FUNCTIONING OF DENOMINAL VERBS
IN MODERN RUSSIAN

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Summary: The present paper focuses on the process of verbalization in the contemporary Russian language. Denominal verbs are seen as the most economic way of expressing meaning compared to normal verbs, therefore in our opinion the increase in their quantity in Russian is caused by the effect of the language economy law. The reasons for language economy are both linguistic and extra linguistic, particularly, the appearance of new information technologies, the internet communication, acceleration of life pace. The article presents the classification of Russian denominal verbs and explores the influence of generic and particular knowledge of interlocutors on the right understanding of the verb meaning. It gives some examples of well-established and occasional denominal verbs and shows the peculiarities of their functioning.

Ключевые слова: переходность, вербализация, отсубстантивный глагол, языковая экономия, инкорпорированный актант, общее и индивидуальное знание

Аннотация: В настоящей статье исследуется процесс вербализации в современном русском языке. Автор полагает, что отсубстантивные глаголы представляют собой более экономный способ передачи смысла по сравнению с обычными глаголами, что объясняет рост их числа в русском языке. Причинами языковой экономии выступают как лингвистические, так и экстралингвистические факторы, а именно, возникновение и распространение новых информационных технологий, интернет-коммуникация, рост темпа жизни.
В статье представлена классификация русских отсубтантивных глаголов по типу инкорпорированного актанта, а также рассматривается вопрос о влиянии общего и индивидуального знания собеседников на правильное понимание значения данных глаголов. Приводятся примеры общепринятых и окказиональных отсубстантивных глаголов и изучаются особенности их функционирования.

Transmutation, the appearance of denominal verbs in particular, is

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becoming a frequent phenomenon in the contemporary Russian language. The peculiarities of this phenomenon were researched by a number of scholars (Babaitseva V. V. 1983, 2002; Vysotskaya I.V. 2006; Infantova G. G. 1991; Kacnel'son S. D. 2001; Koduhov V.I. 1977; Levickiy Yu.A. 2004; Mishkurov Ye.N. 2000; Pavlyukovec M. A. 2009; Rezunova M. V. 2004; Clark E. and Clark H. 1979). It is commonly known that different parts of speech are associated with particular syntactic functions determined by their lexical and category meaning. However, this correlation cannot be considered to be permanent because the boundaries between structural and semantic word classes are not stable, parts of speech are in constant interaction, and during that interaction a transition from one part of speech into another might occur.

We assume that the main reason for this transition is people's desire to express their thoughts in the most precise and laconic way. There is no doubt that changes in the society and rapid development of new technologies extend the applicability of language economy. Language economy results from people's pursuit of communication, on the one hand, and the wish to save their mental and physical efforts, on the other. People strive to spend only the amount of speech efforts that is necessary to be understood by their conversation partner (Martine, 1960: 130). Resources provided by our body must be used in the most efficient way in the circumstances when the interaction with the environment is limited by homo sapience's physiological capabilities (Shiryaeva, 2011: 10), which results in the constant necessity to apply language economy.

Language economy plays a significant role in the sphere of new technologies where we often face with new situations and the lack of verbs for their description. E. Clark and H. Clark give the following examples from English: *to key the data; to flowchart the program; to program the system; to output the results* (Clark and Clark, 1979: 801). Verbs of this kind are being actively created in Russian too: СМСиться – *SMSit'sya (to text) – to communicate by the means of short messages*; скайпиться – *skaipit'sya (to Skype) – to communicate via video calls with the special computer program Skype*; аськаться – *as'kat'sya (to ICQ) – to communicate on the Internet with the help of a special program for instant messages called ICQ* (Rus. colloq. *as'ka*), e.g. (1).

(1) Вчера так <u>наСМСились</u>*, что поругались! А сегодня придется* **скайпиться***, чтобы помириться.* Днями впостоянку то слушаю радио, то переписываюсь, то **аськаюсь***, то ещё чего* (from chats).

