Onomastic Terminology in Hungarian – Situation, Problems and Needs[1]
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Abstract

The paper describes and analyses the present situation, the characteristics and problems of Hungarian onomastic terminology. The author discusses how these terms and their use are affected by linguistic features, synonymy, polisemy and homonymy of terms, the everyday use and the common meaning of words, the different approaches of name taxonomies (e.g. in defining types of personal names), factors in the history of scholarship (e.g. in the absence of certain terms used widely in international onomastics) and the changes of the world. The paper outlines the attempts made so far to establish a unified Hungarian onomastic terminology and points out the need to prepare a Hungarian terminological glossary or dictionary. It takes into account the fortunate external factors that could assist such a project today, proposes actual tasks to do in the field of Hungarian onomastic terminology, and promotes the cooperation with the international onomastic terminological works of ICOS Terminology Group.

First, I give a short overview of the history of the field. Then I present the main characteristics and problems of this terminology. Finally, I outline briefly the most important tasks for the future, first of all a plan for establishing a terminological dictionary of Hungarian onomastics.

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1. Background and preliminaries

As we know, the adequate and appropriate terminology of a certain field is a prerequisite of nationally and internationally effective professional communication and progress in science. At the same time, in Hungary, humanities, including linguistics in general have a long backlog of establishing comprehensive terminological dictionaries, glossaries or databases (cf. H. Varga, 2011). The situation is not any better in the field of onomastics, neither, even if questions of terminology have regularly been discussed in the works of Hungarian researchers.

The first plan to compile an onomastic terminological dictionary was made in the 1970s (see Hajdú, 2010, 24–26), following a stencilled paper in 1974 by Mihály Hajdú which set off a discussion on the terms of onomastics. Remarks and contributions were given to it, and in the following year the Onomastic Subcommittee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (just existing in those few years) also discussed and supported the idea. As it can be seen from some preliminary sample lists, it expanded into a plan for a volume of approximately 3-4 thousand entries, comprising not only current but also outdated terms and forming an encyclopedia rather than a dictionary (e.g., among the entries of nicknames, their motivations, linguistic features, synonymy, succession and loss of function would get their own separate entries). For many reasons, including its outlined dimensions, the other duties of the organizers (M. Hajdú and A. Mező) and the lack of real support, no further progress was made. Few years later, the first issues of Névtani Értesítő (the Journal of Hungarian onomastics) published Hajdú's original paper and some of the contributions (Hajdú, 1979 etc.). By that time several onomastic terminological dictionaries (dictionaries of the German, Finnish and Russian onomastic terminology) also have been reviewed in Hungarian linguistic journals as possible examples. But the plan failed to be completed.

Quite some time later, in the 1990s, an experimental English-Hungarian onomastic glossary by Judit Szilvia Várnai was published on the Internet (Várnai, n. d.). It consisted of 172 terms and expressions, a list of restricted contents and length, with a strong emphasis on toponomy. It was intended to be a part of a comprehensive bilingual linguistic terminological dictionary, which, unfortunately, has not been completed ever since.

A few years ago, at the 6th Conference on Hungarian onomastics, surveying the terminology of a certain onomastic question, as one the necessary conclusions I also suggested the compilation of a terminological dictionary (Farkas, 2008). Some more specific plans were made this year (2011) by a small team (A. Bölcskei, T. Farkas, M. Slíz), which also took into consideration the fact that today there are several fortunate external factors that could assist such a project.

On the one hand, the intensive activities in the field of onomastic terminology on international level, in other countries can inspire and support our work. As the international scientific connections of Hungarian onomastics are gaining strength, the harmonization of terminology is becoming more and more important; also for practical reasons. But these activities also call attention to the situation of the Hungarian onomastic terminology, in which field the comprehensive description and systematization is still a task to be carried out. On the other hand, the interest in the field of terminology in general has recently been raised in Hungary as well, which fact is also proved by the recent establishment of a journal, a research team and also a large scale plan for compiling a comprehensive dictionary of Hungarian linguistic terminology, currently waiting for funding (H. Varga, 2011). If this project began, it would also provide prospects for mutually advantageous cooperation with a similar work on onomastic terminology.

