THE ONOMASTIC VOCABULARY AS THE CULTURAL LACUNARITY MARKER

Onomastic vocabulary, as a linguistic research object, has for a long time been on the periphery and received insufficient researchers’ attention. The anthropocentric approach to the surrounding reality phenomena investigation enables this section of the vocabulary to be studied from the language and culture relationship point of view. Onomastic vocabulary in this case appears to be a translator of cultural information, a carrier of people national-specific features and ethnic identity. The linguocultural study of onomastic vocabulary as a cultural lacunarity marker seems to be relevant and widens research opportunities for proper names translating and contrasting studies. Thus, the onomastic vocabulary is subjectively studied via culturally-specific semantic features. The paper aims at investigating the onomastic vocabulary as a cultural lacunarity marker. Research objectives are to consider the concept of onomastic vocabulary and of cultural lacunarity; to analyze the onomastic vocabulary cultural specifics; to investigate the culture specific onomastic vocabulary in «The Master and Margarita» by M. Bulgakov. The paper exploits the contrasting analysis method to identify and characterize the onymyc lacunae on the material of «The Master and Margarita» by M. Bulgakov translated into English. The culture-specific information of a proper name can be extracted by means of complete linguo-cognitive analysis of a whole concept constituents’ inventory that is a profound study of notion, value, image, association and interpretational aspect in terms of comprehension and translation. This type of analysis appears to be crucial for onomastic vocabulary translating in fiction. The onomastic vocabulary by Bulgakov refers to the semantic motivation type and appear to be «undeciphered» (by translators) lacunas in the novel’s translations. The study proves the idea of onomastic vocabulary being a cultural lacunarity marker.

Keywords: onomastic vocabulary, lacunarity marker, lacunae, culture-specific, onym, proper name.
разрабатывающих вопросы связи языка и культуры. Ономастика в этом случае представляется транслятором культурной информации, носителем национально-специфических черт народа, его этнического своеобразия. Изучение ономастики как маркера культурной лакунарности, с позиций лингвокультурологии, представляется актуальным и открывает широкие исследовательские возможности, в том числе в аспекте перевода имен собственных в художественных произведениях и сопоставительного анализа в условиях межкультурной коммуникации. Цель исследования — изучение ономастики как маркера культурной лакунарности на материале ономастики романа М. М. Булгакова «Мастер и Маргарита». Поставленная цель определяет следующие задачи исследования: рассмотреть понятие ономастики; рассмотреть понятие культурной лакунарности; проанализировать культурную специфику ономастики; изучить культурную специфику ономастики в романе М. М. Булгакова «Мастер и Маргарита». В статье используется метод сопоставительного анализа для выявления и культурных характеристик онимических лакун в переводах романа на английский язык. Выявление культурно-специфичных особенностей имени собственного осуществляется при помощи лингвокогнитивного анализа компонентов номастики и, именем которого является имя собственное. Подобного рода анализ представляется необходимым в условиях перевода. Имена собственные в романе М. Булгакова являются семантически-мотивированными и в переводах на английский язык их основы остаются не дешифрованными, т.е. культурными лакунами. Проведенное исследование позволяет сделать вывод о способности ономастики выступать в качестве маркера культурной лакунарности. 

Ключевые слова: ономастика, имя собственное, лакунарность, лакуна, оним, маркер лакунарности.

Introduction

The idea of language and culture adhesion is quite popular in modern Russian linguistics. The vocabulary is considered to be the most culturally loaded part of any language system. Onomastic vocabulary, as a linguistic research object, has for a long time been on the periphery and received insufficient researchers’ attention. The anthropocentric approach to the surrounding reality phenomena investigation enables this section of the vocabulary to be studied from the language and culture relationship point of view. Onomastic vocabulary in this case appears to be a translator of cultural information, a carrier of people national-specific features and ethnic identity. The nature of proper names in a particular linguocultural community is determined by the people's ideas of the world structure, the whole set of ethnic cognitive experience, its' history, geography, ide-
logy, religion, culture, etc. and determines the relevance of the onomastics study within anthropological and cognitive paradigms.

It becomes particularly evident when a contemporary reader (or translator) is challenged by a classical fiction referring to the concepts and worldview of the past that turns out to be irrelevant and undecipherable for him. Any fiction is highly charged with proper names, which researchers classify as non-equivalent vocabulary. These are names and surnames, toponyms, names of institutions, mass media, and many others. Names in fiction are often clear sign of the individual author’s style, act as a semantically marked means, help to understand the writer’s worldview and reveal the artistic meanings of the work. Since onyms in a literary work are capacious lexical units, they are used as a means of direct and indirect characteristics, revealed in the context of the work or etymologically.

