

## **Place Names in Tuyen Quang with Tay-Origin Elements without a Consistent Way to Perform the First Consonant**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The paper examines the current status of how the first consonant of places with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province is written and offers proposed solutions so that these names can be expressed reasonably and consistently. Currently, through linguistic and cultural contact, many Vietnamese vocabularies are borrowed byTay language and vice versa, there are some Tay words that are borrowed by Vietnamese. Tayplaces' names are transcribed by the Vietnamese version of the international phonetic symbols, which helps to preserve the original elements of Tay's language.*

**KEYWORDS:** *place names, Tay language, Vietnamese, first consonant, standardization, TuyenQuang.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Studying about toponymy, we have found out that many authors claim that the name of a place is a unique title for each natural or unnatural subject in space. According to Russian Linguistic Encyclopedia Dictionary, the study of place names (toponymy) is part of Onomastics (the study of titles) which studies the geographical names, the administration and the transformation of those names over time [7, p.515].

According to Russian linguist A.V.Superanskaja, place names are words within the lexical resource of a language, denoted by individual words and subdivided into natural and artificial subtypes. They have common names and proper names. According to the author, a place, whether large or small, has a name which includes two parts: common name and proper name [4, p.13].

In linguistics, Toponymy is a lexical subject that studies names and how geographic nouns such as names of rivers, mountains or country names and other places are formed [6, p.978].

We believe that: Place names include a common element, which is a part of a common name and a separate element, which is a part of a proper name (from here, we agree on the use of the term "separate element" instead of "proper name", and "common element" instead of "common name").

Studying place names in the orientation of studying linguistic toponymy, geographic toponymy and historical toponymy is highly appreciated by Western authors. There are numerous outstanding studies conducted by authors such as T.A.Gibson; Issac Taylor, Charles Rostaing, etc. Studies of Russian toponymists have marked a new milestone for the study of place names. E.M.Murzaev, A.Kapenko, A.I.Popov and, especially, A.V.Superanskaja have set and solved the issues that are both specific and general related to the study of place names. Through their works, we have found that foreign place names are generally studied in geographic theory such as concept, classification, analysis of place names and the relationship between toponymy and other social sciences. This is undoubtedly an important theoretical basis for research in this field in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, studying places in the orientation of geographical-historical-cultural approach has been employed by authors Nguyen Van Au, Bui Thiet, Nguyen Duoc, TrungHai, Nguyen Nhu Y, etc. The authors systematize place names or study place names with categories associated with specific geographic regions. Studying place names in the orientation of linguistics has been employed by authors Le TrungHoa, Nguyen Kien Truong, Tu Thu Mai, PhanXuan Dam, etc. The authors explore the geographical structure, the way of identification, and study the place names according to the cultural and historical characteristics of the places in different regions of Vietnam. These works mainly focus on places with Vietnamese names. There are a number of works about place names related to ethnic minorities such as Place names of Cham in Central Vietnam (2002); Khor Me place names (2003) by Le TrungHoa; A study on the place names with the original language elements of ethnic minorities in Western ThuaThien Hue by Tran Van Sang. However, there are rarely any studies of place names with ethnic minority origins in the northeastern mountainous areas of Vietnam. There has not been any work about place names with original elements of Tay language in TuyenQuang province yet.

Therefore, the article will be the first work to study the place names with the Tay original elements in TuyenQuang province. The article not only explains the linguistic features of place names, but also facilitates

the use of place names with Tay original elements in TuyenQuang province, which are convenient in related activities.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province

Currently, many place names with original elements that are from ethnic minority languages in Vietnam are read and written in Vietnamese in different ways. The place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province are facing the same situation. Place names with ethnic minority original elements in TuyenQuang province are names (of land, of mountains, of rivers, etc.) which have original elements of ethnic minority language and are accepted by native speakers and used by non-native speakers. They are real words with meanings that are recognized by people of ethnic minority. TuyenQuang is a mountainous province in the Northeast region of Vietnam. Tay people, one of the original inhabitants, have settled in TuyenQuang for a long time. The language of Tay ethnic group in TuyenQuang, Tay - Thai language group, belongs to Tai - Ka Dai language family.

