

# Language and war in Ukraine: Unofficial names in the socio-group “Ukrainian military” as a marker of interpersonal communication

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## Language and war in Ukraine: Unofficial names in the socio-group “Ukrainian military” as a marker of interpersonal communication

**Abstract:** This article focuses on an essential component of the military slang of soldiers and commanders during the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022, in particular their unofficial names. The primary task of the research is to characterise the lexical basis of forming unofficial names among the Ukrainian military. This is done by exploring the conditions of its development and comparing it with the lexical basis of nicknames in the Russian military. From a theoretical perspective, the analysis is premised on the systemic nature of vocabulary and language activities, as

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well as the function of informal names with respect to the sociolinguistic categories *slang* and *socio-group*. The corpus consists of 500 modern nicknames of Ukrainian war participants, 500 nicknames selected from the last century's corpus of military names (to reveal the preconditions for the development of the lexical corpus of modern unofficial names), and 500 modern nicknames from the Russian military (to compare the lexical corpora of unofficial names from two socio-groups). Comparative and biographical methods of analysis provide us with new results about the established naming tradition in the interpersonal communication of Ukrainian representatives of the professional and social group "military". The qualitative approach applied to the lexicological analysis contributes to the formation of the theory of interactive sociolinguistics and socio-onomastics.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, socio-onomastics, socio-group, military slang, informal name, the lexical basis of informal names.

### **La langue et la guerre en Ukraine: Des noms non officiels dans le groupe social des "militaires ukrainiens" comme signes de la communication interpersonnelle**

**Résumé :** L'article est consacré à l'éclaircissement d'un des signes de l'argot militaire des soldats et des officiers pendant la guerre russo-ukrainienne des années 2014-2022. La tâche de la recherche est de caractériser la base lexicale de la formation des noms non officiels parmi les militaires ukrainiens, en relevant les conditions préalables à son développement et en la comparant à la base lexicale des surnoms de l'armée russe. La théorie utilisée pour l'analyse est l'interaction de la notion sur la systématité du vocabulaire et de l'activité langagière, sur l'essence et les fonctions d'un nom non officiel en relation avec le contenu des catégories sociolinguistiques de l'argot d'un sociogroupe. La base de données comprend 500 surnoms modernes de militaires ukrainiens, 500 noms de guerre du siècle dernier (pour se référer aux conditions préalables du développement de la base lexicale des noms non officiels modernes) et 500 surnoms modernes de l'armée russe (pour comparer les bases lexicales des noms non officiels de deux groupes sociaux). Des méthodes d'analyse comparatives et biographiques ont permis d'obtenir de nouveaux résultats sur la tradition nominative formée dans la communication interpersonnelle des représentants ukrainiens du groupe professionnel et social "militaires". L'approche qualitative appliquée à l'analyse lexicologique du problème contribue à la formation de la théorie de la sociolinguistique interactive et de la socio-onomastique.

**Mots-clés :** Sociolinguistique, socio-onomastique, sociogroupe, argot militaire, nom de guerre, base lexicale des surnoms.

### **Sprache und Krieg in der Ukraine: Informelle Namen in der Sozialgruppe "ukrainisches Militär" als Kennzeichen der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation**

**Zusammenfassung:** Der Beitrag widmet sich der Analyse eines der bedeutenden Merkmale der Soldatensprache während des seit 2014 andauernden russisch-ukrainischen Krieges. Ziel dieser Studie ist es, die lexikalische Basis der Bildung inoffizieller Namen beim ukrainischen Militär zu charakterisieren, indem die Voraussetzungen für deren Entwicklung dargelegt und mit der lexikalischen Basis von Spitznamen des russischen Militärs verglichen werden. Den theoretischen Rahmen der Untersuchung bildet das Zusammenspiel der Erkenntnisse über die Systematik des Wortschatzes und der Sprachaktivität, über das Wesen und die

