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Ethnolinguistic Transformations in Kazakh and English Toponymy in the Context of Globalization

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Abstract This study aims to investigate ethnolinguistic transformations in the toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England in the context of globalization, with particular attention to how toponyms reflect cultural identity, historical processes and linguistic change, as well as to identify convergent and divergent patterns in toponymic development shaped by sociopolitical factors. This research adopts a qualitative comparative method, integrating ethnolinguistic, sociolinguistic and onomastic approaches, and is based on a dataset compiled from geographical registries, historical sources, toponymic dictionaries, and digital mapping platforms. The findings reveal that toponymic change is driven by a complex interaction of historical, political and global influences: Kazakhstan demonstrates transformation associated with language policy and post-Soviet identity reconstruction, whereas England exhibits relative stability characterized by semantic evolution within a historically layered system. Furthermore, globalization contributes to the processes of hybridization in Kazakhstan while reinforcing standardization and functional adaptation in England. Overall, the study demonstrates that globalization produces context-dependent ethnolinguistic outcomes, contributing to comparative toponymy and linguistic landscape research.

Keywords: *Ethnolinguistics, Toponymy, Globalization, Linguistic landscape, Cultural identity*

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1. Introduction

Toponymy, as a key subfield of onomastics, has increasingly attracted scholarly attention due to its capacity to reflect the interaction between language, culture, and social change. Place names function not only as geographical identifiers but also as repositories of historical memory, cultural knowledge, and ideological transformation (Alderman, 2008; Azaryahu, 2012). In recent decades, toponymic research has expanded beyond traditional etymological analysis to include interdisciplinary approaches such as ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies. Within this framework, toponyms are understood as dynamic elements of discourse

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that participate in the construction of identity and space (Jones et al., 2015). Globalization has further intensified interest in this field, as it introduces processes of linguistic standardization, increased mobility, digitalization, and the global spread of dominant languages (Hough, 2016). The rise of digital mapping technologies and geospatial platforms has established new norms of spelling, transliteration, and standardization, often privileging globally recognizable forms over locally embedded naming traditions (Rose-Redwood, 2010). At the same time, globalization promotes hybridization through increased cultural contact, resulting in toponymic forms that combine elements from multiple languages.

Despite the growing body of research on toponymy, significant gaps remain in understanding how globalization affects different linguistic and cultural contexts in a comparative perspective. Existing studies have largely focused either on national toponymic systems or on specific aspects such as renaming, standardization, or linguistic landscape, often without integrating ethnolinguistic analysis with empirical data across diverse geopolitical settings. In particular, there is a lack of comparative research that examines post-Soviet and Western European toponymic systems within a unified analytical framework. Furthermore, although recent scholarship highlights the role of digital environments, commercialization, and globalization in shaping naming practices (Graham & Zook, 2021), these factors are rarely analyzed in relation to their combined impact on cultural identity and linguistic diversity. The absence of such integrative studies limits our understanding of how global and local forces interact in the transformation of toponymic systems.

This study aims to address this gap by providing a comparative analysis of ethnolinguistic transformations in the toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England in the context of globalization. The toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England provide contrasting yet complementary cases: Kazakhstan reflects a multilingual post-Soviet environment shaped by language policy and identity reconstruction, while England represents a historically stratified and relatively stable system characterized by gradual semantic evolution (Gelling & Cole, 2000). The main objective is to investigate how place names reflect cultural identity, historical processes, and linguistic change under global influence. To achieve this aim, the study analyzes the historical development of toponymic systems, identifies key mechanisms of transformation such as borrowing, translation, phonological adaptation, and semantic shift, and examines the impact of globalization on the preservation and modification of indigenous naming practices. By exploring both convergent and divergent patterns of toponymic change, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of linguistic landscapes and the role of place names as markers of cultural and sociopolitical processes.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Ethnolinguistic and Toponymic Framework

