

The Realization of (In)definiteness in Russian*

1. Introduction

The problem I shall address in this paper can be formulated as follows: how are definiteness and indefiniteness realized formally in Russian? I shall make the following points:

- Definiteness and indefiniteness have syntactic (word order), morphological (case-marking) and lexical realizations (pronouns).
- The realization of (in)definiteness is in many cases parasitic on other categories, e.g. case and topic/focus. This I will refer to as 'indirect realization'. Indirect realization resolves itself into two subcategories, which I will designate 'implicational' and 'statistical':

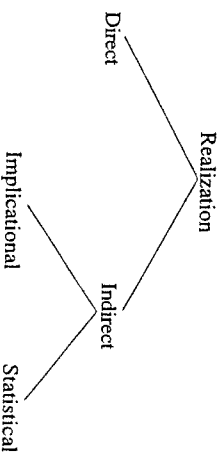


Fig. 1: Realization patterns

- Syntax, morphology and lexical realizations interact in terms of relative strength, and therefore constitute three subsystems of a coherent system. Lexical realization evinces greatest strength in that it overrides morphological and syntactic realization.

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As suggested by the title of the paper, these points all pertain to Russian. By 'Russian' I here mean 'Contemporary Standard Russian'. This is an important limitation of the scope, since Russian dialects differ significantly as far as the realization of definiteness and indefiniteness is concerned. For instance, North Russian dialects are reported to have developed definite articles similar to those found in the Germanic languages (Kasatkin 1989:143).

The paper is structured as follows. First, I define the key notions of definiteness and indefiniteness (section 2). In sections 3 through 5 I consider syntactic, morphological and lexical realizations before I turn to the interaction of syntax, morphology and lexicon in section 6. A brief summary is given in section 7.

2. Definiteness and Indefiniteness

When talking *we refer* to things; we single out things in the world to which we assign properties. In order to facilitate communication it is important for the speaker to make sure that the addressee understands what the speaker is referring to. For this purpose languages like English have definite articles. Roughly, by using definite forms like *the boy* the speaker signals that s/he is referring to a unique person that s/he thinks the addressee is able to identify.

In order to arrive at a more precise understanding of definiteness, it is helpful to introduce what Langacker (1991:97) calls *the current discourse space*. Like any other people, the speaker and addressee possess knowledge about potential referents. In order for the two to communicate, their sets of knowledge must overlap. Minimally, the intersection must contain the entities present in the speech situation and the context, but in addition to this it may also include things like the sun and the king of Norway, i.e. referents of which there is only one in the world. If the interlocutors belong to the same social subgroup, e.g. the same family, people like *the kids* and *the neighbour* will be also unique members of the intersection. It is this intersection I shall refer to as 'the current discourse space'. Notice, that the current discourse space is a *mental space* (in the sense of Fauconnier 1985), not part of the external world; it may contain things like unicorns which are thought not to have any existence in the

external reality. In figure 2 I have therefore drawn lines from the heads of the interlocutors to the referent X.¹

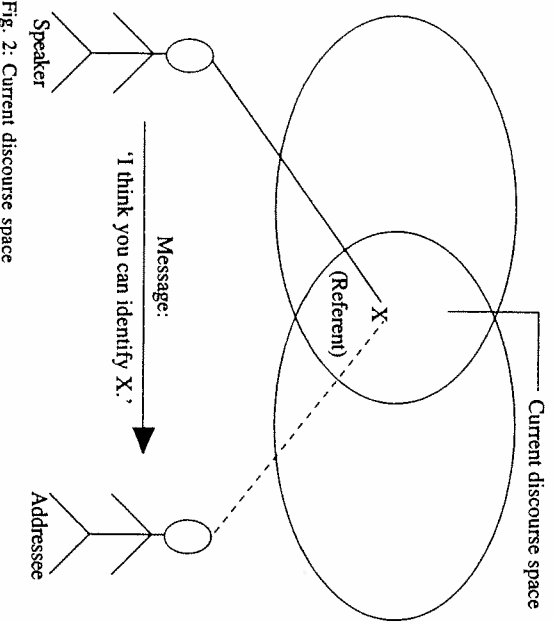


Fig. 2: Current discourse space

Examples (1) and (2) illustrate that felicitous usage of the definite form requires that four conditions are satisfied.

- (1) The boy is playing in the garden.
- (2) Tom bought seven gallons of milk. The milk turned sour. (Langacker 1991:100)

First, the speaker must single out a certain boy or, as Langacker puts it, the speaker must establish 'mental contact' with the boy. Second, the boy must be unique, i.e. there must be one and only one boy in the current discourse space. If the space is empty, or there are more than one boy in it, the sentence in (1) is odd. Third, the entity in question must be maximal, i.e. the speaker must refer to the whole of it. This requirement is best illustrated by mass nouns like *milk* in example (2). The definite form in the second sentence is permissible only if the phrase *the milk* refers to all the seven gallons

¹ A similar figure is given in Nørgård-Sørensen (1983c). See also Yokoyama (1986).

mentioned in the preceding sentence. Finally, by using the definite article the speaker informs the addressee that the addressee is expected to identify the referent. In example (1), the addressee must either have mental contact with the boy already, or the use of the nominal is sufficient to establish mental contact. For instance, it is appropriate to utter the sentence in (1) in a situation where the interlocutors are both looking at a particular boy in the garden. However, if the addressee happens to be blind, s/he may not share the necessary knowledge about the boy, and therefore it may be more adequate for the speaker to use the indefinite form *a boy*.

