

# Colloquial emphatic negation in Russian and morphology of negative concord\*

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Alongside the standard negation, colloquial Russian has grammaticalized an alternative negation marker, *xuj* ‘dick’ and its euphemisms, that has negative force but does not license *ni*-phrases in its scope. I explore the properties of this construction to provide novel evidence that both semantic licensing and morphological concord are implicated in forming *ni*-negative indefinites in Slavic.

## 1. Introduction

Situations where a language uses several coexisting patterns to express sentential negation have not been studied particularly widely. This paper addresses such a situation in Russian, which, alongside the common Slavic pattern of standard negation, exhibits a fully grammaticalized, parallel system based on the taboo word *xuj* ‘dick’ and its euphemisms.

As is well known, standard negation in Russian is expressed by the preverbal clitic *ne*= and uses Strict Negative Concord (SNC), Giannakidou & Zeijlstra (2017), i.e., what is pre-theoretically called “negative indefinites” co-occur in a clause without cancelling out the negative force of each other (1), but they require the presence of the sentential negation marker *ne*.

- (1)    **ni**-kto            **ni**-čego            **ne**    ponjal  
         NEG<sup>1</sup>-who        NEG-what        NEG    understood  
         ‘No one understood anything.’

Although the technical implementations vary, a number of works propose to analyze NC as agreement, e.g. Zeijlstra (2004), Haegemann & Lohndal (2010), and Penka (2011). Alternative proposals exist as well, e.g. Zanuttini (1991), De Swart & Sag (2002), and Iordăchioaia & Richter (2015). An early precursor of agreement-based approaches to negation and negative concord in Russian are Brown & Franks (1995) and Brown (1999).

Taboo words are known for their versatility in grammaticalization processes, see e.g. Napoli & Hoeksema (2009). In particular, they can give rise to negators (*squatitives* in the terms of Postal 2004), Hoeksema (2009); Sailer (2018); Sailor (2020).

- (2)    a.        English  
              I know **fuck all** about physics<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Glosses: ACC accusative; COMP complementizer; FOC focus; GEN genitive; IDF indefinite; IMP imperative; INF infinitive; INS instrumental; MOD modal; NEG negation; NOM nominative; NUM numerative; PRS present; REFL reflexive; X.NEG *xuj*-negation.

<sup>2</sup> <https://literallystories2014.com/2020/12/19/week-303-the-leader-of-the-rat-pack-three-barrels-is-mingling-and-popeyes-obvious-love-for-power-ballads/> Accessed 04/23/2021.

- b. Colloquial German<sup>3</sup>  
**Einen Dreck** rufe ich zurück  
 a.ACC dirt.ACC I.call I back  
 ‘I won’t call back.’

A similar pattern of negation using *diabhal* ‘devil’ as the negator is attested in Modern Irish as well<sup>4</sup>, (Ó Siadhail 1989: 327), see a recent minimalist analysis of this phenomenon, called by him “demonic negation”, in D’Antuono (2022). The grammar of negative constructions that emerge this way will be different from the standard negation pattern(s) in a given language. That makes them an interesting tool to investigate polarity-related phenomena.

Based on the properties of such a negation pattern in Russian, I argue that licensing of NegP in Russian (headed by *ne*) proceeds according to Zeijlstra’s proposal, i.e. by a dedicated high operator with an interpretable Neg feature. However, unlike Zeijlstra, I argue that negative indefinites are semantically licensed as NPIs by such an operator rather than undergo agreement with it. The morphological marking, spelled out as the proclitic *ni-*, is a result of morphological concord of indefinites with Neg<sup>0</sup>.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a basic description of the colloquial emphatic negation pattern under discussion. Section 3 addresses NPIs licensed by this negation. Sections 4 and 5 are the key technical part of the paper. Section 4 discusses the position of the negator in the syntactic structure and its relationship with the standard NegP, while Section 5 explores the implications of this construction for the theory of negative concord in Russian. Section 6 addresses other *wh*-based indefinites within the proposed system, while Section 7 addresses *ni*-NP negative indefinites and occurrences of *ni*-indefinites in non-negative clauses.

## 2. The phenomenon: *xuj*-negation in Russian

Alongside the standard negation, expressed by *ne* procliticized to the verb, a very colloquial register of Russian can emphatically negate sentences with the prosodically prominent word *xuj* ‘dick’ and its various euphemisms (*fig*, *xren*, *xer*, etc.), (2b). I will call this pattern *xuj*-negation. Reported judgments in this paper are based on the author’s native speaker intuitions and informal consultations with 5 speakers of Russian.

- (3) a. Standard negation  
 vasja **ne**=pošël na rabotu segodnja  
 Vasya NEG=went on work.ACC today  
 ‘Vasya didn’t go to work today.’
- b. *xuj*-negation  
 <XUJ> vasja <XUJ> pošël <\*XUJ> na rabotu segodnja  
 X.NEG Vasya went on work.ACC today  
 ‘Vasya didn’t go to work today.’

Although uncommon in edited written texts, this negation pattern is robustly attested in the spoken language and online (4). The naturally attested examples in (4) indicate that that *xuj*-negation indeed has negative force. As the clauses in the scope of *xuj*-negation stand in the past

<sup>3</sup> <https://bipo2015.wordpress.com/2021/06/> Accessed 12/13/2021.

<sup>4</sup> I thank Jevgenij Zintchenko for this reference.

or present indicative, *xuj* indeed negates the propositions ‘I understood X’, ‘I left yesterday’, ‘I violated something,’ and ‘He writes in this manner elsewhere’<sup>5</sup>.

