

INTENTIONALITY AND ADDRESSNESS OF PERFORMATIVE VERBS IN RUSSIAN CHARM TEXTS

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Abstract: The performativity of charm texts as sacred ritual texts is well studied in folk studies, ethnography and linguistics. The core of performative texts is performative verbs. However, there is no clear boundary between performative verbs and other verbs in performative use. There are performative verbs ('I beg,' 'I conjure,' 'I swear,' 'I curse') and non-performative verbs ('I tie,' 'I cut,' 'I drive out,' 'I clear') in charms. In this article, I distinguish between them using two concepts of Speech Act theory: Intentionality and Addressness. A result of my work is the classification of Russian 'charm verbs'. The material is Russian charms in compilations from 1860s till 2000s.

Keywords: Performative verb, charm, spell, Speech Act theory, intention, illocutionary act, illocutionary goal, illocutionary force, ritual communication

INTRODUCTION

During the magic ritual speaker uses a specific text. This text is called a 'charm text' or a 'spell'. The use of this text is a performative act in which a person does not describes but creates the world. Hence, we call this text 'performative text' or 'performative utterance', or 'performative'. The performativity of verbal charms as sacred ritual acts is related to performative conventions (or 'felicity conditions') of performative utterances which are met in oral charms. A charm act cannot be true or false. It can be only successful or unsuccessful (Austin 1962). Success is determined by the observance of certain conditions: the right place and time for the ritual, the personality of the speaker, who is endowed with the authority of a wizard/witch (Moroz 2012; Khristoforova 2010). Performativity requires the belief in the achievement of the ritual goal and an addressee as a required participant in communication: for example, the name of the addressee – the supernatural power that the person invokes,

is invoked in spell texts, but is not mentioned in, for example, courtrooms when the accused is requested to pronounce a spell (Ilomäki 2019). The goal of a charm text is the transformation of the person's mental state and social reality around him/her.

Various aspects of charm performativity are currently being studied: for example, Maarit Viljakainen explains performativity of a charm by the presence of a communicative person in texts (Viljakainen 2011: 203), Deniver Vukelić considers Croatian curses as performative speech (Vukelic 2019: 69); Davor Nicolčić describes charms with the pragma-linguistic approach, with the goal of considering the structure of a ritual as a sequence of rational argumentative techniques to achieve the effect which a speaker wants (Nicolčić 2019: 89).

The result of the performative act, according to the speaker's opinion, should be the transformation of the dream into reality: "Magical procedures, as we see, have two logical steps. The first step is the approval of the topic: a certain quality is introduced, metaphorically named by a sign, created in the process of a magical act. The second move is a performative act, due to which the approved quality is assigned to objects of the real world, which is accomplished by converting the latter into iconic signs, the content of which becomes the same quality" (Adon'eva 2014: 395). As we see, ritual performativity is not limited to pronouncing the text: the text can be accompanied or completely replaced by actions. So-called 'abracadabras' can be pronounced instead of texts-with-meaning. In abracadabras, the words themselves are the only referent (Meyer, Mirecki 2002: 10). It also may be a magical performative object (Strother 2000).

The dominant approach to the study of the performativity of charms is a communicative, or socio-interactive one. A performative ritual act leads to the formation of the certain world image among the participants of the interaction, because of the changed communicative attitude. Charms look like one among many forms of ritual communication, along with divination, liturgy, prophecy, auto-training, etc. (Romanova 2001; Romanov, Romanova, Fedoseeva 2013). However, in addition to this approach, there is another method of studying performative utterances with the focus on the lexical and semantic characteristics of a performative verb. It means focusing on the features of its semantic compatibility, the presence of certain performative semantic components, etc. (for example: Koshmider 1962; Apresyan 1986; Krasina 1999, Kustova, Paducheva 2003; Mikheev 2003; Hlebec 2015). It is the performative verb that is at the core of the performative utterance-action. This thesis has been proved more than once: for example, Paul Amrhein, on the basis of experimental results, has shown that the understanding of a speech act directly depends on understanding of a speaker's intention as expressed by a verb (Amrhein 1992: 780). By a performative verb, they usually mean a verb in an explicitly performative type: active voice, first person singular, present indicative, having semantics of speech action and instigating a speech act. Such performatives are called 'explicit (canonical)'.

