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Implicit Verbs in Russian[1]

The most important concept on which I rely in this paper is that of valency.[2] Valency is traditionally thought of as a property of verbs. I, however, apply this concept to all kinds of linguistic signs—words, morphemes, signs with non-phonemic expression and signs without expression. Closely related to valency is a sign's capability of functioning as a predicate. "Predicate" is used here neither in its syntactic, nor in its logical sense, but as a semantic term. Semantic predicates are linguistic signs denoting "facts", rather than "things". The word "fact" is to be understood in a broad sense, covering qualities, states, events, processes, actions and so on. Only semantic predicates have valency, which means that they presuppose certain dependent members, so-called arguments, or actants, as I prefer to call them; these may or may not be present on the syntactic surface.

In this paper I will concentrate on those predicates that lack phonemic expression. They may have an intonational expression or no expression at all. In both cases I refer to them as implicit. They can normally be traced back to specific words. I will narrow the scope still more and deal only with predicates that can be traced back to verbs. Instead of using the possibly more accurate formulation "implicit predicates corresponding to verbs", I will refer to them simply as implicit verbs.

Implicit verbs can be more or less easy to "recover", by which I mean to identify in explicit terms. The easiest case is when the verb is recoverable from the context, normally the preceding context. This means that the identification of the implicit verb can be done directly from an explicit occurrence, as in the following example:

1. [Мальчик пил сок из стакана, а его] отец—вино из фужера.

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[1] A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the Arizona AATSEEL meeting in Tucson, April 24, 1999.

[2] For a more detailed account of my approach to this concept, see the monograph Lönngren (1998).

Here the verb *пить* (represented by the word-form *пил*) occurs explicitly only once, in the first clause, but it is no doubt present also in the subsequent clause, this time implicitly. In both clauses the verb has three actants, all with explicit expression. The prepositional phrase is treated as one actant. I include in square brackets those parts of the sentence which do not belong to the domain of the implicit verb.

Although the number of actants dominated by one predicate may well be more than three (cf., for instance, *Она переставила цветы со стола на окно*), this seems to be the maximum number of explicit actants dominated by an implicit predicate. However, examples with a smaller number of actants are quite normal. For instance, in

2. [Она боится собак, а] я—змей.

the implicit verb has two actants; and in

3. [Кто там дальше шуршал, мне было все равно, он сказал, что] мыши. Пт.[3]

it has only one actant. If we recover not only the verbs as such but also the word-forms by which they are represented, it is evident that on this concrete level there need not be an exact echo in person and number: with regard to these categories the actual word-form is selected by the syntactic subject. Thus, the word-form in example (2) "would be" *боюсь*, and in example (3) *шуршали*.

The next three examples contain implicit predicates which are not so easily recoverable; there is no explicit occurrence of the verb in the preceding context. Nevertheless, it is possible to establish the verb (or, at least, the most plausible verb) on semantic grounds. Here also, the examples differ as to the number of actants; they contain three, two and one actant, respectively:

4. Жена, [конечно,] меня за дверь, [сердится]... Чр. ("выставить")

5. Мне, [пожалуйста,] молока. ("дать")

6. С приездом! ("поздравлять")

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[3] The following references to authors of examples are used: Гк: И. Грекова; Дс: Ф. Достоевский; Ис: Ф. Искандер; Лм: Э. Лимонов; Мв: В. Медведев; Пт: Л. Петрушевская; Рл: М. Рассолов; Рм: П. Романов; Св: Н. Соловьева; Тк: В. Токарева; Тл: Л. Толстой; Чр: Саша Черный.

In this type I find it justifiable to give the implicit verb after each example; implicitness is indicated by means of citation marks. I give the verbs in the infinitive, although in the given contexts they would, of course, be realized as specific word-forms: *выставил*, *дай(те)*, and *поздравляю*, respectively.

