consists of one morpheme. We cannot take any part (phoneme) of this word/morpheme without changing or destroying its meaning: Taking away the phoneme /s/ we have *cream*, a different word/morpheme, taking /m/ we have a meaningless element *screa*.
- ▶ Bound morphemes and Free morphemes
  - ❖ A free morpheme can occur as a word by itself: *book, out, no...*
  - ❖ A bound morphemes by contrast cannot appear on its own, but must co-occur with other morphemes and functions in a word as an affix or a combining form.
  - ❖ An affix is a bound morpheme that changes the meaning or function of a word it is added to. The function of an affix can be either inflectional or derivational. Inflectional affix as the plural morpheme {-s} in *grammars* (the plural form of *grammar*). Derivational affix as {-al} in *grammatical* (the adjective form of *grammar*), or {un-} in *ungrammatical* (the derivative antonym of *grammatical*).



# Physical aspect: Form

## Lexicon

- ▶ A combining form is a bound morpheme that can form a new word by combining with another combining form, a word, or sometimes an affix. The combining form *bio-*, for example, can form the word *biology* with the combining form *-(o)logy* or with a word (*informatics*) as in *bioinformatics*.
- ▶ Stem (Base form/Base morpheme) is that part of a word to which an inflectional affix is or can be added. *work* in *worked*, *worker* in *workers*.
- ▶ A stem that consists of only one morpheme can be referred to as a root: stem = root: *king*
- ▶ A stem can consist of a root and an affix: stem = root + affix: *kingly*
- ▶ A stem can consist of two or more roots = root+ root: *king-size*
- ▶ The combination of two base forms/stems to form a new word is called compounding: *White House* (as opposed to *white house*)

Activity: Based on the equivalents in the following in German, English, and Vietnamese, decide which language is synthetic/analytic.

Krankenhaus (G)	Hospital (E)	nhà thương
(krank= sick; Haus= house)		
Blau (G)	Blue ( E)	xanh da trời/nước biển
Grün (G)	Green ( E)	xanh lá cây
Bürste (G)	Clothes brush (E)	bàn chải áo quần
Pinsel (G)	Painting brush (E)	bút lông dùng để vẽ/ bút vẽ
Besen (G)	Sweeping brush ( E)	chổi
Bürste (G)	Comb (E)	lược

Synthetic languages combine (*synthesize*) multiple concepts into each word.  
Analytic languages break up (*analyze*) concepts into separate words.

# German vs English vs Vietnamese

G: *Die Tochter des Bäckers gab dem Neffen des Schneiders einen Brief.*

E: *The daughter of the baker gave the nephew of the tailor a letter.*

V1: *Con gái của người làm bánh đưa **cho** người cháu của người thợ may một lá thư.*

V2: *người cháu của người thợ may đưa **cho** con gái của người làm bánh mì một lá thư.*

German varies the word form to indicate grammatical meaning: gab= geben+ PAST, der= definite article+ nominative case, des= definite article +possessive case , einen= indefinite article+ accusative case, dem= definite article+dative case, Neffen= Neffe+dative case

English varies the form of the verb: gave =give+PAST, but does not vary the form of the noun to mark cases, and the form of the articles remain unchanged.

Vietnamese does not vary the form of the verb; cases are marked by using a lexical word (*cho* as a preposition for dative case) or word order (a preverbal noun phrase is nominative and a postverbal noun phrase is accusative)

# Synthetic vs Analytic Language



- ▶ The more a language varies the word form to indicate a change in its meaning or grammatical function the more synthetic or inflectional it is;
- ▶ The less a language varies the word form to mark a change in its meaning or grammatical function, the more analytic or isolating it is.
- ▶ A word can vary its form by inflection or by derivation. Vietnamese has no inflectional affixes and there are very few derivative affixes. English has inflectional affixes and derivational affixes.

# Morphological contrast in English and Vietnamese

- ▶ We observed obviously that English changes the word form to express lexical and grammatical meanings. For instance, from *book* an suffix can be added to form either a new word with some change in lexical meaning *bookish* or a word with some difference in grammatical function *books*.
- ▶ Affixes like those above are not available in Vietnamese. So how can Vietnamese express concepts such as *bookish* and *books* in English as in ‘*he is very bookish; he has many books*’?
- ▶ I guess we can say something like ‘*anh ấy đam mê sách vở; anh ấy có nhiều sách.*’
- ▶ *bookish* = *đam mê sách vở/ mê sách*
- ▶ *books* = *sách*

# Morphological contrast in English and Vietnamese: Analytic vs Synthetic

- ▶ There are two devices to verbalize/ to express verbally a concept: we can lexicalize it (give it a name) or describe it in a roundabout/circumlocutory manner. In the first case, a synthetic expression is used; in the second case, an analytic expression is used.
- ▶ For example, the colour words in English and German *blue*, *blau*, *green*, *grün* are lexicalized items or synthetic expressions. Vietnamese has words for basic colors, but not many, so to denote the equivalent word for blue, and green, Vietnamese uses analytic expressions: *xanh da trời* / *xanh nước biển*, *xanh lá cây*. Similarly, to denote the water coming from the eyes English and German use synthetic expressions, *tear*, *Träne*, but Vietnamese uses an analytic expression, *nước mắt* (water+eye).

# Word formation in English and Vietnamese

- ▶ Isolating as it is, Vietnamese employs affixation in word formation. For instance, to express the notion ‘negation’ as in English words like *illegal*, *impossible*, Vietnamese uses the prefix *bất* as in *bất hợp tác*, *bất bạo động*.
- ▶ Yet, in contrast to the cases above where the prefix *bất* is a bound morpheme, added to a free morpheme, there are cases where the two morphemes are bound, suggesting that Vietnamese uses combining forms as exemplified in words like *tác giả*, *độc giả*, *giáo sĩ*, *tiền sĩ*. These words are composed of two bound morphemes: these morphemes, *tác*, *độc*, *giả*, *giáo*, *tiền* and *sĩ*, cannot stand on their own.

# Word formation in Vietnamese and English

- ▶ We have seen that while English uses inflectional morphemes to convey grammatical meanings; for instance the use of the suffix –ed for past tense, *walk* => *walked*, Vietnamese does not have inflectional morphology.
- ▶ However, there are similarities between English and Vietnamese when it comes to word formation. The two languages make use of derivational morphology to create new words as evidenced previously.
- ▶ They also employ compounding as a means of word formation. Compare: *basketball*, *bóng rổ*, *blackbird*, *chim bói cá*...
- ▶ Unlike English, there is no formal distinction between a phrase and a compound in Vietnamese. For instance, English places stress on both the adjective and the noun in *white house* as a noun phrase, describing a house, but it places the stress on the adjective in *White House* as a compound referring to the official residence of the US president.



# Word formation in Vietnamese and English

- ▶ Due to inconsistency in orthographical representations and the lack of formal features, it is difficult for English learners of Vietnamese, and even researchers, to tell the difference between a phrase and a compound in Vietnamese: *xe máy*, *xe chở cát*, *xe chạy đường rừng*.
- ▶ One of the criteria distinguishing a phrase and a compound is that the latter is a naming device, so it is non-compositional, while the former provides descriptive information. Take, for example, the adjective *hồng* in *hoa hồng* is not descriptive because it can be used to refer to a white or red rose. In this case, *hoa hồng* is lexicalized, becoming a compound word. Yet, *hồng* in *mặt trời hồng* is descriptive since it provides extra information describing the color of the sun at some point, so *mặt trời hồng* is a phrase, a noun phrase.
- ▶ In addition, a compound differs from a phrase in that elements in a compound cannot be separated or modified. It is ungrammatical to say *hoa còn hồng* to refer to a rose but it is grammatical to say *mặt trời còn hồng*.

# Contrast in English and Vietnamese

## Noun phrases

Both English and Vietnamese allow a single noun to function as a noun phrase in the sentence, as in (1); however, they differ in many aspects.

