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VERBS IMPLYING SEMANTIC ROLE OF RESULT:  
CORRELATION BETWEEN DIATHESIS AND ASPECTUAL MEANING

It is commonly accepted that verbs describe situations with one or more participants, each with its own semantic role in the situation in question. Roles approximately correspond to Fillmore's deep cases – there are roles such as Agent, Patient, Location, Theme, etc. I shall deal with the semantic role of Result (called Factitive in Fillmore 1968).

Semantics of Aspect – in Russian as well as in other languages – is closely related to the idea of Result. So it is reasonable to assume that there should be a correlation between the participant Result in the verb's concept of the situation and the possibility to use the verb in this or that aspectual form or aspectual meaning. My paper is devoted to this correlation: I shall deal with aspectual properties of verbs implying the semantic role of Result.

**1. Diathesis: roles and ranks of participants**

Where do semantic roles come from? I assume that the role of a participant is licensed by a component (or components) in the meaning definition of a verb (cf. Apresjan 1974: 125-9; Jackendoff 1993: 60; Croft 1991: 178). For example, Agent is a participant that exerts influence upon somebody or something with a certain goal in mind; Patient is a participant acted upon (by the Agent or some other Causer – e.g. natural force, as in *The hurricane ruined the bridge*); Theme is a participant that changes its state or property in the course of the event denoted by the verb, not being acted upon directly; etc. So what will serve as a semantic license for the role of Result?

It is natural to look for a participant with the semantic role of Result among verbs in the Perfective aspect (Pfv). In fact, a verb in the Pfv designates a change (Antinucci, Gebert 1975): something was the case before, now it is not – or vice versa. A change presupposes existence of an initial state, which ceased to be, and a new state that came into existence. The semantic component "result" is the new state which has arisen in the course of consciously directed activity of the Agent and which corresponds to the purpose of this activity. We say that the semantic role Result is implied by the meaning of a verb in the Pfv if this new state presupposes that a new participant comes into being (in particular, a new state may consist in the arrival of a new participant on the scene). For example, verbs

*narisovat* ‘draw, Pfv’, *svjazat* ‘knit, Pfv’ in (1a) presuppose a participant Result; at the same time, many verbs in the Pfv do not presuppose any participant coming into existence – intransitives *to come*, *to stand up* in (1b) and even transitive *read* in (1c); in fact, *your paper* does not designate the Result of the activity of the Agent:

- (1) a. On narisoval kružoček; svjazal šarf ‘He drew a circle; knitted a scarf’;  
 b. On prišel, vstal ‘He came, stood up’;  
 c. Ja pročitaval vašu stat’ ju ‘I have read your paper.’

The changing relationships between semantic participants of a verb and their syntactic positions in a sentence can be formally represented as diathetic shifts.

As a first approximation, we assume that each participant is denoted by a syntactic argument of a verb – its dependent NP or PP. But it is often the case that a Participant is assigned several different roles. For example, in (2) one and the same participant *zabor* ‘the fence’ is both Patient and Theme – it is Theme, because it changes its state, and Patient, because it is physically acted upon:

- (2) Džon pokrasil *zabor* ‘John painted *the fence*’ [Object = Patient and Theme].

Other verbs may presuppose two different participants for the same two roles. In (3) the Prepositional Phrase (PP) *with water* denotes the Patient affected by the activity of the Agent (in fact, water is acted upon because it changes its place as a result of the Agent’s activity), while the pool, surfacing as the Object in the sentence, is but a Theme – the participant that changes its state (becomes full) and, thus, is ready for being used:

- (3) Džon napolnil svoj bassejn svežej vodoj  
 ‘John filled his pool with fresh water’ [Object = Theme].

Fillmore’s famous examples (see Fillmore 1977), such as (4), demonstrated that, generally speaking, syntactic positions of participants are not wholly predictable from their semantic roles – participants with the same role may occupy different syntactic positions; in (4a) *the truck*, Place, enters the perspective, while in (4b) it does not:

- (4) a. I loaded *the truck* with hay;  
 b. I loaded *the hay* on the truck

Analogous Russian example is due to Apresjan 1974 (here given with a slightly changed interpretation); note that in Russian the verb is the same in (5a) and (5b):

- (5) a. Ivan zalil benzin A-96 v bak  
 ‘John poured petrol A-96 into the tank’ [Object = Patient];  
 b. Ivan zalil bak benzinom A-96  
 ‘John filled the tank by petrol A-96’ [Object = Theme].

