

# Standardizing place names with Tay-origin elements in Tuyen Quang province, Viet Nam

**Phd. Duong Thi Ngu<sup>1</sup>**

Tan Trao University, Tuyen Quang, Vietnam  
[duongthingu@gmail.com](mailto:duongthingu@gmail.com)

**MBA. Dinh Tran Ngoc Huy<sup>2</sup>**

Banking University HCMC Ho Chi Minh city Vietnam -  
International University of Japan, Japan  
[Dtnhuy2010@gmail.com](mailto:Dtnhuy2010@gmail.com)

## Abstract

The way of writing place names originated in Tay language, in Tuyen Quang province is not uniform in two aspects: phonetics and vocabulary. For the above situation, dealing with place names originated in ethnic minority languages has become urgent. Therefore, such principles of transcription as: ensuring the semantic correctness of the place names, following the spelling of the national language, ensuring the habit of language community must be done to standardize the those place names, and facilitate the communication. With the above principles, the selection of solutions to transcribe place names with original element in ethnic minority languages into Vietnamese should be applied to each specific case in accordance with the standards of Vietnamese spelling.

## Keywords

place names, Tay language, Vietnamese, first consonant, main syllables, final sounds, tone/rhythm, standardization, Tuyen Quang.

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## Introduction

Toponymy, which studies the origin, structure, semantics, variation, distribution and use of Toponym. Toponymy explores different aspects of naming, and simultaneously learns about the language, culture of a region in particular and a nation in general. The study of place names in the world appeared early with the formation and development of topography and received much attention in the 80s of the 19th century. The first authors to study place names in the world can be mentioned as (Gibson, 1960), (Taylor, 1896), Egli (Switzerland) (1872) in (Oppermann, 1896); author (Nagl, 1903); (DAUZAT, 1948, 1949). Through these studies, "theoretical basis has been established: the object of toponymy has been determined, the classification of place names is relatively reasonable, the research method has been scientific" (Hoa, 2005). Charles Rostaing (France) in his work: "Les noms de lieux" (Rostaing, 1965a, 1965b) has outlined two principles of place research. That is to find the ancient forms of the words that make up and to know the etymology of the place must rely on the local phonetic knowledge. The research of Russian topographers has marked a new development for toponymy. Murzaev et al. (1985) with *What is Topography* posed both specific and highly generalized problems about toponymy. The author presented a way to understand the concept of place names, delving into practical issues related to the analysis of place names. Superanskaja (2002) introduced the concept of place names, classifying places in his own way. In Vietnam, the study of place names in the direction of linguistics began in the 60s of the twentieth century, along with the development of the field of Toponymy. In recent years, toponymy has really become an object of research in linguistics and there are many research works on places. The representative authors are: Hoa (2005), Trùng (1996), Mai (2004), Dam (2005), etc.. In particular, the thesis *Place names have original language elements. Ethnic minority language in Western Thua Thien Hue* by author Sang (2013) is a new direction when researching places with elements of ethnic minority language origin in Western Thua Thien Hue. The author has researched and pointed out the features of place names belonging to the Katuic language group, Mon-Khmer genus. Place names are words in the vocabulary of a language, used to name geographical objects, so it operates and is influenced and governed by the general laws of language in terms of language pronunciation, vocabulary, semantics and grammar. Topography is a specialized study of the names and names of regions, rivers, streams, lakes, and administrative units, etc. Therefore, toponymy is a science related to history, geography, culturology, and lexicography. The relationship between toponymy and linguistics is reflected in the relationship of toponymy with phonology, lexicon, and grammar. This was specifically stated by Superanskaja as follows: The special position of proper nouns in language can be compared to the separate positions of the planets in their orbits. If the vocabulary is considered to be the sun and the other planets revolve around it, then each individual lexical form (places, names, scientific terms, other categories) can be considered as separate satellites. With common vocabulary. Here, each type of form is in its own orbit and, therefore, does not touch the other forms (Superanskaja, 2002). Researching places from a linguistic perspective includes the following tasks:

- Learn the structural models of place names, methods of identification, the process of creating place names;
- Learn the original historical elements, the process of formation and development of landmarks;
- Learn the semantics of place names, how to represent identifiers; change of place names;
- Learn the origin, spread, distribution of place names through different spaces and time periods; features as the basis for identification;
- Agree on the use of place names in various types of documents and in Vietnamese; serving the work of making dictionaries of places and maps of Vietnamese proper names.

