Research Article

SEMANTIC NUANCES OF VIETNAMESE LEXICAL UNITS AND THE TEACHING OF THESE UNITS TO FOREIGN STUDENTS

Tang Thi Tuyet Mai

Ho Chi Minh City University of Education
Corresponding author: Tang Thi Tuyet Mai – Email: maitttu@hcmue.edu.vn

ABSTRACT

Semantic nuances are particularly important in teaching Vietnamese vocabulary to foreign students, especially lexical units that are considered subtle and difficult to distinguish in the Vietnamese language. This article discusses the ameliorative and pejorative nuances of Vietnamese lexical units, while also proposing specific methods for exploiting ameliorative and pejorative nuances in teaching different kinds of lexical parts: synonyms, unit nouns, personal pronouns, state predicates, reduplication combinations, combinations containing high-level indicators.

Keywords: *semantic nuances, teaching and learning the Vietnamese language, foreign students, lexical units.*

1. Introduction

In the list of color words, *trắng hồng* (*pink white*), *trắng tươi* (*fresh white*), *vàng ươm* (*bright and strong yellow*), *xanh biếc* (*fresh and strong blue*), *đỏ tươi* (*bright red*), etc. are considered words that express positive attitude while *trắng hếu* (*naked white*), *trắng nhởn* (*disgusting white*), *vàng khè* (*dark yellow*), *xanh lè* (*intense green*), *đỏ lòm* (*blood red*), etc. signify the opposite. The evidence is that *trắng hồng* (*pink white*), *trắng tươi* (*fresh white*), *vàng ươm* (*bright and strong yellow*), *xanh biếc* (*fresh and strong blue*), *đỏ tươi* (*bright red*), etc. cannot be used to criticize and *trắng hếu* (*naked white*), *trắng nhởn* (*disgusting white*), *vàng khè* (*dark yellow*), *xanh lè* (*intense green*), *đỏ lòm* (*blood red*), etc. can not be used to praise. The positive or negative attitude here is the semantic nuance of a lexical unit. Although Vietnamese people may not be able to explain why one word is used and another word is not in a certain situation, they can still use the right words in certain contexts. Meanwhile, foreign students will certainly not be able to use correctly the lexical units with complicated nuances in specific cases if teachers do not instruct them to

---

discover the shades of meaning of these words. Semantic nuances have a particularly important role in teaching Vietnamese vocabulary to foreign students, especially difficult lexical units in the Vietnamese language.

## 2.   The semantic nuance of the word

2.1.   Components of meaning

The lexical meaning of a lexical unit consists of three basic components: descriptive meaning, social meaning and expressive meaning. Besides, people often refer to a type of meaning that is considered to be added meaning – connotation.

2.1.1. Descriptive meaning and reference

Many argue that descriptive meaning exists only for content words. However, according to Sebastian Löbner (2002), if the descriptive meaning of a content word is "a concept for its potential referents" (Löbner 2002: 23) then functional words such as pronouns, articles, etc. or grammatical forms such as tense (for inflectional languages) still contain descriptive meaning, and here, the descriptive meaning is "its contribution to descriptive sentence meaning" (Löbner 2002: 24). For example, the descriptive meaning of the word "*mèo*" is a concept for all cats, small animals in the same family with tigers and leopards that are often kept in the house to catch mice. Meanwhile, the descriptive meaning of the word "*những*" (these/those/the) is a concept that denotes "a large number, undefined". And the word "*những*" expresses a specific descriptive meaning when participating in specific sentences.

When it comes to descriptive meaning, people often refer to denotation or denotative meaning. Sebastian Löbner (2002) shows the distinction between descriptive and denotative meaning in his triangle model. Accordingly, the denotative meaning has an indirect relationship with the word through descriptive meaning. In other words, it is the descriptive meaning that determines the denotation.
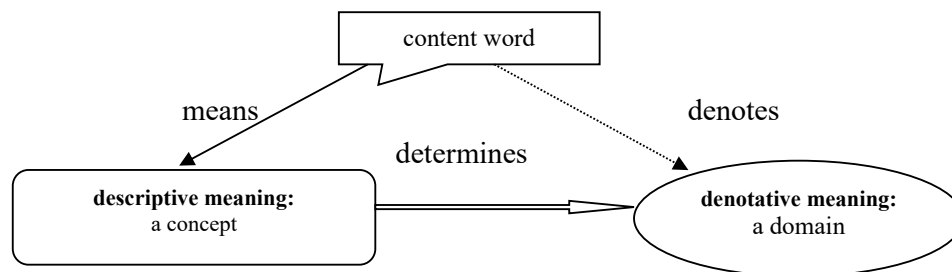
Some authors define the denotative meaning in relation to the inferred meaning as the basic, nuclear meaning of the word (the meaning we can find in the dictionary) and the added meaning.

