Linguistic Imperialism, Toponymy, Semiotics & Taxonomies: The Anglicisation of Irish place names in hegemonic library cataloguing systems

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ABSTRACT: *Background*. Cataloguing systems are generally assumed to be logical, objective and non-political. In this sense they are often assumed to be rather like maps. However, assumptions around the neutrality of both are erroneous. Maps and cataloguing systems reflect, reinforce, and reproduce dominance and power. In Ireland the six inch to a mile mapping project in the early to mid-1800s is generally accepted as the point at which much of the Anglicisation of Irish place names was formalised. As such it is often assumed that this Anglicisation is a historic event and that similar practices do not continue into the present.

Objective. This paper sought to examine how vernacular names for places are treated in a mainstream international library classification and cataloguing system.

Methods. The treatment of vernacular place names vis-à-vis English was examined under the dominant Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, the Dewey Decimal Classification & Relative Index (DDC) and the Resource Description and Access (RDA) system.

Results. This paper demonstrates how established international library classification and cataloguing systems continue to explicitly require English forms of names over the vernacular.

Contributions. This paper reveals how library classification and cataloguing systems both reinforce the legacy of colonial oppression, and continue to assert the dominance of English. Cataloguing systems may therefore be viewed in terms of their power and purpose, and as such should not be seen as ideologically neutral.

Keywords: cataloguing; imperialism; Irish language; taxonomy

Background

> *This passage quotes a 'certain Chinese encyclopaedia' in which it is written that 'animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) suckling pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'*
>
> *Michel Foucault, The Order of Things (New York: Pantheon, 1970) xv.*

Michel Foucault (1970) captured the intimate relationship between power and knowledge exquisitely in his famous text The Order of Things. As can be seen in the almost humorous classification system outlined above, which appears in the preface to that text, there is no obviously 'right' way in which to order our schema of things. Despite widely held thoughts about what are often assumed to be 'common sense', 'obvious' and 'logical' approaches to classifications and cataloguing schemes, Foucault expertly demonstrates how such schematics are both socially constructed and imbued with power relations.

Perhaps one of the most obvious examples of this in recent times relates to the categorization of homosexuality in indexing systems (Greenblatt 1990; Johnson 2008). As Nowak & Mitchel (2016: 1) note: 'Although we tend to see classification as a socially and morally neutral activity, classification systems often incorporate societal prejudices and marginalize disadvantaged populations'. In addition, silences and omissions have also been noted as a means of making some talk or topics unavailable (Billig 2006).

Historically the topic of homosexuality did not even appear in library classification systems, such as the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system until 1932. This is notable as the DDC was originally devised in 1876. As can be seen from the following extracts from the DDC system, homosexuality was previously categorized alongside incest, bestiality, sadism and masochism (see Table One).

Table One: Historic Dewey Decimal Classification System for Homosexuality

301.415 7 - 301.415 8   Abnormal sexual relations Class comprehensive works in 301.415 .415 7 Homosexuality .415 8 Other abnormal sexual relations Incest, bestiality, sadism, masochism (Schrader, 1997: 151)

Other indexing systems were scarcely any different. The (US) Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) variously catalogued homosexuality alongside 'Hermaphroditism...Sexual perversion…Exhibitionism...Masochism, Nymphomania, Sadism...Bestiality, Pederasty' (Schrader 1997: 150). It is clear that such classifications schema serve to enforce normative boundaries. Further evidence of this phenomenon can be seen in how intersex individuals are classified in library cataloguing systems (Roberto 2011; Fox 2015; Fox 2016; Christensen nd).

The Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) system is probably the most widely known library classification system in Ireland. The DDC is based around ten basic classes of information covering all knowledge. Each class is subsequently subdivided into a hierarchy of ten divisions, each of which is then divided into ten sections. The 10 main classes of the DDC are outlined in Table Two.

