Negative Concord (Not) as a Form of Agree in West Slavic

Background. The idea of understanding Negative Concord (NC) as a form of the traditional Minimalist Agree [1] is reasonable [3]: both operations consist of a Probe searching its domain for one or more Goals to match features with. However, while the domain of Agree appears to be reliably bound by a set of widely examined locality constraints, what constitutes the domain of NC and if it at all corresponds to the patterns of Agree has so far not been discussed. Likewise, the direction of this operation (upward versus downward) remains open to question [3][7].

Proposal. This study argues that: (i) the domains of NC and Agree differ in the context of attested locality constraints, (ii) NC should instead be analysed as a form of concord obeying the finite CP boundary, (iii) this prediction applies to licensing as well as movement of involved items. This analysis, embracing the downward concord hypothesis, gives a Minimalist explanation of NC.

Analysis. The scope of NC is observable on the surface: in the presence of a negative verbal clitic *nie* (Polish) or prefix *ne-* (Czech, Slovak) (Probe), all indefinites (Goals) in its domain—also known as *n*-expressions—must be marked, typically with a negative prefix *ni-* [5]. Failing to mark every available *n*-expression yields ungrammaticality (1). Marking items beyond the scope contributes to a different semantic negation and yields multiple-negation reading. **Differences in Domains.** In the context of attested locality constraints, Goals normally unavailable to the Probe of Agree require licensing from the Probe of NC. According to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), Probes should not interact with Goals beyond the nearest phasal head (previously proposed phasal heads being: C, *v* [1], *v** [4], D, P [6]). While PIC holds for Agree (2), the Probe of NC reaches beyond the edge of PPs (both argument and adjunct (3)), DPs (both argument (4) and adjunct (8)), and infinitive CPs (5). According to the Condition on Extraction Domains (CED), Probes should not access items internal to subjects and adjuncts of VPs. Similarly, while CED holds for Agree (6), the Probe of NC licenses items inside both complex subjects (7) and adjuncts (8) of VPs. While both PIC and CED are valid locality constraints for Agree, the Probe of NC does not operate on a corresponding domain and violates their predictions across a variety of cases. **The Alternative Domain.** This analysis observes that if the Probe of NC displays in the form of verb-bound negation and every newly merged verb has the potential to take on its own Probe, then this Probe should also come with its own domain to operate on. If this analysis correctly predicts that the CP is a boundary to the domain of the Probe of NC, then embedded clauses should yield a double-negation reading rather than an NC reading, which they indeed do (9-a). For this constraint to hold, the CP also needs to be finite; *n*-expressions inside non-finite CPs require licensing (9-b). **Movement.** The CP boundary, furthermore, applies not only to licensing but also to the movement of participating items—both Probes and Goals. By the previously attested neg-raising analysis [2], verbal negation should be free to raise from an embedded CP to the matrix CP with little to no impact on the semantic meaning of the clause, all while licensing any items left behind in the embedded CP. This raising is, however, not possible when the verbal negation also serves as a Probe of NC and licenses Goals (10). Likewise, movement out of the initial CP, which would normally be available to Goals of Agree, is unavailable to Goals of NC (11). **The Minimalist Analysis.** This analysis views NC as a single downward operation consisting of a single insatiable [3] Probe affecting all Goals within a specified domain, which simplifies the process compared to the upward hypothesis where each *n*-expression, now as a Probe, triggers its own concord on the verbal negation, leading to multiplicity of operations for each successful implementation of NC.

Extensions. West Slavic examples suggest that the analysis of NC as a form of the traditional Minimalist Agree fails to make accurate predictions on NC's domain. Instead, this paper's proposal of analysing NC as a form of concord obeying exclusively the CP boundary holds better.

