

Theory of Translation Dissecting a Case of “Van Mieu – Quoc Tu Giam”, a Significant Toponym in Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract: In linguistic research, translation is as always, an interesting area to study. It requires not only linguistic knowledge but also non-linguistic or background knowledge to fulfil your study. Vietnam has plenty of toponym, place names that are connected with our history, culture and vernacular. Therefore, a work of translating those to the other language with an accurate and comprehensive way is worth discussing. This paper aims to study about meaning of those nomination then suggest the most applicable and equivalent terms in target language (English). We are going to use the Theory of Nomination accompanied with Theory of Translation based on compiling and discussing about Nomination method and carry out some recommendation to translate those place names from Vietnamese into English. Besides, we would use theory of pragmatics to discover metaphorical and figurative meaning of those names. All names of buildings and constructions in “Van Mieu – Quoc Tu Giam” relics will be fully discussed throughout this paper. As a result, our paper will offer a suitable recommendation in translating names of those constructions to English. For practical perspective, within Tourism field, this paper is attempted to support foreign tourists to comprehend the sense of those names when they have opportunity to visit this relics during their trip to the North of Vietnam.

1. A review on Toponym

In general, toponymy is an interesting field in linguistic research that studies about toponym (place name). It requires candidates' academic background knowledge in linguistics such as: Etymology, Phonology, Nomination and even Semantics... Before, there are lots of researches about toponym and its definition with different perspectives. Kadmon, a famous fellow researcher on place name once stated “*Toponym or topographic name, is a proper name that shows topographic features, on the Earth, or heavenly body such as moon, planets or one of its satellites*” (Kadmon, 2000). It can be inferred that he is trying to approach toponym definition with geographical aspect. He then also view and study about toponym by using theories and features of geography. Vietnam is a country with ancient and diverse history and culture. Vietnam has been through 3 countries reigned as China, France and America. It is inevitable leads to the fact that there is a combination between languages existed in our daily life of Vietnam from the past. Therefore, the study of toponym and its issues is interesting but complicated. Mentioning about origin of toponym (Etymology), we ought to trace the origin of language systems which have been existed in Vietnam from the ancient time. It is originally affected by Khmer language (ancient Cambodian), Austronesian, Tai – Kadai, Muong, Mon –Khmer and so on. Furthermore, there are some definition of Vietnamese experts with a similar perspective to show that toponym belong to concepts as “*Location*”, “*Proper Name*”, “*Toponym type*” and “*Area*”: Truong (1996), Au (2008), Hoa (2018). Especially with Truong (1996), he mentioned “*Toponym types as constructions which were built from the old time such as temple, pagoda, shrine...*”. Also, he defined that “*Toponym are natural or artificial objects...*” (Truong. N. K, 1996). We highly agree this point because they are also located at a particular place and their location has been settled steadily. In addition, Nuessel stated that “*Proper names are not connotative; they denote the individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply attributes as belonging to those individuals*” (Nuessel, 1992). What he concluded concerns to the term of nomination especially for proper name as a specific element. Toponym somehow can be regraded as a proper name. It denotes something which is referent, individual and separate from the others. In this paper, we are going to take into consideration the case of “*Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam*” with their constructions' names. In addition, about ways of classifying toponym as nominating formula, there are some points made by numerical of researchers. By that statement, we mostly accept with classifying perspective of Tent as he divides toponym into 7 types from to his criteria of naming geographical places: Descriptive (1), Associative (2), Occurrence (3), Evaluative (4), Shift (4), Indigenous (5), and Eponymous (6). (Tent, 2015)

