

**Gergana Pencheva-Apostolova, Yana Manova-Georgieva**  
(Благоевград, България)

## **NAMES AND AVATARS IN TRANSCENDING IDENTITIES**

### Резюме

В един бързо развиващ се интеркултурен свят и реалност, пряко свързана с Интернет, един често срещан въпрос интригува духа и съзнанието – „Кой е човекът зад името от аватара?“ Аватари, снимки, образи, идентичности... Дали човекът сам да избере идентичността си, избирайки си какви точно качества да притежава? Когато си избираш име в мрежата, избираш ли си и нова идентичност? Хората използват различни методи, когато създават профил в Интернет пространството, като това важи в голяма степен за имената, които избират за себе си. Обичайна практика в България е Интернет потребителите да се назовават различно в стремежа си да създадат уникален образ, като подчертават определени черти от характера си и скриват други. Тази статия е опит да се проследи и изследва поведението на българските Интернет потребители при избора им на имена за техните мрежови аватари. Особено внимание се обръща на процесите на *диграфия*, *форенизиране*, *съкращаване* и дори *създаване на ново име* с цел заинтригуване и провокиране на интерес. И все пак, остава въпросът, на който ще се опитаме да намерим отговор – Интернет потребителите склонни ли са да запазват своята идентичност, или я заменят с нова – блестяща, различна и независима?

**Ключови думи:** *наименование, идентичност, аватар, диграфия, форенизиране, пренос на културите.*

### **Abstract**

In the fast developing cross-cultural and net-supported reality we live in a question arises that frequents our information-searching minds and throws a shadow on our exchange over the web: “Who is the person behind the name of their web avatars?” Avatars are composite image of ourselves that we have chosen to represent us in the virtual space and they do not complete but only add to our identities. Can one choose an identity or a number of virtual identities, selecting from a list of desired qualities? Is choosing a web name a process of change of identity?

People tend to use various methods when constructing their own profile, and especially when they give names to their web identities. It is a common practice for Bulgarian users to adopt names different from those given to them at birth with the desire to create a unique image, highlighting some features of their character and hiding other. This paper is focused on the socio-linguistic aspects of Bulgarian Internet users when choosing their own avatars and giving them names. Special attention is drawn upon the processes of *digraphia*, *foreignizing*, *shortening*, and *creating a new name* for the purpose of being fascinating and provocative.

The key issue we pursue here is the answer to the question: Do Internet users tend to keep their identity looking for a way of transferring it in the virtual space, or it is substituted by a new one – shining, different, and independent? Or, in other words: what is the individual story underlying the names of the Bulgarian subcommunity of e-kind?

**Key terms:** *naming, identity, avatar, digraphia, foreignizing, transcendence of cultures.*

### **Introduction**

With the birth of a child, most parents spend time and energy to choose the best name which is to be the most appropriate for their new-born baby. It is a widely-spread custom in Bulgaria for the child to be named after their grandparents, either keeping the name as it originally is or preserving only part of it making some changes and thus transforming it in a way that it sounds more fashionable and up-to-date. In this way Velichka becomes Viktoriya, Svetoslav is Sveltin, Mariya becomes Mari-na, etc. A further investigation to the matter will even find a combination

of two names, as it is in Danislav, combined from Daniela and Slaveika, Stanislav – from Stanka and Slavcho, Magdalena – from Marga and Elena, etc. Such procedures in the choice of name are based on the *modern, beautiful* or/and *foreign* sounding of the name rather than on any paradigm. The aim of the parents is that their child be not ashamed by an old fashioned or ugly, unpronouncible and even difficult to transcribe a name. It is also another practice for children to be named in a way that their names carry wishing character. Such examples are Kamen( to be as strong as a stone), Dobrinka (to be good-natured), Velichko (to be a great person), etc. The motivation of the choice and the procedures follow the pattern of giving a nick by other people, whether this nick can be of positive, intimate or negative, humiliating or funny nature by its initial purpose of use as address, or by repetitive usage creating a habit of identification of that person and even – breaking, if any, the barriers of adopting the nick as self-identification marker.

