

The only and definiteness in English and Russian

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1 A puzzle

Courtesy of Coppock and Beaver (2015).

- (1) Scott is not the only author of *Waverley*.
- (2) Anna didn't score the only goal.

2 Research questions

- What are the semantics of *the only* constructions in English and in Russian?
- How do the semantics of *the only* relate to definiteness?
- What is the relationship between regular *only* and *the only*?

3 Russian data

Tol'ko and *edinstvennyj*

- (3) **Tol'ko** studenty prišli.
only students came
'Only the students came.'
- (4) Marija vzjala **edinstvennuju** knigu.
Maria took **only** book.
'Maria took the only book.'

Predicative anti-uniqueness

- (5) Tolstoj ne *edinstvennyj* avtor *Vojny i mira*
Tolstoy not only author *War and Peace*
'Tolstoy is not the only author of *War and Peace*.'

Argumental anti-uniqueness

- (6) Anna didn't score the only goal. *It was an excellent strike. (ambiguous)
- (7) Anna **ne** zabila edinstvennyj gol. On byl otlichnyj udar.
Anna **not** scored only goal it was excellent strike
'Anna didn't score the only goal. It was an excellent strike.' (one goal)
- (8) Anna zabila **ne** edinstvennyj gol. On byl otlichnyj udar.
Anna scored **not** only goal it was excellent strike
'Anna didn't score the only goal. It was an excellent strike.' (multiple goals)

Indefinite *edinstvennyj*

- (9) U etoj kompanii — (odin/??edinstvennyj) direktor
At this company (one/only) director
'This company has a sole director.'

4 Summary

- *Only* and *the only* are different words in Russian, raising the possibility that they have different semantics.
- Anti-uniqueness effects are evident in predicative definites but not in argumental definites in Russian.
- Contrary to Coppock and Beaver's (2015) predictions, indeterminate readings for *edinstvennyj* do not seem to be more widely available in Russian.

5 Outlook

- More data collection in Russian
- Does *edinstvennyj* correspond to *only*, *single*, *sole*, or *one*?
- More research on negation and its interaction with *the only*

References

- Coppock, Elizabeth, and David Beaver. 2015. Definiteness and determinacy. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 38:377–435.