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Functions of characters' proper names in television series: Theoretical outline

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Functions of characters' proper names in television series: Theoretical outline

Abstract: In this article, the author concentrates on the issue of functions served by characters' proper names in television series. To identify the said functions, she uses the theory of two acts. Her conclusions include two lists of functions that the proper names can serve. The first type of functions are served from the moment of naming and the other in individual uses of the names.

Keywords: Onomastics, characters' proper names, functions, television series.

Fonctions des noms propres des personnages dans les séries télévisées : aperçu théorique

Résumé : L'auteur traite en particulier la question des fonctions remplies par les noms propres des personnages dans les séries télévisées. Pour identifier ces fonctions, elle utilise la théorie de deux actes. Ses conclusions comportent deux listes de fonctions que peuvent remplir les noms propres. Le premier type

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fonctionnel est servi à partir du moment de la désignation et l'autre dans les utilisations individuelles des noms.

Mots-clés : Onomastique, noms propres des personnages, fonctions onomastiques, séries télévisées.

Funktionen der Eigennamen von Charakteren in Fernsehserien: Theoretischer Überblick

Zusammenfassung: In diesem Artikel konzentriert sich die Autorin auf die Frage der Funktionen, die von den Eigennamen der Charaktere in Fernsehserien erfüllt werden. Um die genannten Funktionen zu identifizieren, nutzt sie die Theorie von zwei Akten. Ihre Schlussfolgerungen umfassen zwei Listen von Funktionen, denen die Eigennamen erfüllen können. Die erste Art von Funktionen wird ab dem Zeitpunkt der Benennung erfüllt. Die anderen Funktionen werden bei der individuellen Benutzung der Namen erfüllt.

Schlüsselbegriffe: Onomastik, Eigennamen der Charaktere, Funktionen, Fernsehserie.

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Functions of characters' proper names in television series: Theoretical outline

MARTYNA KATARZYNA GIBKA

1. Introductory remarks

In the last decades, television series (fictional shows released in episodes which follow a narrative) were rapidly growing in popularity, which resulted in their increased production. This affected not only the technical quality, but also the complexity of the plot and the development of the characters. Nonetheless, proper names in television series have been a subject of very few studies. Among these, one should mention works by Bugheșiu (2018), Husevåg (2018), Naruszewicz-Duchlińska (2016a, 2016b) and Gibka (2016, 2017). This article's aim is to initiate the studies of functions served by characters' proper names in television series[1]. The tools provided in this work can be used to analyse the functions of *nomina propria* of fictional figures in any television series in its original language version or a translation[2].

2. The theory of two acts

The theory of two acts is a theoretical approach which enables the study of functions of proper names in onomastics of fictional worlds. It was first created for the novel and was based on the naming act and the act of using a proper name (Gibka 2018 and 2019). Such a choice allows the analysis of functions important at the moment of naming and of functions emerging only later, due to the circumstances in which the name is used. The latter functions usually last only for the length of one use of the name. The basic naming act in the novel is illustrated in the diagram in Figure 1.

[1] This study is devoted only to fictional shows (regardless of the number of episodes) and the non-fictional shows, cinematic universes and online diaries lie beyond its scope.

[2] Characters' proper names are sometimes translated and sometimes not. In both cases, the names can preserve the functions they served in the original and serve them also in the translation. However, they can also lose these functions are the functions might be changed. An interesting situation occurs also when the appellation serves more than one function in the original.

