

Historical and Social Background of English Name Giving Process

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Abstract

The article focuses on historical and social background of English name giving process. Proper names are considered as a leading group of onomastic units due to its extra linguistic component and direct connection with a human being. The processes of globalisation influence on all spheres of life and name giving process is not an exception. Challenges of nomination are explained in the article. The actuality of the paper is defined by the authors' point of view who cling to the idea that in modern globalized world only a proper name could be an only identifier of the national and confessional identity of an individual. Historical milestones that impact on name giving process are mentioned and social factors which influence name giving process are classified and described. Proper names have passed a long evolutionary way from a word – the identifier of a person among similar to legally significant sign of a linguistic personality, a register component which defines a social status and position of the individual in society. The research is relevant in the linguistic, social, national and cognitive aspects, as it demonstrates an interaction between language and society. At the modern stage of the English anthroponymics progress, the researchers described social factors influencing name giving process.

Key words: anthroponym, English, name giving process, onomastics, onym

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Introduction

Every decade brings new proper names to English language and society. Some of them are just derivatives of the forgotten ones. According to Zerkina, Kostina, & et al., (2016)

English plays a significant role in people's lives today. Several decades ago it used to be just a foreign language but it is the language of international communication now. Generally speaking, the whole world speaks English when dealing with political, economic, scientific and sports issues. English has been adopted as the official and working language of the UN. Different summits and meetings of heads of governments, enactment of laws and decrees, negotiations and disputes are carried out and held in English. English is used in the international trade, banking operations, maritime, land and air transportation system activities (p. 5147).

It's actual to study personal names on the material of the English language, as modern globalization processes break interethnic and interdenominational boundaries. The name is often the only identifier of the national and confessional identity of an individual. Moreover, the material for our research is accessible, objective and sufficient. "Proper names have enormous potential to describe the cognitive experience of the nation, cultural development of society with its moral ideals and attitude towards other cultural and linguistic societies" (Kisel & Zarutskaya, 2015, p. 15)

Challenges of nomination

The question of what word, phrase, part of speech is capable to be a proper name is closely connected with the problem of which object (person, area, thing, idea, etc.) can be called a proper name, that is a problem of borderline of onomastic nomination and its selectivity.

The selectivity of the nomination manifests in the phenomena that not each meter of the earth, not each animal receives a proper name and, therefore, not each linguistic unit is used at the same extent for naming.

People give names to many things and phenomena in the process of acquiring knowledge about the world, however with this approach to nomination one objects and phenomena are classified that leads to their nominating with common nouns, and the others are individualized that leads to appearing of proper names. Individualization demonstrates that the named object is accepted not only as the representative of any class (though it is certainly a representative of one object class of objective reality) but also it is posed singular and unique. Besides classification and individualization while naming objects of reality there is one more distinctive moment that is completeness of appellative nomination and proceeding character of onomastic lexis. This principle of onomastic nomination is most brightly manifested while giving a name to a person. This phenomenon is obviously caused by scientific, technical progress and the availability of information.

Proper names as a leading group of onomastic units: types of onyms

The functional and linguistic peculiarities of proper names led to being studied in the special section of linguistics – onomastics (from Greek "art to give names") that describes appearing, development, functional specifics, essence of proper names in the language. In scientific literature

it is possible to meet several definitions of the term "onomastics" but each of them treats onomastics as the art of name giving and as the section of linguistics that studies proper names.

Proper names include anthroponyms, toponyms, zoonyms, teonyms, etc. If zoonyms and teonyms represent a small class of language onomasticon so toponyms and anthroponyms are the most numerous groups. All these groups form onomasticon.

Onomasticon represents a set of proper names of a certain language. It forms special national, cultural, historical space around an individual which is specific for any representative of a society and simultaneously it is unitized for the whole linguistic community (Zerkina, 2017, p. 214).

Thus, onomasticon is a circle of proper names that are used by any nation and differs with stability and traditional characters that, in particular, will be explained by community and uniformity of the factors (economic, geographical, biological and other) which are constantly influence on it. The process of learning English has an interdisciplinary character. Onomastic vocabulary allows us to learn the English language simultaneously with literature, history and culture of English people.