The article statistically surveyed on maps of all kinds (collectively referred to as maps), documents on civil status, household registration, administrative documents (collectively referred to as Vietnamese documents) and surveyed the field of place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province (on the basis of 4 districts: ChiemHoa, Lam Binh, Na Hang and Son Duong) with a view to achieve results about the current situation, find out the causes and give solutions of translating those place names into Vietnamese so that they can be read and written in a consistent and accurate way, according to the Vietnamese model.

Thus, defining the concept of place names creates a solid basis for research; accordingly, the comparison of the Tay language with Vietnamese in the initial consonants has led to the following results:

In terms of Phonetic: According to Doan ThienThuat [5], the first consonant system of Tay language consists of 21 phonemes:

p	t	c	k	/	
		ph	th		kH
b	d				
m	n	ㄩ	N		
f	s			h	
v	z				
		ᄀ			
		l			

The first consonant system in Tay language is undertaken by consonant phonemes, including 22 consonants with manner and position as follows:

Manner		Position							
				Bilabial	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Pala-tal	Velar	Glottal
Plo-sive	Noise	Aspirated		ᄁ					
		Un-aspirated		t	□	c	k	/	
	Resonance	Voiced	b	d					
		Voiced	m	n		ㄩ	N		
Frica-tive	Noise	Voiced	f	s	*		ᄃ	h	
		Voiced	v	z			⊗		
	Resonance		l						

In terms of writing, the first consonants in Tay language are as follows:

No.	Phoneme	Symbol	Example	Meaning
1	/b/	b	buộc	đằm lầy
2	/k/	c	co	cây
	/k/	k	kèn	đau buốt
3	/k/	q	quếng	cáikén
	/z/	d	dộc	cáiro
4	/d/	đ	đướt	nóng, ẩm
5	/f/	f	fạ	trời
6	/h/	h	hai	trần
7	/l/	l	lăng	lung
8	/m/	m	mác	quá
9	/n/	n	nà	ruộng

10	/r/	r	rộc	rậm
11	/p/	p	pộ	vin
12	/s/	x	xu	tai
13	/t/	t	tu	cửa
14	/v/	v	vài	sái
15	/j/	nh	nháo	đàn, tốp
16	/N/	ng	ngà	vùng
17	/c/	ch	chí	cáivò
18	/ʒʀ/	sl	slam	ba
19	/ph/	ph	phầy	câytre
20	/th/	th	thát	hắt
21	/kh/	kh	khú	cậu
22	/bj/	bj	bjóóc	hoa
23	/pj/	pj	pja	cá
25	/phj/	phj	phja	núidá

Thus, the differences in the initial consonants of Tay language compared with Vietnamese are:

In Tay language, there are palatalized consonants /bj/, /mj/, /pj/, /phj/.

In Tay language, there is an opposition of fricative labiodental consonant /f/ with bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/. There is no bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ in Vietnamese.

In Tay language, there is a side fricative consonant /h/. There is nothing like that in Vietnamese.

Vietnamese has fricative consonants /ɛ/, /ɔ/. In Tay language, there is a plosive sound /k<sup>h</sup>/.

The above differences are in the first consonants.

The difference in phonetic and scripting of Tay language compared to Vietnamese is one of the reasons that make place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province being used inconsistently, which results in different ways of reading and writing the name of a place; hence, there is a need to standardize all the names of places.

## 2.2. The matter of standardizing ways of writing and reading place names

Standardizing a place name means unifying the way of reading and writing the name of a place based on certain principles. Standardizing place names leads to a uniform use of names in a territory or a country, and, to a greater extent, to avoid confusion of place names and "to prevent international political disputes" [1, p.9].

