Tore Nesset (2008):

Abstract Phonology in a Concrete Model. Cognitive Linguistics and the Morphology-

This book, which is equally relevant for phonologists, morphologists, Slavists and
cognitive linguists, addresses two questions: How can the morphology-phonology
interface be accommodated in cognitive linguistics? Do morphophonological
alternations have a meaning? These questions are explored on the basis of a
comprehensive analysis of stem alternations in Russian verbs. The analysis is couched
in R.W. Langacker's Cognitive Grammar framework, but the book offers comparisons to
other varieties of cognitive linguistics, such as Construction Grammar and Conceptual
Integration. The proposed analysis is furthermore compared to rule-based and
constraint-based approaches to phonology in generative grammar.

Although Cognitive Grammar does not assume underlying representations or
procedural rules, it is shown that the framework facilitates an insightful approach to
abstract phonology. An important advantage is restrictiveness; Cognitive Grammar
provides an analysis of all phenomena under scrutiny in terms of a parsimonious set of
theoretical constructs that all have cognitive motivation. No ad hoc machinery is
invoked, and the analysis yields strong empirical predictions.

Another advantage is the fact that Cognitive Grammar enables us to capture the
meaning of morphophonological alternations. It is argued that stem alternations in
Russian verbs conspire to signal non-past meaning.

This book is accessible to a broad readership and offers a welcome contribution to
phonology and morphology, which have been understudied areas in cognitive
linguistics.