

**LATIP 2021****International Conference on Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm****RECENT CHANGES IN THE AXIOLOGICAL STATUS OF  
ENCYCLOPEDIA ANTHROPNOMS**

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**Abstract**

The paper is devoted to the diachronic analysis of axiological characteristics of several encyclopedic anthroponyms, such as “Stalin”, “Hitler”, “Konev” which became ‘signs of culture’ in many semiospheres. ‘Encyclopedic anthroponym’ is a proper name of a human being which has its value and is subject to storage and reproduction in the semiotic space. Historicity as one of the main principles of semiophere governs the cultural transformation; therefore, political background influences the expert community, and the signs of culture of the previous period can change their value in the encyclopedias and biographies from ‘plus’ to ‘minus’ and vice versa. Encyclopedic entries in the Russian and English languages devoted to Stalin, Hitler, Konev became the material for the research. The analysis has revealed the dependence of the interpretation of the historical importance of the personality on the values of the certain period in the internal space. Lotman’s definition of the boundary between ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space plays an important role in the evaluation of the encyclopedic anthroponyms, because in the internal space the anthroponym, such as “Stalin” has a right for both negative and positive interpretations. In the process of discourse activity value orientations get through the stage of the national community’s reflection over certain facts. Russian and Soviet encyclopedias represented the position of the political leaders, which resulted in considerable revision of the texts whenever the political situation in the country changed.

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*Keywords:* Axiological status, disvalue, encyclopedic anthroponym, semiosphere, sign of culture, value

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays the relationship between signs and value is one of the most important fields of semiotic studies. Morris (1946, p. 100) pointed out that signs in any model of signifying might be used valuatively. He wrote that the most natural kinds of signs to use valuatively are appraisers, “since if a sign is an appraiser to its interpreter it does in fact dispose its interpreter to give a preferential status to what is signified”. This issue was brought back to the foreground by Petrilli (1993, p. 239) who stated the need to “recover and develop that particular bend in semiotics which is open to questions of an axiological order and consequently to studies focusing on a more global understanding of man and his signs”. The evaluation process is usually influenced by the time factor. Historicity as one of the main principles of semiophere governs the cultural transformation. In the process of discourse activity, value orientations get through the stage of the national community’s reflection over certain facts, such as an axiological status of encyclopedic anthroponyms.

## 2. Problem Statement

We consider encyclopedic anthroponym as a sign with the value characteristic which can change according to some historical conditions. Value in this context is a phenomenon which has social and cultural heritage in some historical period. Encyclopedic anthroponym can be viewed as a cultural phenomenon of value, because it can undergo some changes due to the value orientations accepted in the society. Value orientation is an artificially constructed goal for the society to reach by the definite period of time. Value orientation is not always a constant and it can change.

Value characteristics of an encyclopedic anthroponym depend on the worldview and do not possess a unified character. The term *value* indicates the human, social and cultural significance of certain phenomena. In this article the value characteristics of the encyclopedic anthroponyms *Stalin*, *Hitler*, and *Konev* are analyzed with the focus on their changes which are caused by the political instability.

## 3. Research Questions

We suggest that the main characteristic feature of the denotatum of an encyclopedic anthroponym is its reputation in a certain national and cultural community. The time factor usually influences the evaluation process. Past research (Bogdanova & Ignatieva, 2019; 2020) has shown that in the process of discourse activity value orientations get through the stage of the national community’s reflection over certain facts. Russian and Soviet encyclopedias usually represent the position of the political leaders, which results in considerable revision of the texts whenever the political situation in the country changed.

When writing an encyclopedic entry with an anthroponym as the head word, a representative of the expert society cannot stick to the facts only. As quite convincingly shown by Matruglio (2018), values occupy both an important and contested position in History. The author cites Watterson, who said, “History is the fiction we invent to persuade ourselves that events are knowable and that life has order and direction. That’s why events are always reinterpreted when values change. We need new versions of history to allow for our current prejudices” (Watterson, 1994, p. 152). Even the most *objective* historian

