

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Semantics of Word-Formation Categories and Their Role in The Development of The Russian Lexical System

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## Abstract

The study of word-formation categories occupies an important place in modern linguistics, as derivational processes serve as one of the principal mechanisms for the enrichment and development of vocabulary. Word-formation categories reflect semantic relationships between motivating and derived units and contribute to the systematic organization of lexical resources. This article examines the semantics of word-formation categories and their role in the development of the Russian lexical system. The research analyzes the semantic characteristics of derivational categories, identifies their functions in lexical expansion, and explores their contribution to linguistic innovation. The study employs descriptive, structural-semantic, and comparative methods. The findings demonstrate that word-formation categories ensure the continuity of lexical development, facilitate the emergence of new meanings, and maintain the dynamic balance of the Russian language. The article concludes that derivational semantics plays a crucial role in preserving the productivity and adaptability of the Russian lexical system in contemporary communication.

## KEYWORDS

Word formation, derivational semantics, lexical system, Russian language, semantic category, vocabulary development, derivation, linguistic innovation.

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a constantly evolving system that adapts to social, cultural, scientific, and technological changes. One of the primary mechanisms ensuring linguistic development is word formation. Through derivational processes, languages create new lexical units, expand semantic fields, and respond to emerging communicative needs.

The Russian language possesses a highly developed derivational system characterized by numerous productive word-formation patterns. These patterns are organized into specific word-formation categories that unite words according to common semantic and structural features. Such categories serve as an important link between vocabulary and grammar, reflecting both linguistic regularities and cognitive processes.

The study of word-formation categories has attracted the attention of many linguists, including V.V. Vinogradov, E.A. Zemskaya, A.N. Tikhonov, N.M. Shansky, and others. Their research demonstrated that derivational categories are not merely formal structures but semantic formations that influence the organization and development of vocabulary.

Despite extensive studies in Russian derivatology, the semantic nature of word-formation categories and their role in lexical development remain relevant research topics. Modern linguistic changes associated with globalization, digital communication, and technological progress create new opportunities for examining derivational semantics.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the semantics of word-

formation categories and determine their role in the development of the Russian lexical system.

The objectives of the research are:

To define the concept of word-formation categories.

To examine their semantic characteristics.

To identify their functions in lexical development.

To analyze the role of derivational categories in the enrichment of Russian vocabulary.

## **METHODS**

The material of the study consists of lexical units selected from modern Russian dictionaries, derivational dictionaries, and contemporary Russian texts.

The following research methods were employed:

descriptive method;

structural-semantic analysis;

word-formation analysis;

comparative method;

contextual interpretation;

synthesis and generalization of linguistic data.

The research focuses on productive derivational categories represented in modern Russian, including categories of action, person, object, quality, collectivity, diminutiveness, and abstractness.

### **Theoretical Foundations of Word-Formation Categories**

Word formation is a linguistic process through which new words are created on the basis of existing lexical units. The resulting relationships between motivating and derived words form a system of derivational categories.

A word-formation category may be defined as a group of words united by a common derivational meaning expressed through specific morphological means. Such categories are characterized by semantic uniformity and structural regularity.

For example:

Motivating Word	Derived Word	Category
читать (to read) performing an action	читатель (reader)	Person
учить (to teach)	учитель (teacher)	Person

performing an action

строить (to build) performing an action	строитель (builder)	Person
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The common derivational meaning of these words is "a person performing an action."

Thus, derivational categories function as semantic models that facilitate the creation and interpretation of new lexical units.

### **Semantic Nature of Word-Formation Categories**

The semantics of word-formation categories is based on generalized derivational meanings. These meanings are more abstract than lexical meanings but more concrete than grammatical meanings.

Researchers distinguish several major semantic categories:

#### **Category of Agentivity**

This category denotes a person who performs an action.

Examples:

водитель (driver)

преподаватель (teacher)

исследователь (researcher)

The category is highly productive and contributes significantly to vocabulary expansion.

#### **Category of Instrumentality**

This category denotes an instrument used to perform an action.

Examples:

открывалка (opener)

измельчитель (grinder)

очиститель (cleaner)

The semantic core of this category is "means of action."

#### **Category of Abstract Quality**

This category expresses abstract characteristics and properties.

