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## MONONYM AS SELF-PRESENTATION MEANS OF VIRTUAL LANGUAGE IDENTITY WITHIN ELECTRONIC DISCOURSE

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**Abstract**

The paper deals with the study of self-presentation of virtual linguistic identity, which the authors consider as a multifaceted, specific type of linguistic identity functioning within electronic discourse. The key notions on the topic have been defined, as well as their synonyms have been introduced: language identity, virtual language identity, electronic discourse. In order to illustrate some synonymous lexical units listed above, which are most used by modern linguists, a statistical method has been used, and several diagrams have been provided.

The authors emphasise that the first, inherent, and the most important component of any web-personality is self-presentation, which is strictly required in cyber space, and occurs during virtual communication by means of nicknames. The subject matter of the paper – mononyms that function during the Internet communication – names consisting of one element (opposed to polyonyms – names consisting of several words). There have been selected some nicknames-mononyms used by domestic and foreign celebrities (political figures, actors, writers, sportsmen, singers, etc.). The nicknames for the study were taken from the popular social networks Instagram and TikTok, which are used as the platforms not only for the purpose of communication, but also for the distribution of various information, conducting business, entertainment, finding common interests, etc.

Summarizing, the authors focus on the fact that such phenomena as virtual language identity, electronic discourse and nicknames are complex and relevant topics for modern linguistic research. Virtual language identity itself is a multifaceted, complex phenomenon that functions in the global network, and the nickname remains its integral and important component as well as the main means of self-presentation.

**Keywords:** language identity, virtual language identity, electronic discourse, self-presentation, nickname, mononym.

**1. Introduction.**

A great deal has been written and said about *language identity* (LI) in different scientific fields. The anthropocentrism of the latest scientific research in linguistics brings to the fore the task of studying LI in discursive, cognitive, communicative, intercultural, language, and speech aspects. The value of texts created by an individual in virtual communication is growing significantly.

The study of LI has attracted linguists (and not only them) for many years: it is given an expanded definition, it is characterized, classified, analysed, explained from various points of view and positions – a lot of research papers are devoted to it. In our papers, we also often address a subject of LI, and with the development of the Internet our attention is fully focused on the functioning of *virtual language identity* (VLI) within electronic discourse, which, in our opinion, turned out to be infinitely complex and promising in terms of studying the field of linguistics. Many domestic and foreign scientists have studied and continue to study LI, computer discourse, VLI, and publish a lot of new studies, namely: Anikina (2012), Bepalova (2017), Bilous (2017), Crystal (2015), Dzyra (2013), Havryliuk & al. (2020), Holubovska (2008), Husieva (2013), Khraban (2018), Maslova (2012), Mokra (2017), Nikiforova (2010), Petrova (2005), Shugaev (2019), Vorobei (2016), Yaroshenko (2009), and many others.

**2. Aim and Objectives.**

Active use of the Internet and cross-cultural communication in the global network make it necessary to continue studying the phenomenon of VLI, which is the object of our study. The material studied is so-called *mononyms* taken from such social networks as TikTok and Instagram. Thus, the *aim* of this research is to prove that within electronic discourse mononyms are used as self-presentation means of VLI.

The *objectives* of this paper are as follows:

- to analyse modern studies on the functioning of VLI within electronic discourse;
- to define and explain the main terms related to the Internet communication;
- to characterize nicknames-mononyms of well-known public figures.

### 3. Methodology.

The methodology of this study is determined by multipurpose nature of the study, the aim and objectives. The methodological basis of our study is a complex of general and special, as well as descriptive analytical methods. To illustrate our calculations we have used a statistical method, and provided the results in the diagrams.

### 4. Results.

We believe that the basis of any VLI is LI, and earlier in our works we have already mentioned that the definition of LI by Selivanova is close to our understanding: “Language identity is an immanent sign of identity as a native speaker and communicant, which characterizes its language and communicative competence and their implementation in the generation, perception, understanding and interpretation of verbal messages, texts, as well as in the interaction of a discourse” (2006, p. 370). It should be noted that we also support the explanation of LI by Struhanets, who believes that “Linguistic identity is a speaker that knows language perfectly, knows it creatively, understands it has a language in the context of a national culture as its own spiritual core, uses language as an organ a night means of self-creation, self-affirmation and self-expression, development of their intellectual and emotional and volitional capabilities and as a means socialization of a person in society” (2012, pp. 126–133). In our previous research we have also stated that LI is an identity reflecting a set of cognitive, sociological, psychological, emotional, cultural, pragmatic and other traits and characteristics in speech.