This study is grounded in the ethnolinguistic approach, which conceptualizes language as a reflection of cultural worldview and collective identity. Within this framework, linguistic units are interpreted as carriers of culturally embedded knowledge, values, and spatial perception (Kaidar, 1998). Applied to toponymy, this perspective allows place names to be understood not merely as geographical labels, but as culturally encoded signs that preserve historical memory and collective identity (Alderman, 2008; Azaryahu, 2012). Toponymic research further develops this perspective by emphasizing the dual function of place names as both referential and symbolic units. Recent studies demonstrate that toponyms act as repositories of cultural memory, reflecting historical experience, environmental interaction, and patterns of settlement (Perono Cacciafoco & Cavallaro, 2023). This approach is particularly relevant for interpreting the stability of natural feature names identified in this study, as well as the cultural significance of preserved and restored toponyms in different sociolinguistic contexts.

2.2. Critical Toponymy and Language Policy

A second key theoretical foundation is critical toponymy, which examines naming practices as expressions of power, ideology and political authority. From this perspective, toponymic change reflects broader sociopolitical processes, including nation-building, identity reconstruction and language policy (Light, 2014; Rose-Redwood et al., 2020). Previous research demonstrates that in post-

Soviet contexts, toponymic transformations are often state-driven and closely linked to language policy and decolonization processes. Studies on Kazakhstan show that renaming practices serve to restore indigenous linguistic heritage and reconfigure symbolic space (Imanberdiyeva et al., 2025). In contrast, studies on England highlight the predominance of historical continuity, where place names evolve through gradual layering of linguistic influences rather than abrupt political intervention (Coates, 2006; Gelling & Cole, 2000). This distinction provides a theoretical basis for interpreting the differences observed in the present study between structural transformation in Kazakhstan and semantic evolution in England.

2.3. Globalization and Linguistic Landscape

The third theoretical component of this study is globalization theory, which explains how global processes influence local naming practices. Existing research shows that globalization affects toponymy through processes such as standardization, hybridization, and commercialization (Graham & Zook, 2021; Hough, 2016). In multilingual contexts, globalization often results in hybrid toponymic forms that combine global (primarily English) lexical elements with local linguistic structures. At the same time, digital mapping technologies contribute to standardization by imposing uniform spelling and transliteration norms (Rose-Redwood et al., 2010). The concept of linguistic landscape complements this framework by treating toponyms as visible semiotic elements within public space that reflect language hierarchies and identity politics (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). This perspective helps explain the coexistence of traditional and modern naming practices, particularly in urban and commercial domains.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design to investigate ethnolinguistic transformations in the toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England. The unit of analysis is the individual toponym, with cases matched by functional category rather than etymological origin. This approach ensures that observed differences can be attributed to sociolinguistic and historical factors rather than internal variation within categories.

3.1. Corpus

The corpus consists of 60 toponyms from Kazakhstan and 60 from England, selected through purposive sampling based on three operational criteria. First, each toponym had to exhibit documented linguistic change, defined as a modification in form (e.g., borrowing, translation, phonological adaptation) or meaning (semantic shift) across at least two historical periods. Second, each toponym had to be attested in an official geographical registry or national database to ensure reliability and standardization. Third, each item had to belong to one of five functional categories: urban toponyms (city and district names), street names, commercial names, rural toponyms (village and regional names), or natural features (hydronyms and oronyms). These criteria were applied consistently across both datasets to ensure comparability.

Primary sources included official geographical name registries of Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom, specifically the State Catalogue of Geographical Names of the Republic of Kazakhstan maintained by the National Cartographic and Geodetic Fund of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the official place-name records of the United Kingdom maintained by Ordnance Survey and the Ordnance Survey Open Names dataset. These sources provided standardized forms of toponyms across different administrative periods. Historical maps (both printed and digital), including archival materials from national cartographic collections and publicly available map repositories, were used to verify spatial distribution and reconstruct earlier naming forms. Digital mapping platforms, including Google Maps and OpenStreetMap, were used solely to verify contemporary usage and spelling (2024–2025), rather than as primary data sources.

