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Ethnocultural Semantic Components in Forming Commercial Naming

It is a well-known fact that commercial names play a dramatic role in attracting new audience. The article investigates two trends in contemporary Russian naming: using lexis with ethnocultural semantic components (e.g. exotic vocabulary, precedent phenomena, and national onomastic elements) and applying creative linguistic techniques. The sphere of commercial naming is characterized by increased linguistic creativity determined by pragmatic reasons. Commercial names appear as a result of this extraordinary linguistic creativity.
Key words: commercial name, urbanonym, ethnocultural semantic components, linguistic creativity, toponyms.

Nowadays Russian linguistics is focused on the spheres in which solving theoretical problems is of practical use. Onomastics and especially its new subdiscipline named urbonimics are among one of them.

The scientific interest in urban naming increased in the late 20th century, when political realities and changing of forms of ownership had led to the active development of commercial names. This onomastic group was principally new, and the term *artificial onomastic naming* was suggested by M. Golomidova. According to the scientist, it is defined as "an act of naming, which belongs to the field of functional communication and aims at creating a name" [1, c. 14].

Thus, urbanonyms have been studied in the aspect of artificial naming, as advertising names, elements of the urban onomastic landscape [6, c. 137].

However, a multidimensional description of urban names as a linguistic phenomenon has not yet been implemented.

Moreover, the terminological system of the sphere is not well-established either. For example, the complex of urbanonyms, being very flexible, is growing constantly. As a result, there is still no full detailed classification of these language objects. The term *urbanonym* and the phrase *commercial name* are often used in the papers and mass media.

Any commercial name plays an important role in business development, in communication and advertising strategies building. An ideal name attracts potential customers' attention, differentiates the place from other competitors, informs a customer about the local cuisine, and forms its unique image. This is especially true for large cities because megalopolises are developing dynamically in their multicultural characters. This explains the fact that an owner needs to attract as many customers as possible, including residents and foreigners. As a result, one of the major problems in naming process is finding a balance between national (i.e., related to a given culture) and universal (international) semantic components of a word used as a commercial name.

This article considers two trends in contemporary Russian naming: using lexis with ethnocultural semantic components and applying creative linguistic techniques. The analysis of commercial names in two Russian megalopolises, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, demonstrates the functioning trends.

First of all, it is important to say that exploiting *lexis with ethnocultural components* or precedent phenomena is a successful naming method, because these words belong to a particular culture but go beyond it, as it is well known. Such names immediately inform customers about the specific character of the place. Ethnocultural components can be actualized in naming by different ways due to a nominator's communicative goals.

The second trend, which is especially typical of megalopolises, is using *creative linguistic techniques*. In modern science, the term *linguistic creativity* is used as a definition of a speaker's ability to create linguistic innovations at all language levels and use them in communication process [3, c. 27]. Today the sphere of linguistic creativity is very wide and includes media texts, communication in the Internet, and naming [3 c. 28; 5, c. 84].

It should be pointed out that the creative function of the language in these texts is used primarily to reach specific communicative goals.

Therefore, the main trends in commercial naming are the following:
a) actualizing an enthnocultural component;
b) actualizing an international or universal component;
c) actualizing a creative linguistic component.

These principles are rather often combined within the same commercial urbanonym.

Generally, the commercial names from the first group are mainly based on *toponyms*: Russian cafe *Камчатка* (*Kamchatka*), Italian restaurant *Тоскана* (*Tuscany*), Lebanese cafe *Бейрут* (*Beirut*), American steakhouse *Chicago Prime*. It should be pointed out that using toponyms is the most obvious way to identify a specialization of places. These names do not often actualize connotative semantic meanings but only create a certain "national aura". Despite this, cultural and historical components of a proper name can be displayed in the interior design or in the menu.

