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CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS ON MEANING EXTENSION[1]

This paper addresses the question of the difference between regular patterns of semantic extension in standard Russian and those resulting in slang meanings.

The term slang here is restricted to Russian general slang, which is the part of modern Russian slang not associated with any social group. Russian general slang is used or at least understood by every adult citizen. Its characteristics is that it is spoken by the educated speakers of standard Russian and quite frequently used in the language of mass media, through which it is dispersed (Zemskaia, Rozina 1994). About half of the words of general Russian slang are not shaped differently from the words of standard language, because by their origin they are derived meanings of these words[2]. Examples are *chainik* 'a tea-urn', (slang) 'a non-professional'; *krysha* 'the roof', (slang) 'mind, reason'; *navarit'* 'to cook', (slang) 'to get profit', etc.

The question arises why, then, can every educated speaker of Russian distinguish the standard word meaning from the slang one. It is not the denotation of slang meanings that makes them specific. On the contrary, they generally denote the same as standard meanings, cf. *zheleso* 'iron', (slang) 'a computer'[3], *vjexat'* 'to drive in'/ *vrubit'sia* 'to cut in', (slang) 'to understand', *zasvetit'* 'to light', (slang) 'to discover someone', *nakryt'* 'to cover', (slang) 'to catch someone doing smth forbidden' , *iasschik* 'a box', (slang) 'a TV set', etc. This suggests that the speakers' intuitions are based on the differences in the patterns of semantic derivation that result in standard and slang word meanings, and that these differences are regular. Familiarity with the patterns of new meanings derivation helps the native speaker immediately to identify them as either slang or standard.

In the present paper I concentrate on the patterns of semantic extension of Russian verbs. In particular, I analyze the derivational relations between actions and happenings. Meanings of happenings in standard language are the bases for slang meanings of actions, e.g.: *tolknut' rebenka* 'to push a child' – *tolknut' kurtku* [lit.'to push a jacket'] (slang)'to sell a jacket'; *najexat' na peshexoda* 'to run over a passer-by' – *najexat' na firmu* [lit.'to run over a firm'], (slang)'to attack with threats'; *vzdrognut'* [lit. 'to shudder'] (slang) 'to take a drink', etc.

This paper is divided into three sections**:** Part 1 examines the differences between the lexicographic explications of actions and happenings; Part 2 analyzes the derivational relations between actions and happenings in standard Russian; Part 3 reveals patterns of semantic derivation of actions from happenings that result in slang meanings.

1. Actions and Happenings

Actions and happenings are taxonomic verb classes, the distinction between which is

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[2] All the data are based on the corpus of the dictionary Ermakova, Rozina, Zemskaia 1999.Approximately the same relationship holds between formally marked and non-marked, i.e. derived by means of the semantic extension of meanings of words of literary language, units of American slang (cf. Rozina 1978).
[3] The first word in the inverted comas is a literary translation, the second, after a coma, is an equivalent.

based on Vendler's verb classes[4]. Actions and happenings differ by the nature of the causal relation between the components of their lexicographic explications[5]. The following example is an illustration of the lexicographic explication of an action:

(1) …prokurator, rassedivshis'na nego, *razbil* kuvshin o mozaichnyi pol. (Bulgakov)

…the procurator, having become angry with him, *smashed* the jar against the mosaic

floor.

X smashed Y against Z.

Before t Y was whole   <presupposition>

Causer| at the MS[6] X acted with a goal:

affected Y: brought Y into contact with Z

Causation| it caused

The result| Y is not whole

Y has been damaged   <inference>

Actions imply a purposeful, or controlled, causation, whereas happenings do not. Behind this general opposition, there are at least two other features that differentiate actions and happenings, namely the nature of the Causer and that of the caused. The Causer of actions is the Subject's goal-oriented activity, which is reflected by the component 'X acted with a goal' in the lexicographic explication of actions. This is why the Subject of actions always has the semantic role of the Agent, which determines its taxonomic class as a person. What the actions cause is the result identical to the Subject's activity goal.

The Causer of happenings is an event, which is reflected in the lexicographic explications of happenings by the component 'something happened', as shown in the following examples:

(2) Staraias' za chto-nibud' ukhvatit'sia, Berlioz *upal* navznich. (Bulgakov)

'Trying to get hold of something, Berlioz *fell* on his back.'