will not be able to avoid giving his evaluation of the personality in the encyclopedic entry, especially if the encyclopedia itself represents a state-controlled edition. The manipulative effect of the entry with an anthroponym as the head word cannot be denied, if manipulation is viewed as “the ongoing linguistic act which intentionally uses a certain type of self-deception, deception and/or lie” (Santibáñez, 2017, p. 25), or semi-truth, with continuous consequences. As Morris (1946) wrote, “*A* may use signs which to *B* are appraisors in order to induce the desired preferential behavior” (p.100). The so-called orienting discourse is considered to be a characteristic of mass media (Verkhoturova & Rudykh, 2020), but it also takes place in such encyclopedic entries. It can aim at manipulating public opinion in order to put the guiding line for some period of time.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study is aimed at revealing the axiological characteristics of anthroponyms in Soviet, Russian and British encyclopedias published at different historical periods of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries, i.e. diachronically, and investigate the changes in the attitudes of the expert communities implicatively or explicatively shown in the encyclopedic entries.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The main research methods are theoretical – the analysis of scientific papers devoted to semiosphere, historical writing, onomastic space; and empirical – the linguistic analysis of encyclopedic entries devoted to historic personalities and the description of observation results. Methods of synchronous and diachronous information analysis have been also used in the research.

#### **6. Findings**

Taking into account Lotman’s (1990, p. 131) understanding of a boundary, according to which “Every culture begins by dividing the world into ‘its own’ internal space and ‘their’ external space”, we assume that it is also true of the texts, produced in different national communities. In this case we can talk about the boundary between cultures. Thus, the anthroponym “Stalin” is situated on the boundary between *its own* internal space and *their* external space. It is important to note that in the internal space the anthroponym has a right for not only negative but also positive interpretation, because Stalin is the national hero of the Great patriotic war (1941–1945). However, in ‘their’ external space the interpretation is only negative. *Stalin* is the national sign of culture for Russia, while for the Western culture it does not possess this status.

Geographic position and historical processes taking place in some territory can influence the discourse practices. Social life and public opinion determine frames of reference which become benchmarks in certain spheres of human activity. That is why it is the expert community who approves the insertion of the anthroponym in the encyclopedia, whose contents undergo formal expertise, because encyclopedia is an authoritative reference work. One should bear in mind that the authorities may strongly advise the expert community to consider political and economic situation as well as social

climate. The analysis of 2000 encyclopedia entries has revealed the dependence of the interpretation of the historical importance of the personality on the values of the certain period in the internal space.

Not all anthroponyms can be included in the encyclopedias. The anthroponyms which designate people from the spheres of art and science are included in reference books only if their work is approved by the expert community of their internal space. Otherwise, their names are lost for the coming generations. On the other hand, it is a norm to include encyclopedic entries describing historical personalities and political leaders. However, they can get not only positive, but also negative evaluation from the expert community.

Encyclopedic entries can get a new interpretation or they can even be rewritten. Usually such things happen at the junction of epochs, when values are necessarily revised. Such changes under the influence of a new historical epoch can be viewed at the example of the encyclopedic anthroponyms *Stalin, Hitler, Konev*.

The material for the current research was taken from different encyclopedias: The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> editions), The Great Russian Encyclopedia, The New Russian Encyclopedia, The New Encyclopædia Britannica (1994 a,b,c).

Generally, encyclopedic entries have a standard structure. At the beginning of the entry there comes an identifier, a qualifier (qualifiers) and a classifier (classifiers) (Table 01).

**Table 1.** Structural elements of the beginning of the encyclopedic entry

Identifier	Qualifier(s) (additional identifier)	Classifier(s)
Name and surname, Pseudonym	Dates of birth and death	Attributing a person to a certain sphere of activity

### 6.1. The anthroponym *Stalin*

The entries from the above-mentioned encyclopedias devoted to the anthroponym *Stalin* were written in different epochs and in different countries, therefore one can expect that they differ in style, attitude and structure. The example of the universal sign of culture “Stalin” shows the similarity and differences of internal and external semiotic spaces.

As can be seen in Table 02, the structure of the encyclopedic entries devoted to Stalin is different from the standard structure in Table 01.

