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Gender-Marked Nicknames Defining a Male Person in English and Russian

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Abstract

The object of our research is a group of nicknames –phraseological units that are semantically oriented to a man in Russian and English languages, which includes the nicknames of famous personalities and celebrities, namely politicians, heads of state, athletes, writers and publicists, artists, showmen, oligarchs, as well as historical personalities. Nicknames are active in both social and professional jargons. The nicknames of teachers can be heard only in the speech of schoolchildren of a particular school. The nicknames of politicians, oligarchs sound in the speech of a certain rather closed corporate environment. Despite this, this language platform has become widely used both in the pages of the periodical press and on numerous Internet sites. Firstly, the article presents a theoretical review of the literature. Then authors offer their own classification of nicknames, which includes 12 nominations. On the basis of which a comparative analysis of these nicknames is carried out.

Keywords: Nickname, Linguistic culture, Russian, English, Classification.

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1. Introduction

According to F.Kh. Tarasova and A.L. Kormiltseva "At the present time in the study of a human being in the language picture of the world the great importance is acquired by individual characteristics of language personality, the most important of which is gender" [1]. Therefore, it is important to analyze the material referring only to the male sex, that in the future to determine the differences between the origin of the nicknames based on gender.

A nickname is "the kind of anthroponym, an additional unofficial name given to a person by surrounding people in accordance with his characteristic trait, circumstances accompanying his life, by any analogy, by origin, etc." [2]

Nicknames usually arise in lively speech. A nickname is given so that it will allocate a person from the general mass of people, pay attention to him, emphasize his individuality.

In American linguistic culture in parallel with the official onomastic system there is an informal onomastic system, the objects of which are political figures and parties, athletes, famous personalities, cities, etc. It should be noted that Russian linguoculture, unlike the American one, has a less extensive system of nicknames. Frequent use of the "second name" is not a distinctive feature of Russian culture. Despite this interest in this area has increased significantly in recent years. This fact is confirmed not only by the appearance of the long-awaited vocabulary of Russian nicknames by H. Walter and V.M. Mokienko, which included the nicknames of both historical figures and our contemporaries, but also a whole series of dissertations devoted to nicknames [3].

2. Methodology

The instrument used in this study was a compilation of 705 English and 397 Russian nicknames denoting a male person. The phraseological corpus, which is the object of study of this group, was extracted by the method of continuous sampling from single and bilingual dictionaries. The nicknames were selected from "Dictionary of Russian nicknames" and "Oxford Dictionary of Nicknames" [4]. Also, Internet resources were used. The theoretical method, descriptive and synchronous-comparative method are used in the work.

3. Results and discussion

The typology of Russian nicknames on semantic grounds was developed in general terms by T.N. Chaiko in his publications about nicknames and remains relevant up to now [5]. Typology of V.A. Florovskaya, published in the same year and developed on the material of the Kuban nicknames, differs little from the classification of T.N. Chaiko [6]. Summing up the experience of previous researchers, N.A. Volkova offers her classification of nicknames and looks in detail at what fact can motivate the emergence of this or that nickname [7]. Based on the above typologies, using their material, we developed our own classification:

1) **Characteristic features of appearance** (features of the constitution: complexion, height, specific aspects of the face, the head).

Examples:

The Almighty Nose - this was the name of the English general and statesman Oliver Cromwell, who was the owner of a large nose;

Sugar head (Sakharnaya golova) (a brilliant head extending into the back of the head) – a nickname of A.S. Voloshin, the former head of the presidential administration;

2) **Characteristics of the character and the manner of behavior.**

Examples:

The Beast of Belsen - the nickname of Joseph Kramer, German commandant in a concentration camp, famous for his cruelty;

The Poisonous Academician (Yadovity Akademik) – the nickname of the famous politician, academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences Ye.M. Primakov in connection with the manner of his speeches.

