PRZEGLĄD RUSYCYSTYCZNY 2025, nr 4 (192)

DOI 10.31261/pr.18152

PABLO RAMÍREZ RODRÍGUEZ
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6168-3736
University of Granada

COGNITIVE GRAMMAR IN THE RFL CLASSROOM: A METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL ON RUSSIAN VERBAL PREFIXATION FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS

Cognitive linguistics is recognized as a discipline that studies linguistic knowledge in relation to human cognitive processes, such as the role of memory and the perception of reality. Within this framework, cognitive grammar emerges from the idea of describing language functionality under the premise that the form and meaning of any linguistic unit constitute an inseparable symbolic whole. Unlike traditional grammar, which primarily focuses on the structures and rules of a language, cognitive grammar emphasizes the semantic representation of lexical units. Referring to the advancements in cognitive linguistics, this study aims to demonstrate how methods grounded in cognitive knowledge can benefit learners of Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL). This is because cognitive grammar focuses on the actual use of language, taking into account the speaker's communicative intent and the construction of meaning through the use of various linguistic forms. To further support this objective, this study presents a methodological proposal involving a test-based exercise designed for Spanish-speaking students. It examines the role of Russian verbal prefixation in fostering cognitive understanding of various prefixes.
Keywords: cognitive grammar, verbal prefixation, RFL, perception, foreign language teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

Cognitive Linguistics is a modern research paradigm that views language through a cognitive lens, emphasizing the inseparability of form and meaning as a symbolic unit where form (signifier) and meaning (mental representation) complement each other[1]. In foreign language teaching, Cognitive Grammar (CG), a sub-field of cognitive linguistics, offers an innovative approach compared to traditional theories. CG highlights symbolic relationships grounded in cogni-

[1] W. Croft, A.D. Cruse, *Lingüística cognitive*, Ediciones Akal, Tres Cantos 2008.

tive principles and the associations between signifier and meaning.[2] It argues that meaning is the abstract conceptual representation of thought, with linguistic signs reflecting different mental models for structuring situations and allowing various conceptualizations through metaphors, perspectives, or granularity.

Recognizing the figurative sense of language offers a pedagogical advantage by linking linguistic representations to general perceptual principles accessible across languages. Studying diverse perceptions can also explain cultural and grammatical differences between native and target languages.[3] Cognitive Grammar (CG) provides an alternative view of linguistic knowledge, focusing on how speakers acquire, use, and possess it.[4] CG treats linguistic units as cognitive routines, reflecting a usage-based model where abstract patterns emerge through categorization of recurrent usage. However, despite foundational theories in CG,[5] there is a gap in recent cognitive pedagogy advancements, particularly regarding frameworks for integrating cognitive processes in grammatical instruction. These should prioritize experientialism over objectivism, focus on the relationship between form and meaning, and shift from prescriptive norms to practical usage.

The creativity in activity design is crucial for developing a communicative methodology. Grammar represents shared knowledge

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[2] F. Cheikh-Khamis, *Reflexiones para la enseñanza de los verbos de cambio en ELE desde la perspectiva de la lingüística cognitive*, "E-AESLA" 2018, 4, p. 150–160; I. Ibarretxe-Antuñano, T. Cadierno, *La lingüística cognitiva y la adquisición de segundas lenguas (ASL)*, in: I. Ibarretxe-Antuñano et al. (eds), *Lingüística cognitiva y español LE/L2*, Routledge, London 2019, p. 19–51; C. Ureña Tormo, *La enseñanza de las unidades fraseológicas desde la lingüística cognitive*. Doctoral dissertation. Universidad de Alcalá, Madrid 2019.

[3] Z. Kövecses, *Metaphor and emotion: Language, culture, and body in human feeling*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003; R.W. Langacker, *Cognitive grammar*, in: E. Koerner, K. Frideryk, R.E. Asher (eds.), *Concise History of the Language Sciences*, Pergamon, Oxford 1995, p. 364–368; A. Wierzbicka, *Lexical universals and universals of grammar*, in: M. Kefer, J. van der Auwera (eds.), *Meaning and grammar: crosslinguistic perspectives*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin 1991, p. 383–415; p. Briones, G. Lamas, *ldioms (o expresiones idiomáticas): una nueva mirada desde la perspectiva cognitivista*, "Cuadernos de Humanidades" 2019, p. 20–21; R.M. Lavale Ortiz, *Cognitivismo y neología: estudios teóricos y aplicados*, "Cognitivismo y neología" 2020, p. 184–202.

[4] F. Ungerer, H.-J. Schmid, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics*, Pearson Education Limited, London 2006.

[5] R.W. Langacker, *Foundations of cognitive grammar: Theoretical prerequisites*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1987; G. Radden, R. Dirven, *Cognitive English Grammar*. Vol. 2, John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam 2007.

through cognitive schemas activated in daily life, and students should see it as a tool for understanding meaning, not just a set of abstract rules against which error correction takes place.[6] The cognitive approach highlights the role of metaphor and metonymy in language, making previously inaccessible structures understandable through these processes. Such an approach helps one construct complex concepts from simple experiences, thus exceeding traditional methods.

The cognitive approach to grammar offers a novel way to explain constructions previously learned through memorization, using the concept of representation.[7] For example, the Spanish structure *me comí un bocadillo* (*I ate a sandwich* with the reflexive pronoun) may seem illogical compared to *comí un bocadillo* (*I ate a sandwich* without the pronoun). CG explains that native Spanish speakers use the reflexive particle to imply that the sandwich was fully consumed by the speaker, thus clarifying the "imprecision" of the non-reflexive form. In other words, it provides learners with a conceptual tool to facilitate understanding of such structures and to make sense of grammatical phenomena that may initially seem unfamiliar. It is essential to recognize that students internalize a given language based on their comprehension of its functional patterns.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Second language acquisition (SLA) studies the learning of languages different from one's mother tongue, drawing from fields like psychology, sociology, pragmatics, and cognitive science.[8] SLA is about learning how to use a language as a communication tool, which is different from the way we naturally acquire our first language. This can occur in a classroom setting (foreign language) or through exposure in a country where the language is spoken (second language,

[6] P. Rodríguez Ramírez, *La cognición fraseológica en traducción: El caso de las locuciones verbales relacionadas con la alimentación*, "Hikma" 2023, no. 22 (2), p. 207–233.

