Territorial differentiation of toponymic systems[1]

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Abstract

Perhaps there are not linguistic areas in the world that are the same. Areas are divided into parts according to various points of view: ways of categorization to be found in scientific sourches are generally based on ethnographical, geographical, or even dialectal considerations. Any study of this kind, regardless of its approach, comes to the conclusion that a language is characterized by territorial, historical and cultural diversities. I argue in my study that, apart from the differences mentioned above, similar territorial differences can be found in place name systems as well. Since the set of place names of a particular area constitutes a system in itself – it is agreed that a community gives new names to objects according to their own place name patterns – a territorial differentiation of place name systems can also appear, so it is only name systems of particular areas that can be spoken of.

To support this hypothesis I have done a synchronic research of place names in a specific county in Western Hungary. This area offers opportunities for geographical as well as ethnographical and linguistic investigations, showing diversity in all these aspects. Starting from this territorial, ethnographical and dialectal diversity I suppose that there is also a differentiation of place name patterns. Since the scientifically reason for any (ethnographical, linguistic, etc.) diversity can be traced back to geographical factors, it is these factors that I mainly concentrate on. My structural analysis of the place names of the county focuses on their lexical-morphological features as it is at this level that the territorial differences in place name systems are the most obvious. In this paper I attempt to give an overall summary of my research and refer to possible „obstacles" that prevent the spread of some name structure types.

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1. The use of proper names can be observed in every natural language, that is the category of proper names can be considered a linguistic universal, which fundamentally determines the formal characteristics of newly emerging toponyms in every age. All this means that at the moment of the naming the namegiver can only rely on his/her own linguistic competence determined by the already existing toponymic system, i.e. in the naming of the denoted entity the name giver automatically adapts to acquired patterns. Namely, while using a particular stock of toponyms, along with the usage the individual acquires also a certain set of name-giving rules, and thus as name giver s/he can only rely on the toponymic system familiar to her/him (cf. Hoffmann 1993: 29–30, 35). Name givers therefore always adapt to the geographic name types in custom (Bárczi 1958:146) that is in the process of the name giving the main driving force is analogy (Inczefi 1970: 44). The role of analogy in the formation of place names can be best detected in the tendency that toponyms necessarily need to be „name-like", „name-style" (cf. J. Soltész 1979: 25). Should this not be the case, the community is highly unlikely to accept the newly formed toponym, which will thus not enter usage as a place name.

As toponyms constitute a part of the lexical stock, due to the loose structuredness and large number of elements of this linguistic subsystem, in the stock of toponyms no tight connection can be observed between the particular elements: changes of a specific element do not affect the whole of the system to such a great extent as it would be the case in a linguistic subsystem

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with a smaller number of elements (e.g. in a phonologic system). Since the lack of tight interconnection between the individual elements seems to apply to all systems with a significant number of elements, with respect to the toponymic system this also means that relatively tight relations can be observed mostly only in the toponymic stock of particular name communities (for more details see Hoffmann 1993: 39), therefore place name giving patterns are not universal in the whole Hungarian linguistic territory, quite on the contrary, they appear to be highly differentiated.

2. Furthermore, another natural phenomenon seems to be the fact that not even particular linguistic territories display homogeneous character, but they can be subdivided from more aspects: in the relevant Hungarian literature we can find examples of ethnographic (see more Viski 1938, Kósa–Filep 1975, Balassa–Ortutay 1979), geographic (cf. Magyarország kistájainak katasztere [Register of Hungarian Microregions] 201) or even dialectal divisions (cf. Kálmán 1966, Imre 1971, Kiss J. 2001). Through the application of different sets of viewpoints, all of these studies come to the same conclusion of the Hungarian linguistic territory being differentiated from the regional, historical, cultural and linguistic point of view. Developing this thought further to apply it to the toponymic system, we can declare that because of the same reasons we can also talk about the territorial differentiation of toponymic systems.

