

NICKNAMING TENDENCIES IN THE RUSSIAN LINGUOCULTURE OVER THE PAST DECADE (2004–2014)

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Abstract: The paper is aimed at comparing Russian anthroponymic nicknames used by young people (Novosibirsk school and university students) over the past decade (2004–2014). Quantitative analysis and questionnaire interpretation analysis prove the general tendency towards the reduction of nicknames and nicknaming practices among high school and university students, accompanied by a decreasing interest in nicknaming as a creative process. As a result the corpus of nicknames is undergoing changes concerning predominant types and functions of nicknames with descriptive and evaluative nicknames losing their popularity and giving way to non-descriptive and neutral informal anthroponymic nominations, respectively.

Keywords: nickname, nicknaming trends, motivation, connotation, Russian linguoculture.

Introduction. Resources, object and methods of research

The paper is aimed at analysing anthroponymic nicknames that were in use among school and university students of Novosibirsk (Russia) during the decade from 2004 to 2014. Thus, in this research project I focus on nicknames from micro-social discourse mainly including private spheres (family, friends) and academic spheres (school, university), i.e. nicknames that circulate in the subjects' immediate surroundings.

The research is based on comparative study of two corpora of nicknames collected by the author of the article since 2004 in Novosibirsk, Russia.

The first sample of data was collected from 2004 to 2007¹. For this purpose the questionnaire (Q1) was designed and distributed among Novosibirsk school and university students. In Q1 the subjects were asked to:

- 1) answer questions concerning the functions of nicknames and express their attitude to nicknaming;
- 2) fill in a table with nicknames they knew, comment on their motivation, and provide details about the age and gender of the nominee.

Demographic questions concerned only subjects' institution and residence.

To observe the dynamics of nicknaming practices in the Russian linguoculture

¹ The sample of data collected from 2004 to 2007 is further referred to as 'SD1'.

over the past decade (2004–2014) I restarted the collection of data in 2014², using an updated version of the questionnaire (Q2). The contents of Q2 were extended by including:

- 1) questions about subjects' age, gender, as well as institution and residence;
- 2) open-ended statements, aimed at eliciting subjects' opinions about the notion of nicknames, spheres of their use, frequency of nicknaming practices as well as functions of nicknames and attitudes to nicknaming;
- 3) more details about nicknames, such as: connotation, sphere of use, gender and age of the name-giver, gender and age of the nominee.

Thus, the research is based on:

- 1) quantitative and comparative analyses of collected questionnaires, including chi-square test, employed to determine the significance of differences in the quantity of nicknames in two samples of data collected in 2004–2007 and 2014;
- 2) qualitative analysis, aimed at interpreting the motivation of nicknames and functional peculiarities of nicknaming practices. This method also presupposes classification of nicknames according to their motivation and formation patterns as well as the analysis of their connotation and the gender of the nominee.

In this paper I will report on the following issues from the comparative diachronic perspective:

- 1) frequency of nicknaming practices;
- 2) functions of nicknames;
- 3) attitudes to nicknaming practices;
- 4) motivation of nicknames.

The following issues will be discussed from the synchronic perspective only due to the fact that they lack in Q1:

- 1) connotation of nicknames;
- 2) spheres of nicknames;
- 3) reported frequency of contemporary nicknames.

The synchronic analysis is based on the comparative study of the results obtained from the two subsamples of SD2 (university students' subsample *vs* school students' subsample).

Sample description

The majority of respondents in both samples are Novosibirsk residents.

Q1 was administered to a total of 142 students, including 86 school students and 56 students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages (Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University). Q2 was administered to 211 students. In 2014 the number of subjects was extended as the survey involved not only students of Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University and school students, but also 71 students of other Novosibirsk institutions

² The sample of data collected since 2014 is further referred to as 'SD2'.

of higher education, predominantly those of Novosibirsk State Technical University (ref. Table 1).

Table 1. Sample distribution by institution

Institution	2006–2007	2014
School	86	100
Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University	56	40
Novosibirsk State Technical University	0	65
Other institutions of higher education	0	6
Total number of respondents	142	211

Table 2 below represents the sample distribution by gender, based on the data from SD2 as SD1 lacked this information. However, I can state that the proportion of female subjects in Sample 1 is higher than in Sample 2 due to the fact that the majority of subjects representing Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University are female, which is the peculiarity of linguistic faculties in Russia. That was the reason students from Novosibirsk State Technical University were involved in the survey in 2014. As a result, in SD2 the difference between the ‘male’ and ‘female’ subsamples is not significant ($\chi^2=2.84$; $p \leq 0,05$).

