

Citation: Shulska, N., Hromyk, Y., & Yavorskyi, A. (2018). Aspects of gestural alignment in task-oriented dialogues. *Cognitive Studies | Études cognitives*, 2018(18). <https://doi.org/10.11649/cs.1544>

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THE COGNITIVE NATURE OF UKRAINIAN NICKNAME CONSTRUCTION

Abstract

This article is devoted to the study of the cognitive nature of the informal anthroponym creation mechanisms in the everyday communication of Ukrainian speakers. The article traces the role of the associative factors, nominational motives, and cultural, historical and social circumstances that play a direct role in the emergence of informal naming. The article also examines the wide variations in unofficial anthroponyms in spoken Ukrainian, their uniqueness, and their temporal and local character. On one hand, nicknames are not codified. They are prone to variation and susceptible to temporality. On the other hand, they are regulated by certain lexical and word-building norms, as well as custom. It is observed that nicknames reveal both a direct and an indirect (metaphorical) nomination. The article emphasises the cognitive nature of informal names, which is based on a direct or metaphorical resemblance to well-known public figures from the past or present: politicians, actors, artists, musicians, athletes, artists, writers, television characters, etc. Occupations and professions are also analysed as sources of semantic associations which give rise to informal names. It has been revealed that there is a large number of teacher nicknames based on internal associative connections, in which sarcasm is especially expressive. The article also examines the cognitive-axiological mechanisms of nicknames, the emergence of which is associated with an unusual event or a special situation in the life of the named individual.

Keywords: nickname; informal anthroponymy; cognitive nature; associative factor; Ukrainians; motivated nomination; people's everyday communication

1 Introduction. The place of nicknames in the anthroponymic system

Ukrainian anthroponymy has developed a three-component official system, represented by surnames, personal names and patronyms. In public communication, embodied in the communicative environment of social micro-communities, nicknames perform the usual functions of anthroponyms. The uniqueness of this variety of names stems from their characteristic features: a rich

lexical base, an emotional, expressive composition, connotative content, unusual causes of emergence, the mental peculiarities of an activity, ramified dialectal variants, etc.

Modern nicknames based on physical traits, behaviour, activities, and an individual's positive and negative qualities are not only the identification marks of a person distinguishing them from others. Nicknames, in contrast to other classes of anthroponyms (names, surnames, and patronymics), compress a motivational text which precedes the appearance of the informal name. In other words, they can be explained and interpreted via speech in the form of an expanded text.

The Ukrainian nickname system accumulates information about the linguistic, associative-axiological and ethno-cultural specifics of Ukrainians, and thus requires a comprehensive scientific analysis specifically focusing on the cognitive mechanisms of informal anthroponym creation and function.

Theoretical studies by Ukrainian and foreign researchers of anthroponymy, in particular those who have studied nicknames such as G. Arkushyn (Arkushyn, 2009); O. Boronina (Boronina, 1980); H. Buchko, D. Buchko (Buchko & Buchko, 1998); Ya. Bystron (Bystroń, 1915); A. Cieślikowa (Cieślikowa, 1998), V. Chabanenko (Chabanenko, 1976); Ya. Chornenkyy (Chornen'kyi, 1997); E. Danilina, (Danilina, 1978); M. Duychak (Dučhak, 1994), V. Halych, R. Lukianchuk (Halych & Luk'ianchuk, 1998); Cz. Kosyl (Kosyl, 1988); S. Kryzhanovska (Kryzhanovskaia, 1984), Z. Sikorska (Sikors'ka, 1996); N. Ushakov (Ushakov, 1978) were used in the research for this article. N. Fedotova has studied the cognitive pragmatics of nicknames in the Luhansk region (Ukraine) (Fedotova, 2008).

