Semantic field of health in the Hispanic toponymic discourse

Campo semántico de la salud en el discurso toponímico hispánico

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Abstract: Health and medical toponyms are not the most numerous groups in the toponomastics of the world, however, present an important part of the history of a city where they function. The article analyzes the extensive lexical-semantic field of health in Hispanic toponymy of the world in the aspect of its constituting units' distribution. By means of the GeoNames electronic database, material for the study was selected using the continuous sampling method. The functioning of such units is analyzed from the pragmatic point of view, numerous examples are given. The boundaries of the core and peripheral region of the field are determined. It is established, in particular, that in Paraguay and Uruguay toponyms are associated with the names of outstanding doctors and scientists. And the generalizing concept of *Medicina* – the Spanish for "medicine" (mainly) – is a component that appears mostly in the urban toponymy. There are also Latin American cities named after diseases. The author comes to the conclusion that the meliorative connotation within this semantic field prevails over the pejorative one. And the linguistic parameters obtained can be viewed as markers of the national identity in toponymy of the indicated regions which are isosemic to the spread of the Spanish language on these terrritories. Parallels are drawn between the semantic field of health, developed by Russian toponymists in the field of regional onomastics, and that in the field of Hispanic toponymy. It is demonstrated that the most abundant Hispanic toponymic unit within the theme of health is *Salud* which is "health" for Spanish and the core or concept of the considered semantic field. Some place names can be attributed the "health" semantic field only with due caution as they belong to another semantic category. The article contributes to the development of the theory of the semantic field, national identity, toponomastics and linguodidactics.

Keywords: place names, health, toponymic discourse, semantic field, geolinguistic system.

Résumen: Los topónimos médicos y de salud no son los grupos más numerosos en la toponomástica del mundo, sin embargo, presentan una parte importante de la historia de una ciudad donde funcionan. El artículo analiza el extenso campo léxico-semántico de la salud en la toponimia hispánica del mundo en el aspecto de la distribución de sus unidades constitutivas. Mediante la base de datos electrónica GeoNames se seleccionó el material para el estudio mediante el método de muestreo continuo. El funcionamiento de dichas unidades se analiza desde un punto de vista pragmático y se dan numerosos ejemplos. Se determinan los límites de la región central y periférica del campo. Se establece, en particular, que en Paraguay y Uruguay los topónimos están asociados a los nombres de médicos y científicos destacados. Y el concepto generalizador de Medicina es un componente que aparece mayoritariamente en la toponimia

urbana. También hay ciudades latinoamericanas que llevan nombres de enfermedades. El autor llega a la conclusión de que la connotación mejoradora dentro de este campo semántico prevalece sobre la peyorativa. Y los parámetros lingüísticos obtenidos pueden verse como marcadores de la identidad nacional en la toponimia de las regiones indicadas que son isosemicas a la difusión de la lengua española en estos territorios. Se establecen paralelos entre el campo semántico de la salud, desarrollado por los toponimistas rusos en la esfera de la onomástica regional, y el de la toponimia hispánica. Se demuestra que la unidad toponímica hispana más abundante dentro del tema de salud es *Salud* que es el núcleo o concepto del campo semántico considerado. A algunos topónimos se les puede atribuir al campo semántico "salud" sólo con la debida precaución, ya que pertenecen a otra categoría semántica. El artículo contribuye al desarrollo de la teoría del campo semántico, la identidad nacional, la toponomástica y la linguodidáctica.

Palabras clave: topónimos, salud, discurso toponímico, campo semántico, sistema geolingüístico.

Introduction

Linguistic and health realities cross in plenty of place names all over the world. Generally, medicine is a total science that studies and describes everything that affects or is capable of affecting a person: all substances, fields, organisms, technologies, items of production, achievements and aberrations of the human mind. Striving for pharmacy accuracy and reliability, it uses a wide variety of measuring devices and instruments. It was medicine that gave birth to the widest range of sign systems (Vorontsov, 2018). The aim of this article is to analyze Hispanic toponymic units that semantically refer to the sphere of health and medicine, to define their functioning conditions using pragmatic approach and to prove the existence of the semantic field of health within the Spanish geolinguistic system.

