

Linguistic Landscape Peculiarities in Comparative Language and Cultural Aspect

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Abstract — Peculiarities of place naming in different linguistic and cultural situations of one of the largest Russian industrial city Chelyabinsk in the South Urals and the largest city of Nevada Las Vegas in the US West are discussed in the article. Similarities and differences of linguistic landscape verbalization are stated. It is argued that urban minor place names contribute to the unique city image creation by using unique and common minor place names, on the one hand, and by resorting to the general naming practice of linguistic landscape, on the other hand. Linguistic landscape has been analyzed on the material of city districts names, commercial place names, names of streets and monuments. The results of linguistic landscape study confirm that place naming peculiarities of the city are determined by its history and geography, by the history of the country in general. It is shown that urban onomastic reveals both universal features and national, cultural and local peculiarities.

Keywords — *linguistic landscape; language and cultural approach; city image; comparative analysis.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Linguistic landscape study attracts attention of many researchers in the Russian Federation and abroad. It is a part of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, semiotics and urban studies mostly focused on the analysis of verbal and non-verbal language displayed in public spaces, such as shop signs, toponymy, pedestrian/directional signage, advertisements, governmental signs, graffiti and other forms of visuals including icons, QR (quick response) codes, etc [1]. Linguistic landscape is understood as a symbolic construction of public space, unveiling language contact, language mixing, power relations, and diversified social uses of language and social meanings of the material placement of signs [2; 3]. The importance of linguistic landscape study can be explained by the fact that urban inhabitants comprising the majority of the population in developed countries are mainly responsible for forming and changing modern national language culture in general and local city language culture in particular. City language culture is determined by the city space, a complex open system verbalized by onomasticon which is most often unique and extremely important in creating city image and by urban verbal markers which correspond to universal verbal city characteristics.

Theoretical basis of linguistic landscape semiotics has been developed by Yu. M. Lotman [4], V. N. Toporov [5; 6], et al.

Creativity of Petersburg inhabitants at the beginning of XX century has been analyzed by D. S. Likhachev in connection with the city districts and social status. The river Neva clearly marked an intellectual border concentrating the main art and academic centers of the city. The author makes a logical conclusion that there are districts of the highest concentration of creative activity in cities and suburbs [7].

N. A. Prokurovskaya logically structuralizes and defines city onomastic space as a system of onomathemes or microtoponyms (minor place names) taking into account their structural and status peculiarities specifying plane names of city districts, micro-districts, city settlements, linear (godonyms) and point (ergonyms, names of separate buildings) names of city objects [8: 23],

S. A. Pitina and G. V. Urvantsev define city onomastic space as an organized open complex system of urban names and place names naming city objects [9: 17].

G. V. Urvantsev studies city space modeling in fiction and cinema discourse claiming that city image is synonymous to city space and reflects both its unique, subjective, and national features as well as universal, stereotypical and objective perceptions [10: 7].

M. V. Golomidova views the problems of local urban names creation in correlation with the whole image conception of the city [11: 185-203]. Such approach to the city linguistic landscape study can result in creating a positive image of the city.

A. V. Urazmetova and Ju. Kh. Shamsutdinova identify and illustrate the main principles of place names classification [12].

For this reason, a sociocultural phenomenon can often appear spatial in multiple ways that are not reducible to one origin (e.g. to the physical environment). For example, a city can simultaneously be a point in discursive space, a unit in a world image, a spatial structure, the object of actions, a physical environment – and accordingly, the space of the city as a sociocultural phenomenon and a study object cannot be reduced to a single ‘spatiality’ [13].

T. Remm views the city as a semiotic system, a complex sociocultural phenomenon where space and time are simultaneously parts of itself and parts of its conceptualisation. The urban space can thus be a space of rhythms and practices, an objectified dimension of the settlement, and a symbolic form in interpretations and creations of cities. The city can be understood as a semiotic whole by considering varying semiotic natures of the urban space [13].