2. A brief review on Translation theory

We attempt to look into some perspective in theories of translation applied in this paper. There are lots of studies and researches which clarify some theories of translation. “Skopos” is somehow a suitable theory for specialized translation. This theory was first introduced by Vermeer in 1978 at Germany. He explained “*Every action has a purpose and translation is an action, therefore, it has to have a purpose...*” (Vermeer, 1978). It can be inferred from this statement that when we start to do a translation with a word, phrase, sentence or a

paragraph, we should consider purpose and goal after finishing our task. Also, for non-linguistic aspect, he stated “Linguistics alone won’t help us. First, because translating is not merely and not even primarily a linguistic process. Secondly, because linguistics has not yet formulated the right questions to tackle our problems.” (Vermeer, 1987). This can be comprehended as beside linguistic knowledge, we should apply our background knowledge which are concerning to what we are going to translate. Furthermore, Nida and Taber has also mentioned their view that *translation is a procedure of reproduction linguistic information towards target language by using the most equivalent method from the aspect of semantics and style*. It can be concluded that they concern not only on semantics between the two languages but also the linguistic style. In details, the content in target language should reach the equivalence both in semantics and linguistic style to secure the authentic and precise meaning after being switched (translating). Regarding to our circumstance here, we translate names of construction in “*Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam*”, a famous cultural temple and old university in Vietnam. This task requires us with interdisciplinary knowledge to fulfill due to the fact that those constructions function for worshipping and educating in feudalism time.

Furthermore, our purpose is to tentatively translate toponym from Vietnamese to English. We shall discuss the way and result in switching these names of construction from source language (Vietnamese) into target language (English). Theoretically, the information at target language should reach the ideal equivalence comparing to source language at both semantics and style. Moreover, in practical, the information after being translated into target language should reflex a precise picture into the awareness of receiver. In this circumstance, tourists are those who have English as a mother tongue and English culture as their root culture. In brief, we are going to fix the problem of intercultural communication.

3. A brief introduction of Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam

This is the most famous and architecture building located at the center of Ha Noi, the capital of Vietnam. Being built on 1070, it was used to be a temple to worship the father of Confucian religion in China named Confucius. He was born and lived in China at about 554 B.C. He was a man who set up the foundation of Confucian philosophy in China. In general, this religion focuses on the five manners of a so called merit man as: Humanity, Merit, Kindness, Acknowledging and good prestige. Besides, a man must be loyal to three men in his life: King, Master and Father. From that time, his philosophy has been developing by his disciple until present time. Therefore, people built a temple to worship him as what he did for this religion and name it “Van Mieu”. “Quoc Tu Giam” is a successive construction which was built six years after that in the year of 1076. At that time, Vietnam education syllabus based mainly on crucial philosophy of this religion. That is the reason “Quoc Tu Giam” building has been founded this time as a first university in Vietnam right beside “Van Mieu”. On the year 2012, “Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam” has been recognized as “**National special relics**” by government of Vietnam. About architecture, it was built in the acreage of 50.000 meter square at the center of Hanoi capital with some construction reflecting the special feature of traditional culture of feudalism.

4. Analyzing structure and semantics feature of toponyms in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam

To continue with constructions name list that exist in “Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam”. We shall make a table of constructions’ name and attempt to analyze the literal meaning of each one by their names. Since this building is a complex building with full of named constructions, it is regarded as a captivating destination for tourists to come to visit them and comprehend more about the history of Vietnam education and historical culture of Vietnam in feudal age. It can be listed with: “Van Mieu, Quoc Tu Giam, Dai Trung mon, Dat Tai mon, Thanh Duc mon, Thien Quang tinh, Khue Van Cac, Van Mieu mon, Ao Van, Khu Nhap Dao, San Dai Thanh, Khu Thai hoc, Dien Dai Thanh, Nha Ta vu, Nha Huu vu”. From that list, we set a table to have a clearer observation about constructions here and their concepts as follows:

No	Name of Construction	Concept/Function
1	Van Mieu (Văn Miếu)	The temple where they worship Fellow Confucian
2	Quoc Tu Giam (Quốc Tử Giám)	The university in Feudalism time, place where students are trained and educated at university level
3	Dai Trung mon (Đại Trung môn)	A gate to entrance of university
4	Dat Tai mon (Đạt Tài môn)	A left gate to the university (Usually for male student)
5	Thanh Duc mon (Thành Đức môn)	A right gate to university (Usually for female student)
6	Thien Quang tinh	A big pond in the middle of 82 stone stele of Ph.D

