Negative Concord, Fragments, and (Downward) Agree

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1. Introduction

Negative concord items (NCIs) are constituents that require a negative marker in their finite clause. The term is due to the fact that in some languages NCIs have overt negative morphology (e.g. *n-* in Slavic and Hungarian) which seems to be uninterpretable (1).

(1) Russian (strict negative concord)

a. Petja *(ne) videl ni-kogo.
Petya NEG saw NI-who.ACC
'Petya hasn't seen anybody.'

b. Ni-kto ni-kogda ni-komu ni-čem *(ne) pomogaet.
NI-who NI-when NI-who.DAT NI-what.INSTR NEG helps
'Nobody ever helps anybody with anything.'

Negative concord (NC) is strict if NCIs co-occur with negation in both pre- and postverbal position, as in (1). NC is non-strict if some kind of asymmetry is attested, i.e. (pseudo-)NCIs are grammatical without negation under particular circumstances. For example, in Italian preverbal (pseudo-)NCIs do not need a negative marker (2).

(2) Italian (non-strict negative concord)

a. Non ha telefonato nessuno.
NEG AUX called NCI/anybody
'No one has called.'

b. Nessuno ha telefonato.
NCI/nobody AUX called.
'No one has called.' (Zeijlstra 2004: 39; glosses are mine)

Non-strict NC is cross-linguistically very rare and diverse which casts serious doubt on both two-way split between strict and non-strict NC and non-strict NC as a single, coherent phenomenon in general (Van der Auwera & Van Alsenoy 2016). For example, Romance (pseudo-)NCIs can be licensed in non-negative contexts of NPI licensing and can even be ambiguous between actual NPIs (like English *any NP*) and negative quantifiers (like English *no NP*) which makes one suspect that they are not NCIs at all (that is why I dub them "pseudo-NCIs").

(3) Dubito che nessuno venga.
doubt.1SG that anybody/nobody come.SUBJ
1. 'I doubt noone will come.'
2. 'I doubt someone will come.' (Zanuttini 1991: 143; glosses are mine)

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I assume that strict and non-strict NC are distinct phenomena. Thus, an analysis of strict NC does not have to be extendable to non-strict NC (*pace* Zeijlstra 2004 and many others). In what follows I will focus on strict NC exemplified by Russian.

NCIs are usually analyzed as existentials/indefinites in the scope of negation ("∃-analyses" henceforth). This analytical option appeared to be tied to various disputable assumptions, most notably covert (phonologically null) negation and Upward Agree (UA) (Brown 1999, Zeijlstra 2004, Penka 2011, Chierchia 2013, Fălăuş & Nicolae 2016, Szabolcsi 2018). In this paper I will argue that under the assumption that NCIs are universals (Giannakidou 2000, 2006, Abels 2005) negative concord can be naturally analyzed as syntactic agreement involving standard (Downward) Agree (DA) (Chomsky 2000, Bošković 2007). No further assumptions will be needed in order to account for a range of data points which are challenging for ∃-analyses. Thus, it will be shown that NC does not provide any evidence in favor of UA. In fact, it is problematic for UA.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2 I provide some arguments in favor of the wide scope of NCIs w.r.t. negation. In Section 3 I present the analysis of NC which uses a reformulation of Agree by Bošković (2007) and compare it to a UA-based analysis (Brown 1999, Zeijlstra 2004, Penka 2011). In Section 4 I discuss NCIs in simple fragment answers and consider two solutions for the well-known problem of polarity mismatch in fragments with elided interpretable negation. In Section 5 I discuss ambiguous fragment answers to questions that contain negation. I show that the DA analysis of NC fares better in explaining those data. Section 6 concludes.

2. NCIs outscope negation

Existential and universal analyses of NCIs are difficult to tell apart because of the equivalence between ¬∃ and ∀¬ and the fact that NCIs "track" the scope of negation, i.e. no other scope-taker can intervene between an NCI and negation disambiguating between ¬∃ and ∀¬[1] (Abels 2005: 12-14). Despite this, there are quite a few arguments in favor of the wide scope of NCIs some of which have not been acknowledged before. I will discuss four of them, see also Abels (2005), Giannakidou (2006), and Bošković (2008).

