COLONIALITY OF POWER AND RESISTANCE IN SOME INTERRACIAL TOPONOMASTIC TRANSPHONOLOGIES IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

This paper engages the theory of coloniality of power in analysing the implications of trans-phonological toponymic distortions in the context of colonial Zimbabwe. The paper argues that toponyms are part of people's cultural identity as they form part of a collective cultural memorabilia. Their distortion, therefore, compromises their critical symbolic function. This paper uses a qualitative approach for collection and analysis of the data. A total of 33 transphonologies were collected through interviews, observations, and document reviews. Of these, 15 that deviate significantly from their linguistic etymons are analysed through etymological analysis and historical toponym reconstruction. The paper uses a functional linguistics approach to address issues related to power in toponomastic transphonologies. The analysis establishes that there are coloniality of power matrixes in English transphonologisation of indigenous toponyms aimed at acculturation and de-historicisation. The paper also establishes that the Zimbabwean colonials also used transphonologisation on imposed English toponyms as anti-colonial resistance. The lack of effort by both coloniser and colonials to get the pronunciation of the toponyms correct is either colonial arrogance or decolonial disobedience. The transphonologies achieve onomastic erasure through meaning alterations that are either done through meaningless renditions or a change in meaning towards a different lexeme.

Keywords: Toponym, coloniality, transphonologisation, Zimbabwe, decoloniality, onomastic erasure

1.   Introduction

Proper names have been found to have a communicative and symbolic value over and above their referential function in language. One such symbolic value is their link to cultural identity. Wamitila (1999) observes that one of the most basic qualities of a name is its relationship with a particular culture. He terms this relationship the social contextuality of naming. Toponyms form part of a culturally defined discourse in Africa. They are part of expressions of integrity rooted in an African cultural legacy which continue to help shape the contours and textures of the African experience (Boykin et al., 1997). Traditional methods of researching toponyms in onomastics focus on culture and memory (Wanjiru and Matsubara, 2017). However, focus on power matrixes in naming spaces has seen the burgeoning of the methodology of critical toponymy. African toponyms were reflective of African history, cultural identity and experiences before colonial conquest established exotic heritages on the African spaces. Colonialism diminished African people's

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political power and this affected their right to naming space. Power relations dictate what is right and correct, the one wielding political power influences cultural identity (Asante, 1983). The uneven power relations fashioned to create subalternity establish the coloniality of power.

Critical toponymy investigates colonialities of power as expressed and enforced through toponyms. Coloniality of power is a system that denies hierarchical social ascendency, knowledge, and culture to create subalterns (Quijano, 2000). Ndlovu (2014) alludes to the fact that Zimbabwe lived under colonial British culture for a long time, and this continues to date under the western and global colonialities. This has resulted in the heavy influence of western cultures on the languages and philosophies of Zimbabwean Africans (Ndlovu, 2011). The transformation of some African toponyms through colonial transphonologies tempers with African identity in a manner that seeks to erase history and culture. Darwish (2010, p. 191) makes the claim that 'Names used during conflicts are not mere labels, they are able to influence public thinking, beliefs, and political standpoints. They can also be used to change facts'. A look at both African and western transphonologies of toponyms in Zimbabwe may elicit an Afrocentric interpretation whereby the colonisers flagrantly distorted African names as a way of displacing African history to introduce theirs. Africans in turn distorted some of the western impositions, and the distortions also erase the western heritages imported into the country.

The naming systems at the level of toponyms are a manifestation of the cultural views that people deploy to assert their history and identity. Indigenous names are an instance of an African worldview and their erasure through western transphonologies undermines their Africanness. On one hand, the distortions of western names in Zimbabwe are an instance of resistance. This study is a qualitative and functional linguistic analysis of the colonialities and resistances exhibited and implied through toponomastic transphonologies in Zimbabwe.

The aim of the study was to purposively identify toponomastic transphonologies linked to colonialism in Zimbabwe. The study also established, through etymological analysis, the original names and meanings of the toponyms before the distortions. Transphonologies that differ significantly from their linguistic etymons were analysed through the lenses of functional linguistics to decipher the colonial and decolonial nuances behind these phonological choices. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was engaged as a method within critical toponym to associate the transphonological erasures to the intended colonialities and decolonialities. The study was motivated by the fact that the process of transphonologisation has not been studied in the context of onomastic erasure and coloniality of power in Zimbabwe.

2.   Literature review and theory

The impact of colonialism on African names and naming has attracted a lot of scholarly attention. Colonialities of power, culture, knowledge, and

gender converge on the subject of onomastics as naming in Africa is rooted in culture, history, knowledge, and religion. This section reviews literature on the power of, and in naming and the nexus between names and cultural identity. The section also reviews literature on the phonological process of transphonologisation and the theories of coloniality of power and Afrocentricity as they relate to distortions of toponyms in colonial contexts.

