

SEMANTIC FEATURES OF INFANTRY TERMS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE

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Abstract: *Based on a corpus of 405 English terms and 409 Vietnamese terms, the article is aimed at (i) investigating the semantic features of Infantry terms in English and Vietnamese, and (ii) examining the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese Infantry terms in terms of semantic features. The article employs descriptive and comparative methods to describe, to compare and contrast the semantic features between English and Vietnamese Infantry terms. The findings of the study can be used as a useful reference for cadets of army schools.*

Keywords: *Infantry terms; army schools; semantic features.*

I. Introduction

In the 75th issue of Hanoi Open University Journal of Science, released in January 2021 we examined and compared structural features of English and Vietnamese infantry terms. With an attempt to have a more comprehensive insight into the linguistic features of the terms, within the scope of this article, the study is aimed at fulfilling the following objectives: (i) investigating the semantic features of Infantry terms in English and Vietnamese; and (ii) examining the similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese Infantry terms in terms of semantic features.

II. Theoretical background

2.1. The concept of Infantry terms

The Infantry term is the class of words divided by the scope of use. Compared to the whole common vocabulary, Infantry terms have a narrower scope of activities. However, they still have the common characteristics of the vocabulary system of a language, and their own characteristics reflect the intrinsic nature according to the rule of the general term system and their field of special activities. In terms of linguistic form, Infantry terms are words or phrases. In terms of syllables that make up words, Vietnamese words are divided into two categories, single words and

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complex words, again complex words are divided into reduplicative words and compound words (Nguyễn Thiện Giáp, 1985). Infantry terms are also divided into single words, such as ‘*bom, mìn, tãng, đạn, pháo, cối, súng, mũ, hướng, tầm...*’ (*bomb, mine, tank, bullet, artillery, mortar, gun, hat, direction, range* etc.) and complex words such as ‘*binh chủng, đội hình, chiến dịch, bom bi, mìn chống tãng, bom ba càng*’ (*arm, formation, campaign, fragmentation bombs, anti-tank mines, cluster bombs*), but there is a special point in Vietnamese Infantry terms, that is, they are not reduplicative terms, but single words, compound words and phrases... an Infantry term is a phrase - a combination of many words, for example: *công tác quân sự địa phương, công tác tham mưu hậu cần, ba mũi giáp công phòng ngự, chính sách hậu phương quân đội...* (*local military work, logistics advisory work, three-front defenses, military rear policy...*).

In terms of content (what is expressed), the Infantry terms represent the Infantry concept and name Infantry objects. The concept of Infantry is a total characteristic of Infantry objects reflected in human perception. Infantry concept is the symbolic face of Infantry terms, for example, the term *weapon* reflects the characteristics of many Infantry objects: Infantry technical means which is used to destroy enemy forces, enemy material and technical means, that is, instruments to harm the enemy and protect ourselves. That characteristic is the common feature of many Infantry objects in the army. From the above-mentioned things, it can be seen that the Infantry terms as well

as other types of linguistic signals which present expression (words and phrases calling the names of Infantry phenomena) are linguistic and facial forms expressed as conceptual content. These aspects are closely related to creating the inner nature of Infantry jargon. Specifically, words and phrases called for things and Infantry phenomena. Infantry things and phenomena are reflected by the Infantry concept. The most ideal case for an Infantry term is that the linguistic - conceptual - object aspects have a corresponding relationship and often only indicate an Infantry concept. In fact, there are also cases where a word or phrase names many Infantry objects, that is the case of homonymous Infantry terms, such as: *tãng, địa bàn, ý định, nhiệm vụ...* (*tank, area, intention, mission...*). There are also cases that a concept is represented by many Infantry terms, which is the case with a synonymous Infantry term. For example, a ‘*terrain*’ which is structured and designed in accordance with technical and tactical requirements in Infantry training, which is denoted by two names: *thao trường - bãi tập* (*training grounds - the field*). There is also a case where a term expresses different concepts, that is the case with multi-meaning terms (Sager, J.C., 1990): *bắn* (*shooting*), which is the process of creating a shot, including the operation of ‘ *nạp đạn - ngắm - bóp cò*’ (*reloading - aiming - pulling the trigger*); is a command to order the shooter to perform the movements: *bóp cò - đập cò - giật cò - bấm nút...* (*apply the trigger - step the trigger - pull the trigger - press the button...*). Based on the structural and semantic characteristics, we can see that

