

# SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN THE STUDY OF STREET NAMES IN ENGLAND AND VIETNAM

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*Abstract: The purpose of this article is to provide some fundamental themes in the study of street names in England and Vietnam. The descriptive method is employed to provide an overview of the study's core ideas, which include syntax, semantics, and onomatology, using place names, personal names, and street names. These ideas are critical in assessing, interpreting, and comparing street names in England and Vietnam.*

*Keywords: syntax, semantics, culture, onomatology, street names*

## **I. Introduction**

In every city or country, street names are well-known and play a significant role. They give character and personality to the space they occupy, as well as function as a symbol of a country's history, culture, and language. Street names serve several purposes, the most obvious of which is to aid in navigation or identification of a specific location. Furthermore, street names are frequently used to commemorate specific events or individuals, which aids in the promotion of historical figures or notable events in the public consciousness on a daily basis (Shackleton CM, 2018). To comprehend the characteristics of street names, it is necessary to find out the theories of syntax, semantics, culture, and also onomatology with place names and personal names.

## **II. Key concepts in the study of street names in England and Vietnam**

### **2.1. Syntactic and semantic features of street names in Linguistics**

#### *2.1.1. Syntactic features*

##### *2.1.1.1. Definition*

Syntax is an important element of linguistics, there are several definitions of syntax. The Merriam-Webster defines syntax as "The way in which words are put together to form phrases, clauses, or sentences" (Merriam-webster dictionary). According to Radford, A, (1960), "Syntax is concerned with the ways in which words can be combined together to form phrases and sentences".

"Syntax is the study of the principle and process by which sentences are constructed in particular languages" (Chomsky, N, 2002). From this definition, syntax is the study about the rules that words and morpheme joint together to form lager structures such as phrases or sentences. In linguistics, the term "syntax"

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is frequently used instead of “grammar.” While the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, ‘grammar’ can apply to all aspects of language structure, whereas ‘syntax’ refers exclusively to the ways in which words join into phrases and phrases into sentences the shape or structure of well-formed utterances (Wasow, T & Ivan A. Sag, 1999)

### *2.1.1.2. Traditional Grammar*

Traditional grammar refers to grammar research conducted prior to the advent of contemporary linguistics. Grammar, in this conventional definition, is the study of the structure and creation of words and sentences, with little regard for sound and meaning. Grammar, in a more contemporary sense, is the study of a language’s full interconnected system of structures—sounds, words, meanings, and sentences (Allison D. Smith, 2003).

They concentrate on the phrase and evaluate the role and connections of words such as subject, object, and so on. This linguistic structure aids in demonstrating the many clause kinds. Quirk et al. (1985) define seven clause categories, each with its own set of verbs.

Traditional grammars divide words into parts of speech. They define the patterns of word inflection as well as the syntactic rules that govern how those words are integrated into sentences.

## **2.2. Semantic features**

### *2.2.1. Definition*

Semantics is a branch of Linguistics which deals with meaning of language (To Minh Thanh, 2007). According to Hudford, J.R, Heasley, B& Smith, M.B (2007), Semantics studies the meaning of language in general or what language means.

### *2.2.2. Word meaning*

Word meaning is what a word means, i.e. “what counts as the equivalent in the language concerned.” (Hurford and Heasley, 1984)

- Semantic features: the smallest units of meaning in a word.” [Richards et al, 1987: 254]. Semantic features are frequently depicted as binary oppositions, which can be expressed in terms of pluses and minuses. We determine the meaning of a word first using its primitive semantic features, and then with the help of its other semantic features. The characteristics of semantic features: different words may share the same semantic feature; the same semantic feature can occur in words of different parts of speech; the semantic properties of words determine what other words they can be combined with;

- Semantic fields is “the organization of related words and expressions into a system which shows their relationship to one another” (Richards et al, 198). A semantic field can also be defined as “a set of words with identifiable semantic affinities.”

- Lexical gap “The absence of a word in a particular place in a lexical field of a language” is called a lexical gap (Richards et al, 1987).

- Referent, reference and sense: Distinction between referent, reference and sense In Semantics, a distinction is often made between referent, reference and sense.

