Place-name loan and *place-name adaptation*: two sides of the same coin? Some terminological considerations from an ongoing thesis project

Alexandra Petrulevich

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Abstract

The paper focuses on terminological challenges concerning *place-name loan* and *place-name adaptation*, the central research objects within the field of contact onomastics. The challenges include a number of rivaling problematic definitions of the terms used in literature, which in most cases lead to overlapping or underlapping of the target population of the language phenomena in question. The main aim of the paper is to establish what *place-name adaptation* actually is and what kind of relation there is between *place-name loan* and *place-name adaptation*. One of my main suggestions is to draw a sharper border between *place-name loan* and *place-name adaptation*, two onomastic phenomena which are intimately related to each other, but are still different in nature. This will allow us to categorize so called *non-adapted loan names*. I am also introducing a term *place-name replication*, which I find a better alternative to *place-name loan*. *Place-name replication* implies a transfer of a source place-name copy, which can be adapted in the process, into the target language onomasticon, while *place-name loan* suggests that the target language came into possession of the loan place-name only for some limited period of time.

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1. Introduction

Place-name loan and place-name adaptation have been central research objects within the field of contact onomastics since the publication of Eberhard Kranzmayer's classic *Zur Ortsnamenforschung im Grenzland* (1934). But despite active, almost 80-year-long research in different language contact areas across Europe there is still a lack of consensus among the researchers when it comes to theoretical points of departure in the field, including the definitions of the terms in question.

The terminological challenges to be addressed in the paper include (1) the existing rivaling definitions of the terms which in most cases lead to overlapping or underlapping of the target population of the language phenomena in question, (2) the lack of a well-established tradition of distinguishing between the notions place-name loan and place-name adaptation, which often melt into one highly imprecise entity, and (3) the problematic term *place-name loan*.

The aim of the present paper is therefore to discuss the terms *place-name loan* and *place-name adaptation* and the problematic issues listed above, and suggest terminological and even theoretical innovations which can help improve the terminological situation in the field. In the paper I am revising the terms used within Scandinavian onomastic tradition and within UNGEGN, an international authority, whose Glossary is supposed to represent a terminological standard for name researchers. ICOS's "List of key onomastic terms" does not at this point cover any relevant contact onomastic terms which can be analyzed in this paper.

2. Place-name loan and place-name adaptation in Scandinavian contact onomastic tradition

Within Scandinavian contact onomastic tradition there is, disregarding very few exceptions, no recognition of or space for the term *place-name adaptation*. The term *place-name loan* is dominating the scene, and its different definitions include varying degrees of the "adaptation component". The definitions of *place-name loan* are not always precise and it is often not clear which categories of place-names or place-name groups the term under consideration

actually denotes. There is, moreover, a number of researchers who use the term without explicitly telling what they actually mean. Accordingly, I have chosen several works which most explicitly discuss their use of terminology for this overview.

Kurt Zilliacus, a prominent Finnish scholar, (2002, 151) was convinced that *place-name loan* is "a form of analogical name giving over the borders of one language", when e.g. Fin. *Tammerkoski* is loaned as Swedish *Tammerfors*. According to Zilliacus (2002, 152) *place-name loan* does not cover all the place-names that are transferred into the recipient language. The adaptation of the "source" place-name to the source language is a necessary criterion which shows that the place-name in question is a loan name. If a place-name is preserved in its original "native" form, it belongs to another category, *name citation* (Swe. *namncitat*), f. ex. *Rovaniemi*, *Leipzig*, *Greenwich* (Swedish spelling of the place-names). Zilliacus is trying to maintain the difference that by some scholars is imposed on non-proper words transferred from a source language into the recipient language: "*citation words*" (Swe. *citatord*) are the words whose original spelling and pronunciation are kept in the recipient language.

Gunnar Pellijeff (1966, 84 ff.), a Swedish place-name researcher who was interested in place-names within the Swedish-Finnish contact area, and Aud-Kirsti Pedersen (2001, 103), a Norwegian researcher dealing with place-names in the Finnish-Sami-Kven-Norwegian contact area, seem to have a relatively similar underlying idea about place-name loan. Pellijeff (1966, 84 ff.) speaks of three different types of place-name loan. Pedersen (2001, 103) defines *place-name loan* as "transferring a name from one language into the onomasticon of another language by using certain 'loan patterns'", which are more in number and more nuanced than Pellijeffs, but the core of the classification looks alike to a certain extent.