[7] R. LLopis-García et al., *Qué gramática enseñar, qué gramática aprender*, Edinumen, Madrid 2012, p. 315–321; E.F. Maturrano, *Análisis lingüístico-cognitivo del discurso desde la gramática cognitive*, "Puriq" 2021, no. 3(2), p. 466–487.

[8] M. Baralo, *La adquisición del español como lengua extranjera*, Arco Libros — La Muralla, S.L., Madrid 1999. P. Rodríguez Ramírez, *La fraseología pragmático-cultural: los zoomorfismos en español y ruso*, "Revista de humanidades" 2022, no. 46, p. 57–80.

L2). Although the distinction between learning and acquisition is often unclear, both can happen through formal instruction or exposure to comprehensible input in the L2.[9]

2.1. CG APPLIED TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Cognitive Grammar (CG) emphasizes the relationship between form and meaning as part of our cognitive system, allowing speakers to express themselves based on their perception of reality. Grammar, in this view, becomes a tool for learners to construct a new reality in the foreign language, moving beyond the memorization of rules[10]. In second language acquisition, the role of input and output is central, with input referring to linguistic information encountered by learners, and output representing their production of meaning. Effective input must be comprehensible to help learners decode and identify its referent within their mental framework.[11]

Input processing involves the strategies students use to associate linguistic forms with meanings during comprehension.[12] For Spanish-speaking learners of Russian, input consists of all the linguistic information they encounter, while intake refers to what they correctly or incorrectly interpret. Interlanguage introduces linguistic interferences from the native language through cognitive processes, and output occurs when the learner reproduces the acquired information.[13] From a didactic-cognitive perspective, CG provides an alternative methodology for teaching L2, focusing on the relationship between forms and meanings, allowing students to access cognitive processes that influence how native speakers perceive and process the world.[14]

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[9] S. Krashen, *We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis*, "The Modern Language Journal" 1989, no. 73 (4), p. 440–464.

[10] P. Robinson, N.C. Ellis (eds.), *Handbook of cognitive linguistics and second language acquisition*. Vol. 270, Routedge, New York 2008.

[11] D. Lee, *Cognitive Linguistics: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.

[12] R.S. Tomlin, V. Villa, *Attention in cognitive science and second language acquisition*, "Studies in second language acquisition" 1994, no. 16 (2), p. 183–203; R.W. Langacker, *The relevance of Cognitive Grammar for language pedagogy*, "Applications of cognitive linguistics" 2008, no. 9, p. 1–7; M.S. Cuenca, J. Hilferty, *Introducción a la lingüística cognitive*, Grupo Planeta, Barcelona 1999.

[13] P. Rodríguez Ramírez, *Paremiology and Translation: Addressing Cognitive Challenges in Translator Training*, "Sendebar" 2004, no. 35, p. 63–82.

[14] M. Achard, *Teaching construal: Cognitive pedagogical grammar*, in: P. Robinson, N.C. Nick (eds.), *Handbook of cognitive linguistics…*, p. 442–465; T. Cadierno,

Foreign language learners often avoid metaphorical and metonymic elements, preferring literal discourse. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes that metaphor use is influenced by mental processes, not just language. Teaching metaphor and metonymy in foreign language classrooms can enhance vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence by addressing both linguistic and cultural aspects. Our conceptual system is inherently metaphorical,[15] making metaphor crucial for understanding abstract concepts. While the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2002) does not recognize metaphorical competence, in foreign language teaching, it refers to the ability to understand how a language encodes abstract concepts and transforms cognitive schemas into communicative structures.[16]

Based on this, metaphor serves as a support for understanding the diverse experiences on which language is based, as the existence of abstract or difficult-to-define concepts, such as time or space, must be perceived through other concepts that more clearly illustrate the images they represent. In this context, the rationale for conducting a cognitive-style test exercise using verbal prefixes appears, because most verbal prefixes in Russian are not correctly deciphered by Spanish-speaking students, which necessitates the introduction of abstract schemas they are able to linguistically conceptualize.

2.2. VERBAL PREFIXATION IN RUSSIAN

In cognitive linguistics, aspectual prefixes in Russian have been intensively studied.[17] Instead of proposing their fixed meanings, the

K. Lund, *Cognitive Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition: Motion Events in a Typological Framework*, in: B. Van Patten, J. Williams, p. Rott, M. Overstreet (eds.), *Form-Meaning Connections in Second Language Acquisition*, Lawrence Erlbaum, New Jersey 2004, p. 139–144; R.L. García, *La gramática cognitiva: nuevas avenidas para la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*, "Verba Hispanica" 2011, no. 19 (1), p. 94–111; R. Llopis-García, *Gramática cognitiva y selección modal en la enseñanza del español LE/L2*, in: I. Ibarretxe-Antuñano et al. (eds.), *Lingüística cognitiva y español LE/L2*, Routledge, London 2019, p. 255–273.

[15] G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Cátedra, Madrid 1980.

[16] M. Danesi, *Metáfora, pensamiento y lenguaje*, Kronos, Sevilla 2004; R. Acquaroni Muñoz *La incorporación de la competencia metafórica a la enseñanzaaprendizaje del español como segunda lengua a través de un taller de escritura creativa: Estudio experimental*. Doctoral thesis. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2008.

[17] L.A. Janda, *A Semantic analysis of the Russian verbal prefixes ZA-, PERE-, DO and OT-*, Otto Sagner, Munich 1986.

researchers analyzed each prefix's semantics through radial categories based on prototypes. This approach has shown that Slavic prefixes are not semantically empty[18] and act as verbal classifiers.[19] The prototype theory explains the categorization of reality, where prototypes represent the most typical members of a category. Despite criticism over indistinct features of the latter term, the Idealized Cognitive Model (ICM) approach[20] in cognitive grammar clarifies the role of metaphor and metonymy in shaping abstract concepts.

An aspectual prefix alters the aspect of a verb from imperfective to perfective when added to an unprefixed verb. Verbs having both imperfective and perfective forms are called aspectual pairs. However, "idealized perfectives"[21] involve prefixes that also change verb's lexical meaning. This article focuses on these perfectives, which pose a significant challenge for foreign learners of Russian. The research highlights the complexities of verbal prefixation in Slavic languages, particularly for Spanish speakers, due to linguistic interference and the higher productivity of prefixes in Russian compared to Spanish.