- Denotation and connotation: The denotation of a word is the core, central or referential meaning of the word found in a dictionary. Connotation is also referred to as connotative meaning.

- Multiple senses of lexical items: Primary meaning vs. secondary meaning The first and foremost distinction made in

multiple senses of a word is between its primary and secondary meanings.

- Figures of speech: A figure of speech is “a word or phrase which is used for special effect, and which does not have its usual or literal meaning.” (Richards et al, 1987)

- Hyponymy: is a relation in which the referent of a word is totally included in the referent of another word. In other words, hyponymy is the relationship between each of the hyponyms (the “lower” word) and its superordinate (the “higher” word).

- Synonymy: is a relation in which various words have different (written and sound) forms but have the same or nearly the same meaning.

- Antonymy: is a relation in which two words have different (written and sound) forms and are opposite in meaning.

- Homonymy: is a relation in which various words have the same (sound and written) form but have different meanings.

- Polysemy: is a relation in which a single word has two or more slightly different but closely related meanings.

- Ambiguity: A sentence is considered as ambiguity when its structure permits more than one interpretation.

- Anomaly: is a violation of semantic rules to create nonsense.

### **2.3. Culture in the study of street names**

#### *2.3.1 Definition of culture*

Culture is a difficult concept to describe, hence there are several definitions of culture. Culture should be considered as a set of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional characteristics of a society or group of people in society,

and it includes, in addition to literature and art, ways of life, ways of living together, value systems, traditions, and beliefs, according to UNESCO in 2002.

Vietnamese Dictionary defines culture as the material and spiritual values created by humans in the historical-cultural process; it is an organic system of material and spiritual values created and accumulated by people through the process of practical activities, in the interaction between people and the natural and social environment.

“Culture is an organic system of material and spiritual values developed and accumulated by people through the process of practical actions, through the contact with others,” Tran Ngoc Them (1999) agreed. “The relationship between man and his natural and social surroundings”

‘Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.’ (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952; cited by Adler 1997)

‘Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.’ (T.Schwartz 1992; cited by Avruch 1998).

### *2.3.2. Characteristics of culture*

Despite the fact that culture is a concept with a wide range of meanings and traits (and thus many alternative interpretations and definitions), four key qualities can be identified, anthropological, valid, systematic, and historic are the most significant. These are both required and sufficient traits for distinguishing culture from comparable ideas, according to Tran Ngoc Them (1999).

#### Systemic characteristic

The tight interdependence of all occurrences and events relating to a culture reflects the systematicity of culture. Culture, as an item that encompasses all social activities, can serve as a social organizer due to its systematic nature.

#### Valuable characteristic

Cultural values can be split into material values (serving material requirements) and spiritual values, depending on the goal, as a measure of society's and people's human level (serving for human needs). spiritual requirements). Cultural values can have a variety of meanings, including utilitarian, moral, and aesthetic values (truth, goodness, beauty). Moral and aesthetic values are both included in the category of spiritual values. Spiritual values also include ideas that have practical usefulness (scientific, educational, etc.), such as how to develop values that people have gathered over thousands of years of experience. As a result of societal adjustment, culture plays a role in directing standards and regulating human conduct to some extent.

#### Humanity characteristic

Culture is a social phenomena that develops through everyday human activity. Culture is a natural phenomenon that is

influenced by human activity. Culture becomes an important communication tool because it is related with people and human activities in society. Culture's communication function is its third function. If language is the vehicle for communication, culture is the content; this is true of communication between individuals within a country, but even more so of communication between people of various ethnicities and cultures.

#### Historical characteristics

Cultural traditions preserve the historicity of a culture. Tradition is a means for a community's amassing and transmitting experiences over time and space. Cultural traditions are relatively stable values (collective experiences) represented in social idiomatic patterns that are accumulated and repeated in human societies over time and space, and are fixed by language, customs, practices, rituals, laws, and public opinion, among other things.

