

Romanian Store Names in London – Marks of Cultural Identity

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Abstract

Starting from the idea that names, whether perceived as mere labels or representations, are generally very important in defining identity, this study intends to show how Romanians try to preserve, through the act of commercial naming, their cultural identity in the British context. The analysis tries to be a context-based linguistic categorization of the names, emphasizing the commercial name use in the Romanian community abroad. The study focuses on the linguistic analysis of the names of Romanian stores in England, narrowing the investigation to the London area.

Keywords: *Romanian store names, commercial naming, cultural identity, British context*

1. Introduction

Even if it is clear that the process of migration involves a change in the migrants' lives, as they need to adapt to a new cultural environment, it is also evident that they try to preserve their "cultural capital", as it constitutes their "heritage", their link to people and places in the country of origin (Gsir & Mescoli 2015: 7).

While trying to assimilate the new culture, the migrants also behave as cultural representatives of the culture of their country of origin.

Romanians' process of assimilation as a minority and their integration in the new culture can follow different paths (Morărașu 2007: 23). They may entirely preserve the features of their own identity, they may both preserve their own features and adopt some of the features of the new culture or they may fully adopt the new culture

by giving up their own cultural identity. These different attitudes towards the native culture and the new one are visible in beliefs, customs and practices. One of these practices is the act of naming of stores. The central idea of this paper is that Romanians in London, while embracing the new culture, try to preserve their own cultural identity through the names they give to stores opened in the capital of England.

2. The act of commercial naming

Commercial names “are discursive means by which an entity is established on the level of an accepted sociocultural and linguistic convention” (Bugheșiu 2015: IX). They have a double purpose, to serve as an identification for the business and as an appeal to the potential customers (Ainiala & Östman 2017: 184).

Every commercial name comprises a linguistic component, made of local or global features (Sjöblom 2013: 5). The linguistic features labelled as local are those that “can be understood and interpreted only by a local language community or by a local culture”, such as, for example, the use of toponyms or anthroponyms (*ibid.*: 8). Both of them can be considered “markers of identification and individualization” that are “charged with various types of presuppositional meanings” (Bugheșiu 2015: 178). On the other hand, those linguistic features in commercial names that are global “promote the process of globalization in one way or another” (*idem*).

At the same time, the context where the commercial name is used is of vital importance, as the name can get different meanings and interpretations depending on the language community where it is used (Bugheșiu 2015: 7). Consequently, commercial names result from a process of “negotiation between localism and globalism, from the transfer of values from one context of use to the other” (*ibid.*: IX).

According to Eliezer Ben-Rafael (2009: 43), four principles guide the use of different languages in the linguistic landscape, which can also be applied to the study of commercial names:

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- a) Presentation of self – commercial names are created in such a way as to indicate uniqueness;
- b) Good reasons – commercial names are created taking into account the values of the customers;
- c) Power relations – commercial names are imposed as models taking into account the dominant position on the market;
- d) Collective identity – commercial names deploy similarity to a certain part of the customers.

Paula Sjöblom (2013: 10) came up with a four-field table, in which she tried to combine these four principles with “two important functions of commercial names: bearing individual and social identity, on the one hand, and making a good image, on the other.”

	Identity	Image
For local people	Collective identity	Good reasons
For global markets	Presentation of self	Power relations

The names of Romanian stores in London rely more on the principles of good reasons and collective identity. The names are chosen for good reasons, that is, for making a good image in the eyes of the Romanian customers. At the same time, in their attempt to appeal to the local Romanian customers, they try to reflect some common national and cultural values.

3. Research questions

The main premise of this study is that the act of naming is more than a simple process of classifying things in people’s environment; it is also an activity bearing cultural implications. The sociocultural context of the commercial names analysed is London, a multilingual linguistic landscape, in which the Romanians’ cultural identity “is constantly negotiating its existence between the need to feel globally accepted and locally proud” (Bugheșiu 2015: x). Thus, the research questions are the following:

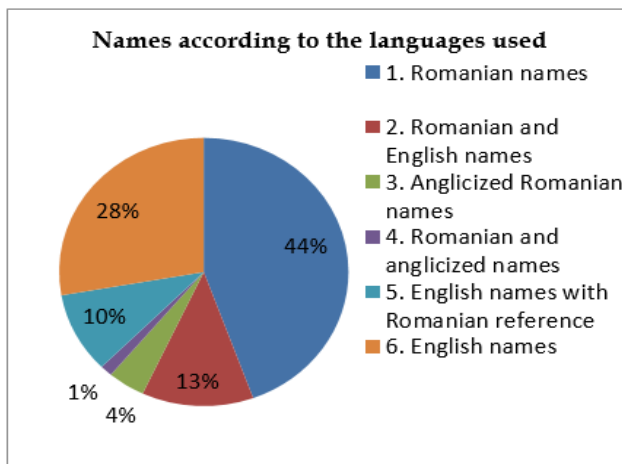
- How are the names of Romanian stores in London linguistically constructed?

- Do the Romanian store owners in London try to preserve their cultural identity through the commercial names?

4. Methodology, data and analysis

The present study focuses on commercial names of Romanian stores encountered in London. Allegedly, there are more than 413,000 Romanians living and working in the UK. The names to be analysed have been provided by three internet sites, www.londra.mae.ro, www.ghid.uk and www.romanin.uk. A total of 80 names of Romanian stores resulted. The Romanians' tendency to preserve their cultural identity is evident, as only 25% of the names are written entirely in English, with no Romanian reference. The analysis aims at linguistically categorizing the names of Romanian stores, pinpointing, at the same time, their role in maintaining the cultural identity.

Taking into account the languages used, there can be depicted six strategies for showcasing the commercial names in the British space, out of which five clearly support the Romanian identity: (1) Romanian names; (2) Romanian and English names; (3) Anglicized Romanian names; (4) Romanian and anglicized names; (5) English names with Romanian reference; (6) English names. *Figure 1* illustrates the frequency with which they occur:



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Using both a quantitative and a qualitative approach, these strategies will be discussed in relation to the idea of preserving the Romanian cultural identity.

1. Romanian names

Thirty out of the eighty names analysed (44%) are entirely in Romanian, clearly relying on the principles of collective identity and good reasons. Through categorial terms, as well as local toponyms and anthroponyms, they try to construct a piece of Romanian identity, appealing to the local Romanians' nostalgia and patriotism.

The categorial terms may appear alone (*Alimentara*, *Magazin Traditional*, *Magazin Românesc*, *Magazin Românesc "1 Decembrie"*), accompanied by anthroponyms under the form of first names (*Cofetăria Gina*, *La Florin Magazin Alimentar*) or *Patiserie La Roman*, *Braseria Timisoreana*. The name *Alimentara* serves as a reminder of the communist Romania, as nowadays, following the blooming of supermarkets and hypermarkets, it is rarely used in urban areas. The same is the case with *Braseria Timisoreana*. The term *braserie* (*brasserie*, *beer house*, *restaurant*) is seldom used in contemporary Romania, being considered an archaism. By using these Romanian names, the owners want more than suggesting the idea of a Romanian space; they also want to keep alive the Romanian spirit. The name *Magazin Traditional* encapsulates in it, on the one hand, the types of products sold and, on the other hand, the idea of preserving the tradition. The names *Magazin Românesc* and *Magazin Românesc "1 Decembrie"*, though more general concerning the types of products sold, are more precise and meant to convey a spirit of patriotism, especially because of the mentioning of Romania's national day, the 1st of December. The names constructed with prepositional phrases (*La Florin Magazin Alimentar* and *Patiserie La Roman*), besides the locative meaning, intend to create a familiar space for the customers.

The Romanian toponyms referring to geographical regions (*Ardealu*, *Oltenia I*, *Oltenia II*, *Transilvania*, *Moldova*), counties (*Ialomita LTD*), towns (*Bistrita*, *Cozia*), rivers (*Vasluiet*, *Dunarea*) and mountains

(*Postăvarul*) in Romania may have, in our opinion, a double explanation. On the one hand, they bring a local feature, probably referring to the owner's provenience. On the other hand, through an association of certain regions in Romania to them, they attempt to trigger emotive associations in the minds of the Romanian customers.

The use of anthroponyms suggests, on the one hand, the owners of the stores and, on the other hand, through their Romanian sonority, they remind customers of home: *Sorin & George, Tudorel, Ileana*. One name stands out in this category: *Dracula*. It is in itself a very strong cultural mark.

