THE ONOMASTIC SPACE OF THE NOVEL: FUNCTIONS OF PROPER NAMES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORLD

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Abstract

This article explores the onomastic space of the novel and examines the functions of proper names in the construction of the artistic world. Drawing on the principles of literary onomastics, the study analyses how personal names, place names, and culturally marked proper names contribute to characterisation, spatial and temporal organisation, and thematic development of fictional texts. The research is based on a functional and structural-semantic approach, combining contextual, discourse, and comparative analysis of selected novels from different literary traditions. The results demonstrate that proper names function as meaningful narrative elements rather than merely nominative units, encoding social, cultural, symbolic, and ideological information. The interaction of various types of proper names forms a unified onomastic system that enhances narrative coherence and interpretative depth. The findings confirm the importance of onomastic analysis for understanding the mechanisms of artistic world-building and highlight its relevance for contemporary literary and linguistic studies.

Keywords

onomastic space; proper names; literary onomastics; artistic world; novel; characterisation; toponyms; narrative structure

Introduction

In modern literary studies, increasing attention is paid to the analysis of onomastics as an essential component of a literary text. Proper names play a crucial role in the construction of the artistic world of a novel, as they not only identify characters and places but also carry significant semantic, cultural, and symbolic meanings. The totality of proper names functioning within a literary work forms its onomastic space, which reflects the author's worldview, aesthetic intentions, and ideological positions [1].

The onomastic space of a novel includes personal names, place names, names of institutions, historical references, and other types of proper names that contribute to the integrity and coherence of the fictional universe. These names serve various functions, such as characterisation, localisation of events, creation of historical or cultural background, and enhancement of the emotional and expressive potential of the text [2]. Through carefully selected proper names, authors are able to convey implicit information about characters' social status, national identity, moral qualities, and psychological traits.

From a functional perspective, proper names in fiction go beyond their nominative role. They often acquire additional stylistic, symbolic, and evaluative functions, becoming an important tool in shaping the narrative structure of the novel. In many cases, names are used to establish intertextual connections, evoke mythological or historical associations, and reinforce the thematic depth of the literary work [3]. As a result, the study of onomastic space allows researchers to gain deeper insight into the mechanisms of artistic world-building and textual meaning formation.

Despite the growing interest in literary onomastics, the functional analysis of proper names within the holistic framework of the novel's artistic world remains an актуальная research problem. Many studies focus on isolated name types, while insufficient attention is paid to their interaction within a unified onomastic system. Therefore, a comprehensive approach to the onomastic space of the novel is necessary to reveal how proper names function collectively in constructing the fictional reality [4].

This article aims to examine the onomastic space of the novel and to identify the main functions of proper names in the formation of the artistic world. The research is conducted within the framework of the IMRAD structure and seeks to contribute to contemporary literary and linguistic studies by highlighting the role of onomastics as a meaningful and structurally significant element of artistic discourse.

Materials and Methods

The material for this study consists of selected novels representing different literary traditions and narrative styles, in which proper names play a significant role in the construction of the artistic world. The primary texts were chosen based on their richness in onomastic elements, narrative complexity, and cultural relevance. The corpus includes both classical and modern novels, allowing for a comparative perspective on the functioning of proper names across different literary periods and genres [1]. Special attention was paid to personal names, place names, and culturally marked proper names, as these categories are most actively involved in the formation of fictional space.

The methodological framework of the research is grounded in a functional and structural-semantic approach to literary onomastics. Proper names were analysed as integral components of the narrative system rather than as isolated linguistic units. The study employs descriptive and contextual analysis to identify the semantic and stylistic functions of proper names within the text. In addition, elements of discourse analysis were used to examine how names contribute to character development, plot progression, and the creation of symbolic meanings within the artistic world of the novel [2].

