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**NAMES AND NICKNAMES AS MEANS OF PORTRAYAL IN
CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN NOVEL**

Anna Vasileva (a)*, Elena Krasina (b)

*Corresponding author

(a) MGIMO-University of RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 76, Vernadskii Ave., Moscow, 119454, Russia,
Vasilyevaaa_mgimo@mail.ru , +7 (495) 229-38-26

(b) People's Friendship University of Russia, 6, Miklukho-Maklai Str., Moscow, 117198, Russia,
elena_krassina@mail.ru, +7 (495) 434-37-45

Abstract

The paper is dedicated to functioning and semantization of proper names and nicknames in a literary text as exemplified by the novel *The Geographer Drank His Globe Away* by Alexei Ivanov. Selection of nomination serves as an important means of artistic expression and reflects features of author's personal attitude. Some names in the novel are allusive to works of Alexander Pushkin and thus bear certain historical and cultural traditions. The methodological foundation of the research is formed by works of Russian linguists V.N. Teliia, B.A. Serebrennikov, A.V. Superanskaia, N.V. Podolskaia et al. The main method is contextual analysis involving lexicographic sources, dictionaries and references. The spotlight is on a dynamic variation of the name of the novel's protagonist, Victor Sluzhkin, determined by external and internal, linguistic motivation. In parallel, a transition from professionalism *geographer* to a nickname *Geographer*. As a result of analysis, a scheme of onomastic space that is reflecting naming of the main character has been proposed; the full official name of the character was selected as the core of this space. Author's vision of the onomastic space of the novel's text as a whole allows stating that personal names and nicknames of the characters are not only tools in imagery creation, they are primarily means of creating speech portrait of various other characters. They become an integral component of the literary text, components of author's individual style, means of creating a literary image.

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1. Introduction

Human-centered paradigm of the modern linguistics sees literary text as one of the main objects of research, where a person is revealed within the limits of linguistic worldview and within the linguistic personae of both author and their characters. The new contemporary Russian prose is not an exception, as seen in works of A. Ivanov, D. Bykov, E. Vodolazkin, Z. Prilepin, V. Sorokin and others (as cited in Ivanov, 2014; Iartseva, 1990).

2. Problem Statement

It appears that in authorial prose, in literary texts, personal names merit one's attention in the aspect of lexical semantics and semiotics from the point of view of symbolism, as well as in the linguo-culturological aspect.

3. Research Questions

Statement of some linguists that proper names do not express concepts draw objections from other linguists, trying to prove their link to the category of concept. For example, Buslaev (1959) believed that proper names are capable of expressing concepts and in that regard noted: "Proper names with which we mark an indivisible representation are actually the same general concepts as generic names" (p. 15). This point of view was shared by Shcherba (2004), who was speaking of obligatory content-related minimum, without which functioning of the proper name in speech is impossible: "This minimum is a concept, which this object substantiates, with a general notion that it is not just any object substantiated to this concept, but a certain definite one" (p. 53).

Of interest is O. Jespersen's observation in his *The Philosophy of Grammar*, where he states that there is no exact boundary between the proper names and common names, as their difference is not qualitative, but quantitative (Jespersen, 1958).

Professor Superanskaia (2009) develops an idea that proper names show higher dependency on extralinguistic factors. She maintains that in proper names a nominative function dominates: "to name with the aim of distinguishing objects of a similar type from each other, in opposite to common names, whose main function is to name with the aim of transmitting a meaning, connotate" (Superanskaia, 2009, p. 57). The same idea may be traced in writings of Lotman (2000), who thought that the general meaning of a proper name designates an object to which this name is attached, at that, it is not characterized with any differential attributes.

Speaking about the question of status of proper names in the modern linguistics, they are defined as naming lexical units, which are simultaneously designating units, and thus connotative ones. For example, English linguist Gardiner (1954) proposed the following definition: A proper name is a word or group of words which is recognized as having identification as its specific purpose, and which achieves, or tends to achieve that purpose by means of its distinctive sound alone, without regard to any meaning possessed by that sound from the start, or acquired by it through association with the object or objects thereby identified. According to his point of view, a mandatory requirement to consider a word as a proper name, such a unit shall be a fact of language, and not that of speech.

