

NAMES OF COUNTRIES. PHRASEOLOGICAL SYNONYMY

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Abstract

Phraseology is a semantically interesting sector in a language. The concern for phraseology is determined by the connections it makes with different areas of language: vocabulary, morphology, syntax, semantics. This analysis aims to classify countries according to the meaning of the phrase, while using metaphors that are more easily entrenched in the collective memory.

Keywords: *phraseology, metaphor, meaning, culture, geography*

Résumé

La phraséologie est un secteur intéressant dans une langue, du point de vue sémantique. La préoccupation pour la phraséologie est déterminée par les connexions qu'elle réalise avec différents domaines de la langue: lexicale, morphologie, syntaxe, sémantique. L'analyse présente vise la classification des pays en fonction de la signification du syntagme. On utilise des métaphores qui se fixent plus facilement dans la mémoire de la collectivité.

Mots-clés: *phraséologie, métaphore, sens, culture, géographie*

Ch. Bally defines phraseology as that part of the vocabulary which includes stable sets of words equivalent to a lexical unit.

Liviu Groza, in *Probleme de frazeologie*¹, argues that phraseology refers to a combination of two or more lexical units, governed in almost all cases by a syntactic relationship and characterized by a meaning perceived as unitary, likely to be used as such, more or less frequently, in a particular language. The term *phraseology* was attested for the first time in 1558 in Renaissance Latin, and then borrowed in French, English, and spreading in European idioms.

Following the model of the first works consecrated to Greek and Latin phraseology, starting with the 18th century, the monolingual dictionaries created at the time contained, according to the linguistic sense of the author, certain associations or lexical groups deemed as functional units from different perspectives, more intuited than specified in terms of theory. Theoretical observations on phraseology do not appear until the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Without using the term *phraseology* some linguists like Ferdinand de Saussure begin to be concerned with the way in which a series of groups of words with a denotative value are formed.

The Swiss linguist who laid the basis of the study of phraseology is Ch. Bally. In Romanian linguistics, the term *frazeologie* ('phraseology') was first used in

¹ Liviu Groza, *Probleme de frazeologie*, Editura Universității din București, 2011.

1943 by Iorgu Iordan. Although the first terms were *locuțiune* ('phrase'), *expresie* ('expression'), phraseology was brought to the attention of researchers by Hristea².

The purpose of this paper is to study the phrasemes defining 38 countries.

According to the meaning of the phrase, we have:

1. Countries differing through landscape

South Africa, "the rainbow country", "the land of diamonds" is so called due to the diversity of the fauna and rich flora. Hippos, lions, ostriches, elephants, whales and crocodiles are just a small part of the richness of this region. A similar diversity can be noticed in the population. With a chaotic history, South Africa is working on its dream of creating a "rainbow nation" where people of all colours live in peace together. The second name comes from the fact that it is regarded as the largest gold producer in the world³.

Belarus, "the land of the blue eyes", has a metaphorical name because its territory is covered by more than 10 thousand lakes (puddles)⁴.

Canada, "the land of great white silence" has large territories in the North, where human presence is rare and the snow covers everything for the most part of the year.

China, "the Celestial Empire", "the land of the dragons" had such names in the imperial era. China is a special country. The symbol of this country is the dragon, the symbol of life. The dragon is a mythical creature, usually described as a big, strong snake or a reptile with magical and spiritual abilities. Such mythological creatures having some or more characteristics typically associated with dragons are common to all mythologies of the world.

Costa Rica, "the Switzerland of Central America" has such a name due to the lifestyle and varied topography, magnificent volcanoes, luxuriant vegetation, emerald lakes, hot springs, wild beaches.

Finland, "the land of 1000 lakes", is so called because there are many lakes on its territory. The exact number of natural lakes on the territory of Finland is 187,888.

Haiti, "the land of high mountains", is an island situated in the Greater Antilles. Haiti's history is marked by the confluence of different cultures.

Iraq, "the land of the two rivers", is the place where the Sumerian civilization arose. The land between the two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, is a mountainous and arid land.

Norway, "the land of the fjords, northern lights and white nights" is so named because early light varies greatly during the year in this country. For example, in Oslo, the sun sets down at 3:30 p.m. in December, and in summer it sets down at 3 a.m. and rises at 4 a.m.

