LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL FEATURES OF ENGLISH TOPONYMS

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ABSTRACT: The following article aims at investigating toponyms in English as a representative of specific linguistic and cultural phenomenon. First the article tries to define English toponyms. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of deep linguistic analysis over them to find out more linguistic and cultural peculiarities.

KEYWORDS: Toponyms, features, place, location, name, etymology, information, eponym

Introduction

Toponyms serve as symbols of regional culture and thus reflect the history, habitat and environment of a place. Toponymic studies examine the origin and development of an ethnic group, present the spatial patterns of a certain culture and reveal both man- made and physical environmental features of a region.

Toponymy can uncover important historical information about a place, such as the period of time the original language of the inhabitants lasted, settlement history, and population dispersal. Place-name study can also provide insight to religious changes in an area, such as the conversion to Christianity. Place names or toponyms are the general terms for any place or geographical entity and as such are the research objects of onomastics, which is known as a subbranch of linguistics. A toponym, therefore, is a name for a place. Wherever you live, its name is a toponym: United States, North America, Atlanta, and California, Uzbekistan are all toponyms. Even names of made-up places like Narnia and Atlantis or Susanbil are toponyms.

The history of a place's name - its geographical etymology - can provide us with clues to the history of the place itself, and often with clues to the people who have lived there in the past. Religious toponym refers to the origin and meaning of the names of religions. This is important to human geography because many names mean significant things including beliefs of cultures.

Method and methodology

The article relies on the qualitative data attained by the resources of written scientific works regarding the topic. It is based on the numerous findings of previous and contemporary linguists concerning toponyms.

Research findings

A toponymist relies not only on maps and local histories, but interviews with local residents to determine names with established local usage. [1]

The exact application of a toponym, its specific language, its pronunciation, and its origins and meaning are all important facts to be recorded during name surveys. When colonies become independent place names often change. Changes in power through coups and revolutions prompt name changes. People can choose to change a toponym to memorialize an important person or event. Place-names are an important part of our geographical and cultural environment. [2]

They identify geographical entities of different kinds and represent irreplaceable cultural values of vital significance to people's sense of well-being and feeling at home. Place-names are therefore of major social importance. Toponyms derive from a founder, famous person, or origin of settlers. Some names also derive from features of the physical environment. Toponyms depend on the inhabited place on Earth's surface. For example, place names in the US are easily traceable to their origins since most of the places are named after their founders or politicians at the time. Most of the streets and avenues of the main cities and towns around the world are also named after prominent people in that city or town. The five themes of geography are location, place, human-environment interaction, movement, and region.

A location is the place where a particular point or object exists. A place's absolute location is its exact place on Earth, often given in terms of latitude and longitude. For example, the Empire State Building is located at 40.7 degrees north (latitude), 74 degrees west (longitude).

Types of toponym include the following.

- **agronym (the name of a field or pasture)**
- **dromonym (the name of a transportation route)**
- **drymonym (the name of a forest or grove)**
- **econym (the name of a village or town)**
- **limnonym (the name of a lake or pond)**
- **necronym (the name of a cemetery or burial ground)[3]**

Eponym is defined as the person for whom a discovery or other thing is defined as named. An example of an eponym is Walt Disney for whom Disneyland is named. That is the name of a real or fictitious person whose name has, or is thought to have, given rise to the name of a particular item. Romulus is the eponym of Rome.

Some toponyms are very old. Colchester claims to be Britain's oldest recorded town. Its claim is based on a reference by Pliny the Elder, the Roman writer, in his Natural History (Historia Naturalis) in 77 AD.

Some religions are more likely than others to use religious place names. Using religious toponyms can affect the Cultural Landscape because a place name can influence the sings and sometimes to appearance of a place. Catholics often named places after Saints, leaving a catholic mark on the Cultural Landscape.   A special and extremely valuable aspect of geographical names is the localized history they contain. Unless a toponym is deliberately replaced, it generally changes in appearance through time because of evolutionary and revolutionary changes of language, writing and pronunciation, but essentially it stays the same. The meaning a name carries when it is first applied may seem lost at first sight, but somewhere inside its iconic image and sound, in a fossilized form maybe and only extractable by the trained eye, it remains there to tell its own unique story to anyone who can see through the scars of time.[4]

Oxford and Cambridge tell a story of river crossings in medieval times, important enough to make settlements grow into towns. Town names ending in –chester or –caster in England echo the presence of Roman legions initially responsible for the growth of these towns.

The toponymy of England derives from a variety of linguistic origins. Many English toponyms have been corrupted and broken down over the years, due to language changes which have caused the original meanings to be lost. In some cases, words used in these place names are derived from languages that are extinct, and of which there are no known definitions.

Place names may also be compounds composed of elements derived from two or more languages from different periods. The majority of the toponyms predate the radical changes in the English language triggered by the Norman Conquest, and some Celtic names even predate the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the first millennium AD.