(1)        *Sinh viên mua sách.*        *Students bought books.*

First, English uses articles (*the, a*) to indicate the (in-)definiteness of the noun phrase, ( a definite noun phrase refers to an entity known to speakers and hearers), Vietnamese does not have articles. Definiteness in Vietnamese is mainly determined by context. Vietnamese learners of English face real difficulties in mastering the use of English articles. For instance, they may refer a person known to the speaker and hearer without using the definite article *the*. Mistakes made by Vietnamese learners like saying ‘Teachers are sad’ instead of ‘The teachers are sad’ are common.

# Contrast in English and Vietnamese

## Noun phrases

- ▶ In order to refer to a number of entities, Vietnamese use classifiers, (*cuốn, bức, con...*), for instance, *ba quyển sách*, not *ba sách*. English does not have classifiers.
- ▶ Therefore, English learners of Vietnamese tend to either overuse classifiers, producing utterances such as '*Mùa hè tôi hay về quê hái trái dừa*', or underuse them, instead of saying '*tôi mua năm con cá*', they say '*tôi mua năm cá*'.
- ▶ English speakers also face difficulties in using appropriate classifiers. Which classifier to use is dependent on the noun it classifies: *quyển sách, bức tranh, ngôi trường, căn phòng...*
- ▶ By contrast, Vietnamese learners of English may be challenged when it comes to English words describing groups of animals: *herd of cattle, flock of geese, school of fish*, because Vietnamese uses only the plural classifier *đàn* or *bầy* for all kinds of animals.

# Contrast in English and Vietnamese noun phrases

Second, English differs from Vietnamese in the order of modifiers and heads. In English the modifier precedes the head, in Vietnamese the modifier follows the head, as in (2).

(2)      quyển sách tiếng Anh cũ màu vàng      an old yellow English book

head    modifier                                  modifier                                  head

To make matter worse, the order of a noun modified by a clause, relative clause, is the same in English and Vietnamese, namely, Noun + Relative clause, causing much more confusion to Vietnamese learners.

(3) Quyển **sách** tôi mua hôm qua có bìa màu vàng.  
           head       modifier

(4) The cover of the **book**    I bought yesterday    is yellow.  
                                head       modifier

Activity: Divide the following words into morphemes. For each morpheme, state whether it is lexical or grammatical.

- A. restating
- B. strongest
- C. actively
- D. precede
- E. disentangled
- F. ran
- G. women

## Quiz 2

Decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. A phoneme is a sound unit and is meaningful by itself.
2. A morpheme consists of one or more phonemes, and is the smallest meaning unit of a language.
3. One of the details for the description of a vowel is the shape of the lip: whether it is rounded or not.
4. A phoneme is realized physically by allophones. That is why the production of a phoneme is always the same.
5. Vietnamese learners of English tend to reduce the consonant clusters in English.
6. Vietnamese is an intonational language while English is a tone language.
7. Vietnamese learners of English normally do not produce the final consonant in an English word because Vietnamese does not release the consonant in final positions.
8. Negative transfer is what happens when some linguistic features of the first language interferes with the learning of the second language.
9. Because aspiration is a phonemic feature in Vietnamese, English learners of Vietnamese will find it difficult to distinguish words like *tha* and *ta*.
10. In the word *unlock*, {un-} is a root and {lock} is an affix.

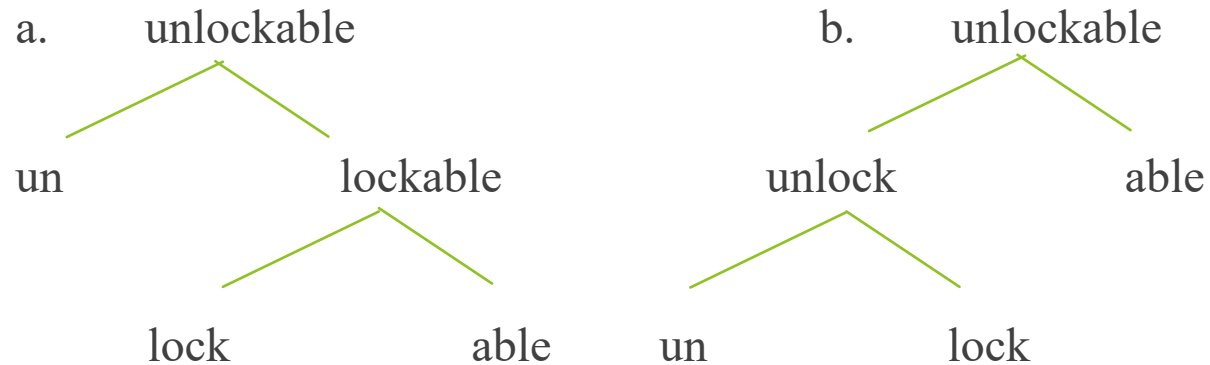
# Quiz (continued)

11. In the word 'builders', {build} is the root or a free morpheme, {-er} is a derivational morpheme, and {-s} is an inflectional morpheme.
12. English is more synthetic than German because English varies the word form more often than German.
13. Vietnamese is more analytic than English because Vietnamese does not change the word form to indicate lexical or grammatical meaning.
14. Vietnamese tones provide extra grammatical meanings to the sentence.
15. The main means of word formation in Vietnamese is compounding.
16. A word in Vietnamese can consist of one syllable, two syllables and three syllables as exemplified in *nhà*, *mô hôi*, *bất thành linh*.
17. Vietnamese uses synthetic expressions more often than analytic expressions.
18. Words in Vietnamese vary their morphology to express changes in lexical and grammatical meanings.
19. The word 'cooked' is composed of the derivational morpheme {-ed}, and the root {cook}.
20. Vietnamese uses word order to convey grammatical meanings.

# Contrastive Linguistics

## The physical aspect: Syntax

- Morphology is the study of word structure. How morphemes are combined to form a word: different structures yield different meanings. The same morphemes can denote different concepts (giving rise to ambiguity) depending on how they are combined. For instance, the ambiguity of the word *unlockable* results from two different structures.



*unlockable* as represented in (a) means ‘it is unable to lock’, as in (b) it means ‘it is able to unlock/open’



# Syntax: Some basics

The study of morphology accounts for the structure-based meaning of a word. The study of syntax accounts for the structure-based meaning of a sentence.

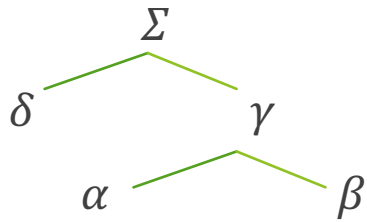
The meaning of a sentence or the propositional content of a sentence is composed from its constituents. The same linguistic material can convey different propositional contents (giving rise to ambiguity) depending on the way the constituents are combined.

For instance, the ambiguity of a sentence *'he took the picture of the giraffe in the forest'* can be understood with the phrase 'in the forest' modifying either 'the giraffe' or 'took the picture'. In the former, the giraffe was in the forest and the photographer was not necessarily in the forest: he/she could be in the helicopter. In the latter, the picture taking event happened in the forest, so the photographer had to be in the forest.

# Syntax: some basics

## Merge

- Syntactic constituents are combined following the principle of binary combination in which constituent  $\alpha$  merges with constituent  $\beta$  to form a new constituent  $\gamma$ .
- For instance, the bottom-up composition of the sentence '*the professor saw the student*' starts with the verb *saw*  $\alpha$  merges with the noun phrase *the student*  $\beta$  forming a verb phrase  $\gamma$ . The verb phrase in turn merges with the noun phrase *the professor*  $\delta$  creating a sentence *the professor saw the student*  $\Sigma$ . The diagram below is illustrative.