X *fell*.

Before t X was upright <presupposition>

Causer| something happened to X

causation| it caused

consequence| X is in the horizontal position

X has been damaged <inference>

(3) Urnu s vodoj uroniv, ob utes ee deva *razbila*. (Pushkin)

'The girl broke the jar, having dropped it against the cliff'.

Lit.: 'The jar with water having dropped, against the cliff the girl *broke* [7]it.'

X smashed Y with Z.

In t<MS X acted with the goal: supported Y <exposition>

before t Y was whole <presupposition>

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[4] See Paducheva 1996: 103-110.

[5] What follows is the summary of the ideas of the differences between actions and happenings, worked out in the course of the system 'Lexicographer' development (see Paducheva, Kustova 1994). Its detailed account can be found in Paducheva 1994.

[6] MS=moment of speech.

Causer| in MS something happened
causation| it caused   <assertion>
consequence| Y came into contact with Z; Y is not whole
Y has been damaged <inference>
 The Subject is responsible for the damage   <inference>

Therefore the Subject of happenings cannot be goal-oriented, i.e. it never has the role of the Agent, and even in those instances when the Subject is a person, this person's activity is not the Causer of the happening. The Subject's activity is represented in the lexicographic explication of a happening by a specific component, namely the exposition, as shown in (3). What happenings cause is not a result, but a consequence, which is usually damaging either for the Subject as in (2) or to the Object as in (3).

However, there are happenings that do not imply any damage, as, for instance, perceptive happenings that describe changes not in the outer world, but in the Observer's perception, as shown in the following examples:

(4) Tut pered glazami Rimskogo *voznik* tsiferblat ego chasov. On pripominal, gde byli
     strelki. (Bulgakov)
     'At that moment in front of Rimsky's eyes the face of his clock *appeared*. He was
      trying to recall where the clock's hands were.'
(5) Vot i les *otvalilsia*, ostalsia gde-to szadi, i reka *ushla* kuda-to v storonu, navstrechu
     gruzoviku *sypalas'* raznaia raznost'.(Uppsala corpus)
     'Now the forest *got off*, remained somewhere behind, and the river, too, *went*
     somewhere to the side, various things *ran out* to the lorry.'

2.0. Meaning Extension in the Standard Language
2.1. Happenings as Extensions of Actions

In standard Russian, many verbs that are actions in their basic meanings become happenings in their derived meanings (Paducheva 1994; see also Apresjan 1995a:228 and 1995b:177 about verbs having "intentional" and "non-intentional" meanings), as for instance, *razbit'* 'to smash' in examples (1), (3). Other examples of the same are *prorezat' (petliu –platie)* 'to cut through (a button hole – a dress)* , zalit' vodoi (kartoshku –pol)* 'to pour water (on the potatoes – on the floor)'*, porvat' (pis'mo – rukav) 'to tear (the letter – the sleeve)', etc.*

The main change accompanying the derivation of a happening from an action is the introduction into the explication of the action of the component 'something happened to X'characterizing a new non-goal-oriented Causer. Further steps depend on what kind of a relationship between situations is reflected by semantic extension.

A.   Semantic extension reflects the similarity between two situations, namely the similarity between the physical result of the goal-oriented Subject's activity and the consequence of the non-goal oriented Subject's affect, as shown in the following example:

(6) a. Rybak *probil* lunku vo l'du lomom.
     'The fisherman *has made a hole* in <u>the</u> ice with a crow-bar.'
     X has made a hole in Z with S.
      Before t Z was whole <presupposition>
      in t<MS X acted with the goal:

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[7] The two meanings of Russ. *razbit'*, intentional and unintentional, in English are expressed by two different verbs, *to smash* and *to break* respectively.

affected Z with S: abruptly, with force <assertion>

it caused

the result| in MS there is Y in Z; Z is not whole

b. Etot edinstvennyj oskolok *probil* zadniju stenku "villisa", proporol kartu,

kotoruju v etot moment derzhal Sincov. (Simonov)

'That only splinter *made a hole* in the back of the Villis, tore the map Sintcov

was holding at that moment.'

X has made a hole in Z.