Definitions of proper name are given in various linguistic dictionaries. The *Dictionary of Russian Onomastic Terminology* of Podolskaia (1988) provides the following definition: “Proper name – a word or collocation that serves to identify the object it names among other objects” (p. 63). The *Dictionary of Linguistic Terms* of Zhrebilo (2010) defines proper name as “a word that serves as an individual designation of persons and animals, geographical and astronomical objects, institutions, authorities, etc.” (p. 37). Generalizing the dictionary material we may note that definition of Podolskaia (1988) appears rather abstract, as it takes into account primarily nominative function of onyms.

Among the naming categories, nicknames represent a significant part of anthroponym vocabulary and are understood as “additional name given to a person by people around in accordance with their characteristic feature, life circumstances or some kind of analogy” (Podolskaia, 1988, p. 20). According to Telia (1977), nicknames are units of secondary linguistic nomination and as a rule they are based upon nominative means already known in the language, but used in a function new to them. As a result, nicknames may explicate occasional usage, conventional meaning, consolidated by a certain social group, contain various allusions (Telia, 1977). For example, the nickname *Kabanikha*, formed from the surname of *Kabanova*, is negative due to association with the infamous *Kabanikha* in A.N. Ostrovsky's drama *The Thunderstorm*.

Nickname nomination is usually determined by connotation. Professor A.L. Sharandina believes that attitudinal meaning is formalized by two ways: 1) “information about attitude is included into the lexical meaning”. Cf.: nicknames like *Рыжий* (*Red-headed*), *Толстый* (*Fat*) etc.; and 2) “attitudinal information is completive with respect to the lexical meaning, as if ‘alleviating’ it with the attitudinal component, making it attitudinally significant” (Sharandin, 2016, p. 721). Examples of such nicknames are *Рыжуха* (lit. *red cow*), *Малышка* (*baby*), *Котяра* (lit. *assured big cat*), and other similar ones formed with the help of attitudinal suffixes.

In other words, secondary nomination has an associative nature, related to already known meaning of the name and its reinterpretation. Nicknames are related to metaphorization, i.e., “a method of reinterpretation on the basis of similarity or analogy of attributes in the conceptual reflection of the signified object and in the significate of the word being reinterpreted” (Serebrennikov & Ufimtseva, 1977), as metaphorization is created on the basis of associations and forms imagery. For example. characterizing nicknames of historical personalities like *Иван Грозный* (usually translated into English as *Ivan the Terrible*, while *Ivan the Awe-inspiring* would be a better translation), *Иван Калита* (Ivan Kalita, the word *kalita* meaning *purse*), *Всеволод Большое Гнездо* (Vsevolod *the Big Nest*, as he had many children), etc.

It is well-known, that until late 18th-mid 19th century, majority of population of Russia did not have surnames. Nicknames had become the foundation for formation of the first Russian surnames that are distinguished by a lack of family formants. For instance, hereditary land ownership led to appearance of hereditary names. Some surnames pointed to a locality, where princes or boyars originated from: the river and town of *Шуя* (Shuya) corresponded to the surname of *Шуйские* (Shuysky), while the river *Вязьма* (Vyazma) originated the surname of *Вяземский* (*Vyazemsky*) (Gorbanevskii, 1987). The reverse process is forming a nickname basing on the surname, cf. in the text of A.Ivanov's novel: surname of *Колесников* and nickname *Колесо*; similarly *Цыренчиков* – *Цыря*; *Овечкин* – *Овца*, *Веткина* – *Ветка*. Some characters in the Ivanov's novel have more than one nickname in parallel: the pupil *Градусов* – *Рыжий* (*Redhead*),

Градус (Degree), and even *Термометр (thermometer)*, this is what Budkin, the only long-time friend of Sluknkin, calls him); Kolesnikovs' son – *Шурка – Шурпун (Screw)*.

