



# Man as the Subject of Possible/Impossible in the Russian Nominations of the Feature of the Subject

Natalia E. Petrova<sup>(✉)</sup>, Natalia M. Ilchenko, Olga A. Patsyukova,  
Galina S. Samoylova, and Anastasia N. Moreva

Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University Named After Kozma Minin  
(Minin University), Nizhny Novgorod, Russian Federation  
petrova\_ngpu@mail.ru, ilchenko2005@mail.ru,  
olalpa@mail.ru, galasam2010@yandex.ru,  
linguanastya@yandex.ru

**Abstract.** In the article, an anthropocentric approach to the analysis of factual material is realized, allowing seeing behind the units of language the work of human consciousness, view of the world, assessments and values. The object of the study is verbal adjectives formed from verbs with the help of the suffix -em-/im-. The choice of material is because the modal component is consistently present in the semantics of these adjectives - the meaning of the possibility or impossibility of action, the subject of which is a person. On the basis of the nature of the motivating action, the semantic groups of these adjectives are distinguished, representing the spheres of interaction of a person with the world that is important for the Russian consciousness: Cognitive and speech-intellectual activity, sensory perception of the object, the physical and mental state associated with the object, ethical relations and the evaluation of the object, the forms of behavior associated with the object, the relationship of possession, the creative and goal-oriented activity of man in relation to the objects of the external world and himself. The authors consider varieties of modal semantics, characteristic of the adjectives analyzed. It is noted that the possibility/impossibility of the key subject for an action can be conditioned, firstly, by the internal potential of a person - his intellectual, physical, psychological qualities and abilities; Secondly, the prescription that is allowed and what is prohibited; Thirdly, the axiological factor-the estimated relation to the determined subject in terms of “good/bad”, “useful, appropriate/not useful, inexpedient”. In view of this factor, the adjectives of various semantic groups are related to the categories of norm and evaluation. In summary, a conclusion is made about pronounced anthropocentricity of the deverbativus with suffixes -em-/im-, indicating that the possibility or impossibility of human interaction with the objective world is an important means of understanding objects and giving them a feature.

**Keywords:** Adjective · Modality · Possible · Action · Anthropocentrism  
Norm · Subject · Nomination · Attribute

## 1 Introduction

In the process of scientific knowledge of the world, the human factor is manifested in the fact that the study of any object is carried out not only from the point of view of man and in the interests of man, but also in order to comprehend the nature and essence of man himself [7, p. 19]. The object of linguistics is the natural human language, “in the construction and application” of which reflects not the objective world surrounding the person, but the subjective image of this world, created “in our soul” [2, p. 80]. Thus, not only the established paradigm of humanitarian knowledge, but also the very nature of language, makes the anthropocentric approach to this study urgent [9, p. 90], which prompts the researcher to switch attention from the language system to carrier. An attempt to implement such an approach is presented in this article on the basis of the Russian verbal adjectives with the suffixes -em/-im-: *Explainable and unrepresentable*.

## 2 Theoretical and Methodological Basis of the Research

In our understanding of the anthropocentric approach to language, we rely on the work of domestic and foreign scientists Potebni, Yu, Apresyan, Arutyunova [1], Karaulova [7], Cubreacova, Shmeleva, Cherneyko, Humboldt [2], Verzbicka, Muracosy et al. The analysis of the actual material takes into account the research of adjectives with suffixes -em/-im-, presented in the works of Bulakhovsky, Ivanova, Zaneginoy [5], Ivanchi [6], Krysko, Kunavina, Kim et al. In the interpretation of the concepts of “evaluation”, “modality,” “norm” expressed by the means of language, we are guided by the work of Arutyunova [1], Wolf, Ivina, Rudnev [11], Beller, Thomasson, and von Wright [12].

Deverbatives with suffixes -em/-im- denote the feature of the object through the possibility or impossibility of a particular action that refers to or is directed from the outside to the object being determined. The subjective characteristic of the action reflects a different way of understanding the trait by a person and is important for the conceptual content and use of these adjectives. This can be shown on the example of adjectives, *fathomless* and *ineradicable*. In the first case, the sign “preserving the freshness that does not lose its importance with time, [10, p. 487] is expressed through an appeal to the action to *wither*, the subject of which is the object itself: *Unfading glory is glory that can not fade*. In the second case, a relatively close sign, “one that is difficult to exterminate, destroy” [10, p. 449], i.e. constantly, for a long time persisting, is expressed through an appeal to an action aimed at an object from outside: *Indestructible Smell is a smell that cannot be exterminated*. Thus, through the adjective *unfading* attribute, “permanent, persistent with time,” is interpreted as an intrinsic property of an object irrespective of the surrounding world and man, whereas through an adjective an *ineradicable* similar feature is interpreted because of resistance to external influences. As a result, the adjective *unfading* carries information only about the object being determined, and the adjective is *indestructible* - about the subject and the subject of the impact on this object.

