

TYPES OF RESPONSE UTTERANCES TO INVITATION SPEECH ACTS IN THE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE

Phan Thi Thuy^{a*}

^aHuong Son High school, Ha Tinh, Vietnam

*Corresponding author: Email: phanphuongthuy81@gmail.com

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Abstract

Conversation is one of the most common forms of verbal communication. In this communication form, all types of speech acts are represented fully and explicitly, including invitation–response acts, because these speech acts are related to face, psychology, and cultural-social characteristics. The Vietnamese have many different ways, some of which have become conventional, to respond to invitations. This article will examine the types of response utterances to invitations, the interlacing in response utterances to invitations, and the expression of politeness of response acts to invitations in the Vietnamese language.

Keywords: Act of inviting; Conversation; Invitation; Response dialogue; Speech acts.

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1. BACKGROUND

Communication is a special human activity in which the most important means is language. The invitation-response act in communication is even more noticeable because it is concerned with face, psychology, and even sociocultural characteristics. The act of inviting is one of the acts of politely expressing a request. As with other persuasive actions (such as requesting, ordering, etc.), invitations can show varying degrees of politeness by the speaker. An invitation is a polite utterance that prompts another person to act. The act is ultimately meant to satisfy both the inviter and the receiver of the invitation. Therefore, we can consider inviting as an act of honoring face, showing elegance, delicacy, affection, respect, and mutual esteem among the participants in the conversation.

Việt Nam từ điển of Hội Khai Trí Tiến Đức (1954) defines *invite* as “there is a prayer that comes to someone.” This definition only gives one feature of the meaning. *Từ điển tiếng Việt* (Văn, 1997) defines *invite* as “praying for people to come and do something.” Although this definition is more complete, it still cannot distinguish between the act of inviting and other acts such as requests, orders, commands, or enticements. According to *Từ điển tiếng Việt* edited by Hoàng (2006), “invite is to express wishes to ask others to do something politely and respectfully.” This definition distinguishes between invite and other acts. It also shows that an invitation is an utterance of politeness, friendliness, and affection of the speaker toward the recipient. Invitations arise for the benefit of both the speaker and the listener. Therefore, we can consider the act of inviting in terms of speech acts. In Vietnamese, invitations appear anytime and anywhere. The representation of the invitation is also very diverse: sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, sometimes spoken, and sometimes in writing with many different degrees of illocutionary force¹. All of these govern the expression of an invitation and have a certain effect on the response to the invitation.

In response to an invitation, the Vietnamese also have various ways of speaking, some of which have become conventional. In this article, we will survey the types of response utterances to invitations, the issue of interlacing in the response utterances to invitations, and the expression of politeness in responding to invitations in Vietnamese.

Based on the function of the response utterances, we can identify positive and negative utterance pairs. According to Đỗ (1998), the active utterance pair is “when an utterance pair satisfies the target of the introductory utterances” or, rather, satisfies the target of the introductory utterance’s implementation. And “when the responsive utterances go against the target of the introductory utterances,” we have a negatory utterance pair (Đỗ, 1998, p. 328). According to this criterion, response illocutionary

¹ When performing the act of inviting, besides using explicit invitation expressions, people also use explicit expressions of other speech acts to invite indirectly (for example, through questions, orders, and commands). In this regard, we have two articles that discuss both invitation and introduction utterances in-depth. For details, see Phan (2017, pp. 548-564) and Phan (2018, pp. 19-27).

functions can be divided into two groups: positive (affirmative) response functions and negative response functions.

Nguyễn (1998, p. 103) stated that speech acts such as ask-accept and invite-agree are utterance pairs with a “favorite turn” (corresponding to our active utterance pair). And ask-refuse and invite-reject are utterance pairs which use turn rarely, dislike use, or are also known as “marked” (Nguyễn, 1998, p. 105) (corresponding to our negatory dialogue pair).

Based on the linguistic data surveyed in this paper, we give types of responses to invitations in Vietnamese.

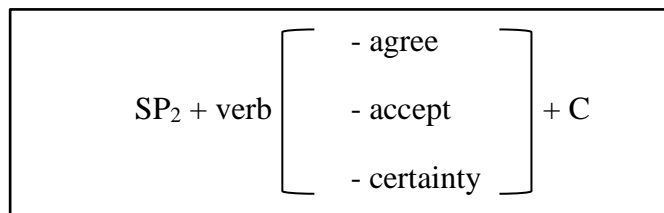
2. POSITIVE RESPONSE UTTERANCES

2.1. Direct positive responses

The direct positive response is the response made directly to the invitation of SP₁ (the first speaker) by SP₂ (the second speaker) and understood as an agreement to the C propositional content. For example:

- (1) - We have agreed to go to your house to celebrate.
 - I accept your invitation.
 - I will come.

In full type, direct positive responses have the following performative form:



However, in everyday communication, when responding to invitational utterances, SP₂ seldom uses the above expressions fully. Because the complete answer, as in the responses in example (1), shows that the relationship between SP₁ and SP₂ is not friendly or close, but somewhat rigid or stereotyped. Based on the collected data, we find that SP₂ often responds positively in a direct manner with a reduced expression, as follows:

- Agree.
- Yes.

- Okay.
- OK.

Consider the following examples:

(2) SP₁: - *Mời bác xơi tạm chén nước.* (Please have a cup of water.)

SP₂: - *Dạ, vâng.* (Yes, thanks.)

(*Một đồng bạc – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)

(3) SP₁: - *Xin rước bà lớn ngồi chơi ạ.* (Please have a seat, ma'am.)

SP₂: - *Được, mặc tôi.* (OK, I'll make myself at home.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng*)

(4) SP₁: - *Cô uống một bát.* (Would you like a drink?)

SP₂: - *Vâng.* (Yes, please.)

(*Bà mẹ Cấn – Kim Lân*)

We see that when direct responses are made with a reduced expression, the relationship between SP₁ and SP₂ is shown as more natural, friendlier, and closer. This is a flexible and soft response and often is used in everyday communication.