2.1.2. Social meaning and social interaction

Social meaning is considered one of the main components of the lexical meaning in parallel with the descriptive meaning above.

This meaning is understood as all semantic nuances regulated by the society, that is, it either conforms or not to social communication standards. For example, although sharing the same descriptive meaning (wife), the two words *phu nhân* and *vợ* have very different social meanings. The word *phu nhân* only refers to the wife of those who have a high status in society. No one uses *phu nhân* to talk about a normal person's wife unless there is another implication (teasing, sarcasm, etc.) because when *phu nhân* is used, there is an assumption of formality.

Social meaning does not only appear in content words, but also in function words. For example, auxiliaries such as *à, ư, nhỉ, nhé,* etc. are only used in cases of intimacy. Therefore, an utterance such as: "*Tình hình có vẻ rất nghiêm trọng, thủ tướng nhỉ?*" (*The situation seems very serious ey prime minister?*) is not acceptable because the nuances of intimacy of "*nhỉ*" cannot go with the word "*thủ tướng*" (*prime minister*) – a specialized word in formal contexts.

2.1.3. Expressive meaning and subjectivity

In general, almost all expressions cover the human emotions, perspectives and attitudes. For example, the word *xanh lè* (*intense green*) does not simply denote the color of things, but also shows the judgment (criticizing implication) of the speaker. Indeed, with the utterance *"Chiếc áo này màu xanh lè."* (*This shirt is intense green.*), everyone understands that the speaker is showing a negative attitude about the color of the shirt. As well as descriptive meaning, the expressive meaning is part of the lexical meaning, a semantic quality of words and expressions independent of the context.

 Expressive meaning is understood as all semantic nuances that are defined by human emotions, that is, the characteristics that are appropriate or inconsistent with the will of the people. This part is defined by human subjectivity, but it has a common denominator among individuals.

Expressive meaning has a rather important position in the meaning of the word. If a word pair has a similar descriptive meaning, the expressive meaning will determine the context of occurrence of the word. A typical example is the group of word *cho, biếu, tặng* (*give*). These words all have the same descriptive meaning but they are different in terms of expressive meaning. *Biếu, tặng* show respect and affection, while *cho* does not include this kind of attitude and affection. In this case, it is the expressive meaning that determines the presence or absence of each word in each context.

The distinction between expressive meaning and social meaning is sometimes not simple. Theoretically, social meaning is often governed by the laws of social conduct while expressive meaning is influenced by people's emotions and attitudes (see Löbner, 2002: 34).

2.1.4. Connotative meaning and association

If the three components above are considered to be key components in the lexical meaning of the word, the connotation is only considered as an added meaning.

Mikko Lehtonen (2000: 74) argues that the first meaning of the word is the basic meaning while the connotation is understood as a number of qualities (emotional contexts and behaviors) related to the meaning of the word. Ronald Carter, Angela Goddad, Danuta Reah, Keith Sanger & Maggie Bowing (2001: 102) also argue that the connotation of the word is a personal, emotional meaning; and the denotative meaning is the meaning in the dictionary. Sebastian Löbner (2002) clearly distinguishes the connotative meaning with basic lexical meaning components. It cannot be a descriptive or expressive meaning because it can be changed individually while the basic lexical components cannot.

If the denotative meaning is the nuclear component of the lexical unit, the connotative meaning is the added meaning, not in the lexical meaning of the word. However, it is not an association of individuals but an association of a whole community. Therefore, although the connotative meaning is subjective, it is jointly subjective, hence, still objective. This is a problem of linguistics and not of psychology.