The way in which the sign was expressed also caused a different connection between these adjectives and axiological semantics. The sign of the *unfading* is

inseparably linked with the idea of what constitutes a value to human *Love, beauty, fame, talent, youth*. The *indestructible* attribute can be connected both with what is valuable (an *ineradicable desire for freedom, an ineradicable interest in the book*), and with antivalues (an *ineradicable desire for violence, an indestructible filth*), since a person is inclined to “exterminate” everywhere, including in to itself, something bad, inexpedient.

All the above leads to the conclusion that adjectives with suffixes -em-/-im- are characterized by a particularly pronounced anthropocentricity in the case when they are formed from verbs denoting the action of a person. Interpretation of their meaning appeals to the potential of human possibilities; therefore, denoting the feature of the object, they simultaneously create a kind of “portrait” of a person interacting with the surrounding world and at the same time making himself a “measure of all things” they know “[3, p. 33].

Proceeding from this, for the present research these adjectives were selected. Further, because of the nature of the motivating action, the semantic groups of the adjectives will be singled out, which will make it possible to conclude that the spheres of influence on the subject important for the Russian consciousness. In addition, we will trace the connection of adjectives of various semantic groups with categories of norm and evaluation. For illustration, examples from the database of the National Corpus of the Russian language (main and newspaper corps) will be used.

### 3 Analysis of the Results of the Study

Most of the deverbativis on -em-/-im- (more than 190 words out of just over 270, recorded in [4, pp. 356–357]) characterize the subject from the point of view of human actions. The verbs that motivate these adjectives represent different spheres of human life and activity. It can be:

- Cognitive activity: *Learn* → (not) *knowable*, *explain* → (not) *understandable*, *compare* → (not) *comparable*, *calculate* → (not) *computable*, *disprove* → *ir-refutable*, etc.;
- Speech activity: *Describe* → *indescribable*, *pronounce* → *unpronounceable*, *translate* → (not) *translate*, *transmit* → *non-transferable*, etc.;
- sensory perception of the object: *See* → (not) *visible*, *hear* → (not) *audible*, *touch* → (not) *tangible*, *feel* → (not) *palpable*, *view* → (not) *foreseeable*, *recognize* → (not) *recognizable*, etc.;
- The physical or mental state associated with the object: *Tolerate* → (not) *tolerant*, *transfer* → (not) *tolerable*, *endure* → (not) *tolerable*, etc.;
- Psychological impact on the object: *Frighten* → *intrepid*, *shake* → *unshakable*, *beg* → *unforgiving*, *tame* → *indomitable*, etc.;
- ethical relations, object evaluation: *Punish* → (not) *punishable*, *allow* → (not) *permissible*, *reward* → *unrewardable*, *value* → *invaluable*, *atoneate* → *unrequited*, etc.;

- activities related to the modification, including destruction, of the object: *Decompose* → (not) *decomposable*, *fix* → (not) *correctable*, *change* → *irreplaceable*, *restore* → (not) *recoverable*, *heal* → (not) *curable*, *remove* → (not) *removable*, etc.;
- goal-setting in relation to an object: *Implement* → (not) *feasible*, *reach* → (not) *attainable*, *overcome* → (not) *surmountable*, *win* → *invincible*, etc.;
- The behavior associated with the object: *Hide* (something) → *unconcealed*, *imitate* (someone) → *inimitable*, *bicker* (with someone) → *indisputable*, etc.;
- Ownership relations and contractual relations: *Take away* → *inalienable*, *alienate* → *inalienable*, *terminate* → (not) *dissolvable*, etc.

In all these groups, the structure of adjectives simulates a situation in which a person can or cannot perform a certain action with respect to an object, which becomes a sign of the feature of this subject. In this case, the modality contained in the semantics of such adjectives has a different nature.

First, the possibility/impossibility of the key to the feature of the action can be related to the internal potential of man - his intellectual, physical, psychological qualities and abilities. This is typical of the adjectives of most of the groups listed above, such as, for example, (not) *explainable*, *indescribable*, (not) *countable*, (not) *visible*, (not) *tangible*, *unbearable*, (not) *carried*, *inexorable*, (not) (Not) *attainable*, *indestructible*, *irresistible*, *incurable*, *irreparable* and similar: *The fire goes **in-explicable*** [no one can explain - aut.] *Way On Great Saturday in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem* (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2014.04.09); *As a result, already in the course of the concert, the pain became simply **unbearable*** [the artist and anyone else in his place can not stand the *test*] and after the fourth song the show still had to be interrupted (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2013.03.13).

