

ANTHROPONYMS IN COMMERCIAL NAME MODELS: SURNAME IMITATION

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Anthroponyms in commercial name models: Surname imitation

Abstract: The term 'commercial name' is used for proper names in the field of business and refers especially to company and trade names. There is a traditional naming principle of using anthroponyms as (parts of) business names; in this respect, the use of owners' names marks possessiveness. However, over the past decades, many new naming models have appeared, in which an anthroponym can play various other roles: evoking associations and allusions, involving some elements of language pun, and so on. The traditional nomination function of names (i.e. to reflect properties and qualities of an object in the object's name) is replaced by a new one – to involve nominative addressees in an enigma, or some form of linguistic game.

The article is based on business names in Russian and discusses the reasons for including in trade or company names surnames that are not related to the real business owner.

Keywords: anthroponyms, commercial names, company names.

Theoretical introduction

In general, we start from the approach developed in Russian linguistics, according to which the onomasticon, that is, the set of all the onomastic units of a language, is considered an onomastic field. The basic principle of organisation of the field is the nuclear-peripheral relations; the core of the field is the category of personal names (anthroponyms), in which the properties and quality of the personal name are entirely present. This concept is proposed by V. Suprun (Suprun 2000) and developed, in relation to commercial names, by I. Kryukova (Kryukova 2004). We generally share this viewpoint, which claims that the names related to the human economic activities (this category is referred to as "commercial names" and includes notably company and product names) are a pronounced peripheral category in which the qualities of personal names are not fully expressed. Thus, anthroponyms (personal names) and business names prove to be opposites, to a large extent, in their onomastic status.

In our opinion, another difference between anthroponyms and business names could be added, which has become obvious in the Russian onomasticon in the last two decades. In the context of emergence of new onomastic units, a kind of "stagnation" is observed with anthroponyms. Anthroponyms are a sufficiently closed system. In fact, when naming a person, we are not dealing with the situation of creating a name, but with the situation

of choosing from quite a limited number of options: the surname is assigned automatically, except for some cases when it is possible to choose between the mother's and father's surname. The patronymic appears completely automatically, which is compulsory in the Russian language. Only when choosing the personal name there may be some creative freedom, but in practice, this choice is quite limited as well. Cases of creating a new personal name are so rare that they become news items in the media.

But at the same time, if we look at the current changes in the onomasticon, then at least for the modern Russian language, we will see that commercial names are rapidly developing. The processes of creating new names are the most active in the "business" area. This category of proper names is the most open to change, to the emergence of new linguistic phenomena: there is a kind of onomastic explosion. As one Russian researcher points out, "if in 1987–1989 in the 10 largest cities of the Russian Federation, that is, almost in the entire country, there were about 50 different names of stores, now in Samara only they number a few thousand and their number continues to grow rapidly" (Romanova 2009). In fact, we are dealing with the change of the name-giving paradigm. For a long time, in the second half of the Soviet twentieth century, there was a more or less limited set of names for commercial sites (shops, cinemas), so to say a set of "canonical" names, like a church calendar (which incidentally made them similar to anthroponyms). But suddenly a complete dilution of this set occurs and after the situation of choice between limited options, the name giver finds himself in the situation of complete freedom.

We point out several reasons for this onomastic development in the Russian language:

1) Extralinguistic reasons – changes in the economic system and the purely legal requirement to individualise new objects.

2) The impact of foreign, more precisely, West-European onomasticons.

3) The lack of tradition (or interrupted tradition) of commercial onomastics.

Let's just say that these three points are controversial. To answer the first question, we could argue that the legal issues are resolved, in most cases, by the registration of sole entrepreneurs, various license numbers, and descriptive nominations. To answer the second question, we can say that in language the impact is manifested, first of all, by loanwords, but with respect to commercial onomastics (unlike in anthroponymy) direct loanwords are, in principle, impossible. To answer the third question, a tradition existed, but it referred simply to the creation of descriptive names. Now, in the linguistic community there is a firmly established idea that, just as a man has a mandatory name, a commercial object, company or product must have a mandatory name.