Specific city space has been researched on the material of one city or several cities of the same region or country. Linguistic landscape of the cities presenting different language and cultural situations has rarely been analyzed in comparative language and cultural and sociolinguistic aspects. We assume that such a research will contribute to revealing universal features and national, cultural and local peculiarities of the city space.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper is aimed at studying Russian and American city space representation from the point of view of comparative linguistic, cultural and social approaches. The choice of empiric material is conditioned by the fact that Chelyabinsk is the native city for the authors and Las Vegas is a many times visited city in USA because of the relatives that live and work there.

Although the two cities are about 10,000 km apart, they play different roles in cultural, social, political and economical life of the counties, their linguistic landscape is expressed in the two rather distantly related languages, Chelyabinsk and Las Vegas share much in common.

1. Historically, both Chelyabinsk and Las Vegas developed as small settlements gradually growing and acquiring city status.

2. Etymologically, their names are disconnected with the native languages of the majority of their inhabitants – English and Russian. Las Vegas place name has Spanish origin with clear etymology (meaning ‘the fertile meadows’) and Chelyabinsk place name originates from a Turkic word with shaded etymology (possible explanations include: wolf pit, hole, swarm of bees, noble, nickname of a Bashkir leader, etc. [14].

3. Both cities developed from settlements and got a city status rather late. Chelyabinsk was founded as a fortress in 1736, received the status of a district town in 1781, it became a trade and railway center in XIX century, one of the leading industrial cities in XX and got the regional city status. The city of Las Vegas was founded in 1905, with a varied history dating from 1832 as a trail of the annual Mexican trading caravan from Santa Fe, then a Mormon mission, fort and settlement, after that a railroad town and gradually the largest city in Nevada and the gambling capital of the world [15:7-8].

4. Chelyabinsk and Las Vegas have a large number of inhabitants: over 1,200,000 in Chelyabinsk ranking 7th largest city of Russia by population and about 650,000 people in Las Vegas, with 1,951,000 inhabitants in Las Vegas agglomeration.

5. Both cities are multicultural. Chelyabinsk has a large Turkic population, Las Vegas Mexican.

It may be assumed that the linguistic landscape of the two cities will also have much in common.

The empirical material has been accessed from various city websites, maps and mass media sources. The scheme of the city linguistic landscape analysis includes comparison of urban names of the two cities including horonyms (names of city districts), godonyms (names of streets), ergonyms (commercial place names of entertainment centers and some school names), names of monuments. All constituents of the city linguistic landscape contribute to the city image creation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results of district names analysis

Several Chelyabinsk districts are named after the Communist party leaders: *Leninskij*, *Kalininskij* and one of the main notions of the Great October Revolution and the Soviet Union: *Soviet*. They have never been renamed during Perestroika and still preserve their ideological socialist naming enforced on each Russian city linguistic landscape. *Sovietskij*, *Leninskij*, *Kalininskij* districts are frequently used names in almost every former Soviet and modern Russian city. *Kurchatovskij* is rather a new district commemorating the name of the nuclear bomb creator Igor’ Vasilievich Kurchatov. (The significance of his personality to Chelyabinsk has been emphasized by recent renaming of the city airport in his honour). *Traktorozavodskij* (tractor plant) and *Metallurgicheskij* (metal plant) districts are minor place names with clear connotations accentuating industrial role of the city. These districts are usually abbreviated in speech to ChTZ and ChMZ respectively. To continue such a tradition there is one more abbreviation, i.e. AMZ (auto-mechanical plant). AMZ is a part of *Sovietskij* district and can be often used to denote the whole district if no clarification is needed. Direct indication to the central district position is traced in the place name *Central* (*tsentralnyi*).

Residential areas of Chelyabinsk are either named after former villages: *Churilovo*, *Malinki*, *Krasnoe Pole* (red field) or have attractively sounding metaphorical names: *Topolinaya alleya* (poplar alley), *Parkovyi* (park), *Zapadnyi Luch* (western ray). However, sometimes names can sound ambiguous. There is a new residential area called *Kvartal u ozera* (quarter by the lake). When it is written, no one can notice something strange. While it is being pronounced, especially fast, it becomes ambiguous as people can hear ‘*kvartal luzera*’ (loser’s quarter). There are folk district names in Chelyabinsk as well: *North West* has a diminutive folk name *Severok*, *Lenar* stands for *Leninskij* district. They are more euphonious in contrast to abbreviated ChTZ and ChMZ. Other folk names are given to smaller territories of Chelyabinsk: *Kirsarai* (brick shed) due to the main occupation of the dwellers who dried bricks on their hut roofs; *Steklorez* (glass-cutter); *Gradskij priisk* (Gradskij goldmine, after Grad, the German owner of the gold mines); *Estonian marshes* (after the street with the same name); *Partisan* (after illegal seizure of lands for building houses by the factory workers); *China Town* (the place was planned

for Chinese workers who never came to the city); *Port* (in honor of Port Arthur events before the Russo-Japanese war).

