

# Aesthetic terms in the Russian worldview

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# DATA

- Key Russian aesthetics terms: *krasivyj*, *nekrasivyj*
- Russian: Russian National Corpus [RNC] (500 mln. words; main (2000-11) and oral (1975-2011) subc. – 70 mln.)

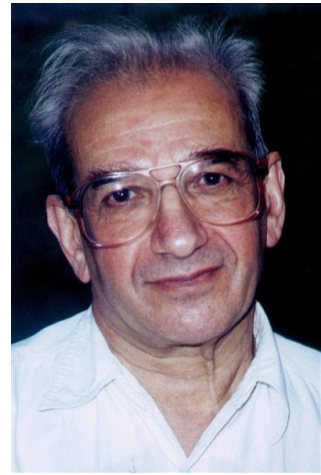
# Methodology and Framework

- Natural Semantic Metalanguage
- Explorations into the Russian linguistic worldview/ Russian folk aesthetics

# Natural Semantic Metalanguage: Russian (Gladkova 2010, 2013, 2018)

Substantives:	JA I, TY you, KTO-TO someone, ČTO-TO~VEŠČ' something/thing, LJUDI people, TELO body
Relational substantives:	ROD~VID kind, ČAST' part
Determiners:	ÉTOT this, TOT ŽE the same, DRUGOJ other
Quantifiers:	ODIN one, DVA two, NEKOTORYE some, VSE all, MNOGO much~many
Attributes:	XOROŠIJ~XOROŠO good, PLOXOJ~PLOXO bad
Descriptors:	BOL'ŠOJ big, MALEN'KIJ small
Mental predicates:	DUMAT' think, ZNAT' know, XOTET' want, ČUVSTVOVAT' feel, VIDET' see, SLYŠAT' hear
Speech:	GOVORIT'~SKAZAT' say, SLOVA words, PRAVDA true
Actions, events, movement, contact:	DELAT' do, PROISXODIT'~SLUČAT'SJA happen, DVGAT'SJA move, KASAT'SJA touch
Location, existence, possession, specification:	BYT' (GDE-TO) be (somewhere), BYT'~EST' there is, BYT' U have, BYT' (KEM-TO/ČEM-TO) be (someone/something)
Life and death:	ŽIT' live, UMERET' die
Time:	KOGDA~VREMJA when~time, SEJČAS now, DO before, POSLE after, DOLGO a long time, KOROTKOE VREMJA, a short time, NEKOTOROE VREMJA for some time, MOMENT moment
Space:	GDE~MESTO where~place, ZDES' here, NAD above, POD below, DALEKO far, BLIZKO near, STORONA side, VNUTRI inside
Logical concepts:	NE not, MOŽET BYT' maybe, MOČ' can, POTOMU ČTO because, ESLI if
Intensifier, augmentor:	OČEN' very, BOL'ŠE~EŠČE more
Similarity:	KAK~TAK like

# each language encodes a particular “naïve” world view...



- The folk picture of the world that developed in the course of centuries and includes folk geometry, physics, psychology, etc., reflects the material and spiritual experience of people (native speakers of certain language) and therefore is language-specific in the following two respects.
- First, a folk picture of a certain portion of the world may be crucially different from a purely logical scientific picture of the same portion of the world that is shared by speakers of a variety of languages.
- Second, folk pictures of the world, obtained through analysis of meanings of words in various languages, may differ in details, whereas a scientific picture of the world does not depend on the language used to describe it.
- The task of a lexicographer (unless he wants to go beyond his discipline and turn into an encyclopedist) consists of discovering the naïve picture of the world hidden in lexical meanings and presenting it in a system of definitions.
- Apresjan (1992 [1974])

# KRASIVYJ

- **krasivyj<sub>1</sub> ('visual perception')**

*Tamara, vy očen' krasivaja ženščina. 'Tamara, you are a very beautiful woman.'*

*Davaj, ja xoču krasivoe plat'e kupit', šikarnoe, na tvoju svad'bu. 'Ok, I want to buy a beautiful dress for your wedding, a splendid one.'*

- **krasivyj<sub>2</sub> ('aural perception')**

*On daval svojim vozljublennym krasivye imena. 'He gave beautiful names to his lovers.'*

