SYNTAGMS AND WORDS SIMILAR TO PLACE NAMES

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Abstract: : Lately, it was noticed that proper names, including place names, are similar to pronouns, adverbs and even the algebra symbol x, the criterion which links all the above being the feature "easy substitutes", the result of their lack of significance, considering the general meaning of the term. But linguists mentioned that, in fact, proper names are not void of sense, only that theirs is different and, from a certain viewpoint, even richer than that of appellatives. According to the previous principle, that means the area of use of proper names is reduced to one signified, i.e. to one topic.

Keywords:place names, significance, context, system, signified

Proper names have a strictly limited distribution potential (i.e. designating the referent constantly associated to the same name). Unlike proper names, pronouns are exclusively grammatical, textual substitutes. Proper names are inseparable from the code, pronouns make reference to the message. As substitutes, proper names are inferior to pronouns on the message level, but superior if we consider that they operate outside the linguistic context, outside the current situation of communication, the association referent-name being autonomous in relation to the text. The pronoun can substitute a proper name (becoming a substitute of a substitute, a pure deictic and anaphoric device), whereas a proper name cannot substitute a pronoun. A proof in this respect is the fact that the inventories of the two types of substitutes are very different: proper names are very numerous because each name designates just one referent, pronouns are limited in number because each of them can, by substitution, designate an extremely large area of discourse fragments (indirectly, of referents).

In the case of toponyms, the analogy with adverbs has the same flaws. It may be valid up to a point, regarding the process of individualizing a place within the larger geographical space; the adverb functions as a substitute strictly within a linguistic context, whereas a toponym designates a referent even outside that context. On the one hand, it would seem appropriate to associate proper names to pronouns and adverbs, but, without excluding, on the other hand, the role played by the autosemantic words that proper names originate from. The association of the two categories of lexical-grammatical units is revealed by the referential and semantic equivalence of a proper name to a syntagm containing an autosemantic word and a pronominal or adverbial substitute (*acest oraş/*"this town", *acel deal/*"that hill", *râul de aici/*"the river down here", *câmpia de acolo/*"the plain over there"). As we can see, with toponyms, it is adverbs functioning as adverbial modifiers that indicate the place, the space, whereas an anthroponym substitution would imply the selection of social and time deictics to be associated to autosemantic words (*omul de atunci/*"that man/the man of those times", *doamna de ieri/*"that lady/yesterday's lady").

To draw a conclusion based on the considerations above, one can say that, if adverbs and pronouns are absolute universal substitutes, reduced to their anaphoric or deictic functions,

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proper names are relative specialized substitutes, preserving, to a certain extent, their categorial features of semantic classification. The referential and semantic equivalence of proper names can be made by using various free or stereotypical combinations of words (the later category containing syntagmatic expressions in general use): *capitala ţării*/"the capital of the country", *oraşul florilor*/"the city of flowers", *cetatea Băniei*/"the Ban's (residence) town", *oraşul de la poalele Tâmpei*/"the town below Tâmpa"etc.). This is due to the property of proper names of condensing information that common noun syntagms accumulate by means of their components. Once again, this proves the capacity that proper names have of individualizing, of identifying either a linguistic context-free referent or a situation-free one.

The specificity of place names is visible not only when considering them in isolation, individually, but also at the level of the mass of place names corresponding to a larger or smaller territory. Toponymy experts, especially geographers, claim that toponymy, i.e. the mass of place names, is "a condensed description of a county", "a coat following closely the lines of a landscape body", "a mirror of natural environment"[1]. If we consider that most place names were, originally, entopics that offered a socio-geographical description of the territory, their claim is justified. Toponyms such as *Dealul*/"The Hill", *Valea*/"The Valley" *Pădurea*/"The Forest", *Cătunul*/"The Village",etc. retained, in their appellative stage, the main geographical elements of the area designated. The toponymic mass considered can contain toponyms such as *Ioneşti* "*Johnsons*", *Fântâna*/"*The Well*", *Stejarul*/"The Oak-Tree", etc., which don't have any significant geographical relevance. Toponyms such as *Faţa Dealului*/"the Front Hill", *Poteca de pe Deal*/"the Hill Path", *Dealul cu Meri*/"The Apple-Tree Hill", etc. fragment the territory, illustrating the popular mentality which considers both the geographical horizon and some details and events that are part of the community daily life, usually ephemeral or inconsistent with the rigorous vision of the geographer, who divides the territory into large geographical units.

Accepting the image of toponymy as a "faithful image" of the territory justifies the statement according to which some place names constitute a geographical nomenclature, i.e. a corpus which describes the relevant geographical objects of a territory. Based on the arguments above, this opinion can be accepted with some reserves. Indeed, the geographical reference points selected by the name-givers (average users) are relevant to them, but, in order to constitute a nomenclature, a rigorous scientific selection is necessary and only experts in geography can do it, even if they start from the "popular grounds" of the toponymic division of the territory.