Notwithstanding this fact when a teenager, the no-longer child decides to change their name and choose something attractive and interesting for themselves. It was perhaps the parents' wish to give a fascinating name and eventually lead the character of the child in a direction they consider to be the best, but is it actually the case? When choosing a name for our kid, do we think of their feelings or preferences? Are we sure that they will like our choice and not be ashamed to pronounce the result of our hard searches and choice? No one can answer these questions, but this paper is an attempt to analyze the choice of names net-users make when they sign up for the biggest communication field possible - the Internet. The Internet space provides information and freedom for everybody to choose who they want to be and how they want the other users to see them.

Here is where we can adopt a new identity and appropriate a name to a featured functioning of our virtual personality – singular or plural.

Hereafter we shall look into a group of related areas of investigation concerning the transcendence of individual identities into the virtual spaces of the WWW through the mechanism of adoption of an *identity infoblock* consisting of a name and avatar based on personal choice and situationally dependent. Four topical areas are touched upon: 1)the gen-

eral necessity of naming for the establishment of an identity of a person or of a person's significant aspect of character; 2) the transcendence of humankind into the virtual worlds supported by the electronic WWW as E-kind seeking for identification through the e-spaces; 3) the identity infoblocks constructed by relating names and avatars; 4) the need for investigating the expansion of our e-Selves in the speech acts of the e-agera and the consolidation around a singular identity seen as the outlines of a sole pyramid of personal needs where each level of needs bears a specific name connected to a specific avatar.

### **Naming and identity**

Names are significant features of people's life and character as some beliefs even trace a personality behaviour with the meaning of the proper name the person possesses. In order to discuss the issue of names, one should first define the term name. Danchev[1] suggests that there are varied groups of names where anthroponyms stand out as the direct identifiers of human individuals, yet other identifiers such as toponyms are of significance, too. The ones designating people are anthroponyms and those designating places are toponyms, and the latter are often added to the identity of a person in the physical reality while the virtual Selves in the e-space would rather use functional markers for the net space they abide currently, such as *com.*, *org.*, *edu.* etc.

Anthroponyms are defined differently by various authors but the subject of proper names has interested many scientists and philosophers. Some linguists make the distinction between a proper noun and a proper name but here the attention will be focused on the meaning of names, not the difference between both terms. What we will try to explore is the characteristic features in relation to the names of people. Proper names are hereby seen not only as gap-fillers in a literary work or even in the everyday life of people. "*A proper name... presents an entity as an individual instance, and not as an anonymous member of a class*"(Crystal 1994 :140).[2] The first thing when getting introduced to someone is mentioning their name. It is therefore significant to relate the proper name and the identity of a person in a way they think is most appropriate for them. This concerns our web identifiers: the machines supporting the

web are unable to identify us unless we have given our identifiers of an avatar, nick and address where the last item is not displayed but is read automatically when the PC is recognised. The human is related to a device and the coordinates of the device are the contextually inbuilt information fixing the name to a person outside e-space.

In a Bulgarian context, names are distinguishable for Bulgarian bearers, who belong to their own cultural identity and they can recognize specific messages encoded in their names. What will a name like “Добринка” mean to a foreigner, especially written in Bulgarian? What can a foreigner understand by a Bulgarian name one has chosen for their profile on the Internet? Will the name of the person reveal the identity of the bearer of that name? The most frequent case of the wish for different naming is the *World Wide Web*. There are hundreds of thousands different names people choose for themselves. For some of them it is easy to unveil the person as they decided to rely on similarity either in sounding or writing. It is a non-surprising fact that Bulgarians often prefer to use as their avatar names which are not of Bulgarian origin.

Bulgarians often choose to change their names for the sake of better understanding of the identity of the person on the net. Striving to persuade the recipients of the messages we try to convey using the *World Wide Web* and the social networks, we use different methods in order to be distinguished and accepted. The Bulgarian spelling is often confusing for non-speakers of the language. They do not know the alphabet and therefore may ignore the bearer of the Bulgarian name. Foreigners might not even make an effort to decipher the meaning the anthroponym carries.

It is somehow a fashion nowadays for Bulgarians to spell their names using the Latin alphabet. Most of the profiles one can come across in the social network are spelled that way. Bulgarian spelling is chosen by ten people out of one hundred. A possible reason for that may be sought in the stronger feeling for cultural belonging of these net-users resulting in their wish to convey and preserve the Bulgarian sounding of their profile. The method of writing using English spelling is also known as *digraphia*. Kirova[3] suggests that writing in this manner is a way to eliminate the risk for the recipient of the message to see unknown signs on

their screen because they have no necessary software to recognize the cyrillic alphabet, or it is seen as a way to demonstrate group identification: belonging to a subculture on the Internet.

