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«RABOTNUL NA SLAVU – GUL'NI SMELO!»
–NU- AS A UNIVERSAL ASPECTUAL MARKER IN NON-STANDARD RUSSIAN

This article illustrates a strong tendency in modern non-standard Russian, where verbs bearing the semelfactive marker –*nu*- can perform various actional functions, ranging from semelfactives to Natural Perfectives and even delimitatives. The universal character of –*nu*- depends on the interaction of such factors as the semantics of the suffix, the semantics of the verbal stem, and constructions.

1. Introduction

Prefixes are the most common means of forming perfective verbs in Russian and yield different types of perfectives even when combined with the same verbal stems (cf. resultative and delimitative *po*- in *posčital vsex detej* '[he] counted all the children' vs. *nemnogo posčital pro sebja* '[he] counted silently for a while', see [Mustajoki, Pussinen 2008] for more references). The suffix –*nu*- is usually described as forming one type of perfectives in Contemporary Standard Russian (henceforth CSR) (semelfectives like *čixnut'*, [Švedova et al. 1980], etc.) and showing restrictions on semantic classes of verbs and verbal stems that it is compatible with ([Dickey, Janda 2009] and [Makarova, Janda 2009]).

However, in non-standard Russian the perfectivizing suffix -*nu*- is used more widely. In this case, non-standard Russian refers to the language that we encounter in blogs and forums on the Internet. For new -*nu*-verbs (not provided in dictionaries) there are no strict boundaries between different types of actionality. Such new –*nu*-verbs can appear as semelfactives (example 1), perfective correlates, or Natural Perfectives, as example 2 (the terminology is taken from [Janda 2007], see section 2 for more detail), and even delimitatives (example 3):

(1) *vot i polučaetsja, čto poka pervyj dosčitaet do 100 … - vtoroj možet i razu ne **sčitnut'***
'Thus, it turns out that while the first one has finished counting up to 100 … the second one may not have counted even once'
[http://radiokot.ru/forum/viewtopic.php?f=20&t=9863&start=180&view=print]

(2) *Ja dumaju, ètix monetok po palcam **sčitnut'** možno*
'I think these coins can be counted on the fingers of one's hand'
[http://www.moifoto.ru/comment/foto-4825943.html]

(3) *... ja **let-nu-l** 2 časa...*
'I used (the helicopter) for two hours…'
[http://paraufa.ru/viewtopic.php?id=1052]

The suffix –*nu*- in contemporary non-standard Russian appears to function as a near-universal aspectual marker. In the present article, I explore the interaction of such factors as the semantics of the actional morpheme, the semantics of the verbal stem, and constructions, and present a quantitative analysis of -*nu*-verbs. First, I provide a brief summary of semelfactive verbs in CSR (section 2) followed by an overview of –*nu*-verbs in non-standard Russian (section 3). Sections 4-6 present three cases that shed light on the new functions of –*nu*- and its expansion in non-standard Russian. Conclusions are offered in section 7.

2. Semelfactive verbs in CSR

Semelfactive perfective verbs such as the Russian verb *čixnut'* 'sneeze once' are associated with quantification of action and are traditionally treated as part of Aktionsarten, or Actional Perfectives ([Isačenko 1960], [Maslov 1948], [Švedova et al. 1980], [Zaliznjak, Šmelev 2000]). Actional Perfectives are opposed to: 1) Natural Perfectives that share their lexical meaning with a

corresponding imperfective verb (*čitat'* 'read-IPFV' – *pročitat'* 'read-PFV'); 2) Specialized Perfectives that change the lexical meaning of the imperfective verb (*čitat'* 'read-IPFV' – *perečitat'* 'reread, read over again-PFV') (the terminology is taken from [Janda 2007]).

As pointed out by Isačenko [Isačenko 1960], Russian semelfactives are formed both via suffixation in -*nu*- (as in *čixnut'* 'sneeze once') and via prefixation in *s*- (as in *sxodit'* 'go someplace and come back once'). On the basis of an empirical study and statistical analysis, Dickey and Janda [Dickey, Janda 2009] show that -*nu*- and *s*- behave as near-allomorphs in the formation of semelfactive verbs in that these markers are attracted to different verb stems which also differ in semantics. Thus, the two assumptions about the Russian semelfactives are that: 1) perfectives containing –*nu*- singularize the action and that 2) semelfactives can use either –*nu*- or *s*- as the derivational tool.

