The Phenomenon of Expletive Infixation in Vietnamese Language From the Perspective of Pragmatics

Nguyen Vi Thong
Dalat University, 01 Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Dalat, Vietnam

Nguyen Hoang Nhat Khanh
Dalat University, 01 Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Dalat, Vietnam

Nguyen Tat Thang
Dalat University, 01 Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Dalat, Vietnam

Nguyen Hoang Nhat Quyen
Dalat University, 01 Phu Dong Thien Vuong, Dalat, Vietnam

Tran Tin Nghi
Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract—Vietnamese has to date been considered to be a language without infixation. This study is an attempt to change that notion. Infixation does exist in the Vietnamese language, but in restricted discoursal and social contexts. Our analysis shows that infixes have pragmatic functions and convey one of three implications. They can be used to (1) to express a complaint, (2) to express disagreement, or (3) to enhance a compliment. For each pragmatic purpose, the social context must be considered so that offensiveness and impoliteness can be avoided. Our results reveal that the majority of the Vietnamese words containing the infix vào chá express complaints and that vào chá is most often inserted into nouns. This study provides Vietnamese language teachers, learners, and translators with an in-depth understanding of the Vietnamese infix vào chá, as added into base words in certain styles of language play.

Index Terms—infixation, Vietnamese, expletive, social context, pragmatics, infix

I. INTRODUCTION

Infixation is not only a phenomenon of linguistics but also an expression of culture. Ultan (1975) claimed that infixes seem to be less familiar to students of linguistics than prefixes and suffixes even though all three belong to the phenomenon of affixation. According to Yu (2003, p. 2), infix can be defined as “an overt continuous morph that appears within a derived discontinuous morph that exists in a continuous form independent of the infixed form, and the individual parts of this resultant discontinuous morph must not be continuous morphs themselves.” More succinctly, Mattiello (2013, pp. 186-187) defined infixation as a process in which an affix (infix) is inserted in the middle of a word. This description implies that infixes are distinct from other affixes in the way that they stand in the body of a base word. Mattiello (2013, p. 186) also reported that in some Indo-European and Austronesian languages, such as Greek and Atayal, infixes have important grammatical functions, whereas English has infixes “only within extra-grammatical morphology.” In other words, infixes in English, for example, bloody in abso-bloody-lutely and diddly in ac-diddly-action, are employed mostly as expressive expletives for the purpose of additional emphasis.

Beljan (2015) stressed that infixation is a process that is not easy to describe due to its unpredictability and irregularity. As explained by Mattiello (2013), in most cases infixes function as intensifiers or emotive stress amplifiers. This implies that in English infixation serves a stylistic purpose. Thus, no difference is found between important and im-bloody-portant, or violin and vio-ma-lin. From these two examples, the only change that infixation conveys to the new word is related to its pragmatic meaning; in other words, this is a form of language play. It can also be seen from the examples that the infix does not change the grammatical category of the word or its meaning. Hence, after the infix -bloody- is inserted in the adjective important, im-bloody-portant still remains an adjective with the same semantic meaning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW
A. A Bird’s-eye View of Infixation Across Languages

As categorized by Beljan (2015), there are four relevant types of infixation in English: expletive infixation, diddy-infixation, Homeric infixation, and hip-hop iz-infixation.

It is widely known that expletive infixation is used most frequently in the English-speaking community. Expletive infixation is defined by Beljan (2015) as the process of inserting an expletive or a profanity within a word with the purpose of emphasis and intensification. Moreover, Zwicky and Pullum (1987, p. 7) concluded that expletive infixation has “clear applicability to phrases alongside words” and “highly expressive colloquial effect.” Beljan (2015) further observed that expletives are a phenomenon of both morphology and phonology. The following examples from McCarthy (1982) provide evidence for this case.

(1) English expletive infixation (McCarthy, 1982)

together    to-bloody-gether
advónce     ad-bloody-vance
Bhówáni    Bho-bloody-wani
perháps    per-bloody-haps
enough    e-bloody-nough
imólórtant    im-fuckin-portant
Kalámażóó    Kalama-fuckin-zoo
Tatamágóucheé    Tatama-fuckin-gouchée
Winnípesáúkee    Winnipe-fuckin-saukee

(Yu, 2003, p. 6)

Regarding these examples, Zwicky and Pullum (1987) listed the most frequently used expletives in English as bloody, blooming, frigging, f***ing, (god)damn, pissing, sodding, etc. As can be observed from examples (1) above, the position of the insertion of an infix into a word depends on the stress pattern of the word. It can clearly be seen that the expletive occurs prior to the stressed syllable. This observation argues against the claim that infixation in English is unpredictable and irregular (Mattiello, 2013).

Considered as a form of expletive infixation, diddy-infixation is actually a novel language game since “it shares with other language games the characteristic of being easily generalized by speakers to be applied to a variety of environments” (Elfner & Kimper, 2008, p. 151).

