Abstract

Prefixation is an important tool in Russian word formation. Prefixation of a verb changes the lexical meaning as well as grammatical status of the verb. Lexical changes brought about by prefixation are studied under “sposoby deistvia” or “Aktionsarten” in Russian. Various “aktionsarten” expressed by a single prefix show a definite connection. This connection is explored in detail in the present work.

Prefixed verbs are analysed on the basis of principles of cognitive psychology, mainly with the help of the concept of prototype or prototypical instance. Prototype helps us understand the diverse and far reaching semantic connotations of a single prefix as one entity.

General background of Russian prefixed verbs, the challenges faced by foreign students while studying them and the possibility of throwing better light on the subject with the help of principles of cognitive psychology are discussed in the introduction. An attempt to mark the prototype of any given prefix is also placed in the introduction.

Depending on the prototype of the prefixes, the prefixed verbs are divided into two groups. The first group, larger of the two, consists of eight prefixes, that are dynamic in nature, i.e., the prototype or prototypical meaning of them indicates a movement through the physical space. All the other meanings expressed by a prefix are just metaphoric extensions of the prototypical meaning. The first chapter deals with such dynamic prefixes. The prefixes examined here are IZ -, NA -, OT -, PERE -, POD -, PRI -, PRO -, and RAZ -. Various lexical meanings expressed by each of the above mentioned prefixes is discussed in detail, with examples from literary text or from actual usage. In the same chapter we have discussed semantic richness of prefixed verbs, their ability to express more than one lexical subtype as well as formation of perfective aspect pairs.

The second chapter is devoted to the studies of prefixes belonging to the non dynamic group. The prefixes coming under this group are ZA -, PO -, S -, and U -. These prefixes do not indicate a movement through physical space. They deal with some other parameters of space like time, tangent, etc. The prototypical meaning of these prefixes is not fully expressed through verbs of motion. Verbs motivated by the above mentioned prefixes are analysed in the same fashion, as verbs motivated by the dynamic prefixes.

The last part of the work consists of conclusions drawn from the analysis. These conclusions throw light upon the interrelationship between various lexical subtypes, expressed by a prefix, understanding the various lexical subtypes, expressed by a prefix, underlining the pivotal position of prototype. They also comment upon the way these lexical subtypes are expressed in English. Lastly, the conclusions also indicate usefulness of prototype based approach in teaching Russian.