Sin City is the nickname of Las Vegas due to legalized gambling and numerous casinos, although many Las Vegas inhabitants have never been on the Strip and in casinos. There is a different approach to Las Vegas township parts naming. Las Vegas is divided into communities represented by commercial and residential villages. Thus, only in *Summerlin* (named after the mother of the richest landowner, film director, aviator and casino mogul Howard Hughes) over two dozen villages have been built. There is only one unincorporated town *Whitney*, named after a person who lived in Las Vegas Valley: the ranch owner of Stowell E. Whitney (renamed from *East Las Vegas*). Other horonyms include simple markers of the parts of the world or geographical landscape: *North Las Vegas*, *South West*, *S. Summerlin/Lakes*, *Spring Valley*. There is a similarity in naming Russian and US city center: *Tsentralnyi* district in Chelyabinsk and *Downtown* in Las Vegas. *Sunrise* and *Centennial* are other examples of Las Vegas district names with clear etymology.

Names of numerous Las Vegas residential villages are often Spanish, English or mixed Spanish-English *Mariposa grove*, *Silverado Ranch*, *Coronado Ranch*, *Inspirado*, *Eldorado*, *Alto Mira*, *Iron Mountain Ranch*, etc.

The district names of the West American city are mainly geographical, there is only one commemorative horonym, ideological horonyms have not been found, while in the Russian city district naming the majority of horonyms are ideological.

B. Monument names study results

Chelyabinsk monuments are numerous, many of them are made of gray granite, resemble each other representing a large sculpture of a warrior or a communist leader with a protruded right hand. Their names are often ideologically connoted. The monuments are dedicated to famous people of the October Revolution and the Soviet Union periods. There are several monuments to *Lenin*, to *Perished Bolsheviks*, *Orlionok*, *Aliosha* (to the perished school leavers in World War II in front of Chelyabinsk 1 school), to *Heroic firefighters*, *Eternal Fire*, *Czechoslovak Legionnaires*. These monuments have either concrete or general names. The latter include *Memory*, *To the New Route*, *Tank Crewmen Volunteers*, *To the Noble Sons of Motherland*, *Glory to Brave*, etc. Many monuments are commemorating people never visiting the city: *Pushkin*, *Jalil*, *Stolypin*, *Tchaikovskyi*, etc.

Chelyabinsk is known as *Tankograd* for its contribution to the victory by producing tanks and other types of weapon during World War II. *Tank*, *Katyusha* stand on pedestals of the city squares as well as the *Kommunar* train monument. Non-numerous monuments without ideological implications include *Sphere*, *Professor*, *the Tale of the Ural*, bronze sculptures on pedestrian Kirova Street (Kirovka as a folk name). The successful experience of Kirovka with its mainly ironically represented sculptures (sculptures of *Professional poor man*, *Sharp dresser*, *Dandy*, etc.) has defined the subsequent tradition. *Kirovka* is not a stable area as some sculptures may be demounted (a monument of *Chimney-sweeper*) and others can appear like a sculpture of

Dog (Chelyabinsk Hachikō). In recent years the city has got a number of modern sculptures: a monument to a camel of unreal proportions presenting facts of Chelyabinsk trade history, a figure of an ox made of sheet iron, a robot made of scrap metal. There is a new monument of geographical importance: *Ural-Siberia* marking a boundary of the two areas.

The names of Chelyabinsk monuments reflect city history and contribute to the complex image of the city formation.

