

Sanda Lucija Udier: “Review of D. Matovac, *Prijedlozi u hrvatskome jeziku: Značenje, prostorni odnosi i konceptualizacija*”

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D. Matovac, *Prijedlozi u hrvatskome jeziku: Značenje, prostorni odnosi i konceptualizacija*, Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada: Zagreb, 2017; pp.295; ISBN 9789531693257.

It is a well-known fact that prepositions are among the most frequently used linguistic units, and yet they were often overlooked in traditional linguistic accounts, being considered only of marginal interest by researchers. The starting point of traditional descriptions of prepositions is the structuralist belief that they are lexical units with severely reduced lexical meaning which hinges only on their role in a clause, as well as on the belief that they make up a closed set whose elements are not subject to diachronic change. This position results in traditional accounts of the Croatian prepositional system largely enumerating various senses of particular prepositions, with no intention of studying or calling attention to the logical connections and relations between these meanings. Moreover, these accounts sporadically contain dubious claims, such as the one according to which they only go with declinable words. In sum, traditional descriptions of the Croatian prepositional system prove unsatisfactory, making it clear that a fresh approach to Croatian prepositions is necessary, where their obvious shortcomings would be overcome. Darko Matovac has done precisely that; first in his doctoral dissertation, and now in the monograph *Prijedlozi u hrvatskome jeziku: Značenje, prostorni odnosi i konceptualizacija* [Prepositions in the Croatian language: Meaning, Spatial Relations and Conceptualization] published by Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada.

The book consists of an introduction, two initial chapters entitled ‘*O prijedlozima*’ [On prepositions] and ‘*O značenju prijedloga*’ [On the meaning of prepositions], the central chapter entitled ‘*Značenjski utemeljen opis upotrebe odabranih prijedloga (po, s, iz, bez, do, o, nad, pod, pred, za)*’ [Meaning-based description of the use of selected prepositions (po ‘by’, s

‘with’, *iz* ‘from’, *bez* ‘without’, *do* ‘until’, *o* ‘about’, *nad* ‘over’, *pod* ‘under’, *pred* ‘before’, *za* ‘for’), the chapter ‘*Zaključne napomene*’ [Concluding remarks] and two appendices ‘*Popis i opis najčešćih značenja hrvatskih prijedloga*’ [The list and description of the most frequent meanings of Croatian prepositions] and ‘*Popis semantičkih funkcija adpozicija*’ [The list of semantic functions of adpositions]).

The book starts with an in-depth review of older and more recent studies of prepositions, most of which explore their meaning, primarily their spatial senses, within the framework of cognitive linguistics, or, more specifically, cognitive semantics. Matovac uses the term *adposition* to refer jointly to prepositions and postpositions. Although they may seem to be determined only by position, there is a difference between them because the connection between postpositions and their complements is stronger than that between the preposition and its complement. He uses the same term (*adposition*) to refer to ambipositions – which can be both postpositions and prepositions – and circumpositions which can be found on each side of the complement. Matovac takes the justified position that the combination of the case affix and adposition should be considered a single unit – a so-called construction. This, in turn, means that the adposition-case affix construction has a specific meaning which cannot be reduced to the sum of the meanings of the adposition and the case affix. Meanings of prepositions in Croatian cannot be studied independently of the constructions in which they appear, that is to say, independently of the case affix appearing on the noun which is part of the prepositional construction.

The aim of Matovac’s discussion is to isolate how the preposition contributes to the meaning of the entire construction, which amounts to describing the prepositional construction from the point of view of the preposition. The descriptions of the meaning of the prepositions *po* (by), *s* (with), *iz* (from), *bez* (without), *do* (until), *o* (about), *nad* (over), *pod* (under), *pred* (before) and *za* (for) give an account of their individual uses and groups of related meanings, and show how they relate to the prototypical meaning of the preposition, which is always spatial. As far as *po* (by) is concerned, all its specific senses with the locative case are shown to be motivated by the SURFACE AS PATH image schema, and its accusative senses by the SURFACE AS GOAL image schema. The section devoted to the preposition *s* (with) shows that all of its uses with the genitive may be related to the SURFACE AS SOURCE image schema, whereas its instrumental senses may be related with the image schema of TOGETHERNESS. The section devoted to the preposition *iz* (from) shows that all its uses may be related to the CONTAINER AS SOURCE image schema. The section devoted to *bez* (without) shows that all its uses may be encompassed under the ABSENCE image schema. The section on the preposition *do* ‘until’ shows that all its uses with the genitive are covered by

the POINT AS GOAL image schema. Moreover, Matovac demonstrates that the concepts of POINT, SURFACE and CONTAINER play a systematic role in conceptualizing spatial relations, and shows how these conceptualizations are reflected in each use of a prepositional construction in Croatian. The section on the preposition *o* (about) shows that all of its uses with the locative case are covered by the POINT AS PLACE image schema, and that all its uses with the accusative can be related to the POINT AS GOAL image schema. The section devoted to the analysis of the uses of orientational prepositions *nad* (over), *pod* (under), *pred* (before) and *za* (for) contains general insights about this group of orientational prepositions, and shows that all the uses of these prepositions with the instrumental are related to the following image schema: BEING SITUATED ON THE UPPER SIDE, BEING SITUATED ON THE LOWER SIDE, BEING SITUATED IN THE FRONT and BEING SITUATED IN THE BACK, and that all their uses with the accusative are related to the image schemas of UPPER/LOWER SIDE AS GOAL or FRONT/BACK AS GOAL.

Overall, Darko Matovac's approach to the meaning of Croatian prepositions establishes connections between what were traditionally referred to as different meanings of the prepositions, thus creating a model which enables the analysis of all potential meanings and uses of each preposition. This confirms Matovac's cognitive-linguistic starting point that prepositions should be considered polysemous linguistic units whose specific meanings are not random, but are motivated and relatable in structured ways. The prototypical meaning of a preposition is always spatial. It is a result of human perception and human bodily experience of the word, and is connected with image schemas, which consist of configurational and functional elements. The functional elements make up the basis of the prepositional meaning network, particularly those parts of the network which refer to abstract meanings. The image schema, on the one hand, connects all individual meanings with each other, and on the other connects all of them to the prototypical meaning. Descriptions of prepositional meanings and uses presented in Matovac's book show that Croatian has a consistent system of prepositional constructions, which express a range of spatial and other relations, reflected in the relationship between the static or dynamic trajector and the landmark.

This monograph tackles a complex topic, which is significant both for Croatian linguistics and linguistics in general. It is a rich and complex book, featuring clear organization and unencumbered style, with the subject presented in a convincing manner without being made overly complex. To read it and appreciate it readers need not be accomplished in all matters cognitive: Matovac's explanations are clear and intended for a wider linguistic audience. Another feature that stands out are sections devoted to the practical application of the results, particularly in teaching Croatian,

interspersed throughout the book. They would be of interest to teaching practitioners. All readers, in addition to finding answers to numerous questions, will also find the book inspirational for future research. In sum, Darko Matovac's monograph provides a valuable insight into Croatian prepositions, promoting a way of thinking which is significantly different from the traditional view, with numerous and obvious advantages over it.