LANDSCAPE TERMS AND PLACE NAMES QUESTIONNAIRE[5]

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Projects	Categories across Language and Cognition, Interactional Foundations of Language.
Task	Checklist/elicitation guide.
Goals	The landscape subproject is concerned with the interrelation between language, cognition and geography. Specifically, it investigates issues relating to how landforms are categorised cross-linguistically as well as the characteristics of place naming.

Background

Landscape terms reflect the relationship between geographic reality and human cognition. Smith and Mark (2001, 2003) explore universals in the ontology underlying landscape terms. Are 'mountains', 'rivers, 'lakes' and the like universally recognised in languages as naturally salient objects to be named? Smith and Mark have conducted cross-linguistic elicitation in European languages which suggested strong universal conceptualisations of landscape features. However, recent work by Mark and Turk (ms) on landscape categorisation in Yindjibarndi (northwestern Australia) points to considerable cross-cultural variation.

Place names (or toponyms) are at the intersection of spatial language, culture, and cognition. They provide a way to refer to space by naming the places referred to, rather than the objects or people that occur at the places. Presumably, places referred to by toponyms are places that play a marked role in the life of the language community. Thus the toponyms of a language community embody a knowledge structure that figures prominently in the spatial conceptualisation of the community's environment. At the same time, the way reference to places is distinguished from reference to objects, animals, or people *at* places is an important piece in the puzzle of the 'natural language metaphysics' that underlies spatial reference and conceptualisation in the language under study.

Our preliminary work on landscape terms and place names within this topic of 'Space' has revealed surprising differences in conceptualisation and categorisation of landforms, and it has raised interesting issues on the relationship between landscape categories and place names. The topic is also of central interest because it integrates into several of our fields of research, e.g., frames of reference, demonstratives, the human body, motion events, topological relations, gesture, interaction etc.

Research question

This questionnaire is designed to elicit basic information as to the linguistic characteristics of two aspects of geography: landscape categorisation and place naming.

[5] This is a revised version of the 'Landscape terms and place names questionnaire' of the MPI Field Manual 2003. The questions relating to place names have in turn been largely extracted from Jürgen Bohnemeyer's 'Toponym Questionnaire' of the 2001 field manual. We refer to that questionnaire for the full background, motivation and examples relating to these questions.

The following over-arching research questions apply to landscape categorisation: How is landscape divided into categories, and how are categories named? Are there cross-linguistic differences in how landscape is divided into such categories? Do referents of landscape terms have well-defined boundaries or not? Which are the main determinants of landscape categorisation: physical environment, subsistence mode, other cultural factors? The answers to the questionnaire should first and foremost determine the basic semantic properties of landscape terms; however, issues relating to their structural properties are also relevant insofar as these are helpful in analysing semantic properties.

The following overarching questions apply to place names: How do we formally identify place names in the research language (i.e., according to structural criteria)? What places are place names employed to refer to (e.g., human settlements, landscape sites)? How are places semantically construed for this purpose? The answers to the questionnaire should determine the basic formal and semantic properties of place names and thus lay the ground work for further research on discourse about places.

Finally, the relation between place names and landscape terms needs to be investigated since this relation may not be simple. For example, there is evidence that in some languages the referents of place names are entirely different from those of landscape terms.

Task

The task is to be regarded as a checklist or elicitation guide. The idea is to make sure you have a comprehensive answer to each of the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire does not detail a general methodology for obtaining answers. You are likely to have answers to several of the questions in your existing database. For further probing, classical elicitation/interviewing (*in situ* or from photos) is recommended (three consultants). Further suggestions as to elicitation techniques (e.g., director-matcher tasks) are given in the questionnaire. If you elicit answers, you may directly transcribe the response, but recording of elicitation on video is preferable. If you are unable to run the whole questionnaire, detailed information on any subset of questions would still be of great interest.

Landscape terms

The following points are designed to help you elicit basic information about landscape terms in your research language. Elicitation can take the form of interviewing, preferably during 'fieldwalking'. In order to spur spontaneous discourse about landscape categories in a controlled setting, you may also want to try a director-matcher game with photos of various features of local geography.

(a) Local geography:

- Try to get an idea of the features of the local geography of your fieldsite and consider suitable scientific terminology to describe them. A useful geographical dictionary is available online at The Geography Portal:

  http://www.kesgrave.suffolk.sch.uk/learningzone/subjects/geography/diction.html

(Note that colloquial English is sometimes likely to be insufficient as metalanguage; technical terms are more precise).