3. The study of assumable differences in toponymic systems, and in the wider sense in name models constitutes a fairy new area in Hungarian onomastic literature, in addition several references in research studies have underlined the presence and importance of the phenomenon (for more details see Hoffmann 1993: 29, 64, 82–3, 85, 87; Hajdú 1991, 1999; Bárth M. 2010). For a comprehensive examination of the territorial differentiation of toponymic systems first of all we need to choose the appropriate method, as well as to outline the research goals and opportunities. Obviously, for a study of territorial differences we need to process stocks of toponyms from different parts of the linguistic territory. In order to ensure optimal results, the corpus of names needs to be recorded and analysed in a database along with the set of criteria of the examination. The database should be freely expandable at any point of time, and it should enable reorganisation of the corpus according to different viewpoints. I am convinced that synchronic study of the differences of particular toponymic systems requires simultaneous data-collection from a large territory. As for the Hungarian linguistic area, the toponymic collections compiled during the 1960s–80s provide great material for this purpose.

3.1. The natural unit of toponymic research is the settlement, because within such a framework we can still speak about names largely determined by a system, that is names whose emergence was spurred by the communicational need, whereas the aforementioned systematic character cannot be detected any more in larger units constituted by districts or even counties (cf. Hoffmann 1993: 39). At the same time, when studying the differentiation of toponymic systems for the same reason it is vital to examine also larger areas such as districts or counties, since due to the systematic character the toponymic system of linguistically, culturally or geographically unified do not show great variation. However, we witness the opposite tendency in the case of less unified areas of for example the size of a county, that is to say, due to differences of the above mentioned factors we can definitely discover variations in larger units. Nevertheless, the assumed differences between particular areas can be revealed exclusively through the comparative study of the settlements, thus it still seems reasonable to treat settlements as basic units of the research. In the compilation of the database further, practical criteria should be taken into consideration as well: in order to

avoid distorted pieces of information we should consider the average amount of names, the area and size of the examined settlements, as well as their indices of name density, and subsequently to examine only the toponymic material of those settlements which match the given criteria.

3.2. I have completed several research projects focusing on the study of the territorial differentiation of toponymic systems. Firstly, by analysing the name stock of different parts of the Hungarian linguistic territory my intention was to reveal remarkable differences in the structure of place names. Secondly, I wanted to explore if homogenising tendencies of the toponymic system can be detected within one county, or else, if differences can be pointed out within this unit, and in this case what factors produce these potential differences.

For the corpus of the study I chose the name stock of a county which seemed to offer favourable terrain for my research: the toponymic collection of Vas county (1982) in the Western part of the Hungarian linguistic territory had been created in a period of Hungarian onomastic research when the compilation of the database was safeguarded by a well-established research methodology elaborated by a highly experienced research community and editors' circle (cf. Hoffmann 1993: 69–70, 77). All this undoubtedly represented a great advantage from the point of view my research. What is more, from the chronological viewpoint the collection of the toponymic corpus in the 1970s–80s took place simultaneously in the Transdanubian region (as the compilation of the toponymic material of the different volumes was in fact completed within a few years). Therefore, due to its chronologic homogeneity the region provides suitable material for a later comparative-synchronic study encompassing larger territories.

As an area of study Vas county features also further advantages since it is differentiated from several aspects: the region contains two dialectal areas (Imre 1971, Kiss 2001, Kálmán 1966), and shows even greater diversity also from an ethnographic point of view, as it can be divided into 4 ethnographic regions (Kósa–Filep 1975: 114–5, 150–1, 155–6; Dömötör 1960: 7, 16)). From a geographic approach it contains 4 macro-regions covering 11 micro-regions (MKK. 354–70, 382–90). Consequently the landscape displays an extraordinarily differentiated picture from both ethnographic, geographic and linguistic aspects, thus the assumption that beyond these variations differences must be detectable also in the name giving patterns of toponyms seems rather obvious.

