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**TEXT-FORMING FUNCTION OF VERB FORMS IN POETIC  
PRAYERS OF Z. GIPPIUS**

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**Abstract**

The paper analyzes the text-forming role of verb forms in the prayer lyrics of Z. Gippius. The material of the study included the cycles of poems of the Russian poetess of the Silver Age representing the genre of prayer or instruction. It is proved that poetic communication in prayer reaches the highest level of implementation, this is manifested in the interpenetration of the author's monologue and dialogue with the rhetorical addressee. The grammatical forms of procedural units – verbs and phraseological units – play an important role in the arsenal of language means of prayer. The system of verb forms is actively involved in the speech intents of evaluation, expression of emotions, attitude; the forms of verb categories transmit the author's idea of space and time, finality and infinity, about passing and eternal. The forms of imperative mood dominate. The meaning of inducement is realized in speech in various shades. High concentration of grammatical verb forms is caused by the desire of a poet to influence the inner world of the reader, to involve him in the spiritual feeling of the author. The study of the poetic function and the text-forming role of verb forms in the prayer lyrics of Z. Gippius made it possible to present the author's understanding of the world. The poetess not only harmoniously perceives the reality, but mainly lives the present, personal. The forms of verb categories determine not only grammatical, but also linguistic specifics of a poetic prayer, broadcast the author's model of the universe.

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## 1. Introduction

For many decades the interest to a poetic prayer has remained stable. However, it is primarily the object of literary studies (Barutkina, 2018; Eremeeva, 2018; Perevalova, 2020). Linguistic features of this genre still require systematic study and description. The poetic understanding of such a religious form as prayer is associated with genre “memory” based on the genetic connection of a religious prayer with a literary prayer and is within the framework of the genre canon formed over the centuries, which implies certain linguistic features, which in most texts of this kind are considered the “universal regulatory means of prayer discourse” (Yatsuga, 2004, 2020). The grammatical forms of procedural units – verbs and phraseological units – play an important role in the arsenal of language means of prayer. The richness and diversity of semantics is combined in a verb with the richness and diversity of grammatical forms (Vinogradov, 2001).

Many scientists analyze the stylistic possibilities of a verb in different genres and styles (Bolotnova, 2016; Churilina, 2017; Lotman, 2016). Ya.I. Gin considers the grammar categories to be one of the leading means of text- and meaning-making, he refers to nuclear “those categories and grades that play a particularly important role in the structure of a literary text (face, time, mood) or regularly undergo aesthetic transformation and rethinking (grammatical genus)” (Gin, 2017, p. 39). Kozhina et al. (2018), among morphological means of expressiveness, notes the special function of a verb in a literary text, calls “verbal speech (or plot science)” as one of specific ways to achieve imagery, which consists in the step-by-step designation of each movement of a hero (both body and soul), changing his state. According to Golub and Starodubets (2016), in the literary text “a verb in all the richness of its semantics, with its inherent meanings of grammatical forms and the power of syntactic connections, with a variety of stylistic techniques of figurative use, is an inexhaustible source of expression” (p. 109).

## 2. Problem Statement

Prayer is a secondary genre of communication, for which *Our Father* acts as a proto-genre (Itskovich, 2016). In the prayer a person uses certain linguistic means to express and determine his feelings. The forms of verb categories are not only grammatical, but also linguostylistic phenomenon, an important side of literary and religious consciousness, they form the author’s model of the world, carry speech intents and form the dynamics of a speech situation.

## 3. Research Questions

The subject of study is the text-forming function of verb forms in the cycle of poems-prayers and instructions in the works of Z. Gippius. In total, 332 verb forms identified by the continuous sampling method were analyzed.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose is to identify the semantic-stylistic potential of verb forms in a communicative situation of prayer and instruction using the example of the works by Z. Gippius.

#### 5. Research Methods

As the main methods of research, the following were used: descriptive, quantitative-symptomatic, semantic-cognitive analysis (from the analysis of language units to the modelling of mental space).

#### 6. Findings

In the text of poems, prayers and instructions, the text-forming function is performed by verbs in the imperative mood. A category of mood is a category of attitude, with the help of which a person expresses his assessment of what is happening, represents an action real, correlated with the reality and therefore manifested through some form of time (present, past or future), or unrealistic, which is thought as possible, desirable, assumed as a will of a speaker. The mood expresses the personal and generally human qualification of the action or a human “will to connect the action with reality” (Chepasova & Kazachuk, 2002). The form of imperative mood is associated with a certain speech situation, in which the speaker’s will is expressed orally or in writing in relation to the addressee, the interlocutor. “This address of the action is the main term of the imperative mood: the action indicated by a procedural unit is evaluated by the speaker not as connected with reality, but as such, to which the speaker encourages the interlocutor, the addressee, accompanying his will with a certain, prompting intonation” (Chepasova & Kazachuk, 2002, p. 9). The imperative speech situation requires the following participants: causator (speaker, addressee) – the one who induces; addressee (listener) – the one to whom the imperative statement is addressed; causable (performer) – the one who must fulfil the motive. Usually, the addressee and the causee coincide: the performer of the action, which is called a form of imperative mood, is the addressee, i.e. the listener (2<sup>nd</sup> person). In the studied material, the verb forms of the imperative mood make 36.2 % of the number of all conjugated forms. This also unquestionably proves the deep dialogic nature of a poetic prayer in relation to Orthodox, for which this is one of the defining features of the genre. “Deep dialogics manifests a special structure of prayer communication and in terms of content it is determined by the presence of two most important signs: the actualization of the “you”-sphere of a statement and the special status of the Addressee ... actualization of the “you”-sphere in prayers is manifested by imperative forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular...” (Prokhvatilova, 2020, p. 90).

