

Symbolism of Nominapropria in the Phraseology of Indo-European Languages

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ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the analysis of phraseological units (PUs) with anthroponyms, the origin of which is associated with real historical figures – state and political leaders, philosophers, and scientists, as well as characters from Greco-Roman mythology and classical literature. The historical and cultural context of the emergence of such expressions, their role in language and society, and the influence of specific figures on the formation of set expressions are analyzed. Special attention is paid to how these phraseological units preserve the memory of key events and ideas, becoming an integral part of national and global cultural heritage. These expressions not only preserve the memory of outstanding figures of the past but also convey their ideas, achievements, and sometimes paradoxes or curiosities associated with their activities.

Such PUs represent a unique phenomenon, as they serve as a bridge between history and everyday speech, uniting generations and shaping the collective memory of society. The article examines examples of PUs associated with specific individuals, their origins, and their role in linguistic culture.

The analysis of PUs with anthroponyms should pursue the following objectives: establishing a corpus of PUs of this type and their classification, etymological-semantic categorization, features of their functioning, and determining the degree of semantic shift of the anthroponym component. Additionally, it should address the orthography of proper names within PUs, and within the framework of a comparative analysis of PUs across several languages, it should identify similarities and

differences, borrowing and parallel development of PUs, internationalization of PUs, and so on.

Keywords: Phraseological unit (PU), phraseme, phraseologization, allusive motivation of new meanings of PUs, derivatives of PUs, proper noun (PN), proprial component, anthroponym, common noun (CN), name as a symbol, symbolic PN, symbolic content, pejorative evaluation, anthroponymization of full-meaning lexemes, pun-based play on a PN.

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of phraseological units (PUs) in language offers a fascinating window into the cultural, historical, and social fabric of societies. Among these, phraseological units containing anthroponyms – personal names derived from historical figures, mythological characters, or literary personas – hold a unique place. These expressions not only encapsulate the legacy of prominent individuals but also serve as linguistic bridges connecting past and present, history and everyday speech.

Anthroponyms, i.e., personal names of people, nicknames, and surnames, represent a special group within the vocabulary. The specificity of surnames and their semantic structure can be revealed through a binary comparison of common nouns (CN) and proper nouns (PN). All proper nouns (*nominapropria*) owe their origin, directly or indirectly, to common nouns (*nominaappellativa*). Having originated from appellatives, proper nouns have acquired their own semantic multipliers and distinctive features unique to them. Unlike appellatives, proper nouns are characterized solely by a nominative-identifying function. The main distinguishing feature of proper nouns is the denotative nature of their meanings.

The article underscores the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and history in shaping phraseological units with anthroponyms. These expressions not only preserve the memory of significant figures and events but also contribute to the linguistic richness and expressive potential of languages. By analyzing their origins, semantic evolution, and cross-linguistic

variations, the study sheds light on the enduring power of names to encapsulate and transmit cultural heritage across generations.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employs a qualitative and comparative approach to analyze phraseological units (PUs) containing anthroponyms across Indo-European languages. The primary materials include idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and winged words from languages such as Russian, French, German, and English, with a focus on PUs derived from historical figures, mythological characters, and literary personas. The methodology involves etymological-semantic categorization, classification of PUs based on their structural and semantic properties, and an examination of their cultural and historical contexts. Special attention is given to the semantic shifts of proper names (PNs) within PUs, their symbolic transformation, and their role in phraseologization. The study also explores the orthographic and phonetic peculiarities of PNs in PUs, as well as their variability and expressiveness. Lexicographic sources, historical texts, and literary works serve as the foundation for identifying and analyzing PUs, while comparative analysis highlights similarities, differences, and cross-linguistic borrowings. The research aims to establish a comprehensive corpus of PUs with anthroponyms, shedding light on their mechanisms of formation, cultural significance, and linguistic evolution.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND THEIR DISCUSSION

