



Research Article

## Towards the nomination feature of historical cultural toponym system in Hanoi capital, Vietnam

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### Abstract

Toponymy is a study branch of the field of nomination category in theoretical linguistic research. Toponymy research is the process of surveying and compiling two major and important issues: 1) Surveying the profound structure of a toponymy complex including lexical structure, syntactic relations, and linguistic origins that make up a complete toponymy complex; 2) Statistics of the nominating (naming) system, surveying semantic characteristics, thereby selecting the characteristic naming methods that appear in a toponymy complex. This paper attempt to focus on examining the method of identifying characteristics and characteristics of groups of meanings of the Hanoi system of historical and cultural toponyms. From there, we point out the cultural aspects contained in the meanings of each group in Hanoi capital historical and cultural toponyms system. During the process, we utilize knowledge related to semantics and identification in language to take into consideration towards the issue. In addition, the criteria and knowledge in the field of etymology are also considered one of the important factors in tracing the origin of words, contributing to the handling of semantic problems because the group of place names of ethnic minority origin and place names of Chinese origin, foreign languages and ethnic minority languages account for a fairly large proportion of the research corpus.

### Keywords

Nomination, toponymy, Hanoi hisctorical cultural toponyms, sementics, etymology

### 1.Introduction

From the ancient times, human needed to communicate and exchange information to perceive and shape the universe and the objective world. Accordingly, language is used as a tool in communication activities. More specifically, humans need to use sound labels (in terms of phonetics, they can be voiceless, voiced or a series of sounds) or linguistic units (in terms of structure, they can be words, phrases, sentences) or existing

feelings belonging to the object (in terms of sensory perception in human consciousness) to specifically designate individuals, objects, phenomena, events... thereby accurately describing the ideas in the objective world that they want to convey to the listener as an agent with the main tool being linguistic units with the characteristic of identifying specific objects in the objective world. All things, phenomena, individuals, actions, and properties in the worldview universe must possess a “name” as a manifestation that directly affects

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human consciousness, thereby forming indications and influencing objective reality. In addition, an area or a land with natural or artificial structure through the process of formation and existence in nature will reflect images into the consciousness of people and the community living in that area. From there, people have an urgent need to mark or in other words, to define that object/individual with a sound or a series of sounds with specific phonemes, a linguistic unit carrying a distinctive signal (to distinguish it from other signal chains) and can be identified by images in human consciousness. We call it the process of identifying or naming a geographical object.

## 2.Literature review

### 2.1.Literature review on Toponyms

In China, since AD, we can mention works such as: “Han Shu” by many Chinese historians (58) writing about more than 4000 ancient place names in China. Then there is Li Daoyuan with the work “Thuy Kinh Chu”, examining the names of rivers in China at that time. In the West, we can mention works published in the early 17th century such as: “Place Names in France” by Dauzat written in 1948, “Etymological Dictionary of Place Names in France” (1963). Notable among them is the research work “Toponymy - the Lore, Laws and Language of Geographical Names” by place name researcher Naftali Kadmon. On the historical and etymological level, there are works Names on the Land: A historical account of Place - naming in the United States (2012). From the perspective of historical linguistics, researchers have also conducted monographs such as English Place-name (1977), Saxon Place-names in East Cornwall; Cornish place names elements (1987); Cornish place name and language (1995); A Gazetteer of Cornish Manor (1998), Naming New York: Mahattan places and how they got their names (2001), ... It can be seen that linguists have paid attention to the study of universal place names and regional place names in the territories of countries around the world. Regarding dictionary works, Dauzat and Ch.Rostaing completed the book "Etymological dictionary of place names in France" in 1963. In European countries and the US, dictionaries have also been quite elaborately produced such as: Dictionary of American place names (1970); The concise Oxford dictionary of English place names (1974); A dictionary of English place names (1991), Dictionary of London place names (2001); Dictionary of British place names (2019). It can be noted that the works show significant progress in approaching the field of place names from the direction of linguistic research instead of the historical and cultural approach as before.