It is important to point out that when "counting" actants here I have in mind explicit actants, expressed in the examples as free words. Clearly, the valency frames of *дать* and *поздравлять* in the latter two examples contain three actants each, as we see in the sentences *Я дал ему молока* and *Я поздравил его с приездом*. Thus, in examples (5) and (6) not only the predicate, but also one or more actants lack expression.

As I have mentioned earlier, implicit predicates may have a non-phonemic expression or no expression at all. If we look at the six examples given so far, we find non-phonemic expression, namely the intonational pause (rendered orthographically as a dash) in examples (1) and (2). In the remaining examples, i.e., (3)-(6), the implicit predicates seem to lack expression altogether. But in all cases there is a syntactic slot for the implicit verb. It is the presence of an empty slot that produces the impression that these structures are syntactically incomplete, i.e., elliptical.[4] However, as we shall see below, the presence of an empty slot is not a prerequisite for postulating an implicit verb.

Now let's have a closer look at the possibilities represented by the examples given so far, which are defined by two properties: degree of recoverability and number of explicit actants.

With contextually recoverable predicates it is possible to compare the two clauses involved. Note that in (1)-(3) the valency frame of each implicit predicate is realized with the same number of actants and the same structural type of actants as the corresponding explicit predicate. For the specific kind of symmetrical constructions represented by these examples this is quite normal, but it is not necessary: the realization of the valency frame of the implicit predicate need not be an exact copy of that of the ex-

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[4] The contextually dependent ellipsis demonstrated in (1)-(3) is sometimes referred to as anaphoric; see, e.g., Padučeva (1992:60).

plicit predicate. We can, for example, reduce the number of explicit actants in (1) from three to two in the following way:

    7. [Мальчик пил сок из стакана, а его] отец—из фужера.

Here not only the predicate *пить* but also the actant *сок* is recoverable from the first clause.

    The realization of actants in the clause with the implicit predicate can even be richer than in the clause with the explicit predicate, as we see in:

    8. [Вы, элитные дети, не испытавшие трудностей, побежали,
        как] крысы с [тонущего] корабля. Рл.

    9. [Только что хотели устраиваться около столика, а] Левин
        уйти, [как вошел старый князь]. Тл.

    Recoverable predicates with three actants are typically linked to their explicit counterparts by the adversative conjunction *a*, as in example (1) above, but asyndetic constructions are also possible:

    10. [Некоторые воспринимают его поступок как оправданный,]
        другие—[все его] поведение как недопустимое.

Similar to the prepositional phrases in examples (1), (4), and (6), the conjunction phrase *как недопустимое* is treated as one actant.

    With only two actants there are more possibilities, although connection by means of the conjunction *a*, as in (2), still prevails. Instead of *a* we may find the conjunction *и*:

    11. [Все возненавидели всех, и] каждый каждого. Мв.

or an asyndetic construction:

    12. [Дни становились длиннее,] ночи—короче.

The asyndetic connection is indicated intonationally by a pause (orthographically a comma sign). The implicit predicate can also be placed in a new, syntactically unconnected sentence:

    13. [Она вбежала в подъезд.] Он за ней. ("побежать")

Note that the implicit verb here, *побежать*, is not exactly the same as the explicit one.

    Quite common are also subordinate clauses introduced by the conjunction *как*, as we saw in (8) above. Here are two more examples:

    14. [Я завидую Копылову, как] Сальери Моцарту. Тк.

    15. [Он забавлялся с этим Ясногоровым, как] кот с мышью.

Contrary to example (9) above, the conjunction here is semantic, which means that it does not form a conjunction phrase. In cases like these the

implicit predicate normally leaves no intonational trace behind it. It is also striking that if we explicate the verb in the second clause of these examples, we observe—besides the adaptation in person and number that I have mentioned earlier—a shift in tense between the two verbs: either from past to present, as in (8) and (15), or from present to past, as in (14).

