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MOTIVATION BEHIND CHARACTER NAMES IN AMERICAN AND CANADIAN ANIMATED FILMS AND SERIES

Summary. This research aims to identify and describe the primary motivational types of character names in contemporary American and Canadian animated films and series. In today's rapidly globalizing world, animated films have evolved into more than just entertainment; they also serve as significant markers of cultural identity. The unique linguistic features of character names in these works play a crucial role in how audiences perceive and understand characters as distinct individuals, while also reflecting the richness of cultural traditions. The study of cartoon character names has gained increasing relevance in recent times. It enhances our understanding of the creative process and helps ensure that audiences appreciate animated films meaningfully. Additionally, this research contributes to the preservation of the cultural uniqueness of names during the translation process.

The motivation behind names plays a significant role in shaping characters. Names can be descriptive, directly reflecting the character's traits, or they can be metaphorical and symbolic, adding deeper meanings and layers of interpretation. Each type of naming motivation contributes to the development of more complex and multifaceted characters.

The names of characters in American and Canadian animated films reflect various motivational factors and their combinations. One important criterion is how appealing a name is, especially for female characters, as well as how well it fits within the overall naming system of the cartoon, which is often based on a specific concept. When selecting a name, factors such as the character's appearance, personality traits, profession, social status, title, nationality, and other aspects may be considered. The blend of these motivational factors, the creativity of the creators, and the use of humorous techniques in name formation contribute to the attractiveness and memorability of characters, particularly for young audiences.

Key words: animated film, series, proper name (onym), character name, motivation.

Problem Statement. In today's rapidly globalizing world, animated films have evolved into more than just entertainment; they also serve as significant markers of cultural identity. The unique linguistic features of character names in these works play a crucial role in how audiences perceive and understand characters as distinct individuals, while also reflecting the richness of cultural traditions.

The study of cartoon character names has gained increasing relevance in recent times. It enhances our understanding of the creative process and helps ensure that audiences appreciate animated films meaningfully. Additionally, the research contributes to the preservation of the cultural uniqueness of names during the translation process. This study can also significantly contribute to the research on the relationship between linguistic and cultural context in the art of film animation. It will help us uncover the profound and diverse influence of American and Canadian cartoons on global trends in contemporary culture.

Literature Review. The theoretical foundation for examining linguistic features of proper names in various works of art is primarily formed by the research of modern Ukrainian scholars. O. Boka explores literary onyms as "compressed texts that carry cognitive information," using J. K. Rowling's fantasy novel "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" as a case study [1]. O. Yakovlieva investigates the text functions of fictional names, focusing on A. Christie's work "The ABC Murders" [2]. Yu. Hliuzdyk's PhD thesis delves into the linguistic and cultural characteristics of literary character names in C.S. Lewis's "The Chronicles of Narnia" [3].

However, the linguistic aspects of character names in audiovisual works have not been thoroughly examined. The onyms in this context have only been sporadically analyzed from a translation perspective, with contributions from A. Kulikova and T. Tychynska [4], T. Skorokhod [5], as well as O. Zosimova and O. Dudchenko [6], among others.

Research purpose. This research aims to identify and describe the primary motivational types of character names in contemporary American and Canadian animated films and series.

The study analyzes character names from popular films: "Bolt," "Brave," "Finding Nemo," "Madagascar," "Ratatouille," "The Bad Guys," "The Lion King," "Toy Story," "Zootopia," and series: "Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers," "DuckTales," "Paw Patrol" and "Vampirina" [7; 8].

Results and discussion. One of the key aspects of studying character names in any work of art, including animated films, is understanding their motivations, which are often closely tied to the meaning of the names themselves. The naming motive refers to the external reasons behind the choice or creation of a particular name for a specific character or object [9, p. 71].

The motivation behind cartoon character names is a unique area of creativity that involves several important factors. The primary principle in choosing or creating a fictional name is the desire to develop a distinctive name that represents the character from various perspectives. This name should capture the audience's attention and make the character memorable.

