

Lexicographic Treatment of Toponyms

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Abstract

Although the relative lexical frequency of proper nouns is 10 to 15 per cent of the vocabulary in most texts, only a limited number of them are listed in language dictionaries, and with very little linguistic information.

Toponyms constitute, besides anthroponyms, the main representative of proper names. They deserve a specific linguistic description, all the more as complex toponyms may be formed with common nouns, adjectives and grammatical words, a fact which blurs the boundary between proper names and others.

Simple as well as complex toponyms (including both endonyms and exonyms) require a formal description concerning e.g. gender, number and use of determiners. A functional analysis approach taking into account, on the one hand, appellative and proprial elements and, on the other, their generic and specific functions, aims to modelize the structures of toponyms and will pave the way to relevant contrastive analyses of toponyms in different languages, and will also help formalising alphabetic order principles.

Last but not least, pragmatic information, based on corpus studies, is essential for a realistic description of the use of variant forms.

Introduction

General linguistics studies on proper names have been increasing over the last twenty or thirty years (Vaxelaire 2009); in spite of this, ordinary grammars often do not seem to integrate a systematic approach to proper names. Nor does the impact on lexicography seem to be generalized. This situation implies a problem for the use of toponyms in real life. The subject of this article is lexicographic treatment of toponyms in a synchronic perspective. In discussing the lexicographic aspects here, I do not pretend to solve these problems, of course, but I will try to point out some crucial issues and thus give a hint for further research.

Toponym treatment in ordinary dictionaries raises different questions. Many dictionaries do not include toponyms at all or very few. Others do, but principles for lexicon item selection, as well as for the information given, vary. Svensén (2009) in his comprehensive handbook on lexicography actually mentions proper names but restricts the survey to anthroponyms and especially names of kings or queens, which traditionally have different forms according to the language in which a given text is written. This approach is very much the same as the one found in encyclopedias, i.e. giving cultural information, like the fact that the French proper name *Guillaume Tell* corresponds to *Wilhelm Tell* in German or that the American novel and film *Gone with the Wind* is called *Autant en emporte le vent* in French. In most cases, detailed linguistic information is lacking. The pieces of information concerning language that are given, if any, are typically about etymology and the source language pronunciation; which is to say encyclopedic information. The point of view adopted here is thus systematic linguistic information in lexicography.

Endonyms and Exonyms

Toponyms actually migrate more than other words from one language to another. You will find toponyms in their original form, endonyms, in other languages, or adapted, in different ways, to the target languages, becoming thus exonyms; examples: the Italian endonym *Genova* corresponds to the French exonym *Gênes* and the English exonym *Genoa*; the German endonym *Deutschland* corresponds to the French exonym *Allemagne*, the English *Germany*, the Polish *Niemcy*, and the Swedish *Tyskland*. This “international” vocabulary is

actually not a simple list of proper names or terms. Their internal structure varies a lot. Toponyms, perhaps more than other proper names, are often complex and include appellative constituents, which cannot be analysed independently of the general vocabulary and grammar of the language. In computational linguistics systems have been developed in order to do automatic information retrieval where one will combine of lists of terms (or integrated dictionaries) and algorithms using formal linguistic criteria. Both these approaches require a detailed linguistic analysis. Dealing with electronic dictionaries for automatic data processing, Morel & Tran (2005) notice that proper names are often lacking in them, and this in spite of the fact that they constitute 10 per cent of the words in journalistic texts (citing Coates-Stephens 1993). If the subject is specialized, a term list can be an efficient tool to retrieve information. A combination of the two methods is the basic solution. An additional tool is statistics, “widely” used to improve efficiency.

These pieces of information, formal general morpho-syntactic data and terms are indeed valuable contributions to the knowledge of the lexicon in use, but they hardly suffice to establish a lexicographic description of, for example, toponyms. A systematic lexicographic description of toponyms in a synchronic dictionary implies treating them as part of the linguistic systems (on different levels) of the given language. This means giving the same types of information as for other word classes, be it phonetic, morphosyntactic, semantic or pragmatic ones. In spite of the fact that lexical and grammatical treatment of proper names tends to be less elaborated than that presented for other word classes, proper names are, as mentioned, relatively frequent in texts, a fact that is worth commenting upon.