Latin spelling is rather a habit nowadays, though, for many of the first users of the WWW, for back in the 1990s when it was introduced in our universities as communication tool, media and environment, we had no choice for the insufficiency of the then existing technology. Today the cyrillic alphabet is still unavailable on the devices Bulgarians acquire abroad, and many of them are inexperienced in their search for the online source or, even, in using the cyrillic keyboard. It is not only a Bulgarian problem and the creators of the WWW have been improving the software so that it automatically recognises the place on the globe and switches to the native language and spelling, even in the cases we have changed or omitted a letter.

The digraphia is not only used with personal names but mainly seen in chats and forums. Another specific feature of net-users is the habit of using numbers instead of letters, as is the case with 6=sh (it comes from the Bulgarian equivalent of six), 4=ch (the Bulgarian word for four). One can also come across even the use of 1 for the Bulgarian /ú/, and “I am” becomes “Az s1m”. Mentioning /ú/, net-users tend to use different ways for transliteration. We can recognize /a/, or /u/ for the Bulgarian letter. Names like Dimitar, can be seen as Dimitur, while Petar, for example receives the English spelling and is transliterated as Peter, thus leading to different pronunciation and consequently to *foreignizing* of the name.

Foreignizing is another method of bridging different cultures using the common sea of nationalities- the Internet. Concerning change of personal names, one can recognize Stefan in Steven, Georgi in George, Roza in Rose, etc. It is the wish to be accepted as a member of an international broad space which is the cyber space that helps this process to become wide-spread in Bulgarian environment.

A tendency that is interesting to mention is also the partial change of the name of a person for one with well-known international spelling and sounding. This is the case with Georgi who decides on the slight change in the ending of his name and there appears George. A common variation

is also related to the Bulgarian name Mariya often spelled as Maria. As a matter of fact, only one out of ten bearers of the name has written it with the spelling of '-ya' and all the others decided on '-a' in the end.

It is also an interesting fact to mention that only three names out of one hundred are symbolic, while all other net-users prefer to be present in the social networks with their real names, thus keeping their original identity. The tendency to hide behind another name or symbolic character remains greater among teenagers, who try to create their exceptional identity which is most often different from their real self. This is probably because they still have no confidence to be the ones they really are and are always dependent on other teenagers' attitude.

The same practice refers to housewives or popular persons who visit blogs and join unusual communities on the web, and do not want to be recognised. It is a special case of adopting a second avatar and name, or more than two different identification blocks based on their desired web-presence. However it is a common practice that people get tired of supporting a double identity and today the web suggests the tools for connecting our avatars so that we can automatically find our lost Selves and add them to our profile.

### **E-kind and its worlds**

In our searches for web-identity, we are based on the understanding of *virtual reality*, as different both from the material and the ideal, the subjective and the objective, as they are interpreted in traditional philosophy. The specifics of the cyber reality enables the appearance of *virtual culture* which is released as *virtual communication* and the communicative means and environment of the virtual culture are analogous to those of oral cultures yet the transformation from traditional to electronic culture has the opposite direction to the process of transformation of oral to written culture, and of a more complex nature.

Here comes the hypothetical statement that the ethic standards of the cyber reality double traditional ethic standards leading to the *transition of standard human values* into something else turning the human abiding the virtual space into an extension of the individual universe or *homo coniunctus* .

Electronic media of communication have provided the environment for a new literacy based on a use of language very similar to the direct, living communicative situation or a network of speech situations. Writing for the Internet, or for any type of software, is speaking to an audience including our own selves. It is a space where our speech is viewed, shared, enacted, supplied with a feedback including both its reflection and its answer. This space, or communicative environment, is different from real life since it creates realities of shared mind. Yet it is different from the realities of human mind since it is virtual, electrically-powered and technologically dependent. However it is capable of supporting a communicative space where verbal proceeding runs to its complete unfolding as logical, emotional, linguistic, and deictic complex, saved and replayed within a vast body of shared intellectual capacity and interplay of signs, both human and technological, of indicative, iconic and conventional nature.

From a pragmatic point of view electronic communication provides an approach to language usage analogous to that of the period of transition from oral to written culture but carried out on the complex level of hyper-cultural transformation and of opposite direction – from written culture to electronic orality.

