

Address Form of Children in Communication (Through the Novel “Southern Forest Land”)

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DOI: [10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i02.003](https://doi.org/10.36347/sjahss.2024.v12i02.003)

| Received: 05.01.2024 | Accepted: 13.02.2024 | Published: 16.02.2024

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Abstract

Original Research Article

The article focuses on understanding children's address forms through the novel “Southern Forest Land” from the following aspects: children's address terms to children and children's address terms to adults. From the survey and classification results, we found that children's address in communication concentrates on two situations (family and community) with six thematic groups associated with two pairs of roles (upper-lower role pair and peer role pair). Children's address terms to children have 2 forms of addressing and 5 forms of calling, while children's address terms to adults have 3 forms of addressing and 7 forms of calling. Analysis of the characteristics of address affirms that the language used by children is diverse, reflecting the entire spiritual life, innocence, and simplicity of children. It also reflects the honest, straightforward, warm, generous, and affectionate culture of the people in the Southern region.

Keywords: Address, children, communication, Southern Forest Land.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Address is the first element that indicates characters in communication. The address form in Vietnamese communication is highly diverse, influenced by various social factors (such as age, gender, power, occupation, religion, etc.) and language (specific communication context). Therefore, for a long time, the addressing style in Vietnamese has been considered a “communication address strategy” [8]. This holds true for children as well; it seems that the initial Vietnamese language lessons for children involve addressing, as it is perceived as a form of “ritual” in their behavior from family to society.

The novel “Southern Forest Land” (*Đất rừng phương Nam*) by the writer Doan Gioi is one of the works focusing on the theme of childhood that has been widely embraced by readers and has contributed to the author's reputation. The novel narrates the life journey of a boy named An wandering throughout the Mekong Delta region in Southern Vietnam. The narrative not only introduces children and the audience to the beautiful images in the southernmost part of the country but also aims to convey the essence of the people living there – despite the harsh living conditions, the people of the Mekong Delta are generous, hospitable, gentle, and simple. This novel has played a significant role in

education and character development for children. It is not only a means of entertainment but also a source of inspiration for children to immerse themselves in characters they love and express their attitudes in various situations, extracting valuable life lessons from the story.

Through the novel, children can immerse themselves in a vivid and diverse world of characters, helping them nurture their childlike souls. One crucial aspect contributing to the success of this novel is the language. Through communicative interactions, children express their personalities and attitudes. To clarify the addressing style of children in the novel “Southern Forest Land”, we examine the language used by children in two interactive scenarios: children with children and children with adults. In each interaction type, the language exhibits distinct characteristics, yet they are unified and complement each other in elucidating the character images and conveying the cultural-social values embedded in the novel.

Within the scope of this article, we focus on investigating the addressing form in the communication of children as portrayed in the novel “Southern Forest Land”, by Doan Gioi, published by Kim Dong Publishing House in 2017.

2. THEORY OF ADDRESS

2.1. Address is defined as “addressing to oneself and calling others something when speaking to each other” [11]. According to this definition, address involves two communication roles: self-addressing communication role (addressing) and calling the partner communication role (calling). Thus, in communication, there are two types of relationships: a) Corresponding relationship between addressing and calling: if I address to myself as X, then I will call the communication partner corresponding to me as Y. This is a corresponding relationship, for example: *ông/bà – cháu, bố/ mẹ - con, anh-em, chị-em, etc.*; b) Non-corresponding relationship between addressing and calling: I address to myself as A, but I do not call the communication partner with B, but with C, for example: *tôi - chú em, bác - em*. Author Nguyen Van Chien referred to (a) as accurate corresponding address and (b) as inaccurate corresponding address.

The reality of communication contexts shows that the issue of address is complex and diverse. For example, a woman is older than a man, but addresses herself as “*em*” and calls the other person “*anh*” or “*bác*”, etc. Here, cultural factors of communication in social relations have influenced address. A child may address to himself/herself as “*tao*” and call an enemy “*mày*”. In this interaction, cultural factors of ethnicity dominate. An older man may address himself as “*em*” and call his leader as “*thủ trưởng*” or “*anh*” under the influence of power factors (social position).