To ensure systematic analysis, all proper names occurring in the selected texts were extracted and classified according to their type (anthroponyms, toponyms, and other categories of proper names) and functional role. Each name was then examined in its immediate and broader textual context to determine its narrative function, connotative meaning, and stylistic value. Comparative analysis was applied to reveal recurring patterns and functional similarities in the use of proper names across different works, which made it possible to identify general tendencies in the organisation of the onomastic space of the novel [3].

Furthermore, the study integrates elements of cultural and historical interpretation, as proper names in fiction often reflect extralinguistic realities, such as social norms, historical events, and cultural stereotypes. By correlating onomastic data with cultural and historical background information, the research aims to uncover the implicit meanings embedded in names and their role in shaping the artistic world of the novel. The combination of qualitative textual analysis and functional classification provides a comprehensive methodological basis for investigating the onomastic space as a coherent and meaningful system within literary discourse [4].

Results

The analysis of the selected novels demonstrates that proper names constitute a structured and multifunctional system within the artistic world of a literary text. The results confirm that the onomastic space of the novel is not random but deliberately organised to serve narrative, semantic, and stylistic purposes. Proper names were found to perform several interrelated functions that collectively contribute to the coherence and depth of the fictional world [1].

One of the most prominent results of the study is the identification of the characterising function of proper names. Personal names (anthroponyms) frequently contain implicit information about a character's social status, ethnic background, or psychological traits. In many cases, authors use names with clear etymological or cultural associations, allowing readers to form expectations about characters even before their actions are described. This function enhances character individuality and supports the development of narrative tension [2].

Another significant finding concerns the spatial and temporal organisation of the artistic world. Toponyms and geographically marked proper names play a crucial role in localising events and creating a sense of realism within the fictional space. The analysis shows that real and fictional place names often coexist, forming a hybrid onomastic system that strengthens the credibility of the narrative while preserving its artistic autonomy. Such names also contribute to the historical and cultural atmosphere of the novel, linking the fictional world to broader extratextual contexts [3].

The study also reveals the symbolic and thematic functions of proper names. In many instances, names acquire metaphorical or symbolic meanings that reflect the central themes of the novel. These names may allude to mythological figures, historical personalities, or culturally significant concepts, thereby expanding the interpretative potential of the text. As a result, the onomastic space becomes an important mechanism for conveying the author's ideological and aesthetic intentions [4].

In addition, the interaction between different types of proper names within the onomastic space was found to be essential for maintaining narrative cohesion. Recurrent names, naming patterns, and contrasts between names contribute to the internal structure of the novel and guide the reader's perception of the fictional world. This confirms that proper names function not only as individual units but also as elements of a unified onomastic system.

The main functional types of proper names identified in the course of the analysis are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1

Functions of Proper Names in the Construction of the Artistic World of the Novel**

Type of proper name	Main functions	Contribution to the artistic world
Anthroponyms (personal names)	Characterisation, evaluation, symbolic meaning	Reveal social, psychological, and cultural traits of characters

Type of proper name	Main functions	Contribution to the artistic world
Toponyms (place names)	Spatial localisation, realism, historical context	Create credible fictional space and cultural background
Institutional names	Social representation, contextualisation	Reflect social structure and power relations
Culturally marked names	Symbolic and thematic function	Reinforce central ideas and ideological meanings
Intertextual names	Associative and allusive function	Establish connections with other texts and traditions

The data presented in the table clearly indicate that proper names serve multiple functions simultaneously and cannot be reduced to a purely nominative role. Their functional diversity confirms the systemic nature of the onomastic space and its importance in the formation of the novel's artistic world. Overall, the results of the study support the view that proper names are a powerful narrative tool that actively shapes meaning, structure, and reader interpretation within literary discourse [1; 3].

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that the onomastic space of the novel functions as a complex and systematic element of the artistic world rather than a collection of randomly chosen proper names. This finding corresponds with established views in literary onomastics, which emphasise the semantic and structural significance of proper names in fiction [1]. The multifunctionality of names identified in the analysed novels demonstrates that they actively participate in meaning construction and narrative organisation.