The notion of diathesis was introduced in Mel'čuk, Xolodovič 1970 and is here slightly modified. With the help of this notion it possible to formally represent the unstable correspondence between semantic roles and syntactic positions of the participants. For one and the same verb this correspondences may be different, the difference being interpreted as a diathetic shift. In Padučeva 1998 syntactic positions of participants were associated with communicative ranks: Center (for Subject and Object), Periphery (for oblique cases and PPs) and "Off screen" (for those participants that do not appear on the surface)<sup>1</sup>, so that diathetic shifts are interpreted semantically as rank changing transformations. For example, the difference between (6a) and (6b) consists in that in (6b) Participant Place is promoted from Periphery to the Center, while Means is demoted to the periphery:

- (6) a. I smeared *paint* on the wall <Agent-Subject, Means-Object, Place-Periphery>;  
b. I smeared *the wall* with paint <Agent-Subject, Place-Object, Means-Periphery>.

In example (7), from Kamp, Rossdeutscher 1994, one of the participants (*the patient*) a participant leaves the perspective altogether and goes «Off screen»:

- (7) a. I cured *the patient* from malaria;  
b. I cured *malaria*.

Now let us return to Result. What is peculiar about this participant is that it prefers to be in the communicative Center, at least in the case of a creation verb. If the concept of a situation includes the participant Result this participant tends to occupy the syntactic position of the <direct> Object, as in (8a) (in examples below the participant Result is underlined; italics is used to mark the direct Object):

- (8) Ivan postroil *dom* 'John built a house';

With verbs of other semantic classes this is not necessarily the case – in (9) the role of Result is disguised under the mask of Instrumental *by new details*:

- (9) On dopolnil svoj rasskaz novymi podrobnostjami.  
'He supplemented his story by new details'.

Indeed, *X supplemented Z by Y* = 'X has made a supplement to Z', and the supplement is what X has added to Z by creating it.

More often than not the participant designated by the direct Object bears the semantic role of Patient, i.e. of the entity acted upon. This makes Patient and Result kind of rivals – they struggle with one another for the prestigious position of syntactic Object.

There are diathetic shifts that put the participant Result in and out of the syntactic Object

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<sup>1</sup> Note that Fillmore has a binary distinction – inside/outside perspective, while our notion of diathesis provides for four different communicative ranks. See Croft 1991: 151 on interrelations between semantic roles and topicality, Levin 1999 on objecthood and perspective.

position. Correspondingly, the participant Result changes its communicative rank. Jespersen in his "Philosophy of grammar" (Jespersen 1924/1958: 183) gives numerous examples of a diathetic shift that concerns the participant Result (= the effected object):

- (10) dig the ground – dig a grave; bore the plank – bore a hole in the plank; light the lamp – light a fire; He eats an apple – The moths eat holes in curtains; hatch an egg – hatch a chicken; roll a hoop – roll pills; strike the table – strike sparks, etc.

The possibility of interpreting a verb (in a given context of its use) as a verb of creation can depend on its diathesis, i.e. on the correspondence between semantic roles and syntactic positions of the participants. Examples below show that a verb may be interpreted as denoting creation only because its participant Result is promoted to the position of the syntactic Object. We consider three types of semantic derivation (some of the examples are due to Apresjan 1974).

a) ‘deformation’ ⇒ ‘creation of parts’.

In (11a) the position of the direct Object is occupied by a Patient subjected to a deformation; in (11b) this position is occupied by parts, i.e. by the Result:

- (11) a. On porezal *mjaso* na melkie kuski ‘He cut *the meat* into fine pieces’;  
b. ‘Ty režeš’ sliškom melkie kuski ‘You cut too fine pieces’.

The participant Result gains the victory over Patient – the other applicant for the Object position – and occupies its place.

b) ‘deformation’ ⇒ ‘creation of an aperture or cavity’.

