

Gach N.

## Proper names as the representations of individual concepts

Gach Nataliia, PhD in Philology,  
assistant professor at the Department of theory and practice of translation from English  
Institute of Philology, Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

**Abstract.** The article outlines the approaches to the linguistic analysis of individual concepts within the American poetic discourse in a diachronic perspective. It is stated that proper names, as opposed to empty names, carry the background information about their holders and serve as the representations of individual concepts. Therefore, the main goal of the article implies the discourse analysis of poems that include references to the names of the American presidents.

**Keywords:** *discourse analysis, empty names, individual concepts, poetic discourse, proper names*

### 1. Introduction

The notion of individual concepts has been widely discussed in cognitive linguistics in recent years, and its application to the analysis of the conceptual sphere functioning on the text level broadens the framework of the cognitive linguistics research. Such scientists as R. Carnap ("Meaning and Necessity", 1947) [3], K.S. Donnellan ("Proper names and Identifying Descriptions", 1970) [5], Ch. Chastain ("Reference and context", 1975) [4], S. Kripke ("Naming and Necessity", 1980) [8], M. Aloni ("Individual Concepts in Modal Predicate Logic", 2005) [2], P.D. Elbourne ("Demonstratives as Individual Concepts", 2008) [6] are among those who made a significant contribution into the study of individual concepts.

The method of name relation is largely used within the framework of the individual concepts analysis, because it is conceived as holding between an expression in a language and a certain or abstract entity (object), of which that expression is a name. Thus, this relation is regarded as a semantical relation [3, p. 97]. Except of the method stated above, the research is also based on the methods of cognitive and lexical-semantic analysis that enable the determination of cultural information behind proper names, and the method of discourse analysis aimed at the investigation of the proper names functioning within a poetic discourse. The research is carried out within a diachronic scope that provides means for the all-encompassing analysis of individual concepts represented by proper names in a poetic work. Thus, proper names are regarded from the point of view of the individual concepts representation, since they acquire certain background associations in the process of the historical and cultural development of a linguistic community.

Within the framework of this research proper names are opposed to empty names that may be defined as names without a bearer (names of fictional, mythical, hypothetical entities, etc.) [1, p. 4]. On the contrary, proper names are rigid designators, expressions with the same referent in every possible world. That is why, proper names express constant individual concepts. However, S. Kripke argues that proper names are not semantically equivalent to definite descriptions. In fact, they are nondescriptorial [8]. Such opinion seems to be rather rational, as a referent may provoke different associations depending on the speaker's background knowledge, personal attitude or pragmatic intentions within a certain communicative situation. This article deals with the analysis of proper names functioning (names of the American presidents, in particular) in poetic works, because the aim of the research implies the investigation of the usage of references to real people in poetic discourse and associations emerging by such references.

### 2. The notion of individual concept

When we talk about concepts, we implicitly assume two different levels of "objects": the individuals and the ways of referring to these individuals. An essential feature of the intuitive relation between the two levels of the individuals and of their representations is that to one element of the first set correspond many elements of the second. The intuition behind it is that one individual can be identified in many different ways. What characterizes a set of representations of a certain domain is this cardinality mismatch, which expresses the possibility of considering an individual under different perspectives which may coincide in one world and not in another [2, p. 24]. The similar idea is expressed by R. Carnap in his book "Meaning and Necessity": we use the term "individual" not for one particular kind of entity but, rather relative to a language system, for those entities which are taken as the elements of the universe of discourse in the language system, in other words, the entities of lowest level deal with in the system, no matter what these entities are [3, p. 32]. The approaches to the definition of individual concepts mentioned above, view proper names (representations of individual concepts) as nondescriptorial rigid designators [1, p. 1].

From this perspective, the division of individual concepts into variable (can have different values at different times and worlds or situations) and constant (always identify the same individual) is relevant. This article deals with the analysis of constant individual concepts that correspond one-to-one with individuals and would serve usefully as the semantic values of proper names, referential definite descriptions, and in the interpretation of specific indefinite descriptions [1, p. 2]. Therefore, the use of constant individual concepts in poetic works is determined by the pragmatic intentions of an author and is subordinated to the general idea of a poem.