Secondly, the possibility/impossibility of the key to the feature of the action can be associated with a specific prescription: *Inherent*, (not) *alienable*, *indissoluble*, (not) *punishable*, and (not) *permissible* and under. Such adjectives express the modality of norms [13], which “prescribe what should, what is allowed, what is forbidden” [10, p. 175]. According to Beller, deontic statements sometimes signal that people can go beyond the conventions, referring to the alternative or additional conditions necessary for the settlement of the deontic situation [12, p. 308]: *A small amount of wine is **allowed** only at an official reception, for which the bar is needed* (Izvestia, 2014.07.09).

As von Wright rightly points out, the very fact of allowing or banning anything in the society is teleologically connected with the evaluation [14, p. 353], therefore the adjectives of this group often express a concomitant value: *The fact that we, men, sometimes allow ourselves to women - this is **punishable*** [badly, not allowed, must be punished - author] (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2013.10.14); *Nechayev was one of those who proclaimed this “right” **inalienable*** [valuable, good, can not be taken away - auth.] *The right of a revolutionary* (Culture, 2002.04.08).

Finally, the possibility or impossibility of an action can be caused by an axiological factor—an estimated relation to a particular subject in terms of “good/bad”, “useful, appropriate/not useful, inexpedient”. This is typical of the semantics of such adjectives as (not) *acceptable*, *invaluable*, (not) *tolerant*, (not) *apologetic*, (not) *permissible* and under. There is a certain pattern: In the adjective with the prefix, *not* the inability to

perform an action by virtue of certain axiological settings forms an unambiguous value, for example: *The first time was a little sad, but then I realized that this is a good option. I can get **invaluable** [good, useful - aut.] Coaching experience (Izvestia, 2014.05.15); this state of things is **intolerable** [bad, harmful - auth.], But it can only be corrected by differently directed systemic methods (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2013.09.12).*

If the possibility of action is not denied, then the estimate only tends to one pole or another, so adjectives are often *not* used with lexical and grammatical indicators of the relative sign: *His voice - **in the best cases, tolerable** (and at worst it looks like the sound of a tearing foam plastic) (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2013.05.01); This experience does not yet have the Russian Academy of Sciences, but this is a **more acceptable** path, which, along with the state, requires (Labor-7. 2007.04.17).*

Our language material allows, through the prism of a possible/impossible for a person, to examine in more detail the relationship between the nomination of a feature and the concept of a norm. Above we have identified a small group of adjectives expressing the significance of deontic modalities. However, a much larger number of adjectives considered relates to the “generic concept” of the norm, which unites “all kinds and forms of order” [1, p. 6]. Defining the content of this broad notion of the norm, Arutyunova enumerates particular groups of concepts whose invariant sign is one or another manifestation of the norm. Among these features, for us, the one on the basis of which the concepts “model”, “sample”, “stereotype”, - standardization are united is important. “To conform to the norm and to observe order means to be” like everyone else “and” as always “<...>”. The normative field borders on the concepts of ordinary, ordinary, predictable, habitual... “[1, p. 7]”. It is this interpretation of the norm that is reflected in the meaning of those nominations of the trait, which are based on an idea of a person’s capabilities.

Most of them are paired formations, differing only in the presence or absence of a prefix of *not* - *Imaginable* - *unimaginable*, *replaceable* - *irreplaceable*, *comparable* - *incomparable* and *under*. Comparison of the values of paired adjectives allows us to reveal a certain regularity. Adjectives without a prefix do *not*, as a rule, designate a feature that is rated by the speaker as normative in the sense that it corresponds to generally accepted concepts and the routine of things. The adjective with *not*, on the contrary, interprets the feature of the subject as anomalous, unusual from the point of view of the human perception of the world, because it goes beyond the bounds of human possibilities. This different attitude of adjectives to the norm is often emphasized by the context:

*Thus, experts note, the desire to invest in durable goods is quite **natural** and **understandable**... (Ogonyok, 2014); and **yet** this **mystery** turned out to be **solvable** (Knowledge is Power 2014); this is nothing **complicated** **No**, and if you set yourself this goal of life, then it is quite **achievable** [Siberian lights. 2013].*

*This amazing feeling that arose in the night battle, where you can not distinguish in three steps who it is - a friend or an enemy ready to kill you, was associated with a second, no less **surprising and inexplicable** feeling of the general course of the battle (V. Grossman. Life and destiny. Part 1. 1960); All of us in one way or another agree that today in the world there are accumulating reasons for the crisis of the structural one, i.e. **insoluble** within the **standard** political and investment decisions of our days*

(Expert, 2015); *He likes to start the film with a landscape of dizzying beauty and peace, and it will be like an ideal **unattainable** for vain life* (Izvestia. 2002.04.26).