Since many modern place names (more often microtoponyms, e.g., urbanonyms) appear in the course of purposeful name creation, it is very symptomatic that in the ideological field of socio-linguistic discourse "discursive views on their nature arise" (Galaktionova, 2016: 153). The concept of **toponymic discourse** is relatively new but is currently being developed by

researchers in relation to urban toponymy[1]. The definition of it was elaborated by Natalya Kravchenko. According to the author, toponymic discourse is a field where toponymic nomination correlates with deliberate social practices used to achieve certain social, political, psychological or linguistic goals (Kravchenko, 2012: 30).

Nelly Galaktionova identifies three layers of toponymic discourse: political layer, historical and cultural layer and pragmatic layer. In the first case, toponymy is understood as a tool of political agitation, in the second – as an element of the cultural landscape, in which toponyms are signs of the stages of a historical and cultural era, assessed from the point of view of their historical and cultural value, and in the third – as a system of linguistic labels and spatial references, where they have value from the point of view of ease of use (Galaktionova, 2016: 154). In our opinion, Hispanic place names pertaining to the semantic field of health can be seen from the third perspective distinguished by the researcher.

1 General theory of semantic field

The study of semantic field theory is traced back to the very first idea of the founder of common linguistics, known as the famous German linguist from the middle of 19th century, W. Humbodt. However, linguists who proposed the idea of semantic field theory on a real sense were some German and Swiss structuralism linguists from 1930s, such as Ipsen, Jolls, Porzig

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[1] See, for example, Golomidova Marina V., Dmitrieva Anastasia V. Reflection of territorial identity in the toponymic landscape of small Ural towns // Voprosy onomastiki. 2023. Vol. 20. N 2. Pp. 144-173.; Rutkowski, M. Urban toponymy and collective memory: a case of law-enforced decommunization of street names in Poland // Language yesterday, today, tomorrow. 2019. Vol. IV. No 2: 261-300.

and J. Trier. A new research approach which studies semantics with relational and developmental viewpoints was widely accepted so as to focus on the unity of language system and the influence of contexts towards senses (Gao & Xu, 2013: 2031).

Later the topic of the semantic field has been thoroughly studied in the philological science for decades[2].

The term **"semantic field"** is used in linguistics most often to mean "a set of linguistic units united by some common semantic feature" (Vasiliev, 1990) or "a lexical set of words grouped semantically (by meaning) that refers to a specific subject" (Jackson & Amvela, 2000: 14; Faber & Usón, 1999: 67).

In other words, these are linguistic units that have some common non-trivial component of meaning. Initially, units of the lexical level, i.e., words, were considered as such lexical units. Later, in linguistic works, descriptions of semantic fields appeared, which also included phrases and sentences.

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[2] See, for example, Filin F.P. On the vocabulary-semantic groups of words // Езиковедски изследования в чест на акад. Стефан Младенов. – София: Бълг. акад. на науките, 1957. – Pp. 523-538.; Novikov L.A. Sketch of a semantic field // Novikov L.A. Selected works. T. II: Aesthetic aspects of language. Miscellanea. Moscow: RUDN. Series "Proceedings of scientists of the Faculty of Philology", 2001. pp. 554–570; Kezina S.V. Semantic field as a system //Philological sciences. No 4. 2004. Pp. 79-86.; Denisenko V.N. Semantic field 'change' in the Russian linguistic picture of the world (structural, functional, cognitive aspects). Doctor of Philology thesis. Moscow: RUDN, 2005. 44 p.; Shein, I.M. Lexico-semantic field as a universal way of organizing linguistic experience // Bulletin of the Moscow State Regional University. Series: Russian Philology. No. 2. Moscow: Moscow State Regional University, 2010. P. 69–72.; Zyablova N.N. Lexico-semantic field "renewable energy sources": lexical and normative status of recurrent units in modern English. PhD thesis. Samara, 2016. 22 p.; Potapova O. E. An integrated approach to identifying the lexical-semantic field "Sea" // Bulletin of the Leningrad State University. A. S. Pushkin. 2012. No. 2. pp. 139–145.; Russkikh A.S., Shushmarchenko E.A. Text semantic field of the image of King Arthur // Russian Linguistic Bulletin. 2020. № 4 (24): 146-148. etc.