Direct positive responses are also manifested in a diversity of forms. The following are some typical forms:

2.1.1. Direct positive affirmative responses

This response form shows SP₂'s strong agreement with SP₁'s invitation. SP₂ accepts the content of the invitation. So, when SP₁ speaks, SP₂ responds directly and affirmatively. For example:

(5) SP₁: - *Đi hát chứ?* (Shall we go singing?)

SP₂: - *Đi chứ. Cố nhiên là phải đi rồi.* (Yes, of course.)

(*Quên điều độ – Nam Cao*)

(6) SP₁: - *Tối mai mời cậu ra ăn cơm với gia đình tớ nhé.*

(Please come have dinner with my family tomorrow evening.)

SP₂: - *Tất nhiên rồi, mai là sinh nhật bé Na mà.*

(Certainly, tomorrow is Na's birthday.)

2.1.2. Direct positive responses with attached conditions

This kind of response means that SP₂ agrees to accept SP₁'s invitation but has attached conditions. In this case, SP₁'s illocutionary content is accepted if the conditions which SP₂ gives are satisfied. For example:

- (7) SP₁: - *Mai đến nhà mình ăn quà quê bà nội mình mới mang vào nhé.*
(Come to my house tomorrow to try the local specialties that my grandmother has brought. OK?)
SP₂: - *Ừ, nhưng phải sau 9 giờ nhé tớ mới qua được nhé.*
(OK, but I can't be there until 9 o'clock.)
- (8) SP₁: - *Khi nào lên Đà Lạt mời anh chị ghé nhà em chơi nhé, ba mẹ em cứ nhắc cu Bi hoài.*
(Please come over to my house when you go to Dalat. My parents would love to see Bi.)
SP₂: - *Ừ, nhưng em ghi lại địa chỉ cho anh nhé, lâu lắm rồi anh quên mất số nhà.*
(Yes, but can you give me your address again? It's been a long time, so I forgot the exact number.)

The response utterances in the examples above have given conditions, meaning SP₂ will accept SP₁'s invitation if SP₁ agrees to SP₂'s offer.

2.1.3. Direct positive responses with reluctance

In actual communication, the invitation often is to honor SP₂'s face, but there are also cases of invitations that are beneficial to SP₁, so in response, SP₂ sometimes agrees with reluctance. For example:

- (9) SP₁: - *Cô ơi, mời cô mua mở hàng cho cháu với, cá tươi ngon lắm ạ.*
(Hello Miss, would you like to buy anything? The fish is fresh.)
SP₂: - *Thôi được, nể lời mời ngọt ngào của cháu mà mua đấy.*
(OK, I will buy some because of your sweet invitation.)
- (10) SP₁: - *Ăn thêm một miếng nữa đi, mít của nhà tớ đấy.*
(Eat one more please; it's my family's jackfruit.)
SP₂: - *Ăn thì ăn, nhưng thú thật là tớ no lắm rồi.*
(Ok, but honestly, I'm too full.)

2.1.4. Direct positive response with constructions of “B neglects A” and “B to A”

This type of ritual direct positive response appears more in the communication culture of the northern Vietnamese. For example:

- (11) SP₁: - *Mời bà vào chơi trong này!* (Please come in, ma’am.)
 SP₂: - *Vâng, bà để mặc em.* (Yes, just let me feel at home.)
 (Làng – Kim Lân)
- (12) SP₁: - *Mợ ngồi, tôi nói câu chuyện.*
 (Aunty, have a seat, please. I want to tell you the story.)
 SP₂: - *Được ạ, cụ mặc con.* (It’s Ok. Just let me be myself.)
 (Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng)
- (13) SP₁: - *Xin rước bà lớn ngồi chơi ạ.* (Please have a seat, ma’am.)
 SP₂: - *Được, mặc tôi.* (OK, let me be at home.)
 (Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng)

Thus, the direct positive response to an invitation is manifested very diversely and is shown in many different forms, as outlined in the above examples.

2.2. Indirect positive responses

Indirect positive responses also are the consent and acceptance of SP₁’s invitation, but in this reply, SP₂ does not respond directly in accepting the invitation but instead uses other expressions. However, SP₁ is still aware of SP₂’s approval. For example:

- (14) SP₁: - *Ông ơi, ông nghỉ tay vào uống nước đã ạ.*
 (Grandfather, you should rest and drink some water.)
 SP₂: - *Ông cũng đang khát nước đây.* (I am thirsty, too.)
- (15) SP₁: - *Thứ hai tuần tới chú út đưa người yêu về giới thiệu với cả nhà, mời cậu tới chơi cho vui nhé.*
 (My youngest brother will bring his girlfriend home next Monday. Please come to my house!)
 SP₂: - *Ôi, thế à. Sao mà tớ vắng mặt được, tớ quý thằng út nhất mà.*
 (Oh, really? How can I miss that? I love your youngest brother most.)
- (16) SP₁: - *Mời chị uống thử ly rượu nếp tự tay em làm bằng nếp quê mình đây. Chị uống thử xem có ngon không?*
 (This is the rice wine I made myself. Would you like to take a sip?)

SP₂: - *Để xem nào, em tôi mà làm chắc ngon lắm đây.*

(Let me see. If you made it, I'm sure it's delicious.)

In example (14), SP₁'s invite utterance was not answered directly by SP₂ as *yes*, but thanks to the dialogue utterance *Ông cũng đang khát nước đây*, SP₁ knows SP₂'s response is an agreement to the content of the invitation.

Similarly, for examples (15) and (16), although not answered directly by SP₂ as *yes*, thanks to the dialogue utterances of "How can I miss that?" and "Let me see. If you made it, I'm sure it's delicious," SP₁ can recognize the attitude of the positive response from SP₂.

Indirect positive responses are shown in the following speech acts:

2.2.1. Indirect positive responses with the formula "A asks for B" and "A asks B for permission"

Consider the following examples:

(17) SP₁: - *Ông giáo hút trước đi.* (Teacher, please enjoy the cigarette first.)

