# Verbal semantics in the context of actantial distribution

## Semántica verbal en el contexto de la distribución actancial

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is based on the theory of methods of verbal action (MVA), presented in the works by O.M. Sokolov. Prefixed Russian verbs are considered as part of a functional approach to language analysis. The authors prove that the verb prefixes in the Russian language should be considered as separate linguistic elements, which provide the characteristics of the subject or object actant.

**Keywords:** verbal prefixes, methods of verbal action, prefixal verbs, verbal-centric theory, actantial distribution of the semantics of the Russian verb.

**RESUMEN**

Este estudio se basa en la teoría de los métodos de acción verbal (AMEU), presentada en los trabajos de O.M. Sokolov. Los verbos rusos prefijados se consideran parte de un enfoque funcional para el análisis del lenguaje. Los autores prueban que los prefijos verbales en el idioma ruso deben considerarse como elementos lingüísticos separados, que proporcionan las características del sujeto u objeto actante.

**Palabras clave:** prefijos verbales, métodos de acción verbal, verbos prefijos, teoría verbal centrada, distribución actancial de la semántica del verbo ruso.

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**Introduction**

Phenomena of polysemy, antonymy, synonymy, paronymy, etc. are typical for the vocabulary of any language. These processes are often based on the presence of certain specific morphemes in the word, and the various implicit values contained in the word are also determined by the semantics of morphemes, which, like the word in general, can show the properties of ambiguity, synonymy, etc. This circumstance is predetermined by the multicomponent semantic structure of the morpheme itself, as well as by the morpheme's ability to perform various functions. Since the semantics of the verb is distinguished by its special capacity and complexity, its study is of particular interest at any level. At the same time, the study of the verb is more important at the level of both the integral unit and affixes, the meanings of which are superimposed on the values of root morphemes and lead to profound changes in the semantics of the verb. From this perspective, prefixes are especially important, since they emphasize the polysemy of the verb. Therefore, it is not surprising that prefixes have been the object of close study by many scientists for a long time.

A functional approach to the study of morphology

The semantic structure of the word is multicomponent and its formation is determined by the interaction of various morphemes being a part of its composition. In this regard, the importance of the functional approach to the study of morphology, which differs favorably from traditional views in that it allows considering morphological categories in motion, while descriptive morphology focuses on the study of paradigms with a distinctive grammatical character, increases greatly.

**Discussion**

Previously, the verbal prefixes were studied in various aspects. To date, the lexical meanings of both whole prefix groups and the meaning of individual prefixes have been comprehensively described, the relationship between verb semantics and the compatibility of prefixes, the influence of various aspectual characteristics on it, for example, transitivity/non-transitivity, etc. have been studied. These and other directions are presented in the works by B.N. Golovin [5], N.B. Lebedeva [7] et al. They particularly focused on the problem of classification of prefixal verbs in relation to the method of verbal action. The discussion resulted in two views on the solution to the problem: semantic and morphological-semantic. One of the first semantic approaches to the problem of methods of verbal action (MVA) was proposed by Iu.S. Maslov [8]. The basis of the theory of Iu.S. Maslov is the ratio of verbs to the "telicity" and "atelicity" of the action. Moreover, any verbs, both telic and atelic, refer to some mode of action. The category of verbs, denoting a particular way of a verb action, includes not only morpheme-characterized verbs but also another that manifest themselves under special conditions. Further development of this direction, according to Iu.S. Maslov, should be oriented to a more in-depth study of the MVA, the selection and study of new variants [8]. Such scientists as A.V. Bondarko [4], M.A. Sheliakin [10], and some others chose this path in their works. Based on the ideas of Iu.S. Maslov, M.A. Sheliakin examines in detail the role of prefix and prefix-suffix formations in the expression of a particular MVA. M.A. Sheliakin totally shares the idea of Iu.S. Maslov that the concept of MVA covers all the verb vocabulary without exception. The author pays special attention to the lexical-semantic category of telicity and atelicity that forms the foundation of the MVA. Thus, all verbs are divided into two large classes: telic and atelic verbs. M.A. Sheliakin [10], in this case, makes a point of the special role of prefixes in the formation of both telic and atelic verbs. For example, considering the formation of new verbs with the help of lexical prefixes, he distinguishes 2 groups: 1) telic verbs, formed from atelic verbs, when there is a semantic transformation of the verb under the influence of the prefix; 2) verbs formed from telic initial verbs and expressing the direction of action on the final result or goal, which differ from the final result or goal of the actions of the active verbs.