- (4) a. tol’ko **xuj** ja ponjal čto TS xotel skazat’  
 onl X.NEG I understood what topic.starter wanted to say  
 ‘Though I didn’t understand what the topic starter wanted to say.’<sup>6</sup>
- b. da ja **xuj** uexal včera  
 PRT I X.NEG left yesterday  
 ‘I didn’t leave yesterday.’<sup>7</sup>
- c. **xuj** ja tam čego narušil  
 X.NEG I there what violated  
 ‘I didn’t violate anything (i.e. any traffic rules).’<sup>8</sup>
- d. **xuj** on gde eščë tak pišet  
 X.NEG he where else so writes  
 ‘He doesn’t write this way elsewhere.’<sup>9</sup>

Unlike the standard negation marker, *ne*, the negator *xuj* cannot express constituent negation (5).

- (5) magazin otkroetsja **ne/\*xuj** segodnja  
 shop will.open NEG/X.NEG today  
 ‘The shop will open not today.’

In the theoretical literature, this pattern of negation has only been addressed so far in the talk Hehl et al. (2019). Hehl et al (2019) argue that the meaning of the negator in *xuj*-negation has a specific modal component. While this conclusion is in all likelihood valid, any systematic discussion of semantics of *xuj*-negation, and, in particular, of interaction between negation and modality is beyond the scope of this paper. In the descriptive literature, *xuj*-negation is mentioned (with the gloss ‘*ne*’) in Levin (1986: 69).

## 2.1 Standard negation and *xuj*-negation in the same clause

Standard negation and *xuj*-negation do not enter in the Negative Concord relationship, that is to say, if both standard negation and *xuj*-negation are present in a clause, only a double negation reading is possible (6).

- (6) a. **XUJ** vasja **ne** pojdët na rabotu  
 X.NEG Vasya NEG will.go on work.ACC  
 ‘It is not the case that Vasya won’t go to work.’/  
 \*‘Vasya won’t go to work.’

<sup>5</sup> In this *xuj*-negation differs from *vrjad li* ‘hardly’, which otherwise has a very similar distribution. Another item with similar properties, the obsolete *čerta s dva* devil-NUM about two, was probably a genuine negator, but I have no firm intuitions about it. I thank Natasha Kasher and Aldan Yerbalanov for these observations.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.skycentre.net/topic/24389-%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BC%D1%8D%D0%BD-%D1%8D%D0%BA%D0%B7%D0%B8%D1%82/>, accessed 12/05/2021

<sup>7</sup> <https://2ch.hk/fi/res/12103.html>, accessed 04/19/2021

<sup>8</sup> <https://max-andriyahov.livejournal.com/187171.html>, accessed 11/25/2022.

<sup>9</sup> <https://holywarsoo.net/viewtopic.php?id=1961&p=235>, accessed 11/25/2022.

- b. **XUJ** vasja **nikogda** **ne** p'ët  
 X.NEG Vasya never NEG drinks  
 'It is not the case that Vasya never drinks.'/  
 \*'Vasya never drinks.'

Accordingly, *xuj*-negation and standard negation instantiate separate negative operators.

## 2.2 Restrictions on the distribution of *xuj*-negation

Unlike the standard negation, *xuj*-negation is subject to some distribution restrictions. First, *xuj*-negation requires the host clause to be finite.

- (7) a. Infinitival embedded clause  
 ja rešil [\***xuj**<sup>ok</sup>**ne** xodit' na rabotu]  
 I decided X.NEG/NEG go.INF on work  
 'I decided not to go to work.' (intended)
- b. Infinitival main clause  
 ?\*tam **xuj** proj-ti  
 there X.NEG pass.through-INF  
 'It's impossible to pass through there.' (intended)<sup>10</sup>

Hehl et al. (2019) proposed a generalization that *xuj*-negation is restricted to main clauses. In actuality, the picture appears to be significantly more complex. While some restrictions exist, examples with *xuj*-negation in embedded clauses of different types are robustly attested, as shown in (8) below.

- (8) a. Indicative complement<sup>11</sup>  
 ja dumaju [čto **xuj** eto proizojdet]  
 I think COMP X.NEG this will.happen  
 'I think this won't happen.' <https://odessa.xxx/t/6985/> accessed 11/24/2022
- b. Non-indicative complement  
 nadejus' vlast' sdelaet tak [čtoby **xuj** oni ]  
 I.hope authorities will.do so COMP X.NEG they  
 vernulis'  
 would.return  
 'I hope the authorities will make it sure that they don't return.'<sup>12</sup>
- c. Conditional  
 tema ne lez' v politiku [jesli **xuj** čto ]  
 Tema NEG dabble in politics if X.NEG what  
 ponimaeš'  
 you.understand  
 'Tema, don't dabble in politics if you understand nothing about it.'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> I thank Aldan Yerbalanov for this observation. Some speakers, however, accept such examples. I leave the reasons and the extent of this interspeaker variation for further research.

<sup>11</sup> For declarative complements, examples with the following matrix predicates were found *znat'* 'know', *sčitat'* 'to be of the opinion', *dokazyvat'* 'convince/prove', (*ne*) *somnevat'sja* '(not) to doubt', *nadejat'sja* 'hope', *predchuvstovat'* 'feel', *pomnit'* 'remember', *vangovat'* 'predict', *govorit'* 'say', *pizdet'* 'say, lie', *ponjatno* 'it is clear', *uveren* 'is sure'.

