

Multiple prenominal adjectives ordering in Russian: a corpus study

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The work deals with the multiple prenominal adjectives ordering within a DP/NP in Russian. Many cross-linguistic and language-specific studies concern the problem of restrictions on their ordering (Lance, 1968; Vendler, 1968; Quirk et al, 1972 for English; *Russkaya Grammatika*, 1980; Pereltsvaig, 2007 for Russian and numerous others). The focus of most of them is the hierarchy of the adjectival types (e.g. Dixon, R.M.W. 1982, Scott 1998; Chinque 1994 etc.). The aim of the present work is to examine the claim concerning word order hierarchy for adjectives suggested in (Chinque 1994 and Svenonius 1994) via quantitative analysis of corpus data. We use the data from the Russian National Corpus (RNC). The following hierarchy was checked Possessive > Quantity > Order > Quality > Size > Shape > Colour > Nationality.

In order to check the hierarchy constraints we consider the two element chains of adjectives. We use the Russian National Corpus semantic annotation taxonomy for the semantic class of an adjective. We checked the pairwise orders for different semantic classes (e.g. possessive > colour vs. colour > possessive etc.). For the majority of pairs, the word order predicted by the hierarchy predominates. However, there are examples where word order does not correspond to the hierarchy. Our analysis has shown that these violations are of the following types: (a) adjective ambiguity (it has more than one semantic tag, cf. *vishnevyy* – ‘cherry’ vs. ‘cherry-coloured’); (b) adjectives in idioms (non-compositional reading of Adj+Noun expression, e.g. an adjective is a part of a term: *glubokaya tarelka* – lit. ‘cutglass deep plate’, meaning ‘cutglass soup plate’); (c) cases of inaccurate semantic annotation.

The two cases of significant hierarchy violation need special analysis. Firstly, our corpus data confirm the claim that the possessive adjectives (adjectives tagged as possessive adjectives in RNC) should be divided into two classes: referential possessives (e.g. *Petin* ‘Peter’s’) and so called ‘generic’ possessive (e.g. *chicken breast*). The referential ones occupy the most left position while the generic ones occupy the position closer to the noun. Secondly, the hierarchy violation concerns the evaluative vs. form/size adjectives. The corpus data has shown that ‘form’ adjectives acquire the evaluative meaning quite frequently. The pair Evaluation vs. Size adjectives have no significant difference in frequency. There is some typological (Svenonius 1994) and psycholinguistics evidence (Moskaleva 2010) that ‘size’ and ‘evaluative’ adjectives form clusters within a hierarchy. Our quantitative data confirm this statement.

Our research has shown that the quantitative corpus data could serve as additional verification for theoretical claims (the word order hierarchy for multiple prenominal adjectives, in our case). The corpus data confirm the claim that the change of the adjective structural position induces its semantic type coercion. The corpus data has also shown that the structural adjective position entails possible interpretation of an adjective (can entail the adjective semantic type coercion): it induces the non-direct interpretation for a relative adjective placed further from the head noun than a qualitative one. The frequency distribution of word order in NP reveals data heterogeneity, for instance, the cases, when a semantic class consists of structurally different classes (c.f. referential vs. generic possessives). It could detect the semantic/syntactic shifts. It could also show that the data do not form the linear hierarchy but rather more complicated structure.

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