

## АКТУАЛЬНІ ПИТАННЯ ЛІНГВІСТИЧНОЇ СЕМАНТИКИ [CURRENT ISSUES IN LINGUISTIC SEMANTICS]

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### СТЕРЕОТИП ПРОФЕСІЇ В СЕМАНТИЦІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО ДІЄСЛОВА-КОНВЕРСИВА

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У статті досліджується семантика дієслів, утворених за конверсією від іменників зі значенням «представник професії». Мета статті – розкрити взаємозв'язок значення похідного дієслова і стереотипних уявлень про професії. Аналіз лексикографічних моделей значення іменника й дієслова у словотвірній парі конверсії, а також агентивно-предикатних конструкцій з дієсловом-конверсивом дозволив виявити ряд закономірностей.

По-перше, у значенні дієслова-конверсива відображено дії, типові для певної професії, проте вживання дієслова не обмежено даною професійною сферою. По-друге, модель конверсії «виконавець – дія» містить метафоричний перенос, при якому представник професії, позначений іменником, порівнюється за характером або манерою поведінки з виконавцем дії, позначеним дієсловом. Як наслідок, деякі стереотипні характеристики виконавця закріплені в значенні дієслова-конверсива як частина імплікаціоналу.

**Особистий внесок** автора передбачає розробку концепції вбудовування стереотипу в лексичне значення дієслів та подання стереотипних особливостей

певних професій, виявлених у випадку вивчення англійських дієслів, отриманих шляхом конверсії. Результати, представлені в цій роботі, виконуються виключно автором.

**Ключові слова:** конверсія, дієслово-конверсив, морфо-семантична інкорпорація, стереотип професії, імплікаціональне значення, агентивно-предикатна конструкція.

## A STEREOTYPE OF A PROFESSION IN THE SEMANTICS OF AN ENGLISH CONVERTED VERB

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*The present article takes a closer look at the semantics of verbs derived by conversion from nouns that denote a professional worker. The aim of the study is to reveal correlation of a converted verb meaning with a stereotype of a profession. The analysis of lexicographic models of noun and verb meanings and agent-action constructions with a converted verb in text fragments showed some relevant evidence of such correlation. Firstly, the actions assumed as typical for a profession are profiled by a converted verb, while the verb is not restricted to a certain professional sphere in its usage. Secondly, the conversion pattern “agent → action” involves a metaphoric transference, as a professional worker named by a base noun is compared to a doer of the action denoted by a converted verb. As a result, certain stereotypical characteristics related to the behavior of a doer are embedded in the implicational meaning of a converted verb.*

*Personal contribution of the author involves the development of the conception of stereotype embedding in the lexical meaning of verbs and representation of stereotypical features of certain professions revealed in the case study of English verbs derived by conversion. The results presented in this paper are carried out solely by the author. The study was conducted on a self-financing basis.*

**Key words:** conversion, a converted verb, morpho-semantic incorporation, a stereotype of a profession, implicational meaning, agent-predicate construction.

### 1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics approaches a word as “a symbolic label of mental categories referring to (in)animate objects, to states, actions, conditions and qualities as they are perceived by and conventionally construed in the human mind in interaction with social and natural environment” [11, p. 2]. The main task is to study

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what knowledge, perceived, processed, and accumulated by a certain language community, is embedded in the meaning of words. In this respect, words derived by conversion are subjects of great interest as they convey a great deal of conceptually-relevant information in a single lexical design. **Conversion** is defined as a lexeme-formation process in which the base lexeme and the derived lexeme are identical in their morphemic form. The derivational process is followed by a change of part-of-speech meaning [5, p. 13].

The goal of the article is to reveal stereotypical images that are embedded in the semantics of English verbs derived from the names of professional workers. A **stereotype** is seen as a cognitive structure that includes knowledge, beliefs and expectations about the behavior of members of a certain social group [6, p. 3-4]. As P. R. Hinton states, stereotypes are the products of our “predictive brain [...]”, developing associations through experience of their prevalence in the social world of the perceiver” [9]. The conditions of social life determine the way language signs develop their meaning to serve communication needs [1, p. 4]. Thus, language signs, mainly words, reflect and perpetuate stereotypes that exist in a language community.

The object of the study is English de-agentive verbs derived by means of conversion such as *to doctor*, *to engineer*, *to advocate*. The idea that the meanings of these verbs demonstrate a certain correlation with stereotypical knowledge about professions hasn't been expressed in research literature so we are making the first steps to investigate the issue. In this paper we will focus on two related questions:

1) What actions are seen as typical for a certain profession? The answer to this question is given through the analysis of a derivational pattern of N – V conversion and the meaning of a converted verb in context.

