

## Summary

This book presents a corpus-based semantic analysis of the German preposition *vor* and its Russian equivalent *непед*. The study is aimed at describing the factors which influence native speakers in their choice and use of prepositions. In accordance with this aim the underlying corpus consists solely of authentic utterances: literary texts, their translations and comparable newspaper articles from both languages. To confirm certain suppositions the author also conducted interviews with native speakers of Russian and German.

In both languages the linguistic units analysed belong to the group of dimensional prepositions and denote the same direction of the dimensional orientation axis „in front of – behind“. However, the comparison of translations of literary texts both from Russian into German and from German into Russian revealed striking differences in the use of these prepositions in the two languages. This comparison was not undertaken as a means of collecting possible translation variants of the analysed linguistic units, but as a method of illustrating semantic differences. The contrastive analysis of translations shows that *vor* in German is one of the most widely-used prepositions and is used for the verbalisation of several locational situations whereas in Russian *непед* is rarely used and then only in specific contexts.

In order to explain these differences in usage, a distributive analysis of prepositional phrases of place with *vor* and *непед* was carried out on the basis of comparable written linguistic corpuses. The data gained illustrates which relational objects can occur in prepositional phrases with the prepositions in question. The classification of these relational objects in accordance with their spatial orientation towards the axis „in front of – behind“ (inherently-oriented and without inherent orientation) as well as their further subdivision according to such features as **animateness** and **motion**, and **restriction** vs. **non-restriction** shows that there are relationships between the categories of objects and their ability to be used with the analysed prepositions: thus, in German *vor* is used with equal frequency with both inherently-oriented objects and objects without inherent orientation (54% and 46% respectively), but *непед* in Russian is mostly used with inherently-oriented objects (92.7% of all instances). Such a

difference can first of all be explained by the different categorizing potential of the German and Russian languages. This categorizing potential (or categorizing force) was proven by means of substitution and transformation of authentic utterances. It became clear that *vor* categorizes relational objects as **spatial orientation points**, **background objects** and **defined spatial areas**. But in Russian only one categorization by the preposition *непед*, namely that of **spatial orientation points**, exists.

These differences in the semantic structure of the two prepositions are due to their ability to denote static vs. dynamic relationships: while *vor* can denote both types, *непед* denotes only static relationships. This influences the topology of the prepositions studied. As a preposition denoting dynamic relationships, *vor* allows the contact between the two items of reference; *непед*, on the contrary, excludes this contact. Thus, **contact** serves as a further feature differentiating the meanings of *vor* and *непед*.

The research undertaken in the course of this study fully validated the initial hypothesis concerning the influence of categorizing and semantic factors on prepositional usage. The analysis of linguistic data on these two components can serve as a methodological device to describe prepositional functioning and, in particular, to compare prepositional units in different languages. A description of prepositions based on a complex analysis of their categorizing force as well as their distinctive semantic features results in clear semantic patterns which can usefully be employed in foreign language teaching.