

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PROPER NAMES FROM LEXICOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Elaborate în scopul de a explica numai cuvintele necunoscute, dar cuprinzând și interpretând în realitate toate cuvintele unei limbi, dicționarele au căpătat cu timpul valoare științifică, strict lingvistică, deoarece, înregistrând (aproape în întregime) vocabularul unei limbi, ele oferă un material extrem de prețios pentru a defini bogăția, varietatea și, în ultimă analiză, specificul acestuia.

În funcție de compartimentele lexicului ce urmează a fi cuprinse de dicționare, acestea se divid în lingvistice și enciclopedice care nu fixează cuvintele, ci noțiunile cu care operează diverse domenii de cunoaștere.

Trebuie să relevăm că numele proprii, care în majoritate s-au format prin metonimizare și metaforizare, deși fac parte din lexic, nu sunt incluse, în cele mai dese cazuri, în dicționarele explicative. Nu există o legătură referitor la locul plasării articolelor.

Lexicograful va hotărâ să respecte în mod consecvent ordinea alfabetică sau să includă articolul respectiv în anexă, partea finală a dicționarului.

Din cele prezentate, se desprinde ideea importanței pe care o are studierea numelor proprii din punct de vedere nu numai lingvistic, discuțiile rămânând însă deschise.

The problem of proper names is particularly complicated and difficult.

The choice of the subject is much influenced by the importance of the role proper names play in the language as they represent a large part of the vocabulary.

They constitute a numerous non-homogeneous class of names that permeate all spheres of human life. They embrace not only geographical names – toponyms, personal names of people – anthroponyms, but also names of objects of material culture – chrematonyms, names of enterprises, various societies, unions – ergonims, names of objects of spiritual culture – ideonyms and a great number of other names, as organizations, firms, clubs, newspapers, books, hotels, the names of months and the days of the week.

Occupying a very important place in the language, proper names are characterized by the fact that they react to various changes in the society. So, they become a sort of registers of historic events having certain sociological and ideological contents.

Every year new names of organizations, establishments, new capitals, cities appear. All these new names must be fixed and explained in dictionaries and encyclopaedias.

There are a lot of scientific works dedicated to this numerous and non-homogeneous class of words. Still, nowadays, when characterizing it, linguists face many problems. No agreement has been reached yet among linguists as regards their status in the language, whether proper names express notions full-fledged semantic structure.

It is necessary to study them not only because of interest, but also because a thorough knowledge of these possibilities helps one to understand the semantic structure of proper nouns at the present stage of their development.

In passing from general usage into some special sphere of communication, a word as a rule undergoes some sort of specialization of its meaning. This fact holds true for proper names also. Let's take for instance, the formation of proper nouns from common nouns chiefly in toponymics that is place names.

Ex.: the City – the business part of London

the Highlands – the mountainous part of Scotland

Oxford – University town in England (from ox + ford, that is a place where oxen could ford the river).

In the above examples, the change of meaning occurred without change of sound form and without any intervention of morphological processes. Specialization is thus identified on the evidence of comparing logical notions expressed by the meaning of words. If the linguist is guided by psychological considerations and has to go by the type of association at work in the transfer of the name of one object to another and different

one, he will observe that the most frequent transfers are based on associations of similarity, or of contiguity. As these types are well known as figures of speech call metaphor and metonymy.

A metaphor is a transfer of name based on the association of similarity and thus is actually a hidden comparison. A subgroup of metaphors comprises the transitions of proper names into common ones: **an Adonis, a Cicero, a Don Juan**. When a proper name like **Falstaff** is used referring specifically to the hero of Shakespeare's plays it has a unique reference. But when people speak of a person they know calling him Falstaff they make a common name generic for a corpulent, jovial, irrepressibly impudent person and it no longer denotes a unique being. This fact can be easily observed in the following example:

Ex. "Even less I am a **Scheherezade**. I never can tell a story properly" (Agatha Christie).

Here **Scheherezade** denotes a person who has the talent of relating stories properly.

As it has been already mentioned, if the transfer is based upon the association of contiguity it is called metonymy. It is a shift of names between things that are known to be in some way or other connected in reality or the substitution of the name of an attribute of a thing for the name of the thing itself.

Common nouns can be metonymically derived from proper names as in **mackintosh** – a cloak or a coat made of waterproof material patented by C. Mackintosh. **Ulster** – a coat named after the province where such coats were originally made. Many international physical and technical units are named after great scientists, as for instance **ampere** – the unit of electrical current after Andre Marie Ampere, a French mathematician and physicist.

Transfers by contiguity often involve place names. There are many instances in political vocabulary when the place of some establishment is used not only for the establishment itself or its staff but also for its policy. **The White House** is the executive mansion of the president of the USA in Washington; the name is also used for his administration and politics. **The Pentagon**, so named because it is a five-sided building, denotes the US military command and its political activities. **Wall Street** is the main street in the financial district of New York and hence it also denotes the controlling financial interests of American capitalism. The same type is observed when we turn to Great Britain. An interesting case is **Fleet Street** – a thoroughfare in central London along which many British newspaper offices are located, hence Fleet Street means British journalism. The name of the street is also metonymical but the process reversed – a proper toponymical noun is formed from a common noun: **fleet** is an obsolete term for "a creek or an inlet in the shore". Originally the street extended along a creek.

