Names and Naming: Semiotic, Linguistic and Anthropological Perspectives

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ชื่อและการตั้งชื่อเป็นลักษณะสำคัญอย่างหนึ่งของทุกภาษาและวัฒนธรรม ชื่อเป็นสิ่งที่มนุษย์ใช้เรียกสิ่งต่าง ๆ ในโลกรอบตัวและมนุษย์มีรูปแบบการตั้งชื่อในวัฒนธรรมต่าง ๆ แตกต่างกันออกไป มีการศึกษาเรื่องชื่อและการตั้งชื่อใน เชิงวิชาการในหลายสาขาวิชาด้วยกัน โดยบทความนี้ได้นำเสนอการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับชื่อและการตั้งชื่อในมุมมองของสาขา วิชาสัญญวิทยา ภาษาศาสตร์และมานุษยวิทยา ซึ่งพบว่านักสัญญวิทยาศึกษาชื่อในฐานะที่เป็นสัญลักษณ์เชื่อมโยงภาษา ความคิดและวัตถุต่าง ๆ ในโลก มีการตั้งข้อสังเกตว่าวัตถุหนึ่งอาจมีชื่อมากกว่าหนึ่งชื่อก็ได้ โดยคนเราจะเลือกใช้ชื่อที่เหมาะสมเพื่อสื่อสารกับบุคคลอื่น นักภาษาศาสตร์ศึกษาชื่อในแง่มุมทางไวยากรณ์และความหมาย นักภาษาศาสตร์กลุ่มหนึ่งเห็นว่าชื่อควรจัดอยู่ในกลุ่มคำนาม ในขณะที่มีนักภาษาศาสตร์อีกกลุ่มหนึ่งมองว่าน่าจะแยกชื่อเป็นคำอีกประเภท หนึ่งต่างหากจากคำนาม ในด้านความหมายพบว่าชื่อมีทั้งในส่วนที่เป็นความหมายตรง (denotative meaning) และความ หมายแฝง (connotative meaning) ส่วนนักมานุษยวิทยาศึกษาชื่อในฐานะที่เป็นอัตลักษณ์ของบุคคลและพบว่าชื่อได้ สะท้อนความหมายเชิงสังคมและวัฒนธรรมอย่างชัดเจน และแม้จะมีการศึกษาเรื่องชื่อและการตั้งชื่อในหลายมิติ แต่ยัง คงมีประเด็นที่น่าสนใจสำหรับการศึกษาเรื่องชื่อและการตั้งชื่ออีกหลายประเด็น เช่น ความกำกวมของชื่อ บทบาททางสังคมของชื่อต่าง ๆ และวัฒนธรรมการตั้งชื่อ เป็นต้น ผู้สนใจศึกษาเกี่ยวกับชื่อและการตั้งชื่ออาจนำเนื้อหาของบทความนี้ไปปรับใช้เป็นกรอบแนวคิดทฤษฎีเพื่อการศึกษาวิจัยในประเด็นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับชื่อและการตั้งชื่อต่อไป

Abstract

Names and naming are considered ones of the important properties of all languages as names are used to label things around us. Naming also varies from culture to culture. Studies on names and naming have been conducted in different disciplines. This paper presents names and naming through the semiotic, linguistic and anthropological perspectives. Semioticians view names as a sign that links between words, concepts and things. It is noticed that a thing can have more than one name; and ones will select an appropriate name for certain communicative situation. Linguists often study names in terms of their grammatical function and meaning. One group of linguists classified 'name' as 'noun', whereas another group argued that 'name' should be classified as a different word class from 'noun'. Regarding the meaning of 'names', scholars proposed that 'names' can have both 'denotative and connotative meaning'. In the perspective of anthropologists, names mark personal identities and clearly reflect social

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and cultural meaning. Although names and naming have been studied in different dimensions, many interesting aspects of names and naming remain questionable. Those aspects are, for example, the ambiguity of names, the social roles of names, naming culture, etc. Interested researchers might used these concepts to extend their studies on names and naming and/or as conceptual or theoretical frameworks for their future researches.

