STRUCTURAL COMPOSITION OF HYDRONYMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract

Hydronyms, as a special class of toponyms denoting water bodies, constitute an important object of linguistic, cultural, and historical research. Their structural composition reflects the interaction of language, geography, and collective cognition over long periods of time. This article presents a comparative analysis of the structural composition of hydronyms in English and Uzbek. The study focuses on morphological, lexical, and syntactic patterns that characterize hydronym formation in both languages. By examining simple, compound, and complex hydronyms, as well as affixal and syntactic models, the paper highlights both universal and language-specific features. The analysis demonstrates that while English hydronyms tend to favor compounding and descriptive lexical elements, Uzbek hydronyms show a strong inclination toward affixation and agglutinative structures. The findings contribute to comparative onomastics and provide a theoretical basis for further hydronymic studies.

Keywords: hydronym, toponymy, structural composition, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics

Introduction

Hydronyms – geographical names of rivers, lakes, seas, springs, canals, and other water bodies – occupy a central position in toponymic systems. Due to the fundamental role of water in human settlement and economic life, hydronyms are often among the most ancient layers of geographical nomenclature. Their structural composition preserves traces of archaic lexical units, historical word-formation models, and earlier stages of language development.

In both English and Uzbek linguistic traditions, hydronyms have been studied within the broader framework of toponymy. However, comparative research focusing specifically on their structural composition remains limited. Such comparison is especially relevant given the typological differences between English, an analytical language with limited inflection, and Uzbek, an agglutinative Turkic language with a rich system of affixes.

The present article aims to analyze and compare the structural composition of hydronyms in English and Uzbek. The objectives of the study are: (1) to identify the main structural types of hydronyms in both languages; (2) to describe the morphological and syntactic mechanisms involved in their formation; and (3) to

reveal similarities and differences conditioned by typological features of the two languages.

Theoretical Background and Previous Research

Hydronymy has long attracted the attention of linguists, geographers, and historians. In European onomastics, scholars such as A.Dauzat, H.Krahe, and E. Ekwall emphasized the archaic nature of river names, noting their resistance to linguistic change. English hydronyms have been examined from etymological and structural perspectives, revealing layers of Celtic, Latin, Old English, and Scandinavian origin.

In Turkic linguistics, including Uzbek onomastics, hydronyms have been analyzed as part of the toponymic system reflecting natural features, economic activities, and ethnocultural factors. Researchers have noted the productivity of certain hydronymic formants such as *-soy*, *-daryo*, *-ko'l*, and *-ariq*. These formants play a crucial role in the structural organization of Uzbek hydronyms.

From a structural point of view, hydronyms can be classified according to their morphological complexity (simple, derived, compound) and syntactic structure (single-word vs. multi-word names). Comparative analysis allows us to observe how different languages employ distinct strategies to encode similar geographical concepts.

Structural Types of Hydronyms in English

1. Simple Hydronyms

Simple hydronyms in English consist of a single lexical root without overt affixation or compounding. Many of these names are of ancient origin and often lack transparent meaning in modern English. Examples include *Thames*, *Avon*, *Exe*, and *Trent*. These hydronyms are frequently inherited from pre-English languages and function as indivisible units in the contemporary lexicon.

Despite their structural simplicity, such hydronyms are semantically opaque. Their persistence highlights the conservative nature of hydronymic systems, where names may survive language shifts and population changes.

2. Derived Hydronyms

Derived hydronyms in English are formed through suffixation or other word-formation processes, although this type is less productive than in agglutinative languages. Examples include *Brooklyn* (from *brook* + *-lyn*) and *Streamlet* (from *stream* + diminutive suffix *-let*). In hydronymic usage, derivation often serves a descriptive or diminutive function.

In some cases, derivational elements reflect historical layers of the language. Old English suffixes such as *-burna* (stream) or *-well* (spring) survive in names

like *Blackburn* and *Bakewell*, where the hydronymic element has become fossilized.

3. Compound Hydronyms

Compounding is one of the most productive mechanisms in English hydronym formation. Compound hydronyms typically consist of a generic term denoting a water body (*river, lake, brook, sea*) and a specific modifier. Examples include *River Thames*, *Lake Superior*, *Red River*, and *White Sea*.

The modifier may express color (*Black Sea*), size (*Great Lakes*), direction (*East River*), flora and fauna (*Otter Creek*), or anthropogenic associations (*King's River*). Structurally, these compounds often follow the pattern **Modifier + Generic Term** or **Generic Term + Proper Name**, depending on conventional usage.

4. Syntactic Hydronyms

Some English hydronyms are multi-word syntactic constructions, such as *The Mississippi River*, *The Gulf of Mexico*, or *The Bay of Biscay*. These names involve articles, prepositions, and fixed word order, reflecting the analytical nature of English grammar.

Such constructions are especially common in official, administrative, and cartographic contexts. The presence of function words contributes to clarity and differentiation, particularly when multiple water bodies share similar base names.

5. Diachronic Layers in English Hydronyms

An important structural characteristic of English hydronyms is their diachronic stratification. Many river names belong to pre-Celtic or Celtic layers (*Avon*, *Thames*), while others reflect Old English (*Derwent*, *Swale*) or Scandinavian influence (*Beck*, *Skell*).

These historical layers often coexist within the same hydronymic system, resulting in structural heterogeneity. From a synchronic perspective, such names function as simple units, but diachronically they reveal complex patterns of linguistic contact and replacement.

6. Semantic Motivation and Structure

Although many English hydronyms are opaque, structurally motivated names still play a significant role. Descriptive compounds and syntactic constructions encode salient physical or cultural features of water bodies. This semantic motivation interacts with structure, as longer and more complex forms tend to be more transparent in meaning.

Overall, the structural types of English hydronyms demonstrate a balance between archaic simplicity and productive compounding, shaped by the historical development of the English language.

Conclusion

This study has shown that hydronyms in English and Uzbek share common structural types, including simple, derived, compound, and syntactic forms, which reflects universal principles of geographical naming. However, the productivity of these structures differs significantly due to typological distinctions between the two languages.

English hydronyms are predominantly characterized by simple and compound structures, many of which originate from ancient linguistic layers and are semantically opaque in modern usage. In contrast, Uzbek hydronyms display a strong tendency toward derivational and agglutinative formation, resulting in greater structural and semantic transparency.

Overall, the structural composition of hydronyms illustrates the close relationship between language, history, and the natural environment. The comparative perspective adopted in this study contributes to onomastic research and offers a basis for further cross-linguistic investigation of hydronymic systems

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