Firstly, it is well-known that NCIs are grammatical in subject position (1-b). Notably, in Russian all other items outscope negation when subjects (in non-echo-contexts, with unmarked intonation). In (4-a) and (4-b) a universal quantifier *každyj student* 'every student' and an antispecific indefinite *kto-nibud'* 'some person or other' respectively can only be interpreted with the wide scope. In (4-c) a weak NPI *kto-libo* 'anybody' is ungrammatical as subject, presumably because of the wide scope w.r.t. its potential licenser *ne* 'not'[2]. This suggests that NCIs outscope negation as well (otherwise one will have to assume that they are unique in this respect, e.g. unlike other constituents they can reconstruct to their initial position in the scope of negation).

(4) a. Každyj student ne rešil xotja by odnu zadaču.
every student NEG solved at.least one problem
'For every student there is at least 1 problem she failed to solve.' (∀ > ∃ > ¬)

b. Kto-nibud' točno ne pridet.
who-INDEF for.sure NEG will.come
'For sure, some or other person won't come.' (□ > ∃ > ¬)

c. *Kto-libo ne prišel.
who-NPI NEG came
Int.: 'Nobody has come.' (∃ > ¬, *¬ > ∃)

The second piece of evidence comes from constituent negation. When a DP/NP is negated, adjectives cannot escape from [*ne* [DP/NP]]:

[1] Shimoyama (2011) shows that intervention is possible with Japanese NCIs. Crucially, they are interpreted as universals in the relevant examples.

[2] Some authors report that Russian *libo*-NPIs are ungrammatical with clausemate negation regardless of the position (Haspelmath 1997: 65). This is not true. Although they are often degraded in comparison to NCIs, corpus data and native speaker judgements confirm that they can be licensed by clausemate negation, e.g. in the direct object position.

(5) a. Petja kupil ne sinij stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought NEG blue table but red cabinet
'Petya has bought not a blue table, but a red cabinet.'
b. *Petja kupil sinij ne stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought blue NEG table but red cabinet
Int.: idem.

(6) a. Petja kupil ne kakoj-nibud' stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought NEG what.ADJ-INDEF table but red cabinet
'Petya has bought not your average table, but a red cabinet.'
b. *Petja kupil kakoj-nibud' ne stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought what.ADJ-INDEF NEG table but red cabinet
Int.: idem.

Adjectival NCIs are the only modifiers which not just can, but must precede the marker of constituent negation (7). The pattern in (5)-(7) seems enigmatic under the assumption that NCIs are licensed in the scope of negation. On the other hand, this is what we expect to see if NCIs must outscope negation. NCIs also tend to precede the matrix negation (1-b) but in this case relatively free word order of Slavic may mask the obligatory movement of NCIs, see a relevant discussion of Serbo-Croatian in Bošković (2008).

(7) a. Petja kupil ni-kakoj ne stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought NI-what.ADJ NEG table but red cabinet
'What Petya has bought is not a table at all, but a red cabinet.'
b. *Petja kupil ne ni-kakoj stol, a krasnyj škaf.
Petya bought NEG NI-what.ADJ table but red cabinet
Int.: idem.

If NCIs have to move outside of the scope of negation, impossibility of this movement should render them ungrammatical. This prediction is borne out (8). In (8-a) an adjectival NCI is either extracted across-the-board from both conjuncts/disjuncts or modifies the entire coordinate structure. In both cases it can be moved in a position above the negation. In (8-b) an NCI can only move together with the entire coordinate structure. Given that it is buried in the second conjunct/disjunct it can never c-command the negative marker (and thus cannot agree with it, see Section 3). If NCIs were licensed in the scope of negation they would be grammatical in the second conjunct/disjunct just like a *libo*-NPI in (8-c).

