

Nicknames as Emotionally Evaluative Social Identity Carriers



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ABSTRACT: The paper analyzes the social pragmatic and emotionally expressive functions of nicknames. We identify nicknames as emotives, the lexemes that can be applied to one of the emotion categories. This study demonstrates that nicknames are semantically related to basic emotions models (*Pride*, *Disgust*). Positive and negative emotions are an integral function of the existence of a human as a whole spiritual personality and as a biological species. Emotional meanings that reflect basic human emotions are universal, and their manifestation in nicknames' lexical nominations vary with degrees of depth and different pragmatic aspects. Emotion lexemes express positive or negative emotional evaluation, the subjective determination of the object's status, emotionally expressive approving or disapproving of somebody or something. Estimating the activities of others and expressing emotional evaluation, subjects of nicknames' nominations intend to influence human behavior by specifying the recipient at risk to become the object of public condemnation and social disapproval, and mockery. The main reason for nicknames' formation in the English language is the perception of the environment by a person both positively and negatively – socially-evaluated. Reflecting the general culture of English society and culture within the individual, in particular, nicknames create socio-cultural symbols, and cultural universals, indicating the traditions of people, habits, lifestyles, tastes, and ideas.

KEYWORDS: nickname; lexeme; anthroponym; cognitive emotion; emotive; metaphor; verbalization; secondary nomination.

1. INTRODUCTION

In modern linguistics, cognitive, linguacultural, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic studies have an anthropocentric orientation. The perception of a person as the center of the universe manifests itself primarily in anthroponyms, the names of individuals. Anthroponymic nominations act not only as a means of cognition and representation of the national picture of the world but also serve to express a wide range of emotions, feelings, and assessments, all that is related to the sphere of emotional and psychological activity of human consciousness.

One of the main anthroponymic nominations, the identification means to distinguish a person in society, are nicknames – additional, unofficial names of a person, used for the most accurate personal, evaluative characteristics of the referent and his identification in the community. Nicknames have been investigated extensively in different aspects (Chevalier, 2004; Kennedy & Zamuner, 2006; Mensah, 2016; Skipper, 1984; Koss, 2006; Potter, 2007) but still, linguists do not have a single understanding of this anthropological category and the problem of the nicknames' status is still unresolved. There are no criteria for identifying nicknames from the mass of anthroponyms, although more and more scientific papers are devoted to individual and collective nicknames studies.

In our opinion, special attention is required to analyze the functional attributes of nicknames, because it is the functional approach that reveals effective mechanisms of interaction between communicants, the individual and society, and past and future experiences of communication among generations. The nicknames appeared as a result of the attitude and assessment of the subject to someone or something and are the result of attributing any qualities. Such a differential feature as "attribution" is actually a major characteristic of emotional assessment.

2. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The research material is the secondary names of people from different social groups (units, selected from the English mass media (periodicals, the Internet sources), as well as data from linguistic dictionaries (Oxford Dictionary of Nicknames by A. Delahnty, Official Dictionary of Unofficial English by Grant Barrett, Twentieth Century American Nicknames by Laurence Urdang, Walter C. Kidney, George C. Kohn).

The research methods include a descriptive method for the analysis and classification of linguistic units, consisting of the following stages: a collection of empirical material, observation, classification, and the generalization of conclusions; the method of conceptual analysis, which makes it possible to determine the character of the cognitive base of English nicknames centered on semantics; the method of comparative analysis, which makes it possible to identify and compare the factors influencing on the

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character and peculiarities of nicknames functioning in modern English; the hypothetic-deductive method for confirmation of the stated hypotheses on the illustrative material; the component analysis method for determining the semantic volume of the studied units. The lexicographic analysis of vocabulary definitions and elements of etymological analysis is also widely used in the work.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Nicknames as evaluative assessments.

