Expletive Negation revisited: on some properties of negated polar interrogatives in Russian[1]

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> You know, you really are a
> negative person
>
> ――――――――――
> Harry Pfarrer,
> *Burn After Reading*

1 Introduction

1.1 Phenomenon

My main preoccupation is with questions like (1), formed by fronting the Neg+V complex before the YN marker *li*. This *li* is an enclitic whose host is limited to 1 prosodic word. *Ne* is an affix/ proclitic (must be verb-adjacent).

(1) **Ne** zapretila li ego cenzura?
     NEG forbade   Q him censorship
     '(I wonder if) he isn't censored.'   (NegYN)

In embedded contexts, *li* is required. In root contexts, the most natural way of asking a YN question is via intonation – no reordering is necessary:

(2) Ivan (ne) prixodil?
     Ivan NEG came
     'Did Ivan (not) come?'   (root Q)

- English questions with preposed ("high") negation supply an inference of speaker bias (Büring and Gunlogson 2000, Giannakidou and Mari 2019, Goodhue 2018, Krifka 2015, Repp 2013, Romero and Han 2004, a.o.). So, (3) imparts the speaker's belief that John is a coffee drinker. The question serves to "double check" this belief. The same reportedly holds of Bulgarian in (4) (Romero and Han 2004).

(3) **Doesn't** John drink coffee?   (Auxn't Q)

(4) **Ne** pije   li Ivan kafe?   [Bulgarian]
     NEG drinks Q Ivan coffee
     'Doesn't Ivan drink coffee?'

- Syntactically, Russian (5) looks like Bulgarian (4), but conveys a different meaning:

  - The bias is substantially weaker than in English/Bulgarian.
  - It communicates the speaker's undesirability or surprise that Ivan might be drinking coffee (under the most natural reading).

(5) **Ne** p'et li Ivan kofe? [Russian]
 NEG drinks Q Ivan coffee
 '(I wonder) if Ivan isn't drinking coffee?'

- In fact, there are contexts that call into question whether there is any bias at all in Russian Neg-YNs. For instance, given the situation in (6), the speaker may ask (a), a question with preposed negation, or (b), a "neutral" YN question. Cf: English Auxn't Q in (d) and the unbiased (c).

(6) Context: Sergey is known to stop by occasionally.

  a. Ne zaxodil li Sergey segodnja?
   NEG stop.by Q Sergey today
   '(I wonder) if Sergey hasn't stopped by today.' (NegYN)

  b. Zaxodil li Sergey segodnja?
   stopped.by Q Sergey today
   'Did Sergey stop by today?' (PosYN)

  c. Did Sergey stop by today?

  d. #Didn't Sergey stop by today? (Auxn't Q)

- The Russian semantic equivalent of the English Auxn't Q is a question with the element *razve*, strictly specialized for non-neutral YN questions, as in (7) (for details see Repp and Geist (2022)). When combined with verbal negation in (a), it yields an inference of positive bias. The absence of negation in (b) reverses the polarity of the inference.

(7) a. Razve Ivan ne prixodil segodnja?
   REALLY Ivan NEG came today
   Biased inference: Ivan stopped by today.

  b. Razve Ivan prixodil segodnja?
   REALLY Ivan came today
   Biased inference: Ivan did not stop by today. (razve-Qs)

1.2 Previous analyses

NegYNs are claimed to fall under the umbrella of "expletive negation" (EN) phenomena, whose other famous representatives appear in (8). Earlier approaches (e.g., Brown 1999, Brown and Franks 1995) hold that *ne* in NegYNs, until-clauses and complements of emotive doxastic predicates (e.g., *fear*) is a morphosyntactic marker that lacks semantic content.

(8) a. Ja podoždu, poka ty **ne** prideš'.
   I will.wait until you NEG will.come
   'I'll wait until you arrive.' (UNTIL-clauses)

  b. Ja bojus', kak by on **ne** opozdal.
   I fear how SUBJ he NEG late
   'I fear that he might be late' (FEAR-predicates)

The baseline pattern, found in (11), is best understood against the background supplied by the declaratives in (9) and (10).

- (9) demonstrates the property of <u>negative concord</u>: **nikogo** in (9) is a negative concord item (NCI), morhologically decomposable into n$_{NEG}$-i$_{FOC}$-kogo$_{WHOM.ACC}$ (per Haspelmath 1997, Bošković 2009) and required under clausemate negation (cf. the affirmative in (9b) and long-distance negation in (9c)).

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- (10) exemplifies the ACC-GEN alternation. Under clausemate negation in (10a), direct objects may optionally appear in the genitive (<u>Genitive of Negation</u>, GoN) instead of the usual accusative. Licensing conditions replicate those that operate under negative concord: a predicate must be negated (cf. 10b) and it must be local (cf. (10b)).

(9)   a. Ivan nikogo   **ne** znaet.
            Ivan ni-whom NEG knows
            'Ivan doesn't know anybody.'

      b. *Ivan nikogo   znaet.
            Ivan ni-whom knows

      c. *Ivan **ne** skazal, [čto nikogo   znaet].
            Ivan NEG said   that ni-whom knows

(10)   a. On ne   pišet pisem   / pis'ma.
            he NEG write letters.GEN / letters.ACC
            'He doesn't write letters.'

      b. *On pišet   pisem.
            he writes letters.GEN

      c. *On **ne** skazal, [čto pišet pisem].
            he NEG said   that writes letters.GEN

- (11) evinces a peculiar split: while the configuration enables GoN, it evidently removes the environment for NCI licensing. The same holds of the other two EN contexts in (12) and (13).[2] It is this property that formed the basis for compartmentalizing features – a semantically contentful operator is required for NCIs, but not for GoN. Hence, GoN is a byproduct of "morphosyntactic negation" – negation with the right morphology but no content. If so, NegYNs are not negative semantically (hence, *NCIs) but negative syntactically (hence, ✓GoN). I will argue **against** this position.

(11)   a. *Ne   kupil   (li) ničego Petr?   *NCI
            NEG bought (Q) ni-what Peter
            Intended 'Did Peter buy anything?'

      b. Ne   pišet li Petr pisem?   GoN
            NEG writes Q Peter letters.GEN
            'Does Peter write letters?'

(12) UNTIL-clauses

      a. *Ja podoždu, poka nikto   **ne**   pridet.
            I   will.wait until ni-who NEG will.come
            Intended: 'I'll wait until somebody arrives.'   *NCI

      b. Ja podoždu, poka on mne **ne**   dast   otveta.
            I   will.wait until he to.me NEG will.give answer.GEN
            'I'll wait until he gives me an answer.'   GoN

(13) FEAR-predicates

      a. */✓ Ja bojus', kak by   nikto **ne** opozdal.
            I   fear   how SUBJ ni-who NEG late
            'I fear that somebody might be late.'   *NCI or ✓NCI

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[2]Note, however, that there is some speaker variation with *fear*-predicates (NCIs are fine for some speakers in these contexts). This is discussed in the Appendix.

    b. Ja bojus', kak by   on **ne**   narušil eksperimenta.
       I   fear   how SUBJ he NEG ruined experiment.GEN
       'I fear that he might ruin the experiment'   GoN

So far:

Negation in EN contexts is weird. On the one hand, it licenses GoN. On the other hand, it does not license NCIs. Roughly, there are two solutions (but see Makri 2016, Yoon 2011 for alternatives):

i Split polarity approach (Gribanova 2017)
A more recent syntactic implementation of this idea, pioneered by Gribanova (2017) for Russian (see also Erschler 2023, Gračanin-Yuksek 2016), provisions two negation-related positions within a sentential spine. The higher one, a specialized polarity projection above TP, houses features pertaining to affirmation/negation. The lower one, NegP, serves as a locus of morphosyntactic negation. These two projections are linked via AGREE, as in (14): Pol, being the host of semantically contentful features, "passes" on its specification to Neg. Although Gribanova writes that "positive valued polarity features on NEG receive a zero exponent, while valued negative features on NEG are realized as the clitic *ne*" (1089), presumably, in EN contexts, some mechanism must ensure that the positive features on Pol are no impediment for the realization of *ne* on the verb.

(14)   [$_{\text{PolP}}$ Pol^0 [$_{\text{TP}}$ T^0 [$_{\text{NegP}}$ Neg^0 [$_{\text{AspectP}}$ ...]]]]
                     AGREE

For the proponents of the split polarity approach, the variable behavior wrt polarity diagnostics in (11), (12) and (13) is a consequence of the division of labor. Genitive is assigned by the lower morphosyntactic Neg, whereas *ni*-items require a negative specification on Pol (to agree with Neg). But if NegYNs, FEAR-predicates and UNTIL-clauses bear a positive polarity value, then only GoN is possible, because for *its* licensing, the value on the higher head is irrelevant.

ii Movement approach (Abels 2005)
Abels derives the relevant set of facts via standard syntactic mechanisms – movement and locality. His core idea is that the assignment of genitive happens immediately upon Merge. However, NEG is free to move: whenever this movement applies, the environment for *ni*-licensing is removed.

