

COUNTABILITY AND UNITY IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF VIETNAMESE NOUNS

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1. [+COUNT]

The concept [+count] is found in the lexicon of most languages, for all language communities have their own ways of cognitive development and ways of denominating things in their lives. In his book *Notes on philosophy* Lenin stated: "By perception through feeling we get things and by perception through reason we get their names". Names are types of "badges" used to distinguish things, kinds of "signals" used to represent them, and give explanations for them in order to be aware of things as a whole [20,86]. By denomination, according to Cao Xuan Hao, language communities may resort to one out of the three following ways. ① merely accounting for the stuffs of which things are made, for example: *giấy* 'paper', *than* 'coal', *bò* 'cow', *vải* 'cloths', *muối* 'salt'(Vietnamese), *ash*, *cour*, *absinthe*, *georgette* (English), *shu*'book', *jiu* 'drink', *miao* 'cat'(Chinese); ② simply accounting for their existing forms, ex: *hòn* 'bar/ piece', *cái* 'piece', *mét* 'metre', *kí* 'kilogram' (Vietnamese), *ge* 'piece', *jìn* 'kilogram' (Chinese) ③ accounting for both of the above-mentioned criteria, i.e. both stuffs and outward appearance, for example: *giọt* 'drop', *tỉnh* 'province', *tầng* 'storey'(Vietnamese), *book*, *admosishment*, *admonition*, *ale*, *analysis*. If the first way is applied we get mass terms and the meanings of these noun groups specify the properties of the things mentioned, the properties which differentiate them from others. If the second way is used, it results in unit nouns; and things indicated by the second way of denomination are said to be discrete items having their own boundaries which help isolate them from the others. Their semantic contents, however, do not signify any notion of the properties of the things mentioned. If the third way is taken into account we get nouns bearing both the characteristics of unit nouns and mass nouns. And whether these nouns are treated as mass nouns or unit nouns depends on a particular context.

There are few language communities that adopt merely one out of the three above-mentioned cases. On the contrary, they are generally employed integratedly by all language communities. Theoretically, it is possible that in some languages one or two ways are taken into account. But from the viewpoint of language users, it is hard to imagine that pure appearance or pure content is sufficient to name all things in a language. The difference found in languages may derive from different preferences in ways of denomination. The English people, for example, prefer the third case. Alternatively, to Vietnamese and Chinese people - the second and the first are preferred.

"In traditional grammar [+count] discrimination has not been accounted. Yet it is, linguistically. A focus in noun phrase analysis due to its approach to explaining the distribution of a noun in accordance with the use of articles and quantifiers. Count nouns are nouns treated linguistically as divisible entities by combining them with such forms as '*much*' or '*some*' [31,96].

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Thus it is not accidental that noun classification in general linguistics is often based on the criterion [+count]. Jespersen [15], Chomsky [7], Allan [1] all admitted that [+count] in general contrastivity is one of the most typical feature specifications of denominative units in most languages. Chomsky insisted that like the three criteria [+broad], [+back], [+round] which are necessary and sufficient for vowels/consonants discrimination, the four criteria [+common], [+count], [+animate], [+human] do necessitate and suffice to discriminate nouns from other parts of speech [7,79-86]. Cao Xuan Hao was more persistent with the idea: the advent of [+count] contrastivity alone is enough to help distinguish nouns and noun phrases from other parts of speech and other phrases. Otherwise, it is almost impossible to imagine [+count] contrastivity would be dismissed from the grammar of a language .

Contrastivity is a “passage” which, on the one hand, reveals the way of structurization in each language and tells us how people name things in their language and, on the other hand, reveals the means of functional sentence perspective as well as the way in which a noun phrase is formed.

According to Lyons [+count] has a close relationship with [+number], the most common manifestation of which can be seen in singularity / plurality (of a noun). This distinction results from whether we accept things as [+count] or not (those objects may be individual or collective). The fact that a thing would be treated as an object or more than an object, a group of objects or a mass depends on many criteria on a large-scale since the lexical structure of each language is an open system which is both diverse and complicated [21,445-448]. Each community has its own ways of expressing and denominating things and each language has its own distinction between [+count]. For instance, the researchers all agree that in European languages most of names objects are count nouns whereas this is not the case in Vietnamese and Chinese: they are non-count nouns and classifiers must be placed between numerals or numerical quantors . Let’s compare.

Vietnamese:	<i>hai cái <u>nồi</u> mới</i>	instead of	<i>*hai <u>nồi</u> mới</i>
	<i>mỗi cái <u>chén</u></i>	instead of	<i>*mỗi <u>chén</u></i>
	<i>những <u>tấm</u> <u>bảng</u></i>	instead of	<i>*những <u>bảng</u></i>
	<i>ba cái <u>bút</u></i>	instead of	<i>*ba <u>bút</u></i>
Chinese:	<i>san <u>tiáo</u> <u>bì</u> ‘ba cái bút’</i>	instead of	<i>*san <u>bì</u></i>
English:	<i>two pencils, five knives</i>		

Nowadays [+count] is the most dominant tendency in noun classification, because this specification is considered the most suitable feature for the internal structure of many languages and many researchers have elaborately analysed it in the languages they dealt with.