Concerning Hungarian onomastics today, the terminological problems, questions, clarifying explanations and individual suggestions appear in summarizing and theoretical works, in monographs on name types, in survey papers and in PhD defences from time to time. On one hand, new theoretical approaches or systematization need appropriate terminology; while on the other hand, we can focus on the usage, the meaning and the system of the existing terms, and the creation of new ones for the needs of the science. In the last few years contributions were made on larger or smaller fields of onomastics; for example, from the general description of the personal name system (Hoffmann, 2008) through the terminology of historical anthroponymy (Slíz, 2010) till the appropriate term for literary names (Korompay, 2011). Concerning a research project and a thematic conference, even such a quite peripheral topic as the phenomenon of surname changes could get special attention: on the one hand, its typology was described with some terminological inventions (Hajdú, 2009; Vörös, 2009), while on the other hand, the pertaining terminology (practically more than two dozen expressions in Hungarian) was analyzed and evaluated in detail (Farkas, 2008). There are not many publications written especially on onomastic terminology in Hungarian, but there are much more dedicated to other fields, which, however, can't avoid its questions. And if it is regarding terminology, typically not only a single term, but a system of terms must be treated. (Concerning the current state of Hungarian onomastic terminology, see also Zs. Fábián in Harvalík, Caffarelli, 2007.)

2. The characteristics of the Hungarian onomastic terminology, illustrated by some examples

2.1. Synonymy of terms is a quite frequent phenomenon in this field. It typically is not the synonymy between the internationally known and the Hungarian term, but among the different terms of Hungarian origin. This synonymy also can take many forms.

A Hungarian term for onomastics is *onomasztika* ('onomastics') or sometimes *onomatológia* ('onomatology'), but the most widely accepted one is *névtan* ('name studies'), less frequently used *névtudomány* ('the science of names') or *névkutatás* ('name research').

There are two formerly used terms that never got widely used, *névészet* (*név* 'name' + *-észet* '-logy') and *névtanulmány* ('the study of names'). In fact, all these terms have the same meaning and are therefore interchangeable.

Toponima is a rarely used term for the designation of the notion 'toponym' (but it occurs frequently in the term *mikrotoponima* 'microtoponym'). Instead of it there are two Hungarian terms in use. The earlier and more practical one (because it's shorter and more capable of suffixation) is *helynév* ('place name'). A synonym, *földrajzi név* ('geographical name') came into being in the middle of the 20th century (first as a solid compound: *földrajzinév*, against the rules of orthography but indicating the claim to create a term). The suggestions aiming the constitution of a hierarchy between these two terms have not gained adherents. They have had the same meaning but it is not typical to alternate them; the authors and works on onomastics prefer either one or the other. However, it can be noticed that the term *helynév* is becoming more dominant in these days.

In the case of traditional bynames there is no international term in use. The Hungarian *ragadványnév* (*ragad* 'stick' + *-vány* 'an entity which was created through the activity' + *név* 'name') has become a generally used term. Its variants, formerly used in the vernacular as its synonyms, *ragadék név* and *ragadt név* (ragadék, ragadt 'stuck' + név 'name') are now obsolete, while the two, earlier synonymous terms, *gúnynév* and *csúfnév* (equally: 'mockery name') have come to denote only certain subcategories of bynames.

2.2. Homonymy and polysemy, the use of some terms in different semantic extent, sometimes the vagueness of the hierarchy among some terms are also present in the field of the Hungarian onomastic terminology.

There is a homonymy in the use of the term *névelem* ('name element'): it is traditionally used for the elements of the *family name + given name* personal name structure, but in the terminology of a recent name analytic model *névelem* is the basic concept of the lexical-morphological analysis, as an umbrella term for all lexemes and suffixes to be found in a proper name.

The use of the term *névmagyarosítás* ('name Magyarization') is characterized by polysemy and by the usage in a wider or a narrow sense: it was used in general and expansively for the designation of the official family name changes, but it refers, very correctly, only for some type of them in the recent terminology.

Amongst the terms mentioned before in connection with the synonymy there were further examples for the possible uncertainty in the hierarchic relations (see *helynév* vs. *földrajzi név*, *ragadványnév* vs. *csúfnév, gúnynév*).

2.3. The use of terms being on international background is not one of the characteristics of the Hungarian onomastics. As we have seen, Hungarian onomastics typically prefers using home-grown terms rather than those with international background. Just to give a few examples to be found in the short but representative list on homepage of ICOS (http://icosweb.net/): *exonima* and *endonima* are commonly used terms in Hungary; *antroponima, etnonima* and *hidronima* are known but rarely used; *hypocoristicus* was rarely used and has by now become obsolete; and last but not least *oikonima, ergonima* and *zoonima* are not in use – all these categories are denominated by Hungarian terms. *Teknonima* is the only item on this list which – as a concept which is not part of the Hungarian cultural scope – does not have a Hungarian version. The more special terms which are not even presented on the list, like *anemonima, faleronima, nautonima* etc. are not used in the Hungarian works concerning these name types either.