          Moved NEG does not license NCIs
(15)   **Neg**   [$_{\text{CP}}$ C^0 [$_{\text{TP}}$ T^0 [$_{\text{NegP}}$ (t_{Neg^0}) [$_{\text{AspectP}}$ ...]]]]]
                                    GoN assigned immediately upon Merge

1.3   Sketch of the proposal

My proposal is closer in spirit to Abels' analysis:

- Abels indicts "expletive negation", i.e. semantically vacuous negation, as superfluous and theoretically undesirable. So, all things being equal, it would be nice not to have it.

- PolP in the majority of cases appears to recapitulate what is directly encoded. We seem to only need it for those cases that are conveyed as positive propositions in English.

- If negation in NegYNs (and other EN contexts) contributes nothing to the semantics, why is it there?

- More importantly, the Split Polarity approach predicts that there should be no semantic differences between PosYNs and NegYNs (both should be specified as [pos]). We will see that that is not true.

My idea here is this: multiple Merge sites are available for Neg.

Low negation merges with AspectP/vP. NegP2 negates events and delimits the exclusive domain of negative concord. The **higher negation** (NegP1), introduced in the illocutionary field above TP, does not license NCIs (see also Przepiórkowski 1999).

(16) [... [$_{\text{NegP1}}$ NEG1 ... [$_{\text{TP}}$ ... [$_{\text{NegP2}}$ NEG2 [AspectP/vP ...]]]]]

- It should be noted that I do not envision a fixed position for "high negation" – indeed, its behavior in various contexts is consistent with multiple merge sites in the illocutionary domain. The precise configuration of this illocutionary domain and the explicit semantics, I leave open (in hopes that one of the numerous existing approaches can accommodate the Russian facts).

- The attempts to syntactize discourse-related properties go as far back as Ross (1970) and Lewis (1970). The elaboration of the periphery has been a long-standing preoccupation of those working in the cartographic tradition (e.g., Cinque (1999) posits four mood/modality levels Speech Acts » Evalutive » Evidential » Epistemic). Speas and Tenny (2003) provision a specialized S(peech)A(ct)P(hrase), in which Speaker and Hearer are values ("we may think of the SPEAKER as the agent of the speech act, the UTTERANCE CONTENT as its theme, and the HEARER as its goal" (p. 320) (see also Wiltschko 2021, Heim and Wiltschko 2016).

- Sode and Truckenbrodt (2018) argue that the Force-head is the locus of speaker anchoring, available in two incarnations, shown in (17) – BEL$_{\text{x,t,w}}$ and WANT$_{\text{x,t,w}}$ (see also Truckenbrodt and Sode 2020). Krifka (2015, 2022) posits the structure in (18), where ActP is the locus of assertions (•) or questions (?), ComP is the domain of the speaker's social commitments to the proposition, and J(udgment)P is the province of subjective epistemic attitudes.

(17) Syntactic representations of speaker anchoring in Force:
BEL$_{\text{x,t,w}}$: The proposition of the clause is believed by x at time t in world w
WANT$_{\text{x,t,w}}$: Futures in which the proposition of the clause comes true are preferred by x at t in w to those in which it does not come true.

(18) [$_{\text{ActP}}$ [$_{\text{Act}^0}$ •][$_{\text{ComP}}$ [$_{\text{Com}}$] [$_{\text{JP}}$ ...[$_{\text{TP}}$ ...]]]]

- However this is ultimately resolved, the idea here is that the higher NEG applies at the not-at-issue level, denying the relevant component(s) of the illocutionary layer.

- NegYNs are ambiguous between "high" and "low" negation.

2 Meaning

Restan (1972) elaborates a finer taxonomy of polar interrogatives in Russian. Within the NegYN class, he distinguishes the following three (all three examples are his):

i The "purely informative" NegYN in (19) is "equivalent to the corresponding affirmative question" (Brown 1999: 99) in that the question is not biased towards a positive or a negative answer, hence presuppositionally neutral, serving to obtain information. Our earlier example from (6a) appears to belong in this class.

ii "Dubious" NegYNs in (20), and presumably, (5), conveys the speaker's belief in the opposite of the utterance's denotation: from (20), it can be ostensibly inferred that somebody knows the reason for the social calls. It should be noted that this description matches the standard description of English Auxn't Qs like (3) (or razve Qs from (7)). Both cases require reference to the background knowledge or beliefs of the speaker.

iii Finally, "rhetorical questions" in (21) are not meant as a genuine request for information; they are instead a vehicle for imparting an opinion or swaying the addressee. In all three types, negation is alleged to carry no negative force.

(19) Ne   pomniš'   li ty   tvoju prežnjuju sosedku?
      NEG remember Q you your   former   neighbor
      'Do you remember your former neighbor?'   (Informative Q)

(20) Ne   uznal   li kto-nibud', počemu ty   ko mne xodiš'?
      NEG found.out Q somebody   why   you to me   come
      'Do you think somebody found out why you come to my place?'   (Dubious Q)

(21) Ne   govoril li ja tebe?
      NEG said   Q I to.you
      'Didn't I tell you?!'   (Rhetorical Q)

Shatunovskii (2016) provides one prosodic diagnostic for disambiguating between the first two types. The question in (22) can be articulated in one of two ways. The informative reading (in (23a)) arises when the sentence contains two intonational peaks (in our case, they fall on the fronted verb, *zapretila*, and the internally focalized nominal constituent, *cenzura*) – this contour is identical to the one in PosYNs. The dubious interpretation requires a single sharp rise on the verb, sustained throughout the sentence with a fall towards the end (23b).

(22) Ne   zapretila li ego cenzura?
      NEG forbade   Q him censorship
      '(I wonder) if he wasn't censored?'   repeated from (1)

(23)   a. Ne zapretila li ego cenzura?
               *   *
       b. Ne zapretila li ego cenzura?
               *   ↘

So far:

- Rhetorical questions aside, NegYNs (according to the previous generalizations) are either like PosYNs or like RAZVE-Qs/Auxn't Qs. If so, why do they exist at all?

- My next objective is to demonstrate that they exist for a reason. They are unlike both PosYNs and biased questions. In particular, NegYNs:

  – feel "negative-y";
  – appear in specific environments not shared with PosYNs or RAZVE Qs;
  – are compatible with *by any chance* (unlike PosYNs);
  – embed (unlike RAZVE Qs and Auxn't Qs).

Two caveats:

- I do not intend to sort out all the semantics-related issues. My goal here is simply to convince my audience that NegYNs are a special variety of polar questions;

- I will follow the general taxonomy above – "informative" vs. "dubious", enumerating the specific environments where NegYNs are typical (without aspirations for exhaustivity, however).

2.1 Informative questions

Informative NegYNs are supposed to be interchangeable with PosYNs.

2.1.1 Minimal context

I begin with the example from the opening section, repeated below. Examples like this should presumably fit the profile of "informative" questions, as they are interchangeable with PosYNs in this context. The closest English rendition of (24a) is: *I wonder if John didn't stop by today.* Hardly anybody would contest that the English version is of negative polarity, but it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how it is different from the positive version. So too, the Russian NegYN feels negative but not "biased" in the sense of Auxn't Qs. Note that in both cases, some minimal situational context is required.

(24)   Context: Sergey is known to stop by occasionally.

    a. Ne   zaxodil li Sergey segodnja?
       NEG stop.by Q Sergey today
       '(I wonder) if Sergey hasn't stopped by today.'   (NegYN)

    b. Zaxodil   li Sergey segodnja?
       stopped.by Q Sergey today
       'Did Sergey stop by today?'   (PosYN)

2.1.2 Questionnaire

Another context where PosYNs and NegYNs are potentially interchangeable is a QUESTIONNAIRE environment like (25), where (a) is borrowed from the citizenship application and (b) from a source discussing fiscal merits and burdens of self-employment. These questions test eligibility: being a suspect in the former case or a lawyer/appraiser/notary in the latter case disqualify one from acquiring citizenship or meeting the requirements for a particular tax status. English Auxn't questions found in the glosses are incompatible with such environments. Likewise, Russian biased questions with razve in (26) would be deviant in these contexts.