Sometimes the semantic connection with place names is concealed by phonetic changes and is revealed by etymological study. The word **jeans** can be traced to the name of the Italian town Genoa, where the fabric of which they are made was the first manufactured. **Jeans** is a case of metonymy, in which the name of the material jean is used to denote an object made of it.

We should say that the problem of proper nouns is rather complicated. It has been often taken for granted that they do not convey any generalized notion at all, that they only name human beings, countries, cities, animals, rivers, etc. (Reformatsky; Vinogradov 1947; Galkina-Fedoruc 1956; Arutiunova 1976). And yet they evoke notions that are particularly rich (Jespersen 1957; Stupin 1985).

Thus, we can regard, that there is no universally accepted theory, concerning proper names. It is not even solved whether to include proper names into linguistic dictionaries.

The lexicographers who share the first point of view consider that proper names should not be included into the word-list of linguistic dictionaries. And, on the contrary, the lexicographers, who share the second viewpoint of linguists, find it necessary to include this large group of words in the body of the book, listed alphabetically among the word entries of linguistic dictionaries.

It is undoubtful that the most important sources for getting information about proper names are encyclopaedias and dictionaries. But, the information presented in encyclopaedic dictionaries does not characterize proper names as words, language units (e.g. encyclopaedias do not always give us any idea about the way the word should be pronounced, variants of its spelling, derivatives).

As we know linguistic dictionaries are aimed at describing words, while an encyclopaedia at describing objects, notions, and phenomena.

Still, lexicographical theory and practice have not yet determined the line of distinction between extra linguistic and linguistic information and consequently between a linguistic (explanatory) dictionary and encyclopaedia. Very often they duplicate each other, but in most cases they certainly differ. Thus the comparison

of definitions of encyclopaedias and dictionaries is very important, because it may help to state the difference between encyclopaedic and philological ways of defining words and objects named by them.

On the other hand it is also interesting to see how the same words and objects are defined in dictionaries and encyclopaedias edited in different countries.

As we all know the lexicographical practice of each country has its own tradition.

It is well known that American dictionaries, for example, are characterized by encyclopaedic inclusion of scientific, technical, geographical and bibliographical items, whereas it is common practice with British lexicographers, as well as ours to exclude from their dictionaries information of this kind to devote maximum space to the linguistic properties of words.

Considered from this point of view, it is quite logical that the unique objects of reference of these words are so preponderant that if the lexicographer indicates proper names in his dictionary at all, they usually bring a strong encyclopaedic element with them. If the lexicographer decides to avoid any encyclopaedic elements; it is possible to treat proper names in a more general way; in that case, it suffices to indicate only their function (e.g. men's given name; family name; place name etc.) But short explanatory (encyclopaedic) glosses are usually expected by the user of the dictionary (such as the situation of the place etc.).

British and American lexicography is rich in dictionaries and encyclopaedias the compilers of which take into consideration, on one hand, the addressee, his age, his occupation, etc. and on the other, the volume, syntactic structure, style, which also influences the information of definitions.

In **Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary** the section of geographical names gives basic information about the countries of the world and their most important regions, cities, and physical features. The information includes spelling, syllabication and pronunciation of the name, nature of the feature, its location, and for the more important entries statistical data.

Ex.: **Austria** /os-tre-e/ country central Europe; capital Vienna – Austrian /-en/ adj. or n.

In **Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary** of the English Language the geographical and biographical entries are listed alphabetically among the word entries.

Ex.: **London**

1. Jack, 1876-1916, U.S. short story writer and novelist.
2. A metropolis in SE England on the Thames: capital of the United Kingdom and the British Commonwealth.
3. City of London – an old city in the central part of the county of London.
4. Country of London – an administrative county comprising the city of London and the 28 boroughs.
5. A city in Ontario, in SE Canada.
6. A town in central Ohio.
7. A town in SE Kentucky.

It is easy to observe that this dictionary provides a lot of information, as well as encyclopaedias do.

The bilingual lexicographer should not overlook the fact that some proper names have different versions in different languages. Few personal names show such a variation: but cf., e.g. English Charlie-magne: German Karl der Grose. But not a small number of the traditional Christian (given) names belongs here: e.g. English Charles, French Charles, German Karl, Italian Carlo. Most important are the place names, which belong here (e.g. French Paris, Italian Parigi). The bilingual lexicographer should indicate these versions, at least in the more important cases.

We can mention that the inclusion of proper names in dictionaries depends wholly on the lexicographer. He may list them alphabetically, in the appendix, or even not list them at all.

Enough has been said to indicate the important role played by proper names in the building up our language. In part, this movement runs parallel to that of other languages, in part, it is specifically our own. Place-names, personal names, family names offer a fascinating insight into the past and present history of the language, and this work is certainly not the whole story, because this class of word-stock presents complex contradictions and conventions.

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