One of the classic examples of a semantic field is a field of color terms, consisting of several color series, e.g., red – pink – pinkish – crimson; blue – cyan – bluish – turquoise, etc. The common semantic component here is "color". According to Vitaly Kodukhov, any semantic field has the following basic features:

1) it is intuitively understandable to a native speaker and is a psychological reality for him;

2) it is autonomous and can be identified as an independent subsystem of the language;

3) its units are connected by one or another systemic semantic relationship;

4) it is connected with other semantic fields of the language and, together with them, forms a language system (Kodukhov, 1987).

The simplest type of semantic field is a field of paradigmatic type, the units of which are "lexemes belonging to the same part of speech and united by a common categorical seme in meaning" (Berezin, 1979). Such fields are often also called semantic classes or lexical-semantic groups. As other authors note, connections between units of a separate semantic field can vary in "breadth" and specificity. The most common types of connections are ones of the paradigmatic type (synonymous, antonymic, generic, etc.). For instance, a group of words tree, branch, trunk, leaf, etc. can form both an independent semantic field, united by the "part – whole" relationship, and be part of the semantic field of plants. In this case, the lexeme tree will serve as a hyperonym (generic concept) for lexemes such as, for example, birch, oak, palm tree, etc.

To organize the semantic field, a dominant is identified. Dominant is "a word that can serve as the name of the field as a whole and is part of the field" (Kodukhov, 1987). There are synonymous and hyponymic fields. In a synonymous field, the dominant is included in the field along with other members of this field. If the dominant rises above other elements of the field, then such a field is called hyponymic (Vasiliev, 1971).

Nowadays new technologies allow constructing various types of semantic fields through ChatGPT and design a semantic field selection strategy to adapt to different scenario requirements (Guanran & Yunpeng, 2024), new models for their interpretation are proposed (JIA et al., 2023; Czyzewska et al., 2023). In addition, a new understanding of health-related motivations for urban food self-production in the light of semantic fields analysis is suggested (Duda, 2024).

2 Semantic field of health in the regional toponymy

Our research has shown that today the semantic field of health most actively has been studied in the Russian regional toponymy. For instance, Alexander Likhtshangof proved its abundancy in the toponymy of St. Petersburg (Likhtshangof, 2014). Moreover, on November 26, 2015, the competition "The Topic of Health in Toponymy of St. Petersburg" was held among 6th, 7th and 8th school grades. Children learned with interest that many medical terms and names of famous doctors can be seen in the names of streets of cultural capital of Russia. Inga Romanova and Olga Konnova studied the medical toponymy of Astrakhan region (Romanova & Konnova, 2022). According to the authors, among medical anthroponyms of Astrakhan city, the following types can be distinguished:

1) street names given in honor of famous scientists and other figures in the field of medicine or who influenced the development of medicine;

2) names of medical institutions given in honor of outstanding physicians;

3) names of diseases given in honor of a geographical object.

The link semantic content – object can also have the opposite direction. Thus, toponyms themselves can be used in medical texts. V. Shkatova undertook the research using the material that gave her dictionaries of medical terminology, where toponyms were selected and analyzed

them using a continuous sampling method, with their subsequent distribution (Shkatova, 2020).

From the data we obtained, the following groups were identified:

1) names given by settlements:

– *Marburg* hemorrhagic fever, or "green monkey" disease (singes verts), named after the city where this virus was discovered in 1967 in a laboratory that did experiments on monkeys;

– *Melaka* virus, named after the first and only recorded case of human infection with acute respiratory disease in the Malaysian city of the same name;

– *St. Louis* encephalitis – an acute infectious disease characterized by general intoxication and damage to the central nervous system; caused a severe epidemic in 1932 in the city of St. Louis, Missouri in (USA);

– *Stockholm* syndrome is a psychological condition that occurs during hostage taking, when hostages begin to sympathize and even sympathize with their captors or identify themselves with them. The authorship of the term is attributed to criminologist Nils Bejerot, who introduced it while analyzing the situation that arose in Stockholm during the hostage crisis in August 1973;

