

A CROSS-LINGUISTIC STUDY OF THE ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS *UP* AND *DOWN* AND THEIR RUSSIAN COUNTERPARTS

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ABSTRACT: *During the recent decades an increasing interest has been observed in pragmatic studies, particularly in the field of comparative linguistics. The object of our study is space prepositions **up** and **down** in English and their counterparts in Russian. We have chosen these prepositions because they present a certain difficulty for foreign learners, especially Russian students of English. Firstly, the prepositions **up and down** do not have direct equivalents in Russian. Secondly, their usage on the syntagmatic level is overloaded with deixis, which makes their understanding and interpretation still more complicated. We have examined these linguistic units in the framework of theory of oppositions and pragmatics, particularly deixis. The analysis shows that on the syntagmatic level the prepositions **up** and **down** display various pragmatic meanings triggered by the reference of motion to the location of the speaker or other subject in space. Both these prepositions are rendered into Russian by means of the preposition **po (along)** which is deictically-neutral and therefore special means are required to express the meanings of the English prepositions both on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic level.*

KEYWORDS: prepositions up and down, pragmatics, deixis, paradigmatic, syntagmatic, theory of oppositions

INTRODUCTION

The object of our study is space prepositions **up** and **down** in English and their counterparts in Russian. We have chosen these prepositions because they present a certain difficulty for foreign learners, especially Russian students of English. Firstly, the prepositions **up and down** have no direct equivalents in Russian. Secondly, their usage on the syntagmatic level is overburdened by deixis, which makes their understanding and perception still more complicated. The prepositions **up** and **down** are rendered into Russian by means of the preposition **po (along)**, which is deictically-neutral and therefore special lexical, morphological and syntactic means are required to express the meanings of the English prepositions both on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic level.

It should be mentioned that space prepositions, namely **up** and **down** have been the object of many researches, but they **have been** examined mostly on the syntagmatic level (1;2;3;4;5;6;7;8;9), i.e. their deictic nature has not been taken into due consideration. We have undertaken to examine the English prepositions **up** and **down** and their Russian counterparts from the pragmatic (deictic) point of view by focusing on the context indicating the reference of space objects to the speaker or other participant of the situation. The cross-linguistic analysis may help Russian learners of English better understand paradigmatic and syntagmatic differences between the prepositions in the respective languages and use them in appropriate speech patterns. We will

apply the theory of oppositions because this way it will be possible to see more explicitly all kinds of differences that the members of the opposition can reveal. The illustrative material is mostly extracted from works by British and American writers and their choice is predetermined by the availability of their translations into Russian.

On pragmatics. Deixis

At present almost all aspects of language are studied in conjunction with pragmatics. It is difficult to examine sentences without taking the context into consideration. As it is put by G. Yule pragmatics is concerned with “how we recognize what is meant even when it isn’t said or written” (10, 127). In all languages, the reference of certain words and expressions relies entirely on the situational context of the utterance, and can only be understood in light of these circumstances (11,202). A very concise definition of deixis is given by A. Radford: “The study of how nonlinguistic knowledge is integrated with linguistic knowledge in our use of language” (12, 474). S. Levinson mentions a powerful motivation for the interest in pragmatics: it is “the growing realization that there is a substantial gap between current linguistic theories of language and accounts of linguistic communication.” The linguist is certain that “a semantic theory can give only a small proportion of language understanding, the rest must be completed by hints, implicit purposes, assumptions, social attitudes and so on” (13, 38). Levinson notes that pragmatics is generally viewed as the study of “just those aspects of the relationship between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of language”. However, the linguist claims that such a definition restricts pragmatics to the study of grammatically relevant aspects of language usage. The linguist claims that pragmatics should include deixis as one of its most important components of this branch of linguistics (13, 39). As Lyons has put it precisely: “There is much in the structure of languages that can be explained on the assumption that they have developed for communication in face-to-face interaction. This is clearly so as far as deixis is concerned” (14, 637-638).

The meaning of deixis is *pointing to something*. In oral communication however, deixis in its narrow sense refers to the contextual meaning of pronouns, and in its broader sense, refers to the place, time and other circumstances in which the action is taking place. Such words as *I, you are defined* as person deixis, *here, there* as place deixis, *now, then, tomorrow, yesterday* as time deixis and their meanings entirely depend on the immediate physical context in which they are uttered.

Naturally, the English prepositions **up** and **down** can be classified within place deixis since their meaning in an utterance usually relies on the orientation of the speaker or another object in space. The prepositions **up** and **down** indicate whether the movement is happening towards the speaker or another object or away from them. The reference point usually constitutes the **deictic centre**, which takes different substance in different contexts.