Given the above, we can describe verbal charms as the intersection of communicative and lexical-and-semantic performativity. On the one hand, with the help of a charm, despite its semantics, the action is not described, but performed; on the other hand, canonical, especially speech act, performative verbs expressing the speech action performed by means of a charm are widespread in verbal charms. Performativity as a category is lexicalized in spells by verbs in the performative form. The descrip-

tion of the semantics of charm performative verbs can make a serious contribution to the study of magical performativity. The relevance and novelty of this paper are determined by this fact.

However, when considering performative verbs in charms, I need to solve a serious methodological problem. Elena Levkievskaya notes that in charm texts we often find “the use of verbs as performatives which are not performative in everyday speech” (Levkievskaya 2002: 224). So, in saying: “I will block the skins with evil eyes”, the speaker does not describe his actions, but performs them. By using non-performative (not meaningful verbal actions) verbs in explicit form, the speaker, nevertheless, does not state the fact of action, but uses the apotropaic function of words. Maria Zavyalova also makes this observation: “... usually, the actions of the person who is talking, realizing the needed action at the moment, are expressed in the form of the present tense [...]. These actions are basically performative verbs” (Zavyalova 2006: 70). Therefore, in charms the boundaries of the performative verb are expanded: not only explicit verbs are considered as performatives, but also such verbs as ‘I open’, ‘I kill’, etc. The problem that I see is the definition of criteria for selecting performative verbs. This is one of goals of this paper. Another goal is description of charm performativity by using two concepts of Speech Act theory: Intentionality and Addressness.

So, I analyzed not only canonical but also non-explicit charm performatives. I picked up verbs in form of active voice, first person singular, present indicative, with speech act and another semantics. The material is verbs from compilations of Mai kov (1869) and Bolonev (1997). Also I used some material from the newest compilation *Magical practices of the North Russian villages: charms, amulets, healing rituals* (2020).

There are two directions of the classification I built: Intentionality and Addressness. Before description of results, I want to underline that all performative verbs I analyzed here are causatives. There were some theoretical observations about connection between performativity and causativity (Kordi 1985; Shustova 2010). Among causative verbs, there are ‘information modifying’ verbs. They can be used with performative (‘I apologize to you’) or non-performative (‘I apologized to him’) function. In this paper, I do not try to describe all causative features of performative verbs but pay my attention to Intentionality and Addressness.

INTENTIONALITY

One of the main directions of research in the field of the theory of speech acts is Intentionality. John Searle considers the concept of Intentionality as “a property of many mental states and events through which they are directed to objects and state of affairs of the external world” (Searle 1987: 96). Intentionality is characterized by a focus on objects of the real world or relatedness to them. Intention is associated with the emotional, psychological state of the speaker. Searle identifies several mental states with Intentionality: these are states such as fear, faith, hope, desire. A state is intentional when it has a reason: non-intentional, when you cannot ask the question ‘What does this state refer to in the real world?’. According to Searle, the basic

intentional states of consciousness correspond to a certain limited set of speech acts (statements, directives, obligations, declarations, expressives).

The category of Intentionality came into linguistics as part of the terminological apparatus of the theory of speech acts. The main object of linguists researching in this direction is the study of the intentional language (especially the so-called ‘mental predicates’) and the intentional component of the meaning of the statement. Canonical performative verbs are lexical means of expressing Intentionality. Grammar and syntactic means are also possible. For example, Alexander Bondarko was engaged in research of intentional grammar (Bondarko 2001: 4). My focus is on only lexical-and-pragmatic approach.