Studying the semantics of prefixed verbs reveals meanings tied to their spatial origins. The meaning of a prefixed verb depends on the interaction between the prefix's original spatial semantics (with varying degrees of metaphorization) and the verb's basic meaning. This interaction depends on the characteristics of the given verb. Typically, prefixed verbs are perfective and describe events, with resultative aspectual semantics indicating a resulting state. Adding a prefix creates a new verb with a different lexical meaning. For example, adding the prefix *до* to *есть* (to eat) results in *доесть*, meaning either "to finish eating" or "to consume the uneaten parts of a meal or food product." The prefixed verb's meaning depends on both the prefix-verb combination and the structure of the verbal phrase, including the presence of a direct object.

[18] C. Schooneveld, *The So-Called 'préverbes vides' and Neutralization*, in: *Dutch Contributions to the Fourth International Congress of Slavistics*, Mouton The Hague 1958, p. 159–161.; M. Vey, *Les préverbes 'vides' en tchéque modern*, "Revue Des Études Slaves" 1952, no. 29, p. 82–107.

[19] L. A. Janda et al., *Why Russian aspectual prefixes aren't empty: prefixes as verb classifiers*, Slavica Publishers Inc. Bloomington 2013.

[20] G. Lakoff, *Image metaphors*, "Metaphor and Symbol" 1987, no. 2(3), p. 219–222.

[21] L. A. Janda, *Aspectual clusters of Russian verbs*, "Studies in Language" 2007, no. 31(3), p. 607–648.

Verbal prefixation, in its broadest sense, is most applied to motion verbs, as it is easier for students to metaphorically grasp a combination of prefix and verb that denote some type of movement. In fact, the original spatial semantics of prefixes has been particularly preserved with verbs denoting displacement in space. Below, in Table 1, a clear example is shown with the motion verb *ir* (to go) illustrating its various meanings according to the combination of attachable prefixes.

Table 1. Motion verb to go with prefixes. Source: own elaboration

Prefix	Verb	Cognitive meaning
[В]	Входить	Movement from outside to inside
[Вы]	Выходить	Movement from inside to outside
[Под]	Подходить	Movement towards a nearby object
[От]	Отходить	Movement from a nearby object in the opposite direction
[При]	Приходить	Movement towards a goal
[У]	Уходить	Movement outward
[До]	Доходить	Movement to the end or specific goal
[Пере]	Переходить	Back and forth movement
[Вс]	Всходить	Movement upwards
[С]	Сходить	Movement downwards
[Рас]	Расходиться	Movement in multiple directions
[Ис]	Исходить	Movement in all directions and for a long time
[Про]	Проходить	Movement through something
[Об]	Обходить	Movement around something
[За]	Заходить	Movement towards a place involving the aspect of reaching the goal by chance
[На]	Находиться	Movement of long duration, to the point of exhaustion

However, teaching foreign students prefixation in verbs that do not denote movement or displacement is still a hardly answered issue. In most Russian grammar textbooks that class of verbs is not distinguished from the more logical one discussed before. Consequently, the same approach for their teaching is used, which notably hinders the process of semantic acquisition of verbal prefixation. In the case of movement verbs, prefixation is more intuitive and acquired more quickly than in the case of verbs that do not denote movement, where prefixation can take on different nuances in relation to the referential verb (e.g., *врать* "to lie" – *завраться* "to lie excessively," "to lie like a rogue").

Russian verbs are characterized by their wide range of possibilities in word formation, leading to a wide array of meanings. Additionally, each of such verbs can take a number of attachable prefixes (there are 16 of them). These prefixes, when combined with verbs, may cause a purely grammatical change without altering the lexical meaning as in the case of perfective verb formation (*слышать – услышать*). Sometimes, however, they can affect both the aspectual and lexical meanings. This study focuses on the latter case, where semantics can impact the coherence of verbs and prefixes because to correctly fuse together the verb and the prefix must share certain semantic features.

In other words, the analysis of Russian aspectual prefixes from the perspective of cognitive linguistics should represent a general schema involving a trajectory, a reference point, and relationship that unites both concepts. As regards the trajectory, certain conditions must exist that involve an observer and a domain of accessibility because the trajectory of the verbal prefix does not necessarily have to be the same as the trajectory of the base verb. Additionally, the mental image schema represents the prototypical relationship between the trajectory and the reference point and therefore it is demonstrated that movement verbs provide strong empirical evidence between the trajectory and the reference point, as the aspectual meaning of prefixes is the result of the metaphorical extension of their basic spatial senses.

Verbal formation through prefixation is characterized by the quantitative feature of the action to express the meaning of the quantity of the action. If we examine the verb to *лить* (to pour; to spill) and add the prefix *под* (*подлить*), we obtain a result of the action that denotes an act that can be quantitatively divided as it is similar to the addition of quantitative adverbs such as "a little, slightly." On the other hand, if we attach the prefix *за* (*залить*) to the referential

verb, the result would be equal to pouring a liquid over the entire surface so that no area remains free. Subsequently, with the prefix *в*, we would give the verbal action the ability to add a little more liquid (*влить* – pour more into a container), or with the prefix *вы*, the opposite, to pour the liquid out of the container or strain it (*вылить*). Hence, it can be argued that the prefix can express diverse meanings, which allows it to become a motivating base for the referential verb. These examples confirm that the meaning of the Russian prefixes is primarily spatial, and it is best preserved when the prefix joins a verb that denotes movement or action defined according to spatial parameters. Therefore, the meaning of such formations can be intuitively grasped at a cognitive level.

It is the verbal semantics that determines the meanings the added prefixes introduce. The prefix itself is responsible for specifying the meaning based on the semantic characteristics of the verb to which it attaches. Therefore, all referential verbs can form derivatives through prefixation with the meaning that contains the capacity to quantitatively measure an action.

From the cognitive perspective, verbal prefixation plays an important role in representing the meaning of prefixed verbs through conceptualization or mental representation. In other words, prefixation serves as a cognitive tool that allows the learner to access the value of forms and grammatical structures through logical pathways of extending the acquired knowledge. The cognitive approach applied to verbal prefixation offers a linguistic philosophy upon which it is possible to obtain and improve an explicit awareness of the cognitive value of grammatical forms, that is, the different prefixes that can attach to referential verbs. In this way, learners, when exposed to input from different verbal prefixes, would prioritize meaning over form and activate processing mechanisms through logic; this vastly differs from simple memorization techniques. Thus, when selecting the forms they can process, learners may employ strategies leading them to the selection of prefixes based on their greater semantic value.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

A new approach has been emerging in SLA in recent decades, emphasizing the growing role of grammar in the learning pro-

cess.[22] Traditionally regarded as a set of prescriptive rules, grammar is now increasingly viewed as an integral component of meaning-making in language. Just as each word consists of a signifier and a signified, grammar also carries both form and meaning. Llopis-García, Real Espinosa, and Ruiz Campillo[23] argue that presenting grammar as a meaningful and conceptual entity facilitates its assimilation by students, shifting the focus away from rote memorization towards cognitive engagement. This perspective enables learners to internalize grammatical structures in a logical and intuitive manner rather than through mechanical repetition.