The proper names actualization, as well as other lexical units, is closely related to a set of associations that affect perception, and depends on these associations’ correspondence in the minds of the addresser and addressee. Such associations are formed in various chronological, socio-cultural, historical or political conditions and make proper names «keys» to decoding cultural experience. As Kaydarov states, «the features of national onomasticons are determined not only and not so much by being a part of a particular national language, but by the specifics of the national culture, that influenced national onymy creation and formation» [Kidarov 1990, p. 8]. The presence of a cultural component in the proper name semantics raises the question of the lacunarity of a proper name in terms of contrasting languages, interlingual and intercultural communication.

Thus, the linguocultural study of onomastic vocabulary as a cultural lacunarity marker seems to be relevant and widens research opportunities for proper names translating and contrasting studies. Thus, the onomastic vocabulary is subjectively studied via culturally-specific semantic features. The paper aims at investigating the onomastic vocabulary as a cultural lacunarity marker.

Research objectives:

1. Consider the concept of onomastic vocabulary.
2. Consider the concept of cultural lacunarity.
3. Analyze the onomastic vocabulary cultural specifics.
4. Investigate the culture specific onomastic vocabulary in «The Master and Margarita» by M. Bulgakov.

The paper exploits the contrasting analysis method to identify and characterize the onymyc lacunae on the material of «The Master and Margarita» by M. Bulgakov translated into English.
The concept of onomastic vocabulary

For a long time, proper names were rendered as being no more than labels adjusted to some subjects and objects. But considering the idea of deliberateness in label adjustment makes us think of proper names as bearing a cognitive nature. A proper name according to Shcherbak A.S. [Shcherbak 2008, p. 20] is a complex multi-aspect system in which thought is embodied in reality». Arguing about the cognitive nature of the proper name, A. S. Shcherbak classifies it as «a kind of verbal sign that has a sound form and conceptual content, that is, a cognitive essence» [Shcherbak 2008, p. 43]. The author introduces the definition of «onomastic concept», which is a «unit of linguistic knowledge of an encyclopedic nature». This concept defines the semantics of a proper name, the onomastic reality knowledge and serves as the onomastic category formation basis [Shcherbak 2008, p. 38]. The tandem of consciousness, onomastic sign and reality suggests the structure of an onomastic concept that is a set of generalized conceptual features sufficient for objects and subjects identifying as a fragment of an onomastic worldview [Shcherbak 2008, p. 60].

The specific ability of onomastic vocabulary to reflect the word phenomena and its cognitive nature prove the culture-based approach to proper name semantics studies. The problem of proper names’ semantics has for a long time been underestimated sphere of linguistics as the onomastic meaning was bound to object correlation only [Superanskaya 2007, p. 263], i.e. referential agency. Although it doesn’t mean that the proper name is deprived of any information capacity. The idea is supported by E. Hansak, arguing that «a proper name, considered from the standpoint of the theory of language, has as much meaning as a word can have» [Hansak 2000, p. 372].

The proper name, according to A. V. Superanskaya conveys the conversational, linguistic and encyclopaedic knowledge. The encyclopaedic knowledge in this case appears to be crucial for the proper name semantics understanding in terms of cognitive linguistics. The proper name in this case provides an access point to the whole senses and associations inventory of a particular onomastic concept that is often culture-specific. Grant W. Smith considers the meaning of a proper name to be symbolic «insofar as it is found in contextual relationship rather than in a single referent» [Smith 2017, p. 25]. The symbolic value results in a set of associations related to a specific context and enables name understanding. In terms of the present study the culture-specific associations and symbolic values are investigated as cultural lacunarity markers.
The concept of cultural lacunarity

The term «lacuna» was first introduced by J. Vinay and J. Darbelne [1995 [1998]] and is now widely used in modern linguistics. Though the biggest input into the lacunarity theory is made by Russian scholars Sternin, Stepanov, Sorokin, Markovina, Barkhudarov and others. A number of approaches (psycholinguistic, ethnolinguistic, cultural, communicative) used by the researchers in studying the phenomenon prove its interdisciplinary character though result in some terminological inconsistency. Thus, lacunae can be referred to as “non-equivalents” [Sternin 1997, p. 18], “lexical gaps”, “blank spots” or “anti-words” [Stepanov 2003 [1965], p. 120].

