APPELLATIVIZATION IN THE COLLOQUIAL-ARGOTIC LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The topic of the present work is represented by lexicalization in the colloquial-argotic language in Romanian. When a proper name loses its grammatical and orthographic feature (it is written with a small letter, the plural form is established, etc.), the phenomenon called appellativization (or lexicalization) occurs. Names of historical, mythological or literary characters become characteristic of the qualities or defects of a human type and are transformed into common names through antonomasia. In the colloquial-argotic language proper names which extended their signification from an object of a class to an entire class are also used. Some proper names in the colloquial-argotic language have some other values than individualization of beings, specializing to express certain meanings. Finally, a specific category of appellatives are "proper pseudonames", word play coined by the speakers with ironical or ludic intentions. Deonyms from the colloquial- argotic language denote the speaker's creativity and contribute to its expressivity.

Key words: *appellativization*, *lexicalization*, *proper names*, *deonym*, *eponym*

Résumé

Le thème de cet article est représenté par la lexicalisation dans le langage colloquial-argotique roumain. Quand un nom propre perd sa caractéristique grammaticale et orthographique (il est écrit avec une minuscule, on établit une forme de pluriel, etc.), il apparaît le phénomène appelé appellativisation (ou lexicalisation). Les noms de personnages historiques, mythologiques ou littéraires deviennent caractéristiques pour les qualités ou les défauts d'un type humain en se transformant en noms communs par antonomase. Dans le langage colloquial-argotique on utilise également des noms propres qui ont étendu leur signification d'un objet d'une classe à toute une classe. Certains noms propres du langage colloquial-argotique ont d'autres valeurs que l'individualisation des êtres, en se spécialisant pour exprimer certaines significations. Finalement, une certaine catégorie d'appellatifs représente des « pseudo-noms propres », jeu de mots créé par les locuteurs à intentions ironiques ou ludiques. Les déonymes du langage colloquial-argotique dénotent la créativité du locuteur et contribuent à son expressivité.

Mots-clés: *appellativisation, lexicalisation*, *noms propres, déonyme, éponyme*

Proper names are used to individualize beings, places, rivers, seas, oceans, mountains, constellations, etc.: *Mihai Brumă*, *Chișinău*, *Prut*, *Marea Neagră* (*the Black Sea*), *Oceanul Pacific* (*the Pacific Ocean*), *Carpați*, *Ursa-Mare*. Proper names are either formed within a language or are taken from other cultures. Each proper name can be deciphered in the language in which it was formed.

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Though it is considered that proper names are devoid of lexical meaning (a person who is named *Lupu* or *Ursu* does not correspond to the lexicographic definition of these words), some of them become symbolic in a given social or cultural context through frequency of use and special characteristics. When a proper name loses its grammatical and orthographic feature (it is written with a small letter, the plural form is established, etc.) the phenomenon called **appellativization** (or **lexicalization**) occurs, for example: *a păcală*, *a mitică* (human types designated with some characters' proper name); *a marghiloman* ("coffee boiled with rom or cognac", from the proper name [Mihai] Marghiloman), *a havană* ("a superior quality foil cigarette", after Havana, the capital of Cuba), *olandă* ("thick and thin high quality linen fabric, used in bed sheets and underwear manufacturing" – originally brought from Olanda [Holland]), *faianță* "faience, pottery" (from the city of Faenza), *șampanie* "champagne" (from the region Champagne) (objects named after their creator or after their place of origin); *newton, ohm, watt* (measurement units named after the scientists' names)*; xerox* "copier" (from the name of the firm *Xerox*), *adidași* "sport shoes" (from the German name *Adidas*) (commercial naming which over time has been extended from a specific brand of objects to a class of objects).

Some linguists call these words **deonyms** or **deonomastic** ones, terms through which the loss of the proper name quality is suggested[1], the others – **eponyms**[2] respectively. In Romanian linguistics, the term **eponym** is defined as "name of a place or a city originating from a person's name"[3], though some specialists[4] expand the lexeme signification, after the French and English model: "proper names which are the basis of common names" (for the distinction *deonym – eponym*, cf. Răileanu 2016). In the given work we will adopt the term **deonym** as being more representative.