M.A. Sheliakin emphasizes further that, although all telic verbs are associated with the achievement of a result, nevertheless the expressed effectiveness has qualitatively different shades, which makes it possible to combine the verbs into different groups based on the variety of such shades. Thus, all prefixes are classified based on their role in the expression of a particular mode of action. Each basic mode of action contains a greater number of different variants, which in turn can break up into smaller ones. Since the enumeration of all the methods of action would take too much space, we can provide just a few examples. For example, the effective mode of action has two options: of the general result, and both of them are not final but contain additional special cases. Thus, variants of the generally effective MVA are resultative-non-processual verbs with the prefix «о»-, «об»– «по»–, «вы!»–, «под»–, «за»– and some others, for example, опомниться, образовать, оробеть, осиротеть, поскользнуться, вывихнуть, заблудиться, задолжать, etc. Further, the author names the resultative-totive verbs used with the prefixes «в»–, «вы»–, «при»–, «на»–, for example, включать/ включить, выключать/выключить, приходить/прийти, наскакивать/наскочить; resultative-process verbs that attach the prefixes «раз»–, «в»–, «у»–, «под»–, for example, будить/ разбудить, вспоминать/

вспомнить, добиваться/добиться, убеждать/убедить, подкарауливать/подкараулить, подглядывать/подглядеть; resultative-pantive verbs with the prefixes «по»–, «за»–. «вы», for example, стареть/постареть, вянуть/завянуть, расти/вырасти, красить/покрасить, белить/побелить; terminative-local verbs with the prefix «до»–, for example, добежать до дома, доехать до Москвы; and resultative-annihilating verbs used with the prefixes «от»–, «обез»–, «де»–, «дис»–, for example, закупорить-откупорить, закрыть-открыть, обезоружить, дезорганизовать, дисквалифицировать. It seems that these examples indicate that the teachings by Iu.S. Maslov, and in particular, A.V. Bondarko, M.A. Sheliakin, significantly developed the concept of the MVA.

The second direction can be characterized as morphological-semantic. Proponents of this approach do not consider the MVA as a semantic phenomenon and relate negatively to the idea that it covers the entire verb vocabulary. This direction is associated with the names of A.A. Shakhmatov, V.V. Vinogradov, P.S. Kuznetsov, N.S. Avilova and other researchers.

According to one of the most consistent representatives of this direction - N.S. Avilova, the most corresponding point of view to the linguistic reality is that in accordance with which "methods of action are necessarily expressed by external formal features that modify the meaning of a simple verb. When it comes to MVA, we are talking about the way the meaning of the action, called the primary prefixless verb, is displaced, shifted, modified. This modification of the action, called the prefixless verb, occurs with the help of a certain formant or formants" [3, p. 264]. N.S. Avilova believes that all types of MVA can be combined into more groups, each of which has its own distinctive features. The author notes that they may differ from each other in the following main parameters:

1) clarification of the nature of the course of action in time;

2) quantitative and temporal characteristic of the action;

3) clarification of the nature of the result achieved by the action.

All these meanings, as the author emphasizes, are necessarily expressed formally, by attaching one or another affix to the verb. Based on these criteria, we can say that the first group of the MVA covers temporary methods of action. The author identifies such options: substantive, restrictive, long-restrictive, and finite. The first is followed by the second group, which covers quantitative-temporal MVA. The group contains two subgroups: in the first, action is specified from the point of view of its momentary or multiple commission, and the second subgroup presents the verbs expressing the action as unlimitedly long, multiply repeated.

Here the author identifies numerous variants: multiple, intermittently soft, long-soft, long-distributive, etc.

The third group contains specially resultative methods of action, which include all verbs expressing special nuances of effectiveness. Here are, in turn, such variants as terminative, integrated, intensely resultative, etc.

O.M. Sokolov assumes a very special position on the problems of MVA, telicity, and atelicity of the verb action, and other related issues. According to O.M. Sokolov, an important disadvantage of the existing classifications of Russian verbal prefixes is that they do not fully consider the multicomponent nature of their structure and, primarily, the interaction of phase nature and telicity in the semantics of prefixes [11].

If we confine ourselves to the statement of the fact that the prefix in the perfective verbs performs the function of designating the implemented telicity, the question remains about the nature of the meaning of the limit. In many cases, this value is attempted to be associated with performance and thus determine the invariant value of the perfective verb. O.M. Sokolov notes that performance does not cover all possible cases of limiting, because there are inceptive, restrictive, and other meanings that cannot be fully identified with the category of performance. The author believes that "with the existing ideas about the semantic structure of the Russian verb, the meaning of the implemented (actual) telicity cannot be interpreted otherwise than as limiting the process on its tense axis either at its beginning or at its end. Consequently, these "boundaries of action are phased in nature, since the result means, in essence, the end of the action". Since the implemented limit is closely related to a specific phase of the action, and the deep nature of the limit has a phase character, therefore, as O.M. Sokolov emphasizes, "there is no such limit of a verbal action that would be out-of-phase and timeless" [12, p. 84-85].