Though without any explicit statements a great number of researchers interested in classifying nouns in terms of [+count], whether at level (1) or level (n), have identified the terms [+count] nouns with unit nouns, in other words, count nouns and unit nouns signify the same content (see [24],[4],[5], [14])¹.

In Vietnamese language, the terms [+count} and {-count} are used more commonly than those of unit and mass. However, in reality the term [+count] usually brings about

¹ This miscomprehension results in listing the nouns as quotted into the list of count nouns by some authors. This brings about a misunderstanding that countable nouns merely consist of names of stuffs.

miscomprehension. ① miscomprehension objects in reality for those in languages. For example, in our lives, no one can deny that *money, star, chicken, book, pen*, are countable. They are, however, uncountable in Vietnamese language¹, for no one says **hai tiền*², **hai gà*, **ba bò*. except for some irregular cases. ② miscomprehension of [+unit] for [+count] because these categories are closely associated but are not identical. Some nouns are [+count] (in any case) but [-unit]. Furthermore, they have grammatical, syntactic and pragmatic features different from those cases regarded as unit nouns. Take the nouns, for instance, *sinh viên* ‘student’, *phóng viên* ‘reporter’, *kí giả* ‘journalist’, *khán giả* ‘audience’, *danh thủ* ‘champion’, *ẩn ngữ* ‘ambiguity’, *chế độ* ‘regime’: they can be combined with numerical quantors³ e.g. they are count nouns and can stand alone to make noun phrases or can occur with prepositions to make adverbial phrases. However, due to the fact that they indicate the meaning of species, but neither that of unit of measurement, nor of discrete items, they do not mean discrete, isolated items with definite size, these words are [-unit] and cannot be combined with peculiar ‘tool’ words of unit nouns (such as quotifiers *all, half*⁴), neither implying [+number] nor [+definite] determinative/indeterminative significance. Furthermore, these nouns can precede unit nouns whereas unit nouns cannot. Ex:

- a. *mỗi [hai] (em) học sinh* **ăn nửa học sinh* *từng chàng [anh] cầu thủ*
 ‘each[two] schoolchildren’ ‘eat half schoolboy’⁵ ‘each player’
- b. **mỗi quyển bộ (sách)* *đọc nửa quyển (sách)* **từng thằng đứa (học trò)*
 ‘each volume series (book)’ ‘read half of the(book)’ ‘each the (school)boy’

Some may wonder if mass terms can be mistakenly used for naming stuffs. The word “mass” reminds us of something shapeless, indiscrete. In fact, this miscomprehension is not only faced by Vietnamese but also by English, the people who coined the term. In his work on mass nouns Burge affirmed: “The distinction between stuffs and *objects* in language and in reality is not identical. It is not always that mass nouns indicate. Such nouns as *fruit, clothing, apparatus, hardware*, do not indicate stuffs at all. They indicate objects. Some words which seem to indicate stuffs are not mass nouns.” Ex *quantity, aggregate*. [3,3].

The use of “unit nouns” and “mass nouns” is relatively popular in modern linguistics

¹ In archaic Vietnamese, money was considered a unit nouns. So we heard in the past : *hai tiền, mấy tiền*.

² For simplicity, the writer adds numerals to numerical quantors (những, các, mấy, mỗi “every”, từng “each”, mọi “all”) under the title ‘quantors’ when a clear distinction is not necessary.

³ *Half* manifests its abilities to combine like that of unit nouns (*two affectionate halves, each half, eat this half and leave the other*). Yet unlike unit nouns *half* does not express the existing forms, it expresses a fraction (one of the two equal parts of thing). Like other quotiers, it differs from other quantitative elements (numerals, whole quantitative terms, quantitative terms, quantors, quantitative predicates, numerical articles). “It does not state number or quantity of thing (or things) expressed by nouns. Instead, it shows a certain fraction of thing (or things) mentioned in the sentence. irrespective of the singularity/ plurality of the noun phrase in question.” [5, 366]. What is more, unlike other unit nouns, *half* can occur with unit nouns (like other quantifiers). Let’s compare: *half of the joint (of meat), half of the (cake), * the piece volume (book), * the copy volume (book)* and so on.

Except for *all, half* the fractional noun phrases or noun phrases indicating percentage, such as *two-third, one-third, ninety eight %* can be quantized.

⁴ In mentioning this case, Cao Xuan Hao gives a very interesting example. He supposes that there were two devils who had caught a schoolboy and discussed whether they ate all or half. It is unlikely to say **eat all schoolboy* or **eat (the upper) half of schoolboy*, and *leave (the lower) half of schoolboy*. One should, in this case, say: *eat all the boy* or *eat half of the boy* or briefly *eat all* or *eat half*. *Boy* is used as unit noun, so it can be quantized whereas *schoolboy* though countable, it is a mass noun. So it cannot be quantified. This is contrary to what had been assumed by some author that in the linguistic conception of Vietnamese people, human-beings are sacred and cannot be quantized.

