

### Split by P: Reciprocals, NCIs, and indefinites in Russian

Cross-linguistically reciprocals often consist of two parts that may be placed next to each other or split by further material. Analyses differ in whether the split is derived by movement (Sigurðsson et al. 2022, Landau 2024, Messick & Harðarson 2024) or by base generation (Paparounas & Salzmann 2024). This research brings to light novel data on split reciprocals in Russian and shows two more constructions that allow the same splitting: negative concord items and indefinite pronouns. On the basis of these three phenomena, I argue that split forms are derived by base generation, not by movement.

**Three split constructions:** Reciprocals in Russian have two identical parts, both literally meaning ‘other’ (Es’kova 1996). The second part bears case marking and the first part remains indeclinable (1). Reciprocals can be split by a preposition (2), but not by a noun (3) or a verb (4). Furthermore, only a subset of prepositions may appear between the two parts of the reciprocal. This is ungrammatical for complex prepositions (5)-(6).

(1) My ljubim drug drug-a. we love other other-ACC ‘We love each other.’	(2) Oni znajut drug <b>pro</b> drug-a. they know other about other-ACC ‘They know about each other.’
(3)*Oni čitali drug <b>knigi</b> drug-a. they read other books other-GEN ‘They read each other’s books.’	(4)*My drug ljubim drug-a. we other love other-ACC ‘We love each other.’
(5) Oni idut <b>navstreču</b> drug drug-u they walk towards other other-DAT ‘They read each other’s books.’	/ *drug <b>navstreču</b> drug-u.
(6) My živy <b>blagodarja</b> drug drug-u we alive thanks other other-DAT ‘We are alive thanks to each other.’	/ *drug <b>blagodarja</b> drug-u.

Negative concord items in Russian show the same pattern. They are formed by a negation marker and a wh-word. Negation marker can be split from the wh-word by simple, but not by complex prepositions.

(7) Paša ne exal ni <b>k</b> komu. Pasha NEG drive <i>n</i> to who.DAT ‘Pasha did not drive to anyone.’	(8) Paša ne exal <b>navstreču</b> ni (*navstreču) komu. Pasha NEG went towards <i>n</i> towards who.DAT ‘Pasha did not go towards anyone.’
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Similarly, indefinite pronouns consist of an indefinite prefix and a wh-word. Simple prepositions may appear after the indefinite marker, while complex prepositions must precede it.

(9) Oni znajut koe <b>pro</b> kogo. they know INDEF about who.ACC ‘They know about somebody.’	(10) My živy <b>blagodarja</b> koe (*blagodarja) komu. we alive thanks INDEF thanks who.DAT ‘We are alive thanks to each other.’
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To sum up, reciprocals, negative concord items, and indefinites may be split only by simple prepositions. As the same restrictions apply to the three phenomena, I assume that the same analysis underlies them.

**Split is syntactic:** Different preposition classes in Russian were argued to have different syntactic structures (Hill 1977, Yadroff & Franks 1999). Following Philippova (2018), simple prepositions are P heads, while depending on their diachronic origin complex prepositions contain an N, an Adv, or a V layer. At the same time, preposition type often correlates with morphological complexity (Ionova 2019); cf. monosyllabic *pro* ‘about’ vs. trisyllabic *navstreču* ‘towards’. I will now present three arguments for the syntactic nature of the split. First, prepositions of different types can be equally complex phonologically: In (11)-(12), both pronouns are disyllabic, but only the second one originates from P+N complex.

(11) Oni kričat drug <b>iz-za</b> drug-a. they cry other due.to other-GEN ‘They cry due to each other.’	(12) Oni kričat <b>v piku</b> drug drug-u / *drug <b>v piku</b> drug-u. they cry in spear other other-DAT other in spear other-DAT ‘They cry to spite each other.’
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Second, if splits were regulated morphologically, then all light, clitic-like elements would be predicted to pattern with simple prepositions, contrary to the facts; see negation marker *ne* that

cannot split the reciprocal. The third argument comes from coordination. (14) shows that duplication of the preposition before the second conjunct is forced if the preposition splits the indefinite in the first conjunct. This is unexpected if the placement of the preposition is only post-syntactic.

(14) My edem <b>k</b> koe-komu i (k) Pet-e we go to INDEF-what.DAT and to Petja-DAT ‘We go to someone and Petja.’	/ koe <b>k</b> komu i *(k) Pet-e. other NEG other other-ACC other NEG other-ACC but me ‘They hear not each other, but me.’
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**An argument for base generation:** Having established that splits are derived in syntax, I turn to the next question: movement vs. base generation. While standard movement diagnostics are inapplicable, because the two parts of split constructions remain very local, I will argue that interpretational differences attested for negative concord items provide evidence for split generation, against movement.

