

## Diachronic discursive dynamics: Knowledge constructions on German exonyms in Slovenia

### 1. Introduction

This article examines the German-Slovene name pairs for the geographical conditions of Slovenia from the perspective of discourse linguistics and aims to capture the connection between the endonymic-exonymic status of the German toponyms and their knowledge constructions.

### 2. German-Slovene name pairs from the perspective of historical frameworks

Historically, the German names for Slovenian geographical designations such as *Laibach*, *Marburg*, *Veldes*, etc. developed from the history of German-Slovene language contact and, together with their Slovene equivalents (*Ljubljana*, *Maribor*, *Bled*), represent a significant part of the historically evolved bilingualism. The political upheaval of 1918 turned the country monolingual, with the result that German names in German-language discourses of the Slovenian cultural area began to gradually fade out (with the exception of the National Socialist phase during the Second World War (1941–1945)).

Slovenia's independence in 1991 was a major turning point. So much so that members of the German (residual) minority organised themselves into various cultural associations and attempted to revitalise Slovenia's German cultural heritage (Ferenc 2020, pp. 232 f.; Krevs Birk 2020, p. 20).

### 3. On the endonym/exonym status of German geographical names

If we consider both parts of the German-Slovene toponymic name pair from the perspective of endonymy and exonymy as well as of the language of the linguistic area, we find German-Slovene name pairs for mixed-language areas, for the contiguous German linguistic area as well as for the Slovene linguistic area (Krevs Birk 2021, p. 114). From a diachronic perspective, the German names can be described as endonymic until 1918 (and during the war period). Synchronously examined, *Laibach*, *Marburg*, *Veldes* can thus be classified as *current exonyms* as well as *historical endonyms*.

In order to grasp the knowledge constructions associated with the endonymic-exonymic dual status, the study uses the representative German-Slovene lexicons (Cigale 1860; Tomišek 1918 and 1924; Tomišič 1938 and 1958; Grah/Klinar 2005; Debenjak, D./Debenjak, B./Debenjak, P. 1992 and 1995; PONS 2009) because, with regard to bilingual toponyms, they can be understood as a “reconstruction of something that could be called a ‘time-talk’” (Hermanns 1995, p. 88; cf. also Kämper 2006, p. 335). In the appendix of Cigale's two-volume dictionary (1860, pp. 1989–2012), there is a list of over 2,000 geographical names in German, including for the “less important place[s] of the Slovenian area” (ibid., p. 8). The lists in Tomišek's dictionaries (1918, 1924) represent the last inclusion of toponyms in German-Slovene lexicography before the start of Slovenia's monolingual period. Tomišič's dictionaries (1938 and 1958, with several editions until the early 1990s) contain neither lists of geographical names nor isolated toponyms.

The DaF university work “Slovenski toponimi v nemških besedilih” from the 1980s (Grah/Klinar 1982, 2000, 2005) is significant here. It explicitly postulates endonymic usage and at the same time advises against the use of German exonyms (Grah/Klinar 2005, pp. I, 3, 12, 58, 73). There are no German exonyms in the attached list of Slovene toponyms, only the endonymic transfer of Slovene names. The postulate is also visually reinforced by the map of “the Slovenian country and regions” by Peter Kosler (“Zemljovid slovenske dežele in pokrajin”, 1853) on the title page, which contains exclusively Slovene names.

In the “Großes deutsch-slowenisches Wörterbuch” (“Great German-Slovene Dictionary”) by Debenjak, D./Debenjak, B./Debenjak, P. (1992), published after Slovenia’s declaration of independence in 1991, a few place names are included as lemmas. Various knowledge constructions can be accounted for using the example of *Marburg* and its *Maribor* counterpart (cf. also Snoj 2009, p. 252; Jesenšek 2020; p. 147). In addition to the lists of German and Austrian federal states and Swiss cantons, the PONS dictionaries (2009) also include a short list of German names for the Slovenian region, revealing a turning point in the use of names: from avoiding exonyms to using them.

The inclusion of German names in selected lexicons can be evaluated from a perspective of discourse linguistics as a reflection of communicative processes generated by societal power processes. In particular, the country’s officially introduced monolingualism as a “social upheaval” (Kämper 2011, p. 31) after the first and second world wars seems to have profoundly influenced “discursive practices” (Polajnar 2019, p. 267), which even led to the pointed rejection of German names. This also affected the level of awareness of the names; some surveys (Krevs Birk 2011; Enčeva 2018) show that the historical German endonyms have been forgotten in Slovenia. For names like *Laibach*, the “semantic charge from world knowledge” (Harnisch 2008, p. 23) also applies as the semantics of the toponyms, which can be considered both historical endonyms and current exonyms, exhibit features of connotation semantic (cf. *ibid.*, p. 25).

The discursive practices seem to change in correlation with the upheaval phenomenon of Slovenia’s democratisation in 1991. Exonyms for Slovene geographical name bearers can be found in German-language text-type or subject-specific discourses, especially in (cultural) historiographical and literary-historical discourse on Slovenian topics. In the digital media (Krevs Birk 2021, p. 116), a diverse use of German names for the Slovenian region is emerging, too.

#### 4. Conclusion

The knowledge constructions on German names for Slovene localities reveal that German toponyms have been avoided since the end of the First World War, after the official status of German names had been abolished due to its semantic charge. The author of the article showed that the discourses in which knowledge constructions on German exonyms were generated are symptomatic of the cultural control in the field of tension “German place names – German mother tongue and second language - Slovenian social change”.

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