

ISSN 0132-1447

BULLETIN
OF THE GEORGIAN ACADEMY
OF SCIENCES

საქართველოს
მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის

ბოლო

VOLUME 160, NUMBER 3
NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

1999

T B I L I S I
თ ბ ი ლ ი ს ი

The Journal is founded in 1940

BULLETIN

OF THE GEORGIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

is a scientific journal, issued bimonthly in
Georgian and English languages

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Editorial Office:

Georgian Academy of Sciences

52, Rustaveli Avenue,

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Telephone : + 995 32 99.75.93

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E-mail : BULLETIN@PRESID.ACNET.GE

N. Kirvalidze, N. Inauri

Semiological Typology of Anthroponyms in Modern English

Presented by Member of the Academy G. Tsitsishvili, June 2, 1998

ABSTRACT: Componential analysis of the dictionary definitions of anthroponyms reveals that two layers of object-logical content of the word are realised in their meaning-denotational and significative. The presence and prevalence of these components in semantic structure of anthroponyms determine their sign status. As a result of generalization of their semantics we single out the following main semiological classes: 1. anthroponyms proper, 2. real, 3. relative, 4. nominal, 5. collective, 6. deictic, 7. quantifier anthroponyms.

Key words: anthroponym, sign status, componential analysis, semantic structure

The aim of this article is to define the sign status of anthroponyms and determine their semiological types in the lexical system of Modern English. The componential analysis of the dictionary definitions of anthroponyms reveals that in their meanings two layers of object-logical content are realised - denotational and significative, which differ from each other according to the degree of generalization. Denotational components are concrete by their nature, as they form the object-sphere denoted by the word reflecting the object's inborn features which can be perceived through one of the senses. But significative components, contrary to denotational ones are abstract, as they convey qualitative and relative generalized properties which form the conceptual meaning of the word. It is mainly the presence of these two types of components in the semantic structure of anthroponyms and the prevalence of one over the other that determines their sign status. We consider their functional predestination as an additional criterion.

As a result of the research the following main semiological classes of anthroponyms are singled out:

1. **Anthroponyms proper**, or proper names. In linguistic literature they are called "defective" language signs, because they are devoid of conceptual meaning [1]. Semantic potential of anthroponym-proper names is minimal, as their meaning is reduced to the denotational component indicating "gender" according to which human beings are differentiated. Such conceptual emptiness predetermines their functional peculiarities, which are confined to the spheres of nomination and identification. Having generalized English anthroponyms, it turned out that the majority of proper names is represented by biblionyms and ethnonyms and a small number is represented by mythonyms. The results of the investigation show, that biblionyms, mythonyms and realonyms can acquire conceptual and together with it informative and connotational meanings - characteristic features of general anthroponyms. Generalized proper names alongside with other words are registered in every explanatory dictionary in the alphabetic order. Their definitions are of an

inclusive character, because they explicate not only their conceptual meaning, but the information about the corresponding person (i.e. the referent) and his or her anthropological features, which motivate the generalization of a given proper name: E.g. "Casanova" a person conspicuous for his amorous adventures, as was Giovanni Jacopo Casanova de Seingalt (1725-1798) [2]. Correspondingly, functional syncretism is characteristic of proper names of this kind, as together with the act of identification they take part in the act of predication.

2. **Real anthroponyms** nominate persons according to such objective, immanent anthropological features, as gender ("man", "women", etc.), age: ("child", "adult", etc.), physical qualities: ("dwarf", "pigmy", "giant", etc.), which form the corresponding object sphere of these names and at the same time present the main parameters according to which the anthroponyms of this class are differentiated into consequential lexico-semantic groups. In real anthroponyms designating human beings as physio-biological creatures denotational components prevail over significative ones in their seme constitution. Due to this fact their sign status is defined as denotational-significative, or as that of object names for which the function of identification is primary and that of predication secondary. In the meaning of real anthroponyms alongside with denotational and significative features there figure stylistic and emotional components. They are connected with the expressive aspect of the word and form its connotational meaning.

3. **Relative anthroponyms** nominate person not according to the objective features peculiar to them, but according to their relation to another particular person or persons, who serve as a determinant to this name. Relativity of meaning of these anthroponyms implies the fixation of a certain reference-point in its semantics in relation to which the subject of speech is characterized. The reference-point being represented in a dictionary entry by a lexeme denoting another person, the semantic structure of such anthroponyms is based on a relative frame, so-called "releme" which can be generally defined as "interpersonal relations". In actual speech these relations are explicated in an attributive syntagma.