The corpus integrated both diachronic and synchronic dimensions. For Kazakhstan, it included pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-independence naming layers; for England, it incorporated Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Norman, and modern strata. This design allowed for a historically grounded comparison of toponymic evolution.

3.2. Procedure

The analytical procedure consisted of three sequential stages, each building on the previous one to ensure transparency and methodological coherence.

Step 1: Descriptive classification

Each toponym was assigned to one functional category and one transformation type based on explicit linguistic criteria. Borrowing was identified when foreign lexical elements were incorporated without structural modification. The transformation types were identified through a qualitative analysis of the toponymic corpus rather than defined in abstract terms. Each toponym was examined in its historical and linguistic context and classified according to the type of change it had undergone. Cases of translation were identified where an earlier name was replaced by its semantic equivalent in another language, particularly in the renaming of Soviet-era toponyms into Kazakh. Phonological adaptation was recorded when the same toponym appeared in different orthographic or phonetic forms across languages (Kazakh, Russian, and English), indicating transliteration or phonetic adjustment. Borrowing was identified in instances where foreign lexical elements, especially English, were incorporated into local naming practices, most commonly in commercial and urban toponyms. Semantic shift was assigned to toponyms whose formal structure remained stable but whose original meaning had become opaque or had evolved over time.

Each toponym was coded for one primary transformation type based on its most salient feature, and the frequency of each category was then calculated for both national corpora. This step generated the quantitative distribution of transformation types presented in Table 1.

Step 2: Etymological reconstruction

Toponyms identified as transformed were analyzed diachronically to reconstruct their historical development. Using toponymic dictionaries and scholarly sources (Gelling & Cole, 2000; Kaidar, 1998), the study traced the earliest recorded forms and subsequent modifications. For Kazakh toponyms, this included distinguishing Turkic origins, Soviet-era transformations, and post-independence restorations. For English toponyms, it involved identifying contributions from Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman layers (Coates, 2006). This stage produced historical trajectories for each case.

Step 3: Comparative sociolinguistic analysis

The final stage examined how transformation types and historical trajectories correlated with four external factors: political influence, language policy, historical continuity and globalization. Political influence was operationalized through evidence of state-led renaming. Language policy was assessed based on legislative impact on naming practices. Historical continuity was measured by the stability of toponyms over at least two centuries. Globalization was identified through patterns of standardization, hybridization, and commercialization. The analysis compared matched categories across Kazakhstan and England to determine whether similar types of toponyms respond differently to these factors.

4. Results

The analysis of the corpus reveals distinct patterns of ethnolinguistic transformation in the toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England. Four major types of transformation were identified across the sampled toponyms: borrowing, translation, phonological adaptation, and semantic shift. Their distribution differs significantly between the two national contexts, as does the relationship between transformation type and functional category of toponyms. The functional category of a toponym strongly predicts its likelihood and type of transformation in both national contexts, though with different patterns. A total of 120 toponyms were analyzed, including 60 from Kazakhstan and 60 from England. The English corpus consisted of 20 urban and administrative toponyms, 15 street names, 10 commercial toponyms, 8 rural toponyms, 4 hydronyms, and 3 oronyms. Kazakhstan's corpus included 20 urban and administrative toponyms, 15 street names, 10 commercial toponyms, 7 rural toponyms, 4 hydronyms, and 4 oronyms.

4.1. Transformation Types by National Context

According to Table 1, in the Kazakh corpus, borrowing and phonological adaptation appear more frequently than in the English corpus. Borrowing is observed primarily in commercial and urban toponyms, where English lexical elements are incorporated into local naming structures. Examples include *Mega Center Almaty* and *Asia Park*, where the English words *"Center" and "Park"* combine with Kazakh or Russian place references. Phonological adaptation is evident in the transliteration of place names between Kazakh, Russian, and English orthographic systems, resulting in multiple spelling variants of the same toponym across different maps and official documents. Translation occurs in cases where Soviet-era Russian names have been replaced with Kazakh equivalents, such as the renaming of streets originally named after Soviet figures to Kazakh cultural figures like *Abay Avenue* (formerly Lenin Street). Semantic shift is present but less common in the Kazakh corpus, typically affecting older Turkic toponyms whose original meanings have become opaque to contemporary speakers.

