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# Echoic Verbs as Means of Expressing Semelfactive/Multiplicative Meanings in Contemporary English

Garsažodiniai veiksmazodžiai – šiuolaikinės anglų kalbos momentinio ir pasikartojančio veiksmo raiškos priemonė

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## Abstract

The article discusses the problem of semelfactive and multiplicative verbs in contemporary English. We state that most of semelfactive/multiplicative verbs are of sound-imitating origin. On the basis of four dictionaries (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003), Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (2000), Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (2008), Webster Universal College Dictionary (1997)), 285 echoic verbs were singled out. Our intention was to study the echoic verbs as the main means of expressing either semelfactive or multiplicative, or both, meanings according to the context within the framework of Smith's (1997) theory of aspect in which five situation types, namely states, activities, achievements, accomplishments, and semelfactives are distinguished. The results of the research contribute to the study of verbal plurality in English. According to the suggested semantic classification, the analyzed verbs were subdivided into three main groups: echoic verbs denoting a sound, the source of which is a person, a thing or nature. The results of the empirically-based study are reflected in the quantitative analysis of the English echoic verbs, which concludes that verbs denoting sounds caused by a thing are used most frequently, verbs denoting sounds produced by a living being are used more seldom, and verbs denoting sounds of nature are least commonly used. Echoic verbs can also be used as part of light verb constructions, where the singular form of a deverbal noun indicates a semelfactive meaning, while the plural form expresses a multiplicative one.

**KEYWORDS:** echoic verb, predicate, semelfactive meaning, multiplicative meaning, semantics.

## Introduction

The paper focuses on the echoic verbs formed in imitation of some natural sound (Merriam-Webster, 2022) as one of the main means of expressing either semelfactive or multiplicative meanings in contemporary English.

The adjective *semelfactive* comes from neo-Latin *semelfactivus* that is equivalent to the Latin *semel* (once, a single time – once) and *factum* (event, occurrence – event, case) (Smith, 1997, p. 29). It is associated with the verbs that

express the ‘do-it-once’ meaning, such as *to kick*, *to blink*, *to sneeze*. Semelfactive of a verb form or aspect means “expressing action as single occurrence without repetition or continuation (instantaneous, momentary)” (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Semelfactive verbs are often referred to as *short-term (instant, instantaneous, momentary), point (punctual), short (non-durational)* (Tron, 2007, p. 234).

There is no clear distinction between the terms mentioned above, which therefore leads either to their full identification or to layers on each other. Thus, we are combining these values under the term ‘semelfactive’. Semelfactives are defined as being the “single occurrence of an event which has repeated actions, result in no change of state and are instantaneous”, “single-stage events that occur very quickly with no result or outcome” (Smith, 1997, p. 29); “verbs which denote one quantum of an activity” (Zaliznjak & Shmelev, 2000, p. 118).

An aspectual class of verbs that denote actions which correlate with the repeated use of semelfactives, i.e., express a series of identical repeating quanta, is called multiplicatives. Multiplicative verbs are also called multiple-event activities (Smith, 1997, p. 50) and simulfactives (Harrison, 2002, p. 5). According to Bolsunovskaya (2016), multiplicative verbs (indicating multiple events) refer to a multiple occurrence of the situation taking place; the sets of actants in all the repeated situations are identical denoting the marginal monotemporal multiplicity.

### Theoretical Background

The in-depth study of semelfactive and multiplicative verbs in various languages belongs to Levin (1993), Makarova and Janda (2009), Markman (2008), Rothstein (2008), Smith (1997), Tron (2007), and other linguists. Smith (1997) was the first to introduce a new aspectual class of verbs – semelfactives (based on the features attributed to the class of point by Moens (1987)) adding them to Vendler’s (1967) four situation types: states, activities, achievements and accomplishments. She explains that the term *semelfactive* is used in the Slavic linguistics for suffixes which indicate single events. Smith proposes that this class of predicates can also be applied to languages such as English which do not mark semelfactives morphologically. According to Smith (1997), semelfactives lack duration (i.e., occur instantaneously) while Moens (1987) states that semelfactives are events which have successive phases i.e. plurality.

Van Valin (2006) also claims that semelfactives are instantaneous, explaining that durativity is distinguished by the internal duration of the event and whether or not an event takes place over a time span or is instantaneous. According to Van Valin semelfactives do not have ‘much’ duration and thus it is acceptable to consider them punctual or instantaneous (2006, p. 159).

Nesset (2013) states that semelfactives are verbs which denote one quantum of an activity. He defines a quantum as being one event, such as a *wave* or *knock* in a series of events. Besides, the scholar asserts that any particular *knock* or *wave* is essentially at its base level identical to another. Therefore, prototypical semelfactives are uniform and instantaneous quanta (Nesset, 2013, p. 124).

Semelfactive predicates according to Nelson (2018) are composed of three sub-categories: semelfactives with internal plurality, semelfactives which are unidirectional, and semelfactives with plurality of participants. He also argues for the possibility that “predicates may at times fall into more than one of these sub-categories depending on usage” (Nelson, 2018, p. 37).

Semelfactive verbs have been explored on the basis of a particular language as well as several ones. Halm (2012) distinguishes the relationship between the syntactic value and semantic characteristics of semelfactive verbs in Hungarian. He states that in Hungarian semelfactives are used “in the middle of the unergative-unaccusative continuum” which is based on “their syntactic behaviour, and that this mixed behaviour can be derived straightforwardly from the semantic characterization of the verbs in question” (Halm, 2012, p. 104). Thus, the linguist explains that semantic features play an important role in the mixed unergative-unaccusative behaviour of Hungarian semelfactives.