2) toponyms indicating the names of provinces and countries:

– San Joaquin Valley fever, or St. Joachim fever, or California fever;

– *Queensland* fever, or *Qfever* is an infectious disease of animals and humans caused by a microorganism belonging to the rickettsia group. Q fever was first described in Australia in 1937 in the state of Queensland by the Australian scientist Derrick as a peculiar febrile disease of workers in slaughterhouses and canned meat factories;

3) toponyms reflecting the names of rivers:

– *Ebola* virus – a river in the Congo;

– *West Nile* virus.

4) toponyms, using forest names:

– *Zika* fever – a forest in Uganda. The Zika virus was first isolated from a monkey in Uganda in 1947.

– *Kwazanur* forest brain virus or *Kyasanur* forest disease is named after a forest in India.

5) names given by the names of mountains:

– *Rocky Mountain* Fever or Rocky montainspotted fever.

The analysis of terms showed that the most frequent are toponyms, the basic components of which are the names of settlements, provinces and countries, and less frequent ones, the basis of which are the names of rivers, mountains, and forests. In the author's opinion, this is due to the simplification of localization of the disease outbreak.

3 Semantic field of health in the Hispanic toponymy

Analysis of the world Hispanic toponymy allows to consider it as a geolinguistic system (Martynenko, 2023). Hispanic place names of the world can be seen not only from the point of view of the traditional interdisciplinary approach (geography/history/linguistics), but also from the perspective of relevant modern scientific paradigms, such as ecolinguistics, cognitive linguistics, critical toponymy, political toponymy. The validity of the approach to the world Hispanic toponymy as a single geolinguistic system, despite the disparate geographical location and the original nature of the toponymy of each individual country-custodian of the *Hispanidad* culture is confirmed. The general processes of evolution of areal toponymic subsystems and the unity of the terminological apparatus in Hispanic toponymy on different continents strengthen the theory. Structural and grammatical analysis of modern heterogeneous toponymy in Spanish made it possible to identify both the most viable and productive models and toponym-forming means on the scale of the entire language system, and also rare forms of Hispanic toponyms,

hybrid toponyms and toponymic derivatives. The main areas of distribution of Spanish language toponymic vocabulary are Spain, countries of Latin America, USA and Philippines.

Meanwhile, the analysis of our factual material shows a general trend for all the areas distributing Hispanic place names towards the preservation of health topic in the toponymic discourse as it is shown by other researches in the Russian regional toponymy. It is reflected in all toponymic classes from oikonyms and hydronyms to urban Hispanic place names.

We suppose that the most abundant Hispanic toponymic unit within the theme of health is *Salud* which is "health" for Spanish and **the core or concept of this semantic field**. Our empirical material shows that it is used in the basic toponymyc classes:

Place name	Toponymic class	Country
Cuenca Salud	limnonym	Panama
Isla Salud, Playón de Salud	insulonym	Panama
Punta Salud	hydronym	Panama
Salud, Salud Arriba, Agua Salud, Agua de Salud, Hato Salud	oikonyms	Panama
Salud	oikonym	Puerto Rico
Salud, Santa Salud	oikonym	Philippines
La Salud	oikonym	Cuba
La Salud, Buena Vista de la Salud, El Plan de la Salud, Rancho la Salud, El Potrero de la Salud, La Nueva Salud, Valle La Salud, Vida y Salud	oikonyms	Mexico
Laguna la Salud	limnonym	Mexico
La Salud, Agua Salud, Campesina la Salud	oikonyms	Bolivia
La Salud	oikonym	Honduras
Agua Salud	oikonym	Venezuela
Parque Fuente de la Salud	urbanonym	Madrid, Spain
La Salud	oikonym	Spain
Fuente de la Salud	oronym	Madrid, Spain
Baños de la Salud	oikonym (abandoned populated place)	Argentina
Canada de la Salud	agroonym	USA

Table 1. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexeme "salud".

