

SUMMARY

Languages make a clear distinction between motion events and stationary locative scenes. The means employed to express this distinction vary across languages and involve verbs, prepositions, particles, cases, etc. Compare: Fr. Il *va* à Paris / Il *vit* à Paris; Du. Hij *gaat naar* Parijs / Hij *woont in* Parijs; or Russ. Он *едет* в Париж / Он *живет* в Париже. A considerable number of recent cognitive linguistic studies relate the diversity in lingual representations of a given locative scene amongst others to varying conceptualisations of the (extra-lingual) reality: the choice of preposition often reflects our depiction of a spatial entity. The preposition *in* is associated with localisation within a container, an enclosure or on a bounded surface, whereas the preposition *on / auf / op* is used when the contact between an object with the location is highlighted. However, this seemingly clear-cut distinction does not suffice to explain why individual languages would employ different prepositions for one and the same situation; a matter which poses a considerable practical problem in second language acquisition.

Several cognitive studies point out that apart from the extra-lingual truth, our 'naïve picture' of the world as well as certain cultural and linguistic conventions determine the way in which we conceptualise and experience spatial locations. This is where languages show a large degree of variation; English and Dutch *in the tree / in de boom* is rendered *на дереве* 'on the tree' in Russian. Unfortunately, research up until now mainly included a number of West-European languages as well as some more exotic languages, whilst Slavic material has been left underexposed, if not entirely forgotten.

One of the aims of this study was to fill this void somewhat with a presentation of an extensive analysis of motion events and static locative scenes, in which a variety of localised objects and locations (termed hier locums) will be involved. In Russian, movement towards a goal (a dynamic situation) and localisation in or on a goal (a static scene) are expressed through the combination of the accusative case (for the dynamic situation) or the locative case (for the static scene) with either one of the two prepositions *v* 'in' en *na* 'on'. The nature of the contact between a localised object and its location, as well as our conceptualisation

of this, are expressed mainly by the choice of preposition. And so, the preposition *v* is associated with a localisation within interior of three-dimensional spatial entities and bounded surfaces, whereas *na* is used to highlight the contact of the localised object with the location.

Chapter 1 is an introduction and pursues the complicated matter of the various choices Russian and certain other languages make between cognates of the prepositions *in* and *on*. This choice does not merely depend on the geometric configuration of a location (container vs. surface) but also on the intention of the speaker and his/her knowledge of the nature of the contact between the localised object and the location. The difference, then, between Dutch *in zijn kamer* ‘in his room’ en *op zijn kamer* ‘on his room’ is determined by a parameter concerning the notion of functional contact with the spatial entity that is referred to, rather than by the actual shape of the room itself.

In modern standard Russian, this opposition is expressed by the prepositions *v* and *na*, but occurs only very sporadically. (Compare *v kuxne* en *na kuxne* ‘in the kitchen’). However, in non-codified Russian – dialects and old texts – this opposition is expressed very frequent indeed.

For this reason I present a many-faceted rendition of the spatial conceptual system itself, but I also include an analysis of the synchronic-dialectic and the diachronic variation in Russian, concerning the use of *v* and *na* in combination with specific locations.

The material selected for this research meets the following criteria:

- it represents relatively stable periods in the development of the language;
- it represents both historically and dialectically original Russian regions.

Other than the above, chapter 1 lists the main aims of this dissertation. These include:

- to provide a full description of the concept of ‘space’ in Russian;
- to present a scale of spatial categories in Russian and to determine a number of their concepts;
- to provide a list of salient cognitive features, based on a certain dichotomy, which determine the conceptualisation and categorisation of a spatial entity;

- to model a mental representation of certain concrete locations by means of abstract but clear schematic drawings;
- to draw up an algorithm that will enable us to predict the place of existing and new locations within the conceptual system of space in modern Russian;
- to provide a detailed description of the varied use of the prepositions *v* and *na* in combination with different locations;
- to develop a new approach for the description and explanation of this variation, in which the focus of the observer is highly important.

