

Licensing negative polarity items in Russian event nominalizations¹

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This paper addresses the issue of licensing negative polarity items in Russian nominalizations. Negation in nominalizations provides negative concord which licenses negative pronouns. Crucially, non-specific indefinite *-nibud'* pronouns, which are usually prohibited in negative concord environments, are available in negated nominalizations, too. In this paper I determine the position of NegP within Russian nominalizations and examine licensing conditions of polarity sensitive items in nominalizations. My analysis suggests that *-nibud'* pronouns are licensed in the scope of the nonveridical operator that is introduced above NegP.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with Russian negated nominalizations, which exhibit a set of features of low frequency phenomena. While nominalizations in general are low frequent in Russian and receive relatively low scores (Pereltsvaig et al. 2018), negated nominalizations are even less used. However, investigation of non-finite structures such as nominalizations contributes to solving the Problem of indirect access (Zucchi 1999), which is that inflected verbs might differ from the uninflected verb forms that are in fact fed into the semantic interpretation component. In particular, nominalizations contain less functional structure than their finite counterparts (e.g. finite clause), and, therefore, can provide evidence for what are the properties of verbs and immediate verbal projections at early stages of syntactic derivation (Lyutikova & Tatevosov 2016). In this paper, using primarily corpus data I study the position and licensing conditions of negation within nominalizations. I hypothesize that negation in nominalizations appears high in the structure and contra clausal negation allows for the presence of polarity elements which are licensed by non-veridical operators from the matrix clause.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I overview generalizations from the previous literature on negated nominalizations in Russian. Section 3 presents the results of a corpus study on the properties of negation and characteristics of polarity sensitive items licensing in negated nominalizations. In section 4, I examine the position of negation with respect to nominalizer. The observations on distribution of pronouns lead me to propose an analysis for licensing conditions in nominalizations in section 5. Section 6 concludes with some

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notes on methodological issues that have arisen when studying low frequent language phenomena.

2. Negated process nominalizations in Russian

Russian process nominalizations are derived with the productive suffixes *-nij-/-tij-* from verbal stems (Shvedova 1980). Process nominalizations have an argument structure which is associated with *vP* functional layer, which correlates with several syntactic properties, viz.: availability for adverbial modification (e.g. agent-oriented modifiers), causative-inchoative alternation, and the ability of the external argument to control phonologically null pronominal phrase (PRO) in purpose clauses (Alexiadou 2001, Pazel'skaya & Tatevosov 2008). According to Pazel'skaya & Tatevosov (2008), the highest available projection which can appear in Russian process nominalizations is Aspect Phrase (AspP).

Russian process nominalizations can be negated. In Russian there are two ways of expressing negation: syntactic negation which is expressed by the particle *ne* or, less frequently, particle *ni*, and negation expressed by derivational affixes, the most frequent of which is the affix *ne-*. Syntactic negation is common for verbs, while derivational negation is mostly used with other parts of speech: adjectives, adverbs and nouns (Pazel'skaya 2006). The difference between the two types of negation is dictated by the fact that syntactic negation can be separated by other words from the predicate (Paducheva 2011). Negated nominalizations are derived by the productive derivational affix *ne-* and do not contain syntactic negation: in (2b) *ne* cannot be separated from nominalization by an adjective (if the sense of (2a) is intended); the only possible interpretation is when *ne* is attributed to the nearest adjective *vcherashnee* 'yesterday's'.

