

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation is concerned with the dynamic processes that are at play in the development of the system of prepositions in contemporary Czech. In the first part, I review different treatments of prepositions as a word class in the Czech linguistic tradition. I use available descriptive accounts to discuss the features of two main subtypes of this category, i.e. primary and secondary prepositions, focusing in particular on the process of 'prepositionalization' of secondary prepositions, i.e. the grammaticalization path that leads to their emergence. The primary focus of the first part of the dissertation is the role of meaning and the semantic features of prepositions as function words, as well as the meaning which prepositions contribute to more complex linguistic items, i.e. the interrelation of prepositions and case marking and valency patterns derived from verbs. I also draw attention to prefixed words which are, in the majority of cases, derived from primary prepositions.

I approach meaning mainly from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, employing also the view of construction grammar which treats prepositions both as constructions in their own right and as parts of higher order constructions. Chapter three is concerned with the processes of language change with regards to changes in a system of prepositions in an inflectional language. I describe both language internal triggers of change and contact induced changes. I focus in particular on the extent and dynamics of the influence of German and English on the system of prepositions in Czech.

In the main part of the dissertation, I present a large-scale case study concerned with the variation and competition between the use of instrumental marked noun phrases (NP) without a preposition and prepositional phrases (PP) with the preposition *s* 'with' governing the instrumental case. I discuss the functions of the instrumental case and draw attention to a prominent relation between the case and the preposition *s* 'with', treating in detail the spectrum of formal and functional properties of such NPs and PPs. The main goal of this chapter is to describe the process of increasing use of the preposition *s* 'with' in originally prepositionless instrumental constructions. I discuss in turn the diachronic aspects of this process, regional and dialectal influences, and specific distributional properties of the preposition (fully interchangeable phrases, uses with verb of manipulation, and the construction *pomocí* vs *s pomocí* 'with help of'). Two functions are traditionally described for the instrumental case: the expression of comitatives and instruments. I characterize the relationship between these two functions using the example of various languages of the European linguistic area. My aim is to demonstrate that Czech is going through a process of unification of the formal means of expression of these two functions and that this process is similar to what has been observed in languages that have been in contact with Germanic and Romance languages to the same or greater extent than Czech.

The development of this unification toward the use of the preposition *s* 'with' is demonstrated by a corpus study of the occurrences of the preposition in a random sample of spontaneous speech and written language sampled from the corpora of Czech National Corpus. While the relative number of occurrences of uses of the preposition in question is not very large, a closer analysis of the data shows that this phenomenon is far from peripheral, nor is it trivial. The analysis of the data has shown a significant relationship between nonstandard use of *s* 'with' and the function of the

instrumental construction it occurs in, an influence of pronouns immediately following the preposition has also been found.

In Chapter Five, I describe a smaller case study which is concerned with the dynamics of use of the preposition *na* 'on'. The case study is based on the inquiries of language users addressed to the language consultation service at the Czech Language Institute of Czech Academy of Sciences. These inquiries document such uses of prepositional phrases that language users find questionable or not acceptable. I conclude that the main motivation of the described processes is a pressure for simplification of linguistic inventory in a specific semantic area. This simplification is primarily favorable for discourse production. In the last part I summarize the results of the research and my conclusions about the forces driving these dynamic processes.