The requirements are summarized in the definition in (3). The definition is very similar to the one given by Langacker (1991:98), but I have simplified it slightly to avoid complications irrelevant for present purposes. Indefiniteness is when at least one of the requirements in (3) is not met.

- (3) Definiteness:
- a) The speaker has mental contact with an entity X.
 - b) X is unique in the current discourse space.
 - c) X is maximal in the current discourse space.
 - d) The addressee either has mental contact with X, or the use of the definite nominal is sufficient to establish such contact.

3. The Syntactic Subsystem: Topic/focus-marking

We now turn to the syntactic subsystem. I shall suggest that Russian syntax provides indirect realizations for definiteness and indefiniteness via marking of topic and focus. A note on terminology is in order. Some linguists draw distinctions between *topic* and *focus* on the one hand and *theme* and *rheme* on the other, whereas other researchers use the two pairs of terms more or less interchangeably. I belong to the second group, and in what follows I shall use the terms 'topic' and 'focus' only.

3.1 Topic and Its Relationship to Definiteness

Loosely speaking, topic is what a sentence is about. Whereas this is not controversial, there are slight differences in the literature when it comes to more precise definitions. In the same way as for definiteness it may be useful to define topics in terms of mental spaces. The definition of definiteness I adopted in section 2 above refers to the *current discourse space*, but as is shown by Yokoyama (1986), in order to account for communication we

also need to refer to another mental space, namely the interlocutors' *matter of current concern* (see also King 1995:67ff.). A definition of topic which I shall adopt for the purposes of the present discussion is given in (4). Figure 3 illustrates the mental spaces of current discourse space and matter of current concern.²

- (4) Topic (\approx theme):
The shared matter of current concern of the interlocutors

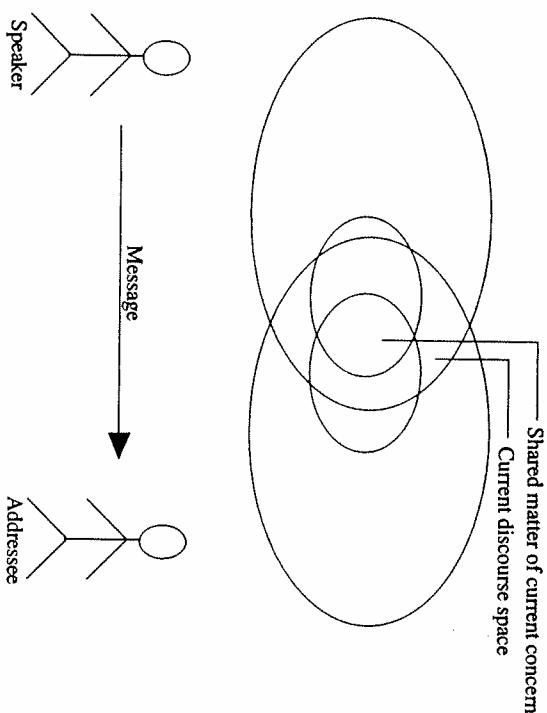


Fig. 3: Shared matter of current concern

As suggested by figure 3, the shared matter of current concern is a subset of the current discourse space, because interlocutors share more knowledge than they are concerned with at the moment of speech. For instance, the interlocutors may both have referential knowledge about the king of Norway, even if that is not what they are talking about at the mo-

²More accurate figures illustrating the relationship between matter of current concern and what I call current discourse space are given in Yokoyama (1986:ch. 1). For a slightly different figure concerning the relationship between topic and definiteness, see Nørgård-Sørensen (1983a:41).

ment. What this suggests is that the relationship between topic and definiteness is one of implication. If an NP is topicalised, then it is definite, as is set out in (5).

- (5) Topic \rightarrow Definite (where \rightarrow = 'implies')

3.2 *Focus and Its Relationship to Indefiniteness*

Focus is loosely speaking what the speaker says about the topic. This insight is made more precise in Lambrecht's (1994:213) definition cited in (6).

- (6) Focus (\approx theme)
'The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition.' (Lambrecht 1994:213)

This may appear a bit complicated, but an example shows that what it really boils down to, is the traditional insight that the focus is what the speaker says about the topic. Consider the question and answers in (7) (adapted from Lambrecht (1994:297) who refers to Comrie (1981:57)).

- (7)
a) Who did Bill hit?
b) He hit *fo*(a man).
c) He hit himself.
d) He hit me.