By prioritizing language use over rigid normative frameworks, this approach acknowledges that language is inherently dynamic, continuously shaped by communicative needs and social evolution. While grammar serves normative function, it is ultimately subject to adaptation, as usage patterns influence and redefine linguistic conventions over time. This evolving view of grammar opens the door for pedagogical methodologies that align with cognitive principles, fostering deeper understanding and practical application.

Building on this theoretical foundation, in the following section a methodological approach is proposed that integrates cognitive grammar principles into second language instruction, particularly in the teaching of Russian verbal prefixes. This approach aims to enhance learners' conceptualization of grammatical structures by involving cognitive mechanisms such as prototype theory and metaphorical mappings, thereby providing a more intuitive and contextually driven acquisition process.

To elucidate the fundamental parameters of GC in the RFL classroom in an accessible yet theoretically rigorous manner, this study adopts an approach according to which language is a dynamic and emergent cognitive process rather than a rigid system governed by prescriptive rules and exceptions. The primary objective is to propose a cognitive-based methodology that underscores the logical and conceptual foundations of language, thereby demonstrating that the diverse uses of verbal prefixes in Russian are not arbitrary but systematically interconnected. Furthermore, this approach seeks to ex-

[22] E.S. Simón, *Una aplicación empírica de la gramática cognitiva-operativa a la enseñanza del contraste modal en español (como lengua extranjera)*, "marcoELE. Revista de Didáctica Español Lengua Extranjera" 2020, no. (31), p. 70–90.

[23] R. Llopis-García et al., *Qué gramática enseñar, qué gramática aprender*, Edinumen, Madrid 2012, p. 315–321.

plain the underlying cognitive motivations that lead native Russian speakers to select specific prefixes over others to convey subtle nuances of meaning.

Within the framework of CG, two theoretical models play a pivotal role in the study of verbal prefixes: prototype theory and the metaphorical mapping of time and space. Prototype theory, applied to linguistics by George Lakoff,[24] challenges the traditional view of linguistic categories as discrete entities with fixed boundaries. Instead, it claims that categories are organized around central, prototypical members that exhibit their most salient features while less typical members are arranged peripherally. In the context of Russian verbal prefixes, this theoretical prism allows for a more intuitive and gradient understanding of prefix usage, where certain prefixes exhibit a core meaning that extends into secondary meanings through systematic semantic shifts. This explains why some prefixes appear to be more productive and frequently used whereas others are restricted to specific contexts.

The metaphor of time and space is an essential component of Conceptual Metaphor Theory.[25] Complementing the prototype theory, it provides a cognitive framework for understanding the relationship between spatial movement and temporal/aspectual distinctions in Russian verbs. Many verbal prefixes originate from spatial prepositions and their extension into abstract domains follows a well-documented pattern of metaphorical projection, wherein physical movement is mapped onto temporal, aspectual, and even epistemic domains. For instance, the prefix *no* often signifies movement along a path, but in aspectual terms, it also denotes delimitative or inchoative actions, reflecting the metaphor *time is space*. By internalizing these cognitive mechanisms, learners can develop a more intuitive grasp of prefix semantics, enabling them to predict and interpret meanings rather than relying on rote memorization.

By integrating these cognitive principles into pedagogical practice, this study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical linguistics and language acquisition, providing learners with cognitive tools to decode the complexities of Russian verbal prefixes more effectively. A cognitive-based approach to teaching RFL not only enhances comprehension but also aligns with contemporary research on embodied

[24] G. Lakoff, *Image metaphors...*
[25] G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *The metaphors we live by...*

cognition and conceptual structuring in second language acquisition, ultimately fostering a more natural and meaning-driven engagement with the language.

3.1. OBJECTIVE, SAMPLE, AND INSTRUMENT

As previously discussed, verbal prefixation in Russian is a pervasive phenomenon across all verb types. However, its productivity varies depending on the verb class. In the case of motion verbs, prefixation constitutes a highly systematic and morphologically productive mechanism, exhibiting regularity in its application. Conversely, prefixation in non-motion verbs is considerably less uniform, as it lacks clear lexical principles and follows less predictable patterns. This irregularity is largely attributed to the high degree of lexicalization that characterizes such verbs, making their prefixed forms more idiosyncratic and semantically opaque.

Due to the inherent complexity of this phenomenon, the prefixation of non-motion verbs has received limited scholarly attention and is often underrepresented in pedagogical materials. Consequently, RFL instruction tends to place greater emphasis on the more transparent and rule-governed prefixation of motion verbs, while the more intricate and less predictable prefixation of other verbs remains relatively unexplored in standard curricula. The above research gap results in lack of practical solutions for the learners of Russian, in particular Spanish-speaking students, who struggle with both the correct interpretation and translation of prefixed non-motion verbs.

This study aims to address the cognitive underpinnings of verbal prefixation in non-motion verbs, offering a structured approach to enhance learners' awareness of their use and translation. By examining the conceptual mechanisms that govern prefixation in this verb category, it seeks to provide a more comprehensive and pedagogically viable framework for improving students' comprehension and application of Russian verbal prefixes. Its objective is to raise students' awareness of the nature of verbal aspect in Russian and its communicative implications, emphasizing the role of verbal prefixation as a central mechanism for meaning construction. Given the complexity of this phenomenon, the topic is approached from a cognitive perspective, aiming to provide a systematic and con-

ceptually driven analysis of verbal prefixes in non-motion verbs. Focusing both on the linguistic phenomenon and on its didactic implications, the study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical linguistic principles and practical language instruction.