Funktionen des inoffiziellen Namens im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt der soziolinguistischen Kategorien Slang und Sozialgruppe. Die Datenbank umfasst 500 moderne Spitznamen ukrainischer Soldaten und Kommandeure, 500 Spitznamen aus dem letzten Jahrhundert (als Vergleichsgruppe, um die Voraussetzungen für die Entwicklung der lexikalischen Basis moderner inoffizieller Namen darzulegen) und 500 moderne Spitznamen des russischen Militärs (um die lexikalische Basis inoffizieller Namen aus zwei Sozialgruppen zu vergleichen). Der Einsatz vergleichender und biographischer Untersuchungsmethoden ermöglicht es, neue Erkenntnisse über die entstandene Tradition der Namengebung in der zwischenmenschlichen Kommunikation ukrainischer Vertreter des Militärs als Berufs- und Gesellschaftsgruppe zu gewinnen. Die qualitative lexikologische Analyse trägt zur Bildung der Theorie der interaktiven Soziolinguistik und Sozioonomastik bei.

**Schlüsselbegriffe:** Soziolinguistik, Sozioonomastik, Sozialgruppe, Soldatensprache, informeller Name, lexikalische Basis informeller Namen (Spitznamen).

## **Language and war in Ukraine: Unofficial names in the socio-group “Ukrainian military” as a marker of interpersonal communication**

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### **1. Introduction**

An informal name in the socio-group “military” is a nominative unit that encodes the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the representatives of this group and contributes to the construction of their social and communicative identities as users of professional military slang. Notably, the unofficial names of foreign soldiers ([Brinkman 2004: 143–163](#)) and generals of the British and American armies have been studied through a linguistic lens ([Chaloupský 2005](#)).

After a long break ([Horbach 1963](#)), the study of the structure and functions of Ukrainian military slang has resumed ([Lytovchenko 2016](#); [Andriianova 2019: 5–10](#); [Levchenko 2021](#)). It seems essential to explore some of its emerging features, in particular unofficial names in the interpersonal communication of the participants of the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022<sup>1</sup>. During the eight-year defence of Ukraine’s independence, the mass media have publicly presented the biographies of living and dead soldiers. In addition to official names and surnames, they often show soldiers’ unofficial names, which have been explored from a linguistic perspective in several papers ([Yatskiv 2014: 99–106](#); [Kravchenko 2016: 80–85](#); [Shulska 2017: 342–347](#), etc.). The process of forming nicknames among the enemy forces has not been the focus of research, as the analysis of this issue has been limited to characterising the unofficial names of terrorists from the temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories ([Shulska 2015: 802–812](#)). It might be explained by the fact that the documents with the nicknames in the Russian military only became available in late February 2022<sup>2</sup>.

The lexical basis of creating unofficial names of Ukrainian soldiers and commanders has not been explored sufficiently. Therefore, the key task of the

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<sup>1</sup> Unofficial names appeared at different stages of the war: during the Anti-Terrorist Operation in eastern Ukraine (14 April 2014–30 April 2018), during the Operation of Allied Forces (30 April 2018–23 February 2022), and during the full-scale invasion of Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine from 24 February 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Since 27 February 2022, the Security Service of Ukraine has published documents that were left on the battlefield, including lists of call signs ([Apostrof](#); [Depo](#), etc.), in the Ukrainian mass media. These published documents have helped in the creation and analysis of the corpus of unofficial names of the enemy.

article is to characterise this lexical basis, emphasising the preconditions of its formation and comparisons with the lexical basis of unofficial names in the Russian military. These findings will help develop the theory of interactive sociolinguistics and socio-onomastics, particularly regarding interpersonal communication in the professional and social group “military” during wartime.

