

## PLACE-NAME METAPHOR IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the comparative analysis of place-name metaphors. Conceptualization of an abstract sphere takes place through a concrete one. Geographical objects, both real and imaginary, are attributed to the concrete sphere, thus place-names serve as a means of conceptualizing abstract phenomena through their metaphorical use. The research carries out a comparative analysis of place-names metaphorical mapping in English and Russian. The article also gives ideas of the common and specific feature of metaphors. There is a certain overlap in the typical place-inherent qualities (high, cold, warm, big, deep); there are overlaps in the sphere of antonomasia as it mostly touches upon the world-known events. There are also overlaps in positive characterization by means of place-name metaphors as they are usually based on the Bible and on mythology, which is a common cultural property. The greatest amount of specificity lies in representing the negative, and, mostly, in representing human qualities, as English negative auto-stereotype is often shown through local place-names associated with certain human qualities, and these associations are specific. Also in English tradition names of water objects are implying danger and difficulty while in Russian tradition water objects are viewed in a more positive way. The results of the study are supported by the examples. The materials of the study may be useful worldwide by educators and researchers involved in professional linguistic research and training.

**Keywords:** place-name, metaphor, conceptualization, overlap, common features, specific features

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Accumulating knowledge takes place on the basis of the information already known. This cognitive rule serves as a basis for linguistic imagery, as from the psychological point of view an image originates from “the memory of the past” (Arnol'd, 2005). It is known that metaphor helps to understand new concepts through their analogy with the old ones. “Many concepts that are abstract ones, are partly structured via the metaphorical mapping of information from a familiar source domain into a less familiar target domain” (Gibbs, Bogdanovich, Sykes & Barr, 1997), “cognitive projection of one sphere of knowledge on another sphere of knowledge is called cognitive mapping” (Manerko, 2012). According to G. Lakoff, A. Deignan and A. Goatley point of view metaphorical conceptualization of abstract sphere takes place through concrete one (Lakoff, 2006) (Deignan, 2005) (Goatley, 2007). Metaphorical mappings have both common and specific features (Knowles, 2006). Metaphor is a phenomenon of thought, it focuses our mind on certain features of the object, or ascribes some quality to the object not compatible to it, as in advertisement (Knowles, & Moon, 2005). Metaphor is thoroughly researched in all the spheres of human communication and in all the types of discourse (Shustova & Platonova, 2017).

## 2. METHODS

The article aims at comparing English and Russian abstract conceptualization through place-names. Place-names metaphors are roughly classified into the following groups denoting: 1) qualities directly connected with the place; 2) qualities indirectly connected with the place (mostly through people or events); 3) basic ethic notions GOOD/BAD [10]. We unite the second and third items in one, as they both imply qualities connected with the place indirectly.

The methods of metaphorical mapping and comparative analysis are used: the most typical metaphorical models for both languages are distinguished, both target and source domains are considered, and an attempt is made to find out common and specific features. The abstract meanings are differentiated according to their connection either with the place named or with the objects and phenomena connected with the place. The research material contains 500 English metaphors from the self-collected database (from

literature and dictionaries) and over 200 Russian metaphors with abstract meaning borrowed from the “Dictionary of Connotative Proper Names” (Shmelev, 1964).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Metaphors naming some quality characteristic of a certain place (climate, dimensions, placement) belong to this group. The qualities are logically presented in the binary oppositions FAR – NEAR, WARM – COLD, HIGH – LOW, DEEP – SURFACE. Mostly these oppositions are asymmetric: one member is represented by several place-names while the other – just by one or not at all (Gafiyatova, 2010).

The primary function of a place-name is to mark a certain geographical object with certain map coordinates, thus they contribute to structuring the territory. Each geographical object has a set of specific characteristics and they get connected with the place-name through its use; a place-name can get the ability to denote the most prominent of its qualities. The above-mentioned oppositions are to be considered.

**1. Place-name metaphors denoting qualities directly connected with the places named.** Place-name metaphors representing the concepts FAR - NEAR in English and Russian have both common and specific features. In both languages the concept FAR is explicit, while the concept NEAR is implicit. The concept FAR requires ‘the starting point’ (Kondakova, 2012), i. e. the answer to the question ‘Far from what?’. ‘The starting point’ for the English-speaking community is represented either by London/England/Britain/the UK, or by the USA/America, thus the place-name symbols of distance should denote objects situated as far from the above mentioned places as possible. For Russians ‘the starting point’ is Middle Russia. Both in English and in Russian the typical place-name metaphor of distance is Australia: it is far from Russia, the UK, and the USA. The other distance metaphor common for the both languages is Siberia: though Siberia is a part of Russia, it is quite far from Middle Russia. Metaphoric use of the place-name North Pole in English in the literary context overlaps with the Russian colloquial symbol of a far-away place Северный полюс [Severnoy polyus]. Overlapping symbols in both languages can differ in frequency of use. In English the metaphor Kamchatka is rare and original, while in Russian the metaphor

