Abstract

Defectivity in the genitive plural of a small group of Russian nouns is a well known phenomenon that maintains its interest. Accounts for why these nouns may be defective have tended to focus on their form, and this will continue to be important if we are to have a general account of why they arise. However, little work has been done on potential semantic correlates of defectiveness. Here we consider the question of Russian defective nouns from a new perspective, namely the distributional semantics of case and number using word vectors. In particular we consider Sims’ (2015: 101) conjecture that defectiveness may be the preferred option when there is semantic incongruity.

Sims, A. (2015).*Inflectional Defectiveness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.