SP₂: - *Tôi xin cụ.* (Thank you.)

(*Lão Hạc – Nam Cao*)

(18) SP₁: - *Cô ngồi xuống đây, đứng thế mỏi chân, vì câu chuyện tôi nói với cô còn dài.*

(Why don't you sit down? The story is quite long, so you might feel tired standing.)

SP₂: - *Con xin phép bà lớn.* (Yes. Thank you.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khái Hưng*)

(19) SP₁: - *Xin mời ông xơi tạm chén nước.* (Please have a cup of water.)

SP₂: - *Vâng, xin phép ông.* (Yes, thank you very much.)

(*Cạm bẫy người – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)

As in the examples above, accepting the indirect invitations shows SP₂'s respectful and polite attitude toward SP₁'s invitations. The response to the invitation in the above style is also a beautiful aspect of Vietnamese communication culture.

2.2.2. Positive responses with the act of thanking

Consider the example:

- (20) SP₁: - *Mời anh ngồi xuống đi.* (Please sit down.)
 SP₂: - *Cám ơn anh.* (Thank you.)
- (21) SP₁: - *Anh ăn món này nhé.* (Would you like to try this dish?)
 SP₂: - *Cám ơn.* (Thank you.)

Here is SP₂'s formal, polite response to SP₁'s invitation. This kind of response also appears often in everyday communication.

2.2.3. Indirect positive response with an invitation in return

Observe the following examples:

- (22) SP₁: - *Cô ăn đi này. Mít mật ăn không đầy như mít dai dâu. Ăn thật lực đi (bà lão cười tủm tỉm). Hồi thằng Phúc còn ở nhà, cứ đến mùa mít chín là nó kéo hàng lũ đến ăn no, ăn chán thì thôi.*

(Please enjoy. The honey jackfruit is not as filling as the normal jackfruit. Eat as much as you want. When Phuc was a little child, he always brought some friends here to eat until they couldn't eat any more.)

SP₂: - *Bà cũng ăn với cháu đi.* (Grandmother, eat with me, please.)

(*Bà mẹ Cẩm – Kim Liên*)

- (23) SP₁: - *Thôi, thế chị ăn mau lên không nó dậy nó lại quấy.*

(Then, eat it quickly before he wakes up and bothers you.)

SP₂: - *Cậu cũng ra ăn đi cho xong có được không, tối rồi còn gì?*

(You, come to eat. It's late now.)

(*Võ Đê – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)

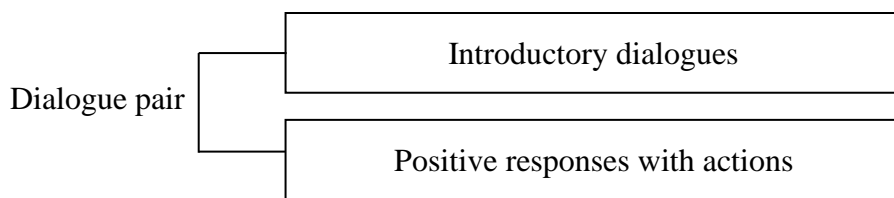
- (24) SP₁: - *Mời các anh cứ ăn uống tự nhiên nhé.* (Please enjoy your drink.)

SP₂: - *Bác cũng ngồi xuống đây cho vui ạ.* (Please sit with us for a while.)

We see from the examples above that SP₂ did not respond to SP₁ directly. But by replying with an invitation, SP₂ has agreed indirectly to SP₁'s invitation.

2.3. Positive responses with actions

In addition to verbal responses to invitations that are expressed as outlined above, we also recognize a response-with-action form based on the data we collected and on daily communication practices. This response type can be schematically represented as follows:



Observe the following dialogues:

(25) SP₁: - *Khi nào rảnh, anh cứ ghé chơi.* (Come whenever you have time.)

SP₂: (*Khải gật đầu.*) (Khai nods his head.)

(*Thằng quý nhỏ – Nguyễn Nhật Ánh*)

(26) SP₁: - *Thôi, ăn cơm đi nào, mời ba!* (Let's enjoy the meal, Father.)

SP₂: (*Mọi người ngồi vào bàn.*) (Everyone sits at the table.)

(*Thương – Phan Thị Vàng Anh*)

(27) SP₁: - *Mời ông khách vào chơi tự nhiên, anh em trong nhà cả mà.*

(Please come inside. You are considered as my brothers.)

SP₂: (*Khách nhanh nhẹn bước vào vái chào.*)

(The guests quickly enter the room.)

(*Trả lại đòn – Kim Lân*)

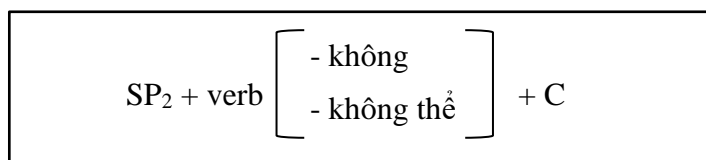
In these dialogue pairs, the response is indicated by gestures, as in example (25), or by physical action, as in examples (26) and (27).

The above types of responses create the “in short supply” structure of the dialogue pair, which is also a fairly common phenomenon in actual communication.

3. NEGATIVE RESPONSE UTTERANCES

3.1. Direct negative responses

The full form of direct negative responses is:



For example: - *Minh không đến dự sinh nhật cậu được đâu.*

(I can't go to your birthday party.)

- *Chúng tôi không thể ở lại lâu hơn.* (We couldn't stay any longer.)

Direct negative responses can be uttered briefly:

- + No.
- + Cannot.
- + Do not.