(25)   a. Ne   presleduetes' li v ugolovnom porjadke [...] za soveršenie   prestuplenija?
       NEG pursued   Q in criminal   order   [...] for commission of.crime
       'Are you under criminal investigation for the commission of crimes?'
       # 'Aren't you under criminal investigation for the commission of crimes?'
                                [application for the Russian citizenship]

    b. Ne   javljaetes' li vy [...] advokatom, notariusom, ocenščikom [...] ?
       NEG are   Q you [...] lawyer   notary   appraiser
       'Are you a lawyer, a notary or an appraiser?'
       # 'Aren't you a lawyer, a notary or an appraiser?'
                   [https://spmag.ru/articles/kakie-uslugi-mozhet-okazyvat-samozanyatyj]

(26)   a. #Razve   vy (ne) presleduetes' ...?
        REALLY you NEG pursued

    b. #Razve   vy (ne) javljaetes' ...?
        REALLY you NEG are

PosYNs are not infrequent as well. In the same two sources, for instance, alongside NegYN of (25), we also find PosYNs (27):

(27)   a. Privlekalis' li k ugolovnoj otvetsvennosti?
       charged   Q to criminal   responsibility
       'Have you been charged with a felony crime?'

    b. Svjazana li vaša dejatel'nost' s   pereprodažej [...]?
       connected Q your activity   with resale
       'Does your business involve the resale. . . ?'

But although it does look like NegYNs are interchangeable with PosYNs, this is not universally so, even in the questionnaire format. For example, (28) opens a survey designed to gauge the opinions of the Novosi-birskites about the provision of certain services in their city. A NegYN version (*ne javljates' li . . .*) would be bizarre as a starting point here. The pollster is interested in the opinion of a specific cohort, i.e. the residents of Novosibirsk. In its extant configuration then, this question seeks to elicit confirmation that the respondents belong in the sought-after population.

(28)   Javljates' li vy žitelem goroda Novosibirska?
        are   Q you resident of.city of.Novosibirsk
        'Are you a resident of Novosibirsk?'
                                  [https://www.encuestafacil.com/respweb/cuestionarios.aspx?EID=1438636]

In other words, in this environment, NegYNs are asking a negative question (it is the case that not p?). PosYNs are either neutral, as in (27) (is it or is it not the case that p?), or positive (is it the case that p?), as in (28).

2.2 "Dubious" questions?

Dubious NegYNs are supposed to be non-interchangeable with PosYNs.

2.2.1 Speech acts

- The most obvious point of divergence between NegYNs and PosYNs obtains in Speech Acts. Bolinger (1978) observes that (neutral) requests and offers in English are imparted via canonical polar inter-rogatives: *Do you want some tea? Will you help me?*

- Disjunctive questions (#*Do you want some tea or not?*), negative questions (#*Do you not want any tea?*) or biased questions (#*Don't you want any tea?*) are not fit for the task of performing speech acts (Tabatowski 2022).

- By contrast, in Russian, NegYNs constitute a preferred means of requesting and offering, as shown in (29). The positive counterparts of (29) found in (30), if not altogether outrageous in these same contexts, strike one as somewhat deviant or at least impolite. Biased questions in (31) have the same status as Auxn't Qs of English: unsuitable for requests, they convey that the speaker's prior beliefs which run counter to the contextually supplied evidence.

(29)   a. Ne   najdetsja li u vas sigarety?
        NEG find   Q at you cigarette
        'Would you not happen to have a cigarette?' =
        I wonder if you wouldn't have a cigarette.   (request)
      b. Ne   xočeš' li torta?
        NEG want   Q cake
        'Would you not happen to want a (piece of) cake?' =
        I wonder if you wouldn't want a piece of cake.   (offer)

(30)   a. ?? Najdetsja li u vas sigareta?
           find   Q at you cigarette
        'Do you have a cigarette?'

    b. ?? Xočeš' li torta?
        want   Q cake
      'Do you want a (piece of) cake?'

(31)   a. #Razve u vas ne   najdetsja sigarety?
         really at you NEG find   cigarette
        'Don't you have a cigarette?'

    b. #Razve   ty ne   xočeš' torta?
        REALLY you NEG want   cake
      'Don't you want a (piece of) cake?'

Related to this are questions like (32) with infinitives, which convey a suggestion (perhaps, what Yanovich (2014) calls "symbouletic modality").[3]

(32)   a. Ivan, ne   zajti   li nam v bar? Gorlo gorit!   (suggestion)
        Ivan NEG to.go.in.PRF Q to.us in bar   throat burns
        'Ivan, I wonder if we shouldn't go into the bar? I'm parched!'

    b. */? Ivan, zajti   li nam v bar? Gorlo gorit!
          Ivan to.go.in.PRF Q to.us in bar   throat burns
       'Ivan, shall we go into the bar? I'm parched!'[4]

2.2.2 Undesirability/surprise

If the infelicity of PosYN in place of a NegYN is a reliable diagnostic of a "dubious" variety, then (33) is precisely the right context – cf. (33b) vs. (33c). Only in this monologue, biased questions in both languages are out as well (33a). (33c) does not necessarily convey any prior belief. Rather, it has a modal

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[3]These constructions actually deserve a space of their own, so I won't go into this here. They have the following shape: Ne + infinitive of PRF verb + li_Q-MARKER with the subject in the dative. First, they may appear in the contexts like (1) – what Shatunovskii (2016) calls "questions to self".

(1)   Raskolnikov felt a great desire to make out what he was singing, as though everything depended on that. "Shall I go in?" he thought. "They are laughing. From drink. Shall I get drunk?" (F. Dostoevsky. *Crime and Punishment*; via Shatunovskii 2016)

    a. Ne zajti   li mne?
       NEG to.go.in.PRF Q to.me
      '(I wonder) if I shouldn't go in?'

    b. Ne napit'sja   li mne pjanym?
       NEG to.get.drunk.PRF Q to.me drunk
      '(I wonder) if I shouldn't get drunk?'

Second, in their declarative incarnations (2), they appear to behave as though they contain a null modal. (2) shows that this null modal: (i) behaves like an NPI (akin to Dutch *hoeven*, German *brauchen* or English *need*, on which see, e.g., Hoeksema 1994, 2000, Zwarts 1995, a.o.); (ii) has the dynamic interpretation. **In questions**, however, the dynamic interpretation is lost: so, (32) does not ask whether the speaker and his interlocutor are capable of entering; rather, the speaker is suggesting that they do.

(2)   a. Nam ne   otryt'   dver'.
       to.us NEG to.open.PRF door
      'We are unable to open the door (because it is locked or we are too weak).'

    b. *Nam otryt'   dver'.
       to.us to.open.PRF door
      Intended: 'We can open the door.'

[4]One Muscovite informant (f, 29 y.o.) insists that the sentence is 4/5 (somewhat off, but ultimately acceptable). Evidently, there is room for variation here.

flavor (i.e., that John might be in jail) and channels a particular attitude (undesirability). Here again, the context is compatible with English *I wonder if he is(n't) in jail.*

(33) Single speaker: *I am worried about John; dude's a screw-up. Haven't seen him around.* Continuation . . .

    a. #Razve   ego ne   posadili v tjur'mu?
       REALLY him NEG put   in jail
      #'Didn't they put him in jail?'

    b. #Posadili li ego v tjur'mu?
       put   Q him in jail
      'Did they put him in jail?'

    c. Ne posadili li ego v tjur'mu?
       NEG put   Q him in jail
      '(I wonder) if he isn't in jail.'

Contrast (33) with (34). Speaker 2 in the conversation below does have a particular conviction. John's mercantile activities are a surprise, because Speaker 2 believes that John is, in fact, in jail. In this situation, Auxn't Q and RAZVE Q are fine. Both NegYNs (34b) and PosYNs (34c) are deviant this context.

(34) Conversation between two people.
    Speaker 1: I just got some pot from John. Wanna smoke up?
    Speaker 2: Wait, you saw John?...

    a. Razve   ego ne   posadili v tjur'mu?
       REALLY him NEG put   in jail
      ✓'Didn't they put him in jail?'

    b. #Ne posadili li ego v tjur'mu?
       NEG put   Q him in jail
      '(I wonder) if they didn't put him in jail.'

    c. #Posadili li ego v tjur'mu?
       put   Q him in jail
      'Did they put him in jail?'

3 Syntactic effects

Here I overview some syntactic effects of PosYNs and NegYNs:

- NegYNs = PosYNs in that both embed unlike English Auxn't Qs and Russian RAZVE Qs.

- NegYNs ≠ PosYNs in disjunctive questions and with *by chance*.

3.1 Embedding

NegYNs (as well as PosYNs) embed just fine.

(35) Ja xoču znat'   / sprosil Ivana, (ne) govorit li Anna po-anglijski.
    I   want to.know / asked Ivan   NEG speaks Q Anna English
    'I would like to know / asked Ivan whether Anna speaks / doesn't speak English.'