Anthroponymy studies information which the name can possess: characteristic of human qualities, interconnection of a person with their father, kin, family, information about nationality, occupation, area origin, status etc. The history of formation and development of anthroponymicon of language goes back to ancient times and closely intertwines with culture, history, ideology, religion and other social and political factors. Zerkina, (2017) states:

The proper name is of special value for each person, it can "store" family values and traditions; positive wishes, spells on future happy life; demonstrate ideology, religion, and just identify the person in a society, in time and space (p.214).

While analyzing the scientific papers (Zerkina, 2017; Kisel 2009; Leonovich, 2002) that are devoted to functioning of personal names it is established that they have consecutive development and pass from father to son. Thus, the name gains diachronic informational content and the history of names are inseparably linked with history of any language and nation. Since proper names perform identification function, it is worth noting that personal onyms are an integral component of human nature or linguistic identity. They characterize it, evaluate, and give an idea of the name – bearer to the recipient.

Historical background of English name giving process

Personal names have their history and they carry out comparative analysis of proper and common names and define connection of common and proper names. This connection is actualized in the continuing development of onym at gradual change of nominal lexicon, interaction of languages and dialects, social processes and cultural and historical factors which darken former connection of proper and common names.

The main idea of personal names researches in synchrony and diachrony is that the name is the naming of an individual thus it is closely connected with society and with social aspect of language.

The qualitative characteristics of the personal names system traditionally includes the three types of personal names:

1. complex names;
2. names derived from complex ones by means of their reduction and further expansion by special suffixes;
3. appellative names, i.e. nominal names used as personal ones, which can be traced from the very start of the historical epoch.

It has been mentioned above, each language has its anthroponymic systems with individual peculiarities. Onomastic papers are inclined to demonstrate the fact that all anthroponymic systems should be divided into three groups: one-name, double-name, and poly-name systems.

An onomastic system enables us to name clearly every new member of the society who can exist in every social group. Thus, the three main types of anthroponymic systems can be distinguished. One of the most ancient four-name systems is the Roman one: *Publius Cornelius Scipione Africano*.

The name giving style of ancient Indoeuropeans is a direct reflection of thoughts, ideals, and models of the world. A name is a linguistic text, the most important for a primitive person. A metonymic basis for name giving gives us the grounds to suggest that the ancient anthroponymic system is not a selection of words, which accidentally found themselves in the onomastic orbit.

As time went on, names were given at birth, and name giving depended directly upon the parents' will. However, these names were not the reflection of the individual's peculiarities. For researchers, this period of anthroponymicon development is interesting by the fact that a newborn child's name reflected information about name givers, their way of thinking, mentality, intellectual level.

The next stage in the development of the anthroponymic system was the dissemination of the main religions. The process of investigating anthroponymic systems includes a problematic issue about the quantity of the elements of the given system. This quantity is determined by a short-term memory of a person. An optimal (average) quantity of elementary symbols of one more or less big unit of a sign system is an interval of 1-4 symbols, while the maximum one – 5-9 symbols. From this point of view we can investigate both the anthroponymic system of any language, and the language in general.

A striking example of this tendency is naming children of puritans, who separated from the Anglican church in the XVI century. As a result of their persecution, as Leonovich (2002) observes, puritan personal names were especially spread in the north-east of the present USA. They often gave their children Latin names of their personal composition: *Beata* "happy", *Desiderius* *Desideratus* "desired", *Deodatus* "given by God", *Renovata* "rennovated". Among the most

famous names, created by the Puritans (especially at the beginning of the XVIII century), are the following: *Free-Gift, Reformation, Earth, Dust, Ashes, Delivery, More-Fruit, Discipline, Joy Again, From Above, Thankful, Live Well*. Very often the Puritans ran to extremes, forming names like *No-Merit, Sorry – for – Sin, Much- Mercey, Sin Dany*. (Leonovich, 2002, p.7; Zerkina, Kostina, 2015)

Wiver, (2007) a teacher of the Faculty of International relations at American University in Washington, in the article "The Mosaics of American Culture" suggests that despite the huge cultural diversity in the United States, there existed the dominant culture. Each new portion of immigrants became part of this culture, in parting with many of their differences to fit in with the dominant cultural trends of society. As a model used a ready cultural template - a set of specific characteristics: white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, male. White male immigrants could easily adapt to this model, taking an English name and turning to Protestantism. Therefore, the backbone of the American names made up of English names borrowed in turn from the Celts, Danes, Normans and Britons, as well as the old Testament and biblical names, which are still in the top of the most ten common names in America.

