

Internet Names as an Anthroponomastic Category

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Abstract

As a relatively new phenomenon, ‘Internet names’ have not yet been exhaustively defined as a category. The present work addresses this issue through a comparative analysis of Internet names and three other anthroponomastic categories: pseudonyms, nicknames and given names. Each of the selected classes gives an opportunity to present different aspects of this phenomenon. Among other things, it includes a brief debate on self-naming, the reasons for using fake names in both real and virtual worlds, and how both pseudonyms and Internet names relate to real names. It then outlines how the social contexts of both nicknaming and Internet naming account for their role in interactions and how they compare as tools of address, reference, identification and characterisation. Common etymological motivations of both groups are also presented. Next, it demonstrates similarities regarding creation and usage in given and Internet names as well as in their position in naming systems. The closing part presents Internet names as an element of written and visual communication.

Introduction

Although we have to do with a relatively new phenomenon, Internet names have received some academic attention as an element of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), especially in relation to identity and self-presentation, e.g. Jaffe, et al. (1995), Zhichkina and Belinskaia (1999), Stommel (2007), Bechar-Israeli (1995), Swennen (2001), Bays (1998), Scheidt (2001), Heisler and Crabill (2006), Lev and Lewinsky (2004), Desser (2000), Kapidzic and Herring (2011), Naruszewicz-Duchlinska (2003) and some of the researchers proposed semantic classifications, e.g. Sidorova (2006), Van Langendonck (2007), Bechar-Israeli (1995), Kolodziejczyk (2004). Few of them, however, attempted to describe this group as a category, e.g. Rutkiewicz (1999), Kolodziejczyk (2004), and Van Langendonck (2007). In addition, the issue of terminology has not been addressed so far: Internet names are usually referred to as ‘nicknames’ (Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Swennen, 2001; Bays, 1998) or ‘pseudonyms’ (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003: ‘Internet pseudonym’, ‘nick’; Van Langendonck, 2007: 300 – ‘nickname’ or ‘nick’, which “comes closest to the class of pseudonyms”); Rutkiewicz (1999: 117) has invented a term ‘irconim’ (irc+onym), but it only applies to names used on IRC (Internet Relay Chat). This approach might be misleading by suggesting unverified kinship and creates a gap to be looked into so that Internet names can be ‘officially’ introduced into the catalogue of anthroponomastic categories, either as part of a recognised one or a new one.

In this article, I aim to more clearly define Internet names as an onomastic class, by comparing them with nicknames, pseudonyms and official given names. In order to do this, it is first of all necessary to review what existing literature has to tell us about the similarities and differences between Internet names and the three mentioned groups.

Naming on the Internet

In an attempt to successfully characterise Internet names as a category we should first of all seek assistance in the environment from which they came. Consultation of a randomly selected group of on-line dictionaries and glossaries of computer and Internet terminology in

English, Russian, Polish and Dutch¹ revealed, that a name on the Internet, usually paired with a password, serves basically to open or access an account in multiuser environments, such as e-mail accounts, forums or chat rooms, banking, shopping or other sites and services; in addition to this, some of these names are also used to interact with others on the Internet. The present paper will focus on the latter.

A range of English based terminology has been used to describe Internet names, including: username, login (name), account name, screen name, handle, alias and nick or nickname. However, it is not uniform and both terms and definitions may vary from one language to another as well as from one dictionary to another within the same language. For example, ‘user name’ seems to be the most frequently included in English dictionaries (*NetLingo*, *Learn the Net*, *Answers*, *Sharpened Glossary*) and universally applied in the situations related to users’ verification, identification and communication; however, *Answers* explains that another term for ‘username’ is ‘screen name’, whereas *SearchSOA* states, that ‘screen name’ only applies to the name used in communication with others online. Other terms defined in English were ‘handle’ (*NetLingo*, *Sharpened Glossary*) and ‘login (name)’ (*Learn the Net*, *Sharpened Glossary*), and one consulted dictionary (*Answers*) explained ‘nickname’ (or ‘nick’).

