

# Cognitive Description of Multilingual Toponym Pairs

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## Abstract

My paper gives an overview of how multilingual toponym pairs may be represented in the mind and mental lexicon of speakers familiar with both name forms. The emergence and continuous development of name usage is examined from three different aspects: firstly, I look at the names from the aspect of the name users and the community, secondly, from the aspect of the places, i.e. that of the mental map, and thirdly, from the aspect of the toponymic system. The connectionist holistic model will be applied with respect to internal mental processes. Apart from providing an overview of the existing knowledge and its extension from a cognitive perspective, I intend to draw attention to the need for research in this area. These results may not only help answer the questions raised here, but they might bring us closer to the understanding of the essence and functioning of proper names as well.

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## Introduction

In a bilingual environment, as a rule, different places and objects have names in both languages (e.g. Hungarian *Kolozsvár* – Romanian *Cluj-Napoca*, Hungarian *Kassa* – Slovakian *Košice*, Hungarian *Duna* – Slovakian *Dunaj* – German *Donau*; besides macro-toponyms, we could list here also a large number of micro-names). These corresponding names may emerge independently from each other, or through the translation or changing of the name. My paper gives an overview of how these names and name pairs may be represented in the mind and mental lexicon of speakers familiar with both name forms. The emergence and continuous development of name usage is examined from three different perspectives, which are closely related, in fact they belong together and are distinguished merely for the purpose of the study. Firstly, I look at the names from the perspective of the name users and the community, secondly, from the perspective of the places, i.e. that of the mental map, and thirdly, from the perspective of the toponymic system. The connectionist holistic model will be applied with respect to internal mental processes. According to this model, different cognitive processes are not independent of each other in the mind, and—like most representations of a somewhat higher complexity—toponyms are also represented as a network of different elements of knowledge (cf. Reszegi 2009: 10-11).

## Name Community

First, I will explore the issue of name usage, concentrating on the community using the names. Toponyms are inseparable from the members of the speech community since the speakers operate the rules of use between the name and the object denoted by it and in certain

situations, they refer to places using their proper names. The individual acquires the knowledge of names and develops his or her language use within the community while he or she also influences the language use of the community (Reszegi 2012: 96-97). However, not only does the individual learn the names within this context, but it is the community where he or she also develops a knowledge of the world as well. Thus, the way of thinking, behaviour and communication of the community influences the individual's developing cognitive system. Therefore, it is this environment that constitutes the socio-cultural criteria for the individual's knowledge, and within that, his/her knowledge of names (Hoffmann 2012: 15).

The knowledge of toponyms and local knowledge of each individual within the community—due to the variety of socio-cultural backgrounds—may be significantly different (cf. e.g. Heinrich 2000: 11) while they share some common features as well. The group of those with a similar toponymic knowledge can be referred to as the name community. A name community can be defined as the network of these smaller name communities loosely or more closely connected to each other (Hoffmann 2012: 15). Where to draw the boundaries of the different smaller name communities is, of course, a matter of debate. For instance, the inhabitants of a smaller settlement may be regarded as the members of one name community; however, in the case of bigger cities, there may be several smaller name communities which, at the same time, are not strictly independent of one another (Reszegi 2015).

Bilingual communities further complicate the situation. Namely, the language knowledge of the individuals living in bilingual communities may be different. Some use both of their languages in their everyday life. Others speak only one language but know certain frequently used elements of the other language as well. As for the scale between the two types mentioned, it contains countless other variations and transitions. At the same time, in the context of minority bilingualism, even those who do not know both languages can be considered bilingual to some extent since their native language—due to the unique situation of language policy—carries the signs of bilingualism. Thus, this circumstance influences the use of toponyms as well.