At the beginning of the entry from The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1947) there are identifiers (*Stalin [Dzhugashvili] Joseph Vissarionovich*) and qualifiers (*Was born on 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1879 in the town of Gori, Tiflis province*). Then there comes some information about his father and mother and his young years. In the entry there is no classifier because at the time of this edition (1947) Stalin was still alive and it was clear that everyone knew him. The whole text is written as a story with the elements of prose and it is much longer than the other texts in the encyclopedia, occupying 43 pages. Moreover, the text in this encyclopedia has a lot of expressive means, e.g. *Stalin is Lenin today; Stalin is an ingenious leader and party's teacher, the greatest strategist of the socialist revolution*. The adjectives ingenious, the greatest do not conform to the norms of the encyclopedic entry.

**Table 2.** The beginnings of four encyclopedic entries devoted to *Stalin*

<i>The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1947)</i>	<i>The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1976)</i>	<i>The Great Russian Encyclopedia (2016)</i>	<i>The New Encyclopædia Britannica: Macropædia (1994a)</i>
<p><b>STALIN</b>  <i>Stalin [Dzhugashvili] Joseph Vissarionovich, was born on 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1879 in the town of Gori, Tiflis province.</i></p>	<p><i>Stalin [a real surname – Dzhugashvili] Joseph Vissarionovich [9(21).12. 1879, Gori, now Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, – 5.3.1953, Moscow], one of the leaders of the Communist party, the Soviet state, international communist and workers’ movement, a distinguished theoretician and propagandist of marksism-leninism.</i></p>	<p><i>Stalin [a real surname – Dzhugashvili] Joseph Vissarionovich [6(18).12. 1879, Gori Tiflisskaya gub., – 5.3.1953, state dacha near Volynskoye Moskovskaya oblast, now Fili-Davydkovo district of Moscow], Russian revolutionary leader, Soviet party, state and military leader, one of the leaders of RKP(b) – VKP(b) – KPSU (in 1922 – 34 the General Secretary of the Central committee), head of the Soviet government (1941–53), generalissimo of the Soviet Union (27.6.1945).</i></p>	<p><b>Stalin</b>  <i>During the quarter of a century preceding his death in 1953, the Soviet dictator Josef Stalin probably exercised greater political power than any other figure in history. Stalin industrialized the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, forcibly collectivized its agriculture, consolidated his position by intensive police terror, helped to defeat Germany in 1941-1945, and extended Soviet controls to include a belt of Eastern European states.</i></p>

The volume with the entry Stalin appeared in the third edition of The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1976), more than two decades after Stalin’s death. Even though the historical epoch remained the same, the text had been changed. Apart from the identifiers (*Stalin [a real surname – Dzhugashvili] Joseph Vissarionovich*) and a qualifier [*9(21).12. 1879, Gori, now Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, – 5.3.1953, Moscow*], there comes a classifier: *one of the leaders of the Communist party, the Soviet state, international communist and workers’ movement, a distinguished theoretician and propagandist of marksism-leninism.*

These examples from the encyclopedic entries show that semiosphere keeps the texts of different historical periods of time. The encyclopedias of the Soviet period reveal a specific attitude to this sign of culture which belongs to *its own* semiotic space. Within a short period of time the evaluation given by the expert community had changed. The panegyric tone in The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1947) was substituted by a more balanced evaluation in its third edition. The expert community, writing texts for the encyclopedia, had to take into consideration the political and economic situation in the society as well as the sentiments of masses.

The mentioned differences between the two entries in these editions of The Great Soviet Encyclopedia show that there took place a reassessment of the activity of a concrete personality, which can be seen in a more neutral tone of the text. The evaluation of the sign of culture is slightly different, but the change of the epoch had not taken place yet, and Stalin’s decisive role for the Soviet state was not questioned.

Nowadays this personality still arouses hot debates. It can be viewed as a result of different interpretations of the events happening at different time periods considering the situation for the certain historical moment. In The New Russian Encyclopedia (2015), published by the private company, the only classifier is ‘*the Soviet statesman*’, and the negative evaluation prevails, while in The Great Russian

Encyclopedia (2016), the official state edition, the general tone is quite positive and more details are provided, including a different date of birth – 6(18).12. 1879 instead of 9(21).12. 1879.

The anthroponym *Stalin*, being the sign of culture, has the right for both positive and negative evaluation in *its own* internal space. At the same time in *their* external semiotic space of *Western culture* with more stable ideological system the evaluation of the anthroponym “Stalin” has always been negative, as can be seen, for instance, in Britannica.