In a recent work, which addresses the development of semelfactves in Old Russian, Nesset [Nesset 2013] argues that in Russian the center of gravity of the –*nu*-semelfactives is shifting from bodily acts to auditory verbs. This tendency is particularly clear for low frequency verbs (see section 5 in Nesset 2013 for more detail). –*Nu*- is spreading to verbs beyond the few types attested in Old Russian, which were limited to mouth based bodily acts such as spitting, blowing, and yawning (*dunǫti* 'blow'); hand based bodily acts (*tlъknǫti* 'knock'); auditory verbs (*svistnuti* 'whistle'); optical verbs (*blesnuti*, *melьkanuti* both meaning 'flash') and verbs of physical movement (*nyrnuti* 'dash off, disappear suddenly').

3. –*Nu*-verbs in contemporary non-standard Russian

The Russian aspectual system is still dynamic. In modern non-standard Russian we find –*nu*-verbs with some verbal stems for which they were not attested before (cf. [Zaliznjak 1980]). This tendency is illustrated by example (2), repeated below as (4), and example (5):

(4) *Ja dumaju, ètix monetok po palcam **sčitnut'** možno*
'I think these coins can be counted on the fingers of one's hand'
[http://www.moifoto.ru/comment/foto-4825943.html]

(5) *Možete v ljuboj moment **korrektirnut'** pokazanija vasego sčetčika*
'You can correct the amount shown on the meter at any moment'
[http://dretun.ru/hardworking/ustanovka-s4et4ikov/#.UnFf9UIeZ94]

Examples like (4) and (5) are remarkable in several ways. First, they no longer actualize the 'do it once' semantics, which is prototypical in CSR: example (4) expresses a general idea that the type of coins mentioned in the sentence is rare. Second, they mostly appear in contexts where in standard Russian one would expect to find a Natural Perfective with *s*-: *sosčitat'* 'count-PFV' in example (4) and *skorrektirovat'* 'correct-PFV' in example (5). Third, such –*nu*-verbs are easily formed from the –*ova*- verbs that do not combine well with –*nu*- (see [Dickey, Janda 2009]): cf. *korrektirnut'* from *korrektirovat'* in example (5). Moreover, in such verbs –*nu*- is attached to some semantic classes that should not combine well with the semelfactive semantics (see the discussion in [Makarova, Janda 2009]): in the Russian National Corpus (http://ruscorpora.ru, henceforth RNC) verbs in (4) and (5) are marked as 'mental sphere', which is incompatible with the semelfactive type of actionality.

Why do we find more –*nu*-verbs than what is attested in dictionaries? As I show in this article, –*nu*-verbs expand their function from the emphasis on single act semantics. This becomes possible due to the fact that –*nu*-verbs not only attribute expressivity to more marginal verbs [Švedova et al. 1980] but also appear in new syntactic contexts. In the next sections I look in more detail at the interaction between non-standard –*nu*-verbs with verb stems, semantic classes of verbs, and constructions. In the first case study (section 4), I illustrate how –*nu*- extends its function to Natural Perfectives. The first case study is based on the results from [Sokolova, Gjervold 2014]. The second case study (section 5) briefly outlines the expansion of –*nu*- to other semelfactives. I

show that in non-standard Russian –*nu*- replaces the prefix *s*- in the *s*-semelfactives. The findings offered in this section are based on the summary of [Alexandrova, Sokolova 2015]. In section 6, I provide examples with the delimitative use of –*nu*- attested in both case studies.

4. Non-standard –*nu*-verbs as Natural Perfectives

4.1. Data. -*Nu*-verbs in cases like (2) and (5) above perform the function of Natural Perfectives, often replacing Natural Perfectives with *s*- (but not limited to this prefix, see [Sokolova, Gjervold 2014] for more detail). To analyze this relatively new phenomenon we have checked how many Russian Natural Perfectives with the prefix *s*- have a –*nu*- correlate in the Yandex search engine. Natural Perfectives with the prefix *s*- have been culled from the Exploring Emptiness database at UiT The Arctic University of Norway (emptyprefixes.uit.no). This number yields 281 Natural Perfectives with *s*-. As our Yandex search has shown, 47% of the Natural Perfectives prefixed in *s*- can be replaced by a –*nu*- counterpart (for the database we have selected cases that have at least 5 occurrences in Yandex).