<sup>12</sup> [https://twitter.com/pvt\\_Scarecrow/status/1568978112368500742](https://twitter.com/pvt_Scarecrow/status/1568978112368500742) accessed 11/24/2022

<sup>13</sup> <https://tema.livejournal.com/1660052.html?page=2> accessed on 11/22/2022.

- d. Reason adjunct  
 černuju ikru ja ne pokupaju nikogda  
 black caviar I NEG I.buy never  
 [potomu što **xuj** na neě zarabatyvaju]  
 because X.NEG on it I.learn  
 ‘I never buy black caviar, because I don’t earn enough for it.’<sup>14</sup>
- e. Relative clause  
 ty poxož na maloletnego debila [kotoryj **xuj** što  
 you similar on underaged idiot which X.NEG what  
 videl v žizni]  
 saw in life  
 ‘You resemble an underaged idiot who hasn’t seen anything in life.’<sup>15</sup>
- f. Noun complement  
 v kompanijax tipičnejšaja situacija [kogda **xuj** ty  
 in companies most.typical situation when X.NEG you  
 dožděš’sja ot zakazčika TZ  
 obtain.after.long.waiting from client specs  
 ‘The situation when you don’t get the specs from the customer is most  
 typical in companies.’<sup>16</sup>

Incidentally, the ability to appear in embedded contexts distinguishes *xuj*-negation from the English “sentence-initial refutation marker”, (the term of Horn 2016) *bullshit/the fuck*<sup>17</sup>.

The *xuj*-negation pattern is impossible with imperatives (9a), although it is possible in other non-indicative root clauses (9b).

- (9) a. \***xuj** kuri  
 X.NEG smoke.IMP.2SG  
 ‘Don’t smoke!’ (intended)
- b. **xuj** by on vyžil posle takix zapoev  
 X.NEG MOD he survived after such drinking.binges  
 ‘He wouldn’t have survived after such drinking binges.’<sup>18</sup>

*Xuj*-negation cannot occur in questions of any kind, at least not on the non-echo reading.

- (10) a. wh-question  
 \*Kto **xuj** pojdět na rabotu?  
 who X.NEG will.go on work.ACC  
 ‘Who won’t go to work?’ (intended)
- b. Y/N-question  
 \*Vasja **xuj** pojdět na rabotu?  
 Vasya X.NEG will.go on work.ACC  
 ‘Won’t Vasya go to work?’ (intended)

<sup>14</sup> <https://alkorikova.livejournal.com/> accessed 11/24/2022.

<sup>15</sup> [https://vk.com/wall-58666510\\_1675677](https://vk.com/wall-58666510_1675677) accessed 11/25/2022.

<sup>16</sup> <https://2ch.life/pr/arch/2022-09-03/res/2336182.html> accessed 11/24/2022.

<sup>17</sup> I thank Steve Franks and Colin Davis for a discussion of this point.

<sup>18</sup> [https://vk.com/wall-130938419\\_23570](https://vk.com/wall-130938419_23570), accessed 7/15/2021

- c. Alternative question  
 \*Vasja ili Petya **xuj** pojdët na rabotu?  
 Vasya or Petya X.NEG will.go on work.ACC  
 ‘Won’t Petya or Vasya go to work?’ (intended)

For the sake of completeness, let me add that *xuj*-negation may not appear in the environments where expletive negation does; see Brown & Franks (1995); Brown (1999: 94-111), and Abels (2005) for various analyses of expletive negation in Russian, and Inkova (2006) for an overview of contexts where expletive negation may appear in Russian.

- (11) a. ja čut’ **ne/\*xuj** razbil vazu  
 I barely NEG/X.NEG broke vase.ACC  
 ‘I nearly broke the vase.’  
 b. poka ja **ne/\*xuj** vyučil gollandskij ja ne čital  
 while I NEG/X.NEG learnedDutch I NEG read  
 Reve  
 Reve  
 ‘Until I learned Dutch, I hadn’t read Reve.’  
 c. ja bojus’ kak by Lev **ne/\*xuj** razbil vazu  
 I fear how MOD Lev NEG/X.NEG broke vase.ACC  
 ‘I fear that Lev breaks the vase.’

These facts are compatible both with the analysis of Brown & Franks (1995) and Brown (1999), who argue that expletive negation does not involve semantic negation, which in their implementation means that it is not accompanied by a negative operator in Spec NegP. On the analysis of Abels (2005), expletive negation is regular negation that takes a high position at the LF. At present, I do not see how to reconcile the facts in (11) with Abels’ analysis. I must leave the matter for further research.

To recapitulate, *xuj*-negation occurs in declarative finite main root clauses and some finite embedded ones. While details are unclear, these restrictions seem to indicate that *xuj*-negation is located high in the left periphery of the clause.

### 3. *Xuj*-negation and NPI licensing

In this subsection I show that *xuj*-negation licenses NPIs, but not *ni*-words<sup>19</sup>. Russian has few NPIs other than *ni*-words, and they typically belong to a rather literary register (*pal’cem \*(ne) poševelit’* ‘lift a finger’, *\*(ne) stoit’ lomanogo groša/vyjedennogo jajca* ‘cost a red cent’). They are rather infelicitous with *xuj*-negation because of a strong register clash. However, modulo this clash, they are licensed by *xuj*-negation.

- (12) #**XUJ** on radi tebja pal’cem poševelit  
 X.NEG he for you finger.INS move  
 ‘He wouldn’t lift a finger for your sake.’

