

ANNALES  
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA  
LUBLIN – POLONIA

VOL. XXXVII

SECTIO FF

1-2019

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## Cognitivism as a Method of Interpreting Anthroponyms

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Kognitywizm jako metoda interpretacji antroponimów

Rich onomastic literature contains numerous studies on the genesis, creation and structure of anthroponyms. Studies employing various research methods were made, and different interpretative positions were expressed, resulting from the applied research method, starting from structuralism, sociolinguistic and pragmatic-communicative methodology or using elements of cultural linguistics, which provided a rich knowledge of the discussed issues. The findings suggest that the analysis of onyms is a multifaceted issue, which does not give clear interpretative results, as can be proven by numerous attempts to classify personal names (e.g. Taszycki, 1968; Rospond, 1965, 1969; Karaś, 1976; Kowalik-Kaleta, 1983; Gala, 1984; Bubak, 1986), indicating, however, always greater or lesser influence of the semantic factor in the process of creating proper names. It can be seen even in the structuralist methodology, which assumed an autonomous study of language as a cognitive system and limited the scope of meaning in proper names to so-called linguistic knowledge. But the classification of anthroponyms according to this methodology (e.g. Witold Taszycki, Stanisław Rospond) clearly indicated the semantic elements contained in the names *in statu nascendi* and the manner of creation of onyms, depending on the significance of an appellative derivation base, indicating, amongst others, occupation, social status, characteristic features of the appearance of a denotation or structural significance, resulting from the construction of a word-forming anthroponym, informing at least about the relationship or affiliation of the named person.

The aim of this article is to propose a method of anthroponymic analysis using cognitive methodology, which rejects the concept of separating linguistic knowledge from encyclopaedic knowledge (knowledge of the designata of linguistic expressions), and “all meaning is pragmatic, because it consists in conceptualizations made by people living in a specific physical and social environment” (Taylor, 2001, p. 186). In onomastic studies, the possibility of using cognitive methodology to analyse anthroponyms as a supplement to the existing studies and a new look at the way of creating own names has been pointed out several times. It is worth mentioning the works of Zofia Kaleta (1998a, 1998b) and Katarzyna Skowronek (1997, 2001), who used certain assumptions of cognitive methodology to exemplify the assumed theses.

The main object of cognitivists’ research is meaning. Cognitive linguists deal with semantics and grammar at the same time. Cognitive semantics, developed within cognitive linguistics, is internally differentiated, depending on the views of individual researchers. However, two trends are predominant. One of these involves the considerations of Ronald Langacker and scientists following in his footsteps (e.g. Gilles Fauconnier, Mark Turner), who emphasize the importance of analysing the cognitive rules that give rise to language organization. Their merits include the development of cognitive grammar. The second direction of research is represented by such cognitive scientists as: George Lakoff, Vyvyan Evans, Andrea Tyler and others, focusing on the main principles of cognitive semantics, which is part of cognitive linguistics, and “just like the entire discipline, with [cognitive semantics – A.R.-K.] as its part – a research perspective rather than a coherent theory” (Evans, 2007, p. 142). Cognitive semantics, resulting from the mainstream cognitive considerations, is proposed to be applied to analysis of anthroponyms and can be characterized by the following theses:

1) the thesis of embodied cognition – the human mind and conceptual organisation are a function for man interacting with the environment; language reflects the conceptual structure, and concepts stem from the nature of human experience (Evans, 2007, p. 106);

2) the thesis of meaning construction, i.e. conceptualisation – the process of creating meaning with language; the notion of conceptualisation is related to the dynamic nature of thought to which language contributes; in cognitive linguistics it is believed that language units have no meaning but rather participate in the process of creating meaning which takes place at the conceptual level (Evans, 2007, pp. 54–55);

3) the thesis of symbolization – the basic unit in grammar is the combination of form and meaning; thus, a linguistic unit is created, symbolizing the concept (Evans, 2007, p. 164).

