

An Onomasiological Interpretation of Word-Formation*

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The subject of the traditional science of word-formation is constituted by derivation and composition, as well as by univerbisation and truncation. The research focuses on how new words are derived and composed from the given base by adding some elements. The results of such research are more or less extensive lists of derived or compounded words organized according to certain semantic criteria. However, in reality, as a rule, not the process of word-formation itself is investigated but what arose or was formed due to this process. Thus Dokulil had earlier suggested to distinguish between ‘tvoření’ and ‘utvořenost’, i.e., the formation of the word (conceived of as a process) and its formedness (result). In each case, though, whether it is the investigation of word-formation or of word-formedness, the procedure is actually additive: to a certain element other elements are added.

This situation is also reflected in the traditional terminology which distinguishes between the word-formation base and the word-formation prefix or affix. The word-formation base is then delimited as that part of the derived word that remains after removing the suffix or prefix and it has independent lexical meaning, regardless of the fact whether it also exists as an independent word. If it does not, it is supposed to be a bound word-formation base (Horecký 1959). Positionally delimited are also affixes: in this conception the word-formation suffix is that part of the derived word which stands after the word-formation base and in some way modifies this base. The word-formation prefix is that part of the derived word which stands before the word-formation base and in some way modifies this base.

If instead of the term word-formation base the terms basic word and formant start to be used, the relationship of motivatedness is stressed (and that is why the motivant and the motivate are differentiated) as well as the inclusion of the word into a certain word-formation category, but even then the analysis still remains within the area of ready-made naming units and their word-formation structure. This traditional analytical or additive attitude, although formulated from the point of view of structure, is basically adhered to also when analysing the relationships, or when including the words into larger units, e.g. into word-formation classes and word-formation paradigms.

Let us point out here that Buzássyová (1974) defines word-formation paradigm as “a set of words derived from the common basic word occurring on the same derivational level.” Hence, with regard to the word-formation nest, this is actually inclusion.

A principal turn from additive orientation seemed to be coming from Dokulil’s onomasiological theory which for the first time was presented at the Conference on scientific research of contemporary languages in 1958, and later in Dokulil’s monograph *Tvoření slov v češtině* (1962) [Word-Formation in Czech]. This theory is based on two categories, the onomasiological base and the onomasiological mark, as well as on the idea that within the process of naming the extralinguistic reality we start from a certain onomasiological base and this is modified by an appropriate, or necessary, onomasiological mark, in fact, a motivating element which is sometimes termed ‘motive’ (Dokulil 1962) or ‘motivant’ (Furdík 1993).

Unfortunately, this theory did not evoke any deeper interest in investigating the naming process itself, and has not led to any change of paradigm. This is also manifested in the second volume of Dokulil’s *Tvoření slov v češtině* (1967) as well as his brief survey in the monograph *Čeština – Řeč a jazyk* [Czech – Speech and Language] (Čechová et al. 1996) where, in addition to defining and listing the word-formation classes and word-formation

types (chapter 4.2), Dokulil confines himself to a brief explanation of naming (onomasiological) categories (chapter 4.1.6). Onomasiological categories are identified here with naming units, or with the general content-based structural types. Specifically stressed (as termed in Czech) are ‘vztahové’ (relational or mutational), ‘obměnné’ (modification) and ‘převodové’ (transpositional) onomasiological categories. Dokulil attempts to include the native, Czech naming units as terms, but it is noteworthy that the analysis does not deal at all with the basic relation between the onomasiological base and the onomasiological mark. This is, nevertheless, understandable as the aim of the monograph was not to investigate the naming process but to make a survey of the results of an analytical research into word-formation.

The need to study the naming process has been pointed out by several linguists in connection with the need to fill in gaps in the wordstock of a given language. This need was stressed by, for example, Hübschmannová (1984) in her extensive study on nomination in the Slovak Carpathian Romany.