<sup>19</sup> *Xuj*-negation does not license the genitive of negation either (i). I propose that this indicates that the genitive of negation in Russian involves morphological agreement with the NegP instantiated by *ne*, which is effectively what was proposed by Brown (1999).

- (i) Vasja ne/\*xuj razbival vaz-y  
 Vasya NEG/X.NEG broke vase.GEN  
 ‘Vasya didn’t break a vase.’

In the matching register, *xuj*-negation licenses an NPI, *ebat* 'lit. to fuck 'to give a fuck', which is indeed a (weak) NPI (13).

- (13) a. Standard negation  
 Menja éto \*(ne) jebët  
 I.ACC this.NOM NEG fucks  
 'I \*(don't) give a fuck about it.'
- b. Y/N question  
 Teb'ja éto ebët?  
 you.ACC this.NOM fucks  
 'Do you give a fuck about it?'
- c. Conditional  
 [jesli tebja éto ebët] ty étim i zanimajsja  
 if you.ACC this fucks you this FOC deal.with  
 'If you give a fuck about this, you yourself deal with it.'
- d. Xuj-negation  
 XUJ menja éto ebët  
 X.NEG I.ACC this.NOM fucks  
 'I don't give a fuck about it.'

However, *xuj*-negation cannot license *ni*-words or *ni*-NPs, compare the sentences in (14a) and (14b); and (14c) and (14d).

- (14) a. ni-kto ni-čego segodnja ne ponjal  
 NEG-who NEG-what today NEG understood  
 'No one understood anything today.'
- b. \*<XUJ> ni-kto ni-čego segodnja <XUJ> ponjal  
 X.NEG NEG-who NEG-what today X.NEG understood  
 'No one understood anything today.' (intended meaning)
- c. ja ne dam emu ni kopejki  
 I NEG will.give him NI kopeck.GEN  
 'I won't give him a kopeck.'
- d. \*xuj ja dam emu ni kopejki  
 X.NEG I will.give him NI kopeck.GEN  
 Idem (intended)

To render the meaning 'No one understood anything.' with *xuj*-negation, different indefinites, most naturally, plain wh-words<sup>20</sup>, need to be used (15a). Remarkably, it is the bare wh-stem of the respective *ni*-item that surfaces under *xuj*-negation, compare (14a) and (15a). Modulo a certain register clash, other indefinites may be used as well (15b). Their stems are still the same wh-words. While the sentences in (15 a-b) are constructed to form a minimal pair with (14a). Examples of this type do occur naturally (15c).

- (15) a. XUJ segodnja kto čego ponjal  
 X.NEG today who what understood  
 'No one understood anything.'

<sup>20</sup> This function of plain wh-words in Russian has not been described in the theoretical literature so far, see Yanovich (2005) and Hengeveld et al. (2022: 6) for a discussion of non-interrogative uses of Russian wh-words.

- b. XUJ segodnja **kto-nibud'/?-libo** **čego-nibud'/?-libo** ponjal  
 X.NEG today who-IDF what-IDF understood  
*Idem*
- c. XUJ ty potom **komu** **čto** dokažeš'  
 X.NEG you later who.DAT what.ACC you.will.prove  
 'You won't prove anything to anyone later<sup>21</sup>.'

Unlike the regular negative marker *ne* (1), emphatic negation must precede all the indefinites it licenses, compare the grammatical sentence in (15a) and the ungrammatical one in (16).

- (16) \***kto** XUJ **čego** ponjal  
 who X.NEG what understood  
 Intended: 'No one understood anything.'

Unlike *ni*-phrases, indefinites under *xuj*-negation cannot be associated with *počti* 'almost' (17 a-b). The latter must precede the *xuj*-negation marker.

- (17) a. ja počti ni-čego ne ponjal  
 I almost NI-what NEG understood  
 'I understood almost nothing.'
- b. \*ja **xuj počti čego** ponjal  
 I X.NEG almost what understood  
*Idem* (intended)
- c. oni bilis'-bilis' i **počti xren** čego dobilis'  
 they struggled-struggled and almost X.NEG what achieved  
 'They struggled and struggled, but achieved almost nothing.'<sup>22</sup>
- d. krome menja **počti xuj kto** prišiel<sup>23</sup>  
 besides I.GEN almost X.NEG who arrived  
 'Besides me, almost no one arrived.'

With these facts in mind, we can proceed to an analysis of *xuj*-negation in Russian. To account for the licensing of indefinites in the scope of *xuj*-negation, any such analysis must include a proposal about the licensing of *ni*-items.