Emotions as one of the most important components of the human emotion conceptual sphere, which determine the process of knowledge and orientation of a person in the world, characterized by biological, psychological, and sociocultural features have been of great interest to a number of linguists (Johnson-laird & Oatley, 1989; Kövecses, 2000; Ortoni, 1996; Pavlenko, 2008; Wierzbicka, 1999). Emotions as the psyche phenomenon have an extremely complex conceptual structure that can be detected by describing the language expressions used by native speakers to refer to and transmit emotions (Lakoff, 1987. pp.195-221). Dylman, Champoux-Larsson & Zakrisson (2020) indicate emotions are a broad concept that can be defined in several different ways and often includes the feelings that we experience within us, that we express through various channels (verbally, physically, etc.), and that we perceive, or at least infer, in others based on cognitive and perceptual processes. Scientists analyze different emotional concepts, distinguishing among them the primary and secondary. So, Rolenhagen and Dalkvist submitted their list of emotional concepts: ANGER, DISGUST, SADNESS, FEAR, ANXIETY, FEELING OF FAILURE, HELPLESSNESS, HUMILIATION, DISAPPOINTMENT, JEALOUSY, SHYNESS, REPENTANCE, SHAME, HAPPINESS, AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE, ATTACHMENT, LUST, PRIDE, RELIEF, SENTEMENTALITY, HOPE, CURIOSITY, SURPRISE (Rolenhagen, 1989). Ungerer and Schmid singled out seven so-called basic emotions – ANGER, JOY, LOVE, FEAR, SADNESS, DISGUST, and PRIDE (Ungerer, Schmid, 1996). Ortony and Turner (1990) point out that the usual reasons that theorists give for assuming the existence of primary emotions are that: (1) some emotions appear to exist in all cultures; (2) some can be identified in higher animals; (3) some have characteristic facial expressions; and (4) some seem to increase the chances of survival.

In numerous proposed classifications, emotions are considered to be common for representatives of different cultures, and therefore universal. As human beings, we all are experiencing the same universal emotions: anger, fear, grief, joy, and irritation. In addition, these emotions, as a rule, are distributed by "sign", that is, they fall into the category of positive, negative, or neutral connotation.

Traditionally the main opposition of the axiological scale is contrasting approval/condemnation; that is, the item, which corresponds to the norm and performs the function of the positive evaluation, is denoted as (+), and what does not coincide with it, has a negative evaluation with the mark (-). The third point lies in the middle of the scale and serves as the starting point, the standard with which the norm of evaluation quality is associated, is neutral or zero. Expression-emotional and evaluation categories help to place an object into one of the evaluation-type on the scale "good-bad", "beyond the norm – the norm – more than the norm". Positive and negative emotions constitute an inalienable function of human existence as a holistic spiritual person and as a biological species. It is necessary to emphasize such a very important feature of emotions, as ambivalence, the combination of two opposite signs of emotion in one sense. Following other researchers, we classify positive, negative, and ambivalent assessments as varieties of emotional evaluation.

To describe a certain emotion, various language means are analyzed by which, from the point of cognitive linguistics, the conceptualization of emotions is realized.

The nickname is an emotional linguistic unit (emotive) designed to express the emotions of the addressers and/or make an emotional impact on the addressees, using a wide range of linguistic means. Emotional nicknames convey the attitude of the subject to the object and express the general positive or general negative emotions (love/affection, pride/honor, humiliation, shame, fear, happiness) in interpersonal communication. Emotional associations, as well as their comprehension and verbalization in linguistic personalities, are individual, within a certain culture, or social group people share popular stereotypes and deliberately verbalize them in the appropriate communicative situations.

3.2. Emotional concept of PRIDE in nicknames' nomination

A nickname is given to a person who, in one way or another stands out from others and, therefore, falls into the focus of attention. This attention may be a result of behavior or deed, which may be related to social status or appearance. Often the existence of nicknames is a sign of popularity either in politics or in sports. Nicknames may have a different impact on celebrities: be a powerful catalyst in a starry career or vice versa – to break it down. Stars receive public recognition with the approval of nicknames that express cognitive emotions of pride and respect. Evaluating not only from the position + / -, good/bad but qualifying objects according to different aspects, the subject relates them to emotions that he is experiencing. The conceptual field of emotion PRIDE in Collins Dictionary is satisfaction, achievement, satisfaction, delight, content, pleasure, joy, gratification; self-respect, honor, ego, dignity, self-esteem, self-image, self-worth, amour-propre. Numerous examples of the metaphorization of the pride emotion indicate that this emotion is actively and productively exploited in

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English using secondary nomination with an emotionally positive connotation. Let's consider the linguistic means of expressing pride in the names of athletes, who are known for their extraordinary qualities.