## Ad. 1)

In the understanding of cognitive grammar, the basic unit of knowledge in the processes of creating meaning is concept, i.e. a psychological and mental being stuck in the mind of a language user. The nuclei of concepts are created in early childhood and are subject to constant modification under the influence of experience. The semantic structure, on the other hand, is a reflection of the conceptual structure, expressed through language. Language does not refer directly to objects belonging to the real world, but to concepts in the minds of language users. This means that the semantic structure (i.e. the meaning associated with linguistic units) is identical to the conceptual structure (i.e. concepts) (Evans, 2007, p. 154). The processes of creating meaning are carried out with the participation of language, and the concept is expressed by a linguistic sign. According to this theory, there are no meaningless signs. This applies both to appellatives and to proper names on various levels (to-onymic, onymic and deonymic – Gajda, 2004) or in various phases of functioning (prenomination and nomination – Šrámek, 1988; ideation, substantialization and interpretation – Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska, 2012), and the meaning of these names depends on the knowledge of the user, resulting from their experience and view of the world.

It follows that the knowledge that exists about the designations labelled by a given name, and, therefore, the concept associated with that name, differs from one language to another, although it is not an individual concept. Proper names with the same phonological structure may have a different meaning structure, depending on external factors shaping their conceptual image, acquired with experience. Cognitivists draw no boundaries between categories, but rather talk about transitory, fuzzy sets with different content of categorical features (Tabakowska, 1995, pp. 12–15; Taylor, 2001, pp. 86–87). In accordance with the assumptions of cognitivism, assuming a general category of propriality, one cannot draw a clear line between appellatives and proper names. However, the semantic significance of appellative has not been equated with the semantic significance of proper name. Semantic discrepancies result from the denotation relationship established at the moment of the nomination act (cf. Rutkowski, 2007, p. 249; also Lubaś, 2006), which precludes the complete abolition of the difference between proper names and appellatives.

## Ad. 2)

According to the assumptions of cognitivism, “all significance is pragmatic, because it depends on conceptualizations made by people in a given physical and social environment” (Taylor, 2001, p. 186), and “a precise separation between linguistic authorities and non-linguistic authorities, linguistic and non-linguistic facts, narrowly

defined linguistic knowledge of the speaker and their non-linguistic knowledge and competence from performance, may ultimately prove to be both unrealistic and unreasonable” (Taylor, 2001, p. 41). The cognitive meaning of proper name is therefore assumed, which is a symbolic realization in the language of mental experience, called “conceptualization”, and is different in each plan of the functioning of onyms. It reflects the conceptual perception of reality and varies depending on extra-linguistic factors affecting both the process of creation and the functioning of proper names. The basis for understanding the meanings of anthroponyms is subjective conceptualization, including both linguistic knowledge resulting from the morphological structure of proper names and extra-linguistic knowledge, conditioned by the act of communication and the individual experience of the name giver. It can be said, therefore, that the name used each time acquires a new meaning, which is dependent on the perception of reality by the language users, while the meaning is also dependent on the plan (or phase) of the functioning of the names and has a different meaning structure, which consists of: motivation, cultural, psychological, social context, morphological meaning – to-onymic sphere and connotation, knowledge about the name designation, as well as a situation taking into account the metonymy and metaphor, which is a carrier of thinking and understanding of concepts – onymic sphere. Cognitive (conceptual), pragmatic and linguistic understanding of proper name is a unified concept, but the individual components of meaning may dominate over the others, depending on the interpretation of onyms and the processes of their subjective reception.

