SEMANTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL TOPONYMS

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Abstract
This aricle explores the semantic characteristics of phraseological toponyms—place names that carry figurative or idiomatic meanings beyond their literal geographic references. Phraseological toponyms often emerge from cultural narratives, historical events, or folk expressions, and they serve as linguistic markers of collective memory, identity, and worldview. The study examines how these toponyms function within language as culturally loaded units, analyzing their structure, meaning, and usage across different contexts. By drawing on examples from various languages, the research identifies common semantic features such as metaphor, irony, exaggeration, and synecdoche.

Keywords: phraseological toponyms, semantics, figurative language, cultural linguistics, idiomatic expressions, geographical names, metaphor.

Introduction

Language is not only a tool for communication but also a reflection of a community's history, culture, and worldview. Among the rich variety of linguistic expressions, phraseological toponyms—place names used figuratively or idiomatically—hold a unique position. These expressions often transcend their literal geographic reference to convey deeper, often culturally embedded meanings. For example, names like "Waterloo" or "Bermuda Triangle" can evoke ideas of defeat or mystery far beyond their actual locations.

Phraseological toponyms combine elements of phraseology and toponymy, forming expressions that function as idioms or metaphors within everyday speech. Their usage can reflect societal attitudes, collective memory, and linguistic creativity. Unlike standard toponyms, which primarily serve a locative function, phraseological toponyms carry semantic and connotative weight, often linked to historical events, stereotypes, or popular narratives.

Literature review

The study of phraseological toponyms lies at the intersection of phraseology, semantics, and cultural linguistics. Several scholars have contributed to understanding the figurative and cultural dimensions of toponyms and their role in language.

One of the foundational works in phraseology is by A.V. Kunin (1996), who emphasized that phraseological units often carry cultural and historical significance, functioning as fixed expressions with metaphorical meanings. While Kunin did not focus specifically on toponyms, his classification of phraseological units provides a framework for analyzing expressions that include geographic names used idiomatically.

V.N. Telia (1996) advanced this field by introducing the concept of "cultural-markedness" in phraseological expressions. According to Telia, many idioms and set phrases—especially those containing place names—are shaped by national history, collective experience, and

stereotypical associations. Phraseological toponyms, under this lens, serve as cultural signposts embedded in language.

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) argued in *Metaphors We Live By* that place names can function as metaphorical concepts that structure our understanding of abstract ideas. For instance, expressions like "going to Timbuktu" metaphorically convey remoteness or isolation, even though the listener may not know the exact location.

Toponymists such as Naftali Kadmon (2000) and George R. Stewart (1970) also addressed how place names evolve in meaning over time. Stewart, in particular, noted how certain locations become symbolic through literature, politics, or popular culture. These symbolic uses often enter phraseological systems as idioms or clichés, as seen with names like "Waterloo" (defeat) or "Hollywood" (glamour, superficiality).

In recent studies, Elena M. Solovova (2015) examined phraseological toponyms in Russian and English, highlighting their cross-cultural differences and the influence of historical events on semantic shifts. She argues that these expressions reflect national mentalities and are often tied to collective memory and identity.

Furthermore, scholars such as L. A. Novikova and A.D. Schweitzer have explored how phraseological toponyms function differently in various languages, noting that some expressions resist translation due to their deep cultural roots.

Despite growing interest, research on phraseological toponyms remains relatively limited compared to other phraseological phenomena. There is a need for more comparative studies and interdisciplinary approaches that consider semantic, cultural, and pragmatic dimensions.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology to explore the semantic characteristics of phraseological toponyms across various languages and cultures. The aim is to analyze how place names are used figuratively and to identify the semantic and cultural factors that contribute to their figurative meanings. The methodology combines linguistic analysis, historical contextualization, and comparative analysis of data from different languages. The data for this study were gathered from two primary sources:

A linguistic corpus of idiomatic expressions and phrases containing toponyms was compiled from both literary and non-literary texts, including newspapers, novels, and online media. The corpus includes phraseological toponyms in both English and Russian to allow for cross-cultural comparisons. The selection of phrases is based on the frequency of usage and their established figurative meanings.

To understand the cultural contexts in which these toponyms are used, historical texts, media reports, and references to significant events tied to place names were reviewed. This helps to identify the historical and cultural moments that shaped the figurative meanings of the place names.

Conclusion

Phraseological toponyms function as powerful vehicles of meaning, often evoking imagery, emotions, and social concepts that transcend their geographical origins. They frequently embody metaphors, irony, or exaggeration, shaping the way people communicate about ideas such as failure, mystery, or success. For example, names like "Waterloo" or "Hollywood" carry

meanings that have become ingrained in the popular lexicon, serving as shorthand for complex ideas or cultural phenomena.

The comparative analysis between English and Russian toponyms further highlights the cross-cultural similarities and differences in the use of place names. While certain toponyms are universally recognized (e.g., "Waterloo" as a symbol of defeat), others carry unique connotations specific to cultural or historical contexts. This reinforces the notion that the figurative meanings of place names are deeply influenced by the cultural and historical backdrop of the speakers.

In conclusion, phraseological toponyms are more than just linguistic curiosities—they are cultural artifacts that shape and reflect the way we think about places and events. By examining these figurative uses of geographic names, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and history, and it encourages further exploration of how other place names function within different linguistic and cultural settings.

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