Phraseological units the lexical structure of which includes PN, represent a still understudied fragment of phraseology. The uniqueness of the analyzed PUs lies primarily in a somewhat different mechanism of phraseologization compared to PUs that do not contain a proper component. The phraseologization of the latter is typically associated with shifts in the semantic structure of their components, and the leading role undoubtedly belongs to the PN component in the phraseologization of the analyzed units. However, proper nouns represent a category of language devoid

of lexical meaning. Consequently, the formation of PUs in this case is not based on the reinterpretation of some primary meaning of the components. The peculiarity of this phenomenon, apparently, lies in the very nature of PN. Potentially, any PN (whether an anthroponym or a toponym) possesses the ability to transition into a secondary state as a symbolic name, like any lexical unit with meaning has the potential for its development. Having become a symbol of certain features or phenomena, PNs do not completely lose their categorical characteristics of being proper nouns. The combination of these two aspects creates expressiveness, and the functioning of PNs in phraseology is based on it. It is here that PNs gain the greatest opportunity to solidify themselves in their secondary state. Within phraseology, the formation of symbolic PNs occurs in two directions:

3.1. *The PN component has a specific prototype*

At the same time, the PN, belonging to the same individual or object, sometimes acquires different symbolic meanings. For example, in the PU Ger. *von Adam her* (“a long time ago”), *he is mit Adam yung west* (L. Ger.) – “he is very old”, the PN becomes a symbol of antiquity based on the association with the biblical figure Adam and the idea of the beginning of human history (and hence of any beginning). Compare: *bei Adam und Eva anfangen* (“to start from the very beginning”). On the other hand, the basis of the PU *wie Adam arbeiten* (“to work hard”, cf. L. Ger.: *adammen* with the same meaning) lies in a different association: Adam, expelled from paradise, sustained his existence through hard labor. Thus, like a full-fledged lexical unit, which, developing meanings in different directions, becomes polysemous, the PN in its secondary state can be polysymbolic.

The inner form of the given PUs is transparent, which is due to the living connection between the PN component and the specific bearer of the name. There are cases where this connection is weakened (the bearers of the names are forgotten or known only to a relatively narrow group of people), and as a result, the inner form of the PU becomes obscured, which determines the possibility of further semantic evolution of the PU. In such cases, the connection between the PN and the person

it denotes is actually lost, meaning that even the allusive motivation for the new meanings of the PU disappears. For example, Ger. *blauer Heinrich* (“watery soup”). This PU originated during the time of Frederick William I, when the poor were given thin soup in tin bowls; Heinrich was the name of the official in charge of the poor. Here, we can speak of a kind of metonymic transfer of the designation. Over time, the PU expanded its meaning and also came to denote: 1) poor-quality milk; 2) rice or barley porridge made from poor-quality milk (soldier’s slang); 3) pearl barley (soldier’s slang). The phraseme *stolzer Heinrich* (“thick rice porridge”, soldier’s slang), based on this PU, emerged.

A brief overview of lexicographic sources indicates that PUs with anthroponyms make up a significant portion of phraseology. All traditionally distinguished structural-semantic types of PUs are represented here: idioms (Rus. *филькина грамота* “a worthless document”, Fr. *marier Justine*, Ger. *den heiligen Ulrich anrufen*, Eng. “make one’s Jack,” Ukr. *де Сидір козацького править* “very far”); comparative PUs (Rus. *Драть как сидорова козу* “to beat mercilessly”, Fr. *Jent comme Jean de Lagne*, Ger. *dastehen wie ein hölzerner Johannes*, Eng. “be as poor as Job”); paired PUs (Rus. *Фома и Ерема*, Fr. *Paul et Pierre*, Ger. *Hinz und Kunz*, Eng. “Jack and Gill”); proverbs (Rus. *На волка слава, а овцу маскаем Савва* “The wolf gets the blame, but Savva steals the sheep,” Fr. *C’est Gros-Jean qui en remontre à son curé*, Ger. *Petrus meintes gut*, Eng. “a good Jack makes a good Gill”); and winged words (Rus. *двуликий Янус* “two-faced Janus”, Fr. *lit de Procruste* “Procrustean bed”, Ger. *den gordischen Knoten zerhauen* “to cut the Gordian knot”, Eng. “Penelope’s web”).