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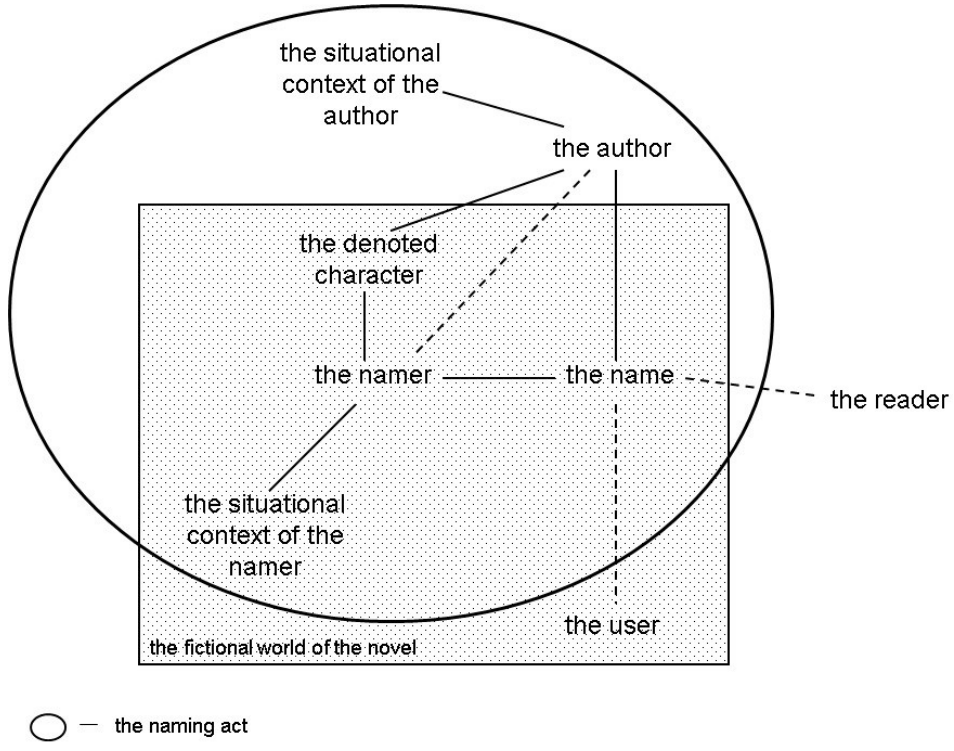


Figure 1: The model of the basic naming act in a novel (see Diagram II.1.1 in Gibka 2019)

The above model consists of eight elements, five of which belong to the fictional world of the novel and three are parts of the real world. On the basis of this model, the permanent function of proper names was defined as a role the name serves in relation to a given element of the naming act in the novel (Gibka 2019: 52). Eight relations have been identified, some of them involve only the fictional world, but some cross the boundary of this world and connect the name with an element from the real world. In these relations, twelve permanent functions were defined (compare Gibka 2019: 52–53). On the other hand, the momentary functions were defined on the basis of the model of the act of using a proper name in a novel (see Figure 2).

This model includes not eight but nine elements, so nine relations the name can enter were identified. The momentary function of a character's proper name was defined as a role the name serves in relation to a given element of the act of using a proper name in a novel (Gibka 2019: 66–67). In the nine relations (also involving one or two worlds) eight momentary functions were and defined (compare Gibka 2019: 67–68).

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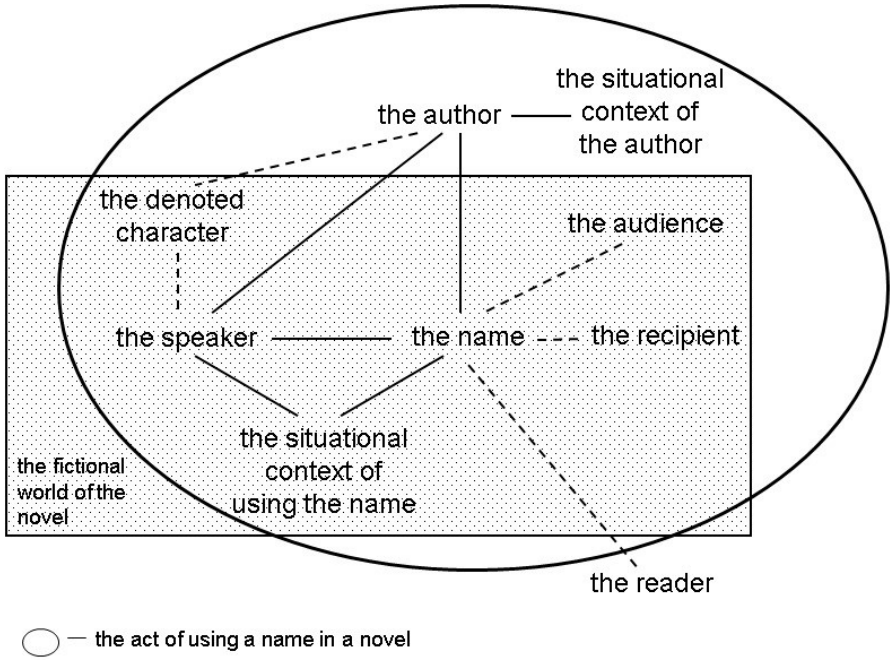