4. As toponyms are linguistic phenomena, I believe that on the linguistic level it is reasonable to approach the signs referring to the territorial differentiation manifesting in toponyms similarly to the set of criteria applied in dialectal research. Taking into consideration also the results of dialectal research (see more Benkő 1954: 24–6), I identified the reasons for the differentiation in 1) the geographic environment, 2) the influence of historic circumstances, 3) the presence of any foreign language environment, 4) migration processes and 5) the influence of maps on today's toponymic system. My work elaborates these ideas in detail, based on my so far accumulated research results.

4.1. The life of linguistic systems is affected probably the most deeply by the geographic environment: certain geographic objects function as barriers dividing particular areas, leading to differentiation in the given linguistic stock. Therefore in the following section I will present the role of the geographic barrier on a representative example, relying on the principle that in any given area "the larger and denser the natural barriers hindering contact (e.g. large mountains, forests, lakes, swamps, barren areas, deserts, etc.), the stronger the linguistic separation. Naturally the opposite of all these (good road conditions, etc.) foster linguistic unification" (Benkő 1957: 25).

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From a structural aspect, in the Hungarian toponymic system the function of the possessive may be expressed by one- or two-part names; at the lexical-morphologic level the structure can be formed from a person's proper name *(Kálmán-rét* 'proper name Kálmán' + rét 'meadow'*)* or from a common name referring to a person *(Koldus-telek* Koldus 'beggar' + telek 'ground'*, Közös-legelő* Közös 'common' + legelő 'pasture'*)*. Consequently, in the Hungarian stock of toponyms there exist four structures to express possession: common name denoting a person *(Molnári* Molnár 'miller, as a name referring to profession' + suffix -i*)*; proper name *(József* 'proper name József'*)*; common name denoting a person + geographic common name *(Pap-tag* pap 'priest, name referring to profession' + tag 'land plot in borderland'*)*; proper name + geographic common name *(Laci-tag* 'Laci proper name' + tag 'land plot in borderland'*)*. The following comparative pictures show the distribution of these categories in the area of Vas county.

