

PERSONAL NOUNS AND THEIR LEXICAL-SEMANTIC RICHNESS

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**Annotation:** *This article analyzes the lexical-semantic richness of personal nouns. Personal nouns are among the most important lexical units of a language, as they convey personal, social, and cultural meanings through individuals' names, surnames, and epithets. The study explores the semantic scope of personal nouns, their synonymic and phraseological connections, as well as their lexical characteristics and stylistic features. Furthermore, the lingvosemantic analysis of personal nouns demonstrates their lexical richness and contribution to the communicative potential of language. This research is of practical and theoretical significance in the fields of linguistics, onomastics, and lexicology.*

**Keywords:** *personal nouns, lexical-semantic richness, onomastics, semantic field, synonymy, phraseological connections, lingvosemantic analysis, lexicology*

Personal nouns are words or phrases that, in context, refer to individuals, places, institutions, or events. Examples include: John, United States, White House. Personal nouns can consist of a single word or be complex personal nouns. As lexical units, personal nouns also include nicknames, diminutive forms of names, or other naming devices used to refer to a referent in social-linguistic communities. For example: Lilibeth, the Iron Lady, the Whitechapel Murderer, the Woman, the bard.

Personal nouns may retain their structure even when they do not directly refer to a person or object but are clarified through a synonym. In English-language studies of personal nouns, particular attention is paid to their morphosyntactic properties. Understanding the distinction between words and lexical units is important for correctly grasping the relationship between morphology and syntax. The form of derivation is also significant in the study of personal nouns. Personal nouns hold great importance in any language. There are two main approaches to studying personal nouns:

The first approach treats personal nouns as having a distinct lexicographic status, emphasizing their unique features compared to other lexical units. The second approach suggests that personal nouns are not fundamentally distinct or special lexical units and can possess ordinary lexical properties like other words.

According to linguist M. Ehrmann, in his 2016 report on multilingual resources, personal nouns represent a constantly developing open class of words. With approximately 700 new names added per week, the database grows weekly to include 1.75 million personal names, over 10,000 organization names, and more than 390,000 lexical variants. This demonstrates that personal nouns are widely used in everyday language.

One clear indication of the special status of personal nouns is their systematic removal from dictionaries. This phenomenon has been frequently recorded by lexicographers and discussed by linguists. As mentioned above, the absence of certain units in dictionaries does not imply that they do not exist as lexical units. However, the systematic exclusion of an entire category from dictionaries suggests that personal nouns are not treated as standard lexical units, distinguishing them from common nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions, affixes, and other dictionary entries.

Linguist P. Hanks notes that personal nouns are a special type of word: “Simply put, personal nouns that are not included in dictionaries are not officially recognized as standard words, which affects their lexicographic treatment.” The role of personal nouns as conventional units of language is governed by specific rules.

In standard dictionaries, there are corresponding sections for “general” or “naming” units, which are typically classified as lexical units. In contrast, personal nouns often appear in specialized dictionaries, encyclopedias, dedicated sections, or special lists. Such distinctions are particularly noticeable when two units with similar grammatical properties appear differently across dictionaries—for example, Marx and Marxism.

Although today some argue that personal nouns are often excluded from dictionaries, this was not always the case. For example, in the 17th century, according to the Port-Royal Grammar School, personal nouns, particularly names of people and places, were considered a special subclass of nouns and studied separately.

Linguist D. Marconi identifies two main reasons for the removal of personal nouns from dictionaries.

Firstly, the distinction between dictionaries and encyclopedias, as well as between knowledge of words and knowledge about the world, gradually became clearer. This shift prompted linguists and lexicographers to focus on the semantic analysis of words, treating them as units analyzable at a small syntactic level.

Secondly, personal nouns are typically associated with specific real-world entities. However, their connection is referential rather than semantic. Consequently, they were gradually removed from lists of purely denotative or predicative lexical units, as they have no direct correspondence with the external world.

The sheer number of personal nouns makes it impossible to memorize them all or even a significant portion. Therefore, in cognitive studies, personal nouns have a lower retention rate compared to other types of lexical units. For a long time, the definition of personal nouns in linguistics was based on their logical representation. Many definitions described personal nouns as “meaningless signs,” implying that they were referential but lacked connotative meaning and did not link to the external world. This perspective, according to Mill, contradicts descriptive definitions, as it fails to account for connotative meaning.

In contrast, linguist S. Kripke, through the “rigid designator” theory, argues that personal nouns establish a direct and stable link to the objects they denote. This link does

not involve any meaning, concept, or symbolic representation. Similarly, A. Garnier defines personal nouns as “purely referential”, connecting them to individual entities rather than classes, unlike common nouns that denote general categories. Rey-Debove further considers personal nouns as “memorized labels”, belonging to a system of entities rather than functioning as signs.

With the advancement of linguistics, the notion of personal nouns as meaningless signs was gradually replaced. In second-language acquisition, personal nouns were treated as “lexical units with meaning”, becoming part of practical teaching. It was assumed that personal nouns in a first language are integrated into general world knowledge. However, research by K. Klassen using comprehension tests with familiar and unfamiliar names showed that personal nouns may not inherently convey meaning. Knowing a person’s name does not imply understanding the person, and second-language learners often struggle to infer the meaning of an unfamiliar name from context, complicating overall comprehension.

The concept of “meaning” can still apply to personal nouns, especially in “indefinite” or “hybrid” forms, which combine noun- or adjective-like lexical elements. In such cases, predicative features and internal hierarchy are theoretically suspended, though they can be reactivated and interpreted. Frege noted that a single referent—such as the planet Venus—can have two different personal nouns, Morning Star and Evening Star, which appear to have different meanings. This arises from the descriptive meanings associated with the proper noun. For example, when reading Gare du Nord or hearing Chicago Union Station or King’s Cross, one anticipates the arrival of trains.

This phenomenon relates to two types of meaning:

Categorical meaning – Personal nouns situate their referents within relevant onomasiological categories, such as a railway station.

Associative meaning – Personal nouns provide additional information about the object, which becomes active when spoken or heard. This includes origin, socio-economic status, purpose, positive or negative connotations, and subjective associations. Examples include the names of churches, streets, shops, or marketing elements (campaigns, product names). Such meanings are crucial for semantic networks and give personal nouns a significant role in the language system.

This final characteristic- the meaningfulness of personal nouns- demonstrates that they are indeed genuine lexical units, activating conceptual fields like other lexical items. Furthermore, they participate in onomasiological hierarchies, including synonyms, hyponyms, and antonyms, confirming their logical status. Importantly, personal nouns do not need to represent a class to be included in the lexical network- they are recognized as authentic lexical units. This necessitates a re-evaluation of their status and the study of personal nouns as a distinct category within lexicology.

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