Commercial onomastics surpassed anthroponymy both in number and especially in the variety of names, and in the creative freedom of the name giver. When you create a name for a commercial company, there are virtually no restrictions in terms of language (here the legal restrictions are not taken into account, such as the requirement not to use a brand which already exists, not to use the names of real persons without their consent etc.). Thus, commercial names become the most active area of the onomasticon and form a sort of alternative core. And there are specific relationships between the old and the new core.

Even more remarkable are the facts that we consider below: while there is wide choice and unlimited freedom in name creation, the units that mimic anthroponyms (in varying degrees) appear in the list of commercial names.

We have already dealt with this issue (Goryaev 2012). In this article, we will consider a special case of such imitation, namely, the formal coincidence of a business name with a surname.

Surname imitation as a model of Russian commercial names

In this article a small corpus of 30 company names has been studied. We have dealt with cases when the name of the business consists of only one word, and graphically or at least phonetically coincides with the surname (one can say that company names mimic surnames). The corpus is not complete: it does not include all Russian business names of this type. These examples have been selected randomly from different Internet sources to illustrate the trend.

It is interesting to note what names have not been included in this corpus.

First, there is a traditional way of using anthroponyms as (parts of) business names: the use of owners' names in commercial names marks possessiveness. However, we do not consider such cases. Moreover, such cases are extremely rare; usually the owner name on the sign is accompanied by a grammatical marker of possessiveness ("A shop of such and such person"), or fits into the nominative model, indicating that a commercial company ("such and such person and the company") is the nomination object.

Second, we excluded the names that use precedent names, which most often refer to names of literary characters (e.g., a pawnshop "Gobsek", a café "Chaplin"). The meaning of such precedent names consists in their recognition. The person perceiving it immediately realizes or should realize that the name is not related to a person.

In principle, the coincidence of an anthroponym and a commercial name is quite well known in the world of onomastics. But the coincidence leading to complete mixing, from our point of view, requires certain comments. By the way, the literature has pointed out that this coincidence can lead to communicative failures (in particular, in the article by a Vietnamese colleague on Russian commercial onomastics (Van Phong Pham 2009)).

Hereinafter the Russian examples are provided as follows: original Russian Cyrillic spelling is followed by practical transliteration (the scientific transcription is not required, as we do not focus on phonetics). It is necessary to point out that in some examples the name giver decided, in order to obtain a language pun or for some other reasons, to adopt the Latin alphabet or a Latin-Cyrillic mix for Russian business name. After the type of business object/establishment is provided in brackets, some linguistic comments are given, to clarify the origin of the surname used as a business name and derived from an appellative word. It should be noted here that some of the Russian appellatives are borrowings; this is obvious and therefore not commented.

The material (chosen randomly from the Internet and personal observations of the signs along the streets of Yekaterinburg) is classified into several groups that, in our opinion, mark out a kind of scale. The frequency of the principle of playfulness increases gradually from the first to the last group: that is, the first group includes the use of real surnames, and the last one includes such cases where the use of surname in the company name will be perceived as a language game. When considering a specific name, we start from the formal characteristics (in compliance with Russian standard spelling) and the content (first of all, it is the transparency of the internal form and its meaning). When defining the "realism" of

various names, in the cases where it is not a violation of the rules of spelling, first, we treat the names based on our own linguistic intuition and the analysis of the representation of the surname on Russian websites, especially on social networks. At the same time, we wanted to illustrate that such a scale – from “linguistic reality to language game” – is possible in principle, and we do not pretend that the examples in this paper show the only scaling option within the extreme parameters. Below we consider the examples in sequence.

Group 1: A surname perceived as a real name but not really coinciding with the name of the business owner:

Лапин [Lapin] (leather gloves store)
Derived from the Russian word **лапа** [ˈlapa] = ‘paw’

This is a common Russian surname, although not included in lists with the most frequent ones. However, when compared with an object type – “gloves store” –, it is clear that the name is given for the inner form. (By the way, the real owner is a sole entrepreneur, Kotelova N.N.)