Bacz (2012) is of the opinion that prototypical semelfactives in Polish are perfective verbs with the suffix *-na-* denoting one cycle of a repeated activity (*szczytnąć* ‘pinch once’). A semelfactive meaning is also expressed by “perfectives with a prefix which indicates short-lasting acoustic (and visual) phenomena (*zagrzmieć* ‘thunder’), natural perfectives which denote completion and perfectives expressing an evaluative assessment of single

acts” (Bacz, 2012, p. 127). Therefore, morphologically, semelfactivity in Polish is expressed either by the semelfactive suffix *-na-* or by inchoative or purely aspectual prefixes.

The aspectual similarities between activities and semelfactive verbs in Japanese, focusing on iterativity in particular, were investigated by Shida and Nakatani (2019). They examined the distinction between semelfactive verbs and activities comparing a pre-suppositional contextual contrast *ikkai* ‘once’ with *ikkai-dake* ‘only once’. They have come to the conclusion that activities and semelfactive verbs have different aspectual properties, as activities involve single whole events while semelfactive verbs are a frequentative operator in their logical meaning (Shida & Nakatani, 2019, p. 95).

Lamarre (2015) on the basis of the Chinese language claims that semelfactives are mostly verbs denoting body movements and facial expressions, conveying a nuance of ‘suddenness’; they are likely “to be construed as atomic and countable events”. In her opinion, the characteristic feature of the semelfactive verbs is semelfactivity, i.e., punctiliarity and atelicity (Lamarre, 2015, p. 233).

An aspectual and pragmatic analysis of the Turkish semelfactive *öksür* (*cough*) on the basis of the Turkish National Corpus has been given by Adigüzel (2020) who states that the word expresses pragmatic messages produced by the agent as a discourse device to express disapproval, annoyance, warning, disbelief, advertising one’s presence or clearing throats before starting to speak.

Kuznetsova and Makarova (2012) have analyzed the distribution between two semelfactive suffixes *-nu-* and *-anu-* in Russian. Having explored 2041 semelfactive verbs from the Russian National Corpus, the researchers have come to the conclusion that distribution of the two suffixes partially depends on the number of the syllables; “suffix *-anu-* is more recent, and most monosyllabic roots are undergoing a shift from *-nu-* to *-anu-*” (Kuznetsova & Makarova, 2012, p. 155).

Semelfactives are also analyzed in the comparative aspect, e.g., in English and Hungarian (Kiss, 2011; Gyarmathy, 2016), English and Korean (Ju, 2014), Czech and Polish (Medova & Wiland, 2018). Kiss (2011) studies semelfactive verbs in English and Hungarian describing semantic and morphological characteristics associated with these verbs. The scholar gives the exact classification of semelfactive verbs in analyzed languages. She states that in English we can point out the following semantic (sub)classes of semelfactive verbs based on their features: bodily events (*blink, cough, burp, sneeze, wink, glimpse, jump, skip, spring, jerk, fart*); internal events (*flicker, flash (lights), gleam, ring, spurt, squirt, spew*); punctual actions involving movement (*tap, peck, scratch, kick, hammer a nail (once), hit, slap, thump, thwack, smack, clap, shake, knock*); punctual verbs of perception (*cry out (in pain), call out, shout out*); punctual verbs implying a subsequent state (*explode, find, break, break in, cave in, crack, split, smash, etc.*) (Kiss, 2011, p. 123). She also claims that most of the English semelfactive classes of verbs have corresponding classes in Hungarian.

Egg (2018) after reviewing the previous analyses of semelfactives compares them to iteratives in Russian and Hungarian. He considers that in Russian the situation is more complex because “a singleton interpretation can be indicated morphologically (with the help of additional suffix *(-nu)* and the prefix *s-*)” (Egg, 2018, p. 76).

Medova and Wiland (2018) in their research prove that semelfactive and degree achievement verbs are morphosyntactically distinct (in Czech and Polish); semelfactives exhibit a more syntactic structure than degree achievements. For this purpose, the Nanosyntax (a theory of the architecture of grammar in which the lexicon stores entire syntactic subtrees) has been used.

Ju (2014) analyzes semelfactive verbs in terms of the lexical aspect on the basis of English and Korean. The linguist examines the specific features of English and Korean semelfactive verbs. Using Van Valin’s classification of the verbs taking into account the inherent semantic properties, Ju comes to the conclusion that semelfactive verbs in Korean and English have much in common.

Some scholars (Dickey (2001) in particular) focus on the differences between the Slavic languages (Russian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Ukrainian, Upper Sorbian, Bulgarian, Belarusian, Croatian, Czech, Macedonian, Polish). Dickey (2001) proved that a class of prefixes of a-stem/n-stem doublets used to be more productive in a group of the Western Slavic languages (especially Czech, Slovak, Upper Sorbian). Besides, this productivity reduces in the languages farther to the east (Russian). The author emphasizes that Russian dictionaries (the Academy

Dictionary for instance), mark semelfactives as ‘odnokratnyj’ [do-it-once] (even if different dictionaries treat such verbs a little bit differently). In Czech and Polish dictionaries, they are called ‘perfectives’ (Dickey, 2001, p. 41–42).