By contrast, neither Eng Auxn't nor Russian RAZVE Qs are embeddable, as attested by Rus (36) and Irish English in (37). Irish English, per McCloskey (2006), embeds a YN question "as is", i.e. in the shape it takes in root contexts, as in (37a). My informants, though admitting (37a), reject a biased Auxn't question like (37b) in embedded contexts.

(36) *Ja xoču znat'/   sprosil Ivana, razve Anna govorit po-anglijski.
      I   want to.know/ asked Ivan   really Anna speaks English

(37) a. I want to know/asked did John blab the secret.   [Irish English]
      b. *I want to know/asked didn't John blab the secret.

3.2 Disjunctive questions

While PosYNs are fine in configurations like (38), NegYNs in (39) are not. If NegYNs are specified as positive polarity Qs, why should (39) be bad?

(38) a. Ubil li on Marfu Petrovnu ili net?
         killed Q he Marfa Petrovna or no
         'Did he kill Marfa Petrovna or not?'   [I. Annenskii. Vtoraia kniga otraženii. 1979]
      b. Ubil li on Marfu Petrovnu ili ne   ubil?
         killed Q he Marfa Petrovna or NEG killed

(39) a. *Ne   znaeš' li ty   Ivana ili net?
         NEG know Q you Ivan or no
      b. *Ne   znaeš' li ty   Ivana ili (ne) znaeš'?
         NEG know Q you Ivan or NEG know

Another pertinent observation due to Gračanin-Yuksek (2016) made for Croatian, but applicable to Russian as well. The data are in (40). In questions with so called alternative reading, preposing negation results in ungammaticality, as in (40b). Gračanin-Yuksek explains it by invoking the size of the constituents. According to her analysis, the disjuncts in (40a) are coordinated at the level of FocP, a projection above TP, which hosts *li*. The material in the second disjunct is deleted, as in (41a). Ungrammatical (40b), on the other hand, is attributed to the coordinate structure constraint (CSC) violation, where the verb moves to the higher projection, PolP, which is a CSC violation, as in (41b).

(40) a. Pišet li Ivan knigu ili recenziruet stat'ju?
         writes Q Ivan book or referees   paper
         'Is Ivan writing a book or refereeing an article?'
      b. *Ne   pišet li Ivan knigu ili recenziruet stat'ju?
         NEG writes Q Ivan book or referees   paper

(41) a. [$_{FocP}$ V+li ...] [or [$_{FocP}$ ~~li~~ ~~Ivan~~ referees paper]]
      b. *[$_{PolP}$ ne V [[$_{FocP}$ li t_V] [or [$_{FocP}$ ~~li~~ [~~Ivan~~ referees paper]]]]

I think the story is simpler:

- There seems to be a pragmatic/semantic mechanism that favors the sequence Pos > Neg, as shown for root contexts in (42) ((b) is impossible under any circumstances; (c) is fine as long as there is a pause before *or* and each verb is focalized). In fact, for a subset of my informants (43) is also fine, given the right prosody.

- The oddness persists in situations like (44). For reasons, presumably unrelated to syntax, disjuncts do not like polarity mismatches. This is independent of any movement, because the same effect is observed with the root strategy.

(42) a. Raskol'nikov ubil   staruxu ili net / ili ne   ubil?
         Raskolnikov killed crone   or no / or NEG killed

b. *Raskol'nikov ne ubil staruxu ili net?
   Raskolnikov NEG killed crone or no

c. Raskol'nikov ne UBIL staruxu | ili (vse-taki) UBIL?
   Raskolnikov NEG killed crone | or after-all killed

(43) ? Tak ne UBIL li on staruxu | ili vse-taki UBIL?
     so NEG killed Q he crone | or after-all killed

(44) a. ?*Pišet li Ivan knigu ili ne recenziruet stat'ju?
        writes Q Ivan book or NEG referees paper

     b. ?*Ivan ne pišet knigu ili recenziruet stat'ju?
        Ivan NEG writes book or referees paper

     c. ?*Ivan pišet knigu ili ne recenziruet stat'ju?
        Ivan writes book or NEG referees paper

(45) **... or NOT**
     a. ✓Verb $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or not?   (✓Pos>Neg)
     b. *Ne Verb $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or not?   (*Neg>Pos)
     c. *Q ... ne Verb or not?   (*no reordering: intonation)

(46) **not $\mathbf{V_1}$ or $\mathbf{V_1}$ // $\mathbf{V_1}$ or not $\mathbf{V_1}$**
     a. ✓Verb $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or ne Verb?   (✓Pos>Neg)
     b. ✓Ne Verb$_{\text{FOC}}$ $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or (after all) Verb$_{\text{FOC}}$?   (✓Neg>Pos)
     c. ✓$\mathbf{Q}$ ... ne Verb$_{\text{FOC}}$ $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or (after all) Verb$_{\text{FOC}}$?   (✓no reordering: intonation)

(47) **constituent negation: (not) $\mathbf{V_1}$ or (not) $\mathbf{V_2}$**
     a. *Verb$_1$ $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or ne Verb$_2$?   (*Pos>Neg)
     b. *Ne Verb$_1$ $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or Verb$_2$?   (*Neg>Pos)
     c. $\mathbf{Q}$... (ne) Verb$_1$ $\mathbf{li_Q}$ ... or (ne) Verb$_2$?   (*no reordering: intonation)

In other words, the disjunctive questions with NegYNs are bad because pragmatics/semantics militates against Neg>Pos sequences or polarity mismatches in the disjuncts themselves. If so, we have evidence for "real" negation in the NegYNs.

3.3 Compatibility with *by any chance*

Sadock (1971) shows that *by any chance* in English is only compatible with neutral polar questions:

(48) a. Are the gazanias blooming, by (any) chance?
     b. *Aren't the gazanias blooming, by (any) chance?
     c. *The gazanias are blooming by any chance.

In Russian, *by chance* can only appear with NegYNs:[5]

(49) a. *Tjul'pany slučaem (ne) tsvetut.   (declaratives: *by chance*)
        tulips by.chance NEG blossom.IMPF
        *'The tulips are(n't) blooming by any chance.'

---

[5]*Slučaem* is also possible in a handful of non-veridical contexts – conditionals, under *fear*-predicates and with negated perfective imperatives.

b. *Tsvetut li slučaem tjul'pany?   (PosYN: *_by chance_)
blossom Q by.chance tulips

c. *Razve tjul'pany slučaem ne tsvetut?   (RAZVE Q: *_by chance_)
REALLY tulips by.chance NEG blossom

d. Ne tsvetut li slučaem tjul'pany?   (NegYN: ✓_by chance_)
NEG blossom Q by.chance tulips

The set in (50) demonstrates _slučaem_ needs negation even in questions formed via the prosodic strategy:

(50)   a. On slučaem ne upomjanul, na kogo rabotaet?
          he by.chance NEG mentioned on whom works
          'Did he not mention who he works for, by any chance?'

       b. *On slučaem upomjanul, na kogo rabotaet?
   he by.chance mentioned on whom works

In other words, a non-veridical context alone is insufficient: _slučaem_, apparently, requires negation as well.

4 Intermediate summary

- "Informative" questions are weakly biased towards ¬p.

- "Dubious" questions are compatible with negation in the higher domain: I leave the implementation open here. But roughly, the idea is that the higher operator negates one of the illocutionary components. So, for instance, examples like (33c) (the undesirability ones) seek to confirm that something _undesirable_ is true. Assuming Sode and Truckenbrodt 2018, we can say that the negative operator is merged above the bouletic Force-head.

- NegYNs distinguish themselves from PosYNs in disjunctive questions and in the contexts with _by chance_. In both cases, NegYNs pattern with root negated YN questions (i.e., those that unabiguously feature clausemate negation).

- NegYNs are also different from the "biased" varieties (RAZVE-Qs and Auxn't Qs) in that they are amenable to embedding.

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5 Syntax of NegYNs

- Things to account for:
  - GoN is assigned
  - Negative concord is impossible
  - (**New data point**: NegYNs are compatible with polarity sensitive elements *already* and *still*)

- Claim: There are two Neg positions in Russian – above AspectP/vP and above TP. NegYNs are ambiguous between these two underlying structures.

- Lower NegP in (51) is the exclusive domain of negative concord (at-issue negation);

- Higher NegP is merged in the C-domain in (52) and does not license NCIs.

- The negator *ne* is a verbal affix ⟶ necessary for GoN.

