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Artifex ludi, or On the Game of Naming.

Form and Meaning in the Act of Giving Names to Toys

1. Introduction

1.1. Due to the growth and diversification of products for entertainment especially in the past decades, toys make up a realm that is particularly meant for children. Nonetheless, this universe provides a means of relaxation for grown-ups as well, for whom the concrete, tactile and affective dimension of playing has not disappeared yet. While anthroponyms are more likely to pique researchers' interest due to their abundance and smooth access to social life, proper names resulting from the internalisation of personal experiences are communicated with greater difficulty and are therefore less investigated.

For ludic objects (i.e. toys) to become part of our referential field, they need to become "alive". Thus, they double their (utilitarian) purpose of objects *used to* communicate (they serve individuals' ludic needs) with an additional (intersubjective) purpose when they function as objects *with which* one communicates: they satisfy users' need for establishing an interlocutory connection (which does not get materialised in articulate speech – response to stimulus). The first action one carries out to establish this quasi-relational dimension of toys is *naming* them.

1.2. The universe of childhood displays a complex cognitive and semantic architecture, which initially consists of simple concepts and basic operations, but develops steadily into systems of meanings and references. Children gradually acquire and learn to manipulate conceptual data in various settings beginning with infancy and toddler years, but the process becomes more elaborate with age (see MORGENTHALER 2006: 65–66) and experience (see RHEMTULLA–HALL 2009: 173). More often than not, these continual activities are mediated by play, seen as a "context or frame [...], with an emphasis on process rather than goals. Play's major characteristics are active involvement, intrinsic motivation, attention to process rather than product, nonliterality, freedom from external rules, and self-reference rather than object-reference" (WILTZ–FEIN 2006: 137). It facilitates a child's growth along both axes of the coordinate system of human existence, the personal axis (focused on self-discovery and, subsequently, self-improvement) and the social axis (centred on sociocultural belonging; see MORGENTHALER 2006: 68). Among the numerous types of play, the one that reaches over both directions of development is play with objects, because it reveals the way in which children mould their identity in relation to others. In



this context, names given to toys are of particular interest: regardless of the naming agent, the names are suggestive of toy users' perception of themselves and of the playthings as instances of otherness.

1.3. Children's use of toys during playful activities takes various shapes, which are either "exploratory and manipulative" (MORGENTHALER 2006: 65), when the toys are mere indices of items outside the play environment, or symbolic, if the toys (regardless of their realism) are vehicles in the construction of a distinct story-like world that may be independent or serialised (see MORGENTHALER 2006: 66). During this type of pretend play (see TAGGART–HEISE–LILLARD 2017: 1), playthings may function as props (see MORGENTHALER 2006: 69), e.g. a toy car is manoeuvred by a child who imagines himself/herself driving it (the focus is not on the play object, but on the plot line). Nevertheless, they may also function as actors in the play, invested with abilities that they do not commonly possess: e.g. they talk, go shopping, go out with friends, cook, dress up and perform all sorts of other activities specific to human life. According to WILTZ–FEIN (2006: 135), "these actions, statements, and clothing are not meant to be replicas of the real thing. They are exaggerations, abbreviations, and highlighted caricatures of whatever the children know and feel about what they are representing". Sociologically and pragmatically, toys are attributed roles that simulate the conceptualised behaviours we adopt in various situations and provide children the opportunity to practise tackling them (see LANDRETH–HOMEYER–MORRISON 2006: 50).

At the same time, the transfer of anthropomorphic qualities onto toys is indicative of a higher degree of individualisation to which children subject certain playthings. Objects used during play-related activities are endowed with an identity established in relation to the players, who thereby take further steps in discovering their own personality and learn to acknowledge the identity of others. Thus, "while objects may be involved as catalysts for the play, they more often serve as the external stimuli for a primarily internal process" (MORGENTHALER 2006: 69).

2. Aims, methodology and corpus

This research aims at exploring the field of toy names in view of determining the main trends that define this onomastic subcategory in contemporary Romanian space. The analysis of the names starts from their multilevel classification: according to the naming agents (*official names*, given by toy makers, and *unofficial names*, attributed by children or other individuals), as well as according to the (lexical-semantic) structure of the identifying constructions. Overall, the names are interpreted from a multidisciplinary perspective, which includes

onomastics, linguistics, lexicology, child/behavioural psychology, pragmatics, referential semantics, sociolinguistics, stylistics and psychopedagogy.

