

A BRIEF CLASSIFICATION OF ENGLISH TOPONYMS

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Annotation: Toponyms (place names) represent language units denoting elements of topographic environment. The relevance of the study is caused by the need to develop the theory of toponymy and to systematize all the existing toponymic classifications. Place names have a complicated (multidimensional) nature, which should be taken into account while classifying them. This article is an attempt to highlight various principles according to which it is possible to group the place names.

Key words: toponym, place name, toponymy, classification, principle, nickname, multifaceted principles, multidimensional features, parametric characteristics, ontological characteristics, toponymic basis, etymological characteristics, motivational characteristics, chronological characteristics names, structural characteristics, toponymic polysemy, localization, cultural opposition, primary and secondary toponyms.

Toponyms in English can be classified according to the following principles:

- 1) parametric characteristics of an object,
- 2) ontological characteristics of an object,
- 3) type of toponymic basis,
- 4) etymological characteristics of place names,
- 5) motivational characteristics of place names,
- 6) chronological characteristics of place names,
- 7) structural characteristics of toponyms,
- 8) toponymic polysemy,
- 9) degree of toponymic nomination,
- 10) variety of toponymic nomination,
- 11) localization of an object.

It is obvious that it is impossible to create a unified classification of place names, which would reflect the entire multidimensional nature of the toponymic vocabulary.

Classifying toponymic nominations, one must consider the multifaceted (intra- and extra-linguistic) principles of allocation of toponymic units. Place names (toponyms) are the linguistic signs of a natural language denoting certain fragments of topographic space. These linguistic signs form a system, called a toponymic system, which is artificially contractual in character. Toponyms are a kind of repositories of political, social and cultural views of the society, which display certain language trends and peculiarities of word formation. Toponyms make up a significant part of the lexical fund of the language. According to some researchers, "toponymic layer constitutes 2-3% of common vocabulary" (Toporov, 1962: 56).

There become fewer and fewer unnamed geographical objects as humankind learns and develops new geographical objects on the earth and expands its geographical horizons. The geographical name is a part of the lexical system of a particular nation. It is formed according to "the fundamental laws of the language and its functions in speech in accordance with its basic rules and traditions" (Leonovich, 1994: 55)

Any geographical object has both a geographic term, which determines its type, and a geographical name; therefore, a topographic object is "named twice", enriching the semantics of a toponym. Linguists regarded toponymic units from different points of view taking into consideration various aspects of their many-sided structure (linguocultural, cognitive, ontological, functional, sociolinguistic, semantic, etymological, etc.). Some of them tried to classify toponyms according to a certain principle; however, an overall classification of toponyms has not been worked out yet.

The aim of this research is to provide and systematize different principles of place names classification, taking into account their complicated (multidimensional) nature. The research is based on 15000 British and 17000 American toponyms, received from toponymic dictionaries, reference books and electronic toponymic search systems GNIS (Geographic Names Information System) and Get-a-map. Methodology includes the methods of descriptive analysis, which consists in collecting and systematizing the collected facts, in their logical comprehension and identification of specific patterns. Taxonomic method as a variant of the descriptive method is used for the categorization of toponymic units into certain logical classes and subclasses. In some cases the method of quantitative analysis was used. It revealed quantitative relationships between different categories of place names; it also discovers the main mechanism of the development of toponymic systems of different territorial variants of the English language.

The main disadvantage of classification schemes of toponyms is the impossibility to "fit all the variety of geographical names into the Procrustean bed of one classification" (Murzaev, 1996: 115). However, some linguists tried to classify

toponyms combining different principles simultaneously. One of the first researchers to classify place names in any systematic manner was George R. Stewart. In 1954, he published an article in *Names* entitled "A classification of place names". His typology based on the "naming-process" recognizes ten main toponym types:

- 1) descriptive names and compass-point names (names that describe and characterize the object's quality or its location;
- 2) associative names (names that evoke associations with different objects);
- 3) incident names (names from an event associated with a person, G. Stewart also refers to this group acts of God, calendar names, animal names, names of human actions, names from feelings, names from sayings);
- 4) possessive names (names originated from some idea of ownership);
- 5) commemorative names (names given in memory or in honor of outstanding people and names for abstract virtues);
- 6) commendatory names (names given by some attractive peculiarities of a geographical object);
- 7) folk etymologies (names with false etymology);
- 8) manufactured names (names which have been consciously constructed of fragments of other words, or names from initials, by reversals of letters or syllables, or in other ways);
- 9) mistake names (names appeared from a mistake made in the transmission from one language to another, either from inaccurate hearing of what was said, or because of faulty rendering of the sounds in writing);
- 10) shift names (names which have been moved from one location to another) (Stewart, 1970: xxix).

A mixture of lexical, grammatical and semantic principles is considered as the disadvantage rather than the advantage of such classifications. The scientific approach assumes that the set is divided into subsets as many times as many principles of division there are, meanwhile the divided subset can also be subdivided. It is obvious that it is impossible to create a unified classification of place names, which would reflect the entire multidimensional nature of the toponymic vocabulary. Classifying toponymic nominations, one must consider the multifaceted (intra- and extra-linguistic) principles of allocation of toponymic units, such as:

- 1) parametric characteristics of an object,
- 2) ontological characteristics of an object,
- 3) type of toponymic basis,
- 4) etymological characteristics of place names,
- 5) motivational characteristics of place names,
- 6) chronological characteristics of place

names,

- 7) structural characteristics of toponyms,
- 8) toponymic polysemy,
- 9) degree of toponymic nomination,
- 10) variety of toponymic nomination,
- 11) localization of an object.