None of the consulted dictionaries in Russian contained entries ‘username’, ‘screen name’ or ‘handle’. Terms explained in Russian, but not included in English dictionaries, were ‘aka’ (‘also known as’) (*Sekrety Windows*, *Wikiznanie*), explained as a pseudonym or one of the Internet addresses of a person who has a number of them, and ‘ID’ (‘identifier’) – a user’s ‘name’ or ‘unique number’, bestowed upon him during registration (*Postroika*). *Postroika* and *Sekrety Windows* explained ‘login’ as both identification procedure and a name used to enter the system; only *Postroika* defined ‘nick’.

Two Dutch glossaries contained another term ‘alias’, defined as: “alternative names of one email address” (*PC Dokter Friesland*) and as “a name for e-mail addresses or an alternative name of a user” (“*de taal van het net*”). The latter website also explained ‘handle’ and ‘nick’, ‘nickname’, both as false names. Only *Netadvies* defined ‘username’ – as a name used with a password to log on a UNIX system. Two glossaries contained Dutch words: ‘loginnaam’ (*InternetPlan*) and ‘schuilnaam’ (*schuil* – ‘hide’, *naam* – ‘name’) (*Lindro Webcreatie*).

None of the consulted Polish resources explained ‘screen name’ or ‘handle’, and just one contained a definition of ‘username’ (*I-słownik*). The most popular were ‘nick’ (*Algorytmy*, *I-słownik*, *AZ Słownik Komputerowy*) and ‘login’ (*AZ Słownik Komputerowy*, *I-słownik*).

From the academic viewpoint the role of Internet names has typically been defined in relation to identity display or cover, for example: “(...) to identify and ‘promote’ themselves, usually, however, without revealing official names” (Van Langendonck, 2007: 300), “(...) to disguise their real identity” (Scheidt 2001: 1), “(...) to support communication by effective identification” (Rutkiewicz, 1999: 118, 123).

Is an Internet name just another pseudonym?

Internet names are often thought to be pseudonyms because like pseudonyms they are typically chosen by the named (Kolodziejczyk, 2004: 146; Rutkiewicz, 1999: 123; Van Langendonck, 2007: 300). It should be noted, however, that self-naming and renaming practices are also relatively common with given names. In some cultures it is acceptable to

¹ See ‘Internet resources’

choose another name whenever the present one is deemed unsuitable. Nikonov (1974: 26),² for example, mentions records of Eskimos in Canada who changed their names five or six times, to officials' despair. There have been as well reported cases of self-ascribed nicknames, for instance, Mashiri (2004: 40), who has observed such practices in Harare, reminds: "This naming style is consistent with naming practices in two Oceanic societies (...) observed by Goodenough in 1965."³ Thus, self-naming as a feature of recognition might be questioned.

According to a dictionary of onomastic terminology (Podolskaia, 1978: 118), a pseudonym is a made-up name used in an individual's or group's public or social life alongside or instead of a real name. Research into pseudonyms typically focuses on people who are recognisable; it often involves matching the fake names with the real ones and organising them into encyclopaedias that may also contain stories and anecdotes related to the pseudonyms, whereas the majority of Internet users are ordinary people, which makes this methodology irrelevant. In addition, pseudonyms are false by definition, whereas both real and false names can be used as Internet names: pseudonyms replace legal names, hence are necessarily different from the real ones, whereas in some internet communities the use of real names is common practice (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003: 85-98).

There are some similarities regarding function: both pseudonyms and Internet names are used to secure anonymity⁴ or recognition, or both at the same time. Anonymity is often a means to prevent undesirable reactions,⁵ for example by hiding certain aspects of identities such as:

1. Gender: female writers have been known for using masculine pseudonyms to gain access to the community of respected authors, e.g. Aurore Dupin – George Sand, Mary Ann Evans – George Eliot (Podsevatkin, 1999: 182, 245); on-line gender-swapping as well as gender neutral naming has been reported, too, for example in Swennen (2001), Scheidt (2001) and Jaffe, et al. (1995), who has also noted a higher tendency to mask gender in female participants than in males.
2. Engagement in controversial activities – porn actors and some strippers use cover names (Ashley, 1998: 302). Likewise, participant of USENET's *alt.binaries.pictures.erotica* group, where sexually explicit conversation, pictures and videos are involved, use fake names much more often than real ones (Jaffe, et al. 1995).

