

**Review of Tue Trinh. 2019. *The Edginess of Silence: A Study on Chain Linearization* (studia grammatica 84). Berlin: de Gruyter. 136 pages, 89.95€**

Stefan Müller  
Humboldt Universität Berlin  
Institut für deutsche Sprache und Linguistik  
Dorotheenstraße 24  
10117 Berlin  
St.Mueller@hu-berlin.de

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This part of the review only concerns typographical issues that could have been found by the author, thesis supervisors, colleagues, or the publisher. The parts of the review concerning the content of the book will follow.

So far I wrote one book review. It was a review of a published version of a thesis I liked very much. The thesis contained a very detailed corpus-oriented description and analysis of a phenomenon. While rereading the book, I noticed that there are some points to be critical about. The case at hand is different: Trinh's book is based on his MIT dissertation from 2011 (Trinh 2011). This dissertation is definitely below standard. There are many reasons for imperfect dissertations, so, that there is a non-optimal dissertation is not a problem per se. But now, eight years after the defense of the dissertation, it is published almost unchanged. This is not acceptable and this is the reason for me writing this review.

## **1 History of the book**

I am not an insider so what is written here are the facts as they are reconstructable for me from published papers. Trinh had an early publication of research that eventually led to his dissertation. He published a target paper in *Theoretical Linguistics*, which is quite an achievement for a young scholar (Trinh 2009). This target article got commented on by Aboh (2009), Bayer

(2009), Duffield (2009), Hinterhölzl (2009), Holmberg (2009), Ishihara (2009), G. Müller (2009) and Truckenbrodt (2009).

The thesis is an extension of the target paper and discusses some of the replies (Holmberg 2009, Truckenbrodt 2009). The other replies are ignored. They are mentioned in a footnote in the 2019 book publication (p. 12) but their content is not discussed. In fact, the book is almost identical to the dissertation with the exception of the pages 84 to 96, which are from Trinh (2017) and a part of the summary of an appendix to Chapter 3 where (Trinh 2011: 122) stated that he did not contribute any “new idea”.<sup>1</sup> The list of references has almost the same length. Three self-citations and references to Rizzi (2004), and Abels & Neeleman (2012) were added and Dayal (2004), Krifka (2007), Chomsky (1986), Sauerland (2004) were removed. The reference to Fanselow (2002) was wrongly removed and replaced by a reference to Fanselow (2004) with wrong bibliographic data (see Section 3). The reference to a published paper by Chierchia (2010a) was replaced by a reference to an unpublished manuscript (Chierchia 2010b).

## 1.1 Sloppiness

Condition A is mentioned on p. 7 but it is not said of what. Probably Condition A of Binding Theory, but no reference is given. The same page has the statement *The proposal was made, then, that the wh-phrase “reconstructs” into the trace position at LF, where Condition A applies. But this does not seem much more than a reformulation of the problem.* Again the reference is missing. Who made the proposal?

Page 56/49 contains a footnote claiming that (1a) is the “German counterpart” of (1b).

- (1) a. arbeiten habe ich ihn gesehen  
work have I him seen  
'I have seen him work.'
- b. \*Hört har jag henne inte hålla föredrag  
heard have I her not give talk  
('I have not heard her talk.')

The German example is not the counterpart of the Swedish example since the verbs are different, the pronouns are different and the Swedish sentence is negated while the German one is not.

The Russian word *knigi* in (7) on page 16 should be glossed as ‘books’ not as ‘book’. The example is taken from Abels (2001: 4) but the glossing is correct in the cited work. Trinh’s citation points to page 6 but the example is on page 4.

The lowest copy of *buy* has to be striked out in (12) on page 28/19.

Trinh discusses the minimal pair in (2) to show that *können* ‘can’ cannot be fronted (p. 47/39).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“we present a set of facts concerning the distribution and interpretation of nominals in two classifier languages – Mandarin and Vietnamese – and derive these facts from precisely formulated assumptions. Our proposal builds entirely on suggestions that have been made in previous works. Thus, we contribute no ‘new idea.’” (Trinh 2011: 122)

<sup>2</sup>I cite the example here with the orthographic errors (*küßten* should be *küssen*, see Section 3) and with the non-standard glossing (‘no one’ should be ‘no.one’ according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules).