Table 2. Sample 2 distribution by gender (2014)

Institution	Gender		
	Male	Female	Not specified
School	51	49	
Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University	4	38	
Novosibirsk State Technical University	41	24	
Other institutions of higher education	0	3	1
Total number of respondents	96	114	1

Table 3 below represents the sample distribution by age, based on the data from SD2. Note that Q1 lacked details about this aspect. Thus, the results show that the average age of the subjects is 13.5 and 19.8 in the school and university subsamples respectively.

Table 3. Sample distribution by age (2014)

Institution	Age		
	Biggest age group	Average	Range
School	12	13.5	11–18
Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University	19, 21	19.7	17–22
Novosibirsk State Technical University	20	19.5	17–27
Other institutions of higher education	21	20.3	19–21

Hypothesis

The hypothesis proposed in the beginning of the present comparative study suggests the reduction of descriptive and creative nicknames in the Russian linguoculture over the past decade. This hypothesis arises from the tendencies towards the reduction of characterising nicknames in the British and American systems of unconventional anthroponyms, pointed out by Allirajah (2006) and Smith (2007)³. Thus, one of the objectives of this research project is to reveal if these tendencies are universal.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no similar research to shed light on the tendencies of nicknaming in post-Soviet Russia.

Sample description. Quantitative characteristics

Despite the fact that the number of subjects in SD2 exceeds the number of subjects in DS1 (the difference is significant at $\chi^2=33.5$; $p\leq 0,05$; ref. Fig. 1), the amount of nicknames collected in these two samples shows a strong decreasing tendency (the difference is significant at $\chi^2=729$; $p\leq 0,05$; ref. Fig. 2). Roughly speaking, in SD1 the average number of nicknames per subject is 13.5 as opposed to 3.5 nicknames per subject in SD2.

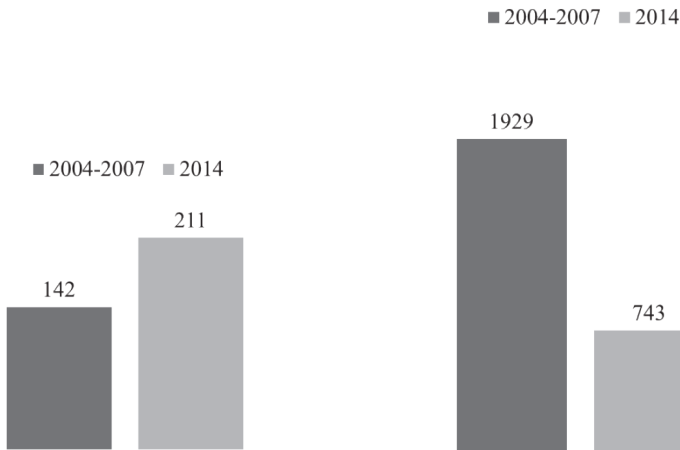


Fig. 1. The number of respondents in the two samples (compared)

Fig. 2. The amount of nicknames in the two samples (compared)

Frequency of nicknaming practices as reported by the subjects

Figure 3 shows the subjects' reported opinions on the frequency of nicknaming acts (the second sample of data, 2014). Thus, about 2/3^{rds} of the respondents (68.2%) consider nicknaming a frequent type of nomination, as opposed to 26.1% of

³ I refer to some of these articles in my paper Tsepikova (2014: 396–397).

respondents stating that nicknaming is a rare naming act and 1.4% claiming that nicknames are no longer in use in the linguoculture under study. It is noteworthy that the difference between the answers given by university students and school students is not statistically significant. However, such results stand in contrast to a comparatively small quantity of reported nicknames in this sample. This fact needs further investigation.