In semantics and pragmatics there are various researchers’ concepts of Intentionality. For example, Julia Kutsevich considers intentional words as lexemes with the meaning of one of the seven stages of volitional action: desire, intention, decision, planning, preparation, attempt and implementation (Kutsevich 2015: 118). Kutsevich places intentional words in a separate lexical-semantic group (based on English). Svetlana Shustova thinks that Intentionality is a mandatory component of a causative situation. All causatives, according to Shustova, are intentional verbs.

For my paper I need to distinguish between Intentionality and an intention. Searle does this, with the note: “an intention to do something is just one form of Intentionality” (Searle 1987: 98). As Svetlana Moshcheva says, “Intentionality is a fundamental aspect of the speech mechanism and the speech it produces; a communicative intention represents the concrete goal of the utterance, reflecting the needs and motives of the speaker, motivates the speech act, places at its core and appears in the intentional sense, which has a variety of ways of linguistic expression in utterances” (Moshcheva 2015: 41). For comparison: “Individual speech acts are integrated into a coherent text based on global, textual intention. It is the global intent that forms the Intentionality of the text” (Effective verbal communication (basic competencies) 2015: 190).

There are three main concepts of Speech Act theory which are associated with terms ‘Intentionality’ and ‘intention’: ‘illocutionary force’, ‘illocutionary act’, ‘illocutionary goal’. An illocutionary act is an act with Intentionality and Conventionality unlike a locutionary act. An explication (projection) of an illocutionary act’s direction is an illocutionary force (Krasina 2006: 20; Romanov 2006). The illocutionary goal is interpreted as “a mental act which the speaker seeks to accomplish, or a mental state in which the speaker intends to bring the listener” (Wendler 1985: 243).

In studying of Intentionality of charm performative verbs, I will distinguish between:

- 1) Global Intention or Intentionality of a text. This is a main reason to use magic for solving speaker’s problem,
- 2) A communicative intention of a charm act,
- 3) A charm illocutionary force as a projection of an illocutionary act on a charm,
- 4) Illocutionary forces of illocutionary acts of which a charm consists,

- 5) An illocutionary goal of a charm,
- 6) Illocutionary goals of illocutionary acts of which a charm consists,
- 7) Illocutionary goals of performative verbs as a function-potency which contains in verb's semantics.

A reader cannot know the Intentionality (Global Intention) of a charm text. In reading, we deal with a written fixation of the illocutionary act. We do not study an act itself. Nevertheless, the aspect of Intentionality pointed out by Bondarko, emphasizing that Intentionality has two sides: "1) the aspect of the actual connection with the intentions of the speaker in the act of speech, with a communicative purpose, with the purposeful activity of the speaker, that is, with what he wants to express in the given conditions of communication, is an aspect 'actually intentional'; 2) the aspect of the semantic informativeness of certain elements of the PST, the ability of a given linguistic value to be one of the components of the transmitted and perceived meaning" (Bondarko, *ibid*), allows us to understand the speaker's Global Intention. The Global Intention of a charm appears as a kind of a problem or a need that needs to be satisfied; this intention is supra-individual and belongs to the collective subject. A communicative intention of a charm is more detailed by an explication of an illocutionary force which determines a type of an act. It is illocutionary force that is always known for a speaker. A speaker always knows what he does: love spells or curses, healing charms (and for what disease), charms for success in hunting, fishing, ploughing.

A charm illocutionary act consists of a sequence of illocutionary acts, each of which has its own illocutionary force and micro-goal. For example, the goal of micro-acts of blessing, baptizing is preparing for main ritual action. The function of appealing, bowing is addressing to a supernatural force (creature). Most of all I was interested in illocutionary dominant and its correlation with a main goal of a charm text. We can examine this.

