

THE ONOMASTIC COMPETENCE OF THE READER AS A CONDITION OF UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

Irina Maslova^{1*}, Olga Shcherbakova², Oksana Glazova³, Irina Budanova⁴, Kristina Akhnina⁵

¹Assoc. Prof., Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), RUSSIA, lovmarchenko@gmail.com

²Assoc. Prof., Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), RUSSIA, pink_poodle@mail.com

³Assoc. Prof., Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), RUSSIA, Ksanik-23@mail.com

⁴Assoc. Prof., Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), RUSSIA, irinabudanova@hotmail.com

⁵Assoc. Prof., Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), RUSSIA, akhnina_kv@rudn.ru

*Corresponding author

Abstract

Literary proper name (poetonym) is a universal functional-semantic verbal sign intended text for individualization and characterization of individual objects of artistic reality in the space of the literary. The semantic and stylistic potential of onomastic units is huge in the space of a literary text. It makes them an important constructive element involved in the processes of text formation and meaning generation. For this reason, onomastic units are an important means of its interpretation in a literary text. Having a great functional potential, they become an important element of the text due to the pragmatic components of meaning. As a concentrated expression of culturological realities, poetonyms are those linguistic units that require the connection of the creative abilities of the reader-interpretor, performing the reading and in-depth analysis of the literary text creative (creative) function. However, the perception of linguistic and extralinguistic content of proper names depends on the inter-textual and onomastic competence of the reader involved in the interpretation of the text. There are three levels of perception and interpretation of poetonym: 1 – elementary (naive) perception of recipient of the proper name; 2 – General education level recognition of the proper name as a marker of extra-linguistic (specific and historical) information, 3 – linguistic level of perception of onomastic units research literary interpretation of the proper name (the restoration of the author's intention by decoding the character image of the character). These levels, along with other factors, determine the completeness and completeness of the reader's understanding of the literary text. Generating a complex of connotative meanings, it activates the "semantic plurality" of the literary text. Each of the proper name's connotative meaning acquires independence in the reader's understanding, opens new semantic facets of the text and allows to know its depth. At the same time, the proper name, on the one hand, explicates the conceptual basis (the idea of the work), the author's attitudes and intentions, on the other hand, the boundaries of the reader's interpretative field are defined, directing the creative activity of the object of interpretation. The results of the study prove that this perception of literary and artistic works is effective for the study of individual author's manner of the artist's words, the deep meanings of his work.

Keywords: literary proper name (poetonym), semantic-stylistic features of the onomastic units, onomastic competence of linguistic personality of the reader, understanding the text.

1. INTRODUCTION

As is well known, literary proper names (poetonyms) are universal (meaning-making and text-producing) functional-semantic word signs intended to individualize and characterize single objects of artistic reality in the space of a literary text. Proper names include:

- Anthroponyms *Акулина (Akulina), Домна (Domna), Фёкла (Fyokla), Дрон (Dron), Карп (Karp), Сысой (Sysoy)* (from the works of D. Grigorovich, the 19th c.); *Бронислав Пупков (Bronislav Pupkov), Дмитрий/Митрий/Мотя/Моня Квасов (Dmitry/Mitry/Motyа/Monyа Kvasov)* (from the works of V. Shukshin, the 20th c.); *Акиндин Судейкин (Akindin Sudeykin), Северьян Брусков (Severyan Bruskov)* (from the works of V. Belov, the 20th c.);

- Toponyms: astyonyms (place names): *Москва (Moscow), Санкт-Петербург (St. Petersburg)*; agoronyms (square names): *Сытный рынок (Sytny Ryнок)*; godonyms (street names): *Крестовский перевоз (Krestovsky Perevoz), Дунькин переулоч (Dunkin Pereulok)*; comonyms (village names): *Заборье (Zaborye), Мугоджары (Mugodzharу), Спас-Клепики (Spas-Klepiki), Петушки (Petushki), Железный Гусь (Zhelezny Gus), Кобылёнка (Kobylyonka)*; hydronyms: potamonyms (river names): *Шуя (Shuya), Пра (Pra), Висла (Vistula)*;

- Zoonyms: *Васька (Vas'ka), Дымок (Dymok), Рогуля (Rogulyа), Рябутка (Ryabutka), Карько (Kar'ko)*;

- Chrononyms (date names): *Дмитриев День (Dmitriyev Den, Nov. 26), Рождество (Rozhdesnvo, Eng.: Christmas)*;

- Ktematonyms: titles of books: *The History of Ancient Rome*; titles of TV shows: *Kabachok '13 Chairs' (Tavern 13 Chairs)*; titles of newspapers and magazines: *Krokodil (Crocodile)*; etc.