## 2. A brief overview of the study of unofficial military names in Ukrainian linguistics

To denote the unofficial names or nicknames that are widely used among the military, Ukrainian researchers use different terms: *pseudonym*, *pseudo*, *call sign*, and *military call sign*, the meanings of which have been gradually clarified. Initially, the authors studied pseudonyms as a separate class of unofficial names within the national anthroponym system. Pseudonyms have been viewed as self-names (individual or group), as these optional units, not regulated by law, are chosen by the nominee. A key point to note is that pseudonyms do not belong to the group of hereditary names, which has brought pseudonyms closer to nicknames. Furthermore, by applying these motivated names, the holders of names characterise themselves (Chuchka 2001: 82–83). However, this approach is more appropriate for the study of the informal onomasticon of creative people. Understanding the linguistic features of the military has deepened historians’ research on the national liberation struggle of Ukrainians in the 1940s and 1960s. There is evidence that military nicknames are not necessarily self-names, as they might be given by other people within the group. It appears that the emergence of an unofficial name is caused by a strict conspiracy, so the holders change their nicknames due to changes in the circle of proxies. Thus, understanding the motivation for choosing a name requires clarification in relation to the holder (Nimchuk 2002: 30–58).

The unofficial names of participants in the 2014–2022 war have been sporadically explored since 2015. The authors began to study the structure and functions of *pseudonyms* or *call signs* in Ukrainian armed groups during the Anti-Terrorist Operation and the Joint Forces Operation in eastern Ukraine. It is believed that the term *call sign* designating an unofficial name best corresponds to the meaning of the denoted concept, as this is the equivalent used by soldiers and commanders. A call sign is an identifier in radio communication in the process of order transmission (*Boiovyi statut sukhoputnykh viisk zbroinykh syl Ukrainy* 2016: 13), while its purpose is to hide real names and surnames. The term is formed from the phrase *call sign recognition*. Biographical data on the Ukrainian military available in mass media show that modern call signs can be created by soldiers, commanders, or comrades-in-arms. These names often appear under the influence of some facts or events that took place during the peaceful period of their holder’s life. The most important functions of the call sign as a kind of anthroponym are *nominative* (distinguishing a soldier or commander), *esoteric* (masking or hiding a holder’s official name

and surname), and *differential* (distinguishing the holder of an unofficial name from other members of the socio-group). As biographical information helps establish the motive for choosing a unit for a call sign, it is also possible to distinguish between an *informative* function of a call sign (which provides some information about a holder), a *characteristic* function (nominating a person), or an *expressive* function (which emphasises special physical or intellectual traits). Thus far, researchers have identified the models and methods of creating call signs and critically assessed their functional features, formal requirements, and typical length (one-, two-, three- and four-component words), as well as the influences of social parameters such as region of origin, gender, education, and language of communication (Russian or Surzhyk) of the holder on his/her unofficial name. The first dictionary of call signs has already been compiled (Belei 2020: 49–62; Petrova 2020: 74–78; Kopytko 2021: 174–260).

### 3. Methodology and corpus

An unofficial name as an individual symbol accumulates and preserves significant cultural and historical information and forms a national portrait of Ukrainian defenders, the “otherness” of which is confirmed by the unofficial names used by the Russian army.

In this article, I draw my assumptions from Saussure’s position on the fundamental principle of systematic vocabulary units and their connection with language activity, as these major theoretical principles provide an insight into the lexical basis (Saussure 1991: 19) that gave rise to the informal names of the 20th and 21st centuries as a system of units. Similar to terminological systems (Sheremeta 2021: 107), this lexical basis can be analysed by identifying thematic groups of units. Each includes words that are united, not by lexical and semantic connections, but by non-linguistic logical relations with objects and phenomena of the external world. Accordingly, the thematic group includes words chosen and combined according to common connections between language parts. Hence, the concept of a thematic group conveys ways and features of semantic development, not of individual words, but of groups of lexemes that have one semantic orientation.

I also take into account the common understanding of the terms *nickname*, *social group*, and *slang*. Crystal posits that

people who tend to be nicknamed are special friends or enemies, those in authority (teachers, officers, politicians), and anyone who has achieved notoriety (especially criminals). It is an important index of intimacy when we feel comfortable in using someone’s nickname to their face (Crystal 1995: 152).