⁵ As called by Cao Xuan Hao.

(Chomsky [7], Lyons [21], Sharvy [29], Cao Xuan Hao [5], Krifka [16]). In Vietnamese unit nouns all specify entities perceived by Vietnamese people as a means to calculate, weigh, measure, and count. So using the term unit nouns can avoid not only miscomprehension brought about by count nouns but also reminds us of units to weigh, measure, count, can *cân* 'kilogram', *tắc* 'equals to 10 centimeters) or "units of cultural features"¹, ex: *tỉnh* 'province', *từ* 'word', *luận cứ* 'arguments'. Mass nouns, though unfamiliar at first hearing, once put in the unit/mass contrastivity refer to "things" with no boundary, things that are not perceived as isolated entities by their appearance.

2. [+UNIT]

In most of the literature on Vietnamese grammar intension and extension of the concept [+unit] has not been attentively regarded as other essential grammatical concepts. It is, however, implicitly or explicitly mentioned here and there by some authors. Nguyen Tai Can was a pioneer in systemizing a unit nouns with full descriptions. Such words as *con* 'piece', *cái* 'bar', *chiếc* 'sheet', in his opinion are parts of unit nouns (besides *yến* 'ten kilogrammes', *tạ* 'quintal', *tấn* 'ton', *tháng* 'month', *ngày* 'day', *huyện* 'district', *tỉnh* 'province') [24,117-135]. Other researchers such as Hoang Tue [11,251-256], Le Can – Phan Thieu [19, 117-119], Cao Xuan Hao [5,241-254 và 265-304], [6,1-16], Ho Le [12,96-103] all referred to unit nouns and also given many specific and clear explanations on the grammatical specifications of these classes of nouns. In Vietnam Diep Quang Ban was perhaps the first author to mention the concept of unit. The concept of unit, in his opinion, conveys two meanings: ① unit is understood as a certain means to measure homogeneous things, to divide them into equal parts; alternatively, ② unit is interpreted as separate items among the others of the same characteristics which are grouped in accordance with some criterion. He also discriminated their significances into pairs of comparative categories: separate unit and quantity unit; separate unit and collectivity; separate unit and species [10,32-36].

In general, unit is employed to express the three demarcations: ① quantity to measure homogeneous things, to divide them into conventionally equal parts. Within this meaning, unit nouns are used to measure and thus to count things². ② "separate items" among the others of the same characteristics grouped in accordance with a certain criterion. By this significance, unit nouns are not used to measure or weigh but to count. ③ A component of a system or a certain whole (such as *tỉnh* 'province', *huyện* 'district', *trung đội* 'platoon', *đại đội* 'company') – or "units of cultural value"³.

¹ As a noun, its function is nominating. However, the function of nominating, and that of being unit of weighing, measuring, and counting of 'met', 'ta', 'tan' and those of 'con', 'cai', 'chiec', 'quyen' are not identical.

² Almost all words in this group are Sino-Vietnamese.

³ In some quarters, it is claimed that Vietnamese nouns fall into three categories of [number] – singularity, plurality and neutrality [10, 49-50], [25, 232-233]. Neutrality, according to these authors, can stand for both singularity and plurality and is marked by a zero marker. For example, *breed cat*, *bit dogs*, *eat sweets*, *buy books*, *feed cows*, and so on. This is derived from the idea that the significance of the number of mass nouns is "completely determined by context". In fact, the question of neutrality is closely related to defining classifiers, and the thorough treatment of grammatical distinctions between mass nouns and unit nouns. According to traditional wisdom, classifiers are not nouns, therefore, they play a marginal role in noun phrases. Thus if [number] in Vietnamese is merely attributed to nouns, we must accept the equipollent opposition around the core *buffalo* in the following case: *the buffalo/ the buffaloes/ buffaloes* as the opposition of singularity/ plurality/ neutrality. However, once classifiers were treated as nouns (by a great number of authors), the question of neutrality was excluded from discussion. The central element of the opposition remains *the*: *the [buffalo]* and *the [buffalo]es*. i.e. the singularity/plurality opposition. Noun phrase containing classifiers such as *the [buffalo]* and *the [buffalo]es* is a typical type

Therefore [+unit] is the principal feature specification of unit nouns.

Unit is also a distinctive feature of unit nouns and count nouns. The distinction is seen not only in meaning but in form, syntax and the roles played in noun phrase structure.