In fact, the basic components of Dokulil’s onomasiological theory – the base and the mark, without the onomasiological link, establish a reliable framework, a basis for the theory of naming, and for the theory of nomination in general; hence, not only for the theory of naming by derivation from the existing basic words. Furdík’s term onomasiological framework (also used by other authors) forms a good starting-point for investigating the process of naming by non-derived words and by naming units composed of multi-root or polylexical naming units. However, the onomasiological framework needs to be included into a wider onomasiological chain (Horecký 1989).

The onomasiological framework is actually the classical semantic triangle unfolded into a line. While the semantic triangle expresses the relationships between the concept, the content, and the name, these relationships are extended in the onomasiological chain by the relationship to the objects of extralinguistic reality; they reflect the features of the objects and refer to these objects. The onomasiological chain has the form P – N – C – F –; where P is a particular object, N is notional generalization of particular objects, C is the content, F is the form. On the background of such onomasiological chain the onomasiological framework includes C as well as F (content as well as form), i.e., the onomasiological base as well as the onomasiological mark.

If the name of an object of extralinguistic reality is to function within the naming and the cognition processes (within the process of identification and predication) it must have an appropriate grammatical form. As objects are usually named by nouns, they must have the category of the word class of nouns and the related categories of gender, number and case. Thus the set of categories actually forms the onomasiological base. Hence when searching for a name for the object in which we usually live, the starting point is the set of the grammatical categories of gender, number and case linked to the category of substance. In other words, in Slovak it is the paradigm of inanimate nouns of masculine gender, e.g. *dom-Ø* (house). However, the category of gender and case of inanimate nouns is also possible, e.g. *vod-a* (water). Such an onomasiological base (without supplementing the nouns of the type *dom*, *voda*) can be denoted as grammatical onomasiological base. This grammatical onomasiological base can be extended by a suffix – then we speak about the derivational onomasiological base. If the whole word serves as the starting-point, then it serves as the onomasiological base (OB).

The above-mentioned principles can be represented as follows:

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|-----|----------|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) | – | OB-P | <i>dom-Ø</i> |
| | – suffix | OB-P | <i>dom-ček- Ø</i> ‘small house’ |
| | – lexeme | OB-P | <i>kultúrny dom Ø</i> ‘assembly hall’ (literally:
house of culture)) |

The particular complements, the motivants, are selected from the adjacent set of onomasiological marks. This set contains both the unprocessed ‘roots’ and the ready-made words.

The above-outlined theoretical basis can convincingly be applied to the description of the wordstock of any language. If we intend to describe the system of the wordstock of the Slovak Carpathian Romany, we are doing so above all because (except for our practical work of the description of the ethnolect of Romany) this system is relatively simple. Distinctly evident in it are the names of persons and animals, as well as the less structured names of concrete as well as abstract objects.

Here the grammatical onomasiological base can be characterized with the help of the article and a set of relational morphemes the most typical one of which is the morpheme *-es/-en* for the animate accusative singular and plural. Attached to this morpheme are the other case forms with the exception of the nominative of the animate ones and the accusative of the inanimate ones (here nominative = accusative). In the nominative singular it is above all the type *o phral-Ø* (brother) as well as the type with the nominative morpheme *-o*: *o čhav-o* (boy). In Slovak the parallel types are *chlap-Ø* (man) and *sluh-a* (servant). From the set of onomasiological features the original New Indo-Aryan names of persons are taken. However, important motivants are also constituted by the adjectives that are mechanically transferred into the grammatical onomasiological base. Hence, *vešesker-o* (pertaining to forest) – *o vešesker-Ø* ‘forester’ as well as *veš/es/* ‘forest’ – *ker-Ø* ‘forester’.

In Romany, the derivational onomasiological base is most frequently expressed by the diminutive morpheme *-or-* (which, however, has also other meanings): *o-phral-Ø* ‘brother’ – *o-phral-or-o* ‘little brother’, *o čhav-o* ‘boy’ – *o čhav-or-o* ‘little boy’. In Slovak there is the parallel type *chlap-ček-Ø* ‘little boy’. Romany onomasiological bases with the morpheme *-ker-* and *-utn-* also belong here. Along with the above-mentioned word *vešesker* ‘forester’, included could also be *o them-Ø* ‘region’ – *o them-es-ker-o* ‘native’, *o kher-Ø* ‘house’ – *o kher-utn-o* ‘native’. As can be seen, in these cases, too, the noun occurs within the onomasiological feature.