Those who speak both languages interact with the members of both language communities, and through the act of speaking, they encounter the toponymic forms of both languages. Thus, they know and use the proper name denominations of places in both languages. This is supported by Teodóra Tóth's studies (2014). Barkaszó and Izsnyéte are two Hungarian-Ukrainian bilingual settlements in the Ukraine where bilingualism is so prevalent that it allows two conversing people with the same native language (Hungarian-Hungarian or Ukrainian-Ukrainian) to switch back and forth between language codes freely. During each conversation, these speakers use different versions of toponyms, they combine parts of the names from different languages and do not rely on one single linguistic system. Therefore, when studying bilingual communities which emerge through the close co-existence of their members, the researcher cannot necessarily link the toponyms to specific languages and language communities, and in these settlements, the two name communities can hardly be distinguished.

Monolingual people living in a bilingual environment—the speakers in a minority bilingual environment in particular—mostly also know the majority forms of toponyms used frequently. However, due to the lack of language knowledge, these name forms are often not

transparent to them. At the same time, on the basis of their sound and some characteristic name segments, these names are also organised and may serve as pillars in monolingual people's mental system for processing new names and judging the name-like nature of words. In bilingual communities, speakers of the majority language are less likely to be aware of the toponymic forms of the minority language. (This hypothesis has not been proven by specific studies yet. Research in this area has to take into consideration the fact that the majority language of a given country may be in a minority position in one or more settlements. In this case, the majority/minority relations may manifest themselves differently.) On the basis of the above, it is possible that the otherwise malleable theoretical boundaries of the name community within a bilingual environment do not correspond to the changeable boundaries of the linguistic community which are also only theoretical in nature, in spite of the fact that toponyms themselves are linguistic elements as well. This hypothesis needs to be the subject of future research.

## Cognitive Map

More research results and theoretical backgrounds are available for the process of bilingual name usage. First, let us have a look at the relationship between the representation of places and toponym usage.

The meaning of toponyms is inseparable from the place denoted by the name, that is, the representation of the place; therefore, the comprehensive study of toponyms must also consider the 'world of places'. Cognitive psychology refers to this as the cognitive map. The mental or cognitive map is the representation of our knowledge of our spatial environment, which—in the form of spatial expressions and toponyms—contains linguistic knowledge as well. This means that because of toponyms—among others—the mental map and the network of the mental lexicon partly overlap (Reszegi 2012: 96; 2013).

The individual's mental map emerges as part of acquiring knowledge of the world—often not by direct experience but through the act of speaking. On the other hand, the mental map as a conceptual framework determines the linguistic form as well. Two identical names, for instance, cannot be placed on one map as denotations for places close to each other. In case they are, the confusion of identification is resolved by the 'closeness rule': this occurs when a name like *Sáros-patak* 'muddy creek' refers to a creek as well as the settlement next to it (Hoffmann 2012: 17). The need for identification may also be superseded by the need for representing one's interests and ownership: therefore, in Medieval Hungary, it was quite frequent for several villages close to each other and owned by the same person to have the same name: the owner's name.

In the case of the knowledge of name pairs of different languages in a bilingual community, the information referring to a certain place on the individual's mental map contains several elements of proper names. Obviously, different name variants and synonymous names may emerge within one language as well; however, in this case, the elements of toponyms belong to a single mental lexicon. In contrast, the forms of toponyms of different languages within the bilingual's mental system are integrated in different linguistic networks (Reszegi 2014a: 21). At the same time, the connectionist holistic model

considers these linguistic systems as not independent from each other; we can assume a close connection between the linguistic elements of different languages. In addition, language interference further strengthens these connections.

We can assume a close connection between the representations of the members of different name pairs as well, which means that the elements of knowledge constituting the representations are closely associated with each other. The representations of both members of a given name pair include the elements of knowledge describing the information referring to the place, the object. Through these, the representations of the toponyms referring to the same object also partly overlap. The close connections between toponymic representations are demonstrated by the interference affecting toponyms as well. The following example is from a Csango Hungarian man's speech: '[Hungarian] én románul tanultam a skólában... én [Romanian] *Kluzsban* végeztem...' ('I learned Romanian at school... I graduated in [Romanian] *Cluj*...') (Szabó 1995: 112-113). The following examples are from the ethnic German language area in Hungary: '*Leipzigből* jött.' '[Hungarian] He came from [German] *Leipzig*.'; '*St. Martin* [Hungarian] elbújt a *Gansensstahlban*.' '[German] *St. Martin* [Hungarian] hid in [German] *Gansensstahl*.' (Navracsecs 1999: 141). In this utterance, only the names are German, even their suffixation is Hungarian.

