

**ONYMS IN INTERNET COMMUNICATION: NEW
PHENOMENA AND REALIZATIONS**

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Internet discourse, along with mass-media discourse, which is close but not identical to it, occupies a stable position in modern typologies of discourse [2, p. 65]. The development of electronic communications entails the emergence of new linguistic phenomena, and onomastics is not an exception to this general trend. As such, there is a need to comprehend both these new onomastic phenomena and the mechanisms through which they emerged.

Although in some respects the science of our country has achieved certain results in the study of onomastics of the Internet space, it cannot be said that this issue is sufficiently studied. The lack of development of this urgent problem of modern onomastics is evidenced, for example, by the fact that there are practically no works devoted to the specifics of the functioning of onomastic units in the Internet environment. Over the last five years, the issues of onyms' functioning in Internet communication have been addressed only in some articles, monographs, one of which is devoted to such a phenomenon as nicknames [3, p.15].

On the other hand, the processes in the field of proper names, initiated by the development of Internet communication, directly affected onomastics as a scientific discipline and, first of all, its terminology. As S. Kersten and N. Lotze rightly note, a distinctive feature of onomastics as a science is the active creation of terms denoting categories of onyms, which, on the one hand, is necessary, but, on the other hand, leads to the overdevelopment of the terminological system, in particular, the terminology of any, not always significant differences [7, p. 133]. This process has also affected the sphere of Internet nicknames, and not in the most favourable way (cf. the abundance of competing nominations for nicknames, or virtual anthroponyms, which are given later in this article). In this regard, it seems obvious that the comprehension of new phenomena and their adequate typology, which is reflected in the terminological system, is an urgent task of linguistics.

The problem of onyms functioning in the Internet environment is complex due to its multidimensional nature. Onomastic phenomena specific to the Internet environment constitute an important, but by no means the only issue in this

problem. It seems that the onomasticon of Internet communication is formed in accordance with the logic to which the interaction between online (the Internet environment) and offline (the familiar “real” world) is subordinated. The construction of virtual reality, which we all witness, takes place in different ways.

Firstly, we can talk about the virtualisation of products of human activity that are familiar in the real world and have been transferred to the virtual environment. This applies to a variety of phenomena: email services, libraries, online shops, online banks, electronic newspapers and magazines, etc. (An analogy can also be made with the use of objects and phenomena of the real world as metaphors for elements of computer programmes, cf. “basket”, “eraser”, “notebook”, etc.).

Two main forms can be distinguished in this process. On the one hand, it is a partial virtualisation of real phenomena, which can be understood as the presence and activities of an organisation, commercial structure, etc. in a virtual environment, which appear to be a complement to the activities of the organisation in the real world. On the other hand, it is the emergence of fully virtual analogues of real organisational forms of activity, the clearest example of which is digital libraries.

Secondly, we can hardly claim that the formation of a new communicative space, such as the Internet, does not bring anything new into our lives. The construction of virtual reality is associated with the emergence of fundamentally new types of phenomena, for which no direct analogues can be found outside the virtual environment. The boom of computer terminology, which the lexical systems of modern languages are experiencing, testifies to this as best as possible. For example, such a phenomenon as a website can hardly be compared with a traditional mass media or a library, although in all cases we are dealing with a set of texts presented in the form of separate documents. The principles of organisation of the information itself, as well as its delivery and storage, are fundamentally different in all cases.

At the same time, even some metaphors that represent a transfer from real phenomena to virtual space cannot be understood as a result of virtualisation in the above sense. For example, an Internet forum as a place of virtual communication can hardly be compared with forums as organisational and communicative forms used in science, business and politics. Forums in the latter case are special events distinguished by solemnity; an Internet forum is a platform for ordinary, everyday communication, which is not necessarily specialised.

The same logic can be seen in the functioning of onomastic units. Firstly, the Internet environment absorbs traditional onyms, and this process can consist of both the simple transfer of existing onyms into Internet communications and the creation of new proper names for virtualised objects. In this case, online and offline seem to duplicate each other. Secondly, the Internet environment generates fundamentally new phenomena in the sphere of proper names, which, in turn, have a reverse effect on the onomastic system as a whole.

Thus, the problematics of Internet onomastics can be divided into two major spheres. Firstly, it is the functioning of traditional onyms in Internet communication, Internet varieties of various discourses, as well as in virtual space in general, which is an addition to the “first reality”. In connection with this direction, we would like to draw attention to the fact that researchers do not always pay enough attention to the specifics of the representation of onomastic units due to the Internet environment, the sphere of their functioning. This line of research seems to be extremely promising, as it is very likely to serve as a basis for identifying the special features that onomastic units acquire in the context of the Internet.

Secondly, an important and, perhaps, the most valuable and productive component of the study of onomastics in Internet communication are special onomastic phenomena that emerged in the conditions of electronic communications and reflect the communicative and discursive specificity of the electronic environment. First of all, it concerns nicknames (virtual anthroponyms), which demonstrate many features that allow us to consider them a fundamentally new phenomenon. At the same time, there is evidence that many models of onym formation, characteristic of the Internet environment and, more broadly, the computer sphere, penetrate into the traditional spheres of onomastics, i.e. go beyond the sphere in which they originated.

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