*Tembr golosa u tebja krasivyj. Devuškam ponravitsja. 'The timbre of your voice is beautiful. Girls will like it.'*

- **krasivyj<sub>3</sub> ('human action')**

*Davno ja ne videl takoj krasivoj igry! 'I haven't seen such a beautiful game for a long time.'*

*Pridumat' krasivuju zadaču – delo neprostoe. 'To invent a beautiful [mathematical] problem is not an easy task.'*

*Ved' Maša ne tol'ko roždaet krasivye idei, ona vzvalivaet na sebja vse xlopoty, svjazannye s ix voploščeniem. 'Masha not only comes up with beautiful ideas, she also takes responsibility for their implementation.'*

- *?krasivyj opyt/vremja/eda 'beautiful experience/time/meal'*

- ?krasivyj vkus/zapax/oščup' 'beautiful taste/smell/touch'*

[A] *something/someone is **krasivyj**<sub>1</sub>*

(a) this thing [this someone] is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone sees this thing

(c) this someone can't not feel something very good because of this

(d) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very good about it

[B] ***krasivyj**<sub>2</sub> singing/voice/tune*

(a) this thing is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone hears this thing

(c) this someone can't not feel something very good because of this

(d) like people can't not feel something very good at some times  
when they see some things

(e) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very good about it

[C] *someone does **krasivyj**<sub>3</sub> something*

(a) it can be like this:

(b) someone does something at some time

(c) when someone else thinks about it, this someone can't not feel something very good because of this,

(d) like people can't not feel something very good at some times when they see some things

(e) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very good about it

# LINGUISTIC FACTORS

- *sense* and *senses* vs. *čuvstva*, *oščuščenje*, *vospriятие*
- *vosprinimat'* 'perceive' (any mental ability, including reason, sight and hearing) vs.
- *čuvstvovat'* 'feel' and *oščuščat'* 'experience' (olfaction, touch, taste, kinesthetic and other internal senses, but not seeing and hearing)



# CULTURAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS

- in modern culture consumerism is associated with the involvement of all senses; a significant increase in the appeal to the five senses since the mid-nineteenth century (transformation of the nature of capitalism from 'industrial' to 'consumerist'), with a particular increase in the past decades (Howes 2005)
- consumer capitalism was particularly associated with Anglo culture (in countries such as UK and USA and also Australia and Canada); the economic development of Russia, on the contrary, was associated with a significantly smaller impact on consumerism.
- difference in historical and economic development could be the reason for the enlargement of the meaning of *beautiful* to the five senses in English and the absence of a similar phenomenon in Russian

# krasivyj vs. ...

*The Dictionary of Antonyms* (L'vov, 2002):

*krasivyj* vs. *bezobraznyj* 'ugly/frightful' (lit. 'without an image/face')  
*urodlivyj* 'ugly/malformed'  
*nekrasivyj* 'ugly/plain'  
*durnoj* 'bad/ill'.

RNC co-occurrence in the main subcorpus:

*krasivyj* and ***nekrasivyj*** 23 times

*krasivyj* and ***bezobraznyj*** 11 times,

*krasivyj* and *urodlivyj* 6 times,

*krasivyj* and *durnoj* 2 times.

## NEKRASIVYJ 'unbeautiful'

### ○ nekrasivyj<sub>1</sub> ('visual perception')

*[...] vidno bylo, čto ona vlyublenu v Ašxarumovu, kak tol'ko dobrye i nekrasivye devuški byvajut vlyublenu v blistatel'nyx staršix podrug. 'It was evident that she was in love with Ashkharumova as only kind and unbeautiful girls can be in love with older dazzling girlfriends.' I počemu u nee krasivye glaza i kakoj-to ploskij nekrasivyj rot? 'And why does she have beautiful eyes and a somewhat flat unbeautiful mouth?'*

*On zakatil glaza k samomu potolku, gde na tolstom krjuke visit kazennaja nekrasivaja ljustra. 'He raised his eyes to the ceiling where there was an unbeautiful lamp hanging on a thick hook.'*

