

Depreciative indefinites: evidence from Russian

Following Haspelmath 1997, we refer to the meaning 'an unimportant or bad person/thing' as **depreciative**. We call the corresponding positive meaning ('something/someone important, remarkable') **appreciative**. Indefinites that can convey such meaning thus are depreciative and appreciative indefinites respectively. This informal description outlines the class of phenomena we are interested in, our primary interest being the depreciative side. Some appreciative and depreciative indefinites:

(1) German (Haspelmath 1997: 187)

Wir sind wieder wer.

'We are somebody (important) again'

(2) Latin (Haspelmath 1997: 188)

Vita agenda est certo genere quo-dam, non quo-libet.

life to.be.lead is certain way which-INDEF not which-INDEF

'Life must be lead in a certain (special) way, not (just) anyhow' (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.24)

Data. Russian depreciative and appreciative indefinite pronouns and expressions:

(3) *On vs'o delaet kak-nibud'.* (Haspelmath 1997: 189)

He all does how-INDEF

'He does everything badly ('anyhow').'

(4) *Ee muž – kakoj-to učitel'.*

Her husband which-INDEF teacher

'Her husband is just a teacher.'

(5) *Nakonec on stal kem-to!*

Finally he became who-INDEF

'Finally he became someone (important)!'

(6) *On ženilsa na Bog znaet kom.*

He married on God knows whom

'He married God knows who (someone not good enough)'

-nibud' series of indefinite pronouns – in non-expressive use – covers a broad range of non-specific contexts, but can't be used as a free-choice item (FCI). It has depreciative but not appreciative uses, as in (3).

-to series is primarily Specific Unknown with possible narrow scope with respect to certain operators (for more information on referential properties of Russian indefinite pronouns cf. Tatevosov 2002). It can have both depreciative (4) and appreciative (5) meanings.

Sluicing-based indefinites (cf. Testelets and Bylinina 2005) are specific and are used depreciatively.

For some reason that we won't discuss here due to space limitations, Russian doesn't use any of its FCIs expressively.

Typology and theories. Typologically (cf. Haspelmath 1997), specific indefinites tend to develop appreciative rather than depreciative meanings, while the ones on the right side of the implicational map for indefinites (especially, FCIs) are always depreciative. The observation about specific indefinites didn't prove to be a strong one.

The views on the nature of qualitative meaning can be divided into two approaches. First, the 'uninformativity' analysis, is introduced in (Haspelmath 1997: 187): "Indefinite pronouns are intrinsically uninformative... and when speakers nevertheless use them in situations where they do not contribute any additional information, hearers are entitled to make additional inferences". To develop the approach, flouting of the Quantity maxim should probably be involved.

An alternative view, found in Horn 2004, builds on scalar approach to NPI and FCI semantics (Fauconnier 1975, Lee and Horn 1994, Lahiri 1998, Werle 2001 etc.). On this view, NPIs/FCIs have the end-of-scale semantic component. Informally, when a speaker constructs a scale according to his opinion about the potential participants of the situation and uses an end-of-scale indefinite, depreciative (in Horn's terminology, indiscriminative) meaning arises.

Here we do not address the issue of appreciative meaning and the way it can arise from specificity. The question is whether there is any evidence that depreciative meaning developing through these different mechanisms is one and the same depreciativeness after all, i.e. whether there is a single phenomenon of depreciative meaning. Or, alternatively, the non-specific depreciatives are scalar items which fits well their non-evaluative use, while the non-scalar specific indefinites do not involve pragmatic scales even when depreciative.

More data. To investigate this question, we involve examples with 'minimizers' like the following:

- (7) V *kakix-nibud'dva č'asa on nabrosal ves'madel'nyj proekt.* (Nikolaeva 1983: 348)
In which-INDEF two hourshe draftedrather sensible project

'In only two hours he drafted a rather sensible project.'

An indefinite pronoun here indicates that half an hour is a surprisingly short time for this task. Interestingly, in (7) *-nibud'* and *-to* can be used interchangeably.

We argue that evidence from minimizers suggests the scalar analysis for specific indefinites as well as for the non-specific ones, thus leading to unified semantics for both.

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