Pedersen (2001, 106) first divides place-name loan into two big groups: (1) place-name loan where the referent of the loan place-name is the same as the referent of the source place-name, and (2) place-name loan where the referent of the loan place-name is different from the referent of the source place-name. These two categories are then divided into three subcategories which partly correspond to Pellijeff's classification:

a) Loan of form, f. ex. Fin. *Apaja*, Sami *Ábaja* > Nor. *Apaja*, name of a small community. This group corresponds partly to Pellijeff's *name loan* which is characterized by phonological adaptation of source names, f. ex. Swe. *Enskäret* – Fin. *Enskeri*, Swe. *Hamnskäret* – Fin. *Hamiskeri*. The difference is that Pedersen's subcategory includes non-adapted place-names, which I shall comment on in section 3.
b) Loan of content or meaning (complete translation), f. ex. Fin. *Outatalot*, *Outa*, Sami *Vuovdi* > Nor. *Skoggårdan*, where Fin. and Sami name elements *Outa-* < *outa* 'forest', Fin. *-talot* < *talot* pl. 'house' and Sami *Vuovdi* < *vuovdi* 'forest' correspond to Nor. *Skog-* < *skog* 'forest' and *-gårdan* < *gård* 'farm'. This corresponds to Pellijeff's *complete translation name loan* (Swe. *komplett översättningslån*) or name loan which is characterized by translation of the whole place-name, f. ex. Swe. *Björkfors* – Fin. *Koijukoski*.
c) Loan of form and content or a combination of phonological adaptation and partial translation, f. ex. Fin. *Suoinujoki*, Sami *Suonjujohka* > Nor. *Såinoelva* (a river-name) from Sami *suoidni* 'hay' or *suotnju* 'swamp', where Fin. *joki* and Sami *johka* 'river' is translated into Norwegian, while the first element of the name undergoes a phonological adaptation. Pellijeff's third type of name loan is also characterized of a partial translation and partial phonological adaptation of the source place-name. In most cases it is the generic which is translated, f. ex. Fin. *Pränti*järvi where the generic, Fin. *-järvi* 'lake', is a translation and the specifier, *Pränti-* is a phonological adaptation of Swe. *Bränd-* 'burnt'.

This overview shows that there exists a problematic category among the potential loan place-names, namely *non-adapted place-names*, which are considered to be loan names by Pedersen, but not by Zilliacus, while Pellijeff does not comment on those at all. Moreover, all the three authors reviewed seem to imply that the adaptation of place-names happens simultaneously with the place-name loan, i.e. at the place-name loan stage. But is place-name adaptation really limited to the name loan stage? And are the adaptation patterns limited to phonological adaptation, complete and partial translation?

3. The non-adapted place-names and their status in contact onomastics

The most important issues to discuss here are 1) if any non-adapted loan place-names at all do exist or – in other words – how non-adapted the non-adapted place-names actually are or can be, if we take into consideration not only their spelling, as Zilliacus seems to do, but also their pronunciation, and 2) if non-adapted place-names are or are not loan place-names.

In her doctoral thesis on the formation and development of Old West Norse place-names in Orkney Islands, Berit Sandnes (2003, 329) speaks of automatic phonological name adaptation at the time of place-name loan: "Phonologic adaptation differs from all other types of adaptation, because it happens automatically at the time of loan. [...] All the names which are loaned into another language get adapted to the phonology and phonotactics of the recipient language so that all the "non-acceptable" sounds and sound combinations get substituted", f. ex. Old West Norse *háland* > Scots *Holland*. It is possible to assume that loan place-names have a bigger chance of getting adapted at the stage of loan if there is a considerable "distance" between the contact languages, f. ex. if they belong to different language families. In Sandnes's case the contact languages – Scots and Old West Norse – are relatively closely related, but the automatic phonological name adaptation is attested anyway.

The bilingual and/or multilingual individuals disturb that picture. Pedersen (2009, 6 f.) finds in her material examples of "the transfer of the name form without adaptation", f. ex. Kven *Lepäystörmä* > Nor. *Lepäystörmä*, as well as "the transfer of the name form with adaptation", f. ex. Sami *Ruohtovárri* > Nor. *Råttovarre*. The research material is constituted by recorded interviews with bilingual and multilingual informants, which used the place-names in question in a Norwegian context, i.e. when they were speaking Norwegian or rather a specific Norwegian ethnolect (Pedersen, 2009, 8). It is obvious that the grade of adaptation can vary significantly depending on the language competence of the name-user, cf. "The grade of phonological adaptation in name pronunciation depends on if a language user is multilingual or monolingual, and on what kind of pronunciation norms there existed in a particular Norwegian ethnolect [the ethnolect that is spoken in Kven-Sami-Norwegian contact area] at different times." (Pedersen, 2009, 9).

