

## Cliticization in casual speech in Vietnamese

In: Cahiers de linguistique - Asie orientale, vol. 36 n°2, 2007. pp. 219-244.

### Abstract

This paper examines clitics in colloquial Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, a clitic is a syllable that appears as a reduced form in casual speech and exhibits a phonological dependency on the material to its left. Only the tone of the former function word remains, while all its segments may be replaced. If the host ends in an obstruent, the clitic surfaces as a homorganic syllabic nasal. If the host ends in a vowel or a glide, the clitic surfaces as a lengthened part of that vowel or glide, unless it has a nasal rhyme, in which case it surfaces with its own nasal.

### Résumé

Cet article analyse les clitiques en vietnamien parlé. En vietnamien un clitique est une syllabe qui apparaît comme une forme réduite dans un registre familier. Il dépend phonologiquement du mot précédent. Le ton alors se maintient tandis que la partie segmentale s'amuisse. Si le mot-support se termine par une occlusive, le clitique se réalise comme une nasale syllabique homorganique. S'il se termine par une voyelle ou une diphtongue, le clitique se réalise comme une prolongation de cette voyelle/diphtongue, à moins que la forme pleine du clitique ne se termine par une consonne nasale, auquel cas cette consonne nasale est conservée comme réalisation de la forme réduite.

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Hoa Pham Andrea. Cliticization in casual speech in Vietnamese. In: Cahiers de linguistique - Asie orientale, vol. 36 n°2, 2007. pp. 219-244.

doi : 10.3406/clao.2007.1840

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# Cliticization in casual speech in Vietnamese\*

Andrea Hoa PHAM

This paper examines clitics in colloquial Vietnamese. In Vietnamese, a clitic is a syllable that appears as a reduced form in casual speech and exhibits a phonological dependency on the material to its left. Only the tone of the former function word remains, while all its segments may be replaced. If the host ends in an obstruent, the clitic surfaces as a homorganic syllabic nasal. If the host ends in a vowel or a glide, the clitic surfaces as a lengthened part of that vowel or glide, unless it has a nasal rhyme, in which case it surfaces with its own nasal.

*Key words* : Vietnamese, clitics, tones, casual speech.

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*Mots-clés* : vietnamien, clitiques, tons, registre familier.

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\* The author would like to thank Marc Brunelle, René Schiering and the three anonymous reviewers for their comprehensive remarks and suggestions for revision.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In English many monosyllabic function words appear as either strong forms or weak forms, e.g., ‘at’ in ‘look at’ versus ‘at’ in ‘at home’ (Selkirk 1995). A function word is defined as “a word whose role is largely or wholly grammatical, e.g. articles, pronouns, conjunctions... all contrast with the lexical words in a language, which carry the main semantic content” (Crystal 2003:193). A similar phenomenon occurs in colloquial Vietnamese. For example, *ở* ‘to live, stay’ in *Anh ấy ở đâu?* ‘Where does he stay?’ appears in a strong form while *ở* ‘in, at’ in *Anh ấy ở đâu?* ‘Where is he?’ appears in a weak form (further examples in Hoàng and Hoàng 1975:96).

However, certain words are often further reduced, so that the whole syllable is deleted except for the tone. This is the case of /ba:w1/ ‘how’ and /ma2/ (*part*) in the examples (1a) and (1b) below.<sup>1</sup>

(1a)            (biɣt7    ba:w1) niɣw1    xoŋ1  
           →        (biɣt7 ɲ1)            niɣw1    xoŋ1  
                   know    how    much    INTER PART  
                   ‘(Do you) know how much (it is)?’

(1b)            za1        (dɔ3    ma2)        ŋɛ1  
           →        za1        (dɔ3 ɔ2)        ŋɛ1  
                   go-out there PART        listen  
                   ‘Go out there to hear (that)!’

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations used in this article are as follows: AUX = auxiliary; CL = classifier; COMP = complementizer; EMP = emphatic, INDEF = indefinite; INTER = interrogative; MASC = masculine; PART = particle. The star \* placed before an example shows ungrammaticality. Tones are referred to by a number that follows the syllables, eg. /ba1/ has Tone 1, /ba2/ has Tone 2, etc. The characteristics of tones are described in Table 4.

In (1a) /bɪɾt7/ ends with a stop. The following syllable /ba:w1/ is realized as a syllabic nasal which is homorganic with the final /t/ of the preceding syllable. In (1b) /dɔ3/ is an open syllable and the following syllable /ma2/ is realized as /ɔ2/. All segments of /ma2/ are deleted and only its tone remains. The vowel of /dɔ3/ is lengthened to carry the ‘floating tone’ of the clitic.

Function words that surface as reduced forms which are phonologically subordinated to a neighbouring word are called *clitics*.

The reduction of these forms in colloquial Vietnamese is not just a random process, but is consistently determined by the rhyme of the host, and that of the clitic itself. This phenomenon has received little attention in the Vietnamese literature. Only a few forms are mentioned in discussion of stress and the morphosyntactic properties of Vietnamese.

In this paper, I provide a preliminary description of the set of Vietnamese clitics which is of interest for research on the prosody of Vietnamese and on typological issues in the theory of prosodic structure. However, I do not attempt to account for stress patterns nor make claims as to the nature of the prosodic hierarchy of the language.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides relevant background on the syllable structure and prosodic characteristics of Vietnamese. Section 3 describes the properties of clitics and examines the processes of cliticization. It argues that clitics are indeed ‘reduced’ forms of their full counterparts while the duration of clitics is not always shorter than that of their full counterparts. Section 4 discusses a small group of superficially similar contracted forms in the Southern dialects of Vietnamese to show that this contraction process is not cliticization. The conclusion is given in section 5.