As mentioned before, the Global Intention of a charm is a mental intentional state which causes a speaker to use a magical text. Intentionality always has a relation to real world's objects and states. In folklore, this relation has some special features. A cause of speaker's mental state may be a curse, an evil eye. A cause of diseases may be anthropomorphic creatures: *kriksy*, *plaksy*, 'Thirteen fevers, Herod's daughters'. Hence, for solving a problem, a speaker does things by traditional, magical way, using spells and magical rituals. A speaker can operate in three main ways: 1) text only, 2) action only, 3) text and action. In all these ways there are some ritual action: tying, throwing, burying and so on, but in ways №1 and №3 a speech act goes instead or with an action. A speech act is built around a performative verb in which semantics there is a component 'intention, result'. A type of a result is classification basis for charm performative verbs.

Comparing an illocutionary goal of each act which leads to a result that the speakers want and the illocutionary goal of whole charm, I found some kind of multidirectionality. For example, verbs of damage may be used for healing. The change of intention

shows a special relation between verb's and text's pragmatics built on the basis of symbol connection between a goal and an action and saved in mentality and folklore. I compared illocutionary goals of performative causative verbs (in explicit form) and illocutionary goals of charm texts in which these verbs are used. My analysis shows that all charm performative causative verbs are divided into four groups:

- 1) Verbs with an illocutionary goal as a way of charm goal achievement,
- 2) Verbs with an illocutionary goal equals a charm goal,
- 3) Verbs with an illocutionary goal equals a speech act goal but unlike a charm goal,
- 4) Verbs with an illocutionary goal equals a communicative speaker intention.

Most of charm performative verbs are of first group. Their illocutionary goals is the main means of charm-goal achievement. The antropomorphic disease nature demands some damage for an illness to get rid of it, so damage verbs are used for healing: to get rid of hernia (*gryzha*) it should be bitten to death (*zagryzt'*). These words have same word root. Sometimes not disease is destroyed but something else: for example, rheumatics ('lomota') can be defeated by laying down ('zalamyvavt') a blade of grass:

Къ jetoj travѣ chuprynѣ prihozhu i nato ja zalamyvaju, chto ona u raba Bozhija (imja rekъ) izъ ruki (ili nogi) vygnala pritku i lomotu, i vsjakuju bolѣznъ, i semdesjat'-tri travy vsѣ priryvaju i cvѣty prilamyvaju, i vъ chelovѣkѣ semdesjat'-tri sustava; amin.

I come to this grass and I'm laying down that she, at the servant of God (name), drove out his/her arms (or legs) and brought out the evil eye and ache, and all illness, and seventy-three herbs I tear off and lay down flowers, and seventy-three joints; Amen.

These verbs also have same root. This creates associative metonymic relationship between a verb and an action. That allows this speech-action to be a way of goal achievement.

The second group consists of verbs in which an illocutionary goal is literally formulated, without metaphor or metonymy. For the purifying of a baby from curses in the bathhouse, a speaker says: 'I steam you' (*parju*), declaring a sense of action: not only purifying a body, but also deleting curses, evil eyes. Pronouncing such verbs gives to an action more sense. It is not an accident that these verbs are often used in spells which go with actions of fishing, hunting, agricultural working.

Verbs of the third group name illocutionary acts. These are acts of appeal, swearing, renouncement, wedding's beginning (*otpusk*). These acts are repeated parts of charms. They do not depend on the charm's goals. They have their own goals. For example, most of rituals have introduction: transgression from profane state to the sacred one.

Verbs of opening and closing are very important. The directive and behabitive verbs are used for effective communication with supernatural forces.

Verbs of the fourth groups are special. In these verbs, the Global Intention is formulated. By these verbs, a charm speech act is opposite to other speech acts. These verbs are ‘I charm’ or ‘I speak’ (*zagovarivaju, otgovarivaju, peregovarivaju*):

Ugovarivaju raba Bozhija (imja rekъ) otъ cingi i lomoty, zubnyja shhemoty.

I charm the servant of God (name) from scurvy and aches, toothache.

