

Significance of Toponyms in Geographical Names

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Annotation: The aim of the article is about significance of toponyms in geographical names and their usages in English languages and giving instruction to young teachers different ways of toponyms.

Key words: dictionary, assimilation, techniques of the toponym, communicate, variability of speech sounds, multiple exposure, illustration, consonant, definition, gradable items, translation, regressive assimilation.

Origin of toponyms and their usages

Geographical names or place names or toponyms are the proper nouns applied to topographical features and settled places and spaces on the earth's surface. Toponyms occur in both spoken and written languages and represent an important reference system used by individuals and societies throughout the world. Toponymy refers to the study of geographical names, or place names, of a particular region. The term *toponym* is derived from the Greek words *topos* - meaning place and *onoma* - meaning name. A toponymist will normally look at not only the meaning of a given name but also at the history of the area. Doing so helps reveal the story behind the name and, it is said, "every name has a story to tell."

The role of toponyms in other countries

Toponymy is the study of the language evolution of place names as well as the motivation for naming them. On the other hand, most toponymy, has focused on the etymological study of habitation names, often overlooking feature names and the motivation for naming a location. Most toponymic studies have concentrated on the specific aspect of the placename. The adjectival form of the specific is the dominant place-name type in English. Prepositional place-names used in a descriptive sense are more rare in English. The City of Chicago is an example of the prepositional place-name, but in common use the preposition and the generic are dropped. The first attempt to interpret and classify toponyms was made by ancient Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Byzantine, and Roman historians. And in the works of geographers as well as in other written sources possible. The name of a particular region of the earth was important to determine the language and many toponymic studies for this purpose by geographers carried out. Most people view place names simply as labelling conveniences to identify features on maps or public signs. Geographical names, or toponyms, however, form an integral part of the linguistic, cultural and historical character of a country or region. The study of toponymy is thus concerned with the origins and meanings of all geographical names and with the changes these names have undergone, in form, spelling and pronunciation. The latter takes the study of place names into the field of linguistics. Toponyms include the names of all natural features such as islands, mountains, hills, lakes, rivers and bays and also cultural features such as cities, towns, villages, parks, fields, roads and bridges. General categories, or families, of place names such as islands or mountains are referred to as generics. Names of individual features (spoken, written or understood) are called specifics. In the toponym Signal Hill, Signal is the specific part, Hill the generic. The name St. John's uses only the specific part of the toponym but a listener or reader is expected to know that the name refers to the place of a settled community, in this case a city. Naming conventions vary by language. In French it is normal to place the generic first, whereas in English it is most common to put it last. Names which originated in French but were adopted into English usage often retain linguistic evidence of their initial form as in Harbour Grace or Port de Grave.

2 Place names form part of the vocabulary of all cultural groups and can thus reflect important aspects of the individual cultures which create and use them. Language itself is often regarded as the most central part of culture and the chief means whereby other aspects ideas, beliefs, knowledge, and values are learned, transmitted and preserved. All geographical names are cultural in the sense that they originate in the spoken languages of different human groups and are inherited and passed on orally, often with changes, from one generation to another. Another way of looking at geographical names is to view them as language on the landscape or, in broader terms, the language of the earth's surface implanted by cultural groups. Place names are essentially the cultural footprints and indicators of societal occupation and awareness by different peoples. The naming of geographical features and places is probably as natural and spontaneous as the naming of individual persons and probably as old. The purposes of geographical naming are to differentiate among natural features on the landscape and to define significant spaces of human social, economic and spiritual activity. Naming is a defining process in creating earth surface identity and providing a means for cultural groups to comprehend and relate to their environment.

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