The situation with the definition of VLI is different. Since the term is quite ambiguous, there are many different interpretations, but after summarizing some linguistic studies, we came to the conclusion that VLI is a modern complex, a specific type of LI, which functions and communicates on the Internet and has some certain characteristics (for example, anonymity, but not always; VLI has communicative and pragmatic properties; its important and integral component is self-presentation, etc.).

Analyzing some recent linguistics works, we cannot fail to note the fact that the synonymous range for VLI has been expanded by researchers. The most common lexical units are: *web (language) identity*, *network (language) identity*, *Internet (language) identity*, *computer (language) identity*, *digital (language) identity*. The use of the listed synonyms we have depicted below in *Diagram 1*, where:

Virtual Language Identity – VLI;

Web Identity – WI;

Internet Identity – II;

Network Identity – NI;

Computer Identity – CI;

Digital Identity – DI.

As one can see from our *Diagram 1*, the most used word by linguists is VLI. It is also should be noted that researchers are eager to give their own definitions of a lot of new (and old) notions, which are connected with the Internet-discourse.

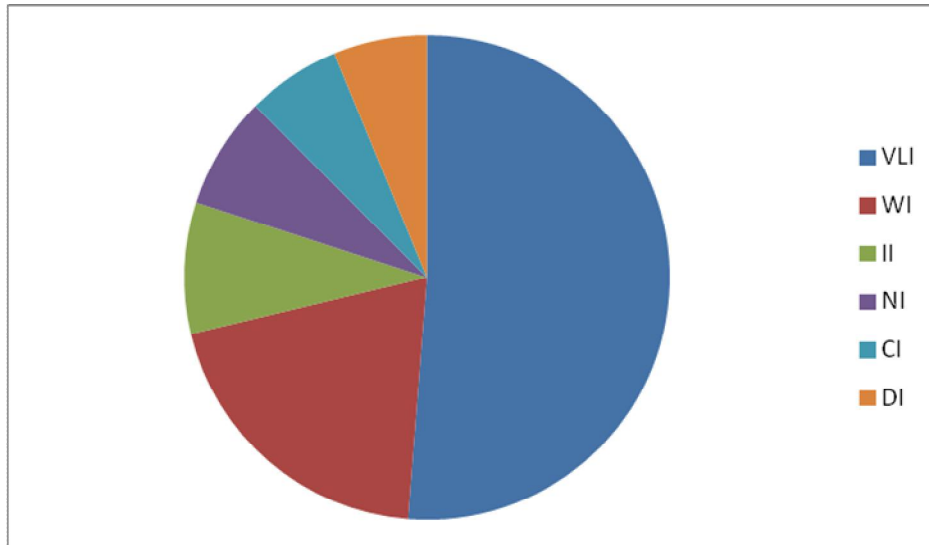


Diagram 1. Use of synonymous lexical units for the concept "Virtual language identity"

No less important, from our point of view, the issue of using the concept of the Internet-discourse. According to Shugaev, "the integration of the phenomenon of informatization into the latest Internet-discourse is under the influence of the evolution of digital technologies. The discovery of modern means and methods of communication caused the emergence of an information and communication environment with much wider opportunities for the implementation of political PR communication in the context of informatization. This is how the Internet-discourse appeared. It should be emphasized that there is no clear approach to the definition of the Internet-discourse... Computer discourse does not always involve the Internet environment, as it may be limited by the internal network of functioning. The term "electronic" is broader than "computer", as it covers the paradigm of the evolution of electronic means" (Shugaev, 2019, pp. 146–150). Thus, more and more often, in our works we adhere to the use of the words *Internet-discourse* and *electronic discourse*.

Analyzing some modern works in linguistics, we realized that researchers use a various synonymous row for the word Internet-discourse, which we have depicted in *Diagram 2*, where:

- Internet Discourse – ID;
- Computer Discourse – CD;
- Electronic/Digital Discourse ED/DD;
- Virtual Discourse – VD.