Figure 2: The model of the basic act of using a name in a novel
(compare Diagram II.2.1 in Gibka 2019)

What is more, the theory of two acts allows the analysis of functions served by characters' proper names in a novel within which a fictional figure creates a literary work and into which proper names from other literary works published in the non-literary world are taken over. For these examinations, more elaborate models of the two acts are needed (see chapters II.1.3, II.2.3 and II.2.5 in Gibka 2019).

3. Functions of characters' proper names in television series

Like in a novel, in a television series a fictional world is presented. A scholar of the onymic stratum can completely access a part of this world, but will never have access to the whole of it. Therefore, he can examine the whole accessible "life of proper names" in this fictional universe, all uses of the names to which he is to have access are presented in the series; yet, he will never reach any uses not shown in the series. The situation is therefore analogical to that in a novel, so the choice of acts can be the same. However, the models themselves will not be identical[3].

[3] The case becomes more complicated when examining silent television series. The models of the acts and lists of functions can remain the same. However, some relations (for instance name : speaker, name : addressee, name : audience) become less direct than in the case of series with sound.

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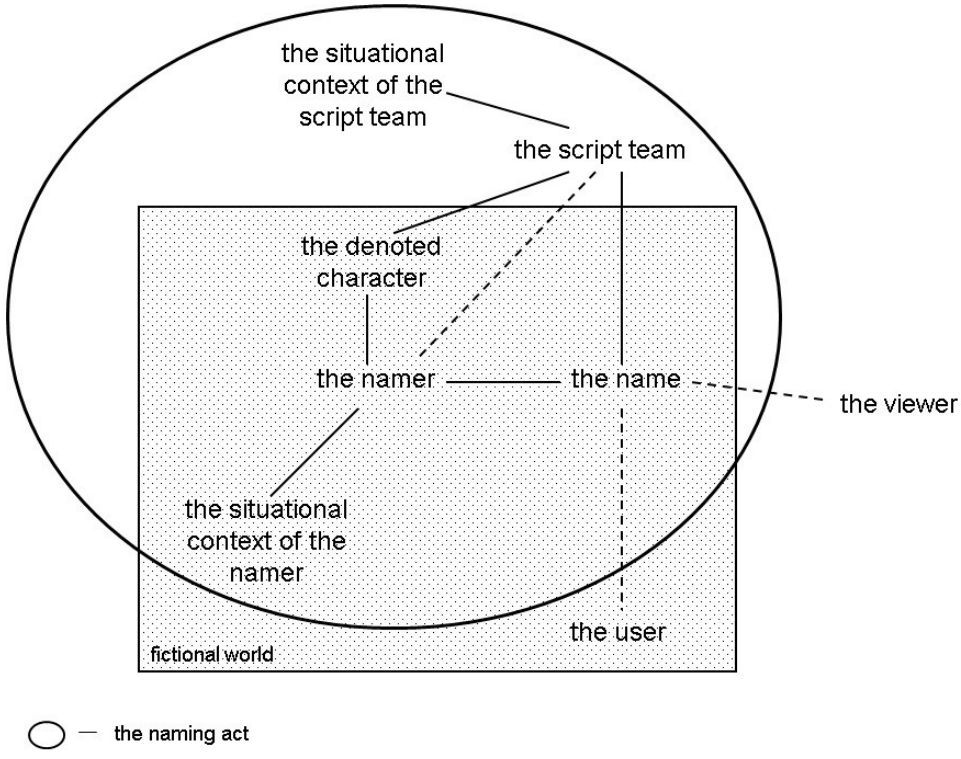