On the basis of the question in (7a) the presupposition can be established that 'Bill hit X'. What the sentence in (7b) asserts is that this X = ('equals') *a man*. The difference between the assertion and the presupposition therefore is the X, and accordingly *a man* is the focus in (7b).

Focus and theme are often defined as 'new information', but as pointed out by Lambrecht (1994:260 et passim), this is misleading. In sentence (7b) above the referent of *a man* is probably new information, with the referent not included in the current discourse space. However, the sentences in (7c) and (7d) show that the focus need not be new information, since both deictic and anaphoric pronouns are possible in focus position. The referents of such pronouns are necessarily identifiable for both inter-

locutors, and they are therefore definite according to the definition I have adopted. What we see, then, is that focus is compatible with both definiteness and indefiniteness, and no implication of the type given in (5) is therefore possible for focus. However, it is a common observation that focus is very often indefinite, and I shall therefore assume that what I would like to call a statistical inference holds between focus and indefiniteness.

- (8) Focus ---> Indefinite (where ---> = 'is normally')

3.3 Realization of Topic and Focus in Russian

In Russian syntax topic and focus are realized by prosody and word order.³ According to King (1995:82f.) topic is marked in Russian by preverbal position and a slightly rising tone at the end. Focus is reported always to be marked by a falling tone at the end of the relevant constituent. In the default case the focused constituent is clause-final, but in so-called emotive speech a sentence accent may fall on a non-final constituent which is then marked by a falling tone. The realizational patterns of the two categories are summarized in table 1. A Russian example is given in (9b).

Category:	Prosodic marking:	Positional marking:
a) Topic	Rising tone at end (H1)	Preverbal
b) Focus	Falling tone at end (L1)	---

Table 1: Topic/focus: Realization patterns for Russian

- (9)
- a) *Čto tebe nužno?* what-acc you-dat need-neut
'What do you need?'
- b) *topl[Me] nužna foc[kniga].* I-dat need-fem book-fem.nom
'I need a book.'

³In order to avoid unnecessary complications I shall ignore clitics like *li* and *že*, which are relevant for topic and focus.

3.4 Conclusion: Indirect Realization of Topic and Focus

We have seen that topic and focus receive formal realization in Russian, and we have also seen that definiteness is associated with topic and indefiniteness in a looser sense with focus. The conclusion we can draw from this is that definiteness and indefiniteness are realized formally in Russian, but only via another category, namely the category topic/focus. Formal realization through another category I shall call *indirect realization*.

I would like to point out that there is a clear difference between definiteness and indefiniteness since the former is related to topic by implication, while the latter is only related to focus in terms of a statistical inference. In order to capture this, I have characterized the realization of definiteness in (10) as indirect and *implicational*, whereas the realization of indefiniteness is labelled indirect and *statistical*. In (10) I summarize the findings about syntactic realization of (in)definiteness in Russian.

- (10) Syntactic realization:
- a) Definiteness: indirect and implicational realization
- b) Indefiniteness: indirect and statistical realization

Before I proceed to the morphological subsystem, a remark is in order. The status assigned to indirect and especially statistical realization in Russian grammar is open to dispute. In a structuralist or generative approach statistical and possibly also implicational realization may be considered to pertain to pragmatics, and thus have a qualitatively different status from direct realization. In a Cognitive Grammar approach, on the other hand, language structure and language use are seen as more closely integrated phenomena, and all types of realization will therefore be relevant for Russian grammar, although they will not be regarded as equally central. I shall not discuss these theoretical questions here, however, as they are beyond the scope of the present article.

4. The Morphological Subsystem: Case-marking

It has often been observed that there is a connection between indefiniteness and the use of the genitive in certain constructions involving quantification and negation. Quantification and negation are related concepts – for instance, negation may be interpreted as zero quantity. However, on the basis

of arguments from Neidle (1988) and Franks (1995) listed in (11), I shall treat quantification and negation separately in this paper. I shall not discuss a third construction involving objects of goal-directed verbs meaning desire, aim, request or achievement (Neidle 1988:31), since data seem less clear here. Moreover, for these verbs choice of object case is reported to be sensitive to the same factors as negated objects, and it is thus unlikely that a discussion of 'goal-directed verbs' will contribute much to our understanding of the formal realization of (in)definiteness.

(11) Arguments for keeping genitive of negation and quantification distinct

(Franks 1995:198):

- a) Genitives under negation need not have partitive interpretation.
- b) Genitive under negation is compatible with singular count nouns, whereas genitive under quantification is not.
- c) Use of the genitive under quantification is independent of sentential negation, whereas genitive of negation (not surprisingly) requires negation.

4.1 *The sub-system of Quantification ('Partitive Genitive')*

The examples in (12), which are taken from Mathiassen (1996:209), illustrate the use of the genitive and accusative in objects.