The proposed analysis is grounded in two cognitive frameworks: the prototype theory and metaphorical mapping of time and space. Prototype theory suggests that certain linguistic categories exhibit a prototypical core with peripheral extensions, which is particularly relevant to the study of verbal prefixation. In the case of Russian, some prefixes display more central, prototypical uses, while others serve extended or less conventional functions. Understanding this gradation helps learners recognize why certain prefixes are preferred in specific contexts. At the same time, the metaphorical mapping of time and space provides a conceptual foundation for interpreting prefixes as carriers of spatial and temporal meaning, reinforcing the idea that aspectual and semantic distinctions emerge from fundamental cognitive schemas. These cognitive mechanisms facilitate a more intuitive and systematic approach to prefix acquisition, moving beyond the traditional reliance on memorization.

Regarding the methodological design, this research employs a grammar test exercise as the primary instrument for collecting data on students' acquisition of verbal prefixation through a CG framework. The test is designed to isolate and examine the selected prefixes individually, thus ensuring a focused analysis of their contribution to meaning formation. Specifically, the study explores sixteen prefixes in relation to the Russian verb *резать* (to cut) (Table 2). This verb was chosen due to its capacity to accommodate all sixteen prefixes while remaining a non-prototypical motion verb, allowing for a controlled yet diverse exploration of prefixation patterns without introducing additional semantic complexity.

By examining the various nuances introduced by prefixation, one tries to determine whether a cognitive grammar-based approach effectively aids learners in distinguishing among prefixed verb forms and enhances their comprehension of semantic distinctions. Table 2 provides an overview of the sixteen meanings assigned to the reference verb "to cut" after prefixation, alongside the cognitive interpretations of each prefix as perceived within CG (inputs). These examples are integrated later into the test-based exercise, which aim to assess students' ability to internalize and apply the conceptual foundations of Russian verbal prefixation in a structured learning environment (Figure 1).

Table 2. Referential verb *резать* with its different meanings and inputs after the addition of particular prefixes. Source: own elaboration

Prefix	Verb	Inputs	Examples
[В]	Врезать	Cut inward, in the sense of inserting or embedding something through the action of cutting.	Женщина врезала новый замок в свою дверь и заперла ее. (La mujer puso una nueva cerradura en su puerta y la cerró). Para poner la cerradura se necesita cortar antes de incrustarla en la puerta.
[Вы]	Вырезать	Cut outward, in the sense of removing something through the action of cutting out or trimming.	На занятиях дети поют песни, вырезают картинки, рассказывают сказки. (En las clases los niños cantan canciones, recortan dibujos, cuentan historias).
[Под]	Подрезать	Cut something from below in the sense of cutting an object gently or removal of its small fragment (pruning).	Остальные растения надо было либо постоянно подрезать и подправлять. (El resto de las plantas había que podarlas y retocarlas constantemente).
[От]	Отрезать	Cut something by moving it away, i.e., cutting a part of an object completely	Потом снять кожу, отрезать хвост и голову. (Luego quitar la piel, cortar la cola y la cabeza).
[При]	Прирезать	Close a blade to an object with the intention of cutting, i.e., cutting out a fragment of a foreign territory (annexation); also in the sense of killing by cutting one's throat (slaughter).	Это усатый грузин прирезал Грузии чужой землицы. (Este georgiano bigotudo fue el que anexionó a Georgia las tierras ajenas). Остального оружия девушка не признавала — чтобы прирезать горло парализованному врагу меча не надо. (La niña no reconoció el resto del arma: no hace falta una espada para cortarle la garganta a un enemigo paralizado).
[У]	Урезать	Cut something by making an outward motion, i.e., reduce or trim in the sense of making it smaller.	Сейчас, действительно урезали зарплату, вот и бегут все. (En realidad han reducido ahora los salarios, por lo que todos están descontentos).
[До]	Дорезать	Cut something to the end or finish cutting something.	Очень удобно, не дорезать крышку у банки до конца. (Es muy cómodo no tener que cortar la tapadera del bote hasta el final).
[Пере]	Перерезать	Cross something through the action of cutting, i.e., in the sense of cutting something from end to end or cutting something across.	Молодой человек решил себе перерезать горло опасной бритвой. (El joven decidió cortarse el cuello con una cuchilla afilada). После этих слов, народ решил, что нужно перерезать путь движущегося войска. (Después de tales palabras, el pueblo decidió que era necesario cortarle el camino al ejército).

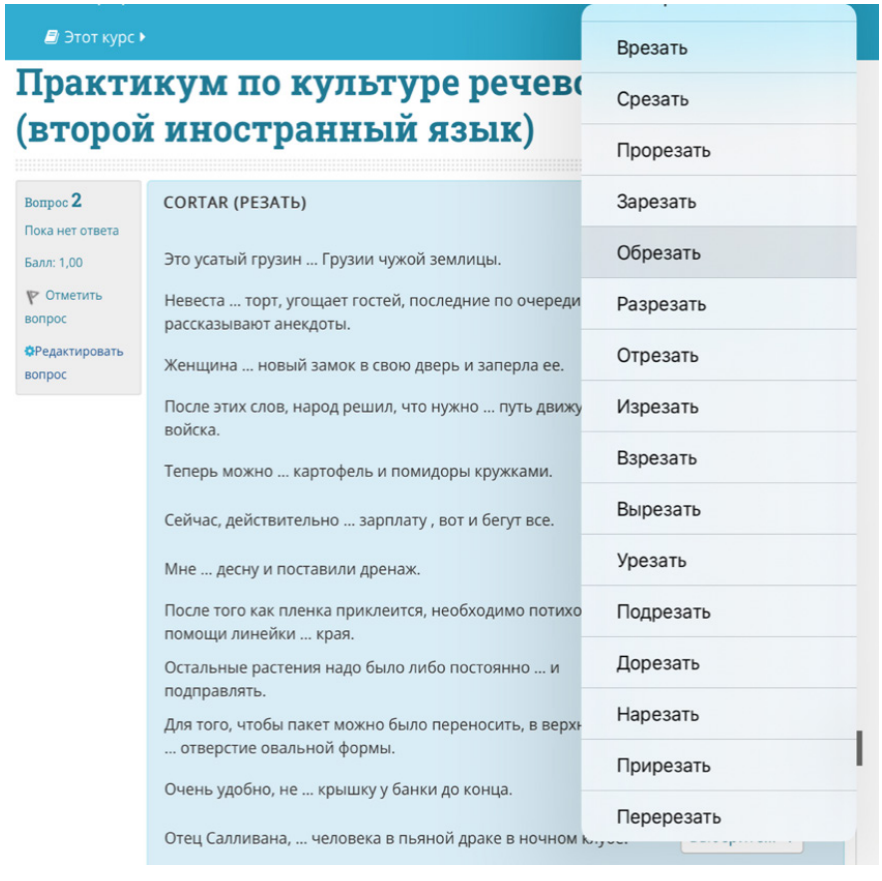
[Вс/ Вз]	Взрезать	Cut by making a movement that facilitates lifting something.	Мне взрезали десну и поставили дренаж. (Me hicieron un corte en las encías y me pusieron un drenaje).
[С]	Срезать	Cut by making a downward motion in the sense of removing something by cutting.	Жители села также срезали сухие ветки и вывезли собранный мусор. (Los habitantes del pueblo también cortaron ramas secas (quintándolas) y sacaron la basura que habían recolectado).
[Рас]	Разрезать	Cut in several directions, i.e., cut something into many pieces.	Невеста разрезает торт, угощает гостей, последние по очереди рассказывают анекдоты. (La novia corta el pastel para los invitados, y éstos a su vez cuentan chistes).
[Ис]	Изрезать	To cut multiple furrows in something, to divide a surface of an object by cutting several lines in it.	Острые осколки страшно изрезали его лицо. (Los fragmentos afilados le cortaron (desfiguraron) la cara por completo).
[Про]	Прорезать	Cross something by the action of cutting.	Для того, чтобы пакет можно было переносить, в верхней части прорезают отверстие овальной формы. (Para poder transportar el paquete, se debe hacer un orificio de forma ovalada en la parte superior).
[Об]	Обрезать	Cut something around or using a rotating movement, circumcise	После того как пленка приклеится, необходимо потихоньку при помощи линейки обрезать края. (Después de pegar la película, es necesario cortar poco a poco los bordes con ayuda de una regla).
[За]	Зарезать	Cut/make a cut regardless of the location; also in the sense of killing (especially by throat cutting)	Отец Салливана, зарезал человека в пьяной драке в ночном клубе. (El padre de Sullivan apuñaló a un hombre en una pelea de borrachos en un bar).
[На]	Нарезать	Cut something into pieces quickly and without much hesitation or difficulty.	Теперь можно нарезать картофель и помидоры кружками. (Ahora tenemos que cortar las patatas y los tomates en rodajas).

