Is there semantic definiteness without articles?

Olga Borik
UNED

oborik@flog.uned.es

A general question that arises with respect to article-less languages from a semantic perspective is whether nominal phrases in argument position are ambiguous between a definite and an indefinite interpretation or whether one of the interpretations is 'basic' and the other one is derived. In this talk, I will discuss three options: a *free type shift* (e.g., Chierchia 1998), a *definiteness* (Dayal 2004) and an *indefiniteness* hypothesis (Heim 2011). I argue that for Russian the *idefiniteness* hypothesis should be adopted. In particular, I show that the uniqueness effect in Russian do not come from 'within' the nominal phrase and cannot be associated with the *iota* type shift, which rules out any hypothesis that derives a definite interpretation by means of a *iota* shift. The crucial empirical evidence comes from the contrast between (1a) and (1b):

(1) a. *The author* of this book gave an interview. #The other author / another author appeared in a TV show.

   b. *Avtor* etoj   knigi   dal intervju Novoj gazete.
       author this.GEN book.GEN gave interview NG.GEN

       Drugoj   avtor vystupil v ėfire Ėxa Moskvy.
       Another author appeared in radio 'EM'

The default interpretation of the first subject in both (1a) and (1b) involves uniqueness and the subject of the Russian (1b) should be interpreted as definite ('the author'). However, this type of uniqueness is easily cancellable in Russian, given a possible continuation with 'another author' referring to another author of the same book. In English, however, the expression 'another author' can only be used as referring to another author of another book, so that the uniqueness of the subject of the first sentence cannot be cancelled.

References: • Chierchia, G. (1998): Reference to kinds across languages. *NLS* 6, 339–405. • Dayal, V. (2004) Number marking and (in)de niteness in kind terms. *Linguistics & Philosophy* 27, 393–450. • Heim, I. (2011) Definiteness and Indefiniteness. In: *Semantics: An International Handbook of Natural Language Meaning*.