Prepositional – Case Constructions
with Preposition “ОТ” in Modern Russian Language:
Structural – Semantic Aspect

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In this article different function of preposition “ОТ” in modern Russian language is described as prepositional-case constructions. These constructions have various forms that depend on their meaning and structure. Author has analyzed fourteen various structural-semantic types of prepositional-case constructions with preposition “ОТ” that are modifications of principle invariant meaning of this constructions. The purpose of our article – Analyze of prepositional-case constructions with preposition “ОТ” in modern Russian language: structural-semantic aspect, detect and describe main semantic classes of usage of prepositional-case constructions with this preposition. In this paper is used descriptive method and method of analyze of dictionary definitions. In conclusion conception of proposed study consists in description of meanings and types of usage of prepositional-case constructions with preposition “ОТ” depending on lexical, morphological and syntactical factors.

Keywords: prepositional-case constructions, Russian language, preposition OT, semantics, English language.

The study of Russian, a highly inflectional language, requires a sound understanding of the use of grammatical cases, prepositions and prepositional constructions with the oblique cases. There are a great number of contextual variants in the semantics of the Russian grammatical cases, but all the specific contextual meanings of any case can be reduced to a common denominator.

Prepositions in Russian as auxiliary part of speech, are used for word junction, furthermore, they subordinate certain words to the other ones. Prepositions, like other words in Russian can be mono- and polysemantic. Preposition “от” is a polysemantic one and it is used only in Genitive case. Their semantics is interpreted by syntactic relations expressed by means of prepositions. The research represents principal meanings of the preposition.

The principal function of genitive case is the expression of the noun phrase modifier. The Genitive case always indicates the extend of the participation of the given object in a given situation. It signals the degree of objectification of the entity in a given context and it presents a thing or a person as somehow limited or even completely eliminated. The genitive case, as do the nominative and the accusative cases belong to the grammatical group of cases. The primary
function of the grammatical case is syntactical, but grammatical cases may also occur in secondary adverbial functions such as an accusative case of time. The grammatical cases in Russian language represent a large number of various meanings and, in conjunction with certain prepositions, the number of meanings increases greatly. The number of prepositions in Russian is increasing. The new prepositions are formed from the other parts of speech. Prepositions fulfill an important function. They segment and define the spectrum of meanings which are expressed by the grammatical cases. The differences between each of contextual meanings are determined either by the grammatical or by the lexical composition of the phrase in which the preposition occurs. The genitive case is by far the most frequently used and is the most complex of the oblique cases; its use encompasses more than one hundred prepositional and preposition less constructions (Ryan, 2008: 4).

In conjunction with prepositions the genitive case greatly increases its number of meanings. When used with prepositions it can denote place, directions of movement, time of actions, cause and reason as well as a number of other relationships. A preposition is a part of speech which expresses the relationship of one word to another. Russian preposition governs a noun or pronoun in an oblique case. Prepositions can be non-derivational and derivational (Ryan, 2008: 50).

Russian is exceedingly rich in prepositions. Only the most common ones can be considered here, but the basic concepts underlying the use of prepositions will be covered. Each preposition governs at least one grammatical case; that is, the noun or pronoun following it (its object) must have the appropriate case ending. When learning any new preposition not listed here, be sure to learn which case(s) it governs. Those prepositions that are followed by more than one case have correspondingly different shades of meaning; such prepositions will be discussed after those more closely bound to a single case (Kemple, 1993: 42).

Prepositions can indicate various types of relations between words. For example, they may indicate location (in the room), direction (to the store), time (before dinner), cause (from fear), manner (by bus), purpose (for reading), and many other relations. In general, the meaning of a preposition, and the type of relation it indicates, is dependent on the context. For example, in the sentence He returned from his trip, the preposition from indicates a directional relation, while in the sentence He is tired from his trip, the same preposition indicates a causal relation, this difference being determined by the lexical meaning of the predicates used. Similarly, changing the object of a preposition may change the type of relation expressed, e.g., He lived in Boston (location), He lived in luxury (manner), He lived in the Stalin era (time).

In English, where case is reflected only in a few personal pronouns, and variation is limited to the choice between the nominative and the accusative cases, all prepositions require their object to be in the accusative case (e.g., nominative she, but following a preposition, accusative her. at her, by her, for her, in her, near her, with her, etc.). In Russian, by contrast, the noun or pronoun following a preposition can occur in whichever of the six cases is required by the preposition (though the nominative is rare). Therefore, it is important for the student of Russian to learn the case(s) that a given preposition governs. Some prepositions govern only one case, while others may govern two or more cases—and express correspondingly different meanings.

It is also important to keep in mind that close correspondences between English and Russian prepositions are rare. On the one hand, the same preposition in English may be used in several different meanings, which in Russian
are expressed by a different preposition each. For example, the English preposition *for* is rendered by six different Russian prepositions in the following phrases. *a gift for Dad* (**подарок для папы**), *closed for repairs* (**закрыто на ремонт**), *for the first time* (**в первый раз**), *thanks for everything* (**спасибо за всё**), *respect for parents* (**уважение к родителям**), *for this reason* (**по этой причине**). On the other hand, some meanings of English prepositions are not expressed in Russian by a preposition at all, but, may be expressed by a Russian case form alone. (Levine Schaum’s, 2009: 67).

