

Barbara Bacz
A semantic analysis of the Polish preposition *za*.

The Polish preposition *za* combines with three different cases: ACCUSATIVE, INSTRUMENTAL and GENITIVE, as in: *Wrócę za miesiąc*-Acc 'I'll come back in a month'; *I tak mijal dzień za dniem*-Instr. 'And so passed day after day'; *Wróc do domu za dnia*-Gen 'Come back home during the day (when it's still daytime). While the accusative and the instrumental uses of *za* can be grouped into spatial (*Za oknem*-Instr *pada deszcz* 'It is raining on the other side of the window /outside'), temporal (*Kurtyna podniosła się za drugim dzwonkiem*-Inst 'The curtain went up after the second ring') or figurative (*Zginął za ojczyznę*-Acc. 'He died for his country'), the genitive uses of the preposition are restricted to the temporal domain (*Za Króla Sasa, jedz, pij i popuszczaj pasa*. 'During the reign of the Saxon King, eat, drink and let your belt loose').

The aim of this paper is to offer a unified semantic description of the spatial, temporal and figurative uses of *za* in prepositional phrases with the three cases: accusative, instrumental and genitive. It is argued that the various uses of *za* in Polish can be explained in terms of two prototypical image schemas: the "following the landmark" schema and the "over/ behind/ beyond the landmark" schema. In the first group of uses, the preposition *za* situates the trajector in a position after (i.e. following) the landmark; the trajector is "aligned" (to borrow Janda's 2001 term) with respect to the landmark by being 'oriented' on it in some way, as in: *Idę za tobą*-Instr. 'I am following you'; *Tęsknię za tobą*- Inst. 'I am longing for you', *Walczyli za wolność naszą i waszą*-Acc. 'They fought for our and your freedom,' etc. In the second group of uses, the landmark separates the trajector from the conventional viewer (us, the interlocutors), as in: *Jan stoi za drzewem*-Instr. 'Jan is standing behind the tree', *Przyjadę za rok*-Acc. 'I will come back in a year', *Czy bierzesz mnie za durnia?*-Acc. 'Are you taking me for an idiot?', *Za mojej młodości*-Gen. *nie było takich możliwości* 'There were no such possibilities in my young days.' Several variants of the basic image schemas will be proposed following a detailed semantic interpretation of a wide range of *za*-examples.

References:

- Bacz, B. 1995. "Searching for the potential significate of the Polish morpheme *za* in its uses as a preposition and a prefix". Paper presented at the 1995 Colloque de psychomécanique at Acfas in Chicoutimi, Québec
- Janda, L. 1986. *A semantic analysis of the Russian verbal prefixes ZA-, PERE-, DO-, and OT-*, Slavistische Beiträge 192, Munich: Sagner.
- Janda, L. A & S. J. Clancy (2002) *The Case Book for Czech*. <http://www.seelrc.org>
- Weinsberg, A. 1973 *Przyimki przestrzenne w języku polskim, niemieckim i rumuńskim*. Wrocław: Ossolineum