Chapter 2 is more theoretical and presents my quest for a scholarly description of the contact relationship between localised objects and locums (my terms). I also endeavour to give an adequate explanation for the variation in the lingual representation of this contact. Apart from that, there is an extensive discussion of the various approaches that describe contact relationships within the cognitive paradigm: the geometrical approach, the topological approach and the functional approach. This discussion leads to the conclusion that as yet, neither descriptive nor cognitive studies on the use of Russian prepositions in general, or on the use of *v* and *na* in particular, provide a conclusive explanation for this problem. The conclusions authors have been able to come up with are superficial and the number of examples provided are limited to the most familiar, whilst remaining examples are explained as deviations or isolated cases.

The conviction that the descriptive research methodology and the existing cognitive analyses concerning the Russian prepositions *v* and *na* are satisfactory in part only, have led to an elaboration of the various cognitive approaches, especially of the functional approach. Employing this enhanced apparatus, I looked at various kinds of contact between objects, as well as contacts between human beings and locations. Moreover, I introduce a new approach, which I have termed *egofocal*. It takes into account the focus of the observer and his/her zooming in or out of locative scenes. This approach is especially relevant for certain Slavic languages, which can present one and the same locative contact situation in different ways depending on this aspect.

Chapter 3 contains a comprehensive account of the application of these four cognitive approaches to modern standard Russian. The material is divided in three groups, which are dealt with separately. The first of these are cases for which normative usage does not extend to prepositional variation, or for which such variation is undesirable. The second group consists of cases in which such variation is possible (*v pole* and *na pole* ‘in/on the field’). Cases such as *na počte* ‘on the post office’, which show an unexpected, contrary use of the preposition, make up the third group. An important conclusion that emanates from this careful analysis of the actual material is that spontaneous variation of *v* and *na* in combination with different kinds of locations occurs much more frequently in the spoken language than expected.

The locations are divided over two kinds of conceptual spatial categories, based on the general opposition ‘container/enclosure’ ↔ ‘surface’. Containers/enclosures are either three-dimensional or bounded two-dimensional spatial entities. Surfaces are subdivided into ‘homogenous’ and ‘heterogeneous’. Heterogeneous locations are complex and consist of a number of homogeneous (container or surface) entities.

The difference between containers/enclosures and surfaces is based on the dichotomy of relevant cognitive characteristics such as:

- ‘three-dimensionality’ ↔ ‘two-dimensionality’;
- ‘completely enclosed’ ↔ ‘partially enclosed’;
- ‘profiled boundaries’ ↔ ‘profiled two-dimensional interior’;
- ‘clear boundaries’ ↔ ‘fuzzy boundaries’;
- ‘verticality’ ↔ ‘supporting surface’;
- ‘large extendedness’ ↔ ‘small extendedness’;
- ‘homogeneity’ ↔ ‘heterogeneity’;
- ‘up’ ↔ ‘down’;
- ‘absorption into the space’ ↔ ‘control over the space’;
- ‘familiar’ ↔ ‘unfamiliar/strange’.

The varied use of the prepositions *v* and *na* is clarified to a large extent using the egofocal approach, as the observer zooms in on a part of the locative scene.

There is a preference for *na* when a speaker merely deals with profiling the place of contact between localised object and location. The preposition *v* prevails when the observer focuses his/her attention on the entire volume of the location, including its vertical/horizontal boundaries. The functional approach discloses that certain locations can serve as background or 'stage' for certain activities, in which instance their spatial or geometric parameters are irrelevant. The preposition *na* is logical in such cases.

The contrary use of the prepositions with certain locations can be clarified from the historic perspective, since they present realities adopted from other languages and cultures.

In chapter 3 I present an algorithm, which serves to establish the conceptualisation and linguistic representation of existing as well as potential locations. This algorithm is highly important to explicate spatial conceptualisation in Russian, but also to serve a practical purpose in second language acquisition and lexicographical studies.

An attempt is made to provide a description of spatial entities as they are envisaged and experienced in the 'naive picture' of the world. One may conclude that this space consist of homogeneous and heterogeneous locations. The upper limit of three-dimensional homogeneous locations may be closed completely or only in part. Their interior consists of two levels: up and down. Apart from this, space in naive images consists of large and small surfaces. Small surfaces are conveniently arranged and can be surveyed by the human being. As the attention of the observer is for the interior of these surfaces, boundaries become irrelevant. On these small surfaces there is a variety of objects with which the human being enters into a functional contact. Large, extensive surfaces on the other hand, are inconveniently arranged and cannot be controlled by man. He feels lost and is looking for boundaries to hold on to. For this reason the limits of this kind of location are clearly profiled.

