

Zatłuczenie się kota: Aspectual range of Polish verbal nouns

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The object of the study is Polish categorial verbal nouns (further – VN), substantivum verbale on *-(e)ni(e)/-ci(e)*, e.g. *czytać* → *czytanie* ‘reading’. There is probably no other grammatical form whose status varies so strikingly both in grammatical descriptions of different Slavic languages and in monolingual studies. For example, the Grammatical Dictionary of Polish (Saloni 2012) considers VN as a form of the verb(!) with no exceptions, while the Academic Grammar of Polish doesn't include VN in the verb paradigm (Grzegorzczkova 1998). But it's generally accepted that in categorial Polish VNs (like *przepalanie (się)* IPFV – *przepalenie (się)* PFV ‘burning’), a number of verb properties are preserved: aspect, voice, reflexivity. Such VNs are generally considered to be in functional relations of complementary distribution and are used in “their” aspectual meaning (Jędrzejko 1993; Vetulani 2000; Rozwadowska 2000; Korytkowska&Małdzińska 2002 etc).

Meanwhile, some corpus data indicate that Polish VNs formed from verbs of certain aspectual classes exist only as potential (vocabulary), not real units; they are absent in speech or lose some of their verb semantics. These aspectual classes of verbs, in particular, are semantically linked to an explicit temporal limit – delimitative, quantum limiting, inceptive (as e.g. *pobadać* ‘to study (some time)’ → *pobadanie?* or *zaplakać* ‘to start crying’ → *zaplakanie?*). The phrase about the ill-fated cat in the title is an example of an amusing attempt by the participants of the linguistic survey – native Polish speakers – to form VNs from similar verbs and to use them: *Babcia spowodowała **zatłuczenie się** na śmierć swojego kota*.

The range of aspectual functions of the VN differ from the corresponding range of its base verb. Certain semantic components of verbal aspect are compatible with nominal derivations (duration, repetition etc.), while other components aren't compatible at all: apparently, “no-go” for VN s in Polish is the temporal delimitation of the action.

The material of the study is continuous sampling of Polish VN, derived from the delimitative (228 VN), inceptive (84 VN) and quantum limiting (42 VN) verbs. These units have been analyzed for presence/frequency in corpora (NKJP) taking into account their realized spectrum of aspectual functions. Four scenarios could be possible: 1) complete absence of such VNs in corpora, 2) reduction of verb aspectual meanings, 3) semantic drift towards substantivity and 4) language game – in each case the semantics of temporal delimitation disappears. The results of a linguistic survey of native Polish speakers will also be presented.

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