### ○ nekrasivyj<sub>2</sub> ('aural perception')

*Saša skučala po domu v Xolue, xotja ona staralas' vsegda izbegat' nekrasivogo nazvanija maloj rodiny, zamenjaja ego na gorod v Ivanovskoj oblasti. 'Sasha missed her home in Kholuya, although she tried to avoid the unbeautiful name of her motherland and replace it with a town in Ivanovo region.'*

### ○ nekrasivyj<sub>3</sub> ('human action')

*Ujti nekrasivo: ja obeščal pomoč' s baulami. 'It was inappropriate to leave; I had promised to help with the bags.'*

*Raz ne skazali – nekrasivo sprašivat'. 'If they didn't say [it], it's inappropriate to ask [about it].'*  
*My dolžny izvinit'sja pered vami, Nina Sergeevna, [...] nexorošo bylo, nekrasivo s našej storony tak govorit' o vašem ljubimom poëte. 'We should apologise Nina Sergeevna; it was bad and inappropriate on our side to talk this way about your favourite poet.'*

*Ego nelepye i nekrasivye postupki vyzyvali vo mne ne tol'ko vozmuščenie, no ponimanie i žalost'. 'His absurd and inappropriate deeds made me feel not only resentment, but also understanding and pity.'*

*Nexorošo, nekrasivo, molodoj čelovek, ne uznavat' znakomyx, - smejalsja gigant. 'It is not good and not appropriate, young man, not to recognise acquaintances, - the giant laughed.'*

[D] **nekrasivyj<sub>1</sub>** (nekrasivaja ženščina ‘unbeautiful woman’, nekrasivyj nos ‘unbeautiful nose’, nekrasivyj osobnjak ‘unbeautiful mansion’)

(a) this thing [this someone] is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone sees this thing,

(c) this someone **does not feel something good**

(d) **like people can feel something good when they see something**

(e) at the same time, this someone **doesn't think something good about this something**

[E] **nekrasivyj<sub>2</sub>** (nekrasivyj zvuk ‘unbeautiful sound’)

(a) this thing is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone hears this thing,

(c) this someone does not feel something good

(d) like people can feel something good when they see something

(e) at the same time, this someone doesn't think something good about this something

[F] **nekrasivyj<sub>3</sub>** (nekrasivyj postupok ‘unbeautiful deed’, someone X postupil nekrasivo ‘someone acted unbeautifully/ugly’)

(a) someone X did something

(b) because of this, someone else (Y) felt something bad

(c) someone Y didn't think that someone X would do something like this

(d) people know: it is bad if someone does something like this

## **BEZOBRAZNYJ** 'ugly/frightful'

### **bezobraznyj<sub>1</sub>** 'visual perception'

Ona dumala, čto redko ej prixodilos' videt' takogo bezobraznogo starika. 'She thought that she has rarely seen such an ugly old man.'

Posmotrite na sebja vnimatel'no [...]. Vaši figury bezobrazny. 'Look attentively at yourself [...]. Your figures are ugly.'

Dvesti sorok par odinakovyx krepovyx noskov bezobraznoj goroxovoj rascvetki. 'Two hundred forty pairs of identical crape socks of an ugly pea colouration.'

### **bezobraznyj<sub>2</sub>** 'aural perception'

Seni napolnilis' bezobraznymi zvukami voz'ni [...]. 'The corridor was filled with the ugly sounds of a fight [...].'

### **bezobraznyj<sub>3</sub>** 'human action'

[...] bezobraznoe vystuplenie takoe / očen' neprijatno bylo ego slušat'. '[It was] an outrageous speech, it was very unpleasant to listen to.'

Čelovek edva ne zabolet posle ... bezobraznogo razgovora / kotoryj ty učinil. 'The person almost fell ill after ... the ugly conversation that you started.'

Nemedlenno prekratite aeto bezobraznoe zrelišče. 'Immediately stop this ugly sight.'

[...] proizošla užasnaja scena, [...] aeto byl edinstvennyj slučaj , kogda v deduškinom dome obideli moego otca. 'An ugly scene took place. It was the only time when my father was offended in my grandfather's house.'

Zakony vse bezobraznye / ix vse na 50% nado menjat'. 'The laws are all horrible, 50% of them need to be changed.'