The writer of this paper has reviewed Cao Xuan Hao's observations on the two main subcategories of nouns (unit and mass) by collecting, listing them and by analysing the way they work in different situations. [26] The results of her survey show that the unit/mass contrastivity stated by Cao Xuan Hao has strictly covered all monosyllable as well as multisyllable [-Sino-Vietnamese] nouns. The data also show that some of the Sino-Vietnamese nouns used for people containing *sinh*, *sỹ*, *viên*, *giả*, *thủ* (in *student*, *soldier*, *pupil*, *audience*,) and that some abstract nouns (such as *regime*, *nationality*, *policy*) though having all the basic feature specifications of mass nouns in term of meaning and grammatical functions (they indicate species, [-unit], are not bound to explicitly indicate singularity/plurality, are not bound to involve definite reference but can stand alone to make noun phrases, combine with unit nouns and prepositions to form adverbial phrases) yet have some formal features identical with those of unit nouns such as going with numerical quantors without contextual restrictions, possibly have a clausal determiner indicating the meaning of completeness, and possibly have a demonstrative determiner, or a plural determiner as unit nouns do. Ex:

Unit nouns		Count nouns	
a. hai người (thợ)	hai đứa (trẻ)	hai học sinh	hai chiến sĩ
'two workers'	'two children'	'two pupils'	'two soldiers'
b. những đứa (trẻ)	từng thằng (gián điệp)	những sinh viên	từng cầu thủ
'the children'	'each spy'	'the students'	'each player'
c. mỗi chiếc (bút)	mỗi cái (máy)	mỗi bản đồ	mỗi cư xá
'every pen'	'every machine'	'every map'	'every residential area'
d. thằng thứ nhất	đứa cuối cùng	thí sinh thứ nhất	chiến sĩ cuối cùng
'the first person'	'the last person'	'the first candidate'	'the last soldier'
e. * gặp đứa	nửa cái	gặp học sinh	* nửa học sinh
'see him/her'	'half of the thing'	'see pupils'	'half pupil'
g. bảy cái này	hai đứa kia	bảy cầu thủ này	hai đội viên kia
'these seven things'	'these two people'	'these seven players'	'those two pioneers'
h. nhều loại khác nhau		nhều quốc tịch khác nhau	
'many different kinds'		'many different nationalities'	
i. người mà anh vừa gặp		thí sinh mà anh vừa gặp	
'the person you have just met'		'the candidate you have just met'	
k. thấy quyển (sách) tuyệt vời ấy		thấy dung mạo tuyệt vời ấy	
'see that wonderful book'		'see that eye catching figure'	

of unit nouns rather than mass nouns as treated by some of the authors. Therefore, buffalo do not take part in a noun phrase containing the singularity/plurality opposition. In other words, they do not involve [number]. I might add that Nguyen Tai Can [25, 284-293] reiterated the question of classifiers as central element of noun phrase in one of his writings. It stands some chance of sharing his idea that in Vietnamese only unit nouns can take part in a noun phrase containing the singularity/plurality opposition if he reverts to the number of nouns.

3. [+UNIT] IN COMPARISON TO [+ COUNT]:

① [+ count] is derived from [+unit] : quantity of unit used to weigh and measure things and “discrete” units of items (defined by a certain criterion) are means to count things. So unit nouns are count nouns (they may be combined directly with numerical quantors. Hence, most unit nouns are count nouns, not vice versa. The clearest evidence is that most of Sino -Vietnamese nouns used for human-beings or for abstract concepts (such as *reporter, poet, journalist, champion, pupil, noun, connotation*) can be used with quantors e.g they are countable. These words, by contrast, [-unit], neither express the meaning ‘quantity’ to measure, to divide things nor the function ‘being used to measure and thus to count things’ (like unit nouns *yến, tạ, tấn, mét*). They are not discrete items among those subject to a certain criterion, having their basic function as means of counting (such as unit nouns *cái, chiếc, quyển, bầy, tỉnh, câu, từ, luận chứng*). These nouns, [+count], but [-unit], signify the ‘permanent’ properties of things. So, contrary to unit nouns, such count nouns can’t be quantized, that is, they can’t be combined with quotifiers. Ex:

a. <i>hai kí (đường)</i>	<i>mỗi tỉnh</i>	<i>hai giáo sinh</i>	* <i>nửa giáo sinh</i>
‘two kilos (of sugar)’	‘each province’	‘two student-teachers’	‘half of the number of student-teachers’
b. <i>nửa quyển</i>	<i>cả bộ</i>	<i>những xạ thủ</i>	* <i>cả xạ thủ</i>
‘half of the volume’	‘the whole volume’	‘the shooters’	‘all shooter’
c. <i>hai lớp</i>	<i>nửa lớp</i>	<i>mỗi quốc tịch</i>	* <i>nửa quốc tịch</i>
‘two classed’	‘half of the class’	‘every nationality’	‘half nationality’
d. <i>nửa vấn đề</i>	<i>nửa bài</i>	<i>từng chế độ</i>	* <i>nửa chế độ</i>
‘half of the problem’	‘half of the lesson’	‘each regime’	‘half regime’
e. <i>hai doanh trại</i>	<i>nửa doanh trại</i>	<i>mỗi chính sách?</i>	<i>thực thi nửa chính sách</i>
‘two military camps’	‘half of the military camps’	‘each policy’	‘implement half policy’
g. <i>lấy hai phần ba tờ (báo) để gói</i>	?? <i>Lấy hai phần ba bản đồ dùng làm giấy gói.</i>		
‘use two thirds of the paper for wrapping’	(use two thirds map for wrapping)		

② In Vietnamese [+unit] is the only criterion used to classify nouns in subcategories with authentic grammatical contrastivity (contrast in their grammatical meaning, combining capacity and syntactic functions). That is because, as mentioned, in Vietnamese there are plenty of nouns, [+count], but they are not bound to explicitly indicate singularity/plurality¹ and they are not bound to state [definite] reference as unit nouns. And unlike unit nouns, countable mass nouns can stand alone as subjects, complements or can form abverbial phrases through use with prepositions (see the given examples).

