

CLASSIFICATION OF PHYTONYMS IN THE FRENCH-ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract: *This scientific study explores the classification of plant names, known as phytonyms, in the French and English languages, delving into the linguistic nuances and cultural dimensions that shape the botanical lexicon in these two linguistic domains. Through a meticulous analysis of selected plant names, this research aims to unravel patterns of classification, linguistic adaptation, and cultural influences, providing insights into the diverse ways in which these languages categorize and name the flora that surrounds us.*

Keywords: *phytonym, classification, plant name, term, terminology, shifonema, multilingual, French language, English language, linguistic adaptation, cultural influences.*

INTRODUCTION.

The introduction sets the stage by highlighting the importance of plant names in communication, scientific research, and cultural understanding. It emphasizes the multilingual context of the study, focusing on the classification of plant names in both the French and English languages. The introduction outlines the objectives of the research, aiming to uncover patterns of classification, linguistic adaptations, and cultural influences that contribute to the rich tapestry of plant nomenclature in these languages.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

The methodology employed for this study involves a systematic approach to uncovering patterns of classification in French and English plant names. The criteria for selecting plant names include a representation of diverse botanical families and consideration of historical and cultural significance. Linguistic tools such as etymological analysis, morphological examination, and semantic mapping are utilized to dissect the structure and meaning of selected plant names. Data collection involves sourcing plant names from authoritative botanical references, linguistic databases, and cultural documents. This methodological framework ensures a thorough and transparent investigation.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.

The analysis section unveils the intricate patterns of classification within French and English plant names, shedding light on linguistic adaptations influenced by historical roots, cultural shifts, and distinctive classification frameworks in each language.

1. Etymological analysis:

French example: The etymological analysis of the French phytonym “*pissenlit*” (*Taraxacum officinale*) reveals its historical roots. Derived from the Old French “pisse en lit,” meaning “wet the bed,” this etymology not only reflects the plant's diuretic properties but also showcases a linguistic adaptation influenced by cultural attitudes towards its traditional use as a medicinal herb. The generic name *Taraxacum* actually originates from medieval Persian pharmacy writings. Around 900, the Persian scholar Al-Razi wrote “the tarashaquq is like chicory”. Around 1000, the Persian scholar Avicenna wrote a whole chapter of a book on *Taraxacum*. Writer Gerard de Crémone translated the Arabic term to Latin around 1170, spelling the term *tarashaquq* as “*tarasacon*”.¹

English example: In English, the etymology of the phytonym “*buttercup*” (*Ranunculus L.*) reflects a cultural connection. Derived from “butter-cup” due to the vibrant yellow color of its flowers resembling the hue of butter, this classification highlights a linguistic adaptation that intertwines the botanical characteristics of the plant with cultural symbolism.

2. Morphological examination:

French example: Morphological examination of the French phytonym “*chèvrefeuille*” (*Lonicera L.*) exposes patterns in word structures. Comprising “*chèvre*” (*goat*) and “*feuille*” (*leaf*), this classification reflects a morphological pattern in French plant names where descriptive elements contribute to the overall characterization of the plant. In 1703, Charles Plumier (1646-1704) changed the original name of *Caprifolium* to *Lonicera* in honor of Adam Lonitzer (1528-1586), a German botanist and physician.² Carl von Linné retained this genus name while also using the original generic name as the specific epithet for the type species of the genus, thus naming the species *Lonicera caprifolium*.³

English example: The English phytonym “*bluebell*” (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta (L.) Chouard ex Rothm.*) showcases a similar morphological pattern. Combining the descriptive term “blue” with “bell,” this classification exemplifies the English language's tendency to use vivid imagery in plant names, creating a sensory association with the plant's appearance. *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* is known by several common names, such as *bluebell*, *common bluebell*, *English bluebell*, *British bluebell*, *wild hyacinth*, *wood bell*, *fairy flower*, and *bell bottle*.⁴ However, in Scotland, the term “*bluebell*” is used to refer to the harebell, *Campanula rotundifolia*.⁵

3. Semantic mapping:

French example: Semantic mapping of the French phytonym “*aubépine*” (*Crataegus*) visually represents the evolution of meaning. Originally signifying “thorn” in Old French, this term has evolved to encompass a broader cultural and symbolic context, reflecting not

¹ Dawn Macleod, *Popular herbs : their history, growth, and use*, Duckworth, 1981, p. 63

² P.-V. Fournier. *Les quatre flores de la France*, Lechevalier, Paris, 1990 (ISBN 978-2-7205-0529-4), page 886

³ Caroli Linnnaei. *Genera plantarum. Lugduni Batavorum (Leyde, Hollande)*, 1742, 527 pages, p. 174

⁴ Fred Rumsey. “*Hyacinthoides non-scripta (British bluebell) > Distribution and ecology*”. *Species of the day*. Natural History Museum. Archived from the original on February 21, 2012. Retrieved March 25, 2012.

⁵ Richard Mabey (1996). *Flora Britannica*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson. pp. 412–416. ISBN 978-1-85619-377-1.

only the plant's physical attributes but also its significance in French folklore as a symbol of hope and protection.