[G] *something/someone is bezobraznyj<sub>1</sub>*

(a) this thing [this someone] is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone sees this thing

(c) this someone can't not feel something very bad because of this

(d) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very bad about it

(e) many things are not like this

[H] *bezobraznyj<sub>2</sub> sound*

(a) this thing is like this:

(b) at many times, when someone hears this thing

(c) this someone can't not feel something very bad because of this

(d) like people can't not feel something very bad at some times when they see some things

(e) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very bad about it

(f) many things are not like this

[I] *(someone does) something bezobraznyj<sub>3</sub>*

(a) it can be like this sometimes:

(b) someone (X) does something at some time

(c) because of this, something bad can happen to someone else (Y)

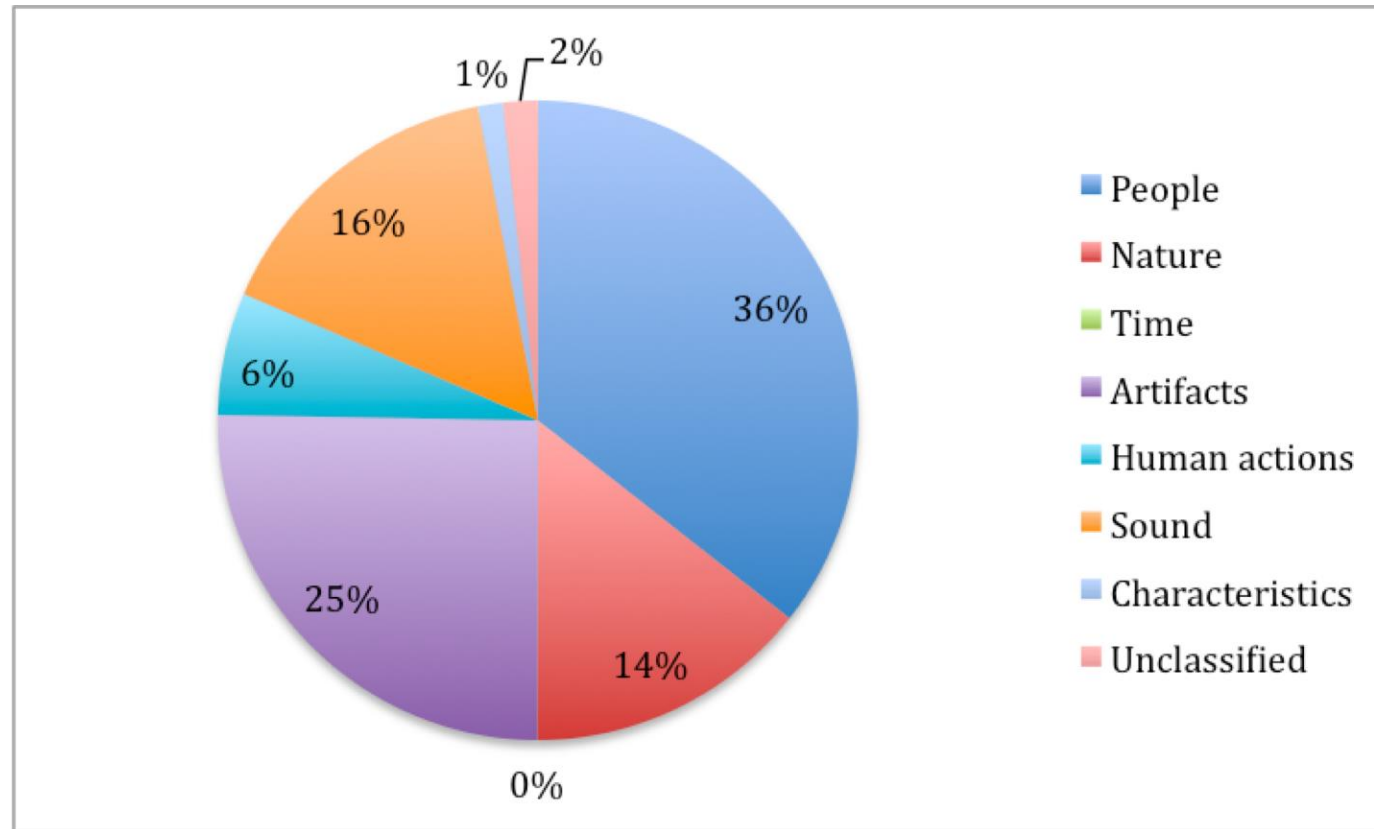
(d) when someone else thinks about it, this someone can't not feel something very bad because of this,