#### 4. Syntactic position of *xuj*-negation and its relation with NegP

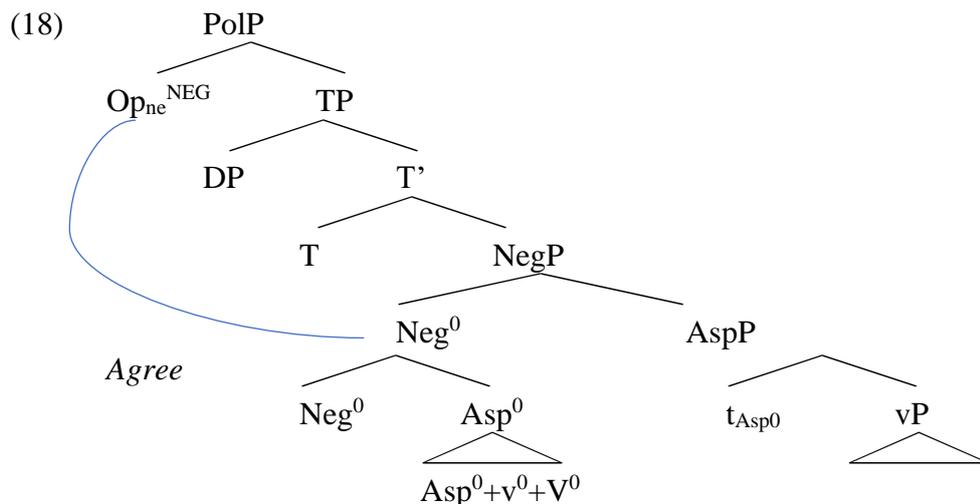
I adopt the basic clause architecture of Russian from Gribanova (2017: 1085). For the standard negation in Russian, I adopt the proposal of Gribanova's (2017) that it is licensed by a negative operator high in the clause. I will use the notation  $Op_{ne}^{NEG}$  instead of Gribanova's Pol. Overt standard negation, the  $Neg^0$  head *ne*, is licensed by  $Op_{ne}^{NEG}$  by means of Agree<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://2ch.life/b/arch/2022-02-13/res/263093981.html>, accessed 11/25/2022.

<sup>22</sup> <https://nosikot.livejournal.com/5174866.html>, accessed 11/28/2022.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.yaplakal.com/forum2/st/75/topic1442356.html>, accessed 11/28/2022.

<sup>24</sup> This involves establishing an Agree relation between a c-commanded featurally deficient probe ( $Neg^0$ ) and a c-commanding goal (the negative operator). The theoretical legitimacy of this non-standard theoretical move, initially proposed in Zeijlstra (2004), is a subject of a vigorous debate. See Zeijlstra (2012) and Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (2019) in favor of upward Agree, and Preminger (2013); Preminger and Polinsky (2015); and Rudnev (2020; 2021) in favor of the canonical direction of Agree. The recent proposal of Deal (2021) allows one to disengage the direction of Agree from the interpretability of involved features, and to restrict the system to downward Agree. It is beyond the scope of this paper to engage in this debate. I will only note that the facts discussed here allow an analysis in terms of upward Agree.



Besides that, I propose that the Russian clause can host an additional negative operator  $Op_{xuj}^{NEG}$  high in the left periphery. In this respect, my proposal about *xuj*-negation in Russian is similar to what D'Antuono (2022) proposes for the demonic negation in Irish.

(19)  $[Op_{xuj}^{NEG} [ \dots [Op_{ne}^{NEG} \dots [VP] \dots ]]$

The operator  $Op_{xuj}^{NEG}$ , if present, is the specifier of the projection whose head is **spelled out** as *xuj* or its euphemisms. Both operators bear an interpretable [Neg] feature, which explains the double negation reading of (6) repeated here as (20).

(20) **XUJ** vasja **ne** pojdët na rabotu  
 X.NEG Vasya NEG will.go on work.ACC  
 'It is not the case that Vasya won't go to work.'/\*'Vasya won't go to work.'

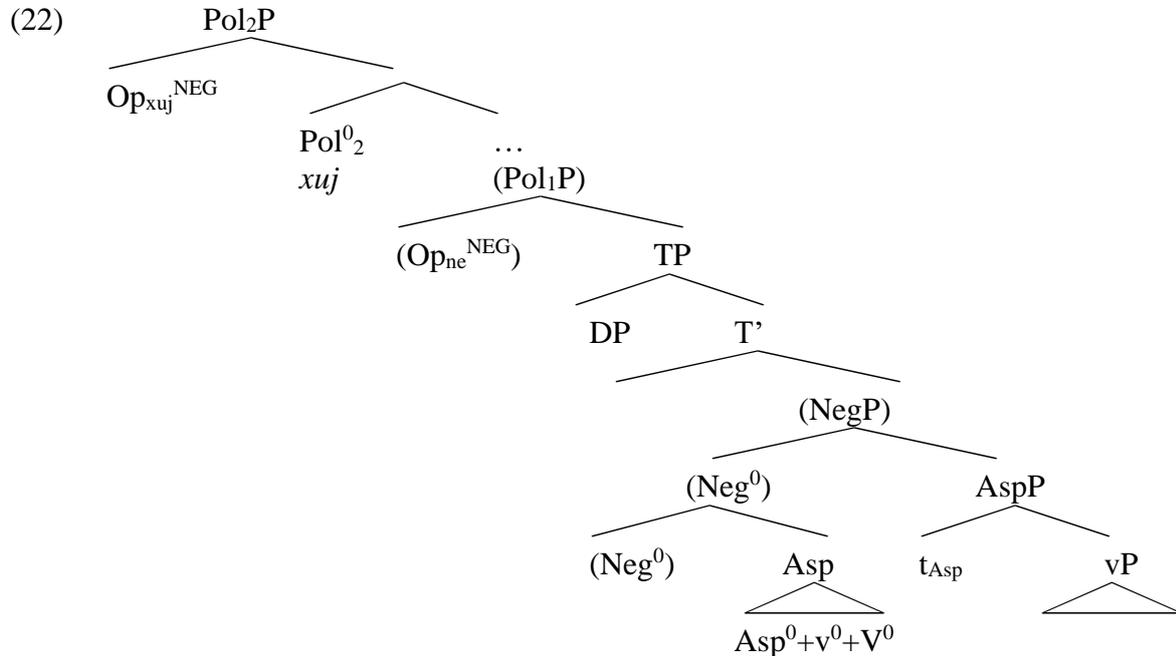
$Op_{xuj}^{NEG}$  is situated high in the left periphery of the declarative clause. The following facts support this conclusion. First, as was shown in (9), Section 2.2, *xuj*-negation is ungrammatical in imperative clauses that are standardly assumed to lack the CP layer, see e.g. (Zhang 1991; Rupp 2007; Isac 2015: 102). Second, unlike the standard negation, *xuj*-negation can take scope over a *nibud'*-indefinite in the subject position, as illustrated by the contrast between (21a) and (21b). Examples analogous to (21b) are attested online (21c).

