

Names of Characters Associated with Russian Cultural Identity

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Abstract—Precedent names greatly contribute to the national cultural canon. The names of famous persons, as well as names of animals and ethnonyms are signs which symbolize national cultural values and concepts. Precedent names may be borrowed by other cultures. These processes involve changes in the name's connotations as well as in its extra-linguistic references. This can be illustrated by the epigrams about famous persons where borrowed images undergo the national cultural adaptation. The content of units of the national cultural canon in the language consciousness of native speakers is discovered through surveys and associative experiments which help find out the list of basic precedent names, texts and stereotypes.

Diachronic studies show essential changes in the national cultural canon. In the near future famous scientists, athletes, musicians, and actors will dominate in the Russian national cultural canon alongside with political leaders and patriotic wars heroes. A precedent name becomes symbolised and is associated with a certain quality (or qualities). The person's name is employed to measure the values of the national cultural canon. In this aspect, it acquires an idiomatic character. One of the ways to create idioms that are impossible to literally translate into other languages is metonymy, and particularly synecdoche. The nationally identified metonymy may be defined as 'frame metonymy'. However, national identity does not always mean the opposition of "native" and "foreign". National self-identification should not only be aimed at contrasting ourselves with other nations but – to a greater deal – at better understanding of our own culture.

Keywords—*precedent name; zoomorphism; identity; metonymy; epigram*

I. INTRODUCTION

The problem of national identity has been acquiring great importance in conditions of globalization. In this connection, interdisciplinary studies in the field of national identity are in the focus of scholars' interest [1]. Russian researchers have proposed a multidimensional model of national identity composed of large constituent blocks, or modules.

Precedent names and zoomorphic metaphoric names are significant part of the national cultural code and provide rich

material for research into the field of national cultural identity. It is common knowledge that there are typical associations which form the country's image and ideas of national identity. These associations embrace the vast collections of precedent persons, of precedent texts, of precedent facts, etc. and are shaped and supported by educational and cultural spheres, on the one hand, and by the language model reproduced in a certain language community, on the other hand.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

There are invariant directions of national cultural associations. Investigation into a cultural associative invariant results in defining the algorithm of its reconstruction and building a universal model, or pattern, to be filled with specific national content (images, key words, language associations, precedent names, etc.).

The range of problems is being revealed in the process of scientific research into the ways in which the system of human knowledge is organized through words and concepts and how it operates. It is important for every nationality to define their national cultural canon. We argue that precedent names and zoomorphic metaphors are important components, which symbolize national cultural values and concepts. A precedent name is a term widely used in Russian linguistics though it does not have a specific linguistic sense in English. Precedent names are well-known proper names which are used by the representative of a culture as signs symbolising particular qualities or paradigms.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Precedent names entering the national cultural code occupy different places in its structure. They may belong to the international level, the national level, or that of a community, which, in its turn, determine their extra-linguistic references. The axiological characteristics of a historical figure or those of an animal also depend on the level of precedence. Precedent names may be transferred from one group to another or they may be borrowed by other cultures. In the latter case, the person's image undergoes the national cultural

adaptation. When moved from the community level to the national or international level, the precedent names become the symbols of particular qualities and national cultural identity due to the frame metonymy.

IV. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to consider the precedent names and zoomorphisms which form the foundation of the associations field "Russia" as verbal signs belonging to the national cultural canon and contributing to the concept of national cultural identity.

V. RESEARCH METHODS

The methods of research are cognitive analysis and component analysis.

VI. FINDINGS

According to the authors of the book *Citizen. Society. State: Russia in the 21st century* [2], the national identity is comprised of the "horizontal" (social) identity concerning everyday activities, language, culture and economy, and the "vertical" (political) identity concerning the state with its institutions and symbols.

The social identity includes, among others, two modules: territory (natural) and spiritual (cultural). These two modules are of particular interest for our research into the national cultural aspect of precedent names since it implies the combined studies of several areas: geography (the natural module), history and language (spiritual, or cultural, module). The language material – the precedent names and zoomorphisms are considered in the article as a phenomenon of the national cultural code and, at the same time, as a phenomenon of texts (epigrams). As we all know, the national cultural canon substantially varies when viewed diachronically.