The connotative meaning is the association of a whole community so it relates much to culture. The association here may be emotional, or of any other problem. For example, the connotative meaning of the word *kiến* (ant) suggests the meaning "small/little". Whenever we say a certain sentence about *kiến*, for example, "*Chuyện bằng con kiến.*" (*It's so little that it's nothing.*), the first implication is also this connotation. If there really is a giant ant in this world, we will say: "*Tuy là kiến nhưng nó rất to.*" (*Although it is an ant, it is very big.*). In saying so, we understand that this giant ant is unusual because the presupposition of *kiến* here is "small".

2.2. Semantic nuances in relation to semantic components

The semantic nuance does not belong to the descriptive meaning but to the expressive meaning and social meaning. However, the semantic nuance of the word does not completely coincide with the expressive meaning and social meaning. The semantic nuance of the word is also more or less dominated by the connotative meaning.

Just like expressive meaning and connotative meaning, the semantic nuance is subjective but it is jointly subjective, meaning that it must relate to common standards that are popular in the community. It must be something that is trending rather than just of individual cases. For example, when talking about the size of people, for one person, the

word *béo* (*fat*) is positive, but not for others. That same thing happens to the word *gầy* (*thin*). The most common standard is to view *béo* and *gầy* with neutral meaning when talking about people. Here, attention should be about the distinction of semantic nuance between words like *béo* (*fat*) and *đầy đặn* (*chubby*); *gầy* (*thin*) and *thon thả, mảnh mai* (*slender*), etc. or *béo* (*fat*) with *béo ịch* (*fat and heavy*), *béo núc ních* (*corpulent*), *béo xụ, béo xù* (*extremely fat*), etc.; *gầy* (*thin*) and *gầy gò, gầy guộc, gầy rốc, gầy rộc* (*skinny*), etc. If *béo* and *gầy* are neutral when describing people, then *đầy đặn* (*chubby*) and *thon thả, mảnh mai* (*slender*), etc. have positive meanings, and *béo ịch* (*fat and heavy*), *béo núc ních* (*corpulent*), *béo xụ, béo xù* (*extremely fat*), etc.; *gầy* (*thin*) and *gầy gò, gầy guộc, gầy rốc, gầy rộc* (*skinny*), etc. have negative meanings.

Based on the method of using context, we have proposed a process to identify ameli'oratives and pejoratives, and the order of priority in combining ameliorative / pejorative semantic nuances (see also Hoang Dung, Tang Thi Tuyet Mai, 2011).

3. The role of semantic nuances in teaching Vietnamese vocabulary to foreign students

As mentioned above, foreigners cannot use correctly the difficult lexical units in certain cases if teachers do not guide them to discover the shades of meaning of these units, especially groups of synonyms and vocabulary parts with special semantic nuances in Vietnamese.

3.1. Groups of synonyms

In the same sense of "transforming your own ownership into another person's for nothing", we have words such as *cho, biếu, tặng, kính biếu, kính tặng, bố thí, thí* (*give*), etc. But the semantic nuances of these words are not the same. *Cho* (*give*) is neutral in terms of semantic nuances; *biếu, tặng, kính biếu, kính tặng* are ameliorative while *bố thí, thí* are pejorative. Even in the group of ameliorative words such as *biếu, tặng, kính biếu, kính tặng*, the degree of formality of each word is not the same. *Biếu* is only used when the speaker is in a lower position than the hearer, not used when the speaker is equal or in a higher position than the hearer while *tặng* can be used when the speaker is in a higher or lower position than, or equal to the hearer. *Kính biếu, kính tặng* have a higher degree of formality than *biếu, tặng* so *kính biếu, kính tặng* often occur in written language and rarely in spoken language. Many foreign students cannot understand the semantic nuances of these words so they often make utterances such as:

(1) *Em có món quà này **cho** cô.* (-) (*I have this present to **give** to you.*)

(2) *Em **cho** bà em một cái áo mới.* (-) (*I **give** my grandmom a new dress.*)

In these two utterances, the speaker/hearer uses the word "cho" incorrectly (lack of formality). Utterance (1) should be "*Em có món quà này tặng cô.*" and utterance (2) should be "*Em tặng/biếu bà em một cái áo mới.*"