3.2. DATA INTERPRETATION AND COLLECTION

For data collection, all participants were required to voluntarily complete an individual test-based matching exercise, with an estimated duration of one hour. The test was administered online through the university's dedicated learning portal, ensuring accessibility and standardization across participants. The digital format also facilitated data storage and retrieval for subsequent analysis. In terms of data analysis, a qualitative approach was employed to synthesize the collected information and examine the relationships between the

research variables. The analysis proceeded in several stages. First, a systematic review of the selected verbal prefixes, initially studied within the category of motion verbs, was conducted, focusing on their aspectual and semantic nuances. This step was essential for identifying the core meanings associated with each prefix and their prototypical usage patterns.

Figure 1. Methodological proposal exercise for matching phrases with the corresponding prefixed verbs



Subsequently, these meanings were analysed in relation to non-motion verbs, with particular emphasis on the verb *резать* (to cut), which served as the reference verb in the study. The objective was to establish conceptual relationships between prefixation in motion verbs and its functional extensions in non-motion verbs, drawing on prototype theory and the metaphorical mapping of time and space.

This cognitive framework allowed for an exploration of how learners conceptualize and categorize prefixes beyond their most conventional applications.

After completing this theoretical and conceptual analysis, the test-type exercise was designed and implemented on the TUIS platform, an online learning management system used for language instruction and assessment. The platform facilitated the controlled administration of the test, enabling researchers to track response patterns and assess participants' comprehension of prefixed verb forms. The integration of digital tools also allowed for the collection of response time data and other interaction metrics, providing additional insights into the cognitive processing of verbal prefixation in RFL.

To ensure the authenticity of linguistic inputs, the examples used in the activity on verbal prefixes in Russian were sourced from ruSKell (Russian Language Learning) [https://skell.sketchengine.eu/#home?lang=ru], a corpus-based Russian language thesaurus designed for learners. This resource was selected to provide students with real-world, contemporary examples of verbal prefixation, reinforcing the natural patterns and frequency of usage in native speech. Additionally, to support comprehension, students were granted access to both online and printed dictionaries, allowing them to independently verify unfamiliar lexical items and enhance their lexical awareness.

Recognizing the specific challenges that Spanish-speaking learners encounter when selecting appropriate verbal prefixes, the reference verb *резать* (to cut) was deliberately chosen as the central lexical item for analysis. In most of the proposed Russian examples, the equivalent verb to cut in Spanish would appear to be contextually appropriate. This deliberate selection compels learners to engage in a more nuanced cognitive analysis, as they must discern subtle distinctions in meaning that arise from prefixation. By doing so, students are encouraged to rely not solely on direct lexical equivalence but rather on the cognitive and conceptual value of each prefix, fostering deeper linguistic processing and reducing the risk of overgeneralization.

Prior to engaging with the exercise on the digital platform, participants were first required to review the explanatory model presented in Table 2, initially without examples, to familiarize themselves with the diverse set of Russian verbal prefixes. This preliminary phase aimed to introduce students to the principles of CG while empha-

sizing the cognitive load carried by each prefix. The intention was to establish a foundational understanding of how prefixes function conceptually rather than as arbitrary affixes.

Once students had internalized the cognitive value of each prefix, they proceeded to the test phase, where they were presented with contextualized examples, this time extracted directly from Table 2. At this stage, learners were expected to apply their cognitive reasoning skills to complete the test-based exercise, demonstrating their ability to distinguish among prefixes based on their semantic contributions. The integration of corpus-based data with a structured cognitive approach not only enhances prefix recognition but also promotes metalinguistic awareness, allowing students to make informed decisions when selecting prefixes in their own Russian language production. The structured progression of the task, from theoretical familiarization to applied analysis, aims to align with the principles of prototype theory and metaphorical mapping of time and space, thereby reinforcing the mental categorization and conceptual relationships underlying Russian verbal prefixation.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Upon completion of the exercise on verbal prefixation in Russian, using the example of the verb *резать*, it can be concluded that the inputs presented in Table 2 play a critical role in supporting students' cognitive development by reinforcing their conceptualization of the cognitive markers associated with each prefix. This conclusion can be largely attributed to the fact that many Spanish-speaking students are likely already familiar with some of the analysed prefixes, particularly because of the high degree of cross-linguistic similarity between Russian and Spanish prefixes. Additionally, the reference verb *резать* itself denotes an action that involves spatial movement, which is a common feature of motion verbs.