- (1) *Ne [vetry veyut buinye], Ne [mat'-zemlya kolyshetsya]*
 NEG winds blow vigorous NEG mother-earth trembels
Shumit, poet, rugaetsya ... u prazdnika narod
 roars sings swears at the feast people
 'It is not the rushing of furious whirlwinds, not Mother Earth shaking, this is people's shouting, singing, swearing at the feast'
- (2) a. *ego vcherashnee nevmeshatel'stvo v konflikt*
 his yesterday's nonintervention in conflict
 'his yesterday not intervening in a conflict'
 b. **ego ne vcherashnee vmeshatel'stvo v konflikt*
 his NEG yesterday's intervention in conflict
 int. 'his yesterday not intervening in a conflict'
 but grammatical if : int. 'his not-yesterday intervening in a conflict'

Pazel'skaya (2006) distinguishes three semantic types of negated nominalizations. First, there are nominalizations that denote negated events with the meaning that the expected event was not realized: *nepopadanie* 'not-stricking', *neprisoedinenie* 'not-attaching', *nesovpadenie* 'mismatching'. These nominalizations are compatible with modifiers that mean repeated action like *mnogokratnyi* 'multiple', *regulyarnyi* 'regular', they denote telic events and can be pluralized.

Second, there are nominalizations that denote stative and atelic events and cannot be pluralized. This second semantic type is the so-called *existential negation*: there is no time interval in which the event denoted by the verbal stem was realized: *nenapadenie* ‘nonaggression’, *nevmeshatel'stvo* ‘nonintervention’, *nerasprostranenie* ‘non-proliferation’. These negated nominalizations are compatible with adjectives denoting time periods: e.g. *trekhletnii* ‘three-year long’, *dvukhchasovoi* ‘two-hour long’. Finally, there are nominalizations that denote negated states, situation such that during a certain period of time the situation denoted by the verbal stem is not realized: *nenakhozhdenie* ‘not -finding’, *nesootvetstvie* ‘discrepancy’, *neznanie* ‘ignorance’. These nominalizations are compatible with adjectives denoting duration: e.g. *mnogoletnii* ‘long-standing’.

According to Pazel'skaya (2006), process nominalizations cannot contain negation due to semantic reasons. Specifically, it is claimed that the timeline in which no process is realized cannot be presented as another process. In particular, Pazel'skaya provides the list of possible candidates, which are unacceptable, according to her judgments: *nekormlenie* ‘NEG-feeding’, *nepodmetanie* ‘NEG-brooming’, *nepodderzhanie* ‘NEG-supporting’, *neraskachivanie* ‘NEG-swinging’, *nekhrapenie* ‘NEG-snoring’.

In this paper I argue that the statement made by Pazel'skaya is not consistent with the data from colloquial speech. In particular, I show that negated process nominalizations do not only exist but demonstrate behavior similar to that of syntactic negation, in particular, licensing of negative polarity items.

3. The Internet-Corpus Study

In order to assess Pazel'skaya's claim about negated process nominalizations, I conducted a study in The General Internet-Corpus of Russian (GICR) (Belikov et al. 2013). The GICR is a corpus of Russian internet texts that contains materials from the largest Russian Internet resources: social network VKontakte, blogging websites LiveJournal and Mail.ru, an archive of Russian literary magazines “Magazine Hall” and several news sites. The contents of the corpus present both colloquial and standardized speech in different genres and registers.

3.1. Do negated nominalizations exist?

The GICR reveals more than 30 000 results with more than 1000 instances of negated nominalizations. Curiously, the generalization about process nominalizations by Pazel'skaya is inconsistent with the data from colloquial speech. All the mentioned instances of negated process nominalizations (the “unacceptable” process nominalizations such as *nekormlenie* ‘NEG-feeding’ from Pazel'skaya (2006), listed in Section 2) were found in corpus (e.g. (3), (4)) together with other stems, e.g.: *nenapisanie* ‘NEG-writing’, *nesledovanie* ‘NEG-following’, *nevladenie* ‘NEG-mastering’, *neuspevanie* ‘NEG-keeping up’, (5).

