

ON ADVANCING NAMES IN SPEECH

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*In memory of my mother,
with love*

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Abstract

In this article we will deal, on the one hand, with official and unofficial anthroponyms, placing each category at the appropriate level of language, and on the other hand, we will consider a greeting trend in the Anglo-American space, by which anthroponyms increasingly tend to gain ground to the detriment of the actual greeting formulas. We will also list the main pragmatic functions of anthroponyms in the considered contexts.

Keywords: *conventional anthroponyms, unconventional anthroponyms, pragmatic functions, language levels, greeting formula*

Résumé

On va s'occuper dans cet article, d'une part, des anthroponymes officiels et non-officiels situant chaque catégorie au niveau approprié du langage, et d'autre part, on va prendre en considération une tendance de salutation de l'espace anglo-américain, par laquelle les anthroponymes ont de plus en plus tendance à prendre le pas sur les formules de salut proprement-dites. On va énumérer les fonctions pragmatiques des anthroponymes dans les contextes considérés.

Mots-clés : *anthroponymes conventionnels, anthroponymes non-conventionnels, fonctions pragmatiques, niveaux du langage, formule de salutation*

Human language has always been distinct from other forms of communication through the valence of creating (or ruining) interpersonal relationships. Individuals exploit this intrinsic power by using various forms of erasing social distance and inventing bridges of communication between them. The “patent” of inventor that I have attached to speakers is supported by the fact that their speech is not limited to a sum of verbal acts previously built and launched as such on the phonatory channel;

speakers are bold in selecting and assembling their own package of words, and then meet others by shaping their own verbal luggage in a personal manner, in other words, blowing fresh spirit each time they assign speaker status over the lexical avatars whose depository they are. Their purpose is not reduced to that of a reproducer of ready-made structures, but they are innovative interpreters of the pre-existing linguistic material. As a rule, they possess the ability to choose and combine lexemes so that they match/enter primary equivalences. In reality, we, as thinking and speaking beings, do not learn the language as such, but practice it every time we mark a new inscription on the syntagmatic axis. We are not docile imitators of formulas that precede us and we do not operate only with them as verbal actants. We use them, and making use of them means creation. We reiterate the biblical gesture of putting “flesh” over the skeleton of “relics” passed down from one generation to another. We instil a “holy” spirit in them. We always make it happen, for in the beginning was the Word; the word placed again and again in unheard phrases. Through this power of little daring ones we are given the chance to be great creators of language. This is because language is not only what has been said, but also or especially what we can invent in it and pass on. Language cannot be reduced to just “repeated discourses”, but will always be labelled as a “free technique”¹. Language *has been*, and more than that, it *will be*.

We can consider that language does not exist beyond its use because a natural language never means only an existing product, but a simultaneous one, a result subject to constant change and creation. No one can perfectly know a language, because it will always represent what has not been said (yet).

Of all the possibilities of language, in this approach we will discuss names and we will try to find out if there is any relationship between them and the “free technique”, in other words, if we can “suspect” them as holders of innovation status or they are just elements located at the historical level of language².

¹ Coșeriu (2000: 258-259) distinguishes, in terms of the synchronous approach to language, two types of traditions: “(...) the *free technique* of the discourse and the *repeated discourse*. The free technique comprises the constituent elements of the language and the “current” rules on their modification and combination, ie “words”, lexical and grammatical tools and procedures; repeated discourse, on the other hand, encompasses whatever is repeated in a more or less identical form, in the speech of a community, in the form of an already made discourse or a more or less fixed combination, as a long or short fragment of what ‘has already been said’ ”.