(51)

CP

C^0 TP

T^0

NegP

NegP

Neg^0 AspectP/vP

...
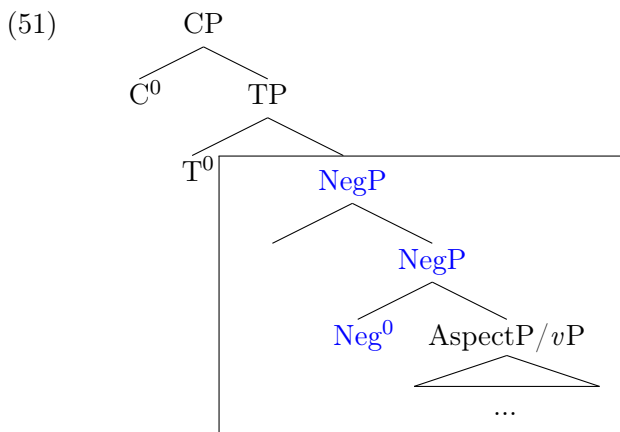
- Suspected structure for "informative" Neg-YNs;

- Neg+V → C movement in question (standard assumption);

- NCIs in NegYNs are not licensed for independent reasons (Criterial Freezing).

(52)

C-domain

NegP

Neg^0 ...

... TP

T^0 AspectP/vP

...
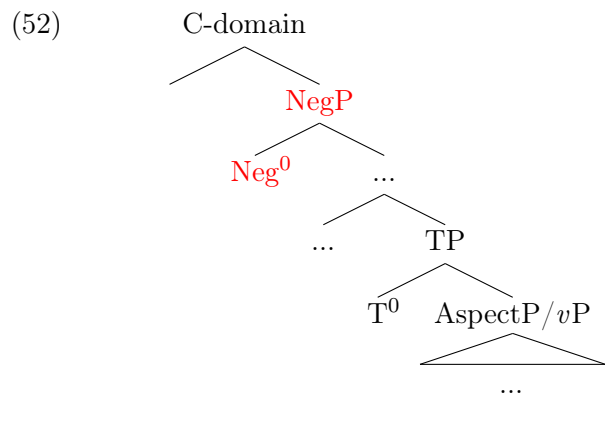
- Suspected structure for "dubious" NegYNs;

- Illocutionary negation has the effect of attenuating/modifying speaker commitments; negating something in the functional domain of C

- NCIs are not licensed, as the licenser is not local.

5.1 Evidence for two negations

Padučeva (2008) catalogues a range of meanings in situations when negation precedes a (possibility in this case) modal in (53) – examples (c) and (d) are hers. In this configuration *možet* can express internal and external ability, as well permission and the assessment of likelihood.

(53) NEG > **možet**: range of meanings

    a. Etot bolvan [ne] možet ponjat' otveta. (ability)
        this dumb-dumb NEG can to.understand.PRF answer
        'This dumb-dumb is unable to understand the answer.'

    b. Voennoobjazannyj zajavil v sude, čto [ne] možet služit', potomu čto v armii
        conscript declared in court that NEG can to.serve.IMPF because in army
        nadelaet bedy. (ability)
        will.make mess
        'The conscript announced in court that he is unable to serve

because he will make a mess of things.' [sud.ua.2023]

  c. Ty ne možeš' stroit' zdes' garaž. (deontic)
    you NEG can to.build.IMPF here garage
    'You are not allowed to build a garage here.'

  d. Ivan ne možet uspet'. (epistemic)
    Ivan NEG can to.be.on.timePRF
    'It is impossible for Ivan to make it on time.'

What has not been noticed to my knowledge is that NCIs are only compatible with root modals – epistemic interpretation becomes unavailable upon the introduction of ni-items:

(54) a. **Nikto** ne možet ponjat' otveta. (ability)
      ni-who NEG can to.understand.PRF answer
      'Nobody is able to understand the answer.'

    b. **Nikto** ne možet stroit' zdes' garaž. (deontic)
      ni-who NEG can to.build.IMPF here garage
      'Nobody is allowed to build a garage here.'

    c. **Nikto** ne možet uspet'.
      ni-who NEG can to.be.on.time.PRF
      ✓'Nobody is able to make it on time.' (ability)
      * 'It is impossible for anyone to make it on time.' (epistemic)

The same holds of objects: ni-items are incompatible with epistemic interpretation, as shown in (55).

(55) a. On ne mog etogo vydumat'.
      he NEG could this invent
      'He could not have made it up.' (epistemic, ability)

    b. On **ničego** ne mog vydumat'.
      he nothing NEG could invent
      ✓'He couldn't invent anything. = was unable' (ability)
      * 'It was impossible for him to invent anything.' (epistemic)

An enduring generalization that epistemics consistently outscope other sentential operators (including negation and root modals) formed the basis for formulating the analyses under which epistemics occupy a clause-peripheral position, high enough to take the widest scope (for various implementations see Butler 2003, Drubig 2001, Cormack and Smith 2002, a.o.). Assuming a skeletal structure in (56), the facts in (54c) are interpreted in the following way. Higher negation does not license NCIs. For the sentence to be interpretable, the modal must merge in the lower position (in the scope of lower negation).

(56) [$_{CP}$ [Neg^0 [$_{FP}$ Mod$^0_{Epis}$ [$_{TP}$ T^0 [$_{NegP}$ Neg^0 [Mod$^0_{root}$ ...]]]]]]

✳ Additional constructions that are ambiguous between the two negations appear in the Appendix ✳.

5.2 Genitive of Negation

- Not at all a straightforward phenomenon with considerable speaker variation (and a commensurate volume of scholarly output).

- Here I confine my attention to genitive objects, but there is a similar effect with subjects of unaccusatives (which evince Nom ∼ Gen alternation) (see Harves (2013) for a data overview and Partee et al. (2011) for arguments that it should not be treated on a par with object genitives).

(57) Reminder pattern:

a. Ivan ne polučil otveta.   NEG ⟶ ✓Gen (GoN)
   Ivan NEG received answer.GEN

b. *Ivan polučil otveta.   No NEG ⟶ *Gen
   Ivan received answer.GEN

c. Ivan ne polučil otvet.   NEG ⟶ ✓Acc
   Ivan NEG received answer.ACC

d. Ivan polučil otvet.   no NEG ⟶ ✓Acc
   Ivan received answer.ACC

- The successful assignment of GoN is said to rely on a set of "tendencies": its acceptability depends on the type of the nominal complement (e.g., abstract nouns are more likely to tolerate GoN than concrete nouns), the type of a verb (e.g., imperfectives under negation tend to combine more willingly with genitive complements than their perfective counterparts), style (sometimes GoN comes off as "quaint") or even age (the construction appears to be in the state of obsolescence) (Timberlake 1975).

  – Nouns:
    * abstract » concrete
    * plural » singular
    * common » proper
    * indefinite, non-specific, narrow scope
  – Verbs:
    * finite » infinite
    * indicative » non-indicative
    * imperfective » perfective
    * specific lexical clusters (verbs of perception, existence, possession, emotion, creation, etc.)
  – Register:
    * formal » informal
  – Language change:
    * GoN appears to be facing obsolescence

- Approaches to GoN: (a) genitive is triggered by a **null quantifier** in the complement NP (e.g., Bailyn 2012, Pereltsvaig 1999, Pesetsky 1982); (b) genitive is licensed by the **Neg head** (e.g., Bailyn 1997, Harves 2002a,b); (c) semantic approaches (e.g., Borschev et al. 2008, Partee et al. 2011, Kagan 2013).

- Semanticists point out that insofar as the meaning differences between Acc and Gen are detectable at all, the object genitives tend to exhibit "decreased referentiality" and the lack of existential commitment. The proposal then is to treat genitive objects as type-shifted elements, as in (58) (an identical conclusion is reached in Kagan 2013). "A crucial corollary is that a shift in NP type requires shift in VP type, and hence a shift in VP semantics. Different classes of verbs have different "routes" to type-shifted meanings" (Partee et al. 2011: 156). It is worth pointing out that the precise formalization of this remains elusive, but I think this is the right approach.

(58) **The property-type hypothesis for Russian genitives**: If a Russian Nom/Gen or Acc/Gen alternation shows a semantic difference at all, then Nom or Acc is interpreted as e-type, and Gen is interpreted as property-type: $<e,t>$.   (Borschev et al. 2008)

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- Following Zeijlstra (2004), I assume that *ne* is a verbal affix: ne+V then functions as a lexical unit. Additionally, it contributes NEG-features, subject to checking by a clausebounded operator (either by the lower NEG or the higher NEG on the present account). The proposal here is to say that type-shifting is facilitated by this morphological property of negated verbs: i.e., that the negative affix itself is complicit in triggering the type-shift. If so, GoN may be assigned by low or high negation, as desired – that is because in both cases, the verb, in addition to the "right" lexical properties, also bears the right morphology.