Key words

    name, naming, semiotics, linguistics, anthropology

Introduction

    "What's your name?", "What's that?", and "Where are you from?" are quite common questions in English language. Their counterparts also appear in all languages around the world. To answer these questions, we, of course, have to say our name, a name of thing, and a name of a certain place, respectively. "My name is Peter", "That's my computer", and "I am from Bangkok" are examples of possible answers to the above questions. 'Peter' is clearly recognized as a person name; 'computer' is used to refer to a certain thing, and 'Bangkok' is used as a place name here. Several traditional grammarians (e.g. Wilkins, 1668; Murray, 1829; and Latham, 1862) consider the words like 'Peter' and 'Bangkok' as Proper Names, and the word like 'computer' as General, Appellative or Common Names. The distinction between the two classes of names, according to the traditional grammar, is that Proper Names are appropriated to certain individual objects while General/Appellative/Common Names are applied to the whole class of objects. Following this classification, only Proper Names, the words referred to individual entities (e.g. Peter, Bangkok), not those referred to classes of entities (e.g. computer), are discussed in this paper.

    Names are necessary properties of a language. Without names, it would be very difficult for us to communicate with each other. Imagine if we want to buy an airplane ticket to Tokyo, without saying the name of the destination, Tokyo, how can we tell the ticket agency? Without our personal names, how can we refer to ourselves? Without names of our favorite products, how can we tell a shopkeeper to get those products for us? Without names (of a person and place) on our mail envelope, how can we tell the post officers to send that mail to the recipients? Here, we can see that names are very important for our communication, both oral and written.

    How do entities get their names? To answer this question, we have to go to the aspects of naming. Names and naming are tightly related since naming is the act of bestowing a name. The study of names needs naming study as its complement; therefore, in this paper, names and naming are investigated in relation to each other.

Olson (2002) proposed that "naming is a means of structuring reality. It imposes a pattern on the world that is meaningful to the namer. Each of us names reality according to our own vision of the world built on past meaning in our own experience. Each of us creates our own structure of reality through naming. Naming is, therefore, not a random process even though it is varied. Naming is a means of interpersonal communication via language." It is quite clear here that names are not just a language, but a tool reflecting our conception of the world.

The previous studies of names and naming are various. They are involved with a large number of disciplines: semiotics, linguistics, sociology, history, demography, ethnography, anthropology, literature, etc. Bacchielli (2005) has gathered the terminology of names which can be problematic as follows: *proper /first / personal / given / adopted / Christian name / forename / font-name,/ pet name / short name / pet name [sic], second name / middle name,/ last name / family name / surname,/ by-name / to-name,/ nickname / soubriquet / substitute name, makeshift or sham name,/ place-name / toponym, patronymic / metronymic, /pseudonym / pen name / stage name / nom de plume / nom de guerre,/ eponym, epithet, double-barreled name, oath-name, imperative name, ornamental name / arbitrary name,/ brand name / trademark / proprietary name,/ company name,/ fun name,/ namesake, etc.* These terms were intentionally created to disentangle the complex situation one is faced with in the study of names, but this large and varied terminology seems to create the real maze rather than the clear way for further exploration of names. I, therefore, have to clarity the term 'names' here again in order to make it clear for the exploration of names in this paper.

Considering the varied terms gathered by Bacchielli (2005), I have come up with the following diagram.
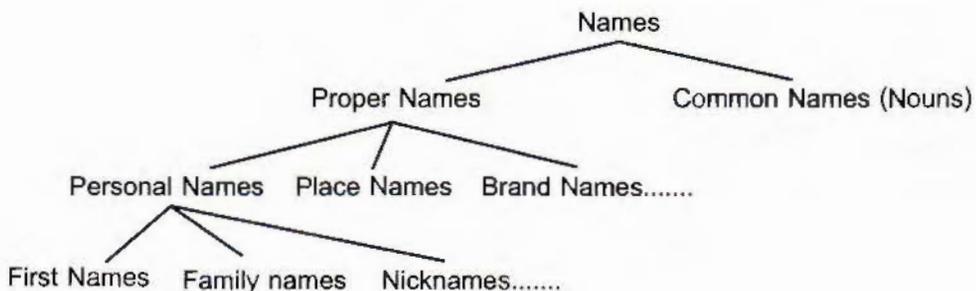

Figure 1:   Hierarchical Members of Names

I have considered the terms mentioned by Bacchielli (2005) as a subtype of Proper Names since they designate one particular person, place, object, etc. Each term in the Proper Names domain is distinctive just in terms of its social, cultural and juridical implications. Therefore, I say here that the term 'names', in this paper, shall refer to the all members in the Proper Names domain. For members of the Common Names, e.g. 'man', 'animal', 'tree', etc. I shall refer to them as 'nouns'. Later in this paper, I shall adopt the simple terms, 'name' and 'noun' instead of 'proper' vs. 'common' in order to simplify the exploration.