# Syntax: some basics

## The lexicon and sentence structure

### 1. The units of syntactic analysis

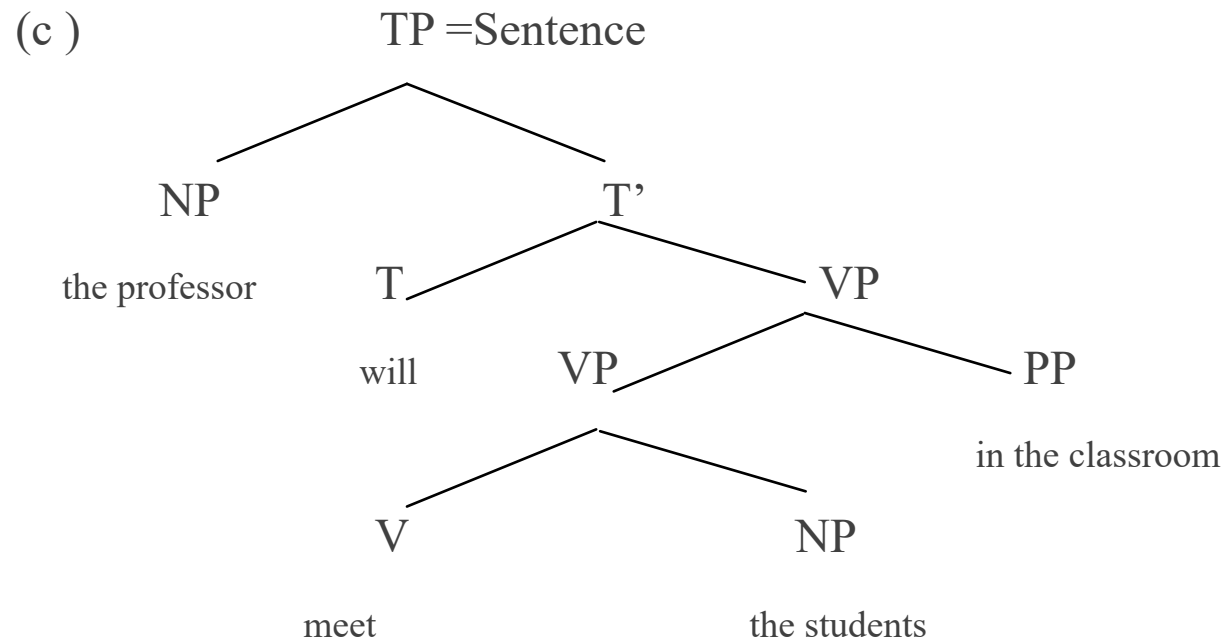
Consider the sentence below.

(a) The professor will meet the students in the classroom.

The sentence consists of nine words, but words are not the immediate constituents of a sentence. The words in a sentence are organized hierarchically into bigger units called phrases. The tree diagram of the sentence in (a) is represented as in (c). The phrase structure rules or the rewrite rules indicate how the words are organized into phrases are in (b). Note that TP stands for Tense Phrase because tense is the functional category at sentence level. T' is constituent that involves a function element, tense, and a lexical constituent, the verb phrase.

(b)	TP	→	NP	T'		VP	→	V	DP
	T'	→	T	VP		PP	→	P	DP
	VP	→	VP	PP		DP	→	Art	N

# Tree diagram



# Words and phrases

- ▶ Words belong to different syntactic categories, such as nouns, verbs... and the syntactic category determines where a word can occur in a sentence.
- ▶ The category of a phrase is determined by the head of that phrase. For instance, a phrase formed by an article and a noun is headed by the article. Since the article determines the definiteness of a noun phrase, the label for this phrase is Determiner Phrase DP. A phrase formed by a combination of a noun phrase and a preposition is headed by the preposition and is given the name Preposition Phrase PP.
- ▶ Similarly a verb and a noun phrase forms a Verb Phrase VP with the verb as the head.

# Contrasts in English and Vietnamese words and phrases

The head of an English noun phrase is the determiner: *the, a*

The head of a Vietnamese noun phrase is the classifier: *cái, quyển, con...*

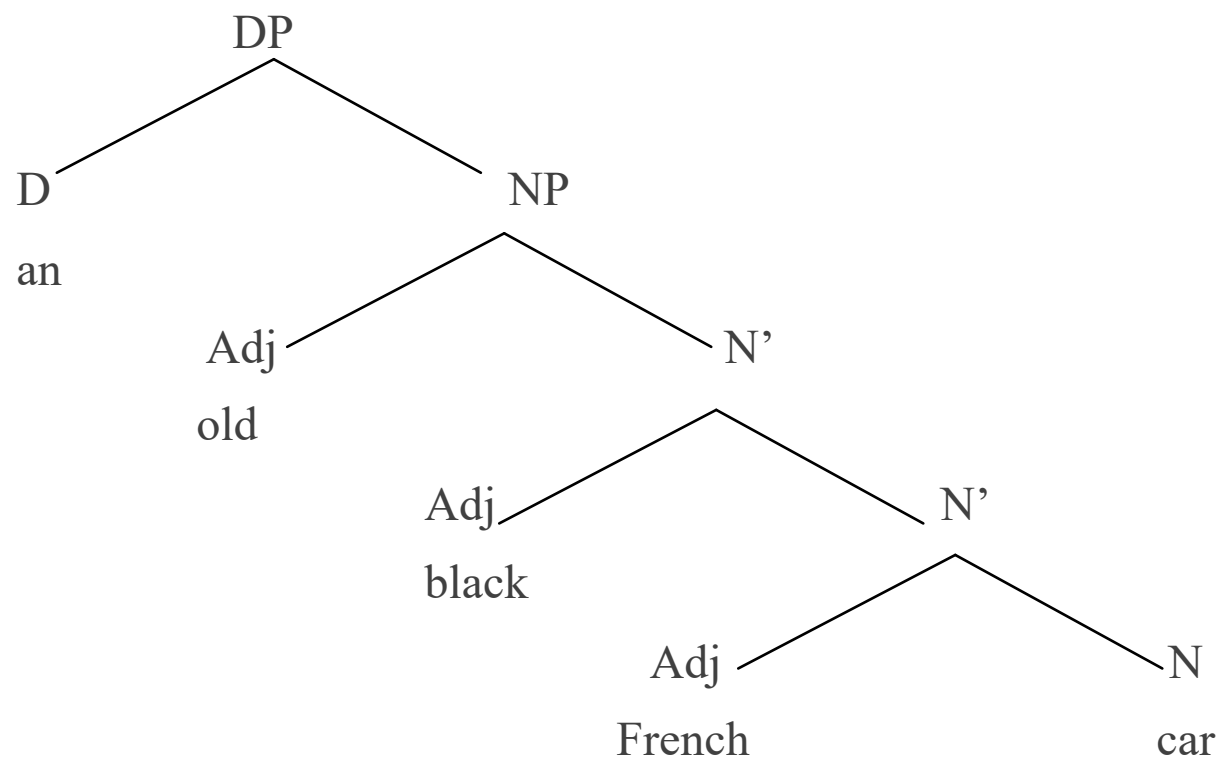
English and Vietnamese noun phrases differ in the word order in that in English modifiers precede the noun, but in Vietnamese modifiers follow the noun. However, the two languages display similarity in the structure of noun phrases when the modifier is a relative clause: a relative clause always follows the noun.

The verb phrase and the preposition phrase in English and Vietnamese are structurally similar.

It is therefore predicted that learners of English or Vietnamese as a second language will face more difficulties in noun phrase structures than in the preposition phrase and verb phrase.