(8) a. Ja ne našel tam ni-kakix deneg i/ili dragocennostej.
I NEG found there NI-what.ADJ money and/or jewels
'I haven't found there any money or jewels.'
b. *Ja ne našel tam deneg i/ili ni-kakix dragocennostej.
I NEG found there money and/or NI-what.ADJ jewels
Int.: 'I haven't found there money or any jewels.'
c. Ja ne našel tam deneg i/ili kakix-libo dragocennostej.
I NEG found there money and/or what.ADJ-NPI jewels
'I haven't found there money or any jewels.'

Finally, NCIs can even be base-generated above negation. Some subject control verbs (at least *starat'sja* 'to try', *rešit'* 'to decide', *predpočitat'* 'to prefer') allow NCI subjects with embedded negation (Rožnova 2009, Kholodilova 2015). Although sentences of this type are ungrammatical for some speakers (Vera Gribanova, p.c.), numerous examples can be found in the Internet and most of my consultants consider at least some of them perfectly fine.

(9) a. Ni-kto rešil ne prixodit'.
NI-who decided NEG come.INF
'Everyone decided not to come.'
b. Ob etom ni-kto predpočital ne govorit'.
about this NI-who preferred NEG talk
'Everyone preferred not to talk about that.'

One can suggest two ways to preserve the ∃-analysis of NCIs in the face of (9). Firstly, it can be assumed that an NCI is licensed in the scope of embedded negation with a subsequent movement to the matrix subject position. Alternatively, it can be assumed that negation is in fact interpreted in the matrix clause.

Both solutions are implausible. As for the first one, the matrix verbs in (9)-(10) are not typical raising verbs. As for the second one, it can be shown that the event variable introduced by the matrix verb is existentially bound above negation, i.e. negation is indeed located in the embedded clause. (10) shows that both ways to rescue the ∃-analysis predict a wrong interpretation for the sentences of this kind.

(10) Duxom ni-kto starals'ja ne padat' no polučalos' nevažno.
spirit NI-who tried NEG fall.INF but be.achieved poorly
1. 'Everyone tried not to lose courage, but they succeeded poorly.' (∀-NCI, wide scope)
2. #,*'No one tried to lose courage, but they succeeded poorly.' (∃-NCI, matrix negation)
3. *'Someone tried not to lose courage, but she succeeded poorly.' (∃-NCI, raising)

So, NCIs either obligatory move in the position above negation (1), (7)-(8), or are base-generated above it (9)-(10). With this I conclude that there is sufficient evidence for the wide scope of NCIs. In the next section I will show that we only need to adopt standard DA (minimally modified by Bošković 2007) in order to account for this data.

3. NC as (Downward) Agree

The view that NCIs are inherently non-negative is prevalent in the literature. It is justified by the fact that they can co-occur within one clause without introducing additional negations in the interpretation (1-b). Moreover, if one assumes that NCIs are semantically negative, she has to explain why the marker of clausal negation is semantically vacuous in sentences with NCIs (1)-(2) but seems to be non-vacuous otherwise (see an analysis along this lines in Watanabe 2004).

Following the standard view, I will assume that NCIs are semantically non-negative (Brown 1999, Giannakidou 2000, Zeijlstra 2004, Abels 2005, Penka 2011, Chierchia 2013, Fălăuş & Nicolae 2016, Szabolcsi 2018, *inter alia*). The negative morphology (*n-*) is just an agreement marker. It introduces (or spells-out) an uninterpretable [uNeg] feature which needs to be deleted upon agreement with interpretable negation, [iNeg] feature[3]. The morphological make-up of NCIs is shown in (11). Notably, strict NCIs exhibit the same morphological make-up cross-linguistically (Watanabe 2004).