Since *to invite* is a face-honoring act to the invitee, recipients rarely respond with such decisive and negative attitudes. Therefore, when SP₂ directly rejects SP₁'s invitation, it is often accompanied by a combination of the utterance of *Cám ơn* with an explanation of the reasons for the refusal so as to avoid offending SP₁, the inviter. For example:

- (28) SP₁: - *Cô ăn cơm luôn.* (You should eat too.)
 SP₂: - *Không, cảm ơn. Cả nhà cứ ăn, tôi ăn cơm rồi.*
 (No, thanks. I have already had lunch. Please enjoy your meal.)
 (*Thương – Phan Thị Vàng Anh*)

Or refuse and give a compelling reason:

- (29) SP₁: - *Bác ăn đi chứ, cháu ăn khoai rồi.*
 (Please enjoy the food. I have already eaten potatoes.)
 SP₂: - *Tôi chẳng ăn, ăn mãi rồi, tám mươi tuổi mà cứ tham ăn thì khó chết lắm.*
 (I don't want to eat anything. At the age of 80, we shouldn't eat too much.)
 (*Những bài học nông thôn – Nguyễn Huy Thiệp*)
- (30) SP₁: - *Việc gì thế? Ta hãy vào trong đã nào.*
 (What's the matter? Let's go inside.)
 SP₂: - *Thôi, đứng ngoài này cũng được.* (Actually, I can't stay here.)
 (*Bố con ông gác máy bay trên núi Côi Kê – Kim Lân*)

In actual communication, to save face for the inviter and also due to motives of politeness, SP₂ often refuses indirectly.

3.2. Indirect negative responses

Indirect negative responses are responses in which SP₂ does not respond directly to SP₁'s invitation but uses different expressions. These are often clever and soft expressions so that although the invitation is refused, SP₂ still shows sympathy toward SP₁, the inviter.

Indirect negative responses often are indicated by the speech acts below:

3.2.1. *Indirect negative responses with the act of thanking combined with giving the reason for the refusal*

- (31) SP₁: - *Cô xơi cho em chiếc bánh giò nhé! Bánh còn nóng nguyên, ngon lắm cô ạ.*

(Please enjoy this pyramidal rice dumpling. It's hot and delicious.)

SP₂: - *Tôi cảm ơn cô, tôi vừa ăn cơm.*

(Thank you, but I have just finished my meal.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khái Hưng*)

- (32) SP₁: - *Chả mấy khi cụ lên chơi, thế nào cũng xin cụ chiếu cố xơi với chị em cháu một bữa cơm xoàng.*

(You hardly ever come to visit us. Please stay to have lunch with us.)

SP₂: - *Tôi cảm ơn mợ. Nhưng quả thực tôi no lắm. Tôi không làm khách đâu.*

(Thank you so much, but I'm really full.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khái Hưng*)

- (33) SP₁: - *Ông Chánh xơi cơm với tôi nhân thế nhé!*

(By the way, let's have dinner together, Mr. Chanh.)

SP₂: - *Thưa, xin cảm ơn cụ, cháu vừa ăn xong thì sang ngay đây.*

(Thank you very much, but I had just finished eating before coming here.)

(*Vỡ đê – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)

In the above examples, even though SP₂ does not respond affirmatively to SP₁'s invitation, the inviter is still comfortable because of the polite refusal form of the thanking act and the reasons offered as explanations by SP₂ to SP₁. This type of indirect rejection is often used in everyday communicative practice.

3.2.2. *Indirect negative responses with apologies and offers to make another appointment*

Consider the examples:

- (34) SP₁: - *Mời anh đi tham quan cùng chúng tôi, tiện thể gặp thêm mấy chiến hữu ta hàn huyên.*

(Would you like to go around with me? You can meet some of our friends.)

SP₂: - *Xin lỗi các anh, thú thật độ này tôi không được khỏe lắm. Hẹn gặp các anh vào dịp khác.*

(Sorry, but to be honest, I don't feel well these days. See you another time.)

- (35) SP₁: - *Tôi muốn mời ngài đêm nay đi chơi giải buồn. Bởi vì chúng mình cùng phùng “hồng” với nhau.*

(I would like to go out with you tonight. We used to do bad things together.)

- SP₂: - *Đa tạ cậu có hảo tâm. Nhưng tôi bây giờ ruột gan đương bồn chồn, còn thiết gì đến chơi bời? Vậy xin lỗi cậu để cho khi khác, chúng ta còn nhiều dịp gặp nhau. Vội gì?*

(Thank you for your kindness. But I'm not in the mood. How can I do that? I am so sorry, but we still have many opportunities to meet each other. What a rush!)

(*Lều chõng – Ngô Tất Tố*)

- (36) SP₁: - *Lát nữa xong việc, mời chị ghé vào nhà em chơi.*

(After finishing your work, please come over to my house!)

- SP₂: - *Xin lỗi em nhé, để khi khác vậy, chị có việc phải về gấp rồi.*

(Sorry, another time please. I have to go home right away.)

Although rejecting the invitation, indirectly refusing with an apology and mentioning an appointment is also a clever form of response so as not to offend the inviter. This is also a commonly used polite response.

3.2.3. *Indirect negative responses with a humble attitude using the structure “Tôi không dám” (I don't dare)*

Consider the examples:

- (37) SP₁: - *Xin mời ông bà vào đây, mở xin thưa chuyện.*

(Vui lòng vào đây tôi muốn nói chuyện.)

(Please come here. I need to talk to you.)

- SP₂: - *Không dám! Không dám! Sao ngài làm thế?*

(Don't dare! Don't dare! Why did you do that?)

(*Cánh buồm nâu thuở ấy – Nguyễn Huy Thiệp*)

- (38) SP₁: - *Mời cô ngồi.* (Please have a seat.)

- SP₂: - *Bẩm bà lớn, con không dám.* (I don't dare, ma'am.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng*)

- (39) SP₁: - *Mời cô xơi nước.* (Please enjoy your drink.)

- SP₂: - *Bẩm quan, tôi không dám.* (I don't dare, sir.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng*)

In the above examples, it is easy to see the relationship, social status, or age of SP₁ compared to SP₂ from SP₂'s responses. Somewhat informal, the humble response utterances often occur when SP₂'s social status or age is lower than SP₁'s.