Russian is a strict negative concord language (Brown 1999). However, as noted by Fitzgibbons (2010) placement of negation after a preposition as in (15) yields double negation reading. Negative concord reading is grammatical only if negation precedes the preposition; see (16).

(15) Vera ne sdelala salat **iz** ničego. (DN/\*NC)

Vera NEG made salad from *n*.what.ACC

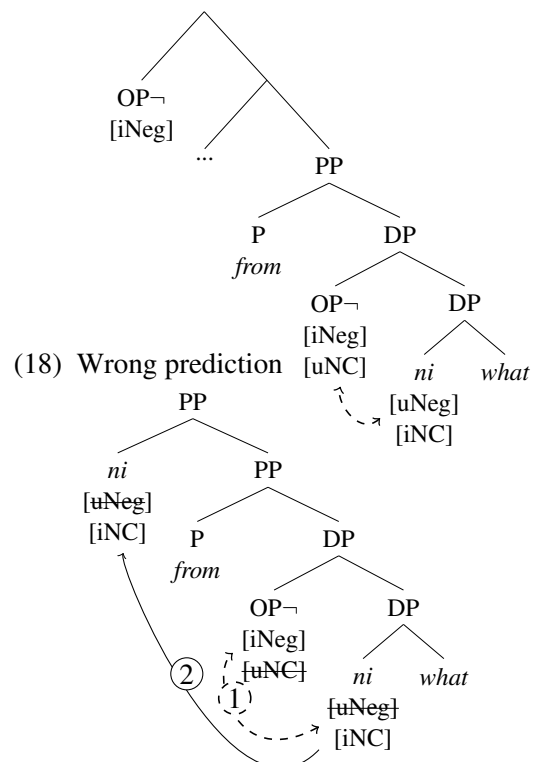
‘Vera didn’t make a salad from nothing.’

(16) Vera ne sdelala salat **ni iz** čego. (NC/\*DN)

Vera NEG made salad *n* from what.ACC

‘Vera didn’t make a salad from anything.’

(17) Double negation in PP

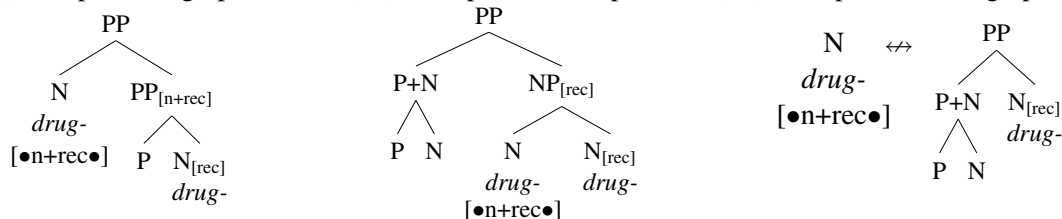


I would like to suggest that once the syntactic approaches to negative concord are taken seriously, these data provide evidence for two base structures. Following Zeijlstra (2014, 2022), neg-words are obligatorily licensed by the negative operator. On the clausal level this operator inevitably leads to the presence of the negation, but being embedded into a PP, it may have no overt correlate (cf. Fitzgibbons 2010, McMahon 2024). The distribution of such null operator can be restricted semantically or by syntactic licensing, i.e., the operator may have a feature that must be checked against the neg-word. (17) schematizes a syntactic account of double negation reading in (15).

As agreement and movement are both syntactic operations, agreement may apply before movement. Consequently, if *ni P wh* order in (16) is derived by movement of negation in front of the preposition, nothing precludes agreement with the negative operator before movement as shown in (18). This predicts availability of the double negation reading for (16), contrary to the facts. Lack of this reading is derived if negation is base merged above the P head.

**Analysis:** Splits of negative concord items and thus also of reciprocals and indefinites are base generated. It remains to be derived why only simple prepositions may appear in all three split constructions. I suggest that simple prepositions being P heads (cf. Philippova 2018) are part of the nominal extended projections, while derived prepositions contain another lexical head (N, Adv, or V depending on the origin of the preposition) and hence start their own functional projection. I further assume that extended projections are defined by inheritance of features from their base to the top (Van Riemsdijk 1990, 1998, Grimshaw 1991, 2000, Shlonsky 2006, and Keine 2019, 2020 for a technical implementation). The part separated by a preposition selects for the part that is embedded under the P head. Due to feature inheritance, such selection can be satisfied by merge at the P-level; see (19). Complex prepositions contain a new lexical head that blocks feature inheritance, so that seemingly non-local selection cannot succeed (20)-(21).

(19) Simple P: High position (20) Complex P: Low position (21) Complex P: No high position



**Summary:** This research provides novel evidence for base generation of split constructions and shows that split constructions follow from restrictive selection, if simple P heads are extended nominal projections.