Figure 3: The model of the naming act in a television series

The term the name signifies the proper name which is given to a fictional figure (the denoted character). The fictional figure who gives the name is the namer (this entity is not always directly revealed). Then the situational context of the namer is understood as the set of all circumstances in the fictional world (e.g. physical, psychological, social) which surround the act of naming[4]. The last element of the fictional world which needs to be included in the act is the user. This term encompasses all fictional characters from the universe of the series even though the majority of them is not present at the moment of naming. The remaining elements of the act belong to the real world. The term the script team includes all people (nowadays it is

[4] This understanding of the term situational context of the namer is based on Ducrot & Todorov's definition of speech situation: "The set of circumstances surrounding the occurrence of an act of enunciation […] By this we mean at once the physical and social setting in which the act takes place, the identity of the interlocutors, their image of the act of enunciation, their views of each other (including the idea each has of what the other thinks of him), the events that have preceded the act of enunciation (especially the previous relations between the interlocutors and in particular the verbal exchange in the course of which the enunciative act in question takes place)" (1979: 333).

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rarely just one person) who have influence on the content of the series, the characters, their names, the plot etc. The situational context of the script team signifies all circumstances surrounding the creation of characters (inter alia inventing or choosing their names, naming) and the writing of the script. Finally, the viewer encompasses all people who will watch the television series. Analogously to the user, the viewer is also absent at the moment of the naming, therefore the line joining him with the name is not solid[5].

In a television series, there appear two types of naming a character. Firstly, a fictional figure who does not have a proper name yet can receive one. Secondly, another proper name can be given to a character who has been named. The naming of the first type occurs as follows: (1) the script team creates a fictional figure who, due to his prominence in the series, must be named; (2) the script team distinguishes (or creates) some motivational features (in the denoted character, a situational context or the name); (3) these characteristics become the incentive for giving the character the name, the script team names the character; (4) the name is used by fictional figures in the series; (5) the viewer meets the name. The second type of naming differs from the first in that as its result the number of named characters does not increase. Moreover, nearly always the namer is directly revealed and the act itself often occurs in the plot of the series.

On the basis of the above naming act, the function of a character's proper name in a television series can be defined as a role which the name serves in relation to a given element of the act. The primary function of the names in question is the identifying-differential function. It is served by every onymic unit, as the unit identifies a fictional figure and allows his differentiation from other entities of the same kind (other characters) (compare Kosyl 1992: 50). Due to the fact that this function is served by all proper names, it will not be analysed here in greater detail. The other functions (the secondary functions – roles which can but do not have to be served by characters' proper names in television series) are shown in Table 1.

Because the presented naming act consists of eight elements, a character's proper name in a television series can serve functions in eight relations[6]. The list of functions in Table 1 does not have to be exhaustive. Its creation included two processes: the answering of the question of what functions a character's proper name in a television series could serve and examinations of characters' proper names in chosen series. New functions can be added to the table provided that they are defined as roles served by the names in relations to elements of the naming act.

[5] Compare chapter I.1.1. in Gibka 2019.

[6] The situation can change if changes are made to the structure of the model of the naming act.