- If so, other incarnations of high negation predictably fail to trigger GoN: in (a), we're looking at a NegYN with a fronted noun; in (b) we have an instance of literal expletive negation: per Erschler (2023), the negator, a taboo word, sits in a Spec of TP-external PolP.

(59) a. Ne   Andrei li polučil   <*otveta>   / otvet?
         NEG Andrei Q received < answer.GEN> / answer.ACC
         'I wonder if it wasn't Andrei who got an answer.'

      b. Xuj on polučil   <*otveta>   / otvet.
         dick he received < answer.GEN> / answer.ACC
         'Fuck if he got an answer.'

5.3   Evidence that NegYNs are ambiguous between the two structures

The evidence is based on the polarity sensitive adverbs *ešče* 'still/yet' and *uže* 'already'. These elements can be polarity sensitive in certain environments. Perfective verbs in the past, when negated, are compatible with *ešče* 'still, yet' (60a) but not *uže* 'already' (61a). Conversely, in positive polarity contexts, *ešče* is bad (60b) but *uže* is fine (61b).

(60) a. Koroleva ešče **ne**   umerla.
         queen   still NEG died.PRF
         'The queen is not yet dead.'

      b. *Koroleva ešče umerla.
          queen   still died.PRF

(61) a. *Koroleva uže   **ne**   umerla.
          queen   already NEG died.PRF

      b. Koroleva uže   umerla.
         queen   already died.PRF
         'The queen has already died.'

Paducheva (2015) draws the equivalence between *ešče ne …* and *it is not the case that… uže*, demonstrated in (62).

(62) Rebenok **ešče ne**   usnul.   = Neverno, čto rebenok **uže**   usnul.
      child   yet NEG fell.asleep.PRF = Not.true that child   already fell.asleep.PRF
      'The child hasn't yet fallen asleep. = It is not true that the child is already asleep.'

Now consider NegYNs below: evidently, NegYNs are compatible with both – *ešče* (63) and *uže* (64) (all sourced from the corpus). I take *ešče* to be symptomatic of lower negation (51). On *uže* in non-veridical contexts, Paducheva (2015) writes: "appearing in the contexts of suspended assertions, negation is converted from a narrow scope particle to a sentential operator that outscopes *uže*. In the contexts of suspended assertions, the particle *ne* behaves as the clause *it is not true that…*, which forms separate predi-

cation and occupies a position higher than *uže* in syntax/ semantics."[6,7] Under my account, this "global" negation interpretation is represented in syntax, as sketched in (52).

(63)   a. Ne   iznosilis'   li ešče pokryški?
       NEG wore.out.PRF Q still tires
       'The tires haven't yet worn out, have they?'

<div align="right">[I. Sirin. Iaponskoe nasledie. 2004]</div>

       b. Ne   vyjasnilsja   li ešče den' priezda   otca   Vladimira?
       NEG found.out.PRF Q still day   of.arrival of.father Vladimir
       'Has the day of father Vladimir's arrival not been established yet?'

<div align="right">[E. Mravinskii. Zapiski na pamiat'. 1987]</div>

       c. Da   ne   poteriala li ešče pjatialtynnyj?
       and NEG lost.PRF   Q still 15-kopeck.coin
       'And she hasn't lost her coin yet, has she?'

<div align="right">[V. Kaverin. Otkrytaia kniga. 1949-56]</div>

(64)   a. (...) ne   nastupil   li uže   moment, kogda etim čelovekom možno požertvovat'.
            NEG arrived.PRF Q already moment when this person   can   be.sacrificed
       'Is it not the case that the moment has already arrived, when this person can be sacrificed?'
       [A. Solzhenitsyn. V kruge pervom. 1968]

       b. Ne   perevel   li uže   poemu kto-nibud' drugoj?
       NEG translate.PRF Q already poem   somebody else
       'Is it not the case that somebody has already translated the poem?'

<div align="right">[N.Voronel'. Vospominaniia. 1975-2003]</div>

       c. (Ne   okažetsja li on,) ne   okazalsja   li uže   v nekoej pustyne?
       (NEG appear   Q he) NEG appeared.PRF Q already in some   desert
       'Will he turn up, has he not already turned up in some desert?'

<div align="right">[A.D. Shmeman. Dnevniki. 1973-83]</div>

Additionally, there does seem to be the prosodic correlation of the following kind: in NegYNs with *ešče*, the contour features two peaks; whereas with *uže*, the most natural rendition provisions but one.

(65)   a. Ne iznosilis' li **ešče** pokryški? = (63a)
                  *   *
       b. Ne okazalsja li **uže** v nekoej pustyne? = (64c)
                      *   ↘

5.4   Why are NCIs impossible in NegYNs?

About "informative" questions, we know that they:

- require two intonational peaks:

(66)   a. Ne   zapretila li ego cenzura?
       NEG forbade   Q him censorship
       '(I wonder) if he wasn't censored?'

       b. Ne zapretila li ego cenzura?
                  *   *

---

[6][O]трицание, попадая в контекст снятой утвердительности, превращается из частицы, которая имеет ограниченную сферу действия, в сентенциальный оператор со сферой действия более широкой, чем у частицы *уже*. Частица *не* в контексте снятой утвердительности ведет себя как оборот *неверно, что,* который составляет отдельную предикацию и занимает семантико-синтаксическую позицию более высокую, чем *уже*.

[7]The description of non-conventional uses of *uže ne* is found in Boguslavskii (2002).

- prohibit *NCIs, but license ✓GoN

So, what I am suggesting here is a conspiracy of sorts: ni-items in YN questions must obligatorily move to Spec, NegP for focus (on NCI licensing via movement see Bošković 2009). The verb raises to Neg. This results in a configuration of *Criterial Freezing (CF)*. Rizzi's formulation of CF is in (68), where the "criterial position" is understood as an instance of a Spec-Head configuration (as in (69)).[8]

(67) $[\ldots$ $[_{\text{NegP}}$ ni-item$_{\text{[FOC, NEG]}}$ $[_{\text{NegP}}$ Neg2^0+V^0$_{\text{[FOC, NEG]}}$ [AspectP/vP...]]]]

(68) **Criterial Freezing:** An element satisfying the criterion is frozen in place.
(Criterial features are those related to information structure) (Rizzi 2015a,b)

(69) **Left Periphery Condition:**
   a. A carrier of a criterial feature {Top, Mod, Foc, Wh, Subj, etc.} must be in a Spec-head relation with the matching head.
   b. A head of the set {+Top, +Mod, +Foc, +Wh, +Subj, etc.} must be in a Spec-head relation with the relevant element. (Samo 2019)

Rizzi originally formulated (68) to account for cases like (70) and (71). The first set shows that focus movement is possible in Italian. The second set – that the phrase [quale.$_Q$ LIBRO.$_{\text{FOC}}$] is stuck in place, because it has two criterial features – Q and FOC. In principle, he says, we can imagine a situation when the Q feature is satisfied *en passant* to enable further movement for FOC, but this doesn't happen. That is because here we have a criterial configuration, so (68) applies.

(70) a. Hanno   deciso di leggere il   LIBRO, non l'articolo.
        they.have decided to read   the **book**   not the-article

   b. Il   LIBRO hanno   deciso   di leggere, non l'articolo.
      the **book** they.have decided to read   not the-article

(71) a. Gianni non sapeva [quale LIBRO Q [avessero raccomandato di leggere]], non quale articolo.
        Gianni not knew   which **book** Q they.had recommended to read   not which article
        'Gianni didn't know which book they had recommended reading, not which article.'

   b. *Quale LIBRO Gianni non sapeva [___ Q [avessero raccomandato di leggere]], non quale
       which **book** Gianni not knew   Q they.had recommended to read   not which
      articolo.
      article

My proposal is to extend this to heads. The claim here is that it is not just the Spec that is frozen, but also the complex V-head: i.e., the attempted fronting in (72) is prohibited. Neg+V cannot extract for the same reason *quale libro* is stuck in the intermediate slot – the verb cannot satisfy its criterial features (of which there are two – Q, FOC) "in passing". Since the head of NegP hosts FOC, the verb is ineligible to move further. It should be reiterated that the situation obtains only in the presence of a filled Spec, which, by assumption, is parasitic on the focal features of Neg^0.

(72) *$[_{\text{CP}}$ [C^0 *li*] [$_{\text{TP}}$ T^0 $[_{\text{NegP}}$ **ni-tems** $[_{\text{NegP}}$ *Neg^0+V*] [$_{\text{AspectP}}$ ...]]]]