See examples (12), (13). In sentence (a) the Object position is occupied by the Patient, in (b) – by the Result, and is what changes the semantic class of the verb:

- (12) a. Pulja probila *furažku* ‘The bullet has punched *the cap*’;  
b. Pulja probila dyrku v furažke ‘The bullet has punched a hole in the cap’.
- (13) a. On prorubil stenu ‘He breached the wall’;  
b. On prorubil okno v stene ‘He breached a window in the wall’.

c) ‘ornamenting X by a pattern’ ⇒ ‘creation of a pattern on X’

- (14) a. vyšit’ *podušku* ‘embroider a pillow’;  
b. Vyšit’ *rozu* na poduške ‘embroider a rose on a pillow’.

In all these examples the verb changes its interpretation as a consequence of the transition of Result into a communicatively prestigious position of the direct Object.

Thus, we reveal a non-trivial feature of creation verbs – namely, on the syntactic level they frequently ignore the participant Patient, which should play an important role at the stage of activity leading to the final Result.

Example (15) can also be interpreted as a diathetic shift. But in (12) the shift consisted in that the participant Result entered the perspective, while in (15b), on the contrary, in the derivative use the Result (underlined in (15a)) is withdrawn «Off screen» – the exact place of the rendezvous remains unknown to the listener:

- (15) a. On vybral mestom svidanija Kistenevskuju rošču  
'He has chosen Kistenev grove as a place for the rendezvous'  
[direct diathesis; Result specified];
- b. On vybral mesto dlja svidanija  
'He has chosen a place for the rendezvous'  
[parametrical diathesis; Result not specified].

## **2. Participant Result and the meaning of ongoing activity in the Imperfective**

Among the numerous factors influencing aspectual choice in Russian, diathesis, as it seems, never was taken into consideration. Meanwhile, there are reasons to believe that such a correlation exists. Namely, with some verbs Ipfv can be used in the meaning of ongoing activity only on the condition that the participant Result is absent from the concept of the situation. I shall consider several classes of verbs where this correlation between aspect and diathesis is conspicuous – 1) verbs of choice and decision making, such as *vybrat'* 'to choose'; 2) phasal verbs, such as *zakočit'* 'to finish' <smth with smth>; 3) verbs of exerting influence on smb's mental state, such as *ob'jasnit'* 'to explain'; 4) verbs of creation of intellectual result, such as *opredelit'* 'to define'; 5) Verbs of creation of a material object, such as *postroit'* 'build'.

### **2.1. Verbs of a choice**

Examples. *vybrat'* 'to choose', *naznačit'* 'to nominate', *zaplanirovat'* 'to plan', *ustanovit'* 'to establish', *dogovorit'sja* 'to agree upon', *podobrat'* 'to pick up', *najti* 'to find', *reshit'* 'to decide' [what to do]:

- (1) Oni dogovorils' o srokax konferencii.  
'They agreed upon the terms of the conference'.

Consider the verb *vybrat'* 'to choose'. It has two diatheses:

- (2) a. Korol' Xussejn vybral [Past Pfv] sebe v preemniki svoego syna Abdullu  
'The king Hussein chose his son Abdullah as his successor'.  
[it is known that he hesitated]
- b. Korol' Xussejn vybral [Past Pfv] sebe preemnika.  
'The king Hussein chose the successor'.

In the diathesis exemplified by (2a) the participant Result occupies the position of the Object;

it is a direct diathesis. In (2b), the Object position is occupied by the Set of a choice; the Result of the choice is not named (it is Off screen) and can and may be absent in a situation designated by the verb:

(3) *Kogda že on vyberet preemnika?* ‘When is it that he will choose *the* successor?’

The generalization is now at hand: in the case of the direct diathesis, when the Result is explicitly specified, the use of the Ipfv in the meaning of ongoing activity is impossible. So, in (4) the Result is present in the situation and, most likely, the Present Tense in (4) is to be interpreted as praesens historicum. In other words, Ipfv is here used, so to say, in the meaning of the Perfective:

(4) *Korol’ Xussejn vybiraet* [Present Ipfv] *sebe v preemniki svoego syna Abdullu*  
‘The king Hussein *chooses his son Abdullah* as his successor’  
[activity interpretation of Ipfv excluded].

The impossibility of ongoing activity interpretation the Ipfv in the context of a diathesis including Result is semantically substantiated: if the Result of a choice is already present among the participants of a situation, the activity directed to its achievement is senseless.