(e) like people can't not feel something very bad at some times when they see some things

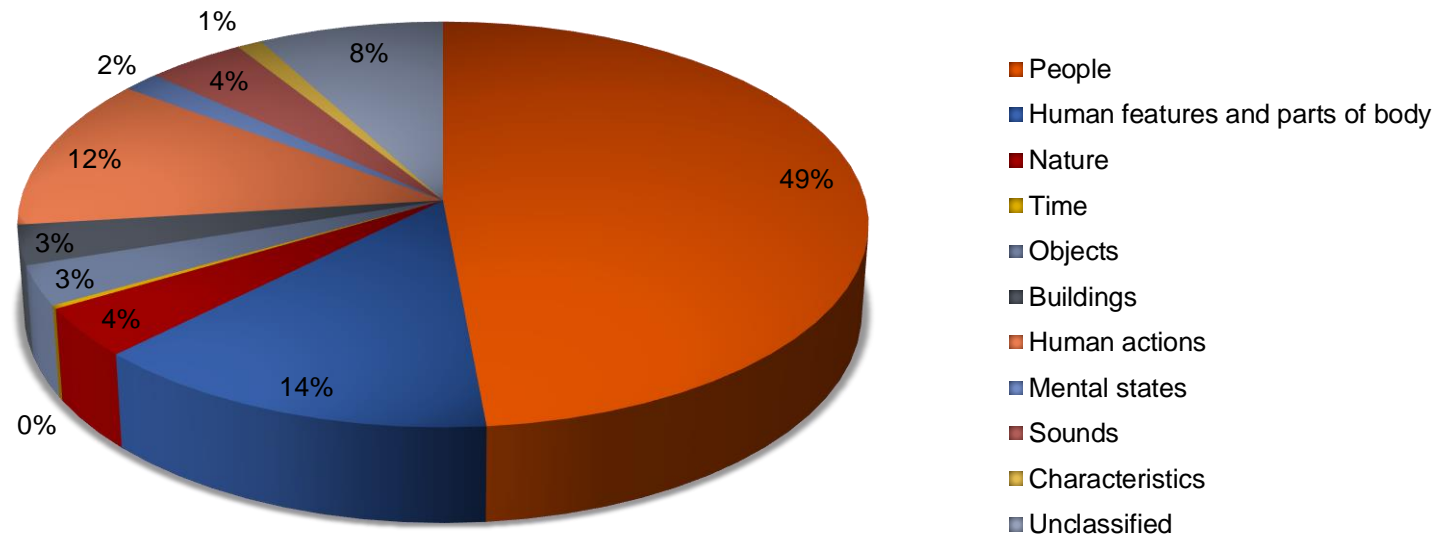
(f) at the same time, this someone can't not think something very bad about it