2.1 Naming, power, and identity

Language, including names, expresses culture and identity. Okello (2020, p. 78) opines that 'a name is one of the most explicit pointers of identity'. This is because naming can include or exclude an individual or a group from certain identities. Naming one's self or their space is usually motivated by the need to assert self-value. This makes personal names and place names important pointers to identity. Ndlovu (2017, p. 123) avers that 'toponyms and anthroponyms are closely linked to identity as they refer to a people's being and place'. Likaka (2009) argues that names make an individual; they are recollections of memory and experience. Herbert (1999) further opines that in Africa, personal names are repositories of history and are part of a people's heritage. Names do not only express identity of selves but are also used to express power and control over others. Borkfelt (2011) argues that naming is thus not only the first and most basic of linguistic processes; it is also an excellent example of the power or control that is in many ways inherent to language use. Whether what is named are lands, people or animals, the process of naming reflects the worldview of the one who names rather than the view of what is named. (p. 118).

Those who wield political power appropriate to themselves the right to name others and their spaces. Martinot (2011, p. 5) avows that 'the power to define is the power to objectify, and thus inferiorise; by defining an otherness for the Africans as property and wealth, the English defined themselves as superior'. The authority that humans exercise over other species includes among other things, their right to name them. The fact that people name dogs and not the other way round demonstrates the power relations necessary to have a namer and the named.

Naming conquered spaces has always been a symbol and seal of colonial conquest. Richardson (1991, p. 1) observes that 'From Charlemagne to the Tsars, from British imperialism to Italian fascism, the language and symbols of the Roman republic and the Roman emperors have been essential elements in the self-expression of imperial powers'. While Mutisya and Ross (2005) recognise that Africans are subjects not objects of their reality and destiny, colonial subjugation made them objects of political and cultural reality. Space has been politicised especially in areas of heightened race or tribal relations such as obtained during colonialism. Everett (2002, p. 131) alludes to the politicisation of space in America and he states that 'for starters, it is instructive to recall how the historical subjugation of racial minorities and women by means of politicisation of space and place in American civil society spurred frequent mass mobilisations by these groups'.

On one hand, the toponymic naming, misnaming, and renaming of African space by colonisers was politicisation and colonisation of space and place. On the other hand, the distortion by Africans of the imposed colonial names was a reaction to the politicisation and subjugation of African space akin to the mass mobilisations by African Americans in America.

2.2 Coloniality of power and Afrocentricity

Coloniality is the machine that reproduces subalternity. Subalternity can be imagined in race, culture, knowledge, gender, and class (Mignolo, 2001). Black people and Africans have always been objects of the coloniality of power. Political and race hierarchies have always favoured Westerners from slavery to colonialism. The inequalities still obtain today. Fritsche (2019) traces colonialities of power back to Aristotle's biological justification of slavery in *Politics* when he opined that society is made up of Greeks, then European Barbarians, followed by Asian Barbarians. The structuring of power to dominate the other is coloniality of power. Africans were colonised together with their spaces and the colonial structures were meant to perpetuate white supremacy. Quijano (2007) opines that coloniality of power was conceived together with Euro-American supremacy and race supremacy.

While a structural analysis of toponomastic transphonologies may point to contact borrowing and phonological adaptation, there are hidden forces that facilitate for colonial toponomastic erasure in the distortions. Mignolo and Walsh (2018) state that there are hidden forces of the colonial matrix of power. Their claim is particularly true in the case of transphonologies whereby erasure and de-linking Africans from their history and identity are hidden in the distortions. The hegemonic relations between the coloniser and the colonised manifest in culture and language. Strani and Szczepaniak-Kozak (2018, p. 162) opine that 'Language, inextricably linked with culture, works in the same way, as it may mask (or betray) hegemonic relations as relics of colonialism, racialisation, and othering in the context of societies that foster monoculture'. Colonial toponyms in Africa present the best example of coloniality as they symbolise the remote-control western countries have on Africa years after the end of direct colonialism.

Maldonado-Torres (2016) avows that coloniality of power articulates continuities of colonial mentalities cultural, social, and political power relations. Colonialism created subjectivities in Africans. Taking another's land by force and naming it using your foreign names and heritage dehumanises the autochthones. Some of those African toponyms that were not replaced were mispronounced to typify English phonology. While this may be argued to be common in language contact situations, the fact that the British went on to write the names as they pronounced them indicates that it was out of choice. The value of African names was undermined and the people and their toponyms were seen as lacking. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014, p. 197) posits that 'African subjectivity that emerged from the processes of racialisation and inferiorisation of blackness, is one that has a diminished ontological density. It became a subjectivity that was said to be characterised by a catalogue of

deficits and a series of lacks'. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) identifies the lacks as consisting of lack of civilisation, writing, history, souls, democracy, human rights, ethics, and development.