According to author Tran Ngoc Them (1999), each culture is the property of a specific group of people - a cultural subject. Throughout their existence and evolution, that group of people - cultural subjects has had a constant need to learn, and as a result, they have amassed a vast store of experiences and knowledge about the cosmos and themselves. The two microsystems of the cognitive culture subsystem are people and information. The second sub-system is directly tied to the human community's intrinsic cultural values - the cultural subject, which is the community's organizational culture. The human community clearly exists in connection to two sorts of environments: natural (nature, climate, etc.) and social (society, etc), (understood here as neighboring societies, nations, and

countries). As a result, the cultural system comprises two additional sub-systems that are concerned with how the ethnic community interacts with those two sorts of environments. The culture dealing with the natural environment and the culture dealing with the social environment are the two sub-systems in question.

## **2.4. Onomatology**

### *2.4.1. Definition*

The terminology of name studies is plagued by an anomaly of Greek derivational phonology that poses a problem at the very core of the terminological field: the Greek word for 'name' is *onoma*, but in other dialects *onyma*; and the form used in compounds is *-onymo-*. As a result, we get the Greek series *onoma* 'name,' stem *onomat-*; *onomazein* 'to name,' *onomastikos* 'belonging to naes,' (*teehne*) *onomastike* 'the practice, or art, of giving names,' (from which there is just a slight step to contemporary onomastics 'the study of names,' and so on. The ancient adjectives *anonymos* 'without a name' and *pseudonymos* 'with a fictitious identity', on the other hand, have been used in western languages since time immemorial, with their current meanings (which roughly coincide with the ancient ones). Anthroponym (the study of personal names) and toponym (the study of place names) are the main branches of onomatology (Zgusta, L, 1998).

### *2.4.2. Onomatology in Linguistics*

Linguistics, as a language science, investigates all linguistic categories, including names. The study of names includes not only linguistic elements but also information about a community's history, tradition, culture, society, and other topics. As a result, the link between onomatology and linguistics is analogous

to the relationship between part and the entire. (Pham Tat Thang, 2005).

### *2.4.3. Onomatology and socio-cultural aspects*

Onomatology aids in the retracement of history. It depicts the origins, formation, and evolution of humans throughout ages. Furthermore, through examining names, it plays an important part in determining the distinctive patterns of communities all over the world.

Each community's name is distinct from the others and reflects its unique traits. The study of names is crucial in the research of family names in order to determine the ties between various clans. According to Xuslova and Xuperanskaja (in Pham Tat Thang, 2005), "personal name is a component of national history," and place names give an abundance of sources for personal name research.

Language is an important aspect of society. The impacts of culture and history have a role in language selection. Changes in society have an impact on other sections of society, and the names reflect these changes. Having a name confers certain rights on the owner, such as the right to be accepted to the society (Pham Tat Thang, 2005).

## **2.5. Toponym**

### *2.5.1. Definition*

The term *toponym* is derived from the Greek: *topos* (location, place) and *onoma* (name). Later, in English appeared another term with equivalent usage are: place name, topographical name and geographical name. Although there are many different terms, but in general, they all include 2 components: *topos* place geography and name (nym/ name). Each scholar has his own approach, so there are many different definitions of place name.

Nouns in English can be divided into two categories: common nouns and proper nouns. A common noun is a noun that refers to a group of items or a concept, rather than a specific individual. Proper nouns are nouns that refer to singular entities such as Ha Noi, London, the River Thames.

### *2.5.2. Classification of Toponym*

G.L. Smolisnaja and M.V. Gorbanevskij (in Le Trung Hoa, 2002) divided place names into 4 categories: local names, mountain names, water names, and street names. A.V. Superanskaja (in Le Trung Hoa, 2002) divided place names into two large groups of natural and man-made objects with seven types of place names: local name, mountain name, water name, street name, park name, and road name.

Herry Louis Mencken (in Le Trung Hoa, 2002) in *American Language: An Inquiry into the Development of English in the United States in 1921* classified American place names into 8 types: Place names derive from people's names; Place name transferred from another place or old place of the residents; Place names origin from native American; Place names are from foreign languages; Place names in the Bible or legends; Descriptive place names of places; Place names of plant, animal or geological origins.

