

Polyonymy in river names

Some scholars argue that place names have no synonyms; however, studies of colloquial language have demonstrated the opposite in several instances. In this context, my aim is to examine the phenomenon of polyonymy in river names, drawing on data from living language usage. More specifically, I will explore the extent to which polyonymy characterizes river names.

The basis of my research is the volume *Magyar Nemzeti Helynévtár helynevei 1. A Hajdúnánási járás*. This corpus, which includes all name variants from five settlements, comprises 306 entries representing 130 distinct denotations. An analysis of the complete data set, encompassing both historical and contemporary names, reveals that half of the watercourses have only one name. One-fifth of the names have two variants, and one-tenth have three. Notably, 6% of the corpus features watercourses are referred to by seven different names, 5% by four, and 3% by five names. A small number of rivers are known by six, eight, ten, or even fourteen different names.

Focusing solely on names currently used in the vernacular, the corpus includes 104 names corresponding to 57 watercourses. A similar trend emerges in this dataset: more than half of the watercourses (52.5%) are referred to by a single name, followed by nearly a third (30%) with two names, and about one-tenth (10.5%) with three names. The remaining 7% of the nomenclature consists of watercourses with four or seven names.

Keywords: *polyonymy, synonymy, name variants, Hungarian river names, vernacular naming practices*

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