The synthetic forms of the imperative mood of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural are *imperative*, they are most frequent (95 %), since the dialogics of prayer as an act of communication implies the presence of the speaker and the addressee. “*Lord. Father. Save, Give Shelter – Who I want*” (About the other). Most poetic prayers of Z. Gippius represent a poetic analogue of general prayers, in which the prayer addresses the God with his needs. At the same time, in a lyrical prayer, the spiritual comes to the fore: “*Open me, God, open people! Are they Yours, Your creation, Or of the enemy creation? Open me, God, open people!*” (Take me). A kind of a general prayer is an intercessory prayer containing

intercessions for other people: for the beloved – “**Accept**, Lord, my desire! Oh, burn me like I burnt a candle, But **send down** liberation, Your love, Your salvation – to Whom I want” (About the other), and even for the devil – “Oh, **grant him**, Lord, His madness – for suffering” (God’s creature).

The poem-prayer *Take Me* is entirely built on the forms of the imperative mood of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular: 4 lexical units – *open, return, give, take* – in 11 uses of the absolute absence of other verb forms.

The analytical forms of the imperative with imperative-desirable semantics in the studied texts are less frequent (5 %): “*Let the night be infinitely long, – Let light be born from darkness!*” (Knock), although, according to linguists, such forms are present quite widely in a religious prayer.

In a lyrical prayer the analytical forms of the imperative mood express indirect request to the supreme power to be involved in any action, to contribute to what is desired, or vice versa to prevent what should not take place in reality.

The main function of the used speech means is to influence the inner world of the reader, draw his attention to spiritual feelings, and influence his perception of reality. The intentional structure of poems-prayers and instructions of Z. Gippius is represented by the following types: request, pleas, orders, calls, prohibition (prohibitive). Indicative in this aspect is the intensity of a request, an intercession realized in a poetic prayer through the synthetic form of the imperative: “*O my Lord and God! Please, calm down, We are so weak and nagged*”.

With the help of the structure *give + infinitive* the speaker asks the permission to perform any action: *Let me plunge into silence, Let me rest in infinity!*.. (Incantation). This semantics is actualized in poetic prayers and instructions by the imperative nature of requests addressed to the Divine addressee, the “moment” of the prayer event, the desire to explain the contradictions of this world and gain a sense of peace, which becomes the setting of the one being in prayer. The meanings of prohibition or warning, cautions arise in the case of using the forms of the imperative mood with negation, i.e. a prohibitive structure. These structures in different mentalities acquire different, sometimes polar semantics: from categorical prohibition to mild caution, in this case they come close to preventive structures. In the poetic works of Z. Gippius, we find different prohibitive structures. The forms of the perfect form of verbs more often convey a warning, and the forms of the imperfect form are forbidden: “*Do not speak to people, Do not rise cover from the soul...*” (Instruction). The intensity of prohibition is contained only in the genre of instruction: “*Do not believe in love and pity, Do not open the holy door, Keep, keep its keys, And suffocate – and be silent*” (In vain).

The forms of other verb inclinations are less represented, although the prayers also play an important role in the genre. There are some cases of using the forms of the subjunctive mood (0.3 %), as well as the imperative, which one of the main meanings is desire. The intensity of desire is enhanced by the use of the modal verb *to want*: “*Lord! Did our soul want red dawns to dust?*” (White).

The indicative mood dominates the poetic prayers of Z. Gippius (63.5 %). The indicative inclination is the only real inclination, in the forms of time representing an action taking place in the present, which took place in the past or is assigned to the plan of the future. “...Language describes reality, which, like speech, exists in time. It therefore has the richest arsenal of internal – grammatical and lexical – means to denote temporal aspects of reality” (Arutyunova & Yanko, 1997, p. 209). In poetry, the literary time is realized in various types: specific literary time (time correlated with the life of a lyrical

hero), generalized literary time (time correlated with the life of any person), time-abstraction (purely time devoid of the subject of being), time-transformation (unreal image – time substitute).

The choice of temporary forms organizing a literary text, as well as the choice of forms of inclination, is determined by the intentions of the author (Nikolina). In the prayer discourse of Z. Gippius, the forms of the present tense are predominant (64.5 %), the future is less frequent (24.4 %), the past tense forms are occasional (11.1 %). Besides, the future tense is most often represented by simple future – 95 % of the number of all tense forms, the future perfect is only 4.8 %.