(2) Canonical examples

čáction    ac-diddly-ácction
múrdér     mur-diddly-órder
órder      or-diddly-órder
welcáome    wel-diddly-élcome
órder      diddly-órder
welcáome    diddly-wé lcome
órder      diddly-órder

(Elfner & Kimper, 2008, p. 151)

It is observed from example (2) that “the process involves infixation of the nonsense word diddly into a base word with initial stress as well as a reduplication of the rhyme and the stressed syllable” (Elfner & Kimper, 2008, p. 151). Elfner and Kimper also explained that placing the infix –diddly– within the base with initial stress causes difficulties for stress assignment; therefore, the role of reduplication in these examples is to “allow the position of stress to remain faithful to its base form” (Elfner & Kimper, 2008, p. 151).

Popularized by the television show, The Simpsons, the Homeric infixation or ma-infixation has recently become common in vernacular American English (Mattiello, 2013). The process is simply understood as the insertion of the infix –ma– into words.

(3) The Simpsons example

Homer: Well, honey, what do you like? Tuba-ma-ba? Oba-ma-bo? That one? Saxa-ma-phone?
Homer: A hundred bucks? For a comic book? Who drew it, Micha-ma-langelo?

(Yu, 2003, p. 174)

Yu (2003) states that the main purpose of ma-infixation is humor. Yu also noted that the “meaning of this construction indicates roughly attitudes of sarcasm and distastefulness, although, it can also be used as a form of language play” (Yu, 2003, p. 174). Mattiello (2013) observed that Homeric infixation can be applied to words regardless of their grammatical categories, for example, noun (e.g., tele-ma-phone, vio-ma-lin), adjective (e.g., wonder-ma-ful), verb (e.g., underest-ma-mate), participle (e.g., unsub-ma-stantiated), or even place/personal/river names (e.g., Ala-ma-bama, Micha-ma-langelo, Missi-ma-sippi).

The final infixation that can be found in English is called iz-infixation. This phenomenon is derived from the American hip-hop community.

(4) Lyrics example

I'm still standin' strizong (strong)
And waitin' on my thrizone (throne)
And live for the dizzay (day) that God calls me hizome (home)
Until then I’ll rizzoam (roam), the face of the Izzerth (Earth)
And shoot for the stizars (stars), on days of my bizzerth (birth)
—Playa Fly, “N God We Trust”
(from Original Hip-Hop Lyrics Archive)

Example (4) shows that the iz-infix is inserted before the stressed vowel. Therefore, if the word is monosyllabic, -iz- occurs between the onset and the nucleus, for example, str-iz-ong. If the word is disyllabic, -iz- occurs before the stressed vowels, as in G-iz-ogle and beh-iz-ave (Mattiello, 2013). Mattiello also states that iz-infixation rarely occurs in words that have more than two syllables.

From these four types of infixation in English, it can be concluded that infixation is a process involving both morphology and phonology. Infixation does not have any grammatical function, so it does not affect the grammatical category of the infixed word. However, it is considered a case of language play when it indicates certain stylistic and pragmatic meanings.

In some languages, however, infixation can function as a grammatical process, which means that the infix can change the grammatical category of the word.

(5) Uradhi pluractional reduplication

| Base | Reduplication | Meaning   |
|------|---------------|-----------|
| willi | willili       | ‘run’     |
| arja  | agaga         | ‘dig’     |
| ipijii| ipipiiji      | ‘swim’    |
| wamp  | wampampa      | ‘float’   |
| iky   | iikkiya       | ‘speak’   |

Uradhi is a dialect of the Pama-Nyungan language in which the reduplicant copies the morphological and/or phonological unit of the base. In this language, pluractionality is marked by (C)CV reduplication, as shown in example (5). This implies that the infix changes the numeric feature of the base from singular to plural.

In other languages, infixation can result in changes in the part of speech of the infixed word.

(6) Mlabri nominalization (Rischel, 1995, p. 85).

| Base | Infixed | Meaning          |
|------|---------|------------------|
| guh  | grnuh   | ‘flames’         |
| kap  | krnap   | ‘singing, song’  |
| peelh| prneelh | ‘a broom’        |
| tek  | trnek   | ‘a hammer’       |
| kwel | krwel   | ‘spiral’         |
| gla? | grla?   | ‘speech, words’  |
| pluut| prluut  | ‘layer’          |
| klaap| kralap  | ‘forceps of split bamboo’ |
| gweec| grweec  | ‘finger’         |
| c. chreet | chrrett | ‘a comb’ |

In all cases of example (6), the verbs become nouns after infixation, as also happens in the Mon-Khmer language. However, the process follows certain phonological rules. As in (6a), if the stem begins with a single consonant, the infix –rn– occurs right after that consonant. If the stem begins with two consonants, the infix –r– is used instead and inserted between the two consonants (6b). In the case of (6c), when the stem contains a rhotic in the initial consonants, the allomorph –n– is employed and inserted before the rhotic.

It can be seen from the literature review that infixation exists in many dialects of languages. It plays different roles in each dialect. As native speakers of Vietnamese, the authors of this study attempt to examine the phenomenon of infixation in Vietnamese, which has been overlooked. Based on our observations, Vietnamese infixation is common in literary works and daily conversations. However, it has never been considered in an academic way; in other words, there has been no study on infixation in the Vietnamese language.