The material investigated comprises official and unofficial names of toys collected by the authors of this paper by means of an online survey in Romanian carried out in July 2017, disseminated on Facebook and via e-mail. The survey was divided into two parts, one requiring general information about the respondents and the other focusing on the subject matter. In the first part, respondents were asked to mention their gender and age, as we believe these variables strongly influence the sociolinguistic interpretation of the data. The second part contained three open-ended questions that referred to toy names, name givers and the motivation behind the onomastic choices (in the case of unofficial names), as follows:

- a) What name(s) did your favourite childhood toy(s) bear?
- b) Did the name(s) correspond to the commercial name (shelf name) or did you or someone else (please mention who) choose it/them? In the latter case, please state what inspired the selection.
- c) What other toy names from your childhood do you remember? At the same time, please specify whether the commercial name was replaced (by yourself or someone else – mention who) with a different name. If so, kindly mention the motivation behind the nominal choice.

Of the forty-five respondents, two are men and forty-three are women, aged 5 to 53. Their answers (103 names of toys) are analysed in the sections below.

3. Naming toys, between institutional and personal

3.1. Given the fact it takes up a significant part of the management of the personal time reserved for entertainment, *playing with toys* casts an individual in various *roles*. Moreover, it determines one to adopt *scripts* that are usually enacted during one's socio-professional time (i.e. the time when the primacy of civil status demands one's abandoning the "frivolous" role and putting on a serious face, required by the specificity of the context in which the individual performs: familiar, institutional/informal, (semi)formal, and so on).

As overlapping (parity), then doubling and, with the passing of time, (un)conscious perpetuation of habits acquired during infancy, games (including playing with toys) are universes that give players the opportunity

- a) to formulate laws based on which the profile of the activity represented (of the type of game chosen) is delineated the most plausibly, by keeping a significant distance in relation to the surrogate and recovering as faithfully as possible the prototype from immediate reality;



- b) to observe the aforementioned laws in view of ensuring a consensus-based framework between partners;¹
- c) to violate the laws, with potential risks and consequences of deteriorating interpersonal harmony and creating chaos; or
- d) to change the laws during the game, an act that is not at all advisable if preserving the feeling of camaraderie between play partners is sought even after play time is over.

Although the choice of playing would impose the cancellation of the intrinsically prescriptive nature of most contiguous activities, once an individual enters a game (s)he has the reflex to reiterate real-world customs on another spatial-temporal scale. One of the practices transposed by the experimenter into the secondary world (i.e. the world of play) is to establish a contact *by means of a name* with the object of ludic possession. This statement holds true whether one refers to *subject-toys* (which the player considers more than the vehicle of his/her manipulation (the various manoeuvres by means of which one applies/attempts at the “production” of human physiology: speaking,² eating, sleeping, waking up, getting dressed, combing one’s hair, walking or using a means of transport, fighting etc.) and which must be addressable in their quality as anthropomorphised “collocutors”) or *object-toys* (such as (lego) cubes, puzzles, cars and trains, for instance, which on the level of form do not reproduce animated objects and thus do not fit the category of potential “dialogue” partners, so that naming *in actu* becomes an optional action on the part of the user).

3.2. Wishing to treat inanimate “interlocutors” on a par, name-giving players follow a naming path that can be broken down into three phases according to the stages of their biological development:

- a) *name-giving commanded by external authority*: the beneficiary (the child who has not yet reached literacy) cannot (literally) issue a name for the subject of his/her play; thus, someone else (from his/her familial milieu) takes on the role of name giver (0–2 years);³

¹ The term *joc* ‘game, play’ somehow also refers to the possibility of triggering a failure in the absence of the malfunctioning of the law of camaraderie as a result of the multiplication of the game (see the plural form of the noun) and implicitly of the initial number of rules of behaviour. We bear in mind the phrase *game theory*, which designates a “mathematical theory of conflicting situations, in which two or several parties have opposing aims and tendencies” (*DEX Online*, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/joc>, orig. Romanian).