2) What qualities are ascribed to a doer of professionally-marked actions? We suggest that the information about the potential doer of an action is part of the implicational meaning of a verb. In other words, the verb implies who could perform the denoted action by a set of deduced attributive features. These features are actualized in context to serve as a semantic link between an agent and a predicate.

## 2. Methods and materials

The theoretical framework of the current study is an integral approach to meaning. Meaning is modeled as a complex structure that includes an indistinct rather than a fixed range of semantic components [10, p. 15-16]. This approach is fully realized in M. V. Nikitin's stochastic model of meaning [3]. The structure of meaning is divided into an intensional, an implicational, and an extensional. **The intensional** contains core semantic features that perform a differentiating function in the language system. The **implicational** part includes periphery semantic components that have

communicative relevance and “are induced by an intensional of a meaning due to implicational ties of features” [3, p. 164]. The *extensional* embraces the objects, actions, phenomena named by a given word.

The intensional meaning is described in a lexicographic definition. However, to reveal an implicational and an extensional of a conversed verb the definitional analysis should be combined with contextual analysis. Contextual meaning of a word could activate implicational semantic features kept in presupposition. The description of scenes, actions, and the participants of these actions help to build up the extensional of a verb. Although the agent in a sentence is named by other lexemes, it is still part of the action scene, hence, part of the verb extensional (similar views are expressed in Ch. Fillmore’s theory of deep cases [8], the concept of event structures for verb categorization by M. Rappaport-Hovav [12] and the methodology of situational modeling of verb meaning [4]).

Definitions for a componential analysis of meaning were selected from online Collins English Dictionary [13] and Oxford Dictionary [14]. Text material was taken from the British National Corpus [15]. A sample concordance was selected for each conversed verb taken as a key lemma (an average number is 100 examples per verb). The selection of examples was restricted to clauses with agent-predicate constructions that show clear reference of an agent.

Firstly, the predicate in a text fragment was substituted by its semantic analogue (other verbs that express the same or nearly the same action) to find out whether a conversed verb in the predicate function corresponds to the action or actions identified in its vocabulary definitions. Secondly, we looked for contextual markers that proved information about the profession of an agent named in a construction with a conversed verb-predicate. Such markers could be words that denoted professions, places of work or career periods. Thirdly, we checked whether the attributive features that were deduced on the stage of definitional analyses are actualized in texts. The noun phrases (NP) in agentive positions could have similar semantic features referring to certain qualities of a doer. The context may also contain other words that point to some characteristics of a doer. In this case we analyzed whether these explicitly given characteristics correspond to the implicational semantic features found in the verb meaning.

### 3. Results and discussion

Noun-to-verb conversion results in morpho-semantic incorporation. On the one hand, the morphemic form of a word suggests an association with the primary doer. We use the notion “a primary doer” to identify the doer (or agent, in the terms of role semantics) that is denoted by a base noun. On the other hand, semantics displays a special type of agent incorporation that is revealed through componential analysis and contextual-based modeling.

(Актуальні питання лінгвістичної семантики [Aktual'ni pytannja lingvistychnoi' semantyky])

Стереотип професії в семантиці англійського дієслова-конверсива (Англійською) [Stereotyp profesii' v semantyci anglijs'kogo dijeslova-konversyva]

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A number of studies of denominal verbs state that an English verb derived by conversion incorporates a source actant in the structure of meaning. For instance, this property of converted words was described in a survey of noun-to-verb transposition by E. V. Clark and H. H. Clark [7] and profoundly analyzed in a recent thesis of valence properties of English conversion by A. V. Lomovaya [2].

Take an instrumentative actant, for example. In a converted verb *to hand* the instrument ‘hand’ is part of its meaning, thus it is not verbalized by a separate lexeme in a sentence, as a rule:

(1) *I handed him the book* (= I used my hand to perform this action).

However, there is no full incorporation of an agent in the meaning of English verbs as the doer is named by a different lexeme in a sentence:

(2) *Rob piloted on Tuesday*. The doer (agent) is Rob and he may or may not be a pilot by profession (further context is necessary).

In elliptical sentences the doer is extracted from the context, not from the meaning of verb predicate:

(3) *What did he do at the weekends?* – *Piloted, as usual*.

As illustrated in examples 2 – 3, a doer incorporated by the form of a converted verb is:

a) attributive – being part of verb meaning, it represents a quality or characteristics rather than a substance;

b) implicational – the qualities ascribed to a doer by this part of verb meaning require additional support of facts from the context to satisfy the truth condition of the proposition (for example, that Rob is a pilot by profession).

The latter semantic property shows that the component of verb meaning associated with the name of a primary doer (a professional worker, in our case) contains stereotypical knowledge – what is believed to be like or what is highly probable.

### 3.1. The profiling of typical actions in a converted verb

Derivational relations between a base noun that denotes a person and a derived verb are based on a propositional pattern: *A person performs a [regular] action\activity*.