At the beginning of the entry *Stalin* in Britannica (see Table 02) there is an identifier *Stalin* which is followed by the general characteristic of this personality. It represents the introduction preparing the reader for getting further information. This introduction has only negative characteristics of the personality itself and his style of ruling. Later in the entry the anthroponym gets exclusively negative evaluation, e.g. *Increasingly suspicious and paranoid in his later years, Stalin ordered the arrest of...; Chief architect of Soviet totalitarianism and a skilled but phenomenally ruthless organizer, he destroyed the remnants of individual freedom* (The New Encyclopædia Britannica, 1994a, p. 181).

The peculiarity of this encyclopedic entry is the structure of the text, which has not only introduction, but also six subsections with their titles, such as ‘The young revolutionary’. This first subsection has an identifier as a part of text, and a qualifier, which is the date of birth. There are no proper classifiers but for the word combinations *the Soviet dictator*, *Chief architect of Soviet totalitarianism*, *ruthless organizer* in the introduction.

## 6.2. The anthroponym *Hitler*

The anthroponym *Hitler* is another example of the sign of culture. Though the sign is charged negatively, it has its significatum which accumulates information from the discourse practice, including the academic historical discourse. The stable negative value characteristic allows this sign to become a universal sign of culture. However, even in this case we can observe some changes in the structural elements of the beginning of the encyclopedic entry (see Table 03).

**Table 3.** The beginnings of four encyclopedic entries devoted to *Hitler*

<i>The Great Soviet Encyclopedia</i> (1952)	<i>The Great Russian Encyclopedia</i> (2007)	<i>The New Russian Encyclopedia</i> (2008)	<i>The New Encyclopædia Britannica: Micropedia, Vol.5</i> (1994b)
<b>HITLER</b> (real surname – Schicklgruber), Adolf (1889–1945) – ringman of the German fascism, German Reichschancellor (1933–45) and “Fuehrer”, executioner of the German nation and the other countries temporarily occupied during the World War II by the German predatory imperialism, the major war criminal, ardent enemy of the Soviet Union. In his fight for the power and influence H., demagogue and conceited maniac, used the vilest means.	<b>HITLER, Adolf</b> (20.4.1889, Braunau, AUSTRIA-HUNGARY, 30.4.1945, Berlin), the head of the German State during the nazi dictatorship (1933–45), the major war criminal.	<b>HITLER</b> , real surname Schicklgruber, Adolf (20.4.1889–30.4.1945) – German statesman, the head of the Third Reich, the leader of the Nazis.	<b>Hitler, Adolf</b> , byname DER FÜHRER (German: “The Leader”) (b. April 20,1889, Braunau am Inn, Austria—d. April 30, 1945. Berlin), leader of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party (from 1920/21) and dictator of Germany (1933-45). He was officially chancellor (Kanzler) from Jan. 30, 1933, and, after President Paul von Hindenburg’s death, assumed the twin titles of Führer and chancellor (Aug. 2,1934).

As Table 03 shows, the sharply negative tone of The Great Soviet Encyclopedia (1952) entry gradually changes into formally negative in The Great Russian Encyclopedia (2007): from the classifier “ringman of the German fascism, German Reichschancellor (1933–45) and ‘Fuehrer’, executioner of the German nation and the other countries temporarily occupied during the World War II by the German predatory imperialism, the major war criminal, ardent enemy of the Soviet Union” (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1952, p. 453) to “the head of the German State during the nazi dictatorship (1933–45), the major war criminal” (The Great Russian Encyclopedia, 2007, p. 192). However, the internationally accepted classifier “the major war criminal” is used in both encyclopedias. The more alarming entry for the anthroponym *Hitler* is given in The New Russian Encyclopedia (2008) edited and published by some private publishing house. The classifier *German statesman, the head of the Third Reich, the leader of the Nazis* sounds negative only to those readers who are acquainted with the notion *the Nazis*. In other respects, it is rather neutral. This example shows that in contemporary Russia there are political forces trying to put up with the crimes of the World War II and who reconsider the internationally accepted evaluation of the personality. As a result, *Hitler* as the sign of culture gets a more neutral value characteristic. In Britannica, however, the axiological status of the anthroponym *Hitler* remains negative (*dictator of Germany (1933-45)*), and we can state here, that the official evaluation of this universal sign of culture has not changed much over the decades. The disvalue, or the value with the negative characteristic, also has its significance from the point of view of the society.