(21) a. kto-nibud' ne prišël  
 who-IDF NEG came  
 'Someone didn't come.'/\*'No one came'.  
 b. xuj kto-nibud' prišël  
 X.NEG who-IDF came  
 'No one came.'/\*'Somebody didn't come.'  
 c. xuj kto-nibud' kogda-nibud' menja vytaščit  
 X.NEG who-IDF when-IDF I.ACC make.go.out  
 'No one will ever make me go out.'<sup>25</sup>

The operator  $Op_{xuj}^{NEG}$  undergoes Spec-Head agreement with the head  $Pol_2^0$  that is spelled out as *xuj*. Although  $Neg^0$  has the right feature makeup to agree with  $Op_{xuj}^{NEG}$ , I assume that this

<sup>25</sup> <https://v1.anekdot.ru/story-03-display.html?from=3635&sort=1>, accessed 11/28/2022.

agreement is blocked for the locality reasons. Specifically, I assume that PolP<sub>1</sub> is always present in the clause. If its specifier hosts the negative operator, it will agree with NegP lower in the clause. The presence of both operators will produce the double negation reading. Otherwise, I assume PolP<sub>1</sub> to host a positive polarity operator that prevents Op<sub>xuj</sub><sup>NEG</sup> from agreeing with Neg<sup>0</sup>. Therefore, the meaning ‘Vasya won’t go to work’ in (20) is not derived.



The fact that *xuj* is situated very close to a negative operator can be seen from the behavior of fragment answers, for which I adopt the combination of analyses of Merchant (2005) and Zeijlstra (2004). In the absence of the overt *xuj*-negator, NPIs licensed by it are ungrammatical, unlike the behavior of *ni*-words under standard negation. The explanation for this is that in fragments lacking overt *xuj*-negation (23a), the negative operator necessary to license NPIs is absent, unlike under standard negation (23b).

- (23) Q: Kto pojdët v magazin?  
 who will.go in shop  
 ‘Who will go to the shop?’
- a. Fragment negative answer, standard negation  
 A: [Op<sub>ne</sub><sup>NEG</sup> [TopP nikto {TP<sub>t<sub>nikto</sub>...</sub>}]  
 no one  
 ‘No one.’
- b. Fragment negative answer, *xuj*-negation  
 A: ??[ Op<sub>xuj</sub><sup>NEG</sup> **xuj** kto ...[TP]... ] /  
 X.NEG who  
 ‘No one.’
- b’. \*[TopP kto {Op<sub>xuj</sub><sup>NEG</sup> **xuj** .. [TP]... }  
 who X.NEG
- Idem*

I leave the precise location of Pol<sub>2</sub>P in the left periphery for further study.

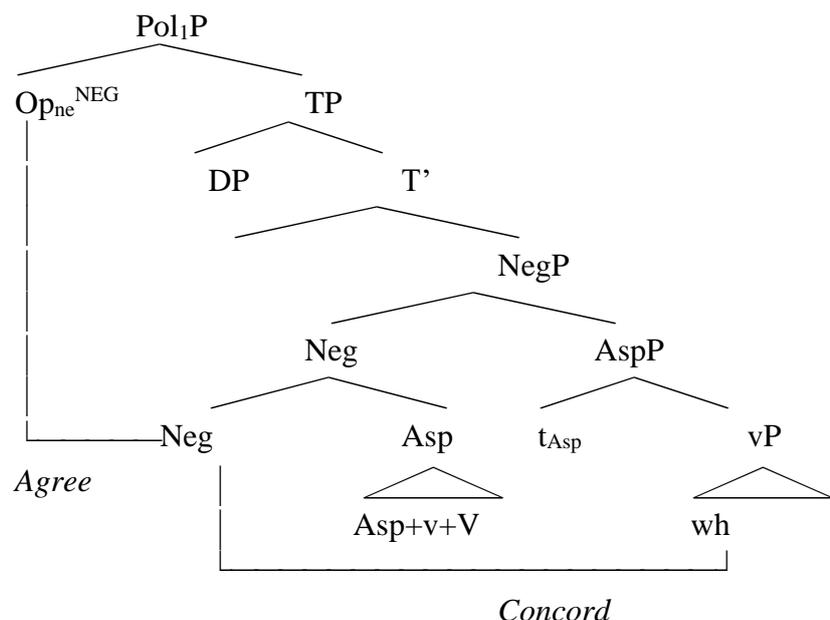
## 5. Licensing *ni*-items

Now let us explore the theoretical implications of the fact that *xuj*-negation fails to license *ni*-indefinites (14). I propose that two processes are implicated in deriving clauses with *ni*-indefinites in Russian: semantic licensing of NPI wh-stems and morphological concord between such items and  $\text{Neg}^0$ , which is responsible for the appearance of the proclitic *ni*.