In the nominal meaning the propositional component of a doer is profiled: a person is categorized according to the actions\activity that are part of a certain profession. For example, *a nurse* is ‘a person who tends the sick, injured, or infirm’.

In the verb meaning the “action” component is profiled, like in the verb *to nurse* ‘to tend (the sick)’. The selection of actions that are to be profiled by conversion depends on the established assumptions of language users about a certain profession. In particular, a nurse has several responsibilities and performs different professional actions, but only the activity “tend” is viewed as the typical one and is encoded in the meaning of the lexeme



*nurse*. “Tend” is a rather general notion but it contains the senses that are part of a stereotypical image of a nurse – care, tenderness. These senses are found in all meanings of a conversed verb in system polysemy and in context. Compare:

(4) *She **nursed** a patient to health* (nurse 1 = tend, take care of).

(5) *Father **was nursing** his baby daughter* (nurse 2 = hold carefully, fondly).

(6) *Winterbottom **is nursing** a shoulder injury* (nurse 3 = cure (an injury) by treating it carefully and protectively).

(7) *Abdallah **nursed** his ambitions for Palestine* (nurse 4 = take special care of the issue, plan carefully).

As could be seen from examples 4 – 7 given above, the polysemy of a conversed verb could develop independently from its base noun. But we have also found cases of parallelism in the polysemantic structures of a noun and a verb in a conversed pair. For instance, a polysemantic verb *to butcher* correlates with all variants of meaning of the base noun:

Noun	Verb
1. ‘a person who slaughters or dresses meat for market’;	1. ‘to slaughter or dress (animals) for meat’;
2. ‘a person who kills people indiscriminately or brutally’;	2. ‘to kill indiscriminately or brutally’;
3. ‘a person who destroys, ruins, or bungles something’.	3. ‘to destroy or ruin something, bungle’.

The second variant of meaning is the most frequent one: the verb *butcher* denotes the action ‘kill’ in 74 % of concordance examples.

The study revealed that a conversed verb tends to profile the actions that are not restricted to a particular professional field. For example, of all actions found in the definition of a noun *advocate* (‘speak or write in favour’, ‘defend in court’, ‘work for the interests’, ‘intercede’ ‘plead (a case)’, ‘support publicly’, ‘recommend’) the verb *to advocate* doesn’t express the meaning ‘to defend in court’ and ‘to plead a case’. In different contexts the verb indicates the actions that show favour, approval or support:

(8) *KMT liberals **advocated** directed presidential elections* (advocate = intercede, plead, speak in favour).

(9) *Islamic extremist groups **advocated** violence* (advocate = approve, urge, express favour).

(10) *Hahnemann strongly **advocated** preventive medicine* (advocate = recommend, write in favour).

A conversed verb could profile actions that are not represented in the intensional of a base noun. The selection of such actions is determined by associative processes that, inter alia, constitute a stereotype. For example, a conversed verb *to doctor*

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primarily means ‘to practice medicine’, but this meaning is outdated. Thus, only in 2 % of the BNC concordance the verb denotes ‘practice medicine’, ‘work as a doctor’. In 75 % the predicate *doctor* means ‘to falsify, change something in order to deceive’ and in 23 % the verb expresses the meaning ‘to alter the food or drink by adding harmful ingredients’:

(11) *The murderer **doctored** the fruit* (doctor 3 = poison, add something harmful).

(12) *The award-winning ITN newsman **doctored** his passport* (doctor 2 = falsify).

(13) *Pakistan **doctored** the ball* (doctor 2 = cheat, here: score by trick).

As seen, the verb meaning reveals a negative attitude associated with the root *doctor* that is probably the result of misconceptions about intellectuals, like ‘they use their competence, skill, and knowledge to fool less educated and trusting people’. Historically, people grew prejudiced against alchemists and pharmacists who could alter substances and create poison, who studied biological processes and ways to affect the human body. A doctor-charlatan is also a strong stereotype: inability to cure a patient was (and still is) believed to be either incompetence or a doctor’s mistake or a fraud.

### 3.2. Stereotypical qualities of a doer in the meaning of a conversed verb

The conversion pattern “agent → action” involves a metaphoric transference, as the primary doer (expressed by a base noun) is compared to a new doer (potentially capable of an action/activity denoted by a verb derivative) in the manner or behavior. Definitional analysis revealed two ways of representing a primary doer in the verb meaning:

1) a direct reference, for example, *to tinker* ‘to mend (pots or pans) as a **tinker**’;

2) an indirect reference through the features attributed to a doer, for example, *to herald* ‘to proclaim, especially with **enthusiasm**’.

The first representation enables a language user to draw analogy between a primary doer and a real doer of the described action in the speech act. Thus, the speaker or listener decides whether the similarity is based on identical categorical feature (attribution to the same profession) or on other attributive features (usually, similar manner of action, revealing certain personal characteristics). The latter is the case of metaphor.