Most of the data used in the present paper are from daily conversations of Northern dialect speakers recorded in Vietnam.

## 2. BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Syllable structure

Vietnamese is mainly “monosyllabic”, *i.e.*, the majority of its basic semantic units are made up from single syllables. The syllable structure is C(w)V(C). The only consonant cluster is Cw. The C, V, and tone are mandatory; the rest is optional. V can be either a short or a long vowel, or a diphthong. Compound words and reduplicative forms have more than one syllable. Table 1 shows the phonemic initial consonant inventory of Northern Vietnamese as spoken in Hanoi and the surrounding areas.

	labial	coronal	palatal	dorsal	glottal
voiceless stop		t	c	k	ʔ
voiced stop		d			
aspirated stop		t <sup>h</sup>			
voiceless fricative	f	s		x	h
voiced fricative	v	z		ɣ	
lateral approximant		l			
nasal	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	

Table 1. Phonemic initial consonants in the Hanoi dialect

Table 2 shows the phonemic vowel inventory of the Hanoi dialect. There are eleven vowels and three diphthongs. Two vowels /a/ and /aː/ have a length contrast. All the vowels in Table 2 are long except for the short members of the pairs /ɛ/ ~ /ɛː/ and /a/ ~ /aː/. Short

vowels occur only in closed syllables, *i.e.*, syllables that end with a consonant or a glide.

	front	central	back
high	i	ɯ	u
mid	e	ɤ    ɤ:	o
low	ɛ	a    a:	ɔ
diphthong	iɤ	ɯɤ	uɤ

Table 2. Phonemic vowel inventory in the Hanoi dialect

Only a limited numbers of consonants and glides occur finally in syllables: /p, t, k, m, n, ŋ, w, j/. As we will see later, the assimilation involved in cliticization in Vietnamese is a phonetic process; therefore, certain final allophones are important. The consonants /c/ and /ɲ/ are phonemes in initial position, as listed in Table 1. However, in Table 3, the palatals and the plain and labialized dorsals are allophones of the same phoneme, *i.e.*, [c], [k] and [k<sup>p</sup>] are allophones of /k/ and [ɲ] and [ɲ<sup>m</sup>] are allophones of /ŋ/.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Although they differ in certain details, Lê 1948, Emeneau 1951 and Thompson 1965 consider the palatals synchronically to be independent phonemes. This view is also reflected in the current orthography. Others, such as Haudricourt 1951, Cao 1958 and 1998, Đoàn 1977, treat palatals as allophones of the velars. Each view yields its own inventory of vowels and final consonants, and provides its own analysis of vowel qualities in certain syllables (see Đoàn 1977 and Cao 1998 for an in depth review of the issue). This paper adopts the second view.

consonants	p	t	c	k	k <sup>p</sup>
	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	ŋ <sup>m</sup>
glides	w	j			

Table 3. Phonetic final inventory in the Hanoi dialect

There are eight tones in the Hanoi dialect. Table 4 shows the tonal inventory. Each tone is shown with its Vietnamese name.

<b>Tone 1</b> <i>ngang</i> (high, level)	<b>Tone 3</b> <i>sắc1</i> (rising)	<b>Tone 5</b> <i>hỏi</i> (falling-rising)	<b>Tone 7</b> <i>sắc2</i> (rising, short)
<b>Tone 2</b> <i>huyền</i> (low, level)	<b>Tone 4</b> <i>nặng1</i> (falling, glottalized)	<b>Tone 6</b> <i>ngã</i> (falling-rising, glottalized)	<b>Tone 8</b> <i>nặng2</i> (falling, short)

Table 4. Tonal inventory

There is a complementary distribution between Tones 1 to 6 on the one hand, and Tones 7 and 8 on the other hand: while Tones 7 and 8 only occur on obstruent-final syllables, Tones 1 to 6 only occur on a syllable that ends in a sonorant.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2. Stress in Vietnamese: how significant is it?

The general assumption in the literature on Vietnamese is that because it is monosyllabic and has lexical tones, stress plays no

<sup>3</sup> Other researchers have proposed a six-tone analysis. This paper adopts an eight tone system. See details and arguments for each view in Phạm 2003.

role in the phonology of the language; if there is any, it is secondary to tone (Ngô 1984, Honey 1989). According to Emeneau (1951), Benedict (1948), Hồ (1976), Ngô (1999), all syllables are pronounced with the same energy. Other researchers claim that in Vietnamese there is no distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables since each syllable has some degree of stress, either primary or secondary (Hồ 1976) or even three degrees of stress: heavy, medium, and weak (Thompson 1965). These authors focus on phrasal stress and different tempos of speech (Nguyễn (1994).

Yet another view is that stress does play a significant role in distinguishing morphosyntactic structures such as certain compounding and reduplicative patterns/types, and lexical and functional words (Cao 1978, 1998, Nguyễn 1994). In this view, stress does affect tones (Cao 1978).

Hoàng & Hoàng (1975) and Ngô (1984) claim that function words are always unaccented and that it is this unaccented property which makes this word category subject to significant alterations including reduction in intensity and duration.