Although names and naming, as mentioned above, were studied in several fields, only three major disciplines, semiotics, linguistics, and anthropology, will be explored in this paper. If you asked me 'why these three disciplines?' I shall answer you that because they are the most basic principle concerning most studies (of names and naming). To understand the issue, we have to explore it through these three perspectives. Semiotics explains our conception of names; linguistics reveals knowledge of names as a part of languages; and anthropology suggests social and cultural aspects of names and naming. So, I believe that the exploration through these three fields should cover the major studies of names and naming.

Semiotics of Names

In this section, I explored names through the field of semiotics, the study of signs. Names are, semiotically, viewed as a type of signs. So, what is a sign? Peirce, the founder of modern semiotics, has given a definition of signs as follows:

> "A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. That sign which it creates I call *interpretant* of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its *object*. It stands for that object, not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea." (Cited in Nöth, 1990:42)

According to Peirce's definition, we can see that a name is a sign *(representamen)*. A name stands for its bearer *(object)*, and a name and its bearer are connected via cognition produced in the mind *(interpretant)*. To illustrate this concept, I have adopted a triangle of signification introduced by Ogden and Richards (1923). But, I shall call this triangle "The Semiotic Triangle of Name.

Cognition (*Interpretant*)

NAME

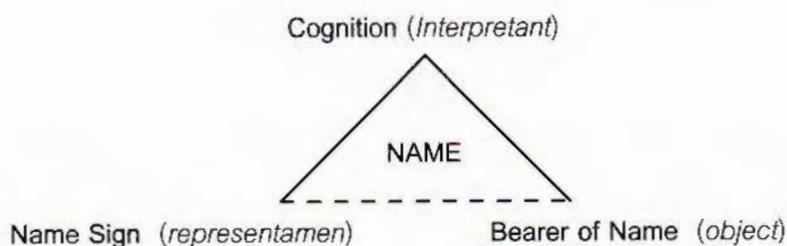Name Sign (*representamen*)   Bearer of Name (*object*)

Figure 2: The Semiotic Triangle of Name

Hobbes, one of the semioticians who studied names, stated that: "Names... are signs of our conceptions ...they are not signs of the things themselves. (Hobbes, 1655)" His statement here is obviously compatible with Peirce's theory mentioned above. Hobbes also introduced the term 'marks', as different from 'signs'. He distinguished between marks and signs that "whereas marks are sign vehicles for our own use only, signs serve for the purpose of communicating with others. By means of signs, what one man finds out may be made known to others". Names, according to Hobbes, are marks of conceptions. He explained, "a name is the voice of a man arbitrary, imposed for a mark to bring into his mind some conception concerning the thing on which it is imposed". To clarify Hobbes's view of names, we may think of the things that bear more than one name, e.g. names of some Soi (avenue or alley) in Bangkok. Local residents of a certain Soi may mark their conception with a name known by them, e.g. Soi Prommitra, Soi Lang Suan, Soi Payanak, etc. But, when they communicate with others who may not be familiar with the area e.g. a new taxi driver, a friend who comes from other town, etc., they may use other names such as Sukhumvit 39, Lad Prao 40, Vipavadee 54, etc. which are signs known to others. From this point of view, we can see that the object can have more than one name. We may mark our conception with one name, and others may mark their conception with other names. But when we come into communication, we have to use the names (signs) which are known to both parties.

Exploration through the studies of semiotics revealed that the main interest of semioticians is the meaning of sign. Each semiotician tried to explain signs using different terms, and many of them came up with their own models of meaning e.g Ogden & Richards (1923), Saussure (1916), Hjelmslev (1954). Although the models looked physically different, they presented similar idea. The studies of names as a sign are, therefore, not varied.

Linguistic Exploration of Names

In this section, I look at names in three aspects: 1) the word class of names, 2) the meaning of names, and 3) the uses of names.