Some names are considered almost rude due to a disgraceful action performed by their bearers, which was given publicity. For example, biblical names *Herod, Judah*, etc. Names of literature characters having negative connotations also belong to almost rude names (e.g. *Uriah Heep*).

Investigating this tendency, it is necessary to mention the role of fiction in name giving. Thus, for example, Swift created two personal names – *Vanessa and Stella*, the latter was borrowed by the anthroponymic systems of other languages (Kisel, 2009, p. 47).

Along with English names English surnames as personal names came into American culture. In the late nineteenth century poor, but ambitious parents gave their sons names after famous personalities such as *Milton*, from John Milton, and *Sidney*, formed from Sir Philip Sidney. The practice of personal names formation from surnames is common in the United States, the names of aristocrats were replaced by the names which traditionally denote a particular activity. For example, *Tanner* (Tanner - a person who is employed to tan animal hides) *Cooper* (Cooper - a maker or repairer of casks and barrels). Also the names of famous performers are popular such as the name of *Marley* (Marley), is especially popular among the Afro-American population of the country, formed from the names of Bob Marley, the legendary Jamaican musician.

Popular former surnames which are now personal names, have distinct national identity, such as *Makkenzy, Reilly or Brennan*, and similar names are given to boys and girls.

The tendency of transforming men's names in the women's is becoming more common in the United States. It should be noted that many American girls' names, like *Shirley, Leslie, Hilary, Renee, Stacy*, and *Tracy*, appeared at first as men's names. Meanwhile, the reverse process, when the boys names are given to girls, has not been observed.

Our empirical material that is based on Wattenberg's book "The Baby Name Wizard",

notes an interesting trend in modern American naming. (Wattenberg, 2013) The sudden popularity of rare Old Testament names such as *Josh (Joshua), Isaiah, Elijah, Caleb, Ethan*. The Jewish names are now in fashion which were in the early twentieth century considered as archaic ones, and today they sound unusually and newly, and, most interestingly. These names have lost their religious and national semantic component.

Having diachronic informational content, onyms are inseparably linked with history of the people and language, reflect socially significant factors. Evolutionary formation of a name begins with origin of an onym as separate linguistic unit on the basis of a common words and finishes its development with sophisticated multistage conclusions that units a number of concepts and projections; generates new linguistic unit at the present stage (Kisel, 2009, p.71).

Social background of English name giving process

Social factors influencing language and functioning of the linguistic units include factors determined by the reflection in the language cognitive, aesthetic, moral, and ideological sides of the language bearer's life, which can be divided into two groups:

1. Social factors of the maximum social significance (social-economic formation, means of production, ideology, science, culture, political system of society, way of life, aesthetic and ethical views of society).

2. Social factors of the minimum social significance (texts and their content, elements of the ideological character).

Sociolinguistic aspect of personal names includes the following:

- theoretical and methodological investigation of general processes of personal name forming and functioning in the language;
- complex investigation of anthroponymics as a system;
- investigation of personal names as a social-historic category;
- social-cultural determination of occurrence, functioning and disappearance of personal names;
- social characteristics of personal names functioning in conditions of the modern society.

In our research special attention is paid to typical and universal aspects in the language name list on the basis of its analysis in different languages. Also our paper deals with revealing peculiar features of onomasticons, their analysis and synthesis, as our work investigates the language theory. The name always reflects national, cultural and social life of the society regardless of the name givers' will, therefore the given aspects are also included while researching the connotative aspect issue of the personal name semantics.