A special type is formed here by the names of persons borrowed from other languages. Though the name of the person is already in the onomasiological feature, it is adapted to Romany by specific morphemes: *doktor* – *o doktor-is* ‘doctor’, *o lavuta* ‘violin’ – *o lavutar-is* ‘violinist, musician’, *charta* ‘iron’ – *o chart-as* ‘smith’. As can be seen, names of persons, but also names of things with which the given person deals can also function as the onomasiological mark. Parallel names also exist in Slovak: *husle* ‘violin’ – *husliar* ‘violin maker’, *železo* ‘iron’ – *železiar* ‘ironworker’.

In names of persons with the lexical onomasiological base the word already existing in the onomasiological feature is extended by a suitable attribute: *o phral* ‘brother’ – *o dujto phral* ‘the second brother, cousin’, *o lavutaris* ‘violinist’ – *o dujto lavutaris* ‘the second violinist’.

Parallel to the masculine names are also the names of persons of feminine gender. From the onomasiological point of view it does not seem useful to speak about forming the

feminine names from masculine gender names by adding a special suffix, which would be a typical additive process. It is more appropriate to postulate different onomasiological bases.

Characteristic of the grammatical onomasiological base (similarly to the masculine gender) is the zero nominative morpheme or the morpheme *-i*: *e phen-Ø* ‘sister’, *e daj-Ø* ‘mother’, *e gadž-i* (white person), *e kirv-i* ‘godmother’, *e rakl'-i* ‘girl’. Characteristic of the derivational onomasiological base is the morpheme *-ň-*: *e rom-ň-i* ‘Romany female’, *e chula-ň-i* ‘housewife’, *e lub-ň-i* ‘female lover’, *e ra-ň-i* ‘lady’. The diminutive morpheme *-or-* does not seem to be limited in its productivity: *e dhaj-or-i* ‘(dear) mom’, *e čhaj-or-i* ‘little/dear girl’, *e kirv-or-i* ‘dear godmother’, *e raň-or-i* ‘dear lady’. Naming units borrowed from Slovak preserve the Slovak derivational suffix *-k-*: *e bosork-a* ‘witch’, *e učitel'k-a* ‘lady teacher’.

The lexical onomasiological base is usually expressed by an adjective in the feminine gender: *phuri daj* ‘grandmother; literally: old mother’, *dujto phen* ‘(female) cousin’, literally: second sister, and by the relational adjective with the morpheme *-ker-*: *dadeskero pheňakeri čhaj* (literally: father’s sister’s daughter), *la dakera pheňakeri čhaj* (literally: mother’s sister’s daughter).

The situation in the names of animals is similar to that in the names of persons: *o guruv-o* ‘bull’ – *e guruv-ň-i* ‘cow’, *o rikon-o* ‘dog’ – *e riko-ň-i* ‘bitch’, *o bakr-o* ‘ram’ – *e bakr-i* ‘sheep’, *o čirikl-o* ‘bird’ – *e čirikl'-i* ‘female ‘bird’’. Borrowed words are characterized by the morpheme *-os*: *o alat-os* ‘animal’, from Hungarian *álat*, *o bocan-os* ‘stork’, *o bujak-os* ‘bull’, *o miš-os* ‘mouse’ (the latter three words from Slovak). The lexical onomasiological base can be expressed by, for example, the adjective: *raň-i* ‘lady’ – *e bari raň-i* (literally: big lady, madam).

The grammatical onomasiological base in Romany is used in a specific way for denoting collective names of persons: *phrala pheňi*, literally: brothers, sisters means siblings, *dad daj* means parents (literally: father mother).

