

## ON THE CATEGORY OF STATE ("SLEEP" VS "ASLEEP")

**Karine Kochunts**

*Yerevan State University*

**T**erms like “state”, “stative”, and “stativity” have long been used by linguists to describe in an intuitive way the properties of certain words or classes of words in language. These terms are also often used in a more formal way by theoretical linguists when discussing certain agreement systems, verb classes, or lexical aspect. When the term “stative” is used descriptively, writers often do not bother to define it, assuming the meaning to be obvious to the reader. The intended sense is frequently that a word or larger predicate which is stative does not involve anything “happening” – it does not involve any action, activity (in a nontechnical use of these terms), or change over time. (Jackson 2005)

The position of the stative in the system of parts of speech is still under discussion. In foreign linguistics words of the category of state have never been distinguished as a separate part of speech, as linguists both of the traditional and structural schools considered them either being in the system of the adjective, or in the system of the adverb. J. Nesfield, Ch. Onions and H. Poutsma considered words of the category of state as adverbs, without differentiating them from such words as “anew, away”.

Russian linguists (Ilyish, Kobrina, Blokh) try to consider statives as a separate part of speech, motivating by the fact that they have meaning, form and function. The meaning of the words of this type is that of a passing state a person or thing happens to be. As to their form, statives are invariable. And as far as their function is concerned, statives usually follow a link verb (was asleep, fell asleep) and in the sentence statives are most usually predicatives, objective predicatives (I found him asleep) and attributes (a man asleep in his chair).

The stative denotes a temporary state of a person or non-person. The number of statives compared with that of nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, is rather limited.

Morphologically statives are characterized as having a special marker, the prefix **a-**. However, there are some words, which do not have the prefix **a-**, but semantically and functionally are very similar to statives (Kobrina 2007). These are *fond, glad, ill, sorry, well*.

Besides statives can easily be confused with other parts of speech, such as adverbs, prepositions, adjectives, even nouns. Thus, for instance, **across** is an adverb, **along** is a preposition, **aloud** is an adjective, **arise** is an adverb, **amount** is a noun.

The aim of the present article is to find similarities and differences between the stative “asleep” and its non-stative counterpart – “sleep”.

The most evident difference is that sleep denotes an action, while asleep denotes a state.

If we look up these two words in the dictionary, we shall find the following definitions: *sleep-* to be in a state of sleep: to be asleep. I couldn't sleep because of the noise. We slept for eight hours. You slept right through the thunderstorm.

*asleep-* sleeping. The baby was asleep upstairs. Don't wake her up – she is fast/sound asleep.

So *sleep* is represented as an action, as a special form of functioning of the human body. When *sleep* is considered as an action, the speaker tries to contrast the action of sleep to other actions or include it in the chain of other actions.

Example:

*Then he **goes to** breakfast, **eats** a dozen eggs and bacon, and **drops off** his paper. Then he **goes to sleep** until the afternoon, when he **gets up** to go down to the Boathouse.*

To be asleep, as compared with sleep, is the temporary state of a person and it is represented as not being awake, being inactive. Z.A. Zavrumov, in one of his articles, tries to reveal the semantic differences of the words sleep-asleep and adduces the following examples:

*I like to sleep, when it is raining.* The aim of the utterance: It is enjoyable to sleep when it is raining. I get a great pleasure of sleeping when it is raining.

*I like to be asleep when it is raining.* The aim of the utterance: I can't stand the rain, I can do nothing but sleep to avoid the rain. So I prefer to be asleep rather than awake when it is raining.

Thus, the choice of *to sleep* is predetermined in any case, when sleep is understood as an action.

The meaning of action in the verb *to sleep* is more distinct in continuous forms. *I phoned him twice, but his mother told me he was sleeping.*

or, for example in the following sentence:

*Maxim **slept on** and I didn't wake him. The day ahead would be long and tiring. (Rebecca)*

Another difference is that *sleep* can be used in imperative sentences such as

*"Go to sleep!" she commanded sharply. "What are you shouting about? Go to sleep at once – there is nothing..."*

(D.H. Lawrence "Odour of Chysanthemums" p.198)

*"There is nothing to make a fuss about. Go to sleep now, like a good child."*

(D.H. Lawrence "Odour of Chysanthemums" p.198)

while *be asleep, fall asleep* can never have imperative forms.