≫⁺ In other words:
   In YN questions:
➤   Neg^0 bears FOC-features (I don't have an explanation for why it is obligatory in these contexts, but inuitively, it must be related to the intonational contour with two prosodic peaks)

---

[8]The configuration in (67) is reminiscent of the NEG-criterion configuration (Haegeman and Zanuttini 1991, Haegeman 1995). However, under my analysis the presumed driving force of NCI movement to Spec, NegP is focus.

→ ni-items must move to its Spec

→ verb is stuck

➣ Evidence for Neg+V immobility & obligatory movement:

- In YN questions, Negative Concord is possible only in questions that employ the prosodic strategy. Moreover, in such instances there is a word order effect, whereby the ni-phrases must precede the verb, as in (73a). Example in (73b) has been noted in the literature.

(73)   a. Nikto ne prixodil?
           ni-who neg came
           'Did no one come?'

        b. *Ne prixodil nikto?   (Gribanova 2017)
           neg came   ni-who

But the fronting requirement actually holds of all ni-items in polar questions, as in (74) (though (b) is not truly outrageous, it is considerably dispreferred compared to (a)).

(74)   a. Ivan nikogo   ne videl?
           Ivan ni-whom neg saw

        b. ?*Ivan ne videl nikogo?
            Ivan neg want ni-whom

- In the absence of special prosody, ni-items are best in a cluster before the verb. This property is reminiscent of multiple wh-fronting (claimed to be triggered by focus in Russian by Bošković 2002).[9]

(75)   a. On nikogo   nigde   ne videl.
           he ni-whom ni-where neg saw
           'He didn't see anybody anywhere.'

        b. ??On nikogo ne videl nigde.
            Ivan ni-wom neg saw   ni-where

- The effect is also detectable in other languages. Hungarian is a language presumed to have focus movement which targets preverbal positions (Kiss 2002), as shown in (76). It is also a language that fronts the verbs in YN questions, as in (77a). What is not possible, however, is the configuration like (77b).[10]

(76)   a. Zsuszi csak Marit / MARIT   hívta   meg.   [Hungarian]
           Suzi   only Mary / MARY$_{FOC}$ invited PRT
           'Suzy invited only Mary.'

        b. *Zsuzsi meghívta csak Marit / MARIT.
           Suzy   met   only Mary / MARY$_{FOC}$

(77)   a. Meghívta Zsuzsi Marit?
           invited   Suzy Mary
           'Did Suzy invite Mary?'

        b. *Meghívta Zsuzsi csak Marit / MARIT?
           invited   Suzy only Mary / MARY$_{FOC}$
           Intended: 'Did Suzy invite only Mary / MARY?'

---

[9]The parallelism between the negative and interrogative sentences is discussed in Haegeman (1995).

[10]Many thanks to George Fowler for a consult on Hungarian (and the provision of access to native speakers).

- I suspect that there is a similar freezing effect in situations with modal verbs. We saw earlier what happens when NEG precedes *can*. But negation can also follow the modal, as in (78). In these situations, the *ability* meaning is impossible –here, we are looking at an instance of lower negation (above *v*P) with the modal merged higher.

(78) **možet > neg**: no *ability* reading in these situations

    a. Etot bolvan   možet $\boxed{\text{ne}}$ ponjat'   otveta.
       this dumb-dumb can   NEG to.understand.PRF answer
       'This dumb-dumb might not understand the answer.'

    b. On možet (i) $\boxed{\text{ne}}$ služit'.
       he can   FOC/MOD(?) NEG to.serve.IMPF
       'He is allowed not to serve. / He might not be serving.'

- Consider now what happens with ni-items in these constructions. The difference between (a) and (b) reduces to the position of the NCI: whenever it reaches Spec, lower NegP, a criterial position, it becomes frozen.

(79) a. ?***Nikto** možet $\boxed{\text{ne}}$ ponjat'   otveta.
       ni-who can   NEG to.understand.PRF answer

    b. Otveta možet **nikto** $\boxed{\text{ne}}$ ponjat'.
       answer can   ni-who NEG understand
       'It is possible that nobody gets the answer.'

6 Conclusion

- Two merge domains for the negative operator – above TP and above the eventive layer (AspectP/*v*P).

  - NegYNs are ambiguous between the two (which roughly correlates with the available meanings);
  - There is a great deal of constructions (listed in Section 6) that are either ambiguous or require high negation – i.e., the analysis extends to the constructions that do not fall under the umbrella of "expletive negation".

- Low Neg: licenses NCIs and is compatible with *ešče* 'yet, still'.

- High Neg: does not license NCIs, but it is compatible with *uže* 'already'.

- NCI are impossible in NegYNs for independent reasons: the complex V-head is inextricable out of the criterial position (this is the extension of Rizzi's *Criterial Freezing*).

- The negator *ne* is a verbal prefix, an integral trigger for type-shifting that accompanies GoN. Whether its checking operator is high or low is immaterial, which is why GoN is possible for both types of negative configurations.

Appendix: Other negation

- For the sake of completeness, I enumerate a number of constructions that are either ambiguous between the two negations or obligatorily trigger high negation. I take the alternations NCI~indefinite and *ešče*~*uže* (where testable) to be symptomatic of ambiguity. The absence of alternations is presumed to indicate a non-ambiguous structure with either high or low negation.

- A word on other indefinites: Russian has a veritable cornucopia of indefinite pronouns. The ones that are pertinent for the present purposes are those that require licensing – *nibud'* and bare wh-idefinites. Both are bad in past episodic contexts in (a) and under clausemate negation in (b). *Nibud'*-indefinites are licensed in a variety of non-veridical contexts (Paducheva 2016). Wh-indefinites are possible in a subset of *nibud'* licensing contexts (Zanon 2023) and, if I am right, one of these licensing contexts is high negation in (c).

(80) a. *Včera   kto-nibud' / kto   / nikto umer.
          yesterday who-*nibud'* / who.INDF / ni-who died
          Intended: 'Yesterday someone / no one died.'

      b. Včera   <*kto-nibud'> / <*kto>   / <✓ nikto> **ne**   umer.
          yesterday < who-*nibud'*> / < who.INDF> / <   ni-who> NEG died
          'No one died yesterday.'

      c. Ne   umer li <✓ kto-nibud'> / <✓ kto>   / <*nikto>   včera?
          NEG died Q <   who-*nibud'*> / < who.INDF> / < ni-who> yesterday

Fear, apprehension, warning

- **Kak by-clauses**

- Shown in (81) are "apprehensive subjunctives" (one of the alleged "Expletive Negation" contexts). A handful of verbs, denoting surveillance/ supervision/ warning (*prismatrivat'* 'keep an eye', *karaulit'* 'guard', *bereč'sja* 'beware, be safe', *smotret'* 'watch (out)' or psych states of an unpleasant nature (*bojat'sja* 'be afraid', *trevožit'sja* 'be anxious', *volnovat'sja* 'be uneasy'), select a subjunctive clause headed by *kak (by)* (the complementizer *čtoby* is also possible, but seems to be moribund in these constructions) (Nilsson 2012). In fact, the matrix verb may be altogether absent, in which case a bare *kak by*-clause (absolutely coherent as a stand-alone sentence) is understood as an implicit warning or expression of fear.

- Contrary to the standard claim that NCIs do not embed under fear-predicates in (81b) (e.g., Abels 2005, Brown and Franks 1995), many such examples are attested online. My informants are fine with either incarnation of (81b).

(81) a. Smotri,   kak by   kto   <kto-nibud' / nikto> telefon **ne** stibril   v takoj
          watch.outIMP how SUBJ who.INDF <who-*nibud'* / ni-who> phone NEG snatched in such
          tolpe!
          crowd
          'Watch out lest someone snatch your phone in this crowd.'

      b. Bojus', kak by   kto   <kto-nibud' / (✓/*)nikto> telefon **ne** stibril   v takoj
          fear1.SG how SUBJ who.INDF <who-*nibud'* /   ni-who> phone NEG snatched in such
          tolpe!
          crowd
          'I fear someone might snatch your phone in this crowd.'

      c. Kak by   kto   <kto-nibud' / nikto> telefon **ne** stibril   v takoj tolpe!
          how SUBJ who.INDF <who-*nibud'* / ni-who> phone NEG snatched in such crowd
          '(I am afraid that) someone might steal the phone in this crowd.'

- To add one more point on the data adjudication front, here's a naturally occurring example with an NCI under the *fear* verb:

(82) No ja bespokoilas' ne za vešči: bojalas', čtoby **nikto ne** vletel v raskalennye ugol'ja
but I worried not for things was.afraid that.SUBJ ni-who NEG ran.into in hot coals
na kuxne.
on kitchen
'But I was not worried about household things: I was afraid that somebody would run into the
burning hot coals in the kitchen.'