Recall that *xuj*-negation licenses bare wh-indefinites that are identical to the stems of the respective *ni*-indefinites under standard negation, (14b) of Section 3. To account for this phenomenon, I propose that NIs are licensed in the scope of a negative operator as NPIs and are base-generated as bare wh-phrases. I leave aside the issue of how to characterize the environments where a wh-item can, or must, stay bare, see Yanovich (2005) and observations in Hengeveld et al. (2022). Accordingly, both  $\text{Op}_{\text{ne}}^{\text{NEG}}$  and  $\text{Op}_{\text{xuj}}^{\text{NEG}}$  are capable of licensing them.

On the other hand, given that  $\text{Op}_{\text{xuj}}^{\text{NEG}}$  fails to license *ni*-indefinites, it is clear that an additional ingredient is implicated in their derivation. I take this process to be morphological concord<sup>26</sup>. I stay agnostic as to how exactly it needs to be implemented, restricting myself to the observation that morphological concord, first, does not hinge on the interpretability of the features involved, and, second, can target multiple items – for instance, this is the case when an inanimate noun agrees in case and morphological gender with modifying adjectives. The resulting system is illustrated in (24).

(24)



The proposal to subdivide *ni*-word licensing into semantic licensing by a negative operator and morphological concord with  $\text{Neg}^0$  deviates from the original analysis of Zeijlstra (2004), where *ni*-words would directly agree with the operator.

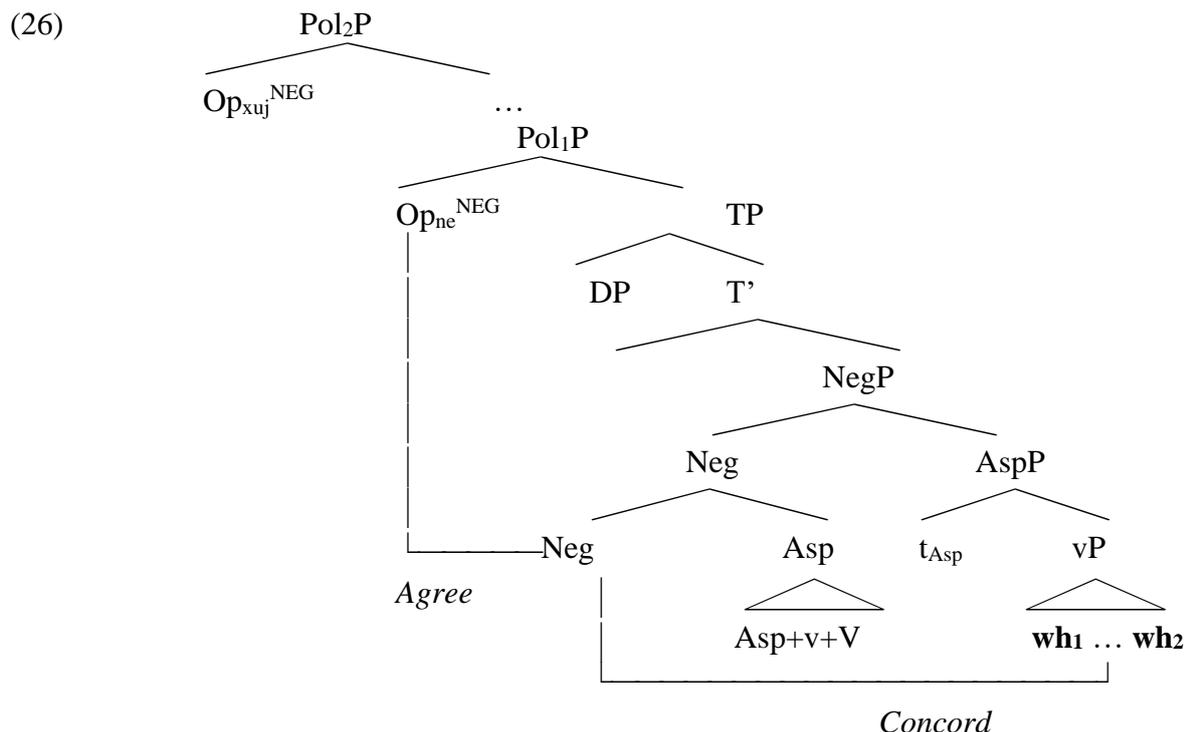
This account makes the following prediction<sup>27</sup>. Bare wh-indefinites licensed by *xuj*-negation on the one hand, and standard negation and *ni*-items on the other hand cannot occur in the same clause (25).

<sup>26</sup> In this respect, my proposal is similar to those of Abels (2002, 2005), Boskovič (2009), and Rossyaykin (2020) who argue that *ni*-indefinites move into  $\text{Spec NegP}$  and undergo  $\text{Spec-head}$  agreement with its head  $\text{Neg}^0$ . In their analyses, however,  $\text{Neg}^0$  bears an interpretable  $[\text{+Neg}]$  feature, contrary to what is assumed here.

<sup>27</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer who attracted my attention to this prediction. The data in (25) are partly theirs.

- (25) a. \*xuj **kto** ničego **ne** videl  
 X.NEG who nothing NEG saw  
 ‘No one saw anything.’ (intended)
- b. \*xuj nikto **čego** **ne** videl.  
 X.NEG nobody what NEG saw  
*Idem*

The reason for this is that indefinites are base-generated below NegP and accordingly cannot escape agreement with it. Therefore, bare wh-indefinites, *kto* ‘who’ in (25a) and *čego* ‘what’ in (25b) cannot surface at the end of the derivation.