1. The word class of names

Traditional grammarians normally categorized names as a subclass of noun with an assumption that they, syntactically, behave just like any other noun. They can be a subject of a sentence e.g. *'John is a man'*. They can be an object of a sentence, e.g. *'A dog bites John'*. The observation of names as a type of noun is also found in the works of Frege (1892) and Russell (1905). They considered (proper) names and definite descriptions (noun) as the same word class. And, names as a subtype of noun have been accepted by many language teachers around the world.

However, there are some linguists attempted to distinguish names from noun. Anderson (2007), for example, proposed that names should be classified as a different word class from noun. He used notional grammar approach to explain his view as follows:

"As far as their use as arguments in a predication is concerned, names clearly belong with determinatives in terms of both their semantic and their morphosyntactic properties. They have the distribution of determinatives as complements of functors; like prototypical pronouns, they are typically not restrictively modified. They do not behave as nouns inside noun phrases. Semantically, they and other determinatives make reference; nouns do not, they denote classes." (Anderson, 2007:239)

Anderson's notion here is just compatible with the observation of many philosophers, for example, Mill (1874) and Kripke (1972) who see (proper) names and definite descriptions (noun) as a different class. To my view, 'name' should be seen as different word class from noun since their properties are obviously distinctive. Names have fixed reference, but noun does not have so. We can see that the words 'rose' (a kind of flower) and 'Rose' (a name of a person) are different in some ways. 'Rose' as a name of a person needs no article (a, an, the), no plural form (*Roses) while the noun 'rose' can go with an article (a rose, the rose) and can be pluralized (roses). Nouns used as a name such as 'Rose' (a name of a person), 'The Lions' (a name of a pub), "Puma" (a name of sportswear), "Jaguar" (a name of a car) no longer refer to the object they used to refer to before. Instead, they refer to a person, a place or a thing bearing the name.

2. The meaning of names

Several works on names and their meanings are carried out by both philosophers and linguists. Those works include Mill (1874), Frege (1892), Russell (1905 and 1912), Waismann (1965), Kripke (1972), Lyons (1977) and Hofmann (1993).

John Stuart Mill (1874), a philosopher who begins the exploration of the modern problem of naming, proposes that names are not connotative. They do not have any discursive meaning that can be explained. They denote the individuals who are called by them; they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals. Thus, Sam, for example, means an individual whose name is Sam. Mill called his theory "direct reference" since a name directly refers to the owner of a name; it does not have any other meaning. His direct reference theory are accepted by some philosophers such as Kripke (1972) but rejected by others such as Frege (1892) and Russell (1905).

Gottlob Frege (1982) denied Mill's theory of name as mentioned above. In his work, "On Sense and Reference", Frege noted that if the meaning of a name is the thing it refers to, how would the objects referred to by the name which do not exist be explained? Is Pegasus, then, meaningless? It is clearly not. There may also be two different names that refer to the same object: Hesperus and Phosphorus, for example, both of which were once used to refer to the planet Venus. Although Hesperus and Phosphorus refer to the same object, they have different senses. Hesperus refers to the Venus in the evening while Phosphorus refers to the Venus in the morning. Frege argued that it was a mistake to think that the meaning of a name is the thing it refers to. Instead, the meaning must be something else - the "sense" of the word. Two names for the same person, then, can have different senses. Alternatively, the meaning of a name has two components: the sense and the reference. Each sense will pick out a unique referent, but one referent might be picked out by more than one sense. Frege argued that, ultimately, the same bifurcation of meaning must apply to most or all linguistic categories.

In Bertrand Russell's (1905) paper, "On Denoting", he agrees with Frege's idea that the meaning of a name has two components. Instead of using Frege's terms, 'sense and reference', he uses his own terms 'meaning and denotation'. Meaning refers to sense of a name which can be more than one, and denotation refers to an object referred to by a name which exists in both real world and imaginary world. Russell thus believes that names have both denotation and connotation, which is not identical to Mill's theory. In his 1912 work, Russell proposes that names are just abbreviated definite descriptions. Therefore, names and definite descriptions are categorized into the same category. This is compatible with Frege's view where he proposes that "Aristotle" (a proper name) and "the teacher of Alexander the Great" (a definite description) have the same meaning. A definite description is thought as one of senses or meanings of the name. However, this view is rejected by Kripke (1972).