Russian linguistics regards ‘semelfactive’ and ‘multiplicative’ as related aspects. The term ‘multiplicative-semelfactive aspect’ is taken from the Russian tradition of linguistics (Chrakovskij, 1997; Knjazev, 2007). The compound term ‘multiplicative-semelfactive aspect’ is used to describe the meaning of the *pilpet* pattern, as ‘multiplicativity is an important component of this pattern’s meaning and because the repetition of consecutive atomic events is iconically represented by the reduplication in this pattern (Agranovsky, 2021, p. 316). Khrakovskii (1989) formulates this pattern as follows: “One of the universal features of lexical multiplicatives (and semelfactives) is that, these words are mostly, if not exclusively, sound-imitating in their basis” (Khrakovskii, 1989, p. 26).

In this article, following Khrakovskii (1989), we state that most of the semelfactive and related multiplicative verbs in English are of *sound-imitating (echoic)* origin.

There are two main directions in the research of sound-imitating verb vocabulary:

- a) study of the lexical meaning of verbs as a set of semantic components in the framework of systematic analysis of the vocabulary;
- b) study of the categorial semantics of echoic verbs using the methods of conceptual analysis.

There are the following tendencies in the study of sound-imitating verb vocabulary:

- a) the study of echoic verbs in the analysis of the combinability of sound-nominating verb lexemes at the syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels (Vinogradova, 1999);
- b) the study of echoic verbs on the material of several languages (Riabova & Kobenko 2015);
- c) analysis of microgroups within the thematic sound group (Razheva, 2013);
- d) analysis of echoic verbs in the framework of a comprehensive study of sound-nominative vocabulary (Sharp & Warren, 2009; Sugahara, 2011).

## Data and Methods

The corpus comprises 285 echoic semelfactive verbs obtained by means of employing the manual selection procedure from four dictionaries namely Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003), Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English (2000), Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language (2008), Webster Universal College Dictionary (1997).

Sharing the opinion of Vinogradova (1999), we classified the echoic verbs according to two main semantic features: the type of the sound source and the way of the sound production. In case the source of a sound is a person, we singled out verbs of speech (83 cases), scream (21 cases), laughter (21 cases), crying (13 cases), musical voice sounds (5 cases), and groaning (3 cases). Verbs denoting sounds caused by a thing were divided into the following groups: verbs of collision (48 cases), verbs of action caused by people (38 cases), vibration (25 cases), verbs of abrupt movement of an object in space (21 cases), friction (20 cases), destruction (15 cases), and reverberation (5 cases). If the source of a sound is nature, the echoic verbs may denote sounds of thunder (11 cases), precipitation (10 cases), and wind (9 cases). One and the same echoic verb may be polysemantic and may belong to different semantic groups.

The in-depth study of the echoic verbs showed that they express only a semelfactive action (*blurt, smack, snap, etc*) or a multiplicative one (*clatter, fizzle, hiss, etc*). However, most of the echoic verbs may denote a semelfactive or a multiplicative action according to the context (*crash, slap, splash, etc.*).

Echoic verbs were also studied as a part of light verb constructions consisting of a ‘light’ verb (*do, make, get, take, have, give*) which is denominated in the constructions (sometimes a ‘heavy’ verb such as *to catch, to cast, to shoot, etc.*) and a converted verbal noun. In case a deverbal noun was used in singular, it expressed the semelfactive meaning, while the usage of the deverbal noun in plural form indicated multiplicativity.

All the echoic verbs were verified in the 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century novels by famous English and American writers (I. Banks, C. Barker, B. Bova, D. Brown, L. Grant-Adamson, G. Martin, J. Rogers and others) which enabled us to conduct a quantitative analysis of English echoic verbs with qualitative data of their use.

To achieve the objective of the research, the following methods were used: narrative (for selecting, rendering and interpreting factual material), the method of discourse analysis (for analyzing excerpts of semelfactive/multiplicative echoic verbs), classification and systematization (for grouping echoic verbs under study on different source domains). The results of the research are presented in Tables 1–8.

## Results and Discussion

### What is an echoic verb?

Echoic verbs are the imitation of the sounds of the surrounding reality with the help of phonetic means (Tron, 2007, p. 231) (for example, splash – ‘to dash (water, mud, etc.) about in scattered masses or particles’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 758), crack – ‘to break with a sudden sharp sound’ (Webster Universal College Dictionary, subsequently WUCD, 1997, p. 188), ‘to make a quick loud sound like the sound of something breaking, or to make something do this’ (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, subsequently LDCE, 2003, p. 364), buzz – ‘to make a low, vibrating, humming sound’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 110), ‘to make a continuous sound, like the sound of a bee’ (LDCE, 2003, p. 204), mumble – ‘to utter in a soft, indistinct manner’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 527).

These predicates are grouped on the basis of their phonetic features, i.e., the presence of similar initial or final consonants or root vowels. Thus, the final consonant [p] is usually characteristic of words denoting a *blow*: *clap* – ‘to strike (an object) against something quickly and forcefully, producing an abrupt, sharp sound’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 146), *clip* – ‘to hit with a sharp, quick blow’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 150). The phoneme [ʃ] denotes a sharp sound that is formed when an object is hit, smashed or broken: *crash* – ‘to make a sudden clattering noise, as of something dashed to pieces’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 189), *smash* – ‘to break to pieces with violence and often with a crashing sound, as by dashing against something; shatter’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 741), ‘to break into pieces violently or noisily, or to make something do this by dropping, throwing, or hitting it’ (LDCE, 2003, p. 1560), *lash* – ‘to strike or beat, as with a whip or something similarly slender and flexible’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 457).

A large number of English echoic words form a complex system of homonyms, some of which are so far from their original meaning that at present there is hardly any connection with the imitation of sounds in their semantics. In addition, sound imitation often manifests itself only at the level of motive and does not find expression in the meaning of the word.

