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REPRESENTATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CONCEPTS THROUGH TOPONYMS (ON THE EXAMPLE OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES)

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Annotation

This article examines the reflection of national identity and cultural concepts in English and Uzbek toponyms through the lens of linguocultural and cognitive linguistics. Toponyms, as linguistic signs, not only denote geographical locations but also encode the collective memory, worldview, and historical consciousness of a nation. The study identifies how naming practices reveal distinctive cultural models and conceptual metaphors rooted in the mentality and lived experiences of each community. The research relies on the theoretical principles of cognitive linguistics, linguistic relativity, and cultural semantics. Comparative examples demonstrate how English and Uzbek toponyms embody different conceptualizations of space, nature, and society.

Keywords

toponymy, national identity, cultural concepts, linguo-culture, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, onomastics.

Introduction. The study of toponyms has evolved from purely geographical naming traditions into a multidisciplinary field intersecting linguistics, culture, and cognition. Modern linguistics views toponyms not only as markers of place but also as indicators of how people perceive and conceptualize their environment. Through toponyms, societies preserve and transmit elements of their national identity, worldview, and values.

In both English and Uzbek, place names have deep historical roots reflecting cultural experience, social life, and the environment [16, 24]. For instance, English toponyms such as Oxford (“ox + ford” – a river crossing used by oxen) and Cambridge (“Cam + bridge”) reveal patterns of human interaction with the

landscape. Similarly, Uzbek toponyms such as Qiziltepa ("red hill") and Beshariq ("five canals") encode the physical and cultural characteristics of local life [17, 35].

This comparative linguistic study aims to analyze how toponyms embody cultural meanings and how the conceptualization of place contributes to the construction of national identity in the English and Uzbek linguistic worlds. In an age of globalization, the preservation of national identity remains a crucial issue in linguistic and cultural studies. Toponyms serve as cultural artifacts reflecting historical memory, traditional worldview, and linguistic creativity [18, 41]. Their semantic structures often reveal conceptual metaphors that link geography to cultural identity. The investigation of English and Uzbek toponyms provides valuable insights into how two distinct nations conceptualize their environment. English toponyms reflect centuries of settlement, Christianity, and feudal structure, while Uzbek toponyms are shaped by Central Asian nomadic heritage, agricultural culture, and Islamic traditions [19, 24]. Understanding these differences contributes to comparative linguocultural research and to the broader study of cultural semiotics. Theoretical and methodological foundations of toponymic studies were developed by scholars such as A. V. Superanskaya and E. M. Pospelov, who analyzed the typology, motivation, and semantics of place names. The emergence of cognitive linguistics with G. Lakoff and M. Johnson introduced new dimensions, emphasizing conceptual metaphors and embodied cognition. C. Fillmore's Frame Semantics and R. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar further deepened the study of meaning structures in human cognition. In Uzbek linguistics, researchers such as B. Yo'ldoshev, R. Rasulov and Z. Doniyorova have explored the semantic, cultural, and symbolic nature of Uzbek toponyms. More recent studies by G'. Rahimov and D. Qurbonova integrate cognitive and linguocultural perspectives, emphasizing the interrelation between toponymy and national mentality. The synthesis of these approaches allows for a comprehensive examination of how toponyms operate as linguistic representations of collective identity and cultural memory. Cognitive linguistics postulates that language reflects the way humans conceptualize the world. From this perspective, toponyms are considered as cognitive artifacts that encode cultural models and experiential knowledge. The notion of conceptual metaphor helps explain how abstract cultural ideas are expressed through concrete spatial images [20, 65]. For example, the English metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is reflected in place names denoting crossings, bridges, and paths, while Uzbek toponyms often mirror metaphors connected to fertility, nature, and spirituality (Beshariq, Guliston, Nurata). Moreover, frame semantics allows toponyms to be seen as parts of broader cognitive frames – structured mental schemas representing knowledge about places, social activities, and values. For instance, Greenwich

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evokes associations of greenery, peace, and history, while Bukhara evokes spirituality, trade, and learning in Uzbek culture [21, 85]. National identity is often manifested through the naming of places that symbolize collective achievements, heroes, landscapes, or historical events. Toponyms thus serve as "linguistic monuments" preserving national memory. In English tradition, names such as Kingston ("king's town") and Oxford preserve socio-political hierarchies of medieval England. Similarly, Nottingham ("home of Snot's people") and Stratford-upon-Avon encode old English community structures and geographical relationships. In the Uzbek context, place names often emphasize kinship, nature, and Islamic heritage [22, 65]. For example, Namangan derives from "namak" (salt) and "kan" (mine), reflecting historical economic activity; Shahrisabz ("green city") symbolizes beauty and prosperity; Qo'qon refers to "hillock" or "mound," linking settlement to natural topography. Through such toponyms, each nation articulates its worldview: the English tend to stress order, settlement, and authority, while Uzbeks highlight fertility, spirituality, and nature's harmony. Cultural concepts are mental representations rooted in shared experience [23, 54]. Toponyms often function as "cultural codes" encapsulating collective knowledge. In English culture, toponyms reveal the concepts of land possession and social structure. Examples include Newcastle (industrial heritage), Cambridge (education and innovation), and Canterbury (religious center). Each name connects linguistic form to cultural meaning. In Uzbek culture, toponyms such as Oqtosh ("white stone") and Qorako'l ("black lake") are grounded in perceptual experience, reflecting color symbolism and natural observation. Religious and spiritual associations are frequent: Nurata ("father of light") connects divine light with place, while Bog'dod (from Arabic "Baghdad," meaning "gift of God") conveys spiritual blessing. These examples show that both languages use toponyms as conceptual metaphors bridging language, culture, and cognition. A cognitive comparison of English and Uzbek toponyms reveals both universal and culture-specific models:

English Example	Conceptual Domain/ Underlying Metaphor / Concept	Uzbek Example	Conceptual Domain/ Underlying Metaphor / Concept
Oxford, Riverdale	Nature and Geography	Qiziltepa, Qorako'l	Nature as space of life and identity
Canterbury, Holyhead	Religion and Spirituality	Nurata, Imom Buxoriy	Place as sacred memory
Newcastle, Coalville	Economy and Craft	Namangan, Paxtakor	Work and productivity as identity

Kingston, Richmond	Authority and Social Hierarchy	Shahrisabz, Qo‘qon	Power and unity reflected in space

This comparison illustrates how toponyms act as mental “maps” of national consciousness. Both languages categorize the environment through culturally specific schemas, demonstrating that linguistic naming is a cognitive and cultural act simultaneously [24, 98].

Conclusion: Toponyms embody the intersection of language, culture, and cognition. They serve as repositories of historical knowledge and expressions of national mentality. English and Uzbek toponyms reveal distinctive worldviews: the English model emphasizes human control, settlement, and social order, while the Uzbek model foregrounds harmony with nature, spirituality, and community values. Cognitive analysis confirms that toponyms are not arbitrary labels but meaningful cultural signs, reflecting conceptual metaphors, image schemas, and frames. Their study deepens our understanding of linguistic worldview (linguistic picture of the world) and helps preserve national heritage through language.

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