African toponyms express African culture and civilisation and these are consequently distorted through the toponomastic distortions. Quijano (2007, p. 174) states that, in the coloniality of power and global colonialities, '... only European culture is rational, it contains subjects - the rest are not irrational, they cannot be or harbour subjects'. The distortion of African culture embedded in toponyms is a calculated colonial process of cultural colonisation, Oyedemi (2020) argues that:

> Cultural colonisation is perhaps the most destructive aspect of coloniality because it tends toward permanence in social understanding of self, social practices, and knowledge creation. In Africa, the European cultural coloniality was intensely destructive. It largely destroyed indigenous patterns of arts, knowledge creation, expressions, and cultural visualisation of African ways of life (p. 403).

The notion of Afrocentricity is a movement aimed at humanising Africans from the colonial dehumanisation. In Africa, naming is part of culture and knowledge, and in Zimbabwe, toponyms express this. Afrocentricity seeks to reclaim African humanity through resisting western culture and rediscovering African culture and knowledge. Dei (1994, p. 4) asserts that, 'the notion of Afrocentricity incorporates African indigenous cultural values, traditions, mythology, and history and it is an alternative non-exclusionary, and non-hegemonic system of knowledge informed by the African people's histories and experiences'. Colonial power matrixes are embedded in language and culture hence Asante (1983, p. 7) argues that 'in its epistemic dimensions, Afrocentricity is also a methodology for discovering the truth about intercultural communication'. In Africa, toponomastic transphonologies are a function of inter-cultural communication between the coloniser and the colonised. Asante (1980) posits that there are three broad views of cultural reality, namely Afrocentric, Eurocentric, and Asiocentric. He further argues that the cultural differences that currently exist in the world today are rooted in different views of reality (Asante, 1983).

Counter transphonologies of English toponyms by Africans are part of the Afrocentric resistance to coloniality. Afrocentricity builds on other Black theories of resistance such as Garveyism, which according to Campbell (1993), was the profound response of the masses to racism, colonialism, and the consequences of white supremacy. Transphonologisations of English toponyms by Africans in Zimbabwe are manifestations of the anti-colonial struggles in Garveyism and Afrocentricity.

2.3 Transphonologisation

Transphonologisation is a sound change process common in language contact situations. Transphonologies are sound domestications. In his analysis of the domestication of English sounds by the Xhosa of South Africa, Neethling (2005, p. 136) states that, 'They appear to be sincere attempts at adaptations to Xhosa facilitating pronunciation and "domesticating" these "strange sounding" English names'. From a structural linguistics point of view, transphonologisation is a process of phonological adaptation. However, a functional linguistic analysis establishes that choices based on power relations also influence transphonologisation of the other's toponyms. Ethnonyms and toponyms are in some cases intentionally mispronounced or misspelt to spite their owners. Ndlovu (2017) demonstrates how transphonologies are deployed in ethnic hostilities between the Ndebele and the Shona of Zimbabwe. The Ndebele for example, choose to replace the affricate [ʧ] with the fricative [s] in some Shona toponyms such as in "Chitungwiza" [ʧituŋgwiza] to "Situngwiza" [situʊŋgwiza]. The Shona also intentionally change [l] to [r] in some Ndebele toponyms as in "Lalaphansi" [lalapansi] to "Rarapanzi" [rarapanzi]. Speakers of both languages use the phonemes they replace in other lexes but choose to replace them in the particular toponyms. This illustrates the functional aspect of transphonologies, whereby they serve extralinguistic functions in ethnic and racial power struggles.

In onomastic research, there is an emerging school of thought that views some aspects of onomastic transphonologisation as notions of domineering and resistance (Neethling, 2005; Ndlovu, 2017). In Zimbabwe, there are transphonologised toponyms that are adapted into a foreign phonology as a way of domesticating strange sounds. However, a closer analysis of some of these shows that there are underlying political machinations of power and resistance. Neethling (2005, p. 136) alludes to the functional linguistics of transphonologies when he points out that in transphonologisations 'there is sound play on the one hand which could be considered as light-hearted and friendly, but at times also reflecting phonetic liberties, suggesting a lack of effort to get it right'. The lack of effort to get it right on the part of the colonisers is partly because colonialists and Christianity bluntly refused to recognise African names and their import (Igboin, 2014). Bekerie (2004) further characterises this misnaming as a process of devaluation. The devaluation in transphonologies goes beyond de-historicisation and acculturation in some cases to express feelings of resentment and insult. Ndlovu (2017, p. 119) avers that some mispronunciations result in a change of meaning to refer to fouling referents; this way, some transphonologies become ethnophaulisms, a term Ndlovu traces back to 'Greek terms that mean disparaging an ethnic other [...], since 1944 the term has been used to refer to insulting language or action aimed at an ethnic or racial group'.