So, the correlation between aspect and diathesis is established. As far as we know, the first observation in this area was made in [Bulygina, Shmelev 1997] (though the term “diathesis” was not used by the authors). Namely, the property of a verb was revealed, consisting in that the activity meaning of the verb *reshat’* ‘deside’ is only possible in the context of an indirect question; while with conjunction *that* or with an infinitive the Ipfv can only have trivial meanings – iterative, praesens historicum, etc.:

- (5) a. \**Oni dolgo rešali* [Past Ipfv], *čto na konferenciju poedet Džonson*  
‘\*For a long time they were deciding that Johnson will go to the conference’  
[activity interpretation of Ipfv excluded];
- b. *Oni dolgo rešali* [Past Ipfv], *kto poedet na konferenciju*.  
‘For a long time they were deciding who will go to the conference’.

Obviously, the combinability restriction demonstrated by example (5) has the same explanation as that in (4): in (5a) the subordinate clause informs what concrete decision was made, i.e. the final result of the activity is ready; while "the discussion of various opportunities making the essence of decision taking, on the contrary, is meaningful only in the event that the concrete decision is not known", [Bulygina, Shmelev 1997: 156].

Similarly in (6):

- (6) a. *On uznaët* [Present Ipfv], *čto ee zovut Tat’jana*  
‘He *learns that she is called Tatiana*’ [activity interpretation of Ipfv excluded];
- b. *On uznaët* [Present Ipfv], *kak ee zovut*  
‘He *is trying to learn what she is called*’.

Here in (6a) the verb has a direct diathesis, the participant Result is specified explicitly; while in (6b), with an indirect diathesis, the participant Result is Off screen – or does not exist at all. And for (6a) there arises the same impossibility to interpreting Ipfv to mean ongoing activity.

For mental verbs, such as *vspomnit'* ‘recollect’ the opportunity of understanding Ipfv in the meaning of ongoing activity is determined by the presence of the participant Result:

- (7) a. Ja *vspomnil* [Past Pfv], čto ee zovut Tat'jana  
‘I *recollected* that she is called Tatiana’;  
b. Ja *vspominaju* [Present Ipfv], kak ee zovut  
‘I *<am trying to> recollect* how she is called’  
[activity interpretation of the Ipfv].

In example (7) sentence (7a) is admissible because the Pfv is compatible with Result, and sentence (7b) is correct because the verb has an indirect diathesis, so that Result is not present in the concept of the situation.

## 2.2. Phasal verbs

Some phasal verbs also imply participant Result: *zakančit'* ‘finish’, *načat'* ‘begin’, *zaključit'* ‘conclude <speech by words>’, *dobavit'* ‘add’.

In (1a), with *zakančivat'* ‘to finish, Ipfv’ in the Result-less diathesis, the activity interpretation of the Ipfv is possible. In (1b) it is excluded, and the reason is, again, that the verb is used in the diathesis with the participant Result; in (1c) the participant Result coerces the habitual interpretation of the Ipfv:

- (1) a. Podoždi, ja *zakančivaju* [Present Ipfv] pis'mo  
‘Wait, I *am finishing* the letter’;  
b. On *zakančivaet* [Present Ipfv] pis'mo latinskim «vale»  
‘He *finishes* the letter with the latin «vale»’ [habitual interpretation of the Ipfv];  
c. Onegin *zakančival* [Past Ipfv] pis'mo latinskim «vale»,  
lit. ‘Onegin *finished* a letter with the latin «vale»’  
[= ‘used to finish’, habitual interpretation of the Ipfv].

## 2.3. Verbs of exerting influence on somebody’s mental state

Examples:

- (1) *ob'jasnit'* ‘explain’, *dokazat'* ‘prove’, *podtverdit'* ‘confirm’, *podskazat'* ‘prompt’, *ubedit'* ‘convince’, etc.

In example (2), where the Result is not mentioned, it is possible to understand *ob'jasnjaet* ‘explains’ in meaning of ongoing activity, while in (3) the participant Result is present in the

diathesis, which fact excludes the activity interpretation of the Ipfv:

(2) – Čto on tam delaet? – *Ob'jasnjaet* studentam proisxoždenie pjaten na solnce  
'– What is he doing there? – He *is explaining* to his students the origin of the spots on the sun';

(3) On *ob'jasnjaet* obmorok u rebenka izbytkom vpečatlenij  
'He explains the child's fainting by overstrain' [activity interpretation excluded].