3.2.4. Indirect negative responses with the act of scolding

Consider the examples:

- (40) SP₁: - *Mời chị xoi nốt.* (Please finish it.)
SP₂: - *Đổ té nó đi! Tao đã bảo.* (Throw them away, I told you.)
(*Con mèo – Nam Cao*)
- (41) SP₁: - *Mời bà phở...* (Please eat something, madam.)
SP₂: - *Bà ăn đi! Đừng mời.* (*Bà phở cau mặt quát*)
(You eat it. Don't wait for me. The woman frowned and shouted.)
(*Một bữa no – Nam Cao*)

In these cases, we see that SP₂ responds harshly to SP₁'s invitation. In actual communication, if SP₂ gives a negative response as in the above cases, it is considered uncultured and impolite.

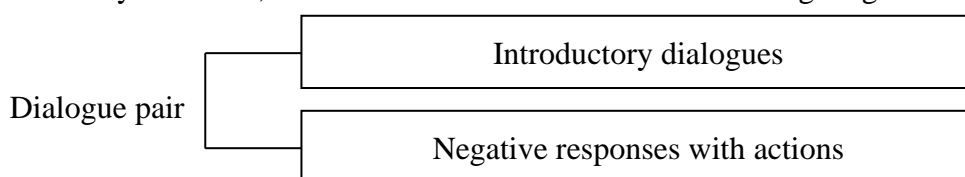
3.2.5. Indirect negative responses with the act of giving advice

- (42) SP₁: - *Em mời anh ra quán uống vài chai nhé.*
(Please go to the bar for some bottles of beer.)
SP₂: - *Cậu nên để dành tiền mà lo cho các cháu, anh em mình hiểu nhau rồi, khách khí làm gì.*
(Save your money to take care of your children. We know each other very well, and you don't need to do so.)
- (43) SP₁: - *Chị em mình đi uống cà phê nhé chị.* (Let's go for a cup of coffee.)
SP₂: - *Em lo làm cho xong việc đi đã kẻo không kịp đó.*
(Take your time to finish the work.)

In the two examples above, the advice “*Save your money to take care of your children*” and “*Take your time to finish the work*” is SP₂'s form of rejecting SP₁'s invitation. The fact that SP₂ does not agree to go to “*the bar for some bottles of beer*” or to “*go for a cup of coffee*” with SP₁, and at the same time gives advice “*Save your money to take care of your children*” or “*Take your time to finish the work*” is intended to do SP₁ a favor. In most of these cases, the relationship between SP₁ and SP₂ is close and personal.

3.3. Negative responses indicated by actions

Like the positive response, the negative response has cases where SP₂'s responses are performed by an action, which can be indicated as in the following diagram:



Consider the examples:

- (44) SP₁: - *Cô xoi bánh giò nhé?*
 (Would you like to have a pyramidal rice dumpling?)
 SP₂: (*Mai lắc đầu từ chối*) (Mai shakes her head to refuse.)
 (*Nửa chừng xuân – Khái Hưng*)
- (45) SP₁: - *Mời quan lên xe ạ.* (Please get in the car, sir.)
 SP₂: (*Sinh xua tay*) (Sinh waves his hand to say no.)
 (*Tôi cũng không hiểu tại làm sao – Nguyễn Công Hoan*)
- (46) SP₁: - *Mời anh cứ vào đây uống nước rồi nói rõ tôi nghe câu chuyện nào.*
 (Come in, drink a cup of water, and tell me the story.)
 SP₂: (*Tuấn vừa đi vừa uể oải lắc đầu*) (Lazily shaking her head, Tuan walks in.)

In examples (44) and (45), SP₂'s actions “shakes her head” and “waves his hand” denote SP₂'s rejection of SP₁'s invitation. Likewise, in example (46), SP₂'s act of “lazily shaking her head” is also a rejection of SP₁'s invitation.

4. THE INTERLACING ISSUE IN RESPONSE UTTERANCES

The issue of interlaced dialogue pairs is known as nested linking between dialogue pairs. According to Đỗ (1998, p. 325), this is the case in a covering dialogue pair with one or several sub-dialogue pairs. Sub-dialogue pairs (called interlaced pairs) are a side effect of the covering dialogue pairs.

In invitational dialogue pairs, there are also some cases of interlaced pairs. For example:

- (47): A dialogue pair between two friends.
- (a₁) - *Tối mai mời cậu đi xem ca nhạc với tớ nhé.*
 (Shall we go to a concert tomorrow night?)
- (b₁) - *Sao? Cậu vừa nói gì?* (What did you say?)
- (a₂) - *Tớ mời cậu đi xem ca nhạc. Tớ vừa được anh bạn cho hai vé nè.*
 (I have two concert tickets, so I would like you to go with me.)
- (b₂) - *Thật thế à? Mai tụi mình đi nhé.* (Really? Let's go tomorrow.)

Two dialogues, (b₁) and (a₂), make a sub-dialogue pair in the covering dialogue pair (a₁, b₂).

Dialogue pair (a₁, b₂) is an invitation dialogue pair containing the interlaced voice pair (b₁, a₂). This interlacing is like an explanation, a clarification for an introduction, or a facilitating dialogue in response to an invitation.

Likewise, we can give another example:

(48) SP₁: - *Anh hai uống đi! Cái này là thứ quý nhất...*

(Drink it, brother. This is the most precious thing.)

SP₂: - (a) *Hả? (Tôi ngỡ người)*

(What? I am shocked.)

SP₁: - (b) *Cả huyết, cả tim, bỏ dĩa lắm! Anh hai đừng ngại, trái tim nó đã được rượu luộc chín rồi.*

(Don't worry. The heart was boiled in wine. Both the heart and blood are really nutritious.)

SP₂: - *Không! Tôi không uống.* (No, I can't drink this.)

(*Ăn mà dĩ vãng – Chu Lai*)

The SP₂ (a) and SP₁ (b) dialogue pair form an interlaced pair inside the covering dialogue pair, SP₁ and SP₂. The interlaced dialogue explains SP₂'s surprise to SP₁ and awaits SP₂'s response.