On the other hand, pseudonyms are often a method of self-presentation, for example to indicate a character of performance: Long Dong Silver and Wilde Oscar are porn actors (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_pornographic_actors), and Rob Zombie, Nergal and Nocturno Culto are heavy metal artists. Internet names often play a similar role, e.g. in Naruszewicz-Duchlinska (2003: 3), Sidorova (2006: 74), Swennen (2001: 67, 72), Bechar-Israeli (1995), Bays (1998: 10) and Jaffe, et al. (1995). They might hint at their bearers' hobbies, e.g. names related to various fields of interest: music, literature, sport and other (punkgirl, *Ло-лу-ма* 'Lolita', schumi), their strategies of behaviour, e.g. names expressing expectations (Szukam2polowy 'looking for a second half', Single and looking), values

² For other examples, see Burt (2009: 236-245) and Bruck and Bodenhorn (2006).

³ These self-ascribed nicknames should not be considered pseudonyms as they were used in relation to social order within certain communities and not to replace legal names.

⁴ 53.2% of users with Internet names other than their own surveyed by Swennen (2001: 62) reported anonymity as the main reason of not using real names on-line.

⁵ For example, Jews would use fake names because of anti-Semitism (Ashley, 298); also false Internet names are often used to "protect a CMC user from adverse social reactions (...)" (Jaffe, et al. 1995).

(niezależna³⁰ ‘independent³⁰’, ***CO-LEADA OF THA GANGSTA BOYZ***) and other properties. A number of Internet names take the form of short advertisements, where individuals try to pack as much information as possible into restricted space: Fajny facet szuka kobiety ‘nice guy looking for a woman’, A może romans? ‘How about an affair?’ (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003; Scheidt, 2001; Van Langendonck, 2007: 301-305; Sidorova, 2006: 92-97).

In the entertainment industry it is quite common to care for the aesthetics of pseudonyms, so that they sound better than the real names: many actors and their agents believe that a ‘catchy’ name may enhance career prospects. For example, Marilyn Monroe sounds more original than Norma Jean Baker and Ava Gardner than Lucy Johnson (Podsevatkin, 1999: 58, 144). Van Langendonck (2007: 301) has also observed that for some chatters the aesthetic value of their Internet names is important: SecondlSun, D@rkst@r[Tr].

Sometimes multiple pseudonyms are used for different fields of activity, e.g. Maciej Słomczyński, a Polish translator of English literature, wrote detective stories as Joe Alex and plays as Kazimierz Kwasniewski. Some users also create optional identities and, for example, visit different domains under different names. Trixke, a 36 year-old examined by Swennen (2001: 59) admits:

97% I use trixke and the remaining 3% pitou why because with pitou I go to special rooms. I am single and sometimes have a need in a spicy talk but I wouldn't like to have the reputation of trixke tarnished this way.⁶

Many pseudonyms resemble real names – “the unsuspected pseudonym fully covers the fact that the work is anonymous” Ashley (1998: 301) writes. They might replace only a given name or a surname, or all the components of an individual’s name (Salmon, 2002: 43). Regarding Internet names, Naruszewicz-Duchlinska (2003: 4) recorded a comparatively frequent use of full names and various forms of given names (full, shortened, diminutive), often combined with a number (Eve17, marcin16, An25na) or a toponym (kuba_berlin, pawel.krakow).

Both pseudonyms and Internet names are usually recognised among the users as the owner’s intellectual property, similarly to brand names. Bechar-Israeli (1995) observed that:

If a person uses a certain nickname, (...) that is already taken, they will usually ask each other how long each of them has been using the nick, and the ‘senior user’ would win. (...) Sometimes when a nickname is ‘stolen’, Netters will sanction the thief; they will prevent his entry into certain channels, and will send him several nasty messages.

However, several cases of so-called *impersonation* were observed (‘stealing’ somebody else’s name, pretending to be that person) (Swennen, 2001: 20).

⁶ The translation from Dutch is my own and reflects the syntax of the original.

Is an Internet name a new nickname?

Internet names are often referred to as ‘nicknames’ or ‘nicks’ in English, as in many other languages, such as Russian, Polish and Dutch, which borrowed this term (Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Swennen, 2001; Bays, 1998; Van Langendonck, 2007; Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003).

