

## Reciprocity in Russian deverbal nominals: lexical vs. syntactic

**Nominal reciprocity.** Reciprocal semantics and special markers of reciprocity are primarily characteristic for verbs (numerous case studies can be found in Nedjalkov (ed.) 2007), but as well in situation-denoting nominals, first of all in nominalizations (Hron 2005, Reinhart&Siloni 2005, Siloni 2002, 2008). This case is particularly interesting since it can tell something about how reciprocity in a language is organized. Thus, Tal Siloni (2008) argues that in lexicon languages (i.e. in those in which reciprocization is realized in the lexicon, not in syntax) one can find reciprocal nominals, while in syntax languages they are unexpected. Russian is a lexicon language, together with Hebrew, Hungarian and English, while syntax languages include all Romance languages, Czech and Serbo-Croatian.

**Decausativation and reciprocity in Russian.** Verbal reciprocity in Russian is marked by the *-sja*-morpheme, used also as a reflexive, decausative and passive marker, and in deverbal nominals this marker is always absent, which, however, does not prevent the nominal to express these derived meanings, on a par with the initial transitive one. E.g., one and the same word *obnimanie* ‘hugging’ can have both “transitive” (i.e. denoting the same situation as the transitive verb, 1a-b) and reciprocal (2a) uses:

- (1) a. *obnimanie drug-a* (“transitive”)  
hugging friend-GEN  
*hugging a friend*
- b. *Ja obnja-l drug-a* (transitive)  
I hug-PST friend-ACC  
*I hugged a friend.*
- (2) a. *obnimanie druz-ej* (reciprocal)  
hugging friend-GEN.PL  
*(mutual) hugging of friends*
- b. *Druz-ja obnja-l-i-s’.* (reciprocal)  
friend-PL hug-PST-PL-REFL  
*The friends hugged.*

Another way to derive a reciprocal or, at least, a symmetrical nominal is to take a verbal stem with a plural argument and to make a noun with this argument as the only one available. This is true for nominalized underived verbs with plural argument fixed in their lexical representation, be it their only argument (cf. *razgovor* ‘conversation’ or *družba* ‘friendship’), or inner argument of a transitive causative verb (like *soedinenie* ‘joining’ or *ssora* ‘quarrel’ from *ssorit’* ‘to make someone quarrel with someone’). The presence of plural argument can be marked with a prefix, such as: *s-* in *sjezd* ‘gathering, convention’ from *sjexat’sja* ‘to gather’, *sgovor* ‘arrangement’ from *sgovorit’sja* ‘come to an arrangement’; *raz-* in *rasxozhdenie* ‘divergence’ from *rasxodit’sja* ‘to diverge’; *pere-* as in *perestrelka* ‘exchange of fire’ from *perestrelivat’sja* ‘exchange fire, fire at each other’; for these nouns reciprocity is the only possible interpretation (though the prefix does not mark reciprocity, but argument plurality).

All these classes of reciprocal nominals are consistent with the observations in Siloni (2008): indeed, as soon as both nominalization and reciprocization occur in the lexicon (as the author assumes), then, no matter which of the operations applies first, their results can be both found in the nominal.

**More reciprocal nominals.** However, at a closer look nominal reciprocity exhibits one crucial difference from the verbal one: it is more productive. Just like the nominal *obnimanie* ‘hugging’ is ambiguous between transitive (1a) and intransitive (2a) meanings, almost every event nominal referring to a transitive situation where an object and a subject are both animate can have the same two interpretations. Existence of a reciprocal verbal counterpart is by no

means a condition of such “transitive/reciprocal ambiguity” for a nominal. For instance, *privetstvie kolleg* ‘lit. greeting of colleagues’ or *prichesyvanie devochek* ‘lit. combing of the girls’ is just as ambiguous as *obnimanie družej* ‘hugging friends’, in all the three cases colleagues, girls and friends can be either internal argument of a “transitive” nominal, or single argument of a symmetrical reciprocal nominal.

It seems that the assumption that reciprocal nominals are formed in the dictionary does not explain the existence of the reciprocal nominals without verbal counterparts. Indeed, if a verbal stem is reciprocal already in the lexicon, why do we see it only in its nominal form, and not in the verbal one? Existence of only-nominal reciprocals excludes the hypothesis of nominalization of a reciprocated verbal stem in the lexicon, and casts certain doubts on the hypothesis of reciprocization of a deverbal nominals in the lexicon (what is so special about this nominal lexical reciprocity?). Moreover, productivity of nominal reciprocization speaks for the syntactic type of formation.

Let us try to test reciprocal nominals for another criterion proposed in Siloni 2008, namely, for the possibility to form a discontinuous construction. Russian reciprocal nominals without verbal counterparts do not allow for discontinuous constructions (3), like reciprocal verbs in syntax languages, but not like reciprocal verbs in Russian and other lexical languages (4):

(3) *prichesyvanie devochk-i s malchik-om*  
 combing girl-GEN with boy-INSTR

lit. *combing of a girl with a boy*

(4) *malchik obnima-et-sja s devochk-oj*  
 boy hug-PRS-REFL with girl-INSTR

*the boy and a girl are hugging each other*, lit. *the boy is hugging himself with a girl*

The NP in (3) has only comitative interpretation (either the boy is also combed together with a girl, or combing himself together with a girl, or he helps to comb the girl), no reciprocity (the boy is combing a/the girl, while the girl is combing the boy) is meant.

Note that for the reciprocal nominals with verbal reciprocal counterparts discontinuous construction is still possible: *obnimanie devochki s malchikom* ‘hugging of a girl and a boy’ has a reciprocal meaning.

**Conclusions.** If Siloni’s distinction between lexical and syntactic (wrt reciprocity) languages and diagnostics for one or the other type is assumed, we need to postulate two types of nominal reciprocity in Russian: lexical (same as verbal) and syntactic (available only for nominals). Lexical reciprocity is “stronger” than syntactic one: if a nominal can be made reciprocal already in the lexicon, it does, and syntactic reciprocity cannot be applied instead (therefore reciprocal nominals with reciprocal verbal counterparts allow for the discontinuous construction). However, if the nominal cannot be reciprocated in the lexicon, but its semantics does not exclude symmetry and reciprocation, then it can be made reciprocal in syntax. Therefore, syntax vs. lexicon parameter does not characterize language as a whole, but only one or on\another type of reciprocity.

#### References:

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