Interlaced pairs usually occur in instances when the receiver is surprised by the invitation, as in examples (47) and (48), or when the receiver does not clearly understand the content of the invitation, so that SP₁ repeats it for SP₂. For example:

(49) SP₁: (a₁) - *Chiều nay mời cậu đến “No name” nhé!*

(Please come to “No name” this afternoon!)

SP₂: (b₁) - *“No name” là chỗ nào? (Where is “No name”?)*

SP₁: (a₂) - *Nằm trên đường Trương Định đó. (It's on Trương Dinh street.)*

SP₂: (b₂) - *Nhưng sao tự nhiên lại đến “No name”?*

(But why do I have to come to “No name”?)

SP₁: (a₃) - *Tớ khao vì được nâng lương trước thời hạn.*

(I want to celebrate because I have had a salary raise before the due time.)

SP₂: (b₃) - *Thế à? Chiều nay sau giờ làm tớ sẽ đến.*

(Really? OK, I'll be there after work.)

In example (49), the invitation (a₁) and response (b₃) pair contains two interlaced sub-pairs that help clarify the introductory dialogue and facilitate the response utterance.

In this case, the speaker has not clearly defined the content of the invitation, so the interlaced pairs are necessary to get a suitable response.

In response-to-invitation utterances, there are positive and negative responses, so there are also cases where both positive and negative responses are interlaced utterances.

4.1. Positive response with interlaced pairs

Consider the example:

(50)

- SP₁: - (a₁) *Nào cậu Phan mua mở hàng cho tôi nào.*
(Mr. Phan, buy some goods from me, please.)
- SP₂: - (b₁) *Ồ, thế cậu chưa bán mở hàng, đư cụ?*
(Oh, you haven't sold anything yet?)
- SP₁: - (a₂) *Chưa ạ, tôi vừa mới dọn...* (No, I have just displayed everything.)
- SP₂: - (b₂) *Thế thì tốt quá! Cháu mua mở hàng thật là tốt vía, hàng thế nào cũng đắt. Cụ có những gì đấy kia?*
(That's great. Let me buy something, and you will have good luck today. What have you got over there?)

(*Đón khách – Nam Cao*)

In the above example, the dialogue pair (b₁, a₂) is an interlaced dialogue sub-pair in the covering dialogue pair (a₁, b₂). This interlaced pair prepares the positive response (b₂) of SP₂, affirming that “have good luck” has a cheering effect psychologically, making the inviter feel secure when Mr. Phan becomes the first buyer of the day.

Consider the example:

(51)

- SP₁: - (a₁) *Thì cô hãy tạm ngồi xuống, tôi nói nốt câu chuyện đã nào.*
(Then please sit down, I will continue the story.)
- SP₂: - (b₁) *Cụ để mặc cháu chuyện đã nào.* (Just ignore me.)
- SP₁: - (a₂) *Câu chuyện tôi sắp nói hay lắm, hay cho cô, vì cô bán được nhà, mà còn hay cho cả tôi, nhưng mời cô hãy ngồi xuống đã.*
(The story I am going to tell you is very interesting. Not only can you sell your house, but I also get a profit. But just sit down first.)
- SP₂: (b₂) *(Mai chỉ lo không bán được nhà, nghe ông Hàn nói tới đó thì mừng thầm, cố dần lòng ngồi xuống).*

(Worried that she could not sell the house, Mai felt relieved to hear Mr. Han's words. She tried to keep calm and sat down.)

(*Nửa chừng xuân – Khải Hưng*)

The interlaced pair, (b₁, a₂), in the example above had a convincing effect on SP₂ and made her curious following SP₁'s invitation. The dialogue also represents a positive response by action.

4.2. Negative responses with interlacing

In cases of a negative response with interlacing, SP₂ does not respond positively to SP₁'s offered invitation, although SP₁ gives reasons to convince SP₂. For example:

(52)

- SP₁: - *Áy, chết chữa kìa, cậu Phú, mời cậu hãy vào trong này! Thế việc lôi thôi bắt bớ đến cửa công ra làm sao?*
 (Oh, Mr. Phu, please come inside. So, how was the arrest at the police station?)
- SP₂: - *Không hề gì ạ. Tôi được tha rồi. Nhân gặp ông Hai cũng về làng nên tôi được đi nhờ một chuyến. Thôi, cảm ơn hai ông.*
 (Nothing special. I was released. I was given a ride by Mr. Hai because he also returned to the village. Thank you so much.)
- SP₁: - *Thì hãy vào đây lát đã! (Come here for a while!)*
- SP₂: - *Thôi, nhân tiện ông lái cho thuyền ra thì xin phép ông cho tôi về trông thấy để tôi...*
 (No thanks. Let me leave so that you can take the boat out...)
 (Vỡ đê – Vũ Trọng Phụng)

(53)

- SP₁: - *Đưa đây! Ăn bát nữa! Mà làm lưng vất vả cả ngày thì phải ăn cho đủ. Cái nhường là để tao! Tao già cả ngồi một chỗ, sống vô ích, sống báo hại con cái, cũng chả nên ăn nhiều mà làm gì.*
 (Give me your bowl. You should have one more bowl. You have worked hard all day, so you need to eat more. I should be the person who eats less. I am old and helpless. I shouldn't eat a lot because I just put more burden on my children.)
- SP₂: - *Thôi, tôi đã bảo tôi không ăn là tôi không ăn nữa.*
 (No, no. I told you that I wouldn't eat more.)
- SP₁: - *Đưa bát đây! Nồi cơm có chừng sáu bát thì chị mày nó có con, nó còn phải cho con bú, để nó ăn ba bát, mày thì ăn hai, còn tao thì ăn một thôi.*
 (Give me the bowl. There are six bowls of rice. Because your sister must feed her baby, she will get three. You get two and I will only have one.)
- SP₂: - *Thì tôi đã nói thế mà! Sao bà nói nhiều thế!*
 (I said so, then. Why are you so talkative?)
 (Vỡ đê – Vũ Trọng Phụng)

In example (52), before the asking utterance is SP₁'s invitation to SP₂: "*mời cậu hãy vào trong này*" (please come inside), but SP₂ declined. In the next dialogue, SP₁ continued to persuade and begged SP₂: *Thì hãy vào đây lát đã!* (Come here for a while), but in the end, SP₂'s response was still negative.