- (2) a. dass sie küssen keiner können muss  
 that her kiss no one can must  
 ‘that no one has to be able to kiss her’
- b. \* Können muss sie küssen keiner  
 can must her kiss no one  
 ‘that no one has to be able to kiss her’

He attributes the example to Gisbert Fanselow (p.c.). The order of *küssen* and *keiner* should be reversed in the second example. In addition the translation of the second example is wrong since it is a declarative main clause and hence the *that* is inappropriate. Apart from a probably wrong citation of a personal communication there are references that could be cited for this claim.

Trinh discusses the possibility to front *wollen* and *können*. On the basis of (65a) and (66b) on page 46/38 he claims that *wollen* can be fronted while *können* cannot. His argumentation is methodologically flawed since the sentences are not minimal pairs.<sup>3</sup>

- (3) a. ?? Wollen hat er sie küssen.  
 want has he her kiss  
 ‘He has wanted to kiss her.’
- b. \* Können muss sie keiner küssen.  
 can must her no.one kiss  
 ‘No one has to be able to kiss her.’

What he should have compared is the following pair and according to most of the literature such sentences are ungrammatical (Haftka 1981: 721, Engel 1982: 225, Lötscher 1985: 212, De Kuthy & Meurers 2001: 165, Müller 2002: 44):

- (4) a. \* Wollen hat er sie küssen.  
 want has he her kiss  
 Intended: ‘He wanted to kiss her.’
- b. \* Können hat er sie küssen.  
 can has he her kiss  
 Intended: ‘He could kiss her.’

The example (14a) *dass der Mann das Buch gelesen wird* on page 127/117 should have *lesen* rather than *gelesen*.

The dissertation contained the following two sentences (p. 98):

- (5) a. John se mua hai thung sach  
 John will buy two BOX book  
 ‘John will buy two boxes of books’

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<sup>3</sup>I corrected his misspellings of *küssen*, the wrong order of *keiner* and *küssen*, and the capitalization and punctuation and the translation.

- b. John se mua hai tui sach  
 John will buy two bag book  
 ‘John will buy two bags of books’

They were coming together with a footnote explaining that BOX and BAG are used to mark measure words, while regular nouns are glossed by ‘box’ and ‘bag’. The footnote is still there in the final book publication and it reads:

The reason for capitalizing the gloss for **thung** and **tui**, i.e. to write them as “BOX” and “BAG,” is to indicate that these words are being used as measure words, not as regular nouns, in which case they will be glossed as “book” and “bag.” (Trinh 2019: 89)

But the examples do not contain any capitalized words in the published version:

- (6) a. John sē mua hai thùng sách  
 John will buy two box book  
 ‘John will buy two boxes of books.’  
 b. John sē mua hai túi sách  
 John will buy two bag book  
 ‘John will buy two bags of books.’

While this is a mistake that careful copy editing could have found without problems, this is not just a copy editing issue: the lack of capitalization together with the footnote results in a wrong and confusing claim regarding the examples in (6).<sup>4</sup>

*gefahren* ‘driven’ is glossed as ‘gone’ (p. 128/117) and the translation of the respective example is wrong as well.

## 2 Unfortunate examples and footnotes

The thesis and the published book contain examples talking about John’s two, three or more wives (22 occurrences, e.g., on pages 80/74, 87/82, 84, 106/97). Trinh explains in a footnote: “Readers raised in the ideal of monogamy might feel that (21-a), which means something like ‘as for wives, I met two wives of John,’ sounds “funny” for the irrelevant reason that no one, not even John, is allowed to have more than one wife. Thus, the clarity of the contrast in (21) can only obtain through abstraction from contextual information of historical accident.” (p. 80/74). I find this example problematic and think it could easily have been avoided.

## 3 Typographical mistakes and lack of copy editing

The thesis contained lots of typos. The overwhelming majority of them is still present in the published book. Proofreading did not take place. The only editorial work carried out by De

<sup>4</sup>As an aside, typographical conventions caused a wrong statement: *tui* is glossed as “BAG” or “bag” not as “BAG,” or “bag.” Pullum (1984: 420) argued that we as linguists should convince publishers to stop adhering to this convention but in this case the misleading convention was already part of the thesis.