It is necessary to distinguish a category of phraseological units (PUs) associated with the circumstances of national history, as well as PUs reflecting the features of the socio-economic and cultural life of a country.

From the aforementioned category of PUs, it is evidently necessary to specifically highlight those PUs that owe their origin to real historical figures – statesmen, political leaders, philosophers, writers, actors, famous athletes, and others, as well

as participants in notorious court trials, duels, etc. This is one of the most extensive groups of PUs. Here are some examples:

1. **Russian:** *как Мамай прошёл* (“like Mamai passed through”), *мамаево побоище* (“Mamai’s massacre”), *мамаево нашествие* (“Mamai’s invasion”), *кондрашка хватил* (“Kondrashka struck”, associated with the name of Kondrat Bulavin), *петровы батоги* (“Peter’s rods”), *потемкинские деревни* (“Potyomkin villages”), *столыпинский галстук* (“Stolypin’s necktie”), etc;
2. **French:** *se chauffer à la cheminée du roi René* (“to bask in the sun,” René being King René of Provence); *faire Charlemagne* (“to quit the game after winning”, associated with Charlemagne); *Jean des vignes* (“scapegoat”, referring to King John the Good); *c’est le chien de Jean de Nivelle, ils’ enfuit quand on l’appelle* (“when he is needed, he is nowhere to be found”, about the son of the Duke of Montmorency, who fled from trial); *oeil à la Montmorency* (“a slightly squinting gaze”, referring to the Duke of Montmorency); *grand condé* (“prefect”, Condé being a 14th-century military commander); *baiser Lamourette* (“fragile peace”, originating from Deputy Lamourette’s 1792 speech on party reconciliation); *mot de Cambronne* (“a crude curse”, referring to General Cambronne, who responded with a curse when asked to surrender at the Battle of Waterloo); *le quart d’heure de Rabelais* (“a critical moment”, from an anecdote about Rabelais); *faire Jacques des Loges* (“to run away”, associated with the 15th-century poet François Villon, whose real surname was des Loges); *la vache à Colas* (“Protestantism”, originating from a 1605 court case involving a Catholic peasant, Colas Lagnier, and Protestants over a killed cow); *coup de Jarnac* (“a treacherous blow”, from a 1547 duel); *coup du père François* (“a treacherous blow”, *père François* being the nickname of a famous 19th-century wrestler, Ariën); *Ah! le bon billet qu’a La Châtre!* (“empty words”, related to an episode involving a 17th-century French aristocrat); *de plus en plus fort comme chez Nicolet* (“stronger and stronger”, Nicolet being an 18th-

- century circus performer); *violond'Ingres* (“a hobby or weakness of a great person”, referring to the famous 19th-century painter Ingres, who was also a skilled violinist). Compare also the following French PUs: *jour de la Saint-Jean Baptiste* (“day of execution”); *comme la bourrique à Robespierre* (“drunk as a skunk”); *le grain de sable de Pascal* (“a trivial cause”);
3. **German:** *das kannst du halten wie der Pfarrer Aßmann* (“do as you please”, Aßmann being a Thuringian priest); *das ist für den alten Fritz* (“to work for free”, referring to King Frederick II); *Mein Name ist Hase, ich weiß von nichts* (“I know nothing about it”, the words of a certain Victor Hase during a 1854 trial);
 4. **English:** *the Admirable Crichton* (“a scholar”, referring to the 16th-century scholar James Crichton); *Hobson's choice* (“a forced choice,” Hobson being the owner of a 16th-century livery stable); *Big Ben* (named after Benjamin Hall, who oversaw the construction of the clock on the British Parliament building); *Jack Ketch* and *St. Johnstone's tippet* (names of 17th-century executioners); *a Sally Lunn* (“a sweet bun”, named after an 18th-century baker); *Joe Miller* (“a stale joke”, named after Joe Miller, who published a collection of jokes in the 18th century); *Mother Bunch* (“a fortune-teller”, named after a 17th-century fortune-teller); *John Doe and Richard Roe* (names of fictitious persons used in 19th-century legal proceedings); *Prince Albert coat* (“a long-tailed coat”, similar to the one worn by Prince Albert, the husband of Queen Victoria), etc.