(g) people know: it is bad if someone does something like this

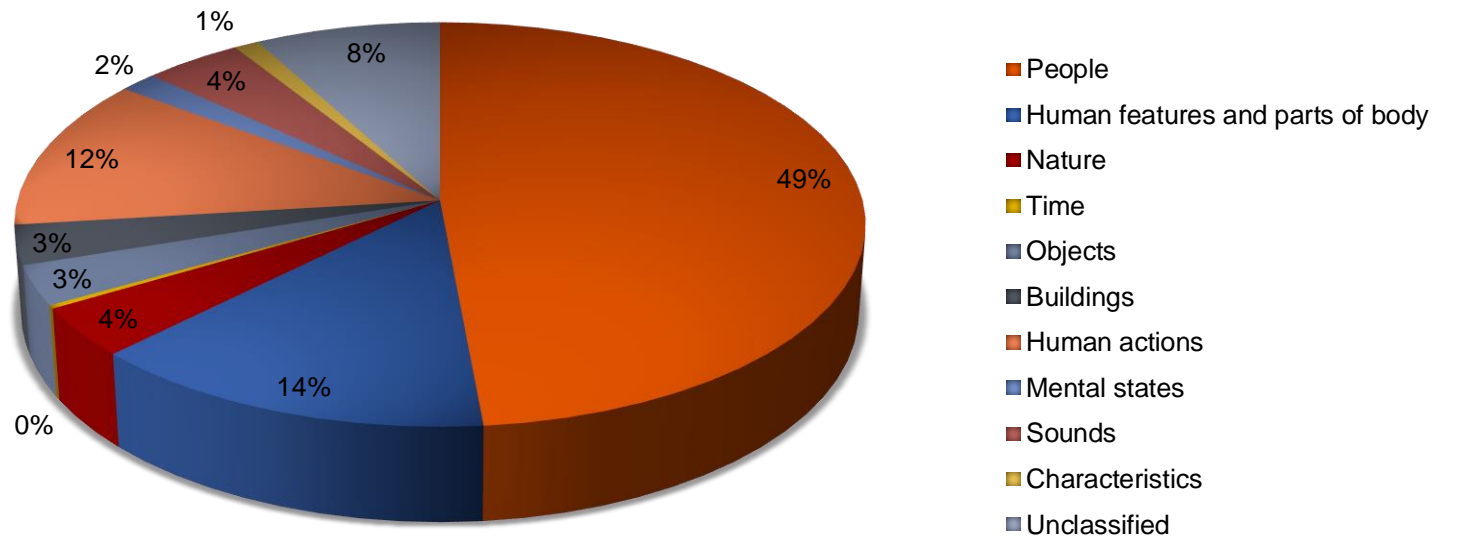
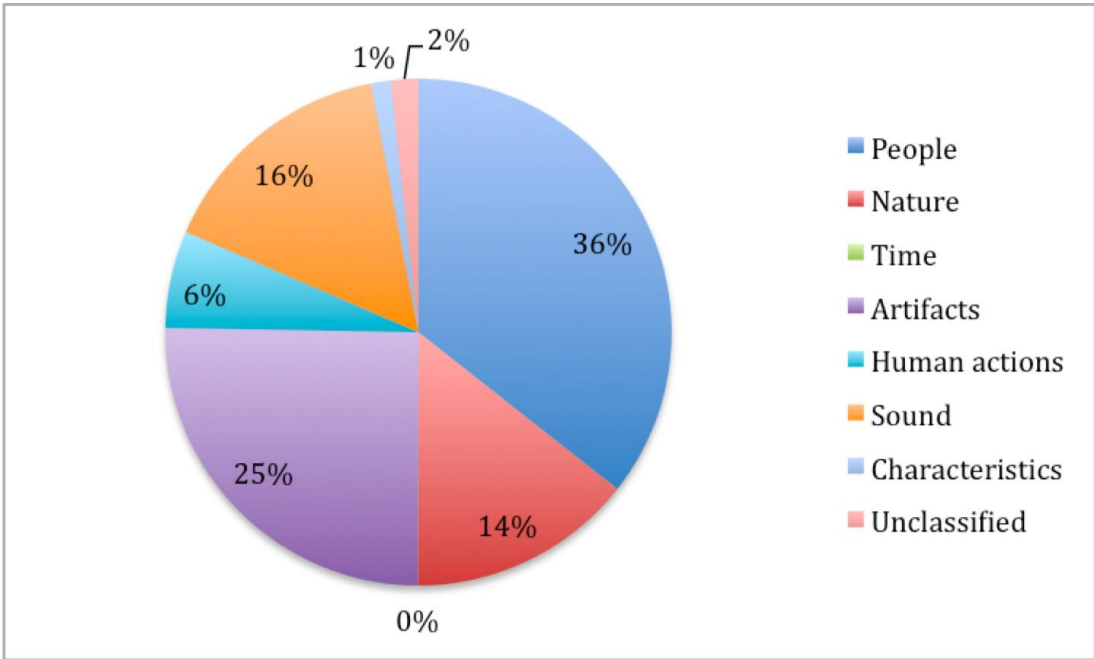
# FIGURE 1. NOUN CATEGORIES MODIFYING *KRASIVYJ*