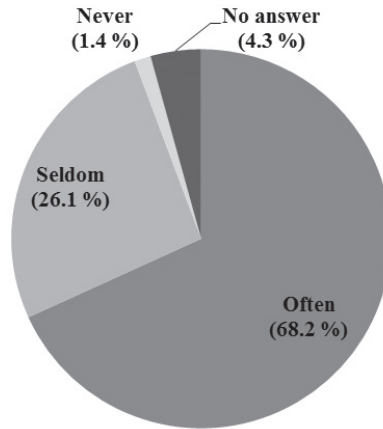


Fig. 3. Frequency of nicknaming acts as reported by the subjects (SD2, 2014)

Nickname distribution by the gender of the nominee

When enumerating nicknames the subjects in both samples were asked to provide gender characteristics of nickname bearers. The results show a slight decrease in the number of male nicknames and an increase in the number of female nicknames, though the difference is not statistically significant in the compared samples (ref. Table 4). Peculiar is the fact that in the first sample the difference in the number of male and female nicknames is significant at $\chi^2=13.5$. However, the difference in the number of male and female nicknames in the second sample is not significant ($\chi^2=1.5$; $p \leq 0,05$), which can reflect the tendency towards an equal proportion of Russian male and female nicknames.

Table 4. Nickname distribution by the gender of the nominee (nickname-bearer)

	2004– 2007 (%)	2014 (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Male nicknames	61.4	55.2	0.7	NS
Female nicknames	38.6	46.8	1.4	NS
χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	13.5	1.5	-	-
The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)	S	NS	-	-

Nicknames: the sphere of use

Considering the subjects' responses to the question about the spheres where nicknames are used, one must take into account the fact that: 1) this question was introduced only in the updated version of the questionnaire (2014); 2) 12.3% of respondents ignored this question.

As a result, the five most frequent spheres reported by school and university students are as follows: school (reported by 64% of respondents), friends (46.4%), family (11.8%), university (11.4%), yard, playground, neighbourhood (10.9%)⁴.

Among the spheres, counting less than 10%, respondents mention: work, criminals, sports club, enemies (as opposed to friends), Internet, computer games, military and secret service, army, love couples, village as well as show-business, historical figures and books.

Moreover, quantitative analysis and chi-square test made it possible to observe similarities and differences in opinions, expressed by the subjects from the university and school subsamples.

Reporting about the sphere of use, 49.5% of university students and 43% of school students agree that nicknaming is most frequent among friends (the difference is not significant at $\chi^2=0.85$; $p\leq 0,05$), as this sphere of social interaction represents a universal category regardless of age, social status, etc.

As to other groups mentioned, chi-square analysis revealed a considerable difference in opinions expressed by respondents from the two subsamples (ref. Table 5).

The difference in the answers is significant concerning the spheres of school, family, yard (playground, neighbourhood), sports club, internet (computer games) and university which is due to obvious reasons connected with the stage of education, age and interests typical of a certain age group. Remarkable is the fact that the overall percentage in the school subsample is higher than in the university subsample, which is an additional confirmation of the fact that nicknaming practices are perceived by young people as a type of nomination more frequent in school age.

Table 5. Nicknames: the spheres of use as reported by the subjects (2014, two subsamples compared)

Sphere	School Students (%)	University students (%)	χ^2 ($p\leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
School	79	49	18.3	S
Friends	43	49.5	0.85	NS
Family	22	2.7	137.96	S
Yard, playground	17	5.4	24.92	S
Sports club	7	1.8	15	S
Internet, computer games	4	0	-	-
University	5	17	8.47	S

⁴ The average percentage for the second sample is given.

The functions of nicknames (two samples compared)

The question 'Why do you use nicknames?' addressed the subjects' opinions about the functions attributed to nicknames by society. As a result the following functions of nicknames were pointed out in the two samples of data: characterising (combined with evaluating), identifying, memorising, integrating (phatic communication, distance shortening), entertaining, expressing attitude (sympathy, respect *vs* antipathy, insult), linguistic economy (simplifying means of nomination), self-expression, status labelling.

In SD1 the most frequent answers were connected with the functions of linguistic economy (25% of respondents), expressing attitude (24%), identification (15.7%), entertainment (14.8%), integrating (11%), characterisation (10.2%)⁵.

In SD2 the functions most frequently reported by the respondents include: expressing attitude (43.6%), linguistic economy (31.3%), characterisation (27%), identification (25.6%), entertainment (17%), integrating (14.5%), memorising / remembering a person (14%).

