

**(1) Paper title: Contrastive Topic in Vietnamese**

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## CONTRASTIVE TOPIC IN VIETNAMESE

### Abstract:

In recent years, it has become well-known that the Vietnamese sentence structure is a hierarchical structure consisting of a topic part and a comment part. In this research, the form *thì*, which has been the research focus of scholars for decades, is still considered to be a “perennial problem” in Vietnamese linguistics because of its seemingly diverse functions, elusive meanings, and intricate interactions with both assertive and negative scopes. However, the term ‘contrastive topic’ has generally not been discussed in the Vietnamese linguistic literature. The insertion of *thì* in the location between topic and comment of sentences can trigger significant alterations in syntactic and semantic structure

The main concern of the paper is to identify the ‘contrastive topic’, one special kind of topic in Vietnamese, and establish a hypothesis in which the form *thì* is treated as a particular Contrastive Topic marker in Vietnamese sentence structure. We have discovered that the form *thì* can be placed after a topical nominal or verbal to compose a Contrastive Topic phrase. Not only the subjects or objects but also predicates in Vietnamese can have a CT interpretation with the marker *thì*. The *thì*-phrase not only refers to an entity or event the speaker wants to talk about, but also indicates that there exist contrastive alternatives the speaker wants to talk about. The nature of the contrastive topic decides the nature the alternative set and the choice of the topic of the implicated proposition, as in response b to sentence a. When the set of alternatives does not have the characteristic of scale, we have a descriptive opposite implicature. Again, if the contrastive set is a scalar set, we get a denial-of expectation implicature.

- a. Ho đi đâu?  
**they go where?**  
‘Where did they go?’
- b. Nam *thì* đi Hà Nội.  
Nam CT go Hà Nội  
‘As for Nam, he went to Hanoi (but no one other than Nam went)’.
- c. Nam đi đâu?  
**Nam go where?**  
‘Where did Nam go?’
- d. Nam đi Hà Nội.  
**Nam go Hà Nội**  
‘Nam went to Hanoi’

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