The author of the present paper assumes that every monosyllabic content word bears some degree of stress, and that function words are often unstressed and can appear either in strong or weak forms, depending on the focus of the utterance. Clitics are function words that appear as reduced forms; being weak forms they cannot bear stress.

### 2.3. Clitics in the literature on Vietnamese

This section gives an overview of clitics from earlier sources which however provide only a partial description of the phenomenon. The phenomenon is mentioned in both Hoàng & Hoàng (1975) and Ngô (1984), who says that 'in a weakly stressed syllable, the segmental syllable is reduced or vanished (*sic*) in allegro speech' (Ngô 1984:112). However, these authors do not identify such reduced forms as 'clitics', nor do they examine how



they are reduced or how they vanish nor even which are their defining properties. This paper describes these properties and shows that these ‘weakly stressed’ syllables are neither necessarily shorter than their full-form counterparts, nor do they occur only in fast speech, as is often claimed. They are found in informal, casual styles of speech regardless of how ‘fast’ or ‘slow’ that speech is.

Modern syntacticians usually treat clitics morpho-syntactically (see Anderson 2005 for a comprehensive review). However, for Wackernagel (1892) and other traditional grammarians and Indo-European linguists, a clitic was a ‘stressless little word that lacks independent accent, and depends prosodically on an adjacent word” (Anderson 2005:2). According to Selkirk (1995:440), a prosodic clitic is ‘a morphosyntactic word which is not itself a prosodic word’. Vietnamese does have a very limited number of so-called ‘affixes’ (Hoàng & Hoàng 1975, Ngô 1984) that function like ‘words’, *i.e.*, they can also occur alone. Examples of some prefixes include the classifiers used to indicate animate/inanimate such as *cái* (objects), *con* (animals), and *người* (people), or to indicate an abstract noun such as *sự* (issues), or *việc* (things, issues), or suffixes used to turn a noun into a verb such as *hóa* ‘-ize’, (*e.g.* *kỹ nghệ hoá* ‘industrialize’, and *lão hoá* ‘become old’, or to indicate people such as *sĩ*, or *sư*, *e.g.*, *họa sĩ* ‘painter’, *ca sĩ* ‘singer’, *nghệ sĩ* ‘artist’, *giáo sĩ* ‘missionary’, *giáo sư* ‘professor’, *võ sư* ‘martial art teacher’, *gia sư* ‘home tutor’ (see Ngô 1984 for details). Only some of these behave like clitics.

Hoàng & Hoàng (1975:94) and Ngô (1984) are the only sources that describe the phenomenon of clitics in some detail, but they fail to provide sufficient data. The first two authors point out that the adverb *cũng* /kuŋ<sup>m6</sup>/ ‘also’ is often pronounced as [ŋ<sup>m6</sup>] and that the indefinite article *một* /mot<sup>4</sup>/ is often pronounced as

[m̄4]<sup>4</sup>. They represent these reduced forms with a syllabic nasal and the original tone of the clitic and state that while these words are reduced to one sonorant, they nevertheless retain a melodic pattern that is recognizable through the curve of intensity that clearly indicates a syllable in the utterance. A second case of reduction they mention is that of *cái* /ka:j3/ (classifier) being reduced to [ki5] or [k̄5], and that of the prepositions *mới* /m̄r:j3/ ‘with’ and *với* /v̄r:j3/ ‘with’ being reduced to [mi3]. They also mention that in the Southern dialects *với* /v̄r:j3/ ‘with’ is often reduced to [j3].

Ngô (1984:90) describes certain function words that lose segments in fast speech because of lack of stress. He states that the rhyme is lost first, e.g., *cái gì* /ka:j3 zi2/ ‘what’ becomes (k3 zi2)<sup>5</sup>, *ai mà* /a:j1 ma2/ ‘the person that’ becomes (a:j1 m2), and *nghe một tí* /ŋi5 mot8 ti3/ ‘rest a while!’ becomes [(ŋi5 m8) ti3]; or else the whole syllable is lost, but not the tone, e.g., (a:j1 2) from /a:j1 ma2/ and (ŋim5 8) from /ŋi5 mot8/. He does not show the surviving consonant to be syllabic, nor is it clear whether there is a stray tone in (ŋim5 8). He notices that most function words are weakly stressed, and reduced within the phrase in which they occur. However, he presents the reduced forms as if they always occurred context-free, e.g., *con* /kɔn1/ ‘classifier’ becomes [kɔ1], *cái* /ka:j3/ becomes [k̄3], and *mà* /ma2/ becomes [m̄2] (Ngô 1984:100).

Function words that are reduced independently of context are not clitics since they do not associate with a host and their surface forms are not structurally affected by that host; therefore, they are outside the scope of this paper. In what follows, I focus on ‘true’ clitics whose surface forms depend on the structure of the hosts, i.e., on words which are reduced to a single sonorant but retain their tone, as in *mang cái gì* /(ma:ŋ1 ka:j3) zi2/ (to bring -CL -what?)

<sup>4</sup> The numbers used in Hoàng & Hoàng (1975) for tonal reference are different from those found in this paper, although the tones involved are identical. These authors assume a six-tone system.

<sup>5</sup> Ngô uses only [k] for the reduced syllables of /ka:j3/ and /kɔn1/ below, without the symbol for a syllabic consonant.