Here is a vivid example: the monument to the Millennium of Russia which was put up in Veliky Novgorod in 1862 depicts 128 historical figures of which an average secondary school child knows (mostly only by name) just about a quarter. This is what is provided by the current school program courses. It is worth mentioning that the historical persons of the monument who were very representative of the Russian nationhood concept in the middle of the last century are represented by three large categories: enlighteners (31), state figures (26), generals and war heroes (36), and a comparatively small group of people of art (16) including eleven writers, three artists, two composers and one actor. There is no special group for scientists, so M. Lomonosov is placed among the writers and artists. However, our observations allow us to say that prominent scientists, outstanding athletes, great musicians, famous singers and actors will dominate in the Russian national cultural canon alongside with political leaders and patriotic wars heroes.

Besides precedent names, the national cultural canon includes animal images (of existing or mythological animals) which can be shared by different cultures and have similar or different components of meaning. For example, the lion is a

noble, strong and brave beast, the "king of animals" for many peoples, whilst the snake and the dragon symbolize different, sometimes opposite, qualities in different cultures. "Goose" is a metaphoric name for a sly cheater in Russian and English, and for a foolish person in French [3].

The personification of a country and describing its people through animal images is one of the invariants of verbal-image associations. Foreigners traditionally call Russia "the bear" (both white and brown). For Italians and Latin Americans call Russia "the Big white bear" [4].

The Russian people also call themselves "bears" (with positive connotations) but, traditionally, these are brown bears. As examples consider the handball club Chekhovskiye Medvedi of the town of Chekhov (Moscow Region) whose emblem has the image of the brown bear, or the National Football Premier League of Russia represented by the brown bear. Originally the emblem of the political party Yedinaya Rossiya ("the United Russia") was also the brown bear. However, in 2005, it was substituted by the white bear for the sake of a simpler logo.

The national cultural canon includes the images of the historical or public figures as the etalons of particular qualities and whose names have become precedent. There are precedent names which are unanimously assessed by the society either as positive or negative. But a great many of precedent names are ambivalent. Omar Khayyam said, "A man has many faces like the world in the mirror." The precedent names which have become symbols are perceived and evaluated in different ways due to a variety of socio-cultural and historical associations.

It is assumed that the precedence of names may be of three levels: collective, national and panhuman [5]. These levels do not have strict borders, and precedent names may move from one level to another thus changing and the scope and content of its referential meaning. When they reach a high level of precedence, they are included into the national cultural canon and become symbols.

In ancient times, in tribal societies only the members of the family, tribe or ethnos could be the models of cultivated qualities. Then the circle of models began to include the representatives of other nations and cultures. For example, in the Middle Ages the national heroes were joined by the persons who had been canonized in the world religions. In the nineteenth century, as a result of spreading of ideological and literary myths, the idols of the reading public in Europe were the conqueror Napoleon and the poet G. Byron.

Thus, the cultural globalisation far preceded the economic one. But it was with the emerging of mass culture that its popular persons, or celebrities, were transformed into idols as well as the characters of films and books. The precedent names forming the contemporary national cultural canon are mainly the names of athletes, actors and actresses, showmen, rock and pop musicians.

In our opinion, the characters of fairy-tales, films and cartoons should also enter into the list of cultural cannon precedent names. It is interesting to observe the process of granting own national features to the international precedent names and characters. It is a well-known phenomenon that

artists usually portray foreign historical figures with an anthropological resemblance to their own ethnic groups. Winnie-the Pooh by Alexander A. Milne or Walt Disney does not coincide with Winnie-the-Pooh from the Russian cartoon by Fedor Khitruk, the animated cartoon artist. It is actually perceived as a Russian bear. In another cartoon, Karlsson and Fröken Bock do folk dancing to a Russian song *Vdol' po Pitserskoy* ("Down Peterskaya Street"). These characters are no longer foreign; they have entered the Russian national cultural code and are perceived as own like such characters as Cheburashka and Matroskin, the Cat.

