

LINGUOCULTUROLOGICAL STUDY OF TOPONYMS IN FRENCH TOURISM ONOMASTICS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NAME AND SPACE

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Abstract

This article examines the linguoculturological characteristics of place names related to the tourism sector in the French language. It analyzes the toponymic layers within the names of tourism objects, as well as issues regarding the history of their origin and etymology.

Keywords: Tourism object, place name, toponym, linguoculturological analysis.

Introduction

Toponyms serve as the linguistic foundation of the tourism industry; they represent not only the names of geographical objects but also the historical-cultural image of a region and the linguistic memory of a people linked to the past. In linguoculturology, toponyms are viewed as units carrying a "cultural seme." For instance, the names of French tourist cities—*Paris*, *Lyon*, *Avignon*—are not merely phonetic units but "brand-names" possessing immense semantic weight within the context of European culture. As the renowned French toponymist *Albert Dauzat* noted, place names are "silent witnesses" from the past; through linguistic analysis, one can reconstruct Gallo-Roman, Germanic, and Frankish cultural layers.¹

In analyzing the toponymic layers within tourism objects, their etymological roots hold significant importance. Affixoids in many French locations, such as "*-ville*" (from Latin villa - village/city), "*-bourg*" (from Germanic - fortress), or "*-mont*" (mountain), are linguistic reflections of urban development.

The toponym *Lyon* originates from the ancient Celtic *Lugdunum* ("Fortress of the god *Lug*"), revealing its layer as a religious-political center in antiquity.

The name *Paris* is derived from the *Parisii*, a Gallic tribe that lived there, testifying to the antiquity of ethnic identity in the region.²

Providing such linguistic information to a traveler increases the "exclusivity" of the object and heightens interest. In this process, the toponym rises from a mere name to a linguoculturological "concept."

¹ Dauzat, A. (1946). *La toponymie française: buts et méthodes, noms de lieux, peuplement, anthroponymie*. P.156.

² Nègre, E. (1990). *Toponymie générale de la France*. P.168.

Another feature that enhances the tourist attractiveness of toponyms is their hagionymic (sacred place names) nature. Objects of pilgrimage tourism in France, such as *Mont-Saint-Michel* (Mount Saint Michael), *Saint-Tropez*, or *Sainte-Chapelle*, are considered units with metaphorical and religious layers in linguistics. The epithets and the prefix "*Saint-*" within these names evoke not only historical information but also spiritual-aesthetic feelings in the tourist. Through this, a people's conception of sanctity is materialized via language.

According to the theory of the linguoculturologist *V.N. Telia*, such names possess "cultural connotations," through which national concepts of holiness are embodied in linguistic forms.³ Furthermore, microtoponyms (names of *streets, squares*) play a special role in tourism:

- "*Champs-Élysées*" (Elysian Fields - mythological paradise)
- "*Côte d'Azur*" (Azure Coast)
- "*Pont Neuf*" (New Bridge)

These names express the natural-geographical, mythological, and functional characteristics of a place. Interpreting the linguistic structure of these names into foreign languages requires high linguocultural competence from guides. Whether preserving the meaning or using transliteration, accurately presenting these toponyms allows for the global demonstration of national linguistic identity.

A toponym defines the identity of a space. For instance, the name "*Côte d'Azur*" (Azure Coast) was introduced into usage in 1887 by the writer Stéphane Liégeard; it established not only the color of the location but also its elite and aesthetic status.⁴

In conclusion, toponyms in French tourism onomastics are not just a collection of names but linguistic units representing French identity. Researching them from a linguoculturological perspective and delivering the linguistic history of each place name to tourists in both a scientific and emotional manner further strengthens the country's tourism brand. Toponyms are the movement of language through space; through them, the breath of past centuries takes on a linguistic form that is both understandable and attractive to the modern traveler.

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⁴ Nègre, E. (1990). *Toponymie générale de la France*. P.188.

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