Table Two: Main Classes of the Universal Decimal Classification System (UDC) and the Dewey Decimal System (DDC)

The Dewey Decimal System (DDC) Main Classes	The Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) System Main Classes
000 Computer science, information & general works **100** Philosophy and psychology **200** Religion **300** Social sciences **400** Language **500** Pure Science **600** Technology **700** Arts & recreation **800** Literature **900** History & geography	**0** Science and Knowledge. Organization. Computer Science. Information Science. Documentation. Librarianship. Institutions. Publications **1** Philosophy. Psychology **2** Religion. Theology **3** Social Sciences **4** Vacant **5** Mathematics. Natural Sciences **6** Applied Sciences. Medicine, Technology **7** The Arts. Entertainment. Sport **8** Linguistics. Literature **9** Geography. History

However, despite the acknowledged dominance of the Dewey Decimal System, it is not without its critics. For example, texts by the names of 'Ireland's Wars' or 'Warfare in Ireland' could each legitimately be categorized under either 'warfare' or 'Ireland'. An alternative system was developed by Paul Otlet, a visionary internationalist working in the pre-World War I Belle Époque period. Working with Nobel Prize Laureate Henri La Fontaine, Otlet developed the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC; see Table Two). Otlet, who is often credited with foreseeing the basic elements of the internet and hyperlinks, envisaged a

Utopian World City that would house international associations to promote world peace. Otlet went on to develop what has been referred to as an analogue search engine which by 1934 included 15 million index cards (Wright 2014; Rayward 1997; Boyd Rayward 1990; 1994; 2003). One interesting aspect of the UDC system is its anticipation of emerging and distinct areas of knowledge in the future. As can be seen from Table Two, the main class 4 is currently vacant in anticipation of the development of new domains of knowledge.

Examples of the social construction and ordering of knowledge may be more apparent to those raised in Anglo-American or European cultural spheres when examining library classification systems from further afield. For example, Table Three outlines the main elements (5 main categories and 22 classes) of the Chinese Libraries Classification (CLC) system. It is notable that the first main category is Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought; Deng Xiaoping's Theories.

Colon Classification (CC) is an alternative system of library classification developed by S. R. Ranganathan (Kabir 2003; Srivastava 1977). As can be seen from Table Three, at first glance, it appears to follow a generally similar format to the other cataloguing systems. What perhaps makes it particularly interesting from an Irish perspective is its use of the symbol 'Δ' between 'M' (Useful arts) and 'N' (Fine arts) for Spiritual experience and mysticism. This was originally conceived as being between the sciences and the humanities. However, the significant difference in the CC system is that rather than pigeon-holing texts into a particular category, it allows an individual and potentially unique classification to be developed for a text based on the facets of the topics being examined. The CC system was in part a reaction against the dominance of nineteenth century linear mono-dimensional forms of literature and classification that Ranganathan saw as increasingly outdated in the twentieth century. It has been suggested that Ranganathan conceived his system after observing a demonstration of Meccano in Selfridges department store in London in 1924 (Satija 2017). Each main class of the CC system comprises five fundamental facets, or groups: personality, matter, energy, space, and time.

Table Three: Main Classes of the Chinese Libraries Classification (CLC) system and the Colon Classification (CC) System

The Chinese Libraries Classification (CLC) System Main Classes	The Colon Classification (CC) System Main Classes
Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought; Deng Xiaoping's Theories **A** Marxism, Leninism, and Mao Zedong Thought; Deng Xiaoping's Theories **Philosophy, Religion** **B** Philosophy, Religion **Social Sciences** **C** General Social Science **D** Politics, Law **E** Military **F** Economy **G** Culture, Science, Education, Sports **H** Language, Linguistics **I** Literature **J** Art **K** History, Geography **Natural Sciences** **N** General Natural Science **O** Mathematics and Chemistry **P** Astronomy, Earth Science **Q** Biology **R** Medicine, Health **S** Agricultural Science **T** Industrial Technology **U** Transportation **V** Aeronautics, Astronautics **X** Environmental Science, Safety Science **General Reference Works** **Z** General Reference Works	**1** Universe of Knowledge **2** Library Science **3** Book science **4** Journalism **A** Science **B** Mathematics **C** Physics **D** Engineering **E** Chemistry **F** Technology **G** Biology **H** Geology **I** Botany **J** Agriculture **K** Zoology **L** Medicine **M** Useful arts **Δ** Spiritual experience and mysticism **N** Fine arts **O** Literature **P** Linguistics **Q** Religion **R** Philosophy **S** Psychology **T** Education **U** Geography **V** History **W** Political science **X** Economics **Y** Sociology **Z** Law

