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FUNCTION WORDS IN STATIVE FORMAT OF LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE: ASPECTS OF DOMINATION

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Abstract

The paper aims at revealing the significant role of function words in the stative format of linguistic knowledge. As it is generally known, the category of function words has a controversial definition and typology, which varies from a small set of members (prepositions, conjunctions and particles) to a wide variety of linguistic units performing mainly some grammatical function. In the cognitive linguistics framework we describe the special conceptual grounding of these language units and argue for their primary function in representing the relations and correlations among objects and events of the world. One of their secondary functions, the stative one, is in the focus of this research. Taking into consideration the results of previous research in the field, we put special attention to prepositions and their role in the process of stativization. It is established that prepositional phrases occupy one of leading positions in the core area of the category of linguistic stativity, thus, structuring the concept of indefinitely lasting states. The revealed metaphorical models of stative interpretation enhance the role of spatial prepositions in the process of forming the secondary stative meaning, mainly in the domains of psychological, emotional and mental states.

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1. Introduction

Most linguists accept that there is a list of function words that can be characterized as a “closed class”. But there is actually no consensus on exactly which words it comprises. According to most common definition, function words include conjunctions, prepositions, and pronouns conveying the relationship between other words in a sentence or phrase. Though function words are commonly assumed to play a secondary role in construing the world in language in comparison with content words, and in grammar guidebooks they are often given only a passing note, there are approximately 500 function words in contemporary English. What is more important, there about 100 of them are most common. So, this correlation outlines one aspect of function words domination in our linguistic cognition.

The scientific literature overview highlights some more instantiations of function words role in interpretation of knowledge about the world in general, and in stative format in detail. The recent investigations of function words impact on understanding of what people feel and think draw much attention and boost further studies in different languages (Almujaiwel, 2019; Andi-Pallawa, 2013; Corbiere, 2016; Garcia & Martin, 2007; Pennebaker, 2011; Schmauder, Morris, & Poynor, 2000; Tomacheva, 2016). To point out all the aspects of function words significant place in the stative form of linguistic cognition let’s first shed light on the diversity of their terminology and specific features of typology.

2. Problem Statement

To begin with, function words research firstly focuses on the great variety of possible terms. Function words are also known as structure words, grammatical words, grammatical factors, grammatical morphemes, function morphemes, form words, and empty words. Our choice of “function words” term on the one hand is in line with most common use of this category, and on the other – fully correlates with the meaning of this term. Probably such amount of terms reflects the problems in their typological structure. The cognitive approach to language study (Boldyrev, 2016, 2018) opens the category boundaries for not only already mentioned but for some other members (Tolmacheva, 2017, 2018). According to the function they perform we differentiate the following groups of function words:

- prepositions, which function as a link between the members of the event or state,
- conjunctions, which function is to unite and define the relations among different events or states,
- particles, which “colour” these relations, or take part in formation of these relations,
- determiners (articles, possessive pronouns, quantifiers, demonstratives, and numbers), which function is to modify a noun and show whether it is specific or general,
- pronouns, which function as antecedents of other words or phrases,
- link and auxiliary verbs, which grammatical meaning is prior to lexical and consists in linking of the subject and the nominal or verbal part of predicate or forming negative statements or questions.

Taking into account the results of previous studies of function words in the light of their ability to interpret different stative meanings, we should mention the works on grammaticalization in general (Lehmann, 2015) and on stativization in detail (Michaelis, 2011; Pavlova, 2018c). Thus, we show the

necessity of addressing and developing the idea of the interpretive potential of prepositions (Evans, 2010) through revealing the mechanisms of their stativization (Pavlova, 2018a, 2018b).

3. Research Questions

The main research question of the study is

What are the aspects of function words domination in forming stative meaning?

To answer this question it is necessary to find out what function words are specific in, how they perform the secondary stative function and what the main conceptual and thematic domain they interpret.

4. Purpose of the Study

So, the purpose of the study is to reveal the dominant role of prepositions in the stative format of linguistic knowledge.

5. Research Methods

Among the general methods of dealing with scientific literature we basically use the method of critical analysis of the previous research results, highlighting the directions of function words investigations, and problematic issues in their definition and typology. Among the specific cognitive linguistics methods we use the conceptual analysis of stative forms which are the result of stativization process.