Now we have arrived at constructions with only one actant. Here, too, the conjunction *как* is a frequent connector between the explicit and the implicit part of the sentence, as we see in:

16. [Чазов крутился, как] белка [в колесе]. Мв.

The single actant has to be supported by an adjunct, in this case the prepositional phrase *в колесе*, in order that the second actant of the conjunction *как* be apprehended as an elliptical clause, and not merely as a nominal phrase, as it is, for instance, in the sentence *Он утонул, как камень.*

The single actant can be the syntactic subject, as in (16), or the object, as in:

17. [Я хотела одного: идти вот так, обнявшись, и, как] бабочку
    [в ладошке, нести эту хрупкую жизнь]. Тк.

Note that in this sentence the implicit predicate precedes the explicit one. The prepositional phrase *в ладошке* does not belong to the valency domain of *"нести"*; it is an adjunct, fulfilling the same function as *в колесе* in (16).

Similar to (13) above, the next example contains an implicit predicate placed in an independent, although, of course, elliptical, sentence:

18. [— Пойдем знаете куда?] На вокзал. Гк.

where a prepositional phrase corresponds to an adverb in the preceding clause.

As we saw in example (3) above, the clause with the implicit predicate can be syntactically subordinate. This subordinate clause can be placed within an independent sentence:

19. [я ... взял шляпу и вышел, как бы не соображая. По крайней
    мере, не знаю, зачем и] куда. Дс.

20. [— Пахнет мастикой, — наконец сказал он. — А ты хотел,
    чтобы] чем? — [язвительно спросил Чик]. Ис.

The connection with the explicit clause can be effected by means of a relative pronoun, as in:

21. [Собаки обучены всему,] чему [можно].

22. [Обхаживал] кого [следовало]. Рл.,

the last example with no antecedent to the pronoun. Note that in these examples the implicit predicate is in a subordinate position, governed by *можно* and *следовать*, respectively. In (21) the explicit counterpart is a participle; the form imposed upon the implicit verb would be the infinitive (*"обучить"*).

In addition, there are also numerous cases of asyndetic connection, as in:

23. (о собаке) [То один глаз откроет, то другой,] оба [сразу]— [лень]. Чр.

24. [Захочешь дыни—дыни будут расти,] винограду—[и виноград попрет]. Рм.

The last example has asyndetic connections also within each part of the sentence.

Now let's turn to constructions with contextually unrecoverable implicit predicates.[5] Examples with three actants, as in (4) above, are quite rare. Here are three more:

25. Олимпиада [Иннокентьевна] палец к губам, [на меня обернулась, ...] Чр. ("приложить")

26. Что мне в вас? Чр. ("найти")

27. Тебя [бы] ко мне внутрь. Гк. ("пустить")

The latter two constructions are impersonal (thus, the infinitive is here the appropriate explicit realization). In (27) the prepositional phrase and the adverb are two exponents of one semantic role ("goal"); we can call such a phenomenon "actant reduplication".

Much more common and diversified are constructions with two actants, as in example (5) above. Here are some more examples:

28. Я о том [же]. ("говорить")

29. [Ну, как] тебе начальница? ("нравиться")

30. [Еще посмотрим,] кто кого. ("победить")

31. С тебя бутылка! ("причитаться")

32. Нам домой. ("идти")

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[5] This type of non-anaphorical ellipsis seems to be especially abundant in classical Latin; cf., for instance, *Ex ungue leonem; Per aspera ad astra.*

33. Удачи вам [в России]! ("желать")

34. С повышением тебя! Св. ("поздравлять")

Certain verbs are especially amply used, for instance *говорить*, *идти*, *желать*, and *поздравить*, the latter two with the implicit subject *я*. Intonationally expressed predicates are not so common, but with certain predicates they do occur, as in the impersonal sentence:

35. Решения [партии]—в жизнь! ("воплотить")

Quite common are also contextually unrecoverable implicit verbs with only one explicit actant, as we saw in (6). Here are some additional examples:

36. [Ни] дня [без строчки]. ("проходить")

37. Шайбу! ("забить")

38. Через [мой] труп! ("переступить")

39. [Не] за что. ("благодарить")

In the last example the verb is often recoverable from the context, at least semantically (for instance, the context may contain the word *спасибо*). Note that *благодарить* is the most plausible, or rather frequent, explicit counterpart. In a specific context, some other verb may be appropriate, for example *наказать*.