A special layer of the novel is formed by Sluzhkin's remembrance of this own school years. Vitya loved literature and had deep respect for his form mistress, a teacher of Russian language and literature, Irida Antonovna Chekasina (*Чекакина*), nicknamed **Чекушка** (meaning a *0.25 liter bottle of vodka*), formed from her surname *Чекакина*, which originated from the word *Чекаса*, from a dialectism *чека*, meaning *a nail* in some Perm dialects. It is obvious that she served as a beam for Vitya Sluzhkin. Her nickname **Чекушка**, was, probably, connected to her professional activity: the verb *чекушить* means 'to talk without stopping, chatter'.

It is well-known that nicknames may change with time. For example, one of the pupils participating in the country walk with the surname of *Тютин* associate each step of his with previous tragic experience and is constantly foreboding a disaster: «*In our village there also was a boy who sailed on an inflatable boat, and then he drowned, – says Tyutin in a low voice*», «*Last year, in our village, a boy had got drunk on vodka and died, – recounts Tyutin*» (Ivanov, 2014). The surname itself is of Vyatka dialect origin: «*тютя*» was a word used to denote 'a meek, quiet, weak-willed person'. Reaction of active and mischievous adolescent Gradusov to such speech behavior on Tyutin's behalf, motivates the latter's new nickname: **Жертва (Victim)**. Names may be changes as well. The protagonist of E. Vodolazkin's novel *Laurus* has a name given at birth, *Арсений*, then, the name *Устин* that he took himself as a remembrance of his dead beloved. They were followed with the third name, *Амвросий*, and, finally, the fourth, *Лавр*. Each of these names turned a new page in the character's life. Let us note, that names of characters who are spiritually close to Geographer, his old and new acquaintances he has a fellow feelings for, such as, *Лена Анфимова*, *Сашенька* and even *Будкин, Кира Валерьевна*, the one he tries to call simply *Кира*, – they do not change through the novel, and the protagonist himself stays Vitya, as he was during his school years, in his childhood and young adult years. In addition, these characters have no nicknames at all.

Personal names, including surnames and nicknames, one way or another are names related to one and the same person. During the secondary nomination, nicknames are either originated from the personal name (or surname) or serve as their motivational base. In any case, in the literary text these names of characters are becoming their distinctive speech characteristic and simultaneously, author's means of character portrayal. Ivanov (2014) skillfully selects such names that in the text of the novel and in the speech of his characters become symbols.

Victor Sergeevich Sluzhkin is the protagonist of the novel *The Geographer Drank Away the Globe*. In the very beginning of the novel, future *Geographer* is applying for a job of a school teacher. He asks a cleaning lady about the name, patronymics and the surname of the school principal, it is *Антон Антонович*, a tall, bulky, balding man in golden glasses. His name *Антон* means 'the one coming into a battle', 'opponent', 'contestant'. However, from the text of the novel it is becoming obvious that this official personal name is an instance of authorial irony, as while the position of a school principal should involve responsible and serious management of the educational institution, the character is externally passive and comes short of his deputy. Here is how it is shown in the novel: «*I am only a manager. – The principal made a gesture that had something from a curtsy and even twitched his knees under the desk. – Deputy head teacher works with teachers – that is you, Roza Borisovna. I would not like making a decision without*

*your support» (Ivanov, 2014). In other words, Anton Antonovich is a nomenclature unit, a representative in the school administration and only plays a role of the principal, passing the reins to the school's deputy head teacher **Roza Borisovna**, who is taking an active autocratic position. Here is Victor Sluzhkin's first encounter with the deputy head teacher: “Роза Борисовна снова разложила бумаги веером, а потом все же обернулась на улыбавшегося по-прежнему Служкина.*

– А вы представляете себе... э-э...

– Виктор Сергеевич, – услужливо подсказал Служкин»

Roza Borisovna again laid out the papers as a fan and then turned back to still smiling Sluzhkin.