Several researchers suggested that the system of nicknames developed to support identification in communities where members share their legal names (Holland, 1990: 256, 258; Butkus, 1999: 125; Anderson, 2007: 103). This is readily apparent in Amish communities, whose selection of names is restricted to those from the Bible (Enninger, 1985: 245), exposing a difference between nicknames and Internet names: the former indicate that the community members know each other’s names whereas the Internet participants may remain anonymous. However, the usage of nicknames does not seem to have been restricted to those with the same names, and seems to be a universal phenomenon, which also applies to communities that do not need additional systems of identification – as Van Langendonck (2007: 193) noted: “Indeed, a general motive for nicknaming is people’s need to characterize others”. Also according to Danilina (1979: 294) research on Russian material demonstrated the secondary status of differentiating function regarding the investigated nicknames.

In addition to this, numerous studies prove that nicknames retain a close link with communities where they are created, and often only members of a particular group are competent to use them correctly (Anderson 2007; Holland 1990; Leslie and Skipper 1990; Adams 2009; Crozier 2004). For example, Gasque (1994: 122) indicated that they are often used in places corresponding with Goffman’s (1961: 61-66) definition of *total institutions*, where a large number of people are kept together full time, whereas Mashiri (2004: 23) observed “(...) their grounding in small face-to-face primary groups relations.” Enninger (1985: 254) described nicknames as “(...) nodes in the internal network of unofficial socio-psychological relationships (...)”. Some of the nicknames do not function as a means of address – as Van Langendonck (2007: 317) noticed, adults’ by-names are infrequently used as address forms compared to the juvenile ones. What is more, one may not know that he or she was nicknamed, for example teachers are usually nicknamed ‘behind their backs’ (Crozier, 2004: 83; Mashiri, 2004: 25). In addition, men are nicknamed more often than women (Butkus, 1999; Van Langendonck, 2007; Haggan, 2008; Mashiri, 2004), and children and teenagers more often than adults (Van Langendonck, 2007; Leslie and Skipper, 1990; Mashiri, 2004), whereas Internet names are obligatory for everyone. Nicknames are also often described as a tool of social control which serves to define, express and maintain the character of relationships. According to Gasque (1994: 123), nicknames “accentuate the relationship as it is perceived to be: more intimacy if intimate, enmity or contempt if distant.” They may impose community norms, highlight inappropriate behaviour – used by both superiors and equals (Butkus, 1999; Adams, 2009; Gasque, 1994; Mashiri, 2004; Haggan, 2008; Danilina, 1979), as well as subordinates as a reaction or revenge against the oppressors and to express solidarity and support (Crozier, 2004: 96). Also self-praising and bragging nicknames serve to secure prestige and reputation (Adams, 2009; Mashiri, 2004). Hence, the key property of nicknames is that they result from interactions, whereas Internet names are necessary to interact; they are elements of first impression and may influence the decision of undertaking an interaction.

Nicknames are often critical, or even malicious or offensive, but usually accurate (e.g. Haggan, 2008; Holland, 1990; Butkus, 1999; Crozier, 2004). The need to create these judgemental names must be extremely strong: they are, for example, widely used in

conservative Muslim Kuwait against the *Qur'ān*, which prohibits such practices (Haggan, 2008: 81-94), and, similarly, are considered a “major concern” in a traditional Amish culture (Enninger, 1985: 252). Nicknames can also serve as weapons of discrimination against all groups: national, ethnic, minorities etc. This is illustrated by some ‘promising’ titles of books dealing with offensive nicknaming: *How to Hate Thy Neighbor: A Guide to Racist Maledicta* by M. Clifton, *A Study of Ethnic Slurs: The Jew and the Polack in the United States* by A. Dundes, *Terms of Abuse for Some Chicago Social Groups* by L. Pederson, and so on (Algeo, 1985: 191).