On the basis of the above, the mental map of bilingual speakers is different from that of monolingual speakers only in terms of the extent of their relational network. Thus since, to some extent, the mental maps of individuals within the same community develop in a similar way and as a result, through the act of speaking, the new places and names on the individual's map can easily integrate into others' mental maps in a bilingual environment.

On the other hand, cognitive psychology suggests that in addition to the mental map, the 'affective component' is also an integral part of environmental competence and it is inherently connected to spatial representations. This subnetwork includes the emotional and motivational response to environmental elements (Dúll 2007: 120). Thus, the holistic representation of names does not only consist of the reference to the object but the emotional content and subjective value judgements related to certain name forms as well. Part of this content is mostly known by the members of the community, and their representation is created through the act of speaking. For those who know the name forms of various languages, these elements of knowledge are also activated when they process or recall a given name form. As a result, the members of the name pairs with different emotional and socio-cultural content may refer to the same object—however, they cannot be regarded as the perfect equivalent of each other. For instance, linguistically, both the name forms *Kassa* and *Košice* make sense for a Hungarian speaker in Slovakia and, depending on the situation, he or she may use either the Hungarian or the Slovakian version for the same referent. The choice may be based on the stylistic character associated with the name forms or the ethnically related content of the name (Hizsnyai Tóth 2003: 143).

## **Name System**

So far, we have had an overview of the way toponyms function in a community as well as the relationship between the representation of names and the mental map; in the following part of my paper, I will analyse name usage by focusing on the name system.

In the connectionist holistic model, the mental lexicon is not an independent module, and the representation of words is not independent from the concepts and conceptual categories. Furthermore, the world of words, the name system, is not an autonomous system within the mental system either. Nevertheless, the representation of the known name stock can be illustrated as a subnetwork developing on the basis of a prototypical principle within the individual's mental system: it is based on the elements of knowledge representing the specific ways of use and the identifying function of names. In addition, the names corresponding to the various name types—such as anthroponyms, toponyms, etc.—are organised in a similar way within this subnetwork. Furthermore, within the category of toponyms, organisation is based on the different types of objects.

Even though cognitive semantics suggests that the name forms constituted by several elements—due to their frequent co-occurrence—are likely to be stored in a holistic way, that is, we regard names as linguistic units (Tolcsvai Nagy 2008, Reszegi 2013), we may assume an analytical, morphology-based processing governed by an analogical principle when interpreting unknown name forms. This means that first the type of object is determined during the processing of new names. In this process, the speaker is assisted by the actual environment or the information which can be retrieved from the linguistic context. In addition, the analysis of the name form takes place.

The names already acquired—in accordance with the frequency of their types and elements—serve as models for the processing and creation of new names. These name models are organised on the basis of semantic and structural characteristics, and they are slightly different for each individual, while showing similar features at the level of the community. Rudolf Šramek (1978: 392-393) suggests that these models determine the linguistic profile of loanwords as well: speakers usually add name formants of their own language to the forms borrowed from a community of a different language so that they can create the toponymic function of these words in their own language.

### **The Word as an Element of the Relevant Linguistic System**

In a bilingual environment, the proper name denominations of places in both languages may be integrated into the individual's mental system—on the basis of the linguistic context containing the word and as an element of the relevant linguistic system. In the case of semantically transparent names, we can assume the organising role of the recognisable common word elements as well. As a result of processing a new toponym, its representation emerges and the name is integrated into not only the cognitive map but into one of the linguistic networks formed on the basis of linguistic experience. Apart from this, however, the encounter with and processing of toponyms are similar to the way these occur within bilingual speakers' mental systems: namely, the analysis of the lexical content based on the

analogical principle and the exploration of information related to the type of place occur simultaneously (cf. Hoffmann 2012: 21).

