



## Background of compilation of Vietnamese spelling dictionaries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

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**Abstract:** Spelling has garnered much attention in Vietnam since as early as the introduction of the Latin-based script (Quốc ngữ). Alongside the study of Vietnamese spelling, efforts have been made to compile Vietnamese spelling dictionaries. The descriptive approach is the main research method used in this article. Specifically, we use this method to describe the macro and micro structures of Vietnamese spelling dictionaries. We go over the kind of entries and how they are arranged in each dictionary in terms of the macro structure. In the micro structure, we highlight the similarities and differences between different Vietnamese spelling dictionaries by describing the information provided for each entry. Additionally, statistical methods are used to collect information on Vietnamese spelling, classify specific spelling problems in Vietnamese, categorize Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, and choose representative dictionaries as the source of the article's material. To compare the macro and micro structures of these dictionaries, comparative analysis is also used. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam's lexicography developed vigorously and gained significant achievements, as evidenced by the emergence of numerous dictionaries in various genres, including spelling dictionaries. This article delves into the state of spelling dictionary compilation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Vietnam by examining and describing several works to explore the authors' approaches and how they addressed spelling problems. Thereby, the article highlights the strengths and shortcomings in existing spelling dictionaries and suggests solutions with the goal of contributing to minimizing spelling errors.

**Keywords:** Vietnamese spelling, spelling dictionary, compiling dictionary

### Introduction

While the first dictionary related to the Vietnamese language, the "Vietnamese - Portuguese - Latin Dictionary" (Annam Lusitan - Latin), was published in 1651 in Rome, (the "Dai Nam Quoc Am Tu Vi" (*Vietnamese Dictionary*) by Huynh Tinh Paulus Cua in 1895 marked the inception of lexicography in Vietnam. The "*Vietnamese Dictionary*" by the Association for the Intellectual and Moral Training of the Vietnamese in 1931 was evidence of the strong development of lexicography in Vietnam, both theoretically and practically. According to author Hao Quang Vu (2005), between 1923 when the article "A discussion on how to make a dictionary" by Pha Truc was printed on Nam Phong newspaper until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were hundreds of articles, theses, and dissertations on theoretical lexicography in Vietnam.

In the realm of practical lexicography, more than 1,000 works were published across various genres such as explanatory dictionaries, spelling dictionaries,

synonyms and antonyms dictionaries, homonym dictionaries, frequency dictionaries, author dictionaries, idioms dictionaries, proverbs dictionaries, dialect dictionaries, abbreviation dictionaries, rhyme dictionaries, redundancy dictionaries, translation dictionaries, terminology dictionaries, and encyclopedias... Vietnamese spelling and Spelling Dictionaries are areas of great interest to linguists, lexicographers, and scientists in various fields. Many articles and research papers highlight specific issues related to Vietnamese spelling and the standardization of spelling. Many Vietnamese spelling dictionaries have been published based on these researches. The purpose of the spelling dictionary is to help users write correctly. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of several Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, each with its own advantages and shortcomings. However, there hasn't been a comprehensive article introducing these dictionaries. Therefore, in this article, we introduce some notable Vietnamese spelling dictionaries in 20<sup>th</sup>-century, outline their strengths and areas where they

fall short, and propose the compilation of a new spelling dictionary to overcome the limitations of the existing publications.

## Method

The primary research method employed in this article is the descriptive approach. We use this method to describe Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, specifically, to describe their macro and micro structures. For the macro structure, we describe the type of entries and the arrangement of entries within each dictionary. For the micro structure, we describe the information provided for each entry to highlight similarities and differences among various Vietnamese spelling dictionaries. In addition, statistical techniques are utilized to gather articles related to Vietnamese spelling, Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, classify specific spelling issues in Vietnamese, categorize Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, and select representative dictionaries as material for the article. Comparative analysis is also employed to compare the macro and micro structures of these dictionaries.