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Table 1: The secondary functions of characters' proper names in a television series

	The relation	**The worlds which the relation involves**	**The functions**
1.	NAME : DENOTED CHARACTER	fictional	semantic, sociological, conative
2.	NAME : NAMER	fictional	expressive, desirous
3.	NAME : SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE NAMER	fictional	allusive, commemorative
4.	NAME : NAME	fictional	poetic
5.	NAME : USER	fictional	humorous, conative, didactic-educative, camouflaging
6.	NAME: SCRIPT TEAM	fictional and real	expressive
7.	NAME: SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE SCRIPT TEAM	fictional and real	localizing, allusive, commemorative
8.	NAME: VIEWER	fictional and real	humorous, conative, didactic-educative, camouflaging

Although some functions (e.g. conative or expressive) are served in more than one relation, the definitions of the functions will be organised by relations. The reason for this is the definition of the function of a character's proper name in a television series.

In relation to the denoted character, the name can serve three functions. The semantic one is served by a proper name which characterizes the fictional figure it denotes "according to the metaphoric or the literal meaning of the name" (Wilkoń 1970: 83). The sociological function appears when characters' proper names indicate their social, group or national affiliation (Wilkoń 1970: 83) or express or suggest their social position (Kuffner-Obrzut 2003: 493). Finally, the conative function occurs when the onym causes the denoted character to react (Gibka 2019: 54).

Then, in the relation to the namer, the expressive and desirous functions can occur. The first can be explained as "the use of a [character's] proper name as a sign voicing certain emotions and emotional undertone" (Wilkoń 1970: 105) of the namer for the denoted character or the name. On the other hand, the desirous function appears when the analysed *nomina propria* reveal characteristics which the namer wanted the denoted character to have (Gibka 2019: 55).

Next, the allusive and commemorative functions can be served by characters' proper names in relation to the situational context of the namer. Names used "as more or less ciphered allusions" (Wilkoń 1970: 83) to other characters serve the first of the two functions and names commemorating entities from the fictional world of the television series serve the latter (compare Gibka 2019: 55).

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The relation of the name to itself brings to the analysis the poetic function. It occurs when proper names "do not refer to other elements of the naming act, but keep THE RECIPIENT's attention on their structure" (Rutkowski 2001: 100). Thus, it is performed by "names whose internal organisation is of an exceptional kind, which attracts attention to the name's linguistic form in the first instance" (Rutkowski 2001: 100–101).

Subsequently, four functions can be served in relation to the user. The first one, the humorous, emerges when the name amuses the character who uses it. The second, the conative, occurs when the user reacts to the name or acts because of it. The third, the didactic-educative, is fulfilled when characters' proper names enrich or preserve the user's knowledge (Kęsikowa 1988: 81). It appears when the user meets *nomina propria* which denote historical figures. Lastly, the camouflaging function is when by the name conceals the identity of the denoted character from all or some fictional figures[7].

Analogously to the relation to the namer, in relation to the script team the discussed proper names can serve the expressive function. It emerges when the voiced emotions for the denoted character or the name are those of the script team and not of the namer.

In relation of the name to the situational context of the script team three functions can emerge. First, exactly like in relation to the situational context of the namer the allusive and the commemorative functions can be served. The difference is that the allusions coded in the names are not to fictional figures, but people from the real world. The same is true for the commemoration of entities. Then, the localising function occurs when a character's proper name sets "the plot [of the series] in a specified time or place" (Wilkoń 1970: 83).

In the last of the relations listed in Table 1, the relation to the viewer, the analysed *nomina propria* can serve the humorous, conative, didactic-educative and camouflaging functions. The first one appears when the name amuses the viewer. It cannot, however, be examined as easily as in the case of the user because the study would require a review of the reactions of all the viewers of the series. Therefore, another solution to this issue has been proposed, namely to analyse humour as a characteristic of the text constituted by the name. A typology of humorous characters' proper names proposed by Gibka & Rutkowski (2015: 169–182) consists of five categories.