4.2. Natural Perfectives with –*nu*- and verb stems. Can morphology affect whether or not a verb can combine with –*nu*– to form semelfactives? Dickey and Janda [Dickey, Janda 2009] compare the prefixed *s*–semelfactives with the suffixed –*nu*–semelfactives and conclude that morphology plays an important role in the distribution of the semelfactive markers among verbs. According to Dickey and Janda [Dickey, Janda 2009], -*aj*-stems (as in *zevat'* 'yawn-IPFV' – *zevnut'* 'yawn once-PFV) and non-productive verb stems (like *lizat'* 'lick-IPFV' – *liznut'* 'lick once-PFV') combine well with –*nu*–, whereas -*i*- and –*ova*-stems combine with –*nu*– less often. Finally, -*ej-stems (as in *robet'* 'be timid-IPFV' - *srobet'* 'behave timidly once-PFV') verbs do not combine with –*nu*– at all.

The results of the first case study of –*nu*- in non-standard Russian are presented below in Table 1 and Figure 1.

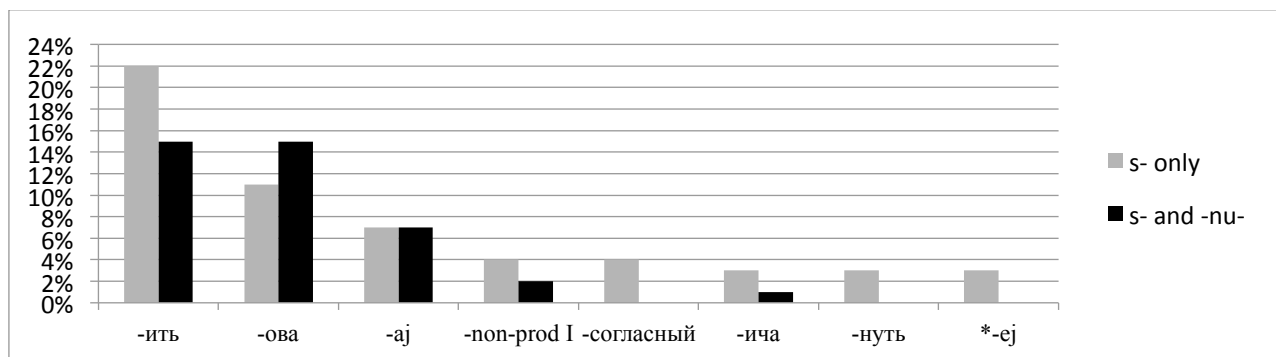| Verb class	only s-		s- and -nu-	
	raw frequency	relative frequency	raw frequency	relative frequency
-ить	63	22 %	43	15 %
-ова	30	11 %	41	15 %
-aj	20	7 %	20	7 %
-non-prod I	11	4 %	7	2 %
-согласный	10	4 %	1	0 %
-ича	9	3 %	3	1 %
-нуть	9	3 %	-	0 %
*-ej	7	2 %	-	0 %
Totals	281	100%	281	100%

Table and Figure 1. Frequency distribution of the attested –*nu*-verbs (from the Natural Perfectives with *s*-) among the main verb stems.

The only piece of data that corresponds to the situation in CSR according to [Dickey, Janda 2009] are *ej-stems: *ej-verbs do not occur with –*nu*- (examples like *gret'* 'heat'). However, most

of the results from non-standard Russian illustrate different tendencies: 1) *-aj*-verbs produce *–nu*-semelfactives much less frequently; 2) *-i*-stems show more *–nu*-semelfactives than expected; 3) a majority of *-ova*-stems form *–nu*-semelfactives.

4.3. Natural Perfectives with *–nu*- and semantic classes of verbs. Makarova and Janda [Makarova, Janda 2009] demonstrate that *-nu*-semelfactives are incompatible with the verbs of 'mental sphere' (marked as "ment" in the RNC). This includes verbs like *znat'* 'know', *verit'* 'believe', *dogadat'sja* 'guess, realize', *pomnit'* 'remember', *sčitat'* 'consider, count'.

The frequency distribution of the attested non-standard *–nu*-verbs among the main semantic classes is summarized in Table 2 and Figure 2 below.