The pragmatic aspect of nickname creation from the perspective of speech and linguo psychology was analysed, based on the scientific works of Ch. Fillmor (Fillmor, 1988); O. Karpenko (Karpenko, 2006); I. Shtern (Shtern, 1998); O. Zalevska (Zalevskaia, 1988); M. Zhinkin (Zhinkin, 1982); I. Zimnya (Zimniaia, 1976, 1985). Proof for the indicative nature of nicknames was based on the scientific achievements of M. Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 1979); O. Kubriakova (Kubriakova, 1997); O. Leontiev (Leontev, 1971, 1999); O. Potebnya (Potebnia, 1999) and others.

M. Duychak, studying the peculiarities of informal name creation and distribution, observes: "Nicknames are a kind of anthroponym, an additional name that is sometimes given to a person (different from their real name and surname). Nicknames are always motivated" (Dučhak, 1994, p. 256). Other researchers, identifying the axiological nature of informal naming, have identified the associative factor as the basis of nickname occurrence (Kryzhanovskaia, 1984), linking the emergence of nicknames with informal contact and arguing that nicknames need not be based on names and surnames (Cieślikowa, 1998). These researchers are convinced that nicknames are "living entities" (Bystroń, 1915), "these are the characteristics that are most often expressed behind one's back, when someone is spoken about in the third person" (Koval', 1986, p. 154). V. Halych and R. Lukianchuk note that every nickname has an internal form, the "expressive-characteristic meaning of which is formed through a comparison of the external and internal properties of the referent with the objects of the surrounding reality" (Halych & Luk'ianchuk, 1998, p. 77). It is appropriate to define the nickname as a "people's invention", since, undoubtedly, these names "reflect the cultural, socio-economic and political circumstances of common people's life, and reveal the aesthetics of folk thinking, imagery and the wit of the people's speech" (Chabanenko, 1976, p. 17); "they have absorbed and reflected the tastes, observations, and evaluations of the people" (Kryzhanovskaia, 1984, p. 100).

Among the main causes of nickname diversification, anthroponomists have identified the motives for 'street' name creation (informal names created and used by a group or community) and the motives for nicknames created by individuals (Buchko & Buchko, 1998, pp. 59–69). According to these researchers, the first classification factor is more important and more realistic, since it is difficult to trace the reasons for nomination among the large number of anthroponymous facts, whereas individual nicknames are a subjective phenomena. In support of this, it is worth considering a statement by O. Danilina about the bilaterality of nomination in nicknames, which occurs with the active participation of the namer and the named (Danilina, 1978, pp. 281–301).

At present, besides defining informal anthroponyms it is important to consider the following:

nicknames in the cognitive aspect as compressed texts; the factors influencing the degeneration of speech, consciously planned by speakers in aspects of textual and communication theory. As N. Fedotova states, “the proposed approach to names as an anthroponym class will help to translate research into a scientific problem from the point of view of establishing the existence of a nickname and describing its characteristics in the field of studying the functioning of this notion at the level of consciousness” (Fedotova, 2008, p. 56).

In the research work for this article the following tasks were undertaken: 1) a study of the internal structure of modern Ukrainian nicknames, which reveals their potential for text creation; 2) proving that nicknames are concise associative texts, each of which contains the motivational / interpretive content of the anthroponym; 3) a review of the process of nickname appearance as a text that interprets the meaning of images, based on the semantics of an individual proper name; 4) an analysis of the structure, the specifics of the lexical base, and the connotative component of modern Ukrainian nicknames, in addition to an interpretative paradigm of their perception.

The findings of anthroponymic field research conducted between 2005 and 2017 in 163 localities of Western Polissya (Ukraine), as well as in two localities of Southern Podlasie (Poland), serve as the base source. The material was transcribed or recorded directly from respondents of different ages, mostly local inhabitants.