(12)

- a) Ona kupila sachar.
She-nom bought sugar-acc
'She bought (the) sugar.' (Mathiassen 1996:209)
- b) Ona kupila sacharu.
She-nom bought sugar-gen
'She bought some sugar.' (Mathiassen 1996:209)

As is suggested by the gloss 'some sugar' in (12b), the use of the genitive signals that the object denotes an indefinite quantity. The use of the accusative like in (12a), however, does not necessarily involve quantification. In (12a) the subject may have bought a definite quantity of sugar, but on a more likely interpretation the focus is on quality rather than quantity. The subject has bought sugar – not, say, salt. It follows from this that while accusative only signals that the NP in question is an object, the genitive sig-

nals that the NP is both an object and denotes an indefinite quantity (cf. Gladrow 1979; Nørgård-Sørensen 1984 for discussion). For the sake of explicitness the content of the relevant case endings is summarized in (13).

- (13)
- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|----------|
| genitive: | object
indef. quant. | accusative: | [object] |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------|----------|

The notion of 'indefinite quantity' suggests a connection to indefiniteness, and indeed there is one, although the two notions are not the same. If we go back to the definition of definite NP in section 2, we see that it contains a requirement of maximality. If there are seven gallons of milk in the current discourse space, the definite form *the milk* is only appropriate if it refers to all the seven gallons. If we have non-maximal reference, then we have indefiniteness. Now, non-maximal reference is the same as indefinite quantity, in the sense that in sentences like (12b) one talks about some but not all the sugar. Therefore, indefinite quantity entails indefiniteness as defined in section 2.

The situation resembles the realization of definiteness through topic. The category object of quantification is realized by case endings, and the definiteness is realized by implication since all objects of quantification are necessarily indefinite. On this basis I conclude that the Russian case system displays indirect and implicational realization of definiteness through the category of quantified object.

Before leaving the topic a couple of words about the accusative are in order. Given that it is quantification that provides the link to definiteness and indefiniteness, and that the accusative does not involve quantification, it follows that the accusative does not signal neither definiteness nor indefiniteness of the object. Nevertheless, Nørgård-Sørensen (1984:27) and others have reported that there is a statistical tendency for the accusative to correlate with definiteness, and on this basis it seems reasonable to assume that the accusative in the relevant constructions displays indirect and statistical realization of definiteness.

(14) Morphological realization I (case of quantified object):

- a) Definiteness: indirect and implicational realization (accusative)
- b) Indefiniteness: indirect and implicational realization (genitive)

4.2 *The Sub-system of Negation*

Under sentential negation an object of a transitive verb and the single argument of an unaccusative verb (i.e. an intransitive verb with a patientive subject) may occur in the genitive case as illustrated by (15a) and (16a). The genitive alternates with nominative for unaccusatives and accusative for transitives, as can be seen from (15b) and (16b).

(15) Unaccusative verb:

- a) Grby zdes' ne rastut
mushrooms-nom here neg grow

'(The) mushrooms don't grow here.' (Babyonshv et al. 1994:5)

- b) Grbov zdes' ne rastet
mushrooms-gen here neg grow

'No mushrooms don't grow here. /'There are no mushrooms here.' (Babyonshv et al. 1994:5)

(16) Transitive verb:

- a) On svoich veščej ne našel.
He-nom self-gen-pl things-gen.pl neg found.

'He did not find his things.' (Franks and Dziwitrak 1993:280)

- b) On svoi vešči ne našel.
He-nom self-acc-pl things-acc.pl neg found.

'He did not find his things.' (Franks and Dziwitrak 1993:280)

Timberlake (1985) observes that the choice of case is correlated to the individuation of the referent of the relevant NP. The less individuated the referent, the more likely the NP is to be in the genitive, while nominative and accusative are preferred for referents that show high degree of individuation. On this basis we may say that genitive in this construction signals individuation to a low degree, and nominative/accusative high degree of individuation, as is stated in (17).

(17)

- Acc/nom: high degree of individuation
Gen: low degree of individuation

Timberlake (1985:339) defines individuation as 'the degree to which the participant is characterized as a distinct entity or individual in the nar-

rated event'. It depends on a number of parameters, *inter alia* those listed in table 2.4

Category:	High individuation:	Low individuation:
properness:	proper name	common noun
abstractness:	concrete	abstract
countability:	count	mass
animacy	animate	inanimate
number	singular	plural
definiteness	definite	indefinite
negation	neutral	emphatic
focus	topicalized	neutral

Table 2: Parameters contributing to individuation (Timberlake 1985:356)

As can be seen from the list, definiteness/indefiniteness is one of the factors that contribute to the individuation of a referent. However, since other parameters also contribute, the choice of case does not strictly entail either definiteness or indefiniteness. Nevertheless, a prototypical NP in the genitive is indefinite and an NP in the accusative or nominative definite, and my conclusion is therefore that case under negation offers indirect and statistical realization of definiteness and indefiniteness.