- (3) *a tochnee nepodmetanie na moei ulitse periodicheski musora ...*
to be precise NEG-sweeping in my street occasionally rubbish
‘And to be precise the occasional not sweeping the rubbish in my street’
- (4) *Yavlyaetsya li nepodderzhanie blagotvoritel'noi initsiativy grekhom*
is whether NEG-supporting charity initiative sin
‘Whether not supporting a charity initiative is a sin’

- (5) *argumentiruet on svoe nerabotanie tem, chto zhizn' korotka*
 argues he his NEG-working by that life short
 'He reasons his not working by saying that life is short'

Grimshaw (1990) distinguished two types of nominalizations, namely result and process (event) nominals. Both types have an argument structure which is associated with the functional projection VP. The evidence for the distinction is based upon a set of diagnostics, viz.: nominals with a process interpretation obligatorily take internal arguments, pass the telicity test, take aspectual and agent-oriented modifiers. Importantly, negated process nominals as affirmative event nominalizations obligatorily take internal arguments (3), (4), and may take aspectual modifiers (6).

- (6) a. *postoyanno nevyderzhivanie avtorskikh dlitel'nostei*
 constant NEG-keeping original (note) values
 'the constant not keeping the original note values'
 b. *Ezhednevno neumolkanie*
 everyday NEG-going silent
 'the everyday not going silent'

3.2. Licensing of negative polarity items

The corpus study has also shown that negation in nominalizations licenses polarity sensitive items (PSIs) – elements that have distribution restricted to a set of contexts that may be characterized differently in terms of truth-conditions. Paducheva (1985) and Haspelmath (1997) distinguish the following four main classes of polarity sensitive items in Russian: negative *ni-* pronouns, non-specific indefinite *-nibud'* pronouns, negatively polarized *-libo* pronouns and free-choice NPIs *lyuboi* and *ugodno*.

Ni- pronouns belong to strict negative polarity items (Giannakidou 2011), or n-words (Laka 1990), which are licensed only under negative concord. Russian *ni-* pronouns are licensed in the context of clausemate sentential negation (7). Contrary to the claims made by Pereltsvaig (2004) the licensing of *ni-* pronouns in the scope of superordinate negation is subject to structural restrictions. According to Gerasimova (2015), the amount of functional structure dominating VP in the infinitival clause affects the licit positions of negative pronouns: they are licensed if the infinitive is not bigger than TP (8). However, *ni-* pronouns cannot appear in the scope of constituent negation (9), nor are they licensed in any other weak negative or non-veridical types of contexts.

- (7) *Vanya nichego ne sdelal*
 Vanya nothing (N-WORD) NEG did
 'Vanya did nothing'
- (8) a. *Ya ne pytayus' [VP nichego istolkovyvat' v ego puti].*
 I NEG try nothing (N-WORD) interpret in his journey
 'I don't try to interpret anything (*int.* any of his decisions) in his journey'
- b. *? On ne skazal [TP nichego smotret' po televizoru].*
 He NEG said nothing (N-WORD) watch on TV

int. ‘He didn’t say to watch something on TV’

- c. * *Emu ne nravitsya* [_{CP} *nikogo priuchat' k poryadku*].
 He NEG likes nobody (N-WORD) teach regular habits
int. ‘He doesn’t like to teach anyone regular habits’

- (9) * *Vanya podgotovil ne nikakoi podarok*
 Vanya prepared NEG no (N-WORD) gift
int. ‘Vanya didn’t prepare any gift’

Non-specific indefinite *-nibud'* pronouns (NSI) are licensed in non-veridical contexts which are introduced by operators that do not ensure truth (Giannakidou 2011). In Russian such contexts include clauses with habitual meaning (e.g. with aspectual modifiers *chasto* ‘often’, *obychno* ‘usually’, etc.) (10), conditionals (11), interrogatives (12), clausemate nominal with a universal quantifier (13), irrealis non-specific contexts, such as futures (14), modals (15) and verbs of propositional attitude (16) (Paducheva 2015). Remarkably, *-nibud'* pronouns are not licensed by clausemate sentential negation and have to be substituted by n-words in negative concord contexts (17).