– *But do you have any idea, eeerm...*

– **Victor Sergeevich**, – *Sluzhkin suggested helpfully” (Ivanov, 2014). Usually, official full name is an evidence of a serious intent on behalf of a speaker. Having taken the official status, the word helpfully adds a tint of friendliness. Further down the text: «Роза Борисовна мгновение помедлила, переваривая имя.*

– *Виктор Сергеевич, – губы ее брезгливо вздрогнули, – что такое работа учителя?*

Roza Borisovna lingered over a little, digesting the name.

– **Victor Sergeevich**, – *her lips shook in revulsion, – what kind of job a teacher is?» (Ivanov, 2014). Professionally strict, exigent and just, she is the only authority for the pupils, she is the only respected and obeyed person, even if against one's will, both by pupils and by teachers. The deputy head teacher manifests the code of true teacher: «A teacher is a person who not only knows their subject, but also knows how to force others to know it» (Ivanov, 2014). V. Sluzhkin is «totally not a teacher», but in this situation he conforms to the norms of speech behavior, while for himself he is already calling the deputy head teacher **Угрозу Борисовну** (*угроза meaning threat*), anticipating their relations.*

It is evident that within the pedagogical discourse the relationships between the teacher and a pupil shall be official and professional. The first geography lesson in the ninth grade that V.Sluzhkin delivers start like this:

«– Я вижу, класс у вас развеселый, (...).

Давайте знакомиться.

Меня зовут Виктор Сергеевич.

Я буду вести у вас географию весь год...

– *А чо не Сушка?*

– крикнули с задних парт.

– Сушка баще!..

– *I can see you class is very merry, (...). Let's get acquainted. My name is **Victor Sergeevich**. I will teach you geography all through the year...*

– *How come t'is not **Sushka**? – somebody shouted from the back rows. – **Sushka's more fun!**..»* (Ivanov, 2014). A contrast between the official *Victor Sergeevich* and familiar nickname *Sushka* (Сушка, a Russian ring-shaped cracknel) brings up associations with personal evaluation. Usually a nickname like **Sushka** is motivated by appearance, 'a small, thin, *dry* person'. Pupils of the ninth grade, Sonderkommando in V. Sluzhkin's lexicon, use this nickname for Nina Petrovna, an elderly teacher of Biology, Geography and Environmental Studies. On the one hand, such way of naming subject teachers *математичка, историчка, немка, русичка, физрук/физручка* etc. is typical and thus devoid of imagery, at that, usual professional nominations are formed, on the other hand, it emphasizes an informal nature of address. A comparative *баще* (translated here as *more fun*) from *баскуй*, which is a slang expression with the meaning of 'cool', thus further emphasizing evaluativity. Address *географ* (*geographer*), then capitalized as *Географ* that has become another name of V.S. Sluzhkin is rather typical. In their turn, teachers also give characterizing nicknames to pupils and whole classes, for example, for Geographer: 9 A is *Red Professors*, 9 B is *Fathers*, 9 C is *Sonderkommando*.

These names arose as analogies to titles of various organizations, unions, societies, etc., cf.:

1) 9 a – Red Professors: The Institute of Red Professors was the first institution in the USSR that was aimed at training scholars. This is the class where a B Student Masha Bolshakova and proposed medalists Spekhova and Starkov study;

2) 9 b – Fathers, with whom V.Sluzhkin develops close relations. Fathers are relatives, family. Sometimes the Fathers teach their teacher. For example, during the outing Geographer behaves like an outsider, giving his pupils ability to independently select and act, while he is observing their courage, dexterity and skills in taking each other's opinion into account.

3) 9 C – *Sonderkommando*. This was the name used in Nazi Germany for various special purpose units. The leader of the class is impertinent and uncontrollable Gradusov.

