

## THE CATEGORY OF PLURALITY IN RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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### ABSTRACT

The article analyzes one of the variants of verbal plurality in Russian and English - distributive plurality. The article differs from other descriptions in that it summarizes various points of view on the nature of distributivity and defines the invariant and variative characteristics of this phenomenon on the basis of extensive factual material; the mechanism for reproducing distributive semantics and its accompanying meanings in the compared languages is revealed.

**Keywords:** Foreign vocabulary, text, aspect, language, society, distributive meaning, plurality.

### INTRODUCTION

*Verbs of the so-called distributive mode of action are perhaps the most numerous. These verbs have the common property that, one way or another, they imply the extension of the actions they designate to some predetermined sum (set) of objects. As a result of this process, the initial set is assimilated by the action without a trace, and the corresponding objects most often do not undergo significant changes, as in the following cases: перецеловать иконы, пережениться (сыновья переженились), перебить дичь, перекупать детей etc<sup>8</sup>.*

When characterizing variants of a distributive meaning in aspectology, they usually operate with two main features - a sign of multiplicity (in a different

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<sup>8</sup> Grammar of the modern Russian literary language. - M.: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the, 2010. - 767 p.

terminology - summation), and a sign of sequential distribution, however, the role and nature of these signs are understood differently<sup>9</sup>.

So, revealing the content of the sign of plurality, some researchers tend to see in it a constitutive component of distributiveness, obligatory for all cases without exception, since distributive verbs “designate an action presented as a set of a number of acts that apply to a number of objects or emanating from a number of subjects”<sup>10</sup>.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to find a way out of the existing interpretation difficulties, it is necessary to correct the corresponding values, taking into account the peculiarities of their implementation in specific speech conditions. So, in particular, the analysis of speech material shows that distributions in all cases without exception involve the development of multiple actions of each individual element of a set of objects or components of a certain mass of matter: *по- срывать (рыбу с крючков), поодавать (все экзамены), повынести (транспаранты на улицу), перенеть (все, многие песни), облазить (все, многие помещения корабля), перебрать (картофель) etc.*

The concept of distributivity common to Russian and English, adopted in this article, does not exclude differences of a particular order. Thus, an English verb taken in an isolated form, i.e. without contextual accompaniment, is not able to express a distributive meaning: the implementation of distributive semantics here is entirely carried out at the expense of a specialized context. For this reason, the English verb is not only unable to express the sign of totality, but also does not implement the sign of sequential distribution, which is clearly presented in the semantic structure of many Russian distributions. As in the Russian language, the specialized English context differentiates the result of the corresponding actions by two functionally equivalent elements of meaning: the sign of distributive multiplicity (summation) and the sign of sequential distribution: *one by one, one after another, all, etc.*

This process of interaction is regulated by each of the two components. Regulation on the part of the basic (producing) verb reveals itself in the fact that the basic verb, due to its content features, in some cases allows, and in others, on the contrary, prohibits word-formative contact with one or another prefix. Thus, the unlimited verbs "*спать, лежать, плыть*" cannot be characterized by a distributive feature, due to the incompatibility of their semantics with the semantics of distributivity<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Bondarko A.V. Functional grammar / A.V. Bondarko. - L., 2014. - 135 p.

<sup>10</sup> Khartung Yu. Distributive and total-distributive methods of verbal action in modern Russian: Abstract of the thesis. dis. ... cand. philol. Sciences / Yu. Khartung - Rostov-on-D. : 2019. - 24 p.

<sup>11</sup> Grammar of the modern Russian literary language. - M.: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the, 2010. - 767 p.

Often, the content structure of distributions formed with the prefix "пере" combines the signs of consistent distribution and re-formativity. When translating such verbs into English, the meaning of re-formativity is usually conveyed, formally represented in English by the prefix "re": *re-read, re-write, etc*<sup>12</sup>.

Russian speakers would agree with the categorisation above, but in Russian the word "money" is always plural (деньги). Therefore, a common Russian mistake in English would be to say something like this: "I put my money in the bank and THEY have been there for 6 months". In English, money is "it" – singular. In rare financial contexts you can see the term "monies" being used to mean "funds" (e.g. "The monies have been transferred") but this is more an exception to the rule and the singular "money" is preferred in most cases.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An interesting category of nouns are those connected with objects that consist of two parts and therefore cannot logically be anything other than plural. English and Russian tend to agree with regard to words like: scissors/ножницы, trousers/брюки, pliers/плоскогубцы, glasses/очки, etc. where the English nouns take "s" and the Russian nouns have the plural ending "и/ы". However, there are some differences of perception here too. For instance, Russian has separate words for "gate" (1-piece) and "gates" (2-piece) – калитка would be used for a garden gate or perhaps one on a farm but ворота (always plural) traditionally refers to a larger entrance gate with two moving doors. These small differences are worth paying attention to.

Russians often make mistakes when using English non-count nouns like: research, advice, knowledge, data, etc. because these words are countable in Russian. In English, we cannot say "advices" or "researches" as a translation for "советы" and "исследования". If you want to count these nouns, then you have to use a construction like "several pieces of advice" or an alternative term like "tips".

Another word that causes problems is "hair". While this noun is countable in both languages, in English we tend to use the plural form in most contexts, e.g. "She had long, brown hair". Russians might mistakenly use "hairs" here because in Russian the plural "волосы" would be used and saying "волос" would mean the lady in question only had one strand of hair!

Russians also have a tendency to add an "s" in common expressions like: "no comment", "no problem" and "thank God" – the final one being a mistake with the verb form and not the singular/plural. In English, these expressions do not take "s"!

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<sup>12</sup> Lomov A.M. On the functional and semantic characteristics of actional verb modifiers / A.M. Lomov // Questions of semantics. - Kaliningrad, 2013. - p. 109-116

However, for some strange reason, in the informal “no probs” (no problem) we see the plural, but “no prob” would be incorrect.

Irregular plurals in English can create further difficulties for Russian speakers. A common mistake is adding “s” to nouns like: men, women, children, sheep, mouse, etc. Native speakers of English rarely use the forms “fishes” and “fruits”, preferring instead “fish” and “fruit” as mass nouns, e.g. “I went to the market to buy some fruit” (not fruits!).

Russians also overuse the word “persons” as the plural of “person”. This type of usage is very formal and sounds strange in most everyday contexts. The normal plural of “person” is “people”. You can also say “peoples” (народы) to refer to an ethnic group. Compare these two sentences:

*“There were loads of **people** at the gig last weekend!”*

*“**Persons** found in possession of alcohol will be expelled from the premises.”*

Some students are also confused by that fact that certain British English nouns that refer to groups can be perceived as either singular or plural. Words of this type include: family, government, team, police, etc. In Russian, nouns are either singular or plural and they cannot be both. Here are some examples of British English usage:

*“Our football team **is** top of the Premier League at the moment.”* (whole group)

*“The team **were** disappointed after their 5-0 defeat at home.”* (individual players)

*“My family **is** big.”* (many relatives form one large group)

*“My family **are** big.”* (individual relatives, each being fat!)

## CONCLUSION

As for the sign of sequential distribution, in cases like "read all the newspapers, darn all the stockings" this sign, as it is easy to see, is not represented in any way and is usually guessed by the participants of communication. The noted circumstance fully corresponds to the so-called interpretive method of quantitative characteristics of the verbal action, when the meanings of sequential distribution and one-time occurrence are distinguished only with the help of knowledge of the corresponding situation. The high degree of participation of the context in the expression of distributive-total semantics in English is reinforced by the increasing role of grammatical means, focusing either on the achievement of the result by the action, or on its duration and/or development over time.

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