

The relationship between quantifier scope, word order and prosody in the Russian of heritage speakers and second language learners

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This talk examines how both heritage speakers (HSs) and second language learners (L2ers) of Russian interpret scopally ambiguous sentences, and in particular whether they are sensitive to the effects of word order and prosody on scope.

Double-quantifier sentences such as (1)-(2) present a challenge for learners because languages differ in the range of possible interpretations available to them. In English, (1)-(2) are ambiguous between surface-scope and inverse-scope readings (cf. May 1977). The focus of the present work is on corresponding sentences in Russian, both sentences with the canonical SVO order ((3a), (4a)), and their scrambled OVS counterparts ((3b),(4b)). Ionin and Luchkina (2014) have shown that with neutral prosody, surface scope is strongly preferred; inverse scope becomes possible when the indefinite determiner is placed in contrastive focus (cf. Krifka 1998); this effect is particularly pronounced with OVS order, suggesting that contrastive focus on the scrambled indefinite object (in (4b)) facilitates reconstruction.

- (1) One girl stroked every kitten.
 - a. surface-scope (one>every): *one specific girl stroked all the kittens*
 - b. inverse-scope (every>one): *for every kitten, one (potentially different) girl stroked it*
- (2) Every girl stroked one kitten.
 - a. surface-scope (every>one): *every girl stroked one (potentially different) kitten*
 - b. inverse-scope (one>every): *for one specific kitten, every girl stroked it*
- (3) a. Odná devočka pogladila každogo kotenka.
one girl-Nom stroked every kitten-Acc
b. Každogo kotenka pogladila odná devočka.
every kitten-Acc stroked one girl-Nom
- (4) a. Každája devočka pogladila odnogo kotenka.
every girl-Nom stroked one kitten-Acc
b. Odnogo kotenka pogladila každája devočka.
one kitten-Acc stroked every girl-Nom

Prior studies of scope in L2-acquisition of Chinese and of Japanese (Marsden 2004, Li 2008) find transfer of available scope interpretations. No prior L2-scope studies have looked at the role of prosody, or compared how L2ers and HSs acquire scope interpretation (for L2/HS comparisons in other domains, cf. Montrul et al. 2010, Montrul and Ionin 2012, among others). In this talk, the following research questions are posed: (1) Do HSs and/or L2ers of Russian whose dominant language is English allow both surface and inverse scope in Russian, due to transfer from English, or do they exhibit a target-like preference for surface scope in prosodically neutral sentences? (2) Are HSs and/or L2ers of Russian sensitive to the role of contrastive stress in facilitating inverse scope, at least at higher proficiency levels? and (3) Do HSs of Russian, who were exposed to Russian at home but English at school, pattern with L2ers or with native speakers in their scope interpretation, and does the age at which they learned English play a role?

This study uses a sentence/picture verification task, in which participants listen to sentences like (3)-(4) and indicate whether the sentence matches the picture. The target pictures match only the surface-scope or only the inverse-scope interpretation, while control pictures match both interpretations. Two versions of the task were constructed, one with Russian and one with English stimuli, in order to provide a direct comparison between the two languages and examine the effects of transfer from English. The Russian task was administered to native Russian speakers, adult HSs of Russian in the U.S., and adult classroom L2ers of Russian. The English task was administered to monolingual native English speakers as well as to a subset of the Russian HSs, in order to compare these HSs' performance in English and Russian directly. The study results will be discussed, with a particular focus on how the type of acquisition context affects the complex interaction of syntax, semantics and prosody in the area of scope interpretation.