In this work, since the survey sites are of Tay-origin, once the session is changed to Vietnamese, these landmarks can be received and recorded which may have differences and many variations, causing difficulties. difficult to use. This requires the necessary correction from a linguistic perspective. Therefore, in carrying out this work, we aim to show the current status of how to write and read places with elements of Tay-origin in Tuyen Quang province and propose some solutions to use place names in a unified manner and correct spelling on Vietnamese documents

## Content

### The current situation of writing and reading places with elements of Tay-origin in Tuyen Quang province

Currently, in Vietnam, the fact that "many ethnic minority languages in Vietnam are in danger of being lost" (Thông, 2018) in there, the way of writing and reading the place name has elements of ethnic minority language origin that are not consistent with the original language of ethnic minorities. The scope of the research is to survey and study topographical documents with elements of Tay origin in Tuyen Quang province. In terms of geographical space, in Tuyen Quang province, ethnic minorities are concentrated mainly in Chiem Hoa, Lam Binh, Na Hang and Son Duong districts. Among 1176 places collected in 3 districts, there are 1121 places of Tay Nung-origin, only 4 places of Hmong origin, 11 places of Dao-origin. Therefore, the research scope of the article is limited to the original Tay-Nung place. Due to many reasons, mainly due to the difference in phonetics and writing between Vietnamese and Tay, places with the original Tay language used are not consistent in reading, writing, etc. It means the same place but read and written in the National language of Viet Nam script in different ways. The translation of places with original Tay elements into Vietnamese so that the place names can be read and written in a uniform, accurate manner, following Vietnamese standards is an urgent requirement.

#### Writing inconsistent initial sounds

Place names with elements of Tay origin in Tuyen Quang are used inconsistently with the first consonant in the /bj/ /mj/, /pj/, /phj/, /f/ /p<sup>h</sup>/. /t/. As follow: Incorrectly writing the letter "b" has 19 cases, of which, the confusion between "b" with "p" appears in 11 cases. Inconsistency between the letter "b" and the letter "m" has 5 cases. Confusing the letter "b" with the letter "l" has 3 cases. For example: Bet village and Pet village (Nang Kha commune, Na Hang district), Bap Pen village and Pop Pen village (Trung Yen commune, Son Duong district), Bung Pau village and Pung Pau village (Phuc Son commune, Chiem Hoa district). Here are some examples:

**Table 1.1:**  
Writing inconsistently the initial sounds "b"

| Common element | 1          | 2          | 3         | 4          |
|----------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Village        | Pác Ta     | Pác Ba     |           |            |
| River          | Mỏ Ngoàng  | Bỏ Ngoạng  | Mỏ Ngoãng | Mỏ Ngoạng  |
| Village        | Bắc Pên    | Pấp Pên    |           |            |
| River          | Khuổi Buộc | Khuổi Luộc |           | Khuổi Luộc |