Toponym Frequency

I will present here some results from two detailed frequency studies of comparable methodological approach concerning two types of texts, Swedish newspapers and modern French novels, respectively. As we can see, even if textual frequencies are rather limited – 4.45 and 2.44, respectively –, the relative lexical frequencies of proper names are important. In the newspapers, 15.10 per cent of the words (simple lexical entries) are proper nouns. This percentage is higher than that of the French novels (10.40 per cent). The difference in the relations shown between different word classes, adjectives, nouns, proper nouns and verbs are as expected due to the different text types. In a lexicographic perspective, proper names (with 15.10 per cent) constitute the second most important word class after nouns (55.48 per cent) and before adjectives (10.45 per cent) in newspaper texts and the fourth most frequent word class in French novels with 10.40 per cent, after nouns, 49.00, verbs, 18.20, and adjectives, 14.25 per cent. Proper names undeniably deserve a comprehensive lexicographic description.

<i>Swedish newspapers</i>					<i>French novels</i>				
<i>Class</i>	<i>Ftext</i>		<i>Flex</i>		<i>Class</i>	<i>Ftext</i>		<i>Flex</i>	
	Abs.	Rel.	Abs.	Rel.		Abs.	Rel.	Abs.	Rel.
<i>Adjective</i>	77k	7,75	7441	10,45	<i>Adejective</i>	22k	4,52	2308	14,25
<i>Noun</i>	221k	22,17	39486	55,48	<i>Noun</i>	86k	17,24	7934	49,00
<i>Proprium</i>	44k	4,45	10746	15,10	<i>Proprium</i>	12k	2,44	1684	10,40
<i>Verb</i>	172k	17,22	4649	6,53	<i>Verb</i>	96k	19,33	2947	18,20
<i>Total</i>	1M	100,00	71178	100,00	<i>Total</i>	500k	100,00	16193	100,00

Figure 1. Distribution of units by word classes (extract). Allén 1971 and Engwall 1984, respectively

To go into detail, the results concern only lemmatized one-word entries and comprize all sorts of proper names. Toponyms thus represent only a part of the proper names accounted for in these two corpus studies. On the other hand, we have to consider the fact that a great number of proper names, and especially toponyms are composed of two or more words and thus not accounted for in these frequency dictionaries.

Complexity and Transparency

Even if typical toponyms may be opaque single words in a synchronic perspective like the English endonym *London* or the English exonym *Genoa* and its corresponding Italian endonym *Genova*, a large number of them are as a matter of fact complex and often also transparent. We find simple words, close compounds, hyphenated compounds, open compounds and prepositional phrases, among others (*London, Bath; Newport, Blackwater; Baden-Baden, Congo-Kinshasa; New Hampshire, Rocky Mountains; Stratford-upon-Avon, United States of America, etc.*). The internal structure in different languages can be very complex. Prepositions, adjectives, common nouns for example, as well as proper names or derivations of proper names, and even foreign words can be part of complex proper names and especially toponyms. Toponyms are more than other word classes at the crossroads of languages.

This fact brings us back to what I mentioned earlier: toponyms migrate more than other words from one language to another. If the endonym is a transparent toponym, involving words as common nouns, adjectives and grammatical words, translation is a natural solution when transposing a toponym to another language. Independently of whether we analyse endonyms or exonyms the types of complexity vary from one language to another for the same toponym. For a dozen languages we have identified about ten types (Löfström & Schnabel-Le Corre 2010: 293-300). Due to the fact that one has to deal with at least five types of toponym transpositions between languages (op. cit. 300-306), the result in the target language is far from being foreseeable. Lexicographic treatment of toponyms in the synchronic systematic perspective is a worthy task for lexicographers and linguists.

In some cases, a raw translation is used as exonym; the French endonym (*le*) *Massif Central* has as corresponding English exonym (*the*) *Massif Central*, where the French structure is intact but the pronunciation is English, of course. It is worth noting that exactly the same word forms as in the endonym are used in the exonym. In the case of German *Schwarzwald*, we have to do with a word for word translation: English *Black Forest*. In another German endonym, *Erzgebirge* ‘ore mountains’, a part of the endonym is translated and the other kept as an un-analyzed (here: specific proprial (see below)) element: English exonym *Erz Mountains*. In still other cases the exonym is quite different; the French *Côte d’Azur* ‘azur (blue) coast’ corresponds to English *French Riviera*, exonymized via another language.