2.4 Methods in toponym research

The main meaning of a toponym is the place it denotes. However, all toponyms have a lexical content when they emerge and this links toponym research

to linguistic research. While research in toponyms has traditionally focused on culture and memory through etymological methods, scientific methods in cartography and geography have also emerged (Basik, 2020). There are computational methods in toponym research that are used to link toponyms to geopolitical spaces. One such method is toponym resolution that is used in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to compute the relationship between toponyms and geographic locations represented by spatial footprints (Leidner, 2006). The traditional linguistic and the scientific methods both avoid the political significance of toponyms. Palonen (1993) opines that these methods have been afraid of politics. Due to the entanglements of language with power relations, the methods of critical toponymies are gaining currency in onomastic research.

Berg and Vuolteenaho (2009) contend that contemporary multidisciplinary critical toponymic scholarship analyses the place names and place naming as a combination of complex and contested processes between spaces, identities, and power. Critical toponymy tackles place naming as a political practice of power over space (Pinchevski & Torgovnik, 2002). Basik (2020, p. 1) states that 'as the spatial onomastic manifestations of human activities, urban toponyms both mirror and absorb all aspects of human existence, including the political, economic, and cultural complexity of the world'. Use and abuse of power in naming space also incorporates economic power. Rose-Redwood et al. (2019) discuss the phenomenon of toponymic commodification whereby corporate sponsors rename spaces because they have the economic power to buy the naming rights.

This study engages etymological analysis of toponyms (Toth, 2011) and historical toponym reconstruction (Toth, 2020) before applying critical toponymy through CDA. Etymological Analysis is the study of the origin of words, looking at historical modifications to their form and meaning. When faced with unfamiliar lexis, people tend to apply semantic mappings based on inference to elements that relate or are similar in form to the foreign word (Hosseini et al., 2012). The inference is the starting point or justification for Etymological Analysis. Hassan (2002) avers that the ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words in a text is an important skill in language learning and meaning construction. It is important for both phonemes and graphemes to be structured such that people guess them to belong to certain cultures, yet transphonologisation distorts this link. Describing Etymological Analysis, Svensen (1993) postulates that:

> information about the etymology of words tells us their history; how they were formed and evolved and finally took the shape and meaning they have in the language of today. Etymological facts lie along the time axis, and cut straight across the other information categories, [...] combining things and events outside language (p. 189).

Given that toponyms originate from lexical content, historical toponym reconstruction is important in tracing the linguistic origins of toponyms. The

reconstruction of the original lexis is critical to the understanding of both the linguistic and symbolic meanings of toponyms.

The transphonologies discussed in this paper did not enter the respective languages as common nouns but they were adapted as toponyms. This already indicates that while they may be a result of language contact, they are not used in the languages except as place names. Transphonologies de-link toponyms from their base lexemes, thereby creating possibilities for meaning erasure. Onomastic erasure has been used in contexts of conflict through such processes as renaming and misnaming. This brings in the domain of functional linguistics into the linguistic analysis of toponyms. This paper analyses the effects of transphonologisation on identity and power relations, and critical toponymy through CDA is engaged to analyse the colonialities embedded in the toponomastic erasures.

CDA helps us understand how language is used to construct identities and social relations of power (Berger, 2016). Critical toponomastic perspectives investigate the politics and power dynamics in names and naming space (Bosik, 2020). Van Dijk (2001) posits that CDA is an interdisciplinary approach focusing on power relations. Here, language is both a cultural and social practice, whereby social context is central in language analysis. The analysis of the transphonologies follows the three-dimensional model of CDA which are description, interpretation, and explanation (Fairclough, 2003). The three dimensions account for historical and critical toponomastic approaches to the study of toponyms. The phonological and etymological analyses are engaged as methods of describing the toponyms while the semantic permutations are the interpretations. Critical toponymy is used to explain the semantic erasure caused by transphonologisation in the context of the politics of space.

3.　Research methodology

The study employs qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. A total of 33 Zimbabwean toponomastic transphonologies from the colonial context were collected through document analysis and observations. Texts used in the analysis were purposively sampled from journals, the media, books, Rhodesian and Zimbabwean atlases and maps. The majority of the transphonologies and their post independence corrections were gathered from the Rhodesian Atlas (1973), Ndlovu (2021), and Magudu et al. (2014). Atlases have records of distortions that were written down as official names. These were the colonial distortions of indigenous toponyms. The African distortions of English commemorative names in Zimbabwe were not officially recorded toponyms hence they were gathered through observations and from literature on transphonologies. Note that transphonologies are primarily phonological and not orthographical. However, pronunciation influences the orthography for those that get to be written down. The researcher is conversant in all three languages involved in the transphonologies and is also conversant in phonetics. This facilitated for the interpretation and

transcription of the transphonologies as the researcher has observed the use of all transphonologies in the data. Table 1 represents all the Zimbabwean transphologies collected.

