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Terminology

A GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY FOR EMPLOYMENT IN
THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES*

* Prepared by the Working Group on Definitions of the United Nations Group
of Experts on Geographical Names.

INTRODUCTION

The following definitions of terminology are intended for employment in discussion and exposition in the field of toponymy. They are set forth not as prescriptive rules of usage, but rather as guidelines which may serve to enhance clarity and precision in communication.

It is generally recognized that the semantic range of any given term may vary from person to person and from community to community. It is further recognized that cognate terms tend to vary in meaning to a still larger degree from language to language. Furthermore, the semantic ranges of terms often change with usage and with the passage of time. Although it is not possible in such circumstances wholly to avoid arbitrary delineations, a sincere effort has been made to reduce these to a minimum.

Equivalent terms are provided for most entries in English, French, and Spanish, and the definition of each term is given in English. Where synonymy of two or more terms is indicated, no order of preference is intended.

An index has been included in order to aid users in locating particular terms without introducing an excessive number of cross-references in the main body of the definitions.

ENGLISH

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abbreviated character SEE character, abbreviated

allograph

allographe

alógrafo

One of the particular representations of a grapheme. (See grapheme.)

allomorph

allomorphe

alómorfo

One of two or more differing phonological manifestations of a given morpheme.
(See morpheme.)

allonym

allonyme

alónimo

One of two or more names employed in reference to a single topographic feature.

allophone

allophone

alófono

A phonetic variant of a phoneme.

alphabet

alphabet

alfabeto

A specific set of graphic symbols which may be employed in representation of the phonological elements of a language.

alphabet, transcription

alphabet de transcription

alfabeto de transcripción

An alphabet which may be employed in the process of transcription. (See transcription.)

alphabet, transliteration

alphabet de
translittération

alfabeto de transliteración

An alphabet which may be employed in the process of transliteration. (See transliteration.)

alphabetical sequence SEE sequence, alphabetical

alternate name SEE name, alternate

article

article

artículo

A morpheme which makes explicit the definite or indefinite nature of another morpheme or morphemes.

authority, names

autorité toponymique

autoridad de nombres
geográficos

A person or body assigned power of decision in toponymic matters by a legally constituted entity.

character

caractère

carácter

A segmental graphic symbol particularly of a script other than Roman script. (See letter.)

character, abbreviated

caractère abrégé

carácter abreviado

A variant character which is less complex than another, and which resembles it in some particular. (See character, variant.)

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SPANISH

character, modified

caractère modifié

carácter modificado

(See character, variant and character, abbreviated.)

character, variant

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carácter optativo

One of two or more characters employed in a writing system in representation of the same phonological and/or morphological item or items.

colloquial language SEE language, colloquial

community, linguistic

communauté linguistique

comunidad lingüística

The totality of those individuals who communicate with relative ease in a single dialect, language, or writing system.

community, speech

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comunidad de hablantes, o de habla

The totality of those individuals who communicate orally with relative ease in a single dialect or language.

context

contexte

contexto

The body of material within which a particular item appears.

conventional

usuel

convencional o usual

That which is sanctioned by current and widespread usage.

conventional name SEE name, conventional

conversion

conversion

conversión

The process of recording in terms of a given writing system the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language, or the graphic symbols of another writing system. (See transcription and transliteration.)

creole

créole

lengua criolla

A stable form of speech derived from a pidgin, which has become the sole or principal language of a linguistic community.

cultural feature SEE feature, cultural

descriptive term SEE term, descriptive

designation

désignation

designación

A term employed in such a manner as to encompass a specific range of feature types.

designatory term SEE term, designatory

diacritical mark SEE mark, diacritical

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dialect

dialecte

dialecto

A variety of a language which is distinguished by phonological and/or morphological characteristics which give it a distinctive identity.

dictionary, geographical

dictionnaire géographique

diccionario geográfico

A list of terms and/or names pertaining to the field of geography, which presents relatively extensive and definitive information concerning the items listed.

diglossia

diglossie

diglosia

A relatively stable language situation, in which in addition to the primary dialect of a language, which may include a standard or regional standards, there is a very divergent, highly codified, often grammatically more complex, superposed variety, the vehicle of a large and respected body of written literature, heir of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and may be used for written and formal spoken purposes, but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation. (After C. Ferguson, 1959.)

digraph

digraphe

dígrafo

Two letters or characters which are together employed in a particular order in representation of a single phonological and/or morphological element of a language.

diphthong

diphthongue

diptongo

A combination of vocalic elements of which only one is the nucleus of a syllable.