- (10) *Vasya chasto chitaet kakie-nibud' zhurnaly*
 Vasya often reads some(NSI) magazines
 ‘Vasya often reads some magazines’
- (11) *Esli budut kakie-nibud' / kakie-libo voprosy, zvoni*
 If be some(NSI) / any(NP) questions call
 ‘If you have any questions, call me’
- (12) *Vy udivleny kakimi-nibud' / kakimi-libo voprosami?*
 You be surprised some(NSI) / any(NP) questions
 ‘Are you surprised with any questions?’
- (13) *Vse studenty khoteli chto-nibud' / chto-libo skazat'*
 all students wanted some(NSI) / any(NP) say
 ‘All students wanted to say something’
- (14) *Vasya kupit kakoi-nibud' podarok*
 Vasya will buy some(NSI) present
 ‘Vasya will buy some present’
- (15) *on mozhet chto-nibud' rasskazat' na uroke*
 he can something(NSI) tell at the lesson
 ‘He can tell something at the lesson’
- (16) *Ya nadejus', chto ob etom kto-nibud' znal zaranee*
 I hope that about this someone(NSI) knew in advance
 ‘I hope that someone knew in advance about this’

- (17) *Vanya ne priglasil^{ok} nikogo / *kogo-nibud' na festival'*
 Vanya NEG invited nobody (N-WORD) / anyone (NSI) to the festival
 'Vanya didn't invite anyone to the festival'

Negatively polarized *-libo* pronouns (NP) are not licensed in positive contexts and in irrealis non-specific contexts such as imperatives, futures, modals, verbs of propositional attitude (Pereltsvaig 2004, Paducheva 2014). *Contra* Pereltsvaig (2004) *ni-* and *-libo* pronouns do not appear in complementary distribution because *-libo* pronouns are allowed in negative concord created by both clausemate and distant negation (18).

- (18) a. *Vasya ne vstretil tam kakikh-libo prodavtsov*
 Vasya NEG met there any(NP) salesmen
 'Vasya haven't met any salesmen there'
- b. *Vasya ne dumal chto-libo pisat' v otzyve*
 Vasya NEG thought anything(NP) write in review
 'Vasya didn't think about writing anything in the review'

As *-nibud'* pronouns *-libo* elements are licensed in the context of conditionals (11), interrogatives (12), clausemate nominal with a universal quantifier (13). Interestingly, unlike *-nibud'* pronouns *-libo* items are not licensed in clauses with habitual meaning but are allowed in the context of aspectual modifier *redko* 'rarely' (19). Free-choice items are not restricted across any of the mentioned contexts and will not be considered in this paper.

- (19) *Vasya *chasto /^{ok} redko chitaet kakie-libo zhurnaly*
 Vasya often / rarely reads any(NP) magazines
 'Vasya often reads some magazines'

Pazel'skaya (2006) states that negation in nominalization creates the same context as clausal negation, therefore, NPIs are licensed in the context of the three semantic types of negated nominalizations. The corpus study has shown that negation in nominalizations indeed licenses both types of negative polarity items, *ni-* pronouns (20) and *-libo* items (21). Surprisingly, non-specific indefinite *-nibud'* pronouns, which are usually prohibited in negative concord environments, are available in negated nominalizations, too (22).

- (20) *Prichinoi avarii stalo [ne-srabatyvanie ni odnoi sistemy zashchity]*
 cause for breakdown became NEG-operating no(N-WORD) safety system
 lit. 'The failure to operate of any safety system caused the breakdown'
- (21) *neispol'zovanie chego-libo, privodit k atrofirovaniyu etogo chego-libo*
 NEG-using anything(NP) leads to atrophy of this anything(NP)
 lit. 'Not using of anything leads to the atrophy of this same thing'
- (22) *kolossal'noe [ne-vladienie kakim-nibud' tekstovym redaktorom]*
 colossal NEG-possessing some(NSI) text editor
 lit. 'Colossal not possessing the skills in any text editor'

To examine whether distant negation creates negative concord in nominalization I conducted a pilot study with 10 participants. Respondents had to give a binary response on acceptability of 10 sentences constructed similarly to (24). The pilot study has shown that *ni*-pronouns licensing is marginally acceptable when nominalization is in the subject position in the matrix clause. Remarkably, there was disagreement in judgments: 4 out of 10 respondents interpreted such constructions as if nominalization was negated, (24ii) instead of (24i).