## Result

### Some Vietnamese spelling problems

Vietnamese is a syllabic language with a phonetic writing system, where each sound corresponds to a letter. Generally, Vietnamese spelling is straightforward, as words are written as they are pronounced. However, in some dialects, there are cases that some syllables are written differently but are pronounced the same.

For example, in the Northern region's dialect, there is no distinction between syllables with initial consonants CH- and TR- (e.g., *chung* and *trung*, *chán* and *trán*), S- and X (e.g., *sách* and *xách*, *suất* and *xuất*), or D- and R- (e.g., *da* and *ra*, *duộm* and *ruộm*), or mixed pronunciation of syllables with initial consonants L- and N- (e.g., *lói* and *nói*, *lại* and *nại*). Similarly, in the Central region's dialect, there is no difference between tone No.6 (.) and tone No.3 (-) and tone No.4 (?) with tone No.3 (-) (e.g., *mãi* and *mãi*, *để* and *để*). In the Southern region's dialect, there is no distinction between syllables with final consonants -N and -NG (e.g., *vàn* and *vàng*), or -T and -C (e.g., *mặt* and *mặc*).

Besides regional pronunciation differences, there are also common issues throughout the country. For example, there is no difference in the pronunciation of syllables with first consonants D- or GI- (e.g., *da* and *gia*, *dông* and *giông*), or rhyme -IÊU/ƯƠU (e.g., *riêu* and *ruou*, *hiêu* and *hou*).

In the work *Vietnamese Spelling*, through data collected from the Spelling Dictionary by Phe Hoang, the author mentions Vietnamese spelling issues, including:

- Spelling of initial consonants
- + Write CH- or TR-?
- + Write D- or GI-?

- + Write D- or GI- or NH-?
- + Write D- or GI- or R-?
- + Write D- or GI- or V-?
- + Write HW- or NGW- or QU- or W-?
- + Write L- or N-?
- + Write S- or X-
- Spelling of final consonants
- + Write -C or -T?
- + Write -N or -NG
- Spelling of rhyme patterns
- + Write -AI, -AO or -AY, -AU?
- + Write -ECH, -ÊNH, -ICH, -INH, -UC, -UNG or -ÊT, -EN, -IT, -IN, -UT, -UN?
- + Write -EM, -EP or -ÊM, -ÊP?
- + Write -IEM, -IEP, -IEU or -IM, -IP, -IU?
- + Write -IUU, -UUU, -UUU, UU or -IU, -UI, -UUU, -UU?
- + Write -OAI or -OI?
- + Write -OM, -OP or -OM, -OH or OM, OOP
- Spelling of tones
- + Write tone No.4 (?) or tone No.3 (-)?
- + Write tone No.3 (-) or tone No.6 (.)?

For each spelling case, the author gives a list of syllables, which syllables are present in this spelling case but not in another spelling case, and vice versa. For example, in the case of spelling CH- or TR-, there are a total of 575 syllables with the initial consonants CH- and TR-, of which 343 syllables have the initial consonant CH- and 232 syllables have the first consonant is TR-; There are 181 pairs of syllables with the first consonant CH- and TR- forming opposite pairs (both CH- syllable and TR- syllable, such as: *cha - tra*; *che - tre*, *chạm - trạm*, *chồng - trồng*, *chấn - trấn*,...); There are 162 cases with only the syllable CH-, without the corresponding syllable TR-, and 51 cases with only the syllable TR-, without the corresponding syllable CH-. Such statistical results for each spelling case are the basis for compiling spelling dictionaries in Vietnam.

