Some issues in new research directions on the Vietnamese linguistics

Nguyễn Huy Cẩn (*)

Abstract: *The article brings an updated overview on new research directions on the Vietnamese linguistics in Vietnam in aspects of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, and anthropological linguistics in which some issues that need enforcing for research in the Vietnamese linguistics at present from the angle of scientific information are presented.*

Key words: Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, Pragmatics, Cognitive linguistics, Anthropological linguistics, Vietnamese linguistics.

It can be seen that, with re-awareness of subject of study and reconsideration the viewpoint on distinguishing langue and parole by F.de Saussure and the switch from the objective of "description" into that of "explanation", the modern linguistics has made remarkable progress in its history. We suppose that it is one of crucial reasons basically changing the modern linguistics' face. This was realized rather explicitly in the last decades of the 20th Century - post- structure period in which, the modern linguistics made quite a few achievements in studies on communicative functions, discourse structure, speech acts, relationships of language and mentality, language and society, language and nation, and language and culture, etc., The appearance of such a series of interdisciplinary subjects as: psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and *anthropological linguistics* (linguistic anthropology), etc., and recently, the semantic study has been enhanced, helping bring cognitive linguistics into the world and

(*) Dr., Former staff of Institute of Social Sciences Information

become a movement in the modern linguistics.

Those achievements in the global modern linguistics make influence on the Vietnamese linguistics and boost up the formation of new movements in study.

1. New study directions on the Vietnamese linguistics made their appearance by the end of the 20th Century are on the way for development firstly thanks to requirements in Vietnam. In addition to learning about and presenting theories of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, anthropological linguistics, Vietnamese linguists who pursue these movements also hope to search for new findings in the Vietnamese linguistics although vital achievements in those directions for structurism-oriented studies have been made (Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008). Some newly-announced works which attract public attention such as "Dictionary of the Nom Characters with Quotations and Annotations" by Nguyễn Quang Hồng (See: Nguyễn Quang Hồng, 2014) can be mentioned. This is not only a massive dictionary (with 14,519 Vietnamese syllables and linguistic data extracted from 124 ancient texts written by 9,450 Nôm

characters on 2,323 pages - a much larger corpus extracted and annotated than any previous dictionaries, but also brings certain scientific values in cultural and historical studies of Vietnamese language. The work titled "Methodology and linguistic research methods" by Nguyễn Thiện Giáp (See: Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2012) has systematized crucial aspects of Methodology and linguistic research methods so far and expressed some current issues in the linguistics and interdisciplinary sciences. This work is awarded a prize of "Good books of the year 2014".

2. For interdisciplinary new trends in the Vietnamese linguistics, Vietnamese linguists do not only simply utilize linguistic concepts separated from that of other sciences but also pay attention to apply methods and knowledge in such other sciences as psychology, sociology, ethnography, culturology, epistemology, statistics, particularly in socio-cultural and socio-historical aspects to search for the Vietnamese language and the Vietnamese people's specific traits that are not detected in structuralism-oriented studies. For example, in sociolinguistics, researchers deeply learn about socio-cultural factors influencing on languages' development, regarding the

language planning as social impacts and intervention on linguistic functions (Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2012; 2014). Socio-historical factors play a role in identifying culture - language and though - language of a group of people like one in the research project on "Learning about cultural traits of the Vietnamese's language and thought (in comparison with other peoples)" by Nguyễn Đức Tồn (See: Nguyễn Đức Tồn, 2002). In his later work (Nguyễn Đức Tồn, 2010), the author also analyzed national cultural specific traits of "Categorization and linguistic worldview" in the Vietnamese's thought - language. Socio-historical factors are the origins of individual utterance - speech acqusion and production in the process of children's language formation and development (Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2005).
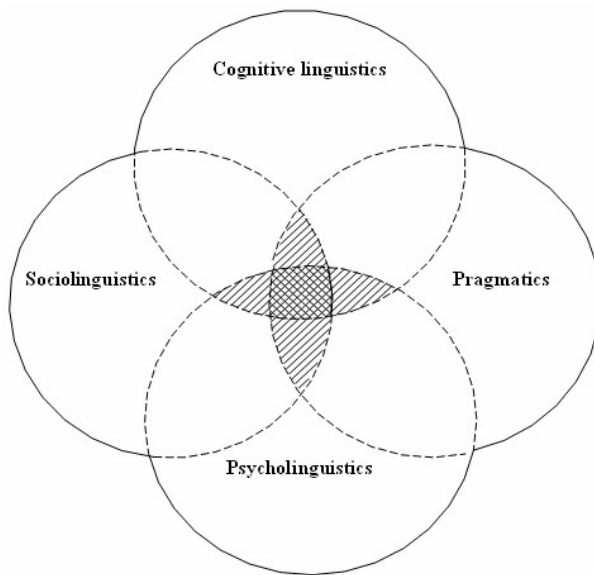
"Cognitive linguistics is regarded our experience-based linguistic approach toward the world and the method we perceive and study about the world (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2014, tr.273). Being directly influenced by the epistemology, studies in this direction attach importance to analyze the awareness's roles in semantic, grammatical units, and build up a map of cognitive Vietnamese language; they are controlled by the Vietnamese language's specific traits and spectrometers in the humankind's linguistics - thought (See: Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008; Lý Toàn Thắng, 2005; Nguyễn Đức Tồn, 2010; Nguyễn Lai, 2001; Trần Quang Cơ, 2009, etc...). With respect of pragmatics, importance is attached to verbal activities and dialogue organization whereas extensive communications contexts (socio-cultural aspect) and confined (contexts) are considered if they directly affect communications types and behavior or not (See: Đỗ Hữu Châu, 2001; Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2014; Nguyễn Đức Dân, 2000;...).