‘what to bring’, which becomes [(ma:ŋ1 ɲ3) zi2]. I will show that the reduction of segments in *cũng* /kuŋ6/ [kuŋ<sup>m</sup>6] ‘also’ to [ŋ<sup>m</sup>6] and in *một* /mot8/ to [m̄8] is the result of different processes: *cũng* and *một* can have different surface forms that depend on the hosts to which they attach. Furthermore, I will show that in the case of *một* the tone is not left to float as Ngô (1984) claims, nor does the clitic surface with its original tone, as both Ngô and Hoàng & Hoàng (1975) claim.

### 3. CLITICS: PROPERTIES AND PROCESSES

In Vietnamese cliticization, a syllable (the clitic) takes on a reduced form in which the only original feature retained is the tone. The vowels and consonants of the clitic are replaced by a segment which borrows most of its features, or all of them, from the last segment in the host: if the host ends in a sonorant, the reduced form is a copy (a prolongation) of that sonorant; if the host ends in an obstruent, the reduced form is a nasal stop homorganic with that obstruent.<sup>6</sup> Cliticization only occurs in casual speech and it only affects certain function words. Some clitics belong to polysyllabic words.

#### 3.1. Morphosyntactic characteristics of clitics

Vietnamese clitics are function words such as demonstrative pronouns, adverbs, personal pronouns, negation particles, conjunctions, prepositions, complementizers, quantifiers, or classifiers. The most common clitics are given in (2).

- |     |            |                 |                           |
|-----|------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| (2) | <i>anh</i> | ‘older brother’ | (1sg or 2sg masc pronoun) |
|     | <i>ấy</i>  | ‘that’          | (demonstrative pronoun)   |

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<sup>6</sup> On the special case where the host ends in a vowel or glide and the clitic ends in a nasal, see § 3.2.2. below.

<i>bao nhiêu</i>	'how much, how many'	
<i>bên</i>	'side'	
<i>cái</i>		(cl for objects)
<i>có</i>	'to have'	(aux)
<i>cũng</i>	'also'	
<i>đấy</i>	'that'	
<i>đi</i>		(emp particle) <sup>7</sup>
<i>đó</i>		(emp)
<i>em</i>	'younger sibling'	(1sg or 2sg pronoun)
<i>không</i>	'not'	
<i>là</i>	'to be'	(aux)
<i>làm sao</i>	'how?'	
<i>mà</i>	'that'	(relative pronoun)
<i>một</i>	'a'	(indef det)
<i>nó</i>	'he, she, it'	(3sg pronoun)
<i>thằng</i>	'he'	(3sg masc pronoun)
<i>thế nào</i>	'how?'	
<i>thì</i>	'then'	
<i>trong</i>	'in'	
<i>với</i>	'with'	
<i>vậy</i>		(inter part)

Some examples are given in (3). The host and clitic in each phrase are bracketed in both left and right columns. The left column provides the full forms of all words. The right column shows the surface forms of the clitics following the cliticization process.

(3a)	(sɿ4	t <sup>h</sup> i2)	duŋ2	di1
→	(sɿ4	ɿ2)	duŋ2	di1
	be-afraid	then	not	go
	'Do not go if (you) are afraid'			

<sup>7</sup> There are many elements in Vietnamese labeled 'particles' in the traditional literature. Zwicky (1985) argues that 'particles' are not a word class and that some are actually clitics. However, this issue is not a concern of this paper.

(3b) → (tuj4        ?ɽj3) law3 lam3  
 → (tuj4 j3)                law3 lam3  
 group        that        smart        very  
 ‘They are very smart’

(3c) → (duŋ2 kɔ3)    la:m2    t<sup>h</sup>ɽt8  
 → (duŋ2 ŋ3)    la:m2    t<sup>h</sup>ɽt8  
 not        have        do        real  
 ‘Do not actually do it’

(3d) → ci3    vjɲ1    (kew1 la2)    mɽt8  
 → ci3    vjɲ1    (kew1 w2)    mɽt7  
 sisterVinh say        that        lose  
 ‘Sister Vinh said (it) was lost’

(3e) → ?aɲ1    (dij4    la:m2)        sa:w1  
 → ?aɲ1    (dij4    ɲ2)                sa:w1  
 2sg    plan        how                how  
 ‘What is your plan (to deal with it)?’

Function words and content words are possible hosts. The examples in (3) show that a clitic can attach to either a lexical word such as the verb /sɽ4/ ‘be afraid’, as in (3a), or a function word such as the negative /duŋ2/ ‘not’, as in (3c). All hosts in (3) are monosyllabic words. However, a clitic can ‘break’ a word that consists of two elements, such as a compound, a proper name, or a reduplicative form. For example, in (4a) the word *đó* /dɔ3/ attaches to the second syllable of a proper (first) name *Minh Anh*. Moreover, a disyllabic word can be cliticized but only the syllable next to the host attaches to the host and undergoes reduction. For example, in (4b) only the first syllable in *bao nhiêu* /ba:w1 ɲiɽw1/ (how much?) attaches to the host *hết* /het7/ on its left side. In (4c) both the host, a reduplicative *lảm cằm* /lɽm5 kɽm5/ ‘silly’ and the adverb *lảm sao* /la:m2 sa:w1/ ‘how?’ are disyllabic. Only the first syllable *lảm* attaches to the second syllable of the host.

