

Dissertation by Aliya Eralievna Smatova on the topic “Linguistic-conceptological Aspects of Kazakh and English Toponymy”, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the educational programme 8D02310 (6D020500) – Philology

ABSTRACT

General characteristics of the study. The dissertation is devoted to a comparative study of the linguoconceptological nature of toponyms in the Kazakh and English languages, their cognitive structure, their ethnocultural content and their role in representing the national worldview. Place names are considered not only as linguistic units that name geographical objects, but also as linguocultural signs that preserve the historical experience, cultural values, specific perception of the world and collective memory of a particular ethnic group. The development of the anthropocentric paradigm in modern linguistics makes it possible to study linguistic units in unity with human cognitive activity, national consciousness and cultural experience. From this perspective, the study of toponyms within cognitive linguistics and linguoconceptology aims to identify not only their nominative function, but also their semantic, motivational, associative, symbolic and ethnocultural features. A comparative study of Kazakh and English toponyms makes it possible to determine how the two peoples' knowledge of their environment, their ideas about natural objects, their historical and social experience and their national worldview are reflected in language. The main scientific focus of the research is the analysis of Kazakh and English toponyms from linguocognitive and linguoconceptological perspectives, determining the structure of toponymic concepts, describing the features of their verbalization and revealing the ethnocultural content of the national toponymic space. This approach makes it possible to consider the toponymic system on the basis of the interrelation between language, consciousness and nation.

Relevance of the research topic. Toponyms are linguistic units that reflect a people's history, culture, worldview and connection with the natural environment. Their formation and change are influenced by linguistic, historical, social and cultural factors. Therefore, a comparative cognitive study of Kazakh and English toponyms makes it possible to identify their semantic, nominative and ethnocultural features. Toponyms reflect peoples' cognitive experience of nature, animals, plants, settlements and historical events. Their linguoconceptological analysis aims to determine the structure of the national toponymic space, the cultural content of concepts and their function in the linguistic picture of the world. The relevance of the study is determined by the need to identify the common and nationally specific features of Kazakh and English toponyms, to describe the cognitive and ethnocultural function of toponymic concepts, and to develop the theoretical foundations of cognitive onomastics and onomastic linguoconceptology.

The main aim of the study is to determine the place of Kazakh and English toponyms in the linguistic picture of the world, to reveal the ethnocultural features of toponymic concepts, and to systematize, from cognitive and linguoconceptological perspectives, the two peoples' knowledge and ideas related to place names. The study also aims to provide a comparative description of the connotative meaning, nominative motivations and function of Kazakh and English toponyms in the structure of national consciousness.

In accordance with this aim, the following objectives have been set:

1. To analyse, from a cognitive perspective, the origin, historical development, and semantic and connotative features of Kazakh and English toponyms.
2. To identify the linguocognitive foundations and psycholinguistic mechanisms of toponymic nomination.
3. To conduct a comparative study of the ethnocultural factors that influenced the formation of Kazakh and English toponyms, as well as of the peoples' way of life, economic activities and worldview.

4. To identify the linguocultural and semiotic features of onomastic concepts, as well as the reflection of colour terms and of the concepts “steppe”, “aul”, “animals” and “plants” in toponyms.

5. To describe the ethnocultural content of toponymic and mythonymic units, their use in literary texts and their function in representing the national worldview.

6. To systematize the categorical zones and ideographic content of the national toponymic space and the types of toponymic information, and to model the cognitive matrices of the concepts “aul”, “settlement”, “mountain”, “water” and “steppe”.

7. To determine the influence of historical, social, political and ideological factors on Kazakh and English toponyms and to describe their common and distinctive features as a national cultural code.

Object of the study – toponyms in the Kazakh and English languages, their nominative function, their cognitive representation in the linguistic consciousness of the people and their role in shaping the national toponymic space.

Subject of the study – the linguoconceptological structure, semantic and connotative features, nominative motivations and ethnocultural content of Kazakh and English toponyms, the ways in which concepts are verbalized, and their function in the national linguistic picture of the world.

Theoretical and methodological foundations of the study. The theoretical and methodological basis of the study consists of the scientific findings of Kazakhstani and foreign scholars in onomastics, toponymy, cognitive linguistics, linguoconceptology, ethnolinguistics and linguoculturology. In particular, the works of T. Zhanuzak, G.B. Madiyeva, K.K. Rysbergen, B. Tleuberdiyev, S.K. Imanberdiyeva, F.M. Ashimkhanova, A.Zh. Kulmagambetova, A.V. Superanskaya, V.A. Maslova, S.I. Garagulya, V.V. Krasnykh, F. Colman, V. Smart, P.H. Reaney, G.B. Adams, R. Coates, C.C. Smith, A. Room, K. Cameron and P. Hanks served as the basis for the theoretical study of toponymic material. The study of cognitive and conceptual approaches and of the reflection of national culture in language was guided by the findings presented in the works of A. Kaidar, N. Uali, R. Syzdyk, Zh. Mankeyeva, B. Kassym, K.A. Zhamanbayeva, A. Zhartybayev, D. Pashan, L.V. Gnapovskaya, V.I. Karasik and G. Lakoff. In the course of the study, the toponymic system is considered not only as a set of structural and semantic units, but also as a conceptual system that preserves the cognitive experience and cultural information of a particular ethnic group. This methodology makes it possible to analyse the linguistic structure and semantics of toponyms in connection with national consciousness, historical experience and the cultural environment.