Infantry term is a specialized lexical part, including all units qualified as term, used stably in the field of Infantry specialization, in order to accurately represent concepts or things and phenomena belonging to the field of Infantry activities or Infantry specialization.

2.2. Distinguishing Infantry terms from common words

Differences between Infantry terms and common words are expressed in the content and language form. In terms of content, Infantry terms are distinguished from common words in the denotative and connotative aspects. This distinction manifests itself in many respects. Firstly, they are distinguished in both denotative and connotative sides. If common words are used in many fields, according to the common perception of people in society, Infantry terms are the words used to refer to things, phenomena in the field of Infantry and only be aware from an Infantry perspective. It can be said that these are pure Infantry terms, not in common words, such as: *Infantry rifle, attack in progress, individual mortar, meeting engagement, fight hand-to-hand, tactical tricks, firing in progress, etc.* (súng bộ binh, tiến công trong hành tiến, cối cá nhân, chiến đấu tao ngộ, đánh giáp lá cà, thủ đoạn tác chiến, bắn trong hành tiến...). Secondly, Infantry terms are different from the common words in terms of connotative aspect but identical in denotative aspect. For example: *sea, puddle, bay, pond, lake, plain, mountain, war, etc.* (biển, vũng, vịnh, ao, hồ, đồng bằng, miền núi, chiến tranh,...). In terms of denotation, these words are common words and when they are terms, they are

also called the same names of phenomena and things. However, there are differences in terms of connotation, if they are common words, like “*plain*” (đồng bằng) for example, it means a low, flat land, usually in the basin of a large river; if it is a military term, the word “*plain*” expresses the concept that it is an empty terrain, with certain tactical attributes such as camouflage, squad deployment, use of forces and means, accompanied by combat forms and tactics to suit terrain features. The word “*counterattack*” (phản công), when used as a common word, expresses the meaning of the action against the attacker; when it is a military term, it has the conceptual connotation, i.e., it is a special type of combat in attack which is conducted at campaign and strategic scale. However, the concept of military and the concept of common words are closely related because the meaning of common words is always supplemented by the concept of technical terms, enriching meaning nuances (Cabré, M.T., 1999). Furthermore, military concepts are always developed based on the initial meaning of common words (Mellor-Clark & Altamirano, 2004). For example, the concept of “*weapons, war and army*” more or less bears some meaning of common words. *Weapons* (vũ khí) reflected in the perception of most people are all the means and tools used to destroy, damage enemies and keep our advantages; *Army* (quân đội) is perceived to be the armed force of a class or a particular state, tasked with armed struggle for the interests of its class or state.

In addition, the difference between common words and terms is reflected in

the way they are used. Common words are used in many different styles and expressions such as intimacy, courtesy, love, anger... Meanwhile, Infantry terms are used only in the field of military, and do not carry that aspect of sense.

In terms of language structure, Infantry terms are distinguished from common words basically on parts of speech. Most infantry terms are nouns, noun phrases whereas common words are copious and variable.

III. Methods of the study

A mixed research approach is adopted, including both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative approach is used to measure the percentage of semantic categories of the infantry terms in each language, while qualitative approach is utilized to display the semantic features of the terms. The article employs descriptive and comparative methods, with the aid of statistical instruments. The comparative method helps to compare and contrast results and gain much deeper insights. In this study English serves as the target language and Vietnamese as the source language.