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) sets out a general principle of standardizing place names: "use Latin characters and Latin symbols and in any case, must not violate beliefs and sentiments" [1, p.2]. In Resolution No.4 of the United Nations Conference on the standardization of place names, five specific proposals were made: international standards for place names, collection of place names, principles of processing place names in bureaus, and handling place names in multilingual areas and catalog national place names. Of the above proposals, the one that should be taken into consideration is the introduction of principles for writing place names and the requirement "the way of writing place names must best suit to the current spelling rules of the country, while also taking into account the types of geographical language" [1, p.13].

Standardization of place names is specifically regulated with the following principles:

First: Maintaining the original language;

Second: Phonetic transcribing;

Third: Lexical transferring;

Fourth: Translating meaning;

Fifth: Using according to habits;

Sixth: Following the Regulations of the State or National Place Names Committee. [1, p.2].

These are considered to be the basic principles for a general process of translating place names.

In Vietnam, according to the researchers' results, there are a quite great number of place names that are used inconsistently in way of writing and using geographical terms [1, p.3].

The standardization of place names of ethnic minorities in Vietnam is a very complicated issue. It is "a move to correctly writing that proper name in Vietnamese documents, based on that ethnic minority script (if any), or based on the specific name of that ethnic group (if no word is available). write)". [3, p.9]

However, place names with ethnic minority's language elements in different regions have their own characteristics. According to some researchers, the place names of ethnic minorities in the North of Vietnam in Vietnamese documents are mainly Thai, Tay - Nung, Hmong, Muong, and Ha Nhi, etc. They are often from oral languages and are recorded by the national language. The way to write the place names with original elements of ethnic minorities in the North is suggested as follows: "For cases where it is unclear how to write or one of the ways must be chosen, the best way is following how this place name is read by ethnic minorities." [3, p.68] and "follow the rules of transcribing common Vietnamese places: write each word separately, capitalize the first letters of the word, do not include dash (...), and do not use separate symbols". [3, p.69].

### 2.3. Standardizing place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province without unified initial consonants

#### 2.3.1. Place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province without unified initial consonant

Based on surveyed materials: Topographic map of TuyenQuang province in 2009 (1); List of places of residence, mountains, rivers, socio-economy of TuyenQuang province in 2014 (2); Administrative map of TuyenQuang province in 2014 (3); Administrative maps of districts: ChiemHoa, Lam Binh, Na Hang, Son Duong in 2014 (4), we obtained the results: there are 72 cases in which of place names are not unified in the way of recording the first consonant (occupying 18.85% of place names used inconsistently) and they belong to the following cases:

- Do not unify the first palatalized consonant.

For example:

+ Tat Nam Mjà (1), KhunMjè stream (1).

+ Pja Nang mountain, PjaKhao mountain, PjaBoc mountain (1), Pja Bo Can mountain, Pja Deng mountain (1). Phja Lieu mountain, PhjaPhong mountain, PhjaBioocmountain, PhjaKhao mountain (2), PhjaXeng mountain (2), Phja Bo Can mountain, Phja Deng mountain and PhjaPioong mountain, PhjaTrau mountain (2); Phea Chang and Phja Chang (2).

- Fricative labiodental /f/ and plosive bilabial /p<sup>h</sup>/ are written differently from each other.

For example: Pác Fa village, NàFecmountain, Fạ village, Fe Chau mountain, etc.

- The sounds recorded by the consonant group "sl": tat Khuoi Sung, pu Coc Song, Sao village, pu Khau Sang, khuoi San mam, khuoiSooc, Na Sam village, khuoi Bac Sat, etc.

"Place names are words, like any other words, subject to the effect of phonetic law" [2; 109]. Of all impacts, local phonetics are one of the important causes of changes in reading place names. At the same time, Kinh people living with Tay people face many difficulties when pronouncing places like the locals. Therefore, many placenames, which sound like Tay, are borrowed from Kinh. When the Tay has written language, they write places according to their pronunciation. Kinh people have their own different ways of writing and reading according to their language. This makes each group of people write place names in a different way. Consequently, a same place has many different ways to call.