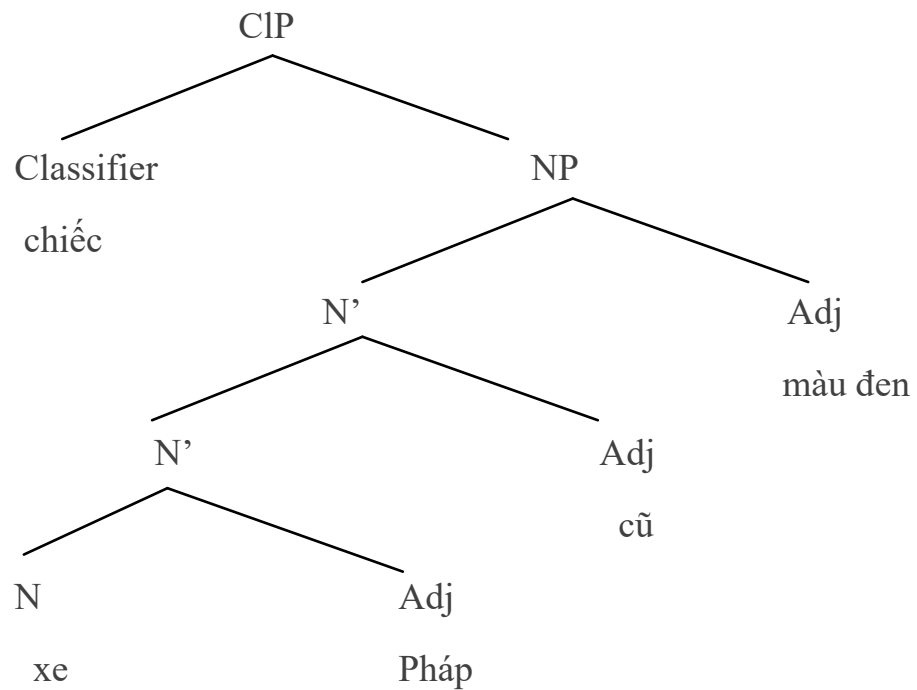
# Determiner Phrase DP

an old black French car



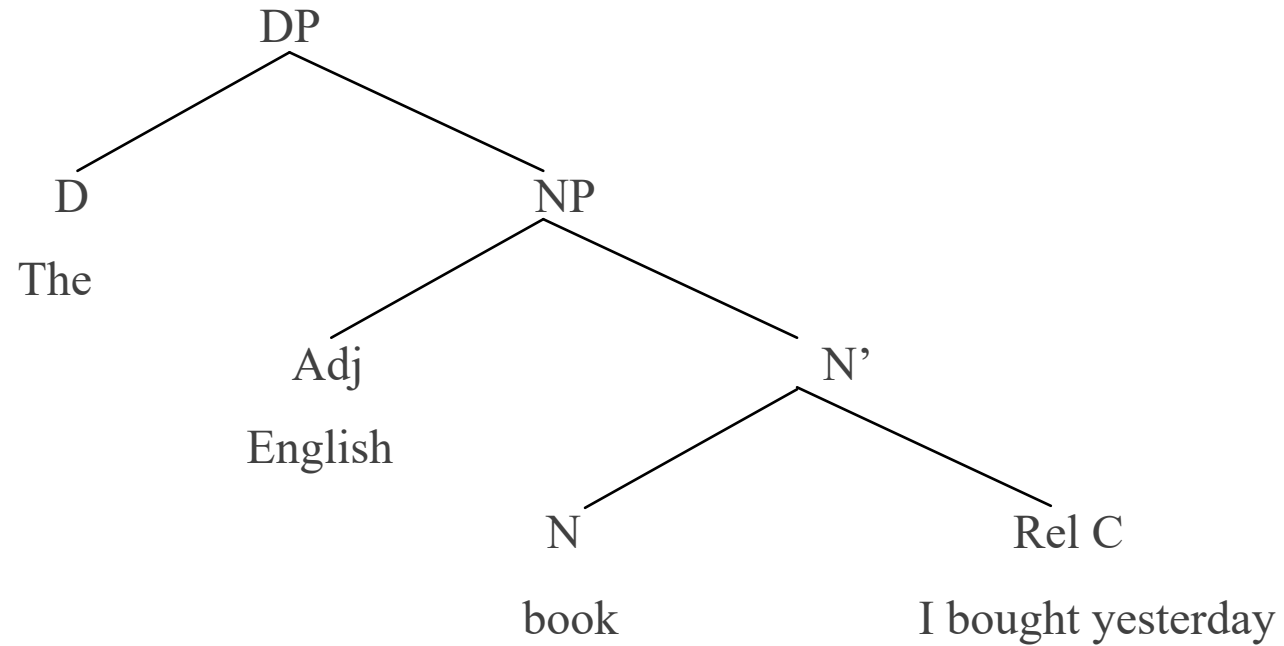
# Classifier Phrase ClP

chiếc xe Pháp cũ màu đen

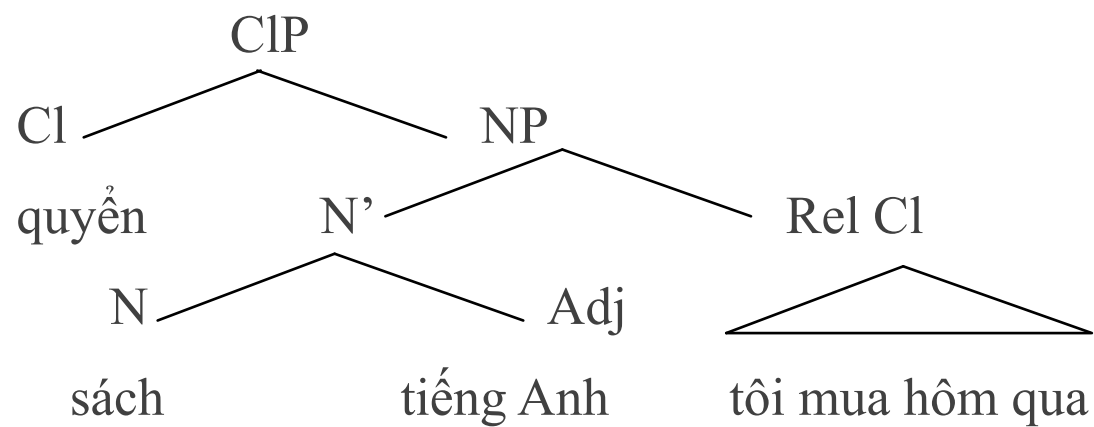




the English book I bought yesterday

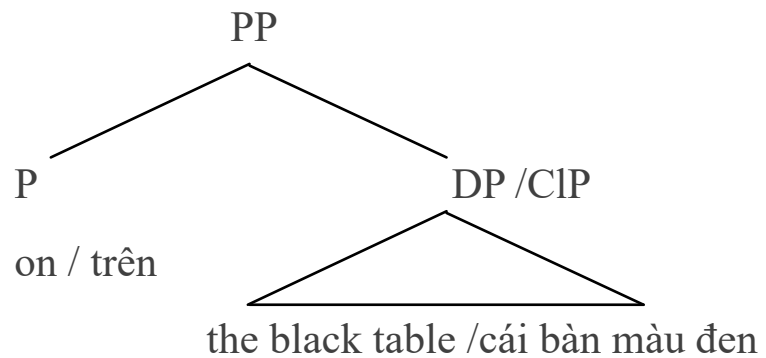


quyền sách tiếng Anh tôi mua hôm qua



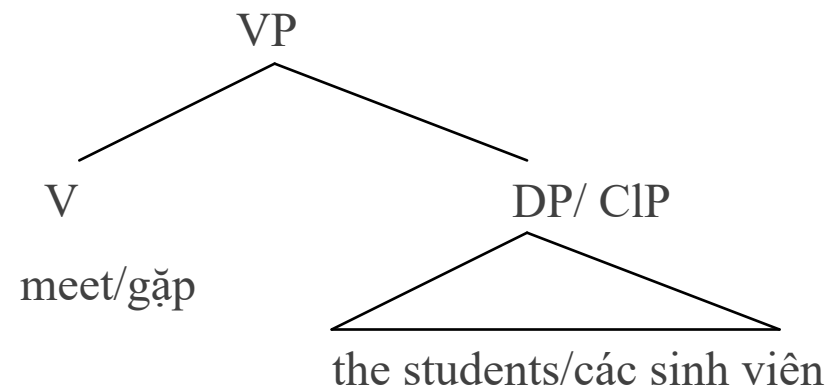
# Preposition Phrase

on the black table / trên cái bàn màu đen



# Verb Phrase

meet the students / gặp các sinh viên



# Argument structure

The propositional content/sentence meaning is constructed from its constituents with the verb as the essential. For instance, in the sentence ‘Mary likes football’, the verb *likes* expresses a *like*-relation between *Mary* and *football*. It is called a two-place predicate; *Mary* and *football* are its arguments.

