DOCTOR DISSERTATION THESES

BAUKO JÁNOS

INVESTIGATION OF NICKNAMES IN A BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT
(The system of nicknames in four Hungarian settlements in Slovakia)

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1. Introduction

The investigation of the various types of anthroponyms in the Hungarian onomasiology has a significant past. The scientific literature dealing with nicknames is ample, but this type of name was not so much investigated in the territories of Slovakia inhabited by Hungarians, only a few essays have been published. Therefore I considered important the introduction of the system of nicknames in new settlements, to immortalize their traditions and changes of name giving and using.

The goal of my investigation is above all the thorough investigation of the use of nicknames by Hungarians in Slovakia. I collected the onomastic corpus in four Hungarian settlements in Slovakia (Búcs, Dunamocs, Hetény, Izsa). The state and the verbal looks of nicknames are strongly influenced by the Hungarian-Slovak bilingual environment, therefore I also investigate in my thesis the appearing contact phenomena in the onomastic corpus. Primarily I deal with the language use of the adults but I touch the denomination habits of the students as well. I analyze both the diachronic and synchronic onomastic corpus. I examine the written nicknames found in written sources, the denomination motives of nicknames used in modern language, the sociolinguistical, dialectological, etymological, onomatophysiological, of word class, morfological and stylistical selfhoods found in the onomastic corpus. I confront the onomastic corpus of the adults and the students and I mention the differences between the nicknames of the two age classes, their denomination and name using selfhoods.I compare the denomination and name using habits of several villages and I also statistically demonstrate the matches and differences found in the onomastic corpus. After the register of the applied scientific literature in the appendix there is a map showing the geographic positioning of the items of my research, the list of occurrence of (current) family and first names of the several villages and the index of nicknames which makes easier the work with the dissertation.

2. General information

In this part of my dissertation I deal with theoretical questions: with the genesis, the term of nicknames and their position in the history and the system of anthroponyms. According to the referred literature I review the history of the research of Hungarian nicknames and within it the investigations of nicknames done on the Hungarian language area in Slovakia.

The most ancient type of name giving of anthroponyms is called pagan secular name giving. Many investigators mention as well that heathen names are related to nicknames (vö. BENKŐ 1967: 382, KÁLMÁN 1989: 94).

The formation of the two-constituent name giving meant the blending of the heathen and the clerical name giving into one specific unit, though the family names arose mainly from nicknames coming from spontaneous name giving and the first names from anthroponyms of clerical origin.

Later on the necessity of differentiation repeated again. The reasons for formation of new nicknames are to find in the inducing effect of multiplication of identical family and first names, respectively in psychological reasons, in the joking, mocking inclination of the name--giving community, in the name-creating vitality of the people and in the preservation of traditions. The lingual and the extralingual factors play also a big role in the name selection.

Anthroponyms create a system where the several types of names (family names, first names, monickers and nicknames) are in mutual connection with each other. Nicknames belong to the unofficial group of names (ethnonyms), they are mostly used and varied in modern language, in informal discourse situations (in a familiar or social circle) and in

smaller separate communities. From the types of anthroponyms these ones form the most open subsystem: any language character or an incomprehensible scale can become a nickname, the name giver can freely select from the language's vocabulary and can also invent fictitious scales for the identification of a person. In the name giving of nicknames the most significant is the ancient instinct of humans' for name giving and their name creating vitality.

Some experts try to specify the definition of nicknames within other types of anthroponyms: 'We call nicknames those name elements which besides official first and family names and nicknames are given by people to each other with any intention. For their creation there must be always a community in which the named and naming individuals know each other personally' (HAJDÚ 1994: 43).

In the circle of Slovak Hungarians the term "ragadványnév" (nickname) is not so often used and is less known. Many times during my research happened that the people who provided me with the necessary data did not know or even heard this word for the first time. Students usually use instead of "ragadványnév" the artificial word "becenév". Adults use independently from their settlement the expressions "csúfnév", "gúnynév", "melléknév", "becenév", "tapadéknév", "megkülönböztető név". The nicknames in my points of research I call "csúfnevek".

