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# ACTION NOMINALS IN THE THEMATIC FIELD "HANDICRAFTS": CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Abstract

The present paper is aimed at the analysis of the names of handicrafts in English, Russian and Latvian, considering the differences in conceptualization, nomination, and categorization of lexical items denoting handicraft activities. The analysis is performed focusing on action nominals that constitute a vast majority of the vocabulary of the respective thematic field in the working languages and which may pose challenges for the translators working in the respective field.

Key words: action nominal, handicraft, conceptualization, categorization, nomination

The thematic field "Handicrafts" provides an interesting medium for research in contrastive lexicology due to its unique composition and development dynamics. On the one hand, this field comprises lexical items denoting traditional handicrafts specific for a particular community, lacking in other linguacultures. On the other hand, rising interest in handicrafts has given an impulse to the hobby and crafts supply industry. Thus, handicraft lexis is enriched with the names of new materials and processes, which enter different languages via either direct borrowing by transcription, calquing or coinage of a national equivalent. Along with the growth of the number of multilingual platforms used as forums for trade and cooperation in the field of artisan handicrafts, the issue of harmonization of respective terminology is becoming topical in all three working languages. It requires a detailed analysis of the handicrafts' naming traditions in English, Russian and Latvian, focusing on the processes of conceptualization, categorization and nomination and paying particular attention to the analysis of action nominals within the given thematic field.

Describing the action nominals (ANs) and their properties, Koptjevskaja-Tamm [2013] maintains, "ANs themselves are either nouns or at least occur in typical nominal positions and show inflectional properties and/or combinability with adpositions typical of nouns. They are, however, in some reasonably productive way derived from verbs, either derivationally or inflectionally, and refer to events and/or facts, i.e. not just to actions, as the name might imply." Traditionally, action nominals have been classified into derivational action nominals (e.g. *demolition*, *denial* and *discussion*) and inflectional action nominals, like English gerunds [cf. Chomsky 1970]. The fact that action nominals and gerunds are often used interchangeably to denote nominalizations of a similar kind and generally there is a certain lack of agreement in the use of terminology has been recognized by Koptjevskaja-Tamm, "…here is on the whole relatively little consensus concerning the terminology to be

used for what is called *action nominals* and *action nominal constructions* […]. Thus, "verbal nouns", "gerunds", "nominalizations", "masdars", "infinitives" often, though not necessarily, refer to ANs" [Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993: 22-43]. Indeed, in the existing body of research in cognitive grammar, the distinction between inflectional action nominals and various gerundive nominalizations is not always explicit, which in its turn leads to inconsistency in term use and may ultimately cause contradictory interpretation of research results. For example, Heyvaert [2003:203] discussing nominal behavior of gerundive nominalizations singles out a certain type of gerundive nominals as referring to a class of activities rather than to a specific instance and compares them to the generic use of uncountable nouns. This unspecified type of gerundive nominals can be classified as inflectional action nominals in Chomsky and Koptjevskaja-Tamm terms. In turn, Langacker classifies such items as *chirping*, *consumption*, *destruction*, etc., that is, lexical items generally defined as action nominals, as nominalized verbs that represent "*conceptual reification* of an event conception" [Langacker 2000:86, original highlight].

In the present paper, the author adopts the definition of action nominals provided by Koptjevskaja-Tamm [1993], that is, an action nominal is a noun or another content word that occurs in typical nominal positions and shows inflectional properties and/or combinability typical of nouns, in some reasonable way morphologically derived from verbs and referring to events, actions and/or facts.

In English, action nominals are formed by means of both derivation and inflection; inflectional action nominals or gerundial nominalizations are pervasive in the contemporary English language. Inflectional action nominals are frequently discussed as a source of ambiguity in language because of lexical-grammatical polysemy these constructs display. Although generally nominal and verbal positions within a sentence or clause structure are clearly identifiable, it is not always possible to distinguish between a gerund and a present participle verb form. In general, gerund-participle constructions have received a lot of attention in the contemporary research on cognitive grammar [e.g. Langacker 2000; Declerck 2006]. Both inflectional and derivational action nominals are widely used in nominating handicrafts activities, the former being predominant.

In Russian, ANs are formed by means of derivation, two most productive suffixes being *–ац–* and *–ени–(–ани–)* used to form a wide range of lexical items finishing with *–ация* and *–ение*. In the thematic field of handicrafts, the latter pattern is the most productive forming a dynamic open system that is constantly expanding. New constructs display a high degree of acceptability among language users. In contrast to many other languages, Russian ANs frequently do not have the aspectual distinction, i.e. distinction between perfective and imperfective aspect is realized on the lexical rather than morphological level [cf. Comrie, Thompson 2007:348]. Specific feature of Russian ANs is that they may appear in the form of synsets where one synonym is an action nominal proper and another may denote both the activity

and the result of that activity, like in the pair *вышивание* ((E) embroidery as an activity) – *вышивка* ((E) embroidery as an activity or as a product).