**Table 1.2:**  
Writing inconsistently the initial sounds "p"

| Common element | 1          | 2          | 3          | 4          |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Village        | Phước      | Pước       |            | Pước       |
| Village        |            | Nà Phin    | Nà Pin     | Nà Pin     |
| Village        | Phia Chang |            | Phja Chang |            |
| Mountain       | Khau Piết  | Khau Piết  |            | Khau Phiết |
| Mountain       | Pia Bó Cầ  | Phia Bó Cầ |            | Pia Bó Cầ  |
| Mountain       | Pia Đeng   | Phia Đeng  |            | Pia Đeng   |
| Range          | Khau Pù    | Khau Phà   | Khau Pù    | Khau Pù    |
| Village        | Khuôn Phúc | Khuôn Pục  |            |            |
| Mountain       | Kéo Pây    | Kéo Phày   |            | Kéo Pây    |
| Mountain       | Khau Pha   | Khau Phà   |            |            |
| Pass           | Khao Pha   | Khau Khà   |            | Khao Pha   |
| Village        | Phu Bảo    | Pù Bảo     |            |            |
| Village        | Khau Pấu   | Khau Phấu  |            |            |
| Village        | Pai Nét    | Phai Léc   |            |            |

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 /t/. There is nothing like that in Vietnamese.

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

+ Dissimilarity in the first syllable: Case "phia" hay "pia". Topographic map of Tuyen Quang province in 2009 ghi mountain Pia Nàng, mountain Pia Khao, mountain Pia Bóc (Na Hang district) mountain Pia Bó Cầ, mountain Pia Đeng (Chiem Hoa district). List of landmarks, mountains, rivers and economy of Tuyen Quang province in 2014 ghi mountain Phia Liêu, núi Phia Phong, mountain Phia Bioóc, mountain Phia Khao mountain (Na Hang district), mountain Phia Xeng (Chiem Hoa district), núi Phia Bó Cầ, mountain Phia Đeng and mountain Phia Pioong, mountain Phia Trầu (Lam Binh district).

+ Case "Phea Chang" , "Phia Trang", "Phja Chang":

**Table 1.3:**  
Writing inconsistently between "ch" and "tr"

| Common element | 1          | 2          | 3          | 4          |
|----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Hamlet         | Chung Phìn | Trung Phìn |            | Chung Phìn |
| Hamlet         | Khâu Chàng | Khâu Tràng |            | Khâu Tràng |
| Hamlet         | Phia Trang | Phia Chang | Phia Trang | Phia Trang |
| Village        | Nà Trang   | Nà Chang   | Nà Chang   | Nà Chang   |
| Village        | Khuôn Chú  | Khuôn Trú  |            | Khuôn Chú  |
| Village        | Phai Che   | Phai Tre   | Phai Tre   |            |
| Village        | Nám Chá    | Nậm Trá    | Nậm Chá    | Nám Chá    |

Thus, with 7 cases where the place names are used inconsistently between the letters "tr" and "ch", we do not classify this confusion as a technical error or a spelling error. Based on phonetic characteristics, in the Tay language, there is no tongue-twisting sound /t./ represented on the written word as "tr". Therefore, the spellings "tr" instead of "ch" are incorrect. In summary, place names are inconsistent in the spellings of initial consonants due to the reasons that there are differences in the initial consonants between languages, the largest influence of which is due to differences in the initial consonants. Phonetically between Tay and Vietnamese.

### Main syllables are not uniformly recorded

Out of a total of 382 places used inconsistently, the inconsistent vowel recording accounted for the largest number, with 157 cases, accounting for 41.1% and concentrated in both single and double recording. In which, "o" and "oo" are not consistent with 13 places, not consistent with "uo" has 32 places.

**Table 1.4:**  
Writing inconsistently between "o" and "oo"

| Common element | 1          | 2           | 3           | 4           |
|----------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Mountain       | Pia Bóc    | Phia Bioóc  | Pia Bióc    | Pia Bóc     |
| River          | Nà Choong  | Nà Chóng    |             |             |
| Hamlet         | Cóc        | Nà Coóc     | Nà Coóc     | Nà Coóc     |
| River          | Phông Ma   | Phoông Mạ   |             |             |
| Village        | Cường      | Noong Cường | Noong Cường | Noong Cường |
| Village        | Mong Tuông | NoongTuông  | Noong Tuông | Noong Tuông |