Among PUs associated with facts of national and world history, a special group can be distinguished: units that represent nicknames of monarchs, military leaders, writers, and others, often with a positive or negative subjective evaluation. Examples include Rus. *Николай Палкин* (Nicholas I), *неистовый Виссарион* (V. G. Belinsky), Ger. *der alte Fritz* (Frederick II); PUs such as Fr. *le chantred'Achille* (“the singer of Achilles”, referring to Homer), *le chantre de Didon* (“the singer of Dido”, referring to Virgil), and the like.

PUs also include symbolic names of countries and nationalities, as well as personifications of specific social groups, such as Eng. *Uncle Sam*, Ger. *der deutsche Michel*, Eng. “John Bull,” “Union Jack,” “Brother Jonathan” (Yankee), “Jack Tar” – British sailor), “Joe Blow” – soldier (American), “Bill Jim” – Australian soldier, “Holy Joe” – nickname for military chaplains, “Tom Tailor” – tailor.

A particularly large number of PUs with anthroponyms – many of which are internationalisms – are connected to Greco-Roman mythology, classical literature, and history. Examples include:

1. Russian: *прометеевагонь* (“Promethean fire”), *лукулловпир* (“Lucullan feast”), *дамокловмеч* (“sword of Damocles”), *мидасовыуши* (“ears of Midas”), *ящикПандоры* (“Pandora’s box”), *овидиевыпревращения* (“Ovidian transformations”), *гомерическийсмех* (“Homeric laughter”), *геростратоваслава* (“Herostratus’ fame”), and many others;
2. French: *la femme de César ne doit pas (même) être soupçonnée* (“Caesar’s wife must be above suspicion”).

The analysis of examples from Indo-European languages shows that, while functioning within a language, surnames possess the potential ability to transform into CNs, which indicates continuous evolution. When phraseologized, PN undergoes desemantization, shedding its meaning in free word combinations and thereby completing its evolutionary cycle from a CN to a PN and back to a CN.

3.2. *The PN component does not have a specific prototype*

In this case, the use of a PN as the core lexeme of a PU can be influenced by various factors, the main one being the frequency of the PN. It is not surprising, in this regard, that there is a large number of PUs with the core *onymHans* (Ger.). This representative name was once the most frequent among Germans, which led to its use in reference to any person: *Was Hänschennichtlernt, Hans nimmermehr* – “what one doesn’t

learn in childhood, one won't know as an adult"; *Hänschen in Keller* ("a child in the mother's womb"); *Was Hans fürwahrhält, istdem Franz keinBargeld* ("what Hans considers true, Franz doesn't take as cash"). Compare: Rus. *У каждого Павласвоя правда* ("Every Paul has his own truth"). Often in PUs, this name is given a clarifying characteristic, usually negative: Ger. *eingroßer Hans* ("an important person", contemptuous); *Hans in allenGassen/Ecken* ("a busybody"); *Hans Unfleißwirdniemehrweis* ("a lazybones will never grow wiser"); *Hans Unbedacht* ("a reckless person").

A distinctive feature common to all PNs that have become symbolic due to their high frequency of use is the development of a pejorative evaluative connotation based on their primary symbolism ("any person"). Hence, such PUs as: Ger. *da will ich Meyer/Hans/Matzheißen* ("in that case, call me a fool"); *mit j-m Hänschen/Mätzchenmachen* ("to tease or fool someone") (cf. derivatives: *j-m anmeiern*, *j-m hänseln*; *ichwerdezurMinne* – "I don't understand anything!").