The methodological analytic approach, developed in chapter 3, is applied to historic and dialectic material in chapters 4 and 5 respectively. For the historical section I used written sources that were originally composed in the Old Russian of the 14th through 17th centuries in truly Russian regions. These criteria are

met by legal documents, personal correspondence, passages from various chronicles and written records of spoken language. In spite of the stylistic and factual diversity of the material the following characteristics crop up in all of these:

- The collection of conceptual spatial categories is relatively limited. One encounters the same kind of locations repeatedly. This is due to the nature of the documents, their contents etc.
- Throughout the entire period the conceptualisation of the same kind of locations is prone to either constant or incidental variation. This is due in part to the flexibility of the conceptual system for spaces as well as to the geometric complexity or ambiguity of the geometric configurations of these spatial entities.
- Over time, a certain change takes place in the conceptualisation and lingual representation of a number of locations. This concerns many administrative units (including several cities and countries) as well as planets, wildlife areas and small surfaces that are used by human beings.
- Associations with the original locations that form the basis for a number of topographic names play a considerable part in the conceptualisation.
- The variable use of prepositions *v* and *na* is also characteristic for the diachronic development of Russian and increases considerably in documents of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In my opinion there is a complex of criteria underpinning the choice of preposition for every factual locative contact situation. I have attempted to establish these criteria:

- Any two-dimensional or three-dimensional location can be interpreted as a spatially bounded entity (preference for *v*).
- In a given locative situation, the contact between the localised object and one of the surfaces of the location can be highlighted (preference for *na*).
- Any location can be interpreted as background for an activity or such like (preference for *na*).

- Movement to a location always takes place on the ground surface (preference for *na*).

One can discern a similar flexibility in this conceptualisation in a number of Russian dialects, which I describe in chapter 5. I have restricted my analysis to Russian dialects from Old Russian area's (Pskov, Novgorod, Moscow and Tver) in order to guarantee the historic and geographical homogeneity of the material. Research was hampered somewhat as only very few written-out, let alone digital dialect texts are available. I had to resort to dictionaries of these dialects and deal with all the shortcoming this entails: examples lacking context, very few actually relevant examples, examples scattered unsystematically over a dictionary that consists of many parts etc.

Certain results from this research were quite surprising, especially as they were virtually equal for the three dialects under scrutiny:

- Wildlife areas, political-geographic and ethnic areas are almost absent in this material, while factual locations in daily use are commonplace.
- There is a difference in the conceptualisation of space in the 'normative' language and the 'dialectic' variants. On the basis of its intensive functional use, dialectic space can be subdivided into *distant* and *near* spaces, but, in fact, this differentiation is due to variation in how factual locations are perceived, as well as in the degree of familiarity with these locations, rather than actual distance.
- Dialectic space is very specific and consists of much smaller entities than normative space. Usually, every subdivision of a given location changes the way it is conceptualised: closed locations are opened and the other way around.
- Often, dialectic space is syncretic. Many spatial entities lack clear boundaries, they merge into each other or are swallowed up by other locations.
- The variable use of the prepositions *v* and *na* is typical, particularly for 'near' dialectic space, and this is especially so for small surfaces with or without fence, inhabited area's, buildings with surrounding grounds as well as rooms in a building. The observer is flexible enough to switch the focus from the boundaries of a location to its interior and vice versa.

SUMMARY

Each chapter is numbered with an Arabic numeral and has its own endnotes. Examples are numbered per chapter. Together, all integral parts of this dissertation form a whole. Both in a wide synchronic and diachronic respect, this study is intended to provide an insight into the conceptualisation and the ‘naive picture’ of space in Russian, as well as the variable use of the prepositions *v* and *na* with different locations.

Using this dissertation as a foundation, it is my intention to tackle the same issues in other Slavic languages (notably Polish, Czech, Serbian en Croatian).