It should be noted that the public recognition of the athletes' achievements in various sports is often carried out with the help of universally approved nominations. So, the name *The King* (a person considered as the finest or most important in their sphere or group) was given to the charismatic golf player Arnold Palmer and the Swedish hockey player Henry Lundquist and also to the ruler of the ring Amir Khan. Numerous athletes, in particular, hockey players Dale Allen McCourt and George Stephen Ferguson, the football player Clarence E. Boston, and baseball players Melvin Leroy Harder and John Owen Wilson were honored by the metaphorical nomination *Chief* (the person in charge of a group or organization, or the ruler of a tribe) (Twentieth Century American Nicknames, 1979).

Clear and vivid images of athletes create metaphorical names, in which certain features of the character and appearance of a person are conceptualized. Through metaphorical transformation, the physical qualities of a man are conceptualized. To nominate the most famous present-day swimmer Michael Phelps the artifact trope is used as "*The Baltimore Bullet*". The lexeme *bullet*, which means "bullet, projectile, rocket," focuses on the associative sign of speed. The development of lexical innovation was due to the re-categorization process. Toponym *Baltimore* proudly proclaims where the name of the subject comes from. The source of the other nickname innovation is the lexeme *cannon* (a large heavy powerful gun that was used in the past to fire heavy metal balls) signifies the prominent boxer of the ring – *The Cannon* (Shannon Briggs). The reason for metaphorical transformation is the ability to strike powerfully. The intriguing speed of the legend in sailing freestyle Jan Thorp has led to an associative comparison of an athlete with a torpedo "*Thorpedo*", and the legend of open water Byron Summers – with a fish *The Flying Fish* (Oxford Dictionary of Nicknames, 2003).

Alan Clark's nomination, one of the best English footballers, has also received a meliorative evaluative meaning. Due to his unsurpassed reaction, and ability to detect and realize a goal moment, he earned the nickname *Sniffer*: "You will not find too many dissenters from the widely-held maxim that Allan Clarke, who turns 67 at the end of this month, is perhaps the most naturally-gifted predator to have ever graced Elland Road. The man known universally as *Sniffer*, in deference to his uncanny scoring ability, was already a goalscorer of some repute when he left" (Yorkshire Evening Post, 2013).

The source of many athletes' names is the common nouns of natural phenomena, in which one or another associative sign is conveyed: *Hurricane* (Rubin Carter) – the strength and power of the boxer is compared with the villainous tropical cyclone; *Thunder* (Arturo Gatti) – the sound of explosive power, caused by lightning strikes, characterizes boxing abilities here; *Rapid fire* (Chris Byrd) – the noun fire is used to refer to a person who has the destructive power of nature, and a lexeme rapid, which means fast, smart, even enhances the name.

In the numerous nickname nominations of British politicians, we observe verbalized emotions of pride, respect, and sympathy of the English people: To express honor, and a commitment to the hero of the nation, the Britons compassionately nominated Churchill with the abbreviated name of Winston <*Winnie*. Winston Churchill, the premiere of the Second World War, was named *the Greatest Briton* in a sociological survey conducted by BBC (BBC News, 2001). An outstanding British marshal, who commanded the British Army in North Africa, a union armies group that landed in Normandy during the Second World War, Bernard Law Montgomery was also called affectionately *Monty* through a diminutive suffix-y. "There his decisive Victory over Rommel's Africa Corps at El Alamein (1942) and his pursuit of the Germans across Libya and Tunisia captured the imagination of the British public, and he became a national hero, popularly known as "*Monty*" (Mail Online, 2004).

In 1959, the Tories (British political party) was re-elected for the third term – thanks to its former leader Harold Macmillan, who was called the great premier of the postwar period, "a wind of change." For his outstanding political abilities, he conquered the nomination *Supermac*: "Macmillan was a shrewd and often brilliant, with a mind that swiftly homed in the crucial point and a tart tongue built for aphorisms" (The Guardian, 2010).