Therefore the names attached to the avatars the e-kind or ‘the citizens of the global village’ (Crystal) are natural to follow the mode of addressing people in a community where people know each other by their social functioning and significance.

Virtual space does not possess the elements of the ideal yet it possesses the routes towards it: it is loaded with value and arouses emotion since it is communication and has the keys to perception. This is so because it is based on verbal codes – and in the words of Iris Murdoch ‘language is soaked in value’, – and it draws on non-verbal access to human senses by using sophisticated audio and visual tools, and by involving the individual in an intellectual puzzle. Residing in and besides cyber space the individual is also subject to radiation and tiredness, and open to all emotional effects of the virtual dialogue, negative emotions grounded on exhaustion, and positive emotions stimulated by the satisfaction of coping with the intellectual challenge and the pride of belonging to the cyber society.



*Virtual culture* is the sphere containing all controlled (primary) and automated (secondary) processes, human activities, relations and products realized in virtual space. At this stage of its development it is characterized as a specific extension to traditional human culture: it is its product and its adaptation.

The evident characteristics of virtual culture are: it is communicative; it has a technical carrier; it uses energy from an outside source; it exists only for those who have access to it.

These features determine the outside boundaries of virtual culture fixing its practices, heroes, rituals and values within matrices. The vast continuum of traditional culture is contained in those matrices in the way they allow it at the present state of technology, capabilities, knowledge, understanding, interest and values both on the level of present-day society and on the level of the individual. Virtual adaptations of culture are interpretations where the present plays the role of an interface letting only the current image of culture – its existence for the ‘now’ – its dimensions reduced to the point of the moment – its significance for the virtual individual regardless of the innumerable interpretations or significances of the same events for generations of human individuals. This reduction is inevitable like pouring the content of a stream into the system of an electric power station where the same water is to fulfill a function very different from its natural or previous man-designed functions. The change of functioning of culture is consequent upon the change of communicative reality where the source, the encoder, the channel, the noises, the decoder and the user employ new means to produce a message different in form, intention and effect while using the same material traditional culture has supplied.

#### **The agents of e-speech situation**

Virtual practice has produced a variety of agent types depending on the level of their access or interest in creating connections throughout their interaction directly or indirectly. Although they are all active (otherwise they cannot take part in cyber communication – they have to enter cyber space on their own will – and ‘enter’ means ‘communicate’ since being ‘silent’ in cyber space is equal to being ‘non-existent’), the agents of virtual interaction form hierarchy based on the level of their access

and the significance of their activity or, in more general terms – on their virtual freedom.

This hierarchy of the *connected* includes: mail-users, entertainment users, business people of various trade and status, gamers, amateur adventure-seeking surfers, professionally interested, fans to addicts, chatters, site-creators, the owners of space, programmers, cyber sharks – generators of great cyber spaces through internet and software). There are also additional branches to this hierarchy including hardware producers, hackers, pseudoservers and all cyber outlaws, internet service and internet police.

The subject of the virtual space is an abstract entity: the shared subjectivity – *the gestalt of the connected* functioning on different levels as creators (*the demiurge* and *the demolisher*), customers (*the users*), abusers (*the hackers*), community members (*the chatters, the gamers*), adventurers (*the surfers, the learners*).

*Existentially* the individual is an intellectual entity whose conscience is extended within the borders of the virtual universe – actually or as a possibility of which the individual is aware. In the virtual space the human being has new dimensions and that requires new standards of humanity.

Since virtual culture, and its ethical system in particular, are based on the cybernetic mechanisms of extending the human conscious, it is important to consider these mechanisms before establishing the hierarchies, principles and criteria of this new ethical system.

*The extended conscious* is related to the virtual realization of the individual as a hyper personality. The individual enters a community of expert minds of different levels of competency. The communication of the individuals in the virtual space is a self-reflection, since the individual conscious enters the virtual space alone and remains such throughout its virtual existence as a connected mind. The principle of the creators of computers is ‘There is nothing in the computer which has not been placed there by the human’. Even the beginner, who has just covered the level of ‘literacy’, is expected to generate information units or virtual objects. The individuals form a hierarchy, which is based on the level of knowledge and virtual experience.