In the case of bilingual speakers, two linguistic systems connected to each other in several respects can be assumed. In addition, there is a strong connection between the name pairs referring to the same object. An even closer link can be observed between homonymic names. Bilingual speakers represent homonymic names as largely, albeit not entirely overlapping elements of the two linguistic networks. However, they usually utter these names in accordance with the phonological characteristics of the actual spoken language. Obviously, the phonetic features may be mixed. Research focusing on this subject has only been made with regard to anthroponyms<sup>1</sup> (cf. Grosjean and Miller 1994); however, the same organisation and behaviour may be assumed regarding toponyms as well. The proper names of both languages with identical or very similar forms often trigger a code switch, for instance ‘Bei uns ware viele Mar/ äh fünf Marschall, (-) Marschall. Jüngster Tuchačevskij, Bljucher (-) Bljucher, Vorašilov, Budenyj i Egorov. Und der’; ‘Es war Mr Fred Burger, der wohnte da in Gnadenthal and he went out there one day and Mrs Roehr said to him: Wer sind denn die Männer do her?’ (Riehl 2005: 1947). This further demonstrates the integral connection between the representations of names.

In the mental system of monolingual speakers living in a bilingual environment, the toponymic elements of the other language—as mentioned before—are integrated into the mental lexicon as the element of the native language system; as a name variant about which the individual stores the information that it is the equivalent of the specific name in the other language as well. On the basis of this information, these foreign names may be connected to each other, and due to their phonotactic patterns, they help assess the name-like nature of new forms. However, these name forms are integrated in the linguistic system with strong connections only if they are also frequently used in speaking the native language in the given community.

### Name Models

For bilingual speakers, the known names are organised by languages, thus, these speakers have information stored about the name giving traditions of both of their languages, which means that bilingual speakers have two name models. However, these models may influence each other in multilingual communities. The reason for this is that on the basis of the name representations belonging to the two linguistic networks, it is possible for certain features of the name model in one language to become dominant in one or more speakers’ mental systems and to affect the creation of names in other languages as well. Through the act of speaking, these patterns influence others’ name models as well.

When studying the Hungarian, Slovenian and German onomastic corpus of the Vend region in western Hungary, Eszter Ditrői pointed out that the influence of the Slavic name model can be observed in some Hungarian road names. The direction in road names in the Hungarian-speaking area is usually expressed by a toponymic element containing

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<sup>1</sup> In their research, Grosjean and Miller (1994) analysed the phonetic characteristics of code switches (e.g. the names Paul, Tom and Carl during telling a story), and they found that switching from one language to the other in speech means a comprehensive switch including the phonetic level as well.

the *-i* adjective formant (*Dorogi út* > the name of the settlement *Dorog* + formant *-i* + ‘road’, that is, ‘the road that leads to the place *Dorog*’). However, the antecedent of *Celina út* and *Trejbes út* are settlement names without a formant, which is the same as in Slovenian (*Trejbes paut*, *Celina paut* (Ditrói 2013: 96-97)).

It is possible that the cross-influence of name models is also responsible for the difference observed during my research of the mountain names of the Carpathian Basin in the Middle Ages (Reszegi 2006, 2014b). I made a comparison of the name of the mountain range on the northern part of today’s Hungary (Északi-középhegység – The Northern Middle Mountain Range) as well as the names of the mountain ranges in the south of today’s Slovakia (Selmeci-hegység, Jávoros, and Szlovák-érchegység, that is, the Štiavnica Mountain, Javorja, and the Slovak Ore Mountains) in terms of their name structure and genesis, and I concluded that in the northern range, where the larger population of Slavic people had lived at the time, Slavic names remained unaltered after being transferred to the Hungarian name system. This may have been influenced by the interaction of the traditions of name usage as well: the Slavic name system mainly contains one-part names. In contrast, the names of the southern range of Slavic origin were more adjusted to the Hungarian name system: a greater part of them became two-part names due to the addition of a geographical common name. This is explained by the fact that syntagmatic construction was the most typical way of name giving among the speakers of Hungarian. There are some differences in the use of name formants within the name stocks of Slavic origin referring to the two ranges: in the south, only a quarter of the names were created with the use of name formants while in the north, this process affected half of the names. This may be due to the fact that the traditions of Hungarian name usage had a greater impact among Slavic name users in the southern range, while in the north the Slavic norm for name creation was dominant.