In the animated series "Paw Patrol," the names of the characters, *Rocky* and *Marshall*, are quite expressive. The name *Rocky* consists of a single component; it is short, easy to pronounce, and memorable. This name evokes images of stones or rocks. Older viewers, such as parents or grandparents watching the cartoon with their children, might also associate it with the iconic American sports drama film "Rocky" and its main character, the boxer Rocky Balboa, played by Sylvester Stallone. In any case, the name *Rocky* reflects the hero's personality, characterized by strength and perseverance. It also suggests adventures in the mountains. The name of another character, *Marshall*, signifies leadership qualities and his role within the team. 'Marshal' is "the highest rank in the armed forces of some countries," and in the U.S., it refers to a high-ranking officer in a fire department [10]. In the cartoon, *Marshall* primarily serves as a firefighter and drives a fire truck. The term 'marshal' has evolved into a common surname in English-speaking countries and is also a fairly popular male first name (*Marshall*).

The name of a character, particularly the main hero or heroine, often carries profound meaning and symbolic significance. It can even reflect the overarching message of the animated film. Frequently, the leading character's name becomes the title of the entire cartoon. For instance, in the animated film "Bolt," the main character is a dog named *Bolt* who stars in a television show. Because of this, he believes he possesses superpowers that enable him to combat evil and always emerge victorious. After a series of disappointments and adventures in the real world, he ultimately demonstrates his bravery, determination, and ability to help others. The name *Bolt* is associated in English primarily with lightning, which symbolizes speed, energy, and power, making the choice of this name quite fitting.

A common reason for selecting particular character names is their appealing sound and rhythm, which can create positive associations and make them easier for the audience to remember. Additionally, if a character represents speed, like in the case of the name *Bolt*, it's effective to choose a name that is short and impactful, resembling the force of a lightning strike.

In our opinion, the criterion of attractiveness is important when choosing names for female characters. For instance, in the animated film "Finding Nemo," the names of Nemo's mother, *Coral*, his school friend, *Pearl*, and the starfish, *Peach*, are much more appealing and elegant compared to the names of most male characters, particularly the supporting ones, such as *Gill*, *Bubbles*, and *Bloat*.

The name of each character in an animated film should align with the overall naming system used throughout the work. This means that the names often share a common theme or motivation. For instance, in the movie "Finding Nemo," the characters' names are primarily related to a "marine" theme. They are derived from various species of fish and other marine animals (such as *Dory*, *Marlin*, and *Coral*), physical phenomena associated with water (like *Bubbles*, *Gurgle*, and *Squirt*), and other ocean-related objects and concepts (like *Anchor* and *Pearl*).

The gothic atmosphere in the animated series "Vampirina" is established through several key elements. The main character's

name, along with her family's surname, *Hauntly*, contributes to this ambience. Additionally, the names of her friends enhance the gothic theme: *Edgar*, which alludes to the writer Edgar Allan Poe, known for his macabre and mystical stories, and *Poppy*, a reference to Poppy Z. Brite, the pseudonym of the modern American novelist William Martin, who writes in the horror genre.

To create the right atmosphere, screenwriters for popular Disney animated fairy tales select or invent vibrant and unique names for their characters. These names are often inspired by historical figures or legendary heroes. For example, in the spectacular animated film "Brave," we meet Princess *Merida*, Queen *Elinor*, King *Fergus*, and the enchanted bear prince *Mor'Du*.