In the same sense of "loss of life, no expression of life", we have words such as: *chết, mất* (*die/is dead*), *qua đời* (*pass away*), *lên thiên đàng* (*go to heaven*), *về với ông bà* (*return to ancestors*), *về với Chúa* (*return to God*), *toi, toi đời, ngỏm, ngủm,* etc. but the semantic nuances of these words are not the same. *Chết* is neutral in terms of semantic nuances; *mất, qua đời, lên thiên đàng, về với ông bà, về với Chúa* are ameliorative while *toi, toi đời, ngỏm, ngủm* are pejorative terms. In other words, if *mất, qua đời, lên thiên đàng, về với ông bà, về với Chúa* are used in contexts that need an expression of respect; *toi, toi đời, ngỏm, ngủm* are used in contexts where the speaker demonstrates a nuance of disdain; *chết* is used in contexts where the emotions are expressed normally, not showing respect or disdain. That is why when speaking about the death of a relative, a context requiring an expression of affection and respect, we need to use one of the words *mất, qua đời, lên thiên đàng, về với ông bà, về với Chúa* but not the word *chết.* In reality, many foreign students often use the word "chết" in their utterances such as:

(3) *Ông bà ngoại của em chết rồi.* (*My grandparents are dead.*)

(4) *Bạn thân của em chết khi cô ấy mới 20 tuổi.* (*My close friend died when she was 20 years old.*)

Both utterances (3) and (4) use the word *chết* inappropriately. In these contexts, teachers must explain and instruct students to use other words such as *mất, qua đời,* etc. to express affection and love for lost relatives.

When teaching groups of synonyms, teachers should keep in mind some of the following:

1/ Instruct students to classify words in the same field of meaning into groups of words with different semantic nuances: ameliorative, pejorative, neutral.

2/ Instruct participants to find out how to use each word in each group classified based on the level of positivity / negativity of the word, the appropriacy of the word with the communicating role and the object described.

3.2.   *Lexical units with special semantic nuances*

This group includes subtle lexical units (such as unit nouns, personal pronouns) and expressive lexical parts (such as state predicates, combined reduplications, combinations containing high-level indicators, etc.) in Vietnamese. When teaching these units to foreign students, we must pay attention to their shades of meaning so that learners can use these units correctly in specific situations.

3.2.1 Unit noun

On the surface, Vietnamese unit nouns are quite simple about semantic nuances with a tendency to neutralize (94.82% of units with neutral nuances) but when studied comprehensively, we find that semantic nuances of this category contain many interesting points. "Among them, it is remarkable to discover that 53 unit nouns (approximately

7.85% of all unit nouns) may alter their shades of meaning in certain sets of contexts. Some units have an unusual combining ability and some have unusual combining processes." (Tang Thi Tuyet Mai, 2019: 234).

When teaching Vietnamese unit nouns to foreign students, teachers must ask students to answer the following questions:

1/ Does this case need to use Vietnamese unit nouns? If so, which unit noun should be used?

2/ In which other contexts can this unit noun be used?

3/ In other contexts, does the semantic nuance of this unit noun change? If yes, how will it change?

For example, many people think that *kẻ₂*[1] is a pejorative unit noun because they can say: *kẻ ăn cắp, kẻ ăn trộm* (*a thief*), *kẻ xấu* (*a bad person*), etc. In fact, it is not so. The phrases *kẻ ăn cắp, kẻ ăn trộm* (*a thief*), *kẻ xấu* (*a bad person*), etc. are considered negative because of pejorative elements behind *kẻ* (*ăn cắp, ăn trộm, xấu…*). *Kẻ* is a neutral unit noun because we can make utterances such as *kẻ anh hùng* (*the hero*), *kẻ ở người đi* (*one leaves while another stays*), etc. (see also Hoang Dung, 2011 and Hoang Dung, Tang Thi Tuyet Mai, 2011).

When we teach unit nouns *bầy* (*herd*), *đám* (*horde*), *đàn₄, mớ₁, nắmII* (*flock, group*) to foreign students, we must show that these words are initially neutral but later changed their shades of meaning to pejorative in certain contexts.

For example, *bầy, đàn₄* (*the herd/flock*), which is a crowd of animals that live together (*bầy chim* (*flock of birds*), *bầy gia súc* (*herds of cattle*), *bầy đàn* (*herd/flock*), *bầy dê* (*herd of goats*), *đàn gà* (*a flock of chickens*), *đàn kiến* (*an army of ants*), *đàn gia súc* (*a herd of cattles*), etc.) and have neutral nuances, but when used to refer to a crowd of people, these words are pejorative (*bầy người, đàn công tử…*)[2]. However, the combinations *bầy trẻ, bầy con nít* have neutral nuances, that is they do not have the nuance of contempt but the intimate nuances[3].