Before t Z was whole <presupposition>

In t<MS something happened

X came into contact with Z: abruptly, with force

It caused   <assertion>

The consequence| in MS there is Y in Z^8; Z is not whole

Z has been damaged <inference>

In this instance, the explication of the happening retains all components relating to the result of the physical affect and loses all components relating to the former Causer. The component characterizing the former goal-oriented Causer is replaced by the new causal component, whereas the Subject changes its semantic role and taxonomic class: instead of being the Agent, the Subject becomes the Patient of a happening and is no longer a person.

The components of the explication corresponding to the peripheral participants related to the former Causer, such as the Instrument and the Means, change as well. Indeed, the very presence of these participants in the situation is possible only if the situation involves the Agent (Fillmore 1968). Now these participants have either to be eliminated from the explication or to acquire a new role. Only the role and the taxonomic class of the Object remain unchanged. In this way, one of the classes of happenings is formed, namely the happenings with the Object.

In the explication of the happening there is a new inferential component 'Z has been damaged'. The consequence produced by the non-goal-oriented Causer, though on the surface it is identical to the result of the goal-oriented Causer's activity, is almost always damaging, either because it is out of place, or because it is not totally identical to the result of human action (Paducheva, Rozina 1993). This can be illustrated by the difference between the situation when one banged the window frame because one had been cold, and the situation when the wind banged the window frame, either when it was stuffy in the room, or with lots of noise, etc.

B. Semantic extension reflects the derivational relation between the situations, where one situation is part of another one. Example (3) shows that in the situation described by a happening, a non-goal-oriented Causer interfered with the goal-oriented Causer's activity, so that it has not been brought to the desired result. In this instance, in the course of semantic extension, all the components of the action that are the base for the derivation remain, but the component 'X acted with the goal' corresponding in the explication to the former Causer, i.e. the Agent. The latter is pushed out to a peripheral position of an exposition. As well as in the first instance, the Subject's semantic role changes into the Patient. However, the Subject does not change its taxonomic class, remaining a person. The Object, as well as in the first instance, retains both its role and its taxonomic class. In this way a subclass of happenings with

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[8] Y is a hole.

the Object, namely the happenings with the acting Subject, or with the Subject of responsibility, are formed. Here, too, changes of the explication have several consequences.

One consequence is the loss of the components revealing the goal and the way of the former Causer's action. As a result, the explication becomes as general as possible. For instance, the goal of the Causer of *razbit'* 'smash' in (1), identical to the result of the action, is revealed in the explication as 'to make Y not whole', whereas the way by which it is done is 'X brought Y into contact with the surface'. The way in which the Agent acts may be revealed in the explication through the indication of the type of the Instrument as well (cf. Levin, Rappaport Hovav, 1991).

The second consequence is the change of the semantic roles of such peripheral participants as the Instrument and the Means, which has been already discussed above. Thus, the participant 'surface' in (1) has the double roles of the Instrument and Place; whereas in (3) it has a single role, Place; example (7) illustrates the change of the role Instrument into the role Patient:

(7)a. Ona osadila poslushnuju sschetku, otletela v storonu, a potom, brosivshis' na disk
vnezapno, koncom sschetki *razbila* ego vdrebezgi. (Bulgakov)
'She forced the obedient broom back, flew aside, and then, suddenly having attacked
the disk, *smashed* it with the end of the broom.'
б. Vchera ona podmetala pol i koncom sschetki *razbila* steklo.
'Yesterday, when she was sweeping the floor, she broke the windowpane with the end
of the broom.'

The role Means is usually changed into the role Patient as well, as shown in the following example:

(8)a. …potom komu-to stalo ljubopytno, chto budet, esli *zalit'*eto vodoj. I *zalili.*
(Strugackie)
'…then someone became interested in what would happen if water was poured
over it. And they did *pour* water over it.'
b. On zabyl zadernut' zanavesku i *zalil* ves' pol vodoj.
He forgot to draw the curtain and *poured* water all over the floor.

The change of roles of peripheral participants when the meaning of the action is extended to the meaning of the happening is consistent with the loss by the former Causer of the components that made its characteristics a more detailed. The Instrument and the Means are much more specialized than the Patient, because they are certain types of the Patient. So, when the roles of the Instrument or the Means are changed into the roles of the Patient, the roles of these participants, as well as of the former Causer, become as generalized as possible. This suggests that the derivation of happenings from actions includes the **generalization** of the explication.