Thus, in the group of verbs with a similar sound (*bash, brash, clash, crash, dash, flash, hash, lash, plash, rash, smash, splash, trash*), the lexemes contain the semes ‘stroke’, ‘abrupt movement’ and ‘sound’ that accompany the action expressed by the verb. However, a more detailed analysis of these verbs shows the complexity of their semantic structure. In particular, the verb *clash* denotes 1) ‘to ring, to rattle, to rumble (about bells, pots, weapons), to fight, to argue, to disharmonize (about colors), to differ, to overlap (about events), etc.’; 2) ‘to strike or collide with a loud, harsh, usu. metallic noise; to conflict; disagree; (of juxtaposed colors) to be offensive to the eye; to engage in a physical conflict or contest’ (WUCD, 1997, p. 147), i.e., to express different meanings and to be used in many contexts. This is due to the fact that semantic word formation is based not only on sound imitation, but also on a person’s ability to think associatively. That is, on the basis of the initial direct meaning of ‘hit, collide, strike’, a figurative one appeared – ‘to disagree, to argue, to overlap (about events)’.

### Semantic classification of echoic verbs

Sound-imitating predicates, sharing the opinion of Vinogradova (1999), are distinguished by two main semantic features: the type of sound source and the way of the sound production. According to the type of sound source, the studied predicates are divided into three groups with the meanings of unintentional sound reaction of a person, sound caused by a thing and sound of natural phenomena (Vinogradova, 1999, p. 8).

If the source of sound is a person, echoic predicates are divided into two groups. The causative agent of the first group is the emotional and psychological state of a person (*chuckle, crack, rave, swear, hiss, snap, yell, echo, gabble, gasp, gush, stammer, stutter, whisper*), and in the second, it is their physiological state (*stammer, stutter, lisp, rave, pant, groan, hiccup, wheeze, yawn*), i.e., these actions are a person’s reaction to external or internal stimuli. According to the way the sound is produced, these predicates are classified into those indicating vibration of the vocal cords, respiratory movements, movement of teeth, etc. (i.e., sounds that are formed in the

human body, its body parts and auditory stimuli). Subsequently, predicates with the meaning of vibration of vocal cords are divided into verbal expression of thoughts, feelings and non-verbal expression of emotions, feelings. When the source of a sound is a thing, it implies the presence of an external causative agent. These predicates are further subdivided into those indicating sounds caused by solid objects, liquids and gas. In case the source of a sound is nature, the unintentionality of the sound is due to the essence of the phenomenon, i.e. it does not involve human control. The latter predicates are subdivided into those denoting sounds produced by thunder, wind and precipitation.

Thus, the differential components of the meaning of sound-imitating predicates are unintentionality, the presence of a certain physiological or emotional-psychological state of a person, the external causative agent and the lack of control by the performer.

### Echoic verbs denoting sounds produced by a person

The quantitative analysis in **Table 1** shows the results of the investigation of 146 echoic verbs of 'verbal expression of thoughts and feelings' according to the semantic feature 'types of voice sounds'.

**Table 1** Types of echoic verbs according to voice sounds

Subtypes of echoic verbs	Number of excerpts
verbs of speech	83
verbs of scream	21
verbs of laughter	21
verbs of crying	13
verbs denoting musical voice sounds	5
verbs of groaning	3
Total	146

As it can be seen from **Table 1**, the majority of the cases (83 cases out of 146; 56.8%) are constituted by the 'verbs of speech' denoting an act of speaking (*babble, blurt, chatter, jabber, murmur, mutter, utter, whisper*, etc.) compared with 21 cases of verbs of scream (*bawl, blare, boo, crow, hail, roar, shriek, shrill, squall, ululate, whoop, yelp*, etc.) and 21 cases of verbs of laughter (*bubble, cachinnate, chuckle, guffaw, gurgle, hee-haw, snicker, squeak*, etc.), 14.4% each. Another 13 excerpts (or approx. 8.9%) are verbs of crying (*blubber, howl, mewl, pule, snivel, sob, ululate, wail, whimper, whine*, etc.). Verbs of groaning (*groan, knell, moan*) and verbs denoting musical voice sounds (*croon, curr, hum, knoll, twang*) (an overall total of 8 excerpts) do not prove to be common cases (5.5%).

Subsequently, echoic verbs denoting scream are subdivided into three groups according to human emotions (see **Table 2**).

The number of verbs of scream caused by negative emotions (*bellow, boo, roar, scream, screech, shriek, shrill, squall, squeal*) is greater (42.9%) than that of verbs caused by posi-

itive emotions (*crow, hail, ululate, whoop, yelp*) (23.8%) and verbs caused by any emotions (*bawl, blare, bray, cry, squeak, utter, yell*) (33.3%). Compare (1) and (2):

- 1 *I leaped as if it had been fired at me, and **shrieked** at Posi (Hill).*
- 2 *She gave it to Ruby who **crowed with delight** while Rain and Holly looked at Rosie with unreadable expressions (Grant-Adamson).*

The echoic verbs denoting laughter (7.4%) and crying (4.6%) are subdivided into three groups, respectively, according to human emotions (see **Tables 3, 4**).

**Table 3** Types of echoic verbs of laughter

Types of emotions	Number of excerpts
Cheerful	9
Mocking	6
Hysterical	6
Total	21

**Table 4** Subtypes of echoic verbs of crying

Types of emotions	Number of excerpts
Convulsing	3
Continuous	7
convulsing and continuous	3
Total	13

while predicates *boom, buzz, clatter, mumble, snivel* only as multiplicatives (5), (6).

