

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Linguocultural And Pragmatic Features of Underground Microhydronyms In France

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## Abstract

The present study investigates the linguocultural and pragmatic characteristics of underground microhydronyms in France. Underground microhydronyms, referring to the names of springs, wells, subterranean streams, caves with water resources, and other minor underground water objects, constitute an important part of French toponymic heritage. The research analyzes the semantic structure, cultural symbolism, and communicative functions of these geographical names. The study applies linguocultural and pragmatic approaches to identify how underground microhydronyms reflect historical memory, religious beliefs, environmental perception, and local identity. The findings demonstrate that French underground microhydronyms serve not only as geographical markers but also as repositories of cultural knowledge and instruments of social communication. Their pragmatic functions include reference, information transfer, social identification, and symbolic representation.

## KEY WORDS

Microhydronymy, underground hydronyms, French toponymy, linguoculturology, pragmatics, cultural heritage, place names, linguistic landscape.

## INTRODUCTION

The interaction between language and culture has become one of the central issues in contemporary linguistic research. Toponymy, as a branch of onomastics, provides valuable material for studying this interaction because geographical names preserve historical, cultural, and social information accumulated over centuries. Among different categories of toponyms, hydronyms are considered particularly significant due to their stability and antiquity.

Microhydronyms denote names of small water objects, including springs, wells, brooks, underground streams, and water-bearing caves. In France, underground microhydronyms occupy a special place within the national toponymic system because they reflect both the physical characteristics of the landscape and the cultural experience of

local communities.

The growing interest in linguocultural studies has created new opportunities for analyzing geographical names as cultural signs. Simultaneously, pragmatic linguistics enables researchers to investigate how these names function in communication and social interaction. Therefore, a combined linguocultural and pragmatic analysis of French underground microhydronyms contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and society.

## Research Objectives

The main objectives of the study are:

- To identify the linguocultural features of underground microhydronyms in France;

- To determine their pragmatic functions in communication;
- To analyze the cultural meanings encoded in these names;
- To examine the relationship between geographical naming and local identity.

## **METHODS**

The study employs several research methods:

- Descriptive analysis;
- Semantic analysis;
- Linguocultural interpretation;
- Pragmatic analysis;
- Comparative method;
- Etymological analysis.

The material for the study consists of French underground microhydronyms documented in toponymic dictionaries, geographical databases, and scholarly works on French onomastics.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Theoretical foundations of toponymic research were established in the works of Dauzat (1947), Rostaing (1950), and Longnon (1920). Their studies emphasized the historical and linguistic significance of French geographical names.

The linguocultural approach developed by Wierzbicka (1997) and Maslova (2001) highlights the role of language as a repository of cultural values and collective knowledge. Within this framework, place names are regarded as cultural texts reflecting the worldview of a speech community.

Pragmatic theories proposed by Levinson (1983) and Allan & Jaszczolt (2012) provide methodological tools for examining the communicative functions of linguistic units. From a pragmatic perspective, geographical names perform referential, informative, social, and symbolic functions.

Despite substantial research on French hydronymy, underground microhydronyms remain insufficiently explored from a combined linguocultural and pragmatic perspective. This study seeks to address this gap.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Linguocultural Characteristics of Underground**

### **Microhydronyms**

**Historical Memory and Cultural Heritage.** Many French underground microhydronyms preserve traces of ancient linguistic strata, including Celtic, Latin, and Old French elements. Such names function as linguistic monuments that reflect historical settlement patterns and cultural continuity.

For example, numerous springs and wells retain names derived from Gallo-Roman traditions. Their preservation demonstrates the long-term stability of hydronymic systems and their resistance to linguistic change.

Consequently, underground microhydronyms act as carriers of collective memory, transmitting historical information across generations.

**Religious and Mythological Symbolism.** Religion has exerted a profound influence on French geographical nomenclature. A considerable number of underground water sources are associated with saints and sacred figures.

Names containing components such as Saint-Jean, Sainte-Anne, Saint-Michel, and Notre-Dame illustrate the integration of religious beliefs into local spatial organization.

Historically, springs and wells were frequently regarded as sacred places possessing healing or miraculous properties. Therefore, their names reflect spiritual values and religious worldviews that shaped local communities.

**Environmental Conceptualization.** Another important linguocultural feature is the representation of environmental knowledge. Underground microhydronyms often describe:

- Water quality;
- Geological composition;
- Temperature;
- Depth;
- Flow characteristics;
- Landscape features.

Lexical units such as source (spring), fontaine (fountain/spring), grotte (cave), puits (well), and résurgence (resurgence spring) indicate how local populations classify and perceive natural phenomena.

Such naming practices reveal culturally specific patterns of environmental cognition.

**Regional Identity.** Underground microhydronyms

contribute significantly to the construction of local identity. They frequently appear in folklore, legends, oral traditions, and regional narratives.

For local residents, these names symbolize attachment to place and reinforce a sense of belonging. Their continued use strengthens cultural cohesion and preserves regional distinctiveness.

### **Pragmatic Characteristics of Underground Microhydronyms**

**Referential Function.** The primary pragmatic function of underground microhydronyms is reference. These names enable speakers to identify specific geographical objects accurately and efficiently.

In everyday communication, local inhabitants use microhydronyms to indicate locations, provide directions, and describe geographical environments.

This referential function ensures communicative precision and reduces ambiguity.

**Informative Function.** Many underground microhydronyms contain descriptive information concerning the object they denote. Such information may relate to physical characteristics, historical events, ownership patterns, or cultural traditions.

As a result, the name itself serves as a compact repository of knowledge, facilitating efficient communication.

**Social Function.** Pragmatically, the use of traditional microhydronyms signals membership within a particular community. Knowledge of local place names often indicates familiarity with regional culture and social practices.

Individuals who correctly employ these names demonstrate social competence and cultural integration.

Thus, underground microhydronyms function as markers of social identity and community affiliation.

**Symbolic and Evaluative Function.** Certain microhydronyms express emotional or symbolic evaluations. Names may convey notions of mystery, danger, sanctity, beauty, or healing power.

These evaluative meanings influence the perception of geographical objects and contribute to the symbolic landscape of a region.

**Communicative Economy.** One of the essential pragmatic

properties of microhydronyms is communicative economy. A short, widely recognized name allows speakers to refer to complex geographical entities without lengthy descriptions.

This characteristic explains the persistence and practical value of traditional underground microhydronyms in contemporary communication.

**Linguocultural and Pragmatic Interaction.** The analysis demonstrates that linguocultural and pragmatic aspects of underground microhydronyms are closely interconnected.

Linguocultural meanings provide the semantic content and symbolic significance of names, whereas pragmatic functions ensure their effectiveness in communication. Together, these dimensions enable underground microhydronyms to serve simultaneously as cultural symbols and practical linguistic tools.

Therefore, underground microhydronyms represent a unique category of linguistic units situated at the intersection of language, culture, geography, and social interaction.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study confirms that underground microhydronyms in France possess significant linguocultural and pragmatic value.

From a linguocultural perspective, these names preserve historical memory, religious traditions, environmental knowledge, and regional identity. They function as cultural codes through which communities interpret and transmit their experience.

From a pragmatic perspective, underground microhydronyms perform referential, informative, social, symbolic, and economic functions. Their effectiveness in communication contributes to their long-term preservation and continued relevance.

The results highlight the importance of integrating linguocultural and pragmatic approaches in the study of geographical names. Future research may focus on comparative analyses of underground microhydronyms across different linguistic and cultural regions of Europe.

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