

17.4 Wider Implications

17.4.1 Alternative names for one place

p. 401 There may be two or more synonyms for a placename. In some speech communities, the more important a place is deemed to be, the more likely it is to bear more than one name; this may arise from there being an alternative name in a neighbouring language, and can relate to a view that multiple names are an index of importance (Wilkinson et al. 2009). The synonyms might vary according to speech types or register; thus in a song, the form of a placename may be modified. A variant can be used for poetic or humorous effect, such as referring to Edinburgh as *Old Reeky*, or New York City as *The Big Apple*. In Australia and New Zealand many placenames as used in English (especially long ones) have commonly used abbreviations, thus the Sydney suburb *Woolloomooloo* is called by locals *The 'Loo* (Simpson 2001).

Placename synonyms will be encountered in languages spoken in a culture which observes avoidance of the name of a recently deceased person: if a placename derives from, or just sounds similar to, a personal name, and the personal name can no longer be uttered, then the placename can be replaced by a synonym or perhaps by a revealing circumlocution. In Aboriginal Australia, for instance, a proscribed placename might be replaced by a descriptive term based on distinctive flora, or the place's Dreaming affiliation. The use of a particular placename may be proscribed for the whole community or just for a few close relatives, and the proscribed placename can return to general use once the mourning period has passed.

With a complex site, different site elements may not be terminologically distinguished, or else a generic term may be optionally added to the placename to distinguish a site element, such as a hill, well, or claypan at the location. Whether the composite nominal is itself a placename may not be clear.

17.4.2 Language engineering and loans

Not all placenames are necessarily 'old'. There are situations where a new placename is required because there is a new 'place'. Typically this arises from extensions and modifications of the built environment: street names are a common example, or a new centre of habitation, but it might result from a landslide or sinkhole collapse or some such natural change. Placename replacement and revival may arise during upheavals in political history, such as when one colonial power has been replaced by another.

The new placename, as in the rest of the vocabulary, might be a lexical creation, or might result from shifts of meaning. Lexical creations may involve the internal resources of the language, or may involve borrowing. Borrowing of a placename leads to the existence of two separate places with the same name, so that a placename echoes another place with the same or overlapping name. An example is in English *Waterlooville*, which designates an English village that grew up after the decisive battle fought against the French near Waterloo in Belgium. *Waterloo* commemorates the victory; the final descriptor is the French *ville* 'town, city'.

p. 402 A new name might be imposed by the dominant authority, and may be in a language which dominates the local language; sometimes a more or less sensitive attempt is made to derive a name using the resources of the local language (Amery 2002; Baker 2002). If these new names are to be listed in a dictionary or gazetteer, it is a good idea to flag them as 'introduced'.

Especially in a postcolonial situation, placenames may occur in doublets, one from the traditional land owners and the other bestowed in the historical colonial period. In some jurisdictions this is officially recognized as Dual Naming. An example is the monolith in central Australia known as Uluru and Ayers Rock.