### Vietnamese spelling dictionaries

The first Vietnamese spelling dictionary is *Nam ngu chinh ta tu vi* (Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary) by Nguyen Duyen Nien, published in 1933 by the Tan Dan printing house. Following this work, there has been a number of spelling dictionaries such as:

- *Vietnamese Comparative Spelling Dictionary* (Volumes 1-3) by Nien Duyen Nguyen, published in 1950 in Hai Phong.
- *Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary* by Tru Ngoc Le, published in 1959, Thanh Tan Publishing House, Saigon.
- *Vietnamese Popular Spelling Dictionary* by Lam Tu, published in 1963, Culture Publishing House.
- *Spelling Dictionary* by Hoe Van Le, published in 1965, Quoc Hoc Publishing House.
- *Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary* by Phe Hoang, Hien Anh Le, and Than Dao, published in 1985, Education Publishing House.

- *Common Spelling Dictionary* by Than Kim Nguyen, published in 1995, Social Sciences Publishing House.
- *Spelling Dictionary* by Phe Hoang, Dictionary Center, published in 1995, Da Nang Publishing House.
- *Mini Spelling Dictionary* by Linh Tuyen Hoang, Dictionary Center, published in 1995, Da Nang Publishing House.
- *Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary - Frequently Misspelled Words* by Y Nhu, Kim Thanh, and Hung Viet, published in 1995, Education Publishing House.
- *Comparative Spelling Dictionary: Used for primary and secondary schools* by Long The Nguyen, published in 1996, Hanoi Publishing House.
- *Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary* by Y Nhu Nguyen, published in 1997, Education Publishing House.
- *Vietnamese Popular Spelling Dictionary* by Tinh Duc Bui, published in 1998, Thuan Hoa Publishing House.
- *Spelling Dictionary for ethnic students (1997)* by Y Nhu Nguyen and Hung Viet Do, published in 1998, Education Publishing House.

With the purpose of guiding users to correctly spell Vietnamese, the above dictionaries have a typical macro and micro structure compared to other dictionaries. The basic similarity in spelling dictionaries is to collect cases of spelling problems among localities throughout the country and take syllables as the unit of entry (explanatory dictionaries take words as the unit of entry) and the entry structure usually provides a list of words, phrases, and expressions that contain the entry unit, which is that syllable. Besides the similarity between spelling dictionaries, each book, author or group of authors has a different way of handling spelling problems. The following are typical projects.

#### 1) Vietnamese Comparative Spelling Dictionary (Nien Duyen Nguyen, 1950) [6]

This work compares the spelling of the first 3 consonant pairs and consists of 3 volumes:

The first volume: comparing S-X spelling

The second volume: comparing CH-CT spelling

The third volume: comparing D-GI-R spelling

For the purpose of comparing spelling, dictionaries arrange entries into pairs so that readers can immediately compare spelling cases. For example:

CHẮC

TRẮC

CHÍ

TRÍ

DA

GIA

RA

The content of the entry includes information: type of word, brief definition, for example, polysyllabic word with the first syllable of the entry, definition of polysyllabic word. For homophones (same root,

random), the dictionary notes the word type before the definition.

CHÍ D.T. Tiếng chuột, con chuột, ý định: hữu chí cánh thành. Sách ghi chép: Dư địa chí. Nốt ruồi. Đ.T. Bấm: chí cổ tay. Ghi nhớ: mặc-chí (Nhằm để nhớ lấy). Đến, đi đến: vô sở bất chí (không có chỗ nào là không đến). Tr.T. Rất: chí đoảng. Chí-chóe: nói trẻ-con hay bấm chí, trêu ghẹo nhau...

TRÍ D.T. Khôn, thông minh-mưu kế. Thú vị: hứng-trí. Nơi đẹp: cảnh trí. Đ.T. Trở nên, thôi việc. Trí-chí: quyết làm việc gì. Trí-chính, trí-sĩ: thôi làm việc quan, việc công. Trí lực: hết sức làm việc gì. Trí-mạng: làm chết, làm thành án mạng....

It can be seen that although this dictionary has many inaccuracies (both spelling issues and content in each entry), it does provide some information to the reader (especially the meaning of words) in addition to spelling information.