English example: In English, the phytonym “*rosemary*” (*Salvia rosmarinus*) undergoes semantic mapping, revealing a rich evolution of meaning. Beyond its botanical accuracy, “*rosemary*” carries cultural associations, symbolizing remembrance and fidelity. The semantic evolution of this phytonym showcases the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and the symbolic significance of plants. *Salvia rosmarinus* is now classified as one of many species belonging to the *Salvia* genus. Previously, it was categorized in a smaller genus called *Rosmarinus*, which only included two to four species, including *R. officinalis*, which is now considered a synonym of *S. rosmarinus*. *Salvia jordanii* (formerly *Rosmarinus eriocalyx*) is a closely related species that is native to Iberia and the Maghreb of Africa. Both the original and current genus names were given by Carl Linnaeus, an 18th-century naturalist and founding taxonomist. Elizabeth Kent, in her *Flora Domestica* (1823), stated that “*The botanical name of this plant is compounded of two Latin words, signifying Seadew; and indeed Rosemary thrives best by the sea.*”⁶

In essence, the results highlight the diverse and nuanced ways in which French and English plant names are classified. The linguistic adaptations observed through etymological analysis, morphological examination, and semantic mapping contribute to a holistic understanding of the intricate classification patterns within the botanical lexicons of these two languages.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion section delves into the nuanced implications of the classification patterns observed in French and English plant names, interpreting the results in the broader context of linguistic shifts, cultural influences, and societal attitudes toward nature.

The linguistic shifts identified in the classification of plant names reflect the profound influence of cultural factors in both languages. For instance, the evolution of the French phytonym “*pissenlit*” from its original medicinal connotation to a more symbolic representation of spring underscores how linguistic shifts can mirror changing cultural attitudes towards the plant. Similarly, in English, the transformation of “*buttercup*” highlights how linguistic adaptation is intricately connected to cultural symbolism, linking the plant's appearance with a familiar and everyday item.

The study sheds light on linguistic traditions embedded in the classification of plant names. In French, the morphological pattern observed in “*chèvrefeuille*” reflects a tradition of descriptive nomenclature, where the elements of the name provide insights into the plant's characteristics. In contrast, the English phytonym “*bluebell*” exemplifies a linguistic tradition that relies on visual imagery to evoke sensory associations, a characteristic feature in English plant names. These linguistic traditions not only reveal language-specific approaches to classification but also illuminate societal attitudes toward nature and the cultural significance attributed to certain plants.

The analysis underscores the significance of considering historical and cultural factors in linguistic studies of plant names. The French phytonym “*aubépine*,” with its semantic

⁶ Kent, Elizabeth (1823). *Flora Domestica, or the Portable Flower-Garden*. Taylor and Hessey. p. 330.

evolution from “*thorn*” to a symbol of hope and protection, exemplifies the historical layers embedded in plant names. Similarly, the English phytonym “*rosemary*,” beyond its botanical accuracy, showcases the cultural depth and historical symbolism associated with certain plants. Recognizing and exploring these historical and cultural factors contribute to a richer understanding of the linguistic tapestry that defines plant nomenclature.

The discussion extends to the potential impact of these classification patterns on various aspects of communication and societal awareness. In scientific communication, the adherence to specific classification frameworks ensures precision and clarity. Understanding the linguistic intricacies in plant names becomes paramount for effective communication among botanists and researchers. Furthermore, these linguistic adaptations play a crucial role in cultural preservation, maintaining a link between language and traditional knowledge. The symbolic richness encapsulated in plant names, as seen in both French and English examples, contributes to environmental awareness by fostering a deeper connection between individuals and the natural world.

In essence, the discussion emphasizes the dynamic nature of linguistic adaptation in the classification of plant names in French and English. By exploring linguistic shifts, traditions, and societal attitudes, this study not only enriches our understanding of botanical nomenclature but also underscores the broader implications for scientific communication, cultural preservation, and environmental awareness in French and English-speaking communities.

CONCLUSION.

This scientific study on the classification of plant names in the French and English languages significantly contributes to our understanding of the intricate relationship between language, culture, and botanical nomenclature. The comprehensive analysis of linguistic adaptations and classification patterns adds depth to the existing discourse on plant names, emphasizing the dynamic nature of language and its intertwined connection with culture.

The exploration of linguistic adaptations within plant names reveals them to be more than mere descriptors; they are cultural signifiers that encapsulate the essence of societal perceptions and historical narratives. The French phytonym “*aubépine*,” evolving from the simple descriptor of “*thorn*” to a symbol of hope and protection, exemplifies how linguistic adaptations become cultural touchstones, reflecting the evolving relationship between language and nature over time.

The linguistic examination of plant names in French and English unravels cultural nuances embedded in classification patterns. The French phytonym “*chèvrefeuille*,” with its descriptive elements of “*goat*” and “*leaf*,” speaks to a cultural tradition of capturing the essence of a plant within its name. Similarly, the English phytonym “*bluebell*” exemplifies a linguistic tradition that relies on visual imagery, creating a cultural connection between the plant's name and its vibrant appearance.

This study underscores the dynamic nature of language and its symbiotic relationship with culture. The semantic mapping of the French phytonym “*pissenlit*” and its evolution from a medicinal descriptor to a symbol of spring illustrates how language adapts and

evolves alongside cultural shifts. Similarly, the English phytonym "rosemary" showcases the enduring cultural symbolism attached to certain plants, emphasizing language's ability to preserve and transmit cultural knowledge.

As we navigate the linguistic landscapes of French and English plant names, this study serves as a foundational exploration. It lays the groundwork for further research into the diverse ways in which these languages classify and name the flora that surrounds us. The examples provided, from "pissenlit" to "rosemary," offer glimpses into the rich tapestry of linguistic adaptation and cultural significance within the botanical lexicons of French and English.

In essence, this scientific exploration invites scholars to delve deeper into the linguistic intricacies of plant names, fostering a greater understanding of the intersection between language, culture, and the natural world. The classification of plant names emerges not only as a scientific endeavor but as a cultural journey, shaped and shaped by the intricate dance between language and the environment.

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