Theory of oppositions

The theory of oppositions was originally developed as a phonological theory, but then it spread on the other aspects of language, including grammar, lexicology, stylistics, etc. Such concepts as *distinctive features, paradigm, syntagm, distribution, neutralization* were spread on all the language levels, including lexicology, “which is the most complicated sphere of language” (15, 12). The founders of the theory of oppositions are F. de Saussure and N. Trubetsky, who used the term “opposition” in a wider sense. “In linguistics everything is reduced to “differentiation”, claimed F. de Saussure. “All the linguistic mechanism turns round similarities and differences, and the latter only are the counterparts of the first one” (16, 118- 125).

According to N. Trubetskoy, opposition (contrast) not only presupposes features that distinguish members of oppositions, but reveals also features that are common for both members of the opposition. Common features serve as the basis of contrast, while differential features express the immediate function in question (17, 75). J. Lyons gives the following definition of oppositions: they are characterized by the fact that the negation of one member implies the affirmation of the other. He summarizes his thesis in the following formulae “ $x > y$ and $Y > -x$ ” (14,485-487). Following Lyon’s formulae we can say that the negation of the sentence “He walks up the street” suggests the affirmation of the other sentence “He walks down the street”. These sentences cannot occur in the same context as the prepositions **up** and **down** display polarity contrast, therefore they form a paradigmatic opposition which preserves its main character on the syntagmatic level as well.

The study of the English prepositions *up* and *down* and their Russian counterparts on the syntagmatic level

As is known, the basic types of relationship between the lingual units are paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. On the basis of paradigmatic relations words of language form classes of similar features. Paradigmatic relations between words generally reflect the relations that exist between entities of objective reality. The basic meanings of words are inherent in paradigmatics, while supplementary meanings are revealed in syntagmatics (18; 19; 20). Kurilovic claims the primary function refers to the system, while the secondary function is to be found in context (29, 184). As for the English prepositions **up** and **down**, they can function both paradigmatically and syntagmatically, revealing various paradigmatic and contextual meanings.

The English prepositions **up** and **down** have no direct equivalents in Russian and are rendered into it by means of the preposition **po (along)** + Noun in the Dative in conjunction with the adverbs **vverkh (up)** and **vniz (down)** preceding the prepositional phrase. Semantically the Russian preposition **po (along)** is analogous to *along* in English which is deictically neutral. We will analyze these prepositions separately to reveal all possible differences that they reveal on the paradigmatic and syntagmatic level.

The analysis of *up* and *down* and their Russian counterparts on the paradigmatic level

Paradigmatic relations refer to the system of language and are not dependent on the context. If we examine the English prepositions **up** and **down** on the paradigmatic level we can point out the following meanings which usually remain constant in any context or situation. These meanings on the vertical line are:

ascending point

- (a) And now he followed Bosinney more
closely than ever up the stairs. (Galsworthy)
Teper on shel za Bosini po pyatam –
-vverkh po lestnyice .

descending point

- (b) **Down the steps** tripped Lady
Caroline Sibly-Biers. (Fitzgerald)
Po stupenkam sbezhala Kerolain
Sibli - Birs.

- (c) Foinet followed him **up the stairs.**
(Maugham)
Fuane podnyalsya v masterskuyu.

- (d) Emma ran **down the stairs** to help her.
(Maugham)
Slezi katilis po ee shershavim krasnim
zhirnim schekam.

- (f) Always take care when driving
up the hill. (OALD)

- (e) The car slowly climbed
down steep hills. (OALD)

In Russian the meanings of the English prepositions are rendered by means of the verbs **подниматься** (ascend), **спускаться**(descend), **катиться(roll) + по**.

up the stream

Up the river shows direction to the place where a river starts; **down the river** means *in the direction in which a river flows*.

(a) **Up the river** the mountains had not been taken. (Hemingway)

Gori v verkhov'yakh reki ne bili
nizhe po reke
zanyati .

Podnimayas vverkh **po techeniyu**
reki vremen ... (Kushner)

down the stream

(b) ...the Austrians still kept a bridge-head further **down the river**.
(Hemingway)

...predmestnoe ukrepleniye,

vse esche ostavalos v rukakh
avstriytssev.

Vniz po reke skolzya, vidast
tebya vragu...(Brodsky)

As we see, the paradigmatic meanings of the English opposition **up/down** in the above cases are preserved in Russian, though here the meanings of the English prepositions are expressed by adding supplementary linguistic units: the noun (верховьях) and adverb (ниже). In other cases the meanings of the prepositions **up** and **down** are rendered into Russian by means of the verbs denoting the direction of the action on the vertical scale : podnimatsya, spuskatsya and the prepositional phrase “po techeniyu”.

northern-point

The prepositional phrases with **up** and **down** may specify another orientation in direction of movement. This may be the northern or southern point that the movement can be directed to.