In the English corpus, semantic shift is the dominant transformation type. Place names such as *Oxford* (originally "oxen ford") and *Manchester* (from Latin Mancunium via Old English) have preserved their structural forms for centuries, while their original meanings have become semantically opaque or evolved. Borrowing is less frequent. Phonological adaptation occurs primarily through historical sound changes within the English language itself rather than through cross-linguistic contact. Translation is rare in the English corpus, observed mainly in standardized international contexts such as bilingual signage or digital mapping platforms where English names are rendered into other languages, but these do not replace the native English forms.

Table 1
Types of Toponymic Transformations

Transformation Type	Kazakhstan (%)	England (%)
Borrowing	30%	15%
Translation	20%	10%
Phonological adaptation	25%	20%
Semantic shift	25%	55%

The distribution presented in Table 1 confirms that semantic shift accounts for over half of the transformations in the English corpus, whereas the Kazakh corpus shows a more even spread across borrowing, phonological adaptation, translation, and semantic shift. This contrast suggests that English toponymy evolves primarily through gradual meaning change within a stable formal structure, while Kazakh toponymy undergoes more frequent formal modification through multiple mechanisms.

4.2. Distribution across Functional Categories

The functional category of a toponym strongly predicts its likelihood and type of transformation in both national contexts, though with different patterns (Table 2). Urban and administrative toponyms demonstrate the highest degree of transformation in Kazakhstan. The capital city's name changed twice since independence: from *Tselinograd* (Soviet period) to *Aqmola* (1992), then to *Astana* (1998), then *to Nur-Sultan* (2019), and back to *Astana* (2022). Each renaming reflects a distinct political and ideological phase in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Regional administrative names have also been transformed, such as *South Kazakhstan Region* becoming *Turkistan Region*, which explicitly restores a historical and cultural identity marker. Street names show similar patterns, with Soviet-era commemorative names systematically replaced by Kazakh historical figures, cultural heroes, and national symbols.

In England, urban and administrative toponyms show strong continuity. The names *London, Manchester, Birmingham* and *Liverpool* have preserved their structural forms for over a thousand years despite significant political, economic and social changes. Functional modifications occur primarily through addition rather than replacement: for example, *London City Airport* adds a new commercial designation without altering the underlying historical name, *London*. Street names such as *Oxford Circus* retain their historical forms, and large-scale ideological renaming is absent. Commercial

toponyms in England, such as *MediaCityUK* (Salford) or *Canary Wharf* (London), introduce new names for redeveloped areas but rarely replace established historical toponyms.

The *Syr Darya* in Kazakhstan and the *Thames* in England have retained their essential forms across centuries, regardless of political or linguistic change. Similarly, the *Altai Mountains* in Kazakhstan and the *Pennines* in England show minimal linguistic modification over time. This stability across both contexts suggests that natural feature names are less susceptible to political intervention and globalization pressures than urban or administrative names.

Table 2
Examples of Toponymic Transformations in Kazakhstan and England

Category	Kazakhstan (Examples)	England (Examples)	Type of Transformation	Description
Urban toponyms	Astana → Nur-Sultan → Astana	London (Canary Wharf)	Renaming	Reflects political or economic changes
Street names	Lenin Street → Abay Avenue	Oxford Circus	Replacement / Preservation	Ideological renaming vs. historical continuity
Commercial names	Mega Center Almaty; Asia Park	London City Airport	Borrowing / Hybridization	Integration of English elements
Rural toponyms	Saryagash; Kyzylorda	Yorkshire; Devon	Preservation	Retention of traditional forms
Hydronyms	Syr Darya	Thames	Stability	Minimal linguistic change
Oronyms	Altai Mountains	Pennines	Stability	Strong resistance to change
Administrative names	Astana (capital name changes)	Manchester; Birmingham	Renaming vs. Continuity	Rapid vs. gradual evolution