Argot represents the "vocabulary of those initiated" of all time. This does not mean only the "language of villains", but the informal words and expressions specific to several social groups. The outstanding linguist Iorgu Iordan considered argot as the most important aspect of spoken language: "Argots of all kinds are characterized through the mood of the speaking subjects to express without any reticence and with the most proper resources, thoughts and feelings, whatever daring or contrary these will be to the conveniences imposed by civilization"[5].

Argot elements are part of the conventional language of some social groups that use special words not to be understood by the other speakers. Argot is preferred by the underworld (Interlopers), military men, students, pupils, etc. The comic-ludic, humoristic component is present in all unconventional languages (cf. *machior* [maker-up] "bully, hooligan", *ruladă* [roll] "a thrashing", *pirat* [pirat] "a policeman", *a pescui* [to fish] "to copy from someone else", *vampir* [vampire] "a very exigent professor"). Argot does not delimitate from the colloquial style in a clear way: it is known that an initial argotic expression either disappears from vocabulary as time passes or it is adopted by wider groups of speakers and tends to become familiar, gradually losing its argotic color.

We are going to refer to a distinct category of argot and colloquial language: appellatives derived from proper names or from deonyms.

[1] Avram, 1996; Enzo, 1982; Răileanu, 2016.
[2] Germa, 1993; Laiu-Despău, 2007.
[3] DTL, 1998.
[4] cf. Laiu-Despău, 2007.
[5] Iordan, 1975, p. 307.

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Names of historical, mythological or literary characters become characteristic of the qualities or defects of a human type and are transformed into common names through **antonomasia**, for example: *adonis* "a name given (after a legendary character from ancient times) to a very good-looking young man"; *păcală* "a joker" (after the name of a character from tales and fairytales); *lolită* "a seductive teenager; underage prostitute" (from Lolita, the name of a protagonist from Vladimir Nabokov's novel); *donjuan* "a man who is always in search of love affairs; a seductive man, philanderer" (after Don Juan, a famous nobleman who appears as a character in many works, including a comedy by Molière); *mitică* "a superficial and unserious person"(I.L. Caragiale's character); *caiafă* "1. double-tongued, hypocritical (man); 2. *(underworld argot)* informant; 3. *(underworld argot)* a thief" (allusion to the well-known Biblical character Caiafa, a great priest of Jews 18-36); *boscar* "*(reg.)* a conjuror; *(argot)* a fraud, rogue" (the word derives from the name of Bartolomeo Bosco (1793 – 1862), a famous (at his time) Italian prestidigitator, who had performances in Iasi 1826); *cerber* "1. a severe guardian; 2. NCO police in the order and security service" (a scary monster from the Greek mythology, Kerberos, a dog with three heads, which guarded the infernal gates); *dalilă* "1. a betrayer, treacherous and fatal woman who can destroy the most powerful men"; 2. a prostitute" (a biblical character); *dulcinee* "a(n) (ironically) loved woman, a woman who is the object of a ridiculous love" (Dulcineea – a literary character, Don Quijote' ideal mistress); *figaro* "*(fam.)* a hairdresser, a barber; a clever man" (Figaro – the character from "The Barber of Seville" and from "Figaro's Wedding" by Beaumarchais); *flaimuc/flaimoc* "*(pop.)* a stupid man, dolt, blockhead" (name of a burlesque character, the German doctor Flaimuc, created by Vasile Alecsandri); *gasper* "1. *(fam.)* a gypsy; 2. a go-getter, skillful man, expert in financial problems; 3. a man with great success with women" (from the proper name Gaspar, the traditional popular name of one of those three philanders from East, a king of India with dark hair and skin); *grobian* "rough, boor, churl, unmannerly" (after St. Grobianus, the boss of boors, a character invented by the German writer Sebastian Brant in *The Ship of Fools* (1494), a satirical allegory where a ship full of insane people and headed by them sails to Narragonia "fools' paradise"; several German authors from the 15th and the 16th centuries retrieved and popularized the character as a boorishness symbol); *iudă* "a traitor, double-faced, false person" (referring to Judas Iscariot, one of Christ's twelve apostles); *julietă* "a mistress" (the name of well-known literary character created by Shakespeare in 1594); *mesalină* "a prostitute" (after Valery Messalina (c. 18-48), Roman king Claudius' wife, known for his fornication and cruelty); *tarzan* "*(fam.)* a skilled man, strong man" (after Tarzan, the famous hero from Edgar Rice Burroughs' novels (1875-1950), popularized in the animations and in several screenings); *Godzila* (or *Godzilla*, *godzila*) "a (human) animal, whopper" (after the name of the monster from several movies); *lache* "1. a stupid man, perplex"; 2. a passive homosexual" (the character created by I. L. Caragiale); *Garcea* (or *garcea*) "(iron.) a stupid policeman" (after the name of a TV comedy character).