The intrinsic connection between the verb *резать* and physical space serves as a crucial factor in the cognitive processing of verbal prefixes. Since the verb *резать* implies a tangible, physical act, such as cutting through space, it aligns with the conceptualization of space that is typically present in motion verbs. This spatial relationship facilitates the mental representation of the verb, allowing students to leverage their existing knowledge of motion and spatiality when

encountering new prefixes. The mental framework for motion verbs, often built around concepts of direction, boundary, and distance, is thus activated, aiding students in deciphering the nuanced meanings of the prefixes attached to *резать*.

Moreover, the use of spatially oriented examples in the exercise helps bridge the gap between abstract prefix meanings and students' cognitive understanding, especially for Spanish-speaking learners. This approach encourages them to extend their existing mental schemas of physical movement to the more complex nuances of verbal aspect in Russian. By fostering an understanding of how prefixes modify spatial relationships within the context of the verb *резать*, the exercise promotes both conceptual clarity and linguistic transfer. Consequently, the study highlights the cognitive advantages of aligning verb forms with familiar spatial concepts, making the process of verbal prefixation more accessible and less abstract for learners.

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, the prefixes *раз, в, за, вы, от, до, пере, у*, and *при* are expected to yield the highest accuracy rates among Spanish-speaking students. This is due to the cognitive similarity between these prefixes and their meanings in both languages, which helps Spanish-speaking students better understand and apply them. Cognitive linguistics suggests that meaning is grounded in experience, and spatial concepts are universally comprehended as they are tied to our physical interactions with the world. Given that many of these prefixes involve spatial relationships, they are more readily understood by Spanish-speaking learners, as they align with concepts that have clear parallels in their native language.

The prefixes *при, пере, в, вы, от*, *у*, and *до* express abstract concepts related to space and action, which are familiar cognitive structures. For instance, *при* conveys the concept of arrival at a location for annexation, which corresponds to a concrete mental image of reaching a destination and establishing a connection. This is an experience that Spanish-speaking students can easily associate with the physical act of arrival in both their own language and in Russian. Similarly, *пере* involves the concept of crossing something from one side to another, a concept with direct physical and spatial counterparts that Spanish-speaking learners can conceptualize based on their own interactions with the world.

The prefix в refers to embedding or introducing something into a space, which is an action that can easily be understood through the visual and conceptual metaphor of placing an object into a contain-

er. This type of conceptualization is familiar in Spanish, where verbs like *meter* (to put in) are used in analogous contexts. Similarly, *вы* (removal or withdrawal) and *от* (taking away or separating) refer to actions that involve physical separation or detachment, which are universally understood as movements that involve an object being displaced or taken away. In Spanish, these actions are also represented with similar verbs, such as *sacar* (to take out) or *separar* (to separate), reinforcing the cognitive similarity and aiding comprehension.

The prefix *у*, meaning to cut down or make something smaller, is conceptually tied to the act of reduction, which can be easily visualized and understood by Spanish-speaking students. The concept of cutting or reducing something aligns with familiar physical experiences, such as *reducir* in Spanish, making it intuitive for learners to grasp. Additionally, *до* conveys the idea of completing an action until its end, as in the phrase *до конца* (until the end). This concept of completion, rooted in temporal and spatial dimensions, is also universally understood, as it evokes the familiar experience of reaching a goal or finishing a task, concepts that are consistent across languages.

The lexical context in which these prefixes appear also plays a significant role in shaping students' understanding. For example, in the case of *раз*, many participants naturally associated the prefix with the idea of dividing something into smaller parts, particularly when linked to the verb *резать*. This is because, in Spanish, the verb *cortar* is often associated with the action of dividing something into pieces, such as a cake, which students can readily connect to the concept of *раз*. The mental image of cutting something into many parts helps cement the meaning of the prefix in students' minds.

The prefix *за* is particularly noteworthy in this regard. The verb *зарезать* often carries a negative connotation, especially in contexts involving conflict or violence (such as a drunken fight). This negative association is something that Spanish-speaking students are likely to recognize and relate to, especially given the strong connotations of the verb *matar* (to kill) or *apuñalar* (to stab) in their language. Such cultural and lexical cues can influence the way students understand and apply the prefix *за*, highlighting the role of both cognitive and cultural context in language acquisition. Finally, the prefix *до* (as in *до конца*) reinforces the idea of completion and finality, which resonates strongly with Spanish-speaking students, who are familiar with the notion of bringing an action to its conclusion through verbs like *terminar* (to finish) or *completar* (to complete). The conceptualiza-

tion of *до* as a marker of continuity towards an endpoint makes it cognitively accessible to learners.

The semantic structures of prefixed verb forms represent symbolic units that allow for the conceptualization and interpretation of reality. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, these symbolic units are not just abstract linguistic constructs, but are deeply tied to the way individuals experience and categorize the world. Students, particularly those whose first language is Spanish, are required to establish relationships between form, meaning, and conceptualization through real-life examples presented in context. This process facilitates the mapping of abstract linguistic forms onto concrete experiences, aiding in understanding and application. In the case of Russian verbal prefixes, the cognitive values associated with prefixes such as в (inside), *вы* (outside), *до* (to the end), *по* (by chance), and *на* (everywhere) resonate strongly with spatial and temporal metaphors, making them more accessible to students. These prefixes denote fundamental cognitive concepts related to time and space, which are universally represented across languages. Thus, students can more easily comprehend and internalize these prefixes through metaphorical production that links spatial-temporal relations with linguistic forms.

For Spanish-speaking students, the cognitive connection between the form and meaning of these prefixes is strengthened due to the shared conceptual spaces in both Russian and Spanish. These conceptual alignments facilitate the process of language acquisition, as learners draw on their existing knowledge of spatial and temporal relationships in their first language. However, certain Russian prefixes present greater cognitive challenges. From a conceptual and linguistic standpoint, prefixes such as *под, про, на, с, об, из,* and *вз* tend to be less intuitive for Spanish-speaking students due to their limited cognitive accessibility and their distance from commonly used conceptual structures. These prefixes often do not align as directly with the students' mental representations, especially when applied to non-motion verbs. Prefixes like *под* (under), *про* (through), and *на* (on) are often harder to conceptualize, as they tend to encode more abstract spatial or directional relationships that are not directly tied to motion in the same way as the more prototypical prefixes like *вы* or *в*. Additionally, the prefixes *вз, из,* and *об* are conceptually linked to motion or action in a way that complicates their use in non-motion verbs. For example, *вз* implies an upward or inward motion, which

creates a challenge for students when applied to verbs that do not denote a movement, such as *взрывать* (to explode). This makes these prefixes particularly difficult for students to mentally map onto verbs without motion.