² In this respect, technology has developed towards producing and marketing a wide variety of talking (interactive) toys.

³ For the stages of object play depending on children’s ages, see MORGENTHALER (2006: 65–66).



- b) *naming as mimesis*: the beneficiary acquires the name given by the third party and employs it, by means of imitation, with a phonetical structure that is faithful to the original or contains orthoepic deviations specific to the biological stage experienced (3–5 years);
- c) *deliberate naming*: beneficiaries are at the age of becoming aware of their belonging to the surrounding world, whose elements they “convert” into (ludic) entities with which they “furnish” their personal world by means of baptism (children older than 6).

In all the stages identified, names used for play objects may coincide with their official onyms or they may be naming agents’ onomastic choices.

4. Cognitive process and semantic-referential structures: name-giving and its results

4.1. One of the means through which the identity of play objects is signalled, as in the case of any other entity, consists of the names under which they exist. According to the name-giving entities (the *producer* or *beneficiary* of the playthings), toy names can be grouped as follows:

4.1.1. Official/commercial/prototype name (the label name); the result of *objectivised onymisation*, which is meant to convey specific concepts that make up the *brand identity* of the product (see CORBU 2009: 64). Every use of the brand name during play should evoke, in a condensed form, the conceptualised representation of the product. Contextual adaptations of this type of identity may occur, in the sense that children emphasise through play only certain meaning associations, sometimes even adding novel connotations to the official ones or removing aspects from their configuration, depending on their experience with the object of play and beyond it. Put differently, the conceptual load associated with an official toy name varies according to children’s knowledge and understanding of the world and the toy itself, although the notional nucleus is the same: *Barbie* is *essentially* ‘Barbie’ despite sociocultural differences. Moreover, the social roles that a toy fulfils are determined by the narrative of children’s play and several shifts may occur within a single play episode (e.g. the official name *Barbie* can refer to various roles of the doll bearing it, such as ‘Barbie – the best friend’, ‘Barbie – the fashion icon’ and ‘Barbie – the sportswoman’).

4.1.2. Unofficial name (spontaneous name, given by another naming entity (child or parent) than the one(s) involved in the making and selling of a certain toy); the result of *subjectivised naming*. In this context, name-giving unfolds as a simulation of official naming, by means of which children grow accustomed to the standard procedure and develop their “metalinguistic awareness” (FREEMAN



DAVIDSON 2006: 38) even when they are not the ones carrying out the task. The onym of choice is the result of a more or less conspicuously motivated “linguistic mechanism of nominal referential identification” (FELECAN 2014: 19). As such, it is tightly linked to characteristics of the named object, as “the object itself is supposed to elicit certain child actions” (MORGENTHALER 2006: 67), naming included. Thus, the unofficial name is almost forced upon the name bearer and name giver alike, by means of associations triggered in the name giver by the name bearer (the toy) on the cognitive-affective level. These associations are context-bound, because there is a “strong reliance on spatiotemporal history when making judgments that pertain to individual identity” (RHEMTULLA–HALL 2009: 167). They may relate to numerous aspects, ranging from a play object’s physical features to its alleged (perceived) similarity to another toy or a real-life entity. From this viewpoint, unofficial proper names may be derived from appellative constructions (clearly denoting or merely suggesting the aforementioned features and associations: e.g. *Brown*, a doll whose hair was brown) or proper names: e.g. *Betty*, based on the homonymous female character in the animated series *The Flintstones*. While the former are the result of “feature selection” (JONES–SMITH 2002: 219), the latter endow the toy with qualities of the original name bearer. They thereby confirm the thesis advanced by RHEMTULLA–HALL (2009: 174), according to which “two representational objects sharing a proper name do share certain properties, if the shared name is connected to a shared character identity”.