The same onomasiological frameworks, or the given three types of onomasiological bases, are also applied to inanimate objects, tools, places, as well as qualities. However, in contrast to the names of persons, the lexical onomasiological base is more frequently applied, for example, *gurutno them* – literally: homeland, *šuko than* – literally: dry land, *phuro kher* – literally: old house, retirement home, *šutko thud* – sour milk, *bari but'i* – serious matter.

Typical for Romany is the formation of naming units using a transposed onomasiological mark, for example, the word *jag* (fire), on the basis of similarity, reinforced also by expressing the possessive relationship, is used as an onomasiological mark in the naming unit denoting the ‘lightning’: *devleskero jag* (literally: God’s fire). Similarly, ‘thunder’ is *devleskero ruš*, literally: God’s anger (cf. Slovak *Pánbožko sa hnevá*, literally: Lord is angry, when explaining the nature of ‘thunder’ to children). ‘Cemetery’ is called *mul'ano bar* – literally: garden of the dead.

The derivational onomasiological base is relatively less used in the names of things. The derivational onomasiological base is used for fruit trees (*ambrol'* – pear, *ambrolin* – tree bearing pears), but the grammatical onomasiological base is also often used for this purpose. In the latter case, the onomasiological mark is selected on the basis of adjacency, and so there is the same name for both the fruit and the tree (*e čerešňa* – cherry).

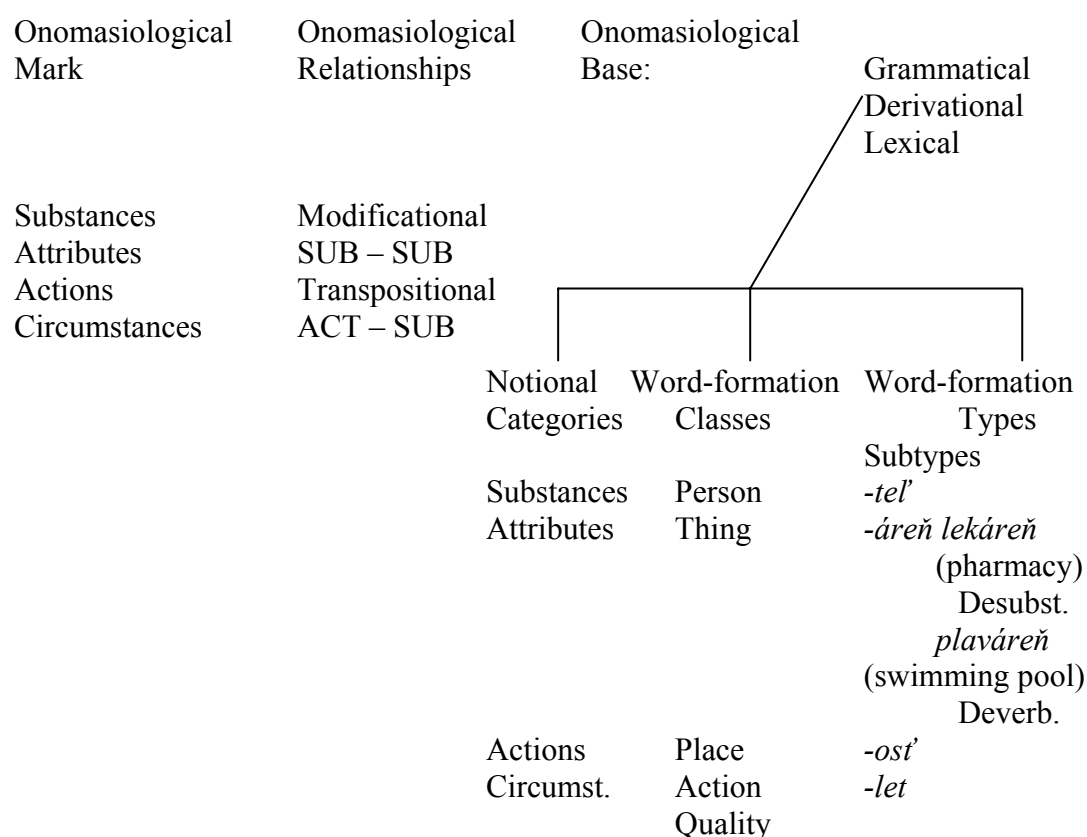
However, in names of qualities, a nearly exclusive position is occupied by the derivational onomasiological base. In addition to the borrowed morpheme *-ša-goš* (from Hungarian), the morpheme *-(i)ben*, *-(i)pen* is used to a much larger extent. Within the marked set there are adjectives (e.g. *terno* ‘young’ – *ternipen* ‘youth’, *phujo* ‘dirty’ – *phujipen* ‘dirt’,