3) **Features of speech.**

Examples:

The Napoleon of the Stump - the 11th US President James Polk received this nickname for his tongue-tied speech;

Politician from the gun -butt (Politik ot priklada) –Governor of the Krasnoyarsk Territory, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation A.I. Lebed.

4) **Connection with professional activities.**

Examples:

The Teflon President - the nickname of Ronald Reagan, the 40th president of the United States, whose reputation remained untainted despite scandals and excesses, of which he could adequately come out during his presidency;

For the conduct of anti-alcohol policy and longing for long speeches, the Secretary-General of the CPSU Central Committee, M.S. Gorbachev received the nicknames of the *Mineral Secretary (Mineral'nyy sekretar')*, *Lemonade Joe (Limonadnyy Dzho)*, *Non-Alcoholic Pig Sweat (Bezalkogol'naya Bormotukha)*.

5) **Connection with the place of birth, origin of the elements of biography.**

Examples:

The Austrian Oak - the nickname of Arnold Schwarzenegger;

The Kremlin mountaineer (Kremlevskiy gorets) – the nickname of I.V. Stalin, born in the Caucasus.

6) **Physical disabilities.**

Examples:

The Blind Harper – the nickname of John Parry, blind Welsh musician.

No examples found in the Russian language.

7) **Unique physical possibilities.**

Examples:

Air Jordan or His Airness - the nickname of Michael Jordan, an American basketball player, for his unique ability to jump high;

Alexander the Great (Aleksandr Velikiy) - the nickname of the multiple world champion in wrestling A.A. Karelin.

8) **Other activities, former work.**

Examples:

The Rough Rider - the nickname of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th US president. During the Spanish-American War of 1898, Roosevelt collected and led voluntary cavalry troops, for which he received this nickname; *Rubber ball in a cap (Rezinovyy myachik v kepke)* – nickname of Yu.M. Luzhkov, enjoying to spend leisure time on the tennis court.

9) **Outward resemblance to anyone.**

Example:

The American Louis-Philippe - the nickname of Millard Fillmore, the 13th US president, who was similar to the French King Louis Philippe, not only externally, but also with an aristocratic manner of acting.

No examples found in the Russian language.

10) **Metaphorical transfer.**

Examples:

The Swan of Avon - such an excellent nickname has had for many centuries the English poet and playwright William Shakespeare;

The Wizard of the Emerald City (Volshebnyk izumrudnogo goroda) is the nickname of B.N. Yeltsin, who, as the first secretary of the Ekaterinburg Regional Committee of the CPSU, gave orders to paint fences in green before the arrival of the authorities.

11) **Language game.**

Examples:

Hunt the Shunt - the disdainful nickname of the British motorcycle racer James Hunt, who was a participant in a large number of accidents.

Barry Alabaster (Barri Alebastrov) - Barry Alibasov.

12) **Nicknames with an unknown nomination.**

Examples:

The Splendid Splinter - the nickname of the American baseball player Theodor Williams;

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (Belosnezhka i sem' gnomov) – V.V. Putin.

The same nickname can be attributed to different groups of nominations. Let's give examples: *The Red Fox* - the nickname of the third US president Thomas Jefferson for the red hair color and political cunning. The nickname of B.N. Yeltsin, *Boris Not Lappin Up (Boris Nelakayevich)* can be attributed both to the language game, and to the behavior with a hint of his famous predilection for alcohol.

One and the same person can have several nicknames, which distinguish it practically on all proposed motives of the nomination. This fact can be easily demonstrated by the example of nicknames given to Russian President V.V. Putin and 43rd US President George W. Bush: *Russian Bonaparte (Russkiy Bonopart)*, *Psychological cannibal (Psikhologicheskiiy cannibal)*, *A nice man in all respects (Muzhchina priyatnyy vo vsekh otnosheniyakh)*, *Gray Cardinal (Seryy cardinal)*; *Bush the Younger, Bush II, Bush 43, King George (II)* (based on the comparison with the king of Great Britain George III), *Curious George, AWOL Bush, The Commander Guy, Commander Codpiece, The Velcro President*.