Group 2: Surnames causing doubt in their reality due to the transparent inner form and its obvious connection with the type of the object:

Ватрушкин [Vatrushkin] (gastronomy)
Derived from the Russian word ватрушка [vaˈtrushka] = ‘curd tart’
Рыбалкин [Rybalkin] (fish-food store)
Derived from the Russian word рыбалка [ryˈbalka] = ‘fishing’
Игрушкин [Igrushkin] (a series of toys)
Derived from the Russian word игрушка [iˈgrushka] = ‘toy’
Прическин [Pricheskin] (hairdresser)
Derived from the Russian word **прическа** [priˈchoska] = ‘haircut’

These names are really recorded in the Russian onomasticon. However, their frequency is relatively small (by our empirical observation), and the connection with the appellative derivative is so clear that they are ready to be transonymised, to change denotation.

In particular, we have used search engines on the Internet, and during a cursory search we have found only two cases of the use of this surname: one for a real person and another for the name of a comic character. Thus, in this name the principle of playfulness is more pronounced than in previous ones.

It should be noted that *Igrushkin* is not only the name of a company, but also a brand. When searching for material, we also found *Mr. Igrushkin* (radio-controlled toys chain store) and *Igrushkin-shop* (online toy store). But they are not included in the review because the case is not pure. There are extra non-anthropymic components added to the surname.

Group 3: Surnames whose writing mimics the pre-revolutionary spelling:

Обедовъ [Obedov] (catering service agency)
Derived from the Russian word **обед** [oˈbed] = ‘lunch’
Портновъ [Portnov] (fashion house salon)
Derived from the Russian word **портной** [portˈnoy] = ‘tailor’

ПРАЗДНИКОВЪ [Prazdnikov] (travel agency)Derived from the Russian word **праздник** [ˈprazdnik] = ‘feast’**ШОКОЛАДОВЪ** [Shokoladov] (cafe)Derived from the Russian word **шоколад** [shokoˈlad] = ‘chocolate’**БОТИККИНЪ** [Botinkin] (shoe shop)Derived from the Russian word **ботинок** [boˈtinok] = ‘shoe’

We have organised the examples into groups by the last letter; it is a silent letter, the so-called “hard sign”, which means a hard, non-palatalised pronunciation of the preceding consonant. In the Russian language it has not been written in the absolute end position of the word since 1918 (in Bulgarian since 1945). Thus, its writing marks a language game, and it immediately becomes clear that it does not mean the real name of a person. It is not by chance that in the last two examples the letter is highlighted by means of uppercase spelling. It draws the attention of the name’s recipient to the perception of the internal form of the name.

Thus, strictly speaking, *Portnov*, as a name, really comes from the word ‘tailor’, and *Prazdnikov* derives from the word ‘holiday’. But *Obedov* as a surname derives historically from a nickname that may be associated with the word ‘lunch’, ‘rim’ and ‘liturgy’. But the name implies only one interpretation.

The last three names have raised our suspicion to whether they are actually surnames. During our in-depth research on the Internet, only one person with the surname *Prazdnikov* was found and we did not find anybody with the surname *Shokoladov* (or rather, there was a girl, but it was clearly a pseudonym). The same is true for the surname *Botinkin*. This surname is not Russian, albeit the late appearance of the word, as it comes from the Hebrew agnominal surname *Botinok*.

Group 4: A surname of the real owner, with an altered spelling:

ТИНЬКОФФ [Tinkoff] (private brewery)

In our material this name is the only case when the real owner’s surname is used in the name of the business. However, on the one hand, the owner sold his business some long time ago, and on the other, the surname has a stylised form, with the normative writing ТИНЬКОВ [Tinˈkov].

The ending -фф [-off]) requires a more detailed examination. This is the result of the reverse transliteration of Russian names ending with -ov from English, German or French languages, according to the norms of the 19th century (for example, the famous French painter of Russian origin is Serge Ivanoff 1893–1983). The next group is made up of the names with such ending.