V. Sluzhking the Geographer appears in a mixed discourse, professional and household simultaneously, at that the latter dominates. All his conscious experience is related to Perm, even to only one district of the city, Starye Rechniki. His neighbours, friends and wife are his peers and former classmates, with whom he drank out of the same bottle more than once. Sluzhkin's environment does not change, and he stays the same, that is why he does not feel difference in his relations with both teachers and pupils. Nevertheless, models of address will be different in school, in the family, among friends. Let us turn out attention to an example of social interaction.

Once, ninth grade pupils Demenev, Tiutin, Barmin, Ovechkin and Chebykin visited V. Sluzhkin at home to congratulate him on his birthday. They went out to the landing. Geographer grabbed a bottle of wine and poured some to the pupils. The pupils took a guitar and started singing a hooligan song to the tune of «Миллион алых роз» (*Million Scarlet Roses*, an well-known Russian pop song from early 1980s):

«Жил-был **Географ** один, Карту имел и глобус. / *Once there was a Geographer, He had a map and a globe* Но он детей не любил, Тех, что не метили в вуз / *But of children he liked only those who aimed at college (...)*» (Ivanov, 2014). Obviously, such a familiar communication is possible among close people, but not between a teacher and pupils: it negatively impacts teacher's reputation. However, Sluzhkin takes this situation for granted, as something natural, as it does not go beyond the boundaries of everyday communication: the situation takes place outside of the school territory, outside of the zone of attention of school administration and other teachers.

Gradually, the Geographer became an informal leader, especially after he had promised a hiking trip for pupils of the 9th grade. He accepts familiar and disrespectful, initially ironic interpersonal communication, e.g.: «**Географ**, мы с тобой, – добавляет Овечкин» / *Geographer, we are with you* (using the Russian informal form of *you*) (Ivanov, 2014). The pupils intentionally shift the accents from official naming towards increased subjective attitude, emphasizing it with the use of the “informal you”, *с тобой*. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the pupils, V.Sluzhkin is the only teacher that behaves not following some rules but as a living person. On this subject, we may read in F.M.Dostoevsky's *A Writer's Diary* : “(Dostoevsky, 1876) each popular person lives only for themselves and into themselves, and now, when the time has come, we will start exactly from becoming servants to all, in the name of total reconciliation. It is far from being shameful, quite the opposite, our greatness is in it, as all this leads to the final union of humankind. Who wants to be above all in the Kingdom of Heaven – become everybody’s servant” (Dostoevsky, 1876). We assume that this quote from Dostoyevsky provides some explanation for the surname of Sluzhkin (originating from a Russian root meaning *to serve*).

The meeting of Victor with Lena Anfimova, his long-time-no-see first love and former classmate is not for nothing:

«– **Лена?**..

– изумленно спросил Служкин.

– **Витя?**..

– растерялась женщина (...)

– А мне Андрюша говорил:

«Тата Шушкина, Тата Шушкина»... Я думала – Шишкина или Сушкина...

– Или Пушкина.

Сколько лет мы с тобой не виделись?

– **Лена?** – Sluzhking asked in amazement.

– **Vitia?** – the woman became confused

– *My Andriusha kept telling me « Tata Shushkina, Tata Shushkina... I thought it is Shishkina or Sushkina...*

– *Or Pushkina. For how many years have we been not seeing each other?* (Ivanov, 2014, 45). They address each other with the names **Lena** and **Vitia**, as they did during their school years: Those are rather typical neutral names, characteristic of informal communication. This episode also includes use of a precedent name *Pushkin*, consonant with *Sluzhkin*: the reader knows that Sluzhkin loves literature, reads Pushkin's tales to his daughter Tata in bed and writes his own poems. The very title of the novel «*Географ злобус проил*» aligns with iambic tetrameter, the favorite poetic meter of A.S. Pushkin, cf. the beginning of *Eugene Onegin*: *Мой дядя самых честных правил...* . Let us turn our attention to allusive name of the daughter, **Tama**: it is a pet form that may correspond to any of three names: 1) *Татьяна (Tatiana)* – a form of *Tatevik* meaning ‘winged, angel’; 2) *Наталья/Наталия (Natalia)*– ‘relative, natural’; 3) *Анастасия (Anastasia)*– ‘resurrecting, returning to life’. Tata is constantly near her parents. *Mama* and *papa* are easy words formed by repetition of the same sounds and syllables. Tata always address V.Sluzhkin as *papa*, while she always address here *mama* using her given name – **Nadia**, as all the adults in their family do. This is an address of a friend or acquaintance. The words *mama* and *papa* emphasize kinship, love and attachment to parents, lack of one of them is speech negativism, as mom's behaviour, probably, does not meet the age-related requirements of the child and there is not much closeness between them.