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(4a)        yap8 mij1 (ʔaŋ1        dɔ3)        nɤ4  
 →        yap8 mij1 (ʔaŋ1 ɲ3)        nɤ4  
 meet Minh Anh        EMP        EMP  
 ‘(I) met Minh Anh’

(4b)        muɤ1 (het7    ba:w1)        ɲiɤw1  
 →        muɤ1 (het7    ɲ1)        ɲiɤw1  
 buy    all        how        much  
 ‘How much was spent (on it)?’

(4c)        mij2 lɤm5 (kɤm6 la:m2)        sa:w1  
 →        mij2 lɤm5 (kɤm6 ɲ2)        sa:w1  
 1sg    silly    silly    how  
 ‘How silly I am!’

Due to the monosyllabic structure of Vietnamese, many prosodic words consist of one single syllable. The fact that a clitic can cliticize onto and be affected by just one syllable of a disyllabic word supports the claim that the host is not larger than a prosodic word (Selkirk 1995, Peperkamp 1997, van der Leeuw 1997).

As far as we can tell, there are no contextual restrictions on cliticization; cliticization can occur after any word, regardless of syntactic context. In (5a), the classifier *cái* /ka:j3/ attaches leftward to a host *năm* /nam1/ ‘five’ within the same quantifier phrase, *i.e.*, [nam1 [ka:j3 ba:n2]<sub>NP</sub>]<sub>QP</sub> ‘five tables’, or else the clitic can emerge from its phrase and attach to a verb, *i.e.*, [xiɤŋ1 [ka:j3 ba:n2]<sub>NP</sub>]<sub>VP</sub> ‘to carry a table’, as in (5b).

(5a)        xiɤŋ1        (nam1    ka:j3)        ba:n2  
 →        xiɤŋ1        (nam1 ɲ3)        ba:n2  
 carry    five        CL        table  
 ‘to carry five tables’

- (5b)            (xiɿŋ1        ka:j3)    ba:n2  
                   → (xiɿŋ1    ŋ3)        ba:n2  
                   carry        CL        table  
                   ‘to carry a table’

In (6), the NP [kɔn1 mɛw2 ma2 bat7 kɔn1 cuɿt8] ‘the cat that caught the mouse’ is the subject of the main clause. The classifier /kɔn1/ in /kɔn1 mɛw2/ (the cat) can cliticize to /sa:ŋ1/, the verb at the end of the preceding subordinate clause.

- (6) xil toj1 (sa:ŋ1 kɔn1) mɛw2 ma2 bat7 kɔn1 cuɿt8 cet7 zoj2  
       → xil toj1 (sa:ŋ1 ŋ1) mɛw2 ma2 bat7 kɔn1 cuɿt8 cet7 zoj2  
       when 1sg come CL cat that catch CL mouse die already  
       ‘When I came over, the cat that caught the mouse had died’

“In Shanghai Chinese, final particles attach to whatever lexical items happen to precede them in syntactic surface structure” (Selkirk and Shen 1990:318). Vietnamese final particles such as *đó*, *ấy*, *vậy* behave similarly.

However, there is one instance in which only a specific element in the phrase can cliticize. In Vietnamese, the basic word order of a noun phrase is: indefinite quantifier – classifier – noun – adjective, e.g., *một cái bàn nhỏ* ‘a small table’. When a phrase contains both a quantifier and a classifier and one of them is a clitic, it will be the quantifier not the classifier. For example, in (7), while *một* /mot8/ ‘indefinite article’ can attach to the verb *có* /kɔ3/ ‘to have’ on the left, the classifier *cái* /ka:j/ does not attach to *một*. Note that the clitic [mot] bears Tone 8, but after cliticization Tone 2 surfaces instead on the lengthened vowel in (7). This is because tones 7 and 8 occur only in stop-final syllables.<sup>8</sup> The clitics surface as lengthened parts of vowels, not as vowels with glottal stops.

<sup>8</sup> All clitics keep their original tones, except in cases like this. The six-tone view, which regards tones 7 and 8 as allotones of tones 3 and 4, would have to say that a

- (7)            nɔ3 (kɔ3 mot8)    ka:j3    ja2    tɔ1 lam3  
 →            nɔ3 (kɔ3 ɔ2)        ka:j3    ja2    tɔ1 lam3  
               3sg have INDEF CL    house big very  
               ‘He/she has a very big house’

Although the data so far suggest that clitics are insensitive to syntactic structure, further research is needed to confirm this observation, as well as to determine which function words cannot be cliticized. We also need to find out if *tầm bậy* ‘nonsense’ is the only content word that can be cliticized (see (8c) below).

### 3.2. Processes of cliticization

This section describes how a clitic surfaces in different environments after its original segments are deleted.

#### 3.2.1. Clitics that surface as homorganic nasals or vowels/glides

This type of change was seen in (1b) where *mà* /ma2/ ‘that’ cliticizes and the host ends in a vowel that is lengthened to carry the tone of the clitic: (dɔ3 ma2) → (dɔ3 ɔ2), or in (3a) where *thì* /ti<sup>h</sup>i2/ ‘then’ cliticizes: (sɾ4 t<sup>h</sup>i2) → (sɾ4 ɾ2). In (3b) the demonstrative *ấy* /ɲj3/ ‘that’ cliticizes and the host ends in /j/, which is lengthened to carry the tone of the clitic: (tuj4 ɲj3) → ‘group-that’ (tuj4 j3). More examples of this type are given in (8d-g) where the clitics surface as vowel or glides. In (8a-c), they surface as homorganic nasals. The examples in (8c) and (8d) contain two clitics. In (8c) the second clitic in italics /kɯŋ6/ is special in that its host ends in a glide. This type of clitic will be discussed in 3.2.2.

