

EXPRESSION OF THE CONCEPT OF SPACE USING CASES IN RUSSIAN  
LANGUAGE

*EXPRESSÃO DO CONCEITO DE ESPAÇO USANDO CASOS EM LÍNGUA RUSSA*

*EXPRESIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DE ESPACIO UTILIZANDO CASOS EN LENGUA  
RUSA*



Natavan Havar Gizi HAJIYEVA<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: hajjyevanatavan@mail.ru

**How to reference this paper:**

HAJIYEVA, N. H. G. Expression of the concept of space using cases in Russian Language. **Rev. EntreLinguas**, Araraquara, v. 9, n. 00, e023008, 2023. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29051/el.v9i00.17696>



| Submitted: 08/12/2022  
| Required revisions: 18/01/2023  
| Approved: 20/03/2023  
| Published: 15/04/2023

**Editor:** Profa. Dra. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno  
**Deputy Executive Editor:** Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

<sup>1</sup> Azerbaijan Medical University (AMU), Baku – Azerbaijan. Professor, Head of the Department of Azerbaijani Language. Doctor of Philology.

**ABSTRACT:** The place concept has field structure. As in the semantic configuration, the nucleus of “space” is highlighted, and the remaining components can be interpreted as peripherals. The space concept can be distinguished by dative and ablative cases. The dative case in the Russian language assumed through prepositions. After the prepositions “k”, “po”, “blagodarya” the nouns show place meaning. The using of prepositions in ablative case semantically goes to the locative meanings and provides the use of these constructions in this language.

**KEYWORDS:** Concept. Grammatical meaning. Syntactical function. Locative.

**RESUMO:** O conceito de lugar possui estrutura de campo. Tal como na configuração semântica, destaca-se o núcleo “espaço”, podendo os restantes componentes ser interpretados como periféricos. O conceito de espaço pode ser distinguido por casos dativos e ablativos. O caso dativo na língua russa é assumido por meio de preposições. Após as preposições “k”, “po”, “blagodarya”, os substantivos mostram significado de lugar. O uso de preposições no caso ablativo vai semanticamente aos significados locativos e propicia o uso dessas construções nessa língua.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Conceito. Significado gramatical. Função sintática. Locativo.

**RESUMEN:** El concepto de lugar tiene estructura de campo. Al igual que en la configuración semántica, se destaca el núcleo del “espacio”, y los componentes restantes pueden interpretarse como periféricos. El concepto de espacio se puede distinguir por los casos dativo y ablativo. El caso dativo en el idioma ruso asumido a través de preposiciones. Después de las preposiciones “k”, “po”, “blagodarya”, los sustantivos muestran significado de lugar. El uso de preposiciones en caso ablativo va semánticamente a los significados locativos y proporciona el uso de estas construcciones en esta lengua.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Concepto. Significado gramatical. Función sintáctica. Locativo.

---

## Introduction

The cases perform syntactic functions in Russian. Different case forms indicate the role of the noun and indicate the relationship with other words in the sentence. V. V. Vinogradov (2001, p. 167) writes about this: "The case forms of the noun reflect the perception of relations between the object, event, action and quality of material life".

As in Azerbaijani, a case that includes the space concept in Russian is the dative case. In Russian, dative case is a simpler case in terms of meaning. "This case determines the person and object for which the action took place" (GVOZDEV, 1973, p. 166). For example: "*Otoslal knigu tovarishchu; Zavod otpravil materialy stroitel'stvu*" [Sent the book to a friend; The factory sent materials to the construction]. The dative case is considered the most semantically transparent case in the Russian language. In this regard, A.M. Peshkovky (2011, p. 280) writes: "this case is more complete than other cases in terms of meaning". That is why in linguistics, the opinions about the semantics of this case are the same.