Based on the analysis of character names in American and Canadian cartoons, various motivational types of fictional names have been identified. They are as follows:

- Names that describe the appearance of characters such as: *Scar* – the main antagonist in the cartoon "The Lion King," who has a distinct scar over his left eye; *Fat Cat* – the enemy of the rescuers, a fat and lazy cat, who enjoys a luxurious lifestyle and engages in illegal activities to make money ("Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers"); *Rhino* – a hamster in the animated film "Bolt". The name of such a large animal as a rhinoceros likely references the overweight appearance of the hamster, who is clearly very well-fed and moves little, spending most of his time in front of the TV. This naming choice exemplifies a common comedic technique known as the "reverse principle," where a tall person might be called "Shorty," among other ironic nicknames. In any case, the choice of the name for this character is closely tied to its appearance and serves to create a humorous effect.

- Names, suggesting that a character belongs to a specific class of animals or similar categories: *Mole* ("Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers"), *Mr. Wolf*, *Mr. Snake*, *Mr. Piranha* ("The Bad Guys"), *Mr. Ray*, *Marlin* ("Finding Nemo"), *Mrs. Otterton*, *Gazelle* ("Zootopia"), *Wolfie Hauntley* – a pet dog that transforms into a werewolf when there is a full moon ("Vampirina").

The onomasticon of the popular animated series "Duck Tales" primarily features names that are related to the themes of "ducks" or at least "birds". The surname of the main character, *Scrooge McDuck*, prominently includes the word 'duck'. This component is also found in the names of other characters, such as *Donald Duck*, *Fethry Duck*, *Bubba the Caveduck* and *Duckworth*. Many surnames feature the terms 'quack' (*Webby Vanderquack*), 'beak' (*Bentina Beakley*, *Mark Beaks*, *Steelbeak*), wing (*Darkwing Duck*), 'drake' (*Ludwig Von Drake*) and 'gander' (*Gladstone Gander*). In some episodes, characters named *Zan Owlson* (from 'owl'), *Storkules* (from 'stork'), *Jim Starling*, and *Black Heron* also appear.

- Names that reveal specific character traits. For example, *Rocky* is portrayed as a brave and reliable rescue dog in the series "Paw Patrol." *Skipper*, the penguin leader in the popular animated movie "Madagascar," embodies leadership qualities rather than primarily serving as a ship's captain. This role is highlighted later in the plot, as 'skipper' is an informal term for the captain of a small vessel, especially in the context of merchant or fishing boats [10]. In the animated film "Ratatouille," the chef *Skinner* shares his name with the American psychologist, inventor, and writer B. F. Skinner [11]. However, most viewers are unaware of this connection and instead associate the name with Skinner's character as the main antagonist who has a strong dislike for animals; ironically, 'skinner' also refers to someone who skins animals.

4. Names that reflect the tastes and hobbies of the characters: *Monterey Jack* – a cartoon character who loves cheese so much that he forgets about his work whenever he catches a whiff of it (“Chip ‘n Dale Rescue Rangers”); *Bubbles* – an aquarium fish who has a great fondness for bubbles (“Finding Nemo”).

5. Names that indicate the character’s profession or occupation: *Gadget Hackwrench* – a clever mouse inventor who is skilled in technology and mechanics (“Chip ‘n Dale Rescue Rangers”); *Launchpad McQuack* – Scrooge McDuck’s personal driver and pilot in the series “DuckTales” (the name derives from ‘launch pad,’ which refers to “a platform from which a spacecraft, etc. is sent into the sky” [10]); *Magica De Spell* – a sorceress who seeks revenge on Scrooge McDuck and aims to gain power (her name is composed of the words ‘magic’ and ‘spell’). *Marshall* is a firefighter dog, *Chase* is a chase dog, *Rubble* is a dog, responsible for construction work in the team (the name comes from ‘rubble,’ which refers to broken stone used in construction), *Skye* is a heroine who serves as a pilot, *Everest* is a husky dog in charge of rescue operations in the mountains (“Paw Patrol”).