#### 2) Comparative Spelling Dictionary: Used for primary and secondary schools (Long The Nguyen 1996) [4]

The dictionary includes 10 chapters (10 Vietnamese spelling issues).

Chapter I. Distinguishing letters with initial consonants CH-TR.

Chapter II. Distinguishing letters with initial consonants D-DI-R.

Chapter III. Distinguishing letters with initial consonants L-N.

Chapter IV. Distinguishing letters with the main sounds A and Â, and rhymes ANG and OANG.

Chapter X. Distinguishing words that rhyme IU-IEU-EU.

Also for the purpose of comparing cases of confusion to guide correct spelling, the entries are arranged in pairs. Entry information is combinations that represent the combination of the headword (syllable) with other elements. These combinations are usually words, a few are phrases. For example:

**chắc:** vững chắc; chắc chắn; chắc trắc: gỗ trắc; vằn tay; chắc nịch; chắc mẫm; chắc trắc; phẳn trắc; trắc lép,... trỏ,...

For entries without comparative words, the dictionary records "No".

**chen:** chen chúc; chen lẩn No

In the case of distinguishing tone No.4 (?) or tone No.3 (~), rhymes and final consonants, the dictionary lists comparisons by each letter.

**Đ**

+ đon **đả**.

+ **đảng** phái.

+ **đã** đành, **đã** khát...

+ **đăng** trí, quang **đăng**...

**B**

**bích:** ngọc bích; bích báo, **bít:** bưng bít, bít lỗ hờ; bít bánh bích quy; hoa bích tất; bít tét **đào**

#### 3) Spelling Dictionary for Ethnic Students (Y Nhu Nguyen, Hung Viet Do 1999) [14]

Similar to the above two works, the spelling dictionary by authors Y Nhu Nguyen, Hung Viet Do also presents contrast and comparison to show the distinction between different spellings of words that are easily misspelled. However, this work differs from the *Comparative Spelling Dictionary* in two points:

- The comparative presentation is only shown in the case of distinguishing initial consonants and tones. In the case of distinguishing rhymes and final consonants, the dictionary lists the correct spelling.

- There is a distinction between the ability to combine before and after the heading by identifying symbols.

### **Distinguishing L and N**

LA la àm ĩ, la bai bāi, la bàn, la cà, NA na mô, na (trúng) la-coóc, (tia) la-de, la đà, la hét, ná, na pan // la làng, la liếm, la liệt, la lối om sòm, la cà na, cây na, àm lên, la rầy, la trời, la ve // bao la, hạt na, mít na, ca la thầu, càn bồng càn la, chữ La nết na, nôm Tinh, chữ số La Mã, con la, dò la, đô-la, na, nu na nu hò la, kêu la, lấm la lấm lét, lân la, lâu nống, quả na. la, lê la, rầy la, say la đà, thiên la địa võng, tim la, úm ba la.

### **Written with -IẾP/Not written with -IP**

**CHIẾP** chiếp chiếp // chiêm **KHIẾP** khiếp đảm, khiếp chiếp. hờn, khiếp nhược, khiếp **DIẾP** diếp cá / rau diếp. sợ, khiếp vĩa // chết **HIẾP** hiếp chế, hiếp dâm, khiếp, khùng khiếp, kinh hiếp đáp, hiếp tróc // ăn khiếp. hiếp, ức hiếp, cưỡng hiếp, hà hiếp, uy hiếp, ức hiếp, ý mạnh hiếp yếu.