On the other hand, there is a phenomenon of the so-called "false toponymic naming". This means that nominators use words connected to a specific culture but not to the menu. For example, there are Russian cafes with a typical menu (which usually includes a standard set of dishes from different cuisines) called *Авиньон* (*Avignon*), *Стокгольм* (*Stockholm*), and *Амстердам* (*Amsterdam*). These places are usually located in uptown, and a nominator's motivation is determined by their desire to find a beautiful and unusual name. In this case the most popular communication strategy of *status raising* is used.

Exotic vocabulary is also actively used in naming restaurants. These commercial names are primarily based on *the names of traditional dishes*: American cafe *True Burgers*, Russian restaurant *Борщ* (*Borsch*), Japanese cafe *Рис* (*Rice*), Italian cafe *Песто* (*Pesto*), etc. The associations or metonymies in the urbanonyms are rather obvious, which helps a potential customer to draw an analogy between a place name and its menu.

Words meaning different types of commercial establishments are also very popular in naming. It is especially important if a restaurant specializes in a particular cuisine. These words can be either commercial names themselves (*Trattoria*, *Чайхона/Chaykhona*) or just a part of a commercial name: *Таверна «Тарас Бульба»* (*Taras Bulba Tavern* – Ukrainian cuisine), *Starlite Diner* (American cuisine), *Osteria Montiroli* (Italian cuisine), *Brasserie МОСТ* (*Brasserie MOST* – French cuisine).

It is interesting to note that the last example demonstrates an unusual actualizing of ethnocultural semantic components. *Brasserie* in French used to denote a *brewery*, but in the late 19th century the word began to denote cafes where bohemians used to gather. *Brasserie МОСТ*, where *мост* 'bridge' indicates the location of the place (Kuznetsky most street), is an expensive French restaurant with exquisite interior. Thus, we observe actualizing both national and cultural semantic components in the urbanonym. In the meantime, the cultural component is transformed: a bohemian French brasserie becomes an elite Russian one. The other group

of commercial names are those which exploit *the Soviet period vocabulary*: *Советская чебуречная* (*The Soviet Cheburechnaya*)*, Рюмочная* (*Rumochnaya*)*, Столовая №1* (*Canteen №1*). The urbanonyms of this kind are designed to touch the target audience's nostalgic feelings, and it makes the naming method successful in the communicative aspect.

One of the most original examples of nostalgic naming is *Страна, которой нет* (*The country which doesn't exist*). First of all, from the structural point of view, the urbanonym is not a word but a nominative sentence. Secondly, it is metaphorical: "the country which does not exist" obviously means the Soviet Union. The easily decoded association is supported by the restaurant location (at the historical centre), its cuisine (Russian, Georgian, Uzbek etc.) and logo. Therefore, all the potential customers perceive a particular communication message rather easily.

National or personal names also actualize ethnical semantic components: German pub *Ганс и Марта* (*Hans and Martha*), Georgian restaurant *У дедушки Вано* (*At grandfather Vano's*). Traditional for a particular culture names are used for forming a clear parallel between the urbanonym and the place specialization. Besides, kinship terms such as *uncle*, *baba* [grandmother], *grandfather*, etc. are often used in this kind of naming, which creates a cozy atmosphere. Thus, it is obvious that the commercial names of the first type are based on well-known ethnocultural components, clichés understandable to any customer. However, there are urbanonyms actualizing cultural connotations with the help of, first and foremost, *precedent phenomena*: Italian restaurant and karaoke bar *Джельсомино* (*Gelsomino*), French restaurant *Жан-Жак Руссо* (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*), Russian restaurant *Пушкин* (*Pushkin*), etc. The names of this type are focused on a well-educated audience with deep knowledge of literature, art, and history.

A precedent name is often explained in a slogan and online advertising texts. This may be explained by the fact that a name is not very well known to a mass consumer, or it is just a part of a communication and image strategy. For example, *Denis Davydov* restaurant is named after a Russian poet, a hero of the Patriotic War of 1812. Its slogan is, *"A restaurant with Russian character"*, the "Menu" section is subtitled as *"Traditional Russian and gourmet trophy French cuisines"*. The website also contains biographical information about Denis Davydov.