In this respect one can also challenge Zilliacus's view of citation names as non-adapted names. He takes into consideration only the spelling of the names in question, but what about the pronunciation? It is very likely that *Leipzig* or *Greenwich* pronounced by monolingual Swedes will be phonologically adapted to Swedish. Normalized spelling of place-names is a convention, which does not necessarily reflect the pronunciation of the place-name or competitive forms which might be used alongside the normalized place-name form.

The non-adapted place-names do seem to exist in authentic speech, but they still have a marginalized status in the field, since there are not that many researchers who deal with them or discuss them. The reason behind this might be the extensive usage of archive, non-speech material in studies of place-names in language contact, place-name loan and adaptation. The kind of studies based on authentic recorded speech, which Pedersen has carried out, seem to be very rare. The prevalence of one sort of material can affect the view of the phenomenon, a problem which of course should be amended.

Including non-adapted place-names into or excluding non-adapted place-names from the category loan place-names depends on how one defines place-name loan. In almost all the texts analyzed in section 2, name adaptation is considered to be an essential, inseparable, natural component of the place-name loan. At the same time, most of the researchers agree that place-name loan implies a transfer of a source name into the target language onomasticon, which makes it quite clear that the non-adapted place-names used in the target language context are in fact loan place-names. But if one chooses to delimit place-name loan as a phenomenon which incorporates some kind of name adaptation stadium, the non-adapted place-names are left out of the picture. They are invisible, which is obviously a problem.

4. UNGEGN's Glossary of terms

For a better understanding of place-name loan and place-name adaptation it might be of interest to carry out a comparative analysis of the related notions from UNGEGN's Glossary of terms. There are though no terms like *loan name*, *name loan* or *name adaptation* in UNGEGN's Glossary. However, there are at least two general terms which can be associated with these two processes: *conversion* and *transformation*. *Conversion* is defined as "the process of transferring the phonological and/or morphological elements of a particular language to another, or from one script to another. Conversion is effected by either transcription or transliteration." *Transformation* is "a general term covering the translation, transcription and transliteration of toponyms. The two latter terms constitute conversion." (Glossary, 7, 26 f.). To get a better idea of what transformation is one has to proceed via definitions of *translation*, *transcription* and *transliteration*.

Translation is "(a) The process of expressing meaning, presented in a source language, in the words of a target language. (b) A result of this process. In toponymy it is sometimes applied only to the generic element of a name. *Examples:* Mer Noire (French for Russian Černoje More) … Lake Como (English for Italian Lago di Como)". *Transcription* is defined as "(a) A method of phonetic names conversion between different languages, in which the sounds of a source language are recorded in terms of a specific target language and its particular script, normally without recourse to additional diacritics. (b) A result of this process. *Examples:* Turkish Ankara → Greek Αγκαρα; Russian Щукино → English Shchukino". *Transliteration* is "(a) A method of names conversion between different alphabetic scripts and syllabic scripts, in which each character or di-, tri- and tetragraph of the source script is represented in the target script in principle by one character or di-, tri- or tetragraph, or a diacritic, or a combination of these. (b) A result of this process. *Examples:* … Владивосток → Vladivostok".

It is obvious that all these terms were designed to suit UNGEGN's special needs and requirements: to standardize place-names in different languages, alphabets and cultures. They do meet the requirements of the modern globalized society, just to give one example – to romanize Chinese or Russian place-names so that they can effectively function in all sorts of international contexts. However, these terms get more and more problematic if one goes back in time using archive material or analyzes a present day situation via a recorded conversation of bilingual speakers, in order to study and explain the process of name adaptation.

The terms like *conversion* and *transformation* have been designed to suit a too wide spectrum of language contexts, and they do not seem to meet the specific requirements of onomastics. A huge disadvantage is lack of precision: it is not clear from the definitions what kind of process the terms describe, if the process is in some way limited in time and if it is limited to the before-mentioned "transformations", i.e. conversion, translation, transcription and transliteration etc. Some definitions are discussable or even problematic from the onomastic point of view. F. ex., the term *translation* is defined as a "process of expressing meaning", but the word *meaning* is not

at all clarified or problematized. The conclusion is that UNGEGN's terms do not seem to have the full potential to be used in scientific contexts.

