Russian *ni*-pronouns are non-negative universal quantifiers

Summary. *ni*-pronouns in Russian (and other Slavic languages) are negative concord items (NCIs) licensed by clausemate negation (see Pereltsvaig 2006 among others). There is no consensus as far as the semantics of NCIs in Slavic and cross-linguistically are concerned: most recent theories seem to argue for the unified analysis of NCIs as indefinites with existential quantification licensed in the scope of negation (Zeijlstra 2004, 2008; Penka 2011; Déprez 2017; Szabolcsi 2018). The analyses along these lines are often adopted for Russian NCIs by default (Letuchiy 2017; Garzonio 2019). Giannakidou (2006) and Surányi (2006) suggest that even within one language NCIs can be both existential and universal. In this talk, following the work by Abels (2002, 2005), we argue that Russian *ni*-pronouns are non-negative universal quantifiers licensed syntactically outside of the scope of negation (supposedly under Spec-Head agreement with Neg head, see Brown 1999; Bošković 2009).

Movement (to SpecNegP) is obligatory. The licensing of Russian NCIs fails whenever they occur in an environment prohibiting movement. Attributive NCI *nikakoj* cannot occur only in the second argument of conjunction (1b). Weak NPI *kto-libo* 'anybody' is allowed in the same context (1c). (This contrast is observed in disjunction as well.)

(1) a. ja   ne   našel   tam   ni-kakix   deneg   i   dragocennostej
         1SG NEG found   there   NI-what   money   and jewels
         'I haven't found there any money or jewels.'
    b. *ja   ne   našel   tam   deneg   i   ni-kakix   dragocennostej
         1SG NEG found   there   money   and NI-what   jewels
         Expected: 'I haven't found there money or any jewels.'
    c. ja   ne   našel   tam   deneg   i   kakix-libo   dragocennostej
         1SG NEG found   there   money   and what-ANY   jewels
         'I haven't found there money or any jewels.'

Next, genitive possessor cannot be extracted from NP/DP in Russian (Lyutikova 2009). NCIs are prohibited as genitive possessors (2b). This contrasts with perfectly grammatical attributive NCI *ničej* 'nobody's' (2a) and more marginal weak NPI *kto-libo* in genitive (2c).

(2) a. ja   ne   prosmatrival   ni-čji   soobščenija
         1sg NEG looked.through   NI-whom   messages
         'I haven't looked through anybody's messages.'
    b. *ja   ne   prosmatrival   soobščenija   ni-kogo
         1SG NEG looked.through   messages   NI-who.GEN
         Expected: 'I haven't looked through the messages of anybody.'
    c. ?ja   ne   prosmatrival   soobščenija   kogo-libo
         1SG NEG looked.through   messages   who-ANY.GEN
         'I haven't looked through the messages of anybody.'

Finally, NCIs in Russian are not licensed by constituent negation (3a). However, the marker of constituent negation turns into a licenser when an attributive NCI precedes it (3b).

(3) a. *vanya   podgotovil   ne   ni-kakoj   podarok
         Vanya   prepared   NEG NI-what   gift
         Int.: 'Vanya didn't prepare any gift.'
    b. prišel   ni-kakoj   ne   pisatel', (a   dux)
         came   NI-what   NEG writer   but spirit
         'It was no writer, (but a spirit) who came.'

The provided data suggests that NCIs in Russian are not licensed in the scope of negation (unlike NPI-pronouns) but need to move (presumably to SpecNegP) in order to be licensed.

This provides automatic explanation to the fact that no other scope-taking element can be "sandwiched" between quantifier and negation in LF ($*\forall > Q > \sim$; but see (5) below).

The fact that NCIs are licensed in SpecNegP suggests that they actually outscope negation and hence are universal quantifiers. However, independent evidence is desirable to show that neither reconstruction in the scope of negation, nor abstract negation higher in the clause structure can account for the data.