As for the two English toponyms *Rocky Mountains* and *Scottish Highlands* they are translated into several languages: *Montagnes Rocheuses* (French), *Klippiga Bergen* (Swedish); *Schottisches Hochland* (German), *Skotska högländerna* (Swedish) and so on.

We sometimes have to deal with endonyms in two or several languages for a same geographical or political feature, like the stretch of the sea between Great Britain and France. The English endonym *the English Channel* has been translated directly into a Swedish exonym, *Engelska kanalen*, and the French one, *la Manche*, has got a German translation, *Ärmelkanal*, where *Ärmel* translates *manche* ‘sleeve’, adding the appellative part of the English endonym, *Kanal*!

On the other hand, the two Swedish transparent endonyms *Storsjön* ‘big lake’ and *Söderhamn* ‘south port/harbour’ are not altered at all (excepted for the pronunciation) but

used directly in foreign languages. The less a language is known or the culture close to us, the less exonymizations are probable.

A majority of toponyms thus never change when used in another language. The (written) endonym is used. Often a phonetic exonymization takes place automatically. In other cases, there is a special coinage to create an exonym (*Parigi, Londres, Estocolmo, Schonen, Dalécarlie, ...*).

Paris (Fr.)	[pa'Ri]	<i>Paris</i> [pa'ri:s] (Ger., Sw.), [ˈpaɪs] (Eng.), <i>Parigi</i> (It.), ...
London (Eng.)	[ˈlʌndən]	<i>London</i> [ˈlɒndən] (Ger., Sw.), <i>Londres</i> (Fr.), ...
Stockholm (Sw.)	[ˈstok.holm]	<i>Stockholm</i> [ˈstɒkɪhøʊm] (Eng.), [stokˈɔlm] (Fr.), <i>Tukholma</i> (Finn.), <i>Estocolmo</i> (Sp.), ...
Skåne (Sw.)		<i>Schonen</i> (Ger.), <i>Scanie</i> (Fr.), ...
Dalarna (Sw.)		<i>Dalecarlia</i> (Eng.), <i>Dalécarlie</i> (Fr.), ...

We can sum up so far: due to the great **variety** of forms, a reasonably high relative lexical **frequency** of toponyms in texts, their sometimes **transparent** structure, we should not hesitate to proceed to a **synchronic, contrastive analysis** in order to organize a coherent lexicographic description. To be able to cope with these heterogeneous structures we propose a **functional analysis** which gives us the possibility to explore and analyse the often **sketchy** presentation of toponyms in dictionaries and encyclopaedia.

Functional Analysis

The functional analysis is based on a double dichotomy: Appellative (A) vs Proprial (P) and Generic (g) vs Specific (s) components (Stani-Fertl 2001). This is rather an evident form of analysis, distinguishing determined and determining components and taking at the same time into account the type of content – avoiding involving word classes and neutralizing: close compounds, hyphenated compounds, open compounds and prepositional syntagms. This enables a cross-linguistic comparison. Examples:

<i>North Cape</i>	As + Ag
<i>New Hampshire</i>	As + Pg
<i>Swasi land</i>	Ps + Ag
<i>Kongo-Kinshasa</i>	Pg + Ps
<i>French Guyana</i>	Ps + Pg
<i>Land's End</i>	As + Ag
<i>Stratford upon Avon</i>	Pg + Ps

With this approach we have got the possibility to study and compare the structure of the toponyms in the lexical and grammatical synchronic system of different languages. This implies that endonyms can be analyzed from a grammatical point of view but that foreign endonyms (not exonymized) will remain opaque to the internal formal (and functional) analysis.