4) Vietnamese Spelling Dictionary  
- Frequently Misspelled Words (Y Nhu, Kim Thanh, Hung Viet 1995) [12]

This work only selects words in Vietnamese that cause difficulty when writing. The dictionary consists of 3 parts: Part 1. Words with initial consonants which are frequently misspelled; Part 2. Rhyming words that are frequently misspelled; Part 3. How to write words with tone No.4 and tone No.3. In each section, the dictionary gives pairs that frequently cause confusion while writing and clearly guide readers how to use them correctly in each specific case. After the headword (in capital letters), in case of correct spelling, there are examples listing combinations that show the combining ability of the headword, including words, phrases. The combination is divided into two groups, the group with the headword appearing at the beginning of the combination and the group with the headword not appearing at the beginning of the

combination. The combinations in this group are arranged in Vietnamese alphabetical order and the two groups are separated by the symbol "/". For instance:

Part 1. The entries are arranged in order: ch, d, gi, l, n, nh, r, s, tr, v, x, including the following cases: written with CH- not written with TR; written with D- not written with GI; written with L- not written with N; written with R- not written with D or GI; written with S- not written with X; written with TR- not written with CH; written with V- not written with D; written with X- not written with S.

For example: In the case of writing in CH- and not writing in TR, there is:

**CHA** cha anh, cha cǎng chú kiết, cha chả, cha chàì chú chóp, cha chung không ai khóc, cha cố, cha đạo, cha đỡ đầu, cha già, cha già con cọc, cha liu điu để con hổ mang, cha mẹ, cha nào con nấy, cha nội, cha nuôi, cha ông, cha sinh mẹ dưỡng, cha truyền con nối, cha xứ // bỏ cha, chém cha, chết cha, chua cha, con hơn cha là nhà có phúc, mả cha, mẹ cha, mồ cha, ông cha, sẩy cha còn chú, sẩy mẹ bú dì, thằng cha.

**CHÀ** chà chuôm; chà đập // ái chà...

**CHẢ** chả ai, chả bảo gì // bánh chả, miếng chả...

**CHÃ** lã chã.

Part 2. The entries are arranged in the order of the rhyme: ach, an, anh, at, au, ay, ǎn, ǎt, ǎn, ǎt, ǎu, ǎy, en, et, êch, ênh, ich, iêm, iên, iệp, iết, iêu, in, inh, it, oan, oanh, oat, oǎn, oǎt, on, ot, ôn, ôt, ơn, ơt, uân, uât, un, uôi, uôn, uôt, ut, uyên, ươi, ươn, ươt, ươu, ưt. Similar to part 1, part 2 lists all the possibilities of writing rhymes and not writing rhymes, such as: written with -ACH not written with -ATT; written with -IẾT not written with -IÊC; written with -ON not written with -ONG,.... For example:

**KIẾT** kiết cú, kiết lị // ca kiết, cha cǎng chú kiết, keo kiết, nghèo kiết.

Part 3. Entries trarranged in Vietnamese alphabetical order, including:

- Written with the tone No.3 - not written with the tone No.6, the tone No.4.

**LỎA** lỏa lờ, lỏa lượt, lỏa thể // đồng lỏa.

- Written with the tone No.4 - not written with the tone No.6, the tone No.3.

**BỬA** bữa cau, bữa củi, bữa làm đôi // ăn chẳng vay bữa, nói bữa, tường bữa vôi.

5) Vietnamese Spelling notebook (The dictionary part) (Hoang Phe 1995)

This part handles spelling cases in a unique way compared to the those works mentioned above. The opposing syllables in each spelling case (initial consonants, final consonants, rhyme patterns, tones) are arranged into adjacent entries for ease of lookup and comparison. When looking up the spelling of a syllable, you can see the opposite syllable at the same time (the opposite syllable is written back a distance from the main syllable). In case the opposite syllable is

not used in a word (the syllable is not in actual use), then write the symbol "----" immediately after the syllable. For syllables used as a word, there is an explanation of the meaning with a brief example and enclosed in commas (,). After the explanation, the words containing the entry syllable are arranged in order: words with the entry syllable standing in front, words with the entry syllable standing behind (recorded after the symbol //), and words with entry syllables standing in the middle (recorded after the symbol ||); Finally, (after the symbol \*) are idioms and idiomatic combinations. For example, in the case of "write D- or GI-?".