- With the aim to investigate typical and universal aspects in names of different languages, we consider it necessary to:

- - analyze personal names from the point of peculiarities of their social and national-cultural functioning and semantic codification;
- - to describe anthroponymic systems of languages, social and national-cultural aspects of personal names functioning.

In our research we follow the idea that sociality of names consists in:

- personal names are social historically, though their social colouration is changeable;
- personal names cannot always react to social shifts, but respond to them with delay;
- personal names reflect a social-historic life of society by the time of their formation by means of their nominal origin basis.

Social aspect of onomastic researches provides studying of names in connection with those public estimations which they receive at different times from separate public groups and also in connection with some conscious or irresponsible preferences of some names in separate societies or among separate individuals. Influence of socially caused factors depends on many conditions: historical era, spontaneous and conscious aspects, influence of the society on anthroponymic layer of the language.

Social character of personal onyms reveals in tradition to use the same words for name giving and also in:

- *A traditional attachment of definite names* to the representatives of famous social groups. The given tendency goes back to the times of the slave-holding system. Thus, for example, in Ancient Rome a slave had a name consisting of his/her master's name in a genitive case, and a word *puer*: **Lucipuer** – a slave of **Lucius**.

The diachronic aspect of our research shows that a social stratification of names was due to the "rich-poor" factor. Some names were associated with noble birth and nobility, while the others – with poverty and obscurity. Thus, according to the researches of Leonovich (2002), it was characteristic for English culture that such names as **Rupert, Benjamin, Alexandra** were traditionally associated with the representatives of the middle class. A female name **Abigail**, which was traditionally interpreted as a maid's name, has lost its social coloration, while for foundlings there existed quite definite names corresponding to their position in the society: **Helpless, Rependance, Forsaken** (p. 8).

The next factor is *a social evaluation of some names*. Each language has its own collection of personal names with a striking social coloration. Thus, in Ancient Rome adopted children took the name of their adopter with a suffix *anus* (i.e. **Octavianus** – a son of Octavius, adopted by Guy Julius Caesar).

In our research we observe that the role of social factors as linguistic universalialia and their realization in the language anthroponymicon is very important in the investigation of onyms connotation, and, consequently, in the name giving practice.

Fashion names in very small degree depend on the events occurring in the world. Every new name is just a variation of a well-forgotten old one, and despite the fact that the popularity of names is constantly changing, in this process it is possible to identify certain patterns. Traditionally people prefer female names ending in "a" (**Sarah, Emma, Hannah, Mia, Anna**), as well as names beginning with a hard "k" (**Kylie, Caitlin, Courtney**).

According to our observation the popularity of female names ending in "n" has rapidly increased (**Jaden, Aiden, Hayden, Caden**) and names beginning with "j" (**Joshua, Justin, Joseph**).

This allows us to conclude, that in English language tradition of naming the main emphasis falls on the phonetic, graphic, in other words, on the external form of the name. Zerkina, (2017) explains that:

English antroponymic system (especially its American variant) has a quantitative index of an axiology – that is quantity of elements of an official name. It is about the second "middle" name which is very popularly among Americans. Instead of the middle name they often use initials. While choosing initials they take into consideration the belief in the magic force of a name. Thus, among the Afro-Americans the belief is widespread that if initials of a name form the meaning word, then it brings happiness: *FUN, JOI, PET, PEP, VIM*. About 75% of eldest sons from the American families with claims for social prestige have a maiden name of their mothers as the first or middle name. (p. 215).

Today in mass media there are many publications on this topic. Judging by recent observations of journalists, the following picture emerges: the name in modern American culture is gradually losing its semantics and becomes a combination of consonants and vowels. We can give an example of another new name.

Conclusion

However, name giving of a person is very specific for each nation, every national anthroponimicon has its national and typical universal features, characteristic for any language and nation, which are reflected in the system of anthroponyms.

The classical system of naming has national characteristics, depending on the language of the society to which serves. Anthroponymical system reflects the cultural and historical milestones in the development of the language and the people.

Tendency of substituting national names with English one for convenience reasons is observed in mordent communicative spate or at least national names adopt English phonetic form (pronunciation).

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