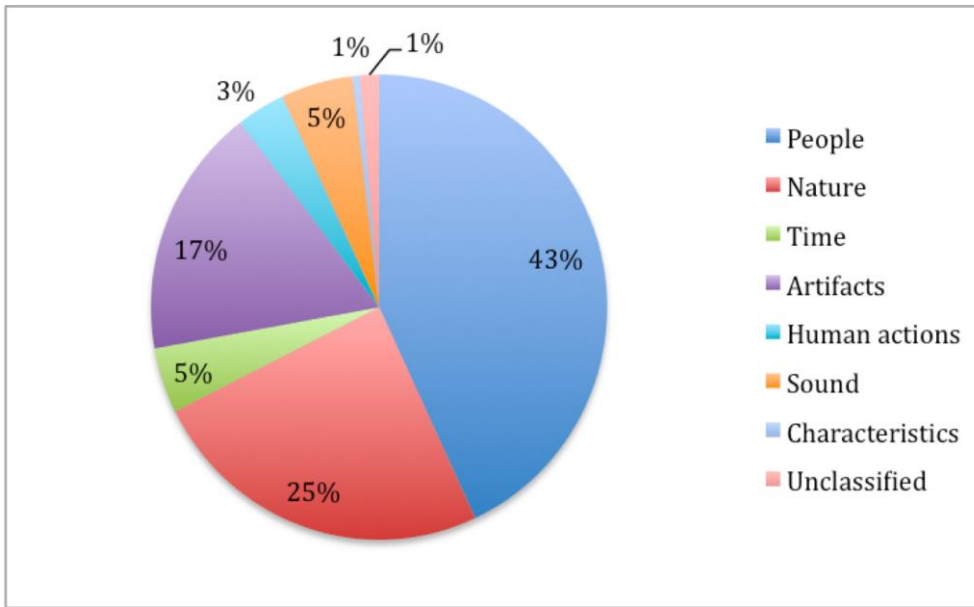
# FIGURE 2: NOUN CATEGORIES MODIFYING *NEKRASIVYJ*