**dấu** (1. dấu chân trên bãi cát; ngắt câu bằng một dấu chấm; đánh dấu nặng; đón đầu bưư điện. 2. cũ, con vua vua dấu...).- dấu ấn, dấu câu, dấu hiệu, dấu hỏi, dấu lặng, dấu luyến, dấu lửng, dấu má, dấu mũ, dấu nổi, dấu tích, dấu vết // đánh dấu, đóng dấu, làm dấu, nón dấu, thuốc dấu, yêu dấu \* con vua vua dấu, con chúa chúa yêu.

**giấu** (giấu tiền trong tủ sách; chôn giấu, giấu dốt; không giấu được nỗi lo sợ).- giấu giếm // ẩn giấu, cất giấu, che giấu \* giấu đầu hở đuôi, ném đá giấu tay.

#### 6) Common spelling dictionary (Nguyen Kim Than 1995) [9]

The work has a different structure from the 5 works mentioned above. As a toolbook to guide how to write Vietnamese correctly, this dictionary collects the correct spellings for cases with spelling problems. The dictionary does not divide spelling cases for comparison. The macro structure of the dictionary is similar to the macro structure of explanatory dictionaries, the entries are arranged alphabetically and in the tone order: tone No.1 (unmarked), tone No.2 (\), tone No.4 (?), tone No.3 (-), tone No.5 (/), tone No.6 (.).

Rhyme A: a, ả, ã, á, ạ, ác, ai, ải, ái,...

Rhyme B: ba, bà, bã, bá, bác, bạc,...

#### 7) Spelling Dictionary (Hoang Phe 1995) [8]

This dictionary has a macro structure similar to *Common spelling dictionary* by Nguyen Kim Than in 1995, which means the table of entries includes syllables written in the correct spelling of cases considered to have spelling problems and arrange them alphabetically. However, the microstructure has differences. The project collects spelling cases, including:

- Syllables have initial consonants: ch-/tr-; d-/gi-/v-, d-/gi-/r-; l-/n-; s-/x-; hw-/ngw-/qu-/w-.

- Syllables have consonants (or semi-vowels) at the end: -c/-t (-ac/-at, -ăt/-ăt, -âc/-ât, -ec/-et, -iêt/-iêc,...); -n/-ng (-an/-ang, -ăn/-ăng, -en/-eng, -un/-ung, -ư/-ung,...); -c/-ch (-ic/-ich); -ch/-t (-êch/-êc, -ich/-it); -n/-nh (-ên/-ênh; -in/-inh); -i/-y (-ai/-ay).

- Syllables have main sounds: e/ê, i/ie, i/u, o/oo, o/ô/ô, u/uô, u/u.

- Syllables have rhyme patterns: -oi/oi.

- Syllables have tones: tone No.4/ tone No.3, tone No.3/ tone No.6.

For each complete entry, the dictionary provides 7 pieces of information, including:

- + Entry name (syllable) (bold).

- + Monosyllable words (with style notes, meaning shown through examples).

- + Idioms and proverbs given as examples (after the "-"symbol).

- + Compound words of two or three syllables have the initial element as the entry syllable (after the symbol "//", and use the symbol "-" placed right at the beginning to indicate).

- + Compound words of two or three syllables have the finalelement as the entry syllable (after the symbol "/", and use the symbol "-" placed behind to indicate).

- + Dialect homophones, there are spelling problems for a certain dialect(s), need to compare if necessary.

For example: **nát** nát (1. ph., lè lưỡi nát trẻ con; - người nát nhát người bạo. 2. gạo giã nát quá; trâu giẫm nát hết lúa; cơm nát; con đò nát; nhà rách vách nát; tình hình nát bét). - ăn hại đá nát. // - bàn; - nước; - óc; - rượu. \ dốt -; dốt -; đồ -; đồng -; mục -; nhàu -; nhàu (ph., → nhàu nát); rách -; ruộng-; thối -. //□[xo nát / sonata < Ý, A; F sonate]

- Compare lát; nác.