A number of studies show that irrespective of cultures or social environments, nicknames seem to be similarly inspired by the following list of characteristics (Butkus, 1990; Holland, 1990; Crozier, 2004; Gasque, 1994; Mashiri, 2004; Haggan, 2008; Enninger, 1985):

1. Physical features: appearance, motion, age and other: *Dracula*, *Voverè* ‘squirrel’, *Diedukas* ‘old man’, *Porky Dan*.
2. Personality traits, temperament, habits, behaviour, attitudes: *Mhepo* ‘wind’, *Abeeta* ‘idiot’, *Ustadh Kashka* ‘Mr Show off’, *Pope*, *Sloppy Steve*.
3. Occupation, hobby and other activities: *Al Sha'era* ‘the poetess’, *Smuikas* ‘violin’, *Aludaris* ‘brewer’.
4. Origins, nationality, residence: *Kampinis* ‘corner’, *Naujelis* from ‘naujas’ – ‘new’, *Sibiriakas*, *Amerikonas*.
5. Kinship references – genealogical and marital: *Adomienė* (wife of Adomas), *Monikėnas* (husband of Monika), *Sonny* (little son).
6. Associations with given and family names: *Tate* from name Tatenda, *Dutch* from Duche, *Hitleris* (for a person named Adolfas), *Kranklys* ‘raven’ from surname Krankauskas, *Tadi-boy* from Tadiwa.
7. Financial situation, status: *Buržujas* ‘bourgeois’, *Doleris* ‘dollar’, *Aukso Kiaulė* ‘golden pig’, *Plikienė* from ‘plikas’ – ‘naked’, *Čvertinėlis* ‘a little quarter’.
8. Names of famous people and characters – especially self-ascribed, praising nicknames: *Superman*, *Cheso Power*, *Chomsky*, *Macduff*, *Peter the Great*.

Internet names are subjective and tend to express strengths (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003: 11). They are also often etymologically transparent and both groups share a number of motivations, such as (Sidorova, 2006: 95-96; Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Van Langendonck, 2007: 301-306; Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003; Scheidt, 2001):

1. Physical appearance: *Голубоглазая* ‘blue eyed’, *Рыжая* ‘ginger’, *Маленькая* ‘little one’, *RedGirl*, *Bitch_In_Pink*, handsome, *Wysoka Brunetka* ‘tall brunette’, *Spits* ‘tiny’.
2. Personality: *Mily Chlopak* ‘nice boy’, *Иная/Иной* ‘other’ – female/male, *Скромняга*, *скромняжка* ‘the modest one’, *СумаШведия* ‘out of mind’, *Креативная* ‘creative’, shydude, *Sarcasmo*, *Romantyczna* ‘romantic’.
3. Occupation, hobby and other activities: *Не поэтесса* ‘not a poet’, *Часовщик* ‘watchmaker’, *Ночная_Снайперша* ‘night sniper’, *Анархисточка* ‘little anarchist’, pilot, *Nurse*, *skatewifj* ‘skating female’, *punkgirl*, *Jazzboy*, *dichtertje* ‘little poet’.
4. Origins, nationality, residence: *БаРБИ из Москвы* ‘Barbie from Moscow’, *Dutchguy*, *El_ingles*, *Dutchman*, *Leuven*, *Грек* ‘Greek’, *Justyna25Warszawa*.
5. Kinship: *Сестра Дали* ‘Dali’s sister’, *Дочь Билла Гейтса* ‘Bill Gates’s daughter’, bfiancee, ***kandi's man 4life***.
6. Names: *Sofie*, *eprenen* (Eric Prenen), *Прасковья* (Praskovya), *leintje* (diminutive form of Marjolein), *Ola_Ola*, *Anette*.

7. Status: *Ваше Высочество* ‘your majesty’, *prinseske* – diminutive ‘princess’, director.
8. Names of famous people and characters: *Анна Каренина* (Anna Karenina), Саурон (Sauron), *Фредди Крюгер* (Freddy Krueger), *В.В. Жириновский* (V. V. Zhirinovskii), *Ленин* (Lenin), *Вольтер* (Voltaire), *Гагарин* (Gagarin), Godot, Elvis, Yosi (Sarid).