Precedent names are on different levels in the hierarchy of the national cultural canon. The same precedent anthroponyms may belong to different national cultural canons and have different extensionality. For instance, Columbus, Hercules, Apollo, Che Guevara, Nero, Hitler, Mother Teresa, Gagarin, Rafael, Sherlock Holmes, Chekhov, Hamlet, Don Juan, and many other precedent names are international and, therefore, lie on the surface of the most of national persons spheres.

But if we consider the deeper orbits of functioning of precedent names, the list of names will be much longer and the persons themselves will be of various significance. As we move to the kernel of the spherical model of the people's sphere, we will find out numerous sectors limited by discourse and background knowledge of smaller language communities (social groups).

As examples of such groups are the cinema, theatre and literature communities. In the world of theatre and literary men a genre of epigram is wide-spread. It can be explained by the fact that these people belong to the same professional circle and discourse space and, therefore, are well-informed about the details of biography and character of their colleagues – the objects of epigrams. Outside this circle, the meaning of epigram texts were often not quite clear to the public. As a rule, the objects of epigrams are famous people. However, the essential feature of an epigram is its original chamber character. An epigram is produced and circulates in a narrow circle, in a small language community. During his years of studies at the Lyceum, A. Pushkin was said to write an epigram about V. Kühelbekker in which he invented an occasional word *kühelbekerno* meaning "tediously". That was a reason for a duel between two friends.

The publicity of a person-an object of an epigram gradually leads to extension of the audience. The selections of epigrams are published, although their background meaning may still be unknown to the majority of native speakers, or the personality and image of the epigram's object may have different evaluations in the social group and at the national level.

Names of animals and zoomorphic metaphors in epigrams typically have negative evaluation and invective in meaning. This is due to the fact that the epigram is by form an invective genre [6].

For example, S. Esenin in the epigram addresses Demyan Bedny with the words "fat hog". A. Glikberg (Sasha Chyorny) compares the latter with a "voracious boa". The actor V. Gaft

in his biting epigrams compares his colleague actors with dogs, snakes and insect-pests [7].

One of the distinctive marks of globalisation is eclectics in festival rituals or when people celebrate the holidays of other nations. For example, in late 1970s it became fashionable in the USSR to see a New Year in under the signs of animals of the East Asian calendar. At the same time, it was not taken into account that in East Asia people celebrate a New Year nearly two months later than January 1.

For example, in 1988, L.V. Kuklin published an epigram in which he ironically offered his fellow citizens to keep teetotal during the New Year's feast while celebrating the coming of the Year of the Snake. The combination of the words "Year of the Snake" with the word "teetotal" creates an allusion to the idiom "the green snake" (a figurative name of alcoholism). So, the borrowed customs were combined with the traditions of the Soviet period and underwent national and cultural adaptation.

Let us consider the mental mechanism of formation of associative images of lexical units in the national cultural canon. By reconstructing of the language picture of the world precedent names which are used in set predicative structures "who is who" or "who is what" (if a famous person is identified with a certain feature of character) it is possible to reveal the invariant directions of natural cultural associations. The search of an invariant is followed by designing an algorithm of its reconstruction, by building a universal model or pattern to be filled with national contents. At the language level these are key words, linguistic associations, and precedent names. The content of units of the national cultural canon in the language consciousness of native speakers is discovered through surveys and associative experiments which help find out the list of basic precedent names, texts and stereotypes. Numerous researches in this field have been conducted and are still topical [8–10].

The cultural meaning is embodied in a word in the text: in the predicative structure "who is who" a precedent name is symbolised and is identified with a quality. The person's name becomes an etalon of values in the national cultural canon. In this aspect, it acquires an idiomatic character. One of the ways to create idioms which are impossible to literally translate into other languages is metonymy, and particularly synecdoche. The nationally identified metonymy may be defined as 'frame metonymy' which is defined on the basis of the "cognitive principle of relationship" of a metonymic model with the types of concept organizing our knowledge of the corresponding objects of the reality [11].

The transition of a word from one lexical and grammatical category to another is known as *transposition*. For example the process of transition of proper names from one category to another or their transition to common names occurs regularly (e. g. the surname Pushkin – the town of Pushkin, mineral waters – the town of Mineral Waters, mesopotamia (place between two rivers) – Mesopotamia (ancient state), the name of the literary character Oblomov became the name for the multiple personality type "oblomovs" etc.).