B. Vietnamese Morphology and Term of Affixation

As addressed many years ago by Thompson (1963), Vietnamese is a language that appears to be devoid of morphology; as a result, the argument about what constitutes a “word” has been continuously raised by linguists. Noyer (1998) classified Vietnamese as a canonically “isolating” language. It is obvious that Vietnamese lacks morphological markings for case, gender, number, and tense; thus, it has no finite/nonfinite distinction. A Vietnamese word may consist of a single morpheme or more than one morpheme. Polymorphemic words are either compound words or words consisting of stems plus affixes or reduplicants. As estimated in Nguyen (1976), roughly seven-tenths of Vietnamese dictionary entries are idiomatic polysyllabic collocations. Consider the following examples.

(7) Vietnamese morphology
common infixes and infix clusters are examined in this study, as shown in Table 1. Infixes in Vietnamese function as expletives and can be considered aspects of language play or style. The four most important observations are made as follows: (1) infixation does not change the grammatical category or literal meaning of the infixed word. Therefore, like English, Vietnamese infixes are not used in formal contexts; (2) the infixation does not change the grammatical category or literal meaning of the infixed word; (3) infixes in Vietnamese maintain their meaning in colloquial contexts; (4) infixes in Vietnamese can be used to create new words.

### A. Expletive Affixation in Vietnamese

As stated previously, infixation in Vietnamese is commonly used in less formal contexts, such as movies, literature, and daily conversations. It is true that infixes do not have any grammatical or semantic function with regard to the stem; the infixation does not change the grammatical category or literal meaning of the infixed word. Therefore, like English, infixes in Vietnamese can be considered aspects of language play or style. The four most common infixes and infix clusters are examined in this study, as shown in Table 1.

| Vietnamese word | English gloss | Phonological form | Morphological form |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------|
| (a) mưa | "rain" | monosyllabic | monomorphemic |
| (b) bếp núc | "kitchen chores" | disyllabic | monomorphemic |
| (c) nhà tắm | "bathroom" | disyllabic | bimorphemic |
| (d) vội vội vàng vàng | "hurry-scurry" | polysyllabic | polymorphemic (reduplicative) |

In example (7a), the word mưa has only one syllable and one morpheme. Example (7b) is a case of a word that has two syllables but only one morpheme, since, if we separate this word into two morphemes, núc conveys no meaning. On the other hand, (7c) shows a word that is both disyllabic and bimorphemic, since both morphemes have their own meaning. In this example, nhà means house and tắm means to take a shower. Thus, when they are combined, the meaning of the compound word can be understood as "a house (a room) where we can take a bath." Example (7d) is an example of reduplication, which is very common in Vietnamese. The word contains more than two syllables and morphemes.

As analyzed in Noyer (1998), examples (7b) and (7c) can be categorized as two types of collocations: separable collocations and inseparable collocations, respectively. For example, bếp núc can be separated by the "idiom" với, which means and, an overt conjunction. However, Noyer did not indicate the purpose of this linguistic phenomenon. In the case of (7c), it is claimed in Noyer (1998) that the word cannot be separated by any element. As native Vietnamese speakers, the authors of this study would argue against these two notions of Noyer. First, Noyer only used the term "idiom" in a general way to describe the function of với, which in this paper is argued to be an infix. Second, the word nhà tắm in example (7c) can be separated by an infix, as will be demonstrated in Section 4.

It is widely known that the Vietnamese language has prefixes and suffixes. These two phenomena of affixation are taught and discussed in any Vietnamese language teaching program. The following examples provide some cases of affixation in Vietnamese.

(8) Vietnamese affixation

| Prefix/suffix | English gloss | Example |
|---------------|--------------|---------|
| (a) bán- | "half, semi-") | bán thân (body): a body half (upper/lower) |
| (b) phi- | "non-") | phi pháp (law): illegal |
| (c) -hóa | "-ize, -fy") | phi lợi nhuận (profit): non-profited |
| (d) -giă | "profession, occupation") | phi hành (travelling to outer space) gia: astronaut |

It can be seen from these examples that prefixation and suffixation in Vietnamese are expressed very clearly. They each have their own function in grammar and semantics. Consider example (8a). The stem is thân, meaning body, which is a noun. After prefixation, the new word bán thân changes the meaning of its stem and grammatical category to become an adjective. The same pattern can be found in the remaining examples.

As mentioned above, the authors’ observation is that Vietnamese language does have infixation, but somehow the phenomenon has been ignored and never closely examined by linguists. The present paper is an attempt to give the phenomenon academic consideration. The following sections provide an analysis of why the issue is worthy of study.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research Design

This research mainly used a qualitative approach, but a quantitative method was also used. Examples of Vietnamese infixations were collected from social media and websites to form a dataset.

#### B. Data Analysis

After the data were collected, the samples were categorized into groups. The groups were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the size of each group was expressed as a percentage.

### IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Expletive Affixation in Vietnamese

As stated previously, infixation in Vietnamese is commonly used in less formal contexts, such as movies, literature, and daily conversations. It is true that infixes do not have any grammatical or semantic function with regard to the stem; the infixation does not change the grammatical category or literal meaning of the infixed word. Therefore, like English, infixes in Vietnamese function as expletives and can be considered aspects of language play or style. The four most common infixes and infix clusters are examined in this study, as shown in Table 1.
In Vietnamese, the function of intonation is expressive. It adds to the cognitive meaning of the words in the utterance and indicates the attitude and emotion of the speaker. Moreover, the system of intonation, pause, and tone of voice can help to deepen understanding of speech. Diacritics are used to indicate the tones of Vietnamese. The tone markings are a (no mark), â, á, à, â, and ă. They can be separated into two groups according to register: a, â, ă are realized in a higher register while à, á, ă are realized in a lower one. Therefore, of the four Vietnamese infixes that can be inserted into a word, the infix ă is realized in a higher register and infixes với cha, với-cái gi, and với cha-cái gi are realized in a lower one.