Then the verb *likes* combines with *football*, forming a one-place predicate, denoting a set, a set of those who like football. This one-place predicate has *Mary* as its argument. Approximately, the meaning of the sentence expresses that Mary is one member of the set.

# Thematic structure: thematic roles

It is obvious that in (1) ‘a man’ is the doer, the agent of the biting event, and ‘a dog’ is the one that suffers from the biting, the patient. In (2), the situation is just the opposite: ‘a man’ is the one that suffers and ‘a dog’ is the doer, the agent of the biting event.

(1) A man bites a dog.

(2) A dog bites a man.

(When a dog bites a man, it is not news. When a man bites a dog, it is news.)

The explanation offered by traditional grammar is that because in (1) ‘a man’ is the subject, while in (2) it is the object, hence the difference. The same goes for ‘a dog’

# Thematic structure: thematic roles

However, observe the following sentences and we can see that the object-subject contrast is not a satisfactory answer.

(3) Mary opened the door with a golden key.

(4) The door opened.

(5) A golden key can open any door.

In (3) 'Mary' as subject is the doer, doing something to the door, the agent of the opening event. The noun phrase 'the door' as subject in (4) and as object in (3) remains the thing affected by the action performed by the agent 'Mary'.

Similarly, the noun phrase 'a golden key' is understood as an instrument, regardless the fact that it is a subject in (5) and an object of a preposition in (3).

# Thematic structure: thematic roles

A verb or a predicate can be compared to a play in which a certain number of actors is required for a certain roles: intransitive verbs like *sleep*, *swim*... require only one character, the agent of the action, and the experiencer of the state.

Transitive verbs like *hit*, *enjoy*... require two characters, the agent/experiencer and the theme or the patient; ditransitive verbs requires three arguments, playing the roles of the giver/agent, the thing given/theme, and the receiver/beneficiary.

SLEEP	experiencer	They slept.	*The table slept.
SWIM	agent	They swam.	* The boat swam.
HIT	agent/theme, patient	The car hit them.	They hit the car.
ENJOY	experiencer, theme	They enjoyed the play.	*The play enjoyed them.
GIVE	agent/theme/beneficiary	They gave her a book.	*They gave her.



# Projection principle

- ❖ The previous discussion examined the extent to which sentence structure is determined by lexical properties. The following principle known in the literature as the Projection principle serves as the basis for sentence formation ( supposedly across languages).
- ❖ **Projection principle: Lexical information is syntactically represented.**
- ❖ The thematic structure of the predicate specifies the number and types of arguments that the predicate takes. The thematic structure associated with the lexical items must be saturated in the syntax.

SLEEP	experiencer	They slept.	*The table slept.
SWIM	agent	They swam.	* The table swam.
HIT	agent/theme, patient	The car hit them. They hit the car.	*They hit.
ENJOY	experiencer, theme	They enjoyed the play.	*The play enjoyed them.
GIVE	agent/theme/beneficiary	They gave her a book.	*They gave her. *They gave her them the book.

# Does the projection principle apply across languages?

- ❖ The answer from the syntactic study within the framework of Generative Grammar is YES.
- ❖ Despite the parallel in word order between English and Vietnamese, SVO, there are many characteristics not shared between the two languages.
- ❖ The differences primarily derive from the fact that English is not totally analytic: some aspects of English are synthetic. For instance, English employs inflectional morphology to convey the contrast between Present and Past tense interpretation (*walk*, *walked*), but uses modal verbs (*will/shall*), not inflectional morphemes for Future tense.
- ❖ Vietnamese depends totally on preverbal particles for tense (*đã*, *sẽ*), and even relies on the context for temporal interpretation.

Activity: Each of following phrases is structurally ambiguous. For each phrase provide tree diagrams to show different structures.

- a. English history teacher
- b. old men and women
- c. party lady killer
- d. Japanese rice cooker

# Ambiguity in Vietnamese

a. tủ gỗ cũ

[tủ gỗ] cũ

tủ [gỗ cũ]

b. súng bắn đạn bi cỡ lớn

súng [đạn bi cỡ lớn]

[súng đạn bi] cỡ lớn

c. chuông chó nhỏ

chuông [chó nhỏ]

[chuông chó] nhỏ

d. nhà và bàn ghế mới

nhà và [bàn ghế mới]

[nhà và bàn ghế] mới

# Basic syntactic contrasts between Vietnamese and English

- ❖ First, consider the noun phrase structure. The lack of articles in Vietnamese and the absence of classifiers in English cause difficulties to learners of both languages. Also problematic is the different orders: Noun Adjective in Vietnamese as opposed to Adjective Noun in English.
- ❖ English changes the forms of the pronouns for nominative and accusative cases. Vietnamese does not.
- ❖ The verb phrase structure is not without problem: English verbs vary their form for tense, Vietnamese verbs do not. English requires subject-verb agreement. Vietnamese does not.

*He met her. He likes her.                      Nó gặp cô ấy hôm qua.*

- ❖ English requires wh-phrases move sentence initially. Vietnamese does not.

*Who did he meet?                      Nó gặp ai?*

- ❖ English requires the inversion of subjects and auxiliary verbs inversion in yes-no questions. Vietnamese does not.

*Did he meet her? Will he meet her? Nó có gặp cô ấy không? Nó gặp cô ấy phải không?*