element, generic

élément générique

elemento genérico

That part of a name which consists of a generic term, and which may include modifiers, articles, and/or particles as well. (See term, generic.)

element, specific

élément spécifique

elemento específico

That portion of a name which does not contain a generic element. (See element, generic.)

entity, geographical

objet géographique

entidad geográfica

(Synonym: feature, geographical, q.v.)

entity, topographic

objet topographique

entidad topográfica

(Synonym: feature, topographic, q.v.)

exonym

exonyme

exónimo

A geographical name used in a certain language for a geographical entity situated outside the area where that language has official status and differing in its form from the name used in the official language or languages of the area where the geographical entity is situated.

extraterrestrial topographic feature SEE feature, extraterrestrial topographic

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feature, cultural

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accidente geográfico
artificial

A topographic feature made or significantly modified by human effort.

feature, extraterrestrial

accident topographique
extra-terrestre

accidente topográfico
extraterrestre

On any planet or satellite other than the earth, a portion of the surface which has a recognizable identity.

feature, geographical

accident géographique

accidente geográfico

A portion of the surface of the earth which has a recognizable identity.

feature, hydrographic

élément hydrographique

accidente hidrográfico

A topographic feature which consists of water and/or of recognizable interfaces between a body of water and one or more of its boundaries.

feature, natural

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accidente natural

A topographic feature not made or significantly modified by human effort.

feature, physical

(---)

accidente físico

(Synonym: feature, natural, q.v.)

feature, topographic

accident topographique

accidente topográfico

A portion of the surface of any planet or satellite which has a recognizable identity.

feature, undersea

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accidente submarino

A portion of that part of the earth which lies directly beneath an ocean or sea, and which has a recognizable identity.

feature name SEE name, feature

form, graphic

graphie

grafía

Written letter(s) or character(s), including any markers and diacritical marks, which represent a linguistic item.

form, printing

présentation
typographique

presentación tipográfica

The size, shape, and style of the graphic items in a printed document.

format

présentation générale

formato

The size, shape, and general arrangement of a written document.

gazetteer

nomenclature toponymique (---)

A list of toponyms which presents relatively brief information regarding the items listed.

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gazetteer, index

index toponymique

índice o listado de
topónimos

A list of toponyms which presents relatively brief information regarding the items listed, and which serves as a guide to the source from which it has been compiled.

generic element SEE element, generic

generic term SEE term, generic

geographical dictionary SEE dictionary, geographical

geographical entity SEE entity, geographical

geographical feature SEE feature, geographical

geographical name SEE name, geographical

geographical name standardization SEE standardization, geographical name

glossary

glossaire

glosario

A relatively brief list of items pertinent to a limited field of interest, which may present information concerning the items listed.

grapheme

graphème

grafema

A graphic symbol or combination of graphic symbols, cited within the context of a particular language, which represents a particular phonological and/or morphological item or items with consistency.

graphic form SEE form, graphic

graphic symbol SEE symbol, graphic

hydrographic feature SEE feature, hydrographique

hydronym

hydronyme

hydrónimo

A toponym applied to a hydrographic feature. (See feature, hydrographic.)

ideogram

idéogramme

ideograma

(Synonym: logogram, q.v.)

index, place name

(---)

índice de nombres geográficos

(Synonym: gazetteer, index, q.v.)

index, toponymic

(---)

índice toponímico

(Synonym: gazetteer, index, q.v.)

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index gazetteer SEE gazetteer, index

international geographical name standardization SEE standardization, international geographical name

key, romanization tableau de romanisation clave de romanización

A table which sets forth the graphic symbols of a non-Roman writing system together with corresponding graphic symbols of one or more Roman writing system(s).

key, transcription tableau de transcription clave de transcripción

A table which sets forth descriptions and/or graphic representations of the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language together with corresponding representations in terms of a particular writing system.

key, transliteration tableau de clave de transliteración
translittération

A table which sets forth the graphic symbols of one writing system together with the corresponding graphic symbols of another writing system or systems.

language langue lengua o idioma

A system which provides a means by which the members of a community carry on conscious thought, and in terms of which they communicate orally and/or graphically.

language, colloquial langue courante lengua coloquial

A form of the speech and/or writing of a language which is employed in informal communication in a given area, and which, where a standard or literary language exists, significantly differs from it.

language, literary langue littéraire lengua literaria o lenguaje
literario

A form of the speech and/or writing of a language which is employed in formal speech and/or writing.

language, non-official langue non-officielle lengua no oficial dentro de
un estado o región

A language which lacks official status in a particular legally constituted entity.

language, official langue officielle lengua oficial

A language which has official status in a particular legally constituted entity.

language, principal langue principale lengua principal

In a linguistic community where more than one language is in use, that language which has greatest currency.