Following the topic of VLI, we entirely agree with Nikiforova, who writes that: "Virtual language identity is a discursive variant of language identity that communicates within the Internet space. The main factors that affect the virtual language identity are the anonymity of the network, which allows creating own status image, and the nature of communication – synchronicity or asynchrony". We are also interested in the classification of VLI by Nikiforova: "There are some virtual language identities that are distinguished on the English-language forums: moderator, expert, troll, consultant and flooder. Moderator, expert, troll are the key among them, while the situational ones are consultant and flooder. Each virtual language identity reveals certain verbal signs, as well as uses certain communicative strategies and tactics to achieve its own communicative intention"

(Nikiforova, 2010, pp. 193–200). We believe that the written-above gives us the right to affirm that any VLI has its own aims and tasks, which depend on the type of internet-genres, within which this VLI functions.

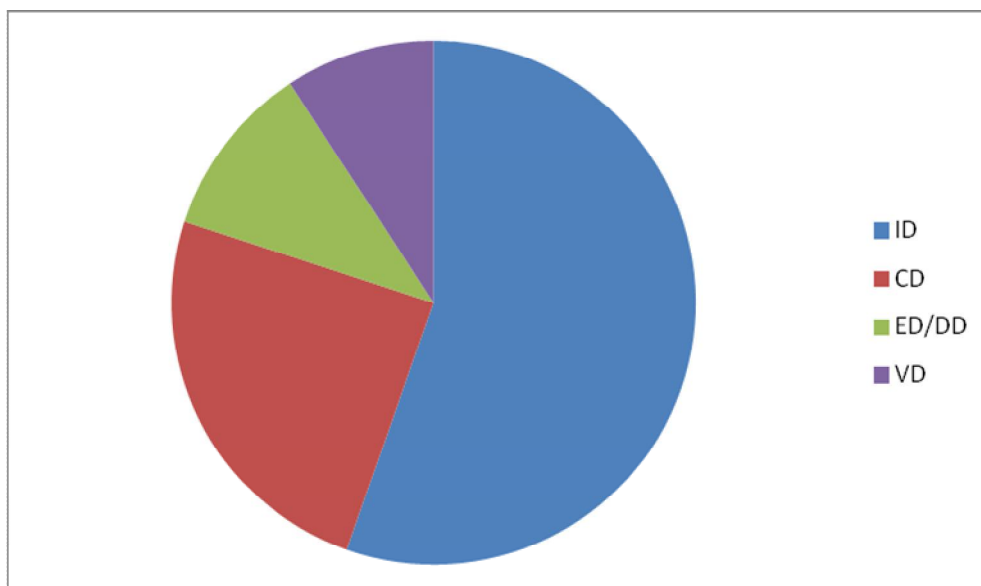


Diagram 2. Use of synonymous lexical units for the concept "Internet-discourse"

We also share the point of view of Velyka: "...Virtual language identity differs from language identity that exists in the real world. It has its own components, and can be characterized as a quasi-personality that performs certain functions and then disappears in virtual space. It is characterized by significant freedom and democratic behavior, because it has anonymity and freedom of action, unlike real life. It is impossible to identify virtual language identity, it is a concept intermediate between a real personality and a fictional personality" (Velyka, 2017).

According to Bespalova, VLI is "one of the personifications of an individual, the difference of which from a real social personality is due to several factors. Firstly, virtual language identity is created, and it functions with the help of a technical system; secondly, it does not exist outside of verbal embodiment; and thirdly, it has great freedom to realize the desired image" (Bespalova, 2017, p. 92).

It should be noted that over the past ten years, when we first began to take an interest in the studies of VLI, not only significant scientific studies on this topic appeared, but also the Internet-discourse itself changed: more users mastered the Internet; there is an expansion and popularization of already long existing social networks (*Instagram, Twitter*) and the emergence of new ones (*TikTok*); the development of messengers (*Telegram, WhatsApp*); comments from the Internet users have been updated with a new genre – so-called *thread* (i.e., sequential responses); *netiquette* (i.e., formal rules of appropriate online communication and behavior) became an integral part of the Internet communication. Thus, linguists are studying new internet-genres and carrying out quite significant research on these topics.

### 5. Discussion.

There are a lot of considerable studies that deal with proper names in general linguistics. *Onomasticon* (a list or collection of proper names) has been analyzed at various levels and from different points of views. A great deal has been written and said about

nicknames (*netnames*) – proper names on the Internet, but we are of the opinion that such phenomena as nicknames, VLI (and many others) require more comprehensive studies from the standpoint of pragmatic linguistics, communication theory, psycholinguistics, etc. This necessity is due to the fact that with active and rash development of the Internet communications, there are significant and fairly rapid changes in linguistics, language, speech, communication, etc.