Russia, "the country of geographic superlatives" has more borders than any other country in the world. It is a country of contrasts, a vast and rich territory (containing oil, gas) where some people are extremely wealthy, while others starve.

Rwanda, "the land of a thousand hills", is a small but extremely beautiful country in the heart of Africa, with volcanoes, large lakes, green hills and fertile terraces.

² Th. Hristea, *Frazeologia și importanța ei pentru studiul limbii române*, in *Limba română*, XXXVI (1986).

³ <http://www.digi-world.tv/Africa-de-Sud>.

⁴ <http://m.ziare.com/international/belarus>.

Switzerland, “the country of cantons”, is a federal republic made up of 26 autonomous cantons. The name of the country in Swiss German, Schwiiz is a homophone of the name of the canton.

Turkey, “the land of the two continents”, lies at the meeting point of two continents, Asia and Europe.

Iceland, “the land of ice and fire”, is a country carved by lava and ice; one can find there: volcanoes, earthquakes, lunar landscape, but also the largest glacier in the world after Antarctica and Greenland, geysers, wonderful waterfalls.

Portugal, “the land of eternal spring”, is one of the most popular countries for holidays. Portugal provides all the benefits of a perfect destination and its presentation at this time is not accidental: spring is the season when the country of the Atlantic flourishes both literally and figuratively.

2. Countries with metaphorical names which make reference to biblical themes

Armenia, “the land of Noah”, was among the first peoples converted to Christianity. As one of the world’s oldest civilizations, Armenia once included the biblical mountain Ararat, where Noah’s Ark is said to have remained after the flood. The Armenians consider themselves the direct descendants of Noah, the Biblical Flood survivor. According to the Book of Genesis, Noah’s Ark landed on Ararat, in the heart of Armenia.

Israel, “the land flowing with milk and honey”, has a name which makes reference to the biblical times of the Old Testament. God promised Israel “a land flowing with milk and honey”.

3. Countries with names which make reference to animals and birds

Albania, “the land of the eagles”, has a name relating to toponymy. In the language of the locals, the country is called Shqipëria. Ever since the 16th century, the toponym Shqipëria and the ethnonym Shqiptare gradually replaced Arber. The two terms are commonly interpreted as “the land of the eagles”, and “the land of the children of the eagles”.

Australia, “the land of kangaroos”, is called after the animal which is the national symbol. Australia provides many special attractions. The Australian fauna is mostly unique, since it cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

China, “the land of the dragons”, has a name which makes reference to a symbolic animal.

Ireland, “the land without snakes” or “Emerald Isle”, has two names entrenched in world geography. Ireland is the only country in the world where there are no snakes. Legends say that St. Patrick drove all the snakes out of Ireland, pushing them into the water. Ireland is also known as the Emerald Isle, due to the prevailing green colour.

4. Countries named by colours

Madagascar, “the Red Island” is so called because of the colour of the soil. It is also called the graphite island because it has very rich resources of graphite.

Mongolia is known as “the land of the blue sky” because it is a sunny country, 250 days of the year are sunny.

5. Countries with names which contain names of plants

Tunisia, or “the jasmine country” has such a name because jasmine is the traditional flower of Tunisia. The most famous Tunisian perfume is a story inspired by

a French soldier who fell in love with a Berber princess. It is said that the princess loved to walk every evening in a field of jasmine flowers. The jasmine scent became a symbol of hope and love, a testimony of love between two people belonging to different cultures.

The Netherlands, “the land of tulips”, since tulip varieties can reach thousands of Euros for a single flower. The Netherlands is a surprising country with typical landscape attractions, making the subject of many paintings and other works of art.

6. Countries with various other names

Austria, “the country of apples” is so called because the fruit representing this country is the apple. This fruit is one of the basic components in modern human nutrition.

Belgium, “the country of chocolate”, is a large chocolate producer. Belgium, the country of chocolate, is rich in medieval towns, gothic cathedrals and castles. In Belgium you can spend a few days admiring the architecture of cities and tasting many kinds of chocolate.

