Tracing Environmental Elements in British Proper Names

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Abstract

Personal names have been studied within separate disciplines, but there has been little attention toward the environment's trace in proper names to date. Mühlhäusler (2003) declares a close interconnection between language and environment, whether language shapes the environment or it constructs the language. As a result of this ecological approach, the present study aims to discover the trace of environment and ecology in British proper names. The author of the present article collected 1062 British proper names from online sources in male (n=613) and female (n=449) genders. Then through the content analysis, the author classified them based on their environmental elements and approaches. The present article's central hypothesis is that trace of environmental elements is available in British proper names. The second hypothesis is that environmental approaches are also available in British proper names. The third hypothesis is that female British proper names include more trace of environmental elements than male. The findings approved the first and second hypotheses, but the third hypothesis was rejected.

Keywords: British personal names, environmental approaches, affinity toward nature, onomastics

Names are an inseparable and universal part of any language. They are arbitrary labels that we allocate to the objects around us. A personal name is not just a label for identifying the person but rather a form of communication or a message encoded by the name- giver in thoughts, feelings, hopes, moods, and aspirations to the larger society (Cheditey, 2019:24 .(

In olden times, grandfather and grandparents were the name givers, but mothers and fathers are the ones who give a name to their baby in our time. The name-giver conveys a message to the community through the name bearer. Personal names have meaningful connotations that emerge from these names; these connotations can cover various areas such as kinship, objects, animals, nature, names of places, heavenly bodies, etc. Names reveal their holders' preferences regarding real-life objects, actions, features, and beliefs (Rosenhouse, 2002). Alford (1988:1) asserts that a personal name might have symbolic power and indicate that person's identity and sends a message.

Likewise, Mühlhäusler (2003:2) mentions the availability of a close interconnection between language and environment and declares that languages are complicated processes of building the environment and being built by the environment. Al-Zumor (2009), in his article regarding Yemeni personal names, mentions the category of names that reflect the agricultural environment in Saadah and the neighboring areas. Buberwa (2017), while evaluating the meaning of Kiswahili's names and the circumstances under which a child was given the name, mentions the names expressing flora and fauna, which indicated the association between baby distinguished features and nature. Liu, Geng, Ye, and Zhou (2019) studied the women-nature association via implicit and explicit measurements and explored how it affected people's environmental intentions and behaviors. Kolahdouz (2020) investigated Bengali's names and considered personal naming as an essential aspect of nature love among this nation's people. According to her findings, the frequency of flower elements in the Bengali female name (36.81%) was higher than other environmental factors that the reason can be sought in the background of Bengali culture.

As reviewed, personal names have been studied within separate disciplines, but there has been little attention toward the environment's trace in proper names to date. What makes the study of personal names (anthroponymy) significant is that they occur in any language and change, develop, and die out. They have a life cycle similar to other lexical items (Rosenhouse, 2002). Algeo (1992:12-13) states four criteria for the classification of proper nouns in English, namely morphosyntax, orthography, referential, and semantics. He concludes that names are primarily dependent on which level of language one is looking at and whether one is concerned with the universals of naming or naming within a specific language .

As a result, the present study investigates the environmental elements and approaches in British personal names based on their semantic classification within a specific language. The first hypothesis of the present article is that trace of environmental aspects is available in British proper names. The second hypothesis is that environmental approaches are also available in British proper names. The third hypothesis is that female British proper names include more trace of environmental elements than male ones.

Methodology

The author searched British girl and boy names on two online websites (Incnut Digital, 2020ab). These UK websites were the online database of personal names and their gender

and meaning. During this study, the author analyzed 1062 British proper names for male (n=613) and female (n=449) gender and classified them through the content analysis of their meanings. The obtained data were rechecked through other online dictionaries and finally were classified based on their environmental elements and frequency of occurrence to ensure accuracy.

Data Analysis

This section deals with the categories of the names, their frequencies, and the data analysis. According to table (1), it can be inferred that a total number of 77 (12.56%) out of 613 male British names were related to the environmental elements. In this table, waterbody is related to water components such as lake, sea, river, marsh, and wave.

 As can be seen, only 5.19 % of male British personal names are based on nature's affinity. In the case of British male names, elements such as waterbody, nature-involved professions, animal, and nature-related places have the same frequency (15.58%), personal names related to earth, stone, the hill has the highest frequency (19.48%), and sky-related elements with one case has the lowest frequency.