③ In fact, given specific linguistic events, there is often confusion between what is counted in reality and that in language. The reason for this can be observed in the lack

¹ The fact that there is an exception for “numerals + [-count] mass nouns”, but there is none for “quantor + [-count] mass nouns” is taken as linguistic evidence for the lack of clarity of the [+count] criterion in comparison to the [+unit] criterion.

of strictness of the criterion ¹.

④ The [\pm count] criterion helps us with the classification of mass nouns, because only mass nouns are capable of the opposition whereas unit nouns are not ². So [\pm count] is a criterion to classify nouns at the second level in mass nouns classification.

⑤ Besides, the coverage of [\pm unit] over [\pm count] is shown at the contrastivity in their abilities to combine with determiners. Whether a noun can go with all types of determiners depends on [\pm count] but not [\pm unit]. It is obvious that unit nouns and count nouns can be combined with any determiners while non-count nouns can be used with deixis, classifying and possessive determiners only.

4. TWO PRINCIPAL SUBCATEGORIES OF VIETNAMESE NOUNS: UNIT NOUNS AND MASS NOUNS

4.1. Unit nouns: According to Nguyen Tai Can [24, 117-135], and Diep Quang Ban [10, 93-94] unit nouns include nouns indicating “natural” units such as *cái, con, chiếc, quyển* and nouns denoting conventional units such as *mét, yến, giờ, tỉnh*. Ho Le even differentiated nouns of social features from measure phrases such as *làng, xã, tỉnh* and *mét, tạ, yến* [12, 99] Cao Xuan Hao emphasised the specification “indicate isolated existing form” of unit nouns [5, 333]. In general, most of the linguists of Vietnamese language, Hoang Tue [11] Nguyen Kim Than [22] Nguyen Tai Can [24] Cao Xuan Hao [4], [5], Ho Le [12], [13], Huynh Ba Lan [14] all consider unit nouns a class of nouns indicating conventional units used to measure such as *yến, tạ, kí, mét, phút* or “separate items” which are used to count *con, cái, tấm, đũa* or nouns denoting things as parts of a whole subject to a certain way of division *tỉnh* ‘province’, *huyện* ‘district’, *vấn đề* ‘*question’, *luận điểm* ‘theoretical point’, *câu* ‘sentence’, *bài* ‘lesson’, *giống* ‘race’, *loài* ‘species’.

These linguists assume that those semantics that feature specifications of unit nouns are expressed in the following grammatically formal specifications: ① Do not stand alone as subjects or complements (except for some cases). If they do, they occur with other words (quantifiers, and/or mass nouns and/or deictic determiners. ② Can be combined with numerical quantors. ③ Can be combined with demonstrative terms. ④ Can be used in combination with any kind of determiners [5,333-339].

In Vietnamese language use, there are some nouns which denote content of entity (mass nouns), but are count nouns, that is, they can combine with quantors without context restrictions. However, they are [-unit] and can't be quantized eg can't be divided. So we should adjust what was said in (2): unit nouns are nouns that can be quantized by quotifiers.

Form the above-mentioned, we can come to a general definition of unit nouns (in Vietnamese). Unit nouns are nouns denoting forms of existence of entities or denoting

¹ The oppositions in sub-groups of unit nouns – sub-groups indicating discrete objects, sub-groups indicating collectivity, sub-groups indicating time, sub-groups indicating administrative organizations, and so on (as divided by some of the authors [6,117-135], [4, 29-30]), are mainly those of meanings.

² The characteristics of unit noun “can't stand alone as subjects or complements” “can combine with demonstratives and with any determiners” are the consequences of the characteristics “treated linguistically as separate items”, “can be quantized”. So the definition was simplified.

things treated linguistically as separate entities which can be quantized¹.