- (24) % *ego vmeshatel'stvo ni v kakie dela ne smoglo udivit' menya*
 his intervention in no(N-WORD) business NEG could surprise me
 'his intervening in any business could not surprise me'
 (i) 'I am not surprised that he interferes in affairs'
 (ii) 'I am not surprised that he does not interfere in any affairs'

In case nominalization in the object position, *ni*-pronouns licensing becomes fully acceptable (*ok* for all 10 respondents).

- (25) *Ya ne dobilsya ego vmeshatel'stva ni v kakie dela*
 I NEG achieved his intervention in no(N-WORD)
 'I have not achieved his intervening in any business'

This diagnostic shows that the syntactic position of nominalization affects judgments on whether distant negation can license negative pronouns. I suggest that the marginality of NPI licensing in subject position results from the fact that negation no longer c-commands the nominal phrase. Consequently, the data from nominalizations in object positions allows us to draw a conclusion that n-words in nominalization can be licensed distantly from the matrix clause. As a result, the nominalizer does not serve as a barrier for the strict NPI licensing, which means that negation can be located above the nominalizer.

I propose that all arguments of a nominalization are generated before the [NEG]-feature is introduced and fall under the negative scope. The evidence for that can be provided by the diagnostic in spirit of Borschev et al. 2006. If one of the arguments is quantificational, both wide and narrow scope are allowed for the negation.

- (26) *ne-vladienie kazhdym instrumentom mozhnet byt' prichinoi dlya uvol'neniya*
 NEG -possessing every instrument can be a cause for dismissal
 'not possessing the skills to use every instrument can be a cause for dismissal'
 $\forall > \text{NEG}$: employee can't use any of the instruments
 NEG $> \forall$: employee can use some instruments but not all

To sum up, the diagnostics show that negation appears high in the syntactic structure, at least above all arguments and possibly even above the nominalizer. However, the current data does not show what is the relative position of negation and nominalizer. In the next section I propose an analysis for the licensing conditions of the polarity sensitive items in nominalizations.

5. Prospect analysis for PSI licensing in nominalizations

The corpus data has shown that negated nominalization involves the context which licenses the two types of pronouns that are otherwise in complementary distribution. Herewith, the interpretation of the sentence remains the same. The phenomenon of NSIs being incompatible with negation and consequently being substituted by *ni*-pronouns is usually attributed to as the Bagel problem² (Pereltsvaig 2004). In case of nominalizations we observe an exception to this problem. However, these are not the only examples in Russian. Paducheva (2015) documents two contexts in Russian in which both NSIs and *ni*-pronouns are acceptable under negative scope with equivalent interpretation: subjunctive sentences (27) and embedded purpose *čtoby*-clauses (28). As in case of nominalizations, the interpretation is the same with NSIs and *ni*-pronouns.

- (27) *Ne naiti sem'i*
 NEG find family
 [v kotoroi **by** ^{ok}nikto / ^{ok}kto-nibud' ne postradal]
 in which **SUBJ** no one (N-WORD) / someone (NSI) NEG be hurt
 'It's almost impossible to find a family, in which no one was hurt'

- (28) *My shli ostorozhno*
 we were going cautiously
 a. [**čtoby** ^{ok}nigde ne upast']
COMP nowhere (N-WORD) NEG fall down
 b. [**čtoby** ^{ok}gde-nibud' ne upast']
COMP anywhere (NSI) NEG fall down
 'We were going slowly to avoid falling from anywhere'

Paducheva argues that NSIs in such contexts are licensed by non-veridical subjunctive operator. In this way, nonveridicality outweighs negative concord and licenses NSIs. I propose that licensing conditions in nominalization function similarly. I hypothesize that *-nibud'* pronouns are licensed by nonveridical context introduced above NegP.