(11) a. NEG (*n-*): uninterpretable agreement marker, [uNeg]
b. ADD (*i-*): universal quantifier or exhaustifier (provides universal force)
c. WH (*kto*): standard denotation (e.g. the set of animate individuals)

Next, I assume DA. That is, NCIs probe downwards, i.e. search for negation (more precisely, [iNeg]) in the c-command domain[4]. Finally, I will assume that a (downward) probe has to move in case there is no suitable goal in the c-command domain in order to save the derivation. This is a natural modification of DA which was proposed by Bošković (2007) in order to account for independent data (successive cyclic wh-movement).

[3] The analysis can be recast in terms of valued/unvalued features. For simplicity, I keep the typology of features as concise as possible.

[4] Following Abels (2012), I use corresponding arrows to mark downward (↓) and upward probes (↑) respectively.

These simple assumptions suffice to explain the distribution of NCIs observed so far. (12) and (13) exemplify the analysis.

(12) Petja ni-čego$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\downarrow]}$ [$_{\text{NegP}}$ ne$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$ sdelal ~~ni-čego~~$_{[\text{uNeg}\downarrow]}$].
Petya NI-what NEG did NI-what
'Petya hasn't done anything.'

(13) Ni-kto$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\downarrow]}$ rešil ne$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$ prixodit'.
NI-who decided NEG come.INF
'Everyone decided not to come.'

Can one account for the same data assuming the ∃-analysis of NCIs and UA? Yes, but with a range of additional assumptions. For example, to account for the obligatory movement of NCIs, an UA-based analysis has to assume EPP or [uK↑] on *ne*$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$. Both options will make an NCI move, but both options seem to lack any independent motivation (EPP is just eliminated in Bošković 2007).

(14) Petja kupil ni-kakoj$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\uparrow\text{~~},(\text{iK})]}$ [$_{\text{NotP}}$ ne$_{[\text{iNeg,~~EPP/uK}\uparrow\text{~~}]}$ ~~ni-kakoj~~$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\uparrow\text{~~},(\text{iK})]}$ stol].
Petya bought NI-what NEG NI-what table
'What Petya has bought is not a table at all.'

Furthermore, covert negation is needed to account for reverse negative concord (15). Given that the NCI subject is base-generated above the embedded *ne* it is not able to agree with it in upwards fashion. So, a covert negation should be invoked on top of the matrix clause. Moreover, *ne* should be deemed semantically vacuous in order to avoid the unattested double negation reading. Notably, this will still result in a slightly wrong interpretation, see the discussion of (10)[5].

(15) Op¬$_{[\text{iNeg}]}$ Ni-kto$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\uparrow\text{~~}]}$ rešil ne$_{[\text{~~uNeg}\uparrow\text{~~}]}$ prixodit'.
NI-who decided NEG come.INF
#'Nobody decided to come.' (unattested interpretation)

It turns out that UA does not suffice to account for the NC *per se*. To reproduce the predictions of DA, one should stipulate at least EPP (or a mysterious [uK↑] on the negative marker) and covert negation.

4. Fragments

4.1. Polarity mismatch

The grammaticality of NCIs in fragments was used by some authors as an argument against ∀-analyses of NCIs. If NCIs are universals outscoping interpretable overt negative marker, fragment answers yield a polarity mismatch, as shown in (16) (A for Antecedent, E for Ellipsis site). This is a violation of the semantic identity/parallelism constraint on ellipsis (Merchant 2001 *et seq*).

(16) Kto [$_{\text{A}}$ prišel] ? – Ni-kto [$_{\text{E}}$ ~~ne~~ ~~prišel~~].
who came NI-who NEG came
'Who has come? – Nobody.'

Watanabe (2004: 568) even regards (16)-type examples as a "dead end" for non-negative analyses of NCIs. This is not quite so. UA-based analyses have what looks like an elegant solution to this problem: non-negative existential NCI is licensed by a covert negative operator which is outside the ellipsis site (Zeijlstra 2004, Fălăuş & Nicolae 2016). Even if there is an overt negative marker in the ellipsis site, it is uninterpretable, so A and E are semantically identical (17).