Камчатка[Kamchatka] is a traditional naming of a far away place or back rows in the classroom (Shmelev, 1964). Thus there were distinguished four overlaps: Australia/Австралия, Siberia/Сибирь, North Pole/Северный полюс, Камчатка/Камчатка. English symbols of far away places in the literary context are represented by the place-names Botany Bay, Timbuktoo, Jericho. Some symbols (Jericho, Halifax, Bath, etc.) are used euphemistically in the meaning 'desired distance' in set-expressions ('Go to Jericho!' = 'Go to the devil!') (Otin, 2006). There could be mentioned such Russian place-name metaphors of distance as Соловки, Сахалин, Аляска [Solovki, Sahalin, Alyaska] (Shmelev, 1964). In both languages the main meaning of distance can be combined with the secondary meaning of exile: Botany Bay, Siberia, Australia, Сибирь, Сахалин, Соловки.

The opposition FAR – NEAR in certain contexts could be transformed into the opposition CENTRE – PERIPHERY, the "periphery" part in both languages is explicit, periphery symbols are represented in dictionaries, while the part "centre" is mostly implied by names of capitals and countries. Symbols of periphery, province in English and Russian differ, they do not coincide in British and American English. In American English they are traditionally represented by the towns Pocatello and Dubuque. In British English the symbol of periphery is Watford – "a town in Herefordshire, South-East England, used with allusion to the view, attributed to Londoners that north of the metropolis there is nothing of any significance to English national or cultural life" (Partridge, 1973). Russian symbols of province are numerous: Урюпинск, Хацапетовка, Чухлома, Пошехонье, Васюки, Тмутаракань, Конотоп, Криворожье, Лапландия [Uryupinsk, Nacapetovka, Chuhloma, Poshekhon'e, Vasyuki, Tmutarakan', Konotop, Krivorozh'e, Laplandiya] (Shmelev, 1964); speaking about a provincial narrow-minded person one can mention that they have come from the Urals, or they can be also called Тюмень [Tyumen'] (Shmelev, 1964), by the name of a city in Siberia.

The opposition HIGH – LOW is represented asymmetrically in both languages, with the explicit part HIGH. Both in English and in Russian the metaphors of height are represented by the names of the highest mountains: Everest/Джомолунгма, Олимп/Олимп. In English together with the names of mountains (Alps, Ararat, Himalayas,

Mont Blanc) there are names of high buildings (Eiffel Tower, the Tower of Babel).

The opposition DEEP – SHALLOW is asymmetric, with the explicit part DEEP. Its place-name representations are noted only in English. Due to the fact that the English adjective "deep" can be used in two different metaphorical meanings: "sly" and "strong", place-names denoting deepness acquire these meanings in certain contexts: deep [cunning, wily] as Dolcoath (Knowles, 2006) (Dolcoath symbolizes a human quality 'slyness').

The opposition WARM – COLD is symmetric both in English and in Russian. The common metaphors of heat and warmth are Africa/Африка and Sahara/Сахара. In English WARM is represented by the place-names South America, India, South(land), while in Russian – by the names of cities of former southern soviet republics: Душанбе, Нарын, Ташкент [Dushanbe, Naryn, Tashkent] (Shmelev, 1964). The common metaphors of COLD are Siberia/Сибирь and North Pole/Северный полюс. In English cold is symbolized by Arctic and Antarctic. In Russian cold weather is associated with the place-name Лапландия [Laplandiya] (Shmelev, 1964). Evidently the metaphors reflect the climate characteristics of the places named.

The opposition MUCH – LITTLE is asymmetric, with the explicit part MUCH in both languages. Commonly the idea of size and quantity is represented by the geographical terms "sea"/"mope" (Myuller, 2002), "mountain"/"гора" (Myuller, 2002) (Ozhegov & Shvedova, 1997), in English – also by the terms "high building", "waterfall". Such metaphors have a hyperbolic character: Atlantic, Niagara, Etna, Cliffs of Dover, Eiffel Tower. In Russian size and quantity are rather named by mountain names: Арапат, Гималаи, Ниагара, Эверест [Ararat, Gimalai, Niagara, Ehverest] (Shmelev, 1964). "Metaphoric transference helps to lessen negative characteristic of possible substitutes" (Harkova, & Shigapova, 2014).

**2. Place-names denoting qualities indirectly connected with them.** Place-names can characterize and evaluate people, things, and situations through similarity with those ones which are connected with the place named, which is based on metonymy.

It was found out that the ability of place-names to imply human qualities is more typical of English. A certain quality is traditionally ascribed to people born and/or living in some place, thus due to metonymy PLACE-PEOPLE a geographical name reflects a stereotype. For example, names of small British geographical objects (counties, settlements, towns, villages, city districts, streets) tend to characterize mental abilities (Gotham, Bolton, etc.), traits of character (Yorkshire, Essex etc.), property status (Hoxton, Spitalfields, etc.), mostly in a negative way. A negative quality is restricted by a set of smaller places. This tendency is less evident in Russian, though there are some cases: Рязань [Ryazan'] – bright-coloured clothes (Shmelev, 1964).