As one can see, the indicators of such changes of language categories of words are the changes of their grammatical characteristics, including the following:

- 1) the initial capital letter is replaced with a lowercase letter or, vice versa, the initial lowercase letter is replaced with a capital one;
- 2) the morphological paradigm is incomplete, for example, the word only has either a single or a plural form;
- 3) different endings of different types of proper names in the same case: surnames have endings of adjectives, and city names have endings of nouns in the Instrumental case (for example: *Pushkinym* (man), but *Pushkinom* (city)).

To this type we can refer the phenomenon of acquiring the meaning of quality by relative and possessive adjectives (and the same root adverbs). It mainly refers to phraseological units (idioms). Adjectives and adverbs with national and geographical affiliation are often used in set collocations: Chinese literacy, Hamburg account, French kiss, Greek salad, etc.

The adjective *russskij* “Russian” and the adverb *po-ruscki* “in Russian” developed qualitative semantics in discourse. It should be noted that qualitative semantics of the adjective *russskij* is more definitely shaped than the qualitative semantics of the same-rooted adverb.

Set collocations with the adjective *russskij* are divided into two groups: 1) terminological combinations in the nomenclature and 2) evaluative names denoting certain qualities and possessing cultural connotations.

The first group includes such nominations as: *russskaja borzaja* “Russian Greyhound” (breed), *russskaja pech'* “Russian oven”, *russskije shashki* “Russian checkers”, *russskaya vodka* “Russian vodka”, *russskije gorki* “Russian roller-coaster”, *russskij krasnyi* “Russian red” (the red colour, like the colour of the flag of the USSR), *russskij chjornyi* “Russian black” (the black colour of the specific hue). Here we can also include the following phrases with well-defined denotations: *russskij salat* “Russian salad” (Olivier salad), *russskaja gitara* “Russian guitar” (seven-string guitar), *russskij biljard* “Russian Billiards”, *russskaja ruletka* “Russian roulette” (deadly game with a gun where one bullet is left in the drum), *russskij chai* “Russian tea” (a plant Ivan-tea), *russskij shanson* “Russian chanson” (songs of the thug style), etc. Many of these categories can be found in the dictionaries of terms.

Some objects defined with the help of the adjective *russskij* are not only associated as items belonging to the Russian culture, but are terms with definitions of the structure, properties that distinguish them from the objects of the same type not only in other cultures, but in the Russian culture as well.

These are the names of classes, categories, and specific concepts. We can see the metonymic transfer in the semantics of the adjective *russskij*, although there also may be metaphors for similarity and function (e. g. *russskaja ruletka*, *russskij chai* and the like).

The units of the second group developed meaning of evaluation, including various connotations. By comparison with nomenclature names with the adjective *russskij*, these phrases are less explicit, and their extensionality can be very large, that makes it very difficult to explain their meaning and register all its shades in dictionaries. In this cases the quality values resulted from the metonymic transfer of the adjective *russskij*, as a rule, acquire the semantics of emotional evaluation: *russskij harakter* “Russian character”, *russskoje gost'eprimstvo* “Russian hospitality”, *russskaja svad'ba* “Russian wedding”, *russskaja zima* “Russian winter”, *russskaja banja* “Russian bath”, *russskij balet* “Russian ballet”, *russskij duh* “Russian spirit”, *russskij krest* “Russian cross”, *russskij medv'ed'* “Russian bear” (about a man), *russskaja len'* “Russian laziness”, *russskaja smekalka* “Russian savvy”, *russskaja dusha* “Russian soul”, *russskaja zhenshina* “Russian woman” (image from Nekrasov's poems), *russskij paren'* “Russian guy”, etc.

The essential difference between the above groups of collocations with the qualitative adjective *russskij* is that nominations of the first group have constant semantic characteristics.

The collocations with the adverb *po-ruscki* “in Russian” also demonstrate a shift in semantics. Literally *po-ruscki means* “to use the Russian language” (read, speak, think in Russian) or “to do something in the ethnographic Russian style” (‘dress in Russian’ – dress in the national costume, ‘dance in Russian’ – dance Russian folk dance).