### Ad. 3)

Cognitive grammar is based on the assumption that the essence of language is its symbolic character, because it provides its users with a set of means to represent thoughts, which are grammar and lexis, constituting a continuum, fully describable as symbolic structures. Cognitive grammar focuses on the symbolic units of language.<sup>1</sup> Such a symbolic unit of language, in which there is a close connection between the semantic pole, expressing semantic value, and the phonological pole, determining its grammatical realization, is surname that profiles the person, but

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<sup>1</sup> Linguistic unit (also symbolic unit) – a general term in cognitive grammar for indicating the basic units of language. Sometimes it is used by cognitive linguistics in place of terms characteristic for a given theory, such as *symbolic assembly* or *construction*. Cognitive linguistics maintains that a language unit consists of a conventional combination of a semantic unit and a formal unit, forming a meaning-form pairs. Linguistic units include inflectional morpheme (such as the plural marker *-i* in *zabawki*), word-formation morphemes (such as *-arz* in *malarz*), words (e.g. *kot*), compound words (e.g. *kot-y*), idioms (*kopnąć w kalendarz*), and finally grammatical constructions at the sentence level (e.g. a construction with two objects with the following schematic meaning: X MADE Y RECEIVE Z, and the form: SUBJECT, VERB, OBJECT 1, OBJECT 2), which is illustrated by the example of *Janek dał Marysi bukiet kwiatów* (“John gave Mary a bouquet of flowers”) (Evans, 2007, p. 47).

with different types of meaning depending on the level of functioning (to-onymic or onymic), and the status of the symbolic structure achieved in a process called *habituation*.<sup>2</sup>

Language expressions symbolize, or represent, conceptualizations. In other words, the thesis of symbolization boils down to the claim that language is in its essence a means of combining sound with meaning, and that every linguistic unit, including onyms, has a phonological and semantic pole (Tabakowska, 1995, pp. 15–17; Bobrowski, 1998, p. 74). This concept brings to mind the theory of the language sign developed by Ferdinand de Saussure (2002), but there is a certain difference between name as a cognitive symbolic unit and name as a linguistic sign – a symbol, in de Saussure’s view, consisting in a divergent definition of the concept. Eugeniusz Grodziński’s (1973) reflections were also close to cognitive grammar and, at the same time, to de Saussure’s sign theory.<sup>3</sup>

According to cognitive methodology, grammatical rules are used to create symbolic expressions (including anthroponyms) (cf. Lakoff, 1987, p. 491; Langacker, 1987, p. 183, 2008, p. 78; Taylor, 2001, p. 261; Tabakowska, 2001, pp. 33–35). Symbolic units form an ordered structure of abstract schemes and more detailed concretization (Evans, 2007, p. 171). Schemes, on the other hand, can be used as templates for creating new symbolic units (including anthroponyms). The morphological scheme of surnames will include a kind of derivation base (appellative, name, ethnic name, place name, personal name) and a method of derivation (by means of simple or expanded suffix, paradigmatic or reductive derivation, semantic transformation, etc.). This construction is a reflection of the structure of human thought in the name formation process.

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The complementary value of the indicated theses leads, among others, to the separation of cognitive categories, which are represented by anthroponyms in the to-onymic sphere. They include the following categories: person, kinship, affiliation, origin, space and place, work, appearance and character as well as emotions and values (Raszewska-Klimas, 2018, pp. 83–95) and they are expressed

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<sup>2</sup> Habituation – a process of cognition and experience of another human being, based on conceptualization, which had to obtain its linguistic equivalent and the acceptance of a given community as regards both the conceptual dimension of experience and the phonological dimension of the newly created anthroponymic structure (Skowronek, 1997, pp. 149–150).

<sup>3</sup> The positions of researchers in the discussed case are described in the book by Agnieszka Raszewska-Klimas (2018), in the chapter “Nazwisko jako jednostka symboliczna” (“Name as a Symbolic Unit”).

both in genetic-semantic types of names and in their morphological structure. Anthroponymic conceptual categories group together onyms that are transparent in terms of word-formation, expressing the same concept by means of specific linguistic means, according to established patterns. It is the so-called standard version of the category concept understood as structure combining one type of designation, i.e. an organisation that assumes the identification of prototype units (with the highest frequency, created according to a model scheme) and the existence of blurred boundaries between individual categories (Kleiber, 2003, p. 109).

