Negation and Predication in Slavic Languages

Slavic Languages are considered strict negative concord (NC) languages, where the negative marker is obligatorily present and negative concord items (NCIs) always require licensing ([7, 6, 3]). Given one clausal CP layer with a negative marker and any number of NCIs, only single negation (SN) readings are available in strict NC grammars. Russian: Ukrainian:

(1)	Nikto ne spal.	(2) Nil	khto ne	spav.
	Nobody NEG slept	No	body NEG	slept
	'Nobody slept.' (SN)	ʻNo	body slep	t.' (SN)

However, there are anomalous contexts where NCIs in Slavic languages are freestanding. In restricted cases, NCIs appear without an obligatory negative marker but are grammatical and result in an SN reading. Additionally, if a negative marker is added to the matrix clause, NC may not occur and double negation (DN) readings are available—in contrast to the typical behavior of strict NC grammars. Small clauses (SCs) are observed to be one such anomalous context ([2, 4]).

vanya schital	Iru	nikem.		
Vanya consider.PST.M Ira.ACC nobody.INS				
Vanya considered Ira	a noboč	ly.' (SN)		Russian
Fitzgibbons (2010)				
	Vanya consider.PST.M Vanya considered Ira Fitzgibbons (2010)	Vanya consider.PST.M Ira.AC Vanya considered Ira a noboc Fitzgibbons (2010)	Vanya consider.PST.M Ira.ACC nobody.INS Vanya considered Ira a nobody.' (SN) Fitzgibbons (2010)	Vanya consider.PST.M Ira.ACC nobody.INS Vanya considered Ira a nobody.' (SN) Fitzgibbons (2010)

 (4) Maria nie uważa go za nikogo. Mary NEG consider him.ACC as nobody.GEN
'Mary doesn't consider him a nobody.' (DN)
Polish

Fitzgibbons (2010) proposes an abstract negative operator, \emptyset_{NEG} , which is associated with TPless environments and can license the freestanding NCI in the SC. She proposes the following syntactic structure for a freestanding NCI in an SC:

(5) $\begin{bmatrix} TP[T] \\ ... \\ [PolP[n - word] \\ [Pol'[Pol] \\ [Pol] \\ [PolP[NeG] \\ [PredP[t_{NP}] \\ [PredP[t_{NP}] \\ [PredP[t_{NP}] \\ [Pred] \\ [PredP[t_{NP}] \\ [PredP[t$

 \emptyset_{NEG} scopes over the entire SC in this structure ([2]). This syntactic position predicts that there should be no asymmetry with the behavior of subjects and predicates of SCs regarding NC. Fitzgibbons (2010) argues that NCIs are licensed by movement to the specifier position of PolP; following from her proposed syntactic structure, both subjects and predicates should be candidates to function as freestanding NCIs.

In this work, I observe that there is in fact an asymmetry in the behavior of subject and predicate NCIs of SCs in Russian and Polish. While NCIs as predicates of SCs can be freestanding and result in DN readings, NCIs that are subjects of SCs cannot be freestanding–instead, they participate in NC in a typical fashion. NCIs as subjects of SCs enter into concord with a negative marker in the matrix clause and result in SN readings. This asymmetry is clearly demonstrated when two NCIs are in an SC: in this case, the subject NCI will participate in NC, while the predicate will not and will trigger a DN reading. Russian (Subject NCI):

Polish (Subject NCI):

(6)	Vanya ne schital nikogo	(7)	Maria nie uważa nikogo za
	Vanya NEG consider.PST nobody.GEN		Mary NEG consider nobody.GEN as
	velikim.		wspaniałego.
	great		great
	'Vanya did not consider anyone great.'		'Mary doesn't consider anybody great.'
	(SN)		(SN)
(8)	Maria nie uważa nikogo za niko	go.	
	Mary NEG consider nobody.GEN as nobo	dy.G	EN

'Mary doesn't consider anybody nobody.' (DN)

Polish (Two NCIs in the SC)

This data demonstrates that, although DN readings do appear with SCs in Slavic languages ([2]), the placement of \emptyset_{NEG} in previous work is too high with respect to the SC. \emptyset_{NEG} crucially should not scope over subjects of SCs to account for the asymmetry between subjects and predicates of SCs.

I propose that Pred can take NegP as a complement, where \emptyset_{NEG} is able to appear in a specifier position of NegP. This placement of \emptyset_{NEG} as syntactically lower than PredP correctly accounts for the fact that subjects of SCs participate in NC in a typical manner. This placement of \emptyset_{NEG} only scopes over the predicate of the SC, capturing this asymmetry between subjects and predicates.

(9) $\left[\dots \left[\Pr_{edP} \left[\Pr_{ed} \varnothing \right] \right] \left[NegP} \left[\varnothing_{NEG} \right] \left[Neg' \left[NegP ni - \right] \left[NP kem \right] \right] \right] \right] \right]$

I further suggest that Fitzgibbons (2010) is incorrect to generalize this anomalous behavior in strict NC grammars to SC environments. Instead, I propose that this behavior arises from the predicate itself (PredP). If \emptyset_{NEG} is in the complement of PredP, both freestanding NCIs that appear as predicates and DN readings that appear with predicates are accounted for. \emptyset_{NEG} being associated with PredP thus unifies the behavior of predicates of SCs with other predicate NCIs. Russian: Russian:

(10)	Vanya byl	nikem.	(11)	Vanya ne	byl	nikem.	
	Vanya be.PST	Г a-nobody.INS		Vanya NEO	G be.PS	T a-nobody.IN	NS
	'Vanya was n	obody.' (SN)		'Vanya was	s not no	body.' (DN)	

Tsedryk (2024) discusses freestanding NCIs as 'properties' and also proposes that similar data contains a negative operator; my proposal also accounts for this data and is compatible with such a semantics ([5]). Finally, this work suggests that NC does appear to have constraints on directionality with predication, contra proposals which consider that predication is nondirectional ([1]).

Selected References

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