(b) Basic landscape categories:

- Which are the landscape terms in the language? You are likely to have documented much of this vocabulary already, but try to expand it and make it as exhaustive as possible. Which are their structural characteristics? For example, are they basic (monomorphemic, unanalysable, simplex etc.) or derived in some way?
- What do these landscape terms really denote? Try to define the meaning of terms in as much detail as possible. Can speakers elaborate on the extent/delimitation of entities denoted by landscape terms? Be careful to probe if size, shape, colour or any other characteristics of landscape entities are encoded in categories. Ask consultants to describe and delimit geographical features *in situ* and/or from photos. It may be a good idea to ask several consultants to define/delimit the same individual landscape feature (e.g., a particular mountain), and also to compare different individuals of a particular feature.
- Semantic specifications are often *anthropocentric*. Since linguistic meanings reflect people's ways of thinking and speaking, it is no surprise that meanings of landscape terms may refer not only to inherent physical features of referents, but also to distinctions in how people can and/or typically do interact with those referents. The physical characteristics of landscape features determine their *affordances* for humans, and these affordances are possible candidates for semantic encoding in expressions referring to these features. Consider types of water feature (*lake, pond, stream, creek*). Some may afford boating, swimming, particular methods of fishing, while others may not. Some types of sloped land may afford certain methods of agriculture and not other methods. Consider different forest types. Some may afford unhindered passage on foot, while others may not. Some may yield certain types of forest food (mushrooms, grubs, roots), while others afford different types. Some landscape features may be defined by their distance from a person when visible (e.g., a *mountain* can be seen from more than a day's walk away, while perhaps a *hill* cannot). When thinking about the semantics of landscape terms, try to think not just about the inherent properties of the landscape features, but also about what these features mean for the ways in which people interact with, talk about, and conceive of them.

(c) Subcategorisation:

- Do landscape categories display subcategorisation, i.e., is the landscape lexicon hierarchical? If so, which is the linguistic evidence for such hierarchy? Describe the referential details of any such subcategories. Is it possible to distinguish several levels of categorisation? What strategies does your language use to create partonymic and taxonomic relationships within the landscape lexicon, if any? Is metaphor employed, for example (cf. English 'river mouth', 'foot hills')? If so, from which domains are metaphors drawn (body, kinship etc.)?

Place names

Here the task involves the compilation of an inventory of place names and a linguistic analysis of them according to the points set out in (a)-(c), below. Try to obtain information from several native speakers. Also, try to document the broader cultural significance of places denoted by place names by recording stories associated with them. Finally, if possible, document sites with whatever means are at your disposal: photographically, on video, and/or with a GPS (Global Positioning System) device.

(a) The structural characteristics of place names:

- Phonological aspects: do place names behave like other classes with respect to phonological characteristics or are they aberrant in some way (possibly reflecting conservatism, substrate influence, borrowing, etc.)?
- Morphological aspects: do place names have morphological properties that allow them to be identified as a form class? And are there affixes or morphological processes that occur only in/with place names? Are place names simple terms or binomials or both?
- Syntactic aspects: What is the maximal projection of place names? Determiner phrases, noun phrases, or other? Does this differ across subclasses of place names? If so, what is the distribution? Do place names take attributes? Can they occur in the predication base or subject of non-locative predicates? Is there any difference in the range of topological or path relators (case markers, adpositions, relational nouns) that combine with place names as opposed to other nouns in the language?

(b) The semantics of place names:

- Lexical aspects: What kinds of entities have place names?
- Referential/denotational aspects: How is the place denoted by a place name defined in relation to the physical entity that occupies this place? Are they exactly coextensive? Do people have clear intuitions about this? Are boundaries between named places sharp or fuzzy? Are referents of place names entirely different from those of landscape terms? What is the density of place names?
- Is there any evidence of hierarchical organisation of place names (so that X is considered a subpart of Y, which in turn is seen as a subpart of Z)?

(c) Other issues:

- Etymology: What is the origin of place names? Do they show an internal structure that reveals a naming strategy? How transparent are they?
- Sociolinguistics: What is the distribution of indigenous and non-indigenous place names in sociolinguistic terms? How are recently founded settlements named? Do non-indigenous place names have the same formal and semantic properties as indigenous place names? Does it occur exceptionally/occasionally/frequently that the same place has different names in different languages? In case it does happen, do different place names referring to the same place have exactly the same reference? Are indigenous place names borrowed into contact languages? In case this does happen, do the borrowed place names always have exactly the same reference?

Outcome

The intended result that we are hoping to obtain from each researcher has the format of a concise descriptive report based on the points (or any subset of them) given in the questionnaire. Comprehensive lists of the landscape terms and place names that your analysis is based on should be included. For examples of landscape reports which are already available, contact Niclas Burenhult (Jahai) and Stephen Levinson (Yélî Dnye). The results will be compared and discussed within the Landscape subproject.

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