(18) Morphological realization II (case under negation):

- a) Definiteness: indirect and implicational realization (nom/acc)
b) Indefiniteness: indirect and statistical realization (gen)

Before we proceed to section five of the paper, it should be noted that this conclusion hinges on the independence of the parameters in table 2. If it can be demonstrated that all parameters reduce to a single parameter which entails definiteness/indefiniteness, we have implicational and indirect realization. Furthermore, if it can be demonstrated that all the parameters reduce to definiteness/indefiniteness, we have direct realization of these categories. Attempts by Neidle (1988) and others to reduce the issue to scope relations indicate that such possibilities cannot be ruled out, but since these works have not focused especially on definiteness, I think more

⁴For discussion of the force of the various parameters, see Mustajoki and Heino (1991).

research must be carried out in order to settle the issue, and at present it seems safest to adopt the conclusions in (18).

5. The Lexical subsystem

5.1 Lexical Realization of Definiteness: *ëtot* 'this' and *tot* 'that'

Russian has at its disposal a number of lexical markers of definiteness as can be seen from (19). I shall focus on the demonstrative pronouns, which is the most interesting case since they show signs of development into definite articles. All the items in (19) exhibit the same relationship to definiteness.

- (19) Some Russian lexical markers of definiteness:
- demonstratives
 - anaphoric pronouns
 - possessive pronouns
 - definite quantifiers (e.g. *oba* 'both' and *ves'* 'the whole')

The Russian demonstrative pronouns *ëtot* and *tot* resemble their English counterparts *this* and *that* very closely. They signal that the referent is identifiable in the current discourse space, but in addition to this they focus on the elements as members of categories or sets. *Ëtot* singles out the proximal member of a set, and *tot* the distal member. Simplified paraphrases of the meanings are given in (20) and (21).⁵ The mnemonic representations in (22) clarify the difference between the meanings of the demonstratives and definite articles.

- (20) The meaning of *ëtot* 'this':
Ëtot expresses definiteness and that the referent is the proximal member of a set of more than one element.

- (21) The meaning of *tot* 'that':
Tot expresses definiteness and that the referent is the distal member of a set of more than one element.

⁵The paraphrases do not justice to all the subtleties of demonstrative pronouns, but they are nevertheless adequate for present purposes. For a detailed discussion of the Russian facts, see Padučeva (1985).

- (22)
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------|---|----------|---|
| <i>ëtot/this:</i> | [| [| [| [| [|
| definite |] | definite |] | the: |] |
| proximal |] | distal |] | [unique] |] |

The English examples in (23) illustrate what it means to be a member of a set in this connection. If I say *this king* or *that king*, I convey that more than one king may be relevant, whereas if I simply say *the king*, no such implication arises. As Padučeva (1985:158f.) points out, the focus is not on the referent as a member of a category when the definite article is used.

- (23)
- The king is bald.
 - This king is bald.
 - That king is bald.

The representations in (22) make it easy to establish the relationship between demonstrative pronouns and definiteness. Definiteness is part of the meaning of demonstrative pronouns, and demonstrative pronouns therefore provide direct realization of definiteness.

Definiteness is expressed in separate lexemes, which are, however, phonologically similar in the same way as *this* and *that* resemble each other formally. The English demonstratives also resemble the definite article, and historically the definite article has developed from a demonstrative pronoun (Hawkins 1978:155). The demonstrative pronouns have lost their stress and also been segmentally reduced. They have also been semantically bleached in that the opposition between distal and proximal has been neutralized so that the resulting element is a pure marker of definiteness. Grammaticalization processes of this type are well known from many languages, e.g. Scandinavian and Bulgarian.

Russian may be in an early stage of this development. The full forms of the demonstrative pronouns are stressed and normally appear before the noun they modify, but an unstressed variant may also occur after the noun. In examples like (24b), the meaning of proximity is reported to be bleached or lost, and we are thus dealing with something similar to the Germanic definite article (see Birkenmaier 1979:89f.; Gladrow 1979:216ff.; Nørgård-Sørensen 1983b:19 and references in these works; Gladrow 1992:253f.).

However, the parallel is not complete as long as the unstressed post-noun demonstrative is not obligatory in any syntactic construction in Russian.

- (24)
- a) Zatem s solidnym dokumentom ot redakcii on poechal na sever (...).
'Afterwards he went up north with a substantial document from the editors.'
- b) Dokument étot byl neobchodim ...
Document this was necessary
'He needed the document' (Birkenmaier 1979:90)

5.2 Lexical Realization of Indefiniteness: Pronouns in *-to* and *-nibud'*

There are numerous lexical markers of indefiniteness in Russian, some of which are listed in (25). I shall only discuss pronouns in *-to* and *-nibud'* since all the listed elements display similar relationships to indefiniteness.

- (25) Indefinites:
- a) pronouns in *-to* (e.g. *kto-to* 'somebody')
- b) pronouns in *-nibud'* (e.g. *kto-nibud'* 'somebody')
- c) pronouns in *-libo* (e.g. *kto-libo* 'somebody')
- d) pronouns in *ne* (e.g. *nekto* 'somebody')
- e) pronouns in *koe-* (e.g. *koe-kto* 'somebody')
- f) *odin* 'one, a'

As is noted in virtually any textbook on semantics, sentences like (26a) are ambiguous. On a specific reading John has a certain blonde in mind, on a non-specific any girl will do provided that she is blonde. In the same way as the English sentence in (26a), the Russian sentence in (26b) also permits both a specific and a non-specific reading. However, as observed by Dahl (1970:34), the sentence may be disambiguated by the addition of pronouns in *-to* and *-nibud'*.