As examples taken from the GeoNames electronic database show, the "healthiest" country from this point of view is Mexico. Besides, we found some more lexemes of the studied semantic field in the Hispanic toponymy of the world:

Lexeme	Tranlation	Examples	Geographical object	Country
RECUPERACION, CONVALECENCIA	"recovery"	Colonia Recuperación	populated place	Mexico
		Estancia la Recuperación	ranch	Argentina
		La Convalecencia	2 populated places	Mexico
		La Convalecencia	intermittent	Mexico
		Isla de Convalecencia	island	Philippines

Table 2. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexemes "recuperación",

"convalecencia".

The etymological data confirm the attachment to the given semantic field. E.g., the island's name of *Isla de Convalecencia* (Philippines) dates back to the 1830s when the Hospicio General was built, and the island was used principally as a place of recuperation or convalescence for patients of the Hospital of San Juan de Dios (Camagay, 1988).

Lexeme	Tranlation	Examples	Geographical object	Country
CURANDERO	"a folk healer"	Curandero	populated place	Venezuela
		Fundo El Curandero	farm	Venezuela
		Curandero	2 populated places	Mexico

Table 3. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexeme "curandero".

Curandero is a shaman-healer in Latin America who has undergone appropriate training and initiation and is able to treat psychological and physical diseases (Bersnev, 2006). This medicine man gains his special magical knowledge through training in isolation in the jungle. To work, the curandero often uses entheogens that cause an altered state of consciousness. Depending on the country, different plants are used for this: for example, in Peru the main plants are ayahuasca and San Pedro cactus. The curandero also uses mapacho, a ritual tobacco, in his work (Arévalo Valera, 1985). A curandero often served as a spiritual leader of his people. The Peruvian Moche tribe were often depicted as curanderos on traditional pottery (Berrin, 1997).

Lexeme	Tranlation	Examples	Geographical object	Country
ENFERMEDAD	"desease"	La Enfermedad	populated place	Venezuela
		Quebrada la Enfermedad	stream	Venezuela
DOLOR DE CABEZA	"headache"	Dolor de Cabeza	3 populated places	Mexico
ENFERMERA	"nurse"	Laguna la Enfermera	lake	Venezuela
		Arroyo Enfermera	stream	Argentina
MÉDICO	"doctor"	Cañón El Médico	canyon	Mexico
		Playa el Médico	beach	Cuba, Uruguay
		Cerro El Médico	mountain	Mexico
		Medico	populated place	Philippines
		El Médico	stream	Cuba
		Arroyo del Médico	stream	Dominican Republic
		Centro Médico La Quinta Inn	hotel	Texas, USA
CLÍNICA	"hospital"	La Clínica	5 populated places	Mexico
		La Clínica	populated place	Dominican Republic
JERINGA	"syringe"	Punta Jeringa	point	Panama
		Fracción de Jeringa	populated place	Mexico
		La Jeringa	2 populated places	Mexico
		La Jeringa	intermittent stream	Mexico
		Laguna La Jeringa	intermitent lake	Mexico
		Río Jeringa	stream	Costa Rica
		Ensenada Jeringa	bay	Panama
		Hacienda La Jeringa	farm	Venezuela
PASTILLA	"pill"	La Pastilla	hill, populated place, stream	Mexico
		La Pastilla	3 populated places	Dominican Republic
MULETA	"crutch"	Muleta	river	Philippines
		Quebrada La Muleta	river	Panama

Table 4. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexemes "enfermedad", "dolor de cabeza", "enfermera", "medico", "clínica", "jeringa", "pastilla", "muleta".

We noted that the generalizing concept of MEDICINA – the Spanish for "medicine" (mainly) – is a component that appears mostly in the urban toponymy: *Centro de Medicina de la Familia* – hospital in Juncos, Puerto Rico; *Escuela de Medicina San Juan Bautista* – school in Caguas, Puerto Rico, etc.

The utilization of DOCTOR or DR. elements is also worthnoting. Among the anthropotoponyms of Paraguay, several dozen names containing the *Doctor* or *Dr* components stand out. Some of them glorify doctors, some – scientists from other fields. Thus, towns of *Doctor Raul Peña* and *Raul Peña* are named after one of the country's most prominent doctors, Raul Peña, son of former President Pedro P. Peña and direct descendant of José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia.