phuro ‘old’ – *phuripen* ‘old age’, *lačho* ‘good’ – *lačhipen* ‘goodness’), but also nouns (e.g. *manuš* ‘človek’ – *manušipen* ‘ľudstvo’), less frequently also verbs (e.g. *merel* ‘to die’ – *meriben* ‘smrť’, *marel* ‘to fight’ – *mariben* ‘war’, *lekhavel* ‘to write’ – *lekhipen* ‘correct spelling’). The mark can be constituted by more complex forms, for example, *leskeripen* means special character, uniqueness (literally: ‘what is his’). However, the sphere of usage of this onomasiological base is rather vague and limited, so the meaning of such naming units follows only from the context. It is true that within lexicographical processing the particular lexical units can be presented in the sequence from the most general meaning to the more special ones (e.g. *čačipen* ‘truth, truthfulness, right’), but from the onomasiological point of view each lexical unit has to be taken as a unit specifically, individually formed by a particular onomasiological chain.

Of course, the onomasiological structure of adjectives and verbs can also be interpreted by means of onomasiological chains. Nevertheless, within the sphere of verbs it is not clear whether the forming of causatives of the type *žužo* ‘nice’ – *žužarel* ‘to make nice’ belongs to the sphere of naming or to the sphere of grammatical categories. In any case special morphemes can be used as verbal formants, and thus interpreted as specific derivational onomasiological bases.

The above-outlined system of notions and the relationships among them could probably be represented as follows (with examples from Slovak):

(2)



As evident from the above scheme, the onomasiological base is a quite complex element of the onomasiological chain: the notional categories are carried out within the

classes of names (word-formation classes). These classes are arrived at empirically within a particular language, but the derivational means for their expression are always searched for. Or, they are arrived at in the opposite way, by generalizing the meaning of the derivational morphemes. Hence, the word-formation classes are the result of word-formation analysis, and, at the same time, they serve as tools of word-formation. Word-formation classes and partly also word-formation types can be defined by the sets, the rows of semantic features +ERG -Hum -ECT + LOC; e.g. the Slovak word *strojáreň* (machinery room) by the semantic features -HUM +RES -POZ -CONT (or +CONT). Cf. Horecký, 1994.

Nevertheless, the concrete means of word-formation are the word-formation types represented by or linked to the concrete derivational affixes. It is namely in the word-formation type, in selecting the particular suffix where it is decided which motivational element, which motivant will be selected from the set of onomasiological features. Those, however, can be bound to particular notional categories. For example, Slovak naming units from the word-formation type characterized by the suffix *-áreň* can make use of a substantival motivant (*liek* (medicine) – *lekáreň* (pharmacy), *víno* (wine) – *vináreň* (wine cellar)) or actional motivant (*sušit'* (to (make) dry) – *sušiareň* (drying room), *plávať* (to swim) – *plaváreň* (swimming pool)).

The onomasiological base as a whole is linked to a set of onomasiological features by relationships to the notional categories. It is only in connection with these relationships that we can speak about a relationship (which is in fact not acknowledged by Dokulil in his last version). To the contrary, it is necessary to add the relationship of transferring the meaning (according to the theory of Group μ it could be termed a metabological relationship) in the case of which the motivant is selected on the basis of the relationship of adjacency or similarity (metonymically, metaphorically). Also this selection is made within the word-formation type, mostly in the grammatical and lexical onomasiological base, less often in the derivational onomasiological base.

Note:

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