

LEXICO-SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF MOTION VERBS IN MODERN RUSSIAN

Nafisa Akhmadzhonovna Khodjaeva

Senior Lecturer

Tashkent University of Social Innovation

Abstract

Motion verbs in the modern Russian language represent a highly complex and semantically rich verbal category that reflects the interaction between lexical meaning, grammatical aspect, and spatial conceptualization. This article examines the lexico-semantic properties of Russian motion verbs, focusing on their semantic structure, directional oppositions, aspectual characteristics, and the role of prefixation in meaning formation. Special attention is paid to the distinction between unidirectional and multidirectional motion verbs and their cognitive and functional interpretations. The study demonstrates that Russian motion verbs form a systematic and hierarchical lexical-semantic field that plays a crucial role in discourse organization and linguistic worldview representation.

Keywords

motion verbs, lexical semantics, Russian language, directionality, aspect, prefixation, cognitive linguistics

Motion verbs constitute one of the most distinctive and extensively studied lexical-semantic groups in the modern Russian language. Their importance lies in the fact that they encode not only the physical act of movement but also a wide range of semantic nuances related to direction, manner, repetition, and result. Unlike many other verb classes, motion verbs in Russian exhibit a strong interaction between lexical meaning and grammatical categories, making them a key object of linguistic analysis. In Russian linguistics, motion verbs are defined as verbs that denote the movement of an animate or inanimate entity through space. However, this definition only partially reflects their semantic complexity. The meaning of motion verbs is structured around several interconnected components, including the agent of movement, the trajectory or path, the manner of motion, temporal characteristics, and the goal or endpoint of movement. These components together form a dynamic semantic configuration that allows speakers to convey precise spatial and situational information. One of the most salient lexico-semantic features of Russian motion verbs is the opposition between unidirectional and multidirectional verbs. Unidirectional verbs such as *идти*, *ехать*, and *лететь* describe movement in a single, concrete direction at a specific moment in time. They are typically used when the speaker focuses on the ongoing process of movement or a clearly defined journey toward a destination. In contrast, multidirectional verbs such as *ходить*, *ездить*, and *летать* denote repeated, habitual, or non-specific movement, where direction is

either irrelevant or varies across instances. This distinction reflects different conceptualizations of motion events and plays a crucial role in everyday communication.

From a lexico-semantic perspective, the unidirectional–multidirectional opposition can be interpreted as a contrast between event-specific and generalized movement. Unidirectional verbs tend to highlight immediacy and concreteness, whereas multidirectional verbs emphasize regularity, experience, or spatial dispersion. This semantic opposition is deeply embedded in the Russian verbal system and cannot be reduced to simple grammatical variation, as it reflects culturally and cognitively motivated patterns of spatial thinking. Another essential aspect of the semantic organization of motion verbs is their relationship with grammatical aspect. Basic motion verbs without prefixes are typically imperfective and focus on the process of movement rather than its completion. However, the addition of prefixes often results in perfective verbs that express the achievement of a goal or the completion of a movement. Prefixation thus serves as a powerful semantic mechanism that modifies both the lexical meaning and the aspectual value of motion verbs. > Мансур: Prefixes such as в-, вы-, при-, у-, пере-, and до- introduce specific spatial meanings related to entering, exiting, arriving, departing, crossing, or reaching a destination. For instance, the verb идти denotes the process of walking, while войти emphasizes entering a space and выйти focuses on leaving it. Similarly, ехать describes movement by transport, whereas приехать highlights arrival and уехать emphasizes departure. Through prefixation, motion verbs acquire a telic interpretation, where movement is conceptualized as a bounded event with a clear endpoint. The semantic structure of Russian motion verbs can be further analyzed through the distinction between telic and atelic motion. Atelic motion verbs describe unbounded movement without emphasizing completion, while telic verbs encode movement toward a specific result or goal. In Russian, telicity is closely associated with prefixation, which reinforces the tight connection between morphology and semantics. This feature distinguishes Russian from many other languages and contributes to the overall complexity of its motion verb system.

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, motion verbs reflect how speakers conceptualize space and movement. According to cognitive theories of motion events, such as Leonard Talmy's framework, motion involves components like figure, ground, path, and manner. Russian is often classified as a verb-framed language, where the path of motion is encoded in the verb or its prefix, while manner is expressed less prominently than in languages like English. This typological characteristic influences how Russian speakers describe movement and structure narratives involving spatial transitions.

Functional analysis reveals that motion verbs play a central role in discourse organization. They are frequently used to structure narratives, describe changes in location, and convey temporal progression. The choice between unidirectional and multidirectional verbs, as well as between prefixed and unprefixed forms, allows speakers to express pragmatic meanings such as repetition, intention, completeness,

or habituality. In literary texts, motion verbs contribute to imagery and dynamic description, while in everyday speech they serve as essential tools for spatial orientation and interaction.

In conclusion, the lexico-semantic analysis of motion verbs in modern Russian demonstrates that this verbal category forms a coherent and highly systematic lexical field. The interaction of directionality, aspect, prefixation, and cognitive conceptualization enables Russian motion verbs to express subtle distinctions in meaning that are crucial for communication. Their study provides valuable insights into the structure of the Russian language and the linguistic representation of space and movement. Understanding the semantics of motion verbs is therefore essential not only for theoretical linguistics but also for language teaching, translation, and cross-linguistic research.

References

1. Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a Cognitive Semantics. Volume I: Concept Structuring Systems*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
2. Timberlake, A. (2004). *A Reference Grammar of Russian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Vendler, Z. (1967). *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
4. Hopper, P. J., & Thompson, S. A. (1980). Transitivity in grammar and discourse. *Language*, 56(2), 251–299.
5. Bybee, J., Perkins, R., & Pagliuca, W. (1994). *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
6. Jakobson, R. (1971). *Selected Writings II: Word and Language*. The Hague: Mouton.
7. Vinogradov, V. V. (1986). *Russian Language (The Grammatical Doctrine of the Word)*. Moscow: Nauka.
8. Forsyth, J. (1970). *A Grammar of Aspect: Usage and Meaning in the Russian Verb*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
9. Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect: An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspect and Related Problems*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
10. Croft, W. (2012). *Verbs: Aspect and Causal Structure*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.