

Title: Acquiring Indefinite Pronouns in Russian as a Second Language: Language Case a Teaching Resource
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Abstract:

Successful command of all sets of Russian indefinite pronouns requires from an L2 learner an ability to simultaneously consider multiple factors. This turns the choice of the pronoun into quite a complex algorithm for L2 learners.

The Russian Learner Corpus and the Russian National Corpus serve as useful tools for (1) predicting the difficulties in acquisition of different types of pronouns, and (2) designing exercises that specifically target these difficulties.

Previous research of -to, -nibud', -libo, and koe- pronouns [1] has demonstrated that both, L2 and heritage learners of Russian, avoid using koe- indefinites in their spontaneous speech / writing while they use all other types of indefinites often and with very few errors (on average of 90% accuracy).

The almost perfect performance of Russian learners in production of -to indefinites (98%) is not surprising; their semantics and contexts of usage seem to be the most transparent and well described [2, 3, 4]. However, the striking absence of examples of koe- indefinites in RLC requires some explanation. This gap in the acquisition may have something to do with the nature of koe- indefinites themselves, with how these indefinite pronouns function in contemporary Russian, or result from a systematic problem of various textbooks in giving a correct description of this type of pronouns. In this paper we will:

- Analyze how koe- indefinites differ from other types of Russian indefinite pronouns; and see the differences between types of koe- indefinites themselves that split between the so-called pronouns of introductory usage, and pronouns of non-introductory usage (terms by Elena Paducheva);
- See the cases when the notion of speaker identifiability of koe- indefinites (which is the key distinguishing feature for these pronouns when they are described in textbooks) fails to account for their behavior (and even the fact of their appearance in particular contexts);
- Address the Russian National Corpus, and see how koe- pronouns are used in contemporary Russian.
- Provide a different description of koe- pronouns; and a different set of examples and exercises that need to be used for L2 learners to successfully master the whole complexity of the system of Russian indefinite pronouns.