Table 1: Colonial and decolonial transphonologies of Zimbabwean toponyms and their correct(ed) forms

Colonial distortions of African toponyms		African distortions of colonial toponyms	
Colonial distortion	*Correct(ed) form*	*African distortion*	*Correct form*
Umtali	Mutare	*Sozbeli*	Salisbury
Gwelo	Gweru	*Trongo*	Triangle
Sinoya	Chinhoyi	*Folosi*	Victoria Falls
Shabani	Zvishavane	*Khamarantshi*	Common range
Mashaba	Mashava	*Lepete*	Leopard
Bindura	Chipindura	*Demgudu*	Do me good
Chipinge	Chipinga	*Ngerengere*	Glengarry
Gutu	Chinemukutu	*Sikisiveli*	Essex vale
Tugwi	Tokwe	*Keneroyisi*	Kenilworth
Amaveni	Emeveni	*Makoholi*	Mark a hole
Spolilo	Chipuriro	*Tshenisi*	Chanelles
Buhera	Uhera		
Queque	Qweqwe		
Balabala	Mbalabala		
Selinda	Chirinda		
Gatooma	Kadoma		
Marandellas	Marondera		
Belingwe	Mberengwa		
Kariba	Kariva		
Wankie	Hwange		
Buluweyo (from observation)	Bulawayo		
Ayilanda (from observation)	Ilanda		

Since the paper is concerned with the effects of onomastic erasure through transphonologies, 15 cases of erasure were identified from the data. These were chosen because the transphonologies differ significantly from the original lexemes resulting in toponomastic erasure. Of the 15, nine are English distortions of indigenous Zimbabwean toponyms while six are indigenised English toponyms. The etymologies of these names were traced to establish their original forms before the distortions. After establishing their etymologies, CDA was engaged to analyse the power matrixes embedded in the transphonologies.

While the etymologies for the transphonologies have been researched and are available in the literature, six unstructured interviews were conducted to triangulate the etymology data from researches. Three Ndebele and three Shona adults of ages between 65-70 years were sampled for the triangulation interviews. They were asked the names of places before the colonial impositions and what they meant. The choice of these six was based on the fact that they have lived in both pre and postcolonial Zimbabwe. They were also selected to represent the two indigenous languages that feature on the toponyms.

The etymological accounts were further cross checked through a focus group discussion with language and culture lecturers at Great Zimbabwe University. Historical toponym reconstruction was engaged in the analysis as a linguistic method to identify the original linguistic forms used to derive the toponyms and those that are inferred after transphonologisation. CDA was then engaged after establishing the etymologies and linguistic connections to analyse the colonialities of power and resistance in the transphonologies. CDA was chosen because it is a framework that is useful in analysing the nexus between language and social phenomena (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002).

4.   Findings and analysis

The analysis is done thematically, starting with coloniality of power motivated distortions followed by resistance distortions. The analysis is an ethno-linguistic and CDA appreciation on the implications of the transphonologies on power relations and identity.

4.1 Coloniality of power in the transphonologisation of some indigenous Zimbabwean toponyms

Transphonologisation of some indigenous Zimbabwean toponyms by the British coincidentally created both meaningless and meaningful changes. Some of the meanings created are actually ethnophaulic. Ndlovu (2017), posits that transphonologisation as a sound adaptation process can be offensive to the owners of the phonology. When an outgroup member mispronounces an ingroup ethnonym or toponym, the ingroup members can interpret this as a lack of effort to get it right. The lack of effort by the British to pronounce some indigenous toponyms correctly resulted in meaningless phonemes that led to meaningless graphemes. In some cases the new transphonologies have a different inferential meaning through their sound resemblance to other terms or concepts. Table 2 gives some transphonologised indigenous toponyms that became meaningless.

Table 2: Meaningless English transphonologies of indigenous toponyms

Indigenous toponym	Lexical meaning	Meaningless English transphonology
Bulawayo [βulawajo]	Ndebele-one being killed from Zulu and Ndebele royal histories	Buluweyo [buluwejo]
Emeveni [emeveni]	Ndebele-at the Ameva (thorns) regiment where Lobengula's Ameva regiment was stationed	Amaveni [amaveni]
Chipuriro/Guruve [ʧʰip'uriro]	Shona-grain thrashing area	Sipolilo [sip'olilo]
Uhera [uhera]	Shona-locative/*nyika yevahera* (land of the vaHeras)	Buhera [buhera]
Zvishavane [ʒiʃaʋanɛ]	Shona-reddish mountains	Shabani [ʃabani]

The toponyms "Bulawayo" and "Emeveni" commemorate Ndebele royal and military histories and they are part of the country's heritage. The name "Bulawayo" was pronounced by the British as [buluwejo] although the orthography remained correct. The mispronunciation erases the original linguistic and symbolic meaning. The word *bulawayo* is the passive form of the Ndebele verb *bulala* "kill" meaning the one being killed. Ransford (1967) asserts that the name was first used by King Shaka of the Zulu to name his capital in recognition of his childhood struggles. The name was also used to name the capital of the Ndebele state in Zimbabwe. Ransford further points out that in 1870, when Lobengula became king of the Matabele in what is now present-day Zimbabwe, he established a new capital which he named Bulawayo after his struggles to the throne. The transphonology loses all the imbedded history as the name becomes meaningless.