- (26)
- a) John wants to marry a blonde. (spec./non-spec.)
- b) Ivan chočet ženit'sja na blondinke.
Ivan-nom wants marry at blonde-loc
'Ivan wants to marry a blonde.' (spec./non-spec.)

- c) Ivan chočet ženit'sja na kakoj-to blondinke. (spec.)
Ivan-nom wants marry at indef.spec blonde-loc
'Ivan wants to marry a (certain) blonde.'
- d) Ivan chočet ženit'sja na kakoj-nibud' blondinke.(non-spec.)
Ivan-nom wants marry at indef.non-spec. blonde-loc
'Ivan wants to marry a(ny) blonde.'

In all the sentences we have indefiniteness in that we are talking about a blonde whom the addressee is not expected to identify. Accordingly we can describe the meaning of the pronouns in *-nibud'* as non-specific and indefinite and the meaning of those in *-to* as specific and indefinite. Simple representations are given in (27). Since both types of pronoun contain the component 'indefinite', they both evince direct realization of indefiniteness.

- (27)
- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---|------------|
| <i>-nibud'</i> : | indefinite |] | indefinite |
| | non-specific | | specific |

The analysis I have outlined is due to Dahl (1970). It differs from a more traditional analysis according to which pronouns in *-to* signal that the referent is unknown to the speaker. Padučeva (1985:210ff.) argues for this analysis on the basis of the examples in (28).

- (28)
- a) Ivan chočet speť kakoj-to/kakoj-nibud' romans.
b) Ja choču speť *kakoj-to/kakoj-nibud' romans.

Her argument appears to be that *-to* is impossible in (28b) because it would imply that the speaker does not know what s/he wants to sing, but still wants to sing it (see also Kobozeva 1981:168). However, Dahl (1970) notes that the similar sentence in (29) is possible and appropriate 'when you want to tell a child: "I am going to buy you something, but I won't tell you what"'. This judgment is verified by two of my informants.

- (29) Ja tebe kuplju čto-to. (Dahl 1970:34)

Given this, the traditional analysis cannot be fully adequate. The question that remains is to explain under Dahl's analysis why Padučeva's

example with *-to* in (28b) is infelicitous. I would suggest that the explanation is that the speaker is not maximally informative. S/he knows more than s/he says, and so does not act in harmony with Gricean maxims about cooperativeness. Sentences like (28a) where the subject is not the speaker are more felicitous with *-to*, in that the speaker may employ the pronoun *-to* because s/he does not know what the subject is going to sing. In this case the speaker is as informative s/he can. Hence the use is in accord with the Gricean maxims, and the sentence is more easily judged as felicitous. Sentences like Dahl's example are adequate in situations where it is socially appropriate or even required not to be maximally informative. Indeed, in the situation with the child, maximal informativeness would defeat the communicative point.

Before we leave the lexical subsystem one remark is in order. A possible objection to the analysis I have presented might be that pronouns in *-to* and *-nibud'* are not lexical markers of definiteness, since the particles *-to* and *-nibud'* are attached to a question word. Thus, one might argue that we are dealing with realization of indefiniteness through cliticization or affixation. However, this objection seems misguided. The difference between *-to* and *-nibud'* regards specificity. Since both are indefinite, indefiniteness must be expressed by the common element, i.e. the question word. This makes sense, since a question word involves a plea for identification of a referent who therefore cannot be definite.

6. Interaction

We have seen that the content of definiteness and indefiniteness finds formal realization in three different subsystems. I shall now discuss how these subsystems interact in terms of relative strength. More specifically, we shall see what happens when an NP represents both a definiteness and an indefiniteness marker simultaneously. Three possible outcomes of such conflicts are listed in (30).

- (30)
- Override
 - Clash
 - Reconciliation

In the case of *override* one marker outweighs another. The NP is therefore interpreted as if the "weaker" marker were not there. A *clash* occurs whenever the conflict yields infelicitous or even ungrammatical sentences. In the case of *reconciliation* the conflict yields NP's which are simultaneously both definite and indefinite, but are still interpretable because definiteness and indefiniteness refer to different levels. In what follows, we shall consider examples of all three types.

6.1 Lexical Realization of Indefiniteness vs. Syntactic Realization of Definiteness

We have seen that sentence initial position functions as a topic marker and hence implies definiteness. A potential clash therefore occurs if a sentence initial NP contains an indefinite pronoun. Nørgård-Sørensen (1983a) addresses this question briefly, and shows on the basis of experiments with informants that the resulting NP is interpreted as indefinite. For instance, the sentence in (31b) is impossible in a context which defines the initial NP as topic, because this would have required an interpretation as definite. However, it is acceptable in the context in (32) which defines the NP as focus, since focus accepts and prefers indefinite NPs.