As it was mentioned above, in our opinion, the first and most important component of any type of VLI (according to Nikiforova, there are such types of VLI as: *expert*, *moderator*, *troll*, etc.) is self-presentation, which is obligatory, and takes place within the framework of the Internet-discourse through nicknames which have been the subject matter of our research for many years.

In this work we devote our study to so-called *mononyms* – names that consist of a single word (opposed to *polyonyms/polynyms* – names consisting of several words). Mononyms are known since ancient times (Pythagoras, Socrates, etc.), and the tradition of using mononyms still tends to exist in different countries and cultures (Thailand, Indonesia, and many others). However, in modern world mononyms are not only a sign of peoples' history, customs, they are used for different purposes. Generally, we believe that there are certain factors that determine the choice of a proper name, among which the most important ones can be noted: ideology, beliefs, culture, laws and religiosity. A Ukrainian researcher S. Spivak notes: "Proper names have become codes for a certain amount of background knowledge, specific types of condensed national-cultural texts that preserve in their semantic memory cultural-historical plots inscribed in modern public consciousness" (Spivak, 2004, p. 3).

Following the main topic, one of our tasks was to analyze the frequency of using Internet mononyms and polyonyms – the data is shown in *Diagram 3*, where:

Polyonyms – P;

Mononyms – M.

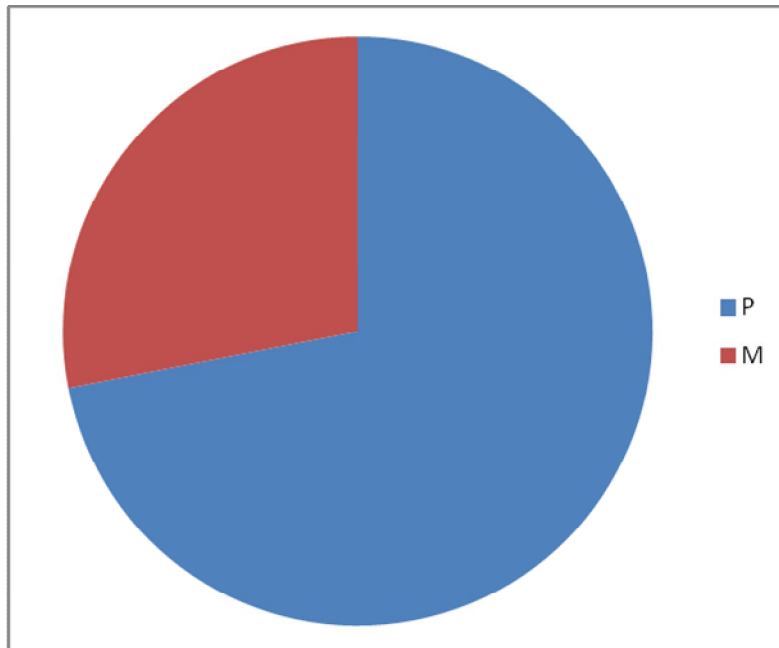


Diagram 3. Frequency of using mononyms and polyonyms on the Internet

So, as we can see, the Internet users tend to use polyonyms more than mononyms. This is, most likely, related to the fact that any nickname should be unique, catchy, unusual, etc.

For our examples of nicknames-monomyms we have selected the ones used by domestic and foreign celebrities, including political figures, actors, writers, athletes, singers, etc. It is remarkable that these people use their mononyms not only in the global network, but also in real life, that is, these names are chosen not only as stage names or nicknames for the Internet space, they can also be a component of the full name. Next to the nickname of famous people, as a rule, there is a badge of distinction – so named *verified badges*, which help people more easily find the public figures, celebrities and brands they want to follow. The verified badges are a sign that the user is authentic and has passed verification. Here are some examples of web-monomyms that we have selected from the social network platforms (Instagram, 2022 <https://www.instagram.com/>; TikTok, 2022 <https://www.tiktok.com/uk-UA/>):

*beyonce* (real name – *Beyonce Giselle Knowles-Carter*),  
*ciara* (real name – *CiaraPrincess Harris*),  
*cristiano* (real name – *Cristiano Ronaldo dos Santos Aveiro*),  
*dreyk* (real name – *Aubrey Drake Graham*),  
*madonna* (real name – *Madonna Louise Ciccone*),  
*naomi* (real name – *Naomi Campbell*),  
*oprah* (real name – *Oprah Gail Winfrey*),  
*rihanna* (real name – *Robyn Rihanna Fenty*),  
*shakira* (real name – *Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll*),  
*kamaliya* (real name – *Natalia ViktorivnaZakhur*),  
*zed* (real name – *Zaslavskyi Anton Ihorovych*),  
*zendaya* (real name – *Zendaya Maree Stoermer Coleman*),  
*zidane* (real name – *Zinedine YazidZidane*).