The second representation keeps the results of metaphoric transference in the lexicographic model of meaning. The attribution of certain features to a doer requires a cognitive reconstruction. The intensional components of verb meaning specify the action – its manner, goal, place etc. But these components could also refer to characteristics of a doer in terms of his ability to act in a particular manner, with a particular goal and in a particular place, for example, “to act with enthusiasm (manner of action) = a doer is enthusiastic”.

(Current issues in linguistic semantics [Aktual'ni pytannja lingvistychnoi' semantyky])

Stereotype of a Profession in the Semantics of an English Conversed Verb (in English) [Internacionalizmy francuz'kogo pohodzhennja v anglijs'kij ta ukrai'ns'kij movah]

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The revealed features of a doer constitute an implicational component of verb meaning. The definitional analysis showed that primary meanings of conversed verbs contain a direct reference to a doer while secondary meanings contain an indirect representation. The corpus analysis proved that in the absolute majority of uses a conversed verb is combined with an agent that is not categorized as a representative of a given profession. The frequency of agent-predicate constructions that refer to one professional sphere varies from 0 to 5 % in the concordances of conversed verbs. Usually such examples describe a career path of a person, for example:

(14) *The unfortunate McNally **was refereeing** a club cup final between Kerikeri and Kaero.* (McNally worked as a referee in this event).

(15) *In 1833 Brunel was engaged [...] **to engineer** a railway between Bristol and London.* (Brunell is a British engineer).

Non-categorical attributive features of a primary doer implied in the meaning of a conversed verb are activated to establish syntagmatic relation between an agent and a verb predicate. For example, the agent of an action *to engineer* should have organization skills, be smart and clever, creative. The survey of concordances provided sufficient examples when the features, deduced in the verb meaning, are described explicitly in context. For example,

(16) *I admit it was rather **clever** of you to engineer that intimate little scene.*

(17) *The high prices [were] **brilliantly engineered** by Kirkman.*

In some cases a conversed verb helps build an extended imagery, activating a professional stereotype. For example,

(18) *She **marshaled** the troops: flour, sugar, eggs, milk, vanilla essence* (marshal = organize, arrange in order).

(19) *She **was marshaling** all her reserves of anger and distaste, but they were being insidiously undermined by a sensation she couldn't begin to describe* (marshal = take under control).

The verb-predicate in examples 18 – 19 activates a stereotype of a marshal – a strong-willed, well-organized, disciplined person.

The following table summarizes our findings on stereotypical features that are embedded in the semantic structure of conversed verbs.

Verb	Stereotypical features of a doer
advocate	biased, socially active
broker	authoritative, peacemaker
butcher	cruel, merciless, brutal
doctor	skillful, crafty, dishonest
engineer	clever, skillful, crafty
herald	spirited, socially active

(Актуальні питання лінгвістичної семантики [Aktual'ni pytannja lingvistychnoi' semantyky])

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marshal	strong-willed, well-organized, disciplined
nurse	attentive, careful, tender
pilot	patronizing, leader
shepherd	attentive, careful, patronizing
soldier	persistent, stubborn
tinker	crafty, careless, lacking skill
usher	courteous, obsequious

**4. Conclusion**

The study has provided new evidence about the ability of conversed words to condense semantic and pragmatic information. Verbs derived by conversion from nouns of profession represent a propositional-type cognitive structure with a profiled concept of an action/activity and an implicated concept of an agent (a doer of the action). Conversion links to a shared knowledge that an average language user is assumed to have. In our study this shared knowledge includes the awareness about typical actions of professional workers and conventionalized beliefs about their qualities and traits of character. The actions that make the meaning of a verb are conceptualized as characteristics of a certain profession, but the derived verb is not limited to a particular professional sphere in its usage.

A conversed verb is used to render common characteristics between its agent in a sentence and its noun-base. The structure of a verb meaning implies such comparison either through a direct reference to a primary doer named by the base-noun or through a set of attributive semantic features that refer to the characteristics of a doer, capable to act in a particular manner. The features that show stereotypical qualities are also found in metaphorical secondary variants of verb meaning. A conversed verb can employ any of the secondary meanings of the base noun or develop its own secondary meanings directly from a professional concept labeled but the given morphemic form.

It ought to be emphasized that the meaning of verbs derived by conversion from names of profession does not express a stereotype in its full content. We have only traced separate features that refer to stereotypical assumptions. Moreover, implicative semantic features deduced in the meaning of conversed verbs are activated in some rather than all contexts from the studied corpus. The research carried here needs to be extended to other language units that could encode stereotypical information about different professions. It would also be interesting to continue the study of verbal embedding of stereotypes on verbs derived from proper nouns, such as *to megan* or *to oprah*, that have recently entered the English vocabulary.

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