Table 1 shows that an infix can be used as a single infix (1 & 2) that is inserted into the base, or it can be combined with other suffixes (3 & 4) to make up a cluster that is added to the stem. As the English gloss shows, the infixes have no clear “real” meanings. This means that these infixes are nonsense in terms of semantics, especially when they occur in collocations or clusters. The following examples show that infixes in Vietnamese are expletives. It should be noted here that all the examples of infixation in Vietnamese in this study were assessed by the first author, who is a native Vietnamese speaker. The data were then discussed with three other Vietnamese linguists to ensure acceptability.

Let us take a look at the following examples.

Example (5) clearly demonstrates the phenomenon of infixation in Vietnamese. It can be observed that the infixes can be added in words with upwards of two syllables, regardless of the number of morphemes or grammatical categories. Explicitly, whether the word is monomorphic or bimorphemic does not affect the use of infixes. One more argument to show that infixes in Vietnamese are expletives is that they do not change the grammatical category of the word.

| Stem | English gloss | Stem description | Infixed word |
|------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| (5a) câu phè | coffee | Noun/disyllabic/ monomorphemic | câu vật phê |
| (5b) vất vả | tough/ difficult + reduplicant | Adj/disyllabic/ monomorphemic | vất với vả |
| (5c) học hành | study + practice (meaning to study) | Verb/disyllabic/ bimorphemic | học với hành |
| (5d) tâm tập | bathe + reduplicant | Verb/disyllabic/ monomorphemic | tâm với tập |
| (5e) Sô coś la | chocolate | Noun/trisyllabic/ monomorphemic | sô với cõ la |

In Vietnamese, the tone markings are a (no mark), â, á, à, â, and ă. They can be separated into two groups according to register: a, â, ă are realized in a higher register while à, á, ă are realized in a lower one. Therefore, of the four Vietnamese infixes that can be inserted into a word, the infix với is realized in a higher register and infixes với cha, với-cái gi, and với cha-cái gi are realized in a lower one.
For example, a girl is walking on the street and a boy runs into her. She yells out in pain: “Trời ơi! Đi với đừng!”(Bold letters indicate primary stress.) This example shows that the Vietnamese infix với expresses anger. Moreover, đi với đừng makes up a sequence a-á-á at a fairly high level because anger is expressed by a very high register and marked by a fast tempo.

From this evidence, it can be inferred that infixation in Vietnamese is very flexible and can be applied in many cases. As with English, infixation in Vietnamese has certain pragmatic implications that will be discussed in the next section along with the contexts for its use.

B. Vietnamese Infixation from a Pragmatic Perspective

The possibility of infixation allows us to note what the speaker’s attitude is, which means that infixes in Vietnamese have a pragmatic meaning or play a pragmatic role.

The use of infixes depends greatly on the setting of the discourse. In particular, infixes are not used in contexts with a high level of formality. This means that social factors should be considered in the use of infixes. It is consciously understood by Vietnamese people that infixation can only be employed in certain situations and not in a spontaneous way. The issue implies that infixes do have certain pragmatic and social functions that show the user’s language style.

In this study, the pragmatic functions of infixes are categorized into three groups by purpose: (1) to express a complaint, (2) to express disagreement, and (3) to enhance a compliment.

1. Complaint

Infixes are mainly used in Vietnamese to express negative attitudes. Infixation is a type of language play in which users emphasize their ideas or opinions. The most common use of infixes is to express a complaint. Consider the following example and its context.

(7) A mother is talking to her son.

Mother: Học với hành cha ra gì?
What a bad child!
Your study habits are really poor!

(8) Two friends are talking to each other.

Person 1: Thời với cha biết cái gì mà như chả rõ?
The weather is as hot as fire.

Example (7) shows the pragmatic function of infixes in Vietnamese. By inserting the infix into a base, we can clearly grasp the implication that the mother is complaining about her son’s performance. This can be seen as an interesting linguistic phenomenon that can rarely be found in other languages. It should be noted that the context for using infixes in complaints is very limited. There should be a certain power relationship between the people involved. Infixes can only be used by people with a higher social status or familial relationship, or among people with the same social status. Those who are younger or of lower social status should be very careful not to use infixes with elderly people or people with higher status; otherwise, it could be considered offensive.

In example (8), the conversation takes place between two friends. This is slightly different from the previous example in that the speaker is trying to judge a subjective entity. It has no purpose to blame or offend on any subjective matter. In this case, without the infixation, the sentence already has its own implication of complaining about the weather. The inserted infix cluster emphasizes the level of seriousness of the matter. In other words, the infixation makes the complaint stronger. In this case, the sentence could be uttered by a son to his mother without offense.

Therefore, the implication of infixation can vary in different social contexts. Even though infixes show complaints, their use still depends upon the target of the complaint. This phenomenon requires Vietnamese learners to have a solid knowledge and understanding of the language.