Las Vegas monuments are also numerous, but they are mainly concentrated in Downtown and Strip areas differentiating tourist and entertainment places from residential territories. There is only one ideological monument in the city resembling in name and form Chelyabinsk ideological monuments. It is *Las Vegas Veterans Memorial* or *Nevada State Veterans Memorial* with solitary or group statues in uniforms or civilian clothes to reflect the main state, country, regional and world wars and battles. The inscription on the Memorial wall summarizes US military ethics with the lines 'I go anywhere in the world they tell me to go, to fight anybody they want me.... I work whenever they tell me to work'. *Las Vegas Strong* is the memorial to the shooting victims on the concert outside the Mandalay Bay casino hotel in 2017.

Other Las Vegas monuments and sculptures are connected with casino owners such as *Benjamin Bugsy Siegel Plaque*, casino attractions with replicas of Eiffel Tower, Sphinx, Statue of Liberty, etc. in front of many buildings. *The Bliss of Dance* near Downtown is a monument to youth and optimism.

C. Results of ergonyms analysis

One of the characteristic features of modern cities in Russia is a large amount of shopping and entertainment venues. These malls become places of interest because they comprise brand shops, cafes and restaurants as well as cinemas, arcades and so on. In Chelyabinsk, there are at least 19 shopping and entertainment centers located throughout the city. Their names reflect various naming traditions.

Some of them refer to landmarks that can be found nearby, such as *Rodnik* (located near a natural spring, which dried out after the construction of the mall), *Kol'tso* (near one of the few roundabouts in the city, and probably the busiest one), *Kalibr* (located on the premises of former factory of the same name), *Gagarin Park* (near the park named after Yuri Gagarin). The latter creates certain ambiguity, especially when translating the name of the park and the mall into English, because both of them would be *Gagarin Park*. However, when the inhabitants of Chelyabinsk say *Gagarin Park* they only mean the mall, while *Park Gagarina* means the park.

Malls built in the late 90s – early 2000s have positively connoted names, aimed at attracting customers. They often have little or no connection to the city or the area where they are situated. Examples include *Fokus* (literally, a magic trick), *Fiesta* (party), *Avrora* (referring either to the goddess of the sunrise of the famous Russian battleship), *Galaktika razvlecheniy* (galaxy of entertainment), *Yolki* (literally,

spruces or *Christmas* trees, referring probably to a rather popular series of New Year films). *Megapolis* entertainment venue stands out from the other names in this category because it can actually be associated with Chelyabinsk itself which is a large and cosmopolitan city.

The trend to name places attractively continues through the 2000s and until very recently, although many of them have occupied the buildings of the former factories sold to new owners after the bankruptcy of enterprises. However, there is a newer tendency to reflect some of the architectural features of the mall buildings in their names. In Chelyabinsk, the architecture-driven mall names include *Gorky* (its roof looks like gentle slopes), *Cuba* (it is intended as a pun, because the building facade was remade to look like a black glass cube), *Bashnya* (the building features a tower), *Raduga* (painted in bright stripes), *Almaz* (it has a specific diamond shape in vertical projection), *Kosmos* (facade covered in blue and white tessellating tiles). Ergonym *Bashnya* deserves a special attention. The new mall was built near the old *Bashnya*, a Soviet department store in the building with a tower. For many years the inhabitants knew only one *Bashnya*, the old one. Then, for a couple of years, people had to indicate which *Bashnya* they meant. Finally the new *Bashnya* has 'inherited' the name and become the only *Bashnya* (although the old *Bashnya* still exists).

The oldest malls have rather non-specific, nondescript names, such as *Ural* (while it is a proper name referring to the entire region and thus bearing some significance to its citizens and people of Russia in general, there are just too many places with that name), *Torgovyi Tsentr* (literally 'shopping mall'), *Severo-Zapadnyi* (located, unsurprisingly, in the northwestern district of Chelyabinsk). These places have been there for many years, and *Ural* and *Torgovyi Tsentr* were even built during the Soviet period. They underwent reconstruction, changed owners several times, but managed to retain their names.