Contrastive Functional Analysis

French	English	Swedish
<i>Cap Nord</i>	<i>North Cape</i>	<i>Nord kap</i>
Ag + As	As + Ag	As + Ag
<i>Nouvelle Guinée</i>	<i>New Hampshire</i>	<i>Stor stockholm</i>
As+ Pg	As + Pg	As + Pg
<i>Pays Basque</i>	<i>Swasi land</i>	<i>Tysk land</i>
Ag + Ps	Ps + Ag	Ps +Ag
<i>Guyane française</i>	<i>French Guiana</i>	<i>Franska Guyana</i>
Pg + Ps	Ps +Pg	Ps +Pg
<i>Golfe de Gascogne</i>	<i>Stratford-upon-Avon</i>	<i>Öarna under vinden</i>
Ag+Ps	Pg+Ps	Ag+As

The two Germanic languages English and Swedish have the same functional patterns. The determining (specific) component is to the left with the exception of the examples on the last line with prepositional constructions. The French (like other Romance languages) has the specific, determining component to the right, with the exception of some adjectives (here *nouvelle*). As for the last line, prepositional constructions in the three languages have by definition the determining element to the right.

Linguistic Information in Encyclopedias

In common French dictionaries and encyclopedia the linguistic information given is word class, gender and number, typically presented as in the following examples:

Appalaches	n.m.pl. / n.f.pl.
Apuseni (monts)	-
Arabique (golfe)	-
Arabique (désert)	-
Arabie	n.f.
Arabes unis [Emirats]	-
Arabe unie [République]	-
Arabie Saoudite	n.f.

For the toponyms with an appellative in parenthesis, like *Apuseni (monts)* for (*les*) *monts Apuseni*, this information is implicit. Sometimes the analyses differ from one publication to another, as seen in the first item.

In some languages the use of the definite article is an import point in toponym forms. The use differs in some respects from that in common nouns. Different possibilities to present the use in a simple way exist. In the French concise dictionary cited below the article use is presented with the gender indication. If a toponym is marked **n.m.**, this means that the article *le* is used: *le Danemark*. For *Irak*, the indication **n.m.** means the abbreviated form of the article: *l'Irak* etc. and **n.f.** indicates the definite article in feminine form: *la France* or *l'Irlande*. *Israël* and *Malte* presented without gender and number information indicates that no article is used in context.

Danemark n.m. (...) off. royaume du D~...

Irak n.m. off. république d'Irak [etym.]...

Iran n.m. off. république islamique d'Iran [etym.]...

Irlande n.f. [etym.]...

Israël [etym.]...

Malte off. république de Malte [etym.]... (Le Petit Robert des noms propres. 2009)

In fact, some toponyms do not take the definite article. This is the case for prototypical toponyms. Others do take the article. We exclude from this argument the modified (nominalized) use of toponyms, which is another question. But for some toponyms there is variation in the use of the article as well as in gender. Quite a lot of toponyms do behave in that way. This type of information is rarely mentioned in dictionaries. The way of presenting *Israël* and *Malte* in the dictionary cited above without any indication of gender would imply that they do not have any gender. Do toponyms without article really not have a gender or a number? Comparing with other languages this seems improbable. Only, it is less clear and integrated in use. And the variation is important. You can see it from the fact that some texts avoid referring to a toponym by means of a personal pronoun.

Linguistic Information in Bilingual Dictionaries

In bilingual presentations, things may be even more explicit as we can see in this French – Swedish and Swedish – French dictionary published in Sweden for Swedish readers, where the article is presented in black and white in the text. An IPA transcription of the French pronunciation is given (not repeated here), in the examples here marked by // . As we can see, the question whether *Israël* takes an article or not in French gets another answer in this dictionary: the presentation suggests that it does. And for the choice of gender it is the masculine that is chosen. In reality, in texts there is actually great variation concerning this and other toponyms, with or without article, feminine or masculine. This variation is hardly ever taken into account in dictionaries.

French - Swedish		Swedish – French	
Danemark //, <i>le</i> ~	Danmark	Danmark	le Danemark
France //, <i>la</i> ~	Frankrike	Frankrike	la France
Irak // m, <i>l'Irak</i>	Irak	Irak	l'Irak m
Iran // m, <i>l'Iran</i>	Iran	Iran	l'Iran m
Irlande // f, <i>l'Irlande</i>	Irland	Irland	l'Irlande f
Israël // m, <i>l'Israël</i>			
[or] <i>L'Etat d'Israël</i>	Israel	Israel	l'Israël m
Malte //	Malta	Malta	Malte

On the other hand, in a recent bilingual dictionary, French – English and English – French, information is quite exhaustive and explicit. Its lexicographic organisation is illustrated below. Between slashes IPA phonetic information is given, followed by word class, gender and number information. For complex toponyms with more than one proprial component they are presented in the article with **COMP** followed by the entire toponym syntagm and the translation.

