

## STRUCTURAL SEMANTIC FEATURES OF TOPONYMS IN ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** The following article aims at investigating toponyms in English based on their structural semantic features. Firstly, the article tries to define English toponyms. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of deep structural semantic analysis over them to find out more structural semantic peculiarities.

**Keywords:** Toponyms, features, structure, semantics, place, location, name, etymology.

**Introduction.** Toponyms, also known as place names or geographical names, use language symbols to describe objects, concepts, and processes in naming places that relate human ideas to objects, such as mountains, rivers, seas, islands, cities, villages, and so on.

**Literature review.** As the research is concerned on the investigation of structural semantic features of toponyms in English, firstly, it was analyzed the notions of toponyms given by scholars and secondly it turns to the analysis of classification of toponyms in accordance with the structural semantic features.

According to "World English Dictionary", toponymy (tə'pɒnɪmɪ) is

1. the study of place names
2. rare the anatomical nomenclature of bodily regions, as distinguished from that of specific organs or structures[4].

According to Bishop et.al., Toponymy is defined as the study of a place based on the historical and geographical information, using words or a collection of words to show, explore, and identify a geographical territory [1, 184].

As Crystal stated, Names are an essential part of human existence since they are used to designate people places, things, pets and houses and it seems a universal practice [2, 140].

As for the structural classification of toponymy, A. Smith distinguished three main classes:

1. Simple names which consist of one word such as; Dale, Lea, Sale, Bedewyn, Rise.
2. Compound names which were constructed from two element models where ultimate which is originated from ancient Celtic and Germanic languages and described with nominal or proper nouns, gidronyms or other toponyms take place. For example: Actor, Winterton.

3. Compound names which were constructed with the help of affixes were under affixes. A. H. Smith implies to add limited definition and geographic terms, for example: Thorton, Wattass, Burton on the hill. [5, 165].

Karpenko divided toponyms into four main groups in accordance with the semantic classification of geographic names.

1. The first class includes toponyms which nominal origin geographic names or the sign of appropriate objects and graphic proper names

2. The second group unites toponyms, originated from anthroponomy, ethnic names and nominal human names.

3. This class borders toponyms which constructed from the names of things and signs of culture.

4. The last group unites indefinite names by their origin. [6, 239].

Based on the notions given by the scholars, it is clear that it is of high importance to get acknowledge about toponyms and their structural semantic features.

**Research method.** The research is based on the qualitative data collection. The data included in the present study is relied on the works of scholars, such as Smith, Crystal, Doig, Karpenko, Bishop and many others.

**Results and discussion.** There are some peculiarities in the structure and semantics of English toponyms, among them are: a) back-formation: the process of forming a new word by extracting actual or supposed affixes from another word, shortened words created from longer words, whereby names are derived from one another in the opposite direction, for example, rivers with an obsolete/forgotten names are often renamed after a settlement on its banks, but not vice versa. The river running through Rochdale (North West England) became known as the 'Roch'. Cambridge illustrates both normal and back-formation. Originally Grontabricc (Old English), a bridge on the river Granta, the name became Cantebruge and then Cambrugge, from which the river was renamed as Cam; b) element order: In Old English and Old Norse place names, the substantive (noun) element is generally preceded by its modifier, such as □good creek□, □waterhole□, □spring□, e.g. Bakewell was originally Badecanwelle formed from Badeca + wella = □Spring or stream of a man called Badeca□. In Celtic place names, the order is usually reversed, with the thing being described as the first element, such as hill, valley, farm etc., e.g. Tregonebris □□settlement of Cunebris□, Aberdeen □□mouth of the river Dee□ (aber = rivermouth + Dee, a name);

c) translation: place names in the Danelaw (Old Norse and Old English) were often simply norsified, e.g. Askrigg (England) means □ash ridge□, but the first element is undoubtedly the Norse □asc□, pronounced as "ask"; □ask□

could easily represent a nonsification of the Old English element *āsc*, pronounced as "ash". Both *asc* and *āsc* mean the same "ash tree";

d) false analogy: sometimes, the place names were changed to match their own pronunciation habits without reference to the original meaning, e.g. Skipton should be *Shipton* (Old English *scipetún* = sheeptown, town/ *tún* = farm, enclosed field). However since *sh* (/sc/ in Old English) was usually cognate with *sk* in Old Norse, the name was changed by false analogy to Skipton, in this way losing its meaning, the Old Norse for sheep was entirely different from the Old English);

e) multiple meanings: some elements can have a variety of meanings, for example *wich*/*wick*. They indicate a farm or settlement (e.g. Keswick "a cheese farm"). However, this element in some place names of Roman origin means *place* (from Latin *vicus*). On the coast, *wick* is often of Norse origin; which can be translated as *bay* or *inlet* (e.g. Lerwick);

f) lost reason: sometimes it is difficult to interpret some names because the reason for the name is no longer evident. Some names originally concerned to a specific natural feature (a river, ford or hill) that can no longer be identified; for example, Whichford means "the ford of the Hwicce", but the location of the ford is lost;

g) confusion between elements: pairs of original elements can produce the same element in a modern place name, for example, the elements of Old English origin *den* (valley) and *dun* (hill) are sometimes confused: Croydon is in a valley and Willesden is on a hill [3].

Therefore, England has a varied system of toponyms due the structural semantic peculiarities which is backformation, element order, translation, false analogy, multiple meanings, lost reason and confusion between elements.

**Conclusion.** Based on the analysis given above, it can be concluded that the study of toponyms and their structural semantic peculiarities is essential field of linguistics this is due to the fact that the research suggests that toponyms are a mottled picture of the history of the England. Moreover, the present study shows that the structural and semantic features of English toponyms have great varieties in the formation. As a consequence, the research presents the importance of the investigation of English toponyms in accordance with their structural semantic features.

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