As nicknames are so much interconnected with the society, they also get affected by changes in it. Postmodern societies become more mobile and fragmented, many people engage externally rather than locally, which limits opportunities of both origination and circulation of nicknames, but they also seem to be losing their relevance in light of contemporary social tendencies to disapprove offensive practices (e.g. Holland, 1990: 255-272; Van Langendonck, 2007: 193, Leslie and Skipper, 1990: 276, Barrett, 1978). I might actually risk to speculate that Internet names, which are at times transferred to ‘real life’ (Swennen, 2001: 80; Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Rutkiewicz, 1999: 123) might form a modern alternative and eventually replace old fashioned nicknames. Gasque (1994: 121-131) discovered that some of his former school mates were still addressed by nicknames after thirty-five years, whereas a self-naming practice offers a flexible, handy and widely available means of self-presentation, adjustable to a specific situation or strategy. Internet names seem to reflect better a character of post-modern identity: its individuality, fluidity, mobility – for example according to Bechar-Israeli (1995), they much more often refer to individual than collective identities, such as national, religious or ethnic.

Is an Internet name a ‘second first name’?

It seems to be taken for granted that Internet names should be classified as ‘unofficial’, ‘secondary’, ‘substitutive’, ‘supplementary’ etc, in contrast to official, ‘real’ names (Van Langendonck, 2007: 189; Rutkiewicz, 1999: 118), and are made up or invented under no control whatsoever, with no rules applying to them (Kolodziejczyk, 2004: 146)

These opinions could be disputed. Pseudonyms do substitute – they are false names that play the role of the real ones, and are used instead. In turn, nicknames can be described as supplementary – they supplement a selection of alternative identification devices – depending on the social situation we can use, for example, a given name, a surname, a title or a nickname. None of the above, however, relate to Internet names. They do not replace the real names: the real ones can equally be utilised to register and enter the Internet realms. They do not supplement either: systems do not permit multiple names for one logging act – each name is treated as a separate entity. Instead, they are an obligatory tool to log on and a main means of reference, address or identification. Thus, similarly to official given names, Internet names are primary and not optional. They may not be considered official but they certainly are a customary means of identification on the Web.

Similarly to official names, Internet names indicate members of the population and are necessary to participate in societies; they indicate an existence, a membership of the named entity. During the registration process everybody is normally asked to choose a name by which they will not only be addressed or referred to by interlocutors, but also by operators in all sorts of formal situations that might take place, such as announcements (“user...has entered the chat room”, “user...has left”, “user...is inviting you to a private room”), or when they receive a warning for misbehaviour. There are also regulations regarding the name choice, e.g. the length of the name is limited to a certain number of characters. On IRC and MUDs, for example, names may contain maximally nine characters and must be unique – more than one participant cannot use the same name at the same time. Moreover,

occasionally names cannot start with digits and not all keyboard symbols are allowed (Swennen, 2001: 19). Some domains use filters which prevent using swear-words to log on. In many domains users may protect their names (so-called *permanent* names) with passwords – only someone who knows the password is able to log on with such names. Thus, each registration means adjusting to a specific naming system.

In Europe given names are usually permanently attached to an individual, but this is far from being universal. As names are often treated as integral parts of their owners' personalities remaining in line with life experience and conduct of the named, name change or acquisition is used in some cultures to reflect or initiate changes in individuals' lives: when one reaches adulthood, gets married, becomes a parent etc. (Nikonov, 1974: 21, Kryukov, 1986, Bruck and Bodenhorn, 2006). Burt's (2009: 236, 240) investigation of naming habits among Hmong-Americans revealed "eight possible occasions during the lifespan when naming or re-naming could take place". Changing the name in the case of a sickness or another misfortune also seems quite widespread in different parts of the world, e.g. amongst Udmurts, Saami and Khmer people (Nikonov, 1974: 30). An individual can have a symbolic new start as another person, and this way 'mislead' bad luck (which is often perceived as a wilful force). In Internet environments the practice of changing names is comparatively popular, e.g. some 30% of CMC users examined by Swennen (2001: 57, 85) admitted having used more than one name. According to Bechar-Israeli (1995), although most of IRC participants prefer to build a recognisable identity on a permanent Internet name, some of them have different names for each chat. Others 'try on' several nicknames before they choose a suitable one (Bechar-Israeli, 1995) or update their Internet names in accordance with changes in life (Stommel, 2007).