6. Findings

As a result of a conceptual analysis of stative forms we argue that such function words as prepositions perform a dominant role in the stativization process. Stativization as cognitive operation of construing state meanings is based on such cognitive schema as *be in some state* which both identifies the members of the category of linguistic stativity and structures the corresponding stative concepts. According to cognitive English grammar typology of states, prepositional phrases mainly interpret indefinitely lasting states. The prevailing amount of such stative meanings is formed with the help of spatial prepositions. From grammatical point of view in contemporary English language such stative forms are the part of so called phrasal verbs, for example, a stative form *be down* interpreting the psychological state has the meaning of 'be depressed, unhappy; unable to feel excited or energetic about anything' (1), (2); further stativization process results in interpretation of human physical state 'be down with' – 'be ill' (3), emotional state 'be down on' – 'have negative feelings towards someone' (4), and financial state 'be down-and-out' - 'be without money, a job, or a place to live; destitute' (5):

(1) *She's been really down since her husband left.*

(2) *I've been little bit down this week.*

(3) *As he was down with fever, he was unable to attend his office.*

(4) *I was really down on him after his poor performance last season.*

(5) *He cares about the environment, the work situation, how you make a living, if you're down and out.*

A stative form **be up** interpreting human positional and physiological states has the meaning of 'be out of bed' (6). Further stativization process results in interpretation of human emotional state 'be up for' – 'be enthusiastic about an upcoming event' (7) and human mental state 'be up to' – 'be good enough' (8) or 'be responsible for' (9):

(6) *He **was up** when I entered the room.*

(7) *I think he **is totally up for** it and wants to change things.*

(8) *Luckily for us no one else seemed **to be up to** the standard either - apart from the hosts and presenters.*

(9) *I can't decide for you Jack, it's **up to** you.*

A stative form **be in** interpreting human positional state can have the meaning of 'be at the place where a person usually lives or works' (10), interpreting the status of a document can have the meaning of 'be submitted' (11). Further stativization process results in interpretation of human mental state 'be in for' – 'have good reason to expect (something, typically something unpleasant)' (12), human habitual state 'be in on' – 'be involved' (13), human emotional state 'be into' – 'be very interested in smth, like' (14):

(10) *I called her, but she **wasn't in**.*

(11) *The article **has been** recently **in**.*

(12) *I shuddered inwardly, knowing what I **was in for**.*

(13) *Were you **in on** the surprise?*

(14) *Kate's really **into** classical music.*

The given examples do not represent the whole picture of prepositional influence on the stative format of linguistic knowledge but tend to show the main strand of metaphorical interpretation of spatial characteristics aiming to form stative meanings. These examples (1-14) are actually instantiations of the well-known Lakoff's (1993) metaphoric model STATES ARE LOCATIONS. According to existing dimensions of SPACE we point out the following metaphoric models of stative interpretation of space:

UP-DOWN model, according to it not only examples (1-9) are formed, but many more others, like *be in high spirits, be on cloud nine, be down with the flu etc.*

IN-AT-ON model, according to it not only examples (10-14) are formed, many others, like *be in love / pain / shock / despair / peace / trouble / debt / milk / banking, on alert / the run / duty / sale, at loggerheads, at war, on the move, on the go, on the run, on the line, on the money, etc.*

LEFT-RIGHT model, for example:

(15) *It was the **left** leaders' election.*

(16) *You **are right** in a way.*

FAR-NEAR model, for example:

(17) *It **is far** from clear, it **is far** from true.*

(18) *Brave but **near** tears, she **was near** to death, etc.*

7. Conclusion

The outlined aspects of domination of such function words as prepositions in stative format of linguistic knowledge include first of all their special role in the process of stativization. As the results of the conceptual analysis show the prepositional linguistic units occupy one of leading positions in the core

area of the category of linguistic stativity, thus, structuring the concept of indefinitely lasting states. The revealed metaphorical models (UP-DOWN model, IN-AT-ON model, LEFT-RIGHT model, FAR-NEAR model) of stative interpretation enhance the role of spatial prepositions in the process of forming the secondary stative meaning. Among the dominant stative domains of metaphoric interpretation of SPACE there are mainly psychological, emotional and mental states.

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