Finally, let us take a look at another name of V.Sluzhkin – **Vumyc** (Vitus), the one that his friend since school Budkin uses: «*Я, Vumyc, принес «АББУ» и «Чингисхана» (...)*» / *Vitus, I brought you some ABBA and Dschinghis Khan* (Ivanov, 2014). Budkin addresses his friend on the analogy of *Vitus Bering*, a navigator famous for his *geographical* discoveries. The proper name **Vitus** had become a constant attribute of V.Sluzhkin in his communications with Budkin, who has been constantly addressing him as *Vitus*: «*Ты лентяй, Vumyc, — хехекнув, объяснил Будкин*» / *You are a slacker, Vitus, – explained Budkin with a giggle* (Ivanov, 2014). One may assume that there is an allusion to the role of V.Sluzhkin who inadvertently became a school teacher of geography.

Self-evaluation of the character is provided with a special expressiveness: «*И вот я, Географ, Виктор Сергеевич, бивень, лавина, дорогой и любимый, сижу на пороге пекарни и смотрю на спящую деревню Межень*» / *So, here I am, the Geographer, Victor Sergeevich, a tusk, an avalanche, dear and beloved, sitting at the doorstep of a bakery and looking down at a sleeping village of Mezhen* (Ivanov, 2014). A number of occasional metaphors on the one hand, *a tusk, an avalanche* with a seme of ‘unsophisticated, clumsy person’, and on the other hand, – *dear and beloved* with a seme of ‘nice and necessary’ actualize the idea of oppositions and contradictions in the character of Geographer. Such collision of meanings facilitate a paradoxical speech portrayal of the character of V. Sluzhkin.

So, let us present the proper names that characterize the novel's protagonist V. Sluzhkin as some kind of a semantic space. The full official name *Victor Sergeevich Sluzhkin* is going to become a core, a center of the onomastic space of the character, a foundation for his portrayal, while the periphery will be filled with derivative names and nicknames, dependent of various factors: motivation for naming, cultural and historical associations, situations and official or unofficial nature of communication, social roles of the communicants, context, etc.

Let us summarize and draw a conclusion that selection of the protagonist's name was meaningful. The name **Виктор** (Victor), obviously, means 'victor'. The protagonist's allusive surname is also meaningful: **Служкин** originates from 'слуга', 'служить' (servant, to serve). Let us recall the word of Jesus Christ: "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all", meaning 'be the first in the eyes of God, not in the eyes of men'.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the functioning and semantization of proper names and nicknames in contemporary Russian novel.

5. Research Methods

The main method is contextual analysis involving lexicographic sources, dictionaries and references.

6. Findings

Characters' names, just as their nicknames, are an important means of creating literary imagery and speech portrayal of the characters. Personal proper names are semanticized in accordance with the character's nature, their moral virtues and physical appearance. Selection of official or unofficial form of a personal name is determined by extralinguistic factors and depends on the situation of communication, subordination of communicants, features of interpersonal communication, degree of acquaintance between the characters. The description of the onomastic space of A. Ivanov's novel is based upon external and internal motivation, professional and behavioral features, as well as contextual dependence of a given anthroponym.

7. Conclusion

Variety of personal names and nicknames vividly demonstrate author's vision of characters, actualize intertextual links, which in its turn, influences interpretation of the personal name or nickname and allows obtaining additional information about the character, pointing features of their temperament, express conceptual content of the literary work in a greater detail.

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