# Inter-clausal negative concord in Russian

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## Introduction

### Phenomenon

• Inter-clausal negative concord (henceforth ICNC):

*Nikto staralsja ob etom **ne** vspominat'.*
nobody tried about it not recollect
'Everyone tried not to think of it.'

• The subject of the matrix clause is a negative pronoun.
• The negative particle is in the subordinate (infinitive) clause.

### Why unexpected?

• Russian is a strict negative concord language, i.e. the negative pronoun normally needs sentential negation in the same clause:

*Nikto ob etom *(**ne**) vspominal.*
nobody about it not recollected
'Nobody thought of it.'

### Cross-linguistic parallels

• Not universal:
 • Such constructions are reported ungrammatical in French (Milner 1979; Larrivée 2004).
• Not unique:
 • Such constructions are possible in Khanty < Uralic (author's field data).

### Previous research

• Similar constructions in complements with object control (Minor 2007, 2013);
• The construction in question is noted in passing by Rozhnova (2009)

## Data and methods

• Methodology:
 • Speakers' grammaticality judgments;
 • Quantitative data: the Internet, Yandex search engine (yandex.com). Available only for the most frequent verbs.
• Material:
 • A basic list of matrix verbs (53 verbs) based on Arylova (2006);
 • + A fuller list to test specific hypotheses;

• A big grey area in speakers' judgments
 → "X is more grammatical than Y" rather than "X is grammatical"

## Generalizations

Negative concord is impossible or less acceptable if:

1. the semantics of the matrix verb contains a negative sub-component ('stop', 'forget', 'refuse'…);
2. intentional energy-consuming activity is associated with the main clause;

*…nikto (?²očen') staral'sja ne obraščat' na eto vnimanija.* (Yandex)
everyone very tried not to pay to it attention
'Everyone tried (hard) not to notice it'.

3. the matrix clause contains explicit arguments other than the quantified subject.

|  | more grammatical | ungrammatical / less grammatical |
|---|---|---|
| 1. No negative component | *soglasit'sja* 'agree' | *otkazat'sja* 'refuse' |
| 2. No energy-consuming activity | *starat'sja* 'try' | *očen' starat'sja* 'try hard' (lit. 'very try') |
| 3. No other explicit arguments | *obeščat'* 'promise' | *obeščat' mne* 'promise me' |

## Declined hypotheses

✓ − Right predictions
✗ − Wrong predictions or no predictions

### Neg-raising

• Neg-raising as described by Horn (1989);
• Might look similar, however:
 ✗ ICNC is possible only in non-finite clauses;
 ✗ The lists of verbs which allow Neg-raising and ICNC in Russian are very different, e.g.
 ✗ 'expect' − Neg-raising, but not ICNC
  ✗ 'primise' − ICNC, but not Neg-raising
**ERGO: No.**

### Restructuring

• ICNC would be natural if the structure were in fact monoclausal. It could therefore be a manifestation of **restructuring** into one clause.

| 1. No negative component | ✗ |
|---|---|
| 2. No energy-consuming activity | ✗ |
| 3. No other explicit arguments | ✓ |
| A similar constraint in restructuring, see (Wurmbrand 1998: 283) | |

More data:
 ✗ expressions modifying the tense of the embedded event (Wurmbrand 1998);
 ✗ other restructuring manifestations in Russian are very limited, the list of verbs which allow them is different.
**ERGO: No, but much in common.**

### Grammaticalization

• Another source of monoclausality is grammaticalization;

| 1. No negative component | ✗ |
|---|---|
| 2. No energy-consuming activity | ✓ |
| A natural outcome of desemantisation. | |
| 3. No other explicit arguments | ✓ |
| Expected if the main clause is reduced. | |

More data:
 ✓ The most grammaticalized verbs are more or less acceptable with ICNC.
 ✓ *moč'* 'can' allows ICNC in its epistemic meaning and not in its participant-internal meaning. Same with some grammaticalization properties (Kholodilova 2015).
 ✗ Many of the verbs which allow ICNC don't show any (other) grammaticalization properties.
 ✗ No semantic bleaching (desemantisation) of the matrix verbs in the usual sense, as described by Heine (1993). According to Heine (1993), desemantisation is the **first** step of grammaticalization
  ✗ No changes in the meaning of the verb;
  ✗ All usual subcategorisation restrictions hold:

*Nikto / #ničto staraetsja ne šumet'.*
nobody nothing tries not make noise
'Eveybody / #everything tries not to make noise'.

**ERGO: No, but much in common.**

## Proposal

• "Bleaching" as introduced by (Partee et al. 2011)
• Much like semantic bleaching in grammaticalization, but:
 - an open list of words ("grammaticalization on-line");
 - no shift in the meaning of the verb itself;
 - depends largely on the context.
• ICNC is possible if the verb can be bleached (in this way) to form a modal / temporal / aspectual / mirative frame, which does not influence the proposition itself. Other semantic components are present, but pragmatically less relevant.

| 1. No negative component | ✓ |
|---|---|
| Negative component is difficult to bleach out. | |
| 2. No energy-consuming activity | ✓ |
| Energy-consuming activities are more likely to be relevant. | |
| 3. No other explicit arguments | ✓ |
| It is natural that the more syntactically reduced expressions are easier to reduce semantically. | |

E.g.:
Negative concord is possible
a. 'Everyone tried not to notice' ~ 'Everyone just wouldn't notice'
b. 'Everyone decided not to come' ~ 'Nobody came'.

Negative concord is impossible
a. 'Everyone tried hard not to notice' ~ ??
b. 'Everyone refused not to come' ~ ??

**ERGO: Probably, yes.**

### Pragmatics-driven "bleaching": the notion

• Semantic bleaching (desemantization):
 going to: motion, of people > future, of any object

• Doesn't work for ICNC (see Grammaticalization).

• (Partee et al. 2011) postulate **another sort of bleaching**, such that
 • the semantics of the word itself does not change;
 • the operation is possible for an open class of words;
 • there's a context-based **presupposed equivalence** of the proposition in question with a more "bleached" proposition.

• (Partee et al. 2011): Russian subject genitive in negative clauses is used when the predicate of the clause is bleached in this way to mean 'to be somewhere'. E.g. the following sentence is only possible if it is (contextually) presupposed that 'to be somewhere' is 'to shine white' (for houses on the horizon).

*Ne belelo domov*
NEG shone-white-N.SG houses-GEN.M.PL
*na gorizonte.*
on horizon
No houses were shining white on the horizon.'
(Borschev and Partee 1998)

## Conclusion

The right and wrong predictions of the hypotheses:

|  | Neg-raising | Restructuring | Grammaticalization | Pragmatical "bleaching" |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Only with non-finite complements | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 2. Matches with other manifestations of this process in Russian matrix verbs | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | Inapplicable |
| 3. No negative component | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| 4. No energy-consuming activity | Inapplicable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 5. No other explicit arguments | Inapplicable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 6. OK Modifying tense of the embedded event | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| 7. *moč'* 'can': epistemic > participant-internal | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |

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