Some names are miscellaneous, intending to appeal to the customers' feelings by including references to the country itself as in *Gustul Romanesc* or *Bunătați din România*. The nickname *Româncuța*, through its diminutive form, aims at reaching the Romanians' patriotism. The name *Las Fierbinți* alludes to a famous Romanian sitcom. *La Nașu* intends to trigger a sense of familiarity by using the noun *nașu* in its oral version (without the definite article -l). Other names such as *Mistrețul* or *Albinuța* only indirectly point to Romanian realities, referring to species of animals and insects living in Romania.

2. Romanian and English names

Eight commercial names (13%) preserve the Romanian specificity through the use of anthroponyms or toponyms; however, these names get an English "flavour" through the use of the second element, which is either the name of a London borough, or a categorial term. Thus, the name of the Romanian poet Bacovia is associated with the name of the London area where the store is located (*Bacovia Cricklewood*) or with a term indicating the specificity of the store (*Bacovia Supermarket*). The family name *Costan* appears accompanied by a categorial term in English: *Rustic Shop Costan*.

The toponyms *Bucovina* and *Muntenia* probably refer to the owners' region of origin, while the English categorial terms suggest the specificity of the products sold in the respective stores: *Bucovina Bakery* and *Muntenia shop*. The name of a Romanian county, *Prahova*,

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appears mentioned three times, each time in association with the London area where the store can be found: *Prahova – Colindale*, *Prahova – Harrow*, *Prahova – Kingsbury*.

3. Anglicized Romanian names

Three store names (5%) have as referents Romanian toponyms, but the form is anglicized. In this case, the principle of good reason is at work, but more for the English customers than for the Romanian ones. By changing the name of the capital of Romania, București, into *Bucharest* in one store name, and by labelling Carpați chain of mountains *Carpathia LTD* or *Carpathian Food Limited*, the owners of the stores do not only try to preserve their cultural identity, but they also want to make a good image in the eyes of the English, whom they want to familiarize with the Romanian realities.

4. Romanian and anglicized names

One name (1%) falls under this category. In *Casa Transylvania*, the categorial term *Casa* is written in Romanian, intending to suggest, in our opinion, tradition and prestige. The second term, referring to a region in Romania, is anglicized: *Transylvania*, in order for the name to be more appealing for the English customers as well.

5. English names with Romanian reference

Six store names (10%) are entirely in English, but the Romanian identity is visible through the use of the adjective Romanian (*Maxy RoExport – Romanian Cash & Carry*, *Romanian Food Shop*), of the particles RO and ROM from the name of the country linked to nouns (*ROEXPORT LTD*) or to other particles (*ROMBIS Limited*) and of the anglicized toponyms referring to geographical areas (*Transylvanian Grocery Store*) or to cities (*Bucharest – Golders Green*).

6. English names

Fourteen commercial names (28%) are in English, without any hint to Romania, Romanians or their cultural identity: *Five Star*

Provisions, The Brewery, Food 4 Less, FOODEX: Food Ltd., Good People Food LTD, Leveloff Foods, PO&FO LTD, Fresh Organic Products Ltd, Deli Twist, Eastern European Food, Barking First Choice Supermarket, D & D Patisserie, Alenka, ABC Grocery & Butchery, Maestro, Delicia. Taking into consideration the fact that these are names of Romanian stores, primarily aimed at Romanian customers, we can consider their act of naming in English as global.

Conclusions

Analysing the six strategies used to showcase the Romanians' commercial names in London, we can notice that the greatest majority (44%) is formed by Romanian names. To this percentage there can be added the 13% of Romanian and English names, the 10% of English names with Romanian reference, the 4% of Anglicized Romanian names and the 1% of Romanian and anglicized names, as, no matter the language in which they are written, all these names contain a Romanian reference of some sort. We can conclude that, with a percentage of 72% of names encapsulating the idea of Romania/Romanians, the Romanians' commercial names in London can be undoubtedly considered marks of cultural identity that create a sense of "ours" within the Romanian community in London. Through these commercial names the Romanians living in London are involved "in a network that is a firm statement of their cultural identity" (Bugheșiu 2015: IX). We can witness here a phenomenon of localism, that "emphasises local production and consumption, local culture and identity" (Sjöblom 2013: 2).

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