The connected form a specific community – a virtual gestalt coordinating their activities in the virtual space which can be viewed as the “collective subconscious” of Jung:

*“We have no knowledge of how this unconscious functions, but since it is conjectured to be a psychic system it may possibly have everything that consciousness has, including perception, apperception, memory, imagination, will, affectivity, feeling, reflection, judgment, etc., all in subliminal form.”* (Jung, *On the Nature of the Psyche*, p. 42)

In the virtual space the collective subconscious is a psychic entity but at the same time it is a functioning social entity: it is a society of individuals, a dialogue of selves where the self is preserved no longer as an individual but as an individually-oriented realization of the virtual reality in a gradually activated network of steps covering the space on successive levels of access. This virtual unit is bigger than a human individual. Therefore the ethical standards reach beyond the common human standard.

Virtual space is technically limited, yet it has no boundaries for the extended conscious, which is a hyper reflection of the individual conscious itself.

There can be distinguished *three types of extensions of the conscious*:

The first type includes the *reflected self*: the computer can operate with a database, organization and style which have been input in it as well the program of improvement. Each individual carries in his conscience his own model as an ideal goal of his self-realization. Technologically virtual space offers intellectual organization, which is a simplified display model of our minds. We input in this scheme the complex of our individuality and it is reflected in a definite ‘other’ – simultaneously simplified and comprehensible in its new complexity at a higher level of informational organization.

The second type of extension is the *individualized individual*: everyone is alone and is multiplied by the network of the virtual space, which enlarges its range to cover multiple exits to other people, programs and institutions. This in itself evolves the feeling of power.

The third type we shall call *the Connected individual*: the individual entity of dialog projections of all the reflected minds Within this entity

of connected individuals there are rules for 'social' behavior different from those which act in the common human society. They are determined by the awareness of the projection of the self beyond the limitations of the physiological and sociological human unit. Consequently, all norms referring to the biological aspect of the human become irrelevant. The positive and the negative are associated with the success and failure of the self-realization on the various levels of the virtual hierarchy, where every next level gives greater access and opportunity to operate with information.

*Primitivism* is one of the features of virtual culture. It is based on the nature of the hyper reality where the transfer from place to place and time to time is instant while the basic characteristic features of the individual are reduced to emotional relaxation and intellectual seeking of ways out of fear and dead-end.

At the present stage of technological development the virtual man comes up against the problem of *doubled ethical norms*.

The virtual man is doubled because his biological existence remains outside the virtual space: the mind is freed from the body by its transfer into the virtual reality, which is a common conscience. That makes a new ground for evaluating life and death. The life and death of *Homo coniunctus* are connected with the oppositions: individual – shared; participation – exit; loss of information – turning off power; deleting or saving of the individual as an information unit in the connected conscience. Altogether the improvement or the 'healing' of the virtual individual is carried out through replay. Death is leaving the virtual space and passing into the space of common humanity. Life is very close to the Cartesian principle *Cogito, ergo sum*, which can be altered to fit virtual space – I am connected, therefore I am. As it has been previously stated, being connected does not possess temporal parameters – it does not coincide with the incessant spells of working online in the Internet. Disconnection is not death – it is the common time when an individual is outside the virtual space in any of its forms – it is irrelevant to being connected since it does not count within the life of the virtual individual.

This leads to a new notion of history: it exists as database with its own temporal parameters, yet it happens at the present moment of the virtual reality of the connected mind.

The double nature of the philosophy of the virtual space is based on the antinomies of the virtual culture. It has to consider the common conscious generated in the electronic environment. At one end it is pragmatics of tangible artifacts and concrete data; in the opposite extremity it is to act as teleology, explaining and motivating the very existence of the virtual human.

The double nature of the virtual man is expressed in the simultaneous validity of the common and virtual values at the entrances and exits of the hyperspace. This is due to the impossibility for the connected individual to be separated from his biological and social nature. When the exits and entrances to the material world are closed, in the virtual space there dominates only the ethics of the connected. It is based on the maximized intellectual explicitness of the system whose logical norms control the virtual community in a non-compromising way. Emotions are not thoroughly excluded – positive motivation and will comprise the mechanism of climbing up the hierarchy; fear and horror are stimulators. Positive and negative emotions are also effects on the exits meant for satisfying the non-connected part of the individual. They bridge the virtual and the non-virtual realities.