1.1 Research methodology

The research work employed the method of linguistic description and its basic techniques: the inventory and systematisation of linguistic material in synchronisation. Psycholinguistic methods were used to study the processes of perception and interpretation of nickname texts, in addition to helping investigate the development of self-identity in present-day conditions. The same methods were also used to investigate the condition of the lexical-semantic models of names of historical, cultural, and regional identity. The process of understanding and interpreting nicknames was recreated using the method of psycholinguistic experiment. During linguo-cognitive analysis, nicknames were examined using a complex approach, taking into account the principle of synergy. This revealed the general foundations of the structural semantic theory of nicknames, which is based on a consideration of the speech space of the generation and the functioning of this class of onyms. Additionally, the following methods were utilised in the study: component, distributive and transformational analysis; modelling of the semantic structure of nicknames and their indicative nature; content analysis; interviewing techniques and questionnaires.

2 The cognitive mechanisms of the creation and perception of Ukrainian nicknames

This article supports the scientific assertion that the perception and understanding (comprehension) of nicknames are complex types of a speech activity, reflecting not only the linguistic competence of the subjects (the author and the recipient), but also their psychological characteristics, along with the individual specificity of intellectual activity (Fedotova, 2008, p. 35).

The theoretical foundations of cognitive scientists are fundamental in the processes of creating nicknames in different micro-collectives: rural, student, professional, worker, etc. During the survey it was revealed that understanding the meaning of a nickname (as well as the personality of the individual who bears it) in one society leads to a misunderstanding of it in another collective. This explains the appearance of nicknames with new motivations, nickname synonyms, and nickname antonyms. An example of this is the case in one locality where one person has synonymous nicknames such as *Poldyk*, *Pold*, *Leopold*, which are motivated by his official name Papezhuk. It would appear that sound association plays a role here, in addition to the association of the rapprochement of the name with other appellates that became nicknames. Another individual in the same

locality is known by two nicknames, the synonyms *Tverdyy* and *Tverdoloby*. Interestingly, the nickname *Tverdoloby* appeared first, followed by its synonym, *Tverdyy*. The latter is used more often today, due to the linguistic effects of informal communication. Thus, understanding a nickname is dependent on the reconstruction of the author's plan and the construction of one's own model of content of the interpretive text of the figurative denominator. This approach relates primarily to the perception, understanding and interpretation of the text (Fedotova, 2008, p. 37).

Every nickname also has a conceptual structure, since the motivational text of the nickname is compressed to a concept. M. Zhynkin calls it a "semantic cluster" of the whole text. In this form, the text can be stored in the memory for a long time, and then be restored verbally in a form that does not coincide with the original text, but which has the same meaning (Zhinkin, 1982, p. 84). In unofficial regional systems one can often observe the transformation of compressed noun texts. Under this condition, there is a new sound shell for the same motivational text. This leads to the mutual replacement of one nickname by another, often caused by associative links. An example of this process is the transformation of a woman's nickname from *Bochka* (a barrel) to *Dizhka* (a tub) in one locality. The anthroponym *Bochka* was formed due to the associative connection of a thick-set woman with the well-known appellative "barrel" ('large wooden or metal vessel'). The motivational text as a concept is preserved in the memory of the speakers and, in certain situations, is implemented by the second nickname *Dizhka* (i.e., the "tub" is a large wooden or metal cylindrical flat bottomed vessel).

It can be concluded that the perception of a nickname is controlled by such basic cognitive mechanisms (according to O. Zalevska) as: association, recognition, obtaining of initial knowledge, forecasting, semantic substitution, control, etc. (Zalevskaia, 1988).

Of great importance for forming a content model is a frame. According to Ch. Fillmore, a frame is activated when an interpreter tries to detect the meaning of a fragment of a text, and may attribute an interpretation to it by placing it in a model that is known, irrespective of the text (Fillmore, 1988). The frames of interpretation of nicknames are introduced into the process of understanding as a result of their activation by both the recipient and the text. More precisely, frames represent stereotypical situations in the memory of a person, identifying a new speech situation, and causing the emergence of informal anthroponyms.