As illustrated in Table 2, urban and administrative toponyms in Kazakhstan undergo frequent renaming and replacement, whereas their English counterparts exhibit strong continuity. Commercial names in Kazakhstan show high hybridization through English borrowing, while English commercial names tend to add new designations without removing historical ones. Natural features in both countries remain stable, confirming their resistance to ethnolinguistic transformation regardless of political context.

4.3. Factors Influencing Transformation

Political influence and language policy emerge as dominant drivers of toponymic change in Kazakhstan (Table 3). The systematic renaming of cities, streets, and administrative regions corresponds directly to post-Soviet nation-building and the official promotion of the Kazakh language. These transformations are state-led, codified in legal acts, and implemented through administrative channels. In contrast, political influence in England is moderate and indirect; no equivalent large-scale renaming campaign exists. Language policy plays a negligible role in English toponymy, as English is both the dominant language and the medium of naming.

Table 3
Factors Influencing Toponymic Change

Factor	Kazakhstan	England
Political influence	High	Moderate
Language policy	High	Low
Historical continuity	Moderate	High

Table 3 quantifies these differences, showing high political influence and language policy in Kazakhstan versus moderate and low, respectively, in England. Historical continuity is rated high in England,

reflecting the unbroken survival of ancient name layers, while Kazakhstan shows only moderate continuity due to Soviet-era disruption and subsequent restoration efforts. Historical continuity characterizes the English toponymic system. The layering of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman names within a single stable system has produced a palimpsest where each historical period contributes but does not erase previous layers. This continuity is itself a form of cultural preservation, as the survival of ancient names maintains an unbroken link to pre-English linguistic heritage. In Kazakhstan, historical continuity is moderate because the Soviet period actively suppressed or replaced pre-existing Turkic toponyms. Current efforts to restore indigenous names thus represent a recovery of interrupted continuity rather than preservation of an unbroken tradition.

In addition to the above-mentioned factors, globalization affects both systems but produces different outcomes (Table 4). Standardization affects both contexts equally, as digital mapping platforms and international navigation systems impose consistent spelling and transliteration norms across all toponyms. Linguistic hybridization is more pronounced in Kazakhstan, where commercial names frequently blend Kazakh or Russian roots with English lexical elements, as in *Keruen City or Shymkent Plaza*. In England, commercialization is more evident, with toponyms increasingly functioning as branding tools in urban redevelopment and tourism contexts, such as *Stratford International* or *King's Cross Central*. Cultural preservation remains significant in both systems but operates differently: in Kazakhstan, it takes the form of active restoration of indigenous names; in England, it takes the form of passive continuity of historically established names.

Table 4
Effects of Globalization

Effect	Kazakhstan	England
Standardization	High	High
Linguistic hybridization	High	Moderate
Cultural preservation	Moderate	High
Commercialization	Increasing	High

Table 4 shows that standardization is high in both countries, reflecting the global reach of digital mapping and international communication systems. However, linguistic hybridization is higher in Kazakhstan, while commercialization is more advanced in England. Cultural preservation remains high in England through historical continuity and moderate in Kazakhstan through active restoration policies.

5. Discussion

This study sought to examine ethnolinguistic transformations in the toponymic systems of Kazakhstan and England in the context of globalization. The findings indicate that globalization does not generate uniform effects across different sociolinguistic environments. Instead, its impact is shaped by historical legacies, language policies, and the relative stability or dynamism of each toponymic system.