# Contrastive analysis from the physical aspect of language: Summary

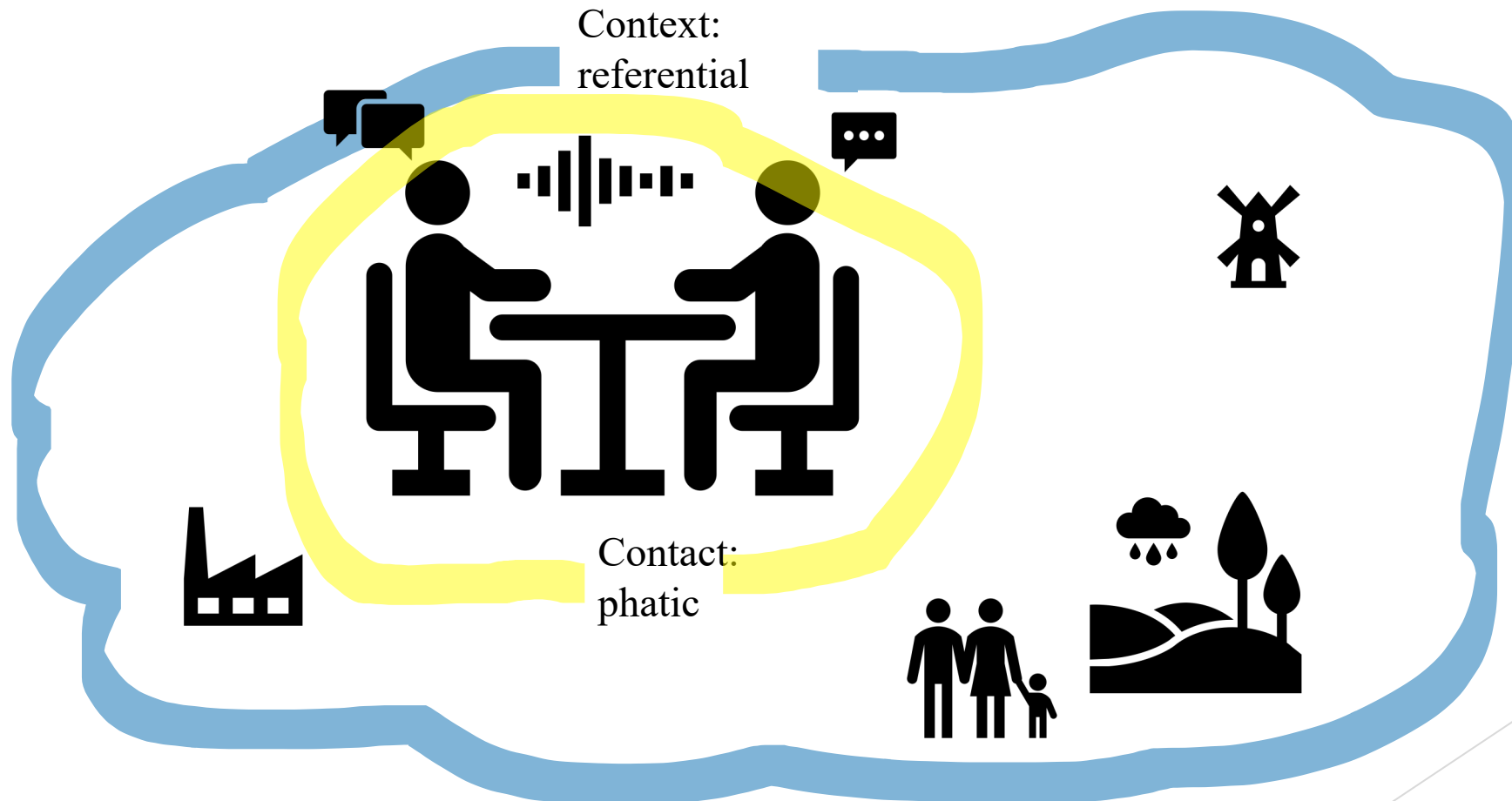
- ▶ The mismatch in the inventories of phonemes (consonants, vowels) between English and Vietnamese requires learners to undergo intensive training for the exotic sounds of the target language.
- ▶ The phonological contrast between the two languages is also problematic to learners. It is obvious that a native speaker of a tone language cannot master an intonational language with ease.
- ▶ The fact that English is partially analytic could make it easier for Vietnamese learners to become proficient in English. They would not face much difficulty in controlling the English morphology.
- ▶ Syntactically, features in English syntax such as subject-verb inversion in yes-no questions, the movement of the wh-phrases to sentence initial position impose a real challenge to Vietnamese learners.

# Quiz: Decide whether the statements below are true or false.

1. Syntax is similar to morphology in that they both are concerned with the structure of linguistic units.
2. The argument structure of a sentence with an intransitive verb differs from that of a sentence with a transitive verb in that the former involves two arguments, but the latter involves one argument.
3. According to the projection principle, the information provided by a verb like 'cry' is syntactically reflected. For instance, this verb requires only one argument, and with the feature [+HUMAN] as the subject of the sentence.
4. Vietnamese is less analytic than English, so Vietnamese does not change the form of the verb for tense.
5. Syntax is the study of the sentence meaning.
6. The meaning of a sentence is composed following syntactic rules.
7. Units for syntactic analysis are words and sentences.
8. The basic syntactic operation is Merge.

# Contrastive linguistics

## The social-psychological aspects





# Pragmatics as the confluence (the meeting point) of speakers, context, and language

Following Rudolf Carnap (1959), we can define pragmatics as the study of the relationships between signs and their users, where signs are taken as languages.

Alternatively, pragmatics can be defined as a subfield of linguistics that is concerned with how speakers obtain the interpretation of a discourse or text based on the interaction of language and context.

Context is broadly defined as including, for example, “... the intentions of the speaker, the knowledge, beliefs, expectations, or interests of the speaker and his audience, other speech acts that have been performed in the same context, the time of utterance, the truth value of the propositions expressed ...” and so on (Stalnaker, 1972)

# Speech act theory

## Performatives and Constatives

The theoretical basis of pragmatics is the speech act theory formulated by the British philosopher John Austin (1911–1960).

According to Austin, many utterances do not communicate information, but are equivalent to actions. When someone utters “*I apologize ...*,” “*I promise ...*,” “*I do* (at a wedding),” or “*I name this ship ...*,” the utterance immediately conveys a new psychological or social reality.

An apology takes place when someone apologizes, and not before. A ship is named only when the act of naming is complete. You become married after saying ‘I do’ in church. In such cases, to say is to perform. Austin calls these utterances performatives, different from statements that convey information (constatives).

# Performatives and Constatives

- ▶ Constatives can be true or false, depending on the reality. For instance, an utterance such as ‘A blue bird is flying’ is taken as true, describing a fact (a reality) if there is a bird and it is blue and is flying. Otherwise, the utterance is false.
- ▶ Performatives by contrast are neither true or false. If A says ‘I promise ...’ B cannot then say ‘That’s not true!’ But performatives can be considered ‘felicitous’ or ‘infelicitous’ according to a set of conditions.
- ▶ Take, for example, the set of felicitous conditions for the performative act of the utterance ‘I do’ includes: the utterer is single, the utterance is made at a marriage ceremony, and the ceremony is conducted by a religious personage...

# Three Kinds of Speech Acts

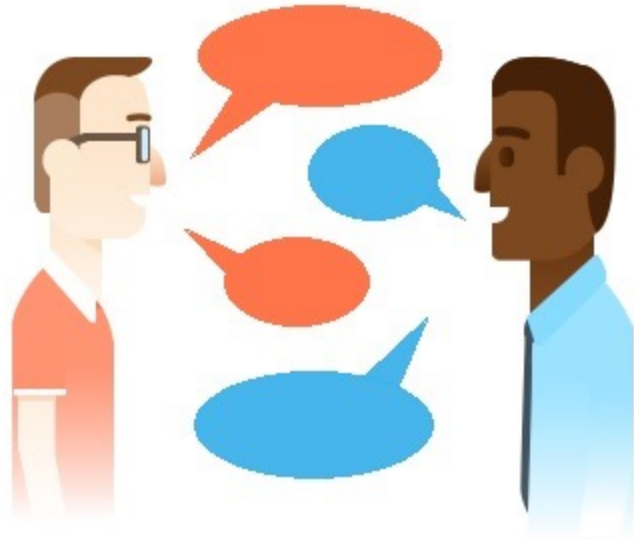
1. Locutionary act: the act of conveying locutionary or propositional meaning, the basic referential meaning of an utterance made by a locutor/speaker.
2. Illocutionary act (the core of the theory of speech act): the act performed as a result of the speaker making an utterance where “saying is equal to doing,” such as **betting, promising, welcoming, and warning**.
3. Perlocutionary act: the particular effect the speaker’s utterance has on the listener, who may feel amused, persuaded, warned, etc., as a consequence of the utterance.

It is like in archery when you aim at a bullseye and release the arrow, but the arrow misses it. The illocutionary force of an utterance and its perlocutionary effect may not coincide. You may not feel being welcomed after the host perform a speech act of welcoming.

# Indirect speech acts

- ▶ Consider the utterance, ‘It’s hot in here’. Besides expressing the propositional meaning of the venue (place) being hot, it can be taken as requesting or advising, depending on the context. Between a host and a visitor, it performs an act of requesting, namely, asking the host to open the windows. Between a contractor and a house owner, it perform the act of advising: you should install an air-conditioning.
- ▶ A speech act performed indirectly as such is specified as an “indirect speech act”. Indirect speech acts are considered to be more polite than direct speech acts.