Similarly, *đám* has a neutral semantic nuance in combinations to refer to a collection of things (*đám cây* (*a shrub of trees*), *đám cỏ* (*a section of grass*), etc.); a land unit (*đám đất* (*a portion of land*), *đám ruộng* (*a field*), etc.) or a crowd of people in events (*đám ma*

---

[1] The written form of these words are copied from the material *Vietnamese dictionary* edited by Hoàng Phê (2002). All definitions without sources in the article are extracted from this dictionary.

[2] Why is there such transformation in the semantic nuance? It is realized that *bầy, đàn₄* are only used to talk about animals. Therefore, it is easy to recognize the subtlety in the use of words here: Using words for animals to refer to humans implies disdain, disrespect.

[3] *Bầy* still keeps a neutral semantic nuances because these combinations are often used with intimate nuance in contexts where the speaker/writer is senior (in terms of age, status, etc.) compared to subjects mentioned. Therefore, in this case, the semantic nuance is an issue of pragmatics.

(*a funeral*)*, đám cưới* (*a wedding*)*, đám lễ* (*a ritual*), etc.). However, in combinations to refer to humans, the semantic nuances of *đám* transform. In combinations like *đám trẻ* (*a group of children*)*, đám học sinh* (*a group of students*)*, đám con gái* (*a group of girls*)*, đám con trai* (*a group of boys*)*, đám bạn bè* (*a gang of friends*), etc., the nuances of *đám* can be of disdain or intimacy. In combinations *đám lính, đám người, đám quân, đám quan lại, đám hào kiệt*, etc., *đám* can have a nuance of disdain used by the speaker/writer to refer to people that they do not have an intimate relationship with[4].

As mentioned, it is clear that although native speakers may not analyze and explain the reasons for the semantic nuance change of these unit nouns, they can still use them exactly in certain situations. Conversely, if foreigners do not understand the reasons for the semantic nuance change of these unit nouns, they may not use these words correctly in specific cases.

In addition, for the neutral unit nouns in all contexts, we may encounter many unusual combined processes to create idiomatic combinations such as: *nửa mùa* (*nửa1*) (*half-baked*)*, làng chơi* (*làng*) (*playboy*)*, lời ong tiếng ve, lời qua tiếng lại, lời ra tiếng vào* (*lời2*) (*rumour*)*, lỗ hổng* (*lỗ1*) (*loose end*)*, trái ngọt, trái đắng* (*trái1*) (*results*), etc. If the teacher and the compiler of the Vietnamese textbook for foreigners can exploit this corpus, lectures will surely be much more vivid.

3.2.2 The combination of a state predicate and a high-level indicator

In Vietnamese, there are many combinations of a state predicate and a high-level indicator. In these combinations, the high-level factor has the effect of multiplying the nature and status that the previous predicate represents. It is clear that the whiteness of *trắng muốt, trắng bệch* is much higher than that of the predicate *trắng* (*white*), or the green level of *xanh mướt, xanh lè* is much higher than that of the predicate *xanh* (*green*).

In the combination of a neutral state predicate and a high-level factor, the factor behind the state predicate determines the semantic nuance of the combination. *Trắng* (*white*) or *xanh* (*green*) are just words of color and do not imply any evaluation, meaning that they are completely neutral on the semantic nuance. Therefore, the semantic nuance of *trắng bệch, trắng muốt, xanh lè, xanh mướt* is due to the factors of high-level *bệch, muốt, lè, mướt*. However, in the combination of an ameliorative / pejorative state predicate and a neutral high-level indicator, it is the state predicate that determines the semantic nuance of the combination. This relates to the priority order of semantic nuances in determining the semantic nuance of the combination (see also Hoang Dung, Tang Thi Tuyet Mai, 2011).