In Latvian, formation of ANs displays a consistent pattern of adding a suffix –*šan*– to the stem. Corpus studies into action nominals in Latvian reveal that "The formation is completely regular, general and productive." [Nau 2016:461]. Nau suggests that only –*šan*– nouns can be categorized as action nominals in Latvian, whereas all other verbal nominalizations should be generically referred to as event nouns [ibid: 463]. Indeed, in contrast to English and Russian, in Latvian a number of ANs are not direct verbal reifications. In many instances, the noun denoting a direct object of the action is the primary basis of nomination; it is further transformed into a verb, which then is nominalized by adding the suffix –*šan*–. Thus, conceptualization occurs on a nominal rather than verbal grounding and direct reference to the object is more explicit than the reference to an activity or event. Such Latvian ANs as *pērļošana* (literally – pearling, equivalent for beading), *tapošana* (literally – pegging or fingering, equivalent for loop knitting), *batikošana* (literally – batiking, i.e. batik painting or coloring) can be mentioned as good examples to this point.

To illustrate this phenomenon in a detail the author shall consider the frame *needlework* in the contrastive perspective, as well as shall provide some examples of non-equivalent novel terms emphasizing the ways how novel concepts are nominated in the working languages.

It is interesting to note that in contrast to English (E) the generic term *needlework* is not used in Russian (R) and Latvian (L) as a hypernym in the respective thematic field. In these languages, *needlework* always has a different degree of abstraction in the hierarchy of the semantic field denoting either handicrafts in general ((R) *рукоделие*; (L) *rokdarbs*), or a specific type of handicraft including embroidery, tapestry, sewing, etc. Thus, conceptual models are organized differently and do not always fully match in terms of their semantic content. In English, the given frame does not include *sewing*, whereas in Russian and Latvian it does not include *knitting, quilting*, and *tatting*. In English, hyponyms of the frame are lexicalized as unique concepts whereas in Russian there are many analytic forms containing one head – *вышивание* and different attributes. For example, (E) *cross stitching* – (R) *вышивание крестиком*; (E) *bead embroidery* – (R) *вышивание бисером;* (E) *faggoting* – (R) *вышивание мережкой;* (E) *friezing* – (R) *вышивание золотом*. In Latvian, both unique and analytic forms are used and many respective action nominals are not lexicalized: (E) *embroidery* – (L) *izšūšana*; (E) *cross stitching* – *izšūšana krustdūrienā;* (E) *satin stitching* – (L) *spodršuvums*; *klājdūriens* (types of stitches rather than activities); E) *faggoting* – (L) *caurā vīle* (type of stitch).

It is interesting to note that in Latvian many concepts present in English and Russian are not lexicalized or lexicalized only contextually. For example, the AN *pērļošana* may denote both *beading* (*нанизывание, сборка бус*) and *bead weaving* (*бисероплетение*) because in Latvian the nominal grounding of this AN *pērle* may

denote *pearl* (*жемчужина*), *bead* (*бусина*), and *seed bead* (*бисер*). Thus, only the attributes can help determine the exact meaning of pērle – *dabīgā pērle* (natural pearl); *stikla zīlītes, pērlītes* (glass seed beads, small pearls), etc.

As the new handicrafts are introduced on the regular basis, the variety of the non-aligned terms in the given field is rising. *Crazy wool technique* is one of the handicrafts that has recently gained popularity. In Latvian, the non-standardized folk variants *čunčošana* (*čunčināšana*) derived from a slang word *čunčināt* (twist, turn) are used interchangeably. In Russian such variants as *сумасшедшая нитка, сумасшедшая пряжа, сэндвич* (*бутерброд*) are available, while items produced using the technique are called "lazy" – «ленивый свитер», «ленивый шарф» [Online]. *Loop knitting* is another name of a handicraft that is missing in Russian; occasionally may be descriptively represented as *вязание на граблях*. In Latvian, the corresponding term is *tapošana*, derived from the noun *tapa* (wooden peg, finger or tooth of a rake).

It can be recognized that in all three working languages, ANs have a similar semantic component of imperfective atemporal relation in their conceptual structure. However, there are many distinctive features in the way certain ANs denoting handicrafts are conceptualized and categorized in English, Russian and Latvian, which require detailed analysis in the further research papers.

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## ОТГЛАГОЛЬНЫЕ СУЩЕСТВИТЕЛЬНЫЕ В ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОМ ПОЛЕ «РУКОДЕЛИЕ»: КОНТРАСТИВНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ

В статье рассматриваются механизмы концептуализации, номинации и категоризации лексических единиц в тематическом поле "Рукоделие" в английском, русском и латышском языках. Особое внимание уделяется отглагольным существительным, которые занимают особое место в реализации процессов номинации в данном тематическом поле и представляют сложность для специалистов-переводчиков.

Ключевые слова: отглагольное существительное, рукоделие, концептуализация, категоризация, номинация