

Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.lang/2005-05/msg00941.html>

- *From:* benlizross <benlizro@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sat, 21 May 2005 21:14:48 +1200
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Brian M. Scott wrote:

>
> On Sat, 21 May 2005 10:20:05 +1200, benlizross
> <benlizro@xxxxxxxxxx> wrote in
> <news:428E6295.14DB@xxxxxxxxxx> in sci.lang:
>
> [...]
>
>> In the meantime, I'll say:
>
>> – names are words (which are socially assigned to individuals);
>
> I don't know what account Peter has in mind, but I don't
> consider names to be words in the ordinary sense of the
> word. Cecily Clark, 'Onomastics', in vol. 2 of the
> Cambridge History of the English Language:
>
> Names, whether of places or of people, have by
> definition a distinctive standing vis-à-vis the
> language at large. Although ultimately derived
> from elements of common vocabulary (not
> necessarily that of the language they currently
> grace), they have become emptied of their
> original etymological denotation; and this is true
> even for those whose form still coincides with
> that of the related lexical items: no-one expects
> to find cattle wading across the river at Oxford
> and, should a Mr Butcher actually be in the
> meat trade, the coincidence almost excites mirth.

But this is no more than the old truth that etymology is not the basis of meaning.

>
> On the one hand, this semantic detachment promotes
> cross-cultural survival: some Present-Day 'English'
> place names are traceable to Celtic forms at least
> two millennia old, a few even suspected of going

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- > back to pre-Celtic times; some 'English' baptismal
- > names have Hebrew origins. On the other, it lays
- > names open to phonological attrition, for no more
- > of any form need survive than is required for acting,
- > in context, as an unambiguous signal or pointer.
- >
- > She goes on to point out that names are a poor guide to the
- > incidence and chronology of sound changes and may even
- > participate in purely onomastic sound changes.

I'd like to see some evidence of this — I'll have a look at the article if opportunity arises. I still think names are words in most important respects.

Ross Clark

• *Follow-Ups:*

- ◆ *Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?*
◇ *From:* Brian M. Scott

• *References:*

- ◆ *Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?*
◇ *From:* ekkilu
- ◆ *Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?*
◇ *From:* Lee Sau Dan
- ◆ *Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?*
◇ *From:* ekkilu
- ◆ *Re: How close is Vietnamese to Mandarin or Cantonese?*
◇ *From:* Lee Sau Dan
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◇ *From:* Brian M. Scott

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