It is important to add that treatment of names of continents in both languages is different. In Russian names of continents can express either human qualities or qualify phenomena: Asia (Азия) symbolizes stagnation, conservatism, backwardness; lack of culture, barbarity, it also implies lack of taste in clothing and disagreeable and unpleasant looks; on the contrary, Europe is a symbol of civilization, culture, and progress (Shmelev, 1964), which does not appear explicit in English by the considered examples. According to Sadykova A. and Kayumova D. “In the sphere of concepts of the Russian native speakers, there is no metaphorical representation of the concepts” (Sadykova & Kayumova, 2014).

There are place-name metaphors denoting a phenomenon or event, they exemplify event antonomasia. There is certain coincidence in antonomasia denoting events similar to the ones which once happened in a certain place. It can be explained by the fact that antonomasia often alludes to the most notable world history events (Waterloo/Ватерлоо, Hiroshima/Хиросима, Watergate/Уотергейт).

It is evident that place-name antonomasia as constantly appear, as it is quite common to denote an event by a place-name and after that to use the same place-name for denoting similar events. Many cases of antonomasia have neither been registered in dictionaries, nor mentioned in literature yet, many of them never get into dictionaries as they soon get out-of-date.

There are cases of biblical and mythological antonomasia, they can be referred to place-name allusions. Biblical allusions are more numerous in English: Aceldama, Acadia, Ararat, Armageddon,

Babylon/Tower of Babel, Bethlehem, Canaan, Dead Sea, Eden, Egypt, Gehenna, Gilead, etc. As for Russian, E. Otin mentions such biblical allusions as Арарат, Армагеддон, Вавилон, Голгофа, Содом, Гоморра, Иерихон, Иерусалим, Иордан, Синай, Сион, Эдем [Ararat, Armageddon, Vavilon, Golgofa, Sodom, Gomorra, Ierihon, Ierusalim, Iordan, Sinaj, Sion, EHdem] (Shmelev, 1964).

As for literature place-name antonomasia, in both languages there is a tendency to allude to places from texts of homeland authors. In English they allude to Wonderland, Brobdingnag, and Laputa, in Russian – to Рио-де-Жанейро [Rio-de-ZHanejro] and Васюки [Vasyuki] (Shmelev, 1964). The common antonomasia originating from English literature is Utopia / Утопия.

**3. A place-name metaphor can serve as an axiological means naming the basic ethic notions of GOOD and BAD.** In describing ethic notions the overlap between English and Russian is seen in the sphere of GOOD (Eden/Эдем, Утопия/Утопия). There are some common moments in the sphere of BAD (Golgotha/Голгофа, Armageddon/Армагеддон) in cases of biblical antonomasia. Specificity appears in using names of real places. The BAD sphere in English is diversely represented by names of water-objects, which are connected with the idea of difficulty, risk, and danger. In Russian water-objects are devoid of such a high degree of negative connotation.

#### 4. SUMMARY

Place-names metaphorically denote abstract notions in English and Russian, which is based both on the qualities of the place named, and on the properties of the object connected with the place. The properties of places are represented in asymmetrical binary oppositions (FAR – NEAR, COLD – WARM, etc.). There are common symbols of distance, climate, a big amount of something in both languages due to objective properties of geographical objects. There is specificity in denoting depth, which is typical only of English and in denoting big amounts (by names of water reservoirs, mountains, and buildings in English and mostly by names of mountains in Russian). The properties connected with the place indirectly through some object are more specific, they are connected mostly with local place-names and on the whole are more typical of English. It is noted that place-name metaphors mostly denote

negative human qualities thus as if restricting the spread of negativity within the map by a certain place. In the sphere of event antonomasia and biblical antonomasia there is much in common, while literature antonomasia is more specific. As for evaluative place-name metaphors, they are common in place-name biblical allusions and specific in using real local place-names.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Place-names are broadly used metaphorically and tend to denote abstract notions. There are both common and specific features of metaphorical use of place-names in English and Russian. A certain overlap lies in naming place-inherent qualities, in the sphere of antonomasia and in the sphere of evaluation based on biblical concepts common for both cultures. We argue that the common features are determined mostly by a number of extralinguistic factors, such as: objective properties of the objects the names of which are used metaphorically (placement, height, climate, etc.), common adherence to European culture, Christian culture (biblical allusions), globalization (widely-understandable event antonomasia). The specificity lies in the sphere of denoting human qualities (intellectual properties, traits of character, financial status) as they are most often connected with using local place-names, which could be not that well known abroad and not used outside a certain culture, there also is a difference in cultural stereotypes and ways of evaluating different spheres of reality; specificity of geographical location of the country is also important for metaphorical use of place-names.

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