### 2.2.Literature on Toponyms nomination

A name is a linguistic form that plays an important role in recognizing and locating a distinct individual in the objective world. The problem is how to create a “name”. The act of creating a name is unanimously called by linguists the process of “denomination”. In the world and in Vietnam, there are many viewpoints on “denomination” mentioned by language researchers: Kolshansky defines "Nomination is to assign to a linguistic sign a concept - significant that reflects certain characteristics of a denotation - the properties, qualities and relationships of objects and processes in the material and spiritual sphere, thanks to which, linguistic units form content elements of verbal communication". (see Thang. P, p. 35). Do Huu Chau also claimed that “Humans need names for surrounding objects like they need air...”, “without a name, humans will lose one of their orientation abilities in the world around them” (Chau. D, p. 25]. From the above viewpoints, we can see the importance of naming or identifying. If the objective world does not have a name, it will lead to the loss of perceptions, distinguishing between this and what is not it. All communication activities will not reach the ultimate goal of accurately grasping and understanding. Therefore, we tentatively define “identifying” as the act of combining the use of available linguistic units (words, phrases, sentences) with the ability to apply sensory knowledge about the objects that need to be located to create a concept that is independent, separate, has a distinguishing function, and uniquely corresponds to the image of the object in human perception. The work of creating a name (denomination) is formed from the following three stages: - The process of reflecting the existence of things, events, phenomena, properties, etc., in the objective world into human consciousness in a reasonable way by a certain representation. - The process of identifying and analyzing the representation through processing data and information in human sensory perception of the object being considered. - After completing the stage of receiving images, recording the attributes, nature or features of the referred object, the conceptual system containing one or several characteristics, properties, and categories of the object will be formed and positioned in the linguistic system of human thinking.

## 3.Data and Methods

The data collected for this paper is 94 Hanoi city historical and cultural relics units drawn from two main sources of data:

A.List of works recognized as national historical and cultural relics according to the statistical database of the Department of Heritage under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism up to the time of the thesis.

B.List of bilingual research works on Vietnamese - English place names, publications, specialized magazines on place names and the system of English versions of websites on the topic of historical and cultural relics in Hanoi of Vietnam.

We focus on using statistic of toponyms units to obtain the results shown in percentage of all system of toponyms in Hanoi capital of Vietnam.

## 4.Results and findings

### 4.1.Self - generated nomination of generic element

Based on data of Hanoi historical and cultural toponyms system, we come into considerate the method of nominating place names as below chart:

Table 1: Genric element statistic

| No | Generic element    | Example   |
|----|--------------------|---|
| 1  | Natural toponym    | Lake, Mound   |
| 2  | Artificial toponym | Shrine, temple, pagoda, medical shrine, fortress, City hall, Memorial place, Palace |

From above, it can be seen that the common elements mentioned above all belong to the types of place names synthesized from two types of terrain in the survey of place name corpus of the thesis. The common elements mentioned in the table, in terms of structure, are all single words or compound words with two or more elements. In terms of meaning, these are single words/compound words with explicit meaning, easily recognizable as denotative when reflected in the perception of the recipient. In terms of the method of identification, we did not find any common element units identified by the transformation method. These common elements are often combined with specific elements (after being identified at level 2), forming a complete place name unit in terms of both grammar, morphology and semantic elements (Complex identification). We assign this as the complex model of a toponym unit.

### 4.2.Self - generated nomination of specific element

In terms of identifying characteristics for specific elements of man-made construction sites, we conducted a statistical table of identifying characteristics of the group of man-made construction sites (including the group of two-dimensional man-made construction sites and the group of three-dimensional man-made construction sites) and obtained the following results:

Table 2: Nomination feature character of toponyms

| No | Specific element                           | Amount/Rate  | Example   |
|----|--|--------------|---|
| 1  | Appearance/shape character                 | 1<br>1,06%   | One - pillar pagoda   |
| 2  | Location                                   | 2<br>2,12%   | West palace, North bound pagoda                               |
| 3  | Proper name, name of worshipping candidate | 35<br>37,23% | Goddess of Granary temple, Ho Chi Minh memorial place         |
| 4  | Worship candidate title name               | 12<br>12,76% | “Ba Kieu” temple, “Ba Ngo” temple                             |
| 5  | Animal/plant name                          | 2<br>2,12%   | Elephant temple, White horse temple                           |
| 6  | Adjacent place name attached               | 41<br>43,61% | “Hoa Ma” pagoda, “Kim Lien” pagoda, “An Thai” pagoda...etc... |
| 7  | Diachronical character                     | 1<br>1,06%   | Millenium pagoda  |
|    | Total                                      | 94<br>100%   |   |