- 3 “The code,” Sophie **blurted**, in **sudden** revelation (Brown).
- 4 Lamm screamed – a high, gurgling sound which went through Horza’s head like an electric shock, until the noise **snapped off suddenly**, replaced for an instant by sharp cracking, breaking noises (Banks).
- 5 Laughter **boomed** up and down the High Hall of the Arryns (Martin).
- 6 Laughter **boomed** all around him, and John felt hot tears on his cheeks (Martin).

In (3) and (4), adverbial intensifiers *suddenly* and *sudden* imply that the actions are semelfactive, while in (5) and (6) *up and down* and *all around him* point to the multiplicative action.

The verbs *chirp, crack, groan, growl, hiccup, screech, shriek, sigh, sob, spit* may convey both semelfactive and multiplicative actions. Compare (7) and (8).

- 7 **Suddenly** Marillion **shrieked**, covering his head with his wood harp as a horse leapt over their rock (Martin).

**Table 5** The division of echoic verbs according to the semantic feature ‘types of internal organs’

Verbs denoting sounds produced by	Number of excerpts
respiratory organs	19
other organs	2
Total	21

*shriek* denotes a successive repetition, i.e., the multiplicative action.

According to the semantic feature ‘types of internal organs’, the echoic verbs are subdivided into two subgroups: those produced by respiratory organs (*blow, breathe, choke, cough, expectorate, gasp, hack, hiccup, hush, pant, puff, shush, sigh, sneeze, snore, sough, wheeze, whiff, yawn*) (19 of 21 cases, 90.5%) and those produced by other organs (*belch, rumble*) (2 of 21 cases, 9.5%) (see **Table 5**).

According to the semantic feature ‘the organ by which the sound is made’, 18 predicates were distinguished denoting the sounds formed by:

Echoic verbs of cheerful laughter (42.8%) include *bubble, chuckle, guffaw, guggle, gurgle, laugh, snicker, squeak, squeal*; mocking laughter (28.6%) is presented by the verbs *cachinnate, chuckle, giggle, hee-haw, snigger, titter*, and hysterical laughter (28.6%) by *cackle, convulse, roar, scream, screech, shriek*.

As it can be seen from **Table 4**, echoic verbs with a common seme ‘to cry’ are subdivided into verbs of convulsing crying, i.e., *snivel, sob, whimper* (23%), continuous crying, i.e., *blubber, howl, mewl, pule, ululate, wail, whine* (53.8%), and convulsing and continuous crying simultaneously, i.e., *bawl, cry, weep* (23%). It should be mentioned that the echoic verbs *blurt, bolt, gasp, smack, snap, squeak, whoop, yelp* can be used only as semelfactives (3), (4),

- 8 They screamed terrified high-pitched wails that **shrieked** in my earphones (Bova).

The latter examples show that the same echoic verb is used as a semelfactive (7) and a multiplicative (8) verb depending on the context. In (7), the adverbial intensifier *suddenly* outlines the semelfactive action, while in (8),

- teeth: *chatter, clatter, gnash, grate, grind, grit, rattle*;
- nose: *blow, sneeze, sniff, snivel, snort*;
- mouth: *chew, puff, scrunch, slurp, smack, whistle*.

It should be mentioned that the above mentioned echoic verbs (*gasp, hush, shush, puff*) can denote only the semelfactive meaning (9), while the predicates (*whiff, chatter, clatter, rattle, slurt*) denote only the multiplicative meaning (10). The echoic verbs (*belch, cough, gnash, hiccup, sigh, sneeze, snort, whistle, yawn*) can be both semelfactives and multiplicatives. Compare (11) and (12).

- 9 *John **gasped**, then watched with awe as Tyrion Lannister spun around in a tight ball...* (Martin).
- 10 *The old man shook her so hard her teeth **rattled*** (Martin).
- 11 *John put two fingers in his mouth and **whistled*** (Martin).
- 12 *He **whistled** tunelessly as he went* (Barker).

In (11), the action is instantaneous, momentary, it does not take much time, while in (12), the action denotes a multi-stage situation compressed in time.

Another group of sound-imitating predicates is formed by predicates indicating the movement of a person accompanied by sound (*drum, lumber, patter, shuffle, pit-a-pat, pitter-patter, slap*). All of them are multiplicatives, only the predicate *slap* can denote both semelfactive and multiplicative actions. Compare (13) and (14).

- 13 *Ignoring my question, he leaned down and **slapped** Bahadur smartly on the cheek* (Bova).
- 14 *Quite methodically he **slapped** my face, first one cheek, then the other* (Bova).

There is also a group of predicates (18 echoic verbs), denoting the sounds of animals and birds. These include: *bellow, bray, bugle, cackle, chipper, chirm, chirp, coo, crow, cuckoo, gnarl, hee-haw, mew, mourn, purr, snarl, squawk, warble*. The results of the study showed that the predicates *chipper, chirm, coo, cuckoo, gnarl, hee-haw, mourn, warble* are only multiplicatives, while echoic verbs *bellow, bray, bugle, cackle, chirp, crow, mew, purr, snarl, squawk* can be either semelfactives or multiplicatives (15), (16).

- 15 *A bloody-mouthed mastiff tied by a chain to a lintel of a door **suddenly snarled*** (Doherty).
- 16 *The road behind the tall wall was still quiet, but the birds were making up for it, their incessant repeated sounds rising to sudden random crescendos as they all **chirped** fiercely together* (Rogers).