The result which means the achievement of an action by the subject, or a change in the state of the object, linked to the completeness of the action in time, or a new qualitative state serves as a trigger for a new process expressed by a verb.

Varieties of phase limits are not limited only to the designation of the beginning and end of the action. O.M. Sokolov notes that a special type of phase limit should include telicity, i.e. such a phase that limits the action in time, not leading to exhaustion. The special type of limits also includes those cases where both phases, initial and final, coalesce, eliminating any idea of the length of the gap between the niches. To determine the phase limit of a particular verb and prefix, we should compare the correlating perfective and the imperfective verbs, since the systematization of the MVA and the function of the prefixes, in this case, is based on the ratio of the long process (imperfective verb) to its phase boundary (perfective verb). As a result, we can establish several types of such relationships:

1) inceptive-process, expressing the relation of the beginning of the action to its process. In this case, the perfective verb indicates the initial phase of the process, and the imperfective verb indicates the process itself. If the verb has a prefix, in this case, the prefix itself serves as an indicator of the initial phase. This type of relationship is realized with the help of the prefixes «за»-, «по»-, «раз»- (загрохотать – грохотать, разволноваться – волноваться, поехать – ехать).

2) process-effective, expressing the relation of the process to the result. In this case, the perfective verb expresses the final phase of the process, while the imperfective verb denotes the process itself. The prefix in the prefixed perfective verbs indicates the final phase of the action (курить-докурить, толстеть-потолстеть, работать- наработать).

3) process-telic, reflecting the relationship between the process and its time limit, while the action is not completed. In this case, the prefix expresses a non-durable phase, which means repetitive actions (ходить-сходить туда и обратно, сидеть-посидеть).

4) single-serial, expressing the ratio of a single instantaneous action to a repeating action. The perfective verb of the form in a situation denotes a single instant action, and the imperfective verb denotes a repetitive action (толкать-толкнуть, дергать-дернуть) [11].

Based on the fact that the semantic constant in perfective verbs is a phase seme, these relations can be used as the basis for the semantic classification of the MVA, taking into account both the multicomponent semantic structure of the verbal word and the semantic variation of the verbal affixes. At the same time, along with the phase meanings, the semantics of the verb may contain additional quantitative, qualitative, and spatial meanings, and the multicomponent semantics and functionality of the prefix is that the prefix has a phase constant, which in some cases coincides with the lexical meaning of the prefix, and has additional lexical meanings: resultative (simultaneously with the phase function of finality), quantitative and quantitatively effective, also capable of performing the function of the indicator of the final phase, which at the same time can indicate the entry of the subject in a new qualitative state.

Subject to the ability of prefixes to combine different values and perform different functions, O.M. Sokolov offers his own classification scheme for the prefix semantics.

1. Prefixes whose lexical meanings correspond to phase functions: поехать, потянуться, закричать, возгордиться, отслужить, отбарабанить, отмолчаться etc.

2. Prefixes with effective values, whose meaning of the result is associated with the meaning of completeness (продолбить, сделать, перепилить, созреть, расседлать, etc.). This also includes varieties, when the meaning of the result is complicated by other lexical meanings (quantitative, local, etc.). For example: исстегать, захлестать, затормошить, приехать, забежать, перебить и т.п.

3. Prefixes with independent resultative meanings (the meaning of the result can be combined with the quantitative and local semes), performing the function of the initial phase indicator. a) generally resultative meanings: надуться на кого-либо, насупиться, вскипеть, встревожиться, взбунтоваться, b) local meanings: протечь (о крыше), выехать (в час дня), c) intensive meanings: раскудахтаться, разбушеваться, размечтаться т.п., устоять, удержаться, усидеть на месте, etc.

4. Prefixes without stable lexical meanings (usually referred to as "purely aspectual"): a) with the meaning and function of the effective completion of the process (сделать, смастерить, помрачнеть, etc.); b) with the meaning and function of one-act: сбегать в магазин, сфотографировать, скосить глаз, сморозить глупость, пошевелить бровью, пожать руку, потребовать ответа, etc.; c) functionally dependent prefixes can serve as indicators of the initial phase of the verb-expressed process. For example: спрятать (прятать взгляд, улыбку), показаться (каззаться), запомнить (на всю жизнь), узнать (новости) etc. [11], [12].