2.2. Address terms in Vietnamese are also diverse and contribute to the diversity of address form in Vietnamese communication. According to Nguyen Van Khang [8, p.326], there are 13 address forms in Vietnamese, including:

A. Address Form with Name, Including:

(1) address by first name; (2) address by surname; (3) address by middle name + first name; (4) address by surname + first name; (5) address by full name.

B. Address form with All Possible Terms, Including:

(6) Personal pronouns; (7) kinship terms used as address terms; (8) other terms used as address terms.

C. Address form with Titles, Including:

(9) Calling by one of the titles; (10) calling by many or all titles.

D. Address form With the Names of Family Members, Including:

(11) Calling the names of family members such as husband, wife, child (alternate calling).

E. Address Form with Combinations of (1), (2), (3), (4), Including:

(12) Calling with various combinations (e.g., title + name; title + surname + name; address term + first name/surname + first name).

F. Address Form with the Absence of Address Terms, Including:

(13) Absence of address terms in communication (lack of address terms).

It is noteworthy that Nguyen Van Khang believes that even when zero address (meaning no address) occurs, it is still considered a form of address with linguistic functions (information transmission) in communication. [8, p.326]

We apply this theory to a specific investigation of how children address each other in the novel “Southern Forest Land” to contribute to identifying the linguistic characteristics of child characters, the beauty of the people in the Western region, and the talent of the author Doan Gioi.

3. SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Survey of Situation, Topics, and Communication Roles of Child Characters in the novel “Southern Forest Land”

3.1.1. Characters’ Communication

Surveying the characters in the novel “Southern Forest Land” revealed a total of 54 characters (named and unnamed). This result allows us to ascertain that the world of characters is incredibly diverse with many dimensions: there are child characters, adult characters, protagonists, antagonists, etc. The characters belong to various social classes and age groups, making each character a “nucleus” contributing to the overall picture of society. Among them are child characters such as *An, thằng Cò, thằng bé lùn, đám trẻ, etc.*; adult characters like *ông Hai (An’s foster father), má nuôi, Võ Tông, dì Tư Béo, lão Ba Ngù, etc.*; protagonists characters like *anh Sáu tuyên truyền, ông Huỳnh Tấn (Liaison officer of the Southern Executive Committee’s General Headquarters for Anti-French Resistance), anh thương binh, etc.*; antagonists characters such as the *vợ chồng Tư Mắm (unpatriotic Vietnamese), đám lính Cộng hòa vệ binh, etc.* An is a child character that spans the entire work. An’s journey across the Mekong Delta, from Dong Thap Muoi to Long Xuyen, then Hau Giang, Rach Gia, U Minh, Bac Lieu, etc. Throughout this journey, the boy experiences many ups and downs until, in the end, he reaches Ca Mau, reunites with *dì Tư Béo*, and learns about soldiers (Uncle Ho’s soldiers). An joins the guerrillas and participates in the resistance against the French.

3.1.2. Situations and Topics of Communication

First of all, children's address terms to children

are associated with communication situations and communication topics. The survey results are as follows:

Table 1: Situations and Topics of Children's Communication with Children.

Situation	No	Topic
Family	1	Daily activities
	2	Childhood game
	3	Personal information
Community	1	Livelihood work
	2	Aspiration for struggle against the enemy
	3	Game

Comments:

- a) Regarding the communication situation: Children interact with children in two environments: the family and the community. An is a child character who serves as both a storyteller and a character. There is no interaction of children with children in the school environment.
- b) Regarding the communication topic: Topics correspond to each communication situation, alongside some common topics, including specific topics such as games that permeate spaces from the family to the community. For now, the interaction of children in games is not explained. Each situation has specific topics such as:

- Topic group within the family includes 3 major topics with 12 situations related to communication content, such as daily activities (*cooking assistant, cleaning the house, snake catching, etc.*); childhood games (*fishing, etc.*); personal information (*asking about relatives, understanding habits, etc.*)
- Topic group in community interaction includes 3 major groups with 8 situations related to communication content, such as livelihood work (*assisting foster mother in selling rice, selling snakes, selling medicine, catching crocodiles, etc.*); the desire to struggle against enemies (*reporting news, guarding for meetings, joining the guerrillas, etc.*); games (*watching plays, bird trapping, etc.*).