- (31) Topic-inducing context
- K nej podošel neznakomyj čelovek.
'A stranger went over to her.'
 - ?_{top}[Kakoj-to čelovek] podchvati ee pod ruku.
indef.spec person-nom took her under arm-acc
'Somebody got a hold of her arm.'
- (32) Focus-inducing context
- Ona kačnulas', edva ne upala.
She teetered, almost falling.
 - loc[Kakoj-to čelovek] podchvati ee pod ruku.
indef.spec person-nom took her under arm-acc
'Somebody got a hold of her arm.'

This suggests that lexical realization of indefiniteness is stronger than syntactic realization of definiteness. In situations of potential conflict the

lexical marker takes precedence, and the NP is interpreted as indefinite despite sentence initial position.

6.2 *Lexical Realization of Definiteness vs. Morphological Realization of Indefiniteness*

In section 4.1 I argued that genitive in quantified objects is a morphological marker of indefiniteness. Therefore, one would expect a conflict to arise in sentences like (33b) where a noun in the genitive is modified by the definiteness marker *ëtogo* (genitive of *ëtot* 'this'). An informant regards the sentence as acceptable in the context of (33a). As suggested by the gloss 'some of this tea' the NP *ëtogo čaju* is interpreted as a non-identifiable amount of an identifiable substance. In this way the NP is simultaneously both definite and indefinite. However, the potential conflict is resolved and ungrammaticality is avoided since indefiniteness relates to the token level and definiteness to the type level. This is an example of reconciliation in the sense of (30b) above.

- (33)
- a) *Mne pravitsja "Indijskij" sort čaja.*
'I like tea of the "Indian" type.'
- b) Ivan *privěz ètogo čaju iz Indii.*
Ivan-nom brought this-gen tea-gen from India-nom.
'Ivan brought some of this tea from India.'

Another example involving a potential conflict between lexical and morphological realization is (34). The sentence involves an object NP in the genitive case in a negated sentence. As was argued in 4.2, genitive is a marker of indefiniteness in this context. A potential conflict arises because the object also involves the demonstrative *ëtogo*, which – as we have just seen – is a lexical marker of definiteness.

- (34) On *ne stal trogat' ètogo volokna.*⁶
He not start touch this-gen/acc filament-gen/acc
'He did not touch this filament.'

⁶Example from Arkadij Strugackij & Boris Strugackij (1997): *Ulitka na sklone*, Moscow: AST and St. Petersburg: Terra Fantastica, p. 491. Thanks to Tanja Kudjavtseva who brought the example to my attention.

The sentence is uttered by the protagonist who is out in the forest for the first time. He becomes aware of something cold that touches his face. He wonders whether this *volokno* 'fibre, filament' is a plant or an animal. *Volokno* is normally treated as inanimate in Russian syntax. However, under this interpretation the object NP is clearly in the genitive. According to my informant, the conflict in between definiteness and indefiniteness makes the sentence pragmatically infelicitous. Now, if *volokno* is animated, i.e. treated as animate despite its normal status as inanimate, the conflict is resolved. For animates, the formal opposition between the genitive and accusative cases is neutralized, which facilitates an interpretation of *volokna* as an accusative form. Since the accusative case does not imply indefiniteness, no conflict with the definiteness marker *ëtogo* arises.

The animation of *volokno* arguably bear on the relative strength of lexical and syntactic realization of (in)definiteness. The lexical marker of definiteness forces a reinterpretation of the noun as animate in order to avoid a conflict with the morphological marker of indefiniteness. In this way, the lexical marker suppresses the morphological marker, which suggests that the former is in some sense stronger than the latter. Admittedly, however, an isolated example of this type probably carries limited weight as linguistic evidence, since the conflict between definiteness and indefiniteness is exploited in a work of fiction in order to achieve an artistic effect.

6.3 *Morphological Realization of Indefiniteness vs. Syntactic Realization of Definiteness*

Given that the topic of a sentence is correlated with definiteness and genitive case with indefiniteness, we must ask if and how a genitive NP is interpretable as the topic of a sentence. Example (35b) involves a sentence initial quantified object in the genitive, which must be interpreted as a topic in the context of (35a). The sentence is judged as infelicitous in the relevant context by an informant. This suggests that the conflict between the morphological and syntactic markers of (in)definiteness yields an unresolvable clash, i.e. an outcome of type (30b) above.

- (35)
- a) *Otkuda ogury?*
'Where are the cucumbers from?'

- b) ^{7?}topl[Ogurcov] ja privěz iz Rossii.
Cucumber-gen.pl I brought from Russia-gen
'Cucumbers I have brought from Russia.'

However, a similar example is in fact attested in the literature. In (36b) a quantified object in the genitive occurs in sentence initial position.⁷ As indicated by the gloss, the object is interpreted as a non-identifiable amount of an identifiable substance. Thus, the object is simultaneously both definite and indefinite. However, in the same way as in (33) above, the potential conflict is resolved and ungrammaticality is avoided because definiteness relates to the token level and definiteness to the type level.