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SPANISH

language, receiver

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(---)

A language in terms of which a geographical name may be adopted or converted from its source language. (See language, source.)

language, source

(---)

(---)

A language in terms of which a geographical name is produced, and on the basis of which it may be adopted or converted for use in the context of another language, a receiver language. (See language, receiver.)

language, standard

(---)

lengua común o normal

That form of the speech and/or writing of a language which is specified as correct by an officially designated or widely recognized authority, or in the absence of such an authority, which is in general recognized as correct in a linguistic community.

language, vehicular

langue véhiculaire

lengua vehicular

A language which serves for intercommunication between members of different linguistic communities.

letter

lettre

letra

A segmental graphic symbol, particularly of Roman script. (See character.)

lettering, multilingual

(---)

rotulación multilingüe

The writing of geographical names in the individual countries which appear on a map in accordance with their officially recognized spellings.

lexicon

dictionnaire

léxico

A relatively exhaustive compilation of items, generally in alphabetical order, pertinent to a particular sphere of interest, which may present information concerning the items listed.

lexicon, ideographic

lexique idéographique

léxico ideográfico

(Synonym: lexicon, logographic, q.v.)

lexicon, logographic

lexique logographique

léxico logográfico

A body of graphic symbols, each symbol typically (but not necessarily) representing a morpheme, which may be employed in the writing of a language or languages.

linguistic community SEE community, linguistic

literary language SEE language, literary

logogram

logogramme

logograma

A graphic symbol or combination of graphic symbols which consistently represents a given morphological element or elements in a given language.

logographic lexicon SEE lexicon, logographic

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lunar name SEE name, lunar

mark, diacritical

signe diacritique

signo diacrítico

A non-segmental graphic symbol which does not in itself represent a phoneme, and which is employed in conjunction with a letter or character.

marker

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signo auxiliar

A graphic symbol or combination of graphic symbols (segmental, non-segmental, or combined), which represents one or more phonemes of a language, and which is employed in conjunction with a letter or character.

modified character SEE character, modified

morpheme

morphème

morfema

A unit in the grammatical structure of a language which has a specific phonological form or range of forms, a particular grammatical function or set of functions, and a limited semantic range.

multilingual lettering SEE lettering, multilingual

name

nom propre

nombre propio

An oral or written item which is recognized as designating a particular entity.

name, alternate

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nombre alternativo

One of two or more standardized names for a single feature.

name, conventional

(---)

nombre propio convencional

A written form of a name which is widely and currently used in a given linguistic community, and which does not coincide with any local official form of the name.

name, feature

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(Synonym: toponym, q.v.)

name, geographical

nom géographique

nombre propio geográfico

A name applied to a geographical feature.

name, lunar

nom lunaire

nombre propio lunar

A name applied to a feature on the surface of the moon.

name, place

nom de lieu

nombre propio de lugar

(Synonym: toponym, q.v.)

name, populated place

nom de lieu habité

nombre propio de lugar
habitado

A name applied to an inhabited feature.

name, standardized

nom normalisé

nombre propio normalizado

A name which has the official sanction of a legally constituted entity.

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name, variant

A name other than that or those standardized for a feature.

names authority SEE authority, names

non-official

non-officiel

inoficial

Lacking explicit sanction by a legally constituted entity.

non-official language SEE language, non-official

normalization

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1. The establishment of a specific set of orthographic criteria or norms.
2. The writing of an item in accordance with such criteria or norms.

official

officiel

oficial

Explicitly sanctioned by a legally constituted entity.

official language SEE language, official

onomastics

onomastique

onomástica

A science which has as its object the study of proper names.

oronym

oronyme

orónimo

A name applied to a feature of elevation.

orthography

orthographie

ortografía

1. (Synonym: form, graphic, q.v.)
2. (Synonym: system, writing, q.v.)

particle

particule

partícula

A morpheme which serves to identify and/or to delimit the grammatical function of another morpheme or other linguistic construction.

phoneme

phonème

fonema

1. A functionally irreducible unit in the phonological structure of a language.
2. That limited range of quality, tone, stress, pitch, and/or duration of sound which corresponds to the above.

physical feature SEE feature, physical

pidgin

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lengua franca

A relatively stable form of speech learned as an auxiliary language, whose vocabulary and sphere of employment are narrowly limited, and whose phonological and morphological structures tend to be simpler than those of the language of derivation.