Among the many nicknames of another remarkable British prime minister Gordon Brown, we single out the name – *Great Leader*, which has the lexeme *great*, meaning beautiful, great, the one who makes a significant contribution. In 2008-2009 the British Parliament faced the question of Gordon Brown's resignation, but most of the deputies gave him support, noting that it was he who must have led Britain during the crisis. "Home Secretary Jacqui Smith says the speech showed Gordon Brown was a great leader and she believes the leadership question" should have gone away" (BBC News, 2008).

The exit of Great Britain from the EU or Brexit remains a leading topic of European politics. In his address to the British, Boris Johnson said that Brexit is "not the end, but only the beginning, the moment when the dawn begins, the curtain rises and a new act of our great national play begins." And the nomination of "Mr. Brexit" imprinted the ambitious achievement of today's British politician for history according to the pattern of social event → subject of action (Connolly, 2020). Ukrainians have a special place in their hearts for British ex-prime minister Boris Johnson for his unprecedented support during the with Russia. Ukrainians fondly called him "*Boris Johnsonyuk*" transforming his Instagram account ID, Boris Johnson UK, into a Ukrainian name (NPR, 2022).

One of the most charismatic and popularly worshiped members of the British royal family, Princess Diana, tried to make the world better, and more compassionate, and in the memory of people she remains "*The Queen of Hearts*". "As Diana did the

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unthinkable and told the world, the world held its breath and cheered her courage, her humor, and even her guile. She also devised her own role, in anticipation of the confusion that would follow her divorce: *the Queen of People's Hearts*" (The Independent, 1996). The lexeme *queen* in English is used to refer to women who have the highest title either in social status or socio-cultural achievements. The husband of Diana, Prince Charles, works towards being known in society as "*Charles the Green*" for his efforts to save the environment. "Prince Charles has told some of his staff to use bicycles in the fight against global warming. He is even ready to travel to London by commuter train from a station near Highgrove. Charles wants to be remembered as the "Green Prince" and is making a personal statement by planning a radical shake-up of his travel plans" (Evening Standard, 2006). The lexeme *green* is used to nominate a person who has joined the global environmental protection movement.

3.3. Emotional concept DISGUST in nicknames' nomination.

According to Dodonov, negative emotions play a more important role than positive ones because they signal the possible danger to the organism and enforce change in the situation and eliminate the existing threat (Dodonov, 1987). We believe that nicknames expressing the actual or potential criticism of the subject through humiliation are formed due to the incentive to change certain negative actions or characteristics. Emotionally disapproving of someone, the nominator thus wants to influence the person's behavior, albeit with the help of extremely offensive lexical units.

It should be noted that among the pejorative names, there are those who condemn, mock and express contempt for society but in this case, they demonstrate disgust. As disgust involves underlining the negative-evaluated attitude of the speaker toward the object of contempt, so for its expression the vocabulary, which transmits a negative emotional evaluation of the acts of contempt is used according to personal reasons. Such vocabulary includes negative-evaluative and emotionally-enhancing nouns and adjectives. In contemporary English-speaking discourse, disgust is expressed with the help of pejoratives, which attribute to a person a negative trait: insolence, cowardice, feeble character, etc. To pejoratives, expressing disgust, we include the nouns bastard, cheat, failure, fool, idiot, and liar; adjectives conniving, faithless, filthy, greedy, loathsome, icky, lying, selfish, self-righteous, spineless, spoiled, stupid, two-faced, shameless untrustworthy etc. (Thesaurus online).

Negative-evaluating units expressing condemnation are found primarily among the names of politicians. They are always at the center of the media and public notice with special attention on their part they often receive rather rigorous assessments of their activities.