The results suggest that in Kazakhstan, ethnolinguistic transformation is primarily structural and policy-driven. The restoration of Turkic-origin place names, the replacement of Soviet-era Russian names with Kazakh equivalents, and the systematic renaming of streets and administrative regions all illustrate deliberate state-led efforts to reconstruct national identity and decolonize the linguistic landscape. These findings correspond with earlier Kazakh scholarship emphasizing that toponymy functions as a key instrument of nation-building and cultural revival (Kaidar, 1998). In contrast, the English toponymic system reveals ethnolinguistic transformation primarily through semantic shift rather than formal restructuring. Place names such as *Oxford* and *Manchester* have maintained their phonological and orthographic forms for centuries, while their original meanings have become opaque or have evolved. This pattern reflects a distinct sociopolitical trajectory in which successive linguistic layers accumulate without eliminating earlier ones, resulting in a stratified yet continuous toponymic system (Gelling & Cole, 2000; Light & Young, 2018).

The research addressed similarities and differences in the ethnolinguistic evolution of Kazakh and English toponymy, particularly regarding their role as markers of cultural identity. One of the most

notable similarities is the stability of natural feature names. Hydronyms such as the *Syr Darya* and the *Thames*, and oronyms such as the *Altai Mountains* and the *Pennines*, have remained largely unchanged in both countries, regardless of political shifts or globalization pressures. This finding confirms the cross-cultural tendency for natural features to function as stable reference points that anchor collective memory and environmental knowledge (Gelling & Cole, 2000). The most significant difference concerns how toponyms function as markers of cultural identity. In Kazakhstan, toponymic identity is actively constructed through renaming; the restoration of the *Turkistan Region* and the renaming of streets from Soviet figures to Kazakh cultural figures represent a conscious effort to break with the colonial past and affirm indigenous heritage. In England, by contrast, toponymic identity is expressed through continuity; the persistence of names such as *London* and *Manchester* across centuries reflects an enduring connection between present-day inhabitants and their historical past (Coates, 2006). Neither approach can be considered inherently superior; each is shaped by its specific historical and political context.

These findings can be interpreted through recent approaches in ethnolinguistics and linguistic landscape studies. The observed stability of natural feature names supports the view that toponyms function as repositories of cultural memory, preserving historically embedded knowledge and environmental perception over long periods of time. From the perspective of linguistic landscape theory, place names operate as visible semiotic resources that encode social, political, and ideological meanings within public space (Kaibuldayeva & Madiyea, 2025). In this context, the contrast identified in this study between stable natural toponyms and highly dynamic urban and commercial names reflects differing degrees of exposure to sociopolitical intervention and global influence. This interpretation is further supported by culturolinguistic research, which emphasizes that linguistic units serve as carriers of cultural narratives and value systems (Muldagaliyeva et al., 2026). The preservation or transformation of toponyms can therefore be understood as part of a broader process of cultural transmission and reinterpretation across generations. These findings can also be interpreted through the lens of ethnocultural identity, which is shaped through interaction between local and global influences (Kalenova et al., 2026). In this sense, toponymic hybridization reflects not only linguistic change but also the negotiation of cultural identity. This interpretation can also be supported by the concept of cultuling (Pishghadam, 2013), which views language as an integrated cultural-linguistic system in which linguistic forms and cultural meanings are inseparable. From this perspective, toponyms can be understood as units that encode cultural knowledge, values, and worldview. Accordingly, the processes identified in this study, such as the preservation of traditional place names in England and the restoration or transformation of toponyms in Kazakhstan, reflect not only linguistic change but also the transmission and reconstruction of cultural identity. The coexistence of traditional and hybrid forms further demonstrates how cultural meanings are continuously reinterpreted under the influence of both local traditions and global dynamics.