## 5.Discussion

According to the above results table, we notice that the identifying characteristics of natural structures and man-made structures have quite similar characteristics such as shape, proper name, adjacent place attached, ...etc... However, the group of man-made structures has a relatively diverse identifying mechanism with 7 identifying mechanisms. Looking deeper into the analysis, we see that the naming

feature "adjacent place names" accounts for the majority with a superior rate of 43,61%. In our opinion, this result reflects the communal lifestyle, living and developing based on the community foundation and having a connection in all elements of nature, including the connection in the method of naming places, concise, easy to identify and briefly reflecting the name of a geographical object to make it easier to absorb and identify with each person's language capital. In addition to the above model, we also found that the model "Name of person, object of worship associated with place name" accounts for a large number of the total number of place names (37,23%). This is also easily explained when the names of man-made structures, most of which are structures belonging to belief systems, religions and cultures, are spread across Vietnam. It can be seen that the religious belief bias in the subject's naming mechanism when using the representation of the objects of worship existing in the structures to refer to place names.

### 5.1. The relation among named subject - naming agent - toponym meaning

Through the survey of the linguistic system in terms of naming, we see that it is necessary to establish a relationship between the three concepts of "linguistic data", "naming" and "meaning of place names". First of all, the naming subject is an individual or organization, a community (generally called the naming agent), they create place names by observing and surveying geographical objects, choosing one of the attributes directly or indirectly related to the object, then using their existing language capital, they create a linguistic unit used as a characteristic to name and represent the object. The process of forming linguistic material used as a name is influenced by the views on the objective world, thinking characteristics, language system, language level, culture, and ethnicity of the naming subject.

The progress of naming as mentioned in the previous section is the process of forming a name for a referent whose signifier has not yet been formed and positioned differently in the language. When this process is completed, the target language unit that refers to the object is formed to maintain the object's signifier in the objective world, thereby forming a lexical unit with all the inherent properties of language, including the property of meaning. It can be seen that in language, the subject with the need to name the objective entity has mobilized linguistic capital from his corpus to perform the act of naming to create a linguistic unit, this unit after formation will have meaning, and the meaning is used to express the entity that affects the consciousness of the receiving object to form the signifier of the object in the

perception of the object when receiving the signifier of the object. Thus, the meaning of a place name is formed from the work of naming a geographical object. We temporarily call the concept of the meaning of a place name complex "Nominative meaning". As above discussion, we make a diagram for this relationship as below:

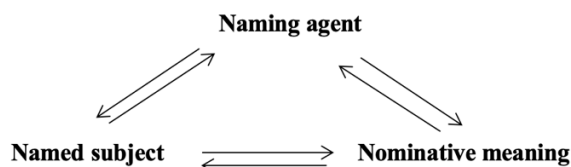


Diagram 1: The relation between 3 dimensions in nomination process

### 5.2. Meaning of toponyms

From the diagram above, we assume that place names themselves do have meaning. Place names are formed on the principle of reason, permeating through the process of forming names with linguistic material as mentioned above. The problem of the meaning of a name that represents an object of the objective world belongs to the field of etymology (the origin of words). Due to the naming subject cannot use a linguistic unit that he or she is completely unaware of to name the object, the problem is whether that representation can be successfully reflected in the perception of the object when receiving a series of phonemes with linguistic form as material. In other words, the linguistic material of the name is formed from many different levels in the knowledge base of the naming subject. The object may or may not be able to process and recognize which reference that series of sound signals represents.

## 6. Conclusion

The Hanoi capital place name system is formed based on the self-created method. The thesis also points out the influence of the "meaning" factor on the naming methods of the geographical name system. Tracing the meaning of a geographical name is a complex task, requiring a large amount of multidisciplinary knowledge at the expert level because the reasons and origins of the naming languages belonging to the naming subjects are "polymorphic". Regarding the characteristics of identifying geographical objects, the thesis determines that geographical names are formed through two naming operations: first-order naming (simple naming) to

classify objects or name common elements and second-order naming (complex naming) to individualize geographical objects or set separate elements. Regarding the self-created naming method, we have compiled 7 naming characteristics for the group of geographical names. The remaining naming characteristics account for a low or insignificant proportion.. From the analysis of the identification method and characteristics, the thesis establishes a diagram of the "tertiary - level" relationship between three factors in the identification process: the naming agent, the named subject and the meaning of the place name. This paper can be a background for successive study in toponyms as the standpoint of linguistic research.

## Data availability statement

The source of data or study corpus which is supported for this work can be easily retrieved at link:

[Địa Danh Lịch Sử Văn Hóa Việt Nam Và Cách Chuyển Dịch Sang Tiếng Anh | PDF](#)

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## Research field

- Toponyms
- Tesol
- Ethnic minority language
- Applied linguistic
- Linguistic & Culture