3. It can be seen that the interdisciplinary study trend in the Vietnamese linguistics is also presented in scopes of "overlapping and similarities" for subjects of study, typically in those studies on the Vietnamese's verbal communications. There are different communicative perceptions in each trend, however, in general, communicative purposes, strategies, socio-linguistic, and psycho-linguistic factors are cared about when involving in this process and so is the relationship among subjects, linguistic users in extensive and narrow communicative contexts.

Try imagining overlapping and homogeneous aspects in the

communicative study with the following outline:

In the "overlapping - encroaching" area, the overlapping point (water mark), typical features of those above-mentioned subjects lie in studies of all types of verbal speeches and communicative behavior. Studies have initially showed an overall visual on the Vietnamese's communicative forms.

Nguyễn Văn Khang's sociolinguistic works like: "Sociolinguistics - basic issues" (1998), "Linguistic planning - Macro sociolinguistics" (2003) and recent "Sociolinguistics" (2012), "Linguistic policies and legislation in Vietnam" (2014) are highly valuable works. For the very first time in Vietnam, the author has systematically analyzed aspects of micro sociolinguistic issues, macro sociolinguistic issues, and applied them to study the Vietnamese linguistics. When laying studies on communications in the context of sociolinguistic theory, Nguyễn Văn Khang shows that during the humankind's linguistic socialization, from linguistic competence to communicative one, the critical communicative thing in social language's interactions means the selection of languages, code transfers, and mixture (Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2012). Communication issue is also cared about in some other scopes like: comparative studies between the Vietnamese and other languages and studies on pragmatics (Đỗ Hữu Châu, 2001)... in which, properties and differences in the Vietnamese's communication are analyzed and compared.

With respect of communication and culture, it is worthy to mention Nguyễn Quang's works (2003; 2008) in which the author applied crucial and basic knowledge not only in linguistics but also analyzed common issues in communication and culture, including "non-verbal communication" (Lê Quang Thiêm, 2008). So far, however, we have not seen any specialized works in the Vietnamese linguistics's communication, in which the communicative theory by L. S.

Vygotsky's psychological school is one of noteworthy theories.

4. We mention some anthropological linguistics or "linguistic anthropology" in this document. This is an interdisciplinary science between linguistics and anthropology whose studies need boosting up for studies in Vietnam (See further: Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2008). Anthropological linguistics offers homogeneousness and overlaps with such other interdisciplinary subjects as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, and even pragmatics. "Anthropological linguistics considers both languages and linguistics as a foundation for a sciences on humankind because it provides a connection among biological - cultural - social levels" (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2014, page 409). In Vietnam, Nguyễn Kim Thản is the first person who has ever discussed anthropological linguistics when considering some linguistic - national and linguistic - cultural issues so that later, such other authors as Nguyễn Tài Cẩn, Đỗ Hữu Châu, and Trần Ngọc Thêm, etc., discussed these in studies on linguistics and culturology. Recently, Nguyễn Thiện Giáp's work has comprehensively presented issues in the global anthropological linguistics. The anthropological linguistics's topics in Vietnam like kinship systems, color terms,

metaphors, popular classification (fauna and floral classification system), space - temporal treatments, differentiated gender - social expressions in languages - structures of stories, and linguistic - legendary connection, etc., (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2012, pages 387-399). Among studies on anthropological linguistics in Vietnam, the work by Dương Thị Nụ titled "Semantics of the phrase that means skinship in English and Vietnamese" (2007) and the work titled "General anthropology" by the Faculty of Anthropology, Hồ Chí Minh City's University of Social Sciences and Humanity closely and deeply analyzed phrases that mean skinship system in Vietnamese and compared it with other languages as well as showed the relationship between anthropology and linguistics.