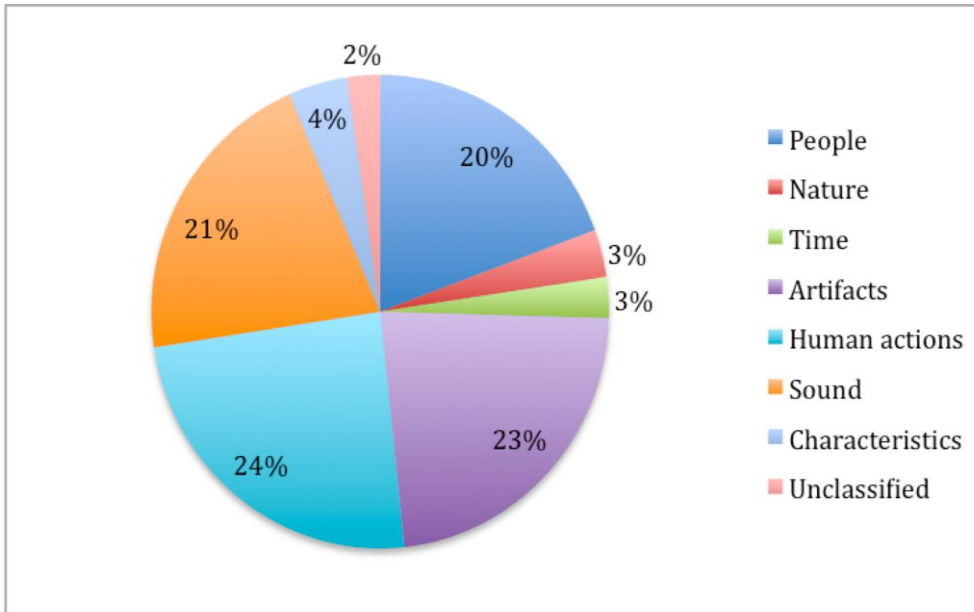




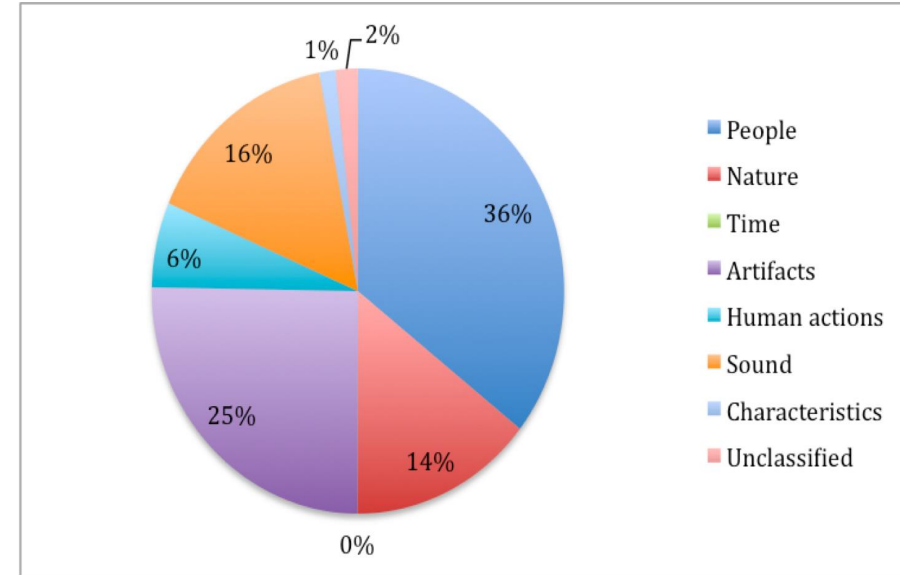
English



Spanish

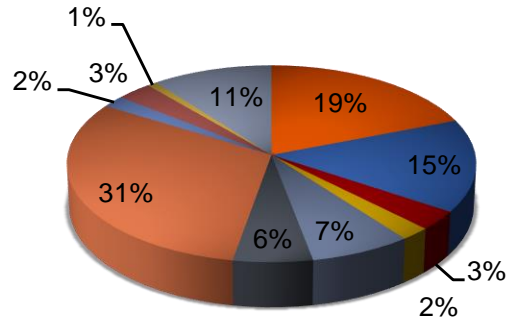


Russian



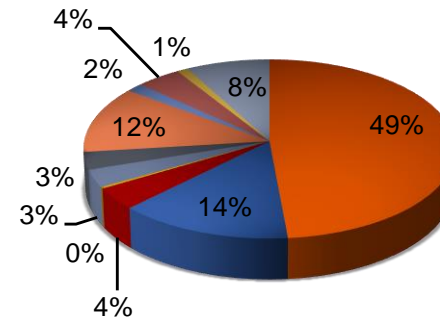
We hypothesize the presence of different models of 'folk' aesthetics in the three languages: English, Russian, Spanish

# English



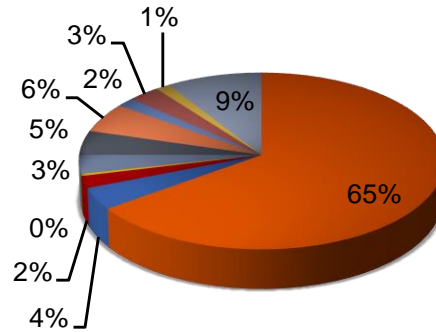
- People
- Human features and parts of body
- Nature
- Time
- Objects
- Buildings
- Human actions
- Mental states

# Russian



- People
- Human features and parts of body
- Nature
- Time
- Objects
- Buildings
- Human actions

# Spanish



- People
- Human features and parts of body
- Nature
- Time
- Objects
- Buildings
- Human actions
- Mental states
- Sounds

# Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases:   case-insensitive

between  and  from the corpus  with smoothing of  [Search lots of books](#)



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Graph these comma-separated phrases:   case-insensitive

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# Conclusions

- Russian words *krasivyj* and *nekrasivyj* are polysemous
- They are applicable to seeing and hearing (two senses)
- The prevailing groups of their use are people, artifacts, sound, nature (*krasivyj*) and people, human actions (*nekrasivyj*)
- There is a link between aesthetics and (im)politeness in the meaning of *nekrasivyj*

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