Thus, over the past decade the key functions of nicknames remain those of linguistic economy and expressing attitude, the latter becoming predominant in SD2. Moreover, in SD2 the attitudinal function of expressing antipathy and insult counts 34%, which makes it the top frequent function (cf. the function of expressing positive attitude, reported by 6.6% of the subjects in SD2). In SD1 the function of expressing insult was specified by 9.3% of respondents as compared to the function of expressing positive attitude which is reported by 2.8% of respondents.

At the same time, peculiar is the fact that in SD 1 the next two rivalling functions are those of identification and entertainment, whereas in SD 2 it is characterisation *vs* identification with the characterising function moving closer to the core functions. As both attitudinal and characterising functions are connected with the evaluation of the nominee, we can state that the subjects from the second group seem to be more concerned about the connotation of a nickname.

One more peculiarity important for our research is the status of the integrating function in both samples of data. Quantitative analysis shows that this function is listed among the peripheral functions of nicknames in both samples of data. Though in SD1 more subjects are aware of this function, chi-square test reveals no significant difference across the subject groups.

Such underestimation of the integrating value of nicknames can be one of the reasons of the general reduction of nicknames in youth subculture. While a lower percentage of nicknames in the post-school discourse is a universal and predictable fact, a decrease in the corpus of school-age nicknames is a tendency to be carefully examined. At this stage of my research I propose that it can be due to the changes in the nature of teenage interaction, which has become more virtual and online-based rather than direct and personalised. In this respect, disregard of the integrating function of

⁵ In this article we do not consider the functions reported by less than 10% of respondents.

nicknames, on the one hand, and perception of nicknames as a means of insult, on the other hand, can result in their loss of popularity.

As N. Pinto-Abecasis points out, “the nickname is indeed part of the folklore of a community, and, as such, it refers to a rich repertoire of anecdotes, personal stories, proverbs, jokes, songs, and cultural loads that form its etymology” (Pinto-Abecasis 2011: 140–141). As a part of folklore, nicknames are inseparable from a micro-group discourse. When a micro-group loses its integrity, its special insider language disappears too.

Subjects’ attitude to nicknaming practices (two samples compared)

The question related to the students’ attitudes to nicknaming as a type of nomination was formulated as follows: “What is your attitude to nicknaming?” The following variables were suggested as possible answers:

- 1) bad;
- 2) bad rather than good;
- 3) neither good nor bad;
- 4) good rather than bad;
- 5) good.

The results also show a significant difference in rating nicknaming practices by the two subject groups (ref. Table 6 for chi-square values). While the percentage of the negative evaluation of nicknaming practices is low in the samples, negative attitudes expressed by the second subject group are not as absolute as those by the first subject group.

Moreover, the attitude to nicknaming practices moves from positive in SD1 to neutral or indifferent in SD2 (‘neither good nor bad’ variable).

Table 6. Subjects’ reported attitudes to nicknaming (two samples compared)

Options suggested as possible answers	2004–2007 (%)	2014 (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Bad	6	1	5	S
Bad rather than good	0	7.6	7.6	S
Neither good nor bad	23	62	24.5	S
Good rather than bad	37.5	19	18	S
Good	22	7.1	31.3	S
No answer	11.5	3.3	-	-

Considering the way school and university students approach this question (SD2), we observe the significant difference in both positive and negative evaluation of

nicknaming practices with higher percentage of negative answers and lower percentage of positive answers in the university subsample as compared to the school subsample (ref. Table 7). The difference can be due to the fact that university students, with their new social ambitions and aspirations, may perceive nicknaming practices as belonging to children's discourse, as a kind of infantile nomination.

The most frequent answer in both subsamples is 'neither good nor bad' (the difference is not significant at $\chi^2=2.4$, $p \leq 0,05$).

Table 7. Attitudes to nicknaming: university students vs school students (2014)

Options suggested as possible answers	University students (%)	School students (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Bad	0.9	1	0.01	NS
Bad rather than good	10.8	4	11.6	S
Neither good nor bad	67.6	56	2.4	NS
Good rather than bad	12.6	26	6.9	S
Good	1.8	13	9.6	S
No answer	6.3	0	-	-

Connotation

The aspect of connotation was approached by the second subject group only, so in this section a synchronic sociolinguistic view on the problem will be presented. School and university students, constituting the second subject group, were asked to label nicknames they mention in the questionnaire as affectionate; offensive; jocular; neutral.