Group 5: Surnames with a transparent inner form and altered spelling:**БЛИНОВФФ** [BlinOff] (crêperie)Derived from the Russian word **блин** [blin] = ‘pancake’**ПИРОГОВФФ** [Pirogoff] (pies to go, Yekaterinburg)**ПИРОГОВФФ** [Pirogoff] (Cafe, Vinnitsa)Derived from the Russian word **пирог** [piˈrog] = ‘pie’**СУШКОФФ** [Sushkoff] (a network of Japanese restaurants)

Derived from the Russian word **сухой** [su`kхой] = 'dry'

Chulkoff (lingerie shop, Yekaterinburg)

Чулкофф [Chulkoff] (wholesale tights, socks and underwear company)

Магазин чулкофф [magazin chulkoff] (stockings shop, New Urengoy)

Derived from the Russian word **чулок** [chu`lok] = 'stockings'

Носкофф [Noskoff] (trademark)

Derived from the Russian word **носок** [no`sok] = 'socks'

Шкафофф [Shkafoff] (furniture workshop, Sverdlovsk region)

Шкафф [Shkafoff] (built-in furniture, Ukraine)

Derived from the Russian word **шкаф** [`shkaf] = 'cupboard'

Here we observe the onomastic fight between two endings: – *офф* vs. –*в*. It is easy to notice that the same names are played with, as it was shown above in the third case. The mix of spelling systems in the second example is also of particular interest. The last two examples show that the idea is up in the air. These are completely different companies, but they are designated by the same name.

The first two examples contain two fairly common Russian surnames derived from the words 'pancake' and 'pie' respectively. The letter 'о' in the word *БлинОфф* is highlighted graphically and shown on the sign as an image of a pancake. The fourth example, however, is quite exotic. The Russian surname *Sushkov* is derived from the adjective 'dry' in a figurative sense, with the meaning 'lean or hard-hearted, unfeeling'. But the authors of the name linked it with the word 'sushi', which appeared in Russian from Japanese only at the end of the 20th century. Thus, we observe a wild conglomerate of traditional Russian surnames in reverse transliteration from European languages, with an inner form rethought, in this case, according to a Japanese word.

The name *Чулкофф-Chulkoff* plays with the corresponding Russian word 'stockings' ("чулок"), while the surname *Chulkov* is an existing surname. *Noskov* is also an existing surname, but it is derived from the word 'nose'. It should also be noted that the ending *-ov* in standard writing marks the genitive plural form. And according to one of the common spelling rules, it is inadmissible to use this ending for the word "чулок" (stocking). But the violation of this rule is shown in the fourth example. This is the appellative complex 'Stocking Store' with some hint at 'family'.

It is hard to imagine the surname *Shkafov*, derived from the word 'cupboard', as a real name in the Russian onomasticon (although some phonetically similar names or nicknames exist). The last example (as well as some of the previously presented ones) is of Ukrainian origin. It should be noted that the Russian language is not only used in Russia.

Group 6: Imitation of a foreign surname

ШШУЛЬЦ [Shshults] (travel agency)

Перчини [Perchini] (an Italian restaurant)

In the first case, the graphics of the company name is different from the Russian spelling of the surname due to the double initial letter. As the authors of the name explain (it is a rare case where the authors explain the reasons of the name selection publicly), it has emerged as an abbreviation of the owners' surnames. However, the abbreviations can be

made in different ways; the prominent fact is that the result is almost a perfect match for one of the most common German surnames *Schultz*.

In the second case the simulation is deliberate: the surname is derived from the Russian word ‘pepper’ to give “Italian flavor” (in principle, the Russian native speaker will easily recognize such a formation as an Italian surname, for example in consonance with the surname of the composer Puccini).

