

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for this further clarification. For me it is now very clear what you really mean. I agree to all three points you made. But I definitely cannot agree to your conclusion.

Let me repeat what you were saying and what is necessary for my argument I absolutely agree to:

Paul Woodman (19 November 2008):

“So **firstly**, the identification that something on the surface of the earth is a feature is a matter of human perception. Then **secondly**, if a particular society perceives that a particular ‘something’ is indeed a feature, probably that society will deem it worthy of a reference label, *ie* a geographical name. The application of a geographical name to that feature must obviously be achieved through the medium of language. And then **thirdly**, as I have tried to argue in my previous submissions, the determination of whether that language name is an endonym or an exonym will depend on the propinquity relationship between the language and the feature.

Now let us look at these three points in relation to the North Sea and the Danube. **Firstly**, the perception of all societies (as far as I am aware) is that these are both identified as justified, discrete, unique features in their own right. There is no real debate as to their existence, identity, extent, or the requirement for them to be named<sup>1</sup>. **Secondly**, and as a result of the foregoing, all societies deem these two features to be worthy of a geographical name. Hence we have names for these features in all languages from Afrikaans to Vietnamese and beyond. But because all societies are agreed on the singularity and unity of each of these features, the name chosen by each language is intended to apply to the entire feature, not just part of it. *North Sea*, *Vesterhavet* and *Mar del Norte* are in their various languages all labels for one and the same whole feature, as are *Donau*, *Dunărea* and *Danube*. **Thirdly**, propinquity will tell us whether each of these names is an endonym or an exonym. Because of the geographical relationship between language and feature in each instance, *North Sea* (English) and *Vesterhavet* (Danish) are both endonyms, whilst *Mar del Norte* (Spanish) is an exonym. Similarly, *Donau* and *Dunărea* are endonyms, whilst *Danube* is an exonym.”

But I cannot agree to the passages marked in red:

Paul Woodman (19 November 2008):

So if *Vesterhavet* is the Danish-language endonym denoting the entirety of that particular single feature, **it must be an endonym not just on the Danish coast but on the Northumbrian coast too – but only if one is communicating in a Danish-language context.** Likewise, since *North Sea* is the English-language endonym for the entirety of that same feature, **it remains the English-language endonym even where that sea washes against the coasts of Denmark and Norway – but only if one is communicating in an English-language context.**

In support of my argument I quote our new definition of the endonym and mark the wording relevant here in red:

“Endonym = Name of a geographical feature in an official or well-established language **occurring in that area where the feature is situated.**” (Addendum to the UNGEGN Glossary)

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<sup>1</sup> I mention *extent* because for some features there is not universal agreement on this. For example, Americans and Australians differ over the extent of the Southern Ocean, while the Bay of Biscay in English is not of the same areal extent as the Golfo de Vizcaya in Spanish.

English is certainly a well-established language at the Northumbrian coast, but not at the Danish coast. So to my understanding, “North Sea” is an endonym at the Northumbrian coast, but not an endonym (rather an exonym) at the Danish coast.

Whether the communication is performed in English or Danish is not relevant according to our definition. The English conversation on the North Sea may even take place in Denmark, “North Sea” will not be an endonym there, since English is not the language of the local community, is neither an official, nor a well-established language in Denmark.

Transferred to the Danube this means that the German name “Donau” is not an endonym for the same feature in Romania and Bulgaria, since German is not an official or well-established language there (at least at the banks of the Danube). Even if I spoke at the Romanian bank of the Danube to a Viennese student group in German about this Romanian river section I would not be using an endonym when I say “Donau”, since I (and my students) are not part of the local community living where (this section of) the feature is situated and which has Romanian as its official and well-established language.

I think that it is most important to say: Our definition relates names (as far as the endonym/exonym divide is concerned) not only to language, but also to place (area). It requires correspondence with two characteristics. To be an endonym the name must correspond to (1) an official or well-established language and (2) this language must be spoken where this feature is situated.

In your examples the first criterion is fulfilled, but the second is not.

Would we follow your argument, French “les Alpes” would be an endonym also in Germany, Italy, Slovenia and Austria, when it is used in French communication; German “Europa” would be an endonym also in the United Kingdom, when it is used in a German-speaking context.

With kind regards  
Peter