## Discussion

The article introduced seven Vietnamese spelling dictionaries by describing the macro and micro structure of each work. With the purpose of guiding users to correctly spell Vietnamese, some dictionaries such as *Vietnamese Comparative Spelling Dictionary* (Nien Duyen Nguyen, 1950), *Comparative Spelling Dictionary: Used for primary and secondary schools* (Long The Nguyen 1996),

*Spelling Dictionary for Ethnic Students* (Y Nhu Nguyen, Hung Viet Do 1999) present contrast and comparison to show the distinction between different spellings of words that are easily misspelled according to each Vietnamese spelling issue such as initial consonants, rhymes, final consonants and tones. The *Vietnamese Comparative Spelling Dictionary* (Nien Duyen Nguyen, 1950) compares S-X, CH-CT, D-GI-R spelling. This work also gives the definition of easily misspelled words. The *Comparative Spelling Dictionary: Used for primary and secondary schools* (Long The Nguyen 1996) distinguishes letters with initial consonants CH-TR, D-DI-R, L-N, letters with the main sounds A and Â, and rhymes ANG and OANG, words that rhyme IU-IEU-EU,...In each pair of comparison, the work represents the combination of the headword with other elements. The *Spelling Dictionary for Ethnic Students* (Y Nhu Nguyen, Hung Viet Do 1999) distinguishes initial consonants and tones and also represents the combination of the headword with other elements. In the case of distinguishing rhymes and final consonants,

the dictionary lists the correct spelling. The *dictionary part of Vietnamese Spelling notebook* (Hoang Phe 1995) explains misspelled words in pairs by giving examples. The *Common spelling dictionary* (Nguyen Kim Than 1995) and the *Spelling Dictionary* (Hoang Phe 1995) collect entries (syllables) written in the correct spelling of cases considered to have spelling problems and arrange them alphabetically.

## Conclusion

Vietnamese spelling is a subject of great significance to language researchers, educators, and those who hold a deep affection for the Vietnamese language. Consequently, spelling dictionaries can be regarded as some of the most comprehensive and diverse resources in the realm of language dictionaries. This diversity is evident through the variations in structure, both at macro and micro levels, among the works discussed in this article.

With the emergence of over ten spelling dictionaries, their pivotal role and contributions during the early stages of the formation and evolution of Vietnamese lexicography are undeniable. These works continue to hold value in contemporary times and serve as crucial reference materials for both research and practical applications of the Vietnamese language.

The prevailing reality remains that despite the proliferation of spelling dictionaries, misspellings continue to be widespread, particularly within the realm of social media and digital communication, where the ease of expressing opinions and engaging in debates often leads to hasty and erroneous writing. This begs the question: Do spelling lookup tools, with their claims of precision and utility, truly fulfill their role effectively and uphold scientific standards?

It is evident that spelling dictionaries have admirably provided correct spellings in accordance with their intended purpose. Nevertheless, two pressing issues persist: First, many entries included in these dictionaries do not necessarily address spelling issues commonly encountered in practical usage but are nonetheless cataloged (hòm, họng, tia, thức, thực, thủy, thuyền, thuyết,...). Second, these dictionaries primarily offer readers the correct spelling without delving into the deeper understanding of why one spelling choice is favored over another.

In light of these challenges, the author proposes a project approach to the compilation of Vietnamese spelling dictionaries, characterized by the following structure: The dictionary would be organized into distinct sections, each dedicated to a specific spelling issue. Within these sections, word entries (syllables) would be presented in pairs, addressing instances of confusion. Each entry would encompass a concise definition, a clear delineation of the differences in meaning between the paired spellings, illustrative examples (including idioms and expressions), multisyllabic words incorporating the syllables from the

entry along with others, and additional contextual details both preceding and following the entry.

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