	(Thiên Quang tỉnh)	
7	Khue Van Cac (Khuê Văn Các)	A 2-storey building with shape of “Khue Tu”, one among 28 stars in Chinese astrology star list
8	Van Mieu mon (Văn Miếu môn)	A main gate to Van Mieu
9	Ao Van (Ao Vãn)	A pond where king and his madarin discuss about Literature, National issue
10	Khu Nhap Dao (Khu Nhập Đạo)	An area where new students gather to attend Opening ceremony of a school year
11	San Dai Thanh (Sân Đại Thành)	A courtyard where students took their examination at that time
12	Dien Dai Thanh (Điện Đại Thành)	A place where they worship Confucian and his four best disciples
13	Khu Thai hoc (Khu Thái học)	Area with rooms for students to study their subjects
14	Ta vu (Tả vu)	A place on the left side of Quoc Tu Giam, where they worship 36 outstanding disciples of Confucian (Khổng Phu Tử)
15	Huu vu (Hữu vu)	A place on the right side of Quoc Tu Giam, where they worship 36 outstanding disciples of Confucian (Khổng Phu Tử)
16	San Dai Bai (Sân Đại Bái)	

Table 1: Name list of construction in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam

As discussing about toponyms with the aspect of elements forming, we will cut it into two elements in structure as generic elements and specific elements. These two elements themselves form into a full complex toponym. By a table below, we set up a name list of full constructions at “Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam”. As shown above, we can see all names of construction here were structured from two elements. Generic elements which refer to the general elements as “San - Courtyard”, “Mieu - Temple”, “Mon - Gate”, “Ao - pond”...etc...Next, we will go onto have a look at generic elements of those non-nature construction as following:

No	Name of Generic element	Language Origin	Meaning
1	Mieu (Miếu)	Sino language	A temple
2	Quoc Tu Giam (Quốc Tử Giám)	Sino language	Official place used for Education purpose
3	Mon (Môn)	Sino language	A gate
4	Tinh (Tỉnh)	Sino language	A well
5	Cac (Các)	Sino language	An attic, a storey
6	Ao (Ao)	Vietnamese	A small pond
7	Khu (Khu)	Sino language	An area
8	San (Sân)	Vietnamese	A courtyard
9	Dien (Điện)	Sino language	A shrine
10	Vu (Vu)	Sino language	A house

Table 2: Name list of generic element in non - nature toponym

Besides generic elements, we also find some specific elements as “Van”, “Dai Thanh”, “Dat Tai”. “Thanh Duc”, “Dai Bai” as an important element that helps toponym maintain the character of individual and separate from others with same type/kind. Hereby we firm a table with list of specific elements that appear in constructions in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam as below:

No	Name of Specific element	Language Origin	Meaning
1	Van (Vãn)	Sino language	“Van” is a part in Confucian’s name at the time of Ming dynasty in China
2	Quoc Tu (Quốc Tử)	Sino language	Education for Man
3	Dai Trung (Đại Trung)	Sino language	Big (Dai) and in the middle (Trung)

4	Dat Tai (Đạt Tài)	Sino language	A success in knowledge
5	Thanh Duc (Thành Đức)	Sino language	A success in manner
6	Thien Quang (Thiên Quang)	Vietnamese	Be sunny/shining/bright by sunshine
7	Khue Van (Khê Văn)	Sino language	A symbolized star for Literature in the sky as Chinese astrology 28 stars
8	Nhap Dao (Nhập Đạo)	Vietnamese	An action of entering a religion/organization
9	Dai Thanh (Đại Thành)	Sino language	A group of outstanding people/students/members
10	Thai hoc (Thái học)	Sino language	Being fellow in study
11	Ta (Tả)	Sino language	Left
12	Huu (Hữu)	Sino language	Right
13	Dai bai (Đại bái)	Sino language	Big respectfulness

Table 3: Name list of specific element in non - nature toponym

As shown above, towards an etymology aspect, we can highly conclude that most of the name of those constructions here are originally from Sino language, an old language which existed from the feudalism time in Vietnam (A.D to the year of 938).