Given as well as Internet names are influenced by both environmental and individual tastes, values and worldviews; they often carry emotional and symbolic meanings, e.g. wishful names that display desirable personal qualities, hopes for a good fortune and other aspirations. People of many cultures and various historical periods have believed that names are able to attribute desirable qualities to their owners (Nikonov, 1974: 30; Anderson, 2007: 85). Similarly, many Internet users trust that attractive names may enhance their attractiveness and popularity (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska 2003: 11; Jaffe et al. 1995; Bechar-Israeli, 1995) – except that the non self-given names will reflect what the name giver wants rather than the name bearer. Naruszewicz-Duchlinska (2003: 13) postulates that this way one may not only influence the Internet 'destiny' – an on-line popularity may increase self-confidence in real life, too. This kind of work might be performed either by indicating the desired attributes directly, e.g.:

- Given names: Хоробрит 'brave', Гораздъ 'talented', Славна 'eminent', Красава 'beautiful' (Superanskaia, 2004: 158, 337, 399 and 434), Luftar 'brave', Mira 'kind', Besnik 'faithful', Urta 'wise' (Doja 2006: 249); in the time of the Chinese Song dynasty, names for boys contained one of the four words: 'brave', 'rich', 'educated' or 'honourable' (Kaluzynska, 2004: 88).
- Internet names: Marzenie mezczyzny 'man's dream', Crazysexycool, Bogini seksu 'sex goddess', przystojny 'handsome', Better man, Uroczka 'charming' (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003), or by using various associative strategies to generate relevant connotations, such as:

1. Naming after important related or non-related persons, idols and role models, such as religious or historical figures, celebrities, relatives or friends (e.g. respected or successful)
 - Given names: for example, naming after a saint would secure a special patronage of the selected one (Nikonov, 1974: 28), using surnames of famous figures as first names: Aranit, Barleti, Uran (figures from Albanian history), Washington, Roosevelt (Doja, 2006: 249).
 - Internet names: James B., MacGyver (Kolodziejczyk, 2004: 154), Fidel, Atena (Rutkiewicz, 1999: 117), Гагарин (Gagarin), В.В. Жириновский (V.V. Zhirinovskii), Онегин (Onegin), Анна Каренина (Anna Karenina), vonnegut (Sidorova, 2006: 97).
2. References to surrounding nature
 - Given names: Lis ‘oak’, Bilbil ‘nightingale’, Luan ‘lion’, Shquipe ‘eagle’ (Doja 2006: 249), Pob Tsuas ‘rocky mountain’, Paj ‘flower’, Tsawb ‘banana tree’ (Burt, 2009: 239)
 - Internet names: Gata nocturna ‘black cat’, Слезы Солнца ‘tears of the sun’, вольный ветер ‘free wind’, Ночная волчица ‘night she-wolf’, Кактус ‘cactus’, Белый волк ‘white wolf’ (Sidorova 2006: 92), froggy, coolfox (Bechar-Israeli, 1995)
3. References to artefacts
 - Given names: Phawv ‘little rice basket’, Tooj ‘copper’ (Burt, 2009: 239, 241, 244), Doolar ‘dollar’, Toyota, Shareehah ‘sim card’, Shafrah ‘knife’ (Al-Zumor, 2009: 21-23)
 - Internet names: BMW, Mig (Bechar-Israeli, 1995), koekje ‘cookie’, Duvel (Belgian beer), Acertje (diminutive ‘Acer’) (Van Langendonck, 2007: 301-306), Левая Тапочка ‘left slipper’, Ключик ‘little key’, Зеркало ‘mirror’, игрушка ‘toy’ (Sidorova, 2006: 95-96).
4. References to abstract phenomena
 - Given names: Bashkim ‘union’, Liri ‘freedom’, Fitore ‘victory’ (Doja, 2006: 249), Tswv Yim ‘idea’, Nrawm Nroos ‘quickly’ (Burt, 2009: 244), Izdihaar ‘prosperity’, Fikrah ‘idea’ (Al-Zumor, 2009: 24).
 - Internet names: свет вечности ‘light of eternity’, Случай_но ‘accidentally’, боль ‘pain’, Мистика ‘mysticism’ (Sidorova, 2006: 95-96), soul, spirit (Bechar-Israeli, 1995).

A property that distinguishes Internet names, together with pseudonyms and nicknames, from official given names, is that given names are never collective; examples of collective Internet names are: marta_z_bratem ‘Marta with brother’, mlode_Malzenstwo ‘young married couple’ (<http://czat.wp.pl>, 06/03/2010), MandyandChristina (Scheidt, 2001).

