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On disclosing nicknaming motivation in dictionaries (Based on sports nicknames)

Abstract

The paper aims to study nicknaming motives in sports discourse. 355 dictionary entries were selected from an English biographical dictionary of basketball as the material for this study. The material was processed using definition, lexical, morphemic and stylistic analysis. The analysis showed that the nickname-making is induced by both linguistic and extralinguistic factors. Three approaches of the dictionary compiler to reveal the nicknaming motivation were found: 1) undisclosed motivation that especially concerns nicknames made with purely linguistic means and motivated by expression plane; 2) fully disclosed motivation that follows from the corresponding explanatory commentaries in the entry and refers to the nicknames motivated by external factors, sometimes together with expression plane; 3) partly disclosed motivation where the search for the motive depends on the user alone who has to speculate about the nomination motive either due to sketchy details in the entry or his / her life experience and common knowledge. The paper concludes that introducing nicknames into biographical dictionary entries is only justified when the motivation is fully revealed adding certain details to a person's biography.

Keywords: study of personal names, nickname, sport, nomination motive, biographical dictionary, dictionary criticism

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