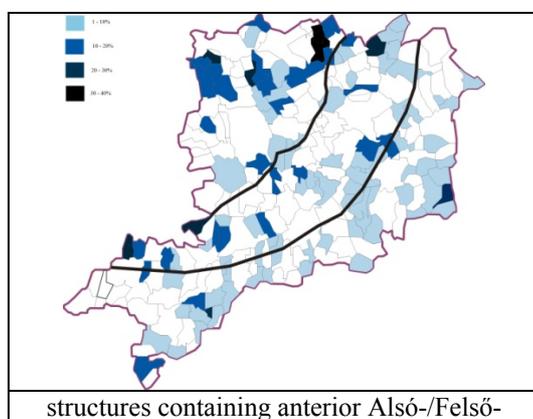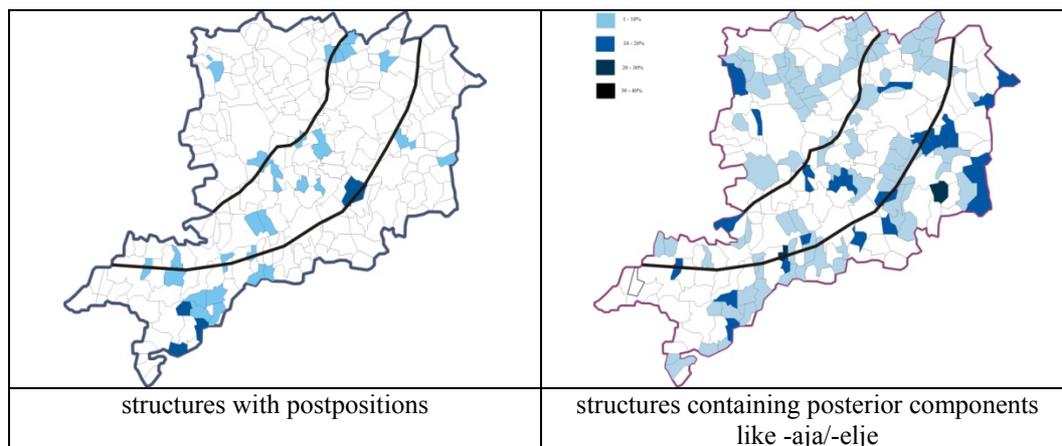| antrophonomy + geographic common name | common name referring to a person + geographic common name |
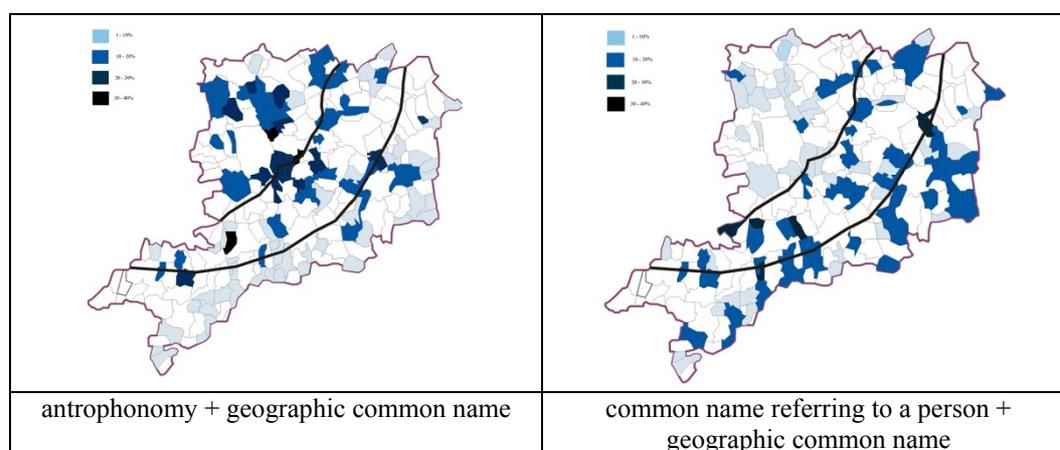
As it is well visible on the map, we can observe a relative break in the distribution of the toponymic structures with respect to the application of the given structure. In Vas county, from a geographical point of view the hindering factor is definitely the area of the valley of the river Rába. Although due to place constraints I cannot present the rest of the results in detail, we can declare that this type of separation can be observed in the case of several functions, therefore the assumption regarding the valley of the river Rába behaving as a geographical barrier in the spreading of name patterns proves to be justified. In the light of the foregoing we can conclude that it is worth focusing research on territories where we can assume a larger river, mountain or any other obstacle placing the role of a geographical barrier. I believe we would come to the same conclusion if we similarly compared the toponymic stock of for instance the Transylvanian Csíkszék and Udvarhelyszék, since it is a strongly held opinion that the Hargita mountain range divides the Székely ethnic group linguistically into two dialects (cf. Benkő 1957: 21), and in fact that is the reason we can talk about the two different Székely dialects of Csík and Udvarhely. I am convinced we would come to similar conclusions also in the case of toponym samples.

4.2. I listed historic events as a second most important factor leading to the differentiation of the toponymic system. In my opinion this research aspect holds just as great relevance for the study of the toponymic corpus of our times, since historic processes influence the present and thus also its toponymic corpus at all times. In order to underpin my statement I would like to cite again some telling examples from Vas county.