When Rudnyckyj (in Le Trung Hoa, 2002) categorised Canadian and North American locales in *Onomastica*, he presented the concept of classification: history, linguistics, and onomastics. As a result, place names are classified into the following groups:

According to historical principles, there are colonial root place names, place names of Portuguese, Spanish, and French origin, religious origin place names, and

place names of Portuguese, Spanish, and French origin. Names of places that date back to the British colonial period; Place names that are either modern or self-contained.

Place names are derived from Native American languages, according to the linguistics premise; Polynomials developed from the languages of the Roman Empire: Portuguese, Spanish, and French; Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, German, Icelandic, Scandinavian, and other languages are used to name places. Slavic, Russian, Polish, and other languages are used to create place names in Ukraine. Other languages, such as Hindi, Greek, and Latin, are used to create place names. According to onomastics principles: Indigenous place names; Places borrowed from Asia; New Canadian place names.

Vu Thi Thang (2014) offers 4 ways to divide place names, including: based on object properties to classify; based on natural criteria, not natural; classifying places according to language criteria; Classification of places according to communication function and synchronous and chronological reference system. Vietnamese place names are divided into four categories by Le Trung Hoa (2006): pure Vietnamese place names, Sino-Vietnamese place names, and places in different languages: languages of ethnic minorities and foreign place names.

## **2.6. Personal names**

### *2.6.1. Definition*

Nouns in English, as well as many other languages, can be divided into two categories: common nouns and proper nouns. According to Matthews (2007), a common noun or appellative is one "whose application is not restricted to arbitrarily distinguished members of a class." Simply

said, a common noun is a noun that refers to a group of items or a concept, such as man, mountain, plant, and/or animal (its denotata), rather than a specific individual, whereas a proper noun refers to a specific person, place, animal, or concept (Chalker & Weiner 1998). Proper nouns, on the other hand, are nouns that refer to singular entities such as Ha Noi, London, the River Thames, Gordon, or Kim Hoa (Nguyen Viet Khoa, 2010). Van Langendonck (2007) gave his own definition of PNs, which included not only the pragmatic but also the semantic and syntactic perspectives. Vu Viet Khoa (2010) claimed that PNs are used to call, identify, label and/or describe unique entities.

#### *2.6.2. Components of personal names*

A person's complete name may consist of three main elements: given name, middle name, and family name. In a strict sense, a personal name is typically seen of as a formal given name. Personal name refers to a person's bestowed/given name, surname, and other sorts of names such as nicknames.

### **2.7. Street names**

#### *2.7.1. Definition*

A street or road name is a name given to a street or road to identify it. *Hodonyms* (from Ancient Greek / hodós - road, and *o* / ónoma - name) are the names of streets and roads in toponymic terminology. Street names, often known as *hodonyms*, play a significant role in Onomastics. A street or road name is an identifying name given to a street or road. It belongs to urbanonyms - proper names of urban elements (streets, squares etc.). Street names, according to Le Trung Hoa, allude to any objects on the street. However, because this definition is too broad, I will just discuss the street names in this study.

#### *2.7.2. Syntactic features of street names*

In study about Hanoi street names, Nguyen Thi Uyen (2015) claimed that the street names of this city have two elements that are general elements and particular elements. General elements are one syllable noun and often with “đường” or “phố” (road, or street). Particular elements are more complex with one to four syllable elements and they have two types: single elements and complex elements. Hanoi street names general elements are originated from pure Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese. Particular elements are from pure Vietnamese, Sino- Vietnamese and Indo-European languages (Nguyen Thi Uyen 2015).

#### *2.7.3. Semantic features of street names*

Irish street names spring from medieval and 17th and 18th century names. According to A.Mezenko'(2016)s classification street names of the capital city of the Republic of Kazakhstan Astana divides into these subgroups: In Astana, there are no street names that have been given with the respect of nationalities. It accounts for 0.3 percent of the population (Kurulysshular Str, was named after builders, while Kenshiler Str, was named after miners).

### **III. Conclusion**

Street name research is a science that gives vital information on street names in every city or country. They are linguistic in nature, hence they contain syntactic and semantic characteristics. The features of a community's history, culture, and society are also reflected in street names. Because street names are a type of toponym in onamatology, they are closely related to place names and personal names. The theories connected

to the study of street names are critical in determining the direction as well as in developing frameworks for the research of street names in England and Vietnam.

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