5. Place-name loan vs. place-name replication and place-name adaptation

The need for a result-based terminology which describes the underlying phenomena in the best possible manner is pressing in both the field of onomastics in general and in the subfield of contact onomastics in particular, since terminology can affect and usually does affect the perception of the reality by researchers. The introduction of a new term should always rely on substantial empirical data which have been analyzed and transformed into theoretical knowledge. The introduction of a new term implies the introduction a more nuanced meaning and, through this, a newer vision of the phenomenon.

The eligibility of the terms *place-name loan* and *loan place-names*, and even their somewhat newer counterpart *import names*, can be questioned, since they do not clearly mediate the idea behind the underlying process. As it is widely known, loan place-names are not going to be returned to the source language by the recipient language. Moreover, the place-names that have been "loaned" or "imported" do not disappear from the source language.

First, I suggest drawing a sharper border between place-name loan and place-name adaptation, two onomastic phenomena which are intimately related to each other, but still different in nature. This will help us to categorize non-adapted loan names. Second, I introduce the term place-name replication, which to my mind is a better alternative to *place-name loan*. Place-name replication implies a transfer of a copy of a source place-name into the target language onomasticon; the copy of the source place-name can be adapted in the process – but there is no such requirement!

I define *place-name adaptation* as an umbrella-notion which denotes all the changes the replicated place-name goes through in the recipient language both at the stage of replication and during its "lifetime" in the recipient language onomasticon, on all language levels including both the addition and the omission of the name elements, which for the most occur in accordance with the rules of the recipient language system (and the recipient language onomasticon in particular) and can be attested in either speech or script. The word *adaptation* used as a term seems to describe well the language phenomenon in question, since it implies the change of the place-name in accordance with some rule, pattern or a set of rules or patterns which represent the norm in (in this case) another (recipient) language. Name adaptation is a highly subjective individual process, which implies that any individual can adapt the name to his or her needs or wishes, cf. f. ex. different degrees of phonological place-name adaptation in the place-names in Pedersen's research (2009, 9).

It is also important to take into consideration the fundamental change in the status of the place-name which happens at the stage of replication: when a place-name is replicated it becomes a part of the recipient language onomasticon, i.e. the replicated place-name is added to all the other place-names which are available to the recipient language user. It may even be possible to say that technically there is no difference between the replicated and indigenous place-names: the question of their origin which etymological studies take care of, is of no relevance or interest. All the place-names in question follow the development of the recipient language. However, the place-name adaptation does not necessarily end with the replication.

As I have mentioned earlier, the classifications of name loan which I have presented in this paper embark, as it seems, on the initial adaptation which occurs at the stadium of name replication. However, the process of place-name adaptation does not have to end when the replicated name enters the onomasticon of the recipient language. This process can continue until the name in question is completely linguistically integrated via, f. ex., a later translation (if a place-name was adapted only phonologically first), Old West Norse *starafjall* is a

ground for the Scots adaptation *Starra Fiold*, which in its turn was translated as Skots *Starling Hill* (Sandnes, 2003, 155, 336). This makes the entire ”equality” between replicated and indigenous place-names impossible, but it makes it even more important to clearly mark the difference between place-name replication and place-name adaptation.

One has to add that the amount of adaptation strategies is not limited to phonological adaptation, partial and complete translation, presented in section 2, or conversion, translation, transcription and transliteration from UNGEN’s Glossary, presented in section 4. The study of Sandnes (2003, 329–360) suggests there exists a “rich flora” of different adaptation patterns, including e.g. rhyme place-names such as Scots *Hellian Kellian* or *Kellian Hellian* (from Old West Norse *Keldan helga*) in Sandwick. It is obvious that each different language contact situation can in principle have its own characteristic place-name adaptation patterns. The researcher’s task is to establish which factors constrain place-name adaptation and lead to the diversity of place-name adaptation strategies. In short, there is a need of a nuanced model of place-name adaptation based on a number of studies from different language contact areas with both extinct and living language contact, which hopefully can give us further insight into the phenomena of place-name replication and place-name adaptation and the relation between them.

6. Conclusion

There has been done much in the field of contact onomastics to obtain a substantial amount of empirical data. To my mind, the discipline is now ready to take another step towards a developed results-based terminology and theory, and towards devising a nuanced model of place-name adaptation.

List of abbreviations and acronyms

Fin.: Finnish
ICOS: The International Council of Onomastic Sciences
Nor.: Norwegian
Swe.: Swedish
UNGEGN: United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

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Glossary = Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names. 2002. UNGEGN. New York: United Nations.

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Alexandra Petrulevich
Uppsala University
Department of Scandinavian languages
Box 135
SE-751 04 Uppsala, Sweden
Alexandra.Petrulevich@nordiska.uu.se