

Every *Where* All at Once:
Vietnamese *Đâu* from a Comparative Perspective

Trần Phan & Wei-Tien Dylan Tsai
National Tsing Hua University
tranphan@gapp.nthu.edu.tw; wttsai@mx.nthu.edu.tw

Vietnamese *đâu* ‘where’ typically appears as a nominal *wh*-interrogative. On the other hand, it receives a refutatory interpretation when serving as a sentence-initial adverb, a phenomenon attested in many languages (see, for instance, Cheung 2008). But the similarity, even to typologically close languages like Chinese, ends there. Lower in TP, *đâu* can be introduced by an applicative head to derive a surprise-denial question involving verb-copying (cf. Phan & Tsai 2022). It also functions as an ‘emphatic’ polarity modifier, which Duffield (2013) likens to *đâu* in a sentence-final position.

Our study digs deeper into these non-canonical uses, and brings to the fore two little-known usages of *đâu* as sentence-final particles (SFPs): First, SFP *đâu* in negative sentences like (1) differs from the pre-verbal ‘emphatic’ *đâu* in that only the former expresses the speaker’s public commitment towards the opposite of a discourse-salient proposition (cf. Krifka 2023). Second, SFP *đâu* in questions like (2) has a distinct *call-on-addressee* function (*à la* Beyssade & Marandin 2006), signaling the speaker’s request for a specific response from the addressee. Adopting Wiltschko’s (2021) Interactional Spine Hypothesis, we take *đâu* in (1) to be the head of a Grounding layer immediately above CP, and *đâu* in (2) the head of a Responding layer above it. The former encodes a response move, whereas the latter an initiating move. These SFPs are not embeddable, displaying characteristics of strong Root Phenomena *à la* Frey (2011).

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| (1) <i>Tí đâu có tiền đâu.</i>
Tí DAU have money DAU
‘Tí doesn’t have money.
(Contrary to what’s believed).’ | (2) <i>Tí đi đâu đâu?</i>
Tí go where DAU
‘Where did Tí go? (Show me!)’ |
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We further put forth a tentative analysis of two instantiations of *đâu* as prosodically independent particles which may co-occur with *đâu* as SFPs in the same conversation move, see (3) and (4). As a result, we are able to map out the topography of *đâu* in cartographic terms. Further evidence from Chinese, German, Japanese, and the Bantu language of Bena is drawn to support our claims.

Keywords: *đâu*; non-canonical interrogative; comparative syntax; cartography; syntax-pragmatics interface

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