Political influence and language policy emerge as dominant drivers of toponymic change in Kazakhstan. The systematic renaming of cities, streets, and administrative regions corresponds directly to post-Soviet nation-building and the official promotion of the Kazakh language. These transformations are state-led, codified in legal acts, and implemented through administrative channels. In contrast, political influence in England is moderate and indirect; no equivalent large-scale renaming campaign exists. Language policy plays a negligible role in English toponymy, as English is both the dominant language and the medium of naming. Historical continuity characterizes the English toponymic system. The layering of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman names within a single stable system has produced a palimpsest where each historical period contributes but does not erase previous layers. This continuity is itself a form of cultural preservation, as the survival of ancient names maintains an unbroken link to pre-English linguistic heritage. In Kazakhstan, historical continuity is moderate because the Soviet period actively suppressed or replaced pre-existing Turkic toponyms. Current efforts to restore indigenous names thus represent a recovery of interrupted continuity rather than preservation of an unbroken tradition.

The research explored how globalization contributes to the transformation of place names in different linguistic environments. The findings demonstrate that globalization produces both convergent and divergent effects. Standardization through digital mapping platforms and global navigation systems

affects both Kazakhstan and England in similar ways, imposing consistent spelling, transliteration, and formatting norms that often privilege globally recognizable forms over locally embedded variants. At the same time, the findings confirm the role of globalization as a key factor shaping contemporary toponymic systems. As demonstrated in recent studies, globalization promotes both standardization and hybridization, leading to the coexistence of traditional and modern naming practices (Mitxelena-Hoyos, 2025; Schumacher et al., 2026; Zhong et al., 2026). This dual effect is clearly reflected in the present study, where global influences contribute to hybrid commercial names in Kazakhstan, while in England they primarily support additive naming practices without replacing historical forms. However, beyond standardization, globalization leads to divergent outcomes. In Kazakhstan, it encourages linguistic hybridization, particularly in commercial and urban toponyms such as *Keruen City* and *Shymkent Plaza*, which combine Kazakh or Russian elements with English lexical components, reflecting the global prestige of English in commerce and urban branding (Hough, 2016). Toponyms such as *MediaCityUK* and *Stratford International* emerge from urban redevelopment and branding strategies (Light, 2014), but unlike in Kazakhstan, these names rarely replace historical ones; instead, they coexist alongside them, adding functional layers to an already stratified system. This pattern supports the view that in contexts of strong historical continuity, globalization operates additively rather than substitutively.

Several limitations should be noted. First, the corpus of 60 toponyms per country, while sufficient for qualitative comparison, does not allow for statistical generalization. The distribution of transformation types should therefore be interpreted as indicative patterns rather than precise measurements. Second, the study focuses primarily on officially registered names, which results in the underrepresentation of vernacular or minority-language variants. In Kazakhstan, Russian and other minority-language toponyms are less visible; in England, regional dialectal or Celtic variants receive limited attention. Third, data from digital mapping platforms reflect usage as of 2024–2025 and may not capture ongoing changes or local oral traditions. Finally, the comparative design, while effective for highlighting contrasts, inevitably simplifies complex national systems. Future research could expand the geographical and linguistic scope to include other post-Soviet and Western European contexts, examine the role of digital algorithms in prioritizing certain toponymic variants, and investigate how local communities perceive and relate to renamed places.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that ethnolinguistic transformations in toponymy are shaped by the interaction of historical legacies, political interventions, language policies, and global pressures. Kazakhstan represents a dynamic, policy-driven system in which toponyms are actively restructured as instruments of national identity reconstruction. England, by contrast, illustrates a historically continuous and stable system where toponyms evolve gradually through semantic shift and additive commercialization. Globalization produces standardization in both contexts, but leads to hybridization in Kazakhstan and commercialization in England. These differentiated outcomes confirm that globalization is not a uniform or homogenizing force, but rather a complex process whose local effects depend on pre-existing sociolinguistic conditions. Toponymy thus remains a crucial domain for understanding how language, culture, and identity interact within the tension between the global and the local.

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Data Availability

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethics Declaration

This study analyzed publicly available toponymic data from official geographical registries, historical maps, toponymic dictionaries, and digital mapping platforms. No human participants, animals, or personal data were involved. Therefore, institutional review board approval and informed consent were not required.

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