In the above examples, we have identified those means of the context that form a semantic opposition to the adjectives (the *riddle of vs. is still solvable, the unsolvable vs. standard, unreachable vs. vain*) or, on the contrary, approaching them (naturally - *understandable, difficult not - achievable, surprising - inexplicable*). In any case, the gravitation of adjectives is emphasized without *not* any notion of norms: “Order”, “pattern”, “ordinary”, “natural”, and non-adjectives - to the concepts of the antinorm: “Paradox”, “exception”, “uniqueness”. In quantitative terms, *not* adjectives clearly prevail: The adjective without a prefix does *not* always have a paired variant with a prefix, whereas the *not*- adjective often functions outside the pair. This pattern is explained by the desire of a person to fix and designate by language means primarily anomalous [1, p. 4], and in our case - beyond the possible.

The connection with the concept of the antinorm has led to a wide use of the adjective type *unattainable* in the role of intensities, i.e. Indicators of the highest degree of manifestation of another feature: *Inexpressible joy, unimaginable self-confidence, unthinkable happiness, indescribable villainy, incorrigible slander, irresistible aversion*, etc. see: [5, 8, p. 328]. In itself, this function is inextricably linked with the subjective interpretation of the world, so that all “adjective-intensifiers are indicators of the stressed anthropo-orientation of the utterance” [6, p. 31]. In the case of adjectives with suffixes -em/-im- this is especially obvious, because measure of the intensity of the trait is the limits of what is possible for man.

## 4 Conclusion

Adjectives with suffixes -em/-imitate such a fragment of the linguistic picture of the world in which the objects-carriers of the feature appear as objects of the cognitive, speech-thinking, sensual, creative, goal-setting activity of human. At the same time, the possibility or impossibility to perform certain actions with respect to the subject turns out to be an important means of understanding this subject and giving it a feature for the Russian national consciousness.

## References

1. Arutyunova, N.D.: Anomalies and language (to the problem of the language “picture of the world”). *Questions Linguist.* **3**, 3–19 (1987)
2. Humboldt, W.: On the difference in the structure of human languages and its influence on the spiritual development of humanity. *Selected Works on Linguistics*, 400 p. (1984)
3. Gurevich, V.V.: About the “subjective” component of language semantics. *Questions Linguist.* **1** (1998)
4. Zaliznyak, A.A.: *Grammatical dictionary of the Russian language: Change of words*. OK. 100 000 words, 2nd edn. The stereotype. M.: Russian language, 880 p. (1980)
5. Zanagina, N.N.: Adjectives with the intensity value, the measure of the manifestation of the sign. <http://lexrus.ru/default.aspx?s=0&p=2917>. Circulation date is 12 May 2017

6. Ivancha, A.V.: Anthro-po-oriented adjectives with the meaning of intensity in the Russian language. *Izv. Saratov Univ. New Ser. Philology J.* **12**(1), 30–33 (2012)
7. Karaulov Yu, N.: *Russian language and language*, 7th edn., 264 p. Publishing house LCI (2010)
8. Petrova, N.E.: On the factors of expressiveness of verbal adjectives with suffixes -em-/im-rational and emotional in language and speech: means of artistic imagery and their stylistic use in the text: Interuniversity. *Sat. Scientific works, dedicated to the 85th anniversary of Professor A.N. Kozhena: MGOU*, pp. 326–331 (2004)
9. Radbil, T.B.: *Basics of studying the language mentality: Training tutorial*. Flint, 328 p. (2010)
10. *Dictionary of the Russian language: In the 4th volume/USSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of Russian language*. Evgenieva, A.P. (ed.) 3rd edn. Stereotype. T. II. M.: Russian language (1986)
11. Rudnev, V.P.: *Dictionary of culture of the XX century*. M.: Agraf, 384 p. (1998)
12. Beller, S.: Deontic norms, deontic reasoning, and deontic conditionals. *Think. Reason.* **14**(4), 305–341 (2008)
13. Thomasson, A.L.: Norms and necessity. *South. J. Philos.* **51**(2), 143–160 (2013)
14. von Wright, G.H.: Valuations – or how to say the unsayable. *Ratio Juris.* **13**(4), 347–357 (2000)