Thus, *explain* class of verbs shows the same correlation of the participant Result with the reduced set of possible aspectual meanings.

Interestingly enough, verbs of *explain* type can be treated as verbs of creation. In fact, in order to achieve the purpose (i.e. to influence the mental state of the Addressee) the Agent creates a certain intellectual or information product: an explanation, proof, confirmation, substantiation etc. This mental product is the Result of the activity: *ob'jasnil* 'has explained' = 'has offered an explanation'; *dokazal* = 'has proved' = 'has presented the proof' etc. Thus we get the third class of verbs with the same correlation between the presence of the participant Result in the concept of the situation and the impossibility of activity interpretation of the Ipfv.

In the presence of the participant Result the Pfv cannot be replaced by the Ipfv with the activity meaning. So, in (4a) the meaning of the Ipfv is not actional but perfective: *ob'jasnjaet* here means 'has already explained'. Meanwhile (4b) with the indirect diathesis, i.e. without the participant Result, is quite pertinent as the answer to a question «What is he doing there?»:

- (4) a. The newspapers *explain* the absence of madam Dubois at the reception by a sudden illness;  
b. He *is explaining* the absence of his wife at the reception  
[= 'the reason of her absence'].

The Present Tense in (5b) can only be understood as praesens historicum:

- (5) a. Blestjašče provedennym eksperimentom on *dokazal* [Past Pfv], čto on prav  
'By a brilliantly carried out experiment he *proved*, that he is right';  
b. Blestjašče provedennym eksperimentom on *dokazyvaet* [Present Ipfv], čto on prav  
'By a brilliantly carried out experiment he *proves* that he is right'  
[activity interpretation excluded].

In (6b) the Instrumental does not express the Result, which finishes the activity of the Agent, but an instrumental action, a kind of method with the help of which the Agent goes on in achieving his/her goal. The activity understanding of Ipfv is possible; so in (6b) Ipfv is understood in the ongoing activity meaning:



- (6) a. Stukom kolotuški storož *dokazal* [Past Pfv], čto on ne spit  
'By knocking the rattle the watchman *has proved* that he is not sleeping;  
b. Storož *stukom kolotuški dokazyval* [Past Ipfv], čto on ne spit  
'By knocking the rattle the watchman *was proving* that he was not sleeping'.

#### **2.4. Verbs of intellectual object creation**

Examples:

- (1) *opredelit'* 'define', *dokazat'* 'prove', *ograničit'* 'limit' (*He limited my obligatory presence by three hours*), *sformulirovat'* 'formulate', etc.

These verbs also confirm dependence of ongoing activity meaning on the participant Result:

- (2) a. Gegel' *opredelil* svobodu kak poznannuju neobxodimost'  
'Hegel *defined* freedom as an apprehended necessity';  
b. Gegel' *opredeljaet* svobodu kak poznannuju neobxodimost'  
'Hegel *defines* freedom as an apprehended necessity'  
[activity interpretation excluded].

In (2b) Hegel's definition of freedom (*Freedom is an apprehended necessity*) is the Result of his activity; therefore (2b) in no way can designate the ongoing activity, and the Ipfv can only have a perfective meaning: *defines* = 'has defined, and this definition preserves its actuality at the present moment' (see Paducheva 1995; 1996: 159).

#### **2.5. Verbs of material object creation**

Now, the question arises: if understanding of the Ipfv in the meaning of an ongoing activity is excluded because of the participant Result, why then is the use of the Ipfv in this meaning possible with verbs of material object creation (with the meaning 'build', 'embroider', 'bake' etc.), which verbs, at least in the Pfv, imply Result more than any other verb classes? In other words, why verbs of creation do not display this destructive influence of the participant Result on the ongoing activity meaning of the Ipfv? It is possible to say

- (1) a. *stroit' dom* 'build a house',  
b. *peč' pirog* 'bake a pie',  
c. *vyšivat' rozočku* 'embroider a rose'.

Obviously, the nature of Result is different in the context of verbs of different semantic classes. The Result of mental activity, such as knowledge, belief, decision etc., wholly belongs to the sphere of the ideal. This kind of Result, when it is present in the concept of the situation, makes the activity vacuous. Hence anomalies revealed for phasal verbs, verbs of choice, mental state influencing or intellectual object creation in sections 2.1 – 2.4.