The data for research are 814 Infantry terms including 405 English terms and 409 Vietnamese terms. These data were collected from different and reliable sources such as textbooks, articles, official internet websites, magazines, newspapers, English-Vietnamese and Vietnamese-English dictionaries relating to Infantry terms.

IV. Findings and discussion

4.1. Semantic features of English Infantry terms

The following findings result from a thorough examination of the meanings of 405 English infantry terms.

4.1.1. Terms related to orders

A military order is an authoritative command, direction, or instruction usually given by a superior to an inferior in a military context. It can be given directly or indirectly depending on situations. A general order is a published directive by an officer in a command post, which is binding on all ranks under his command.

There are 22 English terms referring to orders in the field of Infantry (approximately 5.43 %). Some examples are *about turn*, *at easy march*, *attention*, etc.

4.1.2. Terms related to tactics

According to Wikipedia, military tactics are the collective name for methods used by units up to a division in strength in engaging and defeating an enemy in combat. Changes in philosophy and technology over time have been reflected in changes to military tactics. Tactics should be distinguished from military strategy, which is concerned with the overall means and plans for achieving a long-term outcome, and operational art, an intermediate level in which the aim is to convert the strategy into tactics.

There are 37 terms denoting infantry tactics (nearly 9.14 %): *advance to contact*, *aggressive*, *all-round defense*...

4.1.3. Terms related to weapons and equipment

According to the free encyclopedia, 'A weapon, arm or armament is any implement or device that can be used with intent to inflict damage or harm.

Weapons are used to increase the efficacy and efficiency of activities such as hunting, crime, law enforcement, self-defense, and warfare. In broader context, weapons may be construed to include anything used to gain a tactical, strategic, material or mental advantage over an adversary or enemy target.'

In the corpus of the research, English Infantry terms which are related to weapons and equipment include 185 words (45.67 %), taking the majority of the total number of terms: *rifle, submachine gun, anti-tank weapons...*

4.1.4. Terms related to Infantry units

Infantry plays an important role and is the main force in the army. It is the force to occupy positions and the presence of infantry will ensure the retaining of that territory. While the tactics of using forces on the battlefield may change, the basic mission of infantry remains unchanged. Offensive operations play the most important role of the infantry, along with defense that makes up the main method of combat on the battlefield. An infantry unit is a collective of soldiers with the same service in the military organization system. Depending on the number of soldiers, units can be as small as sections or as large as corps.

English has 23 terms making up 5.67 % of the English Infantry terms that are identified by this field: *Infantry brigade, division, battalion, squad...*

4.1.5. Terms related to Infantry missions and tasks

If you served in the infantry, you know that physical and mental strength

and endurance along with being a team player are critical to getting the job done. Falling short of the mark can result in the loss of life and failure to complete the mission. Besides simple tasks, you have to deal with very important missions that can be extremely dangerous and risky.

In terms of Infantry missions and tasks, English terms consist of 120 words occupying 29.62 %. Some examples are *absorb an order, attack, advance, take the target, etc.*

4.1.6. Terms related to military places

Places usually refer to military bases where Infantry forces land, deploy, operate, station at, or engage the enemy... There are 18 terms referring to places (4.4 %), such as: *bridgehead, front line, killing fields...*

4.2. Semantic features of Vietnamese Infantry terms

After carefully studying the meanings of 409 Vietnamese infantry terms, we identify the following semantic categories:

4.2.1. Terms related to orders

An order is a command which is used with intonation to command, ask, suggest or advise listeners to do or not to do something. Some orders can be given freely depending on situations but some systems of orders belong to military regulations. Reported orders are one form of reported speech.

Within 409 Vietnamese Infantry terms there are 17 terms of orders, occupying 4.15 % of the corpus: *đi đều, đứng lại, tiến công...*

4.2.2. Terms related to tactics

Infantry tactics is the set of military concepts and methods of infantry to achieve tactical objectives during combat. Infantry is an important force and mainly participates in fighting on mainland. The basic roles are to directly engage the enemy, destroy their soldiers, their weapons, means and fortifications; hold or occupy territory during war. Infantry in ground battles directly engages the enemy and also suffers direct military losses. The mission of infantry tactics is set out to use optimal methods for military units in the process of fighting, achieve favorable combat effectiveness and minimize the possibility of fatalities and physical damage.