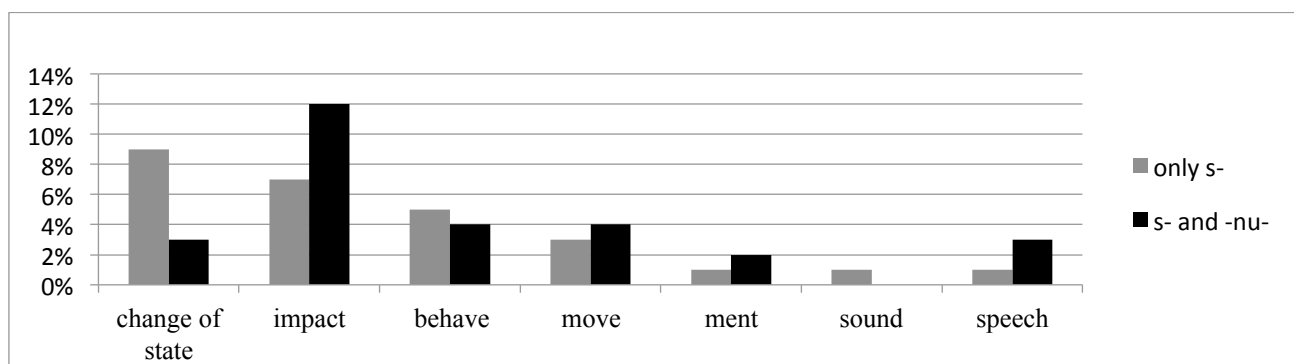| Semantic class	only s-		s- and -nu-	
	raw frequency	relative frequency	raw frequency	relative frequency
change of state	25	9 %	7	3 %
impact	20	7 %	33	12 %
behave	15	5 %	12	4 %
move	9	3 %	11	4 %
ment	3	1 %	5	2 %
sound	3	1 %	0	0 %
speech	4	1 %	8	3 %
Totals	281	100%	281	100%

Table 2 and Figure 2. Frequency distribution of the attested *–nu*-verbs (from the Natural Perfectives with *s*-) among the main semantic classes.

The data extracted from Yandex show that non-standard *–nu*-verbs can be formed from the verbs of mental sphere: we found examples like *korrektirnut'* 'correct-PFV', *mernut'* 'measure-PFV' *orientirnut'sja* 'orientate onself-PFV', *planirnut'* 'plan-PFV', *scitnut'* 'count-PFV'. Non-standard *–nu*-verbs are less compatible with verbs of 'change of state' although some examples are attested: (7 out of 32 s-verbs: *dvoit'* 'split-IPFV' – *dvojnut'* 'split-PFV', *kvasit'* 'sour-IPFV'– *kvasnut'* 'sour-PFV', *krivit'* 'crook, twist-IPFV'– *krivanut'* 'crook, twist-PFV', *krivit'sja* 'bevel, get twisted-IPFV' – *krivanut'sja* 'bevel, get twisted-PFV', *lomat'sja* 'break-IPFV' – *lomanut'sja* 'break-PFV', *tvorožit'* 'turn smth into cottage cheese-IPFV' - *tvoružnut'* 'turn smth into cottage cheese-PFV', *tvorožit'sja* 'become cottage cheese-IPFV' – *tvorožnut'sja* 'become cottage cheese-PFV'). The semantic class 'sound' appears to set a restriction on the formation of *–nu*-verbs from the verbs with *s*-Natural Perfectives. However, this is due to the verb stems that these 'sound' verbs contain: *-nut'* and **ej*-verbs are usually not compatible with *–nu*- (*molknut'* 'get silent-IPFV', *tixnut'* 'get still-IPFV', *pet'* 'sing-IPFV'). In this case it is hard to define whether we are dealing with a morphological or a semantic restriction.

5. Non-standard *–nu*-verbs replacing *s*-semelfactives
5.1. Data. In order to test how much the *–nu*-marker extends within the class of semelfactives, we have taken all the *s*-semelfactives from [Dickey, Janda 2009] (105 verbs) and checked whether they are attested with *-nu*- instead of *s*-, using the Yandex search engine. The data

show that in non-standard Russian 42 out of 105 *s*-semelfactives can be used with *-nu-* instead of *s*-, including motion verbs and verbs of mental behavior. In this case the *–nu*-verbs and the corresponding *s*-verbs can be called "alternates". To check if there are constructional differences between the *s*- and *-nu*-alternates, we have manually tagged the constructions that appear in 100 random attestations of each *s*-semelfactive (RNC) and the constructions in all examples with the corresponding *-nu*-alternates (Yandex).