The analysis of the dictionary entries of relative anthroponyms enables us to determine the main types on the basis of which the following lexico-semantic groups of anthroponyms are singled out: names of kinship (father, mother, etc.), anthroponyms designating friendly or hostile interpersonal relations (friend, enemy, etc.), anthroponyms designating interpersonal relations of support or sympathy (supporter, opponent, etc.), anthroponyms designating relations of partnership (partner, companion, etc.), anthroponyms designating the relations of acquaintanceship/nonacquaintanceship (acquaintance, stranger, etc.), anthroponyms designating amorous interpersonal relations (lover, sweetheart, etc.), anthroponyms designating social interpersonal relations (employer, employee, etc.).

4. **Nominal anthroponyms** contrary to real ones, which denote person as physio-biological creature, designate persons by ascribing some features to them. Due to this fact these names denote concepts which are formed as a result of analytical thinking. Accordingly, in seme constitution of nominal anthroponyms significative semes prevail over denotational ones and this determines their sign status as that of qualitative names for which the function of predication is primary and of identification secondary. The class of nominal anthroponyms is the most numerous in the system of anthroponyms and this is

predetermined by diversity of human characteristics. We have ascertained seven major lexico-semantic groups of nominal anthroponyms which are relevant to disclose the semiological properties of the names grouped in this class [3,4]. These groups are:

a) anthroponyms designating persons from the viewpoint of their professional-working activities, which form the classificational open system of people working in different spheres of the economics: science, engineering, education, culture, medicine, industry, law, military, etc. Their further differentiation is carried out in two directions: according to the branches and specialities and according to those relemes which are realised in their content. We single out four types of relative relemes, and anthroponyms reflecting them: the sort of activity and its performer (to teach-teacher), the sphere of activity and a person engaged in it (music- musician), the place of activity and a person working there (bank-banker), the instrument of activity and its user (violin-violinist);

b) anthroponyms denoting the doer of different actions or processes. They are derived from verbs by adding suffixes -er,- or, which are linguistic markers of an acting subject: to eat - eater, to drink - drinker, to visit-visitor, etc;

c) functional anthroponyms which are mainly represented by the list of functionary civil servants: monarch, president, mayor, manager, clerk, etc;

d) anthroponyms designating persons according to their social status: prince, duke, peer, beggar, tramp, etc;

e) anthroponyms denoting persons according to the place of their residing, which is reflected in their structure: townsman, villager, etc;

f) anthroponyms denoting persons according to their criminal activities. Due to this in their semantic structure together with denotational and significative semes there are some connotational ones expressing negative evaluation of the designated person : criminal, killer, etc;

g) qualitative anthroponyms proper, which denote persons according to rational^{em}otional evaluation of their psychological and mental qualities, moral and ethic standards, religious and political principles. Accordingly this group is represented by such predicative anthroponyms as: genius, lunatic, fool, etc.

5. Seminological class of collective anthroponyms denote such multitude of people, which does not fall into discrete units in the mind of speakers. Their meaning is formed by such semantic features as: person, unity, indivisibility and specification of this unity which is characterized by different degrees of universality. Accordingly we single out the words of the so-called "singularia tantum" type, in which the asymmetry of content and form of a semantic sign is realised. These are the names of various strata of society: intelligentsia, aristocracy, studentry, etc., denoting this or that social unity of people without any exception. At the same time some groups of countable collective anthroponyms are ascertained:

a) anthroponyms denoting various unities of people in general-group, crowd, gang, etc.;

b) anthroponyms denoting national-kinship unities - people, nation, tribe, etc.;

c) anthroponyms denoting professional unities of people - personnel, crew, cast, etc.;

d) anthroponyms denoting social - political unities of people - class, party, etc.;

e) anthroponyms denoting religious unities of people: congregation, sect, etc;

f) anthroponyms denoting military unities of people - army, troop, regiment, etc.

6. Deictic anthroponyms are represented by the lexical units identifying persons according to their roles in the speech act of communication: I = "the person speaking or writing, or the person which holds the situation", you = "addressee, or the person to whom the speech is addressed", he = "the male person, who being perceived by the communicants represents the subject of their discourse", etc. Distinctive semantic-pragmatic features of the sign status of deictic anthroponyms are as follows: the highest degree of generalisation of their conceptual meaning which can be explained by communicative pragmatic predetermination of their meaning, the egocentric relativity of their meaning and peculiarity of their identificational function, which can be explained by the cyclic nature of verbal intercourse accompanied by the change of roles of persons participating in the act of communication. As a result deictic anthroponyms are characterised by individual referential correlation.

7. The semiological class of quantifier anthroponyms is represented by the lexical units which identify a person in an abstract way - as a representative of the class of human beings without any individualization, which is adequately reflected in their dictionary entries. In Modern English such words are: everybody, somebody, anybody, anyone, no-one.

All the above-mentioned enables us to conclude that the sign features of English anthroponyms are manifested in their systematic organisation which is predetermined by the diversity of human character and the logics of their cognition as well as the language regularities by which this diversity finds its realisation in the verbal model of the world.

Tbilisi I. Chavchavadze State University
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