However, I also pay close attention to the claim made in the theory of Ukrainian onomastics that the unofficial names of the Ukrainian military have primarily been used for conspiracy and radio communication during the current war.

The study of the unofficial names of soldiers and commanders in the military requires paying close attention to the concept of a social group. Some sociolinguists hold that a network of people is

defined by regular interaction and shared values/norms. The term is also used more generally to describe sets of people who share certain social characteristics or attributes, but who do not necessarily interact regularly (e.g. women, men, teenagers, class groups) (Swann et al. 2004: 293).

However, it is necessary to specify the information about the values of unofficial names. Thus, the representatives of the Ukrainian military group are united by the idea of defending Ukraine's independence, while the representatives of the Russian military group profess the need to destroy Ukraine's independence as a value.

Although I agree with the assumption that call signs, as a rule, are anthroponyms with motivation lost for non-military citizens (Shulska 2017: 343), I will elaborate on this idea. The description of call signs in papers about war participants helps explain the motives for the use of certain lexemes as call signs. Therefore, the use of the biographical method is instrumental in establishing the motivation of unofficial military names.

A call sign simultaneously acts as a marker of interpersonal communication and a unit of military slang, since "as an in-group variety it may be used to maintain group solidarity or increase social distance with outsiders" (Swann et al. 2004: 281).

The corpus used for this study includes 500 call signs of participants in the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022 from "Knyha pamiati polehlykh za Ukrainu" [The Book of Remembrance of the Fallen for Ukraine] (hereinafter KP)<sup>3</sup> and from the central and regional mass media<sup>4</sup>, which have been publishing information about Ukrainian soldiers and commanders from the theatre of war after the beginning of the full-scale invasion by the Russian army of the territory of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. Biographies with call signs provide insight into the motives behind the use of lexemes from different thematic groups for the re-nomination of the military. However, it is essential to understand whether the trends in forming the lexical basis of call signs in the Russian–Ukrainian war are typical only for the 21st century. Therefore, the article analyses the connection between this corpus and the 20th-century lexical corpus of pseudonyms, in particular 500 unofficial names of Ukrainian participants in the national liberation war of the 1940s–1960s available from "Knyha polehlykh chleniv OUN i voiakiv UPA Lvivshchyny" (2002) (Litopys). In addition, the article presents the first attempt to

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<sup>3</sup> *Knyha pamiati polehlykh za Ukrainu*, <https://memorybook.org.ua/>. The resource was created with the support of the National Military and Historical Museum of Ukraine and contains biographical data about the defenders of Ukraine in the area of ATO/JFO until December 1, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> The names of these sources are presented and abbreviated in the sources section.

systematise the unofficial names of the Russian army. For the analysis, I use 500 call signs from enemy documents left on the battlefield, which have been published by the all-Ukrainian socio-political online medium “Ukrainska Pravda” (UP-1). These are the call signs of one of the units of the battalion tactical group of the 810th Separate Brigade of Marine Corps of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation: the list consists of 450 call signs of soldiers and 52 call signs of commanders.

The theoretical principles of the research have allowed me to apply the extralinguistic principle to the lexicological characteristics of the lexical basis of creating informal names. It is based on comparing words with the realities they signify. In addition, I have applied qualitative methods, including comparative analysis, to identify similarities and differences in the composition of thematic groups within the lexical basis from which Ukrainian and Russian unofficial names of the 21st century are formed, as well as a biographical method, which has contributed to highlighting the motivation for choosing the unofficial names of Ukrainian soldiers and commanders.

In the next part of the article, I will focus on the preconditions for the formation and characterisation of thematic groups of the lexical basis of modern Ukrainian military call signs and make comparisons with the lexical basis of Russian nicknames.