Las Vegas is famous of its casinos which form the largest system of entertainment oikodonyms contributing to unique city image and linguistic landscape creation. There are over 1,700 places for gambling in the city. Some of such places are for family entertainment and rest. They successfully combine resort and casino facilities. The largest ones are on Strip, many of them are in Downtown, and all of them possess unique names. Casino names can be simple: *Horseshoe*, *Silver Slipper*, *Silver city*, *Golden Gate*, *Golden Nugget*, *Golden Spike*, *Treasure Island* to attract all types of adventurers. The noun 'casino' can be added to a concretizing adjective to avoid misunderstanding: *Casino Royale*, *Bighorn casino*, *Longhorn casino* (animal-symbol of Nevada), *Speedway Casino*. Casino names can specify the game: *Bally's*, *Poker Palace*, *Bill's GH* (*gambling hall*) *Jokers Wild Casino*. However, the majority of analyzed names are not connected with gambling: *Fabulous Flamingo*, *Sahara*, *Venetian*, etc. Place names usage indicates the widening of casino meaning, making it more an entertainment center than just a gambling place: *Paris*, *Texas Station*, *New Orleans*, *New York*, *Silverton*, *Santa Fe Station* and many others. *Caesar's Palace*, *Showboat*, *Mirage*, *Winn*, *Mandalay Bay*, *Circus Circus*, *Stratosphere*, *Luxor*, *Bellagio*, etc. are at present rather thematic resorts and entertainment industry centers than places for gambling.

Precedent phenomena are also frequently used in casino names: *Planet Hollywood*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Wild Wild West*, *Eldorado*, *Excalibur*, etc.

Casino names reflect American and world geography, flora and fauna, precious metals, direct markers of gambling, names of their owners forming a unique onomasticon of entertainment ergonyms. Creative endeavor in Las Vegas casino names is more evident than in commercial names of Chelyabinsk.

Creativity can even be seen in the names of Las Vegas schools. While in Russia schools have numbers for names, in the USA they have either names of their founders or principals, metaphorical names, names characterizing local landscape. Compare poetic names of Las Vegas *Chaparral High School* (an evergreen bush) or *Desert Oasis High School* with typical Russian and Chelyabinsk school names: *10 School*, *11 Lyceum*.

D. Results of godonyms study

Being a large city with the population of over 1 million people, Chelyabinsk naturally has plenty of streets. Most of the vital routes have a distinct Soviet flair: they are either named after famous communist leaders or some key concepts of Soviet culture: *Prospekt Lenina*, *Prospekt Pobedy* (referring to the Victory in World War II), *Sverdlovskij Prospekt* (actually referring to Yekaterinburg, former Sverdlovsk because this street runs into the road to Yekaterinburg), *Komsomolskij Prospekt* (referring to the union of communist youths). Numerous ideological godonyms: *Vorovskogo*, *Kirova*, *Dzerzhynskogo*, *Kuybysheva*, etc. are named after people who never visited Chelyabinsk. Besides, there are streets commemorating non-political celebrities, such as *Kurchatova*, *Darvina* (scientists), *Gorkogo*, *Bazhova* (writers), *Gagarina Komarova* (astronauts), *Tchaikovskogo* (composer), etc. Many of the above are quite common for practically every city in Russia, so they in a way neutralize the city identity. While in some of the cities there are debates about streets renaming, it does not happen too often, and Chelyabinsk seems to be proud of its Soviet past.

Another group of street names characterizes Chelyabinsk as an industrial city, commonly known by a nickname The steel spine of Russia due to developed heavy engineering and military plants. These include *Entuziastov* (enthusiastic workers), *Truda* (labour), *Pervoy Pyatiletki* (the first five-year plan), *Geroyev Tankograda* (heroes of Tankograd), *Artilleriyskaya* (artillery), *Metallurgov* (metal plant workers), *Stalevarov* (steel founders).

Streets in newer developments are of special interest. There are two major areas of growth in Chelyabinsk: the eastern outskirts of Churilovo, and the western suburbs of Krasnoye Pole, Parkovyi, Zalesye, Vishnyovaya Gorka, etc. There is the difference in the naming traditions in the eastern and the western parts of the city. While Churilovo seems to be fond of using the names of the famous people: *Samokhina*, *Dukhova*, *Sergeya Gerasimova*, etc. these names are not ideologically connoted: Dukhov is a designer and Gerasimov is a film director. In Churilovo, there are rather direct street names, such as *Razvyazka* (bypass), *Mekhhkolonna* (mobile mechanical division), *Lineynaya* (linear). There are numerous numbered streets as well:

Eltonskaya 1 and 2, Lobinskij 1-11 as well as streets and alleyways of the same name such as *Linejnaya* and *Linejni*.