One of the core social reasons for language economy is the appearance and growing popularity of such kinds of communication as e-mail, texting, Internet communication. The phrase (2a) is obviously more laconic than the

sentence (2b), thus it is more convenient for the use in a text message because it allows to save time for typing as it consists fewer characters.

(2) (a) Она джазила или блюзила – *Did she jazz or blues* (from an SMS).

(b) Она исполняла произведение в жанре джаза или блюза – *Did she perform something from jazz or from blue.*

Every day we have to deal with an enormous flow of information, new scientific advances, the desire to save time and energy. All this makes us pare down our thoughts to the minimum inciting to life new more economical forms (Pavlyukovec, 2009: 82), which come into widespread acceptance in the language.

Denominal verbs can be divided into two groups: **well-established**, i.e. found in dictionaries, e.g., канифолить – *kanifolit' (to resin)*, отксе-рить – *otkserit' (to Xerox)*; and **occasional**, i.e. formed instantly in the communication process, e.g. джазить – *dzhazit' (to jazz)*, СМС-ить – *SMSit' (to text)*. The former group is characterized as stable and stylistically neutral, while verbs from the latter one arise spontaneously and attract attention by their novelty, and a high degree of expressiveness (Babaitseva, 1983: 41). Both the groups are not static: the number of well-established verbs increases due to occasional ones which eventually might change their status; the number of occasional verbs also rises because the process of new verbs formation is constantly going on.

The development of derivative verbs' semantics is a complicated process which deserves special attention. A denominal verb's meaning is defined by a proposition because the verb always describes some activity connected with and, to some extent, limited by a subject / substance expressed by the parent noun and its function in the structure of the activity (Pankratc, 1992: 229). When we analyse the structure of a proposition, we focus not on the predicate but on the actant which is expressed by the parent noun. This allows us to consider denominal verbs to be verbs with incorporated actants because semantically they are equivalent to the combination of a verb and some actant (See, Shustova 2010: 129-136; Smirnova 2014: 16). For example, the verb утничать – *utnichat' (to duck),* which is used in the parlance of country inhabitants of Perm region, is formed from the noun утка – *utka (a duck)*. In the proposition structure of this verb *a duck* is the actant which denotes the object of the action that is reflected in its definition *to hunt ducks* (Skitova, 2011: 84). A. A. Ufimtseva calls such verbs «semantic blends» and determines:

a) verbs meaning to do an action which is typical of a person, for example, *shepherd – to shepherd*;

b) verbs meaning to act with something (*iron – to iron*);

c) verbs meaning to cover with something (*soot – to soot*) (Ufimtseva, 2011: 145). We assume that it is possible to determine other types of denominative verb on the basis of actant types. We worked out the classification of English verbs with incorporated actants which differentiates:

1) verbs with incorporated **Subject** (*to tutor – to work as a tutor; to doctor – to treat*; *to thunder- to make a loud noise; to hail – to precipitate hail);*

 2) verbs with incorporated **Object** (*to rat – to kill rats; to rabbit – to hunt rabbits; to nest – to make a nest; to dust – to remove dust*);

3) verbs with incorporated **Instrument** (*to elbow – to push with one's elbow; to knife – to stab with a knife; to glue – to join with glue; to ship – to transport (goods or people) on a ship; to leather – to cover with leather*);

4) verbs with incorporated **Locative** (*to table – to put on a table; to cage – to confine in a cage*);

5) verbs with incorporated **Descriptive**[2] (*to king **–** to act in an unpleasa ntly superior and domineering way; to dog – to follow (someone) closely an d persistently; to witch – (of a girl or woman) enchant (a man); to dart – to move or run somewhere suddenly or rapidly)*   (for more detail see, Smirnova, 2014: 33-38).