3.1.3. Communication Roles

In the novel "Southern Forest Land", child

characters establish two pairs of role relationships with other characters in communication: the upper-lower role pair and the peer role pair.

The upper-lower role pair is observed in the interaction between children and adult characters. In this role relationship, children take the lower role, while adults take the upper role. This hierarchical relationship is established based on factors such as age and family ties. Examples of role pairs include *An – dì Tư Béo, An – lão Ba Ngụ, An – Ông Hai, An – vợ chồng Tư Mắm, An – Cò – ông Hai, etc.*

1. *Has old man Ba Ngụ (lão Ba Ngụ) come here today?*
- *Aunt Tu Beo (dì Tư Béo) suddenly asked me.*
- *Haven't seen him. What's the matter, Aunt?*
- *Nothing. Just asking!* [21, p.31]

The peer role pair in children's communication is specifically illustrated by the pair of friends (similar in age). Examples of this role pair include: *An – thằng bé mập; An – Thằng Cò, etc.*

2. *The boy Co (thằng Cò) stared at my face, then blurted out:*
- *Well, let's go. There's a cloth-covered boat over there. We'll go there, buy some kerosene, and then come back. Mom's keeping an eye out.*

I hesitated:

- *Won't you stay here and watch them slaughter the monitor lizard?* [21, p.117]

3.2. Address Terms Used by Children to Children

In the examination of address terms in 18 dialogues among children, the results obtained are as follows:

Table 2: Address Terms Used by Children to Children

No.	The address terms used by the storyteller	Addressing of Children		Calling of Children	
		Quantity (time)	Rate (%)	Quantity (time)	Rate (%)
1	Address by name	0	0	32	15,46
2	Address by personal pronouns	38	18,36	51	24,64
3	Address by kinship nouns	0	0	8	3,86
4	Address by another combination	0	0	7	3,38
5	Absence of address terms	43	20,77	28	13,53
Total (207 address terms - 100%)		81	39,13	126	60,87

Comment:

a) The child character's address to the children is very diverse. Addressing mainly uses personal pronouns: *mình, mày/ mậy, tao, chúng mày, etc*; Calling has a variety of forms of address such as:

1. /Address form by name: *An, Cò*.
2. /Address form by personal pronouns: *I (tao, mình, thằng, etc)*; *you (mày/ mậy, chúng mày, etc.)*
3. /Address form by kinship nouns: *he (anh)*.
4. /Address form by other address terms: *tụi bay*.

3. *Have you (mày) just arrived? Just now, two monkeys were pulling a cart, I was so fascinated.*

- *Yeah, I (mình) just got here! – I replied just to respond, no longer paying attention to what he was saying in my ear [21, p.4]*

4. *Oh? What's like a snake... Too many, Cò!*

- *Not snakes, Are you (mậy) mistake? Are snakes coming to give us their live?*
- *Oh! Oh no! [21, p.71]*

[5] - *What's squishing like a fish eating, Cò?*

- *Those are shrimp, not snakes. Why are you (mậy) afraid? You (thằng) are too scared! [21, p.72].*

In examples 3, 4, and 5, the words “*mình*”, “*tụi mình*” in example 3, and “*mày/mậy*” “*Cò*”, “*thằng*” are words used by children for calling. From this calling allows for identification of various contexts, backgrounds, story content, levels of familiarity, etc., of the children in each communication situation.

b) In addressing, children only use 2 address forms (with personal pronouns and absence of address terms), including:

The address forms with personal pronouns appears in 4 words (*tao, mình, tụi mình, chúng mình*).

6. *Let me (tao) try the snake for you – after saying that, he stuck a finger into the snake's basket, scratching its back. When the snake turned and lunged at the finger, the boy Cò quickly pulled his finger back [21, p. 75].*

The absence of address terms rarely appears. However, when used, it often implies emphasis on a certain thing or issue.

7. *Seeing me arrive, the chubby short boy squatted down, lifted his eyebrows, and winked at me, then looked into the snake basket:*

- *Are you scared?*

I smiled, not answering. Saying scared, he would tease me for being timid, but saying no would not be true [21, p. 24].