"Emeveni" is also an element of Ndebele military history as Lobengula's *Ameva* regiment was stationed in the area now occupied by "Amaveni" township in Kwekwe. "Emeveni" is the correct Ndebele locative denoting the place of the *Ameva* regiment. The transphonology distorts the locative by removing the locative preffix **e-** and maintaining the locative suffix **-eni** creating a meaningless word, and in the process obliterating the Ndebele military history.

There are some Shona toponyms that were also distorted, and the resultant renditions also became meaningless, in the process erasing the cultural heritage. The toponyms "Chipuriro", "Uhera", and "Zvishavane" carry elements of Shona material culture, ethnicity, and geography, respectively. However, the transphonologies erode these connections. *Chipuriro* is a corn thrashing area, an indication that the place was a good farming area. The Shona locative *uhera,* when used as a toponym, demarcates the land of the Hera people. However, the transphonology creates a meaningless term "buhera" which does not mean land of the Hera people. Suffice it to note that colonialism was about taking the land from Africans, and here is a toponym referencing land as belonging to Africans being changed by the colonialist.

Some toponyms are used to describe the terrain such as "Zvishavane". This name describes the reddish mountains in the area. The name is a clipping of the Shona phrase *zvikomo zvishavane* "reddish mountains". The British distorted the name to a meaningless rendition and by so doing, the right of the Shona to name their land was violated.

There are some indigenous toponyms that were transphonologised by the British and the resultant transphonologies created new meaning inferences that are different from the original ones. This effectively distorted the history imbedded in the toponyms. Table 3 gives some indigenous toponyms that have been distorted away from their original meanings to some strange meaning inferences.

Table 3: Weird semantic inferences in some English transphonologies of indigenous toponyms

Indigenous toponym	Meaning and etymology	English transphonology	New meaning inference
Qweqwe [ǃʷɛǃʷɛ]	Ndebele-crust/hard clay soils	Queque [kʷɛ kʷɛ]	Ndebele-*isikhwekhwe* is a skin disease
Mbalabala [mbalaβala]	Ndebele-different colours (of the soils)	Balabala [balabala]	Kudu
Chirinda [ʧʰirinda]	Shona-Chirinda/military watch tower	Silinda [silinda]	Cylinder
Chinemukutu [ʧʰinemukut'u]	Shona-name of Mbwazhe founder of Gumbo dynasty. He was a hunter and *mukutu* is a bunch of arrows	Gutu [gut'u]	Pungent odour

Toponyms are also used descriptively to describe elements of ecological culture. The names "Qweqwe" (crust/hard clay soils) and "Mbalabala" (of different soil colours) are Ndebele expressions describing environmental realities of "Qweqwe" river and area, and the topography of "Mbalabala" area respectively. According to data from the interviews, "Qweqwe" river flows through red clay soils and the silt that remains after a flood is muddy. When the mud dries up it forms a crust that cracks called *uqweqwe* in Ndebele. Hadebe (2002) argues that the name derives from the clay soils in the area, *oQweqweni lomhlaba* (the place with hard clay soil). The two etymologies mean and refer to the same concept. The elements of Ndebele hydrological and agricultural heritages are erased by the transphonology "Kwekwe". Kwekwe is in fact, closer in form and meaning to the Ndebele word for a skin disease *isikhwekhwe*. The heritage and association with the river are reduced to a sickness, an instance of fouling the ethnic other. The topography of "Mbalabala" has many colours and this is captured in the name *umbala* which means colour in Ndebele and repeating the stem derives the concept

of colourful. The transphonology now means a kudu in Ndebele, which has no significant history and association to the place.

The toponyms "Chirinda" and "Chinemukutu" make reference to Shona military and ethnic history respectively. However, their English transphonologies align them to different and even fouling semantic inferences. "Chirinda" derives from the mountain that was used by Shona soldiers as a tower to look out for approaching armies. The military history defines the Shona, and the toponym is a record of their past military strategies. However, the military history is distorted and the transphonology "Silinda/Selinda" makes inferences to a cylinder in English. The name "Silinda" is pronounced in the same way as the English word 'cylinder' and this may suggest that the mountain is cylindrical which it is not.