The implicit predicate can be in a subordinate position:

40. [Она хочет] в Париж. ("поехать")

41. [Они собираются] на вечер. ("идти")

42. [Я согласен] лаборантом. ("работать")

43. [Чем богаты], тем [и рады]. ("угостить")

44. С кем [имею честь, разрешите спросить]? ("говорить")

In (42) and (43) the implicit predicates are governed by adjectives, in (44) by the phrase *имею честь*.

In the next example the implicit predicate is governed by a participle:

45. [Радости, обещающиеся] от [такой] женщины, [превышали воображение русского мужчины]. Лм. ("получить")

In this case, however, there may be an alternative analysis: the prepositional phrase can be understood as a non-standard realization of the first actant of the verb *обещать* (instead of the regular instrumental of the passive voice: *этой женщиной*).

Finally, the presence of only one explicit actant is typical of so-called speech-act verbs, which, when implicit, are expressed intonationally. The

default speech-act verb is, of course, *"говорить"*, marked by neutral intonation, the so-called IK 1. This predicate has at least three actants: the agent (plus the source, fused in one actant), the addressee, and the object (the message), represented by the rheme element of the sentence under its domain. This element is normally the only explicit actant: both the agent/source, identical to the speaker (*я*), and the addressee, identical to the listener (*ты*), are implicit. Such an implicit speech-act verb is present in the following example:

46. [На вокзале меня встретила] Даша. ("говорить")

The implicit predicate *"спрашивать"* has likewise three actants: the agent (plus the addressee, fused in one actant), the source, and the object (the content of the question). This verb is intonationally expressed in a more marked way, namely by the non-neutral intonations IK 2 or IK 3, as in:

47. Где [отец]? ("спрашивать")

48. [Дом—] брата? ("спрашивать")

The dash in the latter example does not correspond to the implicit predicate, but to the copula slot, the introduction of which turns the nominal phrase *дом брата* into a sentence, either with IK 1 or IK 3 (*Дом— брата.* or *Дом—брата?*). The copula *быть* is empty, or syntactic, as I prefer to call it; it has no valency and is not a semanticpredicate.[6] Note that the predicate uniting *дом* and *брата* is not a free word, but a semantic inflectional morpheme, namely the genitive case ending (meaning 'own', 'belong to'). Alternatively, it is possible to identify not an explicit morphemic predicate, but an implicit verb *"жить"*, extracted from the noun *дом*. The analyses, however, are semantically equivalent only if 'he' (*брат*) both owns the house and is living in it. In any case, neither predicate is capable of functioning as a rheme, since they cannot carry the sentence stress.

In the examples given so far, there has always been a syntactic slot for the implicit verb, even if this slot is not always intonationally marked, and even if it is not always possible to fill it with an explicit verb and get an acceptable sentence; cf., for instance, (37), which is clearly phraseological and cannot be modified. Speech-act predicates are special in this respect:

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[6] Cf., Schoorlemmer (1994:131): "The copula has no arguments."

their slot is situated outside the clause containing the explicit actant and there is, therefore, no ellipsis.

However, there are also cases with no syntactic slot at all for the implicit predicate, which is, consequently, impossible to insert. Such implicit verbs are usually more difficult to recover. Consider this example:

49. [Татьяна ждала] Сережу из гостей. Тк. ("прийти")

The actant *Сережа* is shared by both the explicit and the implicit verb, but its form is determined exclusively by the explicit verb. The reason for postulating an implicit verb here is the same as in example (45) above: one actant, in this case *из гостей*, does not fit into the valency frame of the explicit verb.