Friedrich Waismann (1965) says that a name is the word which denotes a person or thing, and perhaps an activity or state such as eating and sleeping. There are various ways in which names can come to be connected with what they are names of. A name can be given to a person by means of an ostensive definition; we say, for example, pointing to the person "That is N". Another sort of explanation is

to say 'N is the person who listens when this name is said, signs his letters with his name, receives letters with his name on them, and so on'. In the case, a person is the bearer of a name. Waismann noted that names seem to refer to a single object such as a name of a ship, a building or a town. But for the names of plants, gems, food, etc., these names no longer stand for a single object located in a particular place, but for a class of objects. Therefore, to say that the meaning of a name is a thing it refers to is wrong. The meaning of a name is an invisible connection between the name and the object. Waismann proposed that, in order to understand the meaning of a name, we need to know, firstly, an ostensive definition of a name, secondly, the convention that the name is always to be assigned to the same object, and thirdly, a criterion of identity that shows the identity of an object depending upon its continuous existence in space. According to Waismann (1965), it is clearly shown that the meaning of a name is not the object referred to by that name, but the concept linked between the name and the object. This analysis is thus compatible with the theories of meaning mentioned above (Ogden and Richard, 1923; Hoffman, 1995; Dirven and Verspoor, 1998; and Löbner, 2002)

Kripke (1972) disagrees with Frege and Russell's view which suggested that the meaning of a name includes both sense and reference (or meaning and denotation in Russell's works). His analysis is identical to Mill (1874) which stated that the meaning of a name is what is called by that name, or a name refers directly to a person or thing called by that name. Kripke argued that it was wrong to collapse names and definite descriptions into a single class of existential expression. Kripke thus proposed that names are rigid designators and definite descriptions are non rigid designators. Consider his example, "Aristotle" and "The teacher of Alexander the Great". Aristotle is a rigid designator since no matter which world it is considering; "Aristotle" designates the same man. On the other hand, "the teacher of Alexander the Great" is not a rigid designator. In some worlds, this expression designates Aristotle. But with respect to other possible worlds, it designates individuals other than Aristotle. Kripke suggested that speakers generally do not associate uniquely identifying descriptions with the names they use. Speakers use the name only to refer to an individual called by that name. Therefore, names in Kripke's view have only one meaning that is the person or object they refer to. In other words, the meaning of a name is its referent, or its denotation. Names do not have any connotative meanings according to Kripke (1972).

Lyons(1977) proposed that names have two characteristic functions in everyday language - behavior: referential and vocative. Referential function is that names are used to draw the hearer's attention to the presence of person being named or to remind the hearer of the existence or relevance of the person being named. The vocative function of name is that names are used to attract the attention of the person being called or summoned. Names, according to Lyons, can have both connotations and denotations. The connotations of a name can be generated from history, politics, culture, etc.; these

connotations are relatively constant for members of a particular language-community sharing the same culture (e.g. 'Athens, Judas, Napoleon, Shakespeare, etc. have connotations in a certain language community). A name can have only denotation such as 'John' and 'Mary', which refer to a man and a woman. They may have etymological meaning. For example 'John' comes, though Greek and Latin, from a Hebrew name, which could be interpreted in terms of the ordinary vocabulary of Hebrew as "God has been gracious"(p.221-222). However, the name like 'John' and 'Mary' does not have any connotations.

For Hofmann (1993), names often have descriptive meanings. For example, he suggested that most English speakers know that Sue is a girl's name, so a descriptive meaning of 'Sue' includes [Feminine]. Therefore, most English speakers would feel that it is wrong if someone named his son 'Sue'.The main function of names is to distinguish one individual from another; it is thus called by Hofmann 'indexical'. Hofmann suggested that a word used as a name might have meanings in its original language, for example 'Hofmann' means 'courtier' in German. But the original meaning of a word is not valid when the word is used as a name. The meaning of a name is just what it refers to and its descriptive meanings.

To summarize, there are two main approaches that explain the meanings of names as analyzed in the previous studies. One approach considers that names have only denotation (Mill, 1874; Kripke, 1972) while the other approach allows names to have both denotation and connotation (Frege, 1892; Russell, 1905 and 1912, Waismann ,1965; Lyons,1977).

3. The uses of names

The discussion here concerns two issues regarding the uses of names: metonymic use of names and names and ambiguity. Other social and cultural uses of names are discussed in section 4.