[5] Otherwise, one can assume that overt embedded *ne* is interpreted in the matrix clause in (15). This is a stipulation on its own.

(17) Kto [$_A$ prišel] ? – Op¬$_{[iNeg]}$ Ni-kto$_{[\sout{uNeg}\uparrow]}$ [$_E$ (~~ne~~$_{[\sout{uNeg}\uparrow]}$) ~~prišel~~].
who came NI-who NEG came
'Who has come? – Nobody.'

This solution inevitably relies on covert negation because under UA-accounts NCIs are licensed by a dominating negation. But covert negation appears to be a mere stipulation which is not needed elsewhere in the grammar as far as I know. It is not even needed to account for non-elliptical cases of NCI licensing, as was shown above. In the following sections I will consider two ways to get around with the polarity mismatch problem within ∀-analyses and argue that they are potentially less problematic than (17).

4.2. Polarity mismatch revisited

It is possible that the constraint which requires total semantic identity between A and E (and by virtue of this disallows (16)) is too strict. Rudnev (2022) observes that the polarity mismatch in (16)-type examples is similar to the clause type mismatch in sluicing. If we assume that ellipsis deletes everything up to SpecCP (18) there is indeed a semantic mismatch between A and E caused by mismatching features on silent complementizers[6].

(18) a. [C$_{[decl]}$ I've just seen something.] – What$_{[uQ]}$ [~~have+C$_{[iQ]}$ you seen~~] ? (Rudnev 2022: 4)
b. I have just seen something, but I'm not sure what$_{[uQ]}$ [~~C$_{[iQ]}$ I've just seen~~].

There are also cases of undisputable polarity mismatch in ellipsis. Examples (19)-(20) are from Jacobson (2020).

(19) ?Sally thinks that a Democratic Socialist couldn't possibly be elected president, but Denise does.

(20) John expects not to pass every exam that Mary does.

While I refrain from any reformulation of the identity constraint on ellipsis, I conclude that in the light of (18)-(20) the strictest variant of this constraint is implausible. Thus, (16) cannot be regarded as a "dead end" for ∀-analyses of NCIs until one provides a refined formulation of the identity constraint on ellipsis which allows (18)-(20) and excludes (16).

4.3. Extra PF-deletion of negation

There is another possible account of fragments which preserves both the negativity of overt negation and total semantic and syntactic identity between A and E. Assume that the negative marker *ne* is deleted after ellipsis by a separate operation in order to avoid *ne*'s stranding (21).

(21) Kto [$_A$ prišel] ? – Nikto ~~ne~~ [$_E$ ~~prišel~~] ?
'Who has come? – No one.'

ne-deletion is not just stipulated to account for fragments (21). *ne* indeed cannot be stranded in Russian, not even in elliptical contexts (22). Unlike e.g. the ban on preposition stranding (Abels 2012) this ban seems to have a purely phonological basis: as a proclitic *ne* needs a rightward host to clitcize to.

(22) a. Kto prišel? – Petja (prišel).
'Who has come? – Petya (has come).'
b. Kto prišel? – Petja ne *(prišel).
'Who has come? – Petya hasn't come.'

[6] If the ellipsis of TP is assumed, the absence of *have* in the remnant in (18-a) will require an explanation.

If extra PF-deletion of the negative marker is possible at all, one would expect to find a language in which it is optional, i.e. a language in which the negative marker can be either stranded or targeted by PF-deletion. One such language is Hebrew (23).

(23) Mi ba? – Af ehad (lo)
who came even one NEG
'Who has come? — No one.' (Haspelmath 1997: 198)

A seemingly similar deletion process can target a broader set of markers in Korean. An (2016) shows that in Korean fragment answers PF-deletion can extend from the ellipsis site into the ellipsis remnant, deleting parts of it, such as a case marker (24-a), a postposition (24-b) or a head noun. This process has the features shared by the *ne*-deletion in Russian (21): (a) it is parasitic on ellipsis; (b) it targets elements adjacent to the ellipsis site. There is also a difference: "extra deletion" is optional in Korean. This difference, however, is expected provided that in Russian the negative marker *has to* be deleted due to the ban on its stranding.