4.2 Mass nouns: Mass nouns are groups of nouns denoting stuffs or species. Their significatum is a group of properties which help differ them from those signified by other mass nouns (see [7] [5] [17] etc). The notion that the meaning of mass nouns is a group of properties whereas the meaning of classifiers represents individual items is shared by almost all researchers. **Richie** thinks that mass nouns indicate stuffs, whereas classifiers denote objects [28,1-16]. **Sharvy** says that by mass nouns we mean a certain “mass” of things [29, 345 – 365] and so do **Mc Cawley** [17] **Conklin** [8] **Krifka** [16]. For instance, on comparing mass nouns in Chinese with those in English, **Krifka** wrote: “In English and in Chinese mass nouns are the same that is they can be used. ① as names of species ② as indefinite predicates ③ in measurement construction. Besides there are the others ④ classifiers, and with some other mass nouns such as ‘cattle’ we have ⑤ classifiers for objects. For example, (a) *Wines contain alcohol.* (b) *Wine was spilled over the table.* (c) *Mary bought three bottles of wines.* (d) *John knows three sorts of wine;* (e) *The farmer owns thirty heads of cattle.* [16,406].

In Vietnamese such phenomenon can also be observed. Nouns denoting species (animals, plants, objects) like *trâu* ‘buffalo’, *bò* ‘cow’, *gà* ‘chicken’, *thuồng luồng* ‘seesnake’, *thạch sùng* ‘lizard’, *bưởi* ‘grapefruit’, *hoa* ‘flower’, *sách* ‘book’, *báo* ‘newspaper’ are treated as names of stuffs, ex:

a. <i>mỗi con trâu</i> ‘every buffalo’	instead of	* <i>mỗi trâu</i>
b. <i>mỗi miếng [kí] thịt</i> ‘every piece of the meat’	instead of	* <i>mỗi thịt</i>
c. <i>những bông hoa</i> ‘the flowers’	instead of	* <i>những hoa</i>
d. <i>những hòn than</i> ‘the bars of coal’	instead of	* <i>những than</i>
e. <i>từng tờ báo</i> ‘every piece of newspaper’	instead of	* <i>từng báo</i>
g. <i>những hòn đá</i> ‘the bars of stone’	instead of	* <i>những đá</i>
h. <i>hai con bò</i> ‘two cows’	instead of	* <i>hai bò</i>
i. <i>hai lít [chai] sữa</i> ‘two litres [bottles] of milk’	instead of	* <i>hai sữa</i>
k. <i>ba cây bưởi</i> ‘three grapefruit trees’	instead of	* <i>ba bưởi</i>
l. <i>ba kí đường</i> ‘three kilos of sugar’	instead of	* <i>ba đường</i>
m. <i>năm cuốn sách</i> ‘five books’	instead of	* <i>năm sách</i>
n. <i>Chim bay.</i> <i>mua trâu</i>	<i>Thuốc rất nhiều.</i>	<i>bán mắm</i>
Birds fly. buy buffalo	Medicine is plentiful.	sell fish sause
o. <i>hai tờ báo Tiền phong này</i>	<i>hai kí đường phèn này</i>	
these two ‘Pioner’ newspapers	these two kilos of refined sugar	
p. <i>loại sách giáo khoa này</i>	<i>loại thịt bò lai này</i>	
this kind of textbook	this kind of the beef	

Names of animals or plants such as *đại bàng* ‘eagle’, *bò* ‘cow’, *gà* ‘chicken’, *bưởi*

¹In old times Aristotle insisted that the real intention of mass terms was of category i.e. a property or group of properties. Since the works on logical grammar such as those of Montagne, linguists all assumed that the semantic content of mass nouns was predicate.[5, 324]. In logictics, predicate is interpreted as a complex property, comprising all the things that are mentioned of something. For example, the words *mother*, *prosecutor*, *chairman*, in the following sentences do not indicate species, but are predicate covering a broader meaning. (*She was the mother of two children;* *From this time you are the chairman of a large province;* *They are young prosecutors.* These words express personal social status.

'grapefruit' are nouns of species while nouns denoting family relations such as *cha* 'father', *mẹ* 'mother', *con* 'son/ daughter', *anh* 'brother/ sister' are of kinship terms. What makes *cow*, *chicken*, *lion*, *tiger*, *leopard* different from *mother*, *father*, *brother*, *sister* is the contrastivity of the two meanings - species and family relations. Although the words *cha*, *mẹ*, *anh*, *chị*, *em*, can be classified in logitics, this type of property cannot be classified in Vietnamese language. Kinship terms, once combined with classifiers, are rhetorically marked. For example:

- a. ?? *loại vợ này* ?? *có nhiều loại mẹ* *loại trâu này* *có nhiều thứ sách*
 this sort of wife plenty sort of mother this kind of buffalo there are plenty kinds of book
- b. ?? *lắm thứ cha* ? *kiểu bà (ngoại) này* *lắm kiểu áo khác nhau* *thứ bò này*
 plenty sort of father this type of grandmother plenty kinds of shirt this kind of cow
- c. ?? *xếp loại cha* ?? *xếp loại con* *xếp loại học sinh* *loại thợ lành nghề*

It seems that this was taken from a semantic point of view. As we know, in the semantic structure of a word there are two types of meaning - **presupposed** and **informative**. Take the words *father* and *mother* for examples. The meanings of species (mother as female and father as male) are those that belong to presupposition and the meanings of kinship - **informative structure, the ones which enable words to exert their functioning activities** [5, 470 -471].This characteristics is marked by the formal signals as follows.