Bibliographic description

Another important element of standard library cataloguing systems is a text's bibliographic description. Such information details the name of a text, the authors name, the date and place of publication, as well as a host of other details. There is a very fixed format for such systems. In Western countries the standard text has for many years been the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (Gorman & Winkler 1978). These Rules were prepared by the American Library Association, the British Library, the Canadian Committee on

Cataloguing, the Library Association and the Library of Congress. The first and second editions dominated library cataloguing standards in the West for at least 40 years.

It would be easy to assume that such standards are ideologically 'neutral'. However, as Social Scientists are well aware, in the same way that maps do not merely reflect reality, but are imbued with power and control (Crampton, 2001; Harley,1989; Wood, 1992; 2010), so are such cataloguing systems. Of particular concern in the Irish context is the Anglicisation of place names of publishers required by the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules.

The Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules: An Examination

Section 23 of the Rules deals with Geographic Names. Section 23.2, 'GENERAL RULES', specifies the adoption of the 'English form' of names. The quotation below clearly details these instructions (Gorman and Winkler 1978: 395):

> Use the English form of the name of a place if there is one in general use. Determine this from gazetteers and other reference sources published in English-speaking countries…
>
> **Austria**
> not   Österreich
>
> **Copenhagen**
> not   København
>
> **Florence**
> not   Firenze
>
> **Ghent**
> not   Gent
> not   Gand
>
> **Sweden**
> not   Sverig
>
> (Use of bold in the correction version is taken from the text)

In section 23.2B, which deals the Vernacular form, rule 23.2B1 states 'Use the form in the official language of the country if there is no English form in general use'. Examples given include Buenos Aires and Tallinn. However, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules also state that 'If the country has more than one official language, use the most commonly found in English-language sources'. Thus according to section 23.2B2 the correct spelling is:

Louvain

not　　Leuven

Helsinki

not　　Helsingfors

(Gorman and Winkler 1978: 395; Use of bold in the correction version is taken from the text)

Ireland & the Impact of English Colonialism on Toponyms

The formal Anglicisation of many of Ireland's place names occurred in the post 1801 Act of Union period through a series of mapping ventures, the most important of which took place in the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Andrews 2006; Prunty 2004; Hewitt 2010; Ó Cadhla 2007; Smith 2007; Doherty 2004). This process standardised names, providing a uniformity and conformity of place names more amenable to the English language that many would argue had a devastating impact on the native Irish language (Gaelic) and culture.

The theme of imperialism in relation to cartography, typonyms, and orthography is explored in Brian Friel's famous play *Translations* set during the six inch to a mile Irish survey of 1824–46. An example of his description of the process can be seen in the following quotation from the beginning of Act Two, Scene One:

> The sappers have already mapped most of the area. Yolland's official task, which Owen is now doing, is to take each of the Gaelic names – every hill, stream, rock, even every patch of ground which possessed its own distinctive Irish name – and Anglicise it, either by changing it into its approximate English sound or by translating it into English words. For example, a Gaelic name like Cnoc Ban could become Knockbaun or – directly translated – Fair Hill. These new standardized names were entered into the Name-Book, and when the new maps appeared they contained all these new Anglicised names.