The problematics of onomastic research is based as a whole on both philosophical and linguistic traditions (Plato, Proclus, W. Humboldt, E. Husserl, E. Cassirer, J. St. Mill, B. Russell (Russel, 1997); O. Jespersen, Je. Kurylowicz, P. Florensky (Florensky, 1998); A.F. Losev (Losev, 1990); A.A. Reformatsky, L.V. Shcherba, A. Wierzbicka, N.D. Arutyunova, A.V. Superanskaya, V.A. Nikonov and many others). However, some questions of onomastics require special attention. One of them is the specificity of proper names (PN) in literature studied by literary (poetic) onomastics.

Researchers note a special position of PNs in general and poetonyms in particular among other units of the nominal class. And it is the understanding of a word as a lexical sign that causes numerous scientific disputes. According to the well-known thesis of the Swiss linguist F. de Saussure, language is nothing but a complex system of signs (Saussure, 1977). A sign, including a linguistic sign, is primarily intended to transmit some information; therefore, it needs an interpreter (i.e., a message recipient/decrypter), as defined by the American researcher Ch. Pierce. When applied to a language system, an interpreter is understood as the language persona of a particular native speaker acting as the "semantic center" of interpreting aesthetic objects, for example, literary texts.

Against this background, it becomes clear why modern linguists widely recognize the distinction between the reader's language competence and his/her language activity (in particular, interpretative activity), i.e., the functioning of this competence in various communicative situations. At the same time, Z.M. Shalyapina notes that, "it is obvious, however, that in real linguistic reality, these two aspects do not exist irrespective of each other" (Shalyapina, 1988).

In the process of speech activity, a person not only preserves and transmits the national culture and socio-historical experience fixed in the language but also enriches them. This makes it possible to speak about the **creative** function of a linguistic persona. The creative aspect of an "idiolect/polylect" [6] is most effective in reading and in-depth analysis of literary texts.

Recent studies on stylistics indicate that, when working with a text, it is advisable to distinguish between the **verbal** (reading at the actual textual level) and the **pragmastilistic** (reading at the level of the socio-cultural context) aspects (Troshina, 1992; Luzina 1989). This is especially important when it comes to such specific

units as literary proper names.

The text creator chooses the best, from his/her point of view, nomination method, using the possibilities of onomastic words to convey the semantic side of the story. At the same time, the author is focused on typical native speakers ("standard linguistic personas"), primarily on their linguistic competence, which includes proper names as a means of conveying extralinguistic information.

Sharing the positions of domestic linguists, we consider it possible to talk about onomastic language units as an important means of interpreting texts and the reader's onomastic competence as an important condition for an adequate understanding of a text.

2. DISCUSSION

It is obvious that onomastic notions of communication participants (activated and potential) constitute a specific competence of native speakers. The onomastic competence of a linguistic persona, as a rule, is based on linguistic and cultural information, pragmatic connotations common to a linguistic community in one or another period of its development (Suprun, 1993).

It should be emphasized that proper names are a concentrated expression of cultural realities (V.I. Karasik). Therefore, the onomastic competence of a linguistic persona includes precedent texts of a culture (Yu.N. Karaulov) or obligatory works of art (Ye.M. Vereshchagin, V.G. Kostomarov), i.e., phenomena of literature, painting, architecture, music, and folk art known to every native speaker.

Often being markers of intertextuality, literary proper names generate a chain of intertextual associations. In this sense, they become an integral part of the reader's **intertextual** competence, which is based on the fact that the reader's memory stores traces of what was previously read, techniques of literary descriptions, principles of various genres, models of possible rethinking (for example, ironic), models of different tropes, and schemes of possible interpreting strategies.

Semantic-stylistic and functional transformations at the level of literary speech lead to the fact that literary PNs become "unconditional" signs of textual reality. They are included in the author's dialogue not only with the reader, but also with the entire modern and previous culture (M.M. Bakhtin), because, due to their capacity and informativity, often turn out to be signs of allusions, quotes and other inclusions (for example, the proper name-title of the novel 'In the First Circle' by A. I. Solzhenitsyn). That is why the factor of the reader's linguistic persona and his/her onomastic competence is so important in the text interpretation process.

On this basis, we can talk about two complementary processes: 1) involving the creative capabilities of a literary text reader-interpreter is an important condition for an adequate perception of a literary PN; 2) as a matter of fact, interpreting individualizing signs in literary speech most fully reveals a person's creative potential.

The ultimate goal of the reader's interpretative activity is to determine the actual meaning of an onym, i.e., its pragmatilistic potential. Semantically hollow in the language, a PN appears as an extremely informative unit in the speech of each communicant, "for, designating an object, it includes the entire fund of knowledge of a person who speaks about it" (Kukharenko, 1988). Note that the volume of this knowledge varies depending on the speech situation conditions and the communicant's position (i.e., age, profession, social status, outlook development, language intuition, etc.).

