

Explaining the distribution of Russian *nibud'* indefinites*

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INTRO: The restricted distribution of Russian *nibud'* indefinites has been explained using the assumption that *nibud'* encodes covariation. In this paper, I will show that this explanation is inadequate. I will propose a novel account, which states that *nibud'* indefinites (i) require anaphoric inaccessibility, i.e. that they fail to introduce a discourse referent into the global context (cf. [Kuhn 2022](#) a.o.), and (ii) are local PPIs, i.e. cannot appear in the immediate scope of a strong NPI-licensing operator unless it is itself in the scope of an NPI-licensing operator ([Szabolcsi 2004](#)). These two conditions account for a wide range of data, some of which would otherwise seem quite puzzling.

OBSERVATIONS: The indefinites in question are formed by wh-words suffixed by *nibud'*. In episodic sentences, *nibud'* indefinites are ungrammatical (1a). However, they are licensed by such operators as distributive quantifiers (1b), adverbs of quantification, modals (1c), conditionals, and disjunction (1d), as well as in imperatives and questions (1e). When licensed, *nibud'* indefinites must take narrow scope wrt. their licenser.

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| (1) a. *Maša priglasila kogo-nibud'.
Maša invited who-NIBUD'
int.: 'Maša invited someone.' | d. Maša libo upala s velosipeda, libo
Maša or fell off bike or
podralas' s kem-nibud'.
got.into.fight with who-NIBUD'
'Maša either fell off her bike or got
into a fight with someone.' |
| b. Každyj iz nas priglasil kogo-nibud'.
each of us invited who-NIBUD'
'Each of us invited someone.' | e. Ty priglasila kogo-nibud'?
you invited who-NIBUD'
'Did you invite anyone?' |
| c. Maša dolžna priglasit' kogo-nibud'.
Maša must invite who-NIBUD'
'Maša must invite someone.' | |

Interestingly, attitude predicates differ in the ability to license *nibud'*: those meaning 'think', 'want', and 'hope' are licensors, but factives are not.

- (2) Ja ^{OK}nadejus' / ^{??}rada, čto Maše kto-nibud' pomog.
 I hope glad that Maša who-NIBUD' helped
 int.: 'I {hope, am glad} that someone helped Maša.'

COVARIATION THEORY: According to a prominent approach, *nibud'* signals that the variable contributed by the indefinite possibly covaries relative to another variable, which can be bound by a quantifier over individuals, situations, or possible worlds ([Pereltsvaig 2008](#), [Farkas 2021](#), [Aloni & Degano 2022](#)). Thus, *nibud'* indefinites are likened to so-called dependent indefinites ([Farkas 2021](#)). This account successfully captures the ungrammaticality of *nibud'* in episodic sentences and its licensing by distributive quantifiers, adverbs of quantification, modals, and, under certain assumptions, conditionals, imperatives, and wh-questions. It is unclear, however, how it would deal with disjunction, polar questions, and alternative questions, because in these cases, there is no variable for the indefinite to covary with. The contrast between factives and non-factives also remains mysterious. It thus seems reasonable to look for an alternative approach.

ANAPHORIC INACCESSIBILITY: Indefinites taking narrow scope with respect to some operator *O* often fail to be anaphorically accessible outside the scope of *O*. For instance,

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a singular indefinite in the scope of a distributive universal quantifier normally cannot be referred back to by a singular pronoun appearing outside the scope of the quantifier. The same is true for indefinites in the scope of adverbs of quantification, modals, conditionals, disjunction, imperatives, and questions (see Karttunen 1976, Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991, Groenendijk et al. 1996, a.o.). I propose that *nibud*' indefinites must appear in an environment outside of which they are anaphorically inaccessible (cf. Giannakidou 1998 on NPIs and Kuhn 2022 on NCIs). It seems natural to explicate the approach using the tools of dynamic semantics (Heim 1983, Groenendijk & Stokhof 1991). Let us assume that a context c includes a set of assignments defined for exactly the same variables (corresponding to familiar discourse referents), the set of which is referred to as $\mathbf{dom}(c)$, and sentences denote functions from contexts to contexts.

- (3) Let ϕ be an environment of the context change potential type. An indefinite occurring in ϕ and introducing a variable x is **anaphorically inaccessible** iff for every context c s.t. $x \notin \mathbf{dom}(c)$: $x \notin \mathbf{dom}(c[\phi])$.

As expected, all operators which license *nibud*' make indefinites in their scope anaphorically inaccessible (plural anaphora and quantificational subordination introduce complications, but they can be dealt with in a sufficiently rich dynamic framework). In addition to the cases discussed above, the proposal successfully accounts for the contrast between factives and non-factives: Karttunen 1976 and Elliott & Sudo 2021 demonstrated that indefinites in the scope of factives are anaphorically accessible, unlike those in the scope of non-factives, therefore only the latter are predicted to license *nibud*'.

POSITIVE POLARITY: Indefinites marked by *nibud*' display the properties of local (*some*-type; Szabolcsi 2004) positive polarity items: they cannot occur in the scope of clausemate strong NPI-licensing operators such as negation, unless the operator itself is in the scope of another NPI-licensing operator («rescuing»).

- (4) a. *Nam kto-nibud' ne pomog.
 us who-NIBUD' not helped
 int.: 'Nobody helped us.'
 b. Esli nam kto-nibud' ne pomožet, my pogibnem.
 if us who-NIBUD' not will.help we will.die
 'If someone doesn't help us, we will die.' (OK $\neg > \exists$)

Anaphoric inaccessibility does not predict the PPI-like behavior of *nibud*', so I am forced to stipulate that in addition to the anaphoric inaccessibility requirement, *nibud*' comes with a positive polarity requirement responsible for its anti-licensing (we can adopt the theory of Szabolcsi 2004 or Homer 2020). Strikingly, this «hybrid» account straightforwardly explains the puzzling fact that negation can license *nibud*' under emotive factives (5): negation under factives makes indefinites in its scope inaccessible and also creates a PPI rescuing environment (Szabolcsi 2004), so we predict *nibud*' to be acceptable.

- (5) Žal', što Maša *(ne) pozvala kogo-nibud' na pomošč'.
 pity that Maša not called who-NIBUD' for help
 'It's a pity that Maša didn't call anybody for help.'

CONCLUSION: I pointed out that covariation theory of *nibud*' indefinites is problematic. I also showed that a novel «hybrid» account, according to which *nibud*' indefinites are licensed in the environments which make them anaphorically inaccessible, with the exception of PPI anti-licensing environments, is empirically superior.

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