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tonal change accounts for this. However, in the eight-tone view, which treats two tones in stop-final syllables as separate tones, there is no change here: the clitic /mot8/ surfaces with Tone 2 simply because the clitic appears as a vowel and, therefore, cannot bear Tone 8. Tone 2 is phonetically closest to Tone 8; consequently, it replaces Tone 8.



- (8a)      nɔj1    (cɤm4    kuŋ<sup>m</sup>6)      duɤk8  
           →    nɔj1    (cɤm4 ɱ6)                    duɤk8  
           speak slow            also            fine  
           ‘It is okay to speak slowly’
- (8b)      (duŋ2            kɔ3)      la:m2    t<sup>h</sup>ɤt8  
           →    (duŋ2 ɲ3)                            la:m2    t<sup>h</sup>ɤt8  
           not                    have            do            real  
           ‘Do not really do it’
- (8c)      (viɤt7    tɤm2)    bɤj4      kuŋ<sup>m</sup>6    duɤk8  
           →    (viɤt7    ɲ2)            (bɤj4      ɲ<sup>m</sup>6)    duɤk8  
           write    nonsense                    also    okay  
           ‘It’s OK to write nonsense (here)’
- (8d)      kɔn1    (mɛ:w2    ma2)    (bat7    kɔn1)    cuɤt8  
           →    kɔn1    (mɛ:w2    w2)    (bat7    ɲ1)      cuɤt8  
           CL    cat            COMP    catch    CL            mouse  
           ‘The cat that caught the mouse’
- (8e)      em1    (ba:w5      nɔ3)    den3    ɲɛ3  
           →    em1    (ba:w5 w3)            den3    ɲɛ3  
           1sg    tell                    3sg    come    INTER PART  
           ‘I’m going to tell him to come, ok?’
- (8f)      cɔ1 ɔŋ1      (ɤɤ:j5      mot7)      duɤ3  
           →    cɔ1 ɔŋ1      (ɤɤ:j5      j2)            duɤ3  
           let 1sg      send            one            CL  
           ‘Let me send (you) one kid’
- (8g)      t<sup>h</sup>e3 (la2      t<sup>h</sup>e3)      na:w2  
           →    t<sup>h</sup>e3 (la2    a3)            na:w2  
           that is            how  
           ‘What does that mean?’

The surface forms of clitics result from a process of phonetic assimilation. In Vietnamese, final palatal consonants are allophones of velars. If the host ends with a palatal, the clitic surfaces as a palatal nasal, e.g., (dɨŋ<sup>4</sup> ŋ<sup>2</sup>) in (3e) or (aŋ<sup>1</sup> ŋ<sup>3</sup>) in (4a). Likewise, velar consonants after back rounded vowels are labialized and surface as double articulations. If the host ends in a labialized velar, the clitic surfaces as a homorganic labialized velar, as with the clitics in the examples in (9), except for the first clitic in (9c), which assimilates to [t] in the host /ha:t/ and surfaces as a coronal nasal.

(9a)      nɔ3    (xɔk<sup>p7</sup> cɔŋ<sup>m1</sup>) (fɔŋ<sup>m2</sup>    dɤj3)  
           → nɔ3    (xɔk<sup>p7</sup>    ŋ<sup>m1</sup>)    (fɔŋ<sup>m2</sup>    ŋ<sup>m3</sup>)  
           3sg    cry        in        room    EMP  
           ‘He/she is crying in the room’

(9b)      xi1    na:w2 (sɔŋ<sup>m1</sup>    t<sup>h</sup>i2)    dɛm1    la:j4  
           → xi1    na:w2 (sɔŋ<sup>m1</sup>    ŋ<sup>m2</sup>)    dɛm1    la:j4  
           when do        finish    then    bring    back  
           ‘Bring (it) back when (you are) done’

(9c)      nɔ3    (ha:t7    cɔŋ<sup>m1</sup>)            (fɔŋ<sup>m2</sup>    dɤj3)  
           → nɔ3    (ha:t7    ŋ<sup>l</sup>)                (fɔŋ<sup>m2</sup>    ŋ<sup>m3</sup>)  
           3sg    sing        in                room    EMP  
           ‘He/she is singing in the room’

### 3.2.2. Clitics which keep a nasal segment

In the examples given above, the clitics lose their segments in cliticization. However, there are cases in which clitics retain one original segment, the final nasal. A clitic keeps its final nasal if the host ends in a vowel or a glide. In (10), the hosts do not end with consonantal segments; consequently the clitics *em* /ɛm<sup>l</sup>/, *cũng* /kuŋ<sup>6</sup>/ [kuŋ<sup>m6</sup>], *anh* /aŋ<sup>l</sup>/ [aŋ<sup>l</sup>], and *bên* /ben<sup>l</sup>/ all surface with final nasals.