I basically review the schematic history of the research of Hungarian nicknames in a chronological order. Besides studies analysing the onomastic corpus of the adults I deal also with reports about the nicknames of students. I compile the research of Hungarian nicknames, respectively of nicknames with Hungarian reference done in Slovakia in an individual chapter.

3. Points of research

By choosing the points of research I took into consideration that in the investigated settlements the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality should form the majority of the local population, have a similar number of inabitants, belong to one region, be situated close to each other and have a school.

The selected points of research are to find in the Komárno district (okres Komárno). I collected the necessary material in a consistent Hungarian language area in four adjacent villages (Izsa, Hetény, Dunamocs, Búcs). This area did not have a special name in the past, the inhabitants of Komárno call it Vágon túl (region beyond the river Váh), because the mentioned villages are situated beyond the river Váh, east of the town of Komárno. The newer designation of this region is Vág és Garam köz (the region between the rivers Vág and Garam).

The number of people with Hungarian nationality in all four Slovak Hungarian settlements outreach 70% of the local population (Búcs 93,6%, Dunamocs 92%, Hetény 87,1%, Izsa 72,8%).

4. Method and sources of the material collection.

In my dissertation I tried to collect all the written and spoken nicknames. For the investigation of historical nicknames a diachronical examination is needed, therefore I searched for written distinctive names in official records. I tried to review all those available written sources in which there were anthroponyms. In the State District Archives in Komárno (Okresný archív v Komárne) I examined several records, land registers, records about people ; in the State Regional Archives in Ivanka pri Nitre (Štátny oblastný archív v Ivanke pri Nitre) I investigated the registers issued between 1722-1895 and in my points of research the state

registers managed since 1895, respectively in some villages (where there were any) the ecclesiastical registers. Besides these I also found related nicknames in other sources (village monography, manuscript, fiction).

I collected the nicknames used in modern language with a different method by each generation. In the circle of adults I applied the method of active questioning, they answered my questions directly. I recorded on tape a part of my conversation with them. The explanations of the names I also marked phonetically according to the conventional Hungarian phonetic notation, adverting the selfhood of the texts of modern languages, but I only publish a part of these by the discourse of the dialectological aspect. The selection of the informants happened according to many aspects. First of all I asked for help my relatives, familiars who live in the villages. Before starting my work in the municipal offices I asked for the list of names from the population register what helped me a lot during the collection of the nicknames and by the exact identification of the named person. The information was provided by people and families who know each village very well. From each village I chose individuals from every age class with the same method (10 young – 10 middle-aged – 10 old) to provide me with the information I needed, so my research was supported by 120 people. Besides the nicknames of adults I collected also the nicknames used by students. I did my research in grammar schools with Hungarian as the teaching language and with the duration of 9 years which can be found in my points of research (Katona Mihály Grammar School in Búcs, Hungarian Grammar School in Dunamocs, Tarczy Lajos Grammar School in Hetény, Döme Károly Grammar School in Izsa). The collection of the nicknames of students was done by a questionnaire. The questionnaire was filled in by 100 students in each school, so 400 people took part in the research.

5. Results

Nicknames also appear in written sources (registers, land registers, records, etc.). They were fixed because of the necessity for the name to fulfil its identifying function. In the documents between the 18th – 20th century examined by myself appears as a signal name in these cases:1. the whole form of the nickname: *Válé András (Malac)(Pig), Joannes Varga alias Barát (Friend)*. 2.the initial letter of the nickname: *Cs. Varga Pál* (these often referred to the entire family, were inherited as well). 3. maiden family name of the mother or the wife: *Sárai Kurucz András*. 4. the first or the nickname of the father: *Jóska Varga András*. 5. marking of the residence: *Tóth József Zsitvasori*. 6. the profession: *takács (weaver) Szabó László*. 7. the age: *Kovács János Öreg (Senior)*.

I collected about 1299 nicknames used by adults in the modern language.