But we can often observe the phenomenon of ambiguity or polysemy indicating the transition of the semantics of the adverb *po-ruscki* that may indirectly name a certain quality. For example, *dumat' po-ruscki* “to think in the Russian way or manner” means to reflect using the so-called “Russian logic”, which is usually impossible to predict. Similarly, there is a polysemy of the phrase *vyrazhat'sja po-ruscki* “to say something in Russian”. In the literal sense “to say something in Russian” means “to use the Russian language”. The figurative meanings can be identified in the following ways: 1) to use swear words; 2) to express thoughts clearly and intelligibly; 3) to express one's opinion firmly and decisively. Here, the referents of the adverb are the characteristics of the traditional behavior of the Russian person, reflecting the national stereotype. This transition opens a continuous number of nominations: *lubit' po-ruscki* “to love in the Russian way”, *zhit' po-ruscki* “to live in the Russian way”, etc. as well as their antonyms with the component *ne po-ruscki* “not in the Russian manner” carrying a negative connotation. To do something *ne po-ruscki* means “to do something dishonestly, selfishly, meanly”.

The nominations of the second group have additional meanings that are manifested as optional in different contexts. Nevertheless, qualitative definitions of the adjective *russskij* and those of the adverbial modifier *po-ruscki* reflect the existing reality and form the national language picture of the world. Therefore, they can be subject to lexicographic and functional-semantic description, including the comparative and contrasting studies of the similar phenomena in other languages and cultures.

V.V. Kolesov writes that the sequence in manifestation of language signs has the following formula: “image – concept – symbol – image – concept – symbol” [12]. We may argue that such a type of thinking is common for a majority of people who live an ordinary life and do not practice scientific (logical, conceptual) thinking. The same is true for the processes of symbolization of precedent names and zoomorphic metaphors in the national cultural canon.

While considering the national identity of literature, V. Amineva, M. Ibragimov, E. Nagumanov and A. Nabibulina give the following definition: identity implies contrast and is displayed in the situation when two literatures “come across” each other thus revealing the points of contrast between them. Unlike national identity, national peculiarity is shown through specific images, types of heroes, symbols and myths forming the national picture of the world [13]. This approach solves the problem of identity as that of demarcation between “own” and “foreign” which may include the demarcation of the same name concepts scope and contents in different cultures.

We agree that identity is based on restrictions but it is necessary to point out that national identity does not always mean the opposition of “native” and “foreign”. Foreign may become own, as illustrated by the borrowings from the world culture. Karlsson who lives on the roof, Mowgli, Sherlock Holmes, Pele, Hemingway, Romeo and Juliet, Robin Hood, Shakespeare and Charley Chaplin – all these names and images have already taken their places in the Russian cultural canon. The classical Russian fiction and films appeared and originally developed following the western models. Russia adopted the European concepts and ideology, government structure, philosophy (including Marxism), architecture, painting ... Although the resistance to foreigners and foreign ideas was rather strong, the monarchs who turned to the West became the symbols of the Russian national identity and statehood [3].

The openness of the Russian culture to the history and culture of other nations is one of the characteristic features of the Russian mentality. This opinion is shared by other scholars [14; 15].

We are sure that national self-identification should not only be aimed at contrasting ourselves with other nations but – to a greater deal – at better understanding of our own culture.

VII. CONCLUSION

In the structure of the national cultural canon there is a block of precedent names (the persons’ names sphere) which provide invariant language and cultural associations. There are fixed set of associations forming the country’s image and these are often supported not only by the real life but also by the language model reconstructed by a certain language community.

The cultural meaning of the word is actualized in the text: in the predicative structure “who is who” a precedent name becomes symbolic and is identified with a particular quality.

The person’s name becomes an etalon of values in the national cultural canon. In this aspect, it acquires an idiomatic character. Metonymy (and particularly synecdoche) is one of the ways to create idioms which are impossible to literally translate into other languages.

We may conclude that precedent names and zoomorphic names become symbols and are used for identification of the national cultural canon as the bearers of evaluation – the lexical units with an axiological semantic component.

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