Here are specific cases: - In the case of "stitch", "khu" and "khao": The map of Tuyen Quang province in 2009 shows Khu Cuom mountain, Khu Dao mountain (Lam Binh) but also says

(mountain) Khao Mo, Khao Pha pass, (mountain) Khao Han (Chiem Hoa) and says (mountain) Khau Phase. Thus, in the map of Tuyen Quang province in 2009, there are 3 ways of writing "stitch", "khau" and "khao". According to the actual survey results, in the Tay language, "khau" (mountain and forest) is transliterated into "khao" or "kieu" and using "khao" or "khau" is a phonetic variation. of "khau". Thus, saying and writing "khau" is the most reasonable, according to that, the places mentioned above should be written as Khau Cuom mountain, Khau Dao mountain, Khau Mo mountain, Khau Pha mountain, Khau Pha pass, Khau Han mountain.

- Inconsistent use of the letters "o" and "oo", for example:

### Comment

Through some examples above, it is shown that the word "oo" in the Tay - Nung language (representing the prolonged pronunciation of the "o" sound), in many cases, when combined with other phonemes, "oo" " becomes difficult to read for people of other ethnicities. Therefore, there are different ways of calling and writing for the same place with the sound "oo". Some specific cases are as follows:- The case of confusion between "oo" or "o" and "ô": The topographic map of Tuyen Quang province in 2009 shows Na Choong village, Na Coc village, Na Coc stream, and Phong Ma stream (NH); Corresponding to the ways of writing the above places, the List of residential, painted, hydrological, socio-economic landmarks of Tuyen Quang province in 2014 recorded as Na Chong village, Na Cooc village (village, high fields), Na Cooc stream (stream, high field) (NH), Tong Mooc village, Noong Tuong village, Coc Cooc village, Tong Xuong village; Administrative map of the district: Chiem Hoa in 2014 shows (village) Na Noong. In these cases, the compound letters "oo" should be used to record the long vowels of the original place names. So the places are written as: Na Choong village (village, box field), Na Poong village (village, puff field).- Trường hợp nguyên âm đôi "uô" và "u". For example

**Table 1.5:**  
Writing inconsistently "uô"

| Common element | 1            | 2           | 3           | 4            |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Village        | Khuôn Súm    | Khun Xúm    | Khun Súm    | Khuôn Súm    |
| Range          | Khuôn Cang   | Khun Cang   | Khun Cang   | Khuôn Cang   |
| Village        | Khuôn Cúc    | Khun Cúc    | Khun Cúc    | Khun Cúc     |
| Village        | Khuôn Mạ     | Khun Mạ     | Khun Mạ     | Khun Mạ      |
| Range          | Khuôn Miêng  | Khun Miêng  | Khun Miêng  | Khun Miêng   |
| Village        | Khuôn Pồng   | Khuôn Pồng  |             |              |
| Village        | Khuôn Vinh   | Khun Vin    | Khun Vin    | Khun Vin     |
| Village        | Khuôn Lăn    | Khuôn Lăn   |             | Khuôn Lăn    |
| Village        | Thanh Khuôn  | Thạch Khuôn |             | Thạch Khuôn  |
| Village        | Khuôn Khương | Khun Khương | Khun Khương | Khuôn Khương |
| Village        | Khuôn Nhò    | Khuôn Nhò   | Khuôn Nhò   | Khuôn Nhò    |

Through the statistics of some examples above, it shows that, in places with elements of Tay origin, "uô" is written inconsistently with the following cases: Due to their pronunciation habits, the Tay people easily add and remove the vowels /u/, /o/, /j/... compared to Vietnamese, so in speaking and writing, people confuse simple vowels and diphthongs. For example, "Xớ" is pronounced "Xứ", "Quân" is pronounced as "Quyên", "Nguyên" is pronounced as "Nguyên" and "Khun" is pronounced as "Khuôn". That pronunciation gradually became familiar and up to now, local people are still familiar with the names Khuon Ma, Khuon Mieng, Khuon Khoai, Khuon Phuc, Khuon Vin, etc.