The fact is that if the Result (future for the Ipfv verb) is of material nature then it can be, so to say, projected from the future into the present – either as an image of Result, existing in the head of the creator, or as a half made object – which is already better thought of as an object than as mere raw material. In other words, an incomplete Result can count as Result: you can ask «Who is building this house?» when only the foundation of *the house* is ready. Thus, with verbs of creation, such as *build*, the Agent's knowledge of Result does not necessarily makes the activity vacuous. For example, the Agent can know beforehand that what he/she will create will be a house; or even a novel in verse titled "Eugene Onegin" etc. What he/she knows is the Image of Result.

The participant Image of result can be detected in (2); Incomplete result – in (3):

- (2) On vyšivaet rozočku 'He embroiders a rose'  
[Object = Pattern, i.e. Image of Result];
- (3) Pirog pora peč' 'It's time to bake the pie' = 'It's time to put the pie in the furnace'  
[Object = Incomplete Result].

It is important to bear in mind that an Ipfv verb conceptualization of a situation differs from that of the corresponding Pfv one by a shift of the focus of attention: Pfv promotes the Result (and the resulting state) to the foreground, while Ipfv makes accent on the activity stage, which strongly implies a Patient, Result being represented at this stage at best as a Goal. But Patient makes a claim for the syntactic position of the Object; meanwhile, creation verbs reserve this position for the participant Result. As we saw in section 1, Patient and Result are badly combined in one and the same deep case frame, both of them having claims for the position of the syntactic Object. There are two possibilities of compensating for the absent Patient in the case frame of a creation verb.

1. Diathetic shift. If a verb's diathesis (in non-creation meaning) includes the Patient this Patient can be treated as an incorporated participant of the creation meaning, especially in the case of a part-whole relationship between the Result and the Patient. For example, in (4b) the Object position is occupied by Result but Patient is, so to say, metonymically present in the situation due to the part-whole relationship between the knot and the shawl:

- (4) a. zavjazyvat' šal' uzlom 'to tie a shawl in a knot' [Ipfv];  
b. zavjazyvat' uzel 'to tie a knot' = 'to make a knot <on smth>' (e.g., a knot for memory on a handkerchief);

2. Meaning extension of a verb. In examples (5), (6) NPs unambiguously designate Result, which occupies the place of the expected Patient:

- (5) kosit' seno, lit. 'to mow hay' = 'make hay';

(6) sušit' izjum 'to dry raisins'.

In their literal meaning Russian phrases (5), (6) are deviant: you mow, certainly, grass, not hay; you dry grapes, not raisins. The apparent semantic abnormality of these word combinations is overcome by means of meaning extension of the verb. The contextual meaning of the verb here amounts to what Melčuk calls lexical function: *kosit'*, *sušit'* in (5), (6) mean 'cause to exist' = 'create'. The same in (7):

(7) rubit' drova 'to cut fire wood (in a forest)' = 'by cutting smth <trees / branches> make fire wood'.

Manner of action indications that constitute the core of activity meaning of *rubit'* go to the background – together with the participant Patient, required by the primary meaning of the verb, what is left of semantics of *rubit'* is a pure idea of creation; and the syntactic Object *drova* is reinterpreted as designating the Result of this creation component.

It is not surprising that these phraseologically bound creation meanings of Russian manner of action verbs cannot be literally translated into English: at the face of Patient-Result competition different languages behave differently – Russian has rich phraseology of the kind, while English prefers abstract goal oriented verbs *make*, *do*, *set*, which do not specify the manner of action and, consequently, do not require Patient:

(8) zapletat' kosu, lit. 'to braid a plait' = 'to braid / plait one's hair; do up one's hair in a braid' [it is impossible to braid a plait – what you braid is hair;

(9) zažigat' ogon 'to burn fire' = 'to set fire'.

On the other hand, English idea of *frying eggs* (as distinct from making an omelette, see Wierzbicka 1980: 175) cannot be translated into Russian – you can fry only *jaičnicu*: Russian ignores the Patient and substitutes it by Result.

Thus, we see that participant Result not only blocks activity interpretation of abstract verbs of creation but constitutes a problem for verbs of material object creation as well: ingenious meaning extensions are necessary in order to make a creation verb in the Ipfv semantically compatible with the participant Result.

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