place name SEE name, place

place name index SEE index, place name

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point, vowel

point-voyelle

moción

A term which designates a vowel marker in an alphabet of Arabic or Hebrew script.

principal language SEE language, principal

printing form SEE form, printing

receiver language SEE language, receiver

reversibility

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reversibilidad

A characteristic of a conversion system which results in the convertibility of any written item from one writing system to another, and reconversion into the first system, the result being identical in every particular with the original item.

romanization

romanisation

romanización

1. The process of recording in Roman script either the phonological elements of a language or the graphic symbols of a non-Roman writing system.
2. An item of a language which has undergone this process.

romanization key SEE key, romanization

script

écriture

escritura

A set of graphic symbols which may be variously employed in representation of the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language or languages.

script, receiver

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A script in terms of which a geographical name may be converted from its source script. (See script, source.)

script, source

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(---)

A script in terms of which a geographical name is produced, and on the basis of which it may be converted for use in another script, a receiver script. (See script, receiver.)

sequence, alphabetical

suite alphabétique

orden alfabético

1. The order in which the letters or characters of an alphabet are customarily cited.
2. A body of items listed in such order.

sound

son

sonido

An oral symbol which, in a given linguistic context, conveys a specific item of information.

source language SEE language, source

source script SEE script, source

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specific element SEE element, specific

speech

parole

habla

An oral manifestation of language.

speech community SEE community, speech

spelling

graphie

grafía

(Synonym: form, graphic, q.v.)

standardization,

(---)

normalización de un nombre

geographical name

geográfico

The prescription or the recommendation of a particular graphic form or forms for application to a given feature, as well as the conditions of employment of that form or forms.

standardization,

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normalización internacional

international

de nombres geográficos

geographical name

That activity aiming at a maximum of uniformity in the writing of every geographical name on earth and of topographical names on other bodies of the solar system by means of national standardization and/or international agreement, including the achievement of equivalences between different writing systems.

standardized name SEE name, standardized

standard language SEE language, standard

syllabary

syllabaire

silabario

A specific set of graphic symbols, each symbol typically (but not necessarily) representing a particular syllable, which may be employed in representation of the phonological elements of a language.

symbol, graphic

symbole graphique

signo gráfico

A written mark which, in a given linguistic context, conveys a specific item of information.

system, writing

systeme d'écriture

sistema de escritura

A structure which employs in representation of the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language both:

1. an alphabet, syllabary, and/or logographic lexicon; and
2. a systematic manner of application of the alphabet, syllabary, and/or logographic lexicon.

term, descriptive

terme descriptif

término descriptivo

A written item which appears on a map, which does not constitute a toponym, but which serves to describe a topographic characteristic in the area where it appears.

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term, designatory

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término designativo

(Synonym: designation, q.v.)

term, generic

terme générique

término genérico

A term included in a name which indicates the type of the named entity, and which has the same meaning in current local usage. (See element, generic.)

tetragraph

tétragraphe

tetrágrafo

Four letters or characters which are together employed in a particular order in representation of a single phonological and/or morphological element of a language.

topographic entity SEE entity, topographic

topographic feature SEE feature, topographic

topography

topographie

topografía

The surface configuration of a planet or satellite, or of a portion thereof.

toponym

toponyme

topónimo

A name applied to a topographic feature.

toponymic index SEE index, toponymic

toponymy

toponymie

toponimia

1. A science which has as its object the study of toponyms.
2. A coherent body of toponyms.

transcription

transcription

transcripción

1. The process of recording the phonological and/or morphological elements of a language in terms of a specific writing system.
2. The result of this process.

transcription alphabet SEE alphabet, transcription

transcription key SEE key, transcription

translation

traduction

traducción

1. The process of rendering an expression of one language in terms of a corresponding expression of another language.
2. The result of this process.

transliteration

translittération

transliteración

1. The process of recording the graphic symbols of one writing system in terms of corresponding graphic symbols of a second writing system.
2. The result of this process.

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transliteration alphabet SEE alphabet, transliteration

transliteration key SEE key, transliteration

trigraph

trigraphe

trígrafo

Three letters or characters which are together employed in a particular order in representation of a single phonological and/or morphological element of a language.

undersea feature SEE feature, undersea

variant character SEE character, variant

variant name SEE name, variant

vehicular language SEE language, vehicular

vocabulary

vocabulaire

vocabulario

1. A list of the words of a language. (Synonym: lexicon.)
2. A succinct dictionary giving the principal words of a language or citing a list of specialized terms. (See glossary and lexicon.)
3. The repertory of words of a particular individual or document.

vowel point SEE point, vowel

writing system SEE system, writing