Classification based on parametric characteristics of an object involves the division of place names into macrotoponyms (names of large geographical objects and political-administrative units) and microtoponyms (individualized names of small geographical objects, reflecting the peculiarities of the local landscape, familiar only to local residents). There exist no rigid boundaries between these types; however, it can be confirmed that macrotoponyms are functionally more stable and standardized, while microtoponyms are characterized by relative instability and mobility.

Depending on geopolitical, economic and socio-cultural significance of geographical objects denoted by the place names one can differentiate between hypertoponyms (names of the continents, oceans, countries), macrotoponyms (major regions, states, capitals, mountain ranges, major seas, rivers, islands), regionyms (names of cities, areas, rivers, mountains of regional significance) and microtoponyms (names of small objects in some localities known only to a limited circle of people, e.g. ravines, fields, forests, buildings, roads, parks, quarters) (Muryasov, 2015: 73).

Classification based on ontological characteristics of an object is characterized by worldwide orderliness and uniformity. The peculiarity of this classification is that "toponymic categorization duplicates the structure and the content of the categories of natural objects, i.e. it forms ontological model of the categorization of the world" (Sherbak, 2012: 90). Despite the fact that toponymic lexis presents an extensive layer in the language system, the diversity of place names can be reduced to a relatively small number of types. They can be divided into two groups:

- 1) names of natural objects and
- 2) names of manmade objects.

Depending on their origin, toponyms are subdivided into native, borrowed and hybrid ones. Native place names prevail among the toponyms of Great Britain (54%) and the USA (52%). British and American native toponyms are the names of Anglo-Saxon origin (Suffolk, Liverpool, Oxford). Borrowed names adapt to the phonetic and grammatical peculiarities of the borrowing language. Borrowed British toponyms can be of Celtic (Avon, Dover, Glasgow), Latin (Pontefract, Mellifont, Balne), Scandinavian (Lowestoft, Kirby, Braithwaite) and Norman-French (Beaulieu, Belmont, Belvoir) origin. Borrowed place names of the USA are presented by a larger

number of language sources because of the peculiarities of the historical development of the country.

Classification based on motivational characteristics of place names or the clarity of their inner form presupposes two groups of geographical names: motivated toponyms with clear inner form (Bearpaw Mountain, Newtown, Oakland, Oceanside) and non-motivated toponyms with vague obscure semantics, the meaning of which is impossible to decipher (Arran, Nefyn, Rathlin, Rosyth, Scramoge, Wenvoe). Over time, place names can move from one group to another.

The basis for the chronological classification of place names is the division between the archaic (ancient, obsolete, disused) toponyms (New Amsterdam) and contemporary (current) place names (New York).

Classification based on the structural principle differentiates simple (Dawn, Deer, Park, Herman, Happy), derivative (Birmingham, Buckingham, California, Gatwick, Middleton), compound (Bridgewater, Lakewood, Longview, Oceanside, Springfield) and complex (Blue Mountains, Death Valley, Elmwood Place, Michigan City, Mount Forest, State of Colorado) place names.

According to the degree of toponymic nomination place names are divided into primary (nominations derived from common names, e.g. Hunter Place, Red Mouth Creek, Riverwood, Tornado Canyon) and non-primary (nominations derived from proper names, e.g. Columbus, Hercules, Hudson River, Saint Terese, Washington) (Superanskaya, 1967: 38-41).

Depending on the variety of toponymic nomination, we differentiate between primary and secondary toponyms. The primary toponymic nomination presents an actual toponym, while the secondary nomination (giving a new name for an already named object) is the toponymic nickname, acting as an alternative name, which should be considered as a variant of an actual place name, for example Florida is the primary nomination of the state; at the same time this geographical object has a number of secondary nominations (nicknames): Sunshine State, Everglade State, Alligator State, Citrus State, Orange State, Peninsula State, Flower State, Gulf State, God's Waiting Room, Hurricane State, La Florida, Manatee State, Tropical State (Urazmetova, 2014: 181).

Cultural opposition "ours – theirs" is realized in the classification of toponyms according to the principle of localization of an object. The term "our" toponyms implies geographical names, denoting objects within the examined language area ("our" names of Great Britain and the USA are Washington, Alabama, New York, Mississippi, Birmingham, Thames, London, etc.). "Their" toponyms represent geographical names, denoting objects outside the language area in question (Norway, Argentina, Qatar, Sierra Leone, The Netherlands, Thailand, Spain). We can also include here the group of "semi-our" or "semi-their" toponyms, denoting place names

of the same language, but of different countries and cultures, such as place names in New Zealand and Australia.

There are a great number of place names in the English language. We analyzed over 32000 place names of Great Britain and the USA and distinguished 11 main principles according to which toponyms can be classified. The specificity of geographical names lies in the fact that along with naming and identifying objects they reflect, capture and retain social and historical facts in the development of the society, bringing ideological messages from the past to our daily lives. Toponyms are regarded as a result of human cognitive activity, establishing relations between different entities in the world and expressing this relationship in the created name. Onomastic units represent the world the way we live in, the way it is seen, learnt, comprehended and reflected. Names in general are only rarely randomly chosen, and this is especially true in the case of geographical names. Whether they carry a physical meaning or they were coined to honour someone, to commemorate some historic event or to make clear to whom the named object belonged, in all cases they once used the vocabulary and followed the grammatical and orthographic rules of a certain language. Languages are the subjects of the science called linguistics. Therefore, anyone handling geographical names needs to have some basic linguistic knowledge, both in general terms and specifically pertaining to the language situation of the area of survey. People usually start looking for the meaning of names that are incomprehensible to them and try to pronounce by adapting them to their own language, more precisely false etymology, appears in this way, and thus legends are also made up.

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