At the same time, the terminology of recent Hungarian linguistics in general also has some impact on the use of international terms in Hungarian onomastics. Beside

névszociológia ('name sociology'), the term *szocioonomasztika* ('socioonomatics') has become well-known. There were born two terms for denominating a possible field of research: *onomatodialektológia* ('onomatodialectology') and *névdialektológia* ('name dialectology'). (Cf. the terms *szociolingvisztika* 'sociolinguistics' and *dialektológia* 'dialectology' which are dominantly used in current Hungarian linguistic works.) A term *geoonomasztika* ('geoonomastics') (cf. the late term *geolingvisztika* 'geolinguistics') would be viable in the same way, but its appearance has been evidently blocked by the existing term *névföldrajz* ('name geography') (cf. also the currently dominant *nyelvföldrajz* 'language geography').

Even the terms turning up as innovations have mostly Hungarian origin. Nevertheless, it can be remarked that some elements of the existing Hungarian onomastic terminology could have arisen following foreign models – German ones – as calques. It can be supposed in the case of the terms *névkutatás* ('name research'; cf. *Namenforschung*), *helynév* ('place name'; cf. *Ortsname*) and *családnév* ('family name'; cf. *Familienname*).

2.4. The terms in Hungarian are linguistically motivated and their transparent common meaning can even influence their usage. The main categories of personal names, for instance, could have gained their Hungarian denominations from various aspects: their names can refer to the method of name giving (*keresztnév* 'baptismal name' = Christian name), to the personal name order of the Hungarian language (*vezetéknév* 'lead name' = family name; *utónév* 'last name' = given name) or to their function (*családnév* 'family name', *egyéni név* 'individual name' = given name). One part of Hungarian onomastic terminology has been taken from the vernacular while another part has been created especially as scientific terms. They are the tokens of the common human viewpoint in the first case, and a given professional approach in the latter. New approaches can require new terms even because of these reasons.

To exemplify these questions in the field of given names, the term *keresztnév* ('baptismal name') can be problematic when referring to non-Christians, to name usage in other cultures and to the times before Christianity. The use of the term *utónév* ('last name') can also cause problems in the case of foreign languages in which the order of personal names is different from the typical Hungarian name order, and also in reference to the times before surnames developed. The term *egyéni név* or *egyénnév* ('individual name') eliminates these problems, even if it possibly involves another one: the individuality which is literally emphasized in it is actually the main characteristic of all proper names.

Another question to ask is what term to use to denote the particular materializations of a given name type. For instance, in the case of the terms which are used for the names of non-christian origin of the Magyars of the pre-christianity era: *eredeti név* ('original name'), *közszói név* ('name derived from a common noun'), *pogány név* ('pagan name'), *világi név* ('secular name'), *egyelemű név* ('name of one element'). All of them can be seen to be problematic in one way or another; as an alternative, the term *egyéni név* or *egyénnév* seems to gain some acceptance these days. Another example: how to denominate in Hungarian the first element of a personal name structure of Indo-European name order (*first name, Vorname, prénom* etc.)? It would be a bit strange to call it by the semantically equivalent *utónév* ('last name') but it can't be called *előnév* ('forename') either, because that is traditionally reserved for the denomination of another historical Hungarian type of personal names, the additional name of nobility which came before the family name in the Hungarian personal name order.

2.5. There can be differences in the conventional usage of the terms among the different fields dealing with proper names, among the different kinds of scenes of language use, and

among different language varieties. For instance, the legislation concerning name use has always used consistently the term *névváltoztatás* ('name changes') also in those times when in the common use and also in the scientific terminology the term *névmagyarosítás* ('name Magyarization') was more typical for denoting this phenomenon. On the contrary, the content of the concept called simply *névhasználat* ('name usage') in onomastics is split into two in the field of name legislation: the term *névhasználat* ('name usage') designates only the bearing of the non-official personal name, while the bearing of the official name is called *névviselés* ('name bearing'), whereas the latter term is not known in onomastics in this sense at all.

Apart from the differences in quality there are also differences in quantity. For instance, from the two synonymous terms *családnév* ('family name') and *vezetéknév* ('lead name') the former is the more widely accepted in onomastics, but according to the results of the Google Search Engine it is the latter which seems to be the more widely used by the general public. We have to remark that this fact is presumably a result of the official language use that prefers and promotes the term 'vezetéknév'.

