

Background: Clausal exceptive constructions are derived from full clauses via ellipsis. The current debate regarding clausal exceptives is whether they involve a polarity mismatch between the antecedent and the ellipsis site (Vostrikova 2021) or not (Potsdam & Polinsky 2019, Stockwell & Wong 2020). Vostrikova (2021) presents the contrast in (1)–(2) in support of her claim: NPIs are licenced in an *except*-clause associated with a universal quantifier, but not with a universal negative quantifier. She argues that the ellided *except*-clause in (1) contains sentential negation, whereas the one in (2) does not. This explains the licensing facts: the *except*-clause in (1) constitutes a downward-entailing environment due to negation being present, which is why NPI *any* can occur in the clause. By contrast, the *except*-clause in (2) does not contain negation, constituting a non-DE environment. Therefore, an NPI is ungrammatical in this clause.

(1) *John danced with everyone except with any girl from his class* ~~*John did not dance*~~ _.

(2) **John danced with no one except with any girl from his class* ~~*John danced*~~ _.

Krome kak exceptives in Russian: Exceptives formed with the conjunction *krome kak* are claimed to be clausal in Potsdam & Polinsky (2019). They pass the majority of the established diagnostics for clausal structure (cf. Polinsky et al. 2023), including case connectivity (3a), the possibility of multiple exceptions (3b), and the possibility of a high adverb occurring in the exceptive clause (3c). We conclude that *krome kak*-exceptives involve clausal structure.

(3) a. *Ja ne govoril ob etom ni-komu, krome kak Maksu.*

I not told about this NI-who.DAT except Max.DAT

‘I did not tell this to anybody, except to Max.’

b. *Ni-kto ni s kem ne guljaet, krome kak Maks s Vikoj.*

NI-who NI with who not walks except Max with Vika

‘Nobody goes for walks with anyone, except Max with Vika.’

c. *On ne zahodil ni-kuda, krome kak, {možet byt’/ slava bogu}, k Maksu.*

he not went NI-where except possibly thank god to Max

‘He did not go anywhere, except, possibly/thank God, to Max’s.’

The claim: We present an argument against a polarity mismatch between the antecedent and the *krome kak*-clause. We do so by comparing the behavior of Russian *-libo* NPI indefinites (4a) and of negative concord items (4b) inside the exceptive clause. We assume that negative concord is the result of an Agree relation between a negative indefinite, which carries a [*u*NEG] feature, and negation, carrying a [*i*NEG] feature (cf. Zeijlstra 2004).

(4) a. *Maks ne čital o čem-libo poleznom.*

Max not read about anything useful

‘Max did not read about anything useful.’

b. *Maks ne čital ni o čem poleznom.*

Max not read NI about what useful

‘Max did not read about anything useful.’

On the approach of Vostrikova (2021), *krome kak* clauses associated with universal quantifiers must involve negation. Consequently, it is predicted that not only NPIs, but also NCIs will be licenced. This prediction is not borne out: as (5) shows, NPIs, but not NCIs are possible in the reduced clause. We argue that the impossibility of an NCI in (5b) indicates that there is no sentential negation in the deleted clause.

- (5) a. *Maks čital obo vsem, krome kak o čem-libo poleznom.*
 Max read about everything except about anything useful
 ‘Max read about everything, except anything useful.’
 b. **Maks čital obo vsem, krome kak ni o čem poleznom.*
 Max read about everything except NI about what useful
 Int.: ‘Max read about everything, except anything useful.’

Note that the unavailability of NCIs in clausal exceptives cannot be due to ellipsis: as shown by the gapping construction in (6), eliding negation does not block NCI licensing.

- (6) *Inogda Maks progulivaet semantiku, no sintaksis – nikogda Maks ne progulivaet.*
 sometimes Max skips semantics but syntax NI-when Max not skips
 ‘Sometimes Max skips Semantics, but he never does Syntax.’

These data can be captured if we assume, following Potsdam & Polinsky (2019), Stockwell & Wong (2020), Crnič (2021), that negation is a part of the lexical meaning of *except/krome kak* and that there is no sentential negation in the syntax of the *except*-clause. Since conditions on NPI licensing are checked at LF, it is predicted that NPIs will be licensed, while NCIs will not, since the latter require a *syntactic* agreement relation (see Crnič 2021 for a detailed proposal for the semantics of clausal exceptives and an account of the NPI-licensing facts).

Conclusion: We presented an argument against a polarity mismatch in clausal exceptives. In Russian, NPIs, but not NCIs are licensed in reduced *krome kak*-clauses. This points towards a semantic nature of the licensing of NPIs inside exceptive clauses, in line with what Potsdam & Polinsky (2019), Stockwell & Wong (2020), Crnič (2021) propose.

References

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