#### 2.3.2. Proposing solutions

##### 2.3.2.1. Principles of transcribing Tay-origin place names

Standardizing the writing of Tay's place names must be in line with the Party's and State's status, circumstance and language policy on ethnic minority languages. In order to transcribe the ethnic minority place names into Vietnamese, some principles can be proposed as follows:

- Vietnam is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation but Vietnamese is the national language. Therefore, the place names in ethnic minority languages must be transcribed with Vietnamese symbols into Vietnamese.

- In comparison between Tay and Vietnamese, in terms of phonetics and characters, there are many similarities, thus creating favorable conditions for the transcription of the Tay-origin place names into Vietnamese. At the same time, the specific characteristics of the Tay language should be considered and the pronunciation of native speakers should be respected.

- When standardizing the Tay's place names into Vietnamese, it is necessary to avoid disturbances, especially those that have been recorded for a long time on national maps and maps that have existed for a long time.

These are the principles applied to the whole process of proposing the transcribing method in order for a consistent way to write down the names which need to be standardized in TuyenQuang province.

##### 2.3.2.2. A specific solution for writing the first consonant

Use single characters or combinations of characters to write consonants with pronunciation close to the Tay and Nung languages.

+ Case 1. The palatalized consonants are written by adding "i" before the vowels and after the consonant.

For example:

Transcription	Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)
/tat2 nΦ(m5 mja3/ /pu3 phja1 doN1/	tátNậmMia pùphiaĐông
/pu3 phja1 khau1/ /pu3 phjabj□□k2/ /ban4 Pjat2/ /pu3 Phja1 Pjoong1/	pùPhiaKhao pùPhiaBioóc bản Pi Át pùphiapioong...

+ Case 2. Fricative labiodental consonant /f/ and plosive bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ are differently written. The consonant /f/ is written as "f" and the consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ is written as "ph".

For example:

**Transcription**

/ban4 pak2 fa1/  
/ban4 na3 fek2/  
/təom1 fa5/  
/khuoi4 fe1 Cau04/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

bảnPácPha  
bảnNàPhéc  
ThômPhạ  
khuôiPheChâu...

+ Case 3. For the sounds written as "sl" in Tay language, the symbol /l/ is used to represent them when transcribed.

For example:

**Transcription**

/tat2 khuoi4 luN2/  
/pu3 kok2 loN1/  
/ban4 lau1/  
/pu3 khau1 laN4/  
/khuoi45 lăN1 măm2/  
/khuoi4 l□□k2/  
/ban4 na3 lam4/  
/khuoi4 bak2 lat2/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

tátKhuôiSlung  
pùCốcSlông  
bảnSlao  
pùKhauslăng  
khuôiSlănMăm  
khuôiSlóoc  
bảnNàSlăm  
khuôiBácSlát...

### III. CONCLUSION

That there are inconsistent ways of writing the first consonants of place names occurs due to the phonetic differences between Tay language and Vietnamese. When Vietnamese becomes the national language, the writing of place names with Tay-origin elements according to Vietnamese and officially documenting them in Vietnamese facilitate communication. After many times of standardization, many place names have been changed. However, there are certain differences between Vietnamese and Tay language. In some cases, Vietnamese cannot be used to reflect the sound reflect the sound, and it is difficult to transcribe the pronunciation of Tay people, so some place names with Tay-origin elements have been popularized for easier reading in Vietnamese. Therefore, there is a certain deviation in pronouncing the place names. The solution to standardize the way of writing place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province is to use Vietnamese script, characters and writing rules to transcribe Tay-origin place names into Vietnamese - the national language. In addition, other characters and spellings in Vietnamese can be used to write Tay-origin place names.

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