The instantaneousness of semelfactive actions is often expressed by means of adverbial intensifiers, such as *abruptly, rapidly, suddenly, sharply, swiftly, at once*, etc., which can be used in preposition (17) or in postposition to the echoic verb (18), (19).

- 17 *He **suddenly cracked** the whip and the horse leaped astonishingly, all four feet off the ground* (Wilson).
- 18 *I was only **smacked once**, a fiery look from my Mother being sufficient deterrent for most mischief* (Caine).
- 19 *He **knocked once** on the door, and it was instantly opened* (Beauman).

#### **Echoic verbs denoting sounds created by a thing**

Echoic verbs which denote sounds created by a thing are divided into those that indicate solid objects, liquids and gas.



**Table 6** Types of echoic verbs indicating the sound caused by solid objects

Subtypes of echoic verbs	Number of excerpts
verbs of collision	48
verbs of actions caused by people	38
verbs of vibration	25
verbs of abrupt movement of an object in space	21
verbs of friction	20
verbs of destruction	15
verbs of reverberation	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>

The quantitative analysis in Table 6 shows the results of the investigation of 172 echoic verbs which indicate the sound caused by solid objects according to the semantic feature 'way of sound production' (see Table 6).

As it can be seen from Table 6, the overwhelming majority of the cases is constituted by verbs of collision (*bang, bounce, bump, chime, clack, clang, clap, clash, clatter, click, clink, clank, clop, clutter, collide, crash, etc.*) – 48 of 172 cases (27.9 %), compared with 38 cases of verbs of actions caused by people (*bang, batter, bell, blob, burp, burr, chap, clank, clatter, click, clink, clout, crash, creak, crepitate, crunch, ding, flail, flip, flute, furrow, grate, grind, jingle, pat, pipe, rattle, rustle,*

*scarify, scrabble, etc.*) – 22%, verbs of vibration (*blare, bast, brattle, bulge, buzz, chatter, clatter, chug, drone, emit, explode, etc.*) – 14.5%, verbs of abrupt movement of an object in space (*beat, boom, bustle, buzz, drone, flap, flog, hiss, hurtle, pash, plunk, scream, screech, shriek, slat, snip, swish, etc.*) – 12.2%, verbs of friction (*creak, crunch, grate, grind, groan, jar, pestle, rasp, rustle, scrape, screech, scuff, squeak, squeal, etc.*) – 11.6%, verbs of destruction (*clatter, crack, crackle, crash, craze, crick, crump, crunch, crush, decrepitate, fissure, shatter, smash, snap, etc.*) – 8.7%. Five excerpts (or approx. 2.9%) are verbs of reverberation (*echo, resound, ring, roll, sound*).

Predicates that denote the sound that occurs as a result of the impact of one object on another, can be divided into four groups: 1) predicates indicating metallic sounds (*bang, bump, clack, clang, clank, clash, clatter, click, clink, crash, ding, jangle, jar, jingle, knel, knoll, rattle, ring, etc.*), 2) predicates denoting the sound made by vehicles (*bump, bounce, clatter, clang, clank, rattle, roll, rumble, thunder, etc.*), 3) predicates describing the operation of a clock work (*chime, clang, strike, tick, toll, etc.*), and 4) predicates indicating a falling object (*clatter, patter, plump, thud* and others).

Echoic verbs indicating the sound caused by solid objects (*bang, bump, burp, clack, clang, clash, clank, crash, explode, flip, smash, snap, snip, squeak, etc.*) denote a semelfactive action (20), while the verbs *clatter, buzz, echo, jingle, knell, knoll, pound, rattle, swish, tinkle, etc.* denote a multiplicative one (21). Some of them (*bang, blast, chap, chug, click, clink, crackle, creak, crunch, ding, groan, jangle, jar, shriek, strike, etc.*) may denote both semelfactive and multiplicative actions. Compare (22) and (23).

20 The craft **smashed** into the waves, crashing to a stop in the water (Banks).

21 The helmet speaker **buzzed**, then went silent (Banks).

22 The mess PA **cracked once**, and then came clear with the voice of Kraiklyn (Banks).

23 The mangled wreckage **hissed and groaned and creaked** as it settled (Banks).

Echoic verbs with the semantic feature 'liquid substances' (25 predicates) include *babble, bicker, brawl, bubble, crash, dabble, dash, drip, drivel, gurgle, lap, lash, murmur, splash, purl, slush, splat, splatter, squash, swash, tinkle, etc.* Most of them (*babble, bicker, brawl, bubble, dabble, drip, drivel, gurgle, lap, lash, murmur, purl, roll, slush, splat, splatter, squelch, swash, tinkle, etc.*) are multiplicatives, as in (24), (25). The predicates *crash, dash, lash, splash, slap, splat* can denote both single and multiple actions. Compare (26) and (27).

24 Frothy red spittle **bubbled** from his mouth (Martin).

25 The hot juices ran down her chin and **dripped** onto her cloak, but she was too famished to care (Martin).

26 *The snowmelt was icy cold. He drank and **splashed** some on his face* (Martin).

27 *Hecate's hot droppings clearly **splashed** when they hit the ground, forming bright new-looking puddles of liquified metal* (Bova).

Another group of predicates (*fizz, fizzle, hiss, jet, sizzle, spit, splutter, spout, sputter*) denote the sounds that occur during the release of gases. It should be mentioned that all predicates of this group express multiplicative action (28), (29).

28 *Arrows **hissed** past his ear and clattered off the rocks* (Martin).

29 *Fat sausages **sizzled** and spit over firepits, spicing the air with the scents of garlic and pepper* (Martin).