Brazil, “the country of coffee”, is the world “giant” or “monarch” of coffee. As the song says, there is enormously much coffee in Brazil. No wonder the country was described as the world “giant” or “monarch” of coffee.

France, “the country of cheese”, explains its name through the existence of more than 46 types of cheese.

Germany, “the country of beer” or “country of cars”, has two well-known names. Beer appeared about 600,000 years ago. Germany is the country that has a long tradition of brewing. To demonstrate the mastery of brewing, the Germans organize a festival called Oktoberfest every year, in October. On this occasion, people drink a lot of beer, “rivers of beer” served in one litre glasses; they are popular as souvenirs. Germany is also known as the country of cars because German cars are sought worldwide: VW, Mercedes Benz, Porsche, Opel, Audi and BMW are the best quality and the spirit of innovation, the image of Germany as a tourist destination.

India is “the land of contrasts”, and “the land of spices”. These names are entrenched in universal culture. India is a country of contrasts, where traditions meet the modern world, where one can find something new everywhere and where one cannot be amazed at the difference between things. India is a mystical country, wrapped in the aroma of spices, a colourful and noisy realm. Spices are used since ancient times.

Italy, “the boot country” or “the land of pizza and pasta” is a dream destination for those who love good food. While there is a possibility that pizza might have Greek origin, Italy remains the country of pizza, with a plurality of sorts. But Italy is also known for its boot shape. For this reason Italy is called the “Boot Country”. The Italian Peninsula is known as “La stivale” which is translated in Italian as “boot”.

Mexico, “the land of hot pepper”, has a name which refers to the nutrition of primitive people on the American continent since 7500 BC. In Mexico there are many types of hot pepper: jalapeno, chili, tabasco.

Sri Lanka, “the land of tea”, is dubbed as such due to the fact that it is the third largest world producer. Tea represents now approximately 12% of the GDP, annually producing over 700 million dollars.

Columbia, “the country of drugs”, is a country visited by many tourists, still

hiding many of the shadows of the past. It is the country where the word drugs does not impress anyone any longer. The images from this country are terrible. They represent a lesson about what drugs mean in a country where the culture and processing of cocaine is a way of life.

Cyprus, “the island of love”, “the island of Aphrodite” is so called because the most famous beach in Cyprus, the beach of Aphrodite, lies near Paphos. It is the place where the goddess of beauty and love was born of the sea foam, as the legend tells.

Spain, “the land of passion”, is the cradle of universal civilization, the land of bullfighters, songs, wine and beautiful girls.

Japan, “the land of the rising sun”, has the official name Nipponkoku, the country of origin of the sun. It is also known in Romanian as “the Land of the Rising Sun” because people believe they belong to a solar kingdom, to the sun goddess Anatersu. Anatersu was the shining goddess of the sky, she was so beautiful that the gods decided to move her up in the sky.

Thailand, “the land of smiles”, is one of the most beautiful and tempting places thanks to the charming smile of Thai women. The land of smiles is one of the most beautiful places on earth. The name of the country comes from the fact that, on these exotic lands, any tourist can relax with a Thai massage. This massage combines yoga and stretching movements. The massage areas are arranged in the Feng Shui style, inviting you with a variety of fragrances.

America, the land of gambling, is so called because the true development of gambling took place in America, where the gambling buildings in the West were called “saloons”. Certainly, the most important and attractive activity in a casino is gambling.

The countries we have referred to are classified according to the significance of the phrase: countries differing through landscape, countries with metaphorical names that make reference to biblical themes, countries referring to creatures etc. Some countries have names that refer to their economy. For example, Belgium is the country that has exported a lot of chocolate, just as Brazil helps the economy by exporting coffee. Another example is Germany, the main automobile manufacturer. Some countries have names that come from the names of plants symbolizing those countries: Tunisia “the jasmine country”, the Netherlands “the land of tulips”.

These metaphors originate in descriptive landscape elements, in certain characteristics of the landscape, in soil and subsoil riches, symbolic elements that emerged in the world culture. Most phrasemes contain the generic name *land* or *country* accompanied by different determiners. Rarely, *land* or *country* is replaced by *island*.

Since metaphors are expressive, they get more easily entrenched in the collective memory. They thus become an alternative to the country’s actual name.

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