Likewise, in example (53), SP₁ also begged and attempted to persuade SP₂ to eat more and explained to SP₂: "*Because your sister must feed her baby, she will get three. You get two and I will only have one.*" When listening to his mother talking about the number of rice bowls, the character Phú saw that it was an impoverishment, so she spoke up sharply: "*I said so, then. Why are you so talkative?*" This is a dissatisfied attitude and the dialogue ends with SP₂'s still-negative response. Similar to the examples above, we have the following example (54):

(54)

- SP₁: - *Nếu có thể được, em xin phép được mời hai anh vô nhà khách hay một hotel nào đó nghỉ ngơi, tắm giặt. Lên xe em chở đi!*
(If possible, I would like to invite you two to a guesthouse or a hotel to rest and wash up. Get in my car!)
- SP₂: - *Xin lỗi, cho hỏi một câu: cô mời hay bà giám đốc của cô?*
(Excuse me, may I ask a question: would you or your female manager pay for that?)
- SP₁: - *Trời, câu nệ chi anh Hai! Ai mời chả vậy, ít nhất tối nay anh Hai cũng là khách của sở, khách của bà giám đốc. Hồi chiều chính anh Hai chả nói thế là gì. Thôi, lên xe đi anh!*
(Oh my god. Mr. Hai, it doesn't matter who will pay since you are a guest of our department, a guest of the manager. You said so, right? Come one, get in the car!)
- SP₂: - *Cảm ơn! Nhưng cái đời tôi nằm võng, ở rừng ở rú quen rồi, nằm khách sạn không hợp.*
(Thanks, but most of my life was spent "on the hammock." I am very familiar with living in the forest. The hotel isn't suitable for me.)
(*Ăn mày dĩ vãng – Chu Lai*)

The interlaced example (53) is split; it contains SP₂'s explanation and continues SP₁'s invitation offer to SP₂, but the result is that SP₂ still rejects SP₁'s invitation. Thus, the dialogue still ends with a negative response.

5. EXPRESSIONS OF POLITENESS IN RESPONSE TO AN INVITATION

5.1. SP₂'s method of address to SP₁ in response to an invitation

When responding to SP₁'s invitation, whether it is a positive or a negative response, SP₂'s reply must also ensure politeness in communication. For example:

(55) SP₁: - *Thế thì mời cô ra vườn hái. Tôi đánh chó.*

(So please go to the garden to pick fruit. I will hit the dog.)

SP₂: - *Đạ, thôi ạ. Đã vào nhà rồi chắc chó không cắn nữa.*

(No, thanks. Once I get in the house, the dog might not bite.)

(*Một truyện Xu vợ nia – Nam Cao*)

(56) SP₁: - *Mời bà ăn cùng con ạ.* (Please have a meal with me.)

SP₂: - *Người ta đang bận mà ăn uống gì.*

(I am busy. How can I eat or drink anything?)

In the two examples above, the responses are negative, but the response in (55) ensures politeness in communication and respects SP₁'s face. However, the reply in (56) violates the politeness principle in communication. By addressing the response utterance as in example (56), SP₂ threatened SP₁'s face, breaking the relationship between SP₁ and SP₂.

Depending on the relationship between SP₁ and SP₂, SP₂ chooses a suitable method of address. If it is a peer relationship, SP₂ often uses pairs of addressive words that express intimacy. If it is a relationship with superiors or elders, SP₂ often uses pairs of grave addressive words. For example:

(57) SP₁: - *Mời cậu vào chơi với ông đồ nhà tôi xơi nước đã, chứ thế này thì...*

(Please come in and drink water with him, but so this...)

SP₂: - *Bà cứ yên tâm. Bây giờ tối rồi, con phải đi thôi.*

(Don't worry. I must go now, it's dark.)

(*Đón khách – Nam Cao*)

(58) SP₁: - *Vào ăn cơm với tôi cho vui nhé.* (Come in and eat with me.)

SP₂: - *Lạy cụ lớn, chúng con đã vô phép cụ lớn rồi ạ. Nhà quê chúng con hay ăn cơm sớm.*

(Please forgive us, sir. People in the countryside like us often have dinner so early.)

(*Hé! Hé! Hé! – Nguyễn Công Hoan*)

- (59) SP₁: - *Áy! Ông ngồi chơi đã! Đi bây giờ nắng chết.*
 (Hey! Have a seat! It's very sunny now!)
 SP₂: - *Ông tha phép cho... Tôi phải ra tỉnh ngay cho kịp.*
 (I beg you. I must go to the province now. I don't have much time.)
 (*Nước mắt – Nam Cao*)

Thus, the method of address is one of the ways to express politeness in the communicative process. The method of address in SP₂'s response utterances can honor but can also threaten SP₁'s face. At the same time, the method of address also serves to maintain, develop, or diminish the relationship between the invitee and the inviter. Therefore, choosing the appropriate method of address is very important for the best effect in the conversation.

5.2. Expressions of politeness in positive response dialogues

When making an invitation, inviter SP₁ often honors invitee SP₂'s face. Directly or indirectly, SP₂ responds positively. Because of politeness, SP₂ also often displays humility toward SP₁, and this is a necessary principle of politeness in the communicative culture of the Vietnamese when receiving invitations.

As mentioned above, for cases of indirect positive responses to invitations, the expressions of politeness in the positive answers are not only manifested through the method of address but are also expressed concretely through the action of thanking when receiving, or by the structures *A asks B* and *A asks B for permission*. For example:

- (60) SP₁: - *Mời ngài vào.* (Come in, please, sir!)
 SP₂: - *Xin phép cụ.* (Yes, thank you.)
 (*Giông tố – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)
- (61) SP₁: - *Mời ông ngồi!* (Have a seat!)
 SP₂: - *Bản tảng xin phép.* (Yes, thank you.)
 (*Số đỏ – Vũ Trọng Phụng*)
- (62) SP₁: - *Mời bà ngồi xuống đây ta uống nước, ăn trầu.*
 (Madam, please have a seat, drink water, and eat betel.)
 SP₂: - *Vâng, cảm ơn bà.* (Yes, thank you.)