86 Vietnamese terms fall into this category, accounting for 21.02 %. Some examples of tactics terms are: *bắn chặn*, *bắn chế áp*, *vu hồi*...

4.2.3. Terms related to weapons and equipment

A weapon is an instrument of attack or defense in combat, such as a gun, missile, or sword. A weapon can be as simple as a knife when used for a fight or as complex as a self-propelled bullet. Weapons may also be classified as conventional, destroying by kinetic energy such as *bullets* or by chemical energy such as *bombs* and *grenades*. The nonconventional category comprises *nuclear weapons*, such as the *atomic bomb* and *thermonuclear bomb*, as well as weapons of *chemical warfare* and *biological warfare*. All the above-mentioned are offensive weapons, but such defensive measures as fort, armor,

and the helmet have also been regarded as weapons.

130 Vietnamese infantry terms (31.78 %) have this semantic category, such as: *đạn*, *lựu đạn*, *súng máy*, etc.

4.2.4. Terms related to Infantry units

The Army is a military service in the military operating mainly on the ground, often the largest number, with a variety of equipment and combat methods. It is the main force that determines the ultimate result of the war.

Infantry is a unit under the Army service in which the soldiers often fight with small infantry weapons although they can be sent to the battlefield by horse, ship, car, plane or other vehicles. Their weapons are rifles, pistols, and grenades... Infantry is responsible for the main function of destroying the enemy, taking their battlefield and holding firm their own battlefield. It is the oldest service in history and is often the first to be built in the military. From the middle of the twentieth century, most industrial countries tend to develop Infantry into mechanized Infantry. Motorized infantry is an infantry force that is supported and protected by motorized means, thus they are capable of maneuvering quickly. When fighting, this force moves on foot, when operating they use motorized vehicles. The infantry is equipped with an armored combat vehicle for moving and fighting, which can be carried out either right on the vehicle or with a walking formation. Compared to the infantry, motorized infantry is equipped with stronger firepower and has a higher maneuverability. Vietnamese Infantry terms related to units consist of 44 terms,

occupying 10.75 %, for example: *cơ quan đầu não, cơ quan tình báo, đại đội bộ binh...*

4.2.5. *Terms related to Infantry missions and tasks*

Despite the hardships, the difficulties, the feet of the infantry soldiers are the bravest ones, able to go through the jungle, cross the mountains, step into difficult and difficult places. The infantry is the main force and plays an important role in the Vietnam People’s Army. This is the force used to occupy positions, the presence of infantry will retain that territory.

In terms of Infantry tactical missions and tasks, Vietnamese terms consist of 110 words occupying 26.89 %. Some examples are: *chiếm đóng, dàn trận, đánh đuổi*, etc.

4.2.6. *Terms related to military places*

Besides functioning as aforementioned military operations,

Infantry places are locations where military-based structures and items are found in the military. They usually contain the highest grade of items available in the military (Items such as military-grade weapons, attachments, and traps), and are the most used places to Infantrymen.

Vietnamese Infantry terms related to this field consist of 22 terms occupying 5.37 %: *cao nguyên, chiến tuyến, giải phòng ngự...*

4.3. *Similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese Infantry terms in terms of semantic features*

Considered to have a particularly important role in the military activities, the Infantry has its own term system full of specific characteristics and categories. Within the framework of the article, English and Vietnamese infantry terms are grouped into 6 semantic categories with the number of terms specified in each category as follows:

Table 1. The number of terms specified in English and Vietnamese

	Semantic features	English	Vietnamese
1	Terms related to orders	22	17
2	Terms related to tactics	37	86
3	Terms related to weapons and equipment	185	130
4	Terms related to Infantry units	23	44
5	Terms related to Infantry missions and tasks	120	110
6	Terms related to military places	18	22
Sum		405	409

4.3.1. *Similarities between English and Vietnamese infantry terms in terms of semantic features*

In terms of semantic features, both English and Vietnamese Infantry terms are used for 6 semantic fields such as *orders, tactics, weapons and equipment, units, missions and tasks*

and *places*. The survey results show the following similar features:

First of all, both English and Vietnamese Infantry terms are used in all 6 chosen semantic fields above. They are frequently used terms when talking about the area of Infantry.

