

On the status of pseudonyms within the theory of names – evidence from the Welsh setting

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The aim of the presentation is to revise the current state of affairs as regards the placement of pseudonyms within the general theory of names. Pseudonyms are markers of identity assumed by individuals with a view to obscuring recognition, and are therefore in marked contrast to nicknames (assigned epithets) that facilitate identification. Whatever the motivation for the choice of pseudonyms might reveal, these linguistic expressions are widely perceived as falling under the category of proper names (proper nouns). It can be stipulated that pseudonyms enjoy a rather ambiguous status within the general theory of names. On the surface they seem to exhibit features characteristic of proper names, among others uniqueness of reference, lack of number inflection and restrictive modification (Berezowski 2001). On closer examination, however, a plethora of pseudonym forms would not fall into the category of 'pure' proper names since the latter typically preclude descriptive content.

In the empirical part the study will concentrate on a selection of pseudonyms (bardic names) of the contestants participating in Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru (The National Eisteddfod of Wales) in the course of the twentieth century. The emphasis will be put on the examination of an underlying naming pattern as compared to traditional naming systems of the Welsh. In a similar vein, an attempt will also be made to arrive at a clear definition of what constitutes a Welsh pseudonym.

References

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