The detailed concretizations of certain anthroponymic schemes sometimes gives rise to formally convergent names, which nevertheless represent different conceptual categories, e.g. surname *Perczak I* <- personal name *Perka*, SSNO, with suffix -'ak (kinship category); surname *Perczak II* <- dialectal *perkać*, "to cook", SONP, with suffix -'ak (appearance and character category) or, e.g. surname *Brocki I* <- place name *Brok* (*Brok-ski* > *Broc-ski* > *Brocki*), SG, with suffix -ski (origin category); surname *Brocki II* <- personal name *Brok* (< from the first element of the name *Brodzi-slaw*, cf. Old Slavic \**broditi*, Spsł, cf. *brodzić* "to wade, walk in shallow water", Sstp, NAp), MalS, with suffix -ski (emotions and values category); surname *Brocki III* <- appellative *broczyć* "to bleed", RNP or appellative *broda*, with suffix -ski (appearance and character category).

This leads to the creation of *naming homonymy* in the phase in which the name maintained conceptual bond with the mental category and genetic bond with the motivating word, and the semantic (conceptual) differences of formally convergent anthroponyms resulted from the different meaning of the components of the morphological structure of onyms *in statu nascendi* (in the to-onymic sphere).

In the onymic sphere, the naming process involving morphological means no longer occurs. The linguistic, motivational-generic meaning is becoming less important at the expense of the denotational meaning and connotational value of the name. The process of creating names involves only the semantic transformation of the initial onym, with the participation of the phenomena of metaphor and conceptual metonymy<sup>4</sup> related to the transfer of the name to a new object. The transformation

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<sup>4</sup> Conceptual metaphor – a form of conceptual projection involving mapping, i.e. relations of adequacy, between different conceptual domains. Conceptual metaphors often consist of a series of conventional mappings that link the aspects of two different conceptual domains. The task of such a set of mappings is to take a structure from one conceptual domain – the source domain – and project it onto the structure of the target domain. This allows to reflect reasoning patterns associated with the source domain in the target domain. For this reason, conceptual metaphor is considered a basic and indispensable tool of thought (Evans, 2007, p. 67). Conceptual metonymy – conceptual operation in which one element (medium) can be used to identify the other (theme) to which it is linked by association. As with the metaphor, conceptual metonymy motivates a variety of linguistic expressions. Linguistic metonymy is referential: it involves using linguistic expressions in such

of meaning into other appellative or onymic units triggers the formation of chains of semantic links and the formation of an extended, multi-category version of the prototype, which is the result of the family similarity theory, or polysemic theory (Kleiber, 2003, p. 183, 165). In such a situation, the lexical unit itself constitutes a category, combining several different meanings and referring to “several types of designations or [...] categories” (Kleiber, 2003, p. 159), e.g. the appellative *brzezina*, the anthroponym *Brzezina*, the toponym *Brzezina*, the microtoponym *Brzezina*, the zoonym *Brzezina* or the hydronim *Brzezina* will be polysemic names, forming a chain of semantic connections and a single conceptual category determined by an unpredictable individual motivation, not explaining the chain of meaning, but describing semantic links between different meanings of the lexical unit (cf. Kleiber, 2003, p. 167). It should be noted, however, that the standard and extended prototype theory, used to distinguish homonymous and polysemic units in the to-onymic and onymic sphere of proper names, is mutually exclusive.

The method of analysing personal names presented above is only a proposal for interpretation of onyms, but it requires in-depth research. As we have tried to prove, the cognitive methodology can be applied to the analysis of proper names, recognizing the three basic theses of this methodology, i.e. the thesis of embodied cognition, the thesis of meaning construction (conceptualisation) and the thesis of symbolization, as a starting point for considering the meaning of proper names. The interpretation of anthroponymic material, taking into account the specificity of the creation and functioning of onyms on various levels of their use, requires referring to such notions of cognitive linguistics as: symbolic unit or symbolic expression, habituation, metaphor and conceptual metonymy, conceptual category, standard version of category concept, family similarity theory or prototype, and others. Proper names, as well as appellatives, are an expression of mental perception of reality and the use of cognitive methodology to analyse proper names may result in interesting interpretative results.