3.1 Metonymic Uses of names

Names that are used to refer to other nouns are known as metonym. It is pretty common in a language that people uses names instead of nouns. I propose here that using names may help us interpret intention of speakers clearer. Let's look at the following examples

a) He has a car.

b) He has Mercedes-Benz.

By saying a), the speaker just wants to tell the hearer that someone has a car, a general one. But, by using the brand name 'Mercedes-Benz' in b), we can interpret that 'he' in b) must be rich since the name 'Mercedes-Bens' is known as an expensive car. The metonymic uses of names are pretty common in our daily lives. Instead of using nouns, we prefer using their names; for example, many people say, "Let's go to eat McDonald"(instead of "Lets' go to eat hamburger"), "My Nike are wet" (instead of "My shoes are wet"). By using names, our utterances will be more specific than using nouns. And names

convey some special message to the hearers.

3.2 Names and Ambiguity

Using names can, sometimes, cause ambiguity. Let's consider the following example.

c) I hit him with my apple / Apple.

By saying c), if the hearers have no background about what the speaker says, their interpretation can be: 1) the speaker hit someone with an apple (a kind of fruit), and 2) the speaker hit someone with a laptop computer under the brand name 'Apple'. These two different interpretations, of course, may give different reactions. The hearers may think that it is not dangerous for the speaker to hit someone with an apple (a fruit), but the speakers may kill someone by hitting him with a laptop computer.

Personal names can also cause gender ambiguity. Rickel and Anderson (1981) noticed that the first names such as Francis, Lynn, Lesile, etc. can be given to both male and female. If these names are used in a sentence without any title, they may cause difficulty for us to know the gender of a person being addressed. The same case also happens in Thai language. Thai personal names like Somkhuan, Samruay, etc. can be borne by both male and female.

Different places that have the same name can be ambiguous as well. Imagine if you are asked to go to a village in the North of Thailand, and what you know is just a name of that village (no other information like a name of a district or a name of a province), you may find it is very difficult to find out which village you have to go to due to the fact that there are many different villages in the North of Thailand that bear the same name, e.g. Palan, San Sai, Pa Tan, Pa Tan, San Klang, Nong Bua, Pa Sak, etc.

Different persons who bear the same name accidentally are found quite often. If you are walking on a street and shout out loud a name of a person you know to call his/her attention, you may, sometimes, find that someone will also turn his/her face to you because he or she has the same name as the person you know. In a classroom where there are two or more students bearing the same name, when a teacher call that name, students may confuse which one the teacher is calling. Using Google Search to find a Thai common first name for male, Somchai, revealed about 1,800,000 names in the result. So, we can assume that personal name ambiguity should be very common in our society.

Although name ambiguity is obvious, there are not many studies investigated the issue. Therefore, I would, here, like to introduce this topic to those of you who are interested in doing a research in this area.

The Anthropology of Names and Naming

Three aspects of name and naming anthropology, 1) names and identities, 2) roles of names, and 3) naming and culture, are discussed here.

1. Names and Identities

Why do people need a name? The most common explanation would be that 'a name identifies people who they are in their society'. In other words, a name gives them their social identity. Anthropologists have long been discussed about biological birth and social birth (Alford, 1993). An unnamed newborn was just born biologically, not socially. The social birth occurs only when the newborn is assigned a name. In some culture, social birth occurs some time after the biological birth, often as part of a ceremony that ends a period of ritual seclusion for mother and newborn. For example, in rural China a "child-reaching-full-month" ceremony is held at which the child is shaved and given a personal name by his maternal uncle (Fei, 1946). Once a child is given a personal name, he/she gains his/her social identity. The parents and relatives start to call him/her by using that given name. And the child uses his/her name to interact with others in the community.

Our name as our social identity is very important when we grow up. At a certain age, we need an ID card, a passport and a driving license. Officers will ask what our name is, and the name is put on our important documents. Without names, how can we identify ourselves in this society?