(Friel 1981: 38)

However, it should be noted that Friel's work has been described as performing 'wilful mistranslations of history' and it is generally acknowledged that the 'Irish Ordnance Survey's character was much more complicated than the purely imperialist endeavour that Friel described' (Hewitt 2010: 281). Nonetheless, despite the important work of this survey in terms of recording local history and culture, significant Anglicisation of names occurred. These extensive changes have been the focus of intense examination in recent years (Andrews 2006; Prunty 2004; Hewitt 2010; Ó Cadhla 2007; Smith 2007; Doherty 2004). The Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI; nd) website gives an example of the more common forms of Anglicisation:

> Baile_____ became Bally_____,
>
> Cill_____ became Kil_____,
>
> Dún_____ became Dun_____ or Down_____. etc.,

Significant remedial work has been conducted in recent decades to produce reference works detailing Irish place names (Ó hAisibéil 2009). This work has been conducted at both a national scale (The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs 2007), and at county level (Ó Maolfabhail 1990; Ó Cearbhaill 2007; 2010; The Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (1991a,b,c; 1993; 1994; 1996; 2004).

It is imperative to note that such Anglicisation of Irish place names is not confined to historical mapping projects in the dim and distant past, far beyond living memory. Cataloguing systems such as the dominant Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules continue to replicate such linguistic imperialism.

The Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules in an Irish Context

The dominance of English throughout the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules outlined above is obvious. A benign interpretation of the global role of the English language is that it functions as a Lingua Franca facilitating communication between disparate individuals (Tardy 2004). However, rather than always being viewed in such a positive light, the international dominance of English has also led to it being viewed as a Tyrannosaurus Rex (Swales 1997) in reference to the smaller languages it has 'devoured'. The impact of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules on the cataloguing entries for Irish place names serves

to covertly undermine the Irish language and reinforce anglicised names introduced into Ireland during its history as an oppressed colony.

Alarmingly, adherence to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules would even serve to minimise the Irish language in books produced in Irish/ Gaelic speaking areas through its insidious adoption of English language dominance. In Éire/ Ireland there are a number of areas where Gaelic/ Irish has a protected status and receives special supports. Each of these areas is known as a Gaeltacht:

> The term 'Gaeltacht' is used to denote those areas in Ireland where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language of a substantial number of the local population. The Gaeltacht areas are defined by Government order and every successive government has recognised the need for specific measures, structures and funding to ensure the maintenance of these communities. The existence of areas where Irish lives as a community language is an important cornerstone in the building of a bilingual society in Ireland, and it provides an environment where the language can evolve naturally in a modern setting.

> (Údarás na Gaeltachta, 2019)

For example, an Irish language publishing house based in a Gaeltacht area such as one that exists within the western reaches of the city of Gaillimh (in Gaelic/ Irish), will be categorised instead as being published in Galway, the English term for the city. In addition, the State within which the document was published will be categorised as Ireland rather than Éire. The bitter irony of such a reclassification is not lost on those Irish nationalists opposing the hegemonic dominance of English in such classification systems.

The Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index in an Irish Context

The Dewey Decimal Classification and Relative Index system (known as the DDC) is probably the world's best known book indexing system. It is interesting to note a similar dominance of English within this system, similar to the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules discussed above. It is also notable that in the DDC the term Republic of Ireland is used extensively, with the anglicised term Eire appearing after it in brackets. It is notable that although Éire is the legal description for the state, Ireland is the constitutional name of the state. The term Republic of Ireland (in Irish: Poblacht na hÉireann), Southern Ireland, or

Irish Republic are all terms often used within the UK to denote Ireland. In part these descriptions are undoubtedly aimed to help differentiate the State from Northern Ireland, which is a constituent element of the United Kingdom. However, the use of any designation other than Éire/Eire or Ireland has connotations of what is essentially a description used by its former colonising master.

The RDA in an Irish Context

The Resource Description and Access (RDA) cataloguing system was published in 2010 and was adopted by the British Library in 2013. This system is slowly replacing other cataloguing systems, although given the work involved in reclassification, combined with limitations around training and financing, it must be acknowledged that this is a slow process.