### 6. Apparent problem: Interrogative wh-phrases and wh-based indefinites with non-null morphological marking

As is well known, Russian (and other Slavic languages) has several series of wh-based indefinites, see e.g. Haspelmath (1997).

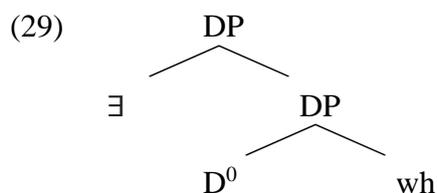
- (27) Indefinites based on *kto* ‘who’
- |     |         |            |          |         |
|-----|---------|------------|----------|---------|
| kto | kto-to  | kto-nibud’ | kto-libo | koe-kto |
| who | who-IDF | who-IDF    | who-IDF  | IDF-who |

If we assume that all wh-based items are generated fully underspecified, we seem to predict that concord with Neg will automatically occur in the presence of Neg. Robustly attested sentences such as in (28) will be then impossible to derive<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> This shows that the “bagel paradox” (Błaszczak 2003; 2005; Pereltsvaig 2006) only exists as a statistical tendency. I tentatively propose that the reason for its existence is pragmatic, namely, additional existential operators, which are necessary to create a bagel paradox violation, are normally not inserted in the structure.

- (28) a. wh-question  
**čego** nikto **ne** ponjal?  
 what nobody NEG understood  
 ‘What did no one understand?’  
 Indefinite in the scope of negation
- b. davno **ne** čital **čego-libo** stol’ bezdarno debil’nogo  
 long NEG read what-IDF so talentlessly moronic  
 ‘(I) haven’t long read anything as talentlessly moronic.’<sup>29</sup>
- c. po povodu finala karjery xokkeist **ne** skazal  
 regarding end career hockey.player NEG said  
**čego-libo** opredelennogo  
 what-IDF definite  
 ‘Regarding the end of his career, the hockey player didn’t say anything definite’<sup>30</sup>.

To explain this phenomenon, I assume that indefinites with an overt morphological marker come together with a local operator which they undergo concord with as in (29), in the spirit of (Kratzer & Shimoyama 2002/2017; Kratzer 2004).



The concord with the operator blocks the concord of the indefinite with Neg<sup>0</sup>.

For interrogative wh-phrases, I assume them to be underlyingly different lexical items. This receives support from languages where indefinites are not all based on wh-stems.

## 7. Remaining issues

In this section I address, first, the failure of *xuj*-negation to license *ni* + DP combinations in Russian and, second, the appearance of *ni*-phrases in the absence of negation.

As was shown in (14d), *xuj*-negation fails to license *ni*+DP combinations. Within the system I present in Sections 6 and 7, I propose to analyze these items in the following manner. I propose that such items host a [+IDF] D (that can be either spelled out as *odin* or be phonologically null) that undergoes concord with Neg<sup>0</sup>. Additionally, they obligatorily bear the genitive of negation. Given that *xuj*-negation is incompatible with an overt NegP and fails to license the genitive of negation, such items are not licensed by it.

Additional (some) *ni*-words in Russian are used in affirmatives where they mean approximately “the worst representative of the respective ontological class” (30). In this use, they appear without sentential negation and lack negative force. Ostensibly, this presents a challenge for the proposal laid out in Sections 4 and 5.

- (30) a. on byl soveršenno **ni=kto/ni=kem**  
 he was totally nobody.NOM/nobody.INS  
 ‘He was a total nobody.’

<sup>29</sup> [https://mobile.twitter.com/drinkins\\_/status/1302875639201050624](https://mobile.twitter.com/drinkins_/status/1302875639201050624), accessed on 11/24/2021.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.kp.ru/daily/2171207/4319392/> accessed on 7/13/2021

- b. ja vsjo eto delal **ni=začem**  
 I all this did NI=what.for  
 ‘I did it all in vain.’
- c. ja prijexal iz **ni=otkuda**  
 I arrived from ni=from.where  
 ‘I arrived out of the blue.’

I take such uses of NIs to be fully lexicalized. They lack the meaning of a negated existential quantifier, no matter how obtained, and exhibit lexical restrictions. For instance, *nikogda* ‘never’ does not seem to be used in this function in Russian. Accordingly, they are not licensed by any negative operator, and do not fall under the purview of the theory proposed here.

## 8. Conclusion

I have shown that, in colloquial Russian, an additional negation strategy is used alongside the regular negation that involves Strict Negative Concord and *ni*-words. This alternative strategy involves the word *xuj* ‘dick’ as the negator and NPIs that may occur in non-negative contexts, typically plain wh-words. The difference between the two constructions is transparently reflected in the morphology of the licensed indefinites. I have shown that the standard negation and regular negation correspond to different negative operators with different licensing properties.

The fact that the negative operator corresponding to *xuj*-negation fails to license the preverbal NegP and *ni*-words forces one to modify Zeijlstra’s (2004) analysis of Negative Concord. Unlike in the original proposal of Zeijlstra’s, I conclude that *ni*-words do not agree directly with the negative operator, but rather are semantically licensed by it and undergo morphological concord with Neg<sup>0</sup>.

It stands to reason that in other languages with squattive negation this negation corresponds to a separate negative operator as well. Given that squattive negations appear to be widespread in the languages of Europe, the conclusion that negative concord items do not agree with a negative operator directly is typologically testable. I leave this typological study for further research.

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