Research methods and materials. The study employs descriptive, systematization, comparative-contrastive, classification and generalization methods. In addition, cognitive and conceptual analysis, componential analysis, text analysis and statistical frequency methods were used. By modelling the cognitive matrices of concepts, the structural components, cultural content and interrelations of toponyms are examined. These methods allow for a comprehensive study of the semantic structure, nominative foundations, ethnocultural features and linguocultural function of Kazakh and English toponyms. Comparative-contrastive analysis aims to identify the common and specific features of toponyms in the two languages, while cognitive analysis seeks to reveal the connection between names and the cognitive experience of the people. The research materials include linguistic, toponymic and encyclopaedic dictionaries, reference books, popular science literature, phraseological dictionaries and historical sources containing Kazakh and English place names. In addition, toponyms found in Kazakh and English literary texts were examined in order to determine their contextual, cultural and conceptual function.

Scientific novelty of the study. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the comparative examination of Kazakh and English toponyms from the standpoint of cognitive linguistics and linguoconceptology, and in determining the structure and ethnocultural content of toponymic concepts.

The main elements of the scientific novelty of the study are as follows:

1. Kazakh and English toponyms have been analysed comparatively within the framework of cognitive linguistics and linguoconceptology, and their nominative, semantic and ethnocultural features have been identified.

2. The onomastic concept has been considered as a cognitive category, and principles for systematizing the structure and content of concepts in the Kazakh and English toponymic space have been proposed.

3. The historical, social, linguistic and ethnocultural factors influencing the formation of Kazakh and English toponyms have been compared, and their connection with the national worldview has been described.

4. The cognitive and linguocultural features of toponyms related to colours, animals and plants have been compared, and their function in reflecting the natural environment and traditional economic experience has been determined.

5. By modelling the cognitive matrices of the ethnotoponymic concepts “aul”, “settlement”, “mountain”, “water” and “steppe”, the principles for describing the categorical structure of the national toponymic space have been systematized.

6. The address-related, linguistic, ethnocultural, scientific, historical-documentary and linguosocial types of toponymic information have been systematized, and the informational and cultural function of geographical names has been described.

7. The use of Kazakh and English toponyms in literary texts and their historical and political changes have been examined, and their function in representing the national cultural code, historical memory and social experience has been determined.

The scientific novelty of the study is based on a comparative investigation of Kazakh and English toponyms not merely as names of geographical objects, but as cognitive and linguocultural units that accumulate the national worldview and historical and cultural experience. The study is also distinguished by its examination of the structure, ethnocultural content and informational function of toponymic concepts in their interrelation.

1. Main results of the study. In the course of the study, the formation, semantic features and connotative meaning of Kazakh and English toponyms were examined from a cognitive perspective. It was established that the formation of toponyms is influenced by linguistic, historical, social and ethnocultural factors. The historical linguistic layers and signs of cultural interaction in the geographical names of the two languages were described. The linguocognitive foundations of toponymic nomination were examined, and the connection of geographical names with the collective experience of the people, their worldview and their perception of the environment was determined. Kazakh and English toponyms related to the natural environment, traditional economy and cultural knowledge were compared. The ethnocultural content of toponyms related to colours, animals and plants was described, and their function in representing the national worldview was determined. The linguocultural and semiotic features of onomastic concepts were differentiated, and the importance of the concepts “aul”, “settlement”, “mountain”, “water” and “steppe” in describing the national toponymic space was demonstrated. By modelling the cognitive matrices of these concepts, their semantic structure and interrelations were systematized. The use of toponyms in literary texts was examined, and their capacity to convey historical memory and cultural associations in addition to naming a geographical object was described. Toponymic information was classified into address-related, linguistic, ethnocultural, scientific, historical-documentary and linguosocial types. In addition, the connection of geographical names with historical, social, political and ideological changes was examined. Overall, the study aimed to identify the common cognitive features and national specificities of Kazakh and English toponymy and to describe the function of toponyms in preserving and transmitting cultural information.

2. Main provisions submitted for defence

1. The formation and semantic development of Kazakh and English toponyms are linked to linguistic and extralinguistic factors. The nominative foundations of geographical names are shaped by the historical and cultural experience, worldview and economic activity of the people.