On the surface level it is reflected in the diathesis change (see Paducheva 1998): a peripheral participant becomes an optional one and goes off screen, as in (9), where the Instrument (the ball) is missing:

(9) Vchera mal'chishki igrali na poljane v futbol i *razbili* nam steklo.
Yesterday the boys played football and *broke* our windowpane.

The third important consequence of the former Causer having been pushed out, is the appearance of the inferential components 'Y has been damaged' in the explication in the same way as in the happenings with the Object.

2.2. Actions as Happenings Derivatives

In standard language one can seldom find the opposite-directed meaning extension of happenings to actions. It is natural, because happenings, as a rule, imply damage. The extension of happenings to actions require the replacement of the causing component 'something happened' by the component 'X acted with the goal'. In this

way, one ascribes to the Subject a purposeful infliction of harm to someone or something, which contradicts the cultural and social norms encoded by standard Russian. Standard language allows for one type of extension of happenings to actions only: the extension of happenings to semiotic actions. That it is possible to derive semiotic actions on the basis of happenings was indicated in Paducheva 1998 for the verbs of sound production, e.g.:

(10)a. *Stuknulo* okoshechko kassy, vysunulsia serdityj kassir i zakrichal (Strugackie).

The window of the booking office *knocked*, the angry cashier looked out and started shouting.

b. Beskudnikov *stuknul* pal'cem po ciferblatu, pokazal ego sosedu, poetu Dvubratskomu. (Bulgakov)

Beskudnikov *knocked* on the face of his watch with his finger, showed it to his neighbour, the poet Dvubratski.

This pattern is of a general nature. Polysemy of the same kind is characteristic of quite a few verbs of mimics and gesture, their basic meanings describing spontaneous reactions, e.g.:

(11)a. – O da, ty ne pokhozh na slaboumnogo, - tikho otvetil prokurator i ulybnulsia kakoj-to strashnoj ulybkoj. (Bulgakov)

'Oh, no, you don't look ~~like a~~ feebleminded, said the procurator in a low voice and smiled a horrible smile.'

b. Mekhaniki pogljadeli na nego, rassejanno emu *ulybnulis'* i snova sklonilis' nad bumagoj. (Strugackie)

' The mechanics looked at him, absent-mindedly smiled at him [lit. he-DAT.]and bent over the paper again.'

(12)a. Ot ispuga zhensschiny vskochili i zamakhali rukami.

'The women jumped from fright and *waved* their hands.'

b. Menedzher strashno nakhmurilsia, prizhal palec k gubam, a potom *zamakhal* na Peretsa rukoj. (Strugackie)

'The manager frowned severely, pressed his finger to his lips and then *waved* at Peretc with his hand.'

The derivation of semiotic actions from happenings, which works in the opposite direction to the derivation of happenings from actions, must include, in contrast to the latter, the **specialization** of meaning explication instead of its generalization. The main step of semiotic actions derivation consists in adding to the explication the component 'X acted with the goal' corresponding to the new goal-oriented Causer, which pushes out of the explication the component corresponding to the non-goal-oriented Causer of the happening. The goal is made more detailed according to the semantic class of the derived verb. For instance, for ~~the~~ semiotic actions the goal is 'to let Z know something'. The semantic role of the participant having a syntactic position of the Subject changes accordingly, so that it becomes the Agent instead of the Patient. But, as I have previously demonstrated in the course of the analysis of meaning extension from actions to happenings, the change of the central component of the explication inflicts changes on the peripheral participants.

The sources of semiotic actions can be happenings of two types, namely happenings with the Subject, as shown in (11) and (12), and happenings with the Object, as shown in (13):

(13)a. Vziav sschetku pod myshku, Margarita voshla v podjezd, *tolknuv* dver'ju udivlennogo shvejtsara. (Bulgakov)

' With the broom under her arm, Margarita went into the entrance, *having pushed* the surprised warden with the door.'

b. Margarita pod stolom *tolknula* nogoj mastera. (Bulgakov)

'Margarita *nudged* [lit. pushed] the master under the table with her foot.'