### Inconsistency in final consonants

The article examined the dissimilarity in writing "t – c"; "o" and "u".

### Comment

The dissimilarity in writing "t – c": For example "tặng khiết" and "tặng khiếc". The reason is that "t" and "c" have the same phonetic characteristics, so the Kinh people have changed "khiếc" to "khiết" to make it easier to speak and read, thus leading to the phenomenon of misspelled places. "Khau Mo" and "Khao Mo": In terms of Phonetic, in Tay and Vietnamese languages, the last sound /u/ is represented on the written word as "o" or "u" because it is preceded by a short vowel or a

long vowel, so "khau" and "khao" are possible different representations of the terminal semitone /u/. Furthermore, "khao" is a phonetic variant of "khau".

**Table 1.6:**

Writing inconsistently in final consonants

| Common element | 1          | 2           | 3 | 4          |
|----------------|------------|-------------|---|------------|
| River          | Khuôn Lung | Khuổi Luông |   | Khuôn Lung |
| Range          | Pù Đồi     | Pù Đồn      |   | Pù Đồn     |
| Mountain       | Khau Khuôn | Khao Khuôn  |   | Khau Khuôn |
| Range          | Khau Muồng | Khau Muồn   |   |            |
| Pass           | Kẻ Mác     | Kéo Mác     |   |            |
| Mountain       | Khao Mo    | Khau Mo     |   | Khao Mo    |
| Range          | Tang Khiết | Tạng Khiếc  |   | Tạng Khiếc |
| Village        | Thân Luông | Thôm Luông  |   | Thôm Luông |
| Village        | Thác Dẫn   | Thác Dẫng   |   |            |
| Range          | Véc        | Vén         |   |            |

### Not uniform in recording tones

The dissertation studied the inconsistency in writing title bar, question mark in comparison with other tone bars. In the cases of not uniform in recording tones, the inconsistency occurs more often in falling bars, heavy bars with other bars. The main reason is that there are differences in the tones of Tay and Vietnamese, so when speaking and writing (especially the habit of saying how to write like that), causing the original Tay places to be used inconsistently in tone. About how to record the tone: In the Tay language, there is no tilde, so tilde is not used in writing. Due to the difference in tone between the Tay and Vietnamese languages, especially the pronunciation of lisp of the Tay people, the transcription and transliteration of places with original Tay elements into Vietnamese are inconsistent as above. For example: village Nà Mỹ, village Nà Ngoãng, village Nhũng, village Ngóa, and village Nà My, village Nà Ngoáng, village Nhùng, village Ngõa because the Tay language does not have a ton, the heavy tone is used to record Vietnamese borrowed words that have a falling sound. Therefore, when writing place names, it is easy to confuse the falling bar with the heavy or sharp bar

### 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" (Mapping and Geographic Information of Viet Nam, 2010). 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" (Mapping and Geographic Information of Viet Nam, 2010). 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" (Mapping and Geographic Information of Viet Nam, 2010). 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. (Mapping and Geographic Information of Viet Nam, 2010).

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 (Mapping and Geographic Information of Viet Nam, 2010). 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)" (Jatseva, 1990). However, place names with ethnic minority's language elements in different regions have their own characteristics. According to some researchers (Hoa, 2005), 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" (Jatseva, 1990) 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". (Jatseva, 1990).