#### 4. Discussion of results

To characterise the lexical basis of modern call signs, I will first clarify the context for their formation. The war of the 21st century, which is characterised as “national liberation struggle”, is associated with the 20th-century struggle of Ukrainians for liberation from Nazism and Soviet totalitarianism between the 1940s and the 1960s. Systematised informal names from this period show that the lexical basis of the then informal names was formed by thematic groups of *onyms* and *appellatives*. When reused for the nomination of persons, they underwent *transonymisation* (i.e. the transition of onyms to a new category of proper names) and *onymisation* (i.e. the transition of appellatives to proper names).

Table 1: Examples of transonymisation

<b>Thematic groups – onyms of the lexical basis</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>
Historical heroes	<i>Baida, Bohun, Honta</i>
Surnames	<i>Voinarovskyyi, Hordiienko, Savchenko</i>
Male names	<i>Andrii, Anton, Arkadii, Bohdan</i>
Female names	<i>Vanda, Iryna, Liuba, Nadiia</i>
Names of rivers	<i>Don, Horyn, Zbruch, Prut</i>

The units of the selected thematic groups of the lexical basis of onyms illustrate an important feature: the proper names chosen by soldiers and commanders for the re-nomination of soldiers and commanders reflect



traditional Ukrainian culture. It includes similar-minded historical heroes, unconquered in the fight against the enemies of the Ukrainian people, as well as a familiar system of male, female, and geographical names familiar to every Ukrainian and historically related to the life of the Ukrainian population. Informal names could be formed from colloquial forms of male (*Vasylko, Dmytrus, Ivas*) or female names (*Mariika, Natalka, Slavka*). Some units of the lexical basis are frequently applied because they are used many times for nomination by various participants in the national liberation struggle (*Andrii, Taras, Levko*).

Table 2: Examples of onymisation

<b>Thematic groups – appellatives of the lexical basis</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>
Names related to the Cossack Wars and the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917–1921	<i>Haidamaka, Kozak, Sichovyk</i>
Names of occupations or professions	<i>Koval, Kosar, Kucher</i>
Names referring to a person's appearance or character	<i>Bosyi, Buinyi, Veselyi, Virnyi</i>
Names of family members	<i>Vuiko, Stryk, Stryi</i>
Names of trees and shrubs	<i>Bereza, Verba, Lishchyna, Kalyna</i>
Names of animals, birds, or insects	<i>Vovk, Yizhak, Voron, Horobets, Komar, Mukha</i>
Names of ethnic groups	<i>Chekh, Boiko, Hutsul, Tsyhan</i>
Names of colours and their shades	<i>Bilyi, Blakytnyi, Voronyi, Holubiyi</i>

The lexical units of thematic groups-appellatives used to create informal names, as well as thematic groups of onyms, reflect the everyday life of a Ukrainian citizen and his/her connection with nature.

It is possible to distinguish other features of the lexical basis of 20th-century pseudonyms. Thus, in order to realise the secret function of names, the holders never use the equivalents for naming, which would emphasise their personal characteristics in pseudonyms: *Lysyi* ('Bald') might have thick hair, and *Malyi* ('Little') could be a giant. The lexical corpus does not contain pseudonyms derived from birth names or forms of official surnames. As their pseudonyms, men often choose appellatives of grammatical feminine gender, like *Lastivka* ('Swallow') or *Kalyna* ('Viburnum'). In addition, the same fighter or commander could have two or more unofficial names because Ukrainian participants in the national liberation war change the groups in which they fight. Units of the lexical basis of pseudonyms convey features of the Ukrainian literary language and, in some cases, dialectal influences or influences of Russian and Polish languages; most importantly, they never emphasise the status of the unofficial name – i.e. they do not distinguish between soldiers and commanders.

The lexical basis behind the creation of the call signs of Ukrainian participants in the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022 also includes thematic groups of onyms and appellatives distinguished on the basis of logics. Those used to re-nominate a person are transonymised: *Adam* is a name, while *Adam* is also a call sign of the commander at the front. Appellatives can be onymised because they go from being common names to proper names: *artist* is a profession and *Artist* is an unofficial name of Volodymyr Trush, a lecturer at the Faculty of Culture and Arts of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv before the war. The examples confirm that the onyms and appellatives that are combined into thematic groups of the lexical basis continue the nominative tradition of the past into the new century.