2. The linguocognitive foundations of toponymic nomination are manifested in the transmission of knowledge about geographical objects through linguistic units. Toponyms are linguocultural units involved in shaping the national linguistic picture of the world.

3. The historical linguistic layers of Kazakh and English toponymy are closely connected with the historical development and language contacts of each people. A comparative study of the formation of geographical names makes it possible to identify common and distinctive features in the toponymic stock of the two countries.

4. Toponyms related to colours, animals and plants reflect peoples' perception of the natural environment, their economic experience and their cultural ideas. Their comparative analysis provides a basis for describing the ethnocultural features of the Kazakh and English worldviews.

5. The ethnocultural content of toponymic and mythonymic units is connected with the national worldview and cultural associations. Their use in literary texts is distinguished by their function of conveying historical and cultural information.

6. The concepts "aul", "settlement", "mountain", "water" and "steppe" are considered key categories characterizing the cognitive structure of the national toponymic space. Modelling their cognitive matrices makes it possible to systematize the semantic composition of the concepts and their interrelations. The classification of toponymic information provides a basis for a comprehensive description of the linguistic, ethnocultural, historical and social content of geographical names.

7. The formation and change of Kazakh and English toponyms are influenced by historical, social, political and ideological factors. Therefore, in studying toponyms, their historical context and social function must be taken into account along with their linguistic structure and semantics.

Theoretical and practical significance of the study. The theoretical significance of the study is determined by its contribution to examining Kazakh and English toponyms from the standpoint of cognitive onomastics and onomastic linguoconceptology, to describing the structure and ethnocultural content of toponymic concepts, and to explaining the linguistic nature of the national toponymic space. The results of the study may serve as a basis for developing theoretical issues in cognitive linguistics, linguoconceptology, comparative linguistics, ethnolinguistics, linguoculturology, sociolinguistics, pragmalinguistics and onomastic semiotics. In addition, the study expands the methodological possibilities of examining the toponymic system within the unity of language, consciousness and nation.

The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using its results in lectures and seminars at higher education institutions in General Linguistics, Lexicology, Onomastics, Toponymy, Cognitive Linguistics, Linguoconceptology, Linguoculturology and Psycholinguistics. The research materials may be used in preparing special courses, textbooks and academic works, as well as in comparative studies of Kazakh and English toponymy. The conclusions of the study may also serve as a basis for future research aimed at systematizing the national toponymic space, describing the toponymic conceptosphere and analysing ethnocultural information through toponymic units.

Approbation and publication of the research

1. Articles in international peer-reviewed journals indexed in Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus

1. The verbalization of toponymic concepts in literary texts, *International Journal of Society, Culture, & Language*, 14(2), 2026, ISSN 2329-2210, P.346-362.
2. Psycholinguistic and cognitive foundations of Kazakh and English mythotoponyms: A Comparative Linguistic Study, *International Journal of Body, Mind and Culture* 13(8), 2026-1684, Vol. 13, Issue 8.

2. Publications in journals recommended by the authorized body

1. Verbalization of toponymic concepts in an epic literary text
Scientific journal "Science and Life of Kazakhstan". No. 5 (49). Astana, 2018. P.15-17.
2. The toponymic system reflecting the worldview of the Kazakh ethnos

Scientific journal "Science and Life of Kazakhstan". No. 6 (69). Astana, 2018. P.54-57.

3. A cognitive study of Kazakh and English toponyms

Scientific journal "Science and Life of Kazakhstan". No. 11/12 (43). Astana, 2019. P.322-327.

4. Linguocultural and cognitive aspects of the nominative function of toponyms. Scientific journal "Science and Life of Kazakhstan". No. 12/1. Astana, 2019. P.265-270.

5. Linguocultural and Cognitive Features of Kazakh and English Toponyms. Scientific journal "Bulletin of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University". Astana, 2025, P.114-132.

6. Ethnocultural space in the Kazakh and English languages: a comparative analysis of mythotoponyms. Bulletin of Ablai Khan Kazakh University of International Relations and World Languages. Series "Philological Sciences". 2 (81), 2026. P.411-432.

3. Papers in proceedings of international scientific and practical conferences

1. Features of the representation of colour terms in toponyms

Proceedings of the international scientific and practical conference "Auezov Readings-19: 30 Years of Independent Kazakhstan".

Shymkent, 2021. P.259-261.

2. The principles and comparison of plant names in Kazakh and English toponymy

Proceedings VIII International annual conference "Industrial Technologies and Engineering" ICITE – 2021. Shymkent, 2021. P.301-305.

3. Onomastics and topographical elements in English place names. Proceedings of the international scientific and practical conference "Auezov Readings-21: New Kazakhstan – the Future of the Country", dedicated to the 80th anniversary of M. Auezov South Kazakhstan University. Shymkent, 2023. P.73-77.