Similarly, the secondary names created with the addition of formants which were documented in the Middle Ages (*Batár* > *Batarcs*, *Túr* > *Túrc*) can be attributed to linguistic interference. Such names can only be found in the north-eastern part of the Carpathian Basin, where, apart from Hungarians, Slavic, Romanian and German-speaking populations used to live at the time. Therefore, the influence of the model of toponym formation active in the stratum of Slavic names can be assumed as the basis for this type of name formation (Kocán 2013: 236-237).<sup>2</sup>

### Speakers’ Knowledge

On the basis of the cognitive approach, we must take into account the fact that the speakers’ knowledge of the motivation and structure of names is often incongruent with the information explored by onomastic researchers. However, since the names function and change within the community, it is the speakers’ knowledge that is significant in this regard. The reason for this is that when an individual acquires names, in reality, he or she recreates them semantically,

<sup>2</sup> Due to the interference of languages, we may assume the borrowing of certain topoformants as well. The names formed by borrowing the *-ovce* name formant which is of Slovakian origin have a typical *-óc* ending in Hungarian. As a result, in the northern part of the Hungarian-speaking area, where Slovakian and Hungarian communities used to live together, a large number of formerly two-part Hungarian names became one-part names with the ending *-óc* (cf. Kenyhercz 2014).

and the representation of names may be modified later during name usage as well. Thus, the meanings of toponyms contain characteristics we attribute to them. This means that it is not the world but our knowledge of the world that is reflected in the semantic content expressed in names (Hoffmann 2012: 22-24).

We may assume similar processes during the creation of the elements of name pairs in multilingual areas. This can be demonstrated by a German-Hungarian example. In the Hungarian *Vas/malom* with an anthroponym as its antecedent [Hungarian *vas* ‘iron’ + Hungarian *malom* ‘mill’] ~ German *Vas/Mühle* [Hungarian *vas* ‘iron’ + German *Mühle* ‘mill’], bilingual language users had incorrectly identified the antecedent as the root of the German verb *waschen* ‘wash’; therefore, the version *Mosó/malom* [Hungarian *mosó* ‘washing’ + *malom* ‘mill’] could appear in Hungarian (cf. Póczos 2010: 191). What is called incorrect identification in the traditional onomastic literature is, in reality, the process of name acquisition and thus, the semantic recreation of names. From a cognitive perspective, the fact that it results in an interpretation of the name which is different from the etymology of the name is of no significance. At the same time, this example also demonstrates that during this process, bilingual speakers may activate their knowledge of both languages and take into consideration the lexical as well as the functional name models.

### The Way Name Pairs Are Created

The example mentioned above also points out the way name pairs are created. Regarding the name equivalents in different languages, it is well-known that they may be created independently from each other, or by translating or changing the name. In his theory, István Kniezsa suggests that in the case where two toponyms are semantic equivalents of each other and the first data related to the names are of roughly the same age – a case of parallel name giving (1944: 3). This means that the members of name pairs are not translations of each other but they might have been created at the same time, independently from each other. This view was dominant from the mid-20th century in Hungarian onomastic research; however, it has been debated recently. From a cognitive perspective, it is possible that the same attribute of an object characterised by several attributes and relations is chosen as the basis for name giving in two different communities, and even the structure of the name will be similar; however, in reality, we may only assume this possibility in the case of toponyms formed from geographical common names. When numerous examples occur—regarding the names with a more complex structure and semantic content in particular—the creation of name pairs by translation seems more likely in the majority of cases.

### Conclusions

As my paper suggests, there are still numerous questions about the name usage of bilingual speakers as well as the mental representation of name pairs. Thus, apart from providing an overview of the existing knowledge and its extension from a cognitive perspective, I intended to draw attention to the need for research in this area. These results may not only help answer the questions raised here but they might bring us closer to the understanding of the essence and functioning of proper names as well.

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