The context of a whole poem influences greatly the unfolding of the elements of certain individual concepts on the text level. In other words, context plays a major part in the interpretation of natural language expressions. Apparently, the conversational circumstances, as well as the interests and goals of the participants within a certain discourse, play a crucial role in the representation and interpretation of individual concepts [2, p. 20].

As some elements of a text can be referentially connected with particular things outside the text level the next part of the article deals with the analysis of the functions of proper names as the representations of the individual concept *LEADERSHIP* within the American poetic discourse.

### 3. Practical aspects of the concept analysis

The analysis of the associations that appear in the process of the proper names functioning in poetic works will help to mark out those elements of the conceptual sphere of the American linguistic community that are revealed by mentioning the names of the American presidents.

3.1. *George Washington* was one of the Founding Fathers and the first president of the United States. Being highly supported by the Americans, he managed to create a strong system of the national government that helped to improve infrastructure, promote commerce and the spirit of American nationalism. George Washington was hailed as the father of his country and named by Henry Lee as “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen”. He has always been depicted as a national leader that is proved by the poem of Edward J. McCoull “The Presidents” [11]:

*One, George Washington showed bravery at Valley Forge!  
Two, John Adams built the Library of congress for storage!  
Three, Thomas Jefferson, helped declare us free!  
Four, James Madison, fighting in war, he did see!..*

Apparently, the author brings the military achievements of the first US president to the forefront. Namely, Valley Forge is well known as the site of the military camp of the American Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. At those times, the American Army headed by George Washington was very poor and weary, showing no signs of powerful military force. The Congress criticized George Washington for his inability to advance the war effort. Such conflict resulted into anti-Washington movements, but after a few addresses he easily renewed the authority as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental army. As we can see, the author describes George Washington as a true leader of the American nation, ready to suffer with his people and to show bravery when the nation needs it.

Nevertheless, some modern American poets express doubts, concerning such flawless reputation of the first US president, that are expressed in the poem “George Washington” by Adam Fitzgerald [7]:

*And George Washington, someone we can't really know,  
rows  
over famed waters, wondering what his face will be, not in  
the future, not for the monthly book clubs...  
We make of him so much hackneyed affection, dress  
wounds  
as if equivocal all need...  
No, in fact, I don't know how he ever crossed the channels  
or canals  
from that stout city. I don't really know if I ever really need  
to know.  
One thing we share is worshipping the image of a person  
we never knew.*

The main idea of the poem consists in the fact that the image of every leader becomes romanticized with time, as peoples and nations need heroes to be inscribed into the annals of history. Such personalities are respected, loved and even worshipped, and this cannot ruin the acknowledgement of their deeds as leaders of a nation.

3.2. *Abraham Lincoln*. Being the sixteenth president of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln led the country through the Civil War and the US greatest constitutional and political crisis. During his presidency slavery

was abolished, economy was modernized, and the Union and government were preserved and strengthened. However, the times of Abraham Lincoln leadership are clouded by his assassination in April 1865. This tragic event inspired a lot of poets to bemoan one of the greatest leaders of the American nation:

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is  
won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and dar-  
ing;  
But O heart! heart! heart!  
O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.*

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores  
a-crowding,

*For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turn-  
ing;*

Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

*It is some dream that on the deck,*

*You've fallen cold and dead.*

W. Whitman “O Captain! My Captain” [14]

The poem mentioned above was included by W. Whitman into his collection “Leaves of Grass” and became one of well known among those dedicated to A. Lincoln commemoration. The president is referred to as a captain of a ship, a leader of the whole American nation led through its most diminished times. W. Whitman praises the end of the bloody war (*our fearful trip is done*) and glorifies Lincoln's success in the abolishment of slavery (*the prize we sought is won*). Moreover, he emphasizes the fact of the unity of the American nation around a strong and wise leader (*For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning*).

At the same time, the author expresses deep sorrow about the death of Abraham Lincoln, using the metaphorical image of the bleeding heart (*O heart! heart! heart! / O the bleeding drops of red...*). In addition, the repetition of the phrase *Fallen cold and dead* in the end of every stanza accentuates author's emotions of anguish and gloom, and provokes readers to picture the image of the dead president in their minds.