2.6. The conventional interpretation of the terms in use may even need some clarifications from theoretical or practical aspects. For example, it may be asked from which point can we call a specific name *családnév* ('family name'), and we can realize that there have been different answers in the secondary literature given to the question when this new type of personal names arose, partly because of the uncertainty in the use of the term itself. To take another example, in the definition of *ragadványnév* ('byname') a characteristic feature is its difference from and its relation to the official name of the person, but this, of course, won't hold for the era before official names came to be used. Moreover, the appearance of the official or half-official usage of the bynames in electoral registers, bank registries etc. raises new questions in this field these days.

The extension of the meaning of some terms, of course, can never be delineated perfectly, for instance in the case of such terms as *névszépítés* ('name beautifying') or *esztétikai célú névváltoztatás* ('aesthetically motivated name changes').

2.7. We can also see that some terms are missing on certain levels. For example, in the case of the term *márkanév* 'Markenname' there does not exist such a division as that between *brand name* and *trade name* in English. The Hungarian version of the term *chrematonym,* which has recently attracted great attention in international onomastics, is also absent due to the lack of academic attention and hence the lack of conceptual clarity. There is a term, *névjel* ('name sign'), which is widely used in the research of sign languages but it has largely remained unknown in the field of onomastics. Recently the question of translating the English term *state nickname* could bring about a discussion in the editorial board of our onomastic journal, motivated by a paper submitted concerning a special foreign name type, and resulting *informális államnév* ('informal state name') as a potential term.

Naturally, the changes of our world may also cause the need and emergence of new terms, even irrespective of onomastic research. One of the most characteristic examples may come from the field of the research of name usage on the internet, where the term *azonosítónév* ('identifier name') has become the Hungarian obverse of *nick(name),* but the half-international, half-Hungarian *nicknév* (Eng. *nick* + Hung. *név* 'name') (by a unique suggestion also with Hungarian orthography: *niknév*) is also frequently used, to reflect the everyday internet language usage. To mention just one more example: the changes in the field of official marital names, legalized but a short time ago also for Hungarian husbands, resulted in the emergence of new terms, too. For this reason *születési név* ('birth name') was created in the legal terminology, which should now be adopted in the field of onomastics as well to complement or replace the traditional former term *leánykori név* ('maiden name').

3. Tasks for the future

As the situation outlined above suggests, Hungarian onomastics is confronted with several tasks to fulfill, including, first and foremost, the survey of the present state of Hungarian onomastic terminology, the compilation and evaluation of the terms already in use; the appropriate systematization of existing knowledge and experience; the clarification of the features of the conceptual and theoretical background of terms in use; the identification of differences in approach and related problems; the considerate complementation of terminological gaps (with respect to content and elaboration). Taking into account all these facts as well as the results of international research, there is a definite need for the creation of an informative, descriptive terminological dictionary of Hungarian onomastics.

According to a present plan, a dictionary section, indices and a multilingual glossary are to be included in this dictionary, in printed and online format. In the dictionary section the headwords are to be listed in alphabetical order. The related, subordinate and peripheral terms could be discussed under a relevant headword within the same entry, with cross references whenever necessary. Each term is defined with respect to its most important interpretations and applicability, and exemplified by several related onomastic data. Bibliographical references also should be included in the entries. The index of terms is to contain all terms appearing as headwords, reference words or additional terms in entries. A thematic index could be organized to take name types and other onomastic domains into consideration. The multilingual glossary is to be based primarily on the glossary of ICOS Terminology Group and partly on an own compilation of Hungarian and English term equivalents. In the field of terms for the standardization of geographical names there is also a certain amount of work to do (cf. Bölcskei, 2011).

A dictionary of Hungarian onomastic terminology could facilitate summarizing the results of Hungarian onomastics achieved so far and support further research. The systematic survey and processing of these terms is also a prerequisite for including them in a professional multilingual glossary. We think that other disciplines, including other branches of linguistics could also benefit from the results.

However, the compilation and editing of the dictionary outlined above would be a task for the future. The project unfortunately did not gain the support of the Linguistic Jury of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund this year, reflecting a potential opinion that "it is a question whether the linguistic proceeds of such a work would be remarkable enough". Therefore the work may be postponed and extended in time. Still we would like to continue the preliminary research and we are committed to create the Hungarian version of the multilingual glossary of onomastic terminology under construction by the ICOS Terminology Group. Besides its other accounts, that could serve also as a solid basis of a future terminological dictionary of Hungarian onomastic researches.

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