The second common feature of the functioning of high-frequency PNs in phraseology is their transformation into a kind of phrase-forming element. This tendency is particularly evident in PUs with the structure "adjective + PN". In addition to the factors mentioned above, the formation of PUs with symbolic PNs can also be influenced by the similarity of the PN's phonetic form to that of a full-meaning lexeme, leading to a pun-like play on the PN. For example, Ger. *Esstehtgut, wenn ein armer Mann Conrad heißt* ("a poor man must be clever"). (Here, Conrad > con – a prefix with a collective meaning "with" + Rat "advice", "guidance"; cf.: *Rat wissen* – "to know what to do"). Conrad/Konrad (OHG.: **kuoni** + **rāt**, **kühn** and **Rat**).

The pun-based method of forming PUs is quite productive in modern German, as evidenced by the existence of phrasemes created in this way, where the center is not a traditional name but a fictional one (a fictonym), derived from common nouns according to existing onomastic patterns in the language: *ausDummsdorf/Dummsbach sein* ("to be a fool") (Dummsdorf>dumm "stupid").

The active trend in the language of creating PUs based on the anthroponymization of full-meaning lexemes demonstrates the high expressiveness of any PN functioning in phraseology, as well as the high expressive potential of this particular segment of phraseology.

Despite the specificity of the core word, the phrasemes of this type possess the main properties of phraseology, particularly variability. For example: Ger. Wasser in die Donau/den Rheintragen (“to engage in a futile task”).

The uniqueness of this variation lies in the fact that it does not occur on a semantic basis: the alternating components do not have a dictionary meaning. Their interchangeability is determined by the commonality of their symbolic characteristics. Observations on the functioning of PUs built on an onomastic basis lead to the conclusion that they possess the main features characteristic of the entire phraseological system. Their key feature is that the semantic transformations, which determine all phenomena in other areas of phraseology, here correspond to the transition of the PN (a desemantized element) into a secondary state as a symbolic name, which forms the basis for both the formation of PUs and their main properties.

As a result of desemantization (deonomatization), these PNs have actually turned into CNs, losing their individualizing-identifying meaning and acquiring a generalizing function. At the same time, they have retained the external form of PNs. In their new function, deonomatized PNs serve as a source of enrichment for the phraseology of the language and remain relevant components of paremias.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of phraseological units (PUs) containing anthroponyms in Indo-European languages reveals their profound cultural, historical, and linguistic significance. These PUs serve as a bridge between past and present, preserving the memory of historical figures, mythological characters, and literary personas while embedding their symbolic meanings into everyday language. The study demonstrates that anthroponyms

within PUs undergo a unique process of phraseologization, transitioning from proper nouns (PNs) to symbolic names with generalized meanings. This transformation is driven by associations with specific traits, events, or cultural narratives tied to the name bearers, such as “Adam” symbolizing antiquity or “Prometheus” representing enlightenment. The research highlights the polysymbolic nature of PNs, where a single name can acquire multiple symbolic meanings depending on context, as seen in the dual associations of “Adam” in German PUs. Furthermore, the study underscores the role of frequency and phonetic resemblance in the formation of PUs, particularly in cases where high-frequency names like “Hans” or “John” become symbolic of generic human traits or behaviors. The findings also emphasize the expressive potential of PUs with anthroponyms, which often carry pejorative or evaluative connotations, reflecting societal attitudes and cultural stereotypes. Comparative analysis across languages reveals both shared and unique patterns in the use of anthroponyms, illustrating the interplay between cultural specificity and universal themes. For instance, PUs derived from Greco-Roman mythology, such as “Pandora’s box” or “sword of Damocles,” exhibit widespread internationalization, while others, like Russian *потемкинские деревни* (“Potyomkin villages”) or French *mot de Cambronne* (“a crude curse”), remain deeply rooted in national histories. The study concludes that PUs with anthroponyms are not merely linguistic artifacts but dynamic elements of cultural memory, continuously evolving to reflect changing societal values and historical perspectives. Their analysis enriches our understanding of phraseology, offering insights into the interplay between language, culture, and history, and underscores the need for further research into this understudied yet vital aspect of linguistic heritage.

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