Table (1) British male personal names based on environmental elements

Meaning of the Name	Example of male Personal Name	frq.	per.
Earth /Mountain/Rock	Clive/Clifton/Corwin- headland (hill)/Craig (rocky)/Dunstan(dark stone)/Ebenezer(stone of help) / Gresham(village with grazing land)/Winston(stone)/Riley (meadow)/ Morton (near moor)/ Lambert(famous land)/ Heath-Hadley(moorland)/ Halbert(blight stone)/	15	19.48
Waterbody	Atwater (water side) /Aberforth/ Caldwell(cold-well) /Clyde/Conway/Douglas(black river)/ Fenton (marsh lands)/ Webster (who waves)/ Jordan- Kelvin-Maxwell (river)/ Mortimer(dead sea)	12	15.58
Nature-involved professions	Bentley/ Bond/ Brewer/ Bailey/ Calvert/ Carter/Carver/Coleman/ Gardner/ Marshall/ Mason/ Hunter	12	15.58
Animal	Buck (male deer)/ Harte/ Hebrewulf/Ulric(wolf power)/Todd (fox)/ Leo-Leon-Leonard (Lion)/Lovell- Bleiz- Ralph-Rolf (wolf)/	12	15.58
Nature -related places	Oliver, Ford, Forrest, Sylvester, Perry, Dean, Dalton-Dale, Denton, Leland, Lyle, Hanley	12	15.58
Tree	Hain/ Aiken/Ashley/Hirst/Ellery/Grover/Laurel/Linford/ Kingsley(old wood)	9	11.68
Nature's affinity	Eadbald/ Earcna/Philip/ Oscar	4	5.19
Sky-related elements	Hama (Rain)	1	1.29

Some male names express nature's affinity, such as *Eadbald (A person who enjoys the beauty of nature), Earcna (It means friend of the sea), Philip (a person who loves horses), and Oscar (deers' friend).*

Due to the cultural background, some names embrace professions as well, such as *Bentley (grass clearing), Bond (farmer), Brewer (who manufactures the beer), Bailey (associated with the job of the bailiff), Calvert (shepherd), Carter (the name comes from a person who drives a cart), Carver (a person with a trade as a woodcarver), Coleman (a man who burns cole), Gardner (someone who works in a garden), Marshall (horse worker), Mason (who works with stone), Hunter (someone who hunts).*

Besides, some names indicated the places which are related to the countryside and nature, such as *Oliver (The one who represents the emblem of peace or olive tree), Ford (who lived by a river), Forrest (who lived by a forest), Sylvester (A person from woods), Perry (who lived by a pear tree), Dean (who lived in a valley), Dalton-Dale (A person from a valley town), Denton (valley settlement), Leland (Someone from a fallow land), Lyle (Someone who live on an island), Hanley (a person from the high meadow).*

Table (2) British female personal names based on environmental elements

Meaning of the Name	Example of Female Personal Name	Freq.	Per.
Flower	Hawysia/ Crystiana/ Daisy/ Fern (plant)/Flora/Holly(bush)/Ivy/Myrtle/Lilly/Jasmine/ Rosemary/Rose/Roseanne/Primrose/Poppy/Pansy/Olive/Tansy/Violet/Yasmin	20	34.48
Earth /Mountain/Rock	Tara(hill)/ Beverly -Haley (meadow)/ Amber (gemstone amber)/ Jade -Beryl-Jewel-Sapphire –Ruby-Preal-Opal (gemstone)	11	18.96
Heavenly bodies	Poebe (moon)/ Estelle(star)/ Roxanne (sun)/ Lena(sunlight)/Daisy(sun)/Dawn(light)	6	10.34
Animal	Melissa(bee)/Mavis(song thrush)/Rosalinda(tender horse)/Molly(fish)/Tawny(owl)	5	8.62
Edible food	Berry(fruit)/ Hazel(nut)/ Honey/Zera(seeds)	4	6.89
Sky-related elements	Aria (air)/Skye/ Iris (rainbow)/ Misty(fog)	4	6.89
Waterbody	Sabrina -Alma (river)/ Doris(sea)	3	5.17
Tree	Ashley (ash and wood)/Ebony(black wood)/Willow	3	5.17

Nature -related places	Wade / Olivia	2	3.44

According to table (2), 58 (12.91%) were related to the environmental elements out of 449 female British names. Based on this table, only two British female names expressed places related to the countryside and nature, i.e., *Wade (A person who lives by a ford)* and *Olivia (The one who is closer to an olive tree)*. Categories such as nature-involved professions and nature's affinity were not available in female personal names. On the other hand, categories that conveyed meanings such as flowers, heavenly bodies, and edible food were not available in British male names.