The results of the study confirm that PNs are able to focus attention on certain (often key) elements of a message. This is connected with such properties of PNs in speech as limiting information richness, sharp drops in information volume and emotional-evaluative orientation in designating the same referent, rigidly determined one-to-one connection between the PN content and communicative situation.

An onomastic unit in a literary text is always a sign-symbol, a key to understanding an image. Therefore, the reader's decoding of the extralinguistic information embedded in one name or another by the text creator often contributes to an adequate understanding of a literary text as a whole.

So, the perception of the PN linguistic and extralinguistic content by the reader's linguistic persona depends on the "semantic competence of a native speaker" (U. Weinreich), in particular, on onomastic notions of communicants. However, the factors associated with the recipient's personal or psychological qualities are no less significant. They include: age, profession, social status, linguistic intuition, thesaurus formation level, general knowledge degree, etc. The combination of these conditions creates the so-called "tertiary informant reactions" (i.e., an ordinary native speaker's opinion of the interpreted object – according to L. Bloomfield) and determines their character.

Hierarchization of a linguistic persona's onomastic competence makes it possible to isolate the following levels in perceiving and interpreting onomastic units:

- The level of "naive" (ordinary) perception of a PN;
- The general educational level of perception of an onomastic unit as a marker of extra-linguistic (national-specific and cultural-historical) information;
- The philological level of perception – research interpretation of a literary PN.

The latter must be deeper than that of the reader's, because "it requires a historical approach: it traces the history of the spirit and the history of ideas" (Arnold, 1003).

Let us turn to the novel 'In the First Circle' by A. Solzhenitsyn.

He turned right onto Kuznetsky Most. A taxi was about to pull away from the curb. Innokenty grabbed it, hurried the driver downhill, then told him to turn left, under the newly lit streetlights of the Petrovka. <...> At the traffic light on Okhotny Ryad, his fingers felt and drew out two fifteen-kopeck pieces simultaneously. <...> Without intending it, Innokenty now found himself riding along the Mokhovaya past the embassy. Fate was taking a hand <...> They passed the university (the process of transonymization – oikodomonym > godonym) ... They sped up to the Arbat <...> By now the Arbat was all lit up. In front of the Khudozhestvenny Cinema, there was a long line for The Ballerina's Romance. A faint bluish mist clouded the red M above the metro station (Solzhenitsyn, 1990).

The toponyms used by the author are characterized by obvious semantic capacity and versatility as well as rich pragmatilistic potential. They are symbols of the city in which the events take place. However, decoding the meanings of these toponyms depends on the creative activity of the reader and his/her onomastic competence.

The first level: the recipient perceives the targeting of the PNs, i.e., linear objects of Moscow.

The second level: the reader recognizes historical microtoponyms in them, i.e., that are not formally used in the depicted epoch.

The third level: the recipient restores the author's intention and decodes the character-image of the person, whose vision of the Moscow he/she perceives, i.e., takes into account not only the formal (targeted) information but also the deep, implicit content of the PNs. The deliberate use of historical, outdated or banned at that time Moscow microtoponyms (instead of official ones) testifies to the author's negative attitude to the existing power, the totalitarian Soviet state of the 30s–50s, his own and his central character's protests against the totalitarian orders of communist society.

The perception of literary PNs turns out to be dependent on the associations that a particular name evokes in the reader's imagination. The "semantic multiplicity" of literary texts generates a complex of connotative meanings. Each of them, from the reader's viewpoint, acquires an independent status, presenting the text from a new side and revealing its unique identity. Such a perception of a literary-artistic work turns out to be effective for understanding the individual author's manner of a master of the pen as well as the pathos of his/her work.

Thus, onomastic units are included in the general system of nomination (?) and become a means of interpreting the denotative-semantic space of a text. On the one hand, they explicate the conceptual basis (the idea of the work), the author's attitudes and intentions; on the other hand, they limit the reader's interpretational field by directing the creative activity of the subject of interpretation.

3. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of onomastic units, it can be concluded that the perception of extralinguistic and linguistic content in the semantics of PNs by the reader's "idiolectal" linguistic persona depends on the recipient's onomastic competence as well as the following factors: age, profession, social status, linguistic intuition, thesaurus formation level, and perceiver's general knowledge degree. On this basis, the following three levels in perceiving and interpreting poetonyms are identified:

- The level of "naive" (ordinary) perception of a PN;
- The general educational level of perception of an onomastic unit as a marker of extra-linguistic (national-specific and cultural-historical) information;
- The philological level of perception – research interpretation of a literary PN.

An important condition for an adequate perception of a literary proper name implies involving the **creative** capabilities of a literary text reader-interpreter. In this case, the understanding of poetonyms, and hence a literary work as a whole, will be the most complete and profound.

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