

NOUNS OF SOCIAL OCCASION AS A LINGUISTICALLY RELEVANT CLASS

Events denoted by “social occasion” nouns (cf. German *Massnahme*, Russian *meroprijatije*) like *meeting, concert, lecture, funeral* etc. normally occur at a certain place; they literally TAKE PLACE somewhere. This metonymic connection with place engenders co-occurrence restrictions specific for these nouns: they are freely combined with verbs of **motion**, namely, with verbs of arrival and departure (such as Russian *prijti, priexat* ‘come’, *popast* ‘get’ etc.) and their causative correlates (like *prinesti, otvesti* ‘carry’), see Muravenko 1998.

One of the most common **static** verbs connected with nouns of this class is *prisutstvovat* ‘be present’. It is remarkable that the verb combines with a noun of event and a noun of place, see example (1), but, as a rule, not simultaneously with both – sentence (2) doesn’t sound smooth (example from Paducheva 2004: 432):

- (1) a. Ivanov *prisutstvoval na lekcii* ‘Ivanov was present at the lecture’;
b. Ivanov *prisutstvoval v auditorii* ‘Ivanov was present in the auditorium’.
- (2) Sonya *prisutstvovala v zale pri ukladke xrustalja i farfora* (L.Tolstoy) ‘Sonya was present in the hall while cut-glass ware was packed’.

In fact, presence at the event presupposes being at the place where it occurs, wherefrom a feeling of tautology in (2).

The location component in the meaning of social occasion nouns (SON) is so strong that it influences the word order, which resembles that of existential sentences; for example, (3b), with an inverted word order, is much more frequent for *prisutstvovat* than (3a):

- (3) a. Ivanov *prisutstvoval na sobranii* ‘Ivanov was present at the meeting’;
b. Na sobranii *prisutstvoval Ivanov*, lit. ‘At the meeting was present Ivanov’.

Another metonymic shift characteristic of SON consists in that they can denote the participants of a social event (example from Paducheva 2004: 315):

- (4) *na sobranii reshili* ‘at the meeting <they> decided’ = *sobranie reshilo* ‘the meeting decided’.

This semantic shift is, though, of limited extent; a meeting differs in this respect from, e.g., an execution (where you can also be present).

Another verb combining with SON is *uchastvovat* ‘take part’:

- (5) On *uchastvoval vo II Mirovoj vojne* ‘He participated in the World war II’.

Different kinds of participation can be differentiated with the help of the construction *v kachestve*:

- (6) On *uchastvoval v dueli v kachestve vracha* (A.Chexov) ‘He took part in the duel as a doctor’.

From the aspectual point of view, SONs denote actions or sets of actions that occupy some time; thus, they freely co-occur with such prepositions as *vo vremja, na protjazhenii* ‘during’. Actions constituting a “Massnahme” develop in accordance with a more or less conventional scenario and, thus, SONs have clear cut beginnings and ends.

Nouns of social occasion have a special tag in the semantic classification accepted in the Russian National Corpus (<http://www.ruscorpora.ru>), so constructions (in the sense of Fillmore 1982) and frames they are implemented in can be thoroughly studied.

References

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