Here *berilă* (or *Berilă*) is also included "1. a person with numerous long-time convictions, who spent his life in several prisons; 2. a minor or a young man who spent a lot of time in a rehabilitation institute", the appellative known especially from the expression *a face închisoare cu* (or *cât*) *berilă* ("to be convicted with (or like) *berilă*") "to serve numerous and long-term convictions; to spend most of one's life in prisons". The proper name belongs to a real character, evoked by the media and by several texts

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issued by the police: Andrei Berilă, a serial killer from the 1930s. His life conviction was well-known during that period of time and it was the maximum mark for a hyperbolic evaluation of a time period[6]. Further the transfer between the terms *jail* and *army* occurred: *(a face) armată cât Berilă* "(to make/enlist) in the army as long as Berilă" (a very long period), and later the formula extended, specializing for the quantitative-intensification signification "long-time": *a sta la coadă ca berilă* ("to stay in line as berilă") or only "more": *a plăti cât berilă* ("to pay as much as berilă"), *a mânca cât berilă* ("to eat like berilă"), *a bea cât berilă* ("to drink like berilă"), *a munci ca berilă* ("to work like berilă").

The online argot dictionary *123urban.ro* provides for *Berilă* the definition "a stupid man" and an illustration: „Dacă *stai ca berilă* și nu faci nimic, nici nu o să se întâmple nimic" ("If you *stay like Berilă* and do nothing, nothing will happen"). It is possible that the meaning "stupid" was recoined by the speakers from the concrete contexts, from the numerous sentences in which the excessive actions are described. The one that drinks, eats and especially works too much is a ridiculous character, the comparison to *Berilă* becoming equivalent to the expression "like a stupid man". Thereby, Rodica Zafiu states that "the convicted murderer is metamorphosing in a symbol of work or in a stupidity etalon"[7].

In the colloquial-argotic language **proper names which extended their signification from an object of a class to an entire class** are also used, for example: Malamuc, a place where a hospice was, became *balamuc*, a synonym of "hospice"; Gherla, a place where a famous prison is, became the common name *gherlă* in the colloquial-argotic language being synonymous with "jail"; *macarenco*, in the argot of convicts has the meaning of "jail" (after the name of Anton Semionovici Makarenko (1888-1939), a Russian writer and teacher, one of the founders of the communist educational method based on the collectivity exigencies; the first who led several work colonies for reeducation of minor delinquents); from the name of the city Brașov *brașoavă* derives "a twaddle, lie, fiddlestick" (one time *brașoavele* were some kind of bagels with salt which were produced in Brașov); *chivuță* "a woman (usually gipsy) who whitewashes the houses with the brush" (from the proper name *Chivuța*, the hypocoristic form for *Paraschiva*).

The words *friț* "*(pejor.)* German" (after *Fritz*, traditional hypocoristic from *Friedrih*, a widespread masculine first name); *ivan* "*(pejor.)* Russian" also belongs to this category (based on the idea that *Ivan* is the most widespread Russian masculine first name, as well as *Natașa*, the most widespread Russian feminine first name); *gabor* „1. a gipsy from Transylvania; 2. a policeman; 3. a guardian" (from the masculine name *Gabor*, the Magyar variant of the first name *Gabriel*).

Commercial names also fall within this category which, over time, extended their semantic field from certain brand objects to an entire class of objects: *drujbă* "mechanical manual saws" (from the Russian proper name *Дружба*); *adidași* "sport shoes" (derive from the name of the German company *Adidas*), *pampers* "diaper" (from the name of the product, which was lexicalized); *kalașnikov* "a machine gun fabricated in Russia" (after the name of Mihail Timofeevici Kalașnikov, a famous engineer and manufacturer of AK-47 light firearms); *doxă* "mind, skill, cleverness" (after the well-

[6] Cf. Zafiu 2010, p. 109.
[7] *Ibidem*, p. 111.

