

Summary

It is a well known-fact that neither lists of the different meanings nor detailed descriptions of various rules in grammar books can provide learners of a foreign language with a satisfactory solution of how to learn prepositions. Elaborating the specific strategies that a native speaker applies when speaking his or her mother tongue, the approach adopted here regards the preposition as an element which connects two linguistic entities in a specific way. This kind of connecting determines the specific function of the preposition and establishes its abstract “meaning”, which remains constant in a variety of contexts of use. Against the background of the concept of a *constant* “meaning” the traditional classification of prepositions as local, temporal, modal and so forth can be re-interpreted within a new conceptual framework.

The aim of this study is to contrast the Czech preposition *na* with the German prepositions *an* and *auf*, and to elaborate their “meaning”. A Czech learner of German has difficulty finding the correct German equivalent for the Czech preposition *na*. As many grammar books and dictionaries suggest, the most common translations of *na* are the German prepositions *an* and *auf*. But there is still the problem of when either of these is more appropriate.

The study starts with an examination of a number of German grammar books for what guidance they provide in the usage of the preposition, especially for *an* and *auf* (§2).

Chapter 3 deals with the theoretical background of the grammar books, esp. *Valence Theory* and *Cognitive Grammar*. Valence Theory and even more so the cognitive approach provide very detailed descriptions of the meaning of the prepositions, but they do not provide a satisfactory explanation because they do not take the *usus* of prepositions as the basis of a systematic linguistic analysis. Such an explanation can be found in *Functional Pragmatics*, whose central arguments are presented here (§4).

The analysis starts with the question of how the hearer's knowledge of the connexion of specific linguistic entities is changed by the way the speaker uses the respective preposition. It is evident that prepositions are not the only means of bringing about a change of the hearer's knowledge. There are at least three others: case, word order and intonation. Case is the most important, and is considered as an ensemble of information about how the noun is incorporated into

speech. Both the functional characteristics of prepositions and cases and their interplay are discussed in chapter 5.

The only study of prepositions so far within the framework of Functional Pragmatics (Grießhaber 1999) deals with local prepositions in local usage, and the preposition is considered as a *relational procedure* (§6) which provides a piece of knowledge to the hearer about how to connect two linguistic entities. By contrast, the aim of the present study is to enlarge the local approach to a complex and abstract relational procedure.

In §7, the analysis initially focusses on the historical dimension of the prepositions investigated taking *functional etymology* as a framework of analysis; in a second step, a sketch of the contemporary usage of *an*, *auf* and *na* (based on a sample of 33 texts for each preposition) will be given.

§8 discusses the topic of contrasting prepositions. It is the category of the *purpose* of a language which serves as the *tertium comparationis* – in this respect, a preposition has to relate two language entities.

The *comparison* (§9) of *an*, *auf* and *na* is based on original German and Czech texts and their translations into the other language. The comparison uses the results of the analyses in §7 and shows how Czech and German as typologically different languages reflect the same constellation by different linguistic means. German as an analytic language is inclined to use – in Bühler's terms – appellative procedures (traditionally speaking: “lexical meaning”) or linguistic means derived from symbolic procedures in order to relate two language entities. Correspondingly, the prepositions *an* and *auf* go back to adverbs – words with a strong symbol field structure; the dative and accusative cases confer only static or dynamic character to the relation; the preposition dominates the relation. By contrast, Czech as a synthetic language tends to use operative procedures to relate two language entities; the preposition *na* goes back to a particle – a word with “grammatical” rather than “lexical meaning”; in addition, the accusative and locative cases as nominal endings differentiate the noun according to the relation; preposition and case collaborate to relate two linguistic entities.

The conclusion (§10) discusses characteristics of usage together with the basic concepts of the prepositions *an*, *auf* and *na* in order to instruct and guide learners in how these relations are created in Czech and German. Learning the differences between the relational procedures can help the Czech learner to apply the preposition *an* and *auf* correctly.