A very interesting example of a fictional name is *Buzz Lightyear*, a character from the “Toy Story” franchise who is depicted as a toy superhero and space ranger. While the component *Lightyear* clearly suggests a connection to space adventures, the motivation behind the name *Buzz* may not be as obvious to everyone. In fact, the character is named after Buzz Aldrin, an American astronaut and a member of the historic Apollo 11 mission, making him the second person to walk on the moon in 1969. According to the film producers, Aldrin had “the coolest astronaut name” [11].

6. Names that reflect a character’s social status, title, or position: *King Julien* – the king of the lemurs (“Madagascar”), *Cap’n* (=Captain) *Turbot* (“Paw Patrol”), *Chief Bogo* – the chief of police, *Mayor Lionheart* – the mayor of the city (“Zootopia”).

7. Names that suggest the nationality of the characters: *Jacques* – a shrimp, living in a dentist’s aquarium, who speaks with a French accent (“Finding Nemo”); *Ludwig Von Drake* – a scientist, who comes from Vienna, Austria (“DuckTales”), *Auguste Gusteau*, *Remy*, *Émile*, *Patrick Pompidou*, *Colette Tatou* – most of the names in the cartoon “Ratatouille” are French, since the action takes place in France, primarily in a Parisian restaurant whose employees are the main characters. At the same time, the name of the sous chef, *Horst*, indicates his German origin.

It is important to note that this classification is not exhaustive. The variety of naming motives is extensive and diverse. Our classification outlines the main types that we have observed to be the most productive.

As we can see from the examples above, many cartoon characters’ names have multiple layers of meaning, often reflecting double or even triple motivations. For instance, *Mayor Lionheart* is the mayor of the city in “Zootopia”. Here, the name contains a reference to his position as mayor, while the surname *Lionheart* indicates his species, as well as alluding to the famous English king, Richard I, known as Richard the Lionheart. Another example is *Ludwig Von Drake*, a supporting character in “DuckTales”. The name *Ludwig*, combined with the nobiliary particle *Von*, suggests the place of origin and noble ancestry. The surname *Drake* specifies that he belongs to the duck species, as ‘drake’ refers to a male duck. It is a distinctive feature of most of the character names in this animated series.

In the full name *Zipper the Fly*, the second component identifies the character as belonging to an insect species. The first compo-

nent appears to be motivated phonetically, as it resembles the sound of a zipper. Additionally, it may have some semantic significance. Since a zipper on clothing fastens quickly, unlike buttons, this suggests that one of the main characters in the popular series “Chip ‘n Dale: Rescue Rangers” is very agile.

The name *King Julien* in “Madagascar” clearly indicates the character’s role as the king of the lemurs. The choice of the name *Julien*, however, is less obvious. It seems that the creators sought a name that sounded grand and “royal,” and importantly, had a French flair, as the story is set in Madagascar, a former French colony where French remains one of the official languages. Additionally, it’s worth mentioning that the name *Julien* is adapted for English pronunciation in the cartoon, even though the lemurs speak with a French accent.

The name of the iconic Disney character *Scrooge McDuck* is derived from three key sources. First, the surname component ‘duck’ is straightforward, as the ‘duck’ theme is fundamental to many fictional names in this popular TV series. Second, the prefix ‘Mc’ suggests a Scottish origin for the character. In fact, in 2007, the Glasgow City Council humorously included Scrooge in a list of outstanding citizens, as the Disney screenwriters indicated that he hailed from this city [11]. The third motivational factor influencing the name is the character’s personality. The name *Scrooge* is closely associated with a miserly, greedy billionaire fixated on money and the success of his business. The screenwriters have noted that the inspiration for *Scrooge McDuck* was Ebenezer Scrooge, a well-known character from Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” [10]. The surname Scrooge, which derives from ‘scrouge’ (meaning ‘to squeeze or press’) and ‘gouge’ (meaning ‘to cheat or swindle’), invented by Dickens, has become the personal name of the cartoon character *Scrooge McDuck*.