Generally speaking, interdisciplinary subjects have considered languages in a "dynamic" aspect (distinguished with the "static" in the period of structuralism), which means studying languages in the relationships and interrelationships among the humankind, the natural world, and society, in which although there occur some scopes of overlaps, in our opinions, we should not make this subject "merge" with other subjects as proposed by Đỗ Hữu Châu (2001) because they are not only differentiated

in terms of starting points in theoretical basis but also different in any other aspects paid with more attention in the study object.

5. Achievements in interdisciplinary subjects in Vietnam do not only mean a systematic introduction of theories, basic viewpoints in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, anthropological linguistics but also apply these novel and new theories to studying the Vietnamese linguistics.

If in the period with influences made by structuralism, the Vietnamese linguistics tended to depict the Vietnamese language's structure to the extents of phonology, lexis - semantics, gramma and determine the Vietnamese language's structural specific traits based on searching for relationships among linguistic units without attaching too much importance to factors in linguistic and verbal activities. This "static" study orientation has almost been "predestined". None of any possible theories has not appeared yet to basically change common viewpoints in the Vietnamese linguistics such as: determining basic units in the grammatical, lexis, semantic systems, syllable and phrase structure. These are specific traits in the Vietnamese linguistics, an isolating and syllablism language - in terms of functional

grammar and the Vietnamese linguistics's history (Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008).

However, new trend-oriented studies of the Vietnamese linguistics during the post-restructure period pay attention to external factors in addition to the structure system itself and consider these factors as integral components in the language system. Therefore, findings and contributions to the Vietnamese linguistics have been made. Social and community-related factors like speaking, gender, linguistic policies, and recent linguistic "ecology" have been extensively and intensively studied by Nguyễn Văn Khang and some other researchers in order to explore specific traits and changes in the Vietnamese linguistics. Through the study, Nguyễn Văn Khang shows the modern society's strong development has promoted changes and development in the Vietnamese linguistics. As long as there is the formation and division of social sections (differentiation with respects of economic - cultural, political - social aspects, etc.,), social dialects will appear, which shall directly influence changes and development in the Vietnamese linguistics (Nguyễn Văn Khang, 2012).

Related to verbal language learnt by Vietnamese children, studies by Nguyễn Huy Cẩn (publicized locally

and abroad) have reflected the mechanism of utteracne - speech acquisition and production. They are built up and developed on "Basis structures (with respects of phonology, semantics, and syntax structures)" through successive development phases in the connection with the development of common psychological aspects and children's object-oriented features (for mother-tongue and coummunicative context, social, and natural environments) (Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2001; 2005).

In the work of "Cognitive linguistics: From theories to the reality of the Vietnamese linguistics" (See: Lý Toàn Thắng, 2005), Lý Toàn Thắng has set up a critical milestone to commence a new study orientation in Vietnam. The author has built up a spacial cognitive model - a crucial aspect in the map of linguistic cognition and two reflective modes with a "human-centered". The models express ways that the Vietnamese take a principle of "conceptualisation and categorization" linguistic worldview (Lý Toàn Thắng, 2001; 2005; Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008). Issues in the relationships of languages - thought and languages - culture have been cared about by the Vietnamese linguists. Those relationships have made crucial achievements in the Vietnamese linguistics (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 2014,

pages 325-334, 381-386). Recently, those issues have been clarified in research works by Nguyễn Đức Tồn (Nguyễn Đức Tồn, 2002; 2010).

Therefore, together with the Vietnamese-related achievements made in the previous period, theoretical achievements, application to current studies on languages and the Vietnamese linguistics in Vietnam, new trend-oriented studies as mentioned above by such authors as: Nguyễn Quang Hồng, Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, Nguyễn Văn Khang, Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, Nguyễn Đức Tồn, Lý Toàn Thắng, Nguyễn Quang, and Dương Thị Nụ, etc., have made contributions to the findings in those rules that are both popular and distinctive in the modern Vietnamese language.

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With initial achievements in the Vietnamese linguistics's new study orientations, it can be said that the Vietnamese linguistics in Vietnam now has made steps of integration into the development of the world linguistics, although some aspects have been left behind up to some decades. At present, it is essential to develop such interdisciplinary and highly applicable subjects as neurolinguistics and linguistic pathologies (references can be gained

from the above-mentioned Ministry-level research project (Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008), the part realized by Prof. Nguyễn Văn Lợi, PhD), the Vietnamese linguistics with Information Technology (refer to the work by Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008), the part realized by Assoc. Prof. Vũ Kim Bảng, PhD), linguistics with language teaching (refer to the work by Nguyễn Huy Cẩn, 2007-2008), the part realized by Assoc. Prof. Vũ Thị Thanh Hương, PhD) ❑

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