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known Swiss watches created by the company *Doxa*, famous for their precision and exceptional quality); *egări* "tights (for woman) pants" (after *Jaeger*, an English company of clothing products; named after Dr. Gustav Jaeger (1831-1917), a German professor of zoology and physiology at the University of Stuttgart who promoted a "scientific theory" referring to the hygienic benefits of wool-made clothes worn directly on skin); *țais* "formidable, excellent; amazing" (the word refers to optical instruments produced by the German company *Zeiss*, famous for their precision and exceptional quality; the company was founded in Jena in 1846 by the German optician and mechanic Carl Zeiss, 1816-1888).

Some proper names in the colloquial-argotic language have **some other values** than individualization of beings, specializing to express certain meanings: in the underworld language, *Arsene* (or *Arseni*) means a code name used to announce a probable danger; the lexeme represents a word play, a funny contamination between the verb *a se arde* (*ne-am ars!*) [to burn; we got burned!] and the proper name *Arsene*. The name *Alecu* is registered with the same value.

The name *Radu* from the expression *Radu l-a chemat!* [Radu called him!] is also a funny allusion to the verb *a o rade* "to run, to disappear". Iorgu Iordan explained the expression *Radu l-a chemat* [Radu called him] similarly, where the proper name overlaps the imperative *rade-o!* [Run!] (Iordan 1975: 320). *Valencia* has a close meaning which in teenagers' language means "run!, disappear!" (a funny contamination with *valea!* [scram!]).

The deonyms *Georgică* and *Timișoara* are used with the meaning of "a rubber stick" together with the other terms in the prisoners' language.

Some appellatives derived from proper names designate drugs in the addicts' language: *Jimmi* "cocaine", *Harry* "heroin", *Mari*, *Maria*, *Maria-Ioana*, *Marie*, *Marie-Jeanne* "marijuana".

In the colloquial style *Roza* (or *Tanti Roza*) designates *sclerosis* in the ironical allusions and reproaches regarding the forgetfulness of some things.

We also mention here some names that became generic anthroponyms, usually depreciative, pejorative, being substitutes of "dump, stupid": *Gigel* (or *gigel*), *ghiță*, *Gogu* (or *gogu*), hypocoristic form after *Gheorghe*; *Bulă*, *Grigore* (or *grigore*), *guță*, *tândală*, *tilică*. As an argotic term, *gigel* has the sense of "gigolo, a man who has sex for money".

The first name *Dorel* became "viral" after the commercial series of the cognac "Unirea" several years ago, it was transformed in the common name of the clumsy and unlucky worker: „Biserică veche de 250 de ani distrusă de un *Dorel*!" ("A 250-year old church destroyed by a *Dorel*!") (http://spynews.ro); „Au şi italienii *un Dorel* al lor!" ("Italians have their own *Dorel*!") (www.b1.ro); „*Doreii* de Rusia toarnă asfalt pe zăpadă" ("Russian *Doreii* pour asphalt on the snow") (www.220.ro).

Finally, a specific category of appellatives are "proper pseudonames", word play coined by the speakers with ironical or ludic intentions. The proper name either preexists and it is used with the intention to recall a common name or it is coined from the common name: *atârnache* "outsider", *străinache* "stranger", *șestache* "ambush", *dilimache* "loony", *mache* "drunk", *bulache* "naive man", the lexemes formed with the ironic-depreciative or funny suffix *-ache*. The other onomastic suffixes are *-eanu*: *vinuleanu* "wine", *goldeanu* "gold" and *-escu*: *a merge cu blătescu* "to go with someone's help", *învoire de la maiorul Gărdescu* "an escape from military units through jumping the

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fence", *priponescu* "prison". Some ironic or pejorative appellatives imitate the formula first name + name: *Gigi Mușchea* "a huge and strong man", *Gică Contra* "a person who is always against any actions", *Gigi Duru'* "a man who considers himself to have exceptional qualities and wants to look important, remarkable", *Gigi Pălămidă* "a jerk, despicable person".

Deonyms from the colloquial-argotic language denote the speaker's creativity and contribute to its expressivity.

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