By creating the groups according to the name-giving motives I took as basis the classification of B. GERGELY PIROSKA (1977). From the categories used by her I dropped nicknames with mere identifying and emotional motive because I think that every nickname – like proper names in general – has an identifying function and by creating a new name not only the rational, but also the emotional motive is present. Within some groups I let out those subtypes which do not refer to my collected onomastic corpus, respectively I completed the system with some new subcategories. The names referred to customs which by B. GERGELY PIROSKA appear in the type referred to oral tradition and customs I deal within the group referred to inner features (vö. ÖRDÖG 1973: 182).

Among the types of nicknames according to name-giving motive the most numerous group is formed by nicknames referred to outer features (25,17%). Within this the creation of nicknames is mostly motivated by the shape, stature of an individual (small, tall, fat, thin). The group referred to visible body parts (face, eye, ear, nose, etc.), corporal defect, strangeness and illness is also very numerous and then follow names referred to speech

impediment, slip of the tounge and mispronunciation. On the second place are nicknames with unknown and uncertain motive (21,17%). In the case of hereditary nicknames the descendants often do not know the motive of the name giving. In the group of unknown origin we can also find a lot of nicknames which general meaning is apparent, but there is no explanation for the motive of the name giving. We know that the knowledge of the meaning of the name cannot be identified with the motive of the name giving and we could only assume it when we rank the names into each type. The third most frequent motive is related to the inner features of an individual (14,09%). The group of names referred to customs, to favourite activities overrun in quantity those ones referred to the dominant feature. Besides the favourite activity the favourite drink or food can also often motivate the creation of a name. From the dominant features the negative human ones prevail. Most names can be found in the subcategories denoting mischief, disobedience, waggery, smartness, lie, stupidity and mental disablement. On the fourth position are the names related to occupation, handicraft and office (9,85%). Most of them refer to occupations directly. After these names follow the nicknames with reference to family, first and nicknames (with name-association motive) (9,31%). The most typical subgroup is formed by the nicknames coming from family names. This name formation method is mainly preferred by the young people. Names related to events are on the sixth place (6%). These are followed by nicknames related to the names of family members and familiars (5,31%). The names of male and female ancestors only seldom become nicknames in my points of research. By nicknames coming from name of the wife we can observe that the husband is often identified with the maiden family name of his spouse. Among the names referred to oral tradition dominate the ones of own oral tradition. Then come the nicknames related to other living conditions (3%) where the biggest ammount have those related to financial situation, respectively to rearing of farm animals. The names connected to former or current residence (2,31%) indicate above all a settlement or part of a boundary. From the name-giving motives the number of nicknames referred to age is the lowest one (0,69%). I would like to mention that the reference to age is general in my points of research when the nickname is inherited.

The attitude towards nicknames is influenced by many factors: the name-giving/name-using individual or community, the place of the name's origin, its circumstances, the offending, caustic feature of the name, the name-using setting, the situation (formal or informal), the relationship between the name bearer and name user (friends or enemies), the time elapsed since the name giving, etc. The attitude research shows that most of the name bearers accept their nicknames (87,14%). This indicates that the nicknames became an organic part of the community's vocabulary. Following the conversations with the people I can say that the members of the village community identify the name bearer primarily with a nickname and the official family and first name of the person with a nickname is used very rarely in modern language. Many mentioned that the nickname is the *right name, the main name* in the village and not the people's *ordinary, registered name*. With the words of one of my informators:

'Well, here everybody has a nickname and the nickname is the main name, not their ordinary name'. A positive attitude towards nicknames has 6,85% of the name bearers who like, respectviely are proud of their nickname. There are people who find it honourable that they can have the name of notable personalities known from history as a nickname. A negative attitude show 6,01% of the name bearers who dislike, respectively hate their nicknames, they find it annoying when somebody calls them like that. The negative, rejecting attitude of the name bearer to the name is visible especially in the case of nicknames with pejorative meaning.

Most of the nicknames has the function of an identifier (66,97%), but they can be used as a style name as well (33,03%).

