

On the locality of negative concord in Russian: an experimental study

Ekaterina Lyutikova, Anastasia Gerasimova

Lomonosov Moscow State University,

The Interdisciplinary Scientific and Educational School of Moscow University

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Annotation. The paper examines locality conditions on licensing Russian “negative” (*ni-*) pronouns in negative concord configurations. Drawing on experimental data we show that *ni-* pronouns can be licensed by the matrix negation in both subject and object control infinitives. We further argue that long-distance licensing occurs through expansion of the licensing domain to the inclusion of argumental infinitive clauses, and not through raising of *ni-* pronouns to the matrix clause.

Background. *Ni-*pronouns are often claimed to require clausemate negation (Brown 1999, Paducheva 2011). However, they are frequently found in infinitival clauses licensed by negation in the matrix clause (Gerasimova 2015, Kornakova et al. 2016). There are two theoretical options to deal with this data: (i) to assume long-distance licensing by matrix negation or (ii) to save clause-level locality of licensing by assuming either raising of the negative operator (neg-raising, Horn 1978) or overt/covert raising of *ni-*pronouns (Progovac 1994, Haegeman 1995). Moreover, subject control infinitives have been demonstrated to produce various clause union effects (Babby 1997, Lyutikova 2010) which can be taken as evidence for restructuring, thus allowing to consider *ni-*licensing local.

In order to decide between these options we organized the following data set: (i) we excluded neg-raising predicates; (ii) we included both subject and object control infinitives; (iii) we considered three positions of *ni-*pronouns — base position (1a)-(2a), in front of the infinitive (1b)-(2b) and in front of the matrix verb and negation (1c)-(2c).

Experiment. 153 native speakers participated in an acceptability judgment experiment, which manipulated the infinitive type and *ni-*pronoun position, for a 2x3 design. The participants judged totally 52 sentences (24 target, 24 filler, 4 practice sentences) on a 7-point Likert scale.

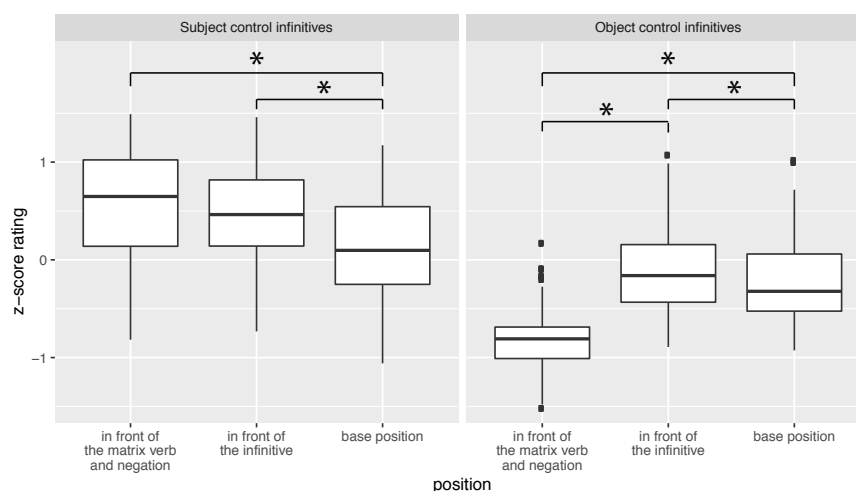
Results. ANOVA revealed significant main effect for both infinitive type and *ni-*pronoun position and interaction of these two factors ($df = 2$, $F = 113.44$, $p \ll 0.05$). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons demonstrate that in subject control infinitives the base position is significantly less acceptable than the two other positions, while in object control infinitives the position in front of the matrix verb and negation is the least acceptable (Figure 1).

Discussion. The experiment reveals the following tendencies. Firstly, object control infinitives are less transparent than subject control infinitives with respect to *ni-*licensing, but still allow it. Secondly, *ni-*pronouns tend to short-move to the preverbal position (the difference between base and pre-infinitival positions is statistically relevant for both subject and object control infinitives). Thirdly, movement of *ni-*pronouns to the matrix clause does not affect acceptability in subject control infinitives and drastically diminishes acceptability in object control infinitives.

Our account of the results is as follows. Since movement of *ni-*pronouns to the matrix clause does not yield increased acceptability, we conclude that *ni-*licensing does not require clausemate negation. Therefore, long-distance licensing of *ni-*pronouns is to be preferred to the local licensing plus raising account. The difference between subject and object control infinitives is due to the reduced functional structure of the former and the full-fledged clausal structure of the latter. This structural complexity translates into higher opacity of object control infinitives with respect to both long-distance *ni-*licensing and extraction of *ni-*pronouns. Finally, the short movement of *ni-*pronouns to the preverbal position is independent of *ni-*licensing and reflects a more general tendency of weak pronominal objects' placement (Yanko 2001, Kholodolova 2013).

- (1) subject control infinitive
 Žurnalist {**nikomu (c)**} ne proboval {**nikomu (b)**} vozražat' {**nikomu (a)**}
 journalist nobody NEG try nobody object nobody
 v komentarijah k stat'e.
 in comments to article
 'The journalist did not try to object to anyone in the comments to the article.'
- (2) object control infinitive
 Lektor {**nikomu (c)**} ne vynuždal assistenta {**nikomu (b)**}
 lecturer nobody NEG force assistant nobody
 rekomendovat' {**nikomu (a)**} novyj učebnik po statistike.
 recommend nobody new textbook on statistics
 'The lecturer did not force his assistant to recommend to anyone the new textbook on statistics.'

Figure 1. *The results of an acceptability judgment experiment (z-score transformed)*



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