(24) a. nwu-ka nwukwu-lul manna-ss-ni? – Cho*(-ka) Yang(-ul).
who-NOM who-ACC meet-PAST-Q Cho-NOM Yang-ACC
'Who met whom? – Cho (met) Yang.' (An 2016)
b. Cho-ka eti-eyse nwukwu-eykey cenhwa-lul ha-ess-ni? – suthapeksu*(-eyse)
Cho-NOM where-at who-to phone.call-ACC do-PST-Q Starbucks-at
Yang(-eykey).
Yang-to
'Where did Cho make a phone call to whom? – At Starbucks to Yang.' (An 2016)

Although the extension of PF-deletion from the ellipsis site discussed in this section remains mysterious in some respects (e.g. the constraints on its availability and applicability in different languages and contexts are not entirely clear), I conclude that such an operation is possible in principle and can lie behind fragments with NCIs (21).

In what follows I will assume that either polarity mismatch in ellipsis (Section 4.2) or separate (or extended from the ellipsis site) PF-deletion of the negative marker is allowed. Such a move is not obviously more costly than the postulation of covert negation (17). In the next section I will consider ambiguous fragment answers to negative questions. I will show that they pose yet another challenge for ∃-analyses of NCIs but can be handled by the proposed analysis without any additional assumptions.

5. Negative questions and ambiguous answers

5.1. A problem for ∃-analyses

Cross-linguistically NCIs are ambiguous in fragments when there is negation in the antecedent (Fălăuş & Nicolae 2016). This ambiguity shows up in Russian as well (25).

(25) Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – Ni-kto.
who NEG read Idiot NI-who
'Who did not read "The Idiot"? – No one did / Everyone did.'

Crucially, it presents a severe problem for ∃-analyses. Assume that overt negative marker *ne* is uninterpretable (Zeijlstra 2004). Just like NCIs, it probes upwards and agrees with interpretable covert negation. This would yield the single negation reading (26-a). In order to obtain the double negation reading, one has to assume that there can be another covert negation right below the subject NCI (26-b). The ambiguity is essentially due to optionality of the lower covert negation.

(26) a. Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – $\neg_{[iNeg]}$ Nikto$_{\exists}$ ~~(ne)~~$_{[uNeg\uparrow]}$ ~~čital~~.
'Who did not read "The Idiot"? – No one did.'
b. Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – $\neg_{[iNeg]}$ Nikto$_{\exists}$ $\neg_{[iNeg]}$ ~~(ne)~~$_{[uNeg\uparrow]}$ ~~čital~~.
'Who did not read "The Idiot"? – Everyone did.'

However, it is unclear why the presence of negation in the antecedent makes it possible to insert two covert negations in the answer. Note that (a) this option is unavailable elsewhere (27); (b) it cannot be regarded as a "last resort" since one covert negation is sufficient to license both an NCI and an overt negative marker (26-a). Moreover, one has not only *allow* the insertion of lower negation, but also *constraint* it so that only fragments with NCIs would be ambiguous, cf. (27).

(27) Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – Petja.
1. 'Who did not read "The Idiot"? – Petya didn't.'
2. *'Who did not read "The Idiot"? – Petya did.'

Now, assume that *ne* is interpretable. As far as this option is concerned, I will follow the account of Fălăuş & Nicolae (2016). They derive the single negation reading by assuming that NCIs can reconstruct in the scope of negation (28-a) (angle brackets indicate the interpreted but unpronounced copy). The double negation reading arises when an additional covert negation enters the structure (28-b).

(28) a. Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – Nikto$_{\exists}$ [~~ne$_{[iNeg]}$~~ <nikto$_{\exists}$> ~~čital~~].
b. Kto ne čital "Idiota"? – ¬$_{[iNeg]}$ Nikto$_{\exists}$ [~~ne$_{[iNeg]}$ čital~~].