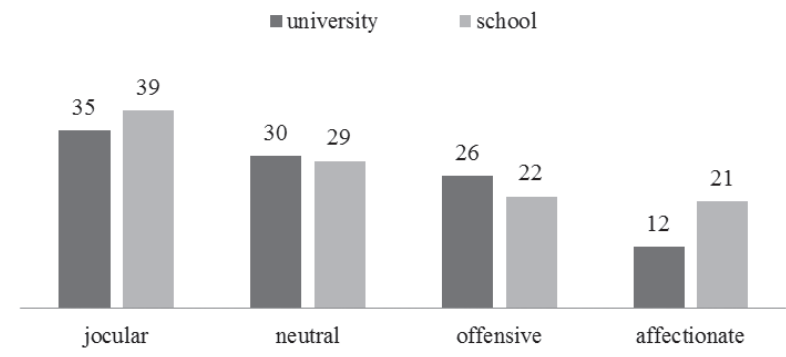


Fig. 4. Reported connotation of nicknames (2014,%)

The histogram (ref. Fig. 4) shows that in both samples the difference between the answers is not significant. In addition, offensive nicknames add up to approximately a quarter of all nicknames. The most frequent label is jocular – 35 and 39%, respectively. The difference between the university and school subsamples is not significant as to jocular, neutral, offensive types of connotation. The number of nicknames labelled as affectionate differs significantly between the two subsamples ($\chi^2=3.86$; $p\leq 0,05$). The difference can be due to the fact that affectionate nicknames, especially those from the sphere of family, are more popular among parents and children of school age.

Motivation

When analysing motivation of nicknames, I follow the principle of classification of names into internally and externally motivated, as proposed in Barley (1974) and Morgan et al. (1979).

Internally motivated nicknames

Internal factors have a linguistic nature and presuppose different modifications of a linguistic sign, traditional and occasional. Here belong derivatives, shortenings or abbreviations of names, patronyms and surnames.

The histogram (Fig. 5) shows the percentage of these nicknames in the two samples of data. In both cases it remains the most numerous group, with the slight tendency to decrease in SD2 (the difference is not significant, $\chi^2=2.07$; $p\leq 0,05$).

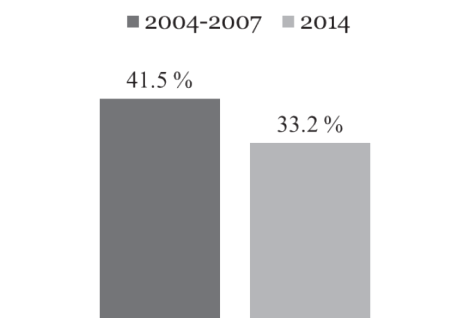


Fig. 5. Internally motivated nicknames in two samples compared

As internally motivated nicknames lack connection with the qualities of their bearers, they are often labelled neutral or affectionate:

- (1) *Semyonchick* / Семёнчик < surname *Semyonova* (affectionate nickname of a friend);
- (2) *Irinushka* / Иринушка < name *Irina*, a kind and nice teacher (affectionate);
- (3) *Kot* ('cat') < surname *Kotov* (neutral);
- (4) *Kazak* ('Cossack') < surname *Kazakov* (neutral).

Nicknames from this group can also be labelled jocular or derogatory. It happens when a nickname is based on a phonetic association of an official anthroponym (mostly a surname) with some common noun, which brings negative associations and can be treated as mockery:

- (5) *Vedro* ('bucket') < surname *Vedernikov* (jocular);
- (6) *Ishak* ('donkey') < surname *Ishshenko* (jocular);
- (7) *Baran* ('sheep/ram') < surname *Baranov* (offensive).

According to SD2, the majority of nicknames based on conventional anthroponyms are labelled neutral, the second largest group being jocular (ref. Fig. 6).