- kinship terms can hardly be combined with unit nouns denoting species.
- the negative nuance of meaning becomes stronger once combined with deixis 'nay', 'kia', 'ay'.
- can be used as personal pronouns of first and second persons.
- can be treated as groups having a general meaning or groups formed by individuals once used in converseness such as *mẹ con* 'the mother and her son/ daughter', *hai mẹ con* 'the mother and her child'; *ba bà cháu* 'the grandmother and her two grandchildren'; *tình mẹ con* 'motherliness', *tình anh em* 'brotherlines' and so on. In Vietnamese in addition to the two main property should be mentioned of mass nouns denoting species or materials, another type of property of mass nouns - denoting family relationship.

And so we have to come to a conclusion:

In Vietnamese in addition to mass nouns denoting properties of genera or species such as *bò*, *gà*, *lính thợ*, *học sinh*, or properties of stuffs such as *đường*, *nước*, *sữa*, *cát*, there are mass nouns denoting relative properties such as *mẹ*, *con ông*, *bà*, *thầy*, *trò*, *chủ*, *tổ*. Therefore, in addition to the properties of genera and of stuffs expressed by mass nouns, it should be mentioned another type of properties - relative properties¹.

We would like to conclude that mass terms in Vietnamese are nouns indicating properties of genera and of stuffs or relationships between entities. These entities are treated as complete wholes which are indivisible. Hence, mass terms cannot be quantized.

4.3. The distinctive features between unit nouns and mass nouns

¹ Besides, some items in this group (*học sinh*, *sinh viên*, *tổ quốc*, *anh hùng*, *chiến sĩ*, *doanh trại*, *chiến xa*, *anh hùng*) are seen as words by most Vietnamese linguists, and this entails the necessity to use the two separate criteria [unit] and [count] in classifying Vietnamese nouns.

From the above-mentioned, what I am claiming is that in the classification of Vietnamese nouns, [+count] criterion may cause difficulties when we deal with Sino-Vietnamese nouns which make up a large number in the vocabulary stock of Vietnamese¹. To avoid such difficulties [+unit] criterion should advisably be used instead. By using the latter we may achieve more consistent and more general results since this criterion can cover over [+count] criterion.² Besides, owing to its type and its specific properties of Vietnamese language, [+count] is treated as a secondary criterion in comparison to [+unit].

The differences between mass nouns and unit nouns can be generalized as follows:

Unit nouns	Mass nouns
1. Express entities isolated in form, having definite size, [+unit], and being able to be quantized.	1. Express entities isolated in content, do not imply [+ unit], and not being able to be quantized. For example, <i>bò</i> “cow”, <i>sách</i>

¹ [+Count] can be understood in two ways: Mass terms are collective nouns combining many different objects and the terms are themselves objects having their definite intensions which differ them from the objects belonging to other groups. All nouns considered as collective terms all contain different components under the same title can be quantified and quantized.

- a. * *ăn nửa gà* ‘eat half chicken’ * *ăn nửa (trên) sinh viên* ‘eat (upper)half student’
 * *nuôi hai gà* ‘raise two chickens’ * *mua hai sách* ‘buy two books’
- b. *Lấy phân nửa sinh viên ngành văn và hai phần ba sinh viên ngành toán đi xóa mù.* ‘nominate half of the students of literature and two third of students of maths for the illiteracy alleviation campaign’.
- c. *Sáng nay, nó bán được mười con: hai ngỗng, ba vịt, năm gà.* ‘This morning she sold ten poultries: two geese, three ducks, five hens’.

In example (a), *gà* ‘chicken’, *sinh viên* ‘student’, *sách* ‘book’ can’t be quantified or quantized for they represent indivisible objects. Yet in (b) and (c) they can be quantified for the words indicate components of a group. The informants having compared the following examples based on “the structire quotifiers + countable mass nouns “ using with or without unit nouns

- a. *lấy một nửa giáo sinh đi xóa mù* ‘nominate half students for the illiteracy alleviation campaign’.
 - a’. *lấy một nửa số giáo sinh đi xóa mù* ‘nominate half of the students for the illiteracy alleviation campaign’
 - b. *hai phần ba học sinh nghèo được thưởng* ‘two -third students were awarded.’
 - b’. *hai phần ba số học sinh nghèo được thưởng* ‘two –third of the poor students were awarded
 - c. *một nửa học sinh bị ốm* ‘half pupils are sick’
 - c’. *một nửa số học sinh bị ốm* ‘half of the pupils are sick’
 - d. *vắng mặt một nửa bộ trưởng vì đi công tác nước ngoài* ‘half ministers were absent because of business abroad’.
 - d’. *vắng mặt một nửa số bộ trưởng vì đi công tác nước ngoài* ‘half of the ministers were absent because of business abroad’
- all admitted that the second ways (using unit nouns) a’,b’, c’, d’ are more common.