In Slavic languages with dative case, the situation is complicated by the inflectional case paradigm, where gender, number, ending, stress and other factors play an important role. However, there is no obvious correspondence between inflectional form and grammatical meaning. For example: In the sentence "Ya dayu knigu bratu (sestre)", [I give the book to my brother (sister)] the ending *-u* in the word *bratu* indicates the masculine singular in the dative case of the noun, and the ending *-e* in the word *sestre* indicates the singular feminine gender in the dative case of the noun.

Let's take the sentence *Otryad idet k gorodu* [The squad goes to the city]. As we have seen, it has a spatial meaning and indicates the movement direction. If we compare it with the sentence *Otryad idet v gorod* [The squad goes to the city], in the *k* + dative case construction, we are talking about the so-called exceptional action, that is, it implies an action that does not suppose to enter the boundary of the object, and in the dative case construction, we are talking about an internal movement, that is, it is possible to enter the object's boundary. The ending of the movement is described accordingly in the following sentences: *Otryad podoshel k gorodu — Otryad voshel v gorod* [The squad came to the city - The squad entered the city]. The type of the verb indicates the end of the action and the place, exception or inclusion indicates the direction of the action.

The spatial-adverbial meaning of the dative case is primary from a historical point of view, which is also written by A.B. Pravdin (1956, p. 6): "The local meanings of the case forms

have a non-generative meaning effect, a more common meaning develops on their basis". The ancient Slavic dative differs from the modern dative in that nouns marked by them can express adverbial meaning independently without the help of the preposition *k*.

Another case that reflects the space concept is the locative case. The locative case has many meanings in Russian. It should be noted that this case form is used in verb combinations, not noun combinations. In this case, the noun performs the nominative predicate, for example: *Brat byl uchitelem; On u nas povarom* [The brother was a teacher; He is our chef] (GVOZDEV, 1973, p. 167). The adverbial meaning of this case form brings it closer to an adverb: a) expressing manner, for example: *ehali legkoy rysyu, slezy tekli ruch'em, krikom krichit* [rode at a light trot, tears flowed in a stream, shouted with a cry]; b) expressing time duration, for example: *vzvurtilsya ranney vesnoy, sazhali drevera provoloj osen'yu* [returned in early spring, planted trees in autumn]; c) indicating the place where the action takes place, for example: *shli gorodom, ehali dremuchim lesom* [walked through the city, drove through the dense forest].

A.S. Lutin (2008, p. 189) puts forward two main meanings of the locative case: a) explanatory (with the preposition *o*): *posmotreli o vypolnenii plana, nachalo o priezde delegatsii, dumal ob ot'ezde* [looked at the implementation of the plan, the beginning of the arrival of the delegation, thought about the departure]; b) place (with prepositions *v*, *na*): *sobralis' v auditorii, zhili v derevne, sideli na beregu* [gathered in the audience, lived in the village, sat on the shore], later he adds the meaning of time to these meanings of the locative case.

Looking at the meanings of the locative case, we can see that these meanings are somehow affected by the processing of prepositions, so that it is with their help that the concept of space and time can be seen in this case. The meanings of prepositions are further revealed in locative case constructions. These constructions reflect the ruling and subordinate word. Both the ruling word (*poehal za bol'nym* [went for a sick patient]) and the subordinate word (*govoril s uchenikom* [spoke to a student]) influence the detection of these meanings.

## Results

We should note that it is in Russian and English languages that prepositions are used to express case meanings. Prepositions are used to show spatial and temporal relationships. Spatial relations are performed in the following cases, for example: a) the location of the subject, its

location in relation to another subject: *bliz sela, u reki, vne doma, pod goroj, pod obryvom* [near the village, by the river, outside the house, under the mountain, under the cliff]; b) the situation in relation to the object where the displacement occurred: *move it to the closet, put it at the table, on the table, under the table, at the table, in front of the table* [podvin' do shkafa, postav' u stola, na stol, pod stol, za stol, pred stolom]; c) the place where displacement occurs: *ehali cherez les, po stepi, mezhdu derev'yami* [We drove through the forest, across the steppe, between the trees].