We believe that this classification principle can be applied to Russian denominative verbs as well. Thus, as mentioned above, the verb утни-чать – *utnichat' (to duck)* will refer to the group of verbs with incorporated Object. This group will also comprise such verbs as квасить – *kvasit' – to have alcohol drinks (from «kvas»* – colloq. *beer)* (Kropachova 2011: 204); тараканничать – *tarakannichat' – to live in one part of your house or in someone's house (usually when the weather is freezing in the winter) leaving your home to make cockroaches freeze out (*from *tarakan – cockroach),* e.g.(3a); чиферить – *chiferit' – to drink «chifer»* (*very strong tea made in a special way which influences people's organism like a spirit*, e.g. (3b); кляузничать – *klyauznichat' – to spread denunciations, gossip (*from *klyauza – denunciation, gossip)*.

   (3) (a) Вот я бы вышла к соседке <u>тараканничать</u> (Skitova, 2011: 9);
       (b) Это они без меня <u>чиферили</u> (Skitova, 2011: 204).

The group of verbs with incorporated Descriptive comprises mainly denominal verbs formed from proper nouns, for instance: кержаковить – *kerzhakovit' (to Kerzhakov) – to shoot wide from a close range (*after *Kerzhakov, the surname of the Russian national football team's frontman);* дедморозить – *dedmorozit' (to Father Christmas) to be involved with charity,*

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2 Descriptive is the carrier of the properties denoted by the predicate (Bogdanov, 1977).

*to help orphans. (*after *Ded Moroz – Father Christmas),* e.g. (4a); псакнуть – *psaknut' (to Psaki) – to say something silly with an expert's expression on one's face and not to confess it later (*after *Jennifer Psaki, the representative of the US State Deaprtmant)*, e.g. (4b).

(4) (a) В том случае, если на приобретение подарков времени нет, а желание «<u>дедморозить</u>» остаётся, осуществить мечту ребенка можно, перечислив денежные средства специальный расчетный счет или электронный кошелек (59.ru)

(b) Кличко не <u>псакнул</u>, *Кличко* <u>псачит</u> каждый божий день (Pikabu.ru).

However, there are some examples of verbs with incorporated Descriptive formed from common nouns, for example: вызверить – *vyzverit' – to make sb go through the roof* (from the noun зверь – *zver' (a beast*) (5); петушиться – *petushit'ya – get on one's high horse* (from the noun петух – *petukh (a rooster*); попугайничать – *popugainichat' – to parrot* (from the noun попугай – *popugai (a parrot*).

(5) Своей медлительностью этот город просто **вызверил** меня (komandirovka.ru)

The group of denominal verbs with incorporated Instrument includes such examples as: канифолить – *kanifolit' (to resin) – to rub or treat with resin;* чагать – *chagat' – to hog a river with 'chag' (a kind of dam),* e.g. (6).

(6) Начинаем <u>чагать</u> воду, чтобы рыба туда шла (Skitova, 2011: 148).

The verbs туманить – *tumanit' – to fog* (*from* туман – *tuman (fog*) (7); беспризорничать – *besprizornichat' (live without parental supervision, from* беспризорник – *besprizornik (a street child)*; соседить – *sosedit' (to be sb's neighbor, from* сосед – *sosed (a neighbour*) – are, in our opinion, verbs with incorporated Subject.

(7) <u>Туманить</u> начинает (Skitova, 2011: 48).

Therefore, the actant type in a verb proposition can justify including the verb into a particular semantic group.

Understanding the meaning of the parent noun, however, does not always guarantee understanding the meaning of a denominal verb. To interpret a denominal verb correctly, especially an occasional one, it is often necessary to understand the context in which the verb is used and also to have common generic knowledge with the speaker. «Generic knowledge is what people tacitly know about space and time, the basic physical laws, natural kinds, manufactured artifacts and their functions, and so on… Generic knowledge doesn't vary much from person to person… Particular knowledge, however, is what people tacitly know about particular or individual entities-particular objects, events, states, and processes. Particular knowledge depends critically

