

The Celtic name from a sociolinguistic perspective: The case of multiple renderings of singular nominal entities

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Any theory of personal names, if it is to be complete, must take into account the social and cultural aspect of naming. Name-giving is tightly interwoven with the history of human civilization and the relations within its members. Consequently, any analysis, constrained to purely logical arguments or linguistic observations and bereft of sociolinguistic parameters, proves deficient in addressing this multifaceted issue. Not only do names act as labels facilitating communication locally and globally, but they are also culturally conditioned. Thus, a closer look at naming practices is likely to reveal discrepancies in the way different nationalities or cultures perceive reality, with the linguistic dimension included.

The sociolinguistic aspect of naming does not deny the existence of strong and compelling reasons that determine the choice of a name. From this perspective, any application of a personal designation appears inextricably connected with the belief in strong psychological influence that the name exerts upon its bearer as confirmed by Wierzbicka: “Names are not arbitrary symbols, they are meaningful not only in etymological sense, but also in a synchronic sense, where they have important psychological and pragmatic meanings which affect and shape the character of interaction between and among people” (Wierzbicka 1992: 302).

The paper investigates the phenomenon of multiple realisations of the same name within the stock of Celtic nominal designations. While primarily focusing on historical and legendary figures from the Celtic culture, the analysis is an attempt to highlight differences in their perception as reflected by diverse linguistic make-up which underlies the corpora under discussion.