The ideas of culture-specific lacunarity can be found in the studies of Russian and foreign scholars. According to the theory of lacunarity developed by Yu.A. Sorokin, «the process of intracultural and intercultural communication (both at the interpersonal and textual levels) is a conflict process due to differences in the volume and structuring of personal and ethnic experiences, both verbal and non-verbal» [Sorokina 2007, p. 44]. The study of lacunae, the identification of areas in which cultural disagreement between languages is observed, will help to explore more deeply the nationally determined features of meaning formation and will contribute to more effective intercultural communication.

I. Markovina considers the phenomenon of lacunarity, from the standpoint of ethnopsycholinguistics and views intercultural communication as a condition for identifying incongruity areas in communicants’ worldviews [Markovina 2007, p. 4]. This theory of lacunarity has become relevant because lacunae of various types can be identified in the course of a comparative analysis of cultures and languages. The process of languages and cultures translation or contrastive comparison reveals the gaps that Shakhovsky et al. consider to be a mismatch of conceptual, linguistic, emotional and other categories of two / several linguocultural communities» [Shakhovsky et al., 1998, p. 82].

Z. Popova and I. Sternin suggest dividing lacunae into two types: motivated and unmotivated [Popova, Sternin, 2002]. Motivated gaps are explained by the absence of a corresponding object or phenomenon in the national culture. Unmotivated gaps do not mean that there is no specific concept in a particular language, since the latter, for various reasons, may simply not be verbalized in a given linguoculture, since it is communicatively irrelevant.

E. Alimova dealing with the lacunarity concept in her PhD thesis [2022] refers to the ideas of Popova and Sternin [2002] and brings them
into correlation with the semiotic triangle (concept, referent, form). The vertices of the triangle manifest connotative, denotative, nominative aspects of the sign. In the situation of cross-cultural communication all the constituents of the source language / culture sign correspond to the target language / culture sign we observe the full equivalence. Otherwise, if at least one of the constituents does not coincide that results in lacunarity. E. Alimova [2022] provides a lacunarity model for different types of discrepancy.

The first type is called a connotative lacunarity and relates to the connotative disruption between source (SL) and target language (TL). See Figure 1.

The second type, referred to as nominative lacunarity, accounts for the lack of lexicalized concept in TL (Fig. 2).

The third type — the denotative lacunarity — implies the absence of denotatum in TL refers to the «understanding of a lexical lacuna as a culture-specific referent» [Alimova 2022] (Fig. 3).

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**Fig. 1. A connotative lacunarity model**
*Source: Alimova, 2022, 17.*

**Fig. 2. A nominative lacunarity model**
*Source: Alimova, 2022, 18.*
Thus, the model offered by A. Alimova distinguishes three types of lacunae: connotative, denotative, nominative. Having studied different types of lacunae in corpus-based data the author concludes that lexical lacuna is «a knowledge-dependent discrepancy between two lexical systems manifesting itself as the absence of a direct equivalent in one of the languages due to the divergent culturally-conditioned denominative practices» [Alimova 2022, p. 222]. The term «knowledge-dependent» in [Alimova 2022] refers to encyclopaedic knowledge in terms of cognitive linguistics and is used in this paper to denote the culture-specific knowledge.

**Cultural Specifics of Onomastic Vocabulary**

The culture-specific perspective of onomastic studies in Russian linguistics date back to the late 80th of the XX century when the idea of onomastic worldview was uttered. Since then there appeared a number of studies in a whole range of approaches like culture-through-language studies, ethnolinguistic, linguocultural and cognitive ones.

The ethnolinguistic studies postulate the spiritual culture being the basis of culture-specific component of onym and searches the modes of this information representation [Berezovich 1999]. In that respect the studies of V. Golomidova are of particular interest as they anticipated the cognitive approach of the recent years. The author refers to the frame semantics in proper names and investigates the onyms from the linguistic and cognitive standpoint [Golomidova 1998, pp. 23–27].

The culture-through-language vector reveals the background knowledge in a proper name that is a «start point for associations objectifying the ethnocultural community collective consciousness» [Vereshchagin 1991, p. 44]. This very approach, though is highly criticized [Berezovich 1999], for being of strictly synchronic character, focuses on the realia-
onyms — significant in terms of culture-through-language research units of onomastic vocabulary (Big Ben, Moscow etc.). The background semantics of a proper name as a culture-specific information representation mode, should be interpreted in terms of connotative meaning that is the whole range of socially significant cultural associations of a language community [Anikina 1988, p. 7]. The author suggests four-component structure of a connotative meaning: formal, situational, socio-historical and personally-associative. The similar distinction is found in Vereshchagin’s research [Vereshchagin 1991, p. 44]. Though V. Neroznak [1995, p. 5], E. Berezovich [1999, p. 131] and V. Maslova [2018] criticize the culture-through-language approach as lacking the deep study of onomastic vocabulary organization principles. V. Maslova speculates on the culture-through-language studies as dealing exclusively with non-equivalent words (primary-named units) that does not condition the worldview as distinct from secondary-naming units of implicit content.

