

Russian *tam*: a discursive and hypothetical marker?

In analyzing the use of *tam* in corpora of spoken Russian it can be noted that the main function of *tam* as an adverb of place used to signal a distant element is often overshadowed by its use as a discursive marker.

Discourse is often saturated with *tam* as if speakers want listeners to follow them in their mental reconstructions step by step:

(1) Takoe oščuščenie čto u nas takoj telefon Margo / kotoryj vot tak bereš' / ty **tam** trubku vzjal / nerovno / on **tam** prosto rassypaetsja na časti / i prichoditsja ves' sobirat' / on **tam** raskručennyj / razbityj

Tam can reinforce the indefiniteness of the sentence:

(2) Pomimo togo / čto Margo vam položili pered dver'ju če-to **tam** / bol'she ničego ne bylo

Another function of *tam* which is typical of spoken language is that of a hypothetical marker in sentences where the use of a distancing element underlines the abstractness of the situation:

(3) Predpoločim / tot že rep / da / sčitaetsja rečitativ / a na zadnem plane idet melodija golosa / prosto bez slov **tam** / ili **tam** iz slova „Love you” i ono mejaet **tam** čerez vsju pesnju

(4) Ustroj mne fotosessiju / Ol' / menja vse očēn' prosjat fotki / ili **tam** chotja by vyložit' / vot **tam** vykladyvajut kogda / smotru **tam** to / čto vyloženo / mne **tam** Nataškini očēn' nravjatsja fotki / krasivo

The analysis of data from conversational discourse seems therefore to suggest that the deictic value of *tam* is changing toward more discursive and perhaps grammatical functions.