If the source of the semiotic action is the happening with the Subject, as in (11) and (12), a new participant appears in the situation described by the action, namely the Addressee, cf. *ulybnulis' jemu* 'smiled at him' in (11b), *zamakhal na Peretsa* 'waved at Perets' (12b) and the explications of zamakhat' in (12):

(12) Zhenschiny *zamakhali* rukami.

    The women *waved* their hands.

    X waved Y.

    Before t<MS X was still <presupposition>

     Causer| at t<MS something happened

     it caused

     The consequence| at MS X is moving Y <assertion>

    Menedzher *zamakhal* rukoj na Peretsa.

    The manager *waved* his hand at Perets.

X waved Y at Z.

Causer| in MS X acted with the goal <presupposition>

moved Y

by this

Goal/result| X let Y know smth

Y perceived smth   <inference>

If the source of the semiotic action is the happening with the Object as in (13), the role of the participant occupying the syntactic position of the Object changes: instead of being the Patient it becomes the Patient-Addressee, that is, its role becomes more specialized. For the semiotic actions including the component of physical contact, the place of contact is relevant[9], as it expresses the semiotic information. Therefore, another new participant may appear in the situation, namely the Goal, whereas the verb in this meaning has a new diathesis, which can be called the locative one, cf. *tolknul loktem v bok* 'pushed with the elbow into one's side'. This diathesis is characteristic of semiotic actions irrespective of their origin, cf. non-derived semiotic actions *pogladil po golove* 'stroke on the head', *potseloval v lob / v guby* 'kissed on the forehead /on the lips' and semiotic actions derived on the basis of physical actions (*udaril po litsu /po plechu* 'struck on the face /on the shoulder', etc.[10]

One can suggest a natural explanation of why standard language allows the derivation of semiotic actions from happenings. The basis for the derivation of semiotic actions are those happenings, the consequences of which is not a physical contact with the Subject or the Object destroying them or inflicting on them other kinds of damage. It is the happenings, the consequences of which are either a surface physical contact (an illustration is the verbs of sound), or spontaneous reactions of the Subject, not threatening its physical well-being. If semiotic actions are derived from the happenings with the Object implying the damage of one of the participants, the component of damage is irrelevant, as the Subject's goal is the transmission of information, whereas damage, for example, pain as in (13), is merely the means.

3.0. The Derivation of Slang Meanings

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[9] 'Adapter' in semiotic terminology (Kreidlin 1999).

[10] About the role of predicate frame in determining verb's semantic class see Atkins, Kegl, Levin 1988.

The derivation of actions from happenings is a regular pattern of slang meanings derivation. The derived slang actions are not semiotic, cf. slang meanings of the verbs *vzdrognut'*, *najekhat'* and *tolknut'* cited at the beginning of the paper, as well as:

zasvetit' kogo-to lit. 'to expose smb', 'to discover someone's presence and to make it known to others against the wish of the former': Vse gotovo k provokatsii. Pojavljajutsia raboche v kombinezonakh. Zinaida Mikhajlovna pervaja *zasvetila* ikh: 'Chto zhe ty – kombinazon natjanul rabochij, a tufel'ki lakovye ostavil'(Izvestija 04.08.94). 'Everything is ready for the provocation. The workers in overalls appear. Zinaida Mikhailovna uncovered (lit.) *exposed* them first, 'Why, you have put overalls on and remained in lacquer shoes!';

Otorvat'sja lit. 'tear off', 'to have a good time': Osobenno *otorvalis'* deti, kotorye reshili, chto etot prazdnik ustroen imenno dl'a nikh. 'In particular, the children *enjoyed themselves* (lit. *tore off*) who thought the holiday was organized for them specially'. (Moskovskij komsomolets, 29.12.93)..

Smyt'sia lit. 'to wash away', 'to disappear unnoticed': Poka vse uspokaivali plachusshego malysha, khozjajka so svoim zverem potikhon'ku *smylis*. While everyone was trying to calm down a crying baby the dog owner quietly disappeared (lit. *washed away*). (Severozapadnyj okrug, N 7 (63), 1997);

Slinjat' lit. 'to wash off, to fade', 'to go away': Na tom kontse provoda – voobrazhaemaja rodnja , kotoraja, ne buduchi duroj, *slinjala* na rodnoj Brajton. 'On the other end of the wire there is an imaginary kin, which, not being foolish*, left* (lit. *washed off*) *for* dear Brighton long ago'. (Moskovskij komsomolets 11.06.93) , etc.