Gruyter seems to be work on the bibliography. Translations and Vietnamese diacritics were added to examples.

The following is a list of shortcomings I noticed (see also Section 1.1 for shortcomings that are scientifically problematic): The phrase *in other word* should be *in other words* and occurs 31 times in the thesis and 29 times in the printed book (for example on page 13/7).<sup>5</sup> The plural of acronyms is often formed with an apostrophe (pages 7, 91, 112). On page 7–8 we even find a mix of the correct and the wrong form: LFs and LF's.

The book is full of agreement mismatches: “cross a finite clause boundaries” (p. 22/13), “The three authors mentioned above takes it for granted” (p. 28/20) “The two relevant steps of this derivation is given in [...]” (p. 52/44), “This strongly suggest that predicate clefts in Swedish is possible” (p. 57/50), “These authors draws attention to the fact” (p. 64/57), “The claim that **always** takes scope over modals and **ever** is merged higher than **always** are backed up by (i) and (ii), respectively.” (p. 68/61), “EC and CEC makes identical predictions:” (p. 124/113).

Page 25/16 refers to *The first sentence in (7)* but (7) contains just one sentence.

p. 48/40 *the the*

The references to derivations are wrong in different ways in the thesis on p. 53 ((81) is an example, not a derivation) and in the book on p. 45 ((82) is an example, not a derivation).

*Per* is translated as *Peter* p. 56/49.

Some sentences do not start with capital letters, some do. Some end with punctuation, some do not. There have been changes from the dissertation to publication but there is no general line that has been followed.

The book contains sentences like *The ungrammaticality of (85a) is bad* (Trinh 2019: 48), which a careful copy editing would have caught.

The Swedish *den Idioten* is written with a capital letter although there is no noun capitalization in Swedish (p. 57/50).

*mannen* is glossed as ‘the-man’ (p. 58/51). Dashes are used only if the morphemes are marked in the object language. The correct gloss<sup>6</sup> would have been ‘man.the’ or rather ‘man.DEF’.

Punctuation is missing in the translations on p. 58/51 and elsewhere but is present in some translations (e.g., p. 58).

The sentence “They base their claim on cases of “V stranding VP Ellipsis” (VVPE), where the T head which governs the elided VP hosts not an auxiliary, but by the main verb itself, which has moved to T from VP.” (p. 64/58) is ungrammatical.

p. 65/58 *na* should have been glossed as ‘in.the’ rather than ‘in the’.

p. 65/58 “While the difference between traces of XP movement and traces of V-to-T movement can be accounted for by defining the relevant notion of “identity” and such a way that,” should be “in such a way”.

The word *has* is missing in “By hypothesis, the embedded when-sentence in (111-b) has the structure in (112-a), while the unembedded that in (112-b).” (p. 70/63)

p. 71/64 “liknot, hi kanta et ha-praxim” The glosses are not properly aligned and the indicated morphemes are not separately glossed.

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<sup>5</sup>Trinh (2009) contains 14 and Trinh (2010) three occurrences of this phrase. Both papers were also published by De Gruyter.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php>, 2019-05-20.

p. 68: “Parts of the split constituent are **boldfaced**.” The intention was probably to boldface the whole word *boldfaced* but then was undone, leaving the **b** boldfaced.

p. 82/76 The glosses of *no se mua hai con meo mau den* are not properly aligned. The glossing of *den* is below *mau*, which is part of the Vietnamese word for *cat*. This is difficult for the reader since English/Vietnamese dictionaries list *mèo* as the translation for *cat*. It is unclear what function *mau* has in the examples.

The glossings of (37) on page 87 and page 81 are other examples of the extreme sloppiness of the author/publisher: (7) from the thesis was modified into (8) for final publication:

- (7) a. sach thi no se mua hai quyên sach ve vat ly  
book TOP he will buy two CL<sub>book</sub> book about physics  
b. sach thi no se mua hai quyên ve vat ly  
book TOP he will buy two CL<sub>book</sub> book about physics
- (8) a. sách thì nó sẽ mua hai quyển sách về vật lý  
book TOP he will buy two CL<sub>book</sub> book about physics  
'As for books, he will buy two books about physics.'  
b. sách thì nó sẽ mua hai quyển về vật lý  
book TOP he will buy two CL<sub>book</sub> book about physics  
'As for books, he will buy two books about physics.'