Probably, a nominator may not want a customer to "recognise" precedence. In this case cultural components indicate the nominator's high cultural level, while precedent names remain only a kind of ethnical indicators. For example, *Жан-Жак Руссо* (*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*) is positioning as inexpensive, funny, and noisy bistro with Parisian

atmosphere. As it is obvious, the precedent name is not explained at all. Moreover, customers usually call the place just as *Jean-Jacques*.

There are some other lexical groups used in commercial naming to identify the restaurant's "nationality". They are various colloquialisms *Ёлки-палки* (*Elki-palki*); precedent phenomena from the sphere of Soviet cinema *Жестокий романс* (*A Cruel Romance*) or music *Подмосковные вечера* (*Moscow-region nights*).

It must be pointed out that the lexis selection is quite often accompanied by other means of influence, particularly graphic. Thus, there is an obvious trend towards using *Roman letters* in contemporary Russian naming. It is especially true of restaurants focused primarily on foreign visitors (most of them are located at big hotels or in the central streets of the city): *Siberia Moscow* (a mansion in Moscow downtown), *Café Russe* (Ritz-Carlton hotel), etc. Thus, Roman letters are used as a means of communication with the target audience.

It is a well-known fact that in the early 2000s many Moscow residents had a negative attitude to the abundance of Roman letters. Using foreign languages in naming and advertising was perceived as only an attribute to fashion. This point of view is valid only partially. The active "romanization" of the linguistic environment is determined by Russians' special perception of everything foreign, which is understood as better quality, fashionable and attractive. Using Roman letters becomes an argumentation technique, thereby actualizing the status rising strategy that we have mentioned before.

Foreign elements also fulfill an informative function (e.g. French in *Cheval Blanc* informs customers of the restaurant cuisine) as well as communicative. There are a number of creative linguistic techniques including graphic and words hybridization, which helps owners to communicate with potential customers.

Thus, the English definite article in *The Веранда* [The Patio] may indicate the unique character of the place: there are many patios, but this is the one. We cannot be sure that the creative name demonstrates a nominator's linguistic competency. However, the commercial name itself is obviously successful.

Graphic hybridization as a creative linguistic trend allows using creative possibilities of the language. For example, mixing Roman and Cyrillic letters in *МариVanna* (*Marie Vanna*) produces an original language game with homophones: *МариVanna – Марь Иванна* [Mar' Ivanna], the character of popular Russian jokes. This folklore reference should amuse customers and at the same time inform them about the place cuisine (it is a traditional Russian restaurant). Supposedly, the Roman elements also

demonstrate that *MapuVanna* is an international network: there are also several *Mari Vanna* restaurants in the UK and the USA. However, Cyrillic is missing in these names, which proves the unique character of graphic hybridization in Russian naming.

Graphic hybridization in Russian onomastic landscape is understood in another aspect, as *mixing old and contemporary Cyrillic letters*. For example, *Пушкинъ* (*Pushkin*) is written according to the rules of Russian pre-revolutionary spelling, with a final ъ (yer) letter. It used to be written in the final position to mark grammatical masculine gender after consonants and did not have its own phonetic value. The letter was eliminated in 1918, and it is used in contemporary naming as a reference to the tradition, and therefore, to the high quality.

Thus, ethnocultural semantic components which are actualized by using adequate lexis (exotic vocabulary, precedent phenomena) and creative linguistic techniques (language games), first of all, inform the potential customers about the specific character of the place, its cuisine and concept. Besides, they can influence the target audience, especially, if additional communication means such as graphic hybridization are used. As a result, the lexis actualizes cultural semantic components, which allows identifying the target audience – Russians or foreigners. This trend is common to all commercial establishments. So, actualizing cultural context is often observed in different names, which results in creating new cultural space of the city.

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