Place names, unlike person names, don't "baptize" pre-existing entities, but select"anchors"from the surrounding area and they simultaneously name them, the toponymization having, thus, a formative role, constitutive of spatial references. Onomasiologically, the mass of place names can be considered a raw, imperfect nomenclatureform, on whose basis geographers configurate the standardized scientific geographical nomenclature of the territory.

Another perspective on the toponymic mass of a territory is the one which considers it as a sui-generis lexical complex, an associative structure, ordered according to some analogous or contrastive tendencies and creating larger or narrower series correlated within a system.

If we take into consideration that language as an overall system comprises subsystems, one of them being vocabulary, in its turn including other various subystems (lexical-semantic fields, derivative series, lexical families, synonymic and antonymic series, onomasiological groups, etc.), it would be expected that the toponymic mass should behave as a system comparable to the

[1]Cf. Buza, 2002; Dragu, 1973.

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other systems which are part of the global lexical system of language, having, though, specific characteristics.

The ordering rules of this system are closely linked to the ways in which place names are formed and function, for a clear and economical individualization of the indices represented by these names in the linguistic mentality of the users. The interface with the raw geographical reality, mostly amorphous and varying from one region to another,causes the limitation of the systematization to empirical primitive forms, which are non-homogeneousand lacunary, more or less extended, depending on the characteristics of the described territory.

We can state that the current frequency of a socio-geographical category of toponyms within a territory reflects, on the one hand, the relevance of the geographical objects denoted by the toponymized entopics, but also the tendency to systematize the mass of names (which selected the lexical forming elements) by analogy. This form of ordering the toponymic mass is comparable to the hierarchization of the vocabulary, generally according to psycho-social criteria (active and passive vocabulary, general vocabulary-vocabulary with a limited use, fundamental vocabulary-secondary vocabulary), in both cases the result being the categorization of elements according to some criteria which are external to the linguistic phenomenon proper (form and meaning), but uninvolved directly in the use of the respective elements. In the case of toponymy, the local microgroups mentioned enter ever larger associations (at the level of the area, region etc), configuring the socio-geographical classes of toponymy (morphonyms, hydronyms, oronyms, oykonyms, etc.), considered by specialists an important form of classifying (and, thus, of systematizing) the toponymic mass.

The systematization of place names, according to their form, respectively to their meaning, is also similar to the internal organization of the entire vocabulary, having, though, specific forms of manifestation.The most obvious modalities are: the polarization of names around some physically or socially "dominant" toponyms (*Jiul*, *Bălţile Jiului*/"Jiu Ponds", *Podul Jiului*/"Jiu Bridge", *Valea Jiului*/"Jiu Valley", etc.), opposite pairs or series containing a primary and a derived toponym (*Olt – Olteţ – Oltişor*, *Craiova – Craioviţa*), a simple and a compound toponym (*Gubandru – Dealul Gubandrului*/"Gubandru's Hill" – *Valea Gubandrului*/"Gubandru's Valley"), toponyms derived one from the other (*Olteţ – Oltişor*), or involving compounding (*Valea Lungă*/"Long Valley" – *Valea Mare*/"Large Valley" – *Valea Roşie*/"Red Valley" – *Valea Rea*/"Bad Valley"), derived or compound toponyms (*Galicea Mare – Galiciuica*). The force of analogy has sometimes introduced atypical forms to the common system of the series(*Piatra lui Rac*/"Rac's Stone", *Fântâna lui Ţuţur*/"Ţuţur's Well").

These forms of systematization, though reduced in intensity and limited as extension, intermingle, are convergent in some cases, or complementary, resulting in configurations of toponymic fields, specific forms of lexical fields, non-homogeneous, in which the variables can constitute different characteristics from one paradigm (microfield) to another. The process of changing these imperfect systematizing forms into systems having a higher degree of rigurosity, a process performed by geographers (scientific authorities) and administration (official authorities) by means of standardization, has turned the structures under discussion into what is called toponymic (geographical) nomenclature.

Therefore, the toponymic mass represents an organised (denominative) ensemble which functions at the level of a territory. The organization of the mass of place names as a sui-generis lexical field has not been analysed explicitly by specialists. Nevertheless, some characteristics can be extracted by comparison to other fields. Extralinguistic conditioning, which is acknowledged regarding lexical fields in general, is direct in the case of toponymic fields, especially at a local level. To a certain extent, a toponymic field can be related to those lexical

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fields which have a vague and hardly describable referent, such as the lexical fields of colors and acoustic phenomena.

As far as its amplitude is concerned, the toponymic field is a lexical macrostructure, compared to the majority of common lexical fields, which are microstructures or medium-size structures. This macrostructure represents a *hyperfield* ("a field of fields"), organized as a vertical hierarchy. The paradigms of this hierarchy are, generally speaking, non-homogeneous (especially those found at the basis of the hierarchy), since the differentiating characteristics are, usually, variable from one region to another or from one socio-geographical category to another.

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