The difficulty of these prefixes can be attributed to the cognitive principle that language processing involves a dynamic interaction between conceptual knowledge and linguistic forms. Cognitive linguistics posits that language is not just a set of rules for combining symbols, but rather a tool for expressing embodied experiences and cognitive concepts. In this regard, Spanish-speaking students may struggle with prefixes like *вз, из,* and *об* because they are tied to specific forms of action (i.e., motion or change of state) that are not as readily represented in their mental maps of language. These prefixes require students to break away from their existing conceptual framework of static spatial relationships and engage with more complex, dynamic notions of motion and transformation.

Furthermore, the prefixes *под, про, на,* and *с* introduce the dual metaphorical idea of space and time, which adds another layer of complexity. These prefixes represent subtler nuances in the conceptualization of space and time, which are often difficult for learners to grasp without clear real-life contextual examples. For example, *под* (under) in the sense of "cut a little along the contours" invokes a very specific spatial relationship that may be harder to conceptualize without a physical context. Similarly, *с* (with) suggests cutting from below or along a surface, which again requires a nuanced understanding of the spatial dynamics involved in such actions. *Про* (through) refers to cutting a little into something or across its surface, evoking the notion of a directional, yet limited action that may not immediately resonate with Spanish-speaking students unless they are provided with explicit, context-rich examples. *На* (on) presents a similar challenge, as it may convey the idea of a complete action, such as cutting something entirely, which requires the student to conceptualize an action in its entirety.

This difficulty arises because traditional language models, which focus on systematizing rules for grammatical correctness, do not account for the complexity of conceptual knowledge involved in language use. In contrast, the cognitive approach to language processing emphasizes the mental representation of meaning and the ways in which individuals use language to represent their understanding of the world. As students interact with these prefixes, they are not sim-

ply applying rules of grammar, but are drawing on their cognitive abilities to map spatial and temporal concepts onto linguistic forms. This process is central to the cognitive theory of language, which contends that meaning is shaped by the speaker's conceptualization of reality, grounded in both individual and cultural experience.

Therefore, students must not only process the linguistic forms of these prefixes but also engage with the underlying cognitive and conceptual structures that these forms represent. Through exposure to authentic examples and real-life contexts, Spanish-speaking students can gradually build mental representations of the prefixes that align with their worldview and cultural context. In this way, the cognitive values of the prefixes become more accessible, and students can create their own mental maps of meaning that reflect their personal understanding of space, time, and action. This approach highlights the importance of cognitive functions in language acquisition, where meaning is not simply a product of syntactic rules but is intricately tied to how learners conceptualize and engage with the world around them.

When revisiting the distinctions between cognitive and generative linguistic perspectives, it becomes clear that traditional models prioritize the systematization of rules for the correct formation of structures in language. In contrast, the cognitive approach emphasizes that language processing is governed by general cognitive functions, focusing on how meaning is constructed using linguistic forms. This perspective canters on the speaker's conceptualization of meaning, asserting that meaning is not merely a result of syntactic rules, but rather a product of how individuals conceptualize and engage with their experiences. From this standpoint, language is not a static system of structures, but a dynamic process through which speakers represent their worldview and that of their community.

In line with this, the exercise proposed in the study aligns with key aspects of CG as a research discipline. CG provided a framework for understanding language use based on shared cognitive principles, focusing on the categorization of linguistic forms and their relation to conceptual structures. By considering language as grounded in general cognitive abilities, CG emphasizes the role of prototypes in conceptualizing meaning, where the cognitive categorization of forms reflects the mental processes involved in their use. The prefixed verbs in Russian, which are referred to as idealized perfectives, exemplify how prefixes can alter the lexical meaning of a verb, fitting within the

Cognitive Model of Conceptual Integration (MCI). In this model, the cognitive function of prefixes is understood not just in terms of their grammatical form, but also in terms of their role in shaping meaning, linking linguistic forms to underlying conceptual structures.

Moreover, CG is a usage-based theory, meaning it considers the communicative intentions of the speaker as a central element in the construction of meaning. The focus is on how speakers use language to convey meaning, with forms serving as tools for constructing conceptual representations. In this context, language is seen as a dynamic interaction between form and meaning, where the speaker's cognitive processing is central to the communicative act.

The distinction between abstract prefixes related to space and those that convey the dual concept of space/time is particularly relevant in understanding the cognitive accessibility of these prefixes for Spanish-speaking students. Prefixes that are tied to abstract spatial concepts, such as *вы* (out), *в* (in), or *на* (on), are more easily inferred by Spanish-speaking learners because these concepts map more directly onto their existing cognitive structures. The metaphor of space is universally perceptible and visual, making it a more intuitive concept to understand across languages. On the other hand, prefixes that represent the dual metaphor of space and time, such as *под* (under) or *про* (through), introduce a greater level of complexity, as they require students to process both spatial and temporal dimensions, which are more abstract and less immediately visual. This duality of space/time can create additional cognitive load, complicating the process of forming clear mental representations of the prefixes.

The participants in the study, therefore, established symbolic associations between the prefixes and their conceptual representations through their cognitive processing. These associations were facilitated by the metaphorical nature of the prefixes, which allowed students to connect the forms to their mental maps of space and action. The cognitive load involved in processing these prefixes also influenced how participants conceptualized and applied them, highlighting the central role of cognitive functions in language use.

This approach to teaching and learning language provides an alternative to traditional grammatical instruction, which often separates forms from their meanings through prescriptive rules. By incorporating the principles of CG, the exercise emphasizes the importance of meaning in understanding language. It seeks to integrate form and meaning in a way that reflects the cognitive processes behind lan-

guage use, offering a more holistic approach to language teaching. In this sense, the exercise does not simply focus on grammatical correctness, but on how learners can construct meaning through language, drawing on their cognitive capacities and conceptual understanding of the world around them. This approach ultimately promotes a deeper understanding of language as a tool for communication, rooted in cognitive processes that shape how we perceive and interact with our environment.

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