Secondly, with some polysemous terms, the way to identify characteristics in order to distinguish meanings of the terms is more or less dependent on classification criteria, context and communication purpose.

Thirdly, among the six categories of semantics of both languages, the Infantry terms related to missions and tasks are relatively high and equal in quantity in English and Vietnamese, accounting for 29.62 % and 26.89 % respectively.

In short, from the aforementioned points, we can see that English and Vietnamese Infantry terms share quite a lot of similar semantic characteristics.

4.3.2. Differences between English and Vietnamese infantry terms in terms of semantic features

It is noticeable that English Infantry terms related to weapons and equipment

are much higher than Vietnamese Infantry terms related to this semantic category, 45.67 % and 31.78 % respectively. On the contrary, terms referring to Infantry tactics in English occupy a considerably smaller percentage compared with those in Vietnamese, 9.14 % and 21.02 % respectively. Besides, terms related to units in English are not as many as those in Vietnamese with 5.67 % and 10.75 % respectively.

The survey shows that there is a shortage of uniformity in the explanation of the Vietnamese Infantry terms expressed in the phenomenon of synonyms and polysemy. In many cases, an English Infantry term when translated into Vietnamese has different meanings. This leads to the fact that there are two or even more Vietnamese terms with the same concept of an Infantry term in English, for example:

English	Vietnamese
armour	vỏ sắt (xe bọc thép); áo giáp; binh chủng thiết giáp
company	nhóm trung đội; đại đội; công ty
machine gun	súng máy; súng đại liên, súng liên thanh
magazine	hộp tiếp đạn; ô đạn; kho vũ khí quân sự; tạp chí
round	phát (súng); viên đạn

Looking at the example we see that one English term is equivalent to some forms of Vietnamese terms. Therefore, if these words are synonymous, we must research and choose one of the most commonly used terms, ensuring the requirements of the term in Vietnamese for comparison.

Regarding cultural factors, the multiform feature of terms can be partly recognized by Vietnamese terms which were borrowed from Indo-European and Sino-Vietnamese. Sino-Vietnamese terms,

in particular, occupy a large amount in the system of the Vietnamese terms.

On the contrary, the English term system has some terms that do not appear in the Vietnamese term system, for example: *aggressive weapons, smart weapons, Special Forces*... Their meanings cannot be identified by looking at the words or expressions but only by having a thorough grasp of basic concepts.

V. Conclusion

The article has described and analyzed English and Vietnamese Infantry

terms based on six semantic fields: *orders, tactics, weapons and equipment, units, missions and tasks* and *places*. Despite quite numerous differences in terms of semantic features, there are some similarities in the systems of English and Vietnamese infantry terms. Especially, for terms that are made up of two elements, the central element can precede or follow subordinate element and functions as classifying the concept of the term, while the subordinate element has the role of clarifying the meaning of term. From the survey results we can see that the English and Vietnamese Infantry term systems share some similarities in the general identifying characteristics. Moreover, among the six semantic fields, the English and Vietnamese infantry terms related to weapons and equipment as well as missions and tasks account for the majority of the two systems. Besides sharing some features in common, both English and Vietnamese infantry term system have their own semantic features. The most striking difference lies in the number of the terms falling into the categories of tactics and weapons and equipment. Some differences (such as the multiform feature of the Vietnamese terms, or the lack of the Vietnamese equivalent terms) can be partly attributed to cultural factors.

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