² Coșeriu (1994: 135-136) distinguishes between “the universal plane of *speech in general* (independent of historical determinations), the historical plane of *languages* and the individual plane of *discourse* (or “text”), planes that are highlighted by the fact that language is a universal human activity, which is carried out by each speaker individually and always in accordance with certain historical traditions (there is no speech beyond a language). These

We must first specify that the naming function is the main function of language. We can neither operate among ourselves, nor point to the various surrounding objects outside of their initial “baptism”. From this perspective, we will consider only human names (anthroponyms). As we have already stated, in Coşeriu's taxonomy, names would be located at the historical level of language. However, a clarification is needed: we talk about official, conventional names³, those received by the individual when baptized and entered in the Civil Status documents. They are used in formal speech situations and have the ability to identify an individual. We cannot ignore the cases of anthroponymic homonymy, in which the exact identification needs a completion, an adjuvant to clarify the signified to which the sign refers. The importance of official anthroponyms should not be neglected, as they qualify the named one not only in the life here, but also beyond death. (It is known that the commemoration of the dead in religious offices is done by the first name.) So, conventional anthroponyms provide preliminary identification and sometimes it stops here. But, as I said, some other times it is necessary to add something to the original name and this is solved by another name which completes the first. This time, the second, unofficial name appears as a requirement resulting

three planes correspond to a) autonomous linguistic knowledge, with its own and differentiated rules: *elocutionary knowledge* (competence), ie knowing how to speak in general, independently of one language or another; *idiomatic knowledge* or knowing how to speak a (certain) language; *expressive knowledge*, ie knowing how to speak in certain circumstances [...], b) different linguistic contents as well: *designation* (reference to ‘reality’, ‘things’ and ‘states of things’), *significance* (content given exclusively by language, by functional idiomatic oppositions) and *meaning* (actual content of speeches, as given by linguistic expression and extralinguistic determinations: for example, the fact that a sentence can be question, answer, order, request, finding, greeting, etc.). [...] The concordance in the plane of elocutionary knowledge (requirement of clarity, coherence, non-contradiction, non-tautology, etc.) can be called *congruence*; the concordance regarding idiomatic knowledge constitutes (idiomatic) *correctness*, and the concordance regarding expressive knowledge represents the so-called *adequacy*”.

³ “According to the pragmatic parameters on which the interaction is based (age and sex of the speakers, their socio-professional status, specifics of interpersonal relationships - distance / familiarity, degree of formality / semi-formality / informality of the interaction), speakers choose the anthroponym to meet the requirements of their communicative intention. Thus, in the current denominative practice, there are *two verbal ways of nominal identification of the referent*:

- a “natural” one, identifiable in the process of *naming itself, conventional, official, canonical, standard*, having as products the *conventional / official / canonical / standard anthroponyms*, and

- another “motivated” one, identifiable in the process of *derived, unconventional, unofficial, uncanonical, non-standard naming*, having as products the *unconventional / unofficial / uncanonical / non-standard anthroponyms* (Felecan 2014: 17).

from causes related to interindividual differentiation⁴. But there is another situation in which another name is assigned, without it being required out of practical necessity, but by the will of the designator to fix a label - most often ironic - on the named one. In both cases we speak of unconventional anthroponyms⁵, but their finality is different. In the first case, it has a differentiating function, and in the second, if we refer to nicknames, for example, a function of ridiculing a referent. Nicknames are for the most part insulting words, which the community or only part of it attributes to the nicknamed. In fact, their paternity is obscure, following a pattern of polyphonic functioning: most of the time, the original speaker is unknown, overlapping the *vox populi* / mouth of the village, which takes care to pass it down from one generation to another. If we say about conventional anthroponyms that they populate the historical level of language, we can say about unconventional anthroponyms that they are created at the level of the text-discourse, at the individual level of language. This is the level of the free creativity of the individual, who performs a work similar, but not identical, to that of the painter: within the limits of the canvas and colours, he can make any painting. In the case of the speaker, any restrictions are abolished: the correctness of the language is suspended by virtue of adequacy (*decorum/to prèpon*). The individual level is that of the absolute freedom of the speaker: here, he can violate the norm by virtue of a unique expressive formula. One can identify situations in which the transitivity of unconventional anthroponyms becomes opaque and then only ostention remains the way to clarify the landmark. The condition is that it should be in the immediate vicinity of the interlocutors (to be *in praesentia*), so that the indicial gesture can enter into discussion / manifest itself.

