ABSTRACT

Author: Monika Kij

Supervisor: dr hab. Agnieszka Myszka, prof. UR

Title: *The Onymic Creations of Preschool Children (on the Example of Toy Names)*

Naming is one of the basic linguistic needs of men, both adults and kids. It is a complex and multifaceted process. The choices of a child concerning naming his/her toys are influenced by interweaving social and psychological aspects, individual and general ones. In a child's world toys function on various, not fully specified levels. It is certain that one cannot perceive them exclusively in utilitarian terms. Toys constitute an object of child's feelings, they are often treated as best friends, secret trustees or family members, and giving them individual names is an important determinant of the emotional attitude towards them. The need for nomination shows already at an early development stage when children spontaneously create names for their favourite toys.

Children's speech and language development are not a novelty in linguistic research, yet their ways to create toy names are beyond the interest of most researchers. It is worth paying more attention to the role of these things in the preschoolers' linguistic development since toys are inseparable companions of a child and often subject to true bond.

The aim of the dissertation was to examine nominative skills of children aged three to six and to determine formal and functional characteristics of the onymic category of toy names. The choice of the topic was influenced by my research interests and the fact that there is a clear gap in this domain in the scientific literature. Taking into consideration linguistic analyses, (both Polish and the foreign ones) the issue of toy naming together with the processes hidden behind it are close to non-existent whereas available studies focus primarily on the appellative aspect of language and therefore, they are not related to the research that interests me.

In order to fully comprehend the mechanisms that drive the creation of names of the children's favourite toys, one needs to follow and characterize speech development stages together with linguistic and communicative competences, and explore the role of play and toys in children's life (especially its influence on the emotion and activity spheres). Such were the goals that I set in the first chapter. The chapter focuses on the description of the communicative skills' development, both in the context of phylogeny and ontogeny. It also encompasses the

factors determining speech development. Subsequently, the chapter includes a description of changes in the concepts of play, from antiquity till present days, plus a discussion on its function in the child's development. It provides also an outline of the history of a child's toy and focuses on the problem of its definition.

Chapter two depicts various accounts on the proper names problem, with a particular attention paid to the notion of the onymic semantics. Additionally, it specifies the scope of interests of the chrematonomastics as a field of science. Furthermore, it analyses the naming process as a cognitive and neuropsychological phenomenon and outlines other problems related to nomination, such as the range in which the names function, as well as their categorical division and secondary functions. In addition, a particular attention is paid to an issue regarding the definition of chrematonymy as an onymic category. This study presents also the onomastic research history, name creation mechanisms and psychological foundations of nomination mechanisms. In this chapter I also put forward my own proposal concerning toy names localization in the chrematonymy structure.

Chapter three is a description of basic ways of expanding appellative and proprial lexis. It concentrates on the issue of the transfer of elements from the appellative resource (onymisation) and the transmission of units within the proprial system (transonymisation). I also discuss the problem of derivative uses of onyms with the resulting homonymy, followed by the outline of the state of research on the phenomena of polysemy and naming homonymy in children's language. The second part of the chapter is devoted to terminological problems related to name formation (I use a narrow definition of the term introduced by A. Siwiec (2014), who explains it as a process involving changes in the formal structure of onyms similar to appellative word formation). In this part I also touch on the problem of the vagueness of the neologism definitions? and the issue of derivation as a source of new naming units. In the last subchapter I present a short review of the research concerning word formation skills of preschoolers.

Chapter four is a methodological part which provides details regarding the aims of the work, research problems and proposed hypotheses. I also discuss methods used to examine the research material and the procedures employed for collecting the data along with an initial characteristic of gathered names.

The following parts contain a multidimensional analysis of the collected material. In chapter five I examine psychological aspects of the nomination mechanisms as well as similarities and differences in the naming ways depending on a child's sex and age plus a type of a toy. I study what kinds of toys receive individual names most often, which nomination

strategies are applied by children and which naming motivations accompany them. I also examine names created by children in terms of their functions.

In chapter six I present an analysis of the formal ways in which the toy names are created. I examine what part of the material consists of onyms transferred outside the translocation process, the translocated ones and which names were created through narrow-sense formation processes. I pay particular attention to onymic derivation. Chapters five and six focus also on simultaneous comparison of two kinds of nomination acts: naming objects with which a child has not established a psychological bond "off the top of his/her head" versus thought out in advance creation of onyms denoting their own favourite toys.

The last chapter contains a recap of the received results along with conclusions from analyses and their practical implications.

My research combined elements of synchronous linguistics, speech therapy theory and developmental psychology. In emphasizing the importance of both functions of names and ways of creating and using them, I entered in my analysis the field of language pragmatics. I do not, however, neglect other scientific perspectives. Methodologically, the dissertation is rooted in cultural linguistics, which explores areas of interaction between language culture and cognitive processes. In addition to other aspects, I considered the role of metonymy and metaphor in creating names by children. I also introduced elements of structural analysis: I studied the frequency of using different motivational types, occurrences of different name creation schemes, formal structure of resulting onyms and derivational techniques.

The groundwork for my analysis was a corpus of nearly two and a half thousand creations composed of the names of toys collected among children aged three to six years. Over forty percent of units are names given spontaneously to their own toys by children from kindergartens located in the districts of Brzozów and Sanok. Other creations (collected through an online survey from preschoolers from all over Poland) comprised names the children came up with for toys shown to them in the photographs. Onyms collected in the first stage (created spontaneously) illustrate the natural nomination process, while those collected in the second (created on the *ad-hoc* basis) show the degree of proficiency in naming "on demand", without prior reflection. In the first part of the material, the methods of creating names were more thoughtful, which was mirrored by greater diversity and more interesting motivations for the names. In the latter case, the nomination act did not run spontaneously, because the list of objects was predetermined, and the goal was to obtain the name invented" on the spot" from an examined child. Therefore, in my analyses I often refer to similarities and differences between these two naming types.