*Translated into English by Marek Robak-Sobolewski*

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a way that they precisely indicate the objects we want to talk about. Metonymy is a conceptual relationship of the type “X represents Y” and metaphor of “X understood in terms of Y”. Metaphor is based on a projection between domains of conceptual system, while metonymy is based on a projection within a single domain (Evans, 2007, p. 74).

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- MaS – Malec, Maria. (1982). *Staropolskie skrócone nazwy osobowe od imion dwuczłonowych*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk
- NAp – Cieślíkowa, Aleksandra, Szymowa, Janina, Rymut, Kazimierz (eds.). (2000). *Słownik etymologiczno-motywacyjny staropolskich nazw osobowych*. Part 1: *Odapelatywne nazwy osobowe*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe DWN
- RNP – Rymut, Kazimierz. (1999–2001). *Nazwiska Polaków. Słownik historyczno-etymologiczny*. Vol. 1–2. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Języka Polskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk
- SG – Sulimierski, Filip, Chlebowski Bronisław, Walewski Władysław (eds.). (1880–1902). *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*. Vol. 1–15. Warszawa: Druk „Wiek” Nowy Świat
- SONP – Tomczak, Lucyna. (2004). *Słownik odapelatywnych nazwisk Polaków*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego
- Spsł – Sławski, Franciszek (ed.). (1974–2001). *Słownik prasłowiański*. Vol. 1–8. Wrocław: Ossolineum
- SSNO – Taszycki, Witold (ed.). (1965–1987). *Słownik staropolskich nazw osobowych*. Vol. 1–6. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich & Malec, Maria (ed.). *Suplement*. Vol. 7. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich
- Sstp – Urbańczyk, Stanisław (ed.). (1953–2002). *Słownik staropolski*. Vol. 1–11. Kraków: Instytut Języka Polskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk

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### ABSTRACT

Selected assumptions of cognitive methodology were used in various works for anthroponymy analysis. This methodology, which is a research perspective, does not constitute a coherent theory. In order to determine the importance of onyms, the basic theses of the aforementioned methodology, i.e. the thesis of embodied cognition, the thesis of constructing meaning as conceptualization and the thesis of symbolization were applied. Determining the importance of anthroponyms was the basis for this deep analysis with the use of cognitive concepts such as: a symbolic unit or symbolic expression, habituation, a metaphor, and conceptual metonymy, schematization, a conceptual category, a standard version of the category concept, prototype or family similarity theory. This methodological approach allowed the author to study homonymy and anthroponymic polysemy. Cognitivism is a methodology that allows for a more in depth research in the field of onomastics, which has been demonstrated on the basis of anthroponymic analysis.

**Keywords:** onomastics, anthroponymy, cognitivism

### ABSTRAKT

Celem pracy jest przedstawienie kognitywizmu jako metody interpretacji antroponimów. Wybrane założenia metodologii kognitywnej stosowane były w różnych pracach do analizy antroponimów. Metodologia ta, będąca perspektywą badawczą, nie stanowi spójnej teorii. W celu ustalenia znaczenia onimów zastosowano podstawowe założenia wspomnianej metodologii, tj. tezy o ucieleśnionym poznaniu, o konstruowaniu znaczenia jako konceptualizacji i o symbolizacji. Określenie znaczenia antroponimów było podstawą do ich pogłębionej analizy z zastosowaniem takich pojęć kognitywnych, jak: jednostka symboliczna czy wyrażenie symboliczne, habituacja, metafora i metonimia pojęciowa, schematyzacja, kategoria pojęciowa, wersja standardowa koncepcji kategorii, prototyp czy teoria podobieństwa rodzinnego. Takie podejście metodologiczne pozwoliło m.in. na zbadanie homonimii i polisemii antroponimicznej. Kognitywizm jest metodologią pozwalającą na pogłębienie badań z zakresu onomastyki, co zostało wykazane na podstawie analizy antroponimów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** onomastyka, antroponimia, kognitywizm

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Article submission date: 31.01.2019

Date qualified for printing after reviews: 03.09.2019