French - English

Appalaches / / NMPL ♦ **les (monts)** ~ the Appalachian Mountains, the Appalachians

Arabie / / NF Arabia ♦ **le désert d'**~ the Arabian desert **COMP Arabie Saoudite** Saudi Arabia

English - French

Appalachian / / ADJ, N ♦ **the ~ Mountains, the ~s** / *les (monts mpl) Appalaches mpl*

Arabia / / N / *Arabie f.*

Saudi / / (...) **COMP Saudi Arabia N Arabie Saoudite**

Principles for Lexical Entry Choice

As we have seen above with examples like *Appalaches*, *Apuseni (monts)*, *Arabique (golfe)*, *Arabique (desert)* and *Arabes unis [Emirats]* the choice of the lexical entry is a question which can be discussed. The functional analysis permits us not only to compare different internal structures but also to analyse the principles for the choice of the lexical entry. In most cases the specific component is the one chosen to be the lexical entry, in principle because it is reasonably the most characteristic component in a complex toponym. But there are exceptions. Some problems can be observed in the following examples.

(monts) <u>A</u>ppalaches	<u>Ag+Ps</u>	
<u>A</u>rabie	<u>P(s)</u>	
<u>A</u>rabie Saoudite	<u>Pg + Ps</u>	
désert d'<u>A</u>rabie	<u>Ag+ Ps</u>	
la <u>M</u>anche	<u>P(s)</u>	
<u>A</u>ppalachian (Mountains)	<u>Ps+Ag</u>	
<u>A</u>rabia	<u>P(s)</u>	
<u>A</u>rabian Desert	<u>Ps+Ag</u>	
(Saudi Adj)COMP <u>S</u>audi Arabia N	<u>Ps+Pg</u>	
the English <u>C</u>hannel	<u>Ps+Ag</u>	cf the <u>C</u>hannel <u>Ps</u>
the <u>E</u>nglish Channel	<u>Ps+Ag</u>	

Both in the French and in the English section, there are exceptions to the mentioned principle. In the French exonym *Arabie Saoudite*, the adjective *Saoudite*, which is a proprial derivation, is the determining element, analysed Ps in the functional analysis. Nevertheless, the toponym is placed in the alphabetical order corresponding to *Arabie*, analysed Pg as it is the generic, determined component.

The English endonym *the English Channel* in the English – French dictionary has the functional structure Ps+Ag and should a priori be placed according to the specific component *English*, which is the case. But it is also placed in the alphabetical order according to *Channel* (Ag) under the common noun *channel* due to the fact that there is the simple variant toponym *the Channel* (Ps) which functions without the proprial component.

Problems of Coherence in Lexical Choice

If we go back to the French-English, English-French dictionary cited before, we can see that the English-French section presents the examples with *united* in one article and all toponyms actually have the word *united* as the specific component – with two exceptions, *United States of America*, where the proprial component *America* is analysed as specific. This is the functional structure of all toponyms with a prepositional determining component. The second

example is in fact *the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* analysed $\text{Ag}\{\text{As}+\text{Ag}\}+\text{PREP}+\underline{\text{Ps}}\{\{\text{As}+\text{Pg}\}\{\text{As}+\text{Pg}\}\}$ where the prepositional component is proprial, specific and determining: *of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*.

English – French dictionary:

united adj: COMP:

the United Arab Emirates NPL

$\underline{\text{As}} + \text{Pg}\{\text{Ps} + \text{Ag}\}$

the United Arab Republic N

$\underline{\text{As}} + \text{Pg}\{\text{Ps} + \text{Ag}\}$

the United Kingdom N

$\underline{\text{As}} + \text{Ag}$

the United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

$\underline{\text{Ag}}\{\text{As}+\text{Ag}\}+(\text{PREP}+\underline{\text{Ps}}\{\dots\})$

United Nations (Organization) NPL

$\underline{\text{As}}\{\text{As} + \text{Ag}\} + \text{Ag}$

United States NPL

$\underline{\text{As}} + \text{Ag}$

United States (of America) NPL

$\underline{\text{Ag}}\{\text{As} + \text{Ag}\}+(\text{PREP}+\underline{\text{Ps}})$

The situation in the French-English section is totally different, as we can observe. I have chosen to compare the English examples above with their French correspondences. In the examples cited, the specific component is never chosen to represent the lexical entry.

