

Russian *nibud'*-indefinites and Neg-Raising

Denis Pisarenko, HSE University

Problem. In Russian, *nibud'*-indefinites outscope clausemate negation (Yanovich 2005). For instance, the only acceptable interpretation of (1) is the existential-negative one while the negative-existential interpretation is banned.

- (1) Dumaju, kto-nibud' ne pridet
 think who-nibud' NEG come
 'I think, there is somebody who will not come.' ($\exists > \neg$)
 *'I think, nobody will come.' ($\neg > \exists$)

The problem I discuss is the ambiguous reading arising in Neg-Raising (NR) environments. In (2), there is a *nibud'*-indefinite co-occurring with double negation which can yield two possible readings (90 out of 190 native Russian speakers I received judgments from preferred the first interpretation and 73 preferred the second one). The first (*universal*) one implies the scope order (3a) while the second *existential* interpretation is assumed to follow (3b).

- (2) Ne dumaju, čto kto-nibud' k nam ne pridet
 NEG think that who-nibud' to us NEG come
 'I think everybody will come to us.'
 'I think there will be at least one person who will come to us.'

- (3) a. $\neg > \exists > \neg \Rightarrow \forall$ (may be paraphrased as *Dumaju, čto vse pridut*)
 b. $\neg > \neg > \exists \Rightarrow \exists$ (may be paraphrased as *Dumaju, čto (xot') kto-to pridet*)

However, if (3b) truly schematises the arising of the existential interpretation in (2), *kto-nibud'* should fall into the scope of negation which violates the rules postulated for *nibud'*-indefinites I discussed above. The puzzle I deal with in this paper is how the existential interpretation arises at the logical form of the sentences like (2).

Analysis. It seems that the most natural way to explain the origin of the existential interpretation is to postulate *rescuing*, a phenomenon implying that in Downward Entailing contexts PPIs may fall into the scope of negation (Szabolcsi 2004). The example of rescuing resembling the existential interpretation of (2) is given in (Baker 1970):

- (4) I do not think that John didn't call **someone**.
 (\Rightarrow there is at least one person John called)

For it, we must consider *nibud'*-indefinites (local) PPIs. Moreover, as shown in (5), other Russian PPIs like disjunctive *ili* exhibit ambiguous interpretation too.

- (5) Ne dumaju, čto Dima ne videl Luvr ili
 NEG think that D. NEG saw the Louvre or
 Èjfelevu Bašnju
 the Eiffel Tower
 'I think that Dima saw both the Louvre and the Eiffel Tower.'
 'I think that Dima had seen either the Louvre or Eiffel Tower (at least one of them).'

Nevertheless, this claim seems to be controversial. As illustrated in (6)-(7), *ili* is rescued in non-NR Downward Entailing environments (like conditional clauses) while *nibud'*-indefinites only allow for the existential-negative reading but not the negative-existential one.

- (6) Esli **mamy ili papy** net doma, ja pridu
 if **mom or dad** NEG at home I come
 OK 'If neither mom nor dad is at home I will come.' (if > ¬ > ∨)
 OK 'If it is true for mom or dad that (s)he is not at home I will come.' (if > ∨ > ¬)

- (7) Esli **kogo-nibud'** net doma, ja pridu
 if who-nibud' NEG at home I come
 * 'If nobody is at home, I will come.' (if > ¬ > ∃)
 OK 'If there is somebody who is not at home I will come.' (if > ∃ > ¬)

The solution I propose to avoid positing rescuing is to assume that the two negative operators are located not above but below the existential. These conditions correspond to the syntactic theory of Neg-Raising which explains that in NR-sentences negation originally appeared in the embedded clause moves to the matrix clause at the syntactic level but semantically remains in the lower clause. Thus, I hypothesize that the model of interaction of quantifiers entailing the existential interpretation is not (3b) but (8).

- (8) $\exists > \neg > \neg \Rightarrow \exists$

The idea of the syntactic origin of Neg-Raising is however considered quite disputable. The most popular theories analyze NR in pragma-semantic terms as generated by special excluded-middle inference of predicates like *believe* or *think* (Gajewski 2007, Romoli 2013). Under that analysis, negation is believed to arise exactly in the matrix clause where it is phonologically and syntactically expressed.

Some recent theories combine syntactic and pragma-semantic approaches stating that both models of NR can simultaneously exist (Collins & Postal 2018, Crowley 2019). This approach provides a plausible argument in favor of my hypothesis. It is possible to distinguish some contexts which strictly involve pragmatic (but not syntactic) NR, like sentences with VP-ellipsis (Jacobson 2020) or with DP in the scope of *only* (Collins & Postal 2018: 16). In these contexts, only universal interpretation is legal, as shown below.

- (9) Jura думаet, čto kto-nibud' ne pridet, a Daša net
 J. think that who-nibud' NEG come but D. NEG
 OK 'Daša thinks that everybody will come.'
 * 'Daša thinks that there is somebody who will come.'

- (10) Tol'ko Jura думаet, čto kto-nibud' ne pridet
 only J. think that who-nibud' NEG come
 OK 'Everybody other than Jura thinks that everybody will come.'
 * 'Everybody other than Jura thinks that at least one person will come.'

Summary. I consider that the ambiguity held in (2) is not the case of rescuing PPIs since *nibud'*-indefinites cannot be freely considered PPIs. Instead, I postulate that such an ambiguity is a possible case of syntactic Neg-Raising which implies the existential reading via the mutual neutralization of two negative operators adjacent at the logical form.

References

- Baker 1970 – Baker, C. L. (1970). Double negatives, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 1:169–186.
- Collins & Postal 2018 – Collins, C., & Postal, P. M. (2018). Disentangling two distinct notions of NEG raising. *Semantics and Pragmatics*, 11, 5.
- Crowley 2019 – Crowley, P. (2019). Neg-raising and neg movement. *Natural Language Semantics*, 27(1), 1-17.
- Gajewski 2007 – Gajewski, J. R. (2007). Neg-raising and polarity. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 30(3), 289-328.
- Jacobson 2020 – Jacobson, P. (2020). Neg Raising and ellipsis (and related issues) revisited. *Natural Language Semantics*, 28(2), 111-140.
- Romoli 2013 – Romoli, J. (2013). A scalar implicature-based approach to neg-raising. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 36(4), 291-353.
- Szabolcsi 2004 – Szabolcsi, A. (2004). Positive polarity–negative polarity. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 22(2), 409-452.
- Yanovich 2005 – Yanovich, I. (2005, May). Choice-functional series of indefinite pronouns and Hamblin semantics. In *Semantics and linguistic theory* (Vol. 15, pp. 309-326).