The colourful world of nicknames makes possible the investigations of a dialogical aspect, though these words live mainly in modern language, in its regional language variant, in the language of the people and therefore the vernacular elements are through the mother dialect naturally integrated into the structure of nicknames. So the vernacular elements can be also found in the system of nicknames. In my investigated points of research people speak the same type of dialect. The local spoken dialect can be ranked into the Nothern-Danubian dialect group of the Middle-Transdanubian-Little Alföld (közép- dunántúli–kisalföldi) dialect region (ref. JUHÁSZ 2001: 271–274). According to the investigation of dialectological aspect we can say that in nicknames mostly appear phonetic phenomena corresponding with the dialect.In my points of research the formal dialect words more often fulfil the function of a nickname as the semantic or original ones. Phraseologisms used in dialects also contain nicknames.

Most of the nicknames is not inherited, they are specific, therefore the onomastic corpus is dynamically changing with time. From 1299 nicknames 299 are inherited and represent 23% of the onomasic corpus.The partial family nicknames (288) overrun in number the family nicknames concerning the entire family (71). From hereditary nicknames 264 are inherited paternally and 35 maternally. The most typical is the inheritance of the father's nickname. Men get more often nicknames than women. 86% of nicknames are related to the male gender and 14% to the female one.

The name serves for identification, therefore nicknames are used in combinations of different structures. There are 12 name structures in modern language. The largest part of nicknames is formed by names with a single element (62,43%). They themselves identify an individual. This name-using method suggests the ancient single-element name system when an individual had one personal name. Within the type of two-element name associations (33,56%) the most frequent type structure is R+B when the nickname preceds the pet name and fundamentally replaces the family name. The three-element name combinations appear only rarely (4%).

From the types of anhtroponyms by the nicknames we can recognise the common-word origin of the proper name. So the most typical thing is that common words become proper names.In scientific literature this process is also called onimisation or proprialisation (ŠRÁMEK 1999: 55–56). In many cases the common-word origin of the nickname can be definitely recognised, but we can often come across the distorted, modified form variant of the name. In such case the revelation of the name-giving motive can help to detect the character of the common word hidden in the nickname. Even existing proper names (anthroponyms, toponyms, animal names, institution names, brand names, etc.) can become nicknames, so they get into other name type. The change of proper name class is called transonimization. Most of the nicknames in my points of research were formed from nouns (55,04%), within them especially from common words (35,26%). Nicknames coming from proper names form 19,78% of the onomastic corpus.

The second most frequent word class serving as the basis for nicknames is the adjective (24,71%). From other word classes only a few nicknames were formed.

The most typical method of name formation is the root word, becoming of an elemental common word to a proper name and its usage as a nickname (30,87%). On the second place are nicknames created by formation (26,17%). These are followed by names difficult to rank morphologically (14,40%). Nicknames created by change of sound form 6,93% of the onomastic corpus and those created from foreign common words or proper names form 6,08%. Besides nicknames expressed by word compounding (5,47%) and syntagm (3%) other name-formation methods play a less important role in name production.

According to the research of the means of expression of nicknames we can say that the creation of a part of expressive nicknames can be explained by the methaforic usage of the words. Metaphor based on similarity often appears in the onomastic corpus of nicknames as the

semantic means for mood creation. From the name-giving motives we can find numerous methaphoric names in the groups of nicknames referred to outer, respectively inner features. Metonymic nicknames are formed through transfer of name based on contact. Many of them can be found among nicknames related to customs, favourite activities and events. The expressiveness of nickname can be increased by other morfological and phonetic means (e.g. onomatopoetic words, modified, distorted formal variants of proper names, playful name associations, name-formation methods).