### **Echoic verbs denoting sounds made by nature**

The semantic group of predicates with the meaning of 'a sound of natural phenomena' is the least numerous. According to the types of natural elements, these echoic verbs (30 predicates) are divided into the verbs imitating the sounds of wind (30%): *blow, bluster, howl, moan, scream, wail, whiff, whiffle, whistle*; thunder (36.7%):

**Table 7** Types of echoic verbs indicating the 'sound of natural phenomena'

Verbs denoting sounds produced by	Number of excerpts
Thunder	11
Precipitation	10
Wind	9
Total	30

*boom, crack, crash, growl, grumble, mutter, peal, roar, roll, rumble, thunder*; precipitation (33.3%): *beat, drum, hail, lash, patter, pellet, pelt, pepper, plump, pound* (see **Table 7**).

It should be noted that echoic verbs indicating the 'sound of natural phenomena' can express semelfactive and multiplicative meanings. Therefore, the echoic verbs denoting the imitation of sounds caused by thunder, can express the semantic features of 'a clap of thunder' and 'some claps of thunder': *crack vs grumble*,

*crack vs growl, crack vs rumble, crack vs mutter, crack vs boom, crash vs mutter, crash vs boom, crash vs rumble, crash vs roll, crash vs roar*. Compare (30) and (31), (32) and (33).

30 *And the thunder **crashed** again, its impact slamming shut that door into Hell* (Laws).

31 *Thunder **rolled** and **grumbled** beyond, and the eerie blue glow from the overhead strip lights flickered momentarily* (Laws).

32 *Thunder **cracked** again, stabbing at their ears* (Laws).

33 *A crash of lightning **boomed** so loudly that the floor shook* (Wilder).

The predicate *crash* as well as *crack* indicates a loud single clap of thunder, as it is obvious in (34).

34 *Thunder **crashed** in the sky, and Cardiff felt the vibrations in his feet* (Laws).

The predicate *thunder* denotes both a single clap of thunder and its repeated roar. Compare (35) and (36).

35 *The sky **thundered**, followed quickly by a crack of lightning that lit up the whole sky* (Magorian).

36 *Only this time it's been pouring and **thundering*** (Wilder).

### **Echoic verbs as part of light verb constructions**

It was established that 42 echoic verbs of 285 have been used as part of light verb constructions that denote activities of short duration.

Light verb constructions are composed of a 'light verb', which has a full semantic meaning in some context and is partially or fully denominated in the constructions and a converted verbal noun. This group of verbs is comprised of *do*, *make*, *get*, *take*, *have*, *give*. Sometimes the verbal component of light verb constructions can be expressed by 'heavy' verbs *to catch*, *to cast*, *to dart*, *to flash*, *to grab*, *to shoot* and others (Tron et al., 2022).

The results of the analysis show that the following echoic verbs have been used as a nominal component of light verb constructions: *beat* (4%), *blast* (5%), *blow* (7%), *breathe* (77%), *buzz* (5%), *clap* (3%), *crack* (9%), *cry* (4%), *dash* (8%), *echo* (1%), *gasp* (7%), *growl* (4%), *gurgle* (8%), *howl* (2%), *jerk* (2%), *knock* (1%), *laugh* (8%), *moan* (6%), *murmur* (1%), *pat* (13%), *puff* (11%), *rattle* (2%), *roar* (3%), *scream* (2%), *shiver* (10%), *shriek* (7%), *sigh* (23%), *slap* (2%), *smack* (8%), *snarl* (3%), *sniff* (8%), *snort* (10%), *sob* (6%), *sound* (12%), *splash* (3%), *stammer* (6%), *thump* (4%), *toll* (20%), *whiff* (100%), *whine* (7%), *whistle* (3%), *whiz* (50%), *yawn* (22%), *yell* (1%). The percentage indicates the correlation between the usage of the echoic verbs and their corresponding deverbal nouns.

**Table 8** The use of the echoic verbs and their corresponding deverbal nouns

Echoic verbs	Total	Intensifiers	Part of light verb constructions	Total
blow	214	shortly – 2 suddenly – 1	take – 3 catch – 4 check – 3 crunch – 1 deliver – 2 trade – 1	14 (7%)
breathe	114	suddenly – 1 quickly – 1 once – 1	give – 1 take – 49 blow out – 1 catch – 7 draw – 17 exhale – 1 expel – 3 let out – 5 pull in – 1 suck – 3	88 (77%)
crack	74	suddenly – 2	give – 12	12 (9%)
sigh	102	–	give – 12 make – 2 allow – 1 breathe – 3 exhale – 1 heave – 1 let out – 3	23 (23%)

The data on the most frequently used echoic verbs, their usage with adverbial intensifiers, the ability to act as substantive components of light verb constructions obtained by analyzing the works of modern authors of the English and American literature are given in **Table 8**.

As it can be seen from Table 8, the total number of uses of the verb *breathe* is 114. The semelfactive meaning has been modified by such adverbial intensifiers as *suddenly* (1), *quickly* (1), *rapidly* (1), *once* (1). It has been used as a nominal component of light verb constructions with the light verbs *take* (49), *give* (1). Moreover, the analyzed echoic verb has been used in the constructions *blow out a breath* (1), *catch a breath* (7), *draw a breath* (17), *exhale a breath* (1), *expel a breath* (3), *let out a breath* (5), *pull in a breath* (1), *suck a breath* (3).

When a deverbal noun is used in singular, it usually expresses the semelfactive meaning, as in (37), (38), whereas the usage of the deverbal noun in plural form indicates multiplicativity, as in (39).