# Conversation: Structural components



# The Structural Components of Conversation

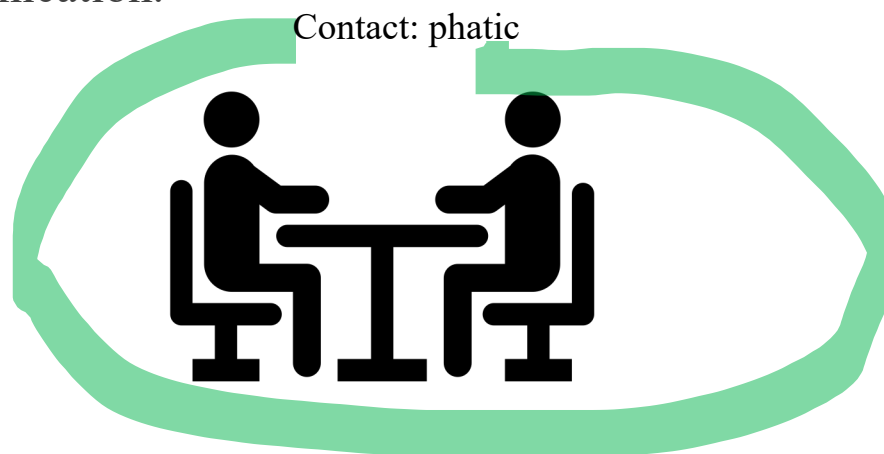
## Opening-Maintaining-Closing

With the advent of writing, we can choose to communicate via written instead of spoken means. There are similarities between the two modes: Making a conversation is like writing a letter in that they both have a beginning, a body, and an end. Examining conversations means examining how they they are opened, maintained, and eventually terminated.

# Openings and closings

Openings and closings are negotiated by ‘ritual’ exchanges, or a set of verbal formulae.

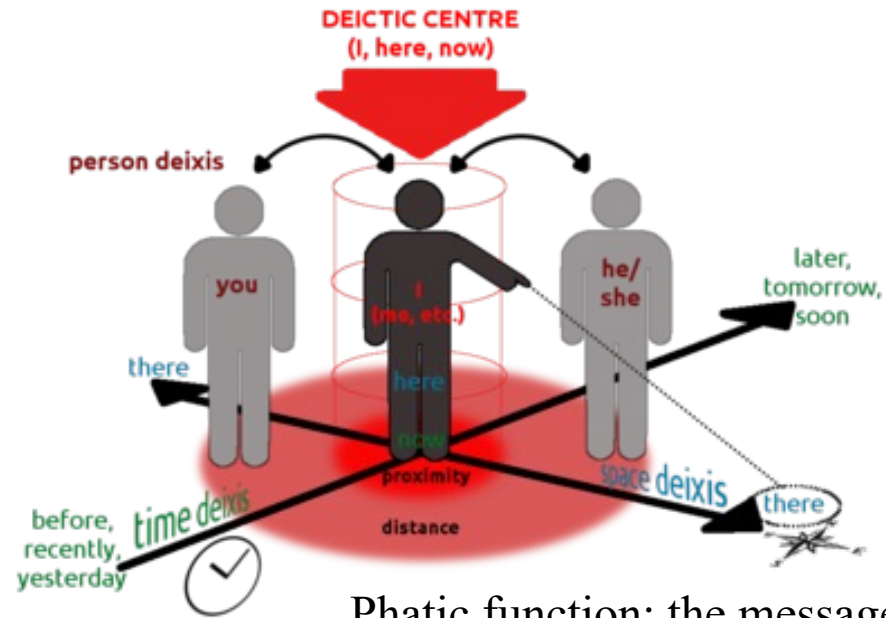
In terms of Jakobson (1960), these formulae orient toward the CONTACT, the physical channel and psychological connection between speakers and hearers so that they can enter and stay in communication. These verbal formulae indicate the PHATIC function/communication.





# Phatic function/communication

## Deixis



**Deixis** is the use of general words and phrases to refer to a specific time, place, or person in context (*tomorrow, there, they...*).

Phatic function: the message aims at the physical channel and psychological connection between speakers and hearers.

# Phatic function/communication

## Openings

- ❖ Openings are negotiated by ‘ritual’ exchanges, or a set of verbal formulae, indexical or deictic by nature, performing phatic functions.
- ❖ Time reference is divisible into the present, the past and the future, and so are phatic expressions with time deixis:

Past: *It was scorching yesterday, wasn't it?*

Present: *What a beautiful moon it is!*

Future: *Do you think it will rain tonight?*

Place-deixis is two-termed, according to whether the place referred to is “here” or “there”; but of course, “there” will in any case be viewed from the perspective of “here”:

*Comfortable in here!*

*What a scene over there!*

# Conversation maintenance

- ▶ The essential of a conversation, at least in Anglo-Saxon culture, if not across cultures, is the unspoken rule that ‘at least one and not more than one interlocutor talks at a time’, because it is natural that if nobody talks, there will be no conversation and, if more than one interlocutor talks at the same time, it will be a quarrel, not a conversation.
- ▶ When a person talks, he/she is said to have the (talking) turn and conversations are organized round the alternation of turns. **A turn is an opportunity or right for each interlocutor to talk in a regular order.** A turn can be one of the following three kinds:
  - (1) opening
  - (2) response
  - (3) closing
- ▶ Turns are organized into moves. **A move is a talk-task over which interlocutors are cooperating on the basis of some tacit agreement on the goal of their talk.** It may consist of just one turn or a pair of turns (adjacency pairs).

# Adjacency pairs

- ▶ In each adjacency pair, the first part is said to have “transition-relevance” to the second: at the end of the utterance by the first speaker the turn automatically goes to the speaker of the second part, which is always a response to the first. It is thanks to the participants’ skill in recognizing first-parts to respond to, and making second-parts to respond with that the conversation keeps going.
- ▶ Familiar examples of adjacency pairs include: **Greeting-Greeting, Question-Answer, Statement-Agreement, Complaint-Apology, Compliment-Denial, Invitation-Acceptance/Refusal, Offer-Denial**, and so on.

For instance, in the adjacency pair below, after A utters the question, the turn goes to B. B is expected to respond to the question. The pair of turns forms a move.

A: Who ate the cake?	{ Question Answer }	Move
B: It wasn't me!		

# Adjacency pairs

## Two-turn units

- (1) A: Hello. *Greeting*  
B: Hi. *Greeting*  
B': What's going on? *Question* → Inappropriate
- (2) (doctor to patient)  
A: How are you? *Question*  
B: I am fine. *Answer* → Inappropriate  
B': I have a sore throat and very high fever. *Answer* → Appropriate
- (3) (strangers at a business meeting)  
A: How are you? *Question*  
B: I'm fine. *Answer* → Appropriate  
B': I have a sore throat and very high fever. *Answer* → Inappropriate

# Adjacency pairs

## Two-turn units

(4) A: That's a nice shirt. *Compliment*

B: Oh, thanks. *Accept*

B': Actually, I don't like it. I got it for Christmas. *Reject*

# Turn→Move→Exchange →Conversation

Let us examine the utterance of a teacher, '*You're right, Sonny, now can you give us some examples?*' This utterance consists of two moves:

- (1) *You're right, Sonny* → the teacher's reaction to something Sonny just said.
- (2) *Can you give us some examples?* → teacher's attempt to get another response from Sonny.

Moves are then organized into exchanges or talk exchanges.

**A (talk) exchange is a relatively complete interaction. It consists of one or more moves plus a closing.** Exchanges are organized into conversations. So we have the following scale of units of discourse.

# Units of discourse

❖ Conversation



❖ Talk exchange (one or more moves plus closing)



❖ Move (one turn or a pair of turns (adjacency pairs))



❖ Turn (talking by an interlocutor)



# Illustration

## Responding strategies to compliments

A widespread strategy in the American culture to respond to a compliment is to demonstrate one's modesty. There are three ways of doing this:

### **Scaled-down agreement**

(1) A: I've been given a scholarship to Oxford. B: That's absolutely fantastic!