On the periphery of the lyrical speech in the prayers of Z. Gippius there are past tense forms, since there are no past events and feelings in prayer. It is the forms of the present that act as genre-forming for prayer. The present serves as a direct address, “here and now”, at the same time when used in a figurative sense it acquires the expression: “*He holds all the fate keys*” (Calm down).

The grammatical category of the person of verbs and procedural phraseological units is part of the functional-semantic category of personhood in Russian, which reflects the connection of a language and a man and represents the latter “in the whole variety of properties and characteristics in the process of life” (Miniyarova, 1993). Vinogradov (2001) called the person category the foundation of fairness, the organizing center of statements. Miniyarova (1993), Panteleev (2018) assigned the category of personhood to the number of categories that play an important role in the generation of speech and perform a text-forming function.

In the lyrical cycle of Z. Gippius, only 272 personal forms are observed: 1<sup>st</sup> person – 40.5 %; 2<sup>nd</sup> – 38.2 %; 3<sup>rd</sup> – 21.3 %. In the paradigm of the imperative mood, the forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person are central – (direct urge), peripheral – 3<sup>rd</sup> (mediated urge), and 1<sup>st</sup> (forms of joint action). The first two forms (95 % and 5 %, respectively) are presented, there are no forms that induce joint action. The person in the forms of the imperative mood is expressed synthetically (100 %): polyfunctional suffixes -i-, -Ø- (*save, accept, give shelter, take out*) and personal endings (*let him not pass, let him not forget*). The forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular are highly frequent due to the singular nature of the recipient of the prayer addressed to the Most High.

In the indicative mood, the way a person is expressed depends on the tense form: in the present (1<sup>st</sup> person – 67.6 %; 2<sup>nd</sup> person – 2.7 %; 3<sup>rd</sup> person – 29.7 %) and the future (1<sup>st</sup> person – 62 %; 2<sup>nd</sup> person – 12 %; 3<sup>rd</sup> person – 26 %) the person is expressed by synthetically personal endings, in the past (1<sup>st</sup> person – 10.5 %; 2<sup>nd</sup> person – 36.9 %; 3<sup>rd</sup> person – 52.6 %) – analytically using the form of the nominative case of pronouns and nouns. This relationship is understandable and indicative. The predominance of the forms of the 1<sup>st</sup> person in the present and future tenses is justified by the most important, determining position of the subject in poetic prayer and instruction. In the past tense it is logical to use the forms of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in metaphorical contexts describing the state of the subject: “*Someone from the darkness of silence Called to cold earth, Called my unfree soul from sleep and silence*” (Instruction); “*But in our life, it is no coincidence that the dark glass lay between us*” (Glass).

In conditional inclination, the person is syntactically expressed. This form of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person occurs only once: “*Lord! Did our soul want red dawns to dust?*” (White).

The lyrical texts are built, as a rule, in the first person. Prayer reinforces the role of these forms, since this is a personal appeal to God. The verbs of the 1<sup>st</sup> person with personal flexions are accompanied

by the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronouns expressing a subjective perception of reality, which creates the specifics of a lyric prayer: “*Jesus, hope of children! Forgive that I am grieving! My clothes are dark, but I love You* (to Ungrieved Master); “*Nothing comes true. And I believe. There is destruction everywhere, and I hope. Everybody is cheating, and I love. There is misfortune, but there will be joy. Close joy, Unearthly – here*” (Will be). “The triad “*I believe – I hope – I love*” expresses the life position of the author, creates a conflict – the confrontation of the lyrical “I” to the world” (Yatsuga, 2004, p. 4).

It is significant that in the prayer cycle of Z. Gippius, specific chains are balanced. The quantitative analysis showed the balance of the category of a grammatical aspect: imperfect – 50.6 %, perfect – 49.4 %. This is explained by the frequency of certain verb forms in the studied material, namely the present forms of the indicative mood typical exclusively for imperfect verbs and the perfect forms of the imperative mood. The imperfect grammar forms are widely used in a metaphorical context since they are able to express the distraction of an action/state that is not really limited in time: “*I give the gravity to you the unshakable spirit*” (to Unshakable Teacher); “*Stronger than myself and people, I love my soul*” (Knock). The verbs in the imperative form are found in a perfect form – 70 %, i.e. the praying one asks for the commission, implementation of the desired actions: “*My immense courage, Lord, help!... Lord, my desires, accept!...*” (Justification).

There is an increase in the lyrical position of a subject, there is an egocentricity, individualization of feelings, which is typical for the poetic prayer and unusual for the religious one.

## 7. Conclusion

The study of the text-forming role of verb forms in the prayer lyrics of Z. Gippius made it possible to present the author’s understanding of the world. The poetess not only harmoniously perceives the reality, but mainly lives in the present, personal. The system of verb forms is actively involved in the speech intents of evaluation, expression of emotions, attitude; the forms of verb categories transmit the author’s idea of space and time, finality and infinity, about passing and eternal.

High concentration of grammatical verb forms is caused by the desire of a poet to influence the inner world of a reader, to involve him in spiritual feelings of the author.

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