5.2. Different constructions with *s*- and *-nu*-alternates. Our results indicate that for over 50% of the verb stems (22 verbs), the *s*- and *-nu*-alternates differ in their argument structure. One such differences is the co-occurrence of the *nu*-alternate with the transitive construction, see examples (6) and (7) below:

> (6) *Nu, **s-duri-l** sgorjača, nagovori-l … lišnego*
> 'Well, I acted silly in the heat of the moment, said … too much'
> [Semen Daniljuk. Rublevaja zona (2004), RNC]

> (7) *Menja kupec ešče i **dur-nu-l** neslabo*
> 'Moreover, the merchant tricked me pretty well out of my money'
> [http://true-3pac.livejournal.com/1358.html]

These examples show that the interplay of such factors as verb stems and affixes with the syntactic construction can modify the syntactic behavior of the verb. We see that the use of semelfactive *–nu-* is extended to other verb stems but in this case we usually attest a semantic shift (see [Alexandrova, Sokolova 2015] for more detail).

5.3. The interaction of semantic classes and constructions within *s*- and *-nu*-alternates. The differences among constructions of *s*-verbs and *–nu*-verbs distributed among different semantic classes are offered below in Table 3 and Figure 3. Overall, the data show that the difference in constructions is not dependent on the semantic class. The change of the constructions is relevant only for motion verbs (marked as "move" in Table 3).

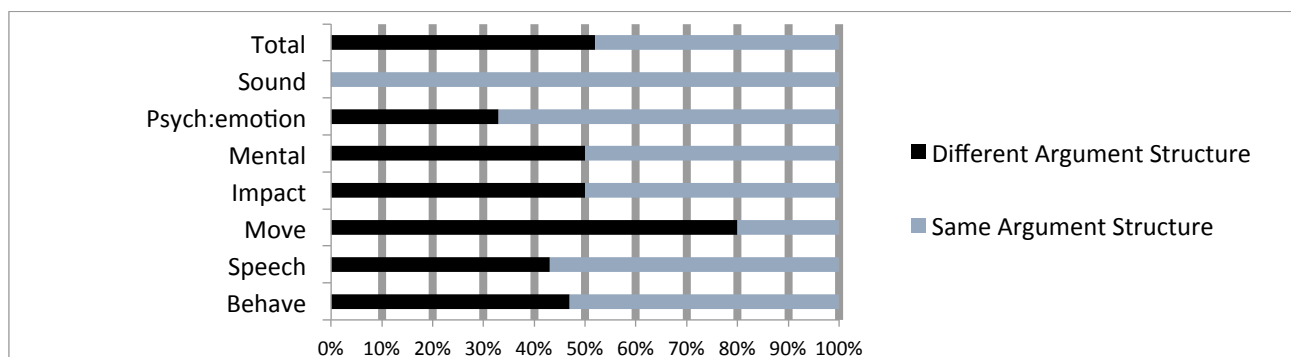|	s- and –nu-verbs show different constructions		s- and –nu-verbs share the same constructions		Total
Behave	7	47%	8	53%	15
Speech	3	43%	4	57%	7
Move	8	80%	2	20%	10
Impact	2	50%	2	50%	4
Mental	1	50%	1	50%	2
Psych:emotion	1	33%	2	67%	3
Sound	0	0%	1	100%	1
Total	22	52%	20	48%	42

Table 3 and Figure 3. Constructional differences of the *s*-verbs and the *–nu*-verbs distributed among different semantic classes.

6. Non-standard *–nu*-verbs as delimitatives

Finally, in this section I provide examples to illustrate that –*nu*-verbs can be used as delimitatives in non-standard Russian. Such extension is not common for standard semelfactives, cf. examples (8a) and (8b), (9a) and (9b) below:

(8a) *Čtoby sogret'sja, ja nemnogo* **poprygal** *na meste*
'In order to get warm, I **jumped up and down for a while**'
[Vera Belousova. Vtoroj vystrel (2000), RNC]

(8b) ?? *nemnogo* **prygnul** *na meste* '[I] jumped once for a while'

(9a) *Brèd Pitt* **poglupil** *ešče minutku sfotkalsja, i svernul k ubornoj*
'Brad Pitt **acted stupid for another minute**, had his picture taken and headed for the dressing-room'
[…http://dogs.duh.ru/user/info.php?uid=80823]

(9b) ?? *sglupil esce minutku* '[he] acted stupid once for a while'

While the delimitative verb *poprygat'* 'jump [for a while]' is compatible with atelic-extent adverbials like *nemnogo* 'for a while', the –*nu*-semelfactive *prygnut'* is unnatural in this context (example 8b). The same is true for the standard *s*-semelfactives like *sglupit'* 'act stupid once, do one silly thing' that are incompatible with time adverbials like *ešče minutku* 'for another minute' (see example 9b).

