Evaluative Categorization of the Russian syncretic derivatives

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The research is aimed at the study of Russian syncretic derivatives evaluative categorization rules. Semantically Russian syncretic derivatives (stukach (a stool pigeon); vorchun (a grumbler); kopusha (a dawdler) etc.) combine both nominative and evaluative components of which the latter can be either dominantly positive or negative or both, which makes them difficult to categorize in terms of their dominant positive or negative charge without a context. A category decision experiment was conducted to reveal how evaluative categorization depends on the derivatives’ dominant evaluative charge (factor 1) and context conditions (factor 2). The context conditions were designed to prime either positive or negative charge of a derivative. The results showed that both conditions define the direction of evaluation (factor 1 - F(1,56)=65.74, p <.05; factor 2 - F(1,56)=41.17, p<.05) but work independently (F(1,56)=0.29, p>0.5). The interaction of the two factors was obtained only in their influence on the time of evaluative categorization (F(1,56)=14.73, p<0.05) which means that the reaction time depended on the charge of both a derivative and an adjective preceding it (context factor). Thus, average time of categorization in case of derivatives with positive semantics in the context with the preceding negative adjective is significantly higher than in case of negative adjective and negative derivative while positive adjective does not influence either positive or negative derivatives. The obtained result evokes to the discussion a so-called negativity bias effect which is based on the assumption that people process negative information with more cognitive effort.

Keywords: categorization, evaluation, a derivative.