The lexical basis of modern call signs contains new units of the thematic group “surnames” – *Makhno*, *Motsart*, *Pikasso*, *Spilberh*, and others (KP-1) – and of the thematic group “male names” – *Alex*, *John*, *Elvis*, *Raul*, and others (KP-2). However, against this background, the thematic groups “historicisms” and “female names” have narrowed their composition. Thematic groups-appellatives of the lexical basis are also enriched with new units: in particular, the thematic group “names of professions” contains such lexemes as *artyst* (‘artist’), *yeher* (‘huntsman’), *moriekh* (‘marine officer’), *fizruk* (‘PE teacher’), *fizyk* (‘physicist’) (KP-3), etc.; the thematic group “names of family relations” contains *batia* (‘father’), *did*, *died* (‘grandfather’), *kum* (‘godfather’) (KP-4); the thematic group “names of people based on ethnic and national characteristics” contains *arab* (‘Arab’), *hrek* (‘Greek’), *italiiets* (‘Italian’), *ispanets* (‘Spanish’), etc. (KP-5); and the thematic group “animal names” contains *bison* (‘bison’), *buldoh* (‘bulldog’), *yenot* (‘raccoon’), *puma* (‘cougar’) (KP-6). In the composition of these groups, the units that were used in the last century are often not relevant. In addition, the set of units of the thematic group “names of trees and bushes” has been significantly reduced. One of the reasons for this might be the alienation of the modern warrior from the folk tradition, with its symbolism attached to the names of this group. However, one of the commanders of the Azov Battalion has the unofficial name *Kalyna*. In general, the lexical basis of the call signs of the 21st century illustrates, first of all, the expansion, and sometimes the partial or complete replacement, of new units of thematic groups used in the last century.

New thematic groups of the lexical basis of modern call signs have appeared, for example the thematic group “names of literary heroes, heroes of movies and cartoons” (*Akela*, *Aramis*, *Balu*, *Betmen* and others – KP-7); the thematic group “names of mythical heroes” (*Zevs*, *Enei*, *Kashchei*, *Lieshyi*, etc. – KP-8); and a small group of “names with the meaning of quantity” (*simnadsiatyi* ‘seventeenth’, *sorokovyi* ‘fortieth’, *tertii* ‘third’, *Yasha-dva* ‘Yasha-two’, etc. – KP-9). The lexical basis of 21st-century call signs contains more Russian-language forms (compared to the last century). However, this is not surprising, because the equivalents reflect the current language situation in Ukraine, i.e. the use of Ukrainian, Surzhyk, or Russian in the interpersonal communication of the military.

Another feature of the lexical basis of call signs – in particular, the motives for choosing units for the re-nomination of the military – can be established from the publications of the journalists who are informing the public about the participants in the Russian–Ukrainian war along with the descriptions of call signs.

*Adam* is a call sign received from other fighters. Society has known the motivation of the call sign since October 2019: the holder of the call sign (the commander) is always first in battle ([ArmiyaInf](#)). A new interview with the commander holding this call sign reveals the peculiarities of the interaction between *a person* and *an unofficial name*: at first, the holder of the call sign did not accept his unofficial name and believed it was logical to associate him with the tank number. Eventually, he got used to the call sign *Adam* ([Versii.if.ua](#)).

*Poltava* is the call sign of a soldier from Hadyach in the Poltava region, which he received at the front ([Polt](#)).

*Tanos* is the call sign of the battalion commander Artem (his surname is not known), formed from the nickname of his favourite cat *Tanos* ([Suspilne 2022](#)).