It may also be the case that the position natural for the implicit verb is already occupied by an explicit verb:

50. [—Что, тебе других] мало?—[загородил дверь] хозяин. Вн. ("спросить")

Identifying an implicit verb can be a way of accounting for the valency structure of a sentence. For instance, B. Levin (1979) compares the sentences *John broke the vase with a hammer* and *John broke the vase against the wall*: "Levin argues that assigning INSTRUMENT to hammer and LOCATIVE to wall [...] does not say anything about the manipulation of the objects. In the first sentence the hammer is being manipulated, and in the second sentence it is the vase itself."[7] In my view it is quite obvious that both sentences contain one predicate besides the one expressed by the syntactic predicate. In the first sentence it is the (semantic) preposition *with*, which is synonymous with the verb *use*. This predicate takes *hammer* as its second actant. In the second sentence there is an implicit predicate, corresponding to a verb of motion, for instance *"throw"*. For the Russian translation we can choose the verb *"ударить"*:

51. Джон [разбил] вазу о стену. ("ударить")

with three explicit actants, one of which, *о стену*, is not shared by the explicit verb.

The following example contains an actant incorporated in a verb but not depending on this verb; rather, it is the second actant of an implicit verb:

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[7] Quoted from Palmer (1990:63).

52. Мама утюж[ила рубашки]. ("использовать")

Efforts have been made recently to account for unexpected valency frames using a set of "argument structure constructions" with very general meanings of the type "X causes Y to receive Z"; see Goldberg (1995). As I have demonstrated above, I prefer to look for specific, though hidden, verbs (and other predicates).

So far, all implicit predicates have been located in a sentence frame. But when we are talking about predicates which are not recoverable from the preceding context, we also have to take into account nominal phrases. In a phrase like *читатель книги* we can extract a morphologically incorporated predicate out of the noun *читатель*, corresponding to the verb *читать*. This incorporated predicate is represented by a morpheme, not by a free word, but it is nevertheless explicit. However, there are also numerous cases with implicit predicates hidden, so to speak, in a nonmorphemic form. For example, in the phrase

53. автор книги ("написать")

the choice of the implicit verb is determined by both actants.

There also occur three-actant constructions of this kind:

54. телеграмма студента отцу ("послать")

where *телеграмма* is the second actant of the implicit predicate extracted from this very noun. The nominal phrase contained in example

55. [Ему были неприятны] слова Тамары о трусости. Рл.
    ("сказать")

is somewhat different. The second actant of the implicit verb is expressed twice, as *слова* and as *о трусости*; cf., the paraphrase: *то, что Тамара сказала о трусости*. We can look upon this as an actant reduplication. In many cases this process converts the nominal phrase into a sentence; thus, (53) can be extended into:

56. Он автор книги (or: Автор книги—Иван).

What we have done is to introduce a new actant in the subject position by means of actant reduplication. *Автор* and *Иван* are coreferential and they both fulfil the role of the agent in the valency frame of the implicit verb *"написать"*; cf., the paraphrase *Книгу написал Иван*. Here is a similar example:

57. По части [курортов] Надя [большой] специалист. Рл.
    ("знать"),

with the paraphrase: *О курортах Надя много знает*. In the next example, with reduplication of the second actant, there is quite a different syntactic distribution:

58. Чья это идея? ("придумать")

Cf., the paraphrase *Кто это придумал?*

Let us return, however, to cases without actant reduplication. Here are some examples with two actants, illustrating different combinations:

59. дорога назад ("вести"); cf., дорога, ведущая назад

60. автор гола ("забить"); cf., тот, кто забил гол

61. начальник охраны ("возглавлять"); cf., тот, кто
    возглавляет охрану

62. роман Толстого ("написать"); cf., роман, написанный
    Толстым

63. ваза из стекла ("изготовить"); cf., ваза, изготовленная из
    стекла

As can be seen from the paraphrases, there is a slot for the implicit verb, located in the attribute position. However, this slot can easily disappear in a sentence frame. Thus, in the famous line by Pushkin: *К нему не зарастет народная тропа*, the prepositional phrase *к нему* has been detached from its head *тропа* and is syntactically dominated by the predicate *зарастет*. This predicate has, however, no prepositional phrase in its valency frame. Semantically, *к нему* depends upon the same kind of implicit predicate as was identified in (59) above, i.e., *"вести"*.

To this group belong also cases where one argument is morphemic, incorporated in an adjective, which itself takes over the predicate position. Such phrases are not immediately, but transformationally, related to implicit verbs:

64. каменный дом ("построить"); cf., дом, построенный из
    камня

65. мамины блины ("испечь"); cf., блины, испеченные мамой

If, however, an isolated word denotes the first actant (the agent) and the second actant is incorporated in it, the postulation of an implicit verb is justified:

66. стекольщик ("вставлять"); историчка ("преподавать")

The key word can also denote an object of a state, as in:

    67. минчанин (“жить”); номенклатурщик (“принадлежать”)

where the incorporated second actant corresponds to a prepositional phrase (*в Минске, к номенклатуре*).

    If we compare the more analytic expression *преподаватель истории* with the more synthetic *историчка*, we see that the same predicate that is incorporated in *преподаватель*, is implicit in *историчка*. The word morphologically incorporated in *историчка*, i.e., *история*, is the second actant of the predicate. For another such pair, cf., *житель Минска* and *минчанин*.

    Several more combinations are possible. In example

    68. смертник (“приговорить”)

the key word denotes the object of an action; the third actant is incorporated and corresponds to a prepositional phrase (*к смерти*). It may also be the case that the incorporated actant denotes the second actant and the key word itself the third one, corresponding to a prepositional phrase:

    69. свинарник (“держать”)

The key word and the incorporated actant may belong to different valency frames, which leaves us with only one explicit actant:

    70. икор[ница] (“подавать”)

Икорница has incorporated the second actant of *“подавать”*, but the key word itself depends upon another predicate, the implicit preposition *“в”*; cf., *то, в чем подают икру.*

    We now realize that, since implicit predicates can be identified also in connection with isolated words, the procedure for extracting such predicates can be turned into a general device for lexical description. This is also true, of course, when we come to cases where the key word is the only explicit actant. The key word can be an agent, as in:

    71. птица (“летать”); рыба (“плавать”); палач (“казнить”),

an object of an action, as in

    72. делегат (“послать”); экспонат (“показать”); нож (“использовать”)

or a location (the actant corresponding to a prepositional phrase), as in

    73. гараж (“хранить”); хлев (“держать”)

That an actant is not expressed does not mean that it is undeterminable. Naturally, deprived of context, we have to rely on our “knowledge of the

world". For instance, in the last two examples we can identify the second actant as (typically) *машина* and *скот*, respectively.

Similar to what we saw in (64) and (65), the only explicit actant may be incorporated in an adjective, which by transformation takes over the position of an implicit verb:

74. карандашный рисунок ("использовать")

Карандаш is not, of course, an actant of the explicit (but incorporated) predicate *рисовать*.

Finally, I will show a couple of examples with zero actant:

75. [нож] ("резать"); [топор] ("рубить")

The word *нож* is semantically described by means of two different, but connected predicates, namely *использовать* and *резать*, but it is an actant only in the first case. That is why it is included in square brackets in (75) but not in (72).

In conclusion, I am firmly convinced that valency-oriented semantic description, of which I have tried to give a sample in this paper, is superiour to still popular approaches that are based on semantic features and/or components. At the same time it must be admitted that in this paper no attention has been paid to many aspects—communicative, referential, logical—which are required for a full account of these structures.

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