Etymology of several place names in the toponymy of Uruguay deserve a more detailed story as well. Thus, Vicente Francisco Soca Barreto (1856-1922), after whom the city of *Dr. Francisco Soca* is named, was an Uruguayan physician and politician. His parents came to Uruguay from the Canary Islands. After graduating from elementary and high school, Soca began studying medicine, graduating in Montevideo. He expanded his knowledge at the University of Paris, where he wrote an outstanding scientific paper that has been published in the most prestigious journals on the topic. After returning to his homeland in Montevideo Soca became a member of the Chamber of Deputies, then the Senate (chairman), the National Administrative Council and a member of the Colorado party. His scientific fame crossed the borders of Uruguay: Soca was considered a world-famous figure; various publishers have collected his magnificent works as works of a true researcher. The politician died surrounded by the gratitude and admiration of his people. He rests in the National Pantheon in the central cemetery of Montevideo, along with prominent figures from Uruguay for their services to their scientific activities (Martynenko, 2021).

Some place names can be attributed the "health" semantic field only with due caution as they belong to another semantic category. Thus, the concept of DEPRESIÓN is polysemantic and can mean both "depression" and "cavity", what is more, the second meaning in toponymy is more likely. Meanwhile we find the corresponding place names in the map:

Lexeme	Tranlation	Examples	Geographical object	Country
DEPRESIÓN	"depression" or "cavity"	Depresión de Maracaibo	plain	Venezuela
		La Depresión	populated place	Colombia
		Depresión de Boca Grande	depression (cavity)	Colombia

Table 5. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexeme "depresión".

Similarly AMPOLLA in Spanish can mean both "medical ampoule" and "bottleneck". Again, we are more inclined to think about relying on the second meaning when analyzing the motivation of place names in these cases:

Lexeme	Tranlation	Examples	Geographical object	Country
AMPOLLA	"medical ampoule" or "bottleneck"	Arroyo Ampolla	stream in La Altagracia Province	Dominican Republic
		Ampolla	populate place	Argentina

Table 6. Hispanic place names containing the Spanish lexeme "ampolla".

In general, the semantic field of "health" in the Hispanic toponymic discourse might be much wider. Our task within this article was to ensure its existence and outline its boundaries. Also, the results show the abundancy of so-called doublet toponyms – similar place names on the territory of one country. The "richest" country for doublet toponyms of health, in our opinion, is Mexico. We presume it is due to the bigger amount and density of the population.

Examples demonstrate that concepts pertaining to the area of our research are present in most types of geographical objects and the composition in Hispanic toponymic units of the semantic field of health varies quantitatively: a place name can consist of 1, 2 and 3 and more components.

According to our observations, the meliorative connotation within the considered semantic field prevails over the pejorative one. This tendency is typical for the entire Hispanic toponymy of the world (Martynenko, 2023) and can be compared with the one of the toponymic

system of Great Britain, for example, where positive adjectives used as topoformants greatly predominate over negative ones (Urazmetova, 2022: 82).

Conclusion

Within the framework of the generalized concept of anthroposociocultural genesis, it is possible to reconcile traditional views on the original human environment with the data of modern science. Toponyms play a significant role in the formation of medical terminology. They are characterized by widespread use in all branches of medicine, and with the correct translation and high erudition of medical workers, place names can certainly simplify their work.

Toponymic discourse is involved in human perception of urban space and in its own way affects people's awareness of their community based on belonging to this space. Considering the importance of the spatial factor in organizing people's lives in the era of globalization and new communication technologies, we see it as potentially useful to further deepen the understanding of the mechanisms that provide toponymic support for the sense of regional belonging.

In our opinion, the linguistic parameters obtained can be viewed as markers of the national identity in toponymy of the indicated regions which are isosemic to the spread of the Spanish language on these terrritories.

The heterogeneity and originality of semantic field "health" within the Hispanic toponymic discourse partly compensates for the small number of Spanish linguistic units in its composition. Such geographical names reflect the social and cognitive characteristics of the place name creators, which undoubtedly makes these nominations a cultural heritage within the given geolinguistic system.

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