(a) We went on **up the lake**.
(Hemingway)

Mi ekhali vse vremya k severu.

(b) ...like being sold **down the river**
in the old days. (Fast)

...kogda raba prodavali na yug.

The characters of the novel (a) were sailing from the Italian part towards Switzerland which is known to take the northern position in relation to Italy. In (b) **down the river** is associated with the sale (historically) of Negroes in the southern states of America.

So we see that in some cases some sort of cognitive (geographical, historical, etc.) information is required to fully understand the meaning of the prepositions under study. We should note that the Russian translation of the two sentences reflects the adequate meanings of the prepositions **up** and **down** – the prepositional phrases k severu and na yug.

The differences of linguistic means in expressing paradigmatic meanings of the prepositions under study can be presented by the following table.

Table 1

Num	Meaning	English	Russian
1.	Ascending-descending line	up//down	vverkh // vniz po spuskatsya, podnimatsya
2.	Up the stream- down the stream	up//down	vverkh//vniz po techeniyu
3.	Northern-southern point	up//down	k severu // na yug

As seen from the table, the Russian language makes use of a number of supplementary means to convey the meanings of the English prepositions **up** and **down**.

The analysis of *up* and *down* and their Russian counterparts on the syntagmatic level

Syntagmatic relations cover relations that exist between lingual units and are mainly influenced by a context. Therefore we can speak of pragmatic meanings, more specifically, deictic meanings that the prepositions **up** and **down** can reveal in certain situations. The deictic character of the prepositions **up** and **down** is explicitly expressed when the direction of the action is dependent on the location of the subject or space object. The use of **up** is appropriate when the action is directed towards the subject or a space object functioning as deictic centre, **down** when the action is shown as moving away from the deictic centre. So to specify the deictic meanings we must proceed from the deictic centre. In some cases it is difficult to determine specifically “where deictic centre should be since the location of the speaker and the location of the hearer are different.” (Payne 146). As deictic expressions are usually egocentric, the center is often represented by the speaker of the utterance, but it may be another person (persons) being described in a narrative. The deictic meanings of the prepositions **up** and **down** show polarity contrast and therefore can be presented as **deictic opposition**.

Movement towards the subject// away from the subject

(a) I was writing away very fast, when something came **up the path** and stopped two yards off me. (Bronte)

(b) Donald quietly opened the door of his room and looked both ways **down the corridor**. (Murdoch)

In (a) the phrase **up the path** points out the direction towards the subject, i.e. the speaker (Jane) who is away from the house and consequently the movement is directed towards her, not the house. In (b) **down the corridor** shows the direction away from the subject, movement from the location of the subject as direction in both ends (both ways) is expressed by the same preposition **down**.

(c)...ran **up the valley** to see her.
(Bronte)

(d) She bade him good-night and hurried **down the road**. (Maugham)

...pribezhalo, chtobi poznamomitsya
s nei.

Ona pozhelala yemu spokoinoi nochi
i ubezhala domoi.

As the Russian language does not have special prepositions to indicate the deictic opposition, various lexical and syntactic means are used to fill in this gap. These are verbs with prefixes indicating proximity or distance from the deictic centre: *pribezhalo* (ran up the valley), *ubezhala* (hurried down the road). The deictic centre is expressed by *s nei* (c) and *domoi* (d).

Movement towards the space object//away from the space object

The deictic center can be transferred to the place towards or away from which the movement can proceed.

(a) Mor leaned his bicycle against the
and came **up the path...** (Murdoch)

(b) Mor had gone a little way
down the drive. (Murdoch)

From the example (a) we understand that Mor came home and the phrase **up the path** shows that he directed his steps towards the house. In (b) Mor's movement takes the opposite direction.

Since the Russian preposition *po* is devoid of the deictic content, supplementary words are needed to express the movement towards the space object or away from it.

(c) ...a woman's figure get out and
come **up the path.** (Murdoch)

(d) ...they moved another bench
further **down the road.** (Fitzgerald)

... iz neye vishla zhenskaya figura

...oni pereshli na druguyu skameiku,

и пошла **po sadovoi dorozhke**

podalshe.

k domu.

In (c) the deictic element is conveyed by means of the phrase *k domu*; in (d) it is expressed through the adverb *domoi*.

As is seen, deixis in English may also be expressed by the deictic verbs **come** and **go**, which are usually associated by **up** and **down** respectively.

Sometimes a particular part or element within the space object can serve as a deictic centre to specify the most important characteristic feature that particular place is designed for.

(a) The ambassador walked slowly **up the room** towards the Queen's throne.