The transphonology "Gutu" is a truncation of "Chinemukutu". The name "Chinemukutu" derives from Mbwazhe, an ethnic leader and founder of the Gumbo dynasty while the truncation Gutu, is used in Shona to denote a disgusting smell. The meaning inference to a disgusting smell irks of what Ndlovu (2018) describes as colonial arrogance in the colonies. "Chinemukutu", so named after his *mukutu* arrow bag (the bag with the arrows) was a great hunter and most importantly, he was the founder of the Gumbo dynasty. The name was transphonologised to "Gutu" and it continued to refer to his area. "Gutu" is Shona for a pungent odour and the name can be construed as a racial slur referring to the area as a smelly place or smelly people.

4.2 Nuances of resistance in some transphonologised English toponyms in Zimbabwe

The colonial onslaught on the toponomastic landscape was not without local resistance. All the transphonologies analysed in this section are colonial impositions because they commemorate British culture in a different and non-British land. Zimbabweans appear to have reacted to some toponomastic impositions by transphonologising them as a weapon of resisting coloniality. Just like the English transphonologies, the indigenous transphonologies of English toponym impositions created both meaningless and meaningful lexis. Some of the meaning inferences from the distortions also denote ethnophaulic references.

Domestication of some strange English phonemes by indigenous Zimbabweans was an instance of lexical borrowing that can be accounted for under imperfect learning. Ndlovu and Mangena (2013, p. 348) posit that 'since English phonology is different from the phonologies of indigenous languages in Zimbabwe, most of the English toponyms were transphonologised'. The pronunciation and representation of some English toponyms by the indigenous people of Zimbabwe can be understood to be a way of resisting colonial influence on their land. Transphonologisation has also been established as an instance of toponomastic erasure by Australian indigenes. Clark (2017) identifies the cases of indigenous transphonologies of colonial impositions as palimpsests. In Zimbabwe, the indigenes distorted some of

the imposed colonial toponyms rendering them meaningless. The distortions could have been unintentional but they served as critical decolonial devices for de-linking African space from imperial commemorations. Table 4 gives some of the English toponyms transphonologised by Zimbabweans, resulting in meaningless words dissociated from British etymologies and heritage.

Table 4: Some meaningless transphonologies of British commemorative toponyms in zimbabwe

English toponym	Commemorative Etymology	Zimbabwean transphonology
Salisbury [salisbri]	Lord Salisbury- British Knight	Sozibeli [soziβeli]
Victoria falls [viktorija folz]	English Queen Victoria	Folosi [folosi]
Kenilworth [kenilweθ]	Ancient English castle	Kenerosi [kenerosi]

Salisbury, the capital of the then Rhodesia was named after Lord Salisbury of England, the colonial overlord. According to Cavendish (2002), Lord Salisbury was the last Prime Minister to run Britain from the House of Lords, from June 1885 until his retirement in 1902. The name was a colonial imposition on space that already had the Shona name "Harari". Zimbabweans pronounced Salisbury away from its original etymon to the transphonologies "Sozibeli" and "Soziberi" in Ndebele and Shona respectively. The transphonologies de-link the toponym from the Lord Salisbury commemoration.

The famous *Mosi oa tunya* (the smoke that thunders) falls by the Zambezi River were also renamed Victoria Falls and the town that sprouted around the falls on the Zimbabwean side of the border came to be known as Victoria Falls. The renaming was in honour and memory of Victoria, Queen of England. The Royal Family website states that, Victoria was the daughter of Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent and Strathearn. Victoria became queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 1937 to 1901. The transphonology truncates the name by erasing the name of Victoria to remain with the "-Falls" part that is then transphonologised to "Folosi". The toponym "Folosi" has no relation to any word or meaning in English and in Zimbabwean languages. While "Folosi" may appear to be a hypocorism for Falls, the clipping of Queen Victoria's name (in common speech) disassociates the toponym from its commemorative function. The clipping of colonial commemorations from African toponymy has been perfected in the decolonial renaming of spaces across Africa and elsewhere (Ellasante, 2021).

Another toponym that was carried to Africa by the colonial trail is "Kenilworth", which is a prime farming area in the Matabeleland North province of Zimbabwe. The English Heritage blog notes that Kenilworth is a medieval fortress in England founded in the 1120s (12ᵗʰ century) by Geoffrey de Clinton. It was later turned into the palace of Queen Elizabeth 1 and has been at the centre of England's affairs for much of its 900-year history.

During the colonial era, the farming area was dominated by white colonial farmers and the name commemorated their British heritage. Suffice it to note that the area has always been known by its Ndebele name "eNyathi" (the place of the buffalo). The locals pronounce the name as "Kenerosi"*,* this is a meaningless word used referentially to denote the area. While the independent government changed Salisbury back to Harare, the other two, Kenilworth and Victoria Falls, remain as the official toponyms, at least in writing and official communication. However, people use the meaningless distortions in their spoken language.