An event occurs at a certain point in space. Grammatically, this is expressed in the fact that the speaker-participant in the role of the place of the event is circumstantial in the sentence, and it is not related to the valency of the verb. Consider the following sentences: *Vasiliy sidit na divane, plachet v uglu, zhivet v Kaliningrade* [Vasily sits on the sofa, cries in the corner, lives in Kaliningrad]. In these sentences, the description of the denotative situation involved in the role of the messenger, are the participants of the corresponding events caused by *sofa, corner, Kaliningrad* or *Vasiliy*? Our answer will be yes. They are described as the place in the events mentioned in the given sentence, and in this sense they act as the place where the action takes place in the development of the events. In Russian, a special grammatical tool is used - locative case constructions + prepositions - to indicate the location of the event described in space. These prepositions are *v, na* and *pri*.

The same grammatical means is used to show the location of the event in time; for example: *v etom mesyatse, v etom godu, na etoj nedele* [this month, this year, this week], etc. Does it make a difference to the locative case? In our opinion, no, so in the sentence *Velikaya Otechestvennaya vojna nachalas' v 1941 godu* - "The Great Patriotic War began in 1941", *in 1941* is the place of the event. In other words, the locative case does not distinguish between space and time, for him one or the other is the determination of the place where the event took place, and for him time or space is not important.

Let's look at the preposition in the sentence *Dvornik zhivet pri shkole* [The janitor lives at the school]. Let's look at the speaker's purpose in choosing this construction. It is known that the school is the real place of the detection of the event, and the preposition is the specification of the contact method. On the one hand, it should be said that the sweeper does not live in the school, but on the other hand, it raises the question of how his living is different from living next to or near the school. A.S. Lutin notes that this is related to direct contact and is different from the construction of *komitet pri Gosudarstvennoy dume* [Committee under the State Duma], so that this committee is not part of it, does not belong to it, but has direct contact with

it. Later, he gives an example of a tense construction to confirm his point: *Eta istoriya byla eshche pri tsare Gorokhe* [This story was still under Tsar Gorokh]. This shows that there is an event here: *This story was*. It is important to narrow the area of expansion of this event, not in space, but in time. The period of the life and reign of Gorokh tsar is the location of the event. However, it should be distinguished from the previous construction, so that the Gorokh tsar is a fixed place as a metonymic indicator in the time phase (LUTIN, 2008, p. 189). It should be noted that localization with prefixes *v*, *na* is purely semantically impossible. "These meanings are also stable in the historical plan, and it can be said that they have not undergone any semantic changes since the stage of the initial written monuments" (TOPOROV, 1961, p. 61).

The situation with locative case constructions with preposition *o* is different, as "the scope of meaning and usage of this type of locative case has undergone more changes in the history of the Russian language" (TOPOROV, 1961, p. 38). In general, the complete loss of locative meanings can be seen in locative case constructions with preposition *o*. It is true, our goal is not thoroughly to study the history of the Russian language and the locative, but we wanted to take a brief look at this issue.

In old Russian, the locative prepositions are *o*, *po*, *pri*, *v* and *na*. This is also the case in modern Russian. However, we should note that the prepositions *o*, *po*, *pri* indicate that the movement is outside the object, and the prepositions *v* and *na* are within the movement of the object. Both groups are used to express different meanings of the locative. Undoubtedly, this difference is not accidental and in a certain sense makes it possible to observe their greater antiquity.

It is difficult to study the locative constructions with that preposition, compared to the modern Russian language, it has undergone more changes, which, according to researchers, has led to its loss of locative functions, which it has already lost in modern times. These constructions with preposition were more widely used in different conditions and meanings, however, according to the frequency of use, they lagged behind the constructions with prepositions *v* and *po* (TOPOROV, 1961, p. 42). If we look at the meanings of that preposition, we can see that it indicates the place where the action is taking place. It is true, it is also mentioned that it means time, but there is no information that it indicates a specific time. In the modern literary language, constructions with an preposition have lost their close connection with verbs, this can be seen in combinations such as *utverzhdienie o chem*, *zaverenie o chem*, *signal o chem*, *material o chem* [statement about what, assurance about what, signal about what, material about what].