4.2. Within the boundaries of *official names* (in fact, fake proper names given to series of prototypes), one can identify:

a) *non-individualising names*:

- a₁) “*pure*” *generics*: *mascoță* ‘mascot (plush toy)’;
- a₂) *classifying appellatives*, which have the role of subsuming a species of toys under a “genus”: *bebe* ‘baby’, *caleidoscop* ‘kaleidoscope’, *cuburi* ‘(lego) cubes’, *cowboy și indieni* ‘cowboys and Indians’, *mașinuță de fier* ‘iron car’, *minge de fotbal* ‘football’, *moară* ‘cat’s cradle’, *morișcă* ‘windmill’, *păpușă* ‘doll’, *pistol cu capse* ‘BB gun’, *pony*, *puzzle*, *tricycle* ‘tricycle’, *trotinetă* ‘scooter’, *ursuleț* ‘teddy bear’;

b) *individualising (specifying) names turned into brands*:

- b₁) *simple names*: *Ariel* (*The Little Mermaid*, Disney’s 1989 animation), (*Păpușă*) *Barbie* (‘Barbie (doll)’), (*Rățoiul*) *Donald* (‘Donald (Duck)’), (*Păpușă*) *Ken* (‘Ken (doll)’), *Lucifer* (plush toy), (*Păpușă*) *Manuela* (‘Manuela (doll)’), *Minnie*, *Pinypon* (small dolls), *Piticot* (literally ‘dwarf’, board game), *Sportacus* (one of the main characters in *Lazy Town*, a children’s educational musical series);

b₂) *compound names*:

– *appellative + proper name*: *Cubul Rubik* (‘Rubik’s Cube’), *Mickey Mouse*, *Păpușa Ileana* (‘Ileana Doll’), *Păpușa Luminița* (‘Luminița Doll’), *Păpușa Mihaela* (‘Mihaela Doll’), *Păpușa Oana* (‘Oana Doll’), *Păpușa Zurli* (‘Zurli Doll’), *Polly Pocket*, *Prințesa Sisi* (‘Princess Sissi’), *Ursul Panda* (‘Panda Bear’), *Ursul Yoyo* (‘Yoyo Bear’);

– *established phrases (in Romanian linguistic space)/sentences*: *Bunul gospodar* (‘the good householder’), *Nu te supăra, frate!* (‘don’t be upset, brother!’), *Sus, jos* (‘up, down’; utterance with ellipted predicate).⁴

4.3. As already mentioned, *unofficial names* occur as a result of another “baptism” than the one performed by the authority responsible with the creation and marketing of toys. Thus, an unofficial name is

- a) either the product of onomastic tradition (local naming customs) or a cultural trend promoted at a given time (stereotypes imported out of the need to distinguish the autochthonous universe of toys from the foreign one), or
- b) an indication of the need to individualise and, at the same time, of the name giver’s wish for the onym of choice to be as expressive as possible.

As regards carrying out the act of naming toys, in Romanian one can identify two verbs specialised in pointing out the status of *named entity*, or *individualised entity*: *a se chema* (‘to be called’) and *a boteza* (‘to baptise’). The former is actualised in cases of *imposed* (official) *onomastics* (“o/îl cheamă X”: ‘(s)he is called X’), whereas the latter appears in instances of *onomastics created according to subjective criteria* (unofficial onomastics) (“am botezat-o X, l-am botezat X”: ‘I baptised him/her X’).

One cannot overlook the educational(-moralising) and equally funny dimension of resulting names. It is brought about by the now serious, now facetious “meaning” of the onomastic intention contained by a name.⁵

Most toy names are motivated (their semantic and/or lexical structure embeds a story that decodes the onomastic option). They can include an owner’s name, names of (animate/inanimate) entities in the surrounding environment, characters in fiction, computer games, films and animations, and so on. In the past years one can notice the tendency to preserve traditional (local) names, alongside the drive (cultural fashion) to *exoticise* (globalise) names of toys.

⁴ All the names under this subcategory designate board games.

⁵ For how children derive humour from the employment of wrong names instead of well-known official names as an example of language play, see FREEMAN DAVIDSON (2006: 33).