(b) The lady consulted moved slowly **up the room.** (Bronte)

In both the sentences the movement is described as directed towards the most characteristic point of the place: it is the Queen's throne (a) or the teacher's table (b) It is worth mentioning that the deictic centre in (a) is explicitly pointed out, while to identify the deictic centre in (b) we should produce a larger context, which is given below:

...(this lady) having taken her seat before a pair of globes placed on one of the tables... commenced giving a lesson in geography."

If there is no indicator of deixis, the neutral preposition **along** is used.

a. Mrs. Reed came **along the corridor.** (Bronte)

Po koridoru shla Misis Rid.

(b) Philip and he walked **along the corridor** again. (Maugham)

Oni snova stali plutat po koridoram.

In (a) the idea is stressed that it was less important (for Jane) in what direction Mrs. Reed was walking; it is her very appearance in the corridor that filled Jane with awe and despair.

As for (b), **along** shows the people mentioned acted chaotically, not knowing the right way to the exit (hence the word *again*). It should be noted that the Russian verb *plutat* gives the exact description of their movement: move about without taking a definite direction, stray, wander.

However, the preposition **along** may be used if the deictic centre is explicitly expressed.

...he found himself hustling **along the hall toward the elevator.** (Segal)

...on uzhe mchalsya po koridoru, k liftu.

Interestingly, when an action, and not a movement is indicated, the preposition **on** may come along as in the following example:

...to sing that song on a South Carolina road. (Fast 51)

Movement towards the centre// away from the centre.

The prepositions **up** and **down** may denote the movement towards the centre or distance from it. When the space object is expressed by the noun *street*, the preposition **up** shows movement towards the centre of a city, especially its main business centre; **down** shows movement away from the centre.

- (a) As she marched **up the street** she was meditating...there could be so many folks all in one place at the same time. (Lewis) (b) Philip...quickly turned **down a side street..** (Maugham)

The contextual analysis allows us to state that **up the street (a)** is associated with the centre of the city as the description prompts it: "where you can see so many people all in one place at the same time". In (b) the word **side** itself indicates a less important street leading off a central street. The same deictic perspective is observed in case with "platform".

- (c) ...clerks and shop people thronged **up the platform.** (Maugham) (d) ...he walked **down the platform.** (Maugham)
...klerki I prodavtsi zapolonili perron. ... on shel po perronu..

Up the platform (c) points out the central part, the busiest part of the platform at the railroad station; on the contrary, **down the platform** points out the distance from that part of the platform, direction towards the exit or near it.

It should be noted that in Modern English, especially American English **downtown** means *in or towards centre*, especially its business area with its largest shops, banks, theatres, etc.; **uptown** points out the opposite direction.

She lives in a beautiful apartment **downtown.** (LLA)

They live in an apartment **updown** away from the centre. (OALD)

An interesting observation has been made when comparing the uses of **up** and **down**. We came to the conclusion that the preposition **down** is used more frequently than **up**. Out of 150 examples studied on the syntagmatic level 85 include **down** and 65 **up**. This phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the **down movement** has a larger scope of directions that the deictic centre can face.

So on the syntagmatic level the English prepositions **up** and **down** display a higher divergence from the Russian counterparts.

The differences of linguistic means in expressing deictic meanings of the prepositions under study can be presented by the following table.

Table 2

Num	Meaning	English	Russian
1.	towards// away from the subject	up-down	po + prefixes (pri, u) pribezhat, ubezhat, plutat
2.	towards//away the space object	up-down	po+ k domu, dalshe
3.	towards the centre// periphery	up-down	po+ k tsentru, ot tsentra

As we see, the Russian language does not have special prepositions to indicate deictic opposition, consequently various lexical, morphological and syntactic means are used to fill in this gap. These are verbs with prefixes indicating proximity or distance from the deictic centre: **прибежала** (ran up the valley), **убежала** (hurried down the road), various prepositional phrases. The deictic centre in the Russian sentences is expressed by **с ней (c)** and **домой (d)**.

CONCLUSION

Summing up, we can say that the cross-linguistic study shows that the English prepositions **up** and **down** have no direct equivalents in Russian. The meanings of these prepositions on the paradigmatic level are rendered into Russian by means of the preposition **по**+Noun in the Dative as well as the adverbs **вверх**(up) and **вниз** (down) or **вверх по течению** (upstream), **вниз по течению** (downstream). On the syntagmatic level the English prepositions display a greater divergence from their Russian counterparts. Here the lack of the deictic element in the Russian preposition **по** is filled in by various lexical, morphological and syntactic means: verbs with specific prefixes, adverbs, prepositional phrases indicating a movement towards or away from the deictic centre.

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Dictionaries

- OALD - Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2005)
LLA - Longman Language Activator (2003)