French – English dictionary:

émirat n.m.

les Emirats arabes unis

$\underline{\text{Ag}}\{\text{Ag} + \text{Ps}\} + \text{As}$

république n.f.

la République arabe unie

$\underline{\text{Pg}}\{\text{Ag} + \text{Ps}\} + \text{As}$

Royaume-Uni n.m. le ~

le ~ (de Grande-Bretagne et d'Irlande du Nord)

$\underline{\text{Ag}} + \text{As}$

$\underline{\text{Ag}}\{\} + \text{PREP} + \underline{\text{Ps}}\{\}$

Etats-Unis n.m.pl les ~

les ~ (d'Amérique)

$\underline{\text{Ag}} + \text{As}$

$\underline{\text{Ag}}\{\text{Ag} + \text{As}\} + \text{PREP} + \underline{\text{Ps}}$

nation n.f.

les Nations Unies

$\underline{\text{Ag}} + \text{As}$

As we can see, for these examples at least, the complex toponyms in question are to be found under the heading corresponding to the generic appellative. Besides, some of the complex toponyms form a lexical entry. Sometimes a cross-reference can be given, as the one to *république* under the adjective *arabe*.

A real problem of coherence in lexicographic principles presents itself to us. Of course, the internal word order of different types of languages plays an important role in this problem. Is it possible to find principles clear enough to be applicable to different types of languages or should each language follow its own principles? The functional analysis might be a tool to contribute to a systematic lexicographic treatment of alphabetic ordering of the entries. Further analyses and comparisons seem to be necessary in order to find a systematic and general approach to this practical problem in the use of dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Variant forms

As we have seen from examples above, indication of variant forms are common but you rarely find information concerning their use in context. The choice between *the United Kingdom* and *the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* is probably a question of style or genre. But can *United Kingdom* and *Great Britain* be looked upon as synonymous? If *Great Britain* and *the British Isles* are used in a text you might interpret the difference as being a question of political (institutional) versus geographical aspects of the area (see the analysis in Cislaru 2006). The choice to make between *New York, New York City* and *the Big Apple* or *France, République française* and *l'Hexagone* are other types of variation worth analyzing for lexicographic purposes.

Interlingual Correspondance between Variant Forms

Dictionaries give us formally correct translations of corresponding toponyms between languages like in the following examples:

English	French	Swedish
<i>United Kingdom</i>	<i>Royaume uni</i>	<i>(Förenade kungadömet)</i>
<i>Great Britain</i>	<i>Grande Bretagne</i>	<i>Storbritannien</i>
<i>British Isles</i>	<i>îles Britanniques</i>	<i>Brittiska öarna</i>
<i>England</i>	<i>Angleterre</i>	<i>England</i>

These toponyms might sometimes informally be used as near-synonyms, but their relations within a given language are probably not a major problem for the language user. But in bilingual dictionaries another type of contextual information lacks. We observe that the Swedish exact and official translation of *United Kingdom*, *Förenade kungadömet*, is practically unknown by the public and hardly ever used in newspaper texts. This information lacks in the dictionaries. When *Förenade kungadömet* is given as the (exact) translation of *Royaume uni* or *United Kingdom*, the dictionaries should ideally indicate that this is the exact and official translation, usually replaced by *Storbritannien*.

Conclusion

If we admit that toponymy should have its place in lexicography on the same conditions as common nouns, there are several phonological, morphosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic issues that need to be explored in order to establish principles for a systematic description on different levels. Even if all these aspects need not necessarily be explicit in an unilingual dictionary, they have to be clearly elaborated at least for bi- or multilingual dictionaries. We propose to use a functional analysis in order to permit easy comparisons between languages, but a detailed morhosyntactic analysis is unavoidable to pinpoint crucial formal criteria in each language.

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