In the case when serious accidents or natural disasters happened, names were needed for listing the injured and the dead victims. The collapse of the World Trade Center in New York, the Tsunami in Phuket, and the Earthquake in Cheng Du were such a case. Officers identified the victims according to their names appeared in a found document. But for the unknown, it was impossible to report their name immediately. It seemed that their social identity was lost due to no one knew their names. The interesting phenomenon was that families or relatives of the named victims could start mourning right away after seeing the reported names (they did not even see the corpse). But those families of the unknown ones may be reluctant to cry until the scientific proof had revealed the unknown bodies to them. Here, we can see that our social identity is attached to our name. We tend to lack our social identity in a place where no one knows our names.

2. The roles of names

As mentioned above, names give us social identity, so one of the name's roles is identification of an individual in a certain society. Names play very important roles in our daily life. Imagine, you mom call your name to wake you up in the morning; you book an airplane ticket and the ticketing officer asks you if she can have your name; you go to a bank to withdraw some money, you have to write your name in a bank's withdrawal form. Here are some examples to show that names involve in every step of our life

A name is normally a gender indicator in many cultures. In Thailand, male names and female names are obviously separate; for example, 'Somchai', 'Surasak', 'Chatree', 'Supot', 'Ong-Art' are common

male names in Thai, and 'Somying', 'Pongpan', 'Sawittree', 'Orawan', 'Sukanya' are names for female. The role of name as gender indicator is quite obvious in the case that ladyboys change their names to sound female, e.g. from 'Kriangkrai' (male name) to 'Kittika' (female name), from 'Terdsak' (male name) to 'Apassara' (female name), etc. Bruck (2006) introduced another interesting example from Teher Ben Jelloun's novel *L'enfant de sable* (1985). In the novel, there is a female who is given a male name, Ahmad, and brought up as a boy. Ahmad's true sex is revealed only after his death when the corpse washers discover that 'he' is a woman. We can see, here, that names often assign a person to a specific gender category.

Names indicate ethnicity. We can often tell people's ethnicity by just looking at their names. For example, the Thai-Chinese in Thailand often bear "Sae" in their family names. Tribal people in the North of Thailand were named in their tribal language. Even though some of them have changed their first names, their family names still tell their ethnicity. Therefore, many tribal people, nowadays, have changed both their first names and family names in order to make their name sound more Thai. In this case, we can see that to name people in other language can sometimes change our perception about ethnicity of the name's bearer. We may think that someone is a 100-percent-Thai when he/she is named in Thai language (and, if their physical appearance is not obviously different from any other Thai).

Names indicate social relationships. People around the world usually have more than one name; many of us have formal names and nickname; some of us may have any other special names. For example, 'Peter Brown' is a formal name of someone. His nickname is 'Pete'; and some of his friend may call him 'Pee', etc. We use different names in different circumstances; e.g. the family name 'Mr. Brown' is usually used in formal occasions; the nickname 'Pete' will be said in other informal occasions, etc.

Your name is your self-representative. If someone mentioned your name in a bad way, you may feel angry with that person, and you may sue him/her for defaming you. Many defamation cases in Thailand are good examples. In political setting, if ones accused someone of doing something bad, they would try to avoid mentioning the name. They may use something else, e.g. initial letter of the name, instead in order to prevent themselves from being sued. Whenever the name is said (in a bad way) the speaker will be sued for defamation then.

As we can see here, the roles of names are varied. Names are not just our identity labels; they tell something more about us - our gender, ethnicity, social status, etc. Thus, roles of names would be another interesting topic for further research.

3. Naming and culture

Naming is a part of culture, and every culture has their own naming system. Some cultures even have naming ritual, e.g. naming ritual in rural China mentioned above. The observation of several naming practices revealed that there are always some kinds of belief hidden behind the process of

naming. In some cultures, children were given "ugly" or "silly" names with a belief that those ugly names will protect the children from witchcraft attack (Layne, 2006). The same belief also happened in rural Thailand several decades ago. Some Thai were named with words like "Khee Ma" (dog's shit), "Kwai" (water buffalo), etc. with a belief that the names will protect the children from evil spirits. However, this kind of belief did not really exist at the present time. Another belief is that Thais usually named their children with plant or animal terms, e.g. "Mali" (jasmine), "Som" (orange), "Kai" (chicken), "Maew" (cat) because plants and animals are easy to grow (Sudaporn Luksaneeyanawin, Ph.D., in-class discussion). Japanese parents choose their children's names according to two criteria: a felicitous meaning and a visually pleasing aspect (Akio Tsuchiya, as cited in Bruck and Bodenhorn, 2006). African Nuer and Tallensi birth names convey specific information about the circumstances in which a child entered the world (Evans-Pritchard, 1964).