The cognitive process of creation is largely conducted through a comparison operation, which plays an important role in shaping the psychological image. A concrete image of a person is compared with existing patterns in thinking, according to which their thinking on a visual or associative basis occurs.

An equally important mechanism is the study of the perception and interpretation of compressed texts of nicknames by recipients. This requires the involvement of functional, cognitive, and epistemological aspects, in addition to the "human factor".

The perception of a nickname text is a cognitive process, similar to its creation, which occurs at the level of the communication addressee's thought process. The nickname passes through the stage of recognition, which is based on a metaphorical transfer (Fedotova, 2008, p. 10). As regards the motives of nickname creation, scientists define both direct and indirect (metaphorical) nomination. During indirect nomination, people mainly take into account the emotional significance of the nominee, which speakers successfully use to create irony and ridicule (Sikors'ka, 1996, p. 75). Some researchers distinguish the following types of nominations: 1) direct; 2) mediocre metaphorical; 3) mediocre metonymic (Kosyl, 1988, p. 210).

The cognitive mechanisms of the appearance of Ukrainian nicknames is considered through associative processes found in the connotative filling of Ukrainian names, double motivation, metaphorical transfer, sound convergence, etc.

The cognitive processes of informal naming are most clearly reflected in nicknames motivated by other anthroponyms, in addition to types of activity:

- own personal names;
- official surnames;

- anthroponyms of other people, most often well-known individuals (from the past or present);
- names based on type of occupation or profession.

A detailed lexical-semantic analysis of Ukrainian nicknames based on the aforementioned motivational groups and subgroups is presented below. The nicknames are singled out in accordance with the associative phenomena of linguistic character, which led to their appearance.

2.1 Nicknames motivated by other anthroponyms (personal names and official names)

The reason for the appearance of nicknames in rural communities is often the thesis names, both male (Ivan, Nikolai, Vasyl, Volodymyr) and female (Maria, Anna, Galina). In every locality there are many identical local surnames, where thesis naming is also observed. For example, three men are officially named Volodymyr Naichuk, but the nicknames *Los'*, *Behemót*, and *Profésor* are used to differentiate between them. The barriers of the name Matthew within a specific rural community are identified by connotative names, the nicknames *Matvívý*, *Matyúkha*, *Matvívychyk*.

Personal names and surnames are an important factor in the process of nickname creation although a double motivation is observed repeatedly: in addition to changing the official anthroponime, there is an intrinsic function. For example, the nickname *Havásya*, corresponds to a regular male name Vasyl, and simultaneously contains an informal characteristic – ‘based on the features of speech’. The informal anthroponym *Lótka* emerged, on one hand, as a spoken form of the name Volodko < Volodymyr, and on the other it reflects a physical characteristic – a ‘man of low stature’. A double motivation arises when the name or surname causes an association that appears in the name of the person with a particular feature of the bearer (Boronina, 1980, p. 119).

A large number of informal anthroponyms form a group of names motivated by the official names of carriers. The assets of this group are represented by various nominal categories: Christian male and female names, borrowings, and nominations based on various associative processes. Among the nicknames formed from traditional male and female names, in quantitative terms preference is given to male nicknames. This fact is due to several reasons: there are more male names than female, and male names are characterised by a higher degree of variability. Additionally, there is a long-lasting tradition of naming a child after its father, as well as the important specificity of ‘street’ anthroponyms which, according to our observations, arise and function more actively in male collectives, despite the fact that women are more talkative and emotional.

One of the unique features of nicknames is that diminutive and affectionate variants of male and female names formed by the model of children’s forms are continuously used in the naming of older people, for example *Pétiochka* ‘old man’, *Gánnochka* ‘old woman’, as well as for identifying teachers: *Pétrýk* ‘Petro Vasyl’ovych’ *Vál’ka* ‘Valentyna Petrivna’, *Kát’ka* ‘Kateryna Ivanivna’, *Ruslánka* ‘Ruslana Petrivna’.