Group 7: Two surnames with a transparent inner form:

Дверкин и **Форточкин** [Dverkin & Fortochkin] (manufacturer of windows and doors)

Derived from the Russian words **дверка** [ˈdverka] = ‘small

door’, **форточка** [ˈfortochka] = ‘small window’

Тапкин и Шлепанцев [Tapkin and Shlepanetsev] (a chain of house shoe shops)

Derived from the Russian words **тапок** [ˈtapok] = ‘slippers’, **шлепанец** [ˈshlepanets] = ‘thong’,

Кепкин и **Шляпкин** [Kepkin and Shlyapkin] (headwear shop)

Derived from the Russian words **кепка** [ˈkepka] = ‘cap’, **шляпка** [ˈshlyapka] = ‘small hat’

In our opinion, the principle of playfulness peaks here since, from the point of view of the person that perceives the name of the firm, the probability that the internal forms of the surnames of two alleged owners coincide semantically with the core business of a company is much smaller than in the case of names with one surname.

Apparently, the model of the nomination of companies with double surnames is clearly outlined. Examples are listed in the chronological order of their appearance. Of these names, only *Shlepanetsev* is invented. The others really exist, although they are not frequent ones and their origin is not always directly related to the current understanding of their inner form (*Tapkin* is a distortion of the word *Тыаркин* ‘hoe’; *Shlyapkina*, a surname in the feminine form, is derived from the older, figurative meaning of the word ‘peak’, namely ‘a brave man’). These names are perceived as non-prestigious, ridiculous. A saying found on one of the social networks is suggestive: “My surname is Fortochkin, I hate it, what to do”. Most likely, *Fortochkin* is also a typical comic pseudonym.

It should be noted that the name brings to life a whole image of a fictional character (as an example, Tapkin and Shlepanetsev are presented below in Figure 1).



Figure 1. Tapkin and Shlepanetsev

Conclusion

In this article we have tried to show that such examples of creating a fictional image of the company name exist, in principle. At the same time, it must be said that the Russian language technically provides an excellent opportunity for this kind of language games. The coincidence of the owner's name with the type and core business of the company at the level of meaning is possible, in principle, in many languages. As an example, we can cite the name of the French company *Charpentier*, founded in 1925 by Henri Charpentier in Sully-sur-Loire, France. Initially, the company manufactured granulated wooden fiber, but later on it diversified its business introducing plastic film production lines (http://www.emballage-filmbulle.com/societe_emballage_filmbulle.html). Thus, the core business of the company originally coincided with the meaning of the surname of its founder. Another example is the French company *Bou langer*, which is active in the pastry production industry. However, a formal distinction between the name *Charpentier* and the appellative *Charpentier* (similar to *Bou langer*) does not exist in French. In the Russian language there are a number of suffixes, which are typical for the formation of surnames from common names (in our examples there are -ин [-in], -ов [ov]). The surnames that are not different, by suffixation, from deriving appellatives are less typical and are perceived as surnames of non-Russian origin (above in our examples we commented the surnames *Botinkin* and *Botinok*). Similar to those considered in this article, playful titles are possible, in principle, in the West European languages, such as two British companies *Mr. Chips* (fish restaurant), *Mr. Sweeps* (Chimney Services), and the Irish *Mr. Sooty* (Chimney Sweep). But in this case, to maintain the language game an additional element – the etiquette word – is required, allowing to interpret the core component as a surname (about the Russian company names containing an etiquette word, see our article: Goryaev and Olshvag 2013). Of course, there can be other formal models that play on the inner form of real or artificial surnames.

In particular, when collecting the material, we discovered *Пиццерия Сержа Пиццина* (Serge Pitstsin's Pizzeria (St. Petersburg)). But we have not considered the detailed deployed nomination, as it is outside the scope of the model, in which the surname completely coincides with business name. In the present study, we tried to show the most pure expression of the idea of play within the formal framework of a single word.

Finally, getting back to the theoretical introduction to the paper, we would like to make a theoretical conclusion: trade names, as we have said, form in the onomasticon a new, alternate core, opposed to the traditional core marked by anthroponyms. But the creation of this alternative begins with a complete imitation, complete assimilation of commercial names to anthroponyms. Roughly but metaphorically speaking, trade names, unhappy with their peripheral status, try to take the status from the anthroponyms and start doing this by copying and imitating them.

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