They mean ‘charm by spell words’ and have different prefixes with meaning of ‘action for a result’, ‘another action’, ‘action to put away something’ and so on. Thereby, despite intentional multidirectionality, a micro-goal achieved by a verb in which an illocutionary dominant is formulated as a main way of achieving a charm goal and an explication of its illocutionary force. It would seem that performative verbs with a speech action’s semantics and those without it are pragmatically marked ways of illocutionary goal explication. This goal was named as a ‘creative goal’ by Levkievskaya. In charms, there are no meaningful difference between speech action and other performative verbs. They all are performatives. However, I found some differences which depend on illocutionary goals. Speech act performatives do not express a goal of whole charm text. Except verbs of fourth group, they name illocutionary acts as parts of charm texts. In contrast, verbs of action (non-speech) may express a goal of whole text.

Nevertheless, a pragmatically marked performative verb is not required for a ritual. Also it must be remembered that a charm text may contain more than one illocutionary dominant or express an illocutionary goal with another ways. A verb only points to oral explication of an illocutionary force of an act.

ADDRESSNESS

The actant structure of an explicit performative verb assumes, as a rule, the presence of an addressee actant. Addressing is considered an integral property of performative utterances. According to Doychil Voivodich, most speech verbs have obligatory valency relations, which are limited to the use of the object / addressee in the singular or plural: “with the performative use (utterance) of these verbs there is no need for an explicit expression of control (i.e. object-recipient in the form of a personal pronoun (you / you and in the corresponding case form), due to the fact that a performative utterance is usually addressed to the addressee as a direct (i.e. uniquely defined) speaker’s interlocutor, and that performative (like other transitive) verbs always (even with the formal absence of a complement conducive to the implementation of the optional valency) have a sign of transitivity or the so-called object intention” (Voivodich 1999: 74). According to Elena Komleva, “a speech act is sent to the addressee, the acting

illocutionary force, perlocutionary effect is oriented to the addressee, the response is expected from the addressee” (Komleva 2009: 120).

It is understandable that researchers studied primarily the Addressness of performative verbs, considering this from the point of view of the theory of the functional-semantic field. According to the point of view of Oksana Rossolova, performative verbs are, depending on the type of verb, at the near or more distant periphery of the ‘You-category’, being one of the means of expression of this category. All performative verbs are semantically united by the fact that “an action they call always has the property of being directed to a listener” (Rossolova 2011). Besides, Rossolova thinks that speech actions cannot be operated for a speaker him/herself, without thinking about any addressee reaction. Hence, Addressness is one of the based features of performative utterances, with autoreference and non-verifiability.

Performative verbs are used in charms to regulate communicative interaction. Despite the actual absence of the addressee, the stable structure of the speech act with a performative basically reproduces this act, creating not only an image of the supernatural addressee, but also a communicative frame that includes an idea of an addressee in the community, functions of an addressee, the relationship between an addressee and the traditional community a speaker belongs to, the hierarchy of relations that a charmer wants to build for the success of his/her illocutionary act.

The role of the addressee (in a substituted or unsubstituted form) is assumed not only by verbs of appeal, but also by other types of charm performatives. ‘I bow’ is impossible without the addressee role; ‘I submit’, too. ‘I curse you’ also has an addressee, but of another type: not receiving the message, but affected by the speech affect. The change of actant is interesting in acts with ‘I charm you’. In this case, an animated, real or virtual, addressee (if he or she should exist) is not an eligible participant of communication, but an object affected by direct suggestion. This is unique for magical discourse. *Zagovarivat’* has another meanings in Russian: ‘to start speaking’, for example. But only in charms it may be used in the meaning ‘I charm you’. It is clear from utterances kind of ‘I charm the snake bite’ or ‘I charm the blood’. This type of Addressness is related to the interpretation of speech as an instrument for a direct action. It also associated with an image of diseases as some anthropomorphic creatures able to understand the speech.