2.2 Association as an important factor in the emergence of nicknames based on similarity to others

It is well known that the informal ‘street’ names of people are an uncontrolled sphere of speech activity. Associations play a significant role in the emergence of informal anthroponymy, inseparable from the creation of nicknames. At the base of such anthroponyms lie associative processes that arise in the minds of speakers in reaction to an external stimulus. In the present case, this stimulus is the name of a person. It is important to emphasise allusion nicknames which, as N. Fedotova notes, “are formed associatively and transmit the author’s individual figurative sensory thought, vision and understanding of reality” (Fedotova, 2008, p. 76). The specificity of such namings is that information about the named individual derives from the expressive perception of the creator, even though the name may not evoke any association for other people.

The anthroponymous assets of the name-derivative associative nominal group of informal names usually consists only of modern nicknames used in student collectives. When creating unofficial naming, associations often appear on the phonetic level: *Valyet* < Valeriy, *Zhorzhýna* < Zhoryk < Heorhiy, *Kásha* < Katya, *Páva* < Pavlina, *Pyetúkh*, *Pésyk* < Petro, *Rúslo* < Ruslan, *Slívka* < Slavik, *Frédka* < Fedir. Among the nickname bases are also the rhymed names: *Banán* < Ruslan, *Badýl'* < Vasył', *Bólik* < Tolik, *Bupka* < Lyubka, *Karás'* < Taras, *Krysa* < Larysa. Rhyming nicknames are a kind of language game in youth communication.

Informal Ukrainian nomination includes yet another type of association – graphic, represented by so-called initial nicknames, formed by abbreviation: *Borfyéd* ‘Borys Fedorovych’, *Halifé* ‘Halyna Fedorivna’, *Váva* ‘Valentyna Vasylivna’, *Bis* ‘Bozhyk Ivan Stepanovych’, *Vermót* ‘a man who has two wives – Vera and Motia’, *Dikól* ‘Dima (son) and Kolya (father)’.

When creating informal anthroponyms, people often use their own surnames and any associations evoked by their lexical-semantic or phonetic peculiarities. In these cases, the existing word is used, and the sound composition of the name gives an impetus to the associations, and serves as a basis for an appropriate nickname (Ushakov, 1978, p. 160). During the field research, instances of surname-derived “household naming” were recorded, which indicate synonymic association, conducted on the lexical level in the nicknames *Búpka* < Vyshnyak, *Derkách* < Vinyk, *Dzhmélyk* < Shmil’ov, *Kompozítor* < Chaykovs’kyy, *Komuníst* < Zhovtyans’kyy, *Krakra* < Voron etc.

Some nicknames reflect a phonetic-lexical modification of the surname, caused by the metaphorical attributes of the name bearer on the basis of associations: *Vereténo* < Veretennikova, *Hóre* < Hirchuk, *Hrýzha* < Hryshchuk, *Garókh* < Horko, *Kashmár* < Kashmanyuk, *Kontratáka* < Kondratyuk, *Krýsa* < Kryshchuk, *Lúsyy* < Lysyuk, *Medvíd'* < Vedmedyk (Arkushyn, 2009b, p. 227), *Pátsya* < Matsyuk, *Sardél'ka* < Sardechuk. It was observed that anthroponymic word formation is reduced to the exchange of similar features between the named object and the object of reality through association.

An anthroponymic language system always reflects various historical epochs and corresponding iconic figures in its lexical composition. It is no coincidence that the nomenclature of Ukrainian nicknames reveals nominations motivated by the names and surnames of well-known people. The sources of these anthroponyms are the names and surnames of people well-known in the minds of the speakers. Such denominators are based on clear characteristics and various features that are metaphorically re-thought, eg: *Gorbachév* ‘bald’, *Bériya* ‘worked on a collective farm’, *Gagárin* ‘fell from a carriage’, *Lénnin* ‘has a beard’, and so on.