1. Proper names which sound identically to common nouns (the incongruity meaningless-meaningful emerges).
2. Names from the first category that appear in contexts reinforcing their humorous element ("a catalyst", Lew 2000: 131).

[7] In earlier research on literary onomastics, the camouflaging function was understood differently. It was "assigned to names in literary works, behind which some authentic people, who are known to the writer, are hidden" (Siwiec 1998: 150).

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3. *Nomina propria* with the neutral-not neutral incongruity (names referring to certain semantic fields, for instance the scatology or sexuality).
4. Appellations depreciating the characters they denote.
5. (Mis)matched clusters of proper names from the previous categories (Gibka & Rutkowski 2015: 169–182).

Then, the conative function is served by characters' proper names which cause the viewer to react or act. The didactic-educative function emerges when the name enriches or preserves the viewer's knowledge. Finally, the camouflaging function occurs when the name conceals the identity of the denoted character from the viewer.

Because the functions described above are served from the moment of naming and are not dependent on the circumstances in which the name is used, they are called the permanent functions. Nevertheless, characters' proper names in television series can serve not only these functions, but also functions which appear only at the moment of individual uses of the appellations. This second group of functions is called momentary. Their identification is based on the act of using a proper name in a television series (Figure 4).

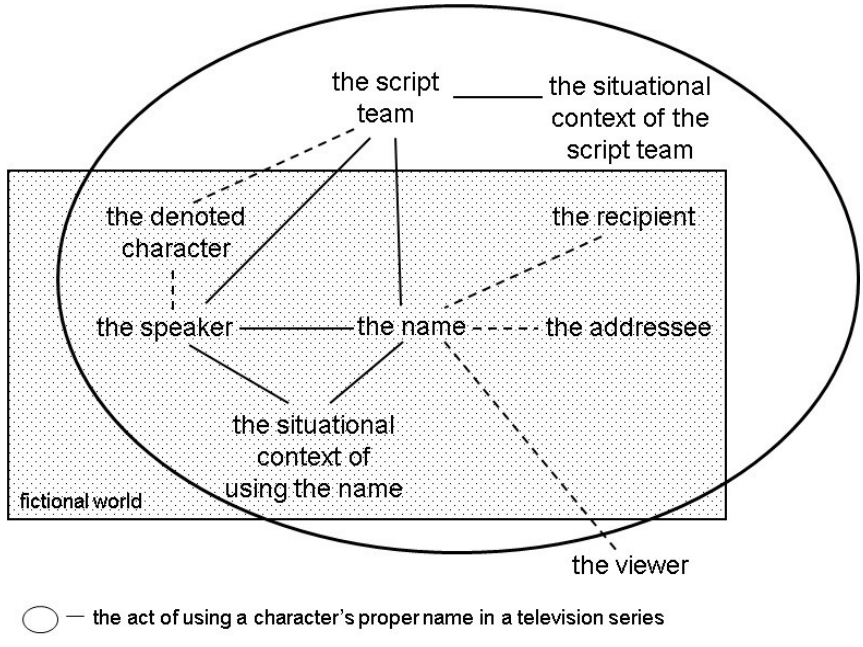


Figure 4: The model of the act of using a character's proper name in a television series

Some elements of this act are analogous to the elements of the naming act (Figure 3). The name is the onymic entity uttered by a fictional character (the speaker). The denoted character is the person whose name is used. The situational context of using the name is understood as the set of all circumstances

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surrounding the act. On the other hand, the addressee is the character(s) to whom the act is directed and the recipient is the fictional figure(s) who witness the act. The script team again signifies the people who decide about the content of the television series and their situational context refers to the circumstances surrounding the process of creating the script. Finally, the term viewer encompasses all people who will watch the series. The dashed lines connect the elements of the act which are not necessary for its occurrence.

Based on the above act of using a character's proper name, the momentary function of that name was defined as a role the appellation serves in relation to a given element of the act. Since permanent functions occur in every use of the proper name, they will not be discussed here again. The only functions to be identified as momentary are those which appear only in individual uses of the names. Their list is presented in Table 2.