2. Disagreement

Another interesting use of infixation in Vietnamese is to express disagreement without adding any structures of negation. Consider the following examples.

(9) A son is talking to his mother.

Son: Mẹ cho con xin ít tiền nhé!
Could you give me more money, Mom?

Mother: Tiền với bạc cái gì.
Money INF coin SUFFIX you spend much so already
No way! You have spent so much already.

(10) Two friends are talking to each other.

Person 1: Đị uống cà phê không?
Wanna go to the café?

Person 2: Cà với cha phê.
Bảng bàn rứa.
Therefore, the results of this research were only based on 146 samples of various online sources, including Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Forum, online news, online conversations, short stories, and other websites. The dataset in this study was obtained from these various online sources. The data specific to this research were collected for this study. Descriptive statistics were calculated and the results were expressed as percentages.

The researchers collected 165 samples of infixations. The data consist of 4 samples of với, 146 samples of với cha, 13 samples of với-cáì gì, and 2 samples of với cha-cáì gì. The research focused on analyzing the với cha sample data because mostly với cha samples were collected. Descriptive statistics were calculated and the results were expressed as percentages.

The researchers have collected the data of the actual process with 4 samples of với, 146 samples of với cha, 13 samples of với-cáì gì and 2 samples of với cha-cáì gì. Despite being rarely used in formal writing, Vietnamese infix can be heard and used in colloquial language, daily conversations, short stories, news online, and social networks nowadays. In this study, the researchers focused on analyzing the data of với cha samples which were handled using descriptive statistics expressed as a percentage because với cha samples were collected the most.

The data set used in this study were obtained from different online sources. The data specific to this research were collected from Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Flickr, Forum, news online, story online and other websites. The number of samples found was 165, within which 146 were identified as eligible for sample of với cha. Therefore, the results of this research were only based on 146 samples of với cha.

Hereafter Table 2 lists some Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha collected for this study.

3. Enhancement of a Compliment

Fortunately, infixation in Vietnamese conveys not only negative implications, but can convey a positive implication as well. Let us consider the following example.

Example (11) illustrates how infixation is used to enhance a certain positive attitude toward a target object. It can be seen that, without the infixation, the sentence itself already has the implication of a compliment; however, the occurrence of the infix helps enhance the compliment. This means that the infix helps emphasize the positive meaning of the stem. In this case, the infix can be used to express a positive attitude toward those who are of higher social status, but only in informal settings. However, –vòi– is the only infix that can be used to imply enhancement. The other infixes shown in (11’) are inappropriate for this purpose, which indicates that infixation is not flexible for this usage.

4. Quantitative Analysis

Despite being rarely used in formal writing, Vietnamese infixes can be heard in colloquial language, daily conversations, short stories, online news, and social networks nowadays. The dataset in this study was obtained from various online sources, including Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr, Forum, online news, online stories, and other websites. The researchers collected 165 samples of infixations. The data consist of 4 samples of với, 146 samples of với cha, 13 samples of với-cáì gì, and 2 samples of với cha-cáì gì. The research focused on analyzing the với cha sample data because mostly với cha samples were collected. Descriptive statistics were calculated and the results were expressed as percentages.

The researchers have collected the data of the actual process with 4 samples of với, 146 samples of với cha, 13 samples of với-cáì gì and 2 samples of với cha-cáì gì. Despite being rarely used in formal writing, Vietnamese infix can be heard and used in colloquial language, daily conversations, short stories, news online, and social networks nowadays. In this study, the researchers focused on analyzing the data of với cha samples which were handled using descriptive statistics expressed as a percentage because với cha samples were collected the most.

The data set used in this study were obtained from different online sources. The data specific to this research were collected from Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, Flickr, Forum, news online, story online and other websites. The number of samples found was 165, within which 146 were identified as eligible for sample of với cha. Therefore, the results of this research were only based on 146 samples of với cha.

Hereafter Table 2 lists some Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha collected for this study.

| Vietnamese Word | English Translation | Example |
|----------------|---------------------|---------|
| với | with | Tôi muốn gặp lại bạn với. (I want to meet you with.) |
| với cha | with father | Tôi muốn gặp lại bạn với cha. (I want to meet you with father.) |
| với-cáì gì | with what | Tôi muốn gặp lại bạn với-cáì gì. (I want to meet you with what.) |
| với cha-cáì gì | with father what | Tôi muốn gặp lại bạn với cha-cáì gì. (I want to meet you with father what.) |
When the Vietnamese infix với cha is inserted into a word stem, the original meaning of the word generally does not change. However, với cha influences the listener’s emotions and expresses the speaker’s attitude in a particular rhetorical situation. As discussed above, với cha can convey one of three implications in the infixed words: (1) to express complaint, (2) to express disagreement, or (3) to enhance a compliment. Figure 1 illustrates the frequency with which với cha is used to convey each implication in infixed words. Of 146 Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha, 80.14% express a complaint, 10.96% express disagreement, and 8.90% enhance a compliment.