While studying constructions with an preposition *po*, V.N. Toporov comes to the conclusion that these constructions developed through the formalization of the preposition, and as the locative meaning of the constructions with an preposition *o* was lost, it gradually gave way to it. In our opinion, if we look at the old Russian language, we can see that these constructions are used to express the emotional state of the bearer, for example: *skuchat' po muzhu, toskovat' po nim* [*miss a husband, yearn for them*] and etc.

It should be noted that constructions with preposition *v* are more productive than other constructions in old Russian as well as in modern Russian. The concept of space is more prominent in these preposition constructions. Touching on the points of its development, V.N. Toporov notes that in the ancient Russian language these constructions were used with nouns that have the meaning of time, but this is a limited number. Later, the author notes that preposition constructions with the same meaning have taken the place of these constructions (TOPOROV, 1961, p. 71). In modern times, this preposition is used to form complex prepositions like *vvidu, v tselyakh, v rode, v litse, v dele, v otnoshenii* [*in view of, for the purposes of, like, in person, in deed, in relation to*].

In old Russian, constructions with preposition *na* had the frequency of constructions with preposition *v*. These constructions are used with nouns that express a spatial meaning. Although in many cases this preposition reflects the entire space in which the action takes place, it also reflects the sense of time. However, it has a small scope of development compared to space.

Time relations are combined with nouns that continue in time are called in the interval of time or process, however, the duration of time is indicated, for example: *sdelal za den', v nedelyu* [*done in a day, in a week*]; the time of the action: *po vecheram, v godu* [*in the evenings, in the year*]; also shows the moment of the action: *otkryvaetsya s devyati chasov, uehal do maya* [*opens from nine o'clock, left until May*].

We think that the denotation is usually or occasionally perceived as the end point of the space where the movement goes along the route (*street, prospect, river*), limited space (*lake, room, window*). At this time, no help is needed to find the way. During the movement, there is no precise landmark in the space, and it is not difficult for a person to find the end point of the movement, as the space itself makes him find it. For example: - *Mamasha, kak doyti do derevni Vasil'ki? — Idi, synok, etoy dorogoy pryamo. Tam i uvidish'* [- *Mother, how to get to the village of Vasilki? "Go, son, straight along this road. There you will see*].

It should be said that the famous routes are not marked with prepositional case (in the sense of location), for example: *ubegat' (idti) prospekt/prospektami, trotuarom; plyt' Baltiyskim morem, dvigat'sya Tverskoy ulitsey* [run away (go) along avenues, sidewalks; sail the Baltic Sea, move along Tverskaya street]. If the denotator knows the name, it also has knowledge of the route. The subject, as the perpetrator of the event, can use the space as an object of movement and take the event along the route - *idti po prospektu; plyt' po Baltiyskomu moryu; dvigat'sya po Tverskoy ulitse* [walk along the avenue; sail on the Baltic Sea; move along Tverskaya street].

It should be noted that speaking about the periphery of the locative case, R.O. Jakobson notes that in the sentence "*Idu polem*" [I'm going through the field] the locative case is not the object of the action, but in a certain sense it is an auxiliary tool. Let's compare: *idu polem v derevnyu* and *idu polem, potom lesom i lugom* [I go through the field to the village and I go through the field, then through the forest and the meadow]. It cannot be said "*Vozduhom letit ptitsa*" [A bird flies through the air] (loc. case), as a bird does not fly in an airless place (JACOBSON, 1985, p. 160). We agree that the circumstantial in the locative case does not indicate the object of the movement, but the question of its role remains open. It should be said that R. Mrazek's definition of the local situation as a "means to achieve a certain goal" coincides with the opinion of R.O. Jakobson, which he called "an auxiliary means".