Though the writer had elaborately reviewed, she has not come up with cases in which noun phrases containing quotifiers cả “all” nửa “half” are used in the absence of units nouns. However, the structure “ percentage noun phrases + mass nouns” is usually accounted. 60% *cán bộ ở khối hành chính sự nghiệp không đáp ứng được công việc* (Source: newspaper) ‘60 percents of officials in the administrative section cannot cope with their work’; *Trong đó có 40% học sinh học thêm do trường tổ chức* ‘(Source: newspaper) 40% percents of the students have supplementary courses organized by the schools’. Even in this structure unit nouns are most often used : *Trên 50% số sinh viên đại học Tây Nguyên tham gia* (Source: newspaper) ‘More than 50 percents of the students of university of Tay Nguyen participated’.

As many other authors usually do, the writer adopts the approach to study the root meaning e.g. the meaning of group of properties of entities as indivisible objects as the basis of her survey. And from the root meaning she considers their derivative meanings. So where a noun is seen a part of a group it bears the derivative meaning, not the root meaning. This is an exception for all mass nouns: the exception in term of [+count] and [+divide]. Besides the notion “ collective nouns” is used for unit nouns to indicate groups such as flock, herb. clan... in this paper and this use is rather common. [see [10] [5] for reference].

² In this paper Vietnamese spellings will be used in language and place names. The author wishes to thank Prof. Şoşun ThiÚn Thút and the Center for Vietnamese and Intercultural Studies for their help and guidance in collecting the data, Dr. Jerold A. Edmondson and Dr. Kenneth J. Gregerson for their helpful comments. The conclusions I reached are my own.

<p>2. Imply [\pmnumber] and [\pmdefinite]</p> <p>3. Can hardly stand alone as subjects, complements or form noun phrases, or combine with prepositions to make adverbial phrases. The basic syntactic function is being the central part of classifying genitives.</p> <p>4. Do not combine with each other by hypotaxis.</p> <p>5. [- contrastivity].</p> <p>6. Can't be changed into other parts of speech</p>	<p>"book", sữa "milk", mẹ "mother", thạch sùng "gecko"*all cow *half milk *all gecko</p> <p>2. Neither imply [\pmnumber], nor [\pmdefinite]</p> <p>.</p> <p>3. Can stand alone as subjects, complements and combine with prepositions to make adverbial phrases. The main syntactic function is being determiners of species.</p> <p>4. Combine with each other by hypotaxis.</p> <p>5. [+ contrastivity]</p> <p>6. Can be changed into other parts of speech.</p>
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HỆ THỐNG ĐẠI TỪ NHÂN XƯNG TRONG TIẾNG VIỆT VÀ TIẾNG MƯỜNG

(TÓM TẮT)

Nguyễn Phú Phong

Trong tiếng Anh, khi nói chuyện với một người, chúng ta chỉ đơn giản dùng "you". Trong tiếng Việt vấn đề không đơn giản như vậy, vì tương ứng với "you" chúng ta phải lựa chọn trong rất nhiều từ một từ thích hợp. Khó khăn này đã khiến một số nhà Việt ngữ học đi đến kết luận rằng tiếng Việt không có hệ thống đại từ nhân xưng chuyên biệt.

Bài viết này sẽ chứng minh rằng trong tiếng Việt có hai hệ thống đại từ nhân xưng: một hệ thống kín và một hệ thống mở. Hệ thống kín được cấu thành bởi những đại từ nhân xưng thật sự. Hệ thống này có mối quan hệ hình thái học với những từ ngữ trực chỉ như các từ chỉ xuất và được định vị theo cơ cấu ngôi thứ ngang, không có tính tôn ti. Hệ thống mở gắn liền với đại từ *tôi*, vốn là một danh từ có nghĩa là "tôi tớ". Hệ thống này được xây dựng dựa trên những trực chỉ xã hội, nghĩa là việc chọn lựa và sử dụng một đại từ nhân xưng thích hợp phải tương thích với vị trí xã hội của từng người tham gia cuộc thoại. Ngoại trừ đại từ *tôi*, các từ ngữ khác trong hệ thống này đều phái sinh từ các danh từ. Chúng tôi sẽ miêu tả phương thức hành chức của một hệ thống mang tính tôn ti như vậy trong bài viết.

Với một đại từ số ít thì có lẽ có nhiều hơn một dạng thức số nhiều tương ứng với nó. Trong khuôn khổ của bài nghiên cứu, chúng tôi muốn khảo sát tường tận nhiều bình diện liên quan đến việc chuyển sang số nhiều của các đại từ nhân xưng trong tiếng Việt.

Bài viết này cũng sẽ đề cập đến các đại từ nhân xưng trong một vài phương ngữ Mường, đặc biệt là Mường Bi ở tỉnh Hoà bình - một ngôn ngữ rất gần với tiếng Việt - và tiếng Rục ở Quảng Bình - một ngôn ngữ cần được bảo tồn của một bộ tộc chỉ còn vẹn vẹn 150 người, thuộc nhóm Việt-Mường.