These observations may lead to a number of conclusions. First of all, the lexical basis of modern call signs contains thematic groups that have been common for two centuries, which illustrate its development in connection with the changed realities of modern life. In the past, Ukrainian soldiers and commanders tended to choose names derived from the names of well-known Ukrainians, whereas today the lexical basis for call signs includes the names of politicians, actors, artists, athletes, and writers from Ukraine and other countries. In addition, thematic groups from the last century have been updated through lexemes related to the culture, as well as the flora and fauna, of different countries. However, in some thematic groups of the modern lexical basis, the list of equivalents has decreased in comparison with the composition of the same groups in the last century.

Simultaneously, the lexical basis of modern call signs has been enriched with new thematic groups, including “names of literary heroes, heroes of movies and cartoons” and “names of mythical heroes”. Examples also show the grammatical features of call signs, including Russian-language forms and a quantitatively small group of call signs with numerals.

Such features as the repetitive thematic groups of the lexical basis and their units, the avoidance of logical informal names with a numerator, and the use of feminine rather than masculine nouns (e.g. the above-mentioned pseudonyms *Kalyna*, *Poltava*) are connected with the unofficial names of the Ukrainian military in the past century. This testifies to a well-established nominative tradition among the modern Ukrainian military, which flexibly reflects the changing world.

These findings allow us to highlight the essential features in the characterisation of the lexical basis of modern call signs of the Ukrainian military who have defended Ukraine during the war of 2014–2022: the connection with the lexical basis of 20th-century pseudonyms through

quantitative (numeral) lexemes; an appeal to the world and to Ukraine; and neutrality in the differentiation of *soldiers* and *commanders*.

To emphasise the features of the lexical basis of modern call signs of the Ukrainian military, it is necessary to identify the lexical basis of modern enemy call signs. First of all, it is obvious that the Russian call signs of the command staff and soldiers are formed according to different models. The call signs of Russian commanders premised on morphological grounds have a two-component structure: *a noun + a numeral*. According to lexical indicators, these call signs are formed only from a small group of onyms and, predominantly, from different groups of appellatives. Among the thematic groups of Russian call signs of commanders are small groups: “names of cities, city objects, year”: *Kabul-32*, *Yenisei-71*, *Colosseum-68*, *Terek-68*; “names of persons by type of activity”: *Graver-67* (‘Engraver-67’), *Pahar-63* (‘Plowman-63’), *Boets-62* (‘Fighter-62’), *Dragun-99* (‘Dragoon-99’), *Lakey-45* (‘Lackey-45’), *Vityaz-07* (‘Knight-07’), *Pirate-83* (‘Pirate-83’), *Strelok-93* (‘Shooter-93’); “names of animals, fish, and insects”: *Komar-02* (‘Mosquito-02’), *Piran’ya-34* (‘Piranha-34’), *Osa-02* (‘Wasp-02’), *Orel-53* (‘Eagle-53’), *Volk-38* (‘Wolf-38’), *Skorpion-39* (‘Scorpio-39’); “names of natural phenomena”: *Groza-53* (‘Thunderstorm-53’), *Purga-80* (‘Snowstorm-80’), *Sneg-97* (‘Snow-97’), *Burya-80* (‘Storm-80’), *Skala-38* (‘Rock-38’); and “names of communicative activities”: *Rasskaz-21* (‘Story-21’), *Beseda-31* (‘Talk-31’) (UP-1, 02.03.2022). I would like to emphasise that, as part of interpersonal communication between Russian commanders and Ukrainian addressees, the call sign is reduced to a number, as evidenced by an eyewitness account of a Russian commander with a call sign *the 90th* with employees of the Chernobyl Nuclear Station (UP-2).