This address form is the subject's way of addressing in the situation of preparing to quote another character. Here there is a shift from the role of both telling the story and participating directly in the story to the role of the character participating in the story's progress. Here, there is a shift from the role of narrating the story to actively participating in the narrative as a character.

In this manner, the words used for addressing by the narrator are scarce: 4 out of 69 terms are used to address to the children in the story.

c) In calling, children use 5 calling forms, including:

1. By name (with 2 words): *An, Cò*.
2. By personal pronouns (5 words): *mày, mậy, tụi mày, chúng mày, thằng*,
3. By kinship nouns (1 word): *anh*.
4. By other words (4 words): *bạn, tụi bạn, lũ trẻ/ đám trẻ, bọn nhóc*.
5. Absence of address terms.

[8] - *Hey, grill it, An? - he told me.*

- *How do I grill it?*
- *Stick that skewer through its belly, prop it up on the charcoal, what else is there to do? You don't even know how to grill food for drinking [21, p. 69].*

[9] - *A little while later, feeling impatient, I asked:*

- *Have we arrived at the fishing spot yet, buddy (mậy)?*
- *Yeah, We are there. I'll pick a good spot to bait. Right here. Okay [21, p. 73].*

[10] - *Why are you pushing so hard? - a chubby little boy, squinting his eyes, pokes his elbow into my side.*

- *Let me see a bit! [21, p. 4],*

The words: *An, mậy* and the absence of address terms in examples 8, 9 and 10 are the words used to call the child character in “*Southern Forest Land*”. Each calling form is associated with characteristics of the child's situation, background, story content, level of familiarity, etc. with the child.

3.3. Address between Children to Adults

Surveying the address terms of children with adults in 47 dialogues, the results were as follows:

Table 3: Children's address terms to adults

No.	The address term used by children to adults	Children's addressing to adults		Children's calling to adults	
		Quantity (time)	Rate (%)	Quantity (time)	Rate (%)
1	Address by name	0	0	7	3,91
2	Address by personal pronouns	16	8,94	2	1,12
3	Address by kinship nouns	24	13,41	57	31,84
4	Address by other words	0	0	5	2,79
5	Address by various combinations	3	1,68	26	14,53
6	Address by title	0	0	2	1,12
7	Absence of address terms.	8	4,47	29	16,20
Tổng (179 address terms – 100%)		148	28,49	258	71,51

Comments:

a) Children in communication with adults use 7 address forms:

1. /By name (1 word): *Võ Tông*.
2. /By personal pronouns (4 words): *tui, ta, mình, chúng ta*.
3. /By kinship nouns (9 words): *cháu, con, tíá, má, chú, anh, chị, dì, etc.*
4. /By other words (1 word): *bà (bà chủ)*.
5. /By various combinations (26 words): *bà chủ, thầy Bảy, dì Tư Béó, lão Ba Ngù, ông già bán rần, thằng Cò, chú Võ Tông, etc.*
6. /By title nouns (1 word): *thầy*.
7. /Absence of address terms.

b) In addressing, the characters use 4 address forms with varying frequencies, specifically:

Addressing by personal pronouns 16 times (*tui, ta, mình, chúng ta, etc.*); by kinship nouns 24 times (*con, cháu*); by other combinations 3 times (*thằng An, đảng mình, người đảng mình*); Absence of address terms is used 15 times. There is no use of addressing by name, by other words, by various combinations, and by title nouns between children and adults.

[11] *I scratched my ear, laughed, and innocently said:*

- *Auntie, you write beautifully! The writing is as neat as if it were cut, and there are no line markings... Even more beautiful than the writing of comrade Sáu, the propagandist.*
- *Have you read it? - She widened her eyes, trying to suppress her anger.*
- *I've been reading it... but what kind of Western letters is you writing, I (cháu) don't understand how to read it. I (cháu) can only spell out the Vietnamese alphabet and read numbers from one to a hundred. But it takes a long time to spell them out [21, p. 36].*