V. Neroznak offers a linguocultural view of onomastic vocabulary with encyclopaedic information in semantics being prioritized. The linguocultural perspective to onymic studies exploited by V. Maslova [2018] founds upon the concept of cultural information implicit character revealed only in a specific context [Maslova 2018, p. 30] thus referring to a discourse vector on proper names studies. The author renders toponyms as cultural concepts of particular structure with a stereotypic or prototype situation.

Thus, the meaning of any proper name is culture-specific and is determined by considering the structure of the onomastic concept, since «a separate individual concept is a bundle of knowledge, perhaps very rich, and highly schematic. An individual concept is capable of almost unlimited modifications, especially through the descriptive content of certain referential expressions» [Croft, Cruze 2004, p. 75]. The proper name information is initially processed subjectively and shows individual knowledge. The collective cultural definitions arise from individual concepts that interact and change over different periods of human history. The creation of proper names seeks to comprehend and evaluate human nature and environment, making the onym to transform into a symbol of culture. The socio-cultural assessment of names develops into human qualities’ assessment [Alefirenko 2002, p. 76].

Thereafter, the culture-specific study of onomastic vocabulary implies the whole concept reconstruction, i.e. the representation of culture-specific meanings in a national consciousness. The reconstruction refers to value, notion, image and interpretation zone [Maslova 2018, p. 31]. This onomastic concept structure constituents are to be considered in translation and require their detection and out-of-the-box interpreting solutions.
All stated above on the proper names culture-specific features does not contradict to the lacunae triangle model by Alimova [Alimova 2022, p. 222], though views the onym from the linguo-cognitive perspective as a cultural lacunae marker.

**The culture specific onomastic lacunae in «The Master and Margarita»**

The onymic vocabulary embodies the symbolic character of the novel «The Master and Margarita». The two types of proper names: anthroponyms and toponyms employ the author’s ironical worldview conception. The anthroponyms used in different (in plot and genre) chapters of the novel — Moscow (real narrative plan), biblical (historical narrative plan), demonic (unreal narrative plan) — are distinct in motivation and culture-specific structure that result in lacunarity of various types. This paper investigates the proper names of Moscow plan as reflecting onomastic concepts of a particular culture in terms of chronological, ethnographical and social features significant for the author.

We aim at considering the lacunarity of some anthroponyms via Russian-English (by Peaver and Glenny) translations contrasting. The proper names under investigation (Лиходеев — Likhodeev, Мстислав Лаврович — Mstislav Lavrovich, Пороков — Porokov, Пролежнев — Prolezhnev, Поприхин — Poprikhin, Благовест — Blagovest, Беломут — Belomut, Аннушка — Annushka) refer to the motivated or secondary-naming units and predominate in Bulgakov’s onomasticon. The semantics of naming a character is strictly correlated with the appearance of the name bearer, his type of behavior, all valued and assessed by the author according to his worldview. The names meaning characteristics can be explained in the context of the novel plot-discourse, though some translators disregard or just unaware of them when rendering into the target language.

Let us consider the proper name Аннушка — Annushka, who spilled sunflower oil, and then tried to steal a diamond horseshoe from Margarita, in order to return this horseshoe to its rightful owner, it took the intervention of supernatural forces. Although at first sight the onym can be easily translated into the target language via transliteration, it results in lacunarity that V. Maslova [Maslova 2018, p. 31] refers to as interpretational aspect of the onomastic concept. The researchers of Bulgakov’s work argue that Annushka got her name from the famous Moscow tram “A” walked through the center of Moscow between Chistye Prudy and Kaluga Square. Being a tram “A”, he got the nickname «Annushka» from
Muscovites [Itkin 2014]. Those associations or the components of the encyclopaedic knowledge are left silent for the foreign reader as neither of translators commented them.

