

Historical linguistic studies in the domain of geographical common names

The study of geographical common names is of great importance for Hungarian historical linguistics, since the elements of this word group appear in very early written records already and are to be found in a great number. These words occur both in proper names and as individual common nouns in the early documentary sources. Although geographical common names have a significant role from a historical linguistic point of view, a systematic survey of them has not been given up to the present. This paper attempts to fill this gap, certain viewpoints stressed, by focussing on the historical aspects of geographical common names.

The theoretical framework of this paper — especially in the clarification of the relationship between geographical common names and place names — essentially approaches the issues connected to geographical common names from the viewpoint of functional place name descriptions. However, some details of the discussion significantly involve the cognitive approach as well. The dimensional theory of language also serves as an organising principle in this dissertation, which means that the spatial, temporal and human aspects of the use of geographical common names are studied with special attention.

The introductory, theoretical chapter first and foremost focuses on the clarification of the notion of the geographical common name. The prototype theory of cognitive semantics is applied as a new approach to the issue, since it provides an opportunity for the dynamic handling of category boundaries. Closely related to the above outlined issue, the relationship of the notions of the geographical common name and the lexical place name formant (i.e. that of the lexical items for naming the type of the place) is discussed in detail.

In the second chapter I focused on the frequency relations in Early Old Hungarian data of the geographical common names. The investigation of frequency relations in Early Old Hungarian data shows that there are observable differences between the semantic load born by the individual semantic fields in the context of frequency of microtoponyms and settlement names developed from geographical common names. Furthermore, not only the semantic fields differ in this respect, but the geographical common names within them are also unequally represented.

In the third chapter the regional incidence of geographical common names is described through the factors affecting it. The historical factors, semantic field connections, cognitive and semantic issues concerning this domain are all interrelated and are often difficult to separate from each other. The study has shown that the reasons for the differences between geographical common names in their incidence are partly historical. The incidence of geographical common names is also significantly influenced by the rank that these elements have in the conceptual hierarchy within the given semantic field. Further important factors to be considered in association with the incidence of geographical common names are the influencing

cognitive factors, since the state and fate of microsystems is defined not only by their inner relations, but also by language-external factors. Finally, the investigation of the semantic relationships between geographical common names also raises some problematic issues that fundamentally influence the spatiality of geographical common names and the possibility of the analysis of this spatiality at the same time.

In the fourth chapter I typified the occurrences of geographical common names as common words, and I distinguished between the various functions they were put to. Along the lines of these groups, the factors that define whether the Latin or the Hungarian form of the given geographical common name stands in the text are finely outlined.

The last chapter of the dissertation is a case study demonstrating the theoretical and methodological observations on a concrete group of words. This study, again, describes the processes of change in the category of geographical common names by surveying the etymological past of a word group — that of fishing equipments and fishing places named after them — that originally was not used for place designating functions. Phenomena motivating this semantic transformation are handled with special attention here. The study of the Early Old Hungarian geographical common names meaning ‘fishing place’ also allows us to come to etymological, phonological, orthographical and unique word geographic conclusions.