The unofficial names collected on the occasion of the present research consist of

- a) *anthroponyms (original or hypocoristic forms)*: *Alison, Amanda, Betty (The Flintstones), Bibi* (the respondent claimed this was the only girl name she knew), *Camelia* (the respondent liked this name when she was a child), *Cindy, Eloise, Kiki, Persida, Prințesa Sisi* ('Princess Sissi'), *Sandy, Sida* (a form obtained by means of aphaeresis from *Persida*); *Dupound, Leila* (the subject's cousin is the source for both names); *Camilo, Coco* (in association with the Hungarian noun *tata* 'daddy', used for 'grandfather'), *Dodi, Norm* ("Norm was a plastic dummy doll whose hair and face I made out of modelling clay. He could not move and *Norm* seemed the most suitable name for him"),⁶ *Păcală* ("*Păcală* was the name of a boy-doll made of cloth, who wore trousers and a white shirt and had a black hat on his head"; due to the character's humour and wit, *Păcală*, a hero of Romanian folk anecdotes, became a source of inspiration for certain Romanian writers, such as Petre Dulfu and Ion Creangă), *Zoli*.

It is worth pointing out the saliency of international onomastic influences, especially Western ones. Among these, there is a clear preference for names pertaining to the field of children's animation (*Cindy Bear, Sandybell*) and films in general.⁷

- b) *brand names of toys*: *Barbie* (a name borrowed from the famous brand, although the doll pertained to another trademark), a typical instance of "brand extension" (see OLINS 2010: 19 and FELECAN 2015: 22); "Barbie, called *Barbi*", a situation of adapting original orthography to rules of Romanian phonetics (overlapping between pronunciation and spelling).
- c) *brand names from other fields except toys*: *Cocolina* < *Cocolino*, a derivative obtained by means of gender-changing suffixation, "The plush toy 'wore' a dress" (*Cocolino* is the name of a well-known brand of washing products and it has the form of a masculine noun).
- d) *zoonyms*: *Azorică* (the name of the grandparents' dog, formed with the typically onomastic suffix *-ică* from the main name *Azor*; with poignant autochthonous character), *Iepurică* ('little rabbit', formed by means of suffixation from the noun *iepure* 'rabbit' + onomastic diminutive suffix *-ică*), *Léon* (a lion; the name was chosen by the parents), *Toto* (the name of a stray dog that lived around the respondent's block of flats, a famous

⁶ The information provided between inverted commas in parentheses after the toy names and explaining the onomastic choices consists of the comments of the survey respondents, which were translated by the authors of this paper.

⁷ A similar tendency was noted by LEIBRING (2010: 368).

zoonym that establishes a connection with the initial referent, Dorothy's pet dog in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*).

Two hypocoristics were identified among the answers to the survey: *Delfi* and *Pingu*, obtained by means of apocope from Romanian *delfin* 'dolphin' and *pinguin* 'penguin', respectively.

e) *phytonyms*: *Azaleea* ('azalea'; the respondent used to like this flower).

f) *nicknames/bynames*:

– *names of "toys converted into ironic-sentimental messages"* (ZAFIU 2003, orig. Romanian): *Băiețoiul* ('the big boy'; "Băiețoiul was a Barbie[-like] doll from a set of bride and groom dolls. I chose this name because I cut her hair really short, so she looked like a boy."), formed by means of derivation from the noun *băiat* 'boy' with the augmentative suffix *-oi*, which does not actualise a pejorative meaning, but physical characteristics; *Cățeluș Ciufulit* ('tousled puppy'; the referent is a plush puppy, which stood out due to the tousled tuft of hair on its head); *Nepieptănata* ('the uncombed one', feminine noun form; "a doll whose hair was always disheveled", a name given by the respondent's father). The affective-moralising note is conveyed on the level of the implicitness construed from the internal form of the name; in fact, this is a warning type of indirect speech act, by means of which the paternal authority makes his daughter aware of the possibility of being in a similar situation, of not being aesthetically appropriate. The name is decoded as offensive, an indirect lesson taught by the adult to the child, a consequence of not observing the code of personal hygiene. Thus, the child will remember that obtaining such a qualification is not to be desired.); *Pityu* (the name of a coloured rubber dwarf, consisting of the nickname of a friend of the respondent's uncle); *Zburătorul* ('the flier'; "I used to call the swing *the flier* because I had the impression I was flying"; the name of the object accounts for the action that the child performs (*to swing*) when she is in a swing. The connection with flight is salient due to the repeated motions in the air brought about by the manipulation of the respective object by the child herself or by an adult.).