In the above examples, SP₂ accepts the invitation politely and modestly through the act of saying "thank you." It is this polite response that honors the face of SP₁, the inviter.

5.3. The expressions of politeness in negative response utterances

As mentioned above, to invite is an act of honoring the face of SP₂. But when SP₂ declines the invitation, SP₂ has threatened SP₁'s face. Therefore, to ensure the principle of politeness, SP₂ must have a way to refuse so that SP₁ feels satisfied even if the invitation is not accepted.

We have also discussed above cases of indirect negative responses. In particular, the response utterances with the thanking act, when combined with the acts of giving reasons for refusal, of apologizing, or of making another appointment, and when done with humility, condescension, or advice in refusing the invitation utterances of SP₁, constitute subtle, ingenious responses that reduce the threat to SP₁'s face. This fact is *the politeness* of SP₂'s response utterances.

In addition to the measures of *politeness* outlined above, when SP₂ rejects SP₁'s invitation, SP₂ can also use tactful words to protect SP₁'s face to make SP₁ be comfortable or willing to accept responses easily. For example:

- (63) SP₁: - *Đám cưới của bé Ngân thế nào anh cũng thu xếp về dự cho vui nhé.*
(Please arrange your time to join Ngan's wedding!)
- SP₂: - *Thú thật với anh, tôi rất muốn như thế nhưng thật tiếc là ngày đó tôi lại có chuyến công tác ở Sài Gòn rồi.*
(Honestly, I'd love to, but I have a business trip to Saigon on that day. I am so sorry.)
- (64) SP₁: - *Chiều mai mời cậu đến nhà tớ ăn tất niên nhé.*
(Please drop by my house to enjoy the end-of-year party tomorrow evening!)
- SP₂: - *Cậu biết rồi đấy, những ngày này tớ phải phụ giúp mẹ bán hàng, một mình mẹ tớ không thể nào xoay sở được.*
(You know, I have to help my mother these days. My mother cannot handle her business alone.)
- (65) SP₁: - *Tối thứ sáu này Kim Chi diễn văn nghệ tại quảng trường chào mừng ngày quốc tế thiếu nhi, mời cô qua xem và cổ vũ cho cháu nó nhé.*
(Kim Chi will give her musical performance this Friday evening. Please come and cheer her on, ok?)
- SP₂: - *Ôi, thế à? Nhưng thứ sáu này em lại phải đi Quảng Ninh mất rồi. Tiếc quá!*
(Oh, really? But I must go to Quang Ninh on Friday. What a pity!)

Despite rejection, the types of responses shown in examples (63), (64), and (65) are ways of declining that save face for the inviter, so that SP₁ is comfortable with the negative comments. When SP₂'s response utterances are performed by scolding or blunt

refusal acts, those responses threaten SP₁'s face. Such responses violate the principle of politeness in communication.

Therefore, to please the interlocutors, whether the response is positive or negative, it is necessary to ensure the principle of politeness. Each ethnic group has its own conventions on how to behave in each specific situation. For the act of inviting, the behavior of SP₂'s response is even more important. The response utterance must satisfy SP₁. Even if it is a negative response utterance, it must not threaten SP₁'s face. Performing politeness in the response speech act to the invitation is to show the beauty in the behavioral culture of the Vietnamese: "Words do not cost money to buy. Choose words to please each other."

6. CONCLUSION

When studying response utterances to invitations, we refer to two main response groups: positive responses and negative responses. In each group, the response utterances also are divided into different manifestations with many forms. Moreover, the interlacing issue and accompanying polite elements also show the beauty in Vietnamese communication culture when accepting or rejecting invitations. This paper's research results show that the response utterances to invitations in Vietnamese are rightly represented as rich and diverse. The representations of the Vietnamese people's politeness or communication culture also are expressed lively through accompanying elements.

It is possible to have the same introductory invitation utterance, but very different response utterances to the invitation. It depends on the content of the invitation, the invitee, and the relationship between the invitee and the inviter. The response dialogue of the act of inviting has two forms: positive response and negative response. We divided it into three subtypes: direct response, indirect response, and response by actions.

In invitational dialogues, there are also cases of interlaced pairs. We have explored the interlacing issue in response utterances to invitations in reference to two types: positive and negative responses with interlacing.

Through this research, we found that the invitational act's response utterances often have polite elements attached. These polite elements honor the face of SP₁ and make SP₁ comfortable. We hope that these research results can be suggestions for further study of other specific speech acts and that they can help users recognize speech acts and use language effectively.

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APPENDIX: SOURCE OF THE EXAMPLES

Ordinal Number	Author	Work	Source
1	Phan Thị Vàng Anh	Thương	Phan, 2013
2	Nguyễn Nhật Ánh	Thằng quý nhỏ	Nguyễn, 2014
3	Nam Cao	Đón khách Nước mắt Quên điều độ Lão Hạc Con mèo Một bữa no Một truyện Xu vợ nia	Lan, 1998
4	Chu Lai	Ăn mày dĩ vãng	Chu, 2004
5	Nguyễn Công Hoan	Hé! Hé! Hé! Tôi không hiểu tại làm sao	Nguyễn, 2014
6	Khái Hưng	Nửa chừng xuân Một đồng bạc	Khái, 1999a Khái, 1999b
7	Kim Lân	Bà mẹ Cấn Làng Trả lại đòn Bố con ông gác máy bay núi Côi Kê	Lữ, 1996
8	Vũ Trọng Phụng	Vỡ đê Số đỏ Cạm bẫy người Giông tố	Nguyễn, 2013
9	Nguyễn Huy Thiệp	Những bài học nông thôn Cánh buồm nâu thuở ấy	Nguyễn, 2007