In the western part of the city some streets get very simple but pleasant names, often connected with flowers, trees, and other natural phenomena. In Churilovo, one can find *Chernichnaya* (blueberry), *Yezhevichnaya* (blackberry), *Osennyaya* (autumn) and *Zimnyaya* (winter) streets, in the western part of Chelyabinsk there are such streets as *Lesnaya* (forest), *Ozernaya* (lake), *Beryozovaya* (birch), *Sadovaya* (garden), *Polevaya* (field), *Raduzhnaya* (rainbow), *Zelyonaya* (green), *Romashkovaya* (camomile), *Vasilkovaya* (cornflower), *Sirenevaya* (lilac), *Solnechnaya* (sun), *Vesennyyaya* (spring), *Lipovaya* (linden), *Ryabinovaya* (rowan), and streets referring to all cardinal directions: *Severnaya*, *Yuzhnaya*, *Zapadnaya*, *Vostochnaya*.

It is curious, however, that some of the streets in the suburbs actually have the same names as city streets: *Entuziastov*, *Svobody*, *Krasnaya*, *Yuzhnaya*, *Solnechnaya*. This entire trend can be explained by the developers' intention to attract people to these far-fetched areas.

The names of streets in Las Vegas are mainly devoid of ideological connotations. Las Vegas streets were at first named after Nevada pioneers: *Clark*, *Fremont*. Railroad construction brought to life *Main St*. Like in Chelyabinsk, it is possible to find a number of 'metal' streets: *Lead*, *Silver*, *Perlite*. Names of trees, states, oceans, children, Amerindian tribes – all of these can be sources for streets naming. After the 1980s when Mob lost its power, Las Vegas witnessed industrial development and housing construction. Streets naming became more varied. Very often celebrities' names have been used: *Frank Sinatra Dr*, *Dean Martin Dr*, *Elvis Presley Rd*, *Wynn Rd* [16].

The same street naming principles are observed in both cities, including space criterion: *Eastern Ave*, *Sahara Ave*, *High St*, *Lake Mead Blvd*, *East Horizon Dr*, natural phenomena: *Rainbow Blvd*, *Westwind Rd*. Las Vegas streets do not only reflect its geography, but they also preserve its history in numerous Spanish godonyms: *Scamadella St*, *La Madre Way*, *Cielo Vista Ave*, *Hasienda Blvd*, etc.

However, Turkic godonyms are only found in Chelyabinsk when they are derived from people's last names. Besides, the godonyms of the Russian city can often be ideological, while Las Vegas godonyms are rarely such. Streets renaming has never occurred in Las Vegas to the same extent as in Chelyabinsk. Creative godonyms are more widely spread in Las Vegas than in the capital of the South Urals.

IV. CONCLUSION

Comparative language and cultural linguistic landscape study on the material of commercial place names, names of streets, monuments and districts of Chelyabinsk, a large industrial Russian city, and Las Vegas, an American city of entertainment and resorts, has revealed common and unique principles of the city space naming. While the two cities are separated by many thousands of miles, they have a number of similar naming traditions. Both use names of celebrities, even if they are not connected with the city, alongside with local VIPs, both use natural phenomena, some city names are quite direct. There is also a specific group of city place

names referring to architectural features of objects. A number of place names verbalize rather abstract concepts, shared values. Most analyzed minor place names have positive connotations and are considered attractive for prospective buyers or customers. Geographical and historical peculiarities are reflected most often in godonyms. Commercial place names are more creative in comparison with other systems of the onomasticon of both cities.

When talking about the differences in naming between the two cities, Chelyabinsk has more politically and/or ideologically-engaged names of monuments and districts, most of which are the inheritance of the Soviet period. The urban place names of Las Vegas, however, are more multicultural and more creative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To the grant of the Fund of Perspective Scientific Research of Chelyabinsk State University.

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