As can be seen from the pie chart in Figure 1, the majority of the Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha are used to express complaints. Many people often post their status on Facebook to express a negative attitude toward some topic. For example, thì với cha cười shows the bad feeling of not getting good exam results. After complaining, their mental state may improve when their friends comment to encourage them. In contrast, only 10.96% of Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha express disagreement. Most of them include an expression of refusal and a reason. For example, the sentence, “An với cha uống đi tâm này nữa, tre rơi,” expresses disagreement very clearly, and the reason for it is late time. However, people can suffer from a sense of disagreement. Why are they so bothered by good friends refusing their requests or declining their invitations posted on Facebook? Why does it ruin their mood? Why would something so seemingly insignificant make them feel angry with their friends and relatives? The reason is that many people fear disagreement. If they have experienced it once or a few times, they probably remember how much it hurt and worry about it happening again. Finally, a minority of usages (8.90%) enhanced a compliment. The example, “Xin với cha đẹp như già dinh chỉ thì ai chẳng thích chứ ạ,” illustrates how the Vietnamese infix với cha is used to enhance a positive attitude toward già dinh chỉ. Thus, the infix với cha helps enhance a compliment. This example is from a comment on Facebook by a fan of a famous singer. This means that the infix với cha can be used to express positive attitudes toward those who are of higher social status, but, of course, only in informal settings.

Importantly, as illustrated in Figure 2, a significant majority of the Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha (47.06%) are inserted into nouns that refer to objects, people, and more sophisticated abstract concepts. Some Vietnamese nouns containing the infix với cha can change their implications depending on how they are used and what combinations they form. For example, the sentence, “...chồng với cha con, cứ đẹp trảt thế này ai mà chịu được...,” illustrates how the Vietnamese infix với cha is used to enhance a compliment. On the other hand, với cha expresses a complaint in “Chồng Với Cha Con, Chân Xuì.” Therefore, expressing a negative or positive attitude toward some matter depends on the context.

A large proportion of Vietnamese words containing the infix với cha (41.18%) are verbs used in everyday conversations and emotional expressions. These uses can be easily categorized as complaints, expressions of disagreements, or enhancements of compliments. The phrase ốm với cha áp provides an illustration. First, the writer of an online short story used the phrase, ốm với cha áp, còn không mau dỗ anh mañana đây,..., to express a complaint. Second, a sentence, Lớn rồi còn đời ốm với cha áp, em nó cười cho, collected from a website exemplifies a disagreement. Finally, the phrase ốm với cha áp is used to enhance a compliment. The writer posted this phrase with a picture on Instagram of herself hugging her boyfriend to show their happiness.

(See the Appendix for the sources.)
Finally, a minority of the Vietnamese words containing the infix **với cha** (11.76%) are adjectives. People always use adjectives to make their expressions more visual and vivid, so the implications that Vietnamese infix **với cha** can convey with the infixed words are clearer. Readers or listeners will get a better idea of what speakers or writers wish to bring to their attention or to picture in their minds when they read or listen to messages containing infixations.

![Diagram](image.png)

**Figure 2. Percentage Use of **với cha** in Three Parts of Speech**

V. CONCLUSION

This paper investigates the phenomenon of infixation in Vietnamese, which has been overlooked by linguists. The analysis shows that Vietnamese infixes are expletives added to base words in certain styles of language play. However, in terms of pragmatics, the functions of infixation in Vietnamese are more obvious. Infixes can be used to express complaints and disagreements, and to enhance compliments. It should be noted that the context in which the discourse takes place must be carefully considered; otherwise, listeners may take offense or feel the expression is impolite. This study has not considered the grammatical roles of infixed words in sentences, which we suggest as a topic of future research. Despite this limitation, this study challenges the traditional notion of affixation in Vietnamese, which we consider its main contribution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We were fortunate to be financially supported by Dalat University and would like to express our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Dalat University for encouraging us to pursue our research path.