The lexical basis of the call signs of Russian soldiers is formed by thematic groups of onyms and appellatives without numerals. Thus, only the thematic group “names of cities, urban objects, rivers, lakes, seas, territories” of the lexical basis contains elements that have been transonymised. Most of these units are geographical names of Russia (Ladoga, Siberia) and, occasionally, of temporarily occupied Crimea (Artek) and Ukraine (Desna). As part of the appellatives of the lexical basis, the thematic group “names of persons by type of activity” includes such signs as *bocman* (‘boatswain’), *vizir* (‘vizier’), *geology* (‘geologist’), *gusar* (‘hussar’), *diktor* (‘announcer’), *donor* (‘donor’), *dubler* (‘backup’), *kovboj* (‘cowboy’), *kuznec* (‘blacksmith’), *kurier* (‘courier’), *pilot* (‘pilot’), *turist* (‘tourist’); “names of animals, fish, and insects” includes the units *sobol* (‘sable’), *enot* (‘raccoon’), *lisa* (‘fox’), *fazan* (‘pheasant’), *kit* (‘whale’), *norka* (‘mink’), *yastreb* (‘hawk’); and “names of natural phenomena” includes *buran* (‘storm’), *grad* (‘hail’), *zenit* (‘zenith’), *liven* (‘rain’), *meteor* (‘meteor’), *otliv* (‘low tide’), *priliv* (‘tide’). There are thematic groups that are not in the lexical basis of call sign commanders, in particular “names of trees and bushes”: *bereza* (‘birch’), *verba* (‘willow’), *vishnya* (‘cherry’), *elka* (‘spruce’), *kedr* (‘cedar’), *pihta* (‘fir’), *sosna* (‘pine’), *chinara* (‘plane tree’); “fruit names”: *ajva* (‘quince’),

*zerno* ('grain'), *zholud* ('acorn'), *kokos* ('coconut'); "names of chemical elements": *azot* ('nitrogen'), *boksit* ('bauxite'), *vismut* ('bismuth'), *zhelezo* ('iron'), *magnij* ('magnesium'), *metan* ('methane'), *morfij* ('morphine'), *rtut* ('mercury'), *svinec* ('lead'), *selen* ('selenium'), *tantal* ('tantalum'); "weapon names": *gilza* ('cartridge case'), *kopie* ('spear'), *kortik* ('dagger'), *mina* ('mine'), *pika* ('spear'), *rapira* ('rapier'); and "names of literary genres": *bylina* ('epic'), *lirika* ('lyric'), *oda* ('ode'), *opera* ('opera'), *satira* ('satire'), *prolog* ('prologue') (UP-1).

Evidently, the major feature of the lexical basis for Russian call signs is the use of its counterparts for various models of informal names of commanders and soldiers. A small number of units belong to the group of onyms that denote geographical features close to the military of the Russian state. With the exception of this group, all other thematic groups of the lexical basis of call signs are formed from appellatives. Call signs do not depict a person as a human being as they are partially related to the nature and culture of Russia and, in general, reflect the material world around the holders of unofficial names. This is evidenced by the thematic groups "names of chemical elements", "names of weapons", and "names of literary genres", which do not form part of the lexical basis of the Ukrainian military call signs.

## 5. Conclusions

This study documents one of the fragments of interpersonal communication of the Ukrainian socio-group "military", in particular call signs during the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022. The analysis was performed on the basis of vocabulary systematisation – the theory of the social essence of informal naming – and such categories as *socio-group* and *slang*, which provide the lexical basis for the informal names of the Ukrainian military.

The findings support the argument that the formation of the lexical basis of the call signs of Ukrainian soldiers of 21st century continues the nominative tradition of the last century. It can be suggested that the connection with the unofficial names of the 20th century prevents the creation of Ukrainian military call signs on logical premises (for example, by the number of combat vehicles serviced by the fighter) and reflects the hierarchy of *commanders* and *soldiers*. In contrast, these are the signs that are typical of the call signs of the Russian military. In addition, the units and thematic groups of the lexical basis of enemy names in the semantics of the equivalents seldom relate to the person or culture of Russia and the world, and clearly appeal to categories from the material spheres of life.

The research prospects are closely related to the lexicographic processing of unofficial names of Ukrainian participants in the Russian–Ukrainian war of 2014–2022 in order to create a martyrology of defenders of Ukraine after 24 February 2022, which marked the beginning of the full-scale invasion by Russian troops.

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