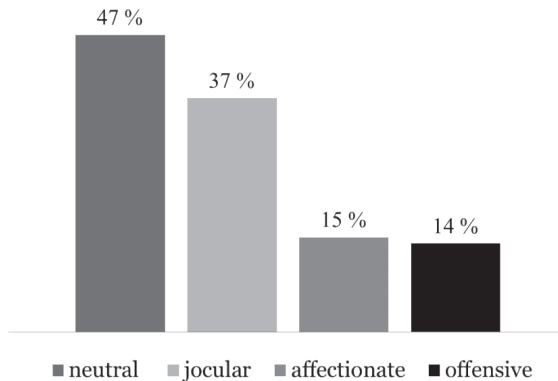


Fig. 6. Reported connotation of internally motivated nicknames (SD2, 2014)

Thus, when considering internally motivated nicknames it is necessary to distinguish between the two types of proper name transformations: those lacking inner form (meaningless nicknames, examples 1 and 2 above) and those obtaining meaning as a result of revived etymology (examples 3, 4, 5 and 7 above) or false etymology (example 6 above). Meaningful nicknames though lacking external connection with the name-bearer can develop strong associations with his/her qualities, based on etymological meaning and connotation, which adds creativity to nicknaming. However, there is a significant reduction in this type of intralinguistic nicknames in SD2 (ref. Table 8).

Table 8. Percentage of intralinguistic nicknames in the two samples of data

	2004–2007 (%)	2014 (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Meaningless nicknames	13	17	0.9	NS
Meaningful nicknames	29	16.3	9.9	S
χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	8.8	0.03		
The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)	S	NS		

Externally motivated nicknames

External factors generating a nickname are non-linguistic in nature (a person's appearance, behaviour etc.). Externally motivated nicknames express connotation more directly as they represent the name-giver's attempts to grasp a person's identity.

The obtained data show a slight increasing tendency in this group of nicknames as compared to internally motivated nominations (ref. Fig. 7). However, the difference is not significant for this sample of data ($\chi^2=1.4$; $p\leq 0,05$).

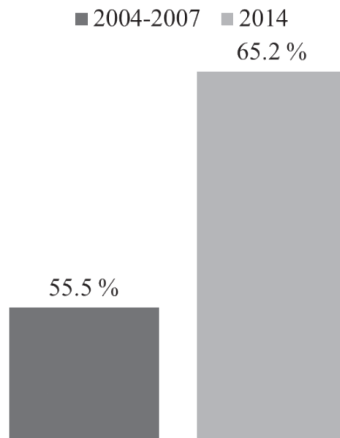


Fig. 7. Externally motivated nicknames in two samples compared

Especially valuable from the cultural perspective are external nicknames based on metaphorical mechanism, as metaphorical nomination is evaluative, culturally determined, linking a person's properties with objects from other spheres of life. Metonymic nominations can also be of interest as long as they represent culturally significant associations. Descriptions, directly nominating the quality, represent a type of external nicknames which requires less creativity from the name-giver and is less valuable for culturally-oriented research. As a result these nicknames form a basic, prototypical category of unconventional anthroponyms, universal across languages and cultures: *Fatty*, *Baldy*, *Shortie*, *Curley*, *Tall Guy* etc.

To observe possible dynamics within the group of externally motivated nicknames I will analyse nicknames based on a person's appearance as the second most frequent group in both samples of data (25.5% in SD1 as compared to 23% in SD2, the difference is not significant at $\chi^2=0.3$; $p\leq 0,05$).

With no significant difference in the proportion of external nicknames taken into account, I will consider this group in the compared samples of data in terms of their imaginary potential. Table 9 shows no significant changes in the percentage of nicknames based on metaphor, antonomasia and metonymy. However, there is a significant

reduction in the proportion of allusive nicknames as compared to a significant increase in the number of descriptive nicknames.

Table 9. Types of externally motivated nicknames in the group “Appearance” (two samples compared)

Formation principle	2004–2007 (%)	2014 (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Metaphor	53	46.5	0.9	NS
Antonomasia	14	12	0.3	NS
Allusion	25	11	17.8	S
Description	18	39	11.3	S
Metonymy	4	2	2	NS

Nicknames combining internal and external types of motivation

Borderline cases between internally and externally motivated nicknames represent hybrid nominations based on a combination of a person’s name and his qualities. As a rule this type of motivation is an example of linguistic game (pun, paronomasia) based on phonetic associations and folk etymology:

(8) *Kon'* (Horse/Конь) < surname *Konysheva* + wide smile;

(9) *TV* < abbreviation of the first name and parental name *Tatyana Victorovna* + hair sticking out like an antenna;

(10) *Microphone* < name *Mitrophan* + tall, skinny and stooping.