on a person's history» (Clark and Clark 1979: 788-789). In philosophy, psychology and psycholinguistics the notions of *collective* and *individual* knowledge are explored, which play a crucial role in the interpretation of the information a person acquires. Collective knowledge is defined as standard knowledge, shared by all members of a particular linguistic, professional or national community. Individual knowledge is a certain variation of collective knowledge which can vary in volume, content and interpretation. The most widely spread denominal verbs as based largely on generic knowledge about definite objects while accurate interpretation of an innovative or occasional denominal verb is only possible when particular / individual knowledge of the speaker and the listener coincide. An innovative verb can become a well-established one provided it is understood from the point of view of a person's generic knowledge. During the Football Cup "Euro 2012" the people's lexicon was enriched with the verb кержаковить – *kerzhakovit' (to Kerzhakov) – to shoot wide from a close range* (8). To interpret this verb correctly one needs to know not only the name Kerzhakov, but also that it belongs to the frontman of the Russian national football team who set an abysmal record at the Euro Cup because he often shot wide of the goal.

(8) С этим мячом английская оборона должна была справиться без проблем, но защитники клевали носом, и мяч попал к де Росси, который развернулся и <u>скержаковил</u> слету мимо ворот с шести метров! (MR7.ru).

A similar situation may occur with the use of well-established denominal verbs, e.g. (9). In order to understand the meaning of the verb чагать – *chagat' – to hog a river with a 'chag'*, a listener must understand the meaning of the parent noun чаг – *chag – a shield made of spruce boughs and wood lathing used in fish stakes* (Skitova, 2011: 148).

(9) Начинаем <u>чагать</u> воду, чтобы рыба туда шла (Skitova, 2011: 148).

Therefore, when a new verb is created or an existing one is used, a speaker should estimate his particular / individual knowledge and that of his interlocutor if he wants to be understood correctly.

Another phenomenon, which is important to consider when a denominal verb's meaning is formed, is semantic re-thinking. Yu.A. Levicky reckons that in the process of a linguistic unit's transmission from one part of speech into anther not only the word's form is changed but also its meaning is re-thought (Levicky, 2004: 18). Thus, the meaning of the verb канифолить – *kanifolit' (to resin)* was re-thought and the phrase канифолить мозги / душу – *kanifolit' mozgi / dushu* (lit. *to resin one's mind / soul*) is used in the meaning *to annoy, irritate, try to influence sb, to deceive sb, to misinform*. Apparently, the appearance of this word combination is connected with metaphorisation of the verb: like a resined bow makes an instrument sound

better, a «processed» mind becomes more responsive and amenable.

Denominal verbs have a number of advantages over usual ones: they are characterized by precision, vividness and surprise (Clark and Clark, 1979: 802). M.Ya. Blokh calls them «transpositional effects» and believes that they make the basis of the bright and unique phenomenon in text-formation which can be named «grammatical figurativeness» (Blokh, 2000: 95). It is not by chance that colloquial speech and publicistic texts are the main spheres where denominal verbs are used. It is interesting to mention that in colloquial speech several variations of the same denominal verb can co-exist simultaneously, for example, the verb отксерить – *otkserit' (to Xerox)* formed after the company name Xerox – copy machines producer – is used in the following variations: отксеракать – *otkserakat',* перексерить – *perekserit',* отксеро-сить – *otkserosit',* ксерить – *kserit',* наксерить – *nakserit',* ксеронуть – *kseronut',* отксерачить – *otkserachit'* (Pikabu.ru). These variations are used in colloquial speech and have a different rate of expansion, however, they are equally understandable for native speakers of Russian and people tend to use them as a more economical way of communicating the necessity to make a copy of some document.

Taking the above mentioned advantages of denominal verbs and the influence of the language economy law into consideration we argue that the number of such verbs in the Russian language will continue to grow. The study of their semantics and functional properties is, in our opinion, a promising direction of linguistic research. Such issues as semantic and syntactic valency of denominal verbs, the appearance and expansion of verbs formed from nouns in the sphere of professional lexis, as well as verbs formed after proper nouns, are of the utmost interest.

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