## A specific solution

### A specific solution for writing the first consonant

For the first consonants used to write the names of the original Tay places, which are similar in pronunciation to the Tay language, it is recommended to use single characters or combinations of characters. + 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) |
|---------------------|--|
| /pu3 phja1 doŋ1/    | pù phía Đông                           |
| /pu3 phja1 khau1/   | pù Phía Khao                           |
| /pu3 phja1 bjəə k2/ | pù Phía Bioóc                          |
| /ban4 Pjat2/        | bản Pi Át                              |
| /pu3 Phja1 Pjəəŋ1/  | pù phía pioong...                      |

+ 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     | Proposed written words (in Vietnamese) |
|-------------------|--|
| /ban4 pak2 fa1/   | bản Pác Pha                            |
| /ban4 na3 fek2/   | bản Nà Phéc                            |
| /tom1 fa5/        | Thôm Phạ                               |
| /khuoi4 fe1 Cau4/ | khuổi Phe Châu...                      |

+ Case 3. For the sounds written as "s" in Tay language, the symbol /t/ is used to represent them when transcribed. For example:

| Transcription       | Proposed written words (in Vietnamese) |
|---------------------|--|
| /tat2 khuoi4 tɯŋ2/  | tát Khuổi Slúng                        |
| /pu3 kok2 tɯŋ1/     | pù Cốc Slông                           |
| /ban4 tau1/         | bản Slaô                               |
| /pu3 khau1 taŋ4/    | pù Khau Slảng                          |
| /khuoi45 tãn1 mǎm2/ | khuổi Slăn Mẳm                         |
| /khuoi4 tək2/       | khuổi Sloóc                            |
| /ban4 na3 tam4/     | bản Nà Slẳm                            |
| /khuoi4 bak2 tat2/  | khuổi Bắk Slát...                      |

### Writing vowel sounds

For places with single vowels and double vowels with similar pronunciation to the Tay language, use the National language to write the place names according to the principle of place name transliteration. In case the Tay language has a long vowel /ɔː/, two "oo" are used to write it. For example:

| Transcription     | Proposed written words (in Vietnamese) |
|-------------------|--|
| /pu3 na3 ɔːŋ2/    | pù Nà Loóng                            |
| /pu3 khu1 kɔːŋ2/  | pù Khu Coóng                           |
| /pu3 ɔː ŋ1 kɔːŋ3/ | pù Loong Noòng                         |
| /pu3 hɔːŋ1 khu5/  | pù Hoong Khạo                          |

### Writing final sounds

In addition, the consonant /j/ in Tay-Nung language is written by "i" in the final sound if it is preceded by long sounds; or written by "y" if preceded by short vowels "â, a, ă, o". It is necessary to transcribe these place names in accordance with spelling rules in Vietnamese.

### Writing tone/rhythm

When transcribing place names from Tay in Vietnamese, the punctuation system of the national language shall be used so that it can simulate relatively the tone of the syllables in the Tay language.

## Conclusion

Inconsistencies in the way of writing, reading place names have many causes, including linguistic, social and historical causes. The main reason comes from differences in phonetics, vocabulary between ethnic minority languages and Vietnamese language. In order to unify use of place names, the article provides a number of principles and suggested solutions to transform place names, in which the semantic features of original names are secured, ore close to the spelling of the national language and consistent with the habit the community. When ethnic minority place names are transcribed into Vietnamese, they must be consistent with the script Vietnamese language. For the initial consonant clusters, vowels, final consonants, tone bars not including in Vietnamese spelling, choose the nearly correct pronunciation to write the place names originated from the ethnic minority languages. The results will contribute to the uniform use of place names to ensure fast and accurate information, consistent with the nomination practices of the resident people and spelling in Vietnamese language. These are contributions to the studies on place names, language and culture of the area. And Huy (2015) stated teachers need to be trained more in language to improve teaching quality.

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## Authors biography

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1. PhD Duong Thi Ngu

At present time working as lecturer at Tan Trao University Tuyen Quang, University Vietnam, she has published many articles in good international and local journals

2. MBA Dinh Tran Ngoc Huy

Graduated from Banking University HCM city Vietnam and received MBA degree from Intl University of Japan, Niigata Japan. He has published more than 400 articles including more than 200 ISI & Scopus articles. Visit his website: [www.dinhtranngochuy.com](http://www.dinhtranngochuy.com)

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