Rather similar description of Abraham Lincoln's deeds can be found in the poem by James R. Lowell “Abraham Lincoln, from the ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration” [9]:

Such was he, *our Martyr-Chief,*

*Whom late the Nation he had led,*

With ashes on her head,

Wept with the passion of an angry grief...  
Once more *a shepherd of mankind* indeed,

Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;

One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,

Not lured by any cheat of birth,

But by his clear-grained human worth,

*And brave old wisdom of sincerity!..*

Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,

New birth of our new soil, *the first American.*

The motif of a leader who suffers with his nation is also present in the analyzed poem. To some extent, the lines *our Martyr-Chief, / Whom late the Nation he had led* approximate the image of the president to the idea of God, *a shepherd of mankind*, whose mission is to lead wisely (*brave old wisdom of sincerity*) his flock to unity, prosperity and happiness.

Such ideas, expressed by J.R. Lowell, are summarized by rather telling word-combination *the first American*. As it becomes clear, taking into account the previous analysis of poetic works, the lexeme *first* plays an important role in the distinguishing of the American leaders. In the context of a whole poem it accumulates the basic features a leader should possess. Within this research such features as wisdom, bravery, heroism, patience, sacrifice, and ability to unify a nation and stop bloodshed come to the forefront.

3.3. *Theodore Roosevelt*. As the leader of the Republican Party and the Progressive Movement, Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest person to become president in the age of 42. The period of his presidency was marked by radical reforms (“Square deal”) and successful attempts to stop wars around the globe. In 1905 Theodore Roosevelt mediated the treaty to end the Russo-Japanese War, which led to the Nobel Peace Prize award in 1906. These achievements are described in poems of different epochs dedicated to the personality of Theodore Roosevelt:

*His name, when uttered, thrills the world  
And charms its millions through  
And flags of nations are unfurled  
In honor of his name so great and true...  
A life of vigor he had wrought;  
He labored to the end;  
A man of vision and forethought –  
The common people’s friend...  
He loved and served his country’s laws  
"With devotion deep and true...  
He led his troops to victory  
On the slopes of San Juan Hill,  
And his name went down in history  
As a man with an iron will...  
The spirit of true Americanism  
He preached and practiced, too;  
His great heart burned with patriotism  
That thrilled the nation through.*

W.W. Peavyhouse

“Theodore Roosevelt. A Tribute in Rhyme” [13]

The 26<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America is depicted as a man of outstanding might (*His name... thrills the world; a man with an iron will*) and wisdom (*man of vision and forethought*). Moreover, the leit-motif of true Americanism as a distinguishing feature of a national leader is a common thread of analyzed poems. Obviously, the idea of patriotism is of pivotal importance for the Americans, whose leader is supposed to cherish this feeling in the hearts of the whole nation. The metaphor *His great heart burned with patriotism* emphasizes the concern of the American nation about this concept.

As in the previous poems, the president of America is described as a man with a brave heart, who not only served the ideas of democracy, but also defended his country as any other representative of the American nation. That is why, the use of place name *San Juan Hill* is

central for the development of the idea of a whole poem, as the battle of San Juan Hill (Cuba) was a decisive battle of the Spanish-American War. Having resulted in the greatest victory of the war, this event brought Theodore Roosevelt the office of the Governor of New York, and later the position of vice-president and president.

The poems of modern times also concentrate on some of the cornerstones of Theodore Roosevelt’s political career:

Theodore Roosevelt, a very active guy...  
*He had named after him a toy bear.  
You all know it as the “Teddy bear”!  
The Nobel Peace Prize came his way  
For trying to stop a war in that day.*

Edward J. McCoul “Theodore Roosevelt” [12]

The author concentrates on the fact that Th. Roosevelt was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize after his active involvement into the resolution of the Russo-Japanese conflict. His slogan “Speak softly and carry a big stick” became widely known and is still used as the embodiment of outstanding diplomatic achievements of Th. Roosevelt.

Although the major bulk of the author’s intention is drawn to the serious political issues, the notion of Teddy bear also comes to the surface. As well as in the previous poem (W.W. Peavyhouse refers to the “Teddy Smile”), Edward J. McCoul indicates spheres of life influences by the personality of the president. As it is well known, the toy name Teddy Bear originates from the name of the American president, usually referred to as Teddy. However, the story behind (bear hunting) depicts Theodore Roosevelt as a man of strong will, who would have chosen death to miserable life.