- (10a)      (t<sup>h</sup>ɣj3      ʔɛm1)      xɔk<sup>p7</sup>  
               →    (t<sup>h</sup>ɣj3 m̩1)                xɔk<sup>p7</sup> /\*(t<sup>h</sup>ɣj3 j1)  
                   see                2sg                cry  
                   ‘(I) saw you crying’
- (10b)      (toj1            kuŋ<sup>m6</sup>)            ɲa:j3  
               →    (toj1 ŋ<sup>m6</sup>)                ɲa:j3 /\*(toj1 j6)  
                   1sg                also                imitate  
                   ‘I also imitated (it)’
- (10c)      (t<sup>h</sup>i2            ʔaŋ1)            mɣ:j2  
               →    (t<sup>h</sup>i2 ɲ1)                mɣ:j2 /\*(t<sup>h</sup>i2 i1)  
                   then            2sg                invite  
                   ‘then invite (him)!’
- (10d)      (ve2            ben1)            ŋwa:j4  
               →    (ve2 ɲ1)                ŋwa:j4 /\*(ve2 e1)  
                   return    side                maternal  
                   ‘going to visit the maternal side’

It might appear that these clitics are independent of the host. Indeed, they do not behave like those in (8) as they do not surface as lengthened parts of the vowels or glides of the host. However, their surface forms are still determined by their hosts, since if the host does end in a consonantal segment and the clitic has a final nasal, the clitic must give up its original nasal and be assimilated to the final consonantal segment of the host.

This fact is illustrated by the following examples. The two sentences (11a) and (11b) have the same meaning except for the different 1sg pronoun. Since the host in (11a) ends in a glide, the clitic retains its original velar nasal, in this case a plain velar not a labialized one. In (11b), the host ends in a palatal nasal and the clitic surfaces as a palatal, not as a velar.

(11a) (toj1 kuŋ<sup>m6</sup>) ɲa:j3  
 → (toj1 ŋ6) ɲa:j3  
 1sg also intimidated  
 'I am also intimidated'

(11b) (ʔaŋ1 kuŋ<sup>m6</sup>) ɲa:j3  
 → (ʔaŋ1 ŋ6) ɲa:j3/\*(ʔaŋ1 ŋ6) ɲa:j3  
 1sg also intimidated  
 'I am also intimidated'

The clitic can keep its original nasal only if the nasal is in the coda. If the nasal is in the onset, it is not retained. The clitic simply surfaces as a lengthened vowel or glide as in (12).

(12a) (ʔa:j1 ma2) ɲɿ3  
 → (ʔa:j1 j2) ɲɿ3  
 who COMP remember  
 'Who can remember (that)!'

(12b) a:j1 duɿ1 (dɿw1 ma2) lɿ3  
 → a:j1 duɿ1 (dɿw1 w2) ɿ3  
 who give EMP COMP take  
 'No-one gave (it), so could (I) have it?'

Ngô (1984) shows that the complementizer /ma2/, which has an initial nasal, in *ai mà thương anh* /(a:j1 ma2) t<sup>h</sup>uɿɿŋ1 aŋ1/ 'who could love you?' has two possibilities after reduction: a nasal with its tone [a:j1 m2] or just a stray tone [a:j1 2]. He does not transcribe or comment on whether the nasal is syllabic, and he offers no comment on how the tone is realized (in the second case). Note that no tone can be left stray in Vietnamese. Tone 2 must link to the lengthened part of the final glide, a fact which Ngô fails to mention. As to the first pronunciation, [m2], this could be another type of reduction of function words in fast speech (just as vowels in

English are often reduced to schwa under such conditions). It then would be an entirely different phenomenon. Note that all three examples of this type given in Ngô share the same environment, *i.e.* the host on the left ends with a vowel or a glide. The result, however, would be different if this environment were too: if the host ends in a nasal with a different place of articulation, the clitic can occur only as a homorganic syllabic nasal, *e.g.*, *ăn một tí* / (an1 mot8) ti3/ ‘eat a little’ becomes [(an1 ɲ2) ti3]/\*(an m2), *học một tí* [(hɔk<sup>p</sup>7 mot8) ti3] ‘study a little’ becomes [(hɔk<sup>p</sup>7 ɲ<sup>m</sup>2) ti3]/\*(hɔk<sup>p</sup>7 m2).

### 3.2.3. Hosts with more than one clitic

There are cases in which a host can have more than one clitic. A few examples are given in (13). In (13a), both words /dɔ3/ ‘that’ and /tɻj3/ ‘until’ cliticize onto /hom1/ ‘day’, which ends in a labial nasal. The clitics surface as syllabic [m] with their tones. In (13b) two clitics attach to /ʔoŋ1/ [ʔoŋ<sup>m</sup>1] ‘man’ and surface as syllabic labialized velars. As Tone 8 in /mot8/ cannot occur with a sonorant, Tone 2 surfaces instead. Although not common, there are hosts with three clitics, as in (13c). Three words /ʔɻj3/, /t<sup>h</sup>i2/, and /la2/ attach to the same host, /cuɻ1/, which ends in a central diphthong. Note that all three clitics surface as the second element of the diphthong.

(13a)      tu2      (hom1      dɔ3    tɻj3)    zɻ2  
           →    tu2      (hom1 m3 m3)                      zɻ2  
           since    day                      that    until    now  
           ‘Since that day until now’

(13b)      cɔ1    (ʔoŋ<sup>m</sup>1    ʔɻj3    mot8)    ta:t7  
           →    cɔ1    (ʔoŋ<sup>m</sup>1    ɲ<sup>m</sup>3    ɲ<sup>m</sup>2)    ta:t7  
           give    man                      that    one                      slap  
           ‘Give him a slap!’