The locative case in the meaning of time forms a lexically limited group of words in modern Russian, these words are formed by the names of seasons and days, for example, *utrom, dnem, vecherom, noch'yu; zimoy, vesnoy, letom, osen'yu* [in the morning, afternoon, evening, night; winter, spring, summer, autumn]. This is almost a complete list of the adverbialized noun group. However, "in the locative case the time indicates with the way, the movement in time shows the movement in the space", so *idti dorogoyu* [go the way] is close to the combination of *spat' noch'yu* [sleep at night] (that is, it does not mean "all night") (POTEBNYA, 1958, p. 438). A.M. Peshkovsky (2011, p. 304) gives the meaning of the locative case as follows: "The locative case indicates the filling of a stage part". R. Mrazek (1964, p. 139) clarifies it as follows: "It is determined that the event is more or less parallel to the given time section, for example: "*my vstretilis' holodnym mayskim utrom; noch'yu menya doma ne bylo...*" ["we met on a cold May morning; I wasn't at home last night..."]. However, it should be said that in the Slavic languages, the temporal locative case had a wider lexical base, and often it had a semantic shade.



As for the old Russian language, which has a wide lexical base, this base is even wider when the names of the season and day are used in the adverbial function. At the same time, in old Russian, the defining locative "night time: *noch'yu* [in the night] is more common. Later comes locative *zimoy, osen'yu* [in winter, in autumn]" (BERNSTEIN, 1958. p. 231), that is, locative case is consolidated as denotatively marked nouns that are adverbs of the event. "Internal activity" makes it possible to preserve these constructions in the language, further expanding the lexical base at the end of the XVII century.

At first glance, the idea we are pursuing assumes the historical aspect, it allows to study the reasons for the preservation of the given event in the language, however, it does not provide any information about the actual nature of the temporal meaning of the locative case. In the adverbs like *utrom, dnem, vecherom, noch'yu; zimoy, vesnoy, letom, osen'yu* [in the morning, afternoon, evening, night; winter, spring, summer, autumn] are assumed to be minimally involved in the development of the event, in modern Russian, the names of the season and the day act as enablers of the event. Analyzing the sentences *Noch'yu Masha tayno vstretilas' s Ivanom; Teplym vesennim utrom devochki poshli kupat'sya* [At night, Masha secretly met with Ivan; On a warm spring morning, the girls went swimming], A. Vejbitska (1985, p. 329) explains it as follows:

locative time constructions reflect a different meaning than time". It is no coincidence that the secret meeting of Maria and Ivan took place at night, or that the little girls bathed in a warm spring morning. There is an allusion to causality in why this calendar day is not processed in local time, so that calendar days are causative, they cannot possibly explain why the action indicates another time and not this particular time.

Later, the author says: "the agent uses time to achieve an independent goal, he does not use action to fill the given time. For him, time is a tool to achieve the goal" (VEJBITSKA, 1985, p. 329). We can confirm this by R. Mrazek's words: "the tool can provide assistance in the formation of the time of duration to a certain place, for example: *oni ubezhali ottuda temnoj noch'yu* - "*vospol'zovavshis' temnoj noch'yu*" [they fled from there on a dark night - "taking advantage of the dark night"] (MRAZEK, 1964, p. 141).

Thus, pointing time as a possibilizer of the event in the noun *noch'* [night] as a lexical event, in accordance with the laws of grammatical and semantic analogy, the given event is transferred to the meaningful nouns of other parts and seasons of the day and has taken its place in the language system. Such a development of local time becomes possible at the end of the XVII century, and it can become an active participant of the event at that time.

Locality is expressed in modern Russian by the prepositions *nad, pod, pered, za, mezhdu, ryadom, s* [above, below, in front of, behind, between, next to, with]. In their original meaning, all these prepositions refer to an object "directed to or parallel to the space of an object", for example: *lampa visit nad stolom, kniga lezhit pod stolom, stoyat' pered domom, za domom, mezhdu domami, stol stoit ryadom so stolom* [the lamp hangs over the table, the book lies under the table, stand in front of the house, behind the house, between houses, the chair stands next to the table], etc. (SHELYAKIN, 1987, p. 115).