- (36)
a) Vodka pri mne, ee chvatit na vsech. Dve butylki – v odnoj chorošaja, v drugoj – otravlenaja.
'I've got vodka, there's enough for everybody. Two bottles – one good, and one bad.'
b) Chorošej vyp'em sečas [...], otravlenoj pust'
Good-gen drink at once bad let
potčujutsja te. the others-nom
enjoy
'We'll drink from the good vodka first [...], the bad one the others can have fun with.' (Birkenmaier 1979:119)

Evidence from negated objects in sentence initial positions bears more directly on the relative strength of the morphological and syntactic subsystems. Informants without hesitation accept sentences with accusative (37b) and genitive (37c) objects in this position in topic-inducing contexts like (37a).⁸ The accusative object in (37b) is interpreted as definite, the genitive object in (37c) as indefinite. Since a genitive object is interpreted as indefinite despite its occurrence in sentence initial position, the morphological marker suppresses the syntactic marker. In other words, sentences of

⁷I shall not discuss whether the object in (36b) is best analysed as a topic or a contrastive focus, since both discourse functions favour definiteness. For a discussion of contrastive foci in Russian, see King (1995).

⁸Similar sentences are discussed in Nørgård-Sørensen (1983a:38). See also Nørgård-Sørensen (1984).

this type provide evidence that morphological realization of (in)definiteness overrides syntactic realization.

- (37)
a) Ty videl restoran?
'Did you see a/the restaurant?'
b) Net, restoran ja ne videl.
No restaurant-acc I neg saw.
'No, I did not see the restaurant.'
c) Net, restorana ja ne videl.
No restaurant-gen I neg saw.
'No, I did not see a/any restaurant.'

6.4 A System of Interaction

In 6.1 through 6.3 I have presented evidence that suggests that lexical realization is stronger than morphological and syntactic realization, and that morphology is stronger than syntax. It is important to notice that these individual observations are consistent with each other in that the hierarchy in (38) can be formulated.

- (38) Hierarchy of (in)definiteness realization:
Lexical >> Morphological >> Syntactic (> = 'takes precedence over, overrides')

The implications of this hierarchy are far-reaching. The hierarchy suggests that lexical, morphological and syntactic realization of (in)definiteness in Russian are not isolated systems, but rather subsystems of a coherent general system. Admittedly, the data material I have considered in this study is very restricted, so it may be premature to draw firm conclusions at this stage. However, the hierarchy in (38) stands out as an attractive working hypothesis for future research.

In addition to the cases where one subsystem overrides another, we have seen examples where no override takes place. In some cases a conflict between indefiniteness and definiteness simply yields a clash, i.e. an infelicitous sentence, whereas in other cases the conflict is reconciled. Sentences of this latter type contain NP's which are simultaneously definite and indefinite, but where definiteness and indefiniteness pertain to different

levels. To work out in greater detail the conditions for clash and reconciliation stands out as an important task for future research on (in)definiteness conflicts in Russian.

A third topic for future research pertains to the motivation of the observed patterns of interaction. For instance, why does the lexical subsystem evince greater strength than its competitors? Two hypotheses immediately spring to mind. First, one might speculate that lexical realization is strongest because a lexical marker is "heavier" in the sense that it contains more phonological material than, say, an inflectional suffix (a morphological marker). On the other hand, one might also hypothesize that relative strength is correlated to directness of realization. Recall from sections 3 through 5 that the lexical subsystem evinces what I have called direct realization, whereas the other two systems involve indirect realization. However, the data material presented in this study is too restricted to allow us to draw firm conclusions, and I therefore leave the question open for future research.

7. Summary

The question I addressed in the beginning of this paper was how the content of definiteness and indefiniteness is realized formally in Russian. I have approached the question on two levels, namely with regard to certain subsystems of the grammar and with regard to the interaction of these subsystems. On the subsystem level we have seen that syntax, morphology and lexicon provide direct and indirect, implicational and statistical realizations of definiteness and indefiniteness, as summarized in table 3. On the higher level, I have suggested that the subsystems interact in terms of relative strength, where lexical realization overrides morphological realization, which in turn overrides syntactic realization. On this basis my overall conclusion is that Russian posits a well-defined and consistent system for formal realization of the content of definiteness and indefiniteness. Although this conclusion is arrived at on the basis of a very restricted set of data, it is my hope that the problems I have addressed and the questions that derive from my analysis may stimulate future research on the subtle system of (in)definiteness marking in Russian.

	Direct realization:	Indirect realization: Implicational:	Statistical:
Syntax:		<i>topic</i>	FOCUS
Morphology:		QUANT. GEN	<i>acc/hom</i>
Lexicon:	<i>demonstratives</i>		NEG. GEN
	INDEF. PRONOUNS		

Table 3: (In)definiteness marking
 SMALL CAPITALS: indefiniteness marking
italic: definiteness marking

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