*"Is he drunk?" asked the girl timidly, faintly.*

*"No! No – he's not! He – he's asleep."*

*"Is he asleep downstairs?"*

*"Yes – and don't make a noise."*

(D.H. Lawrence "Odour of Chysanthemums" p.199)

So we see, that the difference between the two lexemes is not confined to the concepts of action and state. The two lexemes convey different information:

1) the lexeme *sleep* represents sleep as an action

2) it represents an action which depends on the signifier of the subject

*asleep* represents sleep

1) as a state

2) as a state that does not depend on the signifier of the subject

In other words, we always know when we want to sleep, we are always aware of our intention of going to sleep, but we actually never know when we fall asleep or when and how long we have been asleep, until we wake up.

For example:

*I shut the bathroom door behind me so that at least Newall could have some peace, staggered back to my bed, and went to sleep.*

*Or, as George would have put it, sleep-slept-slept.*

(E. Segal "The Class" p.142)

In this example the narrator intentionally goes to sleep to let his friend have some peace. He knows the time when he goes to sleep and the place where he will sleep.

*I must have **fallen asleep**. I woke up suddenly. It was five o'clock.*

(D. Maurier "Rebecca" p.94)

Here the narrator, by saying *fall asleep*, states the fact that she definitely did not intend to sleep as she wanted to be awake to be aware of what was going on in her house.

*Ted got home after midnight. As he slipped into bed, Sara stirred and murmured, "How did it go honey?"*

*"Not bad", he answered quietly. She fell asleep again.*

(E. Segal "The Class" p.378)

Now let us consider an example where we can observe the difference between *sleep-asleep* within one and the same situation:

*"I heard noises" Jason said. "I thought you were in some kind of pain."*

*"I just **fell asleep** for a minute and had a sort of nightmare. It's nothing. And I'd be grateful if you'd let me study." He closed the door again.*

*Jason still would not retreat.*

*"Hey, listen D.D., you don't have to be pre-med to know that people can go nuts from **not sleeping**. Haven't you studied enough for one night?"*

(E. Segal "The Class" p.401)

"Fall asleep" in the above mentioned example indicates an unintentional action of the speaker. D.D. doesn't even know or is not quite sure whether he was sleeping or not. He was getting ready for his examination and definitely did not wish to sleep. Only when he heard somebody knock the door, he realized that he had somehow fallen asleep. So this means that he was **probably** sleeping. In the second case ("to go nuts from not sleeping") we have advice of a friend, who "prescribes" sleeping in order not to go nuts. D.D. should

**consciously** go to sleep to avoid physical and psychical problems students usually have before the examinations.

Thus, the analysis of a number of examples allows us to conclude that stative/non stative distinction may mask a number of more subtle subcategorizations from a syntactic as well as semantic points of view.

## REFERENCES

1. Заврумов, З.А. (2011) *Некоторые особенности употребления be asleep и asleep*. // Университетские чтения. Пятигорск: ПГЛУ.
2. Кобрина, Н.Н.; Болдырев, А.А.; Худяков, А.А. (2007) *Теоретическая грамматика современного английского языка*. М.: Высшая школа.
3. Blokh, M.Y. (1983) *A Course in Theoretical English Grammar*. М.: Vyshaya Skola.
4. Pylsh, B. (1971) *The Structure of Modern English*. Leningrad: Prosveshcheniye.
5. Jackson, E.M. (2005) *Resultatives, Derived Statives, and Lexical Semantic Structures*. / A dissertation for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics. Los Angeles.

## SOURCES OF DATA

1. Lawrence, D.H. (2000) *Selected Prose*. М.: Manager.
2. Maurier, D. (2005) *Rebecca*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers.
3. Segal, E. (1987) *The Class*. New York, Toronto, London: Bantam Books.

### Վիճակի կարգը անգլերենում

Սույն հոդվածում փորձ է արվում առանձնացնել անգլերենի վիճակ ցույց տվող բառերի որոշ առանձնահատկությունները: Վիճակ ցույց տվող բայերի էությունն այն է, որ նրանք չեն արտահայտում գործողության իմաստ: Այնուամենայնիվ, “asleep” վիճակ ցույց տվող բառի և նրա համապատասխան “sleep” բայի համեմատական վերլուծությունը ի հայտ է բերում որոշակի շարահյուսական և իմաստաբանական տարբերություններ, որոնք չեն սահմանափակվում լոկ «վիճակ-գործողություն» հակադրությամբ:

### О категории состояния в английском

В данной статье делается попытка выделения некоторых особенностей слов грамматической категории состояния в английском языке. Основная сущность слов категории состояния заключается в том, что они не выражают действия. Однако сравнительный анализ слова категории состояния “asleep” с соответствующим глаголом “sleep” выявил некоторые синтаксические и семантические различия, которые не ограничиваются оппозицией “действие-состояние”.