From those tables above, we have just figure out meaning of each construction in this famous temple using semantics analysis. From those meaning, we tentatively propose the translation term for full name of those constructions as the table below:

No	Name of Construction	Concept/Function	Proposed Name in English
1	Van Mieu (Văn Miếu)	The temple where they worship Fellow Confucian	Temple of Confucian
2	Quoc Tu Giam (Quốc Tử Giám)	The university in Feudalism time, place where students are trained and educated at university level	Feudalism University
3	Dai Trung mon (Đại Trung môn)	A gate to entrance of university	Middle Gate
4	Dat Tai mon (Đạt Tài môn)	A left gate to the university with the meaning of Success in your study (Usually for male student)	Intellectual Gate
5	Thanh Duc mon (Thành Đức môn)	A right gate to university (Usually for female student)	Merit Gate
6	Thien Quang tinh (Thiên Quang tinh)	A big pond in the middle of 82 stone stele of Ph.D	Shining Pond
7	Khue Van Cac (Khê Văn Các)	A 2-storey building with shape of “Khue Tu”, one among 28 stars in Chinese astrology star list	“Khue” storey
8	Van Mieu mon (Văn Miếu môn)	A main gate to Van Mieu	Van Mieu Gate
9	Ao Van (Ao Văn)	A pond where king and his madarin discuss about Literature, National issue	Van Pond
10	Khu Nhap Dao (Khu Nhập Đạo)	An area where new students gather to attend Opening ceremony of a school year	Initial/Entrance Area
11	San Dai Thanh (Sân Đại Thành)	A courtyard where students took their examination at that time	Examining Area
12	Diên Dai Thanh (Điện Đại Thành)	A place where they worship Confucian and his four best disciples	Confucian Shrine
13	Khu Thai hoc (Khu Thái học)	Area with rooms for students to study their subjects	Classroom
14	Ta vu (Tả vu)	A place on the left side of Quoc Tu Giam, where they worship 36 outstanding disciples of Confucian	Confucian’s Disciple Shrine

		(Khổng Phu Tử)	
15	Huu vu (Hữu vu)	A place on the right side of Quoc Tu Giam, where they worship 36 outstanding disciples of Confucian (Khổng Phu Tử)	Confucian's Disciple Shrine
16	San Dai Bai (Sân Đai Bái)	A courtyard that all people gather to celebrate main part of traditional ceremony of Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam	Prostrating courtyard

Table 4: Suggested Names of construction in English

Conclusion

After taking into consideration about semantics, structure and culture of those construction and toponyms in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam, we have found out some suggestion as well as proposal in translating names in general and toponyms in particular as follows:

1. Nearly all toponyms are structured by 2 elements. We call those are generic element and specific element. They combine to form a completed system of toponym complex. It is crucial to analyze a toponym to two parts when we need to study about their profound structure
2. All toponyms mentioned above are 90% derived from Sino language in China before. It is not hard to understand due to the fact that Vietnam has been reigned by China for nearly one thousand years. That is the reason Sino language has totally affected in Vietnam society that time.
3. For translation task, due to the fact that toponyms are structured by two elements, it is advised that we ought to divide toponyms into two parts and it would be easier to observe each elements in a complex of toponym. Next step is to look for the suitable (equivalent) word/concept in a target language then make a filter to see whether some concepts can reach the term "Equivalence" in translating.
4. This is an interdisciplinary task, translator should be acknowledged in multi-field but not only linguistic. It requires a full research in history, geography, culture and even a kind of archaeology...etc... If they just switch those concept from word to word, directly from source language to target language, reader (receiver) maybe cannot comprehend what metaphor he would send to them. Beside linguistic, culture issue is also what we must concern when processing toponyms translation.

Appendix

No	Name of Table	Content
1	Table 1	Name list of construction in Van Mieu - Quoc Tu Giam
2	Table 2	Name list of generic element in non - nature toponym
3	Table 3	Name list of specific element in non - nature toponym
4	Table 4	Suggested Names of construction in English

Reference

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