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FREE MERGE, NEGATIVE CONCORD AND LONG-DISTANCE SCRAMBLING IN RUSSIAN

BACKGROUND: Syntactic approaches to strict negative concord model it as an Agree dependency between an uninterpretable feature [uNeg] on negative-concord items, including overt negators, and an interpretable [iNeg] feature on an abstract negative operator $Op\neg$ c-commanding NegP (Zeijlstra 2004). Agree on this view proceeds upwards, as shown in (1a), since it is the interpretable goal that c-commands the uninterpretable probes. Because of its syntactic nature, this Agree dependency is sensitive to locality constraints and therefore incapable of crossing a finite-clause boundary, as shown in (1b).

(1) a. $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ *nikto*$_{[uNeg]}$ *ne*$_{[uNeg]}$ *prishël*
         nobody   NEG   came

         'Nobody came.'

     b. *$Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ ya *ne*$_{[uNeg]}$ govoril [chto on pozdravit   *nikogo*$_{[uNeg]}$]
         I   NEG   said   that he congratulate.FUT nobody

         ('I did not say that he would congratulate anyone.')

Proponents of Upward Agree argue that, if negative concord is a syntactic phenomenon derived via Agree, then the traditional formulation of Agree involving downward probing and upward valuation must be abandoned.

AIMS: This paper argues on the basis of strict negative concord data from colloquial Russian that negative concord cannot be viewed as an argument for Upward Agree. I focus on Zeijlstra (2004) but the arguments can also be shown to apply to later variants of the same proposal. I then show how the observed facts can be derived with standard, downwards-probing Agree (Chomsky 2000).

PROBLEM: The locality condition on NCI licensing illustrated in (1b) can be circumvented if an NCI in the embedded finite clause undergoes long-distance scrambling. Short scrambling of NCIs to embedded Spec,CP does not feed NCI licensing (2a) but as soon as the scrambled NCI c-commands matrix negation, negative concord can be licensed, as in (2b) and (2c) below.

(2) a. *Ya ne govoril [nikogo chto on pozdravit   *t*]
         I NEG said   nobody that he congratulate.FUT

     b. Ya nikogo ne govoril [chto on pozdravit   *t*]
         I nobody NEG said   that he congratulate.FUT

     c. Nikogo ya ne govoril [chto on pozdravit   *t*]
         nobody I NEG said   that he congratulate.FUT

         'I did not say that he would congratulate anyone.'

The facts in (2) present multiple challenges for analyses such as Zeijlstra's based on Upward Agree. Firstly, given the structure in (1a), the unacceptability of (2a) is surprising, since *nikogo* 'no one' in embedded Spec,CP is in the same locality domain as $Op\neg$ and that position has been used by Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (2019) to model Tsez long-distance agreement patterns in terms of Upward Agree. Embedded Spec,CP is otherwise an eligible position in which a scrambled (non-NCI) element may be spelled out (Glushan 2006) and is also not a criterial position.

A different set of challenges is posed by the acceptability of (2b–c), since in them, the structural conditions on the application of Upward Agree are not satisfied because [uNeg] c-commands [iNeg] located, according to Zeijlstra (2004), between InflP and vP, and yet negative concord is established. A way of having [uNeg] c-commanded by [iNeg] is to posit an additional intermediate landing site

in matrix Spec,vP before Neg and the accompanying $Op\neg$ enter the derivation, resulting in [uNeg] right under [iNeg], followed by subsequent movement to matrix Spec,CP:

(3) nikogo ya $Op\neg_{[iNeg]}$ ne$_{[uNeg]}$ nikogo$_{[uNeg]}$ skazal chto on pozdravit nikogo$_{[uNeg]}$
     nobody I   not   nobody   said   that he   will.congratulate nobody

This patch, however, is insufficient to rescue Zeijlstra's (2004) analysis, since it produces exactly the unacceptable order in (2a), given that the verb subsequently moves to Neg, as assumed by both the consensus view of the Russian clause and Zeijlstra (2004). Upward Agree as conceived by Zeijlstra (2004) both overgenerates and undergenerates, as it predicts unavailable orders to be available and available ones to be unavailable.

PROPOSAL: I propose that a constituent's negative polarity is encoded by means of a formal feature, [Σ: neg], carried by the sentential negation marker *ne* 'not'. Accepting Rossyaykin's (2021) arguments, I analyse *ne* 'not' as real semantic negation, rejecting Upward Agree's abstract negation operator machinery entirely. Negative indefinites, on the other hand, carry an unvalued counterpart of the same feature, [Σ: □]. Valued [Σ: neg] can be realized in two distinct ways depending on the immediate context: it is pronounced as *ne* 'not' on V (and derived N and A such as *nesposobnost'* 'inability' and *nesposobnȳĭ* 'unable') and as *ni* elsewhere. I also adopt the consensus view of the Russian clause whereby the verb moves to Voice in nonnegative clause and to Neg in negative ones.

If [Σ: □], when probing down, finds a matching valued [Σ: neg], then it becomes valued. This is presumably what happens with the temporal negative indefinite *nikogda* '(n)ever', since it already c-commands *ne*$_{[\Sigma: neg]}$ 'not' from its base position. If, however, [Σ: □] fails to find a matching goal in its c-command domain, two options are possible. **Option 1:** The constituent carrying [Σ: □] undergoes successive-cyclic movement. I follow Chomsky (2004: 108) in assuming that no trigger is required for Merge, including Internal Merge, to apply. Once Internal Merge has applied and evacuated [Σ: □] before Spellout, [Σ: □] can probe again from a derived position. If, when probing from a derived position, it finds a matching valued goal, then Agree will ensure that the constituent surfaces as a negative indefinite. **Option 2:** The constituent carrying [Σ: □] does not move and [Σ: □] remains unvalued. This results in [Σ: □] receiving a default value, just as unvalued φ-features occasionally do (Preminger 2014), and the indefinite surfaces as a nonnegative indefinite.

CONCLUSIONS: The present approach, compared to the existing Upward Agree approaches, is significantly simple: it eschews the abstract invisible negation operator $Op\neg$, it requires fewer feature oppositions (only valued-unvalued features are needed, and no interpretable-uninterpretable ones). It also allows maintaining a uniform directionality of Agree, since downwards-probing/upwards-valuation Agree has recently been shown to be superior for modelling agreement phenomena (see Deal 2021 for the same conclusion). Finally, it is also empirically superior, for it predicts exactly the observed word orders.

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