3.4. *Dwight D. Eisenhower* is considered to be one of the greatest US presidents, being a five-star general in the US army during WWII, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe and the first supreme commander of NATO. The 34<sup>th</sup> president of the USA is also well known for the conclusion of the Korean War, the authorization of the NASA establishment which led to the “space race”, the coinage of the term “military-industrial complex”, and the economic development:

*As General Chief of The Allied Forces,  
Dwight did not hold his “military horses”...  
He modernized our system of roads.  
Our economy moved forward loads.  
As a brave American he did tower,  
He was Dwight David Eisenhower.*

Edward J. McCoul

“Dwight David Eisenhower” [10]

The metaphor *did not hold his “military horses”* outlines political strategies used by D. Eisenhower in the best way. It describes the president as a man of a strong character and will, ready to make decisions, regardless of the position of his opponents. For example, he deposed the leader of the Iran in the Iranian coup d’ état and used nuclear threats to conclude the Korean War with China. The word-combination *a brave American* accumulates the most general vision of Dwight D. Eisenhower, bringing his commitment to America to the foreground.

The phrase *“He modernized our system of roads”* draws attention of the readers to the fact that D. Eisenhower launched the Interstate Highway System, a network of highways that forms a part of the National Highway

System of the United States, which became a part of his social and economic reforms (*Our economy moved forward loads*).

#### 4. Conclusions

The conducted research shows that the use of the names of American presidents in a poetic discourse of different epochs is targeted at the representation of the elements of

the concept LEADERSHIP. Thus, the individual concepts that emerged in the process of the cognitive discourse analysis may be regarded as specific elements of the image of the American leader. Therefore, the results of the research prove that the American poetic works display the following elements of the concept analyzed: PRESIDENT, MARTYR, HERO, PATRIOT, DEMOCRAT, REFORMIST.

#### REFERENCES

1. Abbott B. Support for Individual Concepts // Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations. – 2011. – Vol. 10. – P. 1-23.
2. Aloni M. Individual concepts in Modal Predicate Logic. // Journal of Philosophical Logic. – 2005. – Vol. 34. – P. 1-64.
3. Carnap R. Meaning and Necessity: A Study in Semantics and Modal Logic. – 1947. – 231 p.
4. Chastain Ch. Reference and Context // Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science. – 1975. – Vol. 7. – P. 194-269.
5. Donnellan K. Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions // Synthese. – 1970. – N 21. – P. 335-358.
6. Elbourne P. Demonstratives as Individual Concepts // Linguistics and Philosophy. – 2008. – Vol. 31. – P. 409-466.
7. Fitzgerald A. URL: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetry-magazine/poem/246986>
8. Kripke S. Naming and Necessity. – 1980. – P. 192-220.
9. Lowell J. R. Abraham Lincoln, from the ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration. URL: <http://poetry.about.com/od/poems/1/blowellincoln.htm>
10. McCoul E. Dwight David Eisenhower. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=7STUAQAAQBAJ&pg>
11. McCoul E. Presidents. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=7STUAQAAQBAJ&pg>
12. McCoul E. Theodore Roosevelt. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=7STUAQAAQBAJ&pg>
13. Peavyhouse W.W. Theodore Roosevelt. A Tribute in Rhyme. URL: <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/panegyrics/trtributeinrhyme.pdf>
14. Whitman W. O Captain! My Captain. URL: <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/174742>

#### Гач Н.О. Имена собственные как репрезентанты индивидуальных концептов

**Аннотация.** В статье изложены подходы к лингвистическому анализу индивидуальных концептов в американском поэтическом дискурсе с диахронической точки зрения. Автор утверждает, что имена собственные несут фоновую информацию о своих владельцах и представляют индивидуальные концепты. Таким образом, главная цель этой статьи предполагает дискурс-анализ стихотворений с ссылками на имена американских президентов.

**Ключевые слова:** дискурс-анализ, имя собственное, индивидуальные концепты, поэтический дискурс