The place names of England, as in most other regions, typically have meanings which were significant to the settlers of a locality. Sometimes the places took the names of the tribes who settled second after the first settlers.

Sometimes these meanings have remained clear to speakers of modern English (for instance Newcastle and Sevenoaks); more often, however, elucidating them requires the study of older languages.

As the names lost their original meanings either due to the introduction of a new language or linguistic drift, they gradually changed, or were appended with newer elements. An example is Breedon on the Hill in Leicestershire, whose name seems to have grown by the accretion of elements stressing the hill in the language currently spoken.[5]

The place names of England have diverse origins, largely due to historical changes in language and culture. These affected different regions at different times and to different extents. The exact nature of these linguistic/cultural changes is often controversial. Every linguist try to suggest their own versions.

Commonly-occurring suffixes of Old English origin in English toponyms

1	(-)ham/hamm hamm	river meadow	Dagenham, Horsham, Swaffham South Hams, Ham, Hampton
2	ing - ingas	People of Reading	Worthing, Hastings
3	-ton tūn	fenced enclosure	Brighton, Bolton, Preston
4	-bury / -b(o)rough burh	town	Middlesbrough, Banbury, Shrewsbury
5	-ford	ford	Bradford, Oxford, Chelmsford
6	ley lēah	clearing	Burnley, Keighley, Barnsley
7	-dale dæl	valley	Borrowdale, Calderdale, Derbyshire Dales,

There are several problems regarding toponyms. Interpreting some names can be difficult if the reason for the name is no longer evident. It means that when researchers fail to find the etymology of the words it would be difficult for them to trace the origin.

Some names originally referred to a specific natural feature, such as a river, ford or hill, that can no longer be identified. For example, Whichford (Warwickshire) means "the ford on (of) the Hwicce", but the location of the ford is lost.

The elements den (valley) and don (hill) from Old English are sometimes confused now that they lack obvious meaning; for example Croydon is in a valley and Willesden is on a hill. Their expected spellings might therefore be "Croyden" and "Willesdon".

Another problematic element is -*ey*, as in Romsey. This commonly means 'island', from the Old English -*eg*. However, -*ey* can also be derived from the Old English *hæg*, meaning 'enclosure', as in Hornsey.

The elements *wich* and *wick* can have a variety of meanings. Generally wich/wick/wyke indicates a farm or settlement (e.g. Keswick = 'Cheese-farm'). However, some of the sites are of Roman, or shortly post-Roman origin, in which the *wich* is related to the Latin vicus ('place'). These "*wics*" seem to have been trading posts. On the coast, wick is often of Norse origin, meaning *'bay'* or 'inlet' (e.g. Lerwick). As we have seen, some toponyms have more than one etymological definitions and considerations.

Toponyms are considered to be a huge linguistic unit. They are cultural-spiritual wealth of each nation which was created over many centuries.

Toponyms reflect the unique observations of nations, experiences of them, worldviews of scientists, and various beliefs of the people from the ancient times to the present day.

Toponyms can represent one or more toponymic layers.

Structural aspects of the toponyms studied in English are different. There is not common cognitive-conceptual semantic factor, which is the universal conceptual semantics, "toponymic conceptual semantics" that forms their lingua cognitive basis.

Every toponym has its own means of expression, events, verbalizers. Toponyms are cultural, geographical, linguistic, historical and psychological sources of peoples based on their culture, customs, way of life and place, language and history. As they can show people's culture and traditions, their inhabitants, language and history.

Toponymy can be recorded diaachronically and analyzing placenames in a language-specific area has been investigated much. Placenames are the most direct link between a language and its territory, current or ancestral. Even they can reveal the changes that have happened over a course of time. For many speech communities, placenames are an important part of their cultural heritage.   Placenames encapsulates rights to land and recalling events, activities, and knowledge. Placenames can ensure others to know with what the people of the place are occupied, how they have made any kind of products. They reveal the origin of the people. The names have been called after the places from where they

have settled. Coming to grips with the placenames of a speech community involves understanding its landownership system, and the ways in which the people interact with the land.

Knowing something of the history and prehistory of the area is also important, as placenames may be taken over from earlier inhabitants who spoke a different language; even if the earlier inhabitants spoke an earlier form of the modern language, the relevant vocabulary and morphological structures may have changed since the initial bestowal.

This is easy to see in the case of languages with written records, such as English, and can sometimes be conjectured in the case of speech communities without written records. This article is directed at the situation of a language as spoken away from an urban area, in rural or more remote landscapes which the speakers have occupied for some generations.

Placenames live on as landmarks long after the historical circumstance that made them once important. People use placenames as landmarks as well.

As a conclusion, toponyms are one of the controversial issues in linguistics as one of the lexical categories, as there are a number of other "toponyms" related or similar to the lexical category, description and classification and their linguistic sphere are still the subject of great debate and controversy. And this in due course calls for further research on English toponymy.

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