APPENDIX

| 1 | https://khoachonline.com/sach/cinderella-12-gio | Gì mà măng mỏ dày đố, cất khẩu phán bình quy, xướng lại ôm áp với cha vượt vẻ |
| 2 | https://www.facebook.com/umusuh/posts/333228803521292/ | An với cha nói doc tốt hơn làm lả hồn xước |
| 3 | https://thuithie.vn/thread/an-voi-cha-no,3189030/ | An với cha nói… |
| 4 | https://www.facebook.com/171906550361892/posts/591572772095265/ | Báo Lộc Tổng công chuyễn, đã địch con bởi với cha toán. |
| 5 | http://hoicodo.com/511179/chet-do-an-voi-cha-noi-noi-vay-nhag-quo-viet-quo-gia-ti-nan-cong-san-lai-khoc-len-gio/ | Chết dò. Ản với cha nói. |
| 6 | https://www.cuoida.com/p/an-voi-cha-uong-1 | An với cha uống |
| 7 | https://laizi.vn/photo/album/d/37017/an-voi-cha-uong-co-beo-len-can-nao-dau-co-chu-chi-map-len-thu | Ản với cha uống, có béo lên cần Narrow down core chử, chất mMap lên thủy |
| 8 | https://www.flickr.com/photos/77782854@N07/7844730920/ | Bỡ ăn với cha uống ==)() phải ghi nhờ từng giao đoạn khi ăn LOL - "Nhìn" - "Bố mêng" - "Cắm" - "Nhai"
| 9 | https://www.cuoida.com/p/ghia-lo-chan-anh-voi-chu-anh-nhat-nhat-hanh-chu-nhan-lan-may | Anh với cha em, nhìn mặt, không chúnt hậu là còn may |
| 10 | https://forum.56play.vn/index.php?threads/hartacel-%c3%81o-vi%e1%bb%ba-ch-hanh-gi%e1%ba%a1-766-51356/ | Ảo với cha quân |
| 11 | https://comu.mobi/truyen/den-comics/ban-voi-chu-be/ | Bạn với cha bé |
| 12 | https://xem.vn/ban-voi-chu-be-1362679.html | Bạn với cha bé |
| 13 | https://www.webretho.com/tam-su-chuyen-do/ban-voi-cha-be-lai-ban-than-227161 | Bạn với cha Bé - lại bán than |
| 14 | https://www.comico.vn/comicnours/title/555 | Bạn với cha bé |
| 15 | https://kilopad.com/truyen-cuan-c198/doc-sach-truc-truyen-truyen-cuan-dan-gian-viet-nam-b918/chuong-9-pham-s-110 | Cây dừa, chịu đau phải thử mới dưa mat béo với cha bé! |
| 16 | https://www.facebook.com/neuconfessions/posts/1493320567383957/ | Dầy bỡ với cha toàn, hay phải cơ thể mới có athe, vì mình kò thể nên THAY bội saí cho |
| 17 | https://www.otofan.net/threads/cac-cu-co-tin-vo-phong-thuy-k-a.1433773/ | Bội với cha toàn số người ta suggestion không phải làm vậy còn có mặc đảm kế khó chết là đáng! |