### 6.3. The anthroponym *Konev*

The third encyclopedic anthroponym under consideration is *Konev*, the sign of culture for the Soviet and Russian semiosphere, but not a universal one. As the denotatum of this sign is a military leader who defeated fascism, it has positive value characteristics which do not undergo changes in the internal space.

**Table 4.** The beginnings of three encyclopedic entries devoted to *Konev*

<i>The Great Soviet Encyclopedia</i> (1973)	<i>The Great Russian Encyclopedia</i> (2010)	<i>The New Encyclopædia Britannica:</i> <i>Micropedia, Vol.6</i> (1994c)
<b>KONEV</b> Ivan Stepanivich [16(28).12.1897, Lodeino, now Podosinovskiy district of Kirovskaya oblast, – 21.5.1973, Moscow], Soviet commander, Marshal of the Soviet Union (20.2.1944), twice Hero of the Soviet Union (29.7.1944 & 1.6.1945), Hero of the CSFR (1970) & Hero of Mongolia (1971).	<b>KONEV</b> Ivan Stepanivich [16(28).12.1897, Lodeino Vologodskaya gubernia, – 21.5.1973, Moscow], Soviet military leader, Marshal of the Soviet Union (1944), twice Hero of the Soviet Union (1944 & 1945)	<b>Konev, Ivan Stepanovich</b> (b. Dec. 28 [Dec., 16, Old Style, 1897, Lodeino, Russia [now in U.S.S.R.] – d. May 21, 1973, Moscow), one of the outstanding Soviet generals in World War II who was a leader in the offensive against the Germans.

In Table 04 we can see almost the same classifiers in the encyclopedic entries, but for the one significant difference: in The Great Russian Encyclopedia (2010) there is no remark about the international merits (*Hero of the CSFR (1970) & Hero of Mongolia (1971)*). If the value in this context is the impact of the personality on the development of the nation, it was reconsidered in some countries after the collapse of the so-called Communist bloc.

Nowadays, there are some shifts in the Western political sentiments concerning the sign of culture *Konev*. The value orientations have recently started changing in the negative direction. The Western discourse community attaches another axiological status to this sign, situated on the boundary between *their* and *its own* semiotic space. The result of this shift in the axiological status is the toppling of *Konev* statues in the Czech Republic and in Poland. Here is the extract from the article which contains the evaluation of *Konev*'s activity, Marshal *Konev* liberated most of Czechoslovakia, undeniably. (We might debate whether the replacement of Nazism by Communism is rightly called *liberation*.) *Konev* brought Soviet intelligence agents, who methodically hunted down people who had fled the young Soviet Union – Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians – and been granted citizenship in Czechoslovakia. The agents sent these hapless citizens to their deaths in Siberia (Nordlinger, 2020). The representatives of the discourse community treat this anthroponym as a disvalue, and if this reconceptualization continues, this evaluation might influence the expert community and be reflected in the encyclopedic entry *Konev*.

We have already said that the values of encyclopedic anthroponyms undergo certain transformations, therefore some of them are likely to change their connotation from positive to negative or vice versa. As the time passes, historical events go through the process of reconceptualization, a different emotional evaluation can cause reconsideration of the actions of some personalities. Both emotional and so-called 'objective' evaluations take place in contemporary encyclopedic discourse.

## 7. Conclusion

Encyclopedic anthroponym takes the role of one of the most influential signs of culture, since it is oriented on the intergenerational continuity and, on the other hand, it aims at revealing in the encyclopedia entry the ideological constituent adequate to the historical period. Cultural and historical development assigns some descriptions to the anthroponym. These descriptions let the anthroponym become recognizable in the national semiosphere, and sometimes even in the intercultural semiotic space. If an anthroponym becomes an important sign of the intercultural semiotic space, the encyclopedic entries often change their structure, general tone and volume, as can be observed in the Soviet, Russian and British encyclopedias. A proper name which has become a sign of culture can take part in the formation of the unified communication space. Some recent changes in the general tone of the encyclopedic entries show the disturbing tendency of weakening the negative axiological status of the anthroponym *Hitler* in The New Russian Encyclopedia and of changing the positive evaluation of the anthroponym *Konev* into negative in the Western semiotic space.

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