The appearance of a "second name" for politicians can be instantaneous. The "lifespan" of nicknames and its relevance depend on a number of factors, including political ones. It was worth, for example, in Russia

to break out the energy crisis, as the "*Red Tolik*" (*Ryzhiy Tolik*) - A. Chubais was named "*The Lord of Darkness*" (*Vlastelin t'my*).

A nickname can have a number of expressive synonyms. So many showmen, representatives of political and business structures have a rich synonymous number of titles. The "second" name usually contains a certain evaluation of the activity in different periods, or reflects the political situation.

While official personal names are neutral in themselves, i.e. bear no emotional coloring, the nickname can wear a variety of shades, thus demonstrating their attitude towards the person to whom this or that nickname is assigned. Let's give examples from our material. So, gentle, quivering attitude towards Prince Charles Edward Stewart was demonstrated by his supporters during the Jacobin uprising of 1745-46 by branding him *Bonnie Prince Charlie*. Subsequently, he became a romantic folk hero in Scotland. As a lawyer, for his meticulous honesty, Abraham Lincoln received a nickname that bears the connotation of respect – *Honest Abe*. The founder of modern aerodynamics N. Ye. Zhukovsky, was named *The Father of Russian Aviation* (*Otets russkoy aviatsii*), which is a recognition of his outstanding scientific achievements. The opponents of the 42nd US President Bill Clinton accused him in questionable political tactics, and expressed their contempt and disrespect in his nickname *Slick Willy*. Neglect and irony are conveyed in the nickname of N.S. Khrushchev - "*Village Scholar*" (*Derevenskiy gramotey*). *The British Solomon*, the nickname of James the first, King of Scotland 1567 - 1625 and the King of England and Ireland 1603-25 simultaneously carries a connotation of irony and flattery. Despite the fact that he was known to be a man of letters, he was not the brightest bulb in the chandelier.

Despite the diversity of such names, they remain largely obscure and are used mainly by the tabloid press. Only a small part of them is known to a wide circle of people, because many of them "are not born of a real characteristic of the activity and personality of a famous figure, but only an associative-linguistic folk-etymological play of words" [8]. At the same time, some nicknames due to mass media reach global dimensions and become known in many countries. For example, the Iron Chancellor Bismarck, the great helmsman Mao Zedong, the Gray Cardinal - confidant of Cardinal Richelieu monk father Joseph, Uncle Joe – I.V. Stalin.

4. Summary

Summing up, it is necessary to emphasize that it is men who possess a complex nickname, i.e. the nickname – phraseological unit. In general, regarding the phraseo-semantic group "Nicknames" in English and Russian language the following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) This group is much more widely represented in English by its quantitative composition than in the Russian language. In the English language 704 nicknames - phraseological units were found, while in Russian -397. Such a large number of nicknames-phraseological units in English is explained by the fact that the presence of a "second name" is a characteristic and distinctive feature of American society.
- 2) Despite a significant quantitative preponderance in the English language, there is a presence of phraseological units in both languages being compared in almost all subgroups of nominations. However, there is certainly unevenness in the quantitative distribution.
- 3) The same nickname can be attributed to different subgroups of nominations, which confirms the semantic mobility of phraseological units.
- 4) As for the subgroups of nicknames in the matched languages, a large number of nicknames-phraseological units among athletes and historical figures in English have been found. The sub-group "Politicians" is leading in both languages compared in terms of quantity.

5. Conclusion

The data obtained as a result of a comparative analysis of the nicknames of males in English and Russian languages allow determining the general trends in the origin of nicknames in different languages and also their differences. This information can also be used for its comparative and contrastive analysis with results of the investigation of the female nicknames, which can lead to the identification of trends in the emergence of nicknames based on the gender. Also, these data will be helpful in English lessons to familiarize students with the culture of the country of the studied language.

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Footnotes

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