In our survey results, factors following the state predicate can be ameliorative words

---

[4] Especially with attributes with positive meaning (*hào kiệt* (*hero*)), the negative nuance of the whole combination is leveled up. The reason is because there is a contrast here when using a word with negative nuance to refer to a subject with positive nuances.

such as *lịm* (*ngọt lịm*), *láy* (*đen láy*), *lánh* (*đen lánh*), *mởn* (*xanh mởn*), *muốt* (*trắng muốt*), *mướt₁* (*xanh mướt*), *ngát* (*thơm ngát, xanh ngát, tím ngát*), *rượi* (*vàng rượi, mát rượi, sáng rượi*), *thắm* (*xanh thắm, đỏ thắm*), *ươm* (*vàng ươm*), etc.; or pejorative words such as *bệch* (*trắng bệch*), *bợt* (*trắng bợt*), *ị* (*béo ị*), *ịch* (*béo ịch*), *kều* (*cao kều*), *khè* (*vàng khè*), *lè* (*chua lè, xanh lè*), *nhách* (*dai nhách*), *phếch* (*trắng phếch, bạc phếch*), *etc.*; or neutral factors such as *kinh khủng*[5] (*đẹp kinh khủng, xấu kinh khủng*), *dễ sợ* (*đẹp dễ sợ, hay dễ sợ*), etc.

If teachers know how to exploit these combinations to teach students, surely their vocabulary will have a significant increase. The things to keep in mind when teaching this section of vocabulary are:

1/ Teachers guide students to identify whether the combination has an ameliorative or pejorative or neutral nuance. From there, students can use the right word in the context that needs an expression of positive or negative evaluation.

For example, *xanh lè, vàng khè, đỏ lòm, trắng bệch,* etc. are pejorative words and we cannot use them for praising. Conversely, *xanh mướt, xanh ngát, vàng ươm, đỏ thắm, trắng muốt,* etc. are ameliorative words and we cannot use them for criticizing.

2/ Teachers guide students to determine which combinations can be used to talk about which subjects. As a result, students can use the right words for the subjects to describe.

For example, *vàng hoe* is used to describe hair, sun, not to describe ripe rice fields.

3.2.3 Reduplication combination

It can be seen the reduplication combination in Vietnamese is very rich and diverse. These expressive lexical units are very difficult to distinguish for foreign students. Therefore, teachers must focus on the semantic nuances of these units to be able to guide students to use them correctly.

According to our research, each group of state predicates with different semantic nuances will have a tendency to choose for them a kind of added factor with different semantic nuances to create reduplication combinations. The tendency of ameliorative state predicates is to combine with ameliorative factors to create a series of positive reduplication combinations, such as: *chăm* (*chăm chỉ*) (*hard-working*)*, gọn* (*gọn gàng*) (*neat*)*, khoẻ* (*khoẻ khoắn*) (*healthy*)*, lành* (*lành lặn*) (*intact*)*, mịn* (*mịn màng*) (*soft*), etc.[6]

---

[5] *Kinh khủng*, *dễ sợ* are pejorative words but in combinations *đẹp kinh khủng* (*extremely beautiful*), *xấu kinh khủng* (*extremely ugly*), *to kinh khủng* (*extremely huge*), *đẹp dễ sợ* (*so freaking beautiful*), *xấu dễ sợ* (*so freaking ugly*), *to dễ sợ* (*so freaking huge*)*, etc.* these words do not express negative nuance but the nuance of "high degree, so high that it is not easy to withstand" of the "state" it accompanies. In English, we can encounter similar cases – pejorative units can be used as neutral high-level factors, for example, *awfully*, *badly*, *deadly*, *dreadfully*, *terribly, etc.* In combinations *a deadly poison, a deadly enemy…*, *deadly* has a pejorative nuance, but in the context of *to be in deadly haste*, "*deadly*" is entirely neutral.

[6] Cases such as *hay ho*, *hay hớm* (pejoratives) are considered exceptions of this section.

Similarly, pejorative state predicates only combine with negative factors to create pejorative combinations such as *ốm o* (*ốm*) (*flat*), *gầy gò* (*gầy*) (*skinny*), *yếu ớt* (*yếu*) (*weak*), *xấu xí* (*xấu*) (*ugly*), etc. Meanwhile, neutral state predicates can create both ameliorative reduplicatives when combining with ameliorative factors (*vuông vắn* (*squared and neat*), *nhỏ nhắn* (*little and cute*), *cứng cáp* (*strong and firm*), etc.); and pejorative reduplicatives when combining with pejorative factors (*vàng vọt* (*sick*), *xanh xao* (*pale and sick*), *ngắn ngủn* (*too short*), etc.); and neutral reduplicatives when combining with neutral factors (*xa xa* (*far*), *xanh xanh* (*greenish*), *tim tím* (*light purple*), *vàng vàng* (*yellowish*), etc.) (see more Hoang Dung, Tang Thi Tuyet Mai, 2011).