Common name denoting a person
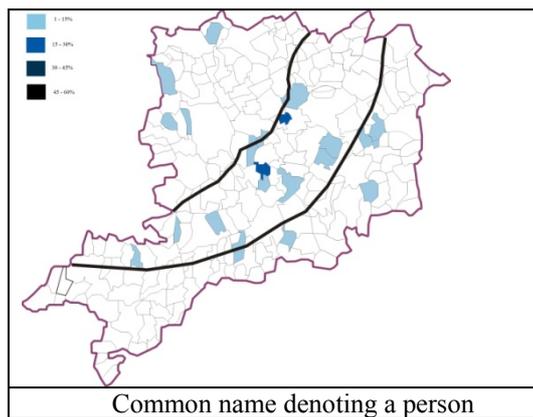
Sticking to the earlier mentioned example, namely the expression of possession in Vas county, we can observe that in the valley of the river Rába possession is expressed through a one-part common word. Going deeper into details we can notice that most of these toponyms denote proletarian land, i.e. most of these estates were distributed in the 1940s–50s, and as such, they mostly bear the names *Proletár* or *Proletárok*. Naturally, the phenomenon continued to induce the widening use of one-part common words designating owners *(Molnári* 'profession name miller + suffix -i', *Vitéz* 'profession name soldier'), as in the valley of the river the aforementioned structure was the predominant name pattern.

We can list as a further example the structural distribution of the denotation of relations, as it is demonstrated in the following picture.

structures with postpositions

structures containing posterior components like -aja/-elje

structures containing anterior Alsó-/Felső-

We can observe that structures with postpositions (such as the place name *Kis-hegy mellett*) and structures containing posterior components like *-alja, -eleje* prevail on one side of the Rába (e.g. *Tüskés-föle* tüskés 'thorny' + föle '(area) above', *Nyíres-alja* nyíres 'birch forest' + alja 'bottom'), whereas toponym patterns containing anterior components like *alsó-, felső-*, etc. (for example *Alsó-Páskumi-kút* alsó 'lower' + Páskumi kút 'well of Páskum', *Felső-Tüskés* felső 'upper' + tüskés 'thorny') are dominant exactly in the Trans-Rába area. Numerous researchers agree that structures with postpositions represent a more archaic layer of the stock of toponyms (cf. J. Soltész, Bárth M., Sebestyén) , and it is not an accident that the presence of the mentioned structure is typical exactly of the area on this side of the Rába: according to historic data, the territory beyond the Rába was populated much later, what is more, the development of its road network and infrastructure took much longer time, and finally, the large forests along the Rába contributed further to the isolation of this area. These conditions are reflected in the toponyms only in that the function of the designation of relations is expressed through a—from an onomastic aspect—more recent structure in the settlements beyond the Rába, while on the other side of the river more archaic forms are used. To sum it up, the historic aspect can play a significant role in the spreading or containment of a given structure, therefore this aspect should also be taken into account in the choice of the area to be researched.

4.3. It is a consequence of the special linguistic situation of Hungary that we need to examine the following, earlier listed viewpoint, namely the influence of the foreign language environment in two ways: on the one hand, we can study the influence of naming patterns of minorities living on the territory of present-day exerted on the formation of the Hungarian toponymic system; on the other hand, also the name-giving habits of Hungarians living beyond the borders of present-day Hungary are worth being examined independently. The separation is mostly necessitated by the different grades of the influence of the foreign speaking environment, as due to the powerful settlings the patterns of the toponymic stock of settlements beyond the borders display a much more mixed character than the name stock of settlements in a Hungarian environment.