The axiological nature of informal anthroponyms as components of a linguistic-cognitive pattern is generally well-established in nicknames implying a similarity to other, mostly iconic, figures from the past or present. Such names not only allow one to determine the approximate time of the name’s appearance, but also to attribute certain axiological features to both a well-known person, and the object of the assigned nickname: *Brézhnev* → ‘with thick eyebrows’, ‘was a member of the party’, ‘father of Ilyich’; *Gagárin* → ‘fast driver’ (Arkushyn, 2009a, p. 216], ‘fell from a tree’; *Hítler* → ‘refers to hairstyle’, ‘evil’; *Gorbachév* → ‘bald’, ‘from Mikhail Sergeevich’; *Lénnin* → ‘bald’, ‘father’s name Ilyich’, ‘with a beard’; *Stálin* → ‘with moustache’, ‘angry’; *Chapáev* → ‘with a big moustache’, ‘from Vasył Ivanovich’. Other types of anthroponomy are sporadic: *Kutúzov* ‘has a false eye’; *Petliúra* ‘ancestors fought in the Petlyura army’; *Gamúlka* ‘often travelled to Poland’, ‘wore white trousers’; *Máo Dzedun* ‘parodied him’; *Trótskyy* ‘wore chrome boots’.

This variety of nicknames includes informal names that have been formed relatively recently, as evidenced by the word-formation bases that correspond to the names of well-known politicians: *Ben Ládin*, *Yéltsin*, *Clínton*, *Lazarénko* ‘plundered the collective farm’, *Pútín*, *Shevernádze*, *Yúshchenko* ‘calls himself in a drunken way’, *Yanukóvych* ‘from Viktor Fedorovich’, *Timoshénko* ‘based on hairstyle’. Observations show that nicknames are most often based on political names, well-known from TV news and commercials.

Many nicknames are motivated by the names or surnames of TV characters: *Bárbara* ‘is always painted’; *Béyzha* ‘lives without a husband’; *Karmelíta* ‘is dark-skinned’; *Pushkaróva* ‘is ugly’; *Rakél* ‘is tall’; *Tarzan* ‘climbs trees’; *Terminátor* ‘is well-built’. Older nicknames are still found: *Borman*

‘tall’, *Budulái* ‘unshaven’. Many youth nicknames are based on a similarity to athletes: *Maradóna*, *Riváldo*, *Ronáldo* ‘plays football well’, *Klitschkó*, *Tháison* ‘tall’; artists, musicians, composers: *Kirkórov* ‘sings loudly whe drunk’, ‘wears white trousers’, *Mózar* ‘sings well’, *Stótska* ‘has red hair’; writers and artists: *Pyshkin* ‘has curly hair or sideburns’, *Levitan*, *Nekrasov*, *Pánas Mýrny*; literary heroes: *Búlba* ‘on behalf of Taras’ (Arkushyn, 2009a, p. 154), *Kaidashýkha* ‘has always quarrelled’, *Telésik* ‘short’, *Máugli* ‘has not had a haircut for a long time’; TV presenter: *Sávik Shúster* ‘from his own name Viacheslav’. In such anthroponyms, one can observe the transfer of a fully-formed feature from the well-known person to the object of the naming.

2.3 Nicknames based on occupation / profession

Nicknames are also created based on one’s occupation or profession. The anthroponymic units of this group are predominantly distributed among young people. Among examples are the following types of associations:

1. *Root association*, found in related names: cash register *Kása* ‘cashier’, *Komóra* ‘storekeeper’, *Prápor* ‘ensign’, *Pozhár* ‘firefighter’, *Póshta* ‘postman’, *Televízor* ‘TV-set repairer’. The appearance of such unofficial names is justified by speech efficacy and convenience.
2. *Semantic association*, expressed in metonymic terms: *Banderólka* ‘postwomen’, *Drit* ‘iron-worker’, *Gudók* ‘tractor driver’, *Karás*, *Ókun* ‘fisherman’, *Medók*, *Pchólka*, *Chmel* ‘beekeepers’, *Pinitsil’ín* ‘veterinarian’, *Payálo* ‘welder’, *Páluba* ‘sailor’, *Shýlo* ‘tailor’, *Cvyakh*, *Schábel* ‘joiners’. Some anthroponyms in folk communication require a detailed explanation, as they are more deeply motivated: *Búda* ‘man who worked on a covered truck’, *Máma* ‘worked in a kindergarten and was very good’ (Arkushyn, 2009c, p. 107). It can be observed that professions served mainly as the generative basis of these nicknames. Such anthroponymic nominations are very similar to linguistic puns.

A large number of teacher nicknames appear on the basis of internal associative communication, eg.: *Glóbus* ‘geography teacher’, *Zhába*, *Infuzória Túfelka* ‘biology teachers’, *Bourbón*, *Isterýchka* ‘history teachers’, *Amiák*, *Atom*, *Mandeléev*, *Chlor*, *Molékula* ‘chemistry teachers’, *Nótka*, *Dúdochka* ‘music teachers’, *Avtomát*, *Protivogáz* ‘civil defence teachers’, *Infórm* ‘I.T teacher’, *Svistók* ‘P.E teacher’. These names represent ridicule, even sarcasm.

3 Conclusions

Anthroponymic nominations are non-standard and original. This is due to the fact that nicknames are often motivated by an unusual event in the life of the named individual, well known to their fellow communicators. This event determines the identification of the individual in their environment, becoming their “business card” for life. The motivations of such nicknames are expressive and semantically saturated: *Agént* ‘in his youth, posing as an insurance agent, he stole money from a retiree’; *Ginirál* ‘his mother-in-law bought him tracksuit trousers with stripes, and when he walked down the street, she said: “Oh, my general is coming!”’; *Kamuftyázh* ‘went to a rural disco in a camouflage suit’; *Kasír* ‘while collecting money for a group of carol singers, he was a cashier and took all the money for himself’; *Monákh* ‘was in prison and returned from there with a beard’. These nicknames are extremely colourful. They not only fulfill the function of identification, but they also describe the peculiar “biographies” of rural inhabitants. Thus, one can conclude that the associative-axiological mechanisms involved in the creation of nicknames which are analysed in this article indicate the wide possibilities of informal anthroponyms in Ukraine, their unique colour, and their temporal and local character. On the one hand, nicknames are not codified, and they are capable of variation, variability, and temporality. On the other hand, they are regulated by certain lexical and word-building norms, as well as by custom. Some of them do not have a long life, others last for decades and are passed from generation to generation.

The process of perceiving the nickname by the recipient and its implementation in society is influenced by the acquired experience of the recipient, their vocabulary, social status, age, general level of education, and other factors. Each individual uses a different semantic code, so that they understand the text information in a nickname differently. In this regard, an informal anthroponym with an undisclosed motivational text may acquire an interpretory explanation different from the real meaning. An example of this is the nickname *Zayets* (a hare), which in informal Ukrainian anthroponymy can acquire more than 15 motivational characteristics: “a person with big ears”, “a cowardly man”, “a fast runner” and others.

Such a transformation is conditioned by the psychological peculiarities of thinking techniques when creating a verbal image of the object of the nomination, with the presence of a substantial associative component in the semantics of the source etymon.

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This work was financed by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science.

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

The authors' contribution was as follows: concept of the study: Nataliia Shulska, Yuriy Hromyk, Andrii Yavorskyi; data analyses: Nataliia Shulska, Yuriy Hromyk, & Andrii Yavorskyi; the writing: Nataliia Shulska, Yuriy Hromyk, & Andrii Yavorskyi.

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Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, University of Silesia & The Slavic Foundation