Names in text-based communication

Internet communication is still based on written text, even though some environments allow using cameras and headphones. It finds for instance its reflection in unpronounceable names (^_^, ???), usage of visual effects (cLoNehEAd, m@d, ***vv) and digits (me33, 123654), or names that do not contain any semantic content (dddd, ffgghgf), which, however, still fulfil their main function to log on the system (Bechar-Israeli, 1995; Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003; Kolodziejczyk, 2004 and <http://czat.wp.pl>).

Written text also enables playing with the form of names, such as: various phonetic transcriptions, e.g. Dejvid (David), Tomashek (Tomaszek), seqtnica (sekutnica) ‘shrew’, Un4GIVEN (unforgiven), 100krotka ‘daisy’ (stokrotka – 100 in Polish is pronounced as [sto]), joining words into one, e.g. jawiemjak (ja wiem jak) ‘I know how’, random usage of

lower and upper case, e.g. amanda, niNA, arteK, spelling alternatives, e.g. Kfiatussek (kwiatuszek) ‘little flower’ as well as their content, for example in jocular names: Piekna Szuka Bestii ‘the beauty seeks the beast’, Opowiesc sztucznej szczeki ‘a denture’s story’ (Naruszewicz-Duchlinska, 2003), which sometimes engages interlocutors, e.g. the name *god* provoked reactions: “o my god” and “now I know god exists” (Bechar-Israeli, 1995).

Conclusions

In this paper I have demonstrated that while Internet names share a number of properties with other anthroponomastic categories, they display a number of unique characteristics.

Like pseudonyms, Internet names are also self-selected. Unlike pseudonyms, however, which are typically used in professional settings and target a larger or smaller group of an anonymous audience, Internet names serve to manage direct communication; the same applies to multiple identities and gender swapping. Even in the field of ‘indecent’ activities, a distinction must be drawn between ‘cover names’ used in working environment and false names on the Internet masking those who wish to satisfy their private wants. Further research might show that the closest resemblance between these two groups can be observed in Internet names used in web logs (blogs) and personal web pages which are, to a certain extent, reminiscent of ‘traditional’ publicity, showing a similar dichotomy of producers and audience where the author is a central figure of the discourse. Nicknames, on the other hand, are invented and utilised exclusively by members of particular communities and are firmly bound with the nature of relationships between them. Perhaps in environments where users form groups and cooperate in them, such as multiplayer gaming, Internet names will be more related to social order and therefore more similar to nicknames. Also, it would be interesting to observe which tool of address and reference is used in communities where people know each other’s real names and what influences the choice. For example, in the Russian version of *LiveJournal* (<http://www.livejournal.ru/celebrities>) we can find a selection of blogs held by contemporary public figures. They advertise under invented Internet names but their real names are also revealed, e.g.: Tatyana Tolstaya (a writer) – tanyant, Marina Litvinovich (a politician) – abstract2001, Yevgenii Khramkov (a musician) – dj-hacker.

In general, anthroponomastic categories are far from homogenous, therefore difficult to define and classify. Internet names are no exception: in the first edition of *Language and the Internet* Crystal recognised five Internet situations: electronic mail, synchronous and asynchronous chat groups, virtual worlds and World Wide Web; in the second edition he added blogs and instant messengers (Crystal, 2006) and he admitted that it needs another revision after such domains as MySpace or Face-Book emerged (Crystal, 2007-2008: 40). Internet names, as part of the whole process, also evolve, developing new classes and roles. This should be taken into account in research projects, as purpose and place of the name usage might considerably influence its shape, and different ‘kinds’ of Internet names might require different tactics of investigation.

Given the limited space available, the present work has not attempted to cover all aspects of the problem. Also, with only a small amount of Internet data having been researched so far, the conclusions drawn cannot be considered as universally applicable. A lot more data collection and analysis will have to be completed before a phenomenon of Internet anthroponymy can be accurately described as a category. Luckily, we live in an age when the anthroposystem of the Web, including the naming system, is still forming, and we have a unique opportunity to observe how a possibly new onomastic category is developing from the very beginning. In addition to being able to retrieve this data, we often have access to its

creators and users. In any case, Cyberspace is an incredibly rich source of anthroponomastic data that deserves much more attention than it has received to date.

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