For demonstration, let me quote again some examples from the toponymic corpus of Vas county.
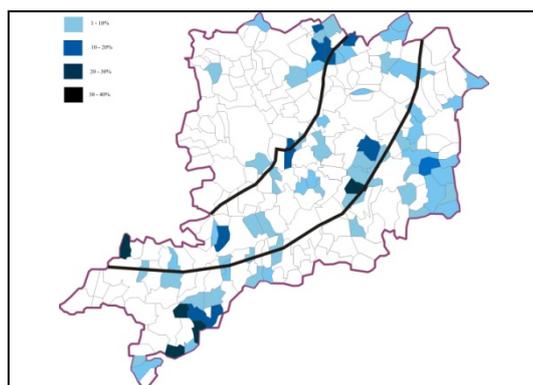
Examinations carried out up to date show that toponyms containing a word structure or a postposition can mostly be located in the southern part of Vas county (*Kis vasút között* 'kis vasút között' 'between the small railroads', *Hegyalja fölött* 'hegy alja fölött' 'above the foot of the mountain'), which makes us conclude that this structure may be kept alive by the foreign language influences (the place-naming patterns of the German and Slovenian population) inducing name givers to create similar toponym structures. From a demographic aspect, namely, in the 17th century Germans were settled into the area, yet even the name

giving patterns of the Wends (Slovenian people of Hungary) could have played a remarkable role in the process. In the international literature this type of structure is registered in the formal typology of proper names. In his work "Deutsche Namenkunde" BACH lists several similar examples in connection with the topic, like *Unter den Linden* or *der Distrikt vor dem Mühlgraben*, and since in the German naming tradition this particular structure seems to play a remarkable role (cf. Bach II/1: 68, II/2: 122), based on the spreading of the structure we can justly assume the existence of a potential German influence. We can assume a similar influence in Transylvania in the case of affixed toponyms like *Gátnál* ('at the dam') or *Hegynél* ('at the mountain'), as this pattern is fairly dominant, at least in the toponymic norm of the Csík region. Parallel examples from Romanian are the toponyms *La gat*, *La cruce*, *La portă* which can be translated into Hungarian with the suffixes *-nál/-nél* (cf. Benkő 1947: 58). Thus we can conclude that the structure of toponyms may be influenced by a foreign language environment, or more precisely, its place-naming patterns, and this factor largely influences the territorial differentiation of toponyms.

4.4. The study of migration processes is also significant in the research of the geography of toponyms: while foreign speaking environment refers to the influence of the naming patterns of the surrounding foreign speaking peoples, in connection with migration processes we examine the influence of the toponymic norms of Hungarian speaking groups resettling from other Hungarian territories. The 19th–20th century migration of Székely groups to the Transdanubian region and its influence exerted on the place-naming patterns of the population there appears to be a fascinating research topic. In accordance with this circle of questions, in the given areas the number of toponyms with postpositions and adverbial affixes grew significantly. On the other hand, having examined the corpus of some Székely settlements, the statement that toponyms with postpositions and adverbial affixes play a remarkable role in the toponymic norm of Hungarians in Transylvania seems to be well-founded. Although in the mentioned area preference for toponyms of these types can be explained also with place-naming patterns of the German population, we cannot ignore the migration factor, which I consider worthy of further detailed study. However, it is also highly probable that the spreading of toponyms with postpositional structure can be traced back to more factors.

4.5. Finally, when examining the territorial differentiation of toponym patterns, we should also take into consideration the influence of maps exerted on today's stock of toponyms. In the course of the comparative study of different settlements we can often come across name stocks of such villages or towns where the use of certain toponymic structures is exceptionally prominent. This can be partly explained, among others, with the influence of the maps in use. Researchers like to list here toponym types like *X-en belül, X-en kívül, X első,* or *X második* ('within X', 'outside of X', 'X One', 'X Two'). In support of this assumption we can quote such toponyms as examples where the outstandingly high extent of the denotation of relations can be traced back, among others, to the above mentioned effect of mapmaking. At this point I am referring to the phenomenon when a particular structure is used nowhere else in such a great measure but in one single settlement within a whole region.

5. The goal of my work was to provide an overview of the factors triggering territorial differentiation of toponyms which in my opinion determine and at the same time distinguish the place-naming patterns of the given community. However, the actual influence of the above described factors will be assessable with greater certainty only after a comprehensive examination of a significantly larger toponymic corpus, in the course of which new ones may be added to the above list of influencing factors.

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