© 2022 ACADEMY PUBLICATION
| 55 | https://www.instagram.com/cuonotty | Có sống ở đời mãi đâu mà giản vì cha hồn |
| 56 | https://truyenku.net/chapter/vkook-text-classmates-kth-ijk-25-messageway/626924767.html | Ngủ rồi hả? Bỏ ơn anh… Giản vị cha hồn |
| 57 | http://forum.ngocrongonline.com/app/index.php?&for=forum&do=list&uid=18764525&p=1&sz=15 | Giấu với cha nhiều, sự thật là t chưa nap l xu náo vào game mà dỗ sáng boss dỗ các kiểu |
| 58 | https://www.facebook.com/blogtamsu.fanpage/posts/2002752273315588/ | Hãy với cha dép, chỉ muốn có nơi ra rỗi đố nỗi ngày và luôn. |
| 59 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PjLGrWVG9I | Hồng với cha hốt |
| 60 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQIP-BKeB4 | Em bê làm chuyện. Anh không lo anh mà hong với cha hốt, Ôn. ạ. |
| 61 | https://www.facebook.com/100016704968748/videos/630355464197947/ | Thời với cha hồn: |
| 62 | https://www.facebook.com/cuoida.com/phu-voi-cha-hen-the-nen-cho-em-cu-phai-di-choi-nhieu-vo-sau-do-moi-lay-chong-nhe | Họ với cha hồn, thế nên chỉ em cứ phải đi chơi nhiều vô, sau đó mới lấy chồng nhe |
| 63 | https://www.facebook.com/cuoida.com/202004/haa-voi-cha-hen_16.html | Họ với cha hồn |
| 64 | https://www.facebook.com/enythplus/videos/293068485307264/ | Họ với cha hồn |
| 65 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAHFBCQQL4 | Khó khe với cha lạc ():) |
| 66 | https://www.facebook.com/vtctvnewsvn/posts/1451789981607967/ | Cộng với cha lạc, thương niệm sâu dài vai rong… |
| 67 | https://www.facebook.com/14920277243172443 | Buồn thì nhà lạnh gel gì mà phải khe với cha lạc |
| 68 | https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=111061336905861&story_fbid=445335107692197 | Dùng tư nghĩ rút tốt với không với cha lạc ai đẹp poster thì cho em chứ em còn không có mà đẹp |
| 69 | https://www.facebook.com/vtctvnewsvn/posts/1451789981607967/ | Mẹ đề khe tỉnh tiền lên xe hoa, mẹ chòng hưởng: ‘Khoé với cha lạc, làm như đi chết không bằng’ |
| 70 | https://tamsucongso.com/lop-1 | Họ với cha hồn… Họ với cha lạc… |
| 71 | https://ruahers.com/cdm/ngay-be-giang-khoc-loc-hua-hen-hen-ku-20-11-ru-7-dha-khoc-to-phat-du-mu-dau-dau-nao-ve.html | Họ với cha hồn… Họ với cha lạc |
| 72 | https://datviet.trithucuoocuong.vn/van-hoa/tu-tuc-gai-tra-to-tra-4-nha-thinh-minh-gia-la-nathan-leac-cho-loc-10-14-458 | Đối, vậy thì bắt bài khe, khe với cha lạc! |
| 73 | https://gau.vn/diem-tim-hom-nay-chay-tay-bun-thu-cu-khoc-do-chuyen-hop-lop-de-ngay-sau-ros-tinh-5d099ca452421f1b79199ebf.html | ‘Lúc ra trường thực thì khó khe với cha lạc rồi chóng mặt lên xem đến lúc gọi hộp lóp được bao nhiêu đứa thì thêm đi’ |
| 74 | https://trocphuyen.vn/hom-nay-ngay-10-uem-thu-xe-1-buoi-ban-vo-chong-khoc-tu-nhu-cham-muon-tam-gi-muay-ban-o.html | Khóc với cha lạc, nhớ với nhưng |
| 75 | https://nuotinhvu.com/truyen/dinh-cap-thieu-nien/chuong-102-2/ | Cô gái mà khó khe với cha lạc chịu. |
| 76 | https://soha.vn/nhay-vao-be-ca-rong-choi-ngho-chong-mat-50 trien-nguy-tuc-khac-va-cac-khet-thuc-mat-20190110145314519.htm | Lai thêm một người, hôm nay là đám ma ai vậy, khe với cha lạc |
| 77 | https://thethaovanhoa.vn/video/gai/tri/sem-nguoc-chieu-nuoc-mat-tap-16-khan-gia-phat-ngan-vi-mai-chiet-biet-khoc-loc-20171111014473007.htm | Gồ thi ngày đấy mà khó khe với cha lạc |
| 78 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qZ1TmqK588A | Trên thực tế, chỉ có ba vụ nào thì chồng chứ hết người này tốt người khác mà mỗi ngày phản tích rõ khó khe với cha lạc |
| 79 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=790457539634824 | Là với cha hết |
| 80 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbT1Ch3v9uM | Ảnh học không lo suốt ngày lên với cha xưởng |
| 81 | https://t319.com/thread/len-voi-cha-suong-nhuc-ca-oc-284655/ | Lên với cha xướng, như cả oc |
| 82 | https://click49.vn/an-dong-xuyen-dem-gai-phong-cay-n-ga-chan-ngang-deo-chau/7?clid=1wA2K3pmqFHSB3QOn2z5gXv6qVdJ57umYF0t7orLoPZq0i73Z725CV | Mùa với cha goi, nguy hiểm quá |
| 83 | http://m.baokontum.com/mua-soan-ban-doc/mua-mua-ma-15393.html | Mùa với cha giờ, cự thê là mua |
| 84 | https://tinhviet.vn/thread/mua-voi-cha-gi-nam-nao-cung-lui-3200543/ | Mùa với cha giờ. Nắm nào cũng lụt |
| 85 | https://www.instagram.com/heong.tranvietbao | Mùa với cha giờ, chỉ muốn ở nhà Netflix và chill, hoặc đọc truyện an… |
| 86 | https://www.cuoida.com/2020/12/nho-voi-cha-nanadanhno09-dieuucav.html | Với cha rảnh |
| 87 | https://www.facebook.com/1001504044424514/ | Với cha rảnh |
| 88 | https://www.facebook.com/1001504044424514/ | Với cha rảnh |
| 89 | https://www.facebook.com/1001504044424514/ | Với cha rảnh |
| 90 | https://adamiy.vn/hang-tui-bau-sap-de-ma-chong-van-nhien-me-net-dinh-vao-oc-mot-cau-thay-can-hang-trai-danh-ten-do-rua-20200108235349517.chn | Mặt chưa còn nữa năm mà ốm với cha áp |
| 91 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvL7e2VGZ8 | Ở trường mà còn ốm với cha áp |
| 92 | https://kenh14.vn/mua-dong-khon-nhan-thinh-be-lo-phien-ban-loi-cua-trao-luu-vong-tay-em-gay-sot-mang-xa-not-201712131307416.html | Hay thẳng corazón mà suốt ngày ở variants |
| 93 | https://zingtruyen.net/chapter/hunksa-sweetheart/2820521355/bc-mat/1118643873.html | Hay thẳng corazón mà suốt ngày ở variants |
Nguyen Vi Thong is currently a lecturer of English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dalat University, Vietnam. He received his Ph.D. in linguistics from National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan in 2020. His research interests include sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, cognitive studies, and translation.

Email: thongnv@dlu.edu.vn
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com.tw/citations?user=d27ot30AAAAJ&hl=en
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9163-5110

Nguyen Hoang Nhat Khanh is a lecturer of English at Dalat University, Vietnam. She finished her master’s program of English studies in 2019. Her research interests include applied linguistics and TESOL.

Email: khanhnhn@dlu.edu.vn
Scopus Author ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57224767821
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6074-9935

Nguyen Tat Thang is a lecturer of English at Dalat University, Vietnam. He received the title of Associate Professor in linguistics in 2017. His interests are semantics, SLA, and socio-linguistics.

Email: thangnt@dlu.edu.vn
Scopus Author ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57212462062
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8486-2385

Nguyen Hoang Nhat Quyen is a lecturer of English at Dalat University, Vietnam. She finished her master’s program of English studies in 2019. Her research interests include applied linguistics and TESOL.

Email: quyennhn@dlu.edu.vn
Scopus Author ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57224785029
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6038-557X
Tran Tin Nghi is a lecturer in the Foreign Languages Faculty, Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry. He is also a member of STESOL, a part of the Association of Vietnam Universities and Colleges. His research interests are Teaching English as a Foreign Language, CALL, corpus linguistics, and cognitive linguistics.

Email: nghitt@hufi.edu.vn
Scopus Author ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57212464873
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6549-3895