- (13c)        buɣj5 (cuɣ1    ʔɣj3    t<sup>h</sup>i2    la2)    met4  
               →    buɣj5 (cuɣ1    ɣ3        ɣ2        ɣ2)    met8  
               CL        noon        EMP        then    be        tired  
               ‘It is tiring around noon’

If only one clitic were reduced in (13), it would be the one that is closest to the host, *i.e.* /dɔ3/, /ʔɣj3/, and /ʔɣj3/ in (13a), (13b) and (13c) respectively.

In summary, this section has shown how clitics surface. The right edge of a host determines whether the clitic surfaces as a syllabic nasal or as a lengthened part of the preceding vowel/glide. In the special case in which a clitic has a final nasal and the host ends in a vowel/glide, the clitic surfaces with its nasal. Finally, a host can have more than one clitic attached to it.

#### 3.2.4. Directionality of cliticization

This section discusses the directionality of cliticization. Clitics attach to the host on their left.

A seeming counterexample is presented by the indefinite quantifier /mot8/ ‘one/a’ and the adverb /la:m2 sa:w1/ ‘how’ which are flexible with respect to direction. They can cliticize either leftward or rightward, as shown in (14). In (14a), /mot8/ can cliticize rightward; in this case it assimilates to the labiodental /f/, and surfaces as a labiodental nasal, which is not a phoneme in Vietnamese. In (14b) /la:m2/ can attach to a host on either side.

- (14a)        nɔ3 sɣ4        (ca1    mot8)        fɛp7  
               →    nɔ3 sɣ4        (ca1 a1)        fɛp7        OR (ɱ2 fɛp7)  
               3sg be:afraid father INDEF        rule  
               ‘He is under his father’s thumb’

- (14b) ba:j2 (vʔ5 la:m2) sa:w1 → (vʔ5 ʔ2)  
 OR (m̩2 sa:w1)  
 OR (ɲ2 sa:w1)

lesson notebook how  
 ‘How is (your) school work going?’

Such rightward attachment is rare, however. In (14a), /mot8 fɛp7/ belongs to an idiom *sợ* ‘be afraid’ *một phép* ‘be under X’s rule’. In (14b), /la:m2/ ‘to do’ has three possible surface forms: either a lengthened vowel or a retention of the original nasal coda if it attaches leftward, or a coronal nasal if it attaches rightward. It should be noted that the above clitics occur after open syllables, which is why there is a choice in the direction of cliticization. If the host ends in a consonantal segment, the clitic must surface as a syllabic nasal.

#### 4. A GROUP OF ‘CONTRACTED WORDS’ IN SOUTHERN DIALECTS

In this section I discuss a phenomenon called ‘contraction’, which is found only in the Southern dialects of Vietnamese. For these dialects the demonstrative pronoun /dɔ3/ ‘that’ disappears when combining with some kinship terms, locative terms, and time expressions which then take Tone 5. For example:

- (15) oŋ1 + dɔ3 → oŋ5 ‘that man, he’  
 ba2 + dɔ3 → ba5 ‘that woman, she’  
 kʔw4 + dɔ3 → kʔw5 ‘that (maternal) uncle/ he’  
 la:w6 + dɔ3 → la:w5 ‘that old man/ he’  
 ɲɔ5 + dɔ3 → ɲɔ5 ‘that little (girl)/ she’  
 ben1 + dɔ3 → ben5 ‘that side/, there’  
 ŋwa:j2 + dɔ3 → ŋwa:j5 ‘outside/ out there’  
 tɕŋ1 + dɔ3 → tɕŋ5 ‘inside/ in there’  
 hom1 + dɔ3 → hom5 ‘that day’  
 nam1 + dɔ3 → nam5 ‘that year’

This phenomenon is mentioned in many studies, *e.g.*, Thompson 1965, Ngô 1984, Hoàng & Hoàng 1975, Bùi 1966, Lê 1948.

It is superficially similar to cliticization but there are important differences. First, one single function word is involved in the process which disappears, triggering only one tone, Tone 5, in the contracted form. Second, it is not a productive process since it affects only a restricted group of words. Third, the words involved in this process are always monosyllabic, whereas clitics as well as their host can be part of a disyllabic word as has been shown above. Besides the examples in (15), there are a few rare cases in which the contracted form bears Tone 3. Note that none of the hosts in (15) ends in an obstruent.

It is of interest to note that the Southern contracted form in (15), /oŋ5/ ‘that man’, is equivalent to the Northern dialects *ông ấy* /oŋ<sup>m</sup>1 + ɤj3/ ‘that man’ which reduces to [oŋ<sup>m</sup>1 ŋ<sup>m</sup>3]. The cliticization of the Northern /ɤj3/ (same tone as /dɔ3/) yields a result which is close to the contracted form of Southern Vietnamese.

Note that cliticization is also found in the colloquial speech of Southern speakers which produces *thím đó* (t<sup>h</sup>im3 m̌3) ‘that aunt’, and *chú đó* (cu3 u3) ‘that uncle’.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This paper describes the phenomenon of cliticization in Vietnamese casual speech. Clitics are function words that associate with a host on their left regardless of the morphosyntactic status of that host. While the tone of a clitic is retained, its vowels and consonants are lost and replaced by a syllabic nasal or by a prolongation of the vowel/glide which occurs at the end of the host.



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