This account turns out to be tailored to this particular data point. Firstly, it assumes both UA[7] and covert negation which do not fare well as far as non-elliptical sentences are concerned, see the discussion of (14)-(15). Next, it stipulates subject reconstruction exclusively for NCIs, cf. (4). Moreover, it stipulates reconstruction in the scope of elided negation which is in fact not easily available and just impossible for some speakers (Weir 2020). Finally, it is tied to some very specific assumptions about the distribution of covert negation. In particular, covert negation can only be invoked if the vP is not spelled-out and an NCI has undergone focus-movement so that it is local to the covert negation, otherwise the following unattested scope configuration would arise: ¬¬∃ (Fălăuş & Nicolae 2016: 592,596).

So, UA-based accounts with covert negation are not sufficient *per se* for the explanation of ambiguous fragments. On top of other problematic suppositions (UA, EPP, covert negation) they have to make assumptions aimed at handling this particular class of sentences. In the next section I will show that the proposed DA-analysis does not need any additional assumptions in this case (besides polarity mismatch *or* extra PF-deletion of the negative marker).

5.2. Double negation with negation stacking

The single negation is unproblematic under the proposed account (29-a). It involves a matching ellipsis with a single interpretable negation in the ellipsis site (an NCI agrees with it in a standard downward fashion). The double negation reading arises when another negative marker enters the structure. It is deleted either as a part of mismatching ellipsis or by a separate operation of extra PF-deletion justified in Section 4. I conjecture that the upper negative marker is actually the marker of constituent negation (CN) rather than the marker of clausal/sentential negation (SN).

(29) – Kto [$_{A}$ ne čital "Idiota"]?
a. – Nikto [$_{E}$ ~~ne$_{SN}$ čital "Idiota"~~]. (single negation)
b. – Nikto ~~ne~~$_{CN}$ [$_{E}$ ~~ne$_{SN}$ čital "Idiota"~~]. (double negation)

Negation stacking is in no way a marginal phenomenon. I assume that by default the marker of CN, glossed as NOT, can be freely stacked on the marker of SN (and can even be iterated) yielding double negation (30). In Russian the marker of CN is phonologically indistinguishable from the marker of SN, but there

[7] In fact, Fălăuş & Nicolae (2016) do not use any kind of Agree at all, because they regard NCIs as strong NPIs. This analysis is untenable at least for true strict NCIs for independent reasons, see the discussion of the distinction between strong NPIs and NCIs in Slavic in Dočekal (2020).

are languages with dedicated markers of SN and CN respectively (De Clercq 2018)[8]. In (31) an example of negation stacking (=*güi* is SN and *biš* is CN) in Khalkha (< Mongolic) is shown.

(30) Ne ne možete – ne xotite.
NOT NEG can.2PL NEG want.2PL
'It is not the case that you can't (do this), you don't want to.'

(31) a. (Context: when turning it on, it seems that this light hasn't been put in yet.)
b. güi=ee, či:deng-gii=n xii-gee=güi biš=ee, en-čen šat-c=iin.
NO=EMPH, light.bulb-ACC=3POSS do-RES.PTCP=NEG NOT=EMPH, this-STC burn-PST=PTCL
'No, it is not that the light bulb hasn't been put in, it has burnt.' (Östling & Brosig 2011)

With this I conclude that there is nothing problematic with adding the second negative marker in fragments (29-b). Thus, the double negation reading is derived in a way attested elsewhere.

Fălăuş & Nicolae (2016: 596) and Dočekal (2020: 37) report that the DN reading is actually preferred to the SN one. This was confirmed by my own survey: the DN reading was reported to be the only reading of (29) by roughly a half of 93 consultants. Does the present account have anything to say about this? I think it has. I conjecture that the insertion of CN is actually the default strategy in fragments. In other words, it is not the marker of SN, but a (homonymous) marker of CN which is inserted and elided/deleted in simple fragments like (21). Thus, when there is the SN marker in the antecedent, the default strategy will amount to adding yet another negation (CN) in the answer, hence the DN reading (29-b).