(1) Marek **ne-**vie **ni-**č/*niečo o **ni-**kom/*niekom.
Marek **NEG-**know.3SG **n-**thing.ACC/*something.ACC about **n-**person.LOC/*someone.LOC
'Marek doesn't know anything/*something about anybody/*somebody.' (*Slovak*)

(2) Padał-**o**/*padał-**y** [PP przez wszystk-**ie** por-**y** roku].
rain-**3SG**/*rain-**3PL** [PP during all-**PL**.ACC season-**PL**.ACC year.GEN]
'It rained during all the seasons.' (*Polish*)

(3) Zoja [PP s **ni-**kým/*někým] **ne-**vychází [PP během **ni-**které/*některé hodiny].
Zoja [PP with **n-**person/*someone] **NEG-**get.on.3SG [PP during **n-**some/*some class]
'Zoja doesn't get along with anyone/*someone during any/*some of the classes.' (*Czech*)

(4) Marek **ne-**opáči-l [DP kúsok [DP **ni-**jak-ého/*nejak-ého syr-a]].
Marek.NOM **NEG-**taste-PAST.MASC [DP bit.ACC [DP **n-**some-GEN/*some-GEN cheese-GEN]]
'Marek didn't try a piece of any/*some cheese.' (*Slovak*)

(5) Zoja **ne-**chce [CP prísť [CP **ni-**komu/*niekomu pomôcť]].
Zoja.NOM **NEG-**want.3SG [CP come.INF [CP **n-**person.DAT/*somebody.DAT help.INF]]
'Zoja doesn't want to come to help anyone/*someone.' (*Slovak*)

(6) a. ***O kom** [subj komentár _____] nahneval Zoju?
about who.LOC [subj comment.NOM _____] upset.MASC.PAST Zoja.ACC
Intended: 'A comment about whom upset Zoja?'
b. ***S kým** Zoja žiarli, [adj lebo Marek sa ne-rozpráva ____]?
with who.INS Zoja.NOM be.jealous.3SG [adj because Marek SE NEG-talk.3SG ____]
Intended: 'Who is it that Zoja is jealous of Marek not talking to?' (*Slovak*)

(7) [subj **Ni-**čí/-koho/ *nie-čí/*-koho otec] **ne-**pil víno.
[subj **n-**POSS/-person.GEN/ *somebody-POSS/*-GEN father] **NEG-**drink.3SG.PAST wine.ACC
'Nobody's father drank wine.' (*Slovak*)

(8) Zoja **nie** widzia-ła [DP/adj prezent-u [PP dla **ni-**kogo/*kogoś]].
Zoja.NOM **NEG** see-PAST.FEM [DP/adj present-ACC [PP for **n-**person.ACC/*somebody.ACC]]
'Zoja didn't see a present for anybody/*somebody.' (*Polish*)

(9) a. Zoja **ne-**chce [CP aby **ni-**komu **ne-**pomohla].
Zoja.NOM **NEG-**want.3SG [CP C **n-**person.DAT **NEG-**help.SG.PAST]
'Zoja doesn't want that she help no one.'
b. Zoja **ne-**chce [CP **ni-**komu/*někomu pomoct].
Zoja.NOM **NEG-**want.3SG [CP **n-**person.DAT/*somebody.DAT help.INF]
'Zoja doesn't want to help anyone/*someone.' (*Czech*)

(10) [CP (***Ne-**)myslím, [CP že Marek *(**ne-**)vie [NPI *a-**ni** **hovno***]]].
[CP (***NEG-**)think.1SG [CP C Marek.NOM *(**NEG-**)know.3SG [NPI *either-**n** **shit***.ACC]]]
'I don't think Marek knows *jackshit*.' (*Slovak*)

(11) Kto/Zoja/***ni-**kto Marek hovoril, [CP že zajtra **ne-**príde _____]?
Who/Zoja/**n-**person Marek say.SG.PAST [CP C tomorrow **NEG-**come.3SG.FUT _____]?
'Who/Zoja/nobody did Marek say that wouldn't come tomorrow?' (*Slovak*)

Selected References. [1] Chomsky, N., *Derivation by phase* (2001). [2] Collins, C. & Postal, P., *Interclausal* Neg *Raising and the Scope of Negation* (2017). [3] Deal, A. R., *Negative concord as Downward Agree* (2022). [4] Legate J. A., *Some Interface Properties of the Phase* (2003). [5] Penka, D., *A Crosslinguistic Perspective on n-Words* (2007). [6] Urk, C. v., *How to Detect a Phase* (2020). [7] Zeijlstra, H., *Sentential Negation and Negative Concord* (2004).