The delimitation of the named one is complicated if he is not in the current speech situation, and the speakers are obliged this time to refer to him. In this case, the participants in the communicative act are required to share a basis of common prior knowledge, to have taken part in the same conversational history. Only the good position in the encyclopaedic knowledge will allow the decipherment of the unconventional anthroponymic formula. The failure to meet these conditions will lead to the promotion of an unsuccessful act of speech. There is a possibility that some of the unconventional anthroponyms tend, through their repeated spreading, in various communicative contexts, to move to the historical level of language, to

⁴ We mentioned above the cases of anthroponymic homonymy (several bearers of that name). This is solved by giving an unofficial anthroponym.

⁵ In the category of unconventional anthroponyms we include, in particular: appellations, bynames, nicknames, hypocoristic forms, pseudonyms. For details see Felecan 2014 and 2018: 133-205.

become bynames. It is the moment when the two levels interfere, a condition whose observance makes the expressiveness (individual creativity) “take over” the language, become, in other words, language facts from discourse facts.

Depending on the context, both official and unofficial anthroponyms are sometimes advanced in speech as verbal prefaces for various subsequent language acts. One of the flagrant examples, less used in Romanian, but characteristic of Anglo-American culture (see cinematography) is the use of the interlocutor's first name or nickname instead of greeting at the beginning of a conversation/discussion. The meeting between the actants is not marked by the recourse to different forms of greeting - as we would expect -, but it is triggered by the utterance of some anthroponyms. In such cases, the names expand their scope, fulfilling various pragmatic functions, including the signalling of the reunion or the expansion of the field of acquaintances with new members. Here, the name is a remnant of the original primary formula: the act of greeting was amputated for reasons related to the economy of the language, being reduced to the name. It takes over the entire semantic load of a greeting act. It is a vocative, whose intonation curve does not necessarily go up (the meeting can be directed, unwanted, etc.) or, on the contrary, having an ascending melodic line (marking the joy of reuniting, meeting, etc.). Therefore, the most common communicative functions that a name can have in such contexts are the following:

- making acquaintance: the action is usually mediated by a third party who facilitates communication between the main interlocutors. C to A and B: *James - Mary*. The attitude that the two acquaintances have can be one of surprise, delight, indifference, displeasure, etc. In this context, the introductory verbal greeting formula is not mandatory. It is replaced by the utterance of the first names of the two by the intermediary. Therefore, *Hello, James!/Hello, Mary!* (or any other greeting formula) can be overlooked without violating a greeting custom.
- reunion: only people who know each other in advance can be reunited (A: *Mary!* – B: *James!*) and this can be a happy occasion to share experiences favourable to both actants or, on the contrary, an unhappy one, when disguised or obvious resentments are revealed. The tone in which the names are uttered can express confidence, when firmer, stronger, or anxiety, when more hesitant, the proof that the individual is not at ease.

The presence of the greeting formula is obligatorily reserved, in the space to which we refer, to strangers whose meeting is not mediated and to people who do not give up the old rules. The use of the name instead of the greeting expands more and more to the end of a meeting as well: the actual formula becomes parenthetical,

and the name triumphs as the future promise of the meeting (for example: *Goodbye!*, *See you soon!* *See you tomorrow!*, etc.)

Conclusions

In the verbal interaction, speakers do not use only previously acquired phrases/structures/sentences, thus being encapsulated in “repeated discourses”, but are able to create new contents in the language. In fact, they do not learn/memorize a language, but innovate within it. They are worthy creators of a “free technique”, able to suspend correctness and congruence in order to establish adequacies. As skilled “handlers” of expressive competence (after having previously practiced their idiomatic competence), speakers select and combine the signs of designation and significance in order to create meaning.

Depending on different communicative contexts, two categories of anthroponyms can be identified: conventional (used in formal speech situations) and unconventional (used in semi-formal or informal speech situations). The first are assigned to individuals in an official setting (at baptism and recorded in the Civil Status documents), while the others are samples of the free creativity of name inventors. The latter do not appear in any official document, but may migrate, due to repeated use, from the individual level of language - where they were created - to the historical level, specific to conventional anthroponyms.

I have noticed that in Anglo-American culture there is a habit of confiscating enshrined greeting formulas in favour of anthroponyms (conventional or unconventional), which are increasingly replacing more and more verbal units for initiating or ending a conversation/discussion.

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