The sources of slang actions, as well as of semiotic actions in standard language, can be happenings with the Object (*zasvetit' plenku* 'to expose the film' – *zasvetit' kogo-to* 'to expose smb'), and happenings with the Subject (*pugovitsa otorvalas'* 'a button has torn off' – *my otorvalis'* 'we have enjoyed ourselves (lit. *have torn off*)'. The main step in the derivation of slang actions is the same as in the derivation of semiotic actions from happenings in standard language: it is the replacement of the component characterizing the Causer of the happening by the component characterizing the Causer of the action. However, there are certain differences as well.

The first difference concerns the component 'damage'. In standard language, when actions are derived from happenings, the inferential component 'damage' disappears. When happenings are the base for the derivation of slang actions, this component is retained as an inferential one, as shown in the following example.:

(14)a. Kogda on perebegal ulitsu, na nego *najekhal* gruzovik.

     'While he was crossing the street, a lorry *ran over* him.'

    X ran over Y.

   exposition| before t<MS X was acting: moving

    X was not in contact with Y <presupposition>

    Causer| something happened

    it caused

    X came into contact with Y: <assertion>

    Suddenly, abruptly <attribute>

    By this X affected Y

    Y has been damaged <inference>

    b. Na nashu firmu *najekhali*.

    Our firm *has been run over*.

    X ran over Y.

    exposition| before t Y was acting <presupposition>

    X wanted Y to act in a different way <background>

    X performed an action: <assertion>

    Affected Y: by words / by force

Y has been damaged <inference>

One can suggest that slang expresses a world view distinct from that expressed by standard language. Slang is egocentric, and purposeful damage, in particular violence and destruction, not only is not censured here, but is the cultural norm.

The second difference concerns the fate of the peripheral participants. When actions are derived from happenings in standard language, the number of peripheral participants may grow. When slang meanings are derived, the number of peripheral participants is either the same as in the basic meaning, or fewer. Actually, what takes place here is incorporation[11], cf.: *Pugovitsa otorvalas' ot pal'to* 'The button *fell off* the coat' – *My khorosho otorvalis'* 'We have greatly enjoyed ourselves (lit. *fell off*)*; Kraska sliniala s tkani' '*The colour *has washed away* from the cloth'.– *My bystro slinjali* 'We have *gone away* (lit. *washed away*) fast', etc. An exception is slang *tolknut'* 'to push', where a new participant, the Counteragent, appears, cf. *tolknut' tachku komu-to* lit. 'to push a wheelcart to smb', 'to sell a car to smb'.

The third difference, which is especially important, concerns the taxonomic characteristics of participants. As has been shown above, when semiotic actions are derived from happenings in standard language, their taxonomic class is not changed. When slang actions are derived from happenings, the taxonomic characteristics of participants change. For instance in (14) the participant having a syntactic function of the Subject becomes, as the result of action derivation, a person instead of a non-person; cf. also *otorvat'sja, smyt'sja, slinjat')*, and a number of other verbs. *Zasvetit'* and *tolknut'* change the taxonomic class of the Object, i.e. the Object of *zasvetit'* becomes a person instead of **a** non-person, the Object of *tolknut'* becomes a non-person instead of a person.

To sum up, the derivation of slang action differs from derivation in standard language in two aspects. On the one hand, the direction of meaning extension is different, as the extension directed from happenings to actions is restricted to one type of actions only in standard language. On the other hand, slang actions derivation differs from the derivation of this type of actions in standard language in its tendency to reduce the number of the peripheral participants and, what is most essential, by retaining the inferential components of the happening, namely 'damage to the Patient'.

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The analysis of ways in which the general slang replenishes itself is a subject of great interest in itself, especially as the development of general slang is a living process, to which all present-day speakers of Russian are witnesses and participants. Yet what makes this subject fascinating is that the study of the processes that take place when semantic extension results in slang, makes verifiable the conclusions about patterns of semantic extension in the standard language.

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[11] See Paducheva 1999 about incorporated participants. More details concerning the role of incorporation in slang derivation are given in Rozina 1999.

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