

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF PHALERONYMIC TERMS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This article explores the linguistic features of phaleronymic terms — names of medals, orders, crosses, stars, and other state or institutional decorations — in the English language. As a distinct class of proper names, phaleronyms embody commemorative, evaluative, and honorific functions, while also reflecting English morphological patterns, lexical preferences, and pragmatic conventions. The study highlights their lexical-semantic fields, morphological structures, syntactic behavior, and sociolinguistic functions, with emphasis on how they encode values such as bravery, merit, loyalty, and service. The paper concludes with directions for further comparative research.

Keywords: Phaleronym, phaleronymic terms, medals, orders, English onomastics, morphology, semantics.

Introduction

Phaleronyms (from Greek phaleron “ornament, distinction” + -onym “name”) are a specialized group within onomastics referring to **names of awards and decorations**. In English, these names constitute a culturally significant lexical stratum, found in military, state, academic, and institutional registers. They are linguistic artefacts that both **label unique objects** (e.g., Victoria Cross) and **convey symbolic meaning**, often encapsulating values of heroism, loyalty, patriotism, or service.

1. Evaluative Vocabulary:

English phaleronyms typically draw from a semantic field of virtues: honour, merit, gallantry, service, bravery, freedom, valor, distinguished.

- Medal of Honor (USA)
- Distinguished Service Cross (UK, USA)
- Order of Merit (Commonwealth)

2. Symbolic Lexemes:

Lexical items like cross, star, crown, eagle, lion serve as symbolic markers, linking awards to heraldic and religious imagery.

- Victoria Cross (UK)



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- Silver Star (USA)

3. **Eponymy:**

Many phaleronyms are eponymous, commemorating rulers or historical figures:

- Victoria Cross (named after Queen Victoria)
- Queen's Gallantry Medal

1. **Compounding:**

Most phaleronyms are **multi-word compounds** or fixed noun phrases, often in the pattern [Noun + of + Noun] or [Adjective + Noun].

- Order of the British Empire
- Medal of Freedom
- Distinguished Conduct Medal

2. **Use of Titles and Modifiers:**

Adjectival modifiers such as distinguished, national, royal, eminent strengthen the evaluative force.

3. **Borrowings and Latin/Greek Influence:**

Terms like merit, honor, valor (from Latin/French roots) give phaleronyms an elevated, formal register.

- Phaleronyms function as **proper nouns**, always capitalized.
- They frequently occur in formulaic syntactic frames:
 - He was awarded the Medal of Honor.
 - She received the Order of Merit.
- In official documents, the definite article the often precedes the award name, but in military registers it may be dropped (e.g., awarded Medal of Honor).

1. **Index of Prestige:**

Phaleronyms signal high social or institutional value. Their mention in discourse carries strong pragmatic weight, enhancing the status of the recipient.

2. **Ceremonial Usage:**

These terms are embedded in ritual language (award ceremonies, state proclamations).



3. International Equivalence:

Many English phaleronyms are translated or calqued into other languages, but some retain untranslated prestige forms (e.g., Victoria Cross internationally recognized).

- **By Category:** Orders, Medals, Crosses, Stars, Decorations
- **By Motivation:**
 - Virtue-based (e.g., Medal of Valor)
 - Symbol-based (e.g., Silver Star)
 - Eponym-based (e.g., Victoria Cross)
- **By Institution:** military, civil, academic, royal, or state phaleronyms.

Phaleronymic terms in English reveal systematic linguistic patterns. They are predominantly **multi-word noun phrases**, often featuring evaluative adjectives and symbolic nouns. Their semantics consistently draw on the fields of virtue, heroism, and service, while their morphology reflects English compounding and borrowing from Latin/French. Pragmatically, they act as **markers of prestige and identity**, functioning both as honorific symbols and as cultural-historical signifiers. Further research may compare English phaleronyms with those in other languages (e.g., Uzbek or Russian) to reveal cross-linguistic naming strategies in the domain of honors and decorations.

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