An interesting question is where the position of nonveridical operators is with respect to nominalizer. When there is no NegP in nominalization, the position may vary. On the one hand, nonveridical operator may be introduced within nominalization. In (29a) the DP that contains nominalization is specific, which means that no non-veridical operator from the main clause can influence its contents. That is, there is no sentential nonveridical operator and nonveridicality is introduced by the overt operator *postoyanno* 'constant' in the nominalization itself. This overt nonveridical operator in nominalization licenses *-nibud'* pronouns.

Another possibility is that nonveridicality is introduced later with sentential aspectual operators such as habitual, generic and iterative: e.g. *vsegda* 'always' in (29b).

- (29) a. *ego postoyanno podrazhanie kakomu-nibud' masteru*
 his constant copying some(NSI) master

² Clausemate negation creates an anti-morphic context. Anti-morphic contexts constitute a subset of non-veridical contexts. NSIs are licensed by non-veridical contexts, therefore, one would expect that NSIs are licensed by negation. However, this is not true: the anti-morphic context figuratively speaking creates "a bagel hole" with respect to NSIs as they are not licensed.

ubilo v nem individual'nost'
 killed in him individuality
 'his; constant copying after some master killed individuality in him;'

- b. *podrazhanie kakomu-nibud' masteru vseгда ubivaet individual'nost'*
 copying some(NSI) master always kills individuality
 'copying after some master always kills individuality'

It is important to note that *-libo* pronouns are prohibited in the presence of aspectual operators. It was previously suggested by Paducheva (2014) that *-libo* series are also licensed in non-veridical contexts. However, that would mean that nonveridicality from the main clause could license *-libo* pronouns in nominalization, which is not the case (30a). I propose that *-libo* pronouns in nominalization are licensed by negation. This idea is supported by the fact that in specific nominalizations without any aspectual modifiers *-libo* pronouns are absolutely acceptable (30b).

- (30) a. * *podrazhanie kakomu-libo' masteru vseгда ubivaet individual'nost'*
 copying any(NP) master always kills individuality
 'copying after some master always kills individuality'
- b. *ego neispytyvanie kakikh-libo' chuvstv*
 his NEG -experiencing any(NP) feelings
proizvelo na menya vpechatlenie
 impressed me
 'his not feeling anything impressed me'

An interesting observation is that when nominalization contains both negation and nonveridical operator (29c), NSIs become less acceptable than n-words.

- (31) ? *ego postoyanno neispytyvanie kakikh-nibud' chuvstv*
 his constant NEG -experiencing some(NSI) feelings
proizvelo na menya vpechatlenie
 impressed me
 'his constant not feeling anything impressed me'

Although a secure conclusion must be based on a formal collection of judgements, this piece of evidence speaks to the fact that the nonveridical operator is indeed located above nominalizer. Then the nominalizer restricts the scope of the negative operator and does not affect the scope of the nonveridical operator.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, in this paper I have examined Russian negated nominalizations. I conducted a corpus study that has provided evidence for the existence of negated process nominalizations. It was shown that negation in nominalizations provides negative concord which licenses negative pronouns. A remarkable result was that all three types of Russian polarity sensitive

items are licensed in negated nominalizations. In order to capture contradictory observations, I determined the position of NegP within Russian nominalizations. I hypothesize that *-nibud'* pronouns are licensed in the scope of the nonveridical operator that is introduced above NegP, while *-libo* and *ni-* pronouns are licensed by negative concord. The results of the paper are in concord with crosslinguistic generalization from (Giannakidou 2006): n-words obey syntactic locality restrictions and are licensed by a clausemate antiveridical expression, while non-veridical operators exhibit long distance licensing.

The obtained result highlights a methodological issue connected to the usage of low frequent construction when developing language theory. As nominalizations are not frequent constructions, in general they receive low acceptability scores. Negated nominalizations are even less frequent, and therefore are judged less acceptable. However, the analysis revealed that different combinations of semantic operators can improve acceptability of negated nominalizations. This finding confirms that exploration of rare constructions helps to develop linguistic theory for acceptable cases.

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