Richard Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, gained the most disgusting characteristic from American society. After a scandal known as Watergate, he stepped down ahead of schedule and resigned. "*Tricky Dick*" – with such a secondary name the politician remained in the history of society, In and out of the office, Nixon was a remote man, lacking humor and grace. As one of his speech-writers said, there was a "mean link to his nature" that he strove to conceal. He was most comfortable alone or with a few wealthy friends" (Nash 1996, p. 623). The adjective *tricky* (a deceitful, crafty person), characterizing not just a person but the president of the country, is characterized by an expressive connotation "bad". The nickname "*Tricky Trump*" appeared due to the mechanism of analogy, describing the 45th president as a cunning trickster.

Extremely negatively British society appreciated the work of their prime minister Tony Blair. In addition to the ironic nickname "*Bambi*", for the support of American President George W. Bush in solving international issues, the press rewarded the ex-prime minister with the nickname "*America's Poodle*" (BBC News, 2003). The conduct of the main politician was associatively compared to the poodle service. The English lexeme poodle has the meaning "a person who is servile; lackey" (Thesaurus online).

A member of the British Parliament from 1970-to 1995, the leader of the Labor Party, Neil Kinnock received a contemptuous metaphorical name – *Welsh Windbag*. He initiated reforms, but never became a prime minister and did not put his amendments to life, and the word *windbag* means "a talkative person who communicates nothing of substance or interest." Labeling a mocking nickname, the society showed its disdain for the politician. The British Prime Minister David Lloyd George became famous not only for his political successes as the "*Welsh Wizard*" but also for his hypersexual appetites, due to which the politician was provided with the invective nickname "*The Goat*" (The Guardian, 2007).

During the 2016 United States presidential race, the head of the White House, Donald Trump manipulatively called his rival Hillary Clinton *Crooked Hillary*, pointing out that the former Secretary of State used a private email server and account while she was in the State Department (The Guardian, 2007). The lexeme *crooked* depicts a dishonest person, a political figure who has received public condemnation and, as a result, Hillary Clinton lost the election.

Since his coming to power in 2016, Americans thought that the president underwent a metamorphosis, such as becoming a "monster" Republican party of his own, and gave him the nickname "*Trumpenstein*". "Trump is the GOP's *Frankenstein* monster. Now he's strong enough to destroy the party," said the headline on a Feb. 25 column by Robert Kagan, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a contributing columnist for The Washington Post" (The Washington Post, 2006). This new lexical unit is created by the method of blending, which combines both semantic meanings: Trump + (Frankenstein). It has become a symbol of the worst manifestations of presidential policy, consisting of prejudice against racism, sexism, and xenophobia combined with

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their own vanity and falsehood, including hatred of the BLM (Black Lives Matter) social movement. Some more negatively-evaluated nicknames were coined by combining Trump's surname with other words, emotionally disapproving of the nominator: *Trumpinator* (Trump+Terminator), *Trumpamaniac* (Trump+maniac), *Trumpastrophie* (Trump+catastrophe).

Russian president's military invasion of Ukraine raised worldwide condemnation with the powerful hostile nominations "Vladolf Putler", "Hitler of the 21 century", "Kim Jong Pu", "the terrorist equal to Islamic State". Ireland's deputy premier has branded Vladimir Putin the "Hitler of the 21st century". Leo Varadkar said Ireland is not neutral on the Ukraine invasion and stands fully behind the Ukrainian people" (Evening Standard, 2022). The cognitive mechanism of association is involved in the creation of the new lexical unit, implying strong world hostility and disgust towards the war criminal.

4. CONCLUSIONS

With metonymic and metaphorical names, the conceptualization of emotions occurs from the cognitive linguistics point of view. The motives of all emotional nominations are the emotions of the speakers (psychological motive), the desire to make up a new original, and therefore expressive objects (pragmatic motive). A group of emotional concepts is verbalized with nicknames associated with certain basic emotions. In the current research, I've discussed only two emotional concepts PRIDE and DISGUST to show the unique emotional nature of nickname nominations, but I am aware that other emotional meanings (for example, FEAR, LOVE, HAPPINESS, and HUMILIATION) would be identified and represented in my next paper. It must be noted that the semantic contradictions "love-disgust", and "respect-humiliation" are formed with a universal character. Consequently, emotional meanings reflecting basic human emotions are universal, and their lexical manifestation in nickname nominations with varying degrees of depth and various aspects specifies them and takes nationality distinction.

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