Such an approach to the classification of prefixes makes it possible, when studying the semantics of Russian verbs, to take into account an aggregate of signs united by a one-time invariant, rather than one sign only. However, these observations are important not only for the analysis of the problems of the MVA and the systematization of verbal prefixes but also relate to the verbal centric theory and the problem of the actual distribution of the semantics of the Russian verb. In terms of the verbal centric theory, the components of the verb semantics determine the case functions of the actants, the deep cases. Analyzing the question of how to determine the true meaning of a verbal suffix, O.M. Sokolov [12] emphasizes that a typical feature of the verbal suffixes is their seminal diversity, polyfunctionality, syncretism. Like prefixes, suffixes are capable of combining various meanings that reflect the main categorical features of a word as parts of speech. To find out the independent meaning of a verbal suffix, we should compare it with verbs that have other suffixes, with the identity of motivators. For example, when comparing the semantics of a motivating name and a verb motivator, we can find out that the verbal suffix conveys the meaning of duration and procedurality. However, this observation does not help to properly understand the difference between suffixes - -«нича»- and -«е»-. This question still stays unclarified even when comparing different-root verbs with these suffixes. Therefore, the only correct way to establish the eigenvalue of the suffix should be a comparison of verbs identical in the composition of motivators but different in their suffixes. If the presence of various suffixes in a word gives rise to regular semantic differences, then the differential semantic features appear to refer to the corresponding suffixes. The used method of matching single-root verbs with different suffixes allows detecting two types of relations between verbs: paronymic and synonymous. O.M. Sokolov [11] considers each of these types but especially pays attention to the paronymic type of relations. This is explained by the fact that, if the fundamentals are identical, then semantic differences between verbs can be caused by semantic differences in suffixes. Verbs come to paronymic relations most regularly, contrasting by suffixes -«е»-/ -«и»-, -«ова»- (-«ствова»-)/-«е»-, -«ствова»-/-«и»-. For example: хмелеть-хмелить, веселеть-веселить, белеть-белить, чернеть-чернить, криветь-кривить, мудрствовать-мудреть, умствовать-умнеть, пьянствовать-пьянеть, злобствовать-злобить, бодрствовать-бодрить.

One should always remember that when paronymic relations arise, semantic differences in verbs can be dictated not only by suffixes, but also by factors such as alternation in roots and some others. Comparing correlative pairs of verbs, O.M. Sokolov [11] concludes that the actual semantic features of the "primary" verbal suffixes are the meanings of activity-passivity, causativeness-non-causativeness, telicity-atelicity. At the same time, opposition in the line of activity-passivity, causativeness-non-causativeness is clearly observed when comparing the verbs ending in –еть (passivity) and –ить (activity). For example.: веселеть (passivity) – веселить (activity), грубеть (passivity) – грубить (activity). Difference on grounds of telicity is clearly observed when comparing the verbs ending in –еть (passivity) and –ить (activity). for example: веселеть (passivity) – веселить (activity), грубеть (passivity) – грубить (activity). Differences on the basis of telicity-atelicity are observed when comparing verbs ending in –«ствова»- and -«еть»-. For example: пьянствовать (atelic) – пьянеть (telic), etc. Analysis of verbs that enter into synonymous relations significantly complements the previous observations. Such relations are found in the verbs, opposed by the suffixes -«и»-/-«нича»-, -«ствова»- /-«ирова»-, -«ова»-/-«ирова»-, -«и»-/-«а»-, -«е»-/-«а»-. For example: безобразить – безобразничать, экономить – экономничать, проказить – проказничать, малярить – малярничать, гостить – гостевать, царить – царствовать, мудрить – мудрствовать, паразитствовать – паразитировать, цементовать – цементировать, ломить – ломать, родить – рожать, месить – мешать, холодеть – холодать, худеть-худать, видеть- видать, etc.

Conclusion. Despite the suffix differences, a common feature that unites all synonymous verbs is that they all signify active actions that characterize the behavior of a person or object. Synonymous oppositions are made with the help of telic and atelic verbs. However, with an identical morphemic composition of opposing parts, differing from each other only by suffixes, synonymy relations can arise only if common signs of suffixing morphemes are signs of activity-passivity, telicity, or atelicity.

Careful examination of paronymic and synonymous pairs of verbs makes it possible to conclude that there are suffixes in the language that can fix such features of the verb process as activity or passivity.

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