Universal quantification. In contrast to indefinites, universal quantifiers are known to be subject to locality (Wurmbrand 2018). In Russian, epistemic verb *moč* 'may' is highly grammaticalized (Kholodilova 2015a) and apparently forms a monoclausal structure hosting a high functional head Mod_{epist} above T (Rossyaykin 2020). Crucially, both positive universal quantifier *každyj* 'every' and NCIs show similar behavior w.r.t. to negation above epistemic *moč*: they cannot outscope it (4). In case of NCIs this leads to ungrammaticality in epistemic contexts which is unexpected under assumption that NCIs need to be in the scope of negation.

(4) a. petya   ne   mog   rešit'   každuju zadaču
         Petya   NEG might.PST   solve.INF   every   task
         1. 'It is not possible that Petya solved every task.'   [$\sim > \Diamond > T > \forall$]
         2. ??'Every task was not possible for Petya to solve it.'   [$\forall > \sim > \Diamond > T$]
     b. petya   ne   mog   rešit'   ni-čego
         Petya   NEG might.PST   solve.INF   NI-what
         1. *'Everything was not possible for Petya to solve.'   [$\forall > \sim > \Diamond > T$; epistemic]
         2. 'Petya was not able to solve anything.'   [$T > \forall > \sim > \Diamond$; root]

Further evidence is provided by the so-called inter-clausal negative concord (Kholodilova 2015b; Letuchiy 2017) with NCI being licensed from the embedded clause (5). This construction is available with a restricted set of verbs, e.g. *starat's'a* 'try' and *rešit'* 'decide'. Interestingly, the same construction at least with the verb 'try' is available in Korean, for which there is rich evidence to treat NCIs as universal quantifiers (Sells & Kim 2006).

In principle, two scopes are possible in inter-clausal negative concord ($\forall > try > \sim$ vs $\sim > \exists > try$). However, the context in (5) and many other examples from the Internet approved by the speakers suggests that the matrix verb is indeed outside of the scope of negation.

(5) duxom ni-kto   staralsja   ne   padat'   no polučalos'   nevažno
     spirit NI-who   tried   NEG fall.INF   but be.achieved   poorly
     'Everybody tried not to lose one's courage, but they succeeded poorly.'

Finally, a morphological argument was often invoked in support of the existential analysis. E.g. Italian and Spanish NCIs are decomposed as elements containing words like 'one' or minimizers (Penka 2011). However, Slavic NCIs are decomposable into the combination of a wh-pronoun and particle *i* 'even, and'. The very same is observed in Japanese where NCIs are also analyzed as universal quantifiers (Shimoyama 2011, Yabushita 2012).

Conclusion. In this talk we are going to bring broader evidence showing unilaterally that Russian NCIs are universal quantifiers licensed syntactically in SpecNegP. This is a welcome conclusion, since we do not need to stipulate semantically vacuous *ne* 'not' with abstract negation higher in the clause structure in Russian, for which actually no convincing argument is known to us (we cannot discuss this in detail for space reasons). Furthermore, our approach can be unified with the analysis for the negative conjunction *ni… ni* 'neither… nor' formed with the same morphological marker *ni*. This conjunction is also licensed by clausemate negation and was analyzed as universal quantification above negation (Paperno 2014).

Selected references. **Abels, K. (2005)**. "Expletive negation" in Russian: A conspiracy theory. Journal of Slavic linguistics, 5-74. **Bošković, Ž. (2009)**. Licensing negative constituents and negative concord. In Proceedings of the North East Linguistic Society (Vol. 38, pp. 125-139). **Giannakidou, A. (2006)**. N-words and negative concord. Blackwell Companion to Syntax. Vol., Blackwell, London. **Shimoyama, J. (2011)**. Japanese indeterminate negative polarity items and their scope. Journal of Semantics, 28(4), 413-450. **Zeijlstra, H. (2004)**. Sentential negation and negative concord. Netherlands Graduate School of Linguistics.