The nicknames below are the examples of polyonyms, made by a formula: *proper name (often real) + symbols, numbers or an additional word*:

*Nevzorovofficial* (real name – *Nevzorov Oleksandr Hlibovych*),  
*lobodaofficial* (real name – *Svitlana Serhiivna Loboda*),  
*monatik\_official* (real name – *Dmytro Serhiiovych Monatyk*),  
*neymarjr* (real name – *Neymar da Silva Santos Junior*).

One can also find a combination of initials and surnames that have been converted to a mononym:

*kosadcha* (real name – *Kateryna Oleksandrivna Osadcha*),  
*jlo* (real name – *Jennifer Lynn Lopez*).

## 6. Conclusion.

The study of such a phenomenon as electronic discourse, in our opinion, is relevant enough for current research, and this trend will continue in the future. This is evidenced, firstly, by the mass use of the Internet by modern people; secondly, the Internet is becoming increasingly interesting and contains a large amount of significant material, including for discoveries in sociology, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, etc.

Within a new type of communication and discourse – virtual one – the phenomenon of VLI appears, and one of the main ways of representing is considered to be a nickname – a word or word combination that names an object for the purpose of recognizing and distinguishing it from a class of similar ones, and which performs the function of individualization, nomination and identification of this object.

LI is any person regarded as a speaker of any language. Every person under certain conditions and spheres of life realizes as a speech, communicative, language-cultural, discursive, and, finally, as virtual language identity, keeping verbal, semantic, cognitive and pragmatic levels.

We consider nicknames as an informative component of VLI, and define them as self-presentation on the Internet, which can be a word / words (proper or common name) or phrase (sometimes a sentence) used during the Internet-communication for self-positioning.

Summarizing the above-written, we also would like to emphasize once again that such phenomena as VLI and electronic discourse are still modern and relevant topics for linguistic studies. VLI is a complex, complicated phenomenon that operates in a global network. The nickname remains an integral important component of the VLI and its main means of self-presentation.

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### **Анотація**

Статтю присвячено вивченню самопрезентації віртуальної мовної особистості, під якою автори розуміють багатогранний, специфічний тип мовної особистості, що функціонує в інтернет-дискурсі. Визначено ключові ознаки цього поняття, а також описано сутність таких термінів, як ‘мовна особистість’, ‘віртуальна мовна особистість’, ‘електронний дискурс’. Для ілюстрації окремих синонімічних терміноодиниць, які найбільш поширені у працях сучасних лінгвістів, використано статистичний метод, а результати унаочнено діаграмами.

Автори акцентують увагу на тому, що першим обов’язковим і найважливішим компонентом вебособистості вважається самопрезентація, що відбувається під час віртуальної комунікації через нікнейми. У роботі охарактеризовано мононіми, що функціонують в інтернеті, – імена, які складаються з одного елемента (на відміну від поліонімів – імен, які складаються з кількох слів). Відібрано інтернет-мононіми, якими користуються вітчизняні та зарубіжні відомі персони, а саме: політичні діячі, актори, письменники, спортсмени, співаки. Нікнейми для аналізу дібрано з популярних соціальних мереж Instagram та TikTok, якими користуються не тільки з метою комунікації, а й для поширення різноманітної інформації, ведення бізнесу, розваг, пошуку спільних інтересів тощо.

Такі феномени, як віртуальна мовна особистість, інтернет-дискурс, нікнейми є цікавими й актуальними темами для лінгвістичних досліджень. Сама віртуальна мовна особистість є різноаспектним, складним явищем, що функціонує в глобальній мережі, а нікнейм залишається її невід’ємною важливою складовою й основним засобом самопрезентації.

**Ключові слова:** мовна особистість, віртуальна мовна особистість, електронний дискурс, самопрезентація, нікнейм, мононім.