The Slovak Hungarian speaking community can be seen as bilingual. Slovak Hungarians are able to use the Slovak and the Hungarian language in accordance with the given communication situation. The use of nicknames by Slovak Hungarians is influenced by the Hungarian-Slovak bilingual environment and in the onomastic corpus also appear contact phenomena as the result of language interaction. The ratio of names coming from various languages can/could refer to the lingual competence of the community. The individuals receive their nickname from the members of that community in which they live. So from this name we can somehow deduce the community in which it was created. In general, people with Hungarian identity receive Hungarian nicknames and only rarely they are identified with Slovak (or other) names. Nicknames can/could refer to the togetherness, to the nationality of the name bearer. The language character of the onomastic corpus of nicknames can/could be formed in consequence of the national distribution of the settlement's population: the more Slovak people inhabit the village, the more is/would be the number of names, contact phenomena coming from Slovak language. In my points of research people and families of Slovak nationality rarely recieved in the past a nickname from the members of the Hungarian community. This can be explained by the fact that the Slovak families moved in large numbers to the settlements inhabited by Hungarians after the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic. The majority of people of Slovak nationality who have been living longer in the villages speak (or understand) Hungarian and also know the nicknames of the Hungarian population. Slovak families which have moved in these areas recently influence the change of the system of nicknames less because they seldom obtain nicknames from the members of the Hungarian community.

In my points of research the inhabitants of Hungarian nationality form the majority from the population of the villages what is also shown in the collected onomastic corpus: besides names of Hungarian origin there are only a few nicknames of Slovak (or other) origin. The Slovak Hungarian investigations of nicknames dealt in the theoretical section show similar results as well. The usage of nicknames by Slovak Hungarians is seen as a mother-language dominant (Hungarian dominant).

Most of the people with nicknames are of older age. The younger generation does not exactly know this onomastic corpus and less and less of them receive a nickname. The once homogeneous village is nowadays getting heterogeneous.

Exogamy, population change and urbanization are not favourable for the creation of nicknames. From the social effects it was mainly the period after the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic and the era of deportations that influenced the change of the system of anthroponyms of the villages. Nicknames closely connected to the deported people were dropped from everyday use. These names are only alive in the memories of the older generation. The ample balance of nicknames represented the community's consistent power and its name-giving customs. Following the change of population families who moved in recently got seldom nicknames from the village's community.

The main differences according to age appear in connection with the use of nicknames by adults and students. By means of the questionnaire method in the grammar schools of my points of research I collected 868 nicknames in total. The name giving of adults is based essentially on intellectual feature, so monickers came into being for a more exact

identification of people with the same name. By students it is mostly the emotional feature that causes the genesis of nicknames. The motives of name giving are similar, but their rate of distribution is different. From the collected onomastic corpus by adults of the largest number are names related to outer features and those of unknown origin. On the contrary, by students the motive of name giving is mostly known (names of unknown origin are represented less in the onomastic corpus). The most frequent motivation of name giving is related to the family name, the first name or the nickname of the name bearer, the most part of student nicknames were formed with the playful transformation of these names (from those of anthroponymic origin the most frequent are the nicknamed forms of family names). By adults and by students as well as a basis for name giving serve in similar distribution rate the inner feature, an event and the name of family members and familiars. By students the profession does not appear as a name-giving motive and only slightly the oral tradition, other living conditions, residence, age. Among adults more often appear the distorted formal variants of proper names and common names; while among students appear lexical common words. Name combinations of different, diverse structure are typical for the use of nicknames by adults; student nicknames identify within themselves, without any other name element (family name, first name, nickname). Nicknames of adults generally last longer, they are invariant (they change rarely), the individuals practically have their name given by the village's community all their life, this name can be even inherited. The sphere of use of nicknames is larger, they are known and used in a wider ambit, they mainly function as identifiers. Student nicknames are of short lasting (by getting out from the school community they are not used anymore by the former name bearer), they are variable, they are known and used in a closer community (school, class), they are inherited rarely and they function as style names. Generally, one name identifies the adult, seldom more adults; at school usually students name their class mates with 2-3 nicknames. For adults it is typical to use a single nickname, students use more nicknames. The use of nicknames by students is like by adults Hungarian dominant, most of the onomastic corpus is of Hungarian origin.

To the current tasks of the Slovak Hungarian linguistics belong the investigation of the nickname vocabulary. In the future I would like to continue with my research and expand it on other regions and areas inhabited by Hunarians in Slovakia. The extensive database will give opportunity for comparative investigations and larger generalization.

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