<div align="right">[D. Kostenko. Kontinent, 2006; via Nilsson 2012]</div>

- One more curiosity about the predicates of fear is that they may embed our NegYNs (as noted in the literature). Note, however, that PosYNs in (b) are impossible as complements (which is, incidentally, yet another point of divergence between the two).

(83) a. Ja bojus', **ne** pojdet li Maša v školu odna.
I am.afraid NEG go Q Masha to school alone
'I am afraid that Masha will go to school alone.' (Iordanskaja and Melčuk 1990)

  b. *Ja bojus', pojdet li Maša v školu odna.
I am.afraid go Q Masha to school alone

- Note as well that even the group that does not like ni-items under *fear*-predicates accepts GoN in these contexts:

(84) Ja bojus', kak by on **ne** narušil eksperimenta.
I fear how SUBJ ni-who NEG ruined experiment.GEN
'I fear that he might ruin the experiment' <div align="right">GoN</div>

- **Perfective imperatives**

- The "default" negative imperative in Russian, covering a range of meanings (wishes, orders, prohibitions, advice, etc.) is expressed with an imperfective verb, as in (85). Ni-items (but not indefinites) are fine here. This, I construe as evidence that negation must be low with imperfective imperatives.

(85) a. Bez menja **ničego ne** predprinimaj! (imperfective imperative)
without me ni-what NEG undertake.IMPF.IMP
'Do nothing without me!'

  b. *Bez menja čto(-nibud') **ne** predprinimaj!
without me what-*nibud'* NEG undertake.IMPF.IMP

- The negated perfective imperative is a special guy. Roughly, it has two meanings – what Nilsson (2013) calls "preventive" meaning (=warning) or a "punitive" one (=threat), shown in (86).

(86) a. Smotri, ne zabolej! (preventive)
watch.out NEG get.sick.PRF.IMP
'(Beware that you) don't get sick!'

  b. Tol'ko mne ne pročitaj! (punitive)
only to.me NEG read.PRF.IMP
'Just you dare to not read this!'

- With "preventive" imperatives, the story is a little complicated.

- Normal agentive verbs are compatible with perfective imperatives, provided there is sufficient context, as in (87). I have split judgments here: one group finds ni-items in these contexts perfectly fine; the other group is vehement about their degraded status. This is, in fact, reminiscent of the situation with *fear*-verbs: evidently, some speakers allow for structural ambiguity and some don't.

(87) Context: *Anastasia lent her phone to Matvei so he can check his rapidly diminishing crypto port-folio. She may issue the following warning:*

    a. Tol'ko ty smotri, **ne** pozvoni komu(-nibud')!   (preventive)
       only you watch.out.IMP, NEG call.PRF.IMP whom-*nibud'*
       'Only you watch out, don't (accidentally) dial somebody!'

    b. (✓/*)Tol'ko ty smotri, **nikomu ne** pozvoni!
          only you watch.out.IMP, ni-whom NEG call.PRF.IMP
       'Watch out, don't (accidentally) dial somebody!'

- The set below was volunteered to me by one of my consultants who does not like ni-items with perfective (agentive) imperatives (many thanks to Elena Filimonova):

(88) Additional examples with perfective imperatives (split judgments):

    a. (Smotri,) ne skaži komu(-nibud')!
       watch.out NEG say.PRF.IMP whom-*nibud'*
       '(Beware that you) don't say (it) to somebody!'

    b. (Smotri,) ne porugajsja tam s kem(-nibud')!
       watch.out NEG quarrel.PRF.IMP there with whom-*nibud'*
       '(Beware that you) don't quarrel with somebody!'

    c. (✓/*)(Smotri,) (**nikomu**) ne skaži (**nikomu**)!
          watch.out (ni-whom) NEG say.PRF.IMP (ni-whom)

    d. (✓/?*)(Smotri,) (**ni s kem**) ne porugajsja tam (**ni s kem**)!
          watch.out (ni-with-whom) NEG quarrel.PRF.IMP there (ni-with-whom)

- Verbs, denoting mental states (*forget*) and involuntary actions (*fall, break, spill, tear*) are fine with ni-items for both cohorts – in (89).

(89) Good for both groups:

    a. Smotri, (ničego) ne zabud' (ničego)!   (perfective / preventive)
       (watch.out) (ni-what) NEG forget.PRF.IMP (ni-what)
       '(See to it that you) don't forget anything!'

    b. Smotri, ne zabud' čego(-nibud')!
       (ni-what) NEG forget.IMPF.IMP what(-*nibud'*)
       'Do not forget anything!'

- Independent of the verdict on ni-items, GoN is possible with this type of perfective imperative for all speakers:

(90) (Smotri,) ne dopusti ošibki!
    watch.out NEG make.PRF.IMP mistake.GEN
    'Do not make a mistake!'

- The "punitive" imperative below is bad with ni-items for both cohorts.

(91) Bad for both groups:

    a. Tol'ko (mne) ne verni knigi! Požalujus' na tebja dekanu.
       only to.me NEG return.PRF.IMP books rat on you to.dean
       'Just you dare to not return the books. I will rat you out to the dean.'

    b. *Tol'ko poprobuj (mne), **ničego** ne verni!
       only try to.me ni-what NEG return.PRF.IMP
       'Just you dare not to return anything!'

c. ✓ Tol'ko poprobuj (mne), **čego** ne verni!
   only try to.me what.INDF NEG return.PRF.IMP
   'Just you dare not to return anything!'

- So, the constructions above:

  - Adversarial *kak by*-clauses and "preventive" (agentive) negative imperatives are ambiguous for some speakers (not necessarily overlapping cohorts though) → both high and low negation possible (for some speakers);
  - "Preventive" (non-agentive) negative imperatives are ambiguous for all speakers (a group of 5, excluding me, though I do agree on the judgments) → both high and low negation possible (for all speakers);
  - Imperfective negative imperatives only admit ni-items → low negation;
  - Perfective "punitive" imperatives do not admit ni-items → high negation.

Lest-clauses

These subjunctive clauses are discussed in Paducheva (2016) wrt *nibud'*∼ni-item alternation and in Zanon (2023) (whence the examples) wrt wh-indefinite licensing. Given that all those polarity items are admissible, LEST-clauses are likewise ambiguous between the two negations.

(92)   a. ... pribrala, čtoby kto   <kto-nibud' / nikto> ne podnjal.
          ... picked.up that.SUBJ who.INDF <who-*nibud'* / ni-who> NEG took
          '(I deliberately) picked [it] up, lest somebody take it.'

                                          [M. Bulgakov. Master & Margarita. 1928-40]

      b. Szadi, čtoby kto   <kto-nibud' / nikto> ne sbežal   dorogoju, exali na konjax
         behind that.SUBJ whoINDF <who-*nibud'* / ni-who> NEG ran.away en.route   rode on horses
         dva monaxa.
         two monks
         'Two monks were riding astride behind [them] lest someone make a run for it en route.'   [Iu.
         German. Rossiia molodaia. 1952]

Razve-Qs

First, both ni-items and wh-indefinites are acceptable, which is indicative of the availability of two merge cites for the negative operator.

(93)   a. Razve   kogo **ne** bespokoit ploxoj son?
          REALLY whom NEG bother   bad   sleep
          'Isn't bad sleep bothering somebody?'

                                          [https://yan.guru/blog/zdorovie/vitamin-d-drug-ili-vrag]

      b. Razve   **nikogo ne** nastorožil pjatyj etaž?
         REALLY ni-whom NEG gave.pause fifth   floor
         'Didn't the fifth floor give pause to anybody?'

                                          [I. Lobusova. Tot, kto pridet otomstit'. 2016]

Second, both *uže* and *ešče* are fine as well:

(94)   a. Razve   ona uže   ne   ušla   vo frikovsktvo?
          REALLY she already NEG left.PRF.PST to freakishness
          'Has she not already become a freak?'   [beauty forum]

    b. Razve   ona ešče ne   ušla?
       REALLY she yet   NEG left.PRF.PST
       'Has she not yet left?'   [I.Uzun. Pora ženit'sja. 2023.]

And, predictably, *uže* (indicative of high negation) does not combine with ni-items in contrast to *ešče*:

(95)   a. *Razve   ona uže   **nikuda ne**   ušla?
            REALLY she already ni-where NEG left.PRF.PST

      b. Razve   one ešče **nikuda ne**   ušla?
            REALLY she yet ni-where NEG left.PRF.PST

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	NEG	negation
FOC	focus	NOM	nominative
GEN	genitive	PRF	perfective
IMP	imperative	PST	past
IMPF	imperfective	SUBJ	subjunctive
INDF	indefinite	Q	YN-marker
MOD	modal		

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