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The Linguistic Significance Of Anthroponyms And Secondary Personal Names In Political Discourse

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Abstract: In political discourse, naming practices serve not only to identify individuals but also to frame them within specific ideological or evaluative perspectives. Through primary and secondary naming, political actors construct public images and influence audience perceptions. Therefore, examining these linguistic tools is essential for understanding the dynamics of political communication. This article presents a linguistic analysis of anthroponyms in political discourse and examines the semantic and pragmatic functions of secondary names such as nicknames, pseudonyms, epithets, and other related forms. The study is grounded in existing scholarly literature and supported by examples from authentic political texts. The primary aim of the article is to reveal the functions of anthroponyms and secondary naming practices in political communication, to demonstrate their semantic and pragmatic power, and to highlight the potential of studying these units within the frameworks of linguistics, onomastics, and political communication.

Keywords: Secondary nomination, political discourse, pragmatics, metaphor, associative, function, social, public.

Introduction: In political speech and public communication personal names act not only as a tool of identification but also as a linguistic phenomenon which carries cultural, semantic and pragmatic features. Anthroponyms, that are the names, surnames and patronymic names of people, are considered to be onomastic units of language which closely tie the language up with culture, history and society. The role of these type of onomastic units in political discourse is significantly increasing. The latest researches in the field evidence that anthroponyms not only fulfill the function of identifying the individual, but also they help to create communicative strategies, political brands, semantic-associative networks and public image of a certain person.

Secondary names that are used to name people also constitute quite a big part of onomastic units. Titles, nicknames, pennames or any other name based on the principles of imagery or epithet represent secondary names of a person. These kinds of names function as a tool for creating an image, for strengthening the individual identification or discrediting the public image of a political persona [1].

METHODOLOGY

Anthroponyms and secondary names frequently occur in political discourse. The method of discourse analysis was chosen as the main research method since it is the most appropriate method for investigating their function and linguistic characteristics in the given context. Political discourse was analyzed in terms of media texts containing speeches of politicians, political news posted on the internet sources, political blogs, interviews and others. Corpus approach was used in order to determine nominative units such as names, nicknames, surnames or secondary names throughout the text chosen for the analysis. Semantic analysis method enabled to identify the main functions that nominative units fulfill. A number of examples were analyzed and their functions constitute the main findings of this research.

Secondary names usually carry metaphorical, evaluative and emotional meaning. On contrary to anthroponyms, they serve to give information or evaluation about a person rather than simply naming

them. According to the meaning they carry, secondary names fulfill nominative, associative, metaphorical and pragmatic functions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The nominative function of secondary names is determined by the fact that they refer to a particular person despite using a proper name. For example, "the iron lady" refers to Margaret Thatcher as a firm, uncompromising lady. Whenever a listener hears or reads this phrase, they remember the first female British Prime minister. The nickname was coined on a Soviet military newspaper Red Star (Krasnaya Zvezda) in 1976 about Thatcher's anti-Soviet remarks [2]. Soon after, British media and Thatcher herself adopted the epithet. Thatcher even publicly embraced it in one of her speeches saying "the Iron Lady of the Western world … Yes, I am an iron lady." Another secondary name "The Father of the Nation" refers to either George Washington or Mahatma Gandhi in context. "The Chancellor" was sometimes used to refer to Angela Merkel without mentioning her full name during the time she was a chancellor of Germany. "The First Black President" refers to Barack Obama to highlight a defining identity marker. This kinds of secondary names clarify or identify a person with a distinguishing feature.

The associative function of secondary names is recognized in the examples such as "Reagan Republican" – associating a politician with Ronald Reagan's ideology; "The Moscow Candidate" – implying association with Russia; "The Brussels Bureaucrat" – evoking an association with EU institutions; and "Wall Street's Favorite" – associating a candidate with financial elites. Such a secondary names connect particular people with broader groups focused on a certain ideology or belonging to a place. Secondary names with associative function are built on association with political parties, places, ideologies and historical parallels.

The metaphorical function of secondary names is determined by the fact that they serve a powerful metaphorical function by framing individuals or groups within a specific interpretive lens. These names compress complex political narratives into vivid, memorable images that shape public perception, either elevating or diminishing their targets. By invoking metaphor, secondary names can legitimize authority as in example "the father of the nation", delegitimize opponents as in "fat cats," "puppets", or moralize political struggles as in "freedom fighters" vs. "tyrants". They also help political actors construct identities, mobilize emotions, and simplify ideological conflicts for mass communication. Eventually, secondary names act as cognitive shortcuts that influence how audiences interpret political realities, often more effectively than direct argumentation. While fulfilling the metaphorical function, secondary names act as a figurative name describing the politician through imagery, symbolism, or metaphor. For example, the lion of Congress referring to Ted Kennedy symbolizes courage and leadership skills.

The pragmatic function of secondary names lies in their ability to achieve specific communicative goals beyond simply labeling someone. These names strategically manage relationships, guide audience interpretation, and influence the social dynamics of political interaction. By choosing a particular secondary name – whether critical as in Crooked Hillary referring to Hillary Clinton by her opponent Donald Trump [4], honorific as in the examples the Old fox referring to George Washington evoking his wisdom [5] and the father of the constitution referring to James Madison signaling respect for his role in founding the constitutional order, ironic as in the example of Tony Blair dubbed as Bliar – a play on his name to suggest lying, or affiliative as in Viki for Victoria and Marty instead of Martin to create more personal or approachable impression – speakers can position themselves and others within a desired power structure, signal group membership, or provoke emotional reactions. Such names help politicians perform face-threatening acts without overt confrontation, strengthen in-group solidarity, or subtly undermine opponents through implication rather than explicit accusation.

Pragmatically, secondary names function as tools for persuasion as in the example Sleepy Joe, that aims at persuading or influencing people's perceptions about this person; or enabling speakers to shape not only what is said in political communication but how it is meant and understood. The nickname "Sleepy Joe" was popularized by Donald Trump and the nickname saw widespread use in his 2020 presidential campaign, including in speeches and social media posts, to imply that Biden was too slow, unenergetic, or unfit. Mainstream media and fact-checking outlets document this usage, and the nickname has entered US-political discourse broadly as a pejorative label [3]. This is how a secondary name can be used to create or influence public opinion about a political individual.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, anthroponyms act as one of the fundamental linguistic and onomastic pillars of political discourse not only identifying the person, but also passing historical, cultural and sociocultural information about them. The precedent units formed on the basis of personal names activate wide

associative fields creating a strong image of the person's beliefs, historical role and personal features. Secondary names such as nicknames, pennames, titles and other forms in political discourse possess nominative, associative, metaphorical and pragmatic functions as well as functioning for identification. Sociocultural and pragmatic roles of the secondary names serve to form the attitude such as honoring, authority, critics, anger or admiration towards the person being named. Therefore, investigating the role and functions of anthroponyms and secondary names holds particular relevance for political communication, language culture, sociocultural analysis and onomastics.

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