The data show that this group remains the least numerous with a slight tendency to extinction (ref. Fig. 8) as it requires creativity and wit from the name-giver, though the difference is not significant for the samples compared ($\chi^2=0.5$; $p \leq 0,05$).



Fig. 8. Percentage of nicknames combining internal and external types of motivation (two samples compared)

The type of motivation chosen by the name-giver predetermines the degree of

creativity of a nicknaming act. The following types of motivation are considered in this research as possessing creative potential: internally motivated nicknames, based on correct or false etymology; externally motivated nicknames based on metaphor, antonomasia, allusion, paronomasia; nicknames based on the combination of external and internal factors.

Table 9 shows the percentage of nicknames according to motivation in two samples of data. As a result, the difference in percentage across the two samples is significant only in the group of internally motivated meaningful nicknames displaying the tendency towards reduction. As it was pointed out above, reduction is also observed in the group of nicknames with combined motivation, though the difference is not significant. In fact, the only potentially “creative” group displaying a slight tendency to increase is the one based on secondary nomination (metaphor, metonymy, antonomasia, allusion, paronomasia, irony); however, the difference is not significant. In addition, there is an increase in the number of internally motivated meaningless nicknames and externally motivated descriptive nicknames, which are considered less creative (though the difference is not significant for the given samples).

Table 9. Sample distribution by the type of motivation

Type of motivation		2004–2007 (%)	2014 (%)	χ^2 ($p \leq 0,05$)	The difference is significant (S) / not significant (NS)
Internal motivation	Meaningless nicknames	13	17	0.9	NS
	Meaningful nicknames	29	16.3	9.9	S
External motivation	Descriptions	7.7	11	0.9	NS
	Metaphor, metonymy, antonomasia, allusion, paronomasia, irony	47.8	54.1	0.7	NS
Combined internal-external motivation		2.5	1.6	0.5	NS

Conclusion

The survey presented in this paper is a preliminary attempt to compare the two corpora of Russian nicknames obtained over the past decade (2004–2014).

The aspects of nicknaming practices analysed so far (frequency, spheres, functions, attitudes to nicknaming, connotation, motivation, gender distribution) led to some unexpected and contradictory conclusions.

First of all, my hypothesis about the reduction of characterising nicknames was not confirmed at least for the sample of data under consideration. On the contrary, quantitative analysis revealed a slight tendency towards increase of nicknames with extralinguistic motivation (58% in SD1 as compared to 66.7% in SD2). Moreover, the

characterising function of nicknames is mentioned more frequently in SD2 than by the respondents from the earlier sample.

Despite the fact that the amount of characterising nicknames seems to increase, we can observe a considerable reduction of creative nicknames based on appearance (96% in SD1 as compared to 71.5% in SD2, the difference is significant at $\chi^2=8.4$, $p\leq 0,05$).

The second observation is connected with the general reduction in the number of nicknames over the past decade. In my opinion, such results can be due to the changes in the nature of teenage interaction, which has become more virtual and less personalised. To confirm this proposition I refer to the functional potential of present-day nicknames and to the reported value of integrating function in particular, which is one of the lowest in both samples of data.

In addition, the following aspects of nicknaming practices need further consideration:

- a discrepancy between the amount of nicknames actually reported by the subjects and their opinions on the frequency of nicknaming practices (SD2);
- predominant functions and their influence on connotation: insult is reported as the most typical function of nicknames, which contradicts the number of nicknames labelled as offensive (the second smallest group in SD2) and the subjects' predominantly neutral to positive attitude to nicknaming practices (SD2);
- gender aspect of the name-giver and name-bearer: proportion of contemporary male and female nicknames in the Russian culture; gender-dependent types of motivation and connotation;
- culturally-determined shifts in groups of allusive and metaphorical nicknames.

Each of the highlighted items deserves a closer attention of the researcher and can be further expanded into a separate study about possible shifts in the sphere of values, attitudes and modes of social interaction.

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