So translations and diacritics were added but the wrong glossings in the b-examples ('book' appears twice) were taken over unchanged.

The following example was also adapted (p. 87/81):

- (9) no se gap hai nguoi vo  
he will meet two CL<sub>wife</sub> wife  
'He is looking for a wife'

It now reads:

- (10) nó sẽ gặp hai người vợ  
he will meet two CL<sub>wife</sub> wife  
'He will meet a wife.'

In the example that follows, *hai* is translated as *two*. It may be that cultural knowledge is needed to properly translate (10) and that one of the translations or even both are correct but then the reader may want to know about this. As indicated in Section 2, I think the examples are problematic and issues like the ones with (9) and (10) could have been avoided by choosing other examples.

“book” should be “box” on page 98 fn. 20/89 fn. 16.

The figures on page 92 and 93 of the book come out scrambled. The translation is separated from the figures.

p. 101/91 “In other word, [...] is to contain no element which is the sum of more than one elements in the same.” Something seems to be missing after *same*.

p. 121/112 The words in the tree are not glossed, there is no caption and hence the examples are impossible to comprehend. There is no way to find out what the examples mean since the surrounding text refers to (127b)/(114b), which does not exist. One can use full text search to find an example on page 119/109, which is too far away given the fact that readers not knowing Vietnamese do not know what to search for.

The example (14a) on p. 127/117 has no (14b).

The German word *küssen* is written as *küßen*, *küsst* is written as *küßt*, *geküsst* as *geküßt* (Trinh 2019: 35, 124). While the latter two were correct till 1996, the former was never correct.

“In fact, standard analyses of German takes both VP and TP to be head-final” (p. 132/122) There is usually just on standard. The agreement is wrong in any case.

The most work as far as copyediting is concerned probably went into the list of references. It improved enormously from “unacceptable”<sup>7</sup> to “okish”. But even in the redone list of references contains misspellings like *Computer Linguistik* carried over from the thesis.

Abels’ paper did not appear in a journal named *Formal approaches to Slavic linguistics* but in proceedings of a conference with this name. These proceedings have an editor and a publisher with an address. It is difficult for inexperienced non-linguistic copy editors to provide this information. It has to be provided by the authors.

Trinh (2011: 44) cites Fanselow (2002: 101, 103). In Trinh (2019) the reference is wrongly replaced by *Fanselow, Gisbert. 2002. Münchhausen style head movement and the analysis of verb second. In Syntax at Sunset 3: Head movement and syntactic theory, ed. Anoop Mahajan, 40–76. Los Angeles & Potsdam: UCLA & Universität Potsdam Working Papers in Linguistics.* but Fanselow’s Münchhausen paper appeared in 2004 as (Fanselow 2004). The cited examples are not contained in the Münchhausen paper.

The authors own work is cited as 2016 but appeared in 2017 (Trinh 2017).

These problems could have been easily avoided by using a citation manager.

## 4 Summary

The book has 136 pages and costs 90€ (0.66€ per page). Readers interested in its content may download the dissertation from the MIT web server since it is almost identical to the book version (examples for changes are: a section was replaced by text from Trinh (2017), a mistake in a figure on p. 53/45 was corrected, a conclusion on an appendix saying that it contains nothing new was deleted, some paragraphs on German were deleted and a condition was reformulated). The book contains some interesting data but the original sources of the examples are not provided (the Vietnamese examples are probably due to the author but given that other examples come without attribution not even this can be taken for granted).

Given that De Gruyter did hardly any copy editing work (on the initial articles and on the book, which is based on them), the price is very high. De Gruyter charges 230.390 € for electronic access to all of their books. For this amount of money, four researchers could be employed in Germany for a year. Looking at the book at hand, I am not sure whether De Gruyter really earned the money.

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<sup>7</sup>Almost all items were incomplete. The formatting was inconsistent. One item was contained twice in different forms both being incomplete.

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