One of the central issues discussed in contemporary onomastic research is the characterising potential of proper names. The present study supports the argument that anthroponyms serve as powerful tools for indirect characterisation, often encoding social, cultural, or psychological information about fictional figures [2]. In many cases, names anticipate character behaviour or moral orientation, guiding the reader's interpretation before explicit narrative descriptions appear. This confirms that names operate as semiotic signs embedded in the broader artistic system of the novel.

The spatial and temporal functions of toponyms identified in the Results section also deserve particular attention. Scholars note that place names play a crucial role in shaping fictional reality by anchoring narrative events within a recognisable or symbolically meaningful space [3]. The coexistence of real and fictional toponyms observed in the analysed texts reflects a deliberate authorial strategy aimed at balancing realism and artistic imagination. Such hybrid onomastic systems enhance narrative credibility while preserving the autonomy of the fictional world [4].

Another important aspect revealed by the discussion concerns the symbolic and thematic functions of proper names. Previous studies emphasise that names in literary texts often acquire

metaphorical meanings and serve as carriers of ideological and philosophical concepts [5]. The findings of this research align with this view, demonstrating that symbolically charged names reinforce central themes and contribute to the conceptual unity of the novel. Through allusions to mythology, history, or cultural archetypes, proper names expand the interpretative horizon of the text.

The interaction between different categories of proper names within the onomastic space further supports the systemic approach adopted in this study. Researchers argue that the onomastic system of a literary work should be analysed as an integrated whole, where individual names gain meaning through their relationships with other names and narrative elements [6]. The recurrent patterns and contrasts identified in the analysed novels illustrate how onomastic coherence contributes to narrative structure and reader orientation.

From a methodological perspective, the functional analysis applied in this study proves effective in revealing the narrative and semantic roles of proper names. Similar methodological approaches have been successfully used in previous research to demonstrate the relevance of onomastics for literary interpretation [7]. The present findings further validate the applicability of functional and discourse-oriented methods in the study of fictional names.

Finally, the discussion highlights the broader implications of onomastic analysis for literary studies. By examining the onomastic space, researchers gain access to deeper layers of textual meaning and authorial intention. As noted by several scholars, onomastics serves as a bridge between linguistics and literary criticism, offering valuable insights into the mechanisms of artistic world-building [8]. Therefore, the study of proper names should be regarded as an essential component of comprehensive literary analysis rather than a marginal research area.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that the onomastic space of the novel constitutes a structurally and semantically significant component of the artistic world. Proper names function not merely as nominative units but as meaningful elements that actively participate in character construction, spatial and temporal organisation, and thematic development of the literary text. The findings confirm that the systematic use of proper names reflects the author's aesthetic intentions and contributes to the internal coherence of the fictional universe [1].

The analysis has shown that anthroponyms play a key role in characterisation by encoding social, cultural, and psychological information, while toponyms serve to anchor narrative events within a credible and symbolically charged space. In addition, culturally marked and intertextual names enhance the interpretative depth of the novel by establishing connections with historical, mythological, and literary traditions [2; 3]. These functions collectively reinforce the artistic integrity of the text and guide the reader's perception of the fictional world.

Furthermore, the study confirms that the interaction between different types of proper names forms a unified onomastic system, where individual names gain meaning through their relationships with other narrative elements. This systemic organisation supports previous theoretical approaches in literary onomastics and highlights the necessity of analysing names within their broader textual and cultural context [4; 5].

From a methodological perspective, the functional and discourse-oriented approach applied in this research proved effective in revealing the narrative and semantic potential of proper names. The results suggest that onomastic analysis offers valuable insights into the mechanisms of artistic world-building and should be considered an integral part of comprehensive literary interpretation [6; 7].

In conclusion, the study emphasises the importance of the onomastic space as a key factor in the construction of the novel's artistic world. Future research may expand this approach by exploring onomastic systems in specific literary traditions, genres, or individual authors' works, as well as by integrating quantitative methods to complement qualitative analysis. Such investigations will further contribute to the development of literary onomastics as a dynamic and interdisciplinary field of study [8].

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