

«Double reciprocals» in Russian: What do they really mean and why?

In my paper I will address a special type of Russian reciprocals. The main markers of reciprocity in Russian are the pronoun *drug druga* ‘each other’ and the suffix *-sja*, which also has the reflexive, the anticausative and other meanings:

celovat’ ‘kiss smb’ → *celovat’-sja* / *celovat’ drug druga* ‘kiss each other’ (see also Knjazev 2007)

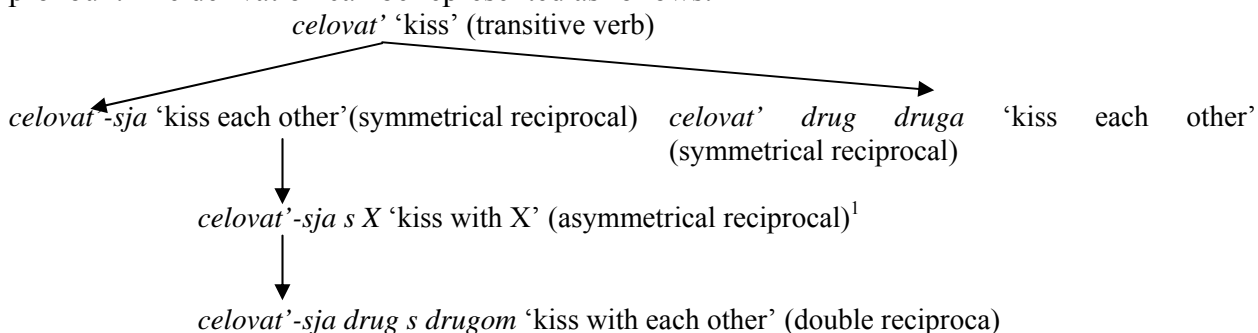
The form of the pronoun *drug druga* depends on the transitivity of the verb: for instance, if a verb governs an object in dative, the second component of the pronoun should also be in the dative case (the first component of the pronoun is always in the same form *drug*):

- (1) *Ja i moj-a žen-a podari-l-i drug drug-u podark-i*
 I.NOM and my-NOM.SG.F wife-NOM.SG give-PAST-PL RECIP RECIP-DAT gift-ACC.PL
 ‘My wife and me gave each other gifts’.

However, Russian also has a special construction where the reciprocal pronoun and the suffix *-sja* are used in one sentence:

- (2) *Neznakom-yje l’udi na ulic-ax obnima-l-i-s’ drug s drug-om*
 unknown-NOM.PL people.PL on street-LOC.PL hug-PAST-PL-RECIP RECIP with RECIP-INS
 ‘People, unfamiliar to each other, were hugging each other in the streets’.

In (2), the verb already has the reciprocal marker. However, it is modified with the reciprocal pronoun. The derivation can be represented as follows:



Many languages have “double reciprocal” constructions. Very often they are synonymous with simple reciprocal constructions (e.g., in Khakas (Turkic) the reciprocal meaning can be expressed with the suffix *-s-*, with the reciprocal adverb *udur-tödir* ‘there-here’ or with both – without any difference in meaning).

However, in Russian, the double reciprocal construction is not synonymous to the ‘usual’ reciprocal construction. For instance, some examples which are perfect with *-sja* and *drug druga* are strange (though not impossible) with the double reciprocal:

- (3) *Maš-a i Petj-a celova-l-i-s’ drug s drug-om*
 Masha-NOM.SG and Petia-NOM.SG kiss-PST-PL-RECIP RECIP with RECIP-INS
 ?‘Masha and Petia kissed with each other’.

The data of the Russian National Corpus shows that the main context of use of the double reciprocal is ‘plural reciprocal situation with participant change’, such as in (2). This means that the reciprocal situation ‘kiss each other’ repeats several times between different participants: ‘people kissed with each other’ = ‘person A kisses person B’, ‘C kisses D’ and so on.

This meaning of plural reciprocal situation seems to be strange: neither the suffix *-sja*, nor the pronoun *drug druga* expresses plurality by itself. However, I want to show that the meaning of plural situation is explicable from the semantics of *drug druga*.

Traditionally, *drug druga* is supposed to be a purely reciprocal marker. However, we should not forget about examples like (3) which don’t correspond to the reciprocal semantics:

¹ The terms “symmetrical reciprocal” and “asymmetrical reciprocal” are borrowed from Nedjalkov 2007. Symmetrical reciprocal is a construction where the arguments of the reciprocal relation belong to the same NP (e.g., *John and Barbara kissed each other*). Asymmetrical reciprocal is a construction where the two arguments have different syntactic status (e.g., *John kissed with Barbara*, where *John* is the subject and *Barbara* is a peripheral argument).

- (3) *Vek-a smen'a-l-i drug drug-a*
 century-NOM.PL replace-PAST-PL RECIP RECIP-ACC
 'The centuries replaced each other'.

A purely reciprocal situation can be defined as follows:

'kiss each other' = 'A kisses B' and 'B kisses A'

(3) does not correspond to this definition. The meaning 'the century A replaces the century B' and 'the century B replaces the century A' is logically impossible. The meaning is rather 'the century A replaces the century B' and 'the century B replaces the century C' ... Thus, in any pair of centuries {A; B} if A replaces B, B does not replace A.

Thus, we propose another definition of *drug druga*: we suppose that this marker has the meaning 'participant change', in other words:

there are several situations which differ by their subjects, objects and other participants

Of course, the simplest variant of this meaning is the reciprocal proper. For instance, in (1) there was two situations of giving gifts: in the first one I gave gifts to my wife, in the second one my wife gave gifts to me.

In the double reciprocal construction, the situation is more complicated. We suppose that the suffix *-sja* in the reciprocal meaning divides the participants into 'sets'. For instance, in (2) there are several sets of people, in each set the people hug each other.

My hypothesis is that when the marker *drug druga* is attached to a construction which already contains a reciprocal verb with *-sja*, it modifies not entities but sets of entities connected by the reciprocal relation,:

there are several reciprocal situations which differ by their subjects, objects and other participants.

The entities themselves are already included into the reciprocal relation and are not any longer accessible to *drug druga*.

We can represent this fact in the following way: in (2), the reciprocal suffix *-sja* is c-commanded by its antecedent subject *l'udi* 'people'. The rule is that **two reciprocal marker in one clause, as a rule, are not co-referent to each other**. Thus, the reciprocal pronoun *drug druga* chooses another antecedent has as the antecedent not the entities 'people' (person1 + person2 + ...) but the sets 'people' (people1 + people2 + ...) where the members of each set are in the reciprocal relation:

Thus, *drug druga* codes the semantic component of 'participant change', and in the combination with reciprocal verbs it denotes the relation of participant change between different sets of subjects. This is proven by the combinations between the markers *drug druga* and *meždu soboj* 'between themselves':

- (4) *vldel'c-y klub-ov i xokkeist-y*
 owner-NOM.PL club-GEN.PL and hockey.player-NOM.PL
vstreti-l-i-s' ne drug s drug-om a meždu sob-oj
 MEET-PAST-PL-RECIP not RECIP with RECIP-INS.SG but between oneself-INS

'The owners of the clubs and the players met not with each other (i.e., not the players with the owners), but between themselves (i.e., the players met the players, the owners met the owners)'.

In such combinations, the marker *meždu soboj* codes the reciprocal relation inside the set. On the other hand, *drug druga*, just as in (2), expresses the reciprocal relation between the sets.

Bibliography

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