Life is then an experimental succession guided by the curiosity and the will, and its goal is the creative realization of the self. When this creative realization ceases, the virtual man descends the hierarchy and is reduced to a common man. Then the ethical system of the virtual man is replaced by the common human ethics.

At the present stage virtual culture is still developing. Its double standards are due to its imperfection. Virtual culture, however, possesses the premises for the transition to a new level of humanity: an intellectual plan and a system of values. The technical carriers of virtual culture support the attempts of the human mind to find its non-material being. What will be the results depends on the further development of this carrier and the perfection of the ethical standards and criteria of the virtual man.

This doubling or multiplying is seen in the choices of our nicks and avatars which stand for, or add to our identities in the web spaces.

### **Naming and avatars**

Avatars are also pieces of the puzzle of the human soul trying to appear interesting and different. Mentioning avatars, there occurs the need to clarify the term.

An online dictionary defines avatar as “a movable image that represents a person in a virtual reality environment or in cyberspace”. Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines avatar as “an electronic image that represents and is manipulated by a computer user (as in a computer game)”. The term is a metaphor, borrowed from Indian mythology where the avatar is the representation of the god in the world of the people. On the web we are the demiurges of our e-environment empowered to take the form of a human, superhuman, animal, plant, ghost etc. We acquire a new freedom to rename ourselves, and this makes us often limited by the simple functioning we have in both the physical and e-worlds.

When defining avatars, it is not only the image that is related to it but also the name avatar. Here, consequently arises the question - who is behind the avatar? Is there a hint about the personality behind one name or another? Therefore, an investigation has been made in order to connect the name avatar and the real person, the first mentioned taken from a forum for future and present mothers. The names extracted and analyzed are one hundred and the following conclusions have been derived. Firstly, the names were divided in four major categories. Not surprisingly, the greatest percentage is for the avatars, partly showing the name of the person (35%). It appears to be a common practice for net-users in forums to hide not their whole name but to unveil just a piece of it, thus preserving their personality and also showing a new one- unknown and intriguing. As it can be seen from Table 1, the name avatar can be a combination of two or more names, or a name or a symbol which helps the recipient understand who is behind the avatar. Here, one can see “emi\_viktoria”, where Emily should be the mother’s name and Victoriya must be the child’s. Some of the names are written in cyrillic letters, but most cases reveal the preference for the Roman alphabet.

The forum investigated consists mainly of women around the age of thirty- married and either having children or expecting ones, so the second part who decided on keeping their full names and even surnames for

their avatars is 34%. A fact which deserves to be mentioned is that the avatars are not capitalized, as it is supposed to be when a person writes their name. Here, only 11 names are capitalized and one fully capitalized. Again the tendency for choosing the English spelling is preserved.

Avatars including symbolic names are 29%. The symbols are usually related to their maternity- nicknames like “mam4eto” or „нова мама 84“ are met in this category. Of course, there are also various choices of symbolism in the name, showing character of the person or their preferences. There are only two names containing toponyms.

To sum up, the tendency with choosing a name avatar seems to be keeping the real personality as close as possible to the avatar, thus helping others to recognize the user behind the image more easily. As Chart 1 shows, more than half of the registered users in the forum investigated prefer to preserve even a small piece of their real self not wishing to be hidden or not recognized behind the avatar.

The need for investigating the expansion of our e-Selves in the speech acts of the e-agera comes from the very nature of our self-identification in the opposite procedures of renaming and universalization, so that we can be recognized.

Names are tender units of language focusing immediately on its essence. The handling of names is bridging meanings. Names are proto-language forms – they are what words have been before they have become the expression of the communicative function of language – before they have acquired universal status. Names are the universal ambitions of the individual existence. Therefore names have difficulty in cross lingual transformation which always bears the risks of their slipping into universalia (or common words), blank spots (noise in the communication process), and into something else (a new individuality).

*“The names of persons whose saying (de dire) means individuality – the proper names among all those common names and topics – don’t they resist the dissolution of sense and don’t they help us speak?”* The proper names bear the idea of the separate absolute entity in the sense of Hegel. (Levinas, 1977:8)

### **Conclusion**

When dealing with the concept of identity one should undoubtedly pay special attention to the issue of proper names. They are the ones

which give essential information about the bearer of the exact anthroponym. There is not a case for people ignoring the attention towards their personal name. Probably this is the reason why net-users devote time and energy to create a special avatar designating a feature of their character. Some want to be mysterious and we come across an avatar – Зимна роза (Winter rose), others wish to reveal a preference they have towards their eating culture – ЧеРен ШоКоЛад (Black Chocolate). However, there is also the group of people who do not attempt to change anything and just want their friends to recognize them easily – thus, they keep their original names as avatars and sometimes include surnames, too.