Understanding the level of nomination skills of preschool children and determining the characteristics of toy names as an onymic category would not be possible without achieving the goals detailed in the problems and hypotheses section. The first objective was to highlight the most common naming motivations. I used own motivational classification, according to which I analysed the collected material. I distinguished ten permanent motivational categories: (1) creativity and objects for children, (2) people from the immediate surroundings, (3) audio-visual media, (4) anthroponyms, (5) zoonyms, (6) characteristic features of name carriers, (7) functions, behaviour and habits, (8) conventional names, (9) names commemorating one-time events, (10) polimotivational names. A small group (11) are onyms with unclear motivation, unexplained due to complete semantic opacity or lack of sufficient knowledge about the circumstances of their creation (showing no palpable relationship with the object denoted).

The data obtained as a result of the analyses confirms in general the hypotheses I set, according to which the use of conventional names, commemoration of other toys and characters from children's works as well as translocation of the names of people from a child's close environment were to dominate in pre-schoolers' names. The first part was confirmed in full extent for the names created *ad-hoc* and partly – in case of the names of favourite toys (in which conventionalisms were fourth most frequent category, with a share of over one-eighth of the material). Transferring names from works and objects for children was the third most common motivation in both the names of favourite toys and the nomination "on the spot". Anthroponyms – one of the two most numerous groups among favourite toys – were fourth in *ad-hoc* naming.

The analysis of the impact of socio-cultural factors on the nomination skills of preschoolers has proved, that such an impact exists, however my hypotheses, which of these factors are the most important, were not fully confirmed. For example, differences in naming preferences sometimes are more pronounced with respect to sex of the respondents than to their age. Such a conclusion is carried out, among others, by studying the approach of preschoolers to modelling toy names on anthroponyms transferred from people close to them – the girls used these inspirations much more willingly than boys. One should also not overestimate the effect of age on the use of secondary functions, at least in spontaneous names, in which – despite quite significant percentage differences – the main trend remained amazingly stable in all groups, the expressive function manifested the most often, less frequent were descriptive and commemorative functions. The poetic functionality was quite rare, similarly to monofunctional – purely identifying names. This does not mean, however, that the effect of age on onymic creations was imperceptible. On the contrary, for example, expressiveness showed inversely

proportional dependence on this factor, just like the polyfunctionality of names, while the use of poetic means increased slightly with age.

I assumed that the most commonly used nomination strategies would be onymic derivation as well as transonymisation. Names of the latter type constitute a significant group in both kinds of nomination. Furthermore, in spontaneous creations it was indeed the most numerous group, containing more than half of the units collected in this part of the study. In contrast, in the names created *ad-hoc*, transonyms were third in terms of frequency, preceded by the names onymised and those transferred outside translocation. However, if, by adopting the Siwiec classification (2014), we combine non-translocated names (i.e., transonymised homogeneously) with transonymised heterogeneously, the overall share of this process in nomination strategies will increase from less than one-fifth to more than one-third. Derivation is a less frequently used nomination strategy, nonetheless, it is prominent in spontaneous naming, where its percentage approaches one-fifth (and where it is the second most common process).

Comparison of ways of creating names of children's favourite toys' with the usage of methods of nomination *ad-hoc* confirmed the hypothesis that all basic methods present in this first type are also used in names created „on the spot". In terms of motivation, most trends repeat as well. Apart from the lack of terms created on demand to commemorate one-time situations, the difference is only manifested in the occurrences of individual types, but it is most significant difference. Spontaneously naming their own toys, children often adapt anthroponyms to this role, as well as transform the appellative terms characterizing the object (in total these two motivations make up nearly half of the naming units). Conversely, *ad-hoc* nomination is characterised by a different set of features – conventional names dominate here over all the other motivational types and, by far, surpass half of the material. Other categories have small shares, in no case exceeding one-tenth.

The analysis of the material allowed me to create a formal and functional characteristic of toy names as a new onymic category and to propose its location in the structure of chrematonymy. Children's naming is characterised by very high semantic and structural openness – even greater than that recorded in the zoonymic layer. The source of names can either be transfer from any category or onymisation. In addition, the system does not limit the creativity of children who use its real and potential mechanisms, but often also go beyond its scope – sometimes over-generalizing the rules, and sometimes deliberately bending them.

Due to their categorical features, toy names do not fall within any of the three subcategories of utilitarian chrematonimy (chrematonimia użytkowa) proposed by

A. Gałkowski (2008): marketing (marktetingowa), social (społecznościowa) or ideational (ideacyjna). They are more similar to the individual names of cars, collectible weapons or musical instruments created for a private use. Names of those items also express the attachment of owners to their property and externalize the sense of uniqueness of the objects named, as well as their owners' belief that they are in some way alive. The lack of a fourth cohyponymic category in the functional chrematonymy that would group the above-mentioned types of names is a gap in onomastic terminology, which should be filled in to get a more systematic view of categorial relationships in this branch of linguistics. Those nomination types, i.e., names of cars, weapons, instruments and toys, are characterized by the absence of a persuasive function, which is undoubtedly a distinctive feature in relation to marketing chrematonyms, but not necessarily in relation to the other two categories. That is why it seems appropriate to draw attention to the fact that while other groups of utilitarian chrematonyms operate in public space, toy names and other terms included in the new category – in private. Therefore, I propose to call this category **non-commercial private**.

1 marca 2023 г.