Another charm verbs, which don’t mean any speech action, usually have the meaning of the action with an object, animated or not. For example:

Utverzhdaju poklazhu siju na kamnъ Alatyръ, zamokъ otmykaju vъ nebъ,
kljuch’ vъ morъ.

*I affirm the luggage for the stone Alatyr, I unlock the lock in the sky, the key
in the sea.*

S raby (imjarek) nechistuju silu vygonjaju: s kostej – lomotu, s golovy – zharobu, s nutra – znobotu, chtoby ne hodila, ne lomila, ne tomila, ne raspalivala

I drive out evil spirits from a servant [name]: from bones – chunk, from my head – chills, from the inside - chills, so as not to walk, break, languish, not burn.

In the second example the inanimate object takes the place of the verb actant. However, the suggestion affects a person, at the level of a communicative act.

A speaker him/herself may be an object of the charming: for example, in verbs ‘I wash myself’, ‘I wipe myself’, ‘I cloud myself’, ‘I cover myself’.

This is our charm verbs classification based on Addressness:

1. Verbs with a targeted focus on an addressee (I pray, I call, I ask, I order, I remember, I appeal, I bow).
2. Verbs with a targeted focus on an object and an addressee (I charm, I curse).
3. Verbs with a targeted focus on an object
 - 3.1. Verbs with an orientation to an animate / anthropomorphic object (I chase, I send, I shoot, I cut, I chop, I tame, I smoke out, I steam, I gnaw, I stab, I crack);
 - 3.2. Verbs with a focus on an inanimate object (I scoop up, I place, I break, I tear down, I lay, I unlock, I draw a circle, I enclose, I load a gun, I bury, I stompe, I stick, I blow, I pin, I pick, I take, I let go, I lock).
4. Verbs with a targeted focus on a speaker him/herself (I surrender, I refuse, I charm myself, I enclose myself, I go to bed, I wash myself, I wipe myself, I dress myself, I clothe myself, I cool myself, I equipe, I can, I cross/bless myself, I help myself).

So, Addressness in a charm text is not required *per se*. In magical discourse, a unique situation is modeled: through a word, an impact is made on an inanimate object. Therefore, a performative act, directed not at a creature that can hear, think and respond (even hypothetically), but at an object on which some physical action can only be performed, is drawn up not by a verb of speech, but by a causative verb of influence on an object with the aim of changes.

The idea of direct influence by the help of words, without persuasion, suggestion, request, etc., creates an intermediate option when a charm is applied to a person who acts as an affected patient; he/she may be a speaker him/herself. Charms demonstrate the features of auto-communication, where there is only a virtual addressee or animate object to which a speech act is addressed. The function of such a patient is to perceive not verbal information, but the verbal-magical effect directed at him/her. A large number of auto-addressed verbs indicates the intention of the person’s internal transformation, which manifests itself not so much as suggestiveness, but rather as auto-suggestiveness of charm texts.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of charm Intentionality and Addressness shows some special patterns of the charm intentional and address targeting which are regularly repeated. Firstly, it was revealed that a charm intention does not equal to an intention of a main communicative act. Sometimes it seems to be directly opposite. Of course, ways of the symbolic and metaphorical connecting between ritual speech and objects and people, accidents and objects of real world are studied many times, but the description in these terms has its meaning for application Speech Act theory to charm texts. Secondly, it was shown that charm texts demonstrate another type of Addressness than usual performative utterances. The charm addressee is different: it is not only a real, or even supernatural, person, but also an inanimate object. This object is incanted by a performative.

The communicative features of charms are interesting in themselves. But they also can become a cause of semantic changes of words. The applicability of the term 'performative verb' in charms is very broad. The canonical, explicit performative of a speech action is only one, bright, side of charm performativity. What is hidden is verbs of physical and another action, if it has some intention and a special addressee. The research in the field of Speech Act theory allows us to divide charm performatives into lexical groups and to distinguish between non-performatives in performative use, potential (or semi-) performatives and canonical performatives. This will be the subject of my researches in future.

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BIO

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