When teaching reduplication combination to foreign students, it is necessary to note the following:

1/ Teachers guide students to identify one reduplication combination with ameliorative, pejorative or neutral semantic nuances. From there, students can use the right word in the context to express a positive or negative attitude.

For example, *vàng vọt, xanh xao, ngắn ngủn, etc.* have pejorative nuances and we cannot use them in contexts that we need to show a positive or neutral attitude. In contrast, *vuông vắn, nhỏ nhắn, cứng cáp, etc.* have ameliorative nuances and cannot be used to express a negative attitude.

2/ Teachers instruct students to classify the reduplication combinations according to the level of increase / decrease of properties compared to the original state predicate.

For example, *xa xa*, *xanh xanh*, *tim tím*, *vàng vàng*, etc. are reduplication combinations with decreasing levels of nature compared to original state predicates; meanwhile, *vuông vắn*, *nhỏ nhắn*, *cứng cáp*, etc. are the reduplication combinations with increasing levels of nature compared to the original state predicates.

4.   Conclusion

When referring to the meaning of lexical units, it is essential that we mention the semantic nuances. The semantic nuance here is an evaluation that can be positive or negative, respectful or disrespectful, ameliorative or pejorative, etc. The semantic nuance has an extremely important role in teaching Vietnamese vocabulary to foreign students, especially groups of synonyms; lexical units that are considered subtle such as unit nouns, personal pronouns, etc. and lexical units with multiple expressive nuances such as state predicates, reduplication combinations, combinations containing high-level indicators, etc. in Vietnamese.

❖ ***Conflict of Interest:*** *Author have no conflict of interest to declare.*

REFERENCES

Cao Xuan Hao, & Hoang Dung. (2005). *A Glossary of English – Vietnamese, Vietnamese – English Linguistic Terms*. Ho Chi Minh City: Social Sciences.

Carter, R., Goddard, A., Reah D., Sanger K. & Maggie, Bowring. (2001). *Working with Texts: A Core Introduction to Language Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Hoang Dung, & Tang Thi Tuyet Mai. (2011). Amelioratives and Pejoratives in Vietnamese. *Language*, *12*, 38-46.

Hoang Dung. (2011). The Extraordinary. *Lexicography and Encyclopedia*, *5*, 52, 76.

Hoang Phe (ed.). (2002). *Vietnamese Dictionary*. Da Nang: Lexicography Center.

Lehtonen, M. (2000). *The Culture Analysis of Texts.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Löbner, S. (2002). *Understanding Semantics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tang Thi Tuyet Mai (2019). Amelioratives and Pejoratives in Vietnamese Unit Nouns. *Vietnamese Studies in Vietnam and Germany – New Contributions to Vietnamese Linguistics*. Hamburg: Publikationen der Hamburger Vietnamistik.

**SẮC THÁI NGỮ NGHĨA CỦA CÁC ĐƠN VỊ TỪ VỰNG TIẾNG VIỆT
VÀ VIỆC GIẢNG DẠY TỪ VỰNG TIẾNG VIỆT CHO NGƯỜI NƯỚC NGOÀI**

Tăng Thị Tuyết Mai

Trường Đại học Sư phạm Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh
Tác giả liên hệ: Tăng Thị Tuyết Mai – Email: maitttu@hcmue.edu.vn

TÓM TẮT

Sắc thái ngữ nghĩa có ý nghĩa đặc biệt quan trọng trong việc giảng dạy từ vựng tiếng Việt cho học viên nước ngoài, đặc biệt là các đơn vị từ vựng vốn được xem là tinh tế và khó phân biệt trong tiếng Việt. Bài viết này bàn về sắc thái tốt nghĩa, xấu nghĩa của các đơn vị từ vựng tiếng Việt đồng thời đề xuất phương pháp khai thác sắc thái tốt nghĩa, xấu nghĩa khi giảng dạy từng bộ phận từ loại cụ thể: từ đồng nghĩa, danh từ đơn vị, từ xưng hô, vị từ trạng thái, kết hợp láy, kết hợp chứa yếu tố chỉ mức độ cao.

Từ khóa: *sắc thái ngữ nghĩa, giảng dạy tiếng Việt, học viên nước ngoài, đơn vị từ vựng.*