It’s worth noting that the scriptwriters of “DuckTales” frequently draw from names of famous literary characters and contemporary celebrities to create names for their cartoon characters. For instance, the name of a dangerous and ruthless supervillain, one of Darkwing Duck’s enemies, is *Taurus Bulba*. This name is an obvious reference to Mykola Hohol’s character Taras Bulba, as well as the Latin word ‘taurus,’ which means ‘bull.’ *Oprah Webfeet*, a talk show host who appears in some episodes of “DuckTales,” is a parody of the well-known American TV host and producer Oprah Winfrey, who has been “often ranked as the most influential woman in the world” [11]. In the cartoon series, the host’s surname was altered to fit the overall “duck theme,” as webbed feet are characteristic of waterfowl.

The motivation behind the names of characters in American and Canadian animated films is often quite evident. Names may often directly indicate a character’s profession, title, social status, or rank, such as “chef,” “king,” “professor,” or “captain.” At the same time, there are many cases where the motivation is not immediately obvious, but a keen observer – often even a child – can typically figure it out with a bit of thought.

Conclusion and prospects. The motivation behind the names of cartoon characters plays a significant role in shaping their identities. Names can be descriptive, directly reflecting the character’s traits, or they can be metaphorical and symbolic, adding deeper meanings and layers of interpretation. Each type of naming motivation contributes to the development of more complex and multifaceted characters.

The names of characters in American and Canadian animated films reflect various motivational factors and their combinations.

One important criterion is how appealing a name is, especially for female characters, as well as how well it fits within the overall naming system of the cartoon, which is often based on a specific concept. When selecting a name, factors such as the character's appearance, personality traits, profession, social status, title, nationality, and other aspects may be considered. The blend of these motivational factors, the creativity of the creators, and the use of humorous techniques in name formation contribute to the attractiveness and memorability of characters, particularly for young audiences.

We see the prospects of the study in a comparative linguistic analysis of character names in American / Canadian and Ukrainian animated films.

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Зосімова О., Кононенко А. Мотивація імен персонажів американських і канадських анімаційних фільмів та серіалів

Анотація. Це дослідження має на меті визначити й описати основні мотиваційні типи імен персонажів сучасних американських і канадських анімаційних фільмів та серіалів. У сучасному світі, на тлі стрімкої глобалізації й розширення культурного обміну, мультиплікаційні фільми стають не лише розважальним продуктом, але й важливим аспектом культурної ідентичності. Мовна специфіка імен персонажів у цих творах виступає як ключовий фактор, що визначає сприйняття та розуміння героїв як самостійних індивідів, а також відображає глибину культурних традицій. Вивчення мовної специфіки імен анімаційних персонажів набуває зараз великої актуальності. Це забезпечить розуміння глибини творчого процесу й, у такий спосіб, сприятиме адекватному сприйняттю мультиплікаційних фільмів аудиторією, а також допоможе зберегти культурну специфіку імен у перекладі.

Мотивація імен грає важливу роль у формуванні образів героїв. Від описових назв, що безпосередньо характеризують персонажа, до метафоричних та символічних імен, які надають глибокого сенсу та додаткових рівнів інтерпретації, кожен тип мотивації сприяє створенню більш багатограних героїв.

Імена персонажів американських анімаційних фільмів демонструють розмаїття мотиваційних чинників, а також їхню комбінацію. Важливим є критерій привабливості імені (наприклад, для жіночих персонажів), їхньої відповідності загальній системі імен мультфільму, підпорядкованій певній концепції тощо. У виборі імені можуть враховуватися зовнішність персонажа, риси характеру, професія чи рід заняття, соціальний статус, титул, посада, національність та ін. Поєднання мотиваційних чинників, креативність номінаторів, використання гумористичних прийомів для створення унікальних образів забезпечує привабливість, запам'ятовуваність персонажів для глядача, насамперед дитячої аудиторії.

Ключові слова: анімаційний фільм, серіал, власна назва (онім), ім'я персонажа, мотивація.

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