Naming is not just a process of labeling, but it is a kind of cultural process that needs its own system. The very basic process of naming is the source of names - where are names derived from?

Different cultures may have different source of names. In some cultures, names are commonly derived from names of deities, natural entities, etc. In Christian culture, many God-related names were given to a child, e.g. "Jonathon" (precious gift from God), "Christopher" (Christbearer) etc. (Layne, 2006). Pulgram (1954) stated that names can come from different sources including 1) The realm of the gods, 2) The realm of nature 3) Time and circumstances of birth, 4) Time of life; kinship, 5) Geographical situation; ethnic relation, 6) Dress; finery, 7) Physical appearance, 8) Human mind, 9) Human conditions, 10) Titles

According to Pulgram's list, names can be derived from all kinds of entities. But in naming process, people usually consider the meanings of names as the first priority. And, it is quite obvious that people in most cultures prefer names with good meanings.

In Thai culture, the way of naming is various. Naming from the past to the present has been continuously developed and has evolved into a variety of patterns. Each pattern has its own rules depending on local belief and language that has been developed until the present. The basic goal of naming is to provide a good fortune and progress during life. According to Snae and Brckner (2006), there are three naming methods widely used by Thais:

1. Principal naming using Thai astrology: it involves the birthday in order to form the name. This is a belief that the individual has a set of 8 attributes called name of the angles referred to in Thai astrology. These attributes influence each person's livelihood, fortune, etc. The attributes refer to Servant > Age > Power> Honor > Property > Diligence > Patron > Misfortune. Each attribute has it own letters that can be used for constructing names.

2. Principal naming using numeric methodology: each letter has distinct numbers that can be added and have according values. These values represent low or high characteristics. The method can always be used along with naming both first names and surnames by increasing the value of first name and surname. Thus using numeric methodology can be used to increase "power" in names and check for better names.

3. Principal naming which uses the traditional calendar is considered by Thai fortunetellers as the best method of anticipating the horoscope or destiny of people. This methodology takes day, month and year of birth including the time of birth to calculate the personality according to astrology. The results of this prediction are defined to tell the fate and personality thoroughly in the future.

In many cultures, naming is not only important because every individual needs to have a name but to have helpful names or names with a good sound. Thai parents always try to choose names that they feel will bring good luck to their offsprings and to the family. However, the names that some parents have chosen for their children may not be good enough; therefore, it is very common to see Thai people change their names when they grow up. Those who change their names often believe that their new names will make their lives better. Many Thai-own companies are also named according to the Thai system of naming. The companies' owners usually hope that good names will bring success to the companies.

Conclusion

This paper reviews the exploration of names and naming in three aspects: semiotics, linguistics, and anthropology. Names, according to the semiotic theory, are a kind of sign; they link our conception to objects in the world. We can see from the above discussion that an object can have more than one name, and it is the name convention that tells us which name we should use to communicate with others. In linguistic part, we discussed about the word class, the meanings, and the uses of names. In terms of word class, nouns are traditionally considered as a subclass of nouns, but some linguists classified names as different word class from nouns. The latter view is quite acceptable according to our discussion. In terms of meanings, there are two major approaches: one said that names have only denotative meanings, and another one accepted that names convey both denotative and connotative meanings. As we have discussed, names tend to have both meanings, especially when we explore the anthropology of names and naming we can clearly see that names have some kinds of social and cultural meanings. Names are often used as a metonym since they can convey some specific message to the hearers. And, names can sometimes cause ambiguity if their convention is not clear enough. Exploring through the anthropological aspects, we see that names are needed to identify each individual in the society - names give us our

social identity. Names play several social roles; they indicate gender, ethnicity, and social relationship in many cultures. Names also represent oneself in many kinds of social interaction. Discussing about the cultural aspect of naming, we see that every culture has different system of naming, but one thing most cultures has in common is that people will choose names that are meaningful to them.

The exploration of names and naming also suggests some interesting issues for further researches, e.g. the ambiguity of names, the social roles of names, naming culture, etc. Having discussed here is just an observation of previous works on names and naming. Therefore, we can say here that there are plenty of rooms for those of you who want to explore these issues further.

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