This proposal is supported by the fact that the marker of CN shows up in fragments in languages which allow overt negation marking in fragments[9]. E.g., in Buryat which is closely related to Khalkha =*bəʃə* (a cognate of *biš* (31)) is used in fragments[10]. Similarly, in Balkar the CN marker *uʁaj* is used in fragments (33). In Russian and Hebrew SN and CN markers are homonymous so even if the negative marker can surface like in (23) one cannot really tell whether it is the SN or the CN marker. It would be parsimonious to assume that the negative markers in (21) and (23) are the CN markers as well.

(32) a. ?xən jər-ə-b? – xən-ʃ(jə). (Buryat)
who come-PST-Q who-ADD
'Who has come? – Everyone/whoever.'
b. xən jər-ə-b? – xən-ʃ(jə)=bəʃə.
who come-PST-Q who-ADD=NOT
'Who has come? – Nobody.'

(33) kim kel-di? – bir adam da ??(uʁaj). (Balkar)
who come-PST one person ADD NOT
'Who has come? – Nobody.'

With this we have justified both the negation stacking analysis of DN readings and the preference for them. An interesting outcome of this finding is that any reasoning about fragments based on the position of SN (i.e., NegP/PolP) in the clause structure may be irrelevant if it is the CN that is actually used in fragments.

Before I wrap up I would like to point out another important typological fact. Pronouns which are built from an indeterminate base (question word) and an additive particle (cf. Russian *n-i-kto* NEG-ADD-who) are widely attested cross-linguistically, especially in Asia. If they do not require a clausemate negation they are interpreted as plain universals or universal free choice items. That is, the only difference between the items in (34) and NCIs is that the latter have [uNeg↓] and thus have to probe downwards for negation.

[8] As far as I understand, De Clercq (2018) uses the term "negative focus marker" for what I call "constituent negation". There are some discrepancies, however, e.g. De Clercq (2018) argues for a dedicated position for "negative focus markers" while I assume that the distribution of CN is relatively free. This is irrelevant for the present discussion.

[9] This is true at least for the four languages discussed here: Balkar, Buryat, Hebrew and Russian, *modulo* homonymy in the latter two. I do not exclude that other strategies may underlie fragments in other languages.

[10] I only have two judgements as for non-negative (32-a). It was accepted by one speaker and rejected by the other.

(34) a. kim kel-di? – kim da. (Balkar)
who come-PST who ADD
'Who has come? – Everyone/whoever.'

b. Lisi shei dou qing.le. (Mandarin)
Lisi who ADD invite.ASP
'Lisi invited everyone.' (Liu 2019: 258; glosses are mine)

c. Bhushan eppuD-uu KF taageeDu. (Telugu)
Bhusan when-ADD KF drank
'Bhusan always drank KingFisher.' (Balusu 2017; glosses are mine)

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed to analyze NC as syntactic agreement involving standard (Downward) Agree. I have provided a number of empirical arguments showing that NCIs either move in the position above negation or are base-generated above it but never stay in its scope (Section 2). This is expected under assumption that NCIs bear an uninterpretable [uNeg↓] feature and by virtue of this have to probe downwards. If there is no goal in the c-command domain, the probe has to move to the nearest position which enables Agree (Bošković 2007), i.e. the position immediately above negation in the case of NCIs. Thus, NCIs have to be non-negative universals for which there is independent evidence (34).

I have shown that DA plus universal quantification suffice to account for the range of data which are problematic for ∃-analyses of NCIs (in particular, UA-based analyses). I have also considered the problem of the polarity mismatch in fragment answers which is tied to ∀-analyses of NCIs and discussed two possible solutions to it (Section 4). Finally, I have shown that ambiguous fragment answers to negative questions pose a yet unresolved problem for ∃-analyses of NCIs and proposed a simple and independently motivated account of ambiguous answers based on negation stacking below an NCI (Section 5).

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