The act of using a character's proper name in a television series consist of nine elements, thus the appellations can serve momentary functions in nine relations[8]. As the list of permanent functions, the following list does not have to be exhaustive. New momentary functions can be added provided that they are identified according to the definition proposed in this work. The set of momentary functions was created in the same manner as that of permanent ones.

Table 2: The momentary secondary functions of characters' proper names in a television series

	The relation	**The worlds which the relation involves**	**The functions**
1.	NAME : SPEAKER	fictional	sociological, expressive, humorous, camouflaging, revealing
2.	NAME : NAME	fictional	poetic
3.	NAME : SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF USING THE NAME	fictional	conative
4.	NAME : DENOTED CHARACTER	fictional	semantic, sociological, humorous, conative, camouflaging
5.	NAME: ADDRESSEE	fictional	humorous, conative, camouflaging
6.	NAME: RECIPIENT	fictional	humorous, conative, camouflaging
7.	NAME: SCRIPT TEAM	fictional and real	expressive
8.	NAME: SITUATIONAL CONTEXT OF THE SCRIPT TEAM	fictional and real	–
9.	NAME: VIEWER	fictional and real	humorous, conative, camouflaging

[8] Exactly as in the case of permanent functions, the number of relations in Table 2 will change if the structure of the model of the act of using a character's proper name in a television series is altered.

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The definitions of many of the above functions differ from the definitions of their permanent namesakes only in the respect of duration (and therefore the act on the basis of which they were identified) and of the relation in which they are served, so they will not be defined here once more. This group of functions which do not need redefining includes the sociological, expressive, humorous, poetic, conative and semantic functions.

On the contrary, the momentary camouflaging function needs a new definition. It can occur in a number of ways. In relation to the speaker and to the viewer, this function emerges when the name hides the identity of its denoted character from the speaker and the viewer respectively. In relation to the denoted character, the function is served when the name conceals the identity of the speaker or information about him (for example when a first name is used instead of a surname). Then, in relation to the addressee and to the recipient, the camouflaging function appears when the character's proper name hides the identity of the denoted character or the speaker (and/or information about him) from the given elements of the act.

Finally, the revealing function is somewhat the opposite of the camouflaging function. It is served by the name which discloses some information about the speaker (for instance his speech impediments or intellectual disabilities).

4. Conclusions

The theory of two acts enables the analysis of functions of characters' proper names in a novel (Gibka 2018 and 2019). In this article, it was shown that the theory can also be used for the study of the functions of characters' proper names in television series. For this purpose, the adapted models of the acts of naming and of using a proper name were created. The original models could not have been used because they were prepared for the structure of the novel which is different from that of a television series. In the naming act in a novel, the author, his situational context and the reader needed to included. Whereas in the naming act in a television series, these elements do not appear. Instead, there are three other elements: the script team, its situational context and the viewer. Analogous changes occur in the model of the act of using a name in a television series. Once again the author, his situational context and the reader are replaced with the script team, its situational context and the viewer.

The identified functions belong to two groups: permanent and momentary. On the basis of the naming act in a television series, twelve permanent functions which can emerge in twenty variants (depending on the relations) have been identified. On the other hand, based on the act of using a character's proper name, the study yielded eight momentary function which can be served in twenty-two variants (again dependent on the relations). Characters' appellations

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in television series serve the permanent functions from the moment of naming and the momentary functions in particular uses of the names.

The specification of the theoretical basis for the analysis of functions served by characters' proper names in television series and the creation of tools for this analysis allows the conducting of studies of individual episodes and series. Hence, comparative analyses of, for instance, different language versions of a television series are also possible. These studies can include not only subtitles, but also dubbing and voice-over. They will in turn result in greater knowledge of the nature of functions and of their sources and will consequently yield methods for preserving these functions in translation.

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