It is worth devoting a separate chapter to Russian prepositions, and the rendering of English prepositions into Russian. For one thing, knowledge of prepositions in a foreign language tends to be a good indicator of command of that language in general. More importantly, the meanings of Russian prepositions coincide with the meanings of their most common English equivalents only to a limited degree. Russian prepositions are also extremely precise in their meanings. The English-speaker must therefore think particularly carefully about the meaning of the English preposition in a given context before rendering it into Russian. Moreover, some of the most widespread English prepositions (e.g. *for, of, to, with*) are often not rendered in Russian by any preposition at all, since their meaning may be implicit in the use of a certain Russian case. Attention must also be paid to the fact that some common Russian prepositions are capable of governing more than one case and that they have different meanings when they are used with different cases (Offord & Gogolitsyna, 2005: 333).

Prepositions Governing the Genitive Case

Prepositions governing the genitive case are the most numerous. Prepositions may be subdivided as follows:

**Primary**: *от ‘from’, до ‘as far as’ etc.

**Adverbial**: близ ‘near’, вдоль ‘along’ etc.

Prepositions derived from nouns (e.g. *в пользу ‘in favour of’, насчёт ‘on account of’) and from verbs (исходя из ‘concluding from’ etc.).

Preposition *OT* is always followed by the genitive case.

Preposition “OT” is one of the richest original prepositions according to its semantic opportunities and according to syntactic model of Russian language. This preposition practically presents all types of possible syntactic relations (subject, object, definitive, adverbial, complementary). It makes constructions with complex syncretic meaning easily; prepositional-case form of noun with preposition “OT” joins verbs, nouns, adverbs, category of state words.

Analyzing materials from Ryan N. «Russian genitive», Pulkina I.M. «A Short Russian Reference Grammar», James S. Levine Schaum’s «Outline Russian Grammar» and Terence Wade. A «Comprehensive Russian Grammar», we classified principal meanings of preposition *от* as follows:

1. A starting point for a movement (source), point of departure:

   Used with a noun denoting the starting point of motion (note: When used in this meaning, the preposition *от* often occurs with a verb of motion that has the prefix *от-*)

   **Виктор отошёл от стола.**
   Victor moved away from the table.

   **Лодка отчалила от берега.**
   A boat moved away from the shore.

   **Нина уехала от сестры.**
   Nina moved out of her sister’s place.

2. An indication of direction:

   The distance from a point (note: The distance may be expressed either by *за* + accusative case or *в* + prepositional case, as shown in the first two examples below.)
The airport is located 10 kilometers from the city.

He lived two blocks from the Kremlin.

3. A starting point in space when measuring distance between two points:

From one place to another (note: In this meaning the preposition от + genitive case usually is combined with the preposition до + genitive case.)

От моего дома до моря десять километров.

It is ten kilometers from my home to the sea.

4. A starting point in time:

ОТ... ДО... is used when the starting point in time is strictly defined

От заката до рассвета

from sunset to sunrise

Слеп от рождения

blind from birth

5. A starting point in counting:

Эта девочка научилась считать от одного до десяти.

This girl learnt to count from one to ten.

В яслях дети от года до трёх лет.

In the nursery there are children from one to three years of age.

6. Specification of date:

Это письмо от первого марта.

This is a letter of the first of March.

Это резолюция от пятого мая.

This is a resolution of the fifth of May.

7. An object from which the action proceeds:

От высокого здания падала длинная тень.

The tall building casts a long shadow.

От роз в этой вазе шёл прекрасный запах.

There was a wonderful aroma from the roses in this vase.

8. A person from whom the action proceeds

Я получила письмо от друга.

I received a letter from my friend.

Лена узнала от Олега, что в понедельник будет семинар.

Lena found out from Oleg that the seminar will take place on Monday.

Нина получила подарок от сестры.

Nina received a present from her sister.

9. An indication of parentage:

Иметь детей от кого-либо

to have children by someone

Это телёнок от этой коровы и от этого быка.

This calf is by this bull and out of this cow.

10. The cause for action:

От is used to both physical and emotional reasons and in both literary and everyday speech.

Вечером мать заснула от усталости прямо на стуле.

Towards the evening mother fell asleep on her chair from weariness.

Увидев красивую куклу, девочка вскрикнула от радости.

A girl cried out for joy on seeing a beautiful doll.

От слёз у Нины красные глаза.

Nina's eyes are red from weeping.

От волнения Анна не могла говорить.

Anna could not speak for nervousness.

Note. To indicate an external cause, the following prepositions are used: (1) из-за (из-за дождя не состоялась экскурсия; из-за шума не мог заснуть; из-за тебя у меня неприятности); (2) от (всё высоко от солнца; погибло от пожара; заболел от потрясения; растрепались волосы от ветра);
от жары разболелась голова); (3) с (с похвал
вскружилась голова, с похмелья...).