From a mathematical point of view, the term "parallel" is ill-chosen (so that we are talking about the mutual location of points in space), however, it correctly reflects the idea of "denotative equality" of objects. Let's take two objects of the same volume, for example: *Polka s knigami Tolstogo visit nad polkoj s knigami Dostoevskogo and Polka s knigami Dostoevskogo visit pod polkoj s knigami Tolstogo* [A shelf of Tolstoy's books hangs over a shelf of Dostoyevsky's books and A shelf of Dostoyevsky's books hangs under a shelf of Tolstoy's books]. The description of this or that situation depends on the communicative ideas of the speaker, that is, it depends what shelf he speaks on. The same can be said for *za/pered* [behind/before] prepositions; for example: *Piony posazheny za tyul'panami or Tyul'pany posazheny pered pionami* [Peonies Planted Behind Tulips or Tulips Planted Before Peonies]. The intention depends on the description of which flower, that is, it depends on the speaker's choice of which flower to talk about. In a certain sense, this comes from the spatial meaning of the preposition *s*. This is a matter of how the storyteller sets up the subject of the story - whether he is talking about peonies or lilies.

Another issue is the question of what size items are compatible with the given prepositions. When the speaker chooses this or that preposition, it depends on the choice of the ratio of the smaller object to the larger one, or the larger one to the smaller one. Let's take a look at the sentences *Lampa visit nad stolom and Stol stoit pod lampoy* [The lamp is hanging over the table and The table is standing under the lamp]. The same idea is reflected in these two sentences. If we compare the sentences *Derevo stoit ryadom s domom and Dom stoit ryadom s derevom* [A tree stands next to a house and A house stands next to a tree], we can see that the first sentence has a higher degree of development than the second.

## Conclusion

As a result, it can be said that the space concept appears in three cases in Russian, and in this case, mainly, prepositional phrases are widely used. Prepositional conjunctions make it possible to express spatial relations. Without diminishing the role of lexical and grammatical means, it should be shown that it is the prepositional phrases that actively participate in this role.

## REFERENCES

- BERNSTEIN, S. B. (Ed.). **Ablative case in Slavic languages**. Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1958. 378 p.
- GVOZDEV, A. N. **Modern Russian literary language**. Moscow: Enlightenment, 1973. 432 p.
- JACOBSON, R. To the general doctrine of the case. *In: Selected works*. Moscow: Progress, 1985. p. 133-175.
- LUTIN, A. S. **System-functional analysis of the case category in Russian language**. 2008. 412 f. Dissertation (Doctorate in Philology) – Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow, 2008.
- MRAZEK, R. **Syntax of Russian ablative**. Prague: Statni pedagogicke nakladatelstvi v praze, 1964. 285 p.
- PESHKOVSKY, A. M. **Russian syntax in scientific coverage**. 7. ed. Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 2001. 511 p.
- POTEBNYA, A.A. **From notes on Russian grammar**. Moscow: Uchpedgiz, 1958. 536 p. v. I-II.
- PRAVDIN, A. B. Dative verbal in old Slavonic and old Russian languages. *In: Scientific notes of the Institute of Slavic studies*. Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1956. p. 3-120. v. XIII.
- SHELYAKIN, M. A. Experience of the semantic description of the ablative case of the Russian language. *In: Uchenyye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*. Works in Russian and Slavic Philology. Tartu: Tartu State University Press, 1987. p. 108-119. v. 760.
- TOPOROV, V. N. **Locative in Slavic languages**. Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1961. 382 p.

VEJBITSKA, A. The case of the superficial case. *In: New in foreign linguistics*. Moscow: Progress, 1985. p. 303-340. v. XV.

VINOGRADOV, V. V. **Russian language**: Grammatical doctrine of the word. 4. ed. Moscow: Russkiy yazyk, 2001. 719 p.

**Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.**  
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