At first glance the RDA would appear to support local languages and not simply reflect, reinforce, and replicate the dominance of English. For example, element 16.2.1.3 on the General Guidelines on Recording Name of Place states 'Record a name of place from which the name is taken, unless instructions at 16.2.2.8 – 16.2.2.13 indicate otherwise'. Reading through sections 16.2.2.8 – 16.2.2.13 there would appear to be little to counteract this directive, which is hopeful for the more widespread adoption of indigenous languages, such as Irish. In addition it would appear that there is scope for local agency around naming in section 16.2.2.2 Sources of Information which states that:

> Determine a preferred name for place from (in order of preference):
>
> > a) gazetteers and other reference sources in a language preferred by the agency creating the data
> >
> > b) gazetteers and other reference sources issued in the jurisdiction in which the place is located in the official language or languages of that jurisdiction.

Thus, using the example above of an Irish language publishing located in the Gaeltacht area of Gaillimh/ Galway could be catalogued as being published in Gaillimh (Éire).

However, it is important to note that the preferred local name for an area in a local language is highly likely to be accepted only within a State. On the international stage the dominance of English through its function as a lingua franca combined with traditional custom and practice is likely to dominate. A prime example of this in the RDA, which clearly reflects

the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules is given below:

CHOOSING THE PREFERRED NAME

16.2.2.6   Different Language Forms of the Same Name

If:

There is a form of a name of place in a language preferred by the agency creating the data

and

that form is in general use

then:

choose that form as the preferred name for place. Determine the form from gazetteers and other reference sources published in that language.

EXAMPLE

Austria
not   Österreich

Copenhagen
not   København

Florence
not   Firenze

Ghent
not   Gent
not   Gand

In relation to the current discussion concerning the dominance of English, the best that the RDA cataloguing system allows is the potential inclusion of a Variant Name for Place (section 16.2.3). However, it is unclear when this option could, or should be used, particularly in an international context.

Three Systems One Impact

It is clear that all three of the cataloguing systems explored above, the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, the DDC system, and the RDA all serve to minimise the use of endangered national and local languages such as Gaelic/ Irish. Each cataloguing system serves to privilege English and the English form of place names. In an Irish context, this serves to prioritise the language of a former colonising power (England) to the detriment of the indigenous language (Gaelic/ Irish). What makes this a particularly bitter pill to swallow in some quarters is that this is a continuation of a historical negative colonial experience in which the Irish language was specifically targeted and its adherents persecuted.

Recent Language Controversy in Éire/ Ireland

Ireland has experienced considerable controversy on the issue of linguistic dominance and place names relatively recently. In 2004 Éamon Ó Cuív, then Gaeltacht minister, changed the name of Dingle to an Irish equivalent under the Official Languages Act (Moriarty 2012; 2014; 2015). This effectively reversed the name from its English version to a more historical Irish name for the town. A plebiscite was held in 2006, which voted overwhelmingly for the name Dingle/ Daingean Uí Chúis. The National Roads Authority subsequently changed the signs in 2013 following legislation (see Figure One). It is particularly interesting in the context of the above discussion of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules that part of the ostensible argument against the Minister's name change to its original/equivalent was that it would be confusing for tourists, many of whom were American (Hickey 2013).

Figure One: Current Signage at the Entrance to Dingle/Daingean Uí Chúis

Conclusion

It would be erroneous to imagine that the Anglicisation process of Irish place names is confined to a distinct period in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Library cataloguing and classification systems continue to function as powerful mediators of what is 'correct' or 'normal'. Thus anglicised versions of Irish place names are being reproduced through library systems on an ongoing basis. As such, they do not merely reflect dominant global cultural norms, but legitimise and perpetuate them. The hegemonic dominance of English in library cataloguing systems, particularly in the international context, continues to covertly undermine local and indigenous languages.

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