37 *The black wolf gave Lan-nister one final snarl and bounded off to Rickon, who hugged him tightly around the neck* (Martin).

38 *I uttered a crazy little shriek of laughter* (King).

39 *The chairman of TVL gave dry grunts in lieu of a chuckle* (Barnes).

## Conclusion

The findings of the research allow us to conclude that an attempt has been made to study the realization of echoic verbs as one of the main means of expressing semelfactive and multiplicative meanings in the English and American literature. It is notable that although there exist multiple researches on the semelfactive and multiplicative verbs, none of them singled out echoic verbs as a constituent part of them, which accounts for the novelty of the current research.

We state that a significant part of all semelfactives and related multiplicatives in English are echoic verbs, which are distinguished by two main semantic features: the type of the sound source and the way of the sound production. According to the type of the sound source, the studied predicates are divided into three groups with the meanings of unintentional sound reaction of a person, sound caused by a thing and sound of nature. Echoic verbs denoting sounds produced by a person include verbs of speech (83 cases), scream (21 cases), laughter (21 cases), crying (13 cases), musical voice sounds (5 cases), and groaning (3 cases). The group of echoic verbs denoting sounds created by a thing is comprised of verbs of collision (48 cases), verbs of action caused by people (38 cases), vibration (25 cases), verbs of abrupt movement of an object in space (21 cases), friction (20 cases), destruction (15 cases), and reverberation (5 cases). According to the types of natural elements, echoic verbs are divided into the verbs imitating the sounds of thunder (11 cases), precipitation (10 cases), and wind (9 cases). Due to the polysemy in English, one and the same echoic verb may be referred to different semantic groups.

The results of the empirically-based study indicate that verbs denoting the sound caused by a thing are used the most frequently, whereas verbs denoting sounds produced by a living being are used more seldom. The semantic group of predicates with the meaning of 'a sound of natural phenomena' is the least numerous.

Moreover, echoic verbs can also be used as part of light verb constructions that denote activities of short duration. Light verb constructions consist of a 'light verb' (*do, make, get, take, have, give*) which has a full semantic meaning in some context and is partially or fully denominated in the constructions and a converted verbal noun. Sometimes the verbal component may also be expressed by 'heavy' verbs such as *to catch, to cast, to dart, to flash, to grab, to shoot*. In case a deverbal noun is used in singular, it expresses the semelfactive meaning, while the usage of the deverbal noun in plural form indicates multiplicativity.

The main categorial meaning of all echoic verbs is semelfactivity or multiplicativity, i.e., they express an instantaneous, momentary action of single occurrence or a series of identical repeating quanta. It should be mentioned that some echoic verbs denote only semelfactive action (*blurt, gasp, smack, snap, squeak, yelp, etc.*), others only multiplicative action (*buzz, clatter, fizz, fizzle, hiss, sizzle, splutter, sputter, etc.*), while the rest (*crash, dash, lash, plash, slap, splash, etc.*) may express semelfactive and multiplicative meanings according to the context. The semelfactive meaning of echoic verbs is often modified by adverbial modifiers such as *suddenly, sharply, swiftly, at once* etc.

In our opinion, further research on other means of expressing semelfactive and multiplicative meanings such as RL-verbs would be beneficial, as it would lead to a more profound description of semelfactive/multiplicative aspects in contemporary English.

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## Santrauka

### Oksana Derevianko, Andrii Tron. Garsažodiniai veiksmažodžiai – šiuolaikinės anglų kalbos momentinio ir pasikartojančio veiksmo raiškos priemonė

Straipsnyje aptariama momentinių ir pasikartojančios reikšmės veiksmažodžių problema šiuolaikinėje anglų kalboje. Teigiama, kad dauguma momentinės ir pasikartojančios reikšmės veiksmažodžių yra garsus imituojančios kilmės. Remiantis keturiais žodynais („Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English“ (2003), „Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English“ (2000), „Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language“ (2008), „Webster Universal College Dictionary“ (1997)) išskirti 285 garsažodiniai veiksmažodžiai. Tyrimo tikslas buvo ištirti garsažodinės kilmės veiksmažodžius, kaip pagrindines priemones, kuriomis, atsižvelgiant į kontekstą, išreiškiamos arba momentinio veiksmo, arba pasikartojančio veiksmo, arba abi reikšmės pagal Smith (1997) aspekto teoriją, kurioje išskiriami penki situacijų tipai: būsenų, veiklos, pasiekimų, laimėjimų ir momentų. Tyrimo rezultatai prisideda prie žodžių daugybiškumo anglų kalboje tyrimo. Pagal pasiūlytą semantinę klasifikaciją analizuoti garsažodiniai veiksmažodžiai suskirstyti į tris pagrindines grupes: reiškiantys garsą, kurio šaltinis yra as-

muo, daiktas arba gamta. Empiriškai pagrįsto tyrimo rezultatai atspindi anglų kalbos garsažodinių veiksmažodžių kiekybinėje analizėje, kurioje daroma išvada, kad dažniausiai vartojami veiksmažodžiai, žymintys daikto sukeltus garsus, rečiau vartojami veiksmažodžiai, žymintys gyvos būtybės sukeltus garsus, ir rečiausiai vartojami veiksmažodžiai, žymintys gamtos garsus. Garsažodiniai veiksmažodžiai taip pat gali būti leksinių analitinių konstrukcijų dalis: vartojami kaip vienaskaitos formos veiksmažodinis daiktavardis jie nurodo momentinę reikšmę, o pavartoti daugiskaitos forma perteikia pasikartojančią reikšmę.

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