Examples (10a), (10b), and (10c) below illustrate the extended use of the –*nu*-verb *katnut'* 'ride':

(10a) *Duševno katnuli v Ašan.*
'[We] **had a hearty trip** to Auchan'
[http://vk.com/diimka]

(10b) *I segodnja nemnogo* **katnuli** *po lesu. Snačala nemnogo doždik morosil a potom prošel.*
'We **rode around in the forest for a while** today too. At first there was a drizzling rain, but then it passed'
[http://www.moto.ks.ua/frm.php?tpc=143&page=20]

(10c) *S 7 utra na ozere Mixeev, Sanja, t. e. ja, i Irina Nikolaevna! Dulo pravda gde-to na 7.0, no paru časov* **katnuli**
'From 7 a.m. on the lake Mikheev, Sanya (that's me) and Irina Nikolayevna! There was a 7.0 wind blowing, but we **were still able to windsurf for a couple of hours**'
[http://www.izmail.es/forums/printthread.php?t=8&pp=50&page=2]

In example (10a) the verb *katnut'* is synonymous to *skatat'sja* 'go there and back, have a round trip', which corresponds to the regular use of *s*-semelfactives. However, in examples (10b) and (10c) we find adverbials like *nemnogo* 'for a while' and *paru časov* 'for a couple of hours' that are compatible only with delimitative contexts. In these examples it is impossible to replace the –*nu*-verb with the corresponding *s*-verb *skatat'sja* 'go there and back, have a round trip': ??*nemnogo skatalis' po lesu* '[we] rode around in the forest for a while'; ??*paru casov skatalis'* 'for a couple of hours [we] went there and back'.

It should be pointed out that the delimitative use of –*nu*-verbs in non-standard Russian is not limited to verbs of motion, see example (11) below:

(11) *so stiralkoj vrode opredelilsja, teper' nado holodil'nik kupit'. značit nemnogo* **čitnul** *forum i ostanovilsja na dvux modeljax*
'I think I've decided on a washing machine, now I have to buy a fridge. So I **spent some time on** the forums and have narrowed it down to two models.'

Example (11) contains the time adverbial *nemnogo* 'for a while' which is combined with the non-standard *–nu*-verb *čitnut'* 'read'.

7. Conclusions

This article illustrates a strong tendency in modern non-standard Russian, where verbs bearing the semelfactive marker *–nu-* can perform various actional functions, ranging from semelfactives to Natural Perfectives and even delimitatives. On the one hand, -*nu*-verbs lose their semelfactive semantics and appear as neutral perfective markers, thus functioning as Natural Perfectives: 47 % of Natural Perfectives with the prefix *s-* show variation with -*nu*-verbs in the Internet language. The important observation here is that the number of verb stems and semantic classes of verbs that are compatible with *–nu-* increases. For instance, the first case study shows that -*i*- and *–ova*-stems are characterized by more *–nu*-verbs than expected (*gruppirnut'* 'group-PFV', *korrektirnut'* 'correct-PFV') and non-standard *–nu*-verbs can be formed from the verbs referring to 'mental sphere' (which have restrictions on the use of *–nu*-).

On the other hand, the marker *–nu-* replaces the marker *s-* in *s*-semelfactives as has been shown in the second case study, where 42 out of 105 *s*-semelfactives can be used with -*nu*- instead of *s-*. This extension, however, often leads to constructional and semantic differences.

Finally, the interplay of such factors as verb stems and affixes with the syntactic construction can modify the actional type of the verb. This allows for a delimitative use of *–nu*-verbs that examples in section 6 illustrate. It may appear that the suffix *–nu-* in non-standard Russian can function as a near-universal aspectual marker. Yet, this universal character of *–nu-* highly depends on the interaction of such factors as the semantics of the actional morpheme, the semantics of the verbal stem, and constructions.

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