The topic of name choice is a vast one and there is not a single opinion on why people decide to use one name avatar or another, but it is a well-known and unquestionable fact that the diversity of names and nicknames on the Internet is great. One can only guess the idea of the avatar and try to uncover and decipher its message, but only the possessors of the name can answer the question about the symbolism in their choice. However, net-users will always try to be recognizable and distinguished, unique and interesting, and such will be the choice of their name avatars.

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**Table 1**

Avatars including the person's name	Avatars constituting of toponyms	Avatars partly showing the person's name	Avatars hiding the name of the person
Nickkie	Янтра	Светлица	Бу ЈЛЈЛ лидер
Vanya_I	Flower-burgas	St. Dobri	Sea Breeze
Биљана		ИрПуц	(heart)Elfita(heart)
kristti		Lady Brinne	нова мама 84
Деси		Мaimunka2 – на Ани майка ѝ	Приятно ми е – Богиня
Бояна		Си( heart) си	Зимна Роза
Poly.		plamba-bo	Дзвер
valialili		Пemi	evil
maria nikol		mili	haus
Елија		мама_на_ ками	Miracle Things
alice88		andi	Мопси
Ianitsa		evamartini	Пълнолуние
krasiraikova		nadiaeuro	ester
kirilka		ВоВо4	bebemancho
marinka		gerinceto90	intense
Silvi 26		lindalinda	ic
Loga		ewka	mam4eto
мики		Ani4ka83	mi6o4eto
ALEKS		Jilina	belladonna
sn_vasileva		Elisha	nikita_perez
lyubomira_ naidenova		renka86	ЧеРеН ШоКоЛад
Valkanova		Бубачка	pure64e

valentina0577		kris_kris	Lady
kate		uleto888	ladybug
kazakova		drali	slance25
Руми		ангелина_ан	ladybird84
dessi:-)		вени2202	jujana
julia_n&m		emi_viktoria	sin4eska
aleksia05		KaTTu i MikiTTu	bl_velvet
Camellia		ADORA84	
desi 21		daka_beni	
iliana737		mama_na_Ali	
Натали		bobyinka	
lulova		mama_Ira	
		sisko83	

**Information about the authors:**

Gergana Pencheva- Apostolova

[apostolovag@yahoo.com](mailto:apostolovag@yahoo.com)

Гергана Апостолова, доц. по английски език в ЮЗУ; д-р по логика и реторика: Теория на аргументацията. ЮЗУ “Н. Рилски” – Благоевград – <http://acad.swu.bg/cv.php?uid=gapostolova>.

Автор на 12 книги и повече от 100 доклада за научни конференции и издадени статии по реторика, аргументация, методика на обучението по английски език, теория на превода, литература и философия на интернет. Редактор на рефериран журнал кн. *Световни изследвания по философия* ([World Research Journal of Philosophy](#)) от серията *Биоинфо* (*Bioinfo Publications*). Член на редколегията на първия български е-журнал „Реторика и комуникации“. Разработва аргументативен подход към изучаването на английски език (AA) и систематичен интегративен подход към световната комуникационна мрежа (SIAN).

Член на BASA, СИЕТАР, ESSE <http://bsbs-bg.net/gergana-pencheva-apostolova/#more-54>

Yana Manova-Georgieva

Яна Славчева Манова-Георгиева от Благоевград работи на основен трудов договор в ЮЗУ „Неофит Рилски“ от 2007 г. Научните ѝ интереси са в областта на превода и в частност предаване на имена от английски на български език и обратно. В момента подготвя дисертационния си труд на самостоятелна подготовка. Има публикации в областта на културата и трансфера на имена от английски на български език и обратно, както и участие в 19-та Международна конференция на БАПА (IATEFL-Bulgaria) във Велико Търново през 2010 г.

<http://acad.swu.bg/cv.php?uid=manova>  
[manova.yana@yahoo.com](mailto:manova.yana@yahoo.com);  
[yana\\_georgieva@swu.bg](mailto:yana_georgieva@swu.bg)