– *epithet-nicknames obtained by means of metonymy*: *Brown* (the doll had brown hair); *Cântărețul* ('the singer', masculine form; "a plush bear that would begin to sing when his paw was touched", the name is based on an adjective formed through suffixation from the verb *a cânta* 'to sing' + suffix *-eț*, which turned into a noun as a result of articulation with the definite article *-l*); *Omul albastru* ('the blue man', the initial referent, the character Sportacus in the Icelandic children's programme *Lazy Town*, usually wore clothes of this colour); *Petuța* ('spotty', feminine form, a



spotted plush cat; the name is formed by means of derivation from the noun *pată* ‘spot’ + the onomastic diminutive suffix *-uță*).

- *metaphor-nicknames*: *Bagheta magică* (‘the magic wand’; “I would take a stick and call it *magic wand* because I pretended to do magic tricks”).
- g) *onomatopoeia*: *Mor-Mor*, *Piu-Piu* (formed by means of imitating in articulate language the sound produced by bears and chicken, respectively).
- h) *sentences*: *Un câțel care lătra* (‘a dog that was barking’; “I didn’t name the toy”). The name consists of an evocative utterance, a quality that is ensured through the use of the imperfect tense of the indicative mood. Thus, “negative delineation by means of absence” (ZAFIU 2003, orig. Romanian) is achieved, i.e. the referent’s being unnamed. The definite article emphasises the idea of the denotatum’s indetermination. The only piece of information that one can access (and that could be perceived as tautological at first sight) refers to the action performed by the referent, i.e. barking. On another level of significance, mentioning this aspect foregrounds extra information: a toy that barks has an additional (superior) characteristic in relation to other non-sound-emitting toys.

5. Concluding remarks

5.1. Taking into consideration the two sociolinguistic variables on which the survey focused (respondents’ age and gender), the following can be noted:

- a) most respondents are women (43 respondents, i.e. 96%, cf. Fig. 1), and the best represented age group overall is the one between 21 and 30 years old (23 respondents, i.e. cca. 52%, cf. Fig. 2);

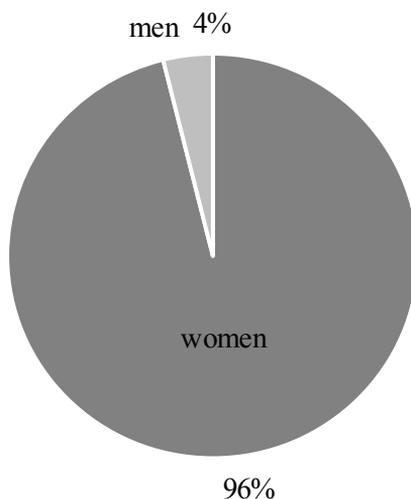


Figure 1: Respondents according to gender

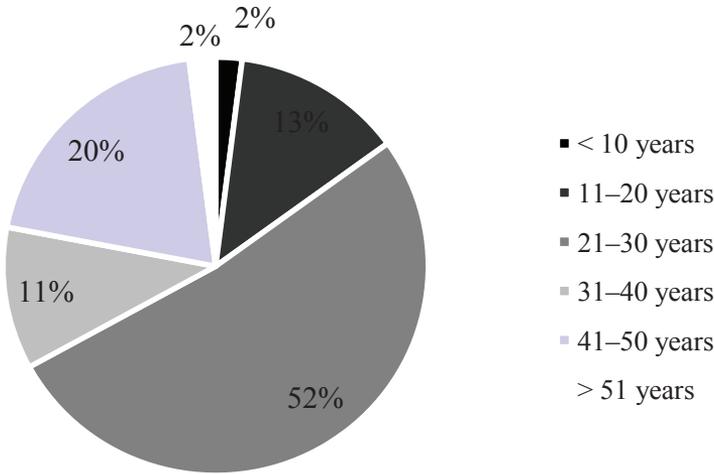


Figure 2: Respondents according to age

b) according to the profile delineated (feminine majority), the respondents' favourite toys consist of dolls and plush toys (84 toys, i.e. 82%, cf. Fig. 3);