Some prepositions can be replaced by
others: от похвал вскружилась голова (instead
of с похвал), or от шума он не мог заснуть
(instead of из-за шума).

The prepositions из-за and благодаря have
different shades of meaning; the cause expressed
by a noun preceded by the preposition из-за
produces an undesirable action while the cause
expressed by a noun preceded by the preposition
благодаря gives a positive effect: Из-за засухи
погиб урожай. Благодаря дождям будет
хороший урожай. Из-за твоего опоздания
мы не успели закончить работу в срок.
Благодаря твоей помощи я уже закончил
работу.

To indicate a cause expressing the state
of a person, certain emotions or feelings, the
prepositions от, с, из are generally used.

The preposition от is usually employed to
denote the state of a person:
Мальчик запрыгал от радости. От
возмущения и обиды у него выступили на
глазах слёзы. Ребёнок дрожал от страха.
Он побледнел от испуга. Девочка плакала от
gоря.

The meaning of the preposition с (со)
is identical to that of the preposition от, but the
former preposition is less frequently used.

The cause indicated by the preposition из
is generally a feeling or inclination impelling
the agent to act in a certain manner: Он совершил
убийство из ревности. Она это сделала из
любви к детям.

To indicate a cause rising from some
internal quality of a person the preposition по
is generally used: Сделал это по рассеянности,
по небрежности, по глупости, по
невнимательности.

Besides по is used in the expressions:
пропустить занятия по болезни ‘to miss
lessons through illnesses, по уважительной
причине ‘for good reasons’.

Человека, который рискует жизнью
из тщеславия или из любопытства, или из
алчности, нельзя назвать храбрым. Из-за
шума идущего ливня ничего не было слышно
(Т), Когда солнце поднимается над лугами,
я невольно улыбался от радости (М. Г),
Мать задыхалась от волнения и чувствовала
– надвигается чтоб-то новое (М. Г), Лицо
его стало грустным от переживаемых
воспоминаний (Арс.), Всё мне показалось
молодым и чистым благодаря присутствию
Лиды и Мисю (Ч), От радости взбудоражанье
спёрло (Кр), Выпьем, добрая подружка Бедной
юности моей, Выпьем с горя. Где же кружка?
Сердцу станет веселей (П).

11. The purpose of cure:
To indicate something to counter or protect
against (note: This meaning is sometimes
expressed by the preposition против + genitive
case, as indicated below.)

Таблетки от головной боли
Tablets for headache
Врач прописал лекарство от бронхита.
A doctor prescribed medication for
bronchitis.
У нас на окнах есть сетки от мух.
We have fly screens in the windows.

12. For the purpose of protection:
Many of them convey figuratively the sense
of movement away from something.
Очень важно защищать глаза от
солнца.
It is very important to protect one’s eyes
from the sun.

Только это лекарство избавляет меня
от головной боли.
Only this medicine can rid me of a
headache.

Она всегда отказывается от моих
приглашений.
She always turns down my invitations.

13. A state of person:

От моего имени
on my behalf

От всего сердца
with all one’s heart

Быть свободным/независимым от кого-либо или от чего-либо
To be free/independent from someone or from something

От моего имени
on my behalf

От всего сердца
with all one’s heart

Нина отличалась от других девочек своим умом.
Nina differed from other girls in (because of) her intelligence.

14. An indication of a part belonging to something

Я потеряла пуговицу от моего платья.
I lost a button from my dress.

Вот ключ от вашей комнаты.
Here is the key to your room.

Где крышка от этой коробки?
Where is a lid from this box?

COMMON IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS:

Время от времени
from time to time

День ото дня
from day to day

Conception of proposed study consists in description of meanings and types of usage of prepositional-case constructions with preposition “ОТ” depending on lexical, morphological and syntactical factors. This work gives a deep analysis of the preposition OT in modern Russian language. As the result of this analysis different meaning of the preposition OT and its usage in modern Russian language have been specified. Various structures and situations where this preposition is used have been considered. Practical application of this article is aimed to help English-speaking students studying Russian use the preposition OT properly.

References


Предложные конструкции с предлогом «от»
в современном русском языке:
структурно-семантический аспект

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Статья посвящена изучению различных функций предлога «от» в современном русском языке на примере предложенных конструкций. Формы таких конструкций разнообразны и зависят от их значения и структуры. Автором статьи были проанализированы четырнадцать различных структурно-семантических типов предложных конструкций с предлогом «от», которые являются модификациами главного инвариантного значения данных конструкций. Целью нашей статьи служит анализ предложенных конструкций с предлогом «от» в современном русском языке, их структурно-семантический аспект, определение и описание основных семантических классов использования предложенных конструкций с данным предлогом. В данной работе использовались описательный метод и метод анализа словарных дефиниций. Концепция предложенного исследования заключается в описании значений и типов использования предложных конструкций с предлогом «от» в зависимости от лексических, морфологических и синтаксических факторов.

Ключевые слова: предложные конструкции, русский язык, предлог «от», семантика, английский язык.