ACTUAL PROBLEMS
OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE
OF PHILOLOGICAL RESEARCHES

Materials of the IX international scientific conference
March 25–26, 2019

Prague
2019
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OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE
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These Conference Proceedings combines materials of the conference – research papers and thesis reports of scientific workers and professors. It examines actual problems of the theory and practice of philological researches. Some articles deal with theoretical and methodological problems of philological researches. A number of articles are covered issues of teaching methods of the disciplines of philological cycle. Some articles are devoted to the issues of general and particular linguistics. Authors are also interested in urgent questions of rhetoric, speech culture, communication theory.

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I. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF PHILOLOGICAL RESEARCHES

SOME FEATURES OF AGENT DERIVATION IN THE MODERN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Summary. The article considers the different types of nomina agentis and semantic classes of verbs, which are productive of them in the modern English language. The author attempts to determine the types of lexical verbal units which are more productive in the formation of agentive nominals in the modern English language. The results of the analysis show, that the marked macroclass of informative verbs has positive correlation with the production of agentive nominals, but unmarked macroclass of non-informative verbs – negative. The author comes to the conclusion that: firstly, the productive potential of verbal system of the modern English language is used incompletely; secondly, different semantic macroclasses have different activity in the production of nomina agentis.

Keywords: category of nomina agentis; semantic classes of verbs; macroclasses of informative and non-informative verbs; agent derivatives; positive correlation; negative correlation.

Being one of the main categories and playing a significant role in the functioning of the language as a whole, the category of nomina agentis at the same time is a prism through which a person refracts the ‘vision’ of himself as an active converter of the environment. Accordingly, it is important to study the category of the nomina agentis in terms of the parameters by which an English-speaking person characterizes the subject of the action, using various linguistic means of expressing this concept both separately and in interaction.

The novelty of the article lies in agent derivatives, denoting the subjects of causative action. From this point of view, the semantic category nomina agentis has not been the subject of special study in English.

The problem of identifying of different agentive derivatives is interconnected with the problem of determining the concept of “agent” itself, about which there is a very wide range of opinions and approaches in linguistics. All the variety of approaches can be divided into four main groups, two of them are formal (“syntactic” and “morphological”), while the other two are considered to be semantic (“intentional” and “functional”).

In the formal-syntactic approach, any noun or pronoun in the position of the subject in the verbal predicate is recognized as an agent [2, 4]. The “agent” is defined simply as “the bearer of an action or state” expressed by a verb predicate.

In the formal-morphological approach to the category of nomina agentis are assigned nouns derived from any basis (verbal, substantive or adjectival) by
certain "agentive" affixes [3]. However, it should be noted that the common disadvantage of both approaches is that the semantic concept of "agent" is determined on the basis of formal criteria, and does not consider the variety of semantic types of names.

From strictly semantic criteria for the definition of a nomina agentis a number of linguists [7, 8] prefer to use intentionality: any animate subject (a person) engaged in some purposeful action is taken for the "agent". But in many cases, there is no clear argument for qualifying an action as purposeful or undirected (the same animate object can be perceived either as an "agent" or as a "non-agent").

The fourth, or "functional-semantic" approach recognizes as an "agent" any subject (animate or inanimate), which has both intentional and unintentional impact on some object, the result of which is a real or potential change in the state of the object [1]. This definition of the agent is consistent with the philosophical interpretation of the activity.

The given definition of the agent is accepted in this research, and three types of the nomina agentis are distinguished in the functional aspect: morphologically marked, semantically marked, and syntactically marked.

Morphologically marked agentive derivatives represent nouns formed from causative verbs and denoting actions of the subjects of these verbs: teacher, demander, deformer, etc. Causative verbs, by the definition, express "the influence of the subject on the object" and thus are most directly related to the category of the agent. From this point of view, "agent" can be defined as the subject (source) of causative action, i.e. action expressed by a causative verb.

Semantically marked nomina agentis include nouns that express the subjects of causative action in their meaning, but are not derived from causative verbs: agent, thief, captain, king, etc.

Syntactically marked agentive derivatives acquire agentive meaning only in the syntactic structure of the sentence, being in the position of the subject under the causative predicate in the active voice. Thus, the causative voice acts as an indicator of the agentive nature of the name in the position of the subject and its reference to the category of nomina agentis.

As a result of the research the definition of the category of nomina agentis in the modern English language was worked out as a complex and heterogeneous category, which includes units of different types: pronouns; proper names; nouns-derivatives of causative verbs (operator, prosecutor, etc.); nouns with the meaning of the subject of causative action that are not derived from causative verbs (doctor, thief, etc.); common nouns with the meaning of person, nationality, age, etc. (man, boy, etc.); abstract nouns (majority, time, etc.); nouns denoting inanimate material objects (plow, arm, etc.), etc. It also includes demonstrative pronouns it, that, this. The data of the analysis of the studied material indicate not only the heterogeneity of the linguistic expression of the category of the agent, but also a different ratio of units of a particular type in the composition of this category. Thus, the leading role in the designation of the agentive subject
belongs to the derivatives of causative verbs nouns (70.7%). And it confirms that at the paradigmatic level the category of the nomina agentis in modern English is mainly morphological (more precisely, word-formative).

During the analysis it was important to trace the semantic characteristics of the verbal agentive derivatives against the background of their relationship with the semantic types of the original verbs.

Three semantic microclasses of the verbal meanings were distinguished: informational, energy and ontological [5, 6].

Informational verbs express different types of information processing in human or animal psyche. This category includes the verbs of sensory perception (see, hear), intellectual perception (remember, remind), emotional state (like, hate), volitional setting (want, desire), verbal/non-verbal communication (say, signal). The verbs expressing different types of evaluation: moral (chasten, deprave), aesthetic (beauty), quality (save, displace), etc. also belong to this category.

Energy verbs denote various states of physical energy transformation: spatial relationship, including motion (move, fly), location (lie, sit), formation and change of form/structure (bend, break), physical processes (burn, melt), physiological processes (die, grow).

Ontological verbs express existential states (exist, create), possessiveness/presence (have, possess), social processes (democratize), temporal characteristics (date, last), quantitative characteristics (increase, decrease). These verbal meanings are characterized by a higher level of generalization than the meanings of the first two classes.

It’s necessary to mention that only the informational macroclass is positively marked in relation to the derived agentive derivatives. The tendency of information verbs to agentive word-formation has a clear quantitative confirmation in a high proportion (80.66%) of verbs of the considered type, generating the nomina agentis. Additional evidence of the information macroclass marking on this derivational criterion is that not only the entire macroclass as a whole, but also all its subclasses (except sensory perception verbs) have a positive correlation with the derived nomina agentis.

It is worth noting that the subclass of nomina agentis from the verbs of communication (class of informational verbs) is characterized by the highest positive correlation coefficient with the agent-nominal derivation and thus represents the main source of the formation of nouns with the meaning of the agent.

There are three main groups of nomina agentis, derived from the verbs of communication. The first group includes names from verbs that characterize the act of communication by the "formal" way of its implementation (articulator, pronouncer, shouter, etc.). In turn, this group includes various subgroups (agentive derivatives formed from verbs, denoting oral speech (speaker); written speech (writer); various technical methods of speech (publisher), etc.). The other groups of communicative verbs represent various content aspects of the informational process. The second group of the verbal agentive derivatives, which has a