Diagram (1) represents a comparative analysis of what has been represented in tables (1) and (2). Based on this diagram, the flower category has the highest occurrence (34.48%) and exclusively is involved in the British female naming process; that is why in many cultures and traditions around the world, women have been likened to flowers which should be treated with delicacy and gentleness and given delicate tasks.

Based on the present study's findings, environmental approaches such as nature's affinity (5.19%) and nature-involved professions (15.58%) were only frequent at the male naming process and had no occurrence at the female naming process. In contrast, the nature-related places' category was present in both groups, but its frequency was higher in the male naming process.

The incidence of rock-related elements such as mountain, stone, and hill in both groups was almost the same, but in female naming mostly meant as a gemstone, indicating the newborn baby's value and uniqueness. Regarding heavenly bodies, edible food, and sky-related elements, the incidence was higher in female naming, and even zero in male naming since women are the source of life, and in many societies, women are well respected and have high status.
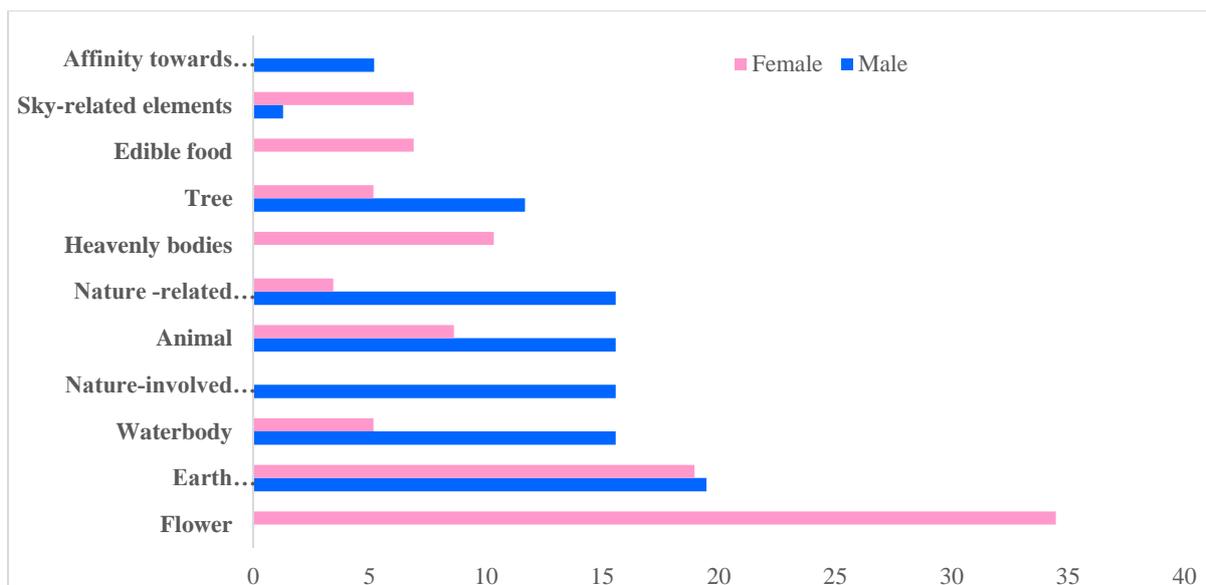
Diagram (1) comparative analysis of elements involved in British personal names

The present study analyzed and categorized British personal names based on trace and approaches toward environmental elements. Regarding British personal naming, three approaches of nature-involved professions, nature's affinity, and author identified nature-related places during data analysis. According to tables (1) and (2), the first hypothesis was accepted as *Hain, Leo, Estelle, Skye, Willow*, *Primrose*, etc., were available in male and female naming processes. The second hypothesis also was approved due to proper names such as *Earcna* (friend of the sea), *Philip* (a person who loves horses), and *Eadbald* (person who enjoys beauties of nature) in the male naming process. The third hypothesis was rejected, as at first sight, the number of personal names which were related to environmental elements may seem unequal, in male was (n=77) and in female was (n=58), but according to the obtained percentage, both had the relatively same share about 12% regarding the trace of environmental elements. However, the frequency of flower elements in the British female name was more than other environmental elements, which was in line with the findings of Liu, Geng, Ye, and Zhou (2019), where women's names were more associated with nature than men. These findings were also in line with the Kolahdouz (2020) findings regarding the high frequency of concrete elements (earth, rock, and the mountain) in male names and flower category in the female names, which indicates their delicate and vulnerable nature.

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