A: It's **quite** pleasing.

(2) A: My, you've lost a hell of a lot of weight. B: **Just** an ounce or two.

### **Reassignment to a third party**

(3) A: You're the best pastry-cook in town, Vera. B: It's that new Kenwood mixer.

(4) A: You've got a lovely house. B: My wife found it.

### **Return the compliment:**

(5) A: That was a fantastic party. B: You were the life and soul of it.

(6) A: You look great tonight! B: I think you're really attractive too.

# Conversation Maintaining

- ▶ A conversation is opened, normally with formulaic phatic expressions. The contents of these expressions are culturally based. For instance, English speakers usually start a conversation with weather-related expressions.
- ▶ Then comes the task of maintaining the started conversation.
- ▶ One way in which a conversation is kept moving is by participants' continually making valid contributions. Whether a contribution is taken as valid or not is culturally determined.
- ▶ Additionally, there are certain conventions (of a linguistic type) used to facilitate the continuing of the started discourse. These conventions are called gambits.

# Conversation Maintaining: Gambit

- ▶ A gambit is an opening move in a talk, discussion... It is usually a remark intended to open a conversation.
- ▶ It may also be used to show whether the speaker's contribution to the conversation adds new information, develops the contribution by a previous speaker, expresses an opinion, agreement, etc. so that a discourse already initiated may move forward.
- ▶ For example, gambits which signal that the speaker is going to express an opinion include: "*To my mind...*," "*In my view...*," and "*The way I see it...*".
- ▶ Two familiar gambits are the "pick-up" and the "down-toner."

# Two common gambits: pick-up and downtoner

The pick-up occurs when the hearer repeats part of what has been said to him, as illustrated below.

A: *I wonder whether the students **hand in the paper on the chapter assigned last week**.*

B: *The paper on the chapter assigned last week? I believe they all submitted it.*

This gambit serves a number of functions.

First, it is a time-gaining device, used by someone short of a ready answer. In the above conversation, if A is a teaching assistant, he can be looking up the information he needs while uttering the pick-up.

The pick-up is also specified as a Theme-Rheme device in that the pick-up turns part of the rheme of the previous utterance (the boldfaced part) as the theme (the underlined part) of the current utterance.

# Two common gambits: pick-up and downtoner

The down-toner is the classic case of Robin Lakoff (1973)'s maxim of politeness: *don't impose*.

As the name suggests, its function is to reduce the force of the speech act it happens to accompany, so as to make it less blunt and harsh, and as such more acceptable to the hearer. A down-toner may either precede or follow the central speech act, but normally precedes it. In the following the central speech act is the act of asserting  $X=Y$ .

- a. I think I'm right in saying that  $X = Y$ .
- b. Correct me if I'm mistaken but  $X = Y$ .
- c.  $X = Y$  unless I'm mistaken.
- d.  $X = Y$  or I'm imagining things

# Conversations fail

It is obvious that conversations can fail if they are not managed properly. Basically, they can fail in two ways:

- (1) The participants can realize that they are not achieving their communicative goals, and so they abandon the conversation; or
- (2) One of the participants can cease to contribute, in which case either a monologue results or there is complete abandonment.

# Closings

Sometimes it takes some courage to start a conversation with someone you know by sight, and you have never had a conversation with that person before. Anyway, we have covered the opening tactics. Now comes the issue of closing a conversation. But why do we need a closing strategy? Why not just simply walk away?

Of course, you can choose to disregard the etiquette (of conversation closing) and walk away, but then you will hurt yourself being seen as socially awkward or tactless. Less severe, other interlocutors will be led to believe that you have been upset.

One thing for sure: a conversation terminated without phatic communication will cause difficulty in future communication. You will find yourself struggle to ensure resumption later on.

Phatic communication, as defined above, is used also to terminate conversations amicably.

# Closing strategies

Laver (1975) identifies six strategies employed in closings in English:

(1) Giving the reasons for closing

These, if indexical, may be either self-oriented or other-oriented.

*Well, I'll really have to get on my way.*      self-oriented

*Now, I mustn't keep you any longer.*      other-oriented

Note that the second expression gives rise to the maxim of non-imposition (Lakoff).



# Closing strategies

(2) Assessing the quality of the talk. Presumably you can provide a favorable or a critical assessment:

*It's been nice talking to you.*

*Well, I don't think all this has got us far.*

(3) Expressing concern for the other person's welfare when you will no longer be with him/her.

*Take care now. Mind how you go.*

# Closing strategies

(4) Referring to future meetings. Some languages have fixed forms of farewell that refer to future encounters. English is more literal in this respect, using such forms as:

*See you next week then!*

*Can we fix a date for next time?*

(5) Referring to a mutual acquaintance, where that acquaintance is closer to the hearer than to the speaker: i.e. the expression is other-oriented. Thus one says such things as:

*Give my regards to Mary* (Hearer's wife).

*Say hello to the kids.*

(6) Using terms of direct address increasingly: this has the effect of reassuring one's addressee, lest he should interpret one's desire to close the conversation as a rejection. In a sense, it is compensatory. It also tells him that, although business is necessarily impersonal, one has not lost sight of him on a personal level (James, 1980, pp. 134–135).

# Closings

- ▶ These six devices were identified as being conventionally employed in the English language.
- ▶ A natural question that arises is whether speakers of other cultures use some other devices for closing a conversation or, in other words, to what extent these devices for closing a conversation are universal.
- ▶ Another question that may follow is that, if different devices are customarily employed in different language communities, what cautions sensitive intercultural communicators should take when trying to bring a conversation to a close.
- ▶ These questions may form part of a meaningful topic on contrastive discourse that merits further investigation.

# Quiz: Decide whether the following statements are true or false

1. Phatic communication is not an exchange of information, but a consolidation of socio-psychological links between interlocutors.
2. An example of phatic communication is the utterance, 'How are you?' following the greeting.
3. We should sometimes create new expressions for phatic communication.
4. Deitic expressions are built up from three axes (factors): speaker, time, and space.
5. An essential rule for interlocutors of a conversation is one turn at a time, namely, at any moment there is one speaker only.
6. A conversation is a hierachically structured entity in which the smallest/lowest unit is the **move**.
7. We can open a conversation and close it using non-linguistic means such as waving, gestures...
8. A two turn unit is called an adjacency pair.
9. As a conversational rule, when someone asks you a question you can choose to keep silent.
10. Expressions like 'you, yesterday, there' are deitic expressions.

# Quiz (continued)

10. The maxim of politeness holds that one should not impose on other speakers.
11. Indirect speech acts are as polite as direct speech acts.
12. Saying 'Talk to you later' is one way of closing the conversation.
13. Weather, fashion, and food are among the common topics for conversation opening.
14. In order to make valid contributions to the conversation interlocutors must not change the topic under discussion.
15. The utterance, 'I find you guilty. I sentence you to five years' imprisonment', by a judge at a court will take effect right after it is uttered.
16. 'Can you go to Mary's?' can be understood as an indirect speech act of requesting, depending on context.
17. A conversation can die on its own if interlocutors are not interested in maintaining it.
18. It is polite to wait for your turn in a conversation.
19. The maxim of politeness is not necessary in communication.
20. To ignore someone's request can be considered as impolite.

# Conclusion and outlook

- ▶ The contrastive analysis of the physical aspect of English and Vietnamese, albeit fragmentary, displays relatively explicit differences between the two languages, which could hinder learners' success in the mastery of the target language.
- ▶ It also examines features, deemed to be universal, shared by the two languages, and predicts that these features, acting as positive transfers, would facilitate the learning of the target language.
- ▶ The contrastive analysis of the social-psychological aspect of the two languages does not go as far as it is expected for the simple reason that in-depth research in this aspect requires interdisciplinary endeavors, which is beyond the scope of this lecture.