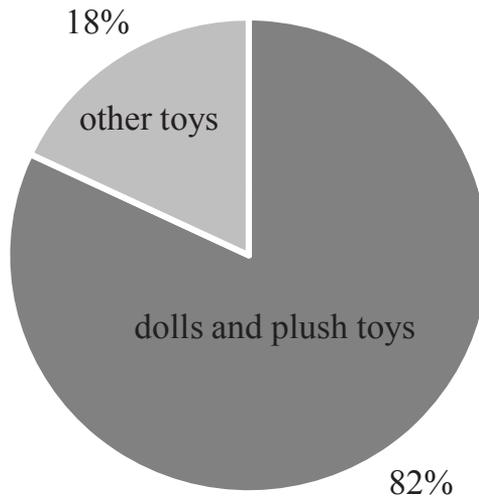


Figure 3: Types of toys

c) in the first category, the predominantly recurring name is *Barbie* (14 instances), regardless of the official or unofficial status it displays. The appellative *barbie* semantically subsumes/classifies a certain category of dolls (representing both genders) irrespective of the producer, as it has become a universally employed generic term (see CLANKIE 2013: 28).



Although it does not always convey the original referential reality (the products made under this brand), the trademark *Barbie* has suffered an “extension” on the market of Romanian toys along with the increase in the number of companies making Barbie-like dolls.

5.2. As regards name sources, toy owners prove to be onomastically conservative: commercial, official names are favoured (in 60 instances, i.e. 58%, cf. Fig. 4) – be they disseminated by the user himself/herself or by an official authority – to the detriment of unofficial names (43 instances, i.e. 42%, cf. Fig. 4).



Figure 4: Official names vs. unofficial names

The latter most often consist of names of objects in the childhood universe with which the child comes into contact (cartoons, the world of pets and wild animals, films, literature). One can notice the poor orientation of name givers towards names of plants and the unquestionable supremacy of onomastic models from the “animated world”. On some occasions, there is preference for names with international aspect, full and/or diminutive forms, hypocoristics (see the suffixes *-el* and *-ica*), constructions that evidence the intersection between onomastic localism and globalism. These names invite receivers to decode them on several levels of interpretation and function as ironic-affective and moralising messages issued by the user himself/herself or formulated by the guardianship authority. They are onyms obtained by amplifying various stylistic devices (epithet, metaphor and metonymy) according to the principle of exploiting their phonetic expressiveness. At the same time, there are rare instances of pure generic names (*mascotă* ‘mascot (plush toy)’ as an official name) and onomastic absence (which is yet another case of “nominally” preserving a referent within genericity).

5.3. For our youngest respondents (< 10 years old), it was usually the parents that filled out the survey. Given this situation and the fact that, in the other cases, the names recorded are based on childhood recollections, this research could be continued through the application of a similar survey to kindergarten or early school-age children. Such an approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the process of naming toys.

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Abstract

The world of toys is essentially a children’s universe. However, it is also a means of relaxation for adults due to the enrichment and diversification, especially in the past decades, of entertainment products.

For ludic objects to become a part of our referential field, they need to become “alive”. Our first action in this respect is naming them.

Depending on the name-giving agents (toy makers or beneficiaries), toy names can be classified into official/commercial/prototype names (appearing on packages) and unofficial names (given by another naming agent than the one involved in making and selling the toys).

Within the boundaries of official names, one can identify *generic names* (e.g. *păpușă* ‘doll’ and *ursuleț* ‘teddy bear’, classifying appellatives with categorising role) and *specifying names* (e.g. *Barbie* and *Donald*, proper names that have become brands).



In the past years, along with the preservation of traditional (local) names, one can notice the tendency (cultural fashion) of *exoticising* (globalising) toy names.

The methodology employed is integrated and consists of onomastics, linguistics, lexicology, child/behavioural psychology, pragmatics, referential semantics, sociolinguistics, stylistics and psychopedagogy.

The corpus comprises toy names collected by the authors through the application of a questionnaire to subjects delimited according to age group and gender.

Keywords: toy name, official name, unofficial name, generic name, individualising name, semantic motivation