Some of the transphonologies exhibit evidence of colonial resistance in that they are distortions towards harsh and resentful semantic concepts. Ndlovu and Mangena (2013) hazard that some of these adaptations could be part of a subtle resistance to the imposed toponyms. The distortions exhibit a subtle way of challenging colonial authority that demythologised and renamed the dominated spaces. Table 5 gives some of the English toponyms that are transphonologised by indigenous Zimbabweans to derive different meaning inferences. The distortions incline the toponyms towards lexis that is not part of their etymon.

Table 5: Different meaning inferences in some transphonologised English toponyms in Zimbabwe

English toponym	Commemorated etymology	Zimbabwean transphonology	New lexical meaning inference
Glengarry [glengari]	Scottish valley of the Garry River	Ngerengere [ŋgereŋgere]	irritating sound of bells
Do me good [du mi gud]	From Dome Good mine subsidiary of the Dome gold mines	Demgudu [demgudu]	phaulism (dem- as in swearing)
Essex vale [iseksvel]	From East Saxons vale, Essex in England	Sikisiveli [siɣisiveli]	sixth vale

"Glengarry" is a toponym which migrated from the highlands of Scotland to Bulawayo, where it was assigned to a low-density residential area to the east of the city towards Harare. *Glen* is a Scottish term for a deep valley in highlands. "Glengarry" is the valley of the river Garry near its confluence with the Loch Oich River in the village of Invergarry. Invergarry Castle was the seat of the Chiefs of the MacDonnell of Glengarry-17th century Britain (Undiscover Scotland, 2002). The name of the suburb in Bulawayo extends British/Scottish heritage to colonial Zimbabwe. While the original name remains in writing and on official communication, the common name for the area is "Ngerengere". The word *ngerengere* is an idiophonic denotation for the noise of bells. The *ngerengere* noise is sharp and irritating to the ears. Therefore, this inference may suggest that the English imposition is irritating noise to the history and culture of Zimbabwe, and it is undesired by the people.

The discovery of minerals was one of the reasons Cecil John Rhodes and his Pioneer Column colonised Zimbabwe. Some of the mines were named to express their British ownership. One of the mines named to indicate its colonial ownership is "Do-me-good" mine. It is a gold mine located in the Midlands province near the town of Kwekwe. This name is traced to "Dome good mine", established by the Dome Gold Mines, an Englo-Australian gold mining company (O'Mara, 2007; Dome Gold Mines website). The local common name for this mine is "Demgudu" mine. While the transphoology may be an innocent effort at the English name Dome Good, colonial hostilities may be nuanced given that the prefix *dem-* is used in English vernacular ritual insults such as "dem shit", "dem swine", "dem nonsense". The association of the name with *dem-* can be construed as insulting by the locals as they perceive the imposition to be an insult.

Another toponym that has been changed semantically by pronunciation distortion is "Essex Vale", a farming area outside Bulawayo. The name of the area reverted to "Esigodini" after independence. This politically motivated change is evidence that the imposed English name was not welcome by the locals. Essex Vale is a travelling toponym from England. It derives from *Essex,* meaning East Saxon, a county to the east of London (Parul, 2011). The toponym links the place to the land of the East Saxons in England, yet, the transphonology "Sikisiveli" infers the "Sixth Vale" in English which has no symbolic significance. While some English impositions are pronounced in a way that creates meaningless renditions, some are inclined towards foul meanings that may be construed as resistance to colonial toponymic impositions.

5. Conclusion

The British colonised Zimbabwe through a chatter granted to Cecil John Rhodes and upon colonial occupation, they asserted their authority over the land by marking the spaces in ways that reflected colonial conquest. They transposed some British names and experiences to the Zimbabwean toponomastic landscape by naming and re-naming places. Another form of re-naming they used was to Anglicise some indigenous toponyms through transphonologisation. The transphonologies either created meaningless distortions or the new forms created new meaning inferences. In both cases, the coloniser achieved onomastic erasure where the history, culture, and symbolic connection between Zimbabweans and their spaces were disconnected.

The colonisers imposed some toponyms from British history and topography to rename Zimbabwean places. They used the names as ownership pegs, by so doing, marking the space as theirs. Indigenous Zimbabweans changed some of these new names particularly in informal communication and popularised the distortions which rendered some of the impositions meaningless. In some cases, the distortions created different meanings disconnecting the names from symbolising British

experiences and topography. Place names are used to mark ownership of space and distortions in pronunciation can lead to scriptural distortions. Such distortions disconnect the names from the history and culture they were supposed to symbolise. Obliteration of the symbolic value in place names was used as a colonising force by the colonialists and as anti-colonial resistance by indigenous Zimbabweans. After transphonologisation, some of the meaning inferences are actually ethnophaulic.

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