Table 1. *Annushka* translations by Peaver, Glenny

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M. Bulgakov</th>
<th>Peaver</th>
<th>M. Glenny</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«Annushka, наша Аннушка! с Садовой! Это ее работа!»</td>
<td>‘…Annushka, our Annushka! From Sadovaya! It’s her work…”</td>
<td>‘… Anna, it was our Anna! She was coming from Sadovaya! It’s her job, you see…”</td>
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</table>

Though Peaver, trying to preserve the cultural specifics accurately conveys the diminutive form of the name Anna and provides the transliterated form that reflects the positive, gentle attitude. Russian diminutive-hypocoristic suffixes, as S. Ter-Minasova states, serve to feature the Russian language need to express love, tenderness towards the world around [Ter-Minasova 2000, p. 153]. In his translation M. Glenny prefers using the common form of Russian name Anna, that has the same equivalents in many European languages thus depriving it from culture-specific meaning. These formal features (common or diminutive) are considered in terms of notional aspect they also refer to cultural identity.

Another proper name considered to be a lacuna in Bulgakov’s novel is Беломут — Belomut. It is semantically motivated and refers to the features of positive hero character in the novel (белый — white) and the means of his disappearance (the deep lace). *Belomut*, as seen from the contrasting analysis, appears to be lacunar both in nomination (see the model by Akimova) and implicit cultural information i.e. interpretation zone (see Maslova). The nominative lacunarity of *Belomut* manifests in the name’s inner form that should be considered as a contaminant of белый (white) and омут (deep place or pool in a river) semantically referring to white pool. The lacunarity of the encyclopaedic character becomes obvious if the prototype of *Belomut* is considered. It was a projection of the People’s Commissar of Internal Affairs, who oversaw the construction of the White Sea-Baltic Canal.

As seen from the contrasting analysis, none of the translators was aware of such culture-specific information and left the gap unfilled.

The analysis of the onyms like Лиходееv — Likhodeev, Мстислав Лаврович — Mstislav Lavrovich, Пороков — Pogorelov, Пролежнев — Prolezhnev, Поприхин — Poprikhin, Благовест — Blagovest etc. results in the
Table 2. Belomut translations by Peaver, Glenny

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<tr>
<th>M. Bulgakov</th>
<th>Peaver</th>
<th>M. Glenny</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«Анна Францевна де Фу-жере, пятидесятилетняя почтенная и очень деловая дама, три комнаты из пяти сдавала жильцам: одному, фамилия которого была, кажется, Беломут, и другому — с утраченной фамилией»</td>
<td>“Anna Frantsevna de Fougeray, a respectable and very practical fifty-year-old woman, let out three of the five rooms to lodgers: one whose last name was apparently Belomut, and another with a lost last name”.</td>
<td>“Two years before, it had been owned by the widow of a jeweller called de Fougerere, Anna Frantsevna, a respectable and very business-like lady of fifty, who let three of her five rooms to lodgers. One of them was, it seems, called Belomut; the other’s name has been lost”.</td>
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similar output. They all refer to the semantic motivation type and appear to be «undeciphered» lacunas in the novel’s translations.

Conclusion

The contemporary interdisciplinary vector to linguistic knowledge domain studies allows the researchers to view onomastic vocabulary as a complex phenomenon of linguistic, cognitive and cultural nature. The cognitive essence of onomastic vocabulary results in appearance of onomastic concept that encompasses the encyclopedic knowledge, the values and the associations referring to the proper name. The proper name in this case becomes a symbol and an access point to the culture-specific background.

The culture-specific lacunarity is easily revealed in translation or contrasting analysis, when the conceptual, linguistic, emotional etc. mismatches result in misunderstanding. Depending on the type of discrepancy there outlined connotative, nominative or denotative lacunarity. Though regardless of type the lacunarity is a cultural phenomenon in its essence.

The linguocultural and cognitive approach to onomastic vocabulary studies render a proper name as concept implicitly manifesting the cultural information, conditioning a worldview and revealed in a specific context. The culture-specific information of a proper name can be extracted by means of complete linguo-cognitive analysis of a whole concept constituents’ inventory. This type of analysis appears to be crucial for onomastic vocabulary translating in fiction.

Investigating the culture specific onomastic vocabulary in «The Master and Margarita» via contrasting its Russian-to-English translations results in uncovering the range of proper names being lacunae. The moti-
vated character of proper names by Bulgakov determine their conceptual nature and require a profound study of notion, value, image, association and interpretational aspect in terms of comprehension and translation. Although the following study of various types of onyms (toponyms, hydronyms, etc.) could contribute deeply into the theory of onomastic lacunarity, yet all stated above proves the idea of onomastic vocabulary being a cultural lacunarity marker.

References