Examples:

красота (beauty)

доброта (kindness)

активность (activity)

Such formations enrich abstract vocabulary and scientific terminology.

### Category of Diminutiveness

This category conveys small size or emotional evaluation.

Examples:

домик (small house)

книжка (little book)

столик (small table)

Besides indicating size, diminutive forms often express affection, familiarity, or emotional attitude.

### Functions of Word-Formation Categories in the Lexical System

Word-formation categories perform several important functions within the lexical system.

#### Nominative Function

The primary function is the nomination of new objects, phenomena, and concepts.

For example, technological development has generated numerous lexical innovations:

блогер (blogger)

лайкер (liker)

подкастер (podcaster)

These words emerged through productive derivational patterns.

#### Systematizing Function

Word-formation categories organize vocabulary according to semantic principles.

For example:

водитель

строитель

исследователь

преподаватель

All belong to the same semantic category of agents.

Such organization facilitates lexical processing and language acquisition.

#### Cognitive Function

Derivational categories reflect conceptual relationships in human cognition.

When speakers encounter a new word such as:

робототехник

they can infer its meaning based on familiar derivational models.

This demonstrates the cognitive significance of derivational semantics.

#### Communicative Function

Word formation allows speakers to express new meanings efficiently without creating entirely new linguistic structures.

The productivity of derivational models ensures communicative flexibility and economy.

#### The Role of Word-Formation Categories in Vocabulary Enrichment

One of the most important roles of word-formation categories is lexical enrichment.

The Russian language continuously expands through derivational mechanisms. New social realities require new lexical designations.

Examples include:

цифровизация (digitalization)

самозанятость (self-employment)

медиапространство (media space)

These lexical units were formed through productive derivational patterns.

Word-formation categories facilitate:

vocabulary growth;

semantic diversification;

adaptation to technological changes;

integration of foreign concepts into Russian.

Consequently, derivation serves as a major source of lexical innovation.

#### Word-Formation Categories and Semantic Change

Derivational categories not only create new words but also influence semantic evolution.

Many derived words develop secondary meanings over time.

For example:

двигатель originally referred to "that which moves."

Today it primarily denotes an engine.

Similarly:

носитель initially meant "carrier."

In modern usage it may denote a data storage medium.

Such semantic developments demonstrate the dynamic interaction between derivation and lexical change.

Word-formation categories provide frameworks through which new meanings emerge and stabilize within the language.

Productivity of Derivational Categories in Modern Russian

Productivity refers to the ability of a derivational model to generate new lexical items.

Contemporary Russian demonstrates high productivity in categories associated with:

digital technologies;

social media;

professional activities;

scientific terminology.

Examples:

стример (streamer)

тиктокер (TikTok creator)

контентщик (content creator)

маркетолог (marketer)

These formations indicate that productive derivational categories remain central to lexical development.

Modern communication accelerates the spread and acceptance of such innovations.

### DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that word-formation categories represent a fundamental mechanism of lexical organization and development. Their semantic structure enables speakers to interpret unfamiliar words, create new lexical units, and maintain systematic relationships within vocabulary.

The analysis demonstrates that derivational semantics

functions at the intersection of morphology, lexicology, and cognition. Word-formation categories are not merely formal classifications; they are semantic constructs reflecting how speakers conceptualize reality.

Moreover, the increasing influence of digital communication has intensified derivational productivity. New lexical items emerge rapidly and are integrated into existing semantic categories, illustrating the flexibility of the Russian derivational system.

The study also supports the view that semantic regularity within derivational categories facilitates language acquisition and communication efficiency.

### CONCLUSION

The research has shown that word-formation categories constitute an essential component of the Russian lexical system. Their semantics is based on generalized derivational meanings that unite lexical units into coherent semantic groups.

The study leads to the following conclusions:

Word-formation categories are semantic and structural formations that organize vocabulary.

They serve nominative, cognitive, communicative, and systematizing functions.

Derivational categories contribute significantly to vocabulary enrichment and lexical innovation.

They facilitate semantic change and adaptation to new communicative needs.

The productivity of word-formation categories ensures the dynamic development of modern Russian vocabulary.

Thus, the semantics of word-formation categories plays a decisive role in maintaining the vitality, flexibility, and developmental potential of the Russian lexical system.

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