In this example, an addressed himself as “cháu” to Tu Mam's wife - a woman collaborating with the enemy (unpatriotic Vietnamese). This is an address form outside of the family with the influence of age. When An discovered that Tu Mam's wife was recording the schedule and notes about our troop arrangements to report to the enemy, he used the address form “cháu” to

create respect and deceive the suspicions of the woman. [12] - *Why didn't you (tía) shoot him an arrow earlier?*

- *There were only three arrows left, son ! I dropped all seventeen when I carried you and ran away. Maybe got caught in the branches, auntie didn't notice.*
- *In a few days, we (mình) will come back to ask uncle Vo Tong again, no worries? [21, p. 96]*

In this example, An used the address form with the personal pronoun “mình” (we) that carries inclusive characteristics to respond to your father regarding the intention to ask Uncle Vo Tong (*chú Võ Tông*) for arrow again. The address form “mình” with inclusive characteristics in family communication reflects the sense of bonding, affection, and respect. This is a distinctive cultural feature of the Vietnamese people.

[13] – *Your side! Your side! - I yelled out, then poured out in one breath.*

- *I'm An, the son of Mr. Hai from the La village. I came in to find my father!*

The sound of many footsteps ran swiftly on the mound of dirt. The beam of light from a flashlight shone straight into my face, making me squint and turn my face aside.

- *Did you come with anyone else? [21, p.141].*

In example 13, due to a tense situation, an used two address forms to address himself. He used a combined form of address (*đảng mình, người đảng mình, and thằng An*) separated, combined with the form of address using personal pronoun “tôi” to define, assert oneself, and explain specific family relations.

c) In calling, the characters use 7 address forms, specifically:

Calling by name: 7 times (*Võ Tông*); by personal pronouns: 16 times (*tui, ta, mình, chúng ta, etc.*); by kinship terms: 42 times (*tía, má, chú, anh, chị, etc.*); by other terms: 3 times (*bà = bà chủ*); by various combinations: 54 times (*bà chủ, thầy Bảy, dì Tư Béó, lão Ba Ngù, ông già bán rần, thằng Cò, chú Võ Tông, etc.*). Absence of address terms: 15 times. No occurrence of calling by names and by titles between children and

adults.

[14] – *Dad (tía)! Are there bears here, Dad (tía)? - I asked.*

- *There are no bears in this forest. Are you scared?*
- *No! I (con) am just asking. Bears really love honey. If there were bears, they would take all the honey!*
- *Well, but don't worry about honey. How could it eat all the honey of this U Minh forest? Just worry about....them eating the bees!* [21, p. 80].

In this example, an called his foster father (*ông Hai*) dad. The address form people shows the strong family relationships of the Southern people. The pair of vocatives “con”- “tía” is the dominant pair of vocatives in Southern people’s families. Although an is an adopted child, this address forms shows that an and Mr. Hai’s family have a loving relationship like flesh and blood. The inclusive address form with the personal pronoun “*minh*” further affirms the strong family relationship.

[15] - *This monitor lizard is truly big! Back in 1942, when I was still teaching in Doc Vang commune, Dong Thap Muoi province, the villagers also caught a specimen, measuring three meters and six centimeters. This was the second one I had seen with my own eyes...*

- *Can it be eaten, teacher Bay (thầy Bầy)?* [21, p. 133]

The address form “*thầy Bầy*” is used by an when calling the teacher to show respect and intimacy. This is also the calling method used by many characters in the long story “Southern Forest Land”. Thereby demonstrating the culture of Vietnamese people respecting teachers.

In summary, the calling term between children and adults appear in 7 address forms corresponding to each situation, communication topic and expressing the relationship between children and familiar adults.

4. CONCLUSION

In communication, address is a way of indicating personal address, thereby referring to the characters participating in communication. Address becomes the first and most important condition in identifying and establishing communication roles and contributes to expressing the characteristics of the communication character. From analyzing the characteristics of children’s address to children and children to adults from two aspects: self-address and calling, we confirm: children’s words of address are both universal (with different types of words). addressed by personal pronouns or